

Theses, Anti-theses and Syntheses of Gender and Higher Education

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The phenomenon of gender issue in higher education is not new. It prevailed around the globe in different forms however, it theses, anti-theses and syntheses are vary from culture to culture and society to society. This study explores gender marginalization in global perspectives to understand gender nuisance in the developed and under-developed world. The aim is not a comparative analysis because higher education is defined differently, and academic degrees and even academic fields are not uniformly structured around the world. Here, I focused more on gender and higher education theses in the UK and US contexts that are suitable to help and extend my anti-theses and syntheses about gender concern in Pakistan. Furthermore, those theses of the developed world are well-documented to assist us in synthesising gender-role in under-developed countries. Therefore, my methodology was based on contents and themes analysis with descriptive and analytical approach. This study concluded women marginalisation and discouragement in mixed-educational and workplace environments. Women own attitude are questioned and made responsible for gender under representation in higher education. However, communal and culture barriers of Pakistani society are more dominated then women's own approach and mind-set.

Keywords: theses, anti-theses, syntheses, gender, higher education, subcontinent

Gender issues in higher education prevailed around the globe in different forms however; its theses, anti-theses and syntheses vary from culture to culture and society to society. I argued in my recent published article¹ by quoting Acker (1981:78), who was one of the first to argue that sociologists have often failed to recognise that sex differences are the result of cultural and social influences:

writing of men, sociologists show an acute awareness of the social constraints upon their actions. Writing of women, of the sex differences, they frequently switch to psychological or biological levels of explanation.

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Nevertheless, the argument is the people's actions are socially constrained, although not socially determined; people make decisions, which are based on an awareness of the potentialities and limitations of certain courses of action (Francis, 2000a). Men and women make limited choices in different areas, because they passively accept their socially allocated roles of masculine and feminine behaviour (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Francis and Skelton, 2005). Thomas (1990) noted that very few feminist researchers in the sociology of education choose higher education for their research venture, while so much work has been done on the primary and secondary levels. This is similar to the academic literature of Pakistan on gender studies, which are not the scholars' first choice of research; even the students are unaware of the scope of study about gender in academia. However, this may be the outcome of a deficiency in the feminist theory of education. Of course, other educational theorists also have difficulty theorising the role of higher education in the reproduction of inequality (Thomas, 1990; Francis, 2000b). In the UK and US, in comparison to Pakistan, there are substantial sources available on gender and gender inequality in higher education. In Pakistan, I found few academic studies on gender in higher education; in contrast, a substantial number of studies have been published on the secondary level of education, and a notable number on the primary level. Most of these studies are contract studies carried out by donor agencies. This lack of research in gender and higher education in Pakistan is largely due to what international organisations choose to study, as national studies and academic research on gender issues in higher education are rare in Pakistan. Another reason of lacking such studies and theories concerning higher education could be that gender inequality issues in education are already entrenched at primary levels and are further reinforced at secondary levels, and by the time women in Pakistan reach the age of possibly entering higher education, a series of patriarchal, social, cultural, economic and religious factors compel women to accept the prevailing system of male dominated education in Pakistan. As a result, very few gain access to higher education.

Thus, my study is a triangulation of theses, anti-theses and syntheses of gender issues in higher education, but for my reader, what do I mean by these theses, anti-theses and syntheses? The theses in this study are academic rational suggestions about gender issues in higher education and its critical perceptions, how it prevail around the globe in the developed and under-developed economies as anti-theses, while my syntheses are to solve the disagreement and inconsistency among theses and anti-theses keeping in view some debates and arguments to develop new proposals or suggestions for the higher education of Pakistan.

However my aim here is not to compare the analysis of the developed and under-developed countries; as Lie, et al., (1994, cited in Hussain, 1995) argue that comparative analyses have intrinsic difficulties, such as lack of comparable information, disparities in the quality and reliability of statistics, and lack of uniform definitions of the factors and conditions involved.

My choice of the UK was due to the colonial power in the subcontinent and has left noticeable imprints on society, culture and economy aspects, while the US was the world's leading cultural influence on women's rights and women's education during the twentieth century. Thus, to explore gender marginalization in global and subcontinent nuisance in the developed and under-developed world, this triangulation of theses, anti-theses and syntheses would further assist to address gender issues in higher education in Pakistan.

Method

The methodology of this study is based on contents and themes analysis with descriptive and analytical approach. This method identifies emerging themes from the collected data rather than predicts what themes, will occur before the analysis. This was chosen because the nature of this article was based on secondary data of theses, anti-theses and syntheses to the gender question in higher education. The study incorporates readings of existing scholarships of the developed world to scrutinise the prevailing gender gap in higher education in Pakistan.

Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, compared to primary and secondary education, feminist sociology gives little attention to the status of women in higher education, especially in Pakistan. Feminists (Francis and Skelton, 2001) considered higher education as women's success, but there is an obvious question: why are women marginalized at higher education institutes? Thomas (1990:29) quoted Byrne (1978:15); "There is an intellectual minority of girls whose elite wings have helped them to fly from the gutter to the university". And Wolpe (1993: 20); "Those children who comprise the elite section of the education system are destined via higher education to fill the managerial, professional and higher executive posts of this country".

Thomas (1990: 29) criticises the use of the word 'elite', in these quotes, and that Wolpe (1993) and Byrne (2001) support women gaining access to higher education but are not concerned how they will be treated there. Why women cannot secure their place there (higher education)? The alternative way of looking at higher education is to see it is a continuation of the reproduction of gender relations (Thomas, 1990:67). Radical feminists' standpoint is that higher education is not the ultimate success of women because the education system further prepares men and women for their stereotype jobs, care-giving and marriage for women and authoritative powerful leading jobs for men (Bown, 2009). Therefore, we can sum up that higher education and secondary school curricula are male-biased and perpetuate unequal status relationships in society.

I would like to add on, there is an inconsistent correlation between higher education and gender inequality because the hierarchy is in the hands of masculine power. Higher education is a semi-government body in Pakistan but not secluded from the cultured power and values of society. Higher education in Pakistan is based less on knowledge and more on training students to secure jobs for economic stability. However, this created confusion between the objectives and policies for higher education, producing something like educated ignorance. The stated aims of the higher educational policy of Pakistan (1998-2010) do not match with the practice, and the education system does not work as it is supposed to; as Isani and Virk (2007) criticised, education is not a means of cultural production, so we need to analyse peoples' responses to it.

Education at the primary and secondary level promotes a passive role for women; sometimes give them puzzling and ambiguous messages about the stereotypical women's role in society. Therefore, there is a drastic need to study higher education and hold it to the same criteria. The classic study of Komarovsky (1946:77) found that women in higher education had the same conflicting experience with their care-giving and career roles; that societal expectation is that women will take on a passive role, and learn to be 'feminine' and marriageable. A female student might experience this attitude from male university staff and peers forcing women into care-giving roles and giving them the impression that men do not like clever (intelligent and capable) women. This can come from tutors, but also, from society, family, peers and friends especially women. Similarly, Pakistani society gives its women the impression that in spite of her cleverness, her main

responsibility is to bear children and serve her family, which is indeed a misinterpretation of the religion Islam. Women household responsibilities are considered as religious obligations by giving her no place in the public life of men. She is not allowed to take part in the decision making process, such as budgeting, because a wife does not know her family's or husband's sources of income, neither she is financially dependent by inheritance of her father or husband's *Haq Mehr* [dowry]. These are the economic sources of her independence but the patriarchal nature of the religion left the women on mercy of her family men.

Likewise Louise and Val (1999) and Chisholm and Woodward (2000) confirmed that women graduates are often confused at whether to make a choice between marriage, bearing children, and part-time post-graduate work, or to enter high-status, traditionally 'masculine' jobs: they have been highly pressured by society either way. Such women are barely accepted by the society and they do not attract men. This theory of women's choice is particularly important for my study where raising a family is considered the only purpose of a woman's life in Pakistan. The society considers the role of religion has everlasting impact on defining gender role. However, our culture has stronger influence that makes religion views more patriarchal. As Hadi (2017:297) argues; "The abnormal, amoral, and harmful customary practices (killing, rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, acid attacks, being burned, kidnapping, domestic violence, dowry murder, and forces marriages, deprivation from education, custodial abuse and torture) which aim at preserving subjugation of women; defended and sanctified as cultural traditions and given religious overtone".

Theses, Anti-theses and Syntheses of Gender Equity in Higher Education

There are many American and British analyses on the difficulties and discrimination experienced by women students and staff in higher education such as Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), (1973); Furniss and Graham, (1973); Fox (1981); Vartuli, (1982) and in Britain, Blackstone and Fulton (1975); Piper, (1975); Rendel (1980); Weiner, (1999); Acker (1989); Arnot, (1981) and Arnot, et al., (1998). Also, there is a growing body of work looking at the position of both men and women in education (for example, Martino and Meyenn, (2001); Reay, (2012); Francis and Skelton, (2001, 2005); Walkerdine et al., (2001); Frosh et al., (2001); Epstein, et al., (2004); Archer (2003); Haywood and MacanGaill, (2003); Renold, (2005). However these studies are conducted exclusively on societies that lack a religious-dominated cultural context. However, my study is strongly based in the religious (Islam) and cultural context of Pakistan to explore the inter-play between religion, cultural and higher education: which of these elements marginalised women's opportunities in higher education in Pakistan.

Since 1969, most of the higher educational institutes have been re-structured in western societies. This directly affected the working-class and their increased participation in higher education. There are growing numbers of women in universities, and although their participation has not reached the level of men after the post-war period in western societies, women are catching up to men in higher education (Reay, 2012). Actually, women initiated changes in higher education because the sixties was the male-dominated era; women were encouraged to enrol in teaching training colleges (Frosh, et al., 2001; Crompton, 2002). However, there was also much social class discrimination in the education system that brought minor changes with little chance for working-class families to participate in higher education (NCE, 2003). High-status universities are only safeguarding an elite class of children but are also experiencing an increase of middle-class children (Egerton and Halsey, 2003). Plummer (2000:67) reports that in 1998 women in middle-class obtained

1.6 % placement at university level and 2% boys, this rise has reduced the difference to 0.4% over ten years. Furlong and Cartmel (2001: 34) state that:

Despite an apparent increase in the possibilities to continue full-time education or embark on a course of training, young people from advantaged positions in the social-economic hierarchy have been relatively successful in protecting privileged access to the most desirable routes.

According to Walkerdine, et al., (2001) and McCabe (2005), analyses suggest that women's access to higher education increases in urban settings and that the general open-mindedness and opportunities for self-realisation strengthen their decision making power. Therefore, women experiences in Pakistan in a different context of culture and society where geographic division (urban and rural) has had a great influence on women's participation in education (Brock and Cammish, 1999) because the urban women have easy access to higher education while the rural women have to move to the urban areas. In rural areas of Pakistan, three to four villages share one girl's primary school while secondary schools are located in urban areas. In that situation, parents often prefer to keep their daughters at home instead of sending them to far-flung schools. Geographical location is one of the factors that restricted women's participation in higher education in Pakistan. Policies on gender in higher education in the western world are not uniform in content. Only the relative under-achievement of male students is under discussion in the US and UK (Martino and Meyenn, 2001; Francis and Skelton, 2005), while similar problems of under-achievement are evident in many other countries' report (Nobel and Bradford, 2000; Epstein et al., 2004; Francis and Skelton, 2005; Yates, 2007).

In South Asian countries, the gender gap in higher education is explicitly visible (Brock and Cammish, 1999). Indian women's participation in higher education is diversified and changing along with the transformation of their culture, society, industry and trade. Singh (2007) found that the increase of women entering higher education is found at the low to middle-class level, rather than an increase in enrolment at elite institutions. This is because of their less focus on long professional courses that delay their marriage. Furthermore, socio-economic factors affect students' choice of subject area because caste and the tribal system in the Indian society mean that few students from the most deprived and marginalised groups can access higher education. However, their representation is better in those states where in recent years higher education for women has been highly encouraged. This is similar to Pakistan, where the socio-economic status of women has a huge impact on their access to higher education. Nevertheless, there are very few merit scholarships available for students in universities, and there is no concept of normal (average) students' fee bursaries as in the UK. Thus, higher education is largely restricted to those who can afford to pay for it.

Social ethics are the main reasons behind women's discipline choice and academic achievement because it is precisely those social and ethical norms that deprive women from their free choice of subject choice at schools. Generally, the parents of a young female student would take the decision regarding the academic discipline she will pursue, because they are in charge of the girl's future. Much consideration is placed on the family honour and on the girl's future marriage prospects quoting religious norms as an obligation upon all parents. Also in India, most of the daughters' future decisions are under parents' consideration, because girls' earnings or outside work is a stigma for family honour as misinterpretation of the religious quotes that earning for a family is the duty of family men. Therefore, women are secluded from work outside home. Parents support their unmarried daughters, their over-protective measures make the daughters dependent and submissive that left them untrained regarding their future decisions power. Here, the concept of *mehram* is over

emphasised to restrict their education and interaction with the world outside family. Education is considered like jewellery (or investment) to utilise if her married life is unsuccessful (Chanana, 2000). Poor parents are always struggling for their daughters' education and dowry, they know the significance of their daughter's education, but the scarce finances let them down or to choose one of them. They would, therefore, want to fulfill their primary responsibility to get their daughters married instead of planning for their higher education just as in Pakistan. Similarly, it is a right of a son to look after his parents culturally rather than a daughter their preference of sons and their education are the parents' old age benefits.

Bangladeshi gender issues in education are more or less similar to those in Pakistan. Because such a small number of girls have access to primary education, very few reach higher education. There poverty compels parents to give preference to boys rather than girls for higher education, because boys are the carrier of family lineage and considered as the strength of the family, therefore the society widely regards boys as the future guardians of and bread earners for their parents. High infant mortality encourages a high birth-rate in Bangladesh that reflects the parents' wish to produce enough sons to ensure that at least some of them survive (Brook and Cammish, 1999). They further added;

A girl, despite her contribution to domestic work, is regarded as a burden in terms of dowry and as is seen as too transitory part of the family to be worth investment in her education. In some villages all girls over 12 are married.

Preference for sons is common in most South Asian countries. As Naz et al. (2011:81) argued about the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society assigns men the superior position in different spheres of life. As mentioned earlier, parents prefer to invest more into males' education as their old age social security is dependent upon the economic ability of their sons. Besides, there is significant misperception regarding women's education—that the investment in educating a girl will not benefit her parents once she gets married (Haq, 2003 cited in Naz et al., 2011). Such kinds of misperception reduce the value of women's education and deprive them of their basic rights.

Analyses of the present position of women in education examine how higher education institutions reflect the social attitudes of the surrounding society. Women tailor their aspirations to serve cultural attitudes and prejudices, which then mould their ambitions to gender-appropriate roles (Kathleen, 2008). Alternatively stated, women in South Asian countries negotiate their gender and academic identities when they engage in higher education. Further analysis of the relevant contents, the following themes are more applicable to the Pakistani context.

Women born for Care-giving Roles

Althusser (1971) analyses the traditions in which educational policies maintain particular family roles for women (in the west); as mothers and carers for their children, while sustaining social inequality. As women are considered good carers this might be the reason that most of the women are engaged in caring centres and old houses' keepers too. In the early seventies, feminist theories had considerable influence on the lives of female academics (David, 2009). Researchers (Kyvik, 1990; Lie, et al., 1994; Sutherland, 2005, cited in Hussain, 1995; Komulainen, 2000; OECD, 2006b) state about the prevailing vision of women's prescribed roles (e.g. as a wife, mother, or care-giver) impedes women from advancing in tough academic and administrative careers. While some researchers (Komulainen, 2000; Cole and Zuckerman, 2004; Coffield and Williamson, 2007) discovered that married life and children affected women's technical efficiency; that might be one of

the reasons of over-crowded male domination in the technical and scientific professions. Similarly, there is lack of woman role-models in Pakistani society who have managed their professional career and family care-giving roles and made a success of both. Women are encouraged to take on caring roles and discouraged from taking on professional ones because all the household duties have been assigned to women, not men. Household chores are labelled women's duty of men's patriarchal Islam, a valid excuse to exempt themselves. Nevertheless, it is hard for women to manage both her work and household responsibilities and do just with them. Most of the successful professional women in the country belong to the elite or the upper-class, and have more minor responsibilities to their household and children.

According to Quality of Employment Survey (2007), women after marriage do not like to work full-time as well as their first priority is their family rather than career. They found it hard to manage their work and family together and make a success of both, while their married men counterparts do not feel they have to stress one identity over the other (Rushing, 2002; Coffield and Williamson, 2007). This is example of developed countries and more independent women, whereas in Pakistani society, women do not have free choice regarding their family or career. As Naz et al. (2011:83) found, women are impeded from advancing at each and every step during the course of their domestic life, professional engagements, and educational careers. The social structure of Pakistan manifests the hold of centuries' old customs, traditions and more patriarchal religious norms that block women's educational advancement and encourage them to adopt care-giver roles.

Furthermore, Smith and Powell (2000), uphold the women perceive that for economic success, they need to reduce their time for family matters. They further added that marriage increases men's wages of while motherhood tends to lessen the wages of women and their presence in the labour force. This is one of the theories of why women are kept away from scientific careers. In a national survey, high school girls reported that they saw scientific careers as incompatible with family (EPI, 2005; Ware and Lee, 2008).

The Problems and Prospects of Co-education

In Pakistan state or public schools are single-sex while all private schools (both elite and non-elite) offer co-education settings. Similarly, private universities are mixed-gender, while few semi-government universities have women campuses; however, women only institutions are scarce in the country. These few institutes do not fulfill the educational needs of the vast majority of the women in Pakistan that are more than 53 percent of the total population. Therefore, co-education further marginalised women participation in higher education. Lasser (2007) and Meal (2008) argue that men and women do not necessarily receive equal education just by sitting beside each other. Moreover, they documented that the attitudes of male administrators and instructors are biased within mixed-gender classroom settings. In short, if women achieved equal access to educational institutions, it is clear that their attendance alone will not ensure that they receive a truly equal education and are being equipped to handle the challenges of practical life (Hussain, 1995).

Qureshi and Rarieya (2007) argued that co-education is one of the main impediments to girls' access to school and later on to their higher education particularly in rural areas of Pakistan, because it is questioned by the religious lobby of the country as well as religio-culture sentiments of the people to avoid such educational institutes. In some institutions went to their extreme conservatism, considered co-education *haram* (religiously forbidding). Similarly, Naz et al., (2011: 85) conclude that the custom of patriarchy and male dominance is a deeply rooted phenomenon that is impeding women's education. Furthermore, the feudal system in the area, the misinterpretation and

negative perception of the common people of society, as well as *purdah* (veiling and segregation) are some major obstacles for women who want to attend higher educational institutes (Naz et al., 2011: 85). Nonetheless, the concept of *purdah* is predominantly culture veiling (*burqah*) rather than Islamic in terms of segregation, if the country hasn't formed single gender infrastructure, then, how Islam being blamed or imposed upon women in their access to higher education.

In Pakistani society, women's honour is also linked to their immobility; attending school or higher education requires them to go outside their home. Therefore, they have to be escorted by a male or female family member, so that parents are often reluctant to allow their daughters to go to far-flung located learning institutes. Religion and culture recommend that girls should be isolated from male strangers; under such circumstances, upper-class girls enrol in boarding schools in towns. Distant schools locations and co-education, available facilities for female students and teachers, curriculum and examination policies are among the other school-related factors that can contribute to the Pakistani gender gap in education (Qureshi and Rarieya, 2007).

In addition, due to cultural restraints, girls are often uncomfortable in co-education settings, and this may have an unfavourable effect on their academic performance. Qureshi and Rarieya (2007) examined co-education at the primary and secondary level of education and concluded that women perform and best academic progress is highest in women's only educational environments. Therefore, this study argues the implications for the adoption of co-education or segregated single-sex education in Pakistan. As mentioned earlier, all the government primary and secondary schools are single-sex except higher education institutes. Women's only post-graduate institutes are very limited in Pakistan.

Hussain (1995:37) came up with similar suggestions in Pakistani context, recommending a separate women's university for women in Punjab; she supported her theories with Sandler (2007) and Lynch, and Lodge (2002), that women found it difficult to elevate their status within a co-educational learning environment. This is a popular demand by women in Pakistan overall, to have separate women's universities. Although there are numbers of women's universities and post-graduates women colleges along with four women's study centres (one in each province) have been established by Pakistani government, opening up more institutions would allow access to higher education for women who are reluctant to go to co-educational universities. However, it is unlikely that existing sexually integrated colleges and universities will eliminate co-education in order to promote women's education or to avoid the difficulties it generates. Nevertheless, these doubts have stimulated thinking, particularly in re-evaluating the contents of the education to which women have gained access. This might be one of the factors which account for the low percentage of women participants in higher education.

Women and Professional Careers

Women with a professional career are lacking in Pakistan as compared to other South Asian countries (Renold, 2005). Malik and Courtney (2011) argue that increasing women's access to higher education empowers them to play a greater role as a role-model within the family as well as in the community. They further explored that higher education is one of the empowering tools that liberate women from various traditional and cultural obstacles in Pakistan. According to their findings, higher education strengthened their respondents' resolve towards fulfilling multiple responsibilities in the home and in society (Malik and Courtney, 2011).

In most of the countries around the world, academic hierarchies are not randomly selected, but are rather centralised by the official leading government authorities (Hussain, 1995). Academic women complain about lower salary packages, ranks and publication rates, as compared to their male colleagues (Acker and Piper, 1984; Davis and Astin 2000; Baron, 2004; Chamberlain 2008(cited in Hussain, 1995). Lie et al. (1994) suggest that the gender gap is more apparent amongst administrators of institutions of higher education, but in spite of the fact that a good number of women hold administrative positions in some countries, their power of authority is limited (Hussain, 1995). They rarely exert authority that is associated with policy making decisions (Davis and Austin, 2000 and Lie, et al., 2004; Moore, 2007; Bown, 2009). Unfortunately, uncooperative attitude of the family men make this care-giving and professional responsibilities disastrous for women. Furthermore, it has been painted with religious negativity towards working women; “*educated women can’t be good wives*”(a famous proverb). This situation gets worst when all the household, husband, and his family considered women’s solo responsibilities to look after them as well as provide them all comforts of home (cooking, cleaning, washing), despite of her professional duties. Here, we forget the actual message of Islam and the greatest role-model (The Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him), whom supported his wives and left a *Sunnah* of extreme care and cooperation for the spouses. This double standard of religion has strong patriarchal roots that till date exist in our society.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article explored the ways in which women are excluded from higher education and from holding positions of power in several countries and in particular in Pakistan. By using the dialectical model; thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, I highlight some forcing themes for gender equity in higher education. For example;

Theses: Patriarchy + Women marginalisation in higher education and workplace,

Anti Theses: Equality+ Women elevation in higher education and workplace

Syntheses: Gender Equality in higher education and workplace

Subsequently, I concluded the thesis of male-domination is a worldwide phenomena but it is more strengthen in the Pakistani society, where women have limited access to public life. The anti-thesis is the claim of western society that there is no patriarchy in their society however; my synthesis comprises the differences of cultural and societal norms of the East and the West that defined women role. In Western patriarchy men secured powerful positions as compared to their women. Although women are equipped more literate in their society but missing from top positions because women lacking career ambitions like men (Egerton and Halsey, 2003). Furthermore, in Pakistan, the honour of the family is linked to woman’s sexuality, and that encourages her role as a housewife, so, I synthesized massive differences in the societal set-up of the East and the West and to evaluate theses and anti-theses which grounded my argument on transnational feminism that women’s issues should be addressed within their regional customs and traditions(Grewal and Kaplan,1994) according to their assumption; the third and first world do not face similar kinds of gender oppression. Therefore, women around the world should join hands for collaboration and solidarity to address patriarchy. Similarly, I mentioned earlier, western studies are conducted exclusively on societies that lacking religious-domination and cultural context. However, Pakistani society strongly based in the religious (Islam) and cultural context where the inter-play between religion, cultural and higher education marginalised women’s opportunities in higher education.

Thus, my next thesis was women marginalisation in higher education and at workplace due to a segregated Pakistani society and the ‘over-strict’ societal norms that drew a line between *zanana*

(women) and *mardana* (men) public and private spheres. The middle and lower-middle class are discouraged to enter in co-education environments at all levels of education and work because it is against the honour of the family that women studied next to men class mates and colleagues. Also, it is against their patriarchal religious norms. While in the developed world, co-education does not reduce women opportunities in any intellectual and work atmosphere however, women are under-privileged with decreased wages in the labour market. On the other hand; Islam encourages segregated educational and work environment for both the gender but under-developing economy and infrastructure (such as Pakistan); the Islamic code of dress and attitude should be prevailed in education and workplace environments to avoid women harassment to synthesize this thesis. This might be a reason that we are lacking women role-models in Pakistani society, who could play a key role for women encouragement in accessing higher education and career. The religo-cultural interpretation of the Islamic rulings discourages women to be a best wife and a successful professional. We need such role-models in our society to revisit the existing male knowledge paradigms that pervade Pakistani society. I agree that women should be given equal representation in this process of attaining education. However, women should change their own thinking, first to participate in all academic professions because religion does not put any restrictions on them, and second, for a smooth running of society, women have to work side by side with their male counterparts. Women do not see any women in the Pakistani society who combine being a good wife with a successful education and a career in middle-class because some examples of elite or upper class cannot set examples for common women. Middle-class women generally have to sacrifice one role, which is usually education or career. Nevertheless, this study has given an overview of the issues of gender in higher education within a broader perspective. Further research on gender issues in higher education in Pakistan is strongly recommended to explore different processes and parameters of discrimination which varies from society to society and culture to culture. Different approaches of feminism broaden our understanding regarding the different theories related to gender issues in higher education in different countries. I see the different kind of forces that are silencing women. They remain silenced and that increases their inequality and makes the men more powerful. Different theses of gender and higher education in the neighbouring countries and the developed world have been discussed that may encourage our women to transform their beliefs to defend and fight for themselves by productive, positive arguments with their family men with their due respect. It does not mean they are violating their religion and ethical values. Education (knowledge) attainment is a right of both men and women; a divine right given to both the gender by the Lord of the worlds despite their biological differences.

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