

Published:
August 7, 2025

Exploring the Perceptions of University Teachers Regarding Female Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of female education in the verbal discourse of university teachers in Pakistan. The perceptions of female education in verbal discourses of teachers remain less explored. The female literacy rate in Pakistan is only 49.6%. So, this research addresses the pressing need to understand how educators, as influential societal figures, conceptualize and communicate about female education. Thereby, qualitative method is used, including in-depth interviews, the study explores the evaluative language employed by university instructors and reveals underlying attitudes, judgments, and ideologies embedded in their discourse. The findings highlight prevalent use of appraisal tools such as affect, judgment, appreciation, graduation, and engagement, which reflect both explicit and implicit beliefs about women's roles and educational access.

Keywords: Female Education, University Teachers, Appraisal Theory

Introduction

The representation of female education has long been a subject of academic interest, reflecting broader social attitudes and cultural norms. Within the

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university setting, teachers' verbal discourse is pivotal in shaping perceptions and influencing students' educational experiences. Verbal discourse provides rich insight into how gender dynamics and educational aspirations intersect, revealing both explicit and implicit attitudes towards female education. This study aims to explore how university teachers represent female education in their verbal discourse, considering the subtle ways language can sustain, challenge or expose the hidden ideologies. Teachers, as influential figures within academia, wield significant power through their words, both in formal lectures and in informal interactions. By analyzing this discourse, the narratives that shape the academic environment for women can be uncovered and potential barriers or enablers to equitable education be identified. In Pakistan the rate of female education is 49.6 % which is even not half of the total population. That means less than half of the society segment are not educated (*UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)*, September 30, 2024). This depravation is a sign of deep held gender biases, cultural practices, and structural problems that ensure women do not get an equal opportunity for quality education. Realizing how female education is talked about and constructed in scholar text is thus important in dealing with these problems since verbal discourse constructs individual beliefs, informs policy and captures social agenda as an important tool to lead the public and change the perception of future generations. The ways that they talk about female education—how they reason, classify, and categorize it—can either reproduce existing asymmetry or not. From the teacher's accounts, audiences receive not only their philosophies but cultural and organizational paradigms governing female education as well. Analyzing this discourse yields invaluable information regarding the causes subsequently, what this discourse reveals has implications on socio-cultural

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norms, economic challenges, and institutional practices that depict societies with a low education rate for many societies with low Female Education enrollment can be attributed to university teachers as key players in the failure to advance Female Education. University teachers are part of the dispensers of knowledge and opinion shapes in society hence their roles in shaping ideas on education. Subtle and manifesting, their language and stories contain attitudes towards gender roles in academia and society. Accounting for analysis into their language gives insights into the social construct of the society during their time regarding female education. It also illustrates how the attitudes described here would help or not help to reach the goal of gender equality in education. The purpose of this research is to investigate how the perception of the female education is constructed in the verbal report of university teachers. It aims to find out major concerns, beliefs and values as well as possible prejudices in their stories. By studying these representations, this research also makes academic and pedagogical contributions to debates on gender and education but at the same time provides ideas on how it is possible to modify the discourse to promote a better environment for female learners in universities.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how university instructors see female education, looking at the variables that influence their opinions as well as any possible ramifications for educational practices and regulations. By learning more about their viewpoints, this study aims to support further initiatives to increase female enrollment in higher education and establish a more equal learning environment.

Research Gap

The representation of female education in verbal discourses of teachers remains

less explored.

Statement of the Problem

Female literacy rate in Pakistan, does not reach the mark of 50% which indicates that more than half of the total population of the society remains uneducated. All the different segments of society need to play a role in improving this situation. Teachers make a very integral part of society that can impart positive change regarding female education in the societal network. Despite that, the representation of female education in the verbal discourse of teachers remains less explored. Thereby this research aims to explore the representation of female education in the verbal discourse of university teachers.

Research Objectives

- To explore the different appraisal tools used by the university teachers to represent female education.
- To explore the hidden ideologies visible in the university teachers, verbal discourse regarding female education using appraisal tools.

Research Questions

- What are the different appraisal tools visible in the university teachers' discourse to represent female education?
- What hidden ideologies are reflected in the university teachers' discourse regarding female education?

Purpose of Study/Justification/Significance of the Research

The findings of the study will raise awareness with regards to the obstacles and enablers that are consciously or unconsciously subtle in teachers' discourses. Considering these findings, corrective measures can be taken for changing the problematic parts of hidden ideologies through seminars, workshops, media talk

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shows, awareness campaigns etc. The study will also expand and contribute to the body of knowledge of education and gender studies.

Literature Review

This study focused on female education plays a vital role in the achievement of society. As significant players in the educational system, university teachers have a significant impact on educational policies and attitudes regarding female students. This review of the literature examines the research that has been done on university teachers' opinions of women's education, looking at topics such teaching methods, institutional support, gender stereotypes, and sociocultural influences. Numerous research shows that innate gender biases shape universities teachers' opinions of female education. Many teachers unintentionally perpetuate traditional gender norms through their teaching strategies and relationships with students, claims Morley (2010). According to research by Bhopal (2015), female students frequently experience subtle forms of discrimination, such as fewer opportunities for academic support and lower expectations from universities. Although many university teachers advocate for gender equality, deeply rooted cultural conventions can occasionally impede female students' access to equal chances, based to a 2013 study by Bailey and Holmarsdottir. This shows up as a disincentive to pursue leadership positions in academia and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) industries.

University teachers' opinions about female education are greatly influenced by institutional policies. Research shows that faculty members at university with robust gender-inclusive policies are more likely to promote the academic progress of female students. To reduce biases and foster fair learning environments, UNESCO's 2019 report highlights the significance of gender-sensitive training for

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university faculty.

Furthermore, Leathwood and Read's (2009) study emphasizes how female teachers contribute to the development of favorable opinions. A more inclusive learning environment is produced by universities with a larger percentage of female teachers, which frequently express more progressive views regarding female education.

University instructors' opinions on female education are greatly influenced by the sociocultural setting. According to Stromquist (2007), faculty attitudes in conservative nations are influenced by traditional gender roles, which frequently result in the idea that female students should put their family obligations ahead of their academic and professional goals. Faculty members in more progressive nations, on the other hand, typically encourage female students to pursue leadership positions and further study.

Male and female faculty members have differing levels of gender awareness, according to studies by Subrahmanian (2005) and Unterhalter (2012). Female educators are more likely to support gender parity in academic contexts. To combat discriminatory attitudes, this research highlights the necessity of cultural changes within institutions.

The educational experiences of female students are also influenced by the pedagogical approaches taken by university Interactive and student-centered teaching strategies encourage better female participation and engagement, according to research by Kim and Sax (2011). Female students benefit from a more inclusive educational experience when university faculty members actively include gender perspectives into their curricula.

Furthermore, research by Acker (1994) and David (2016) shows that university

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teachers are mentoring and role modeling are essential in motivating female students to continue higher education and research. Mentoring faculty members help dispel gender stereotypes and give female students the assistance they need to thrive academically.

The perceptions of university teachers regarding female education are influenced by multiple factors, including gender biases, institutional policies, socio-cultural norms, and teaching practices. While progress has been made in fostering gender equity in higher education, persistent challenges remain. Future research should focus on developing strategies to enhance university teachers' awareness of gender biases and to promote policies that ensure equal educational opportunities for female students. Implementing faculty training programs, increasing female representation in academia, and fostering gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches can significantly improve perceptions and outcomes in female education.

Methodology:

- **Population:** University of Pakistan
- **Sample:** 2 faculty members from university teachers of NUML University Islamabad
- The study will be qualitative in nature. Semi structured individual interviews will be conducted for the study.

Analytical Framework:

The appraisal model by Martin and White (2005) will be used for data analysis.

Theoretical Framework:

The current research utilizes the appraisal theory given by Richard Lazarus (1984). This theory suggests that emotions are determined by the way an

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individual evaluates or appraises a particular situation. Lazarus emphasized the role of cognitive processes in emotional experiences asserting that emotions arise from an individual's interpretation of their environment rather than from the environment itself. It is further categorized into two types of primary appraisal and secondary appraisal.

Primary Appraisal

In the stage of primary appraisal, an individual tends to ask questions like, “What does this stressor and/ or situation mean?”, and “How can it influence me?” According to psychologists, the three typical answers to these questions are:

1. "This is not important"
2. "This is good"
3. "This is stressful"

Since you don't have any plans to go anywhere today, you might believe that heavy rain is unimportant. Since classes are stopped, you might also argue that heavy rain is a positive thing because it means you don't have to get up early to go to school. Or, since you have planned a get-together with your pals, you may perceive the intense rain as stressful.

Classifying the stressor or scenario as a threat, challenge, or harm-loss is the second step in the primary cognitive appraisal process, which comes after responding to these two questions. You perceive the stressor as something that will affect you in the future, like failing tests or losing your job, when you perceive it as a threat.

Secondary Appraisal

The secondary appraisal takes place concurrently with the first appraisal, in contrast to other theories where the steps often occur one after the other. In fact,

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secondary appraisals can occasionally lead to main appraisals. The emotions associated with managing the stressor or the stress it causes are included in secondary assessments. Positive secondary evaluation is demonstrated by using phrases like "I can do it if I do my best," "I will try whether my chances of success are high or not," and "If this way fails, I can always try another method." Statements such as "I can't do it; I know I will fail," "I won't do it because no one believes I can," and "I won't try because my chances are low" stand in contrast to these.

Analysis:

Interview 1:

From the interview, the interviewee highlights the need for women to have education, but the interviewee also depicts discomfort when talking about the tough and many barriers women encounter on their quest for education. The emotions of the interviewee can be traced in the phrases such as 'women are still exposed to a number of hurdles' and 'these barriers bring about exclusion of women and are detrimental to the advancement of society in its entirety'. This assures the more affective tone of the interviewee's response, stressing on the severity of the problem. The interviewer does not hesitate in making a **judgment** on gender inequality in education, especially in areas such as International Relations whereby the interviewee tends to agree with the statement that few women than men hinder diverse point of views and contributions to the subject, thus categorizing inequality as a negative in the discipline. It also applies to the areas of early marriage and other domestic chores, which are perceived by the society as hampering the ability of women to attend school. The interviewee also voices a positive **appreciation** toward education function in dealing with the

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questions of social justice asserting that ‘education for women is, without a doubt, one of the most effective methods in fighting social injustice.’ This contrasts with a beginning appreciation of this truth that education in and by itself could not suffice. The interviewee also points out that the structure itself, part of which is racist laws, economic practices, and cultural prejudice also has to be levelled, thereby underscored a fair assessment of education’s prospects. The graduation tool is apparent in the utterances made by the interviewee as in “education is the gateway to success” which is the epitome of education and the notion “there are still existing inequalities” which amplifies the very difficulties faced by the community. In addition, the interviewee employs what can be called **heteroglossia**: she addresses both the global discourse proclaiming education as a right and local concerning the local values and beliefs that hinder women’s rights to education, the interviewee demonstrates that she realizes that different countries have their peculiarities. In this way, the interviewee discusses the issue in its entirety and says that one has to look beyond enrollment rates to find a solution to the problem.

About the first question, several appraisal instruments can be identified in the discourses of university teachers on female education. The appraisal tools which are identified in the interview from university teachers at NUML University Islamabad are judgment, heteroglossia, appreciation, and graduation. The teachers exercise reason to analyze the hurdles that women experience in their bid to acquire education and include such barriers as cultural attitudes, financial position and social expectations as negative. For example, the **judgment** that practices like early marriage and domestic duties hinder women from attending school implies that these cultures are considered as unfavorable and negative in impacting the

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women's educational opportunities. Also, the poem demonstrates the recognition of women's rights and social justice with such statements as 'education freedom the catalyst and the key to unlock one's chances and potential. There are references to graduation also in form of such phase as 'undoubtedly one of the most important factors' which enhances the importance of education. The affect tool is prominent in the emotion-related term employed when articulating the topic under discussion concerning the low representation of women in academic disciplines such as International Relations.

Apart from the mentioned **judgment**, appreciation, graduation, and affective tools, the university teachers also engage their students in **heteroglossia** where there is a combine views on female education. The teachers are not only themselves, but they bring societies and even global different ideas into their class. For instance, while they disparage cultural values such as early marriage and domestic work responsibilities, they do this within the context of citing other cultures and following the international tendencies and women's rights to education discourses. This reveals an understanding of the way students in the selected communities construct their customary experiences in relation to education at the global perspective that calls for equitable education to learners. Through incorporation of external views in their language, they adopt complex understandings of the issue establishing it is not only a localized issue but influenced by the international and social and cultural world.

In addition, the teachers' discourse also applies the grounding method of modalization so as to show the level of the certainty of the possibility of the educational reforms. Using positive words such as 'without a doubt' gives the teachers' argumentative comments a high level of confident perspective about

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education relating to Women's rights. The teachers understand that the issue may not necessarily be quickly manageable because through the education only, the deeply rooted societal issues cannot be fully eliminated. Such incorporation of the modalization acknowledges the fact that education alone is not the panacea to problems and that other changes are required in legal systems, perception of the society, and policies of economy. In this way, while explaining the problem, the teachers stress the fact that the problem of women's education cannot be isolated and have to be linked to the issue of social justice and gender equality.

These other two modes of appraisal; the use of **heteroglossia** and modalization reveal that the teachers have a coherent outlook towards female education and a recognition of the global realities as well as challenges that exist towards fulfilling the messages of gender equity. It goes a step further in their reasoning by showing that the solution to the problems still inhibiting women's education is not simply improvements in education but with changes in social systems.

Responding to research question no 2, hidden ideology that was depicted in university teachers' discourse about the female education includes is conservative ideology. In this case, the discourse adopted an anti-patriarchal perspective through emphasizing on how cultural practices and cultures of society put barriers on women on their access to education as presenting a hindrance to development. An important aspect of this proposal is recognizing a failure of education as the solution as it denies the main problem existing at a structural level. This is an ideology that conflicts with the conventional aspects of society that equate women to subordinates and educational reforms as a single avenue for change. The teachers also acknowledge other factors that hinder education of the female children in the society; these include cultural barrier and stereotyping. This cation

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takes the art of questioning the conventional norms of male domination in the education as well as in rest of the society. For example, by noting early marriage and domesticity as some of the concerns, it is also evident that social traditions define the level of education that a woman attains. This is so because the norms the discourse denies do not just hinder individual female subject development and overall female subjectivity but also the society's progress as a whole owing to the prohibition of equal opportunities in self-realization in spheres such as academia or the job market.

Also, realization that literacy is not sufficient to overcome inequality in society contributes to the knowledge of systems in this society. Insofar as concerns gender relations, the above idealism– about gender relations– retorts that it is erroneous to posit that education has the capacity to introduce the change, which will enhance women status. Therefore, the teachers stressed the importance of moving past the ideas of cynical acceptance and accepting the fact which requires social, legal, and economic shift to eliminate patriarchy. This presupposes the vision in which gender and cultural profiling of educational difficulties accrue, and gender injustice cannot be considered as an isolated issue of education. The discussion does not only employ a call for a change of mind or change of laws but rather works towards changing the whole society to eliminate systems that hinder the educations of women as well as locking them out of executing certain activities in the society. Hence, the idea represented by the teachers is in line with the philosophy that postulates the social change along with the educational change supporting the idea that all the endeavors to change and eliminate the inequalities between males and females cannot be achieved by focusing on the education only, but it is necessary to address the change on all fronts.

Interview 2:

Responding to research question no 1, several appraisal instruments can be identified in the discourses of university teachers on female education. The appraisal tools which are identified in the interview from university teachers at NUML University Islamabad are judgment, heteroglossia, appreciation, graduation, and affect. From the responses that have been given in the interview, negative **judgments** can be inferred regarding the hurdles that women encounter when it comes to education in society especially in the developing world. Such words as ‘enormous challenges’, girls are supposed to remain at home doing housework’ make such cultural and societal practices unfair and have negative effects. The interviewee also pointed out that, even to date there are many cultures that want women to be at home rather than going to school. This **judgment** clearly raises gender bias that still hinders women’s chances and opportunities to gain an education.

From the manner the interviewee expresses herself, it is evident that she is deeply worried with the current situation in as much as women are concerned especially in their quest to attain education. Phrases like ‘the journey is Too Danger’ and ‘poverty hinder families from sending their girls to school’ show frustration and concern for the challenges which girl experience in an attempt to go to school. The emotional mode is also positive and affirmative when the interviewee referring to the opportunities that education give change the lives of women. The phrase ‘education is absolutely transformative’ depicts a positive attitude showing that education can transform a person as well as provide an opportunity to earn for a livelihood. This mixture of positive and negative emotions can be considered stressful yet creative, as they show how important and challenging education is.

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The interviewee especially shows a high level of appreciation of education in eradicating gender-based discrimination. They term education as revolutionary and game-changer since it plays a central role in enhancing the status of women and their welfare. This appreciation is taken further when the interviewee is expounding on the domino effect that education brings within families and society at large. This is because the statement “educated women are more likely to ensure their children get an education as well” generalize positive outcomes of women education for the society in the next generation and the positive cycle produced in the society.

Regarding the studied material, the interviewee utilizes graduation to emphasize both, the negative experiences women have had when it comes to education and the power education possesses in altering lives. For instance, the enhancement of the term ‘huge barriers’ heightens the audience’s impression that the barriers to education among women are large and challenging. respectively, the phrase ‘long way to go’ also contributes to the general understanding of a slow and enduring task at reaching the goal of equal education for women and males. However, the interviewee also enriches the study by elaborating on the effects of education arguing that it ‘switches up’ the situation which may be interpreted as the change that education brings is one of great magnitude. These amplified expressions witness to the necessary importance of education within the context of such challenges as well as the size of such challenges.

In the case of **heteroglossia**, the interviewee provides both local and global outlook to the issue of women education. Identifying various cultural and safety issues affecting female education include poverty, cultural restraints, and dangers of kidnapped and forced marriage as experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa, South

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Asia, and the Middle East. At the same time, they actively use international organizations such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Malala Fund to show that the problem of women's education is not only a local issue, but he is also a worldwide problem. Thus, the employment of the concept of **heteroglossia** serves to situate the problem of women education not just within a certain context but at the global level that demands the application of variety of discourses. **Graduation** increases the level of restrictions and at the same time underlines the role of knowledge, while **heteroglossia** expands the local and global contextual and deepens the tenor of the discussions.

Responding to research question no 2, the political factors imposed on female education in the speech of university teachers are mainly related to patriarchy and economic determinism. It opposes the stereotypical male performativity that oppresses females, especially by regarding the female gender as essentially assigned to be carers or housewives rather than learners and workers. They are regarded as theories that are detrimental to the development of women by limiting education among women.

Another latent ideology that comprises the teachers' discourses is the economic determinism; the teachers admitted to the restrain of women educational right by poverty. They equally argue that due to cultural and traditional practice, it is usually the boy child who is privileged to go to school when the family can only afford to send one child to school. This portrays an economic rationality in which resources, especially financial, is central to the continued production of gender inequality in education.

This is where the teachers also express the postcolonial concern of the regions where education system and other cultural practices inherited and mostly entrench

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by the colonial masters is a hindrance to education for women. Here the teachers are implicitly subverting colonial and patriarchal paradigms and are insisting that education policies in Tanzania must aim at combating both Tanzanian cultural practices as well as internationally oriented educational policies according to the gender equity.

Last of all, equity is also talked about with the teachers using the women education as a way of pointing out that education is not only a right of the female gender but also an obligation that might help in transforming the society. According to them, education is not sufficient to change the inequality between them, social legal and economic changes are needed to dismantle the barriers women encounter in education. This entails a certain paradigm of social reform, in which education is perceived as a primary tool for modifying not only people's lives but also the whole society.

Findings

In the responses to question number 1, the interviews with NUMAL university teachers, a range of appraisal tools were employed to articulate their perspectives on female education, each contributing to specific ideological positions. The judgment tool was used to critically evaluate societal and cultural practices such as early marriage, domestic duties, and gender bias, positioning them as morally and socially detrimental, thus promoting an anti-patriarchal ideology. The affect tool reflected emotional responses such as frustration, hope, and concern, highlighting the personal and societal urgency of addressing gender inequality, reinforcing an ideology of empathy and social justice. Through appreciation, teachers acknowledged the transformative power of education, framing it as a vital instrument for empowerment and social mobility, supporting an ideology of

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education as liberation. The graduation tool amplified both the severity of barriers and the significance of progress, emphasizing the scale of the problem and the need for sustained efforts, aligning with an ideology of reform and urgency. Heteroglossia brought together local and global discourses—such as UN goals and cultural norms—suggesting that gender inequality in education is both a global and local issue, thus endorsing an ideology of global solidarity and contextual understanding. Tools like modulizations, engagement, evaluation, force, and focus further emphasized the need for certainty, action, and targeted attention to address structural barriers, reinforcing ideologies that advocate for systemic change, inclusive, and participatory governance. Finally, the presence of attribution and monogloss in some interviews underscored the belief that responsibility for change lies with governments, institutions, and communities, reflecting an ideology of accountability and authoritative truth. Together, these appraisal tools construct a complex ideological framework that challenges patriarchal norms, supports educational equity, and calls for comprehensive sociocultural and policy-level transformation.

In response to question number 2 of all the interviews with NUML University teachers, conservative ideology was found in the interview. A dominant anti-patriarchal ideology is evident in the rejection of traditional gender roles, early marriage, and domestic expectations that limit women's access to education. The teachers highlight how these practices are embedded in societal norms and call for their dismantling. A strong postcolonial ideology also emerges, particularly in critiques of lingering colonial education systems and cultural legacies that continue to marginalize women, suggesting that true reform must address both local traditions and imported structures. Additionally, an anti-oppression ideology

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is present in their recognition of systemic inequalities, such as gendered access to resources, discriminatory laws, and economic disparities, arguing that these must be addressed to achieve educational equity. The economic determinism ideology is reflected in their acknowledgment that poverty plays a significant role in denying girls education, especially when families prioritize boys due to limited resources. Teachers also convey an ideology of intersectionality, recognizing how factors like class, geography, safety, and infrastructure interact with gender to further disadvantage girls. Finally, there is a subtle ideology of social transformation, in which the teachers advocate for not just educational reform, but also broader legal, cultural, and economic changes to dismantle the structures that uphold gender inequality. Altogether, these hidden ideologies construct a framework that challenges traditional power dynamics and envisions education as a catalyst for systemic change and social justice.

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