

## **Gender inequity at Workplace in Pakistani Higher Education Institutions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gender inequality amongst a sample of higher education faculty in Pakistan shows that just over one half work in institutions where females enjoy full gender equality. A three element model of female inequality has been tested by a questionnaire survey of 180 faculty staff to provide reliable and valid measures of the five aspects of the working environment of decision making, professional development, utilization of resources, academic affairs and job satisfaction. Data were collected from ten public and private universities of the Lahore through random sampling technique. Results indicate that only in decision making, do males dominate. This supports the hypothesis of real movement in Pakistani higher education in the direction intended by the adoption of national equality policies. Cluster analysis distinguishes between the majority of Equality Positivists, who see no discrimination, and four types of Gender Concerneds, who react to discrimination differentially in terms of the socio-cultural norms of a conservative, patriarchal society. The cluster types have been validated by interviewing a representative sequential sample of faculty. By locating responses within the three elements of the inequality model, validation is also provided for the model itself.

Key words: women, inequality, higher education, workplace, professional

### **Introduction**

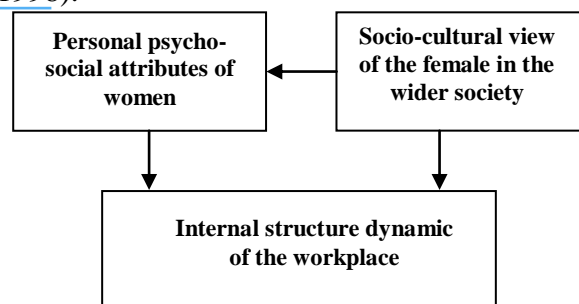
Gender disparity in education is generally manifest in South Asia and in Pakistan according to UNESCO (2002) data. Access to higher education is a priority for all countries and, where females have apparently attained parity, areas where they are still under-represented need to be addressed in both quantitative and qualitative terms (Jacobs, 1996; [Morley, 2007](#)). This tends to be a reflection of the social and cultural nature of much the region, which, as [Ejaz \(2007\)](#) points out in the case of Pakistan, arises from "a rigid, restrictive and often misleading interpretation of the status of women in Islam"(p.19). Contrasting the perceptions of gender role prevailing in Pakistan, Khalid (2011) distinguishes between conservatives, who promote the marginalisation of women, and liberals, who believe in a full democratic role and female emancipation. While in developed countries, women now enjoy gender parity in access to higher education with 52% of tertiary students being female, in developing countries the proportion reaches just 27% (UNESCO, 2002).

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Males represent the majority of the faculty in higher education institutes worldwide. UNESCO (2002) quotes 27% as the female percentage for Commonwealth universities, with the percentage for developing countries generally much lower at 10% for Ghana and 18% for Pakistan, for instance. Singhs (2008) reports low female staff representation at Commonwealth universities for the posts of vice-chancellor, faculty dean and professor at 9%, 17% and 15%, respectively for data collected in 2006.

To understand the possible causes of female under representation in higher education, the model of Figure 1 is proposed here to link three factors which inhibit the progress of females in what have been described as traditional, high-powered, patriarch establishments (Acker, 1994; Bond, 1996b; Smulders, 1998).



**Figure 1. A female inequality model**

The *internal structure dynamic* is the organisational mechanism of the workplace which females face from day to day. Females are faced with discrimination in resources, promotion, salary, negative responses to their management and the politics of power. The innate ability of females to accomplish professional tasks is not in dispute. The model indicates that the prevailing *socio-cultural view of females* in the wider society is reflected in the internal structure dynamic. To varying degrees of upbringing and education, the female responds according to the socio-cultural requirements of the world around her. She will also possess innate motivation and personality, and this mix of *personal psycho-social attributes* will determine how she will cope and progress in her workplace.

The conservative element in Pakistan has a dominating role, which was strengthened following the government of Zia-al-Huq (Husain, 2012; Nayyar, 1998; Niaz, 2010). In the working world women are considered less capable than men (Goheer, 2003) and are expected to be primarily house-managers (Alireza, 1987; Asian Development Bank, 2008). Consequently, the labour force participation for females in Pakistan is 15.5 % of the total population compared

to 49.5 % for males according to the Labour Force Survey of 2009-2010 (Government of Pakistan, 2011). This is a very low ratio in comparison with other South Asian countries (Ejaz, 2007).

Changes are now taking place in many Islamic countries as conservatism is tempered (Hamda,2005; Tyrer, 2006) but the situation in Pakistan is disappointing. According to The World Economic Forum (Lopez-Claros & Zahidi, 2005). Pakistan is 56th out of 58 countries that have progressed towards gender equality. This is despite long enshrined legislation that gives both genders equal rights regarding work and working conditions in The Constitution of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan (NAP, 2004).

*Decision making* is generally considered male dominated and females have little part of involvement in policy making tasks in higher education institutions, even when there is a large number of female faculty is teaching. Females are less likely to be involved in the decision making process as they are under-represented in committees, and very few hold the position of chair. This may be due to communication barrier, so females are not well informed about important decisions of academics, and other reason could be internal structure dynamics of institution (Drudy et al., 2005; Lang, 2010).

Equal access to *professional development* is imperfect (Quraishi & Kalim, 2008). As experiences and opportunities to refresh knowledge are gained formally through professional meetings and participating in workshops and conferences, female faculty in Pakistan are restricted by the nature of the society and find it difficult to build up job-related networks.

Gender discrimination in the *allocation and use of resources* is common in the work place even in the more developed countries (Crosby, 1984; Greenhouse, 2004). According to UNESCO (2002) females generally have less access to use of resources in higher education. Women are still under-represented in academic affairs and the processes of administration, especially in the top positions of institutions even in more developed countries (Bond, 1996b; NESSE, 2009; Singh, 2008). Lund (1998) reports female representation at 33.8 % for lecturers and 9.9 % for professors in Commonwealth countries. In developing countries, for example Uganda, Nigeria, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Zambia, the gender disparity tends to be greater.

*Job satisfaction* is considered a strong determinant of overall individual well-being (Diaz-Serrano, & Cabral 2005). A positive relationship between perceived autonomy within the work setting and the sense of job satisfaction is significant evidence in education (Kreis, & Brockoff, 1986).

### **Research questions**

This study was conducted to determine the gender equality amongst university faculty in Pakistani higher education. The three-element model of female inequality provides the theoretical base for the investigation. The issues to be addressed are the degrees to which five dimensions of the professional academic's job (i) decision making, (ii) professional development, (iii) utilisation of resources, (iv) academic affairs and (v) job satisfaction show evidence of gender inequality.

### **Methodology**

#### **Sample**

This study was conducted with university teachers working at public and private universities in Lahore. A sample of (N=180) teachers were randomly selected with 43.9 % male teachers (N=79) and 56.1% female teachers (N= 56.1) from different age groups. These teachers were holding different teaching positions; 2.8% Professor (N=5), 3.9% Associate professor (N=7), 21.1% Assistant Professor (N=38) and 68.9% lecturer (N=124). There was a public (N=153) and private (N=23) university division.

#### **The Equal Opportunities Questionnaire**

An Equal Opportunities Questionnaire (EOQ) scale established by Shaukat et, al. (2014) was used to collect data from the university faculty on five factors of gender equality provision: decision making, professional development, utilization of resources, academic affairs and job satisfaction. The scale consisted of 36 statements ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Cronbach Alpha reliabilities of the subscales was recorded as 0.95 for decision making, 0.92 for the professional development, 0.76 for utilization of resources, 0.90 for academic affairs and 0.85 for job satisfaction respectively.

#### **Data collection**

Researchers personally contacted with the faculty members through emails and requested them to fill in the questionnaire. Faculty members were informed about the nature of the study and confidentiality of the data. After the approval of their consent then questionnaire was distributed by the researchers with 180 faculty members from 10 universities of Lahore responding to give a response rate of 85%. They completed the questionnaire in twenty minutes.

**Data analysis**

Analysis of Variance (SPSS ANOVA) was used to determine significant difference on the breakdown of demographic variables (gender, teaching position, type of institution, age) on the subscales of the EOQ . These scores were subject to cluster analysis following the procedures of (Pell & Hargreaves, 2011). The cluster solutions were validated and explored by interviewing a sample of respondents drawn as representative of the typologies. Scores on the five areas gender equality practice were then subject to cluster analysis following the procedures of Pell and Hargreaves (2011). After group-average clustering, two solutions were suggested, one of two and one of five clusters after removing a single 'outlier', who recorded effectively zero job satisfaction. Both of the solutions were then pursued with optimization clustering. The two-cluster solution simply allocates respondents to a high scoring group of *Equality Positivists*, who see no gender discrimination and *Gender Concerneds* who do. The five cluster solution splits up the Gender Concerneds into four variants. Table 6 compares the clusters on the five areas of practice.

**Results**

Table 1 shows gender inequality regarding decision making practices was rated most highly by females working as lecturers in public institutions in comparison with their senior university staff.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations and one-way Analysis of variance(ANOVA) to examine the effects of demographic variables on subscale of decision making practices

Variables		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	Male (N=71)	3.49	0.85	5.17	.000
	Female (N= 96)	2.71	1.04		
Nature of institution	Public (N=143)	2.97	1.06	-2.35	.020
	Private (N=20)	3.54	0.63		
Teaching position	Lecturer (N=121)	2.93	1.01	4.16	.007
	Assistant professor (N=31)	3.40	0.892		
	Associate professor (N=6)	4.13	0.61		
	Professor (N=3)	3.33	2.02		

Table 2. Means and standard deviations and one-way Analysis of variance(ANOVA) to examine the effects of demographic variables on subscale of professional development practices

Variables		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	Male (N=71)	3.41	0.88	2.63	.009
	Female (N= 96)	3.03	0.94		
Teaching position	Lecturer (N=121)	3.14	0.89	2.51	.041
	Assistant professor (N=31)	3.43	0.89		
	Associate professor (N=6)	4.06	0.71		
	Professor (N=3)	3.21	1.92		

Table 2 shows that male faculty working at associate professor post-level showed more equality in professional development practices.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations and one-way Analysis of variance(ANOVA) to examine the effects of demographic variables on subscale of utilization of resources practices

Variables		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Nature of institution	Public (N=143)	3.76	0.86	-2.51	.01
	Private (N=20)	4.28	0.87		
Age	22-25 (N=29)	3.55	0.86	2.55	.04
	26-30 (N=36)	3.92	0.93		
	31-35 (N=36)	4.12	0.92		
	36-40 (N=47)	3.78	0.97		

Table 3 shows that University faculty working in private sector reported more gender equality about utilization of resources although young university staff faced more gender inequality as compared to senior staff.

*Table 4 Means and standard deviations and one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the effects of demographic variables on subscale of academic affairs practices*

Variables		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	Male (N=71)	3.48	0.81	5.18	.003
	Female (N= 96)	3.00	0.95		
Teaching position	Lecturer (N=121)	3.79	0.86	5.19	.002
	Assistant professor (N=31)	3.95	0.83		
	Associate professor (N=6)	4.16	0.43		
	Professor (N=3)	3.25	1.98		
Age	22-25 (N=29)	3.01	0.74	2.17	.04
	26-30 (N=36)	3.08	0.96		
	31-35 (N=36)	3.33	0.92		
	36-40 (N=47)	3.47	0.90		

Table 4 shows results that male respondents reflected more gender equality regarding academic affairs as compared to female staff. Senior staff showed more gender equality as compared to young staff.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations and one-way Analysis of variance(ANOVA) to examine the effects of demographic variables on subscale of job satisfaction practices

Variables		M	SD	t	p
Gender	Male (N=71)	3.04	1.05	2.36	.01
	Female (N= 96)	2.68	0.93		
Teaching position	Lecturer (N=121)	2.75	0.95	3.81	.01
	Assistant professor (N=31)	3.01	0.99		
	Associate professor (N=6)	4.00	0.74		
	Professor (N=3)	3.50	2.17		

Female faculty reported more gender inequality regarding job satisfaction although senior staff showed a greater gender equality perception.

Table 6 Contrasting attitudes of *Equality Positivists* and *Gender Concerneds*

Gender equality practice	Mean score/item (Standard deviations in brackets)				
	Equality Positivists (n=90)	Gender Concerneds			
		Type A (n=24)	Type B (n=15)	Type C (n=22)	Type D (n=19)
Decision making	3.78**H (0.63)	1.89**L (0.65)	2.23**L (0.65)	3.26 (0.49)	1.82**L (0.61)
Professional development	3.89**H (0.46)	1.99**L (0.60)	3.20 (0.60)	2.38**L (0.61)	2.75**L (0.59)
Utilization of resources	4.26**H (0.53)	2.77**L (0.68)	3.07**L (0.58)	3.34**L (0.57)	4.26**H (0.47)
Academic affairs	3.81**H (0.66)	1.96**L (0.53)	2.68**L (0.76)	2.98**L (0.38)	3.00 (0.57)
Job satisfaction	3.56**H (0.72)	1.72**L (0.56)	2.82 (0.57)	2.28**L (0.58)	2.13**L (0.60)

**\*\* All group means compared to the rest are sig. at p<1%, medium or large effect sizes**  
**L lower than the mean of all the other groups**  
**H higher than the mean of all the other groups**



## **Discussion**

The results of this study showed that gender discrimination is considered most important in the area of decision making. Gender differences identified *policy making issues* and *curriculum monitoring and evaluation* as major areas of perceived discrimination in decision making. This supports the earlier findings in Pakistan of (Quraishi & Kalim, 2008) and international surveys (Lund, 1998; Singh, 2008). Females lack the professional development opportunities and face gender parity when it comes to the availability and use of resources, females lack access to resources in higher education (Bond, 1996a).

### *The internal structure dynamic element*

Scores on the Equal Opportunities Questionnaire are essentially measures of the applicability of the internal structure dynamic of the female inequality model.

The analysis of the decision making responses points to this area as being particularly gender sensitive. Females register the sharpest inequality in policy formulation and curriculum evaluation. Promotion tends to lessen the dissatisfaction as post-level, like gender, is a large effect size contributor to the variation in scale scores. Professional Development is much more gender neutral, and any significant female differences have small effect sizes. Utilization of resources does not appear to show any gender discrimination at all.

These findings seem to be conclusive. There are significant differences in perceptions of gender equality that are attributable to the respondent's post-level. Those at the higher levels see less inequality. Those at lower levels, especially lecturers, see more. With a high proportion of females at the lecturer level, this can appear as a straight forward gender polarization of views, as happens with Professional Development, Academic Affairs and Job Satisfaction. Promoted females will have high Job Satisfaction scores because of their achievement in acquiring their positions.

### *The Personal psycho-social element*

The interviews of "promoted females" were unable to draw out specific masculine attributes needed for success as reported as pre-requisites from an earlier testing of the model (UNESCO, 2002). In Pakistan, it appears that able, highly motivated females can under certain circumstances and conditions rise to elevated positions. The role of State Prime Minister has been reached on two occasions, but as Niaz (2010) has meticulously explained, the political environment has to be favourable.

### *The Socio-culture centred element*

There is clear evidence from the interview responses that the socio-culture centred element is the driving force for gender linked behaviours in the workplace. The strength of a minority of male views of these well- educated respondents on the perception of females and their duties

within society gives an insight into the major problems some females could face in the internal dynamics of Pakistani universities and colleges.

*Types of respondent*

Equality Positivists tend to be in general agreement that the practices in higher education are gender neutral, and females have access without discrimination. Males (n=48) and females (n=42) are equally represented in this group, which includes all the professors and associate professors. There is a 18% representation from the private sector institutions.

A typical Equality Positivist (who see equal opportunities for both male and female) comment on interview denies gender discrimination in higher education:

Male and females have equal opportunities. Both have equal rights and are doing same jobs side by side. Females have respect in our society; they are respected in all aspects. I do not think they face problems. (Female)

Gender discrimination is recognized by 27 males and 53 females. There are significantly more females in the Gender Concerneds' (those who don't get good progress opportunities) cluster ( $p < 1\%$ , chi square, small effect size). Interviewee comments reflect the reality of a male centred-culture and the restrictions imposed on women:

My opinions and ideas are not encouraged at my work place. It does not mean they do not have credibility, in fact it is due to the jealousy factor. Males do not like to see females moving ahead of them. Males are more privileged in our society even when they are not as competent in some cases, but they are still favoured. (Female)

The full five cluster solution of Table 6, leaves the Equality Positivists untouched, but shows how the four groups reporting discriminatory practices have their own characteristic profiles. The group with lowest job satisfaction are Type A, who see gender inequality in decision making, academic affairs, professional development and even utilization of resources. Type A respondents (the *Dissidents*) are to be found primarily as lecturers (91%), in public sector institutions (96%), aged between 22 and 35 (82%) and female (88%). There is a comment which encapsulates the feelings of this group:

It is severe discrimination if you are not involving females in decision making. It will have a severely bad impact on them that you are neither giving them an authoritative position nor involving them in making decisions.

Type B faculty are drawn from across the age range, and are mostly lecturers (86%) in public sector institutions (96%) and 40% are male. Types Bs (the *Compliers*) are significantly more positive than the Dissidents on the equality scales of professional development, academic affairs and job satisfaction. Compliers appear to accept professional life as it is, although there is some perceived gender inequality in the areas of decision making and academic affairs. This observation suggests that this group is reconciled to the wider cultural situation:

Females face discrimination in higher institutions. It is a chain which starts from birth onwards. In some fields females cannot do work late at night (family responsibilities and culture), but it does not mean they are less competent. Females feel satisfaction from salary (and holding down a post) rather than taking part in decision making.

Type C faculty (the *Career Limited*) have significantly higher scores than Dissidents on all the measures. Career limited are mostly male (59%), experienced (65% over the age of 35), and lecturers or assistant professors in public sector institutions (91%). Respondents of this group are concerned about their own progress and others whose progress is restrained. Reflecting on the status of females in the profession, one member commented:

Females have their status in our society: they have respect and regard. But we are in a conflict, we are riding in two boats, we want to accept change and we do not want to leave our values as well. Females want to move forward but social restrictions tie them, so a conflict situation is arising.

Type D respondents (the *Diligent Workers*) are highly satisfied with access to teaching resources but appear to be left out of decision making. Responses to academic affairs and professional development opportunities are neutral, and with these teachers (74% female) drawn from across the age range, who are mostly lecturers (83%), job satisfaction tends to be negative. This group tends towards Compliers' behaviour, but see their tasks being frustrated by aspects of the gender structure dynamic and are less likely to accept this, as this comment illustrates:

Males can tease female colleagues on any issue. My example: I am performing a duty of deputy controller of examinations, I worked day and night, but I was not paid and all payment was given to controller of examination who visits very rarely. Because he is a male and I am a female: these are the problems females suffer.'

#### *Observations of 'promoted females'*

In an hypothesised gender discriminating environment, the comments of 'promoted females' in interview are pertinent:

Once she joins the profession then she intentionally tries to accept herself alongside males.

If females have controlled attitudes then they easily overcome their gender discrimination. The job is concerned with talent, competence and capabilities. If a female has these factors then she can survive well. Today, females are getting awareness from education and are competing well with males.

#### *Observations on the influence of culture*

The pervasive effect of culture on the workplace and the restrictions placed on females are difficulties that have to be overcome to get promotion:

A female cannot do work late at night due to the social set up, so due to this reason and a lack in social networking she cannot easily access opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

The female inequality model has been applied successfully in this research to account for discrimination amongst higher education faculty. A major finding is that it is possible, in the Pakistani context, to distinguish between different levels of perceived discrimination. The personalities of the respondents and their professional goals determine their classification. The group of essentially young female Dissident lecturers (14% of the sample) express a particular frustration. The Compliers accept the situation as it is and come to terms with it. The other two groups show a degree of acceptance like the Compliers, but Diligent Workers show frustration at the discrimination, while the more male representative group of "plateau" professionals, the Career Limiteds, sympathise with the pressures on the females. The major impact of gender discrimination is found in decision making. This supports the objectives of the establishment of the Fatima Jinnah Women University and a further six all-female universities more recently (HEC, 2012). If paths to decision making are opened up, as expected, this could answer many of the internal dynamic problems that females experience in co-educational institutions.

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