

GENDER DISPARITY ON TEACHING MATERIALS, COMMUNICATION, INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT, AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study gender disparity in teaching materials, communication, institutional support, and learning achievements of the students in higher education in Pakistan. A quantitative study has been conducted. The students of the BS (4 Years) program in social sciences constitute the population of the study. The sampling frame has been collected from the concerned departments. A proportionate random sampling technique has been used to draw a representative sample. A sample of 316 students has participated in the study. A cross-sectional study has been conducted. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect the data. The tool consisted of different sections, including socio-demographic, gender disparity in enrolment, gender disparity in classroom, gender disparity in learning environment, supportive classroom climate, gender disparity in residential backgrounds, accessible resources, and disparity in learning achievements. A pilot test has been done on 30 randomly selected students. An altitudinal scale of (dis)agreement has been used to measure the response of the students. Statistical analysis has been made using AMOS to measure the effects of the model. Similarly, the study findings concluded that culturally relevant teaching materials, gender disparity in communication, and policy and institutional support have positive effects on disparity in learning achievements. Likewise, the primary data analysis described that collaborative learning opportunities and flexible instructional methods have positive effects on the disparity in learning achievements. Furthermore, equitable assessment methods have positive effects on reducing disparity in learning achievements.

Keywords: Gender Disparity, Learning Achievements, Higher Education, Classroom, Students.

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that several studies have been conducted to examine the disparity in learning achievements of students at the higher education level (Shoaib & Zaman, 2025). However, only a few studies have been conducted to highlight the importance of gender disparity (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025). Moreover, the study findings outlined that students face

challenges of gender disparity in higher education (Ro & Knight, 2016). In addition, challenges of disparity affect the learning achievements of the student at higher education and other educational levels as well (Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). The key findings of the research indicated that institutional support is necessary for students to control the

gender inequalities for a better learning environment (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025b). Hence, this study will minimize the gap and provide insights into gender disparity and an inclusive learning environment at the higher education level. This study aims to examine gender disparity in teaching materials, communication, institutional support, and learning achievements of the students in higher education in Pakistan.

Review of Literature

The study findings outline that segregation in education based on gender frequently leads to unequal educational chances in developing countries (Chen, 2007). Similarly, the study findings examine that girls are discouraged from studying different academic subjects like engineering, which is significantly impacted by social stigmas (Chen & Weikart, 2008). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that more than males, girls' schooling is greatly disrupted by family migration and cultural codes (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a; Chen, 2018). Likewise, the argument of the study reveals that parental support and peer support affect the achievements in educational institutions (Chen, 2005). However, the results of the study articulated that several nations have discriminatory regulations that restrict girls from pursuing formal education at a higher level (Chen, Zhao, de Ruiter, Zhou, & Huang, 2022). Comparably, the study of Chen and Leung (2023) asserted that systemic obstacles to girls' academic progress are significantly impacted by a lack of inclusive policies at the tertiary level. As the analysis of the research reported that girls' confidence in their leadership and decision-making skills is diminished by gender stereotypes, evidence on students' achievements at higher education (Ullah & Shoaib, 2021; Cheng, Hitt, Kisida, & Mills, 2017). Correspondingly, the study findings show that mobile interactive learning sessions and other digital learning platforms significantly affect the learning achievements of the students at higher education (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021b; Cheng & Chen, 2022). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that boys are more encouraged to perform well by the impact of academic settings that are competitive (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Tahira, 2021; Cheslock, Varlinskaya, High, & Spear, 2003). In addition, the study findings

conclude that inequitable involvement in class debates hurts girls' intellectual self-esteem (Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021; Chi, Liu, Wang, & Won Han, 2018).

The study findings outline that collaborative group activities are discouraged by peer biases against girls' abilities in academia (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025a). Similarly, the study findings examine that financial objectives frequently prioritize the education of boys over the needs of girls in computer and educational technology (Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that girls' academic focus is disrupted by dangerous circumstances and domestic abuse (Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that girls' mental and physical growth is limited by the absence of inclusive sports activities and web-based learning programs at higher education in developing countries (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Iftikhar, 2025). However, the results of the study articulated that girls are disadvantaged in obtaining real-world academic experience due to unequal internship possibilities (Shoaib, 2025a). Comparably, the study of Click, Huang, and Kline (2017) asserted that seating arrangements according to gender help maintain division in classrooms with mixed genders in educational institutions. As the analysis of the research reported that scholarships are aimed at specific groups, this results in ignoring comparable chances for talented and impoverished girls (Shoaib, 2025b). Correspondingly, the study findings show that girls are deterred from attending faraway schools due to their fear of harassment while commuting (Shoaib, Zaman, & Abbas, 2024). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that patriarchal household systems significantly limit girls' desires for independence and higher education (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024b). In addition, the study findings conclude that inequitable access to extracurricular activities limits the overall academic growth of girls at the higher education level (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024a).

The study findings outline that the male dominance in academic fields significantly affects girls' mentorship in higher education (Shoaib, 2024c; Cooper, 2016). Similarly, the study findings examine that students' scholastic interests and abilities are influenced by their early exposure to gender-specific toys (Shoaib, 2024a;

Cotton, Smith, Ehrenthal, Green-Harris, & Kind, 2019). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that parents undervalue the abilities of girls, which discourages them from pursuing further education (Ali, Zaman, & Shoaib, 2024; Cristino, Davitt, Hayward, & Leek, 2015). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that recognizing girls' intellectual accomplishments is diminished by society's emphasis on guys' accomplishments, which negatively affects the learning achievements (Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, 2023; Cunningham, Cunningham, Halim, & Yount, 2019). However, the results of the study articulated that classrooms that are gender insensitive contribute to preventing both genders from participating and engaging equally in learning at the higher education level (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2023; Curşeu & Sari, 2015). Comparably, the study of Dahlgren (2017) asserted that in comparable situations, girls' accomplishments are frequently underappreciated in comparison to boys affected with traditional gender roles. The analysis of the research reported that inequitable digital literacy initiatives restrict girls' early acquisition of technology abilities for educational achievements (Shoaib, 2023c; Daller, Kuiken, Trenkic, & Vedder, 2021). Correspondingly, the study findings show that there is tough competition in academic environments, and social anxiety is more prevalent among girls at a higher level (Shoaib, 2023b; Danquah & Mays, 2006). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that armed conflict significantly impacts the learning achievements and learning environment of the students at the tertiary level (Shoaib, 2023a; Darwish & Wotipka, 2024). In addition, the study findings conclude that gender disparity affects assigned leadership roles in educational settings (Shoaib, Usmani, & Ali, 2022; Davis, Nation, Christopher, & Fisher, 2024).

The study findings outline that parents are discouraged from bringing their girls to colleges without adequate security precautions because these learning outcomes are greatly affected (Delany et al., 2016). Similarly, the study findings examine that collaborative learning is very meaningful for the students at a higher level for their achievements (Shoaib, Tariq, Shahzadi, & Ali, 2022; Delgado-García, Conde Vélez, & Toscano Cruz, 2022). In the same way, analysis of

the study pointed out that cultural rituals negatively affect the students' participation in an educational setting (den Daas et al., 2020). Likewise, the argument of the study reveals that girls are affected by social biases to continue to be underrepresented in STEM areas in developing countries (Diaconu-Gherasim, Iacob, & Gavreliuc, 2017). However, the results of the study articulated that disparity in unequal distribution of resources significantly affects the ability to study independently (Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, 2024). Comparably, the study of Doonan, Hamilton, and Johnson (2020) asserted that disparity in grading or evaluation affects the achievements of the students at the tertiary level. As the analysis of the research reported that cultural backgrounds affect better learning opportunities because of traveling (Shoaib, 2024e). Correspondingly, the study findings show that across the nation, insufficient awareness initiatives fail to emphasize the advantages of girls' education (Shoaib, 2024d). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that standardized testing of gender biases hinders females' performance at the university level (Shoaib, 2024b). In addition, the study findings conclude that traditional gender norms affect the mental health of females and academic activities at a higher level (Shoaib, 2024c).

The study findings outline that disparities in gender-sensitive teaching techniques and strategies affect the learning outcomes of the students (Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, 2021; Duffy, Toth, Cullinan, Murray, & Spillane, 2021). Similarly, the study findings examine that minority girls experience double discrimination in educational settings, which significantly affects academic achievements (Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021; Duke, 2017). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that gender based bullying has an impact on the academic achievement and mental health of female students at higher education level (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2021; Egalite & Kisida, 2016). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that girls are deterred from pursuing professions in science by the underrepresentation of women in these fields in Nigeria (Shoaib, 2021; Egara & Mosimege, 2024). However, the results of the study articulated that unequal academic experiences are reinforced by schools with resources that are gender-segregated by effecting

factors of disparity (Ehren, Hutchinson, & Muñoz-Chereau, 2023). Comparably, the study of Erwin, Fedewa, Wilson, and Ahn (2019) asserted that the effects of girls' learning capacity are limited by early childhood schooling, which frequently reinforces conventional roles. The analysis of the research reported that adolescent girls' limited access to health resources prevents them from participating in school (Feldmeyer & Cui, 2015). Correspondingly, the study findings show that disparity in counselling services in schools significantly affects girls' ability to meet the emotional and academic requirements of girls (Fernandes, Loisen, & Donders, 2021). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that cultural stigmas associated with menstruation have an impact on preventing girls from regularly attending school in the Philippines (Figueroa, Lim, & Lee, 2016). In addition, the study findings conclude that gender inequality in the technical education system contributes to decreasing girls' employment prospects in developing countries (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh, & Martin, 2017).

Theoretical Framework: Gender role socialization theory argued that socialization processes helped students to acquire and absorb

gender-related societal expectations and norms at an early age (Carter, 2014). According to this idea, gender roles, behaviors, attitudes, and traits deemed suitable for males and females were taught and reinforced by a variety of social agents, including friends, family, schools, and the media, rather than being biologically set. Early on, kids watch and copy the actions of their parents, siblings, instructors, and media celebrities. They then reacted to these behaviors with positive or negative reinforcement that furthered the conformity to conventional gender standards. Boys are encouraged to play sports and in a competitive environment, whilst girls are motivated to play with dolls and partake in nurturing activities. This theory repeated that deeply rooted cultural norms and expectations that specify what was proper for various genders were the cause of disparities in educational attainment. Children were indoctrinated into particular gender roles from a young age by their parents, teachers, peers, and the media, which had a significant impact on their educational experiences and results. In light of the above-mentioned review, the following model has been developed;

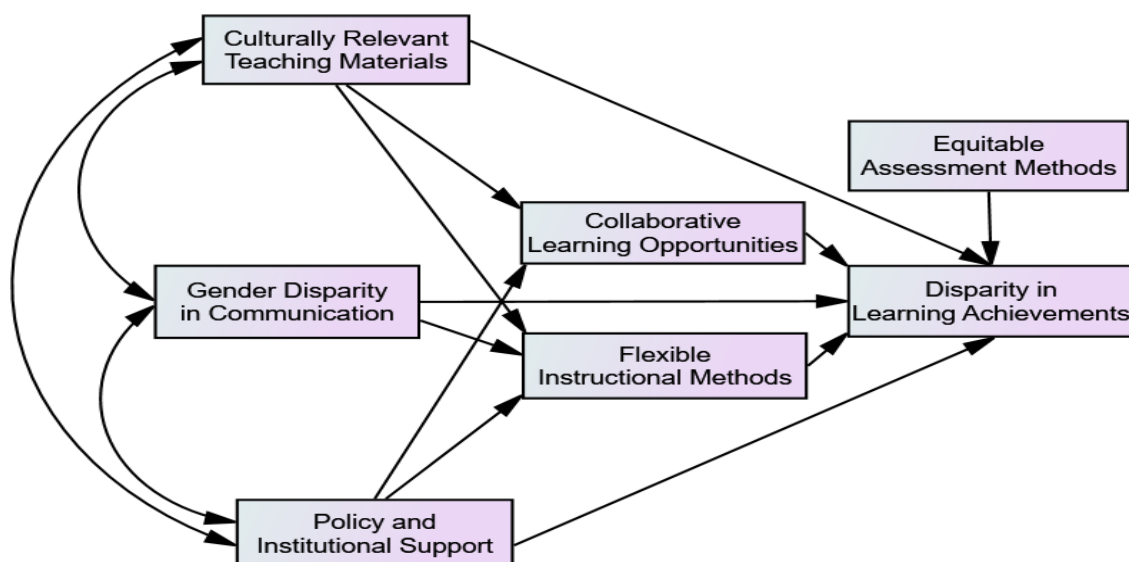


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

The Data and Methods

A quantitative study has been conducted. The students of the BS (4 Years) program in social sciences constitute the population of the study. The sampling frame has been collected from the concerned departments. A proportionate

random sampling technique has been used to draw a representative sample. A sample of 316 students has participated in the study. A cross-sectional study has been conducted. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect the data. The tool consisted of different sections, including

socio-demographic, gender disparity in enrolment, gender disparity in classroom, gender disparity in learning environment, supportive classroom climate, gender disparity in residential backgrounds, accessible resources, and disparity in learning achievements. A pilot test has been

done on 30 randomly selected students (see Table 1). An altitudinal scale of (dis)agreement has been used to measure the response of the students. Statistical analysis has been made using AMOS to measure the effects of the model.

Table 1
Reliability Test

Independent Variables	Codes	Items/Statements	Alpha
Gender Disparity in Communication	GDIN	8	.731
Flexible Instructional Methods	FLIM	8	.704
Collaborative Learning Opportunities	COLO	8	.775
Equitable Assessment Methods	EQAM	8	.728
Policy and Institutional Support	PAIS	8	.726
Culturally Relevant Teaching Materials	CRTM	8	.772
Disparity in Learning Achievements	DILA	8	.804
Overall		56	.908

Results and Discussion

The statistical analysis pointed out that 33.4 percent of the students were enrolled in the third semester at the university. Similarly, primary data analysis revealed that 24.7 percent of students were studying in the seventh semester at university. Likewise, field data described that 16.2 percent of students were registered in the first semester. The statistical analysis pointed out that 83.8 percent gender of the students were female. Similarly, primary data analysis revealed that 16.2 percent of students were male.

The statistical analysis pointed out that 49.3 percent of students were between the ages of nineteen and twenty years. Similarly, primary data analysis revealed that 41.0 percent of students were aged from twenty-one to twenty-two years. Equally, field data described that 3.6 percent of students were aged up to eighteen years. The statistical analysis pointed out that 39.3 percent of the students were matric. Similarly, primary data analysis revealed that 14.0 percent of students were bachelor's degree recipients. Correspondingly, field data described that 1.0 percent were illiterate due to the education of their fathers.

Table 2
Direct Effects of the Model (n=316)

Variables	Standardized Regression Weights	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PAIS → FLIM	.253	.272	.070	3.904	***
GDIN → FLIM	.097	.125	.064	1.955	.051
CRTM → COLO	.187	.211	.077	2.756	.006
CRTM → FLIM	.279	.310	.072	4.292	***
PAIS → COLO	.282	.308	.074	4.160	***
FLIM → DILA	.328	1.320	.069	19.005	***
EQAM → DILA	.298	1.307	.066	19.904	***
CRTM → DILA	.313	1.399	.092	15.286	***
COLO → DILA	.337	1.335	.065	20.404	***
PAIS → DILA	.237	1.023	.089	11.453	***
GDIN → DILA	.076	.394	.078	5.018	***
Variances					

CRTM	16.324	1.318	12.390	***
PAIS	17.448	1.408	12.390	***
GDIN	12.081	.975	12.390	***
e1	17.019	1.374	12.390	***
e2	15.104	1.219	12.390	***
EQAM	16.897	1.364	12.390	***
e3	22.372	1.806	12.390	***
Model Fit Summary: IFI=.902, CFI=.908, NFI=.9014, AGFI=.906, RMSEA=.073, Chi-square = 275.000, df = 7, Probability level = .000				

Direct Effects of the Model

Hypothesis 1: Policy and institutional support, gender disparity in communication, and culturally relevant teaching materials have direct effects on the flexible instructional methods of the students. Hypothesis 1 is accepted that Policy and institutional support ($\beta = .253$) has direct effects on flexible instructional methods of the students, and gender disparity in communication ($\beta = .097$) and culturally relevant teaching materials ($\beta = .279$) also have direct effects on flexible instructional methods of the students. The study findings have been linked with several studies on the subject. The study findings outline that teenage females' school attendance rates are significantly impacted by limited opportunities for education, with several factors (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that unfair exposure to academic competitions restricts the development and self-confidence of girls in developing countries (Laurimäe, Paas, & Paulus, 2022). However, the results of the study articulated that a better learning climate in school education positively affects the performance of students with some factors (Leavitt & Hess, 2019). The analysis of the research reported that unequal distribution of resources greatly affects the learning achievements of students at the university level (Lee & Madyun, 2008). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that cultural disparities in the classroom negatively affect the students' performance and mental health at the tertiary level (Lehmann, 2023).

Hypothesis 2: Culturally relevant teaching materials, policy, and institutional support have direct effects on the collaborative learning opportunities of the students. Hypothesis 2 supported that culturally relevant teaching materials ($\beta = .187$) and policy and institutional support ($\beta = .282$) also have direct effects on collaborative learning opportunities of the

students. The study findings have been linked with several studies on the subject. The study findings outline that teenage females' school attendance rates are significantly impacted by limited opportunities for education, with several factors (LaRocque et al., 2011). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that unfair exposure to academic competitions restricts the development and self-confidence of girls in developing countries (Laurimäe et al., 2022). However, the results of the study articulated that a better learning climate in school education positively affects the performance of students with some factors (Leavitt & Hess, 2019). The analysis of the research reported that unequal distribution of resources greatly affects the learning achievements of students at the university level (Lee & Madyun, 2008). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that cultural disparities in the classroom negatively affect the students' performance and mental health at the tertiary level (Lehmann, 2023). The study findings outline that social norms and gender roles affect the learning opportunities of students with several factors (Lewis, 2009). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that parents often encourage sons more in science subjects, with some influencing factors (Li, 2024). However, the results of the study articulated that students' self-esteem and confidence in various academic areas are impacted by teachers' prejudices in the classroom (Lock, Argentieri, & Shields, 2021). The analysis of the research reported that many girls are forced to leave school early for marriage, which significantly affects their academic performance (Lopata, Miller, & Miller, 2003). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that girls are discouraged from pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics due to gender stereotypes (López-González & Oriol, 2016).

Hypothesis 3: Flexible instructional methods, equitable assessment methods, and culturally relevant teaching materials have direct effects on gender disparity in learning achievements of the students. Hypothesis 3 is accepted that Flexible instructional methods ($\beta = .328$), equitable assessment methods ($\beta = .298$), and culturally relevant teaching materials ($\beta = .313$) also have direct effects on gender disparity in learning achievements of the students. The study findings have been linked with several studies on the subject. The study findings outline that girls are compelled by social pressure to take up household duties, which severely limits their study time and academic advancement (Lusher, 2011). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out the drawbacks of unequal access to technology, girls' declining proficiency in digital literacy, and their prospects for future employment (Magalhães, Carneiro, Limpo, & Filipe, 2020). However, the results of the study articulated that female students are deterred from concentrating on studies that impact learning outcomes by sexual harassment in schools in developing countries (Makowsky & Martin, 2021). As the analysis of the research reported, participation of girls in extracurricular activities that are essential for cognitive development is restricted by traditional gender norms, with several factors (Marc Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that fewer mentorship possibilities for prospective female students significantly affect due to women's restricted leadership responsibilities in education (Marmeleira, Folgado, Martínez Guardado, & Batalha, 2020).

Hypothesis 4: Collaborative learning opportunities, policy and institutional support, and gender disparity in communication have direct effects on gender disparity in learning achievements of the students. Hypothesis 4 is supported, that Collaborative learning opportunities ($\beta = .337$), policy and institutional support ($\beta = .237$), and gender disparity in communication ($\beta = .076$) all have direct effects on gender disparity in learning achievements of the students. The study findings have been linked with several studies on the subject. The study findings outline that the education of children is impacted by parental illiteracy, with girls receiving less support than boys (Martin, Craigwell, & Ramjarrie, 2022). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that boys in competitive fields are given greater academic support than girls, which limits their potential with several factors (Mato, 2016). However, the results of the study articulated that girls are disproportionately burdened with household tasks that affect their study time and frequency of attendance at school (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025; Melius, 2011). The analysis of the research reported that systemic change in education policies that benefit girls is prevented by a lack of awareness about gender equality (Mestry, 2019). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that boys are exposed to more technical innovations than girls, which positively impacts and helps them develop their digital literacy (Mondal & Islam, 2023).

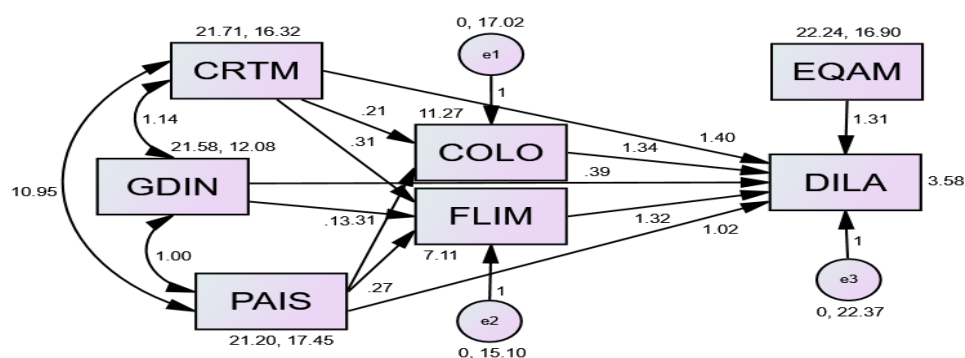


Figure 2: Model Fit Diagram

Table 3
Indirect Effect of Model (n=316)

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
GDIN → FLIM → DILA	0.165	0.012	0.339	0.137	0.032
PAIS → COLO → DILA	0.411	0.217	0.636	0.001	0.095**
PAIS → FLIM → DILA	0.360	0.191	0.551	0.001	0.083**
CRTM → COLO → DILA	0.282	0.001	0.554	0.100	0.063†
CRTM → FLIM → DILA	0.409	0.189	0.639	0.002	0.092**

Significance of Estimates: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.010, * p < 0.050, † p < 0.100

Indirect Effect of Model

Hypothesis 5: Gender disparity in communication, policy, and institutional support, and culturally relevant teaching materials has an indirect effect on gender disparity in learning achievements through the mediation of flexible instructional methods of the students. Table 3 supported that Gender disparity in communication, policy, and institutional support, and culturally relevant teaching materials have an indirect effect on gender disparity in learning achievements through the mediation of flexible instructional methods of the students. The study findings have been linked with several studies on the subject. The study findings outline that textbooks frequently show males in authoritative positions, which reinforces students' biases about gender in developing countries (Mulvaney & Morrissey, 2012). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that dropout rates among girls in high school have an impact on their ability to obtain better economic prospects, with several factors (Muñoz, Ross, & McDonald, 2007). However, the results of the study articulated that girls' access to high-quality higher education is limited by the lack of scholarships (Nam, 2017). The analysis of the research reported that traditional practices place a higher value on marriage than on education, which lowers girls' academic performance in higher education (Nguyen, Rienties, & Richardson, 2020). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that boys are more socially encouraged to take advantage of possibilities for exploratory learning with several factors at a higher university level (Niehues, Kisbu-Sakarya, & Selcuk, 2020).

Hypothesis 6: Policy and institutional support and culturally relevant teaching materials have an indirect effect on gender disparity in learning

achievements through the mediation of collaborative learning opportunities for the students. Table 3 accepted that Policy and institutional support and culturally relevant teaching materials have an indirect effect on gender disparity in learning achievements through the mediation of collaborative learning opportunities for the students. The study findings have been linked with several studies on the subject. The study findings outline that girls' capacity to regularly attend school is greatly impacted by limited access to transportation in developing countries for higher education (Noria, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2009). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that academic gaps between boys and girls are reinforced by the lack of gender-inclusive teaching methods in many educational institutions (Omilani, Akinyele, Durowaju, & Obideyi, 2019). However, the results of the study articulated that girls are discouraged from pursuing ambitious academic goals by the effects of social stigmas associated with women in leadership roles (Oyinloye & Gbenedio, 2010). The analysis of the research reported that traditional societies' beliefs significantly impact the learning achievements of the students at the university level (Park & Holloway, 2017). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that girls are discouraged from taking on leadership roles in educational institutions due to factors of gender conventions (Patterson & O'Brien, 2023).

Conclusion

Similarly, the study findings concluded that culturally relevant teaching materials, gender disparity in communication, and policy and institutional support have positive effects on disparity in learning achievements. Likewise, the primary data analysis described that collaborative learning opportunities and flexible instructional

methods have positive effects on the disparity in learning achievements. Furthermore, equitable assessment methods have positive effects on reducing disparity in learning achievements. The study findings pointed out that several studies had been conducted to examine the disparity in learning achievements of students at the higher education level. Only a few studies have been conducted to highlight the importance of gender disparity. In addition, challenges of disparity affect the learning achievements of students at higher education and other educational levels as well. The key findings of the research indicated that institutional support is necessary for students to control the gender inequalities for a better learning environment.

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