

Gender Equity in Higher Education

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Abstract:

In this article we discussed about gender equity in higher education, women facing gender disparity especially in higher secondary education. Women have been subjected to marginalization and various kinds of discrimination since ancient times. Additionally, it seeks to discuss the concept of gender inequity all over the world and also highlighted Pakistani education system facing gender disparity especially in rural areas. Then later on provide steps towards reduce gender disparity. This paper also discuss the concept of Gender equity in education in the light of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. The famous hadith "**acquisition of knowledge is binding on all Muslims**" make it clear that education in Islam is equally important, irrespective of the sex. It concludes that Islam doesn't restrict women from getting education, it will also briefly explore the current situation of women education in Pakistan, and provide ways to improve their education standards. Main objective of this article is that men and women should be treated equally according to their respective needs especially in higher education because they are actually facing disparity. In the last discussed about normative teachings of Islam with regard to the standing and role of women in society as the criteria by which to judge the practice of Muslims and to evaluate their compliance with Islam.

Keywords: Gender equity, rights, Justice, discrimination, Islam, Female, Education

Introduction:

Gender equity is the process of being fair women and men according to their respective needs.

-In Islam gender equity means "men and women are treated equally" natural justice. However, the limits and rights for men and women may not be identical, because they are

different regarding their;

- a) Abilities
- b) creation
- c) Roles and duties

-According to Cambridge dictionary “the act of treating women and men equally”

-According to oxford dictionary the word “**Equity**” means fairness righteousness in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between two genders regardless of any gender discrimination of man and woman.

Difference between Gender Equity and Gender Equality:

Equality is about treating everyone the same, while equity is about giving everyone what they need to succeed, taking into account their individual circumstances and the systemic barriers they face.

Gender Equity in higher education: Gender equity promotes economic growth. It can be assessed in terms of education, health care, economic, political, legal and social rights provided to the members of both genders (USAID, 2009).

The World Bank has recommended investment in female education as a strategy for development and poverty reduction in developing countries as this high social rate of returns (Oxaal, 1997). For empowering women in all walks of life the more basic and important factor in the education. 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 Commonwealth countries. In developing countries, for example Uganda, Nigeria, Commonwealth universities, with the percentage for a developing countries generally female, in developing countries the proportion reaches just 27% (UNESCO, 2002). gender parity in access to higher education with 52% of tertiary students being Males represent the majority of the faculty in higher education institutes much lower at 10% for Ghana and 18% for Pakistan, for instance. Females are likely reports female representation at 33.8 % for lecturers and 9.9 % for professors in terms (Jacobs, 1996; Morley, 2007).

Males represent the majority of the faculty in higher education institutes worldwide. UNESCO (2002) quotes 27% as a female percentage for commonwealth universities, with the percentage for developing countries generally much lower at 10% for Ghana and 18% for Pakistan, for instance female. Females are likely to experience overt and subtle gender discrimination (UNESCO, 2002).

Managerial positions are usually held by males, who not only have more decision making power but also have more opportunities of social networking. A commonwealth Higher Education Management service survey reported that in universities of the developing countries gender disparity in the most senior position from vice-chancellors through to heads of department. According to UNESCO report gender disparity increases all over the world. Here some facts and figures

UNESCO REPORT -2023

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

122 million
girls,
about 1 in 5,
are
out of school
(UNESCO, 2023)



63% of the
763 million
illiterate adults
are **women**
(UNESCO, 2021)

Women in STEM
account for just
1/3 of global
post-secondary graduates
(UNESCO, 2023)



1 additional
year of school
can increase a girl's earnings,
when she is an adult,
by up to 20%
(UNESCO, 2021)



Women represent

94% of **pre-primary teaching professionals**

67% in **primary education**

44% in **post-secondary education**
(UNESCO, 2022)



Some countries
lose more than
US\$1 billion a year
by failing to
educate girls at the
same level as boys
(UNESCO, 2021)



Gender disparity in Pakistan:

Pakistan ranked 142 out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap (2023). The report highlights that economic opportunities for women are limited with the country only managing to bridge 32.7% of the gap between men and women in the workplace.

In Pakistan, there is a substantial gender disparity in education. Pakistan is a patriarchal society in which face a wide range of discrimination, leading to a low social, economic, and political status. Women comprise 52% of Pakistan's total population, according to World Bank statistics. Keeping such a large portion of the population literate is a dreadful situation, and it might be the root cause of the country's fragile and lopsided economy.

Only 46.5 % of women are literate, 61.6 % attended primary school, 34.2 % attained high school, and 8.3 % attended tertiary education.

➤ Women education in Pakistan is a fundamental rights of every female citizen's constitution of Pakistan.

Major cause of Gender Disparity in Pakistan:

In this article highlighted the root cause of gender disparity in Pakistan which are given below;

- Poverty
- Child marriage
- Outdated customs
- Cultural norms restricting freedom of movement of girls and education
- Sexual Harassment
- Lack of Islamic knowledge about women education
- Lack of awareness and confidence
- Shortage of women education institutes. Two most significant reasons for never attending school for girls reported in Pakistan integrated household survey (PIHS) were parents did not allow and too expensive.

Steps towards reduce gender disparity:

- The provision of schools for girls at a local level is the key to reduce the educational gap
- Family support is more important for women to continue their higher education as a professional.
- Need reorganization and improved awareness in the healthcare facilities, and appropriate education in schools for boys and girls will help decrease gender discrimination in the Pakistani societies
- Strengthen compliance, especially in rural areas, with laws for achieving gender equity in employment, domestic settings, local communities, and in broader society.
- Establish realistic targets for achieving wage parity between men and women for similar work in each province and report annually on progress towards these targets.

- Increase provincial funding for women's colleges and universities and also encourage private sector and NGOs to invest more in women's education and training, especially in rural areas.
- The government need to work with UNICEF and organizes campaign for girl's education.
- Give access to decision making because women generally in Pakistan, neither have a say in decision making at the household and community level, nor on personal issues like marriage and divorce.
- Encourage women in non – traditional jobs is crucial is not long lasting changes in their lives but also help break social taboos.
- Give proper value to women's work.

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN, 2023

The founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was an indefatigable campaigner for women's rights who advocated for full participation of women in public life and in nation building. In keeping with his vision, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has pledged to ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women as guaranteed in the Constitution of the country. Pakistan was amongst the first group of countries in the United Nations to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 and since then has become signatory to seven international human rights treaties out of nine. The Vision 2025 of Pakistan reaffirms the commitment of the Government to promote an enabling environment for women so that they may realize their full potential and be active contributors to the development of the country. The Government of Pakistan has taken significant measures in recent years to improve gender equality as pledged in the Constitution and the country's international commitments. Most notably, a sound legislative and policy framework has been established, including the enactment of many pro-women laws, policy reforms to enhance women's empowerment and participation as well as a National Gender Policy Framework (2022).

Literacy and Education

"Education is the key to our nation's future. We must invest in our schools, colleges, and universities to give our youth the knowledge and skills they need to succeed."

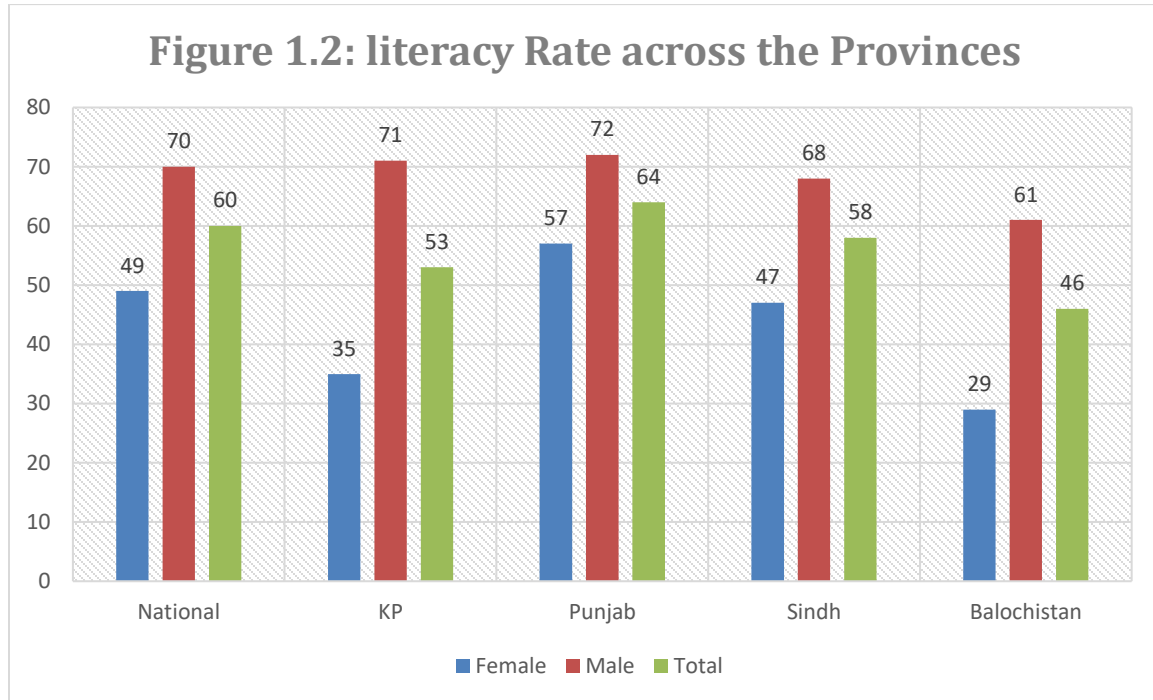
- Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Founder of Pakistan-

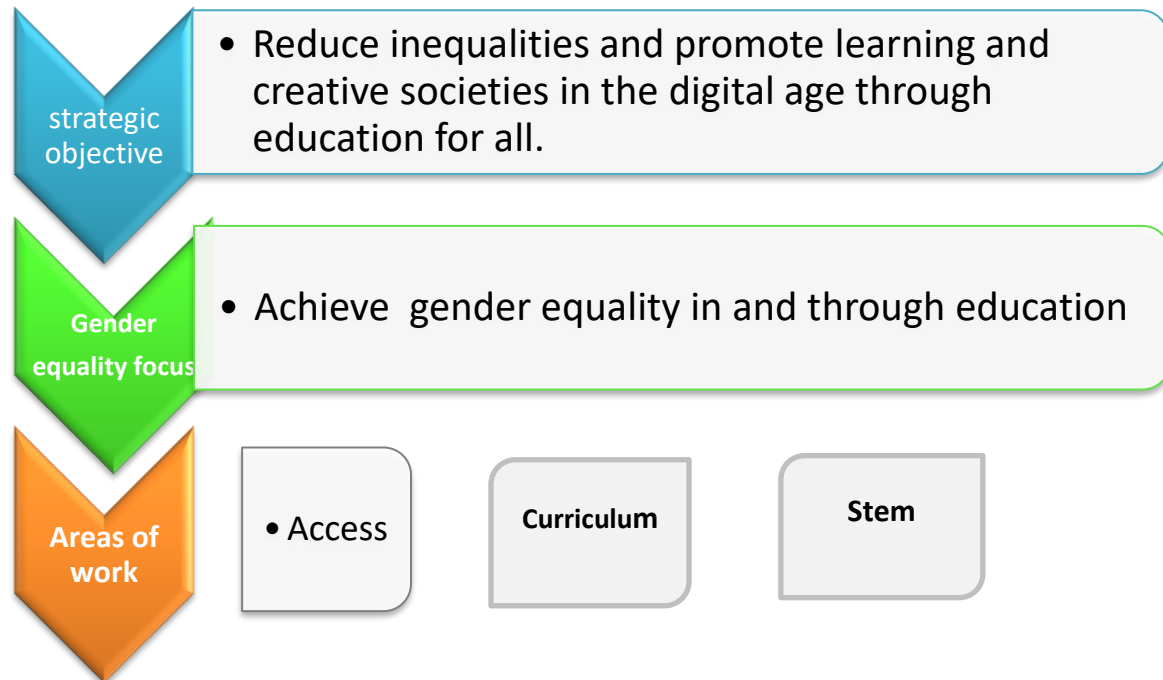
The right to education for all citizens is underscored in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2017 aims to enhance educational outcomes and rectify key issues such as low public expenditure on education, poor levels of female enrollment and literacy, and low student-to-teacher ratio. Yet, the country has been facing challenges in addressing these issues and achieving universal primary education. Pakistan scores 0.825 in educational attainment in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022, ranking 135 out of 146 countries. An estimated **22.8 million children** (aged 5-16 years) in Pakistan are out-of-school children (OOSC) and the gender gap is alarming. A staggering **53% of females** (15-64 years) reported that they never attended school compared to **33% of males** in the same age range. The Net Enrollment Rate (NER) at primary, middle and

secondary levels across regions shows that at all levels girls are dropping out of education consistently more than boys - NER in rural areas at primary level is **56% for girls** and **67% for boys**, whereas at the secondary level it is only 19% for girls and 25% for boys.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN, 2023:

Literacy rate from 45% in 2001-02 to 60% female literacy improved significantly, but only to 49% from 32%, in comparison with the male literacy rate 70%.



UNESCO'S GLOBAL PRIORITY GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK:

- Access to equitable and gender responsive education and learning, including in science, technology etc
- Laws , policies and strategies for gender equality in and through education developed and implemented
- Gender responsive teaching , content and learning opportunities are increased
- Gender gap in learning achievements and completion rates reduced
- Build inclusive just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression , cultural diversity , education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage.
- Provide equal platform for girls and boys according to their respective needs.

Concept of equality in Islam.

The status of women in society is neither a new nor a fully settled issue. Islam gives women equal rights of religious independence. Status and spiritual development compared to men. The implication of the term equality may differ in different society and culture. The western concept of equality has developed over time as a reaction to Christian conception of woman. In Christianity, women is considered an inferior being, who committed the first sin and condemned forever. When the west broke itself away from religion, at the start of renaissance, there was nothing that could provide the basis for the concept of equality. The west then constructed a concept of equal rights in different spheres of life. This is what the whole feminist movement is all about. This meant that in order for a women to be equal to a

men, as a human being, she must have equal political, social and economic rights as men without considering the ability, habit, tendency, duties and responsibilities. The west far from the religion it was impossible for them to have the judgment of the creator in this regard. Facing this dilemma the westerner towards political, social and economic rights as then standard that would define the equality between man and women as human beings. (Islam, 2006)

➤ On the contrary to this concept Islam primarily establish the equality of men and women as human beings. Then Islam determined the duties and responsibilities for man and women on the basis of their nature, ability, tendency and capacity. Because the nature of Islam is not to burden a person beyond his capacity. Allah says; ﴿لَا يَكْلِفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا﴾

'Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope' (Al Quran 2:286).

This is why Islam impose some responsibilities to man and escape the women from some responsibilities. because the determination of responsibilities much take in considering the varying natural in inclination and capabilities of the individuals, therefore Islam takes into account the concept of justices rather than equality.

Allah, the All-knowing and All aware is He who knows is creation best and the characteristics that distinguish the female from male, addresses everyone men and women equally, as Allah says,

﴿إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

'verily the Muslims men and women, the believers men and women, the man and women who are obedient the man and the woman who are truthful, the man and the woman who are patient, the man and the woman who are humble, the man and the woman who give sadaqat, the man and the woman who observe saom, the man and the woman who guard their chastity, the man and the woman who remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues- Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward (Al Quran 33:35)

Allah also says, 'It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error'. (Al Quran 33:36)

Allah also says, **'Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts.'** (Al Quran 24:30-31)

ISLAM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS OF EDUCATION:

Education is a fundamental human rights for all. It is the key to success and growth, not only in developing countries, but also throughout the world. Education is seen as an aspect of religious freedom and an equal right within the teaching of Islam. According to the teaching of Islam, the acquisition of knowledge and education is essential. The duty to acquire knowledge is an obligation imposed upon every Muslims, whether male or female. But there are substantial gaps between the teaching of the Qur'an and the manner in which it is

practiced, in particular referring to the education for girls and women.

- In Muslim majority states literacy and educational attainment rates for girls and women are among the worst in the world.
- In this article, I will discuss the history of women's rights to education in the Islamic world and current status of women's literacy and education in Muslim-majority states and the international community.

ISLAM AND WOMEN'S RIGHT IN EARLY HISTORY:

Before the Islam women had no right for education, the period of before islam is referred to as *al-jahiliyah*, which means "the period of ignorance" women as treated as subordinate to men. According to the Quran, Arabs during *jahiliyah* would bury their daughters alive. The Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W) and the Quran revelation had a powerful role in changing the world and gave them respect.

According to the Quran men and women are seen as equal in the eyes of Allah. In the Quran Allah says that;

"O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person created of like nature his mate and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence Allah through whom ye demand your mutual (rights) and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you".
(Verse 4:1)

The Quran indicates that men and women are spiritually equal.

- The need to acquire knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim whether male or female. It has been unanimously agreed by Islamic scholars that the first word revealed of the Quran was "**Iqra**" meaning "**Proclaim**" or "**Read**". Knowledge is an important part of the Islamic faith, and the Quran makes no distinction between the pursuit of education and acquisition of knowledge for men and women. Prophet (S.A.W) also teach knowledge for both male and female and said that "**Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim.**"

EXAMPLES OF SAHABIYAT:

Islamic history reveals a variety of women participating in education. The Prophet (S.A.W) himself taught his wives and other sahabiyat or women. The lectures of the Prophets were attended by audience of both men and women. Here are the some examples of sahabiyat who actually the role model of every women.

- **Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqah (R.A):**

- There were many women scholars Hazrat Aisha Siddiqah (R.A) is reported to have been an intelligent lady. She became a teacher and a source of authority and documentation in hadith transmission and sacred law. When she grew older she became the scholar, stateswoman and the major resource to all Muslims even today because she knew all of the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Aisha (RA) was blessed with an astonishing memory and never forgot something once she heard it.

Majority of Sahaba learned the Quran, hadith and Islamic jurisprudence from Hazrat Aisha (R.A)

- **Hazrat Khadijah al-Kubra(R.A):**

- The First Muslim Woman ‘Khadijah al-Kubra (may peace be upon her)’ was actually a leading and successful Business Woman in Arab. One of the best inspiration in our lives; is the woman of wonders, the great Khadijah-tul-kubra (PBUH). She was delicate and intelligent and sharp. There is no doubt that Khadijah was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)’s most trusted and favorite among all his marriages.

- Khadijah (PBUH) was a successful and esteemed business woman.

- She was known for taking a successful business and trade across the Silk Road by its helm in a field almost entirely monopolized by men. Even in business, she reinvested her wealth and continued striving to benefit people unserved.

- Societal structures today present their own challenges for women, but y is wholly possible for the 21st century Muslim women to reap the best of both worlds. Just like Hazrat Khadijah RA, women can and should discover their talents and put them to use.

- **Hazrat Asma Bint-e- Yazid (R.A):**

Asma Bint –e- Yazid belonged to the Ansar and was one of the most knowledgeable of the sahabiyat the key compilers of hadith, including ibn e Majah and Abu Dawood, related about 81 hadiths from her reporting. She was also renowned for her riveting speeches, eloquence, and ability to elucidate complex topics.

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