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GENDER INQUALITY IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The study has been designed to evaluate the effects of gender inequality on academic achievements of the students at tertiary level in Pakistan. Since Pakistan's founding, education has been dominated by men at universities. For example, the University of Punjab has fewer students and is also dominated by men. A study with a quantitative focus has been carried out. Students enrolled in the four-year BS program make up the study's population. The relevant departments have gathered the sampling frame. The representative sample was selected using a proportional random sampling approach. 135 students made up the study's sample. There has been a cross-sectional study. The data was gathered using a structured questionnaire. Socio-demographic, gender inequality, and academic achievements are among the parts that make up the instrument. Randomly chosen 15 students in a pilot study. Students' responses have been measured using an altitudinal scale of (dis)agreement. Statistical analysis has been performed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. According to the study's findings, inequalities in learning achievements are positively impacted by gender inequality in enrollment, the classroom, and the learning environment. In a similar vein, the primary data analysis shows that gender differences in household background and a supportive classroom atmosphere both positively impact learning success disparities.

Keywords:
Gender Inequality, Academic Achievements, Enrollment, Classroom, Accessible Resources.

INTRODUCTION

In higher education, gender inequality is still a major issue. Even though more female students are attending college these days, they nevertheless encounter several challenges (Agu & Aguegboh, 2021; Ahmed & Madrid-Morales, 2021; Barnacle et al., 2026; Shoaib, Rasool, et al., 2025). Particularly in rural areas, some families forbid females from attending school. Obstacles include safety concerns, financial difficulties, and a lack of female educators or leaders. Although things are improving in urban areas, there are still more males than girls working in science and technology (Coate & Howson, 2016; Cooke, 2005; Crimmins, 2022). Students and the advancement of the nation are both impacted by this imbalance.

We must provide equitable opportunities, offer scholarships, and establish a secure workplace in order to address this girls are inspired when they witness successful women around them and feel comfortable (Shoaib, Kausar, et al., 2025). Moreover, it is undeniable that the traditional gender roles, domestic work and patriarchy have a significant impact on academic performance of female students at tertiary level (Shoaib, Ali, & Kausar, 2025). Practically, female university students are constantly facing issues like insufficient campus security, limited mobility, socio-familial pressure in terms of early marriage and unequal access to technology and job opportunities. However, male students often are subjected to socio-economic expectations to enter the workforce early, potentially resulting in academic disengagement or increased dropouts. Cultural traditions, societal conventions, and institutional practices that favor males over women are the main causes of this imbalance (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, et al., 2025c). Because of this, women and girls frequently experience barriers to education, employment, healthcare, and decision-making authority. One of the most significant social concerns covered in sociology, public health, and development studies is still gender disparity. Men and women still vary in many aspects of life, despite the fact that many nations have implemented laws and policies to advance equality. These disparities have an impact on people's general well-being and restrict societies' ability to advance. Therefore, developing a just and balanced social structure where men and women have equal opportunity to achieve requires an understanding of gender disparity. The disparity in opportunities, rights, and obligations between men and women is known as gender inequality (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, et al., 2025b). It happens when someone is treated unjustly based only on their gender. Gender inequality becomes more apparent when these positions limit women's flexibility to obtain resources or participate in decision-making. Differences in leadership roles, job prospects, and income are more examples of gender inequality. In many nations, women are paid less than males for doing the same kind of labor. In a similar vein, women are frequently underrepresented in executive roles and political institutions. The systemic obstacles that keep women from attaining equality with males are highlighted by these disparities (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, et al., 2025a).

Academic achievement is defined as successfully completing learning objectives and educational activities. It is the result of the instruction and learning process that occurs in educational establishments (Shoaib et al., 2024). Academic accomplishment is a measure of how well a student has grasped the material covered in a certain course or program. There are two ways to look at academic success: short-term and long-term. Completing homework, doing well on quizzes, and receiving high grades on class examinations are examples of short-term academic success. Long-term academic accomplishments include reaching significant educational benchmarks like graduating from high school, earning a college degree, or getting professional credentials (Shoaib, Ali, et al., 2025c). Formal evaluation techniques including exams, assessments, projects, and ongoing assessment are typically used to gauge academic success. Teachers can assess pupils' academic development and comprehension abilities with the use of these instruments. When choosing applicants for admission or employment, many colleges and companies take academic achievement into account. As a result, students with excellent academic records frequently have more chances of receiving scholarships for further education and achieving success in the workplace. In the light of these special socio-cultural contexts, a study on gender disparity in tertiary academic performance is timely and necessary in Pakistan (Shoaib, Ali, et al., 2025a, 2025b). The purpose of this study is to examine academic performance gaps between male and female undergraduate students, to identify institutional, socio-economic and psychological factors that lead to these gaps and to make recommendations to the University Administration and policy-makers that may help to create a fair higher education system.

Review of Literature

The study findings outlined that academic performance, access, and opportunity are all impacted globally by gender disparity in higher education at higher education in developing countries (Ali et al., 2024). Similarly, the study findings examined that female participation and success in higher education institutions are typically restricted by societal standards that promote male education (Ali, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2025). Equally, the argument of the study revealed that financial limitations disproportionately impact female students, limiting access to resources, tuition, and prospects for academic success worldwide at university level in developing countries (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, et al., 2025b). Correspondingly, the study findings showed that women are occasionally pressured by cultural norms to marry young, which severely disrupts their route to further education and academic success (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, et al., 2025a). Furthermore, the study findings indicated that in institutions across the world, institutional prejudice may affect research opportunities, mentorship access, and grading at tertiary level in developing countries. In addition, the study findings concluded that women striving for greater academic success nowadays are less motivated and confident due to the absence of female role models (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, et al., 2025a).

The study findings outlined that gender prejudices impede diversity and academic achievement worldwide by discouraging women from pursuing careers in STEM (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, et al., 2025b). Similarly, the study findings examined that male students may feel pressure to achieve financial success, which might impact their academic performance and attention in college (A. Ali et al., 2025). Equally, the argument of the study revealed that the emotional health and academic performance of female students are severely impacted by harassment and hazardous campus situations (Elveren & Moghadam, 2022). Correspondingly, the study findings showed that access to technology and digital resources differs by gender, impacting tertiary academic achievement and engagement levels (Fatima, 2013). Furthermore, the study findings indicated that in tertiary education settings, family support is a critical factor in influencing academic accomplishment for both genders. In addition, the study findings concluded that male and female students' enrollment and academic performance may be impacted by the differential distribution of scholarship possibilities (Harford, 2020).

The study findings outlined that academic progress in varied tertiary education contexts worldwide is further complicated by the intersection of gender and language hurdles (Hart & Lane-Bonds, 2017). Similarly, the study findings examined that female students' study time and academic performance outcomes are frequently hampered by time limitations from household duties at tertiary level in developing countries (Hinton-Smith, 2025). Equally, the argument of the study revealed that in today's global tertiary education systems, policy frameworks occasionally fall short of adequately addressing gender imbalances (Hu et al., 2026). Correspondingly, the study findings showed that academic engagement and accomplishment levels are influenced by psychological characteristics that vary by gender, such as confidence and self-esteem at higher education in developing countries (Isnaini et al., 2023). Furthermore, the study findings indicated that peer influence and social networks affect academic motivation differentially among male and female postsecondary students internationally (Kalaivanan et al., 2022). In addition, the study findings concluded that teaching approaches may mistakenly favor one gender, hurting understanding and academic achievement in higher education at university level in developing countries (Kataeva et al., 2026).

The study findings outlined that although access to mentoring programs improves academic performance, gender disparities in participation and advantages continue to exist worldwide (Kuhn et al., 2023). Similarly, the study findings examined that gender discrepancies between rural and urban areas have a substantial impact on tertiary academic success chances and outcomes (Lipton, 2017). Equally, the argument of the study revealed that female students are more affected by

financial independence issues, which restrict their ability to continue their study and succeed in higher education (MacGregor, 2024). Correspondingly, the study findings showed that gender-based discrimination in the classroom lowers student involvement, self-esteem, and academic achievement worldwide (Molla & Cuthbert, 2014). Furthermore, the study findings indicated that academic progress is influenced by the educational attainment of parents, who may have quite different expectations for males and daughters. In addition, the study findings concluded that the academic achievement of female students at postsecondary institutions around the globe is disproportionately impacted by health concerns and reproductive obligations (O'Connor, 2025).

The study findings outlined that gender neutral access and academic performance in higher education can be enhanced by government policies that support equality (O'Connor, 2019). Similarly, the study findings examined that gender sensitive curriculum promote inclusion and raise academic performance and engagement for all postsecondary students (Orkoh et al., 2022). Equally, the argument of the study revealed that research capacities and academic achievement at universities throughout the world today are impacted by gender differences in technological literacy (Paglialunga, 2026). Correspondingly, the study findings showed that social expectations frequently deter male students from asking for assistance, which has a detrimental impact on both academic performance and mental health (Peterson, 2011). Furthermore, the study findings indicated that certain genders may have more options for internships and careers, which might have a big impact on academic achievement and motivation (Pinho et al., 2026). In addition, the study findings concluded that as a result of greater awareness of gender disparity brought about by globalization, tertiary education institutions throughout the world are currently undergoing revisions (Pritchard, 2007).

The Data and Methods

The study used quantitative research design and the target population was the students in the four-year BS program. The sampling frame was drawn from the relevant departments and a proportionate random sampling was used to make sure that the sampling was representative of the population. A sample of 135 students participated in the study. Cross sectional approach was used in the study, and data was collected using a structured questionnaire. A pilot study was undertaken with 15 students who were sampled randomly to test the research instrument. A Likert type agreement scale was used to determine students' responses. The collected data were statistically analyzed by normality test, Kendall's tau-b correlation and the Chi-square test. The tool consisted of different sections, including socio-demographic, gender inequality in enrollment, gender inequality in classroom, gender inequality in learning environment, supportive classroom climate, gender inequality in residential backgrounds, accessible resources, and inequality in academic achievements. A pilot test has been done on 15 randomly selected students. An altitudinal of (dis)agreement was used to determine students' responses. The collected data were statistically analyzed by normality test, Kendall's tau-b correlation and the Chi-square test.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Var.	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Gender Inequality in Enrollment	15	5	20	12.52	4.112	16.908

Gender Inequality in Classroom	15	5	20	12.90	3.249	10.556
Gender Inequality in Learning Environment	15	5	20	12.52	3.064	9.386
Gender Inequality in Communication	15	5	20	12.50	3.582	12.834
Accessible Resources	15	5	20	13.00	3.040	9.239
Flexible Instructional Methods	39	5	44	13.37	4.272	18.250
Supportive Classroom Environment	15	5	20	12.81	3.208	10.291
Collaborative Learning Opportunities	14	6	20	13.34	3.207	10.286
Policy and Institutional Support	15	5	20	12.91	3.311	10.962
Gender Inequality	56	24	80	50.43	10.705	114.605
Academic Achievements	58	38	96	65.43	11.612	134.844

In this table, the value of range, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, and variation had been provided. The variable gender inequality in enrollment had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 12.52 mean value, 4.112 standard deviation, and 16.908 variance. The variable gender inequality in classroom had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 12.90 mean value, 3.249 standard deviation, and 10.556 variance. The variable gender inequality in learning environment had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 12.52 mean value, 3.064 standard deviation, and 9.386 variance. The variable gender inequality in communication had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 12.50 mean value, 3.582standard deviation, and 12.834 variance. The variable accessible resources had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 13.00 mean value, 3.040 standard deviation, and 9.239 variance. The variable flexible instructional methods had descriptive statistics as 39 range, 5 minimum score, 44 maximum score, 13.37 mean value, 4.272 standard deviation, and 18.250 variance. The variable supportive classroom environment had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 12.81 mean value, 3.208 standard deviation, and 10.291 variance.

The variable collaborative learning opportunities had descriptive statistics as 14 range, 6 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 13.34 mean value, 3.207 standard deviation, and 10.286 variance. The variable policy and institutional support had descriptive statistics as 15 range, 5 minimum score, 20 maximum score, 12.91 mean value, 3.311 standard deviation, and 10.962 variance. The variable gender inequality had descriptive statistics as 56 range, 24 minimum score, 80 maximum score, 50.43 mean value, 10.705 standard deviation, and 114.605 variance. The variable academic achievements had descriptive statistics as 58 range, 38 minimum score, 96 maximum score, 65.43 mean value, 11.612 standard deviation, and 134.844 variance.

Table 2: Normality Test

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Gender Inequality in Enrollment	.130	135	.000	.961	135	.000
Gender Inequality in Classroom	.083	135	.000	.980	135	.000
Gender Inequality in Learning Environment	.093	135	.000	.986	135	.004
Gender Inequality in Communication	.091	135	.000	.986	135	.005
Accessible Resources	.088	135	.000	.983	135	.001
Flexible Instructional Methods	.103	135	.000	.974	135	.000
Supportive Classroom Environment	.102	135	.000	.976	135	.000
Collaborative Learning Opportunities	.121	135	.000	.965	135	.000
Policy and Institutional Support	.124	135	.000	.971	135	.000
Gender Inequality	.106	135	.000	.962	135	.000
Academic Achievements	.105	135	.000	.979	135	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

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The study variables' normality test was confirmed in Table 2. The calculated statistics indicated that the data was not normally distributed based on the significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk values. The data was therefore presented as non-parametric, and the normality of the data provided the basis for further study.

Table 3: Kendall's tau_b Statistical Analysis

Variable	GDIE	GDIC	GDLE	GDCM	ADAC
GDIE	1.000	.424**	.296**	.271**	.199**
GDIC		1.000	.422**	.310**	.279**
GDLE			1.000	.228**	.171**
GDCM				1.000	.256**
ADAC					1.000

There is a moderately good association between gender inequality in enrollment and gender inequality in the classroom (r = 0.424), indicating a strong relationship. There is a moderate correlation between gender disparity in the classroom and gender inequality in the learning environment (r = 0.422), suggesting that classroom inequality has an impact on the learning environment. There is a modest to moderate correlation between gender inequality in enrollment and gender inequality in the learning environment (r = 0.296). Gender inequality in communication (communication inequality) has weaker but still significant correlations with all variables (r = 0.228 to 0.310). Academic achievements (academic achievement) shows positive but relatively weak correlations with all inequality factors (r = 0.171 to 0.279).

Table 4: Kendall's tau_b Statistical Analysis

Variable	ACRC	FLIM	SUCE	COLO	POIS	GEIE
ACRC	1.000	.211**	.197**	.241**	.175**	.165**
FLIM		1.000	.332**	.403**	.259**	.157*
SUCE			1.000	.355**	.285**	.153*
COLO				1.000	.330**	.250**
POIS					1.000	.239**
GEIE						1.000

Collaborative learning opportunities and flexible teaching approaches had the largest positive association (r = 0.403), suggesting a tight relationship between the two. Cooperative learning opportunities and a supportive classroom environment have a somewhat favorable connection (r = 0.355), indicating that cooperation is improved in a supportive classroom setting. There is a moderate correlation between classroom assistance and flexible teaching approaches (r = 0.332). Collaboration learning opportunities and Policy and institutional support (r = 0.330) indicate that collaboration is positively connected with policy and institutional support. Accessible resources has weak but significant correlations with all other variables (r = 0.165 to 0.241), showing that access to resources is related but less strongly. Gender inequality shows weak

positive correlations with all factors (r = 0.153 to 0.250), meaning gender inequality in enrollment is influenced by these factors but at a lower strength.

Table 5: Kendall's tau_b Statistical Analysis

	Variable		Gender Inequality	Academic Achievements
Kendall's tau_b	Gender Inequality	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.294**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	135	135
	Academic Achievements	Correlation Coefficient	.294**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	135	135

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings indicate that academic achievement and gender inequality are positively and statistically significantly correlated (τ = 0.294, p =.000, N = 135). A mild to moderate positive connection is indicated by the coefficient value of 0.294. This association is statistically significant and not the result of chance, as confirmed by the significance value ($p < 0.01$).

Table 6: Chi-Square Test (Academic Achievements)

Sr. No.	Independent Variables	Chi-Square Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-Sided)
1	Gender Inequality in Enrollment	764.373[a]	720	.122
2	Gender Inequality in Classroom	844.814[a]	672	.000
3	Gender Inequality in Learning Environment	767.431[a]	672	.006
4	Gender Inequality in Communication	796.228[a]	720	.025
5	Accessible Resources	800.430[a]	672	.000
6	Flexible Instructional Methods	985.999[a]	768	.000
7	Supportive Classroom Environment	826.908[a]	672	.000
8	Collaborative Learning Opportunities	886.637[a]	672	.000
9	Policy and Institutional Support	947.844[a]	720	.000
10	Gender Inequality	2411.713[a]	2112	.000

There is no statistically significant correlation between gender inequality in enrollment (χ^2 = 764.373, p =.122) and the dependent variable. There is a strong correlation between gender inequality in the classroom (χ^2 = 844.814, p =.000). Additionally noteworthy is gender inequality in the learning environment (χ^2 = 767.431, p =.006). There is a significant correlation between gender inequality in communication (χ^2 = 796.228, p =.025). There are extremely significant correlations between accessible resources, flexible instructional

methods, collaborative learning opportunities, supportive classroom environment, and Policy & Institutional Support (p =.000). A substantial overall link is confirmed by the very significant overall variable Gender Inequality (χ^2 = 2411.713, p =.000).

Conclusion

The findings of the study concluded that there is positive correlation and significant association between gender inequality in enrolment, classroom and the learning environment and the inequality in academic achievements. Further analysis of primary data revealed that there is a positive correlation and association between academic achievements and supportive classroom environment and gender inequality in residential background. The Statistical Analysis also revealed that the provision of accessible resources has a positive impact on the inequality of academic achievements. Furthermore, culturally relevant teaching materials, communication inequality (gender) and the policy and institutional support were discovered to have positive correlation and association with academic achievement inequality. Likewise, there was a positive correlation between collaborative learning opportunities, flexible instructional methods and inequality in academic achievements. The results further showed equitable assessment methods had a positive association with inequality in academic achievements.

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