# Personal and Social Problems Faced by Women in Higher Education

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The Higher Education of women plays a significant role in building the human capital and the overall socio-cultural, economic development of a country to make it sustainable. The present study explored the problems faced by female students and faculty regarding higher education in Pakistan. Data were collected from 2188 students and teachers from government colleges and universities spread over four districts of Punjab by using 'Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education' that measured personal and social problems of female students and faculty related to higher education. Data were analyzed by using t-test. ANOVA and Multiple regression analysis to determine the impact of demographic variables (age, discipline, semester, nature of respondents and district) regarding women higher education. Results indicated that respondents with background of arts feel significantly more discrimination on socio-culture challenge. Moreover, respondents of first semester had significantly lower insecurity rating and college teachers appear to have higher socio-culture challenges. However, personal insecurity ratings were lowest in Lahore district. This study recommends that access to higher education is a right of every woman in Pakistan and is a moral and social duty to achieve a sustainable society.

*Keywords*: Personal insecurity, Socio-cultural change, Higher education, District, Faculty

Higher Education contributes a substantial role in the development of a country. It is associated with the personal, social, economic and cultural aspects of human being, and underpins the goal of a sustainable society. It provides opportunities for people to enjoy an enhanced "life of the mind", offering both social and radical benefits to society (Yasmeen, 2005, p11). Higher education is a pre-requisite of an open civil society based on merit. It helps in the understanding of societal norms; gives individuals self-reliance, and discourages discrimination based on gender, beliefs, religion and social class (Kramarae, 2000).

Female empowerment can be strengthen through higher education. Higher education assists females in two ways. It empowers qualified women to become leaders in society and it permits them to become role models for younger girls. It also helps women to choose domains of expertise, whether this is as decision makers through influence on policy issues related to social, economic, and cultural development, or by their participation in family and community life (Shaukat & Siddiquah, 2013).

Educated women have a greater sense of control over their lives and more power and control over resources within the family as compared to uneducated women. They get social recognition, which helps them to get insight of and have an awareness of what is undesirable and unfavourable about their current situation. The educated female can perceive a better situation and the possibility of attaining it. She can realize what is within her reach and what she should do to affect the improvement (Usha & Sharma, 2001). In this way, educated women become empowered and have increased status and autonomy. They can enjoy this empowerment at community or regional/national level as well as within the family/household (Friedmann, 1992; Zafar, 2004).

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Women suffer gender discrimination as a consequence of the prevailing socio-cultural climate in Pakistan (Sen, 2001) There is significant variety in the status of women across classes, regions, and the rural/urban divide due to uneven socio-economic development and the influence of tribal, feudal, religious and social formations on women's lives. However, the women's situation versus that of the men's is one of general subordination, determined by the forces of patriarchy across classes, regions, and the rural/urban divide. The country has generally a male dominating society, and commonly adopts a hostile attitude towards women. According to The World Bank (1999) Country Gender Profile of Pakistan, the status of women in Pakistan is the lowest in the world.

Gender inequality in Pakistani higher education is a consequence of persistent discrimination prevailing through the education system from an early age. Girls lag behind boys in the provision of education and in the access to schooling available (Tembon & Fort, 2008). There are a number of explanations for this gender-biased criterion of resource allocation.

The preference for sons is due to their leading and productive role in household life. Male members of the family are encouraged to get a good quality of education to compete for resources in the outside world. On the other hand, female family members are trained about domestic tasks and taught how to be good mothers and wives (Khan, 2007, Maqsood, & Raza, 2012). Parents do not prioritize education for girls due to low family household income. Khalid and Mukhtar (2002) reported the main reason for low participation of females in higher education is financial such as fee issues, textbooks and other materials. It is also expected that girls should perform their responsibilities in the home (Khalid & Mukhtar, 2002; Maqsood *et al.*, 2012).

At the more senior and higher levels of education, the problem of early marriages arise. In preparation for the early marriage, parents are burdened by the monetary pressure for managing a dowry, which in its turn can drive the need for income earning from the males in the family and preferential investment in male education (Maqsood, et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2010).

If educational institutions are not available nearby, travelling for girls becomes a major obstacle. Travel is seen as a threat to personal security. This is a particularly strong factor in deterring girls from entering higher education as institutions are likely to be very distant and even if boarding facilities are available there are possible incidents of sexual harassment and sexual abuse to consider (Sathar & Haque, 2000; World Bank, 2007; UNESCO, 2010).

In recent decades in Pakistan, it has been observed that a growing proportion of girls is getting education at higher levels despite cultural barriers. This is essentially an urban phenomenon and a reflection of societal shift. In some cases, girls even outnumber boys at the higher educational level. This trend seems to be good for development of Pakistani society because a significant proportion of population is coming out and taking part in academic activities (Maqsood *et al.*, 2012). These authors point out that once an initial break-through occurs in a family, other girls find it easier to follow. The limitations imposed by socio-cultural norms are also being challenged in urban areas by the growth in new universities, which lessens the travelling problems.

At present, female students and teachers have to face many problems that hamper their potential and adversely affect their personal, psychological and professional development. The current study highlights the problems faced by women in higher education. It also suggests how to overcome these problems and to minimize the phenomenon of the Glass Ceiling Effect in our society. The study reveals the great impact on the socio-cultural norms on the development of the country, and will be helpful in suggesting guidelines to stakeholders and policy makers when addressing the problems of females in higher education institutions. The study emphasizes the importance of female education, and a reassessment of the socio-cultural direction of the country to improve female empowerment. The main aim of the study is to determine the problems faced by female students and faculty regarding higher education.

### Hypotheses

1. There is likely to be no significant difference in problems faced by women with Arts and Science disciplines regarding higher education as measured by Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education

- There is likely to be no significant difference in problems faced by women enrolled in first and other semesters regarding higher education as measured by Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education
- 3. There is likely to be no significant difference in problems faced by female students (college and university) and faculty (college and university teachers) regarding higher education as measured by Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education
- 4. There is likely to be no significant difference in problems faced by female students and faculty belongs to four districts (Lahore, Okara, Multan, and Rawalpindi) regarding higher education as measured by Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education
- 5. Independent variable (personal and social problems regarding higher education as measured by *Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education*) likely to be affected by the in dependent variables (nature of respondents, age, district, discipline, semester).

#### Method

### Sample

Respondents were taken from four districts of the Punjab, Lahore (n= 776), Okara (n= 384), Multan (n= 456) and Rawalpindi (n= 572). Participants were taken from each one of the college and university of the four districts. They were as follows: college students (n= 485), university students (n= 1533), college teachers (n=94) and university teachers (n= 76) enrolled in first (n= 62) to other (n=1591) semesters. All participants were females (n=2188). The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 60, although the majority belonged to the younger group of 20 to 30 years (n= 1892). The majority held an educational background with Arts (n= 1420) and the rest had science (n=768). Table 1 presents demographic information.

**Table 1**Summary of Demographic variables

Variables		N	%
Nature of respondents	College student	485	22.2
	University student	1533	70.1
	College teacher	94	4.3
	University teacher	76	3.5
Age	20 to 30	1892	86.5
	31 to 40	72	3.3
	41 to 50	38	1.7
	51 to 60	16	.7
	Missing	170	7.8
District	Lahore	776	35.5
	Okara	384	17.6
	Multan	456	20.8
	Rawalpindi	572	26.1
Subject	Arts	1420	65%
-	Science	768	35%
Semester	First	62	3.8
	Other	1591	72.7
	Missing	535	24.5

#### Measures

A research survey based on questionnaire was used to collect data. It comprised two parts, the first part was related to demographic information e.g. district, nature of respondents, age, semester, discipline, and the second section employed a scale of personal and social factors encountered in higher education (Scale for Women's Problems in Higher Education, SWPHE).

Each item required a five point Likert-type response, ranging from strongly agree (1), agree (2), undecided (3) disagree (4) to strongly disagree (5). Initially, seventeen items were constructed to measure the personal and social problems of women regarding higher education, after the procedures of factor analysis, twelve items were finally selected. Principal components factorisation followed by an oblique rotation of the factor axes to allow for the likely correlation of the attitudinal factors (Norusis, 1990). The complexity of the factors emerging suggested that the items with major loadings be extracted and

subjected to a psychological uni-dimensional check for validity (Gardner, 1995) and Cronbach Alpha maximisation for reliability (Youngman, 1979; Gardner, 1996). Table 2 shows the two scales defined by their respective major items. First factor "Personal Insecurity" explained 42.0% variance (Unidimensional nature) it reported 0.70 Cronbach Alpha reliability and Second Factor "Socio-Cultural Challenge" explained 41.0% variance (Unidimensional nature) and 0.73 Alpha was calculated respectively that suggested their adequate reliabilities for the sample (Youngman, 1979).

**Table 2**Factor loading for the items selected for SCT from Principal component factor analysis (N=2188)

	Factor loading for the items selected for SCT from Principal component factor analysis (N=2188)							
Item	tatements	F1	F2	M	SD			
9	emales are not encouraged to join higher education because parent lo not feel the environment of higher education secured and protective for their daughters	s 0.628		3.63	1.18	0.42		
10	Co-education restricts females higher education	0.478		3.71	1.10	0.41		
14	emales do not get higher education because they, themselves , do not feel secure and safe while going to institutions alone	0.677		3.25	1.24	0.46		
15	emales do not get higher education due to unavailability of proper ransportation	0.717		3.71	1.06	0.46		
16	emales who do not get safe boarding facility should not enroll in a ligher education institution	0.697		3.55	1.05	0.41		
17	emales do not get higher education because their parents assume hey can lose their character due to bad company	0.576		3.22	1.27	0.44		
1	'reference given to sons leads towards the low participation of emales in higher education		0.547	3.35	1.28	0.40		
4	'arents are hesitant to educate females because they are less likely t nake use of their education in future	C	0.571	3.00	1.25	0.50		
5	emales are not supported in getting higher education because it will incourage them to demand their social (talking decisions on	I	0.669	3.34	1.22	0.48		
6	mportant events) and legal (property)rights emales are not encouraged to get higher education because ndividuals are reluctant to change their social structure (females, empowerment)		0.658	3.36	1.15	0.45		
7	'arents do not feel comfortable in letting their daughters join higher ducation institutions because they will then not be submissive in ccepting their parents \ families		0.659	3.05	1.24	0.51		
13	'revalence of discriminations between daughters and sons creates indrance in females higher education		0.651	3.37	1.15	0.41		
	igen value	39	81					
	6 variance	0.1%	2.0%					

Note: F1 (personal Insecurity, items= 6), F2 (Soci0-Cultural Change items=6),

### Procedure

Data were collected from four districts of Punjab, namely Okara, Multan, Rawalpindi and Lahore. Districts were selected purposively from southern, central and northern Punjab. Districts were selected where at least one university was available so that students and teachers could be selected both

from college and university. Random sampling was used to select the colleges and universities within the selected districts. Prior permission was sought for data collection from the heads of all the chosen institutions. Participants were then selected randomly from each year stratum of the chosen college and university. Researchers described the nature of survey to the participating students and faculty before the data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents after taking their consent to participate in the survey. Approximately 30 minutes were given to the participants to fill up the questionnaire.

#### Results

Independent sample t-test was used to determine the mean score difference between the participants of Arts and Science disciplines and between the participants of first semester and other semesters on personal insecurity and socio-cultural change factors.

**Table 3**t-test for Arts and Science comparison related to the Personal in-security and Socio-culture change mean scores

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Variable	М	(SD)	t	df	р	Effect size
Personal insecurity						
Discipline						
Arts	3.54	(0.73)	2.13*	2181	.03	0.04 n
Science	3.47	(0.73)				
Socio-culture challenge						
Arts	3.31	(0.76)	5.13***	2181	.00	0.22 s
Science	3.13	(0.83)				

<sup>\*\*</sup>p<1%, \*p<5%, s small effect size, n negligible effect size

Table 3 shows that Arts respondents have significantly higher scores on socio-culture challenge. The difference on personal insecurity has a negligible effect size.

**Table 4**t-test for First and Other semesters comparison related to the Personal in-security and Socio-culture.

t-test for First and Other seriles	ters compa	i isoli Telate	u to the reisona	al ill-security	and 30clo-	cuiture.
Variable	М	(SD)	t	df	p	Effect size
Semester						
Personal insecurity						
First	3.13	(0.85)	4.10***	1651	.001	0.54 m
Other	3.52	(0.73)				
Socio-culture challenge						
First	3.10	(0.69)	1 24	1651	.28	
			1.24			
Other	3.23	(0.82)				

<sup>\*\*</sup>p<1%, m, medium effect size

First semester respondents have significantly lower 'insecurity' ratings (Table 3) (p<1%, medium effect size).

**Table 5**Analysis of Variance for nature of respondents significantly related to the personal insecurity and *Socio-culture change mean scores* 

Variables		Respo	ndents		F p	)	$\eta^2$
	College student <i>M (SD)</i>	University student <i>M (SD)</i>	College teacher <i>M (SD)</i>	University teacher <i>M (SD)</i>			•
Personal	3.58 (0.75)	3.50 (0.72)	3.51 (0.68	3.36 (0.73)	2.69*	.03	0.001

insecurity							
Socio-cultura	3.30 (0.72)	3.22 (0.81)	3.45 (0.79)	3.22 (0.84)	3.76*	.01	0.05
change					3.70	.01	

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>p<0.000, \*p<0.05, negligible effect size

Analysis of variance was conducted with students (college and University) and faculty (college and University) problems such as personal insecurity and socio-cultural change regarding higher education as dependent variables. Post-hoc analysis using Scheffe's test was used to determine significant sub group differences where a variable had more than two classifications. Scheffe's test is suggested for post-hoc analysis when the number of participants in subgroups is unequal. It also provides more conservative estimates for subgroup differences. For each variable that was found to have a substantial relationship with participants' attitudes, eta-squared values ( $\eta$ 2) were also calculated to determine the effect sizes (see Table 4, 5). College teachers appear to have higher socio-culture ratings (p<1%), the difference has a negligible effect size (Table 4). When personal insecurity scores are broken down by respondent group (Table 4), College students appear to give higher ratings (p<1%), but the difference has a negligible effect size

**Table 6**Analysis of Variance for districts significantly related to the personal insecurity *Socio-culture change mean scores* 

Variables				D	istric	ts			F		p		$\eta^2$
	Lah	ore	Oka	ra	Mul	tan	Rav	walpindi					
	Μ	(SD)	Μ	(SD)	Μ	(SD)	Μ	(SD)					
Personal insecurity	3.39	9 (0.75)	3	.65 (0.62)	3	.64 (0.72)		3.47 (0.74)		17.65***		.001	0.024
Socio-cultural change	3	.32 (0.77	3	.00 (0.80)	3.	.19 (0.83)		3.35 (0.74)		3.76*		.01	0.005

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>p<0.000, \*p<0.05, small effect size

Socio-culture ratings are lowest in Okara district (Table 5) (p<1%, small effect size). Personal insecurity ratings are lowest in Lahore district (Table 5) (p<1%, small effect size).

**Table 7**Multiple regression analyses predicting *socio- cultural challenge* scores from demographic variables

Variables	Unstandardised coefficient	SE	$R^2$	F
(Constant)	3.099 **	.056		19.57***
Okara district (scores '1')	333 **	.046	2.1	
Arts respondent (scores '1')	.180 **	.036	1.4	
Multan district (scores '1')	148 **	.043	0.6	
Age (scores '1' to '4')	.105 **	.042	0.2	
College student (scores '1')	.097 *	.048	0.1	

Multiple r = 0.215, medium effect size, N = 2018

Multiple linear regressions shows the relative importance of the breakdown variables in predicting the two major scale scores and takes into account the contributions of all significant variables see (table 6,7). From Table 6, socio-cultural challenge scores are high for Arts respondents and College students, but being in Okara or Multan reduces the effect. Older respondents tend to get higher scores. The 'typical' respondent's score is calculated from:

3.099 - 0.333 Okara + 0.180 Arts respondent - 0.148 Multan + 0.105 Age + 0.097 College student

Table 8

Multiple regression analyses predicting *Personal insecurity* scores from demographic Variables

iviultiple regression analyses predicting Pers	sonal insecurity sco	res from demo	grapnic varia	abies
Variables	Unstandardised	SE	$R^2$	F

	coefficient			
(Constant)	3.635 **	.026		1.193***
Lahore district (scores '1')	262 **	.036	1.8	
College student (scores '1')	.161 **	.044	0.7	
Semester 1 (scores '1')	379 **	.092	0.7	
Rawalpindi district (scores '1')	165 **	.043	0.7	

Multiple r = 0.201, medium effect size N = 2018

From Table 8, *personal insecurity* scores are increased for College students, but being in Semester 1 and Lahore or Rawalpindi reduces the effect. The 'typical' respondent's score is calculated from: 3.635 - 0.262 Lahore + 0.161 College student - 0.379 Semester 1 - 0.165 Rawalpindi

#### Discussion

The present research study indicated problems faced by female students and faculty regarding higher education in four districts of Punjab. The study highlights the social and personal hurdles in the way of female education, and a re-assessment of the socio-cultural direction of the country to improve female empowerment (Yasmeen, 2005) as educated females have a significant role in the growth of a society (Friedmann, 1992; Usha & Sharma, 2001). Initially, it was found that the socio-cultural challenge is less for science students than for arts, which indicates that families are more likely to resist conservative, cultural pressures if education is sought for females in a high-value, modern, technological discipline that promises prestige and economic and societal advancement. Another reason could be that girls in the Pakistani culture devote most of their time at home because they are less socialized than boys, and they are likely to be involved in domestic chores (Halai, Rizvi, Rodrigues, 2007). One of the possible reason towards females' lower socio-cultural challenge scores may be due to their parents' requirement to learn domestic tasks for preparation of future life, as their parents assume that male prime responsibility to run house and lead the family (Shaukat & Siddiquah, 2014).

Irrespective of students' enrollment in semester 1 to others, semester 1 respondents perceived less personal insecurity and socio-cultural change as compared to students enrolled in other semesters. It may be assumed that they have lack of experience in higher education of how the discriminatory system actually applies. The higher scores for personal insecurity once the first semester is over, suggest that the problems and reality of transportation and college/university life take some time to become apparent (Sathar & Haque, 2000). Realistic expectations proceed with the progression of higher studies this reason may be behind the less personal and social problems of semester 1 students. This appreciation is learned when the students enter the higher semesters (Shaukat & Siddiquah, 2013).

Regardless of the nature of respondents, college students perceived higher levels of discrimination on socio-cultural change than do the other groups. College students were younger than the other groups and closer to family instilled values. College lecturers tend to be less well educated than university staff and hence to be more conservative. College students are therefore in an environment that can be more repressive than that of the universities. University is at a further level of higher studies and it is assumed that its environment is advanced for females, so it could be a campus environment constraint for parents, which caused higher level of socio-cultural discrimination of college students and faculty (Allen & Smith, 2008).

In this research study, socio-cultural challenge is significantly weaker in Okara district, suggesting that cultural pressure might be less. However, from the data collected there are no demographic and socio-cultural reasons why this might be so. Personal insecurity ratings are less in Lahore district possibly because of the better transportation and boarding facilities available in this essentially urban conurbation. Lahore is the most advanced and developed district and its residents have a more encouraging attitude towards females' higher education than elsewhere (Bajwa, et al., 2007).

Although simple univariate breakdowns pointed out important results, for instance socio-cultural challenge does not appear age dependent, when muliple linear regression takes into account the simultaneous effect of other survey variables; there is a weak age effect. Older respondents, primarily the teaching staff in this survey, see more discriminating, socio-cultural effects presumably because perceptions of inequality have become more substantiated as the years have gone by. The multiple

regression analysis regarding personal insecurity shows that district has the strongest influence of the breakdown variables tested, most notably that of Lahore membership (Bajwa et al., 2007), which lowers scores and indicates less perceived discrimination.

#### **Limitations and Suggestions**

This research study proposes suggestions to overcome the problems faced by women regarding higher education and to minimize the phenomenon of Glass Ceiling Effect in our society. This study certainly makes a great impact upon the socio-cultural development of the country. This study is helpful to suggest guidelines to stakeholders and policy makers to address and highlight this issue by raising awareness of female higher education in educational institutions. This study highlights the importance of female education and their social recognition in the society. The results of the study are a milestone to take initiatives to make females empowered.

It is hoped this research is made available to policy makers such as internal decision makers and other stakeholders (e.g., faculty, operational personnel, students) and external stakeholders (e.g., parents, alumni, local and regional communities, future employers, funders of education and research, and accreditation organizations) as well as the Higher Education Commission. Access to higher education is a right of every female in Pakistan and is a moral and social duty to achieve a sustainable society.

A conservative mindset hinders female emancipation. The socio-culture dynamic of Pakistan is slow moving and essential, universal, educational improvement is going to take time. Taking into account the prevailing norms of society, it is recommended that the expansion of female higher education take place in all-female institutions rather than co-educational ones. This will satisfy many families who are resistant to the social structures of co-education, yet will provide an increased pool of highly educated females who in the longer term will moderate the forces of conservatism. The present system of co-educational institutions would remain, of course, for a flexible solution.

Some limitations have been noticed in this research study. This study was conducted on only four districts of Punjab so generalizability of results is limited; it is recommended that future research studies should be conducted with miscellaneous sample (other districts of Punjab) to increase the credibility of the results of the study. The sample selected from female students and faculty only may not represent the holistic views of males, so future research is needed to empirically investigate the male students and faculty views regarding problems faced by females.

This study, in highlighting the problems faced by women in higher education, confirms that even those females that do access the system broadly display all the perceptions of discrimination referred to in the earlier Literature Review of this paper. What the research has not done, nor did it set out to do, is to relate those females who have continued with higher education with all those that did not do so due to extreme family pressure and society's, patriarchal, limited view of the female role.

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