



Analysing Gender Discrimination in Private Educational Institutions: The Role of Societal Norms and Structural Factors

Mudassar Ali¹, Tipo Sultan², Rehan Aslam Sahi³

1. Assistant Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan, Email: mudassar.ali@uog.edu.pk
2. Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan, Email: tipo.sultan@uog.edu.pk
3. Assistant Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan, Email: rehan.aslam@uog.edu.pk

Abstract

This study investigates the presence and social determinants of gender discrimination within private educational institutions in Pakistan. Recognizing that gender-based disparities persist across various societal structures, this research focuses specifically on the educational sector where such inequalities are often normalized. Employing a quantitative research design, the study utilized a multistage stratified random sampling technique to collect data from 250 teaching staff both male and female from different schools. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire, pre-tested for reliability (Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70), and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The findings reveal significant gender disparities in rewards, workload distribution, leave accessibility, professional development opportunities, and upward communication. Female teachers were consistently found to be disadvantaged across these domains. Moreover, the study identifies multiple social factors contributing to gender discrimination, including cultural norms, civil liberties, socialization patterns, and social networking. Interestingly, religion and family norms did not emerge as strong predictors of discrimination in this context. These findings underscore the role of deep-rooted societal structures in perpetuating gender inequality within educational institutions and highlight the need for systemic reforms to ensure equitable treatment and opportunities for all educators.

Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Education, Culture, Social Aspects

Introduction

Gender discrimination refers to the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals based on their gender class, race, sex, or social category, often manifesting through unequal access to opportunities, resources, or social privileges. It is a systemic issue rooted in broader social structures and norms, and is frequently observed across institutions including education where it significantly affects the experiences and progression of individuals, particularly females (Ayalon, 2014; Shoaib & Zaman, 2025). Discrimination, from a sociological perspective, encompasses patterned behaviors and institutional practices whereby individuals or groups are treated unequally based on their perceived or actual membership in a particular social category such as gender, ethnicity, class, or religion. This differential treatment often results in social exclusion or

marginalization, particularly when individuals are subjected to conditions inferior to those experienced by others in similar contexts (Baugher et al., 2019; Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). It is embedded in the everyday interactions and responses that occur within social structures, where initial perceptions and stereotypes shape individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward others, often reinforcing group-based hierarchies and social divisions (Boateng, 2017; Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025b). Such discriminatory practices systematically influence access to institutional resources, entitlements, and privileges, thereby reproducing existing power imbalances. When groups or individuals are denied equitable participation in decision-making processes or access to material and symbolic resources—such as jobs, education, or leadership roles—the resulting social outcomes are inherently stratified (Bruce, Alexis, W., B., & Marshall, 2015; Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025a). This restriction of access through informal norms or formal mechanisms leads to the exclusion of marginalized populations from fully engaging in civic, economic, and cultural life. These exclusions are often shaped by irrational or prejudiced logics that become normalized within institutions and social systems (Chakrapani et al., 2022; Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025). In essence, discrimination constitutes a systemic denial of equal rights and social recognition, effectively curbing individuals' ability to exercise their civic, political, economic, and cultural freedoms (Choudhury, Amit, & Gill, 2023; Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025). This not only challenges the democratic ideal of universal equality but also violates a foundational tenet of human rights: *"all humans are equal in dignity and allow to enjoy same fundamental rights."* Notably, this principle is echoed consistently across international human rights frameworks and treaties. The conceptualizations of discrimination offered in these treaties underscore the shared understanding that differential treatment rooted in social categorization is both unjust and detrimental to social cohesion (Cin, Ecem, & Temiz, 2020; Shoaib, Iqbal, & Iftikhar, 2025).

Despite global commitments to equality, many educational settings particularly in developing countries continue to reflect gendered hierarchies that limit women's participation, advancement, and recognition. The present study critically examines how gender discrimination operates within private educational institutions and how societal norms and structural factors contribute to its persistence.

Objective of the Study:

1. To investigate the presence and forms of gender-based discrimination in private educational institutions.
2. To analyze the role of social factors and institutional structures in reinforcing gender-based inequalities in educational institution.

Review of Literature

Choudhury (2014) analysed those factors that represent the employment opportunities for male and female engineering graduates. The findings of this study open the picture of the whole scenario, that female graduates got lower job offers than male graduates due to socio-economic settings. Engineers work hard in different areas of the country from construction companies to the IT sector and have a lot of stress on their minds. According to society, females look better in houses rather than working on bridges. But this does not present the whole picture, also females get better job opportunities but only those who wish for hard work and try to live in a patriarchal society. Gender discrimination is also present and engineering became the male occupational study. Hays and Morrow (2013) present that women have equal opportunities to work like a male. No one

country became developed without the participation of female workers in every field of economic side. Every industry has equal chances for female workers to refine their products. Women have the right to work safely in everywhere the country. The government should be responsible for providing a safe environment and saving women from sexual harassment. Those countries that have no equal opportunities for both genders became less developed are developing countries. Females were also treated as human beings which gave them equal opportunities to show their talent.

Kuhn and Shen (2010) analysed that Internet job boards provide job opportunities for both males and females. Mostly ads provide job opportunities for males and less number of job opportunities for females. The research presents that the workload of internet models provides better chances for males in internet companies to improve their skills. Females have the same skills but due to their gender, job provider decreases their chances of getting better jobs. Industries have a lot of technical work on the internet, and job ads to running websites of industries higher posts are mostly under the male IT experts due to their gender. Yasin et al. (2010) did empirical research to dig out the two key ideas that are development in the labor force market and salary difference among women and men in Pakistan. They conduct research by keeping in view individual and socio-cultural factors. The study was conducted on secondary data taken from the Labor Force Survey which was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Statistics (2007-2008). The sample for this study contains both lower and upper-level employees. Research shows that gender-based discrimination is increasing with the passage of time and the causes behind this are the level of education, organizational culture, and experience. The study also concluded that married women who have children are mostly discriminated against because they have to give extra time to their family and children and less to their work (Hochdorn, P., V., & Cottone, 2016; Shoaib, 2025a). Pakistani society also does not permit married women to work 9 am-5 pm job. Gender discrimination is a continuing process and it has to be removed for the healthier economic development of the country (Hall, Hubbard, Linda, Qingwei, & Carter, 2023).

The Data and Methods

A quantitative nature of the study has been conducted using a multistage classified random sampling technique to draw a sample of 250 teaching staff including females and males from different schools including primary schools, secondary schools, and higher secondary schools. A cross-sectional survey has been conducted and a structured questionnaire has been administered consisting of different sections. It was pretested from 25 randomly selected teachers and the value of Alpha has been reported as .700 and above. The data collection process takes about three months and it was coded, edited, and also screened. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been employed to conclude.

Results and Discussion

This section has been based on the results of the study and discussion. At this step, data is presented in frequency distribution to observe the responses of every dependent. The primary data analysis depicts that the majority of the respondents were from high schools and also belonged to rural residential backgrounds. It is worth mentioning here that the sample has been split into males and females. About half of the respondents of the study are aged 23 years to 27 years, fresh graduates, and were involved in the teaching and education profession.

Table 1 *T-Test (Gender Discrimination) Group Statistics*

Group Statistics	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Reward	Male	125	32.5440	6.68110	.59758
	Female	125	21.6880	7.85084	.70220
Workload	Male	125	14.1040	4.54516	.40653
	Female	125	19.8960	3.59844	.32185
Leave Availing	Male	125	17.6400	7.95897	.71187
	Female	125	24.2960	6.90841	.61791
Workshops and Training	Male	125	27.5920	5.85593	.52377
	Female	125	17.9920	8.30613	.74292
Upper Communication	Male	125	24.1200	3.96680	.35480
	Female	125	14.4560	6.09667	.54530

There are five types of discriminations; reward, workload, leave availing, participation in workshops and trainings, communication with upper management.

Rewarding

H0: Men receive more rewards as compared to women

H1: Men receive less reward as compared to women

First part has shown that male have higher scores on reward system; it means we reject H1 and accept H0. It indicates males are satisfied on getting rewards and other tangible benefits but female are not. In other words we can say that females were discriminated in rewards system.

Workload Allocation

H0: Females are assigned more duties as compared to males

H1: Females are assigned fewer duties as compared to males

Here H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected because the mean score of females is greater than the mean score of males. It means females strongly agree that they are being allotted extra workload to perform but males are not involved in such extra activities. Males' score on this concept is 14.01 which is less than 19.89 in females.

Leaves Availing

H0: Women face more difficulties in availing leaves as compared to men

H1: Women face fewer difficulties in availing leaves as compared to men

Here H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected because the mean score of women is 24.2960 which is higher than the mean score of men which is 17.6400. It means, in the case of leave availing opportunities females could not avail of leaves as easily as males. Females felt that they were being treated differently in the schooling environment when they applied for leave.

Training and Workshops

H0: Males have more opportunities to attend workshops and trainings

H1: Females have less opportunities to attend workshops and trainings

In this case, H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected because the mean score of males is 27.5920 which is higher than the mean score of females which is 17.9920. It indicates that Males are more satisfied with getting training and workshops and women are less satisfied.

Upward Communication

H0: Males have more opportunities to communicate with top management

H1: Males have fewer opportunities to communicate with top management

The same case is here in communication with top management. Here the H0 accepted and H1 is rejected because the mean difference of males is 24.1200 and mean difference of female is 14.4560. It indicates that males have higher satisfaction index as compared to females. Overall

females feeling discriminated and males were satisfied from different dimensions in the schooling environment.

Table 2 *Independent Sample Test*

Gender Differences	Variance	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Reward	Equal variances assumed	8.659	.004	11.774	248	.000	10.8560	.92205
	Equal variances are not assumed.			11.774	241.81	.000	10.8560	.92205
Workload	Equal variances assumed	10.33	.001	-11.170	248	.000	-5.79200	.51852
	Equal variances are not assumed.			-11.170	235.60	.000	-5.79200	.51852
Leave Availing	Equal variances assumed	7.244	.008	-7.061	248	.000	-6.65600	.94264
	Equal variances are not assumed.			-7.061	243.19	.000	-6.65600	.94264
Workshops and Training	Equal variances assumed	38.30	.000	10.561	248	.000	9.60000	.90899
	Equal variances are not assumed.			10.561	222.84	.000	9.60000	.90899
Upper Communication	Equal variances assumed	37.92	.000	14.855	248	.000	9.66400	.65057
	Equal variances are not assumed.			14.855	213.03	.000	9.66400	.65057

With some descriptive statistics, a t-test was also performed to see the significant difference between these types of gender discrimination. The first result showed that females were being discriminated against significantly as a result of the t-test is highly significant at 0.05 level of significance. T-statistic (11.774) has a value higher than 1.96 which is usually at a 5% level of significance. In addition p-value is (0.000) which is less than 0.05 level of significance and makes this result a significant one. The first part of the table is about F-statistic which evaluates the assumption of homogeneity of variance and results in all parts of this table have depicted that this assumption is not fulfilled in all cases. So second row of each sub-section of the table will be consulted for further t-test results. All other results of discrimination types were also significant at a 0.05 level of significance. It means that females were being exploited and discriminated against by employers in the working organizations, especially in the schooling system.

Table 3 *Group Statistics Social Factors*

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cultural Norms	Male	125	33.1360	5.20134	.46522
	Female	125	18.9440	5.70979	.51070
Religious Factor	Male	125	17.5280	5.74116	.51350
	Female	125	23.1760	5.71227	.51092

Patriarchal System	Male	125	28.5280	5.02345	.44931
	Female	125	28.3280	5.04939	.45163
Civil liberties	Male	124	34.9274	5.83259	.52378
	Female	125	20.1040	8.57023	.76654
Family Norms	Male	125	29.4160	6.27101	.56090
	Female	125	17.5360	6.95440	.62202
Socialization Patterns	Male	125	16.6400	7.35110	.65750
	Female	125	23.5440	6.80074	.60828
Social Networking	Male	125	30.2097	4.93910	.44354
	Female	125	20.8240	7.78550	.69636

Literature has identified seven different factors that have potential roles in gender discrimination; cultural norms, region, patriarchal system, civil liberties, family norms, socialization patterns, and social networking. Males thought that cultural norms, civil liberties, family norms, and social networking have a higher value in discrimination as compared to other factors. On the other side, females thought that they were being discriminated against due to religion and socialization patterns. The patriarchal system is no longer an important concern as its average score is the same in male and female groups. There might be different reasons behind it.

Contemporary Scenario of Gender Discrimination: Today, several disadvantages are faced by women i.e. they are being stacked in particular types of jobs which usually follow status with no skill (Kattari, Eugene, & and Speer, 2017; Shoaib, 2025b). They are less paid and have fewer promotion chances than those of men even the positions where they have comparable qualifications, experience, and skills (Levitt, 2015; Shoaib, 2024d, 2024e, 2025b). In the employment sector, women's identical participation in the labor force in some situations is truly undermined by a determined sexual division of labor (Shoaib, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c; Young 1984). To Young, the family provides foundations of gender-based disparities. It is the family that socializes the female and the male to pre-assume roles in society that's why the roles of the male are unequally valued by society (Manzanera-Ruiz, Carmen, & Gonzalez-Garcia, 2024; Shoaib, 2023b, 2023c). Elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women and empowerment of women are included in the eight-millennium development goals (Martínez Novo & and de la Torre, 2010). In developed countries, a significant development towards these goals has been achieved in the form of an increase in girl's school enrolment and women's workforce participation. However, in developing countries, women have no significant access to the formal labor market (Abdullah, Usmani, & Shoaib, 2023; Shoaib, 2023a). Women do not have even equal opportunities to qualify for administrative posts and higher employment. They are, therefore, less likely to occupy managerial or executive positions. They are left behind in terms of career development and increase in earnings. Peace and balance cannot be created without creating social justice in society (Torales et al., 2023). Social justice is the phenomenon of equality in all spheres of life without discrimination based on gender or sex (Shoaib, 2021). The struggle for the equality of men and women has a long history of almost a hundred years (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024a; Shoaib & Ullah, 2019, 2021a, 2021b; Ullman, 2020). The issue of wage discrimination exists internationally even in developed countries, but in developing countries, women are more vulnerable to discrimination regarding pay & wages.

Women's Status in Pakistan: People have different identities rather than gender, but gender matters much in shaping the social identities of individuals, especially women (Shoaib, Abdullah, Naqvi, & Ditta, 2024; Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, 2024; Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024b). Gender-based discrimination is well documented in South Asian countries. Gender disparities are pronounced particularly in Pakistan (Delavande and Zafar, 2013). The scenario of gender-based discrimination in Pakistan seems rather inconsistent. In Pakistan, on the one hand, Women are a significant part of Pakistani society, they play a vigorous role in the process of development. Women are now much more empowered economically, politically, and socially as compared to those of the previous ages. Participation of women in non-formal and formal organizations has brought the most important changes in their social condition as well as their status within Pakistan. Furthermore, the contribution of women in these organizations is a perfect indication of change in the traditional and cultural norms that limit the free movements of a female in society for social, economic, and political participation. Tooba Reasat also admits in her study that the socio-economic status of women is improving due to female education and their participation in economic activity (Reasat, 2009). Although cultural norms restrict women from availing of these opportunities yet it is true that any deviation from these norms logically causes improvement in women's position in society (Harish, 1991).

In Pakistan, women have prominent political leadership like former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto. She was also the first woman in the world who lead any Islamic state. Dr. Famidha Mirza is another example of political leadership, she was the former speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan. Moreover, Dr. Noorjhan Panezai was the ex-vice chairperson of the Senate. Although these are encouraging examples of women empowerment in Pakistan the other side of the picture elaborates very crucial and interesting facts. It shows an excessive women mortality rate, an increasing gender gap in literacy rate i.e. 45% for women as compared to men i.e. 69% for men in 2009, an alarming rate of violence against women, and a low job participation rate for women i.e. 15% which is lower than the other countries with same GDP (Human Right Commission of Pakistan, 2008). Pakistani society is split and separated along religious, economic, social, political, and ethnic lines and people are still discriminated against based on these lines. Wage discrimination is another crucial phenomenon in Pakistan. Pakistan belongs to the countries where women are facing the problem of wage discrimination. Typically, in Pakistani culture, women are perceived as subordinate to men which becomes the reason for the wage discrimination. Traditionally, women in Pakistan have always been stereotyped as weak people with limited intellect so they are rewarded less than men (Zia et al, 1995). Gender favoritism, specifically, is our expectations about the features of men and women. For example, men, generally, are assumed to be reliable, aggressive, competent, and committed to their professions. Every day, each one of us makes small definitions of individuals based on everyday assumptions that arise automatically. Research has shown that men get more benefits from their activities than those women and even little injustice accumulates over time and causes women to develop at a slower rate than those men.

Conclusion

This study concludes that gender discrimination has been found in private educational institutions and is not only based on single factors but also on social factors involved. There are multiple factors involved to enhance gender discrimination including cultural, socialization patterns, and patriarchy. Generally, it has been considered that the majority of schools are female-dominated and it is interesting to note that women are not enjoying the facilities and benefits as compared to men. Males are given more importance than women, they are assigned high-status positions in

schools, they are given more wages, they feel easy to take leaves, and they feel easy to communicate with higher authority. On the other hand, females are paid less, and they have to work longer hours. Research also explores that many social factors create gender discrimination in private schools. Cultural values, civil liberties, patriarchy, socialization patterns, and social networking are the major factors of gender discrimination in private educational institutions. Religion and family norms are not proven as strong factors of gender discrimination in private schools. This study concludes that gender discrimination is a persistent and systemic issue within private educational institutions. It is not rooted in a single cause but emerges from a complex interplay of sociocultural and institutional factors. The empirical findings demonstrate significant gender disparities in areas such as workload allocation, reward systems, leave accessibility, professional development opportunities, and upward communication. Women, despite being numerically dominant in the teaching profession, experience institutional marginalization in terms of compensation, decision-making roles, and professional recognition. The research highlights that male teachers are more likely to receive higher wages, access to training, and easier communication with senior management, while female teachers face longer working hours, limited leave flexibility, and reduced opportunities for advancement. These patterns point toward a gendered organizational culture shaped by broader societal norms. Furthermore, the study identifies key social factors contributing to gender discrimination, including cultural expectations, socialization patterns, civil liberties, and social networking dynamics. Interestingly, patriarchal structures were perceived similarly by both genders, while religion and family norms were not found to be significant discriminators within this institutional context. Gender inequality in private schools reflects broader societal hierarchies and reinforces structural barriers for women in the workforce. Addressing this issue requires both institutional reforms and societal shifts in attitudes toward gender roles and equity.

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