

Attitude of Male and Female University Students Towards Gender Discrimination

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Gender inequality exists among all spheres of life and students are inclined to respond to other gender either favorably or unfavorably in light of their own beliefs. The present study investigates the attitude of male and female university students towards gender discrimination. Sample consisted of ($N = 150$) university students including equal number of men and women, from different universities of Islamabad. Gender Attitude and Belief Inventory (McCabe, 2013) was used to assess the attitude regarding gender discrimination of university students. Effects of some demographic variables were also explored such as age and education. Results showed that female students had higher scores indicating that they face more gender discrimination than male university students. There were nonsignificant differences between university students on the basis of education (graduate and undergraduate) and age (below 20 years of age and above 20 years of age). This study has strong implications in terms of gender discrimination in Pakistani society.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, university students, attitudes

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and learned through the socialization processes. They are context or time specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in decision making, opportunities, responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, and access to and control over resources (Bukhari & Ramzan, 2013).

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The concept of gender discrimination arises when these humans deny their responsibilities or ask for favors or grants on the basis of their gender. Gender disparity generally occurs in two aspects of being social and biological. Social perception discriminates human beings on the basis of social status of gender while biological discrimination is based on the bodily constructs of both genders. As the development of brain occurs differences in chromosomes and hormones distinguish one gender from the other. In general terms we can consider gender inequality as any difference, whether realistic, grounded or socially perceived (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).

It is a common perception that males and females are not taken equally, sometimes females are prohibited to do some jobs, prevented to study some subjects of their interest, their activities are more restricted than males. This practice is more prevalent in Pakistan. Researches on medical students in US and Canada revealed that 42% men and 46% women reported harassment during medical training. Here women faced more differentiation in comparison to men (Frank, Carrera, & Stratton, 2006; Moscarello, Margittai, & Rossi, 1994). Similar finding was obtained from a study conducted in Pakistan by Hashmi et al. (2013) on medical college students where 78% of the students have been found to be victims of gender discrimination with both men and women being equally victimized. Gender inequality appears both in the workplace and home settings in a society. Inequality among gender circles three major things: firstly, in defining rights and responsibilities of both genders, it gives more opportunities, freedom, and social status to men as compared to women although they belong to the same race, family, or have same age (Dasli & Saricoban, 2016). Secondly, men are given more control than women in any relationship where both are holding same social status. Thirdly, men have dominant status and high utilities of their powers in society in the fields of politics, economics, and in legal or cultural institutions (Hooks, 2010; Jackson, 1998).

Gender inequality has a huge influence on people's lives, but its major consequence is that it acts to create biases in communities (Ridgeway, 2011). A study found that students attending the English medium schools scored high on positive views on gender equality (Nazar, Österma, & Björkqvist, 2017). According to the study by Bukhari and Ramzan (2013) educational system in Pakistani society is one of the major factors that lead to the inferior status of women. Girls are usually taught subjects related to the language, arts, teaching, and official skills while boys are encouraged to for different levels and fields of study result in different opportunities of work and

consequently result in gender inequality (Channar, Abbass, & Ujan, 2011).

Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context; where other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, and age. Today gender roles are knitted by culture and tradition. Humana (1999) has reported that top ten countries of the world ranked as per their resources and wealth provide economic and social equality to women, while if this ranking is further studied, it is revealed that bottom ten countries badly fail to provide such equality to their women. It is also obvious from the population of countries that almost half of the population of every country is comprised of women, so giving such freedom to them would enhance the country's macroeconomic resources while any failure in providing such freedom would result in failed or deteriorating economy (Sen, 1999).

The general concept of gender is taken as the biological and social difference among being a man and woman. These roles of masculinity femininity are narrated by societies in terms of personal characteristics, responsibilities, values, expectations, and judgment of behavior (Dokmen, 2004). In this study the concept of gender equality is referred to as both men and women having equal rights, responsibilities and opportunity for achievements. In addition, discrimination means due to the gender of the individual a person would be using opportunities, resources, and getting more achievements; whereas, other gender becomes a sufferer, a deprived one or an ignored one, and mostly the second stance is considered for females (Sayer, 2011). Even though the policies are being made to create gender equality but still in many areas of the world, gender discrimination occurs in the form of fewer rights for women. Women are given less opportunities for their education, their decisions, business, and life choices. They are provided with less financial facilities and lesser rewards for their jobs. This kind of discrimination prevails both at family and society level and the purpose of the present research is to study the attitude of male and female university students towards gender discrimination. It is also aimed to explore the effect of some demographic variables such as age and educational qualification among university students in relation to study constructs.

Method

Sample

Sample consists of 150 university students, conveniently selected from different universities of Islamabad that is, International Islamic

University, National University of Modern Languages, and Quaid-i-Azam university. Fifty students were selected from each university having an equal number of male ($n = 25$) and female students ($n = 25$). The age range of the sample was 18 to 30 years ($M = 23.0$, $SD = 2.13$) including undergraduates ($n = 65$) and graduates ($n = 85$). All respondents were students of masters or BS program of different departments of natural and social sciences.

Instrument

Gender Attitude and Belief Inventory (GABI). McCabe (2013) developed Gender Attitude and Belief Inventory to measure the attitude of individuals toward gender discrimination or gender inequality. It consists of 45 statements with 4-point Likert scale and response categories for all 45 items range from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (4). Maximum score that could be attained was 180; while minimum possible score was 45. Furthermore, the GABI indicates 11 theoretical perspectives (McCabe, 2013) which are often used on gender, including both conservative theories (physiological, sociobiological, and structural functionalist) and feminist perspectives (liberal, socialist, Marxist, radical, separatist, cultural, multicultural/black, and postmodern feminism) which might influence attitudes. However, this study focuses only upon the consolidated GABI score attained from summing all the 45 items. The alpha reliability coefficient for the total GABI has been reported adequate (.83; McCabe, 2013); while in the present study, reliability coefficient of .78 was achieved for the total scale.

Procedure

The data were collected by administering the scale on the male and female pupils. Participants were given instructions for filling out the questionnaires and were assured of the confidentiality of their data. Upon completion, the questionnaires were scored and statistically analyzed.

Results

Independent sample t -test was used to measure the differences between male and female university students across gender, age, and education.

Table 1

Gender Differences on Gender Discrimination Among University Students (N=150)

Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Gender							
Men	75	62.08(1.24)	4.76	.000	-1.35	-4.70	.23
Women	75	70.70(9.81)					
Education							
Undergraduate	65	67.07(10.07)	0.36	.71	-3.87	5.36	0.08
Graduate	85	66.19(11.53)					
Age							
Below 20 years	68	66.03(10.03)	0.43	.73	-3.62	5.24	0.10
Above 20 years	82	67.12(10.97)					

Results indicate significant differences between male and female university students on attitudes towards gender discrimination. Female university students show more favourable attitudes towards gender discrimination as compared to the male counterparts. This difference is significant at $p < .001$. However, there are nonsignificant differences based on age and education.

Discussion

The focus of the present research was to determine the attitudes of men and women about gender inequality and the relationship of other variables such as age and educational level of the individuals with respect to gender inequality.

Findings revealed more favourable attitudes towards gender discrimination in female students as compared to male students. Robinson and Bell (1978) argued that females face disadvantages of opportunities, thus more conscious of the inequality than men. In a survey, 57 percent participants agreed to send their sons to schools and higher education institutes instead of their daughters (Tisdell, 2002). Similarly, a study in Turkey reported more than half of the female participants stated having experienced discrimination, whereas only a little above 20% male participants reported being discriminated. It was also reported that about 87% of women reported gender-based inequality (favoring men) while only 24% boys reported the same. Almost half of the university student population reports exposure to gender-based discriminatory behaviour (Dasli & Saricoban, 2016).

Nonsignificant differences among undergraduate and graduate students were found on attitudes towards gender discrimination. It seems that not only the educational level but social norms also play an important role in the perception of inequality. As we present our social norms by the toys we provide our children to play. These norms depict the development of the parenting style and preferences of individuals in different aspects of life for example marriage, choosing profession, and work relations in and outside the home. There are cultural stereotypes on the perception of a gender role as it is a worldwide common believe that there is a strong connection between feminism and arts and that women are for satisfaction and sexism (Massey, & Douglas, 2007).

Findings also revealed nonsignificant differences among various age groups in relation to gender discrimination. Different researchers such as Wulansari and Ayu (2009) summarized that there is a nonsignificant relationship among variables of age and employment with the perception of gender inequality. It is observed that important educational decisions about field of study are taken between the ages of 10 and 20 years. This is a time of expectations that influences later life career decisions; therefore, there is a likelihood that this age group does not correlate with the experiences of gender inequality. In addition, Ongen and Aytac (2013) also reported that young adults are less likely to be influenced by various forms of discrimination; however, middle aged adults and elderly people displayed more diverse perceptions of discriminations on the basis of gender, race, and ethnicity.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present study has certain drawbacks such as the size of the sample may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, lack of comparative data from the various age groups would hinder the derivations of the study. In future, studies should incorporate the role of other variables like personality traits, coping strategies, and social and emotional intelligence in shaping the attitudes towards the gender discrimination. Moreover, the inclusion of other demographics such as parental education and occupation along with race and regional affiliations would enhance our understanding about the phenomena of gender discrimination. Future researches should focus on identification and remedies of the leading reasons behind gender discrimination and how to adopt a successful model of gender equality in developing countries.

Conclusion

Gender is an expression of social and biological characteristics of being a male and a female in any culture. There are some expectations and values attached with these two types of roles. Males are expected to be ambitious, strong, decision maker, independent, a head of a family while females thought to have traits of compassion, affection, emotionality, sensitivity, gentility, obedience, faithfulness, patience, and empathy. Both genders are considered equal for all basic needs and human rights but man is provided with more strength; while female is created gentle and is dominated by her tenderness. The socially defined roles and generally observed patterns of behavior are different; hence, perception of these roles is also discriminating. All needs, behaviors, desires, ambitions and requirements of men and women are not equally considered and valued in a society. Same is happening in a developing society of Pakistan in the sample of university students and it has been found that university female students are more discriminated on the basis of gender than male students.

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