

Equity in Higher Education Institutions in Punjab (Pakistan)

R. A. Farooq¹, Rabia Tabassum² and Aijaz Ahmed Gujjar³

¹Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Northern University, Nowshera (Pakistan)

²Associate Professor, Department of Education Northern University, Nowshera (Pakistan)

³Lecturer, Federal College of Education, Islamabad (Pakistan) and Ph. D scholar, Northern University, Nowshera (Pakistan).

Abstract. Higher education is of prime importance for human resource development in any country. The government of Pakistan is justified in emphasizing the higher education in the country. The major objective of this research paper was to investigate the existence or non-existence of gender bias in the institutions imparting higher education to the youth. The investigation was delimited to public sector universities in Punjab, a province having largest population. A sample of 70 administrators, 100 teachers (50 male and 50 female) and 200 students (100 male and 100 female) was randomly selected from 10 public sector universities.

Three questionnaires were developed to collect data from the respondents included in the sample. Analysis of data revealed following interesting results:

Majority of the administrators was found of the view that there was gender bias and teachers behaved differently with male and female students. Majority of the teachers claimed that there was no gender bias in the institutions of higher education and the teachers behaved equally with male and female students. Majority of the students mentioned that teachers behaved differently with male and female students and the male students were given preference in each and every event of the institution.

1. Introduction

The greatest treasure and asset of a nation are its educational institutions. They make or mar the destiny of a nation. The strength of a nation is built on human resources developed by its educational institutions which train the brains, provide skills and open a new world of opportunities and possibilities to the nation. The development of a nation and its education are closely related to each other. The importance of education is realized everywhere and is now on top of political agenda of every nation (Govt. of Pakistan, 1998).

Terry and Thomas (1997) are of the view that equity in education is the fair and equal treatment of all members of our society who are entitled to participate in and enjoy the benefits of educational opportunities. All students and adults have the equal opportunity to participate fully and to experience success and human dignity while developing skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society.

Secada (1989) expressed that equity is the outcome of fundamental laws and policies which, when enforced, should guarantee fair treatment and access to resources and programmes for all students as well as outreach for parental involvement. Furthermore the educational environment must teach and promote the positive self-esteem needed to enable each student to make a productive contribution to his/her school, community, country and the world.

To place higher education on a fast track, the most important need is to foster existing institutions by ensuring equity and fairness in their intake, by strengthening their basic and infra-structural needs including especially qualified teachers, and by grounding these institutions in disciplinary diversity and excellence in quality (Arnold and Lee, 1991).

Despite the worldwide expansion of higher education during the second half of the 20th century, inequalities of access persist nearly everywhere. Inequalities are also due to selective education systems,

which so operate vthat from secondary level, children and young people from the most disadvantaged economic, social and cultural backgrounds are rejected or discouraged. All these factors or often found in various combinations, which perpetuate and aggravate inequality (UNDP, 2003).

Rees (1990) observed that discrimination towards women was still prevalent in society including in the current labour market provisions for women, e.g. career progression and an inequality of pay, the attitude towards childcare, the ideology of gender equality and the existence, and the impact of gender equality legislation. In that context a higher education system that lead opinion in society, gender related discrimination towards women students and staff members was observed. Female students faced traditional access issues such as perceived stereotypes and a lack of positive role models in all areas of their undergraduate careers. Those included application procedures, assessment and lack of flexible entry and exit points to higher education that family commitments can require.

Women academics and university staff members faced similar rather more diverse discrimination. Not only was this inherently damaging the careers and ambitions of those women, but also had a negative effect on future generations of female research students, academic and professional staff and more generally the academic discipline (Farooq, 1996).

Policy makers need to be more explicit about expecting different contributions from different segments of a stratified system. Expressing a clear vision of the goals and structure of a higher education system is fundamental to setting an agenda for reform, while ensuring that this vision is shared widely is vital to achieving practical results (Arnold and Lee, 1991).

The authoritarian perception of higher education is that the professor has to please the chief executive with his performance, which usually does not mean academic excellence and more often refers to matters involving the administrative yes-manship. The professor who has done writing, who takes time to investigate and push forward the frontiers of knowledge is not likely to be promoted or recognized as having any role in the university (Talati, 1998).

In a mushroom growth of higher education, the quality of some of the public sector colleges has also suffered for want of adequate physical facilities and better teachers. Although some of the institutions in private sector have been set up on purely educational considerations, a large number of them are commercial enterprises with financial and political motives(Isani and Virk, 2003).

1.1. Objective of Investigation

The major objective of the investigation was to see the gender equity in higher education institutions of the Punjab.

2. Method and Procedure

2.1. Population

In Punjab there were more than 18 public sector universities. The administrators, teachers and students of these universities constituted the population.

2.2. Sample

Out of these 18 universities, 10 public sector universities were randomly selected as sample of the study. Seven administrators, 10 teachers and 20 students, both male and female, were randomly selected from each sample university to be included in the sample.

2.3. Research Instruments

Three questionnaires, one each for administrators, teachers and students, were prepared for data collection. The data were collected on five-point scale, i.e.

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

UD = Undecided

DA = Disagree

SDA = Strongly Disagree

2.4. Data Analysis

Data collected through above mentioned questionnaires were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in the light of the objective of investigation.

3. Results

Analysis of data revealed the following results:

Table 1: Teachers behave differently with male and female students.

Response	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Administrators	4	19	24	17	16	70	17.00*
Percentage	5.71	27.14	34.28	24.28	22.85	100	

*Significant

Table value at 0.05 level = 9.488

Table 1 shows that value of chi square was found to be 17.00 which is higher than the table value and was found to be significant at 0.05 level. Table also indicates that negative responses are more than the positive ones and about one-third were found neutral. Therefore, the statement, "Teachers behave differently with male and female students", is negatively accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that that, in view of administrators, teachers behave equally with male and female students.

Table 2: Teachers behave differently with male and female students.

Response	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Teachers	0	12	25	53	10	100	63.90*
Percentage	0	12	25	53	10	100	

*Significant

Table value at 0.05 level = 9.488

Table 2 indicates that value of chi square was found to be 63.90 which is higher than the table value and was found to be significant at 0.05 level. Table also indicates that negative responses were more than the positive ones and about one-fourth were found neutral. Therefore, the statement, "Teachers behave differently with male and female students", is negatively accepted. Hence, it can be concluded that, in view of teachers, they behave equally with male and female students.

Table 3: Teachers behave differently with male and female students.

Response	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA	Total	χ^2
Students	67	80	41	9	3	200	116.50*
Percentage	33.5	40	20.5	4.5	1.5	100	

*significant

Table value at 0.05 level = 9.488

Table 3 reflects that value of chi square was found to be 116.50 which is higher than the table value and was found to be significant at 0.05 level. Hence, the statement, "Teachers behave differently with male and female students", is accepted.

4. Conclusions

On the basis of findings, following conclusions were drawn:

- The majority of the administrators of the sample universities were found of the opinion that teachers behave equally with male and female students.
- Overwhelming majority of the sample teachers claimed that they behaved equally with male and female students.
- Majority of the students of the sample universities claimed that the behavior of the teachers was discriminatory with male and female students.

In the light of the above results it is recommended that the gender bias, if it is there, may be discouraged to provide equal opportunities to male and female students at higher education level.

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