

Identify the Problems and Challenges Faced By Female Students in Co-Educational System at University Level In Sindh

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Abstract: Background In co-educational settings, female students are affected globally, which is quite more regular in university campuses in most developed countries of the world through specific policies and mechanisms of enforcement, it remains a forbidden topic in Pakistani colleges and universities. **Objective:** This study was conducted to identify the problems and challenges faced by female students in co-educational system in public institutions of higher learning. **Methods:** This study is a cross-sectional study undertaken using quantitative and qualitative methods, in which the university community participated. **Results:** The problems most frequently cited were violence, harassment and lack of security. Lack of facilities and assertiveness, workload, and academic performance were mentioned less often. In particular, awareness towards the existence of gender discrimination in campus departs. However, the solutions suggested focused on raising awareness, guidance and counseling, academic support and improvement of facilities. **Conclusion:** This study strongly suggests that in order to improve female achievement in tertiary education, attention should be given to personal security, material support and assertiveness creation in addition to academic needs. The educational status of females in Pakistan is unacceptably low, in fact, amongst the lowest in the world. The purpose of this study was find out the challenges faced by female students in co-education at university level and identifying the cultural and social barriers confronted by them getting Higher Education.

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1. Introduction

Pakistan is the world's sixth most populous country with population of over 170 million. At the time of independence (1947) Pakistan had only one university, the University of Punjab, founded in 1882 in Lahore. Pakistan now has more than 130 Universities, from which 71 are public and 59 are private universities (HEC Pakistan). Pakistan is in the row of literacy rates in the world and the literacy ratio is 55 % according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). According to the Ministry of Female Development, only 19% of females have attained education upto Matric, 8% upto Intermediate, 5% a Bachelor's degree and 1.4% achieved a Master's degree. 60% of the female adult population is illiterate. (Ministry of Female Development). The Government of Pakistan is continuously taking efforts to enhance the literacy ratio and to offer equal opportunities to accomplish education to girls but the ground reality is much more diverse. Though the ratio of girls to boys at all levels of education has improved, on the contrary according to 1988 Census, female literacy rate remain low at 32.6%. The ratio of girls to boys at tertiary level education shows improvement, rising from a base level of 0.46 in 1990 to 0.78 in 2001-02 (The Development of Education. National Report of Pakistan. Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. 2004).

Co-education refers to a mixed schooling system, where boys and girls learn together under one single roof. A co-education school system mitigates any impartation and difference between girls and boys. the 1980s revealed that danger to a woman's honor was parents' most crucial concern, rather than the cultural cause which was assumed in the past. Harassment in education is unwelcome behavior of a Relating to the instincts, physiology nature that interferes with a student's ability to learn study, work or participate in academic activities. In the *Report Card on Gender Equity*, the National Coalition for Female and Girls in Education (NCWGE) reported that 30 percent of undergraduate students, and 40 percent of graduate students, have been sexually harassed. (NCWGE *Title IX at 3*.; 1997). annoyance of female at working place is one of the major problem, which depress female in taking active part in economical and social improvement of society.(Riaz S. 2010) The understanding of annoyance find improved recognition at work place, educational institution or at home. (Shafaq A. 2007) Civil society representatives have observed 70% of the female face harassment at work place; but additional reports characterize such cases up and about to 90%. (Malik J, 2006). Adjustment by the distraction of an individual or group's attention is diverted from the chosen object onto the source of distraction. However in co-education setting,

annoyance by teachers and classmates has been also reported as one of the cause of females' adjustment at higher level. Indeed, this sort of harassment can lead to the gravest consequences of all because this is one of the levels where victims (students, regardless gender) have absolutely no power, and no advocates. The causes of annoyance and exploitation by teachers and professors can be complex, where the students are dependent on their teachers' approval for academic success, opportunities and further career, which could also influence the abilities and capabilities due to mental frustration. The girls in common are most sensitive creatures of all, which commonly face annoyance starting from tertiary level education by their male teachers and classmates, affecting not only their education but also threaten them for their honor and self-respect, due to which they lose confidence. Many believe it is the power imbalance between students and teachers that is the primary cause for females 'adjustment. Teachers have as much power as parents because their authority can have such pronounced impact not only on a student's current quality of life, but on their entire future, as well Girls are more likely to use, and experience, verbal and psychological harassment and bullying. Six out of 10 students will experience some form of physical Annoyance." harassment involves a range of behavior from mild annoyances to sexual assault and rape. (AAUW 2006, Dzeich et al, 1990) Therefore, to conduct research at university level about the adjustment of females annoying girls by male teachers and classmates is the need of time. Much work is done on the physical harassment at workplace in Pakistan an ordinance "Protection against Harassment of female at the Workplace Act, 2010" has also been passed by the Parliament government of Pakistan but there is a need to solve this big problem in education; particularly higher education. Harassment is an act that is not favored, not accepted and it is done lacking the approval of the receiver; an act that can be in the appearance of verbal, non-verbal, visual or physical (Tengku Omar & Maimunah, 2000, "Workshop on Code, 1999"). It could be the form of harassment that leaves an impact on the job status of any persons or in the form of danger for the receiver as the receiver feels that his or her personal liberty is there attack by a sexual act (Ministry of Human Resources, 1999; Tengku Omar & Maimunah, 2000). This study focuses to understand the dynamics that surrounds men in relations to gender, knowledge, adjustment and annoyance. Theories that look at perception and attributions and or even the organizational structure are likely to miss the complexity that lies within this problem. For the purpose of this study, the researchers would specifically like to find out what are the predictors that influence.

2. Methodology

A cross sectional study design was used to gather information on the problems of female students at Pub University (JU) using quantitative and qualitative methods. The study was conducted between August and September 2013.

The population of the study was 150 girls from three public universities of Jamshoro (University of Sindh, Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences and Mehran University of Engineering & Technology). The 150 samples of (50 from each university) were selected randomly from under and postgraduate level student. It was involve both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Descriptive types of survey were conducted. As far as qualitative approach is concerned, mixed method approach with in-depth interviews and focused group discussions (FGD) were done to collect the data about the challenges faced by female students. The method o f data collection used was "Questionnaire", in which questions asked with the purpose to meet desired objectives. Various parameters like type of institute, extent of study in co-education, satisfaction level, survival issues and views of students, participations, competition were selected. The data was analyzed statistically analyzed to make certain inferences

3. Results & Discussion

From more than 400 questionnaires distributed, only 150 were completed. The completed questionnaire was from 150 female students. Some returned questionnaires were incomplete, but all available data have been included in the analyses. The demographic profile of respondents is given in Fig: 1. Fig 2 show the statement response Problems and challenges faced by Female Students, Studying in Co-educational System at University. Fig: 3 show the statement response from Undergraduate to Postgraduate Students

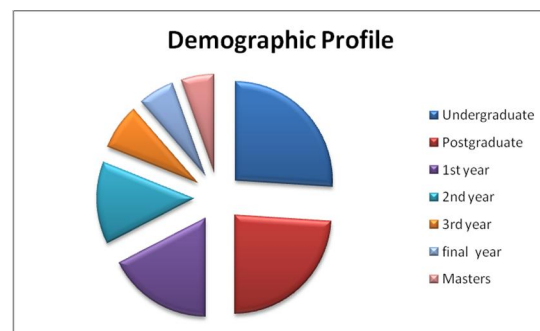


Fig: 1 show the demographic profile of respondents

There are many advantages of co-education such as it builds the confidence and also promotes healthy competition between girls and boys; however there are many disadvantages of this system one of them is the lack of concentration, because of opposite gender both of them cannot concentrate on the studies. The major issue regarding co-education system is the females' adjustment which is usually caused by annoyance. The quantitative data was processed, summarized and presented in figures 1, 2 and 3 by brief descriptions of the data. The data gathered through interview and focus group discussions were presented qualitatively in narrative summary forms after quantitative data description. Generally, for the sake of convenience, related items or concepts were treated together. This study was designed to investigate the challenges and problems, faced by female students at University level caused by different gender issues, that how these adjustment challenges affect female students at university level. It would be hope that the study would enable policy makers to produce or improve policy initiatives that protect the rights of female at university level. Also, through this study, higher education institutions in the continent may establish prevention and intervention programs that would address the needs of the female victims as well as protect them from future attacks. Many male teachers as well as classmates take advantage of the situation and annoy the female students. Parents are also concerned about the honor of their daughters, and try not to permit them in the university.

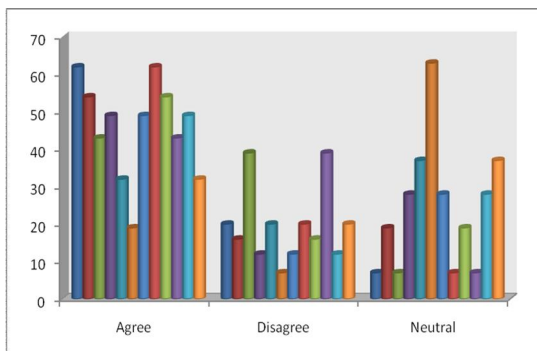


Fig: 2 show the statement response Problems and challenges faced by Female Students, Studying in Co-educational System at University

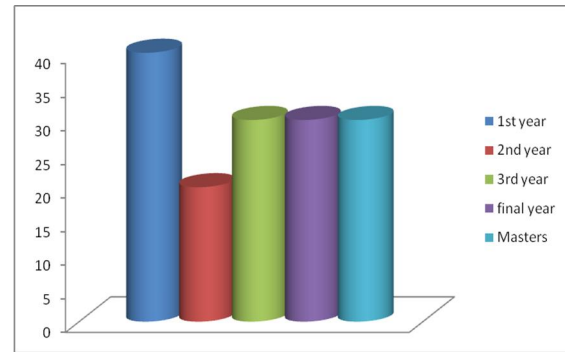


Fig: 3 show the statement response from Undergraduate to Postgraduate Students

As the result of this study shows that the most of the female students can not adjust in the co-education environment, they withdraw from the studies or abused. In fact most of the students have not any awareness about their rights regarding the gender issue. Certain formal and informal trainings by both institutes and parents respectively are direly needed. Government should arrange workshops and seminars for the parents of the students about the benefits of co-education.

Conclusion

The major factors that cause female students drop out from higher learning institutions including lack of assertiveness training, department placement without interest, lack of appropriate guidance and counseling service, lack of teachers support, anxiety, sexual harassment, poor time management, weak academic background, homesickness and economic problem. This implies that most of the causes emanate from the institutions, the teachers and the student from themselves. The purpose of this study was find out the challenges faced by female students in co-education at university level and identifying the cultural and social barriers confronted by them getting Higher Education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the study comes up with the following:

- Most females have a reserved view about their abilities. This in turn contributes to their low achievement and failure in higher education. Providing appropriate orientation and assertiveness training may help them build self-confidence so that they can integrate themselves with the university life.
- The university through the gender office should organize gender awareness training for the instructors so as to incorporate gender variables in their instruction. Since such a strategy is vital force to help reduce the dishonor that has so far been attached females' subordinate position in academia.

• In addition to the suggestions in this study, there are other ways to minimize the disparities between males and females. For example, a gender workshop should be held at Universities.

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