

EXPLORING THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY LEARNERS-A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study designed to analyze the social well-being of female university students because social wellbeing of the female students is one of the important concerns of the female students particularly in Pakistani context. A qualitative phenomenological case study is carried out to focus on graduate and postgraduate students to discover lived experiences and views of ten female participants of SMIU, Karachi. The study follows qualitative methods of data collection and analysis and for that purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. The study topic focuses on how these students deal with social challenges during their university experiences. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and data was analyzed by using a thematic analysis. The findings indicated social challenges were transportation, time management, balanced between personal and academic life, age factors, peer pressure, discrimination, assignment burden. The current research not only throws light on female university learners' experiences but it also provides insights for academic institutions seeking to improve the well-being of female students.

Keywords: Social Well-Being, Female University Learners.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a developing state facing complicated problems such as socially, economically, politically, and religiously. The situation of education, particularly for females, is not good, because even today there are over 22.5 million children who are not attending school, with a substantial percentage of these being girls (UNICEF, 2019). This country has made significant progress in female education in recent decades. Females have shown to be top performers in schools and have taken on several responsibilities in a variety of areas at all levels (Ahmad et al., 2023). They get their own prominence and advance in sectors that were reserved for boys in the past. Unfortunately, this figure is quite little, and gender disparity in families and culture delays

the rate of progress. This could be one of the reasons that accelerate mental health challenges.

Education can also help to improve this dual strain. Arguably the main factor, female educational attainment can have a direct impact on their relationships with their male partners, for example, female having lesser levels of knowledge have a greater feeling of duty towards their partners and families, are substantially less likely to feel appreciated by their partners and close relatives, and lack prospects for profitable professions (Ruppanner, 2009; Jillani et al., 2024). Similarly, SDG 4 focuses on increasing education quality along with expanding educational options and improving access to education (Salman et al., 2023; Ahmad et al.,

2024). The objective is to ensure that all learners' have the information and skills necessary for a sustainable future as well as to attain universal literacy and numeracy also SDG 5 demands an end to all types of violence and discrimination against women and girls. The objective supports equitable access to economic opportunity, education, and healthcare for all people, regardless of gender.

Female university students pass through a complex network of elements that influence their social well-being. Among these elements are cultural expectations, gender norms, peer dynamics, and personal ambitions. Furthermore, they face particular pressures associated with employment choices, academic achievement, and negotiating traditional gender norms (Fetterolf & Eagly, 2011; Jillani, Lashari & Bukhari, 2022). It is a topic of both realistic and academic interest to understand the social well-being of female university students. It has direct consequences for female students' mental health, academic development, and overall enjoyment of higher education. We may learn about the fundamental pressures they face, the support networks they rely on, and the coping mechanisms they employ. This understanding is essential for the growth and support system that concentrate on the particular needs of this population.

As a consequence, the aim of this research is to perform a detailed analysis of female university students' social well-being. The findings of this study can assist institutions, policymakers, and educators in creating more inclusive and supportive environments that promote the social growth and accomplishment of female university learners (Fayaz et al., 2023). Finally, the rationale of this research is to assist women in higher education in having a more equitable and strong educational experience.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Female university learners face unique challenges, pressures and go through a difficult environment dominated by academic restrictions, expectations from society, and developing an identity during university years which can impact their social well-being. The

specific challenges that get and experiences faced by female students are not clearly described. However, some researches are conducted in this area by the researchers, (Zain-ul-abiden et al., 2016; Niaz, 2004; Zamir, 2013; Yasmeen et al., 2021; Farhana Yasmin et al., 2018) but limited, indicating a need for further focused study, there is still a significant gap in understanding their specific experiences and needs. The purpose of this research is to explore and recognize the social well-being of female university students at SMIU Karachi. Understanding female university students' social well-being is important since it has a direct influence on their academic performance, personal growth, and general mental health. Addressing this issue has a larger impact on developing supportive university environments. By learning about their experiences, the effort expects to give significant knowledge that may be used to influence actions regulations, and support systems. There is a significant gap in understanding the social well-being of female university students at SMIU Karachi, preventing the development of focused initiatives and support systems.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the social challenges faced by female university learners at SMIU Karachi.
2. To propose strategies to enhance social well being for female university learners at SMIU Karachi.

Research Questions

1. What are the social challenges faced by female university learners at SMIU Karachi?
2. What are the strategies to enhance social well being for female university learners at SMIU Karachi?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I. Introduction to Social Well-being:

Social well-being relates to our ability to form and sustain meaningful good relationships with others in our lives, such as friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers. Effective social wellness entails not just having relations, however acting responsibly within those interactions and upholding accepted social standards (Cicognani et al., 2014).

According to Samani et al., (2019) social support is a predictor of academic motivation and performance. Higher levels of social compensation promote physical and psychological well-being by increasing self-confidence, competitiveness, and psychological security among university students. Fabio and Kenny (2012) discovered a link between emotional well-being and social reinforcement in schooling. Fernandez-Lasarte et al., (2019) indicated that both social reinforcement and emotional intelligence help students develop and achieve academically in higher education. Social reinforcement, such as acknowledgments or praise, is a crucial factor in overcoming challenges in university life (Cejudo, 2018). It is influenced by families, teachers, and peers (Samani et al., 2019; Buriro et al., 2025). Close friends' praise can increase intrinsic motivation (Lashari & Umrani, 2023; Lashari, Umrani & Buriro, 2021) and contribute positively to coping with new situations, such as university immersion. Overall, social support plays a crucial role in overcoming challenges in university life (Fernandez et al., 2015). Overall, it emphasizes the significance of social well-being for university students, emphasizing the role social reinforcement and support plays in overcoming challenges.

II. Well-being and University Learners

Well-being is a subset of health that addresses persons' physical, mental, and social wellness. The World Health Organization (WHO) determines well being as a state of happiness where a person understand his or her own abilities, can manage at the normal pressure of life, operates effectively and efficiently, and also can help to his or her society (WHO, 2005). As World Health Organization stated that gender is a significant social analyze of health, according to and gendered-based evaluation is necessary to improve women's and men's wellbeing and right to use to health care. According to research conducted in many countries, some health indicators have showed differences between men and women.

Globally and nationally concept of Wellbeing is linked to sustainability, economic progress, and human society, yet is often overlooked in

literature, as it is a crucial aspect of human and human society (Antonovsky, 1996; Dodge et al., 2016).

As the whole, academic difficulties, social changes, and leaving behind support networks are all part of the transition to university life. During this time, the stress on mental health sometimes increases, making university students especially at risk. The worth of providing sufficient support and services cannot be emphasized, since many students with mental health issues do not receive the assistance, they require. Pakistani university students emphasize the need of tackling this issue on a global level, while understanding the specific circumstances that influence students' mental health and the necessity for specialized treatments and support systems in higher education institutions.

III. Challenges associated with University Learners

Del Carmen Triana and Trzebiatowski (2018) highlighted the significant impact of relatives, family, colleagues, and societal pressures on women's work and family life. Females' learners often don't have constant career support due to male family resistance and socio-cultural limitations, as reported (Taghizadeh et al., 2017). Working females face dual roles, potentially affecting their health as they serve their families and perform their jobs separately.

Household tasks and childcare are predominantly assigned to women, who are often undervalued for their roles (Hori, 2010). Both housewives and working women perform more tasks than men, finding it fair. The ratio of women performing 80% of household tasks is 85%, including routine tasks like cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, and daily meal preparation (Carriero, 2011). Social change, on the other hand, refers to the way in which students participate in campus activities, are incorporated into the social environment of university dorms as well as the broader university culture, meet new people and make friends, and manage with difficulties such as missing their families or loneliness (Javed, 2016).

The study investigates at the challenges that postgraduate female students experience in Pakistan. The study identified personal challenges, such as family responsibilities, financial issues, and lack of support services, affect learners, married female learners are particularly affected by these barriers. Institutional barriers include financial difficulties, tuition fees, and lack of prior learning and academic credentials. Dispositional barriers involve low self-esteem, over-ageing, overburdened, exertion and incompetence in communication skills. Academic hurdles include literacy, computer skills, information processing, and assignments. Such challenges affect students' academic achievements and need reasonable focus in order to increase performance (FarhanaYasmin et al., 2018).

Traditional gender roles and labor divides hinder female's educational opportunities, causing physical and mental stress. Missing courses owing to family responsibilities impedes academic development and future opportunities. This can lead to low self-esteem, unrealized potential, and a lack of empowerment. In these situations, the gendered division of labor and lack of support for women can have a detrimental impact on their overall wellbeing, restricting their prospects for personal growth and achievement (Uddin et al., 2021). Women's decision-making authority is directly impacted by education, according to research. Women who are educated have a better knowledge of how society makes decisions and contribute to gender equality. Higher education brings considerable societal advantages, including increased female production and engagement in nation-building, as well as economic and social progress (Nawaz et al., 2021). Female university students confront challenges such as socialization, managing their money, language acquisition, sexual harassment, staff-student interactions, and academic concerns. University students rely on their parents, friends, and senior students for assistance, but they seldom contact teachers or use university resources. During the semester, they experience dread, astonishment, and anxiety, and they are concerned about academic results, failing, pressure from peers,

sexual assault, and becoming pregnant (Thuo & Edda, 2017).

In conclusion, global and local influences impact the social well-being of female university students. It can be defined globally by multiple aspects of well-being, cultural influences, and the connection between well-being and mental health. Traditional gender norms, financial restrictions, and the challenges of handling family and academic commitments all have an impact on the well-being of female university students in Pakistan. Addressing these concerns is crucial for promoting the well-being and empowerment of female higher education students.

IV. Pakistani Society and Challenges faced by Female University Learners

Pakistan confronts challenges as a result of its low priority for higher education, World Bank (2000), will make it more difficult for developing nations to profit from the global knowledge-based economy. Since 1947, Pakistan's higher education system has underperformed, with a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of only 10% in 2015-16. This is far lower than in many other South Asian nations. Despite a rise in female enrollment from 36.8% in 2001 to 47% in 2014, Pakistan remains far from gender balance. The government invests just 2.7% of its GDP on education, compared to the 4% suggested by UNESCO for all developing countries (MFEPT, 2017). The study was conducted Irum et al., (2015) at the problems that female learners in Sindh, Pakistan's higher education institutions confront, emphasizing the need of equal career and admission possibilities. Even with an increase in enrolment in large cities, female learners in higher education still face mistreatment, harassment, and a lack of equal opportunity and empowerment.

In Pakistan, female education is often neglected by society and state, with limited opportunities for higher education and professional degrees. The female literacy rate reveals that investment in human development tends to favor men over women, leading to increasing gender inequality in the education sector over time (Mehmood et al., 2018). Females face gender discrimination in

Pakistan as a result of the country's socio-cultural atmosphere. Due to unequal socioeconomic growth and the effect of tribal, feudal, religious, and social forms on women's life, their position is greatly separated among classes, regions, and the rural/urban gap. Females require family support for education, covering tuition fees and transportation, and often rely on male family members for financial and physical safety (Pervaiz et al., 2011).

In Pakistani society, female learners are traditionally confined to homemaking roles, but their increased role as earners has significantly impacted their time and vitality. Balancing work and life is a challenge, especially for female academics entering the workforce during critical periods like marriage and parenthood. The study investigates the work-life balance of female academics in Pakistan, focusing on the experiences and factors influencing it and the support they receive from both work and home domains. The dynamic natures of the academic sector and increasing women's participation in the labor force have made it challenging for women to achieve a satisfactory work-life balance (Naseem et al., 2020).

According to a study by Ali, Krantz, Gul, Asad, Johannson, and Mogren in 2011, in Pakistani society men are the head of the family, responsible for financial matters, house budget management, and decision-making. Females are expected to be submissive, obedient, sacrificing, and unselfish due to their low education level. They are also considered homemakers, responsible for cleaning, cooking, childcare, and serving family members. In the past, women were responsible for caring for animals, gathering food, and bringing water from wells. These heavy roles lowered women's health and limited their independence in the market. They were dependent on men's permission and had limited access to financial matters (Sadaf & Siegmann, 2004). Working females play a dual role in providing finance for family needs, often working domestically such as stitching, weaving, and embroidery. They have limited access to field work and are not allowed to work in formal settings. Women's

working hours are higher than men's, with an average of 50 hours per week. This can negatively affect women's health, leading to depression, fatigue, and stress. However, education trends are changing (Isran & Isran, 2014).

Overall, Pakistan's higher education production confronts severe issues due to poor prioritization, gender norms, and restricted access to excellent education. As female learners are still expected to complete traditional duties, balancing these tasks can cause tension and shame. Female academics in Pakistan face challenges in work-life balance, cultural and institutional limitations, and traditional gender conventions, which can lead to mental health issues. Male preference in families, along with the widespread belief that women should primarily perform domestic responsibilities, restricts female students' academic goals. Males traditionally hold decision-making duties, control financial concerns, and lead the family in Pakistan's patriarchal society, while females are expected to complete domestic chores. To overcome such barriers and promote equality among males and females, it is critical to address these issues holistically and to promote the significance of female education. Addressing these problems requires increased government funding, a change in societal attitudes towards gender roles, and a comprehensive strategy to empower and support female learners in their goals of education and professional development.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology used for this study is qualitative approach, 'To identify the concepts, opinions or experiences, it involves collecting and analyzing of non-numerical data'(Walliman, 2021). One of qualitative research's advantages is that it provides broad contributes of people's feelings, ideas, experiences, and motivations for their acts, making it a great tool for understanding human behavior (Denzin, 2008). The present study is conducted by phenomenological method as "Phenomenology is an investigation concerning the way we understand things from person's personal point of view" (Smith

2018). The strength of phenomenology research is to focus on each individual's daily experiences (Denscombe, 2008). It is largely concerned with offering descriptions rather than explanations (Denscombe, 2008). The researcher chose phenomenological approach because it helps to insights participant's experience.

Population

All female students of Graduate and Post Graduate of SMIU Karachi are the population of this research. Ten female participants are the sampling for this research. Purposive sampling techniques are used in sampling method. The researcher first defined the goals and criteria for choosing participants. Then researcher identified and accessed the targeted group such as gender, academic level enrollment status and specific experiences by collaborating university departments and contacting students' organizations also used personal networks to use existing contacts within the university to spread the word and meet participants. The researcher also ensured the recruited participants by a short survey asking about their field of study, academic level and other relevant factors.

Data collection method

Data is collected through in-depth semi-structure interviews, where carefully crafted open-ended questions guided the conversation. This method allowed participants to express their opinions and experiences in depth due to its ongoing and responsive nature. Each participant was interviewed one-on-one for a focused and personalized engagement. Interview questions were examined by the expert of Education department of SMIU for validation. Prior to implementation, the questionnaire

underwent content validity testing, which included expert evaluations to determine the relevance and appropriateness of each item.

Ethical Considerations

For ethical consideration, consent letter was given to the participants by the researcher. Throughout the study procedure, ethical rules and regulations is rigorously observed, the privacy of participants and confidentiality is protected. Researcher used appropriate methods to determine trustworthiness of this study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis

Data was analyzed through thematic analysis; it is a process for recognizing, assessing, and reporting data patterns (themes), (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To identify significant findings from the interview data, researcher used an organized approach while doing theme analysis for this research. First, researcher transcribed the interviews to ensure an in-depth understanding of the views expressed by the respondents. Subsequently, researcher engaged herself in the data to discover common themes and important expressions. Next, researcher created initial categories that highlighted major concepts and themes arising from the narratives. Through an ongoing comparison approach, the researcher simplified and organized these categories into broad themes that captured the main ideas of the data. The themes were carefully reviewed and modified to ensure they correctly reflected the participants' experiences. This continuous procedure enabled a more detailed interpretation, providing important perspectives into the study issues and contributing to a comprehensive, contextually based analysis.

Social Challenges

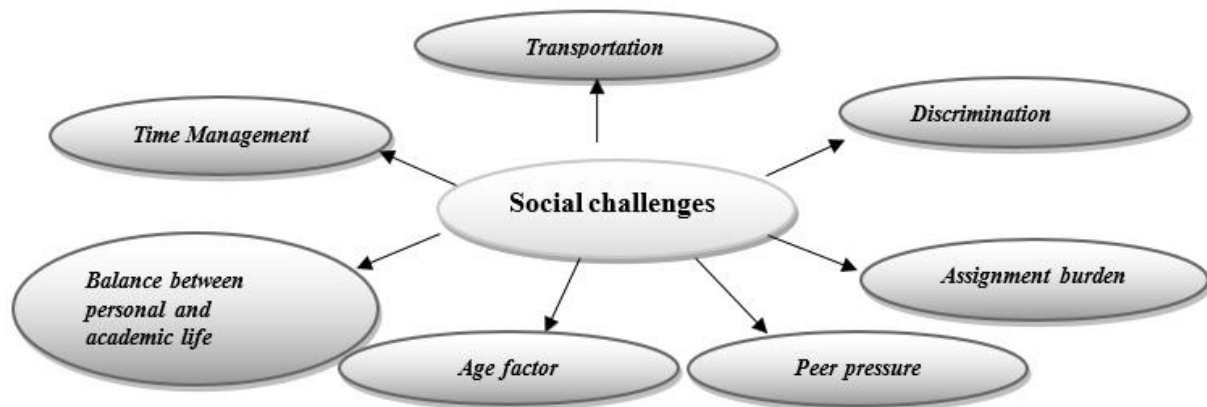


Fig 1. Sub-themes of Social Challenges

i. Transportation

According to female universities students who face obstacles like safety concerns especially during evening hours. Public transportations are not reliable which makes source of anxiety, harassment and uncomfortable situations affect females disproportionately during travel. Limited transport is also a factor that impacts the ability of females to participate in extracurricular activities and evening classes and hinder their overall university experience. "I face transportation issue when I travel to university it makes very difficult for me at times and makes me very tired." (R.P.2)

Overcrowding, security, harassment, a lack of automobiles, and cultural concerns with travelling with the opposite gender are all issues in Pakistan. The majority of students use public or private transportation as their primary means of transportation; however, just a minority of students is able to reach their destinations using these forms of transportation. Educational institutions have a restricted number of transit options, which are also neglected due to the current security environment and threats. According to the report, many brilliant female students do not complete their studies as a result of this problem, causing a significant loss to the country (Fardows et, al, 2018).

"When I travel in a bus, there are so many men, staring at me that makes me uncomfortable." (R.P.4)

A study found that transportation is a challenge reported as a factor that affects the female learners' education (Chauhan & Kumar, 2022).

Overall, the literature supports that transportation is a challenging issue for female university learners that affects the well-being of female students. The investigation of transportation challenges for female university students shows a complicated network of barriers that have a major impact on their educational experiences. The primary results highlight the generality of these challenges, which include issues such as safety concerns, a lack of dependable transportation choices, and the interplay of gender with other characteristics such as socioeconomic position. Female students are particularly impacted by a lack of accessible and cheap transportation choices, limiting their capacity to fully engage in academic work efforts.

ii. Time Management

Female participants stated that they face time management issues, they juggled academic commitments, personal responsibilities and somehow societal expectations, balancing course work, assignments and also exams with other responsibilities of life like family obligation for jobs may create challenges also maintaining a healthy work-life balance and effectively allocating time. Societal pressure is another factor that adds complexity to manage their time.

"I face challenges like fulfilling all my responsibilities as a mother, as a housewife and I have to look after my family and my studies and also my job the biggest challenge for me while I'm enrolled in university." (R.P.2)

According to the study's findings, time management issues are a hindrance to students' academic success (Farhana Yasmin et al., 2018).

"I am married and mother of two children because being a single mother I have to spare time and I have to take care social, emotional and psychological needs of my children, so this is challenging." (R.P.5)

Single mothers face the greatest disadvantage; the issues of paying time at work for studies and childcare were closely linked to what were frequently unstable financial situations (Reay et al. 2002).

Overall managing time along with all responsibilities is challenging for female learners as literature reveals it. The study of female time management issues among university students brings light on crucial factors impacting their academic efforts and general well-being. The major findings highlight the complex balance that female students must achieve between academic obligations, personal commitments, and possible societal expectations. Shortage of time are common, showing factors such as the burden of caring duties, unequal distribution of family duties, and cultural pressures that negatively affect female students. It was concluded that female students have different time demands than male students, and that a supportive and adaptable academic environment is required. A university or educational institution should actively develop policies conducive to work-life balance, provide time management resources, and provide support for female students in navigating the challenges they face.

iii. Balance between Personal and Academic Life

It is tough to balance personal and academic life for female university learners because of expectations from society and family females feel pressure to do well in studies while handling additional responsibilities passing discrimination in academics can make it even more challenging for female to balance it.

"I can't focus hundred percent on my studies and the learning time for me at university is when I sit in the class and I attend the lecture

because I have to work for my children and winding up all these responsibilities." (R.P.6)

According to this study, female academics find it more difficult to achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life than male academicians. This outcome is also in line with many other study findings. This can indicate that traditional gender expectations continue to exert pressure on female learners and employees. It is proposed that universities give seminars and psycho-training to academicians on work-life balance, time management, and stress management, as well as psychological counseling help inside the institution (Helvaci et al. 2017).

"I face difficulties because I am doing job and some of my family responsibilities." (R.P.4)

Female academics have a work-life balance difficulty due to the variety of employment tasks they must play at university, as well as the gender stereotypes imposed by Pakistan's traditional society. Overall, the findings indicate that the varied responsibilities of female academics in Pakistan, the structure of higher education, and Pakistan's socioeconomic setting create distinctive circumstances for female academics to achieve work-life balance (Naseem et al., 2020).

In whole, female learners confront obstacles while balancing personal and academic life according to the literature. A conclusion emphasizes the necessity of identifying and resolving societal and cultural expectations that lead to the imbalance between personal and academic life. Female students may be particularly affected by these expectations, leading to feelings of guilt, stress, and fatigue. Universities play a critical role in creating an atmosphere that promotes a balance between work and life, encourages open debate about these issues, and provides resources to assist students in effectively managing conflicting demands.

iv. Age Factor

Age factors bring challenges like expectations from the society about when to study, work, get married or have a family for female learners. Age-related beliefs were discussed, particularly for senior students returning to university after a gap. The feeling of being 'too old' for some educational efforts were

noted as a social issue. Older students find it harder to balance studies with family responsibilities and feel different from younger peers on energy point of view. It creates more concerns about career opportunities, finances and also adapting to new learning method.

"I have joint university after 4 to 5 years gap so in starting classes I feel like maybe I am a bit senior than the other students." (R.P.9)

A previous study found that senior-age students face similar challenges. Among the challenges faced by mature students are family pressures and employment demand that compete with their studies, as well as financial issues associated with abandoning full-time employment (Stone & Shea, 2013).

"I would like to quote here that people ask from me, oh you have studied a lot so if you have studied a lot, then again you are thinking about studying or what do you have to do by studying or how far do you have to go or what will you do by studying?" (R.P.6)

According to research on senior aged learners, returning to study after a long break is a tentative and dreadful process (Hinton Smith 2009, & Kasworm, 2010).

Thus, age-related considerations present unique barriers for female learners, impacting cultural expectations about, job, marriage, and family. Senior students, in particular, find it more difficult to achieve a balance between studies and home duties, and they frequently experience a mismatch in energy levels when compared to their younger classmates. Concerns about employment chances, economics, and adjusting to new learning techniques are among the hurdles. According to studies on senior-aged learners, returning to study after a long break is an uneasy and scary process. Discoveries that emphasize the common challenges experienced by senior-age students, such as family responsibilities, career commitments clashing with education, and financial limits connected with discontinuing full-time employment.

v. Peer Pressure

Female learners often feel pressure to excel academically complete with peers or their toxic behavior may sometimes hinder in their

academic activities. Experiencing pressures may affect the confident and interest of the female students.

"I feel peer pressure sometimes peers become little bit toxic too so I feel just run away from it." (R.P.8)

Peer pressure has the greatest impact on learners. Individuals' thoughts may readily be shaped at that level, and individuals can quickly become involved in criminal behaviors. The individual believes that if they do not follow their peers' or peers' interests, they will be left alone. Fear of loneliness motivates individuals to join a peer group that may be engaging in undesirable activities (Brown, 2004).

"I feel difficulty to interact for example in a group activity when I try to do something like activity then peers are not satisfied, like they ask a lot of questions and I answers them but when I ask, they do not response me positive." (R.P.6)

Nisar, Ullah, Ali, and Alam (2015) investigated how peer pressure might contribute to illegal behavior. Young people spend more time with their peers than elders. Peer pressure has the greatest impact on youth. Peer pressure causes youth to adapt to differing requirements, behaviors, and values. Individuals' behavior was influenced by their peers. If a peer group has a negative impact, it leads to a bad character formation since people spend the majority of their time with their peers.

Thus, peer pressure is a social challenge that affects the learner's well-being and may create obstacles to participate in academics activities. Finally, the investigation of female peer pressure difficulties in the university context demonstrates the important influence of social factors on female students' experiences. Results highlight the complex nature of peer pressure, which includes academic competitiveness, body image standards, and lifestyle choices. Peer pressure has a widespread impact on female students, contributing to increased stress, anxiety, and a sense of inadequacy, eventually hurting their general well-being and academic performance. Findings show the importance of having a friendly and welcoming educational institutions atmosphere that develops healthy

interactions among female peers. Educational institutions play an important role in raising awareness about the possible negative effects of peer pressure and in giving resources to students to help them build tolerance and confidence in managing social situations.

vi. Discrimination

Learners face challenges due to discrimination based on ethnicity, language, and culture. The unfair treatment in academic affects their confident. Some participants felt that teachers favored certain students based on background or ethnicity, contributing to a sense of inequality. Discrimination also creates a difficult learning environment; unequal opportunities can make hindrances for learners' abilities. Students' statements expressing emotions of separation and discrimination based on language emphasize the negative impacts of such unjust treatment on peer relationships and a sense of belonging.

"I have felt that some of the people linguistically given priorities, if somebody starts discriminating who is new in the domain so that's I have critically seen." (R.P.1) Discrimination was associated with worse grade point averages and self-esteem, as well as an increase in depressed symptoms, discomfort, and somatic problems (Huynh & Fuligni, 2010).

"I feel that some teachers give preference to certain students based on their background so I don't feel connected with other peers." (R.P.8)

Discrimination by teachers is one possible cause of these educational differences (Diehl & Fick, 2016; Farkas, 2003; Mickelson, 2003). Although research has consistently shown that perceived racial-ethnic discrimination has a negative effect on learners' well-being and academic outcomes (Civitillo et al. 2023).

Finally, the common issue of discrimination in the academic setting has an important impact on learners, weakening their confidence and hindering their academic and personal growth. Furthermore, research also found that discrimination has a considerable influence on academic performance and mental well-being, showing as poorer grade point averages, worse self-esteem, and

heightened feelings of despair, discomfort, and sensory disorders. Addressing and overcoming gender-based discrimination in education is critical not only for building an inclusive learning environment, but also for developing each learner's full abilities, free of systematic biases.

vii. Assignment Burden

Some participants stated that they have a lot of assignments burden and this is a challenge which they face in each semester. For all assignment learners need to read it and understand it properly and then searching it from authentic resources is a bit challenging for learners because it needs focus and time. It becomes difficult for them to cope up all the things and responsibilities which create stress and make them anxious.

"I feel that sometimes I am not able to manage things such as my assignments, quizzes and exams along with my other responsibilities which create a lot of stress for me." (R.P.3)

According to the findings of the study, respondents' perceptions of their academic careers suggest that they suffer stress as a result of a severe workload that causes emotional and physical exhaustion, as well as whenever they receive new assignments (Hamjah et al. 2015). Assignments, without a doubt, provide information on students' learning growth as well as information on how to enhance the course, and they also assist teachers in selecting appropriate resources for teaching practices but it has to be at reasonable number (Ismail, 2005).

"I feel achieving all the targets and submitting assignments on time is a bit challenging." (R.P.2)

Although all of the assignments were not very big, and some weren't even graded, they were still challenging because the learners had to spend a lot of time to read and understand what each assignment is required. Researchers found having assignments burden is a challenge (Fook & Sidho, 2014).

Thus, the assignment burden is a challenge for female university learners to manage and submit these on time along with other responsibilities which affects the well-being of female learners. Collaborative efforts among

academic institutions, teachers, and student support services are required to address the difficulties of assignment burden for female university students. Universities can actively contribute to an environment where female students are successful academically while

maintaining their complete health and well-being by implementing strategies that promote a balanced workload, offer specific support, and grow a culture of empathy and understanding.

Other Social Challenges Findings



Fig 3.Sub-themes of Other Social Challenges

Finding highlighted that economic pressure or financial issues appeared as a reoccurring subject, with participant expressing their difficulty in bearing the financial weight of higher education on their own. The necessity to work while learning to fund expenditures added stress and time limits. The impact of traditional gender roles, including cultural pressure to choose marriage over education was reported. The fight against stereotypes and the need for more possibilities for women to go after their education and jobs were emphasized. Worries about cultural pressures around marriage were also experienced. The expectation to choose marriage above education was viewed as a serious hurdle, affecting her confidence and attention to academic efforts.

Finding revealed that empowerment and confidence are critical components also emphasized the need of building confidence in female students in order to overcome societal expectations and achieve their educational ambitions. Infrastructure and facility difficulties included a lack of adequate common room for prayer or lavatory facilities for females, making it impossible for women to take breaks and attend to personal requirements during the academic day. Finding highlighted balancing familial and cultural expectations with academic objectives

became a social problem. Experienced resistance from family and friends who refused to accept or support their educational goals. It was also reported that complications in administrative procedures, difficulties with university administrative processes, such as delays in acquiring essential documentation and facing roadblocks when requesting assistance from administrative offices.

According to the finding, female participant expressed discomfort due to societal looks and judgments. The harsh criticism suffered for personal choices, looks, and education was seen as a serious societal problem. Finding explored social problems, particularly those linked to domestic responsibilities and societal expectations, influenced mood and relationship with peers. This includes situations of being harsh or less communicative because of the burden of duties. Finding revealed that feeling disconnected as a result of absence and punctuality. Irregular attendance, typically assigned to family and official commitments, restricted the development of personal connections with classmates and teachers. It was also reported that safety concerns, harassment at bus stops, particularly during the early or late hours, have increased awareness of the need for a safer environment. According to the finding, feelings of

separation from family and friends as a result of time limitations caused by academic commitments. The schedule of examinations and late-night lectures increased family members' concerns about the safety of female students travelling late.

Overall, the social challenges experienced by participants in this study were many and significant, reflecting the complex the connection of cultural expectations, economic demands, and gender roles in higher education. Economic boundaries, particularly the burden of paying for university on one's own, added stress and time difficulties as participants' balanced job and learning. Empowerment and confidence building were emphasized as critical components, particularly for female students trying to overcome cultural expectations. Infrastructure and infrastructure issues, such as inadequate facilities for women, created new challenges. Married or single moms were burdened with caring for children as well as dealing with emotional and psychological concerns, which distracted attention away from education. Conflict from family and friends, administrative complexities, public attention, and safety concerns all increased the social challenges. The impact went over academic achievement to include emotions, peer connections, and overall well-being. Overall, the findings indicate the importance of comprehensive support structures to meet the diverse range of social issues that students face during their academic journey.

FINDINGS

The main findings of this study indicated social challenges are transportation, time management, balanced between personal and academic life, age factor, peer pressure, discrimination, and assignment burden.

DISCUSSION

The various challenges faced by female university students, with an emphasis on their influence on well-being, learning experiences, and personal growth. This discussion summarizes significant study findings, highlighting the interconnection of female students' challenges, which include transportation, time management, societal

expectations, discrimination, and financial constraints, social and academic responsibilities. The analysis identifies travel as a crucial factor influencing female students' well-being and academic engagement. Safety concerns, a lack of adequate transportation options, and the interaction of gender and economic factors all contribute to a complicated web of hurdles. As a study reported that transportation is a challenge as a factor that affects the female learners' education (Chauhan & Kumar, 2022). Furthermore, female students have considerable time management challenges as they combine academic duties, personal commitments, and cultural expectations. Female learners face time management issues, they juggled academic commitments, personal responsibilities and somehow societal expectations, balancing course work, assignments and also exams with other responsibilities of life like family obligation for jobs may create challenges also maintaining a healthy work-life balance and effectively allocating time. Research showed time management issues are a hindrance to students' academic success (Farhana Yasmin et al., 2018). The findings highlight the ongoing impact of societal and cultural expectations on female learners. The pressure to conform to traditional gender norms, choose marriage over education, and suffer discrimination has a major effect on their confidence and academic performance. Although research has consistently shown that perceived racial-ethnic discrimination has a negative effect on learners' well-being and academic outcomes (Civitillo et al. 2023). Institutions are recommended to aggressively address these difficulties by creating a friendly and responsive academic atmosphere, encouraging work-life balance, and giving services for managing social expectations. Senior female students have specific challenges, such as balancing education with family responsibilities, job worries, and adjusting to changing approaches to education. According to Kasworm (2010) research on senior aged learners, returning to study after a long break is a tentative and dreadful process. Returning to study after a gap is described as a difficult process, emphasizing the importance of

personalized support for these students. Social issues, such as peer pressure, enhance female students' stress, anxiety, and feelings of inferiority. Discrimination complicates these concerns, affecting academic performance and mental health. Institutions are encouraged to develop an environment that promotes healthy relationships and increases awareness about the risks of peer pressure. Economic challenges are an ongoing subject, with female students having difficulty carrying the financial burden of higher education. According to Oswalt and Riddock (2007), female university students experience financial, career, and academic stress, which can have an influence on their well-being. To better comprehend their sense of well-being, literature on managing conflicting roles, developing coping skills, and sustaining social support is reviewed, with an emphasis on the obligations of female PhD students. Collaboration among academic institutions, professors, and student support services is encouraged to reduce assignment responsibilities and financial stress. Research also indicated that students suffer stress as a result of a severe workload that causes emotional and physical exhaustion, as well as whenever they receive new assignments (Hamjah et al. 2015). Overall, the research reviewed here gives an in-depth understanding of the challenges that female university students face. Addressing these difficulties needs a holistic strategy that includes institutional assistance, awareness, and empowerment. Universities may establish an atmosphere in which female students succeed intellectually and personally by recognizing and actively looking to reduce challenges connected with academic, financial, and emotional obligations. This study emphasizes the need of taking into account female students' overall well-being when developing higher education policy and support services.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological case study on the social well-being of female university students in Karachi gave unique perspectives into the lived experiences of ten graduate and postgraduate female students. The findings

provide light on the complexities of their social environment within the academic framework, showing complex themes and patterns. The perspectives of the participants provide light on the challenges and achievements they face while handling social situations during their academic journey. Based on the findings, the study not only adds to the current body of knowledge on the issue, but it also has practical consequences for higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To improve transportation issue as a social challenge for female university students, local governments and institutions should work together to create a safe, dependable system that includes entirely devoted bus stops, shuttle services, ride-sharing agreements, and education about self-defense strategies.
2. To prevent discrimination against female university students, awareness campaigns and diversity training programs should be developed. This promotes diversity, sensitivity, and understanding among students, professors, and staff. A confidential way to report and readily available resources can empower female students to fight discriminatory practices.
3. To reduce the assignment burden for female university students, a flexible management system, clear communication of deadlines, resources on time management and study skills, support services such as writing centers or peer tutoring, and faculty consideration of academic responsibilities can all contribute to a more balanced workload.
4. To help female university students dealing with family or domestic concerns, universities should offer flexible academic policies, open communication channels, counseling services, awareness programs, and an empathetic atmosphere. This will help remove negativity and promote a more supportive environment for female students facing these issues.

5. Financial literacy programs should be offered to educate female students in managing their finances and minimizing stress caused by economic issues.

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