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Examining the Psychosocial Barriers of Female Students in Academic Settings of Sindh: The Case of Public Sector University of Sindh, Pakistan

Abstract *The collective responsibilities and rights of female students are ignored in the academic domain of Sindh, Pakistan. The third world countries are a mirror image of it and highlight their declining condition in the educational perspectives of female education. The twelve Psychosocial barriers are highlighted in this study. They are analyzed to know about their extent in female students in one of the Public sector universities of Sindh, Pakistan. The quantitative design was adopted, and a questionnaire was used as the instrument to measure percentages and frequencies. A five-point Likert Scale was selected for the process of data collection measurement from thirty female participants of the English department. The thirty female students represented four academic stages in a co-academic setting. After the analysis of data through SPSS software, the results affirmed that female students do face problems to pursue their higher education in the shape of psychological fears, uncomfortable situations, adoption of different rough attitudes against her existence in academics, dominancy of the male colleague in academic and societal boundaries, cultural and parental disparities in mind sets that ultimately results to the unawareness of societal conservative norms established in educational setting of Universities in Sindh, Pakistan.*

Key Words: Barriers, Female, Psycho, Social, Students, University

Introduction

The present works highlight the psychosocial aspect of female higher education. It presents the existing problems for female students. Around 52% of the population in Pakistan is female gender (2017). They are set backwards and prevented to show their valuable stance in social change and progress along with human development (Azam, 1993). However, one of the most important pillars responsible for this adverse situation of the female gender in society is her clear cut deprivation against the right to education. According to Raza and Murad (2010), education is the only instrument in a women's life that can empower and develop her psychologically, socially, culturally to such an extent as to overcome the adverse consequences of a low-level degree by challenging her own decision in grading. According to UNESCO (2012-14) statistical reports, it is declared that the literacy rate of females is 36%. Religions of the world provide a significant guideline to acquiring education on equal benefit for both the genders, male and female genders (Stowasser, 1994). A brief glance at the life of the Prophet (PBUH) can inform the value of education given to women by the number of scholars branching out the shores of educational guideline. Prophet's (PBUH) wife, Bibi Aisha, is a worthy example (Shah and Conchar, 2009). The educational system in Pakistan is deplorable. The eleven psychosocial barriers discussed in this study are religious bigotry, less political will, rigid social and cultural framework of society, burdens and responsibilities, health issues, poor educational system, the parental mode in academics, security issues, stereotypic mindsets, economic inadequacy and vested interests of authorities. According to the reports published by the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and UNESCO (2013), it indicated that the rural population of the province of Sind had female literacy of about 22%.

Problem Statement

The constitution of the Islamic Pakistan Republic of Pakistan 1973 states that basic free and compulsory education is necessary for all (females and males) in such a manner as determined by the

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law (Art.25A). The question arises with a demand of justification that what is the reason that still there remains the low female literacy ratio on a constant paradigm.

Theoretical Framework

The following research takes its assistance from different biological researches that proved that females do face psychological changes in their particular phases of life. It is interesting to know that norms of society restrict female students to get emotionally hacked and let them face the consequences. Hamzullah (2007) stated that:

"The psychosocial stressors of Pakistani women are present throughout their life-cycle from childhood to adolescence, adulthood, middle age and old age. Girl students do face directly or indirectly the issues and hide their thought, consent and happiness. All those converts into Shyness, hesitation and feeling of less importance in the society or negative behavior which damage their confidence and put them into psychological stress".

Hamzullah (2007)

According to Hamzullah (2007), females do face psychological barriers in their different life stages, though they may be a student, teacher or any other stakeholder in the educational field. However, the present study will merely focus on one of the many phases of her life. The female students in the Sind context are taken into consideration for the purpose of the study. Irum et al. (2015) had a valuable contribution in this respect. The study highlighted the problems faced by women in higher educational institutions of Sind, Pakistan.

Research Objectives

a. To find the extent of the psychosocial barriers in female students during their University education.
b. To suggest few remedies for them in order to alleviate the pressure of psychological deprivations in their educational field.

Research Questions

a. What is the extent of psychosocial barriers in female students during their university education?
b. What could remedial suggestions be imparted that could alleviate the pressure of psychological deprivations in their educational field?

Literature Review

Scope of Female Education

According to Socrates, if a woman has the same duties as of men, then she must have same education" (Gillet, 1969). The actual right of educational awareness for the female gender was introduced just after the Wood Education Dispatch in 1854. In 2015, a common goal was entitled with an objective to educate every child in a seminar held in Dakar, Senegal. It focused on education without gender discrimination. Thereafter, stress is provided for a channel of education on all equal terms, especially to the female gender. According to Pirzaado (2005), the struggles around the world in the USA, UK, later in Japan, then to third world states of South Asia, is still an unresolved issue, particularly in Pakistan. The situation here in Pakistan since its independence in 1947 marks the low level of education in terms of female students. The barriers in the educational system of Pakistan are briefly discussed.

Religious Bigot Society

Sattar and Baig (2001) stated that Religious clerics (Imams) play a negative role to marginalize the mode of female education. They interpret the sacred teachings of Religion (Quran and Hadith) in their own moralized standards that go against the educational rights of girls of their local areas (Mernissi, 1991). They create a conservative atmosphere with referring to girls for future education (Sattar, A. &

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Baig, R. (2001). They also create a ground of superiority mind complex in Muslim pupils to present other religious disciples as inferior to them. One of the reasons, girls of minority religious sects is not treated equally in terms of educational preferences (Mirza, 2012).

Vested Interests of Authorities

The well to do authorities hires employees that could satisfy their intended motives. It is one of the sore issues for females in their educational surroundings. It is so, the male teachers and even the other educational working staff tries to exploit the chastity of female students (Azra and Pervaiz, 2012).

Less Political Attention Paid to Sindh

The failed educational policy ends up with no practical educational rights for teachers and students (Saeed et al. 2012). Therefore, the issue was raised in the memoirs of a Hindu girl (Mirza, 2012). It vitally signifies the lack of constructive political rights for female students.

Rigid Customs of Sindhi Society

Pakistani society is structured on a strict patriarchal system (Murray, 1995). The feudalistic approach in district towns has given a notion of male dominancy in educational institutions (Focault, 1980). Girls in their educational learning stages are pre-determined to be inferior in their societal status (Shah and Conchar, 2012). An addendum to her injustice is the concept of early marriage (Soomro, 2012).

Complex Culture of Rural Sindh

The concept of co-education is marked as a sign to breed vulgarity and obscenity in Pakistani society (Klasen, 2002). Therefore, to avoid such obscenity, the caretakers are observed to be involved in a practice of "Vani". It is well known cultural practice that let young girls marry an adult male relative (Berti, 2003).

Burdens Imposed on Young Girls

The increased ratio of female labor has been a part of the great discussion (IPEC, 2005). Many female students are working as domestic servants, housemaids, baby sitters in Sind urban and rural domains for their survival (Marhab, 2009). In case if they are married, then it becomes really hard for them to manage their children with studies in a line of less income that is served for their educational purpose (Saeed et al., 2012). The chances are high when she is a member of the joint family system. It becomes a great cause of her depression to continue her education (Kamal and Ayesha, 2013).

Issues of Female Health

The issues pertain to disruption of psychological and physiological health has a direct influence on the female student's contribution in her academics. Chachar et al. (2013) demarcate between psychological and physiological diseases. The psychological issues include nervousness, tension, mental disorder, depression, sleep problems, aggressive attitudes and etc., whereas the physiological issues include stomach and headache, breathing problems, pregnancy, and menstruation.

Poor Educational System

According to Shaashni (1997), the educational policy and guardians have been towards gender-specific subject selection. The nature of some subjects is assigned separately to female and male students. The fields of computer, mechanical engineering, civil engineering are apparently designed for male students to lead ahead. Mono-lingual instruction policy in the classroom is another sort of discomfort for students that results in less heed towards a lecture. Memon (2007) cites an example of Sindhi speaking students that failed to cope with the lecture delivered in Urdu or in English. Lack of proper maintenance towards basic institutional facilities is a great hurdle, especially for the female students that reside in the hostel. The issues are load shedding, non-availability of cold drinking water, no private section of her in a room with separate living restroom and proper sanitation etc. (Khalid and Mujahid, 2002).

Strict Parental Mode Implemented in Sindhi Society

In Sindh, the parents of girl do practice over surveillance on them (Shah and Coucher; 2009). The decisions of her fate are decided by her parents for education and marriage (Memon, 2007). The girls usually lack the influence to share with her parents about the adverse consequences that she faces in educational surroundings (Mirza, 2012).

Economic Inadequacy

Every year, a huge amount of budget is allocated for the educational department; still, there is a hue and cry of less financial allocation in respective domains (UNESCO; 2012). Poverty is of prior concern to many families to serve education to their children, especially a female child, as they consider her a temporary member of their family (Anwar et al., 2003).

Research Design

The quantitative method was made conducive for this study to survey a large number of female students from the given context. The partiality was ensured without any exaggeration of thoughts with cost-effectiveness and identity of participants.

Population

The target population of the study was undergraduate female students of the Public Sector University of Sindh, Pakistan. The students were taken from the department of English at the University of Sindh Jamshoro. Thirty participants that ranged from Part I (BS Honors) class to Part IV class (BS Honors or MA Final) were selected for this study. Eight participants were from part I; eight were from Part II, eight from Part III and seven from Part IV.

Instrument

The close-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used for data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each of the psychosocial barriers discussed above consists of many sub-factors that became the cause of its existence in academic society. One or two factors from each psychosocial barrier were taken for this study. The fifteen most significant factors from the psychosocial barriers were derived for the purpose of analysis in the study. The statistical co-relations between all factors were observed. The highest relation between the two factors was a relation of strictness with fear situation amongst the female students.

Discussion on Results

The extent of Each Factor Responsible for Psychosocial Barrier in Female Students

Strictness

The Frequency has shown that 12 out of 30 participants are neutral to discuss their life issues with their parents. 40% of the participants with neutral option show their unwillingness to present their views on every factor of University life.

Rigid Culture

10 participants out of 30 have shown no concern to present their views. 9 participants out of 30 have agreed on its impact. It is with the valid percentages of 33% and 30% respectively. It shows that the majority of participants have neutral consent of cultural rigidity on them as they tend to hide their views to discuss and share.

Societal Fears

It is the important factor that influences. It imposes a negative impact on female students in University.

The results of this study have validly proved that the majority (i.e., 11 out of 30) of them agreed that they have societal fears to impose on them. This proves that the majority of them have fear instilled in their psychological build.

Uncomfortable Situation

The results have shown that this factor has a high negative impact on participants' education (i.e., 13 participants out of 30) have agreed that factor is a great sort of barrier in their education with a valid percentage of 43.3%. Therefore, the psychosocial barrier of the poor educational system is proved by the uncomfortable factor. It shows that the girls in the University of Sindh context do have to face an uncomfortable situation. This is connected with the facilities lacking for them in their surroundings. It was highlighted with the transportation issue that is halting their smooth.

Attitude

Majority of the participants (i.e.12 out of 30 participants, with around 40% concerned about this phenomenon to their male counterparts in society, who are rude and selfish in their motives. They gravely disgrace the educational progress of girls in University.

Mismanagement

Mismanagement refers to the lack of primary facilities in the department of English that is taken for this study. The Results after analysis of responses have shown 14 participants out of 30 agreed to this with around 46.7 %.

Obstacles in Academic Career

It is no doubt a sign of derogative position for girls to drop their University education. However, the ratio of drop out is still a major issue. The factor of this dropout obstacle is prominent to reflect the overall deplorable economic situation of parents or, in case, if participants are alone to bear their expenses. The majority are of Middle-class families, who hardly afford to have household expenses along with child hostel and academic expenses. The barrier of economic inadequacy in terms of obstacle factor has seemed to be majorly agreed as a strong negative factor by the participants in result data. The results show that 12 out of 30 participants have agreed, and the same ratio of other participants have strongly agreed to it with a valid of 40%.

The dominance of Male Gender in Society

The factor of dominancy in society is a clear direction for rigid customs in society. It is mainly due to males, at their home even in institutes that are sort of dominant factor in deciding the fate of the girl. This instilled phenomenon of gender-selective perception is seen with result data from the majority of participants. 18 out of 30 participants, to around 60%, have agreed to this curse.

Exploitation of Rights

The exploitation of basic rights reflects the concern to less political attention for proper educational functioning. This relation is understood as a cause of psychological depression for girls in their educational setup. Even it is affirmed from the result data that participants belonging to minority sect of religion are less academically privileged due to less political attention on policies. Results have affirmed this factor as the stronger one. It has an impact on girls in their education at University. 14 participants out of 30 participants have strongly agreed with around 46.7%.

Tensions

Tension is one of the significant factors taken from one psychosocial barrier for bad health. It has a great effect on participants' less interest in the study. Terrorism is one of the major aspects observed for participants to go under the suppressive position. The participants selected for this study agreed to it. 14 out of 30 participants agreed with around 46.7%.

Burden of Responsibilities

The result from data shows that an extra educational burden on participants highly influences as to create a psychosocial barrier. Mainly, the management of households' works with higher education is difficult. Majority of participants agreed, who is single and resides in the hostel to express as a free account (i.e., 10 out of 30 participants with 33.3%. This was again because the participants wanted to hide their identity, especially those engaged in a marital relationship or, in other cases, to express the curse of responsibilities by their families freely without fear.

False Interpretations

The factor of wrong interpretations is strongly referred to deprive female students of their higher educational privileges. It is due to falsely interpreted religious teachings by the so-called religious clerics. They consider it as a sin that girl of their native town shall go to the institute and face their opposite gender. The collective results of this study have shown that this hurdle has greatly influenced their educational decisions. 16 participants out of 30 have agreed to this factor, with around 53.3%. This overall reflects that false religious extremism is observed with its negative impacts in Sindhi society when it comes to the educational rights for female education.

Mono-Lingual Lectures

The role of mono-lingual lectures in class is taken as one of the critical issues. It is a social fact that the students and teachers represent different lingual and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, the majority faces the issue of medium of instruction. The results have shown that the teachers are unaware of this situation. 10 out of 30 participants strongly agree to this factor that they have a mother tongue other than the Sindhi language and face this dilemma. It is because the lectures here at Sind University are explained mostly in the Sindhi language.

Role of Teachers

The results from the quantitative data have shown apparently that the friendly relation of teachers with their students is less. The female participants of this study had a critical perception about the male teaching staff that they do not want to openly express. 13 out of 30 participants have agreed to this fact that the role of teachers in their academic career counselling is critical, with around 43.3%.

Harassment

The factor of harassing female students is conducted outside the premises of the department. It reflects the overall weak security concerns. This is one of the strong factors that had a great adverse impact on female students' higher education in University. 14 out of 30 participants strongly agreed to this curse, with around 45.2%.

Suggestions to Mitigate the Extent of Factors that Cause Psychosocial Barriers for Female Students in University

The study presents few recommendations to counter the collective effect of factors that cause psychosocial barriers for female students in their higher educational career.

To Counter the Religious Extremist Provisions

- Extensive research on the part to counter the false religious interpretation shall be guaranteed. It is to authorize the true scholars to highlight the issue of female education in light of the true message that is envisaged in sacred teachings of religion.
- From the part of the National and Local Government, there shall be an organization of proper counselling that needs to resolve the religious confrontations based on societal norms and stating a neutral will. The decisions made shall highlight the true reflection of justice made on an equality basis for equal gender provisions. According to (Rizvi 1994), there shall be a genuine re-negotiation of the issues, requiring an understanding of the contextual and structural considerations.

To Negate the Steps that are Against Female Student's Educational Benefit

- Proper guidance in legal aspects to materialize the practices of gender equality shall be imparted. It should ensure to have compliance against complaints requested for the psychological threats (verbal/nonverbal) that have been practised in collective spheres.
- The Recruitment of teachers should be made on a successful stance for those that can clear the test without any influence of authoritarian stakeholders.

Seek Political Attention

- The political practitioners should engage in conducting awareness campaigns that could highlight the flaws in educational settings for open public benefit. It should respect the objective to awaken the practical approach towards modernizing educational pursuits.
- There should be Promotion of the employment opportunities in the educational field by raising the reserved seat criteria of the female quota system.
- The course of corrupt employment act inside that promotes de-merit educational scenario should be the focused agenda of the community. It should follow in putting cuffs in the hands of those black sheep pupils that steer the political tables and tend to demotivate the concept of female education.

To Locate the Disruption in Societal Hierarchy

- All of the negative beliefs against the female gender should be treated critically.
- Law of any land shall not be made at any cost the right of the egalitarians. It should be the public as a whole that has an open decision for people to decide for their fates of children.

Culture"- a Curse or a Blessing?

- There is a foremost need for extensive research work that could highlight the true ideological complexities in different cultures of society. This can work for proper comprehension of the gender assigned values in stereotyped societies. The benefits of co-education can best highlight the formal promulgation of new ideologies in return for the exchange of ideas between two opposite genders in one setting.
- Separate workshops shall be organized for both care practitioners who are in immediate contact with the female students and even to girls. It will move forward on training them to bear the circumstances up to their university levels.

Is it a Burden on the part of Female Students' Capacity to Face her Responsibilities?

- The role of social media should be promoted with the general consensus to highlight the degraded position of female students, who are striving to achieve the excellence of their execution in her all dividends of life.
- Government should announce some programs of economic assistance like the "Girl's stipend program" that should help needy girls easily to work on their needs and their children on an equal basis.

Is Health a Real Wealth?

- Issues relating to "health deterioration" should be highlighted with practical guidance to overcome them. It can be terrorism, violence, pregnancy and etc.
- Proper survey reports should be collected on a monthly basis to mark the ratio of the health sector in different intuitions.

Educational Awareness- a Need of a Moment

- Old traditional training procedures that have been under practice for a long by teachers should need to be changed. They have to develop a critical aspect to derive the formula of classroom management. This shall especially focus on gender equality.

- For the effective functioning of the entire educational institution, there is a need to claim for monitoring committees at the university level, especially in the Sind region. The wide trace of non-serious attitude on behalf of teachers and other stakeholders should be in direct contact with the educational domain itself. It shall be named as "Sindh examination commission".
- There is a call for immediate response to highlight the lacks of basic facilities in an educational setting. There should be a tendency to design ways to inspect the relation between different practical steps of female education. It could be to eradicate problems from its root cause.

Parents are the Pillars of Future, Not the Hinderers

- Strict legislation shall be organized against those parents who tend to restrict their children against education insight of first-hand punishment. This shall accompany the labelling of the legal penalty with a handsome amount.
- Special programs should be launched that could provide stipend services to the parents as a bonus, who could participate in sending their child (especially girls) to an educational institute. This incentive will surely work for those parents who tend to avoid the education of their female child solely on an economic basis.

Can Security Rights be said to be Fundamental in Practice?

- Party members that are involved in wiping out the cases of black sheep that are their party-workers should be dealt with by law.
- Security privileges shall be made more sound for female students especially related to distance learning. The privilege should be in the shape of the immediate reach of law enforcement agencies.

Infected Minds of Stereotyped Gender Legacies Needs to be Changed

The female students need to establish an idea to actively participate in their educational fields that they desire for their careers.

Conclusion

The effects of the psychosocial barriers in female students have rationally proved to be the major cause of educational deprivation in Pakistan. It can be confidently said that one can compare the international standards of the educational goals with Pakistani educational goals. The economic deprivation, law and order injustices, tribal strengthening to curb the voice of women has continuously played their part to snatch a right from female students. It is acknowledged that Pakistani society, in general, has been psychological at the stake of higher authorities. The surveys on educational programs show apparently that there is no support of accepted norms to arrange education for females. This study might help to create a ground for further research scholars to serve their potentials under this dynamic topic. This keeps on engaging with study from many other underlying phenomena.

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