

## Gender and Cultural dynamics in Shaping Pedagogical Practices in Pakistani Higher Education

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### Abstract

This study explores the intersections of gender, culture, and pedagogy within the context of higher education in Pakistan. Despite significant growth in female enrollment and institutional reforms, the pedagogical environment in Pakistani universities remains deeply influenced by traditional cultural norms and gendered expectations. Using a qualitative research design, the study analyzed existing published research articles and policy documents retrieved from academic databases. Employing content analysis and thematic interpretation, the research examined how cultural and gendered structures shape teaching and learning practices. The findings reveal that patriarchal values, hierarchical teacher student relationships, and culturally embedded norms continue to reproduce inequality in classroom interactions and institutional practices. However, the study also highlights the potential for change through the integration of emerging feminist and inclusive pedagogical approaches. Guided by Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and feminist pedagogical frameworks, the study concludes that higher education in Pakistan operates as both a site of cultural reproduction and a space for transformation. It underscores the urgent need for integrating gender sensitive and culturally responsive pedagogies to promote equity, empowerment, and social justice within academic institutions.

**Keywords:** Gender and Culture, Higher Education, Feminist Pedagogy, Cultural Reproduction, Inclusive Education

### Introduction

The dynamics of gender, culture, and pedagogy have become central to contemporary debates in higher education, particularly in societies where traditional norms and modern educational aspirations intersect (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a). The relationship between gender, culture, and pedagogy has become an increasingly significant focus in the sociology of education, particularly within societies where traditional structures intersect with aspirations for modernity and equality (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025b). In Pakistan, higher education serves as a microcosm of broader social dynamics. In this space, power relations, cultural values, and gendered expectations converge to shape the production and dissemination of knowledge (Shoaib & Zaman, 2025). Universities are not merely academic institutions; they are social arenas where dominant ideologies are reproduced, challenged, and transformed through everyday interactions

between teachers, students, and institutional systems (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025c). Over the last two decades, Pakistan's higher education sector has witnessed a notable expansion in access and participation, especially among women (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025b). The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and other national bodies have promoted reforms to improve quality, inclusivity, and international competitiveness (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025b). However, despite these developments, the pedagogical environment continues to be influenced by deeply rooted patriarchal norms and cultural hierarchies that determine who speaks, who leads, and whose knowledge counts in academic settings (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a). The study highlights the potential of emerging feminist and inclusive pedagogical approaches to inspire change by fostering participation, dialogue, and critical reflection. Gender equality remains essentially numerical, reflected in enrollment statistics rather than transformative in terms of classroom experiences, curriculum content, and pedagogical practices (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a).

The concept of pedagogy, when examined sociologically, extends beyond teaching techniques to encompass the power relations, communication patterns, and value systems embedded within the educational process (Shoaib & Ullah, 2025). In Pakistani higher education, pedagogy is not a culturally neutral practice; somewhat, it is shaped by social expectations surrounding gender roles, respectability, and authority (Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). Female students, for instance, often navigate social pressures of modesty and moral propriety, which limit their active classroom participation (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025b). Similarly, female faculty members face challenges to their professional authority in male dominated academic spaces (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025a). These subtle yet pervasive dynamics illustrate how gender and culture co-construct pedagogical realities, affecting both teaching and learning outcomes (Shoaib, Shamsheer, & Iqbal, 2025). At the same time, globalization, digitalization, and exposure to international academic networks are introducing new pedagogical paradigms that emphasize student centered learning, inclusivity, and critical thinking (Shoaib, Shamsheer, & Iqbal, 2025). Within Pakistan, some educators, especially those trained abroad or influenced by global feminist discourses, are beginning to integrate gender sensitive and participatory pedagogies into their teaching (Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Ahmed, 2025). These efforts signify a gradual but meaningful shift toward more reflective and transformative educational practices, even within culturally conservative contexts (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a). The present study seeks to critically examine these complex interactions between social structures and educational practices. It aims to uncover how gendered cultural norms influence pedagogy, how educators and students negotiate these norms within academic environments, and what possibilities exist for creating more equitable learning spaces. By analyzing published research and policy documents through qualitative content and thematic analysis, the study situates the Pakistani higher education system within broader theoretical frameworks that address power, knowledge, and social reproduction.

Theoretically, this research draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and feminist pedagogical approaches (Schwartz, 1997). Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and field explain how educational institutions perpetuate existing hierarchies through implicit cultural mechanisms, while feminist pedagogy provides a counter framework that emphasizes empowerment, dialogue, and inclusivity in the learning process (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Integrating these perspectives allows for a deeper understanding of how higher education can simultaneously reproduce and resist inequality (Ma, 2023). Ultimately, this study argues that a dual reality characterizes higher education in Pakistan: it is both a site of reproduction, where patriarchal and cultural ideologies are reinforced, and a site of resistance, where progressive pedagogies and gender aware educators are fostering gradual change. By highlighting the intersections of gender, culture, and pedagogy, the research makes a significant contribution to ongoing debates on educational reform, gender equity, and social transformation in the *Global*

*South* (Freire & Macedo, 2002; McCall, 2005). It underscores the need to rethink pedagogical practices not merely as technical methods, but as social and cultural acts that hold the power to either sustain or challenge inequality within academic spaces (Freire, 2018; Stevens, 2012).

### **Study Context**

Pakistan's higher education sector has undergone significant expansion over the past two decades, marked by the establishment of new universities, increased female enrollment, and growing attention to quality assurance and pedagogical reform (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025b). Despite these developments, the higher education system continues to operate within a deeply gendered and culturally embedded social structure (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007; Shoaib, Rasool, Kalsoom, & Ali, 2025). Patriarchal norms, religious values, and class based inequalities influence not only access to education but also the nature of classroom interactions, learning experiences, and the overall academic environment (Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). Within university spaces, gender and culture intersect to shape how students and teachers perceive knowledge, authority, and participation (Grenfell, 2014; Shoaib, Kausar, Ali, & Abdullah, 2025). In many institutions, male dominance in faculty positions and leadership roles, alongside gender segregated campuses and conservative social attitudes, perpetuates subtle forms of inequality (Crenshaw, 2013; Shoaib, Iqbal, & Iftikhar, 2025). Moreover, pedagogical practices often remain teacher centered, with limited emphasis on critical thinking, student engagement, and gender sensitive approaches (Shoaib, Batool, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2025). However, national and international policies advocate for inclusive and equitable education; the translation of these principles into everyday teaching and learning remains uneven across institutions (Shoaib & Bashir, 2025). Understanding how gender and culture influence the pedagogical landscape in Pakistani higher education is, therefore, crucial for fostering transformative learning environments that challenge existing hierarchies and promote social justice (Shoaib, Ali, & Kausar, 2025). This study situates itself within this complex milieu to explore the embedded cultural and gendered dimensions of higher education teaching and learning in Pakistan.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are not just academic exercises, but they hold significant implications for the future of higher education in Pakistan. They are as follows;

- To examine how gender and cultural norms shape pedagogical practices and learning experiences in Pakistani higher education institutions.
- To explore how teachers and students negotiate cultural expectations and gendered power relations within classroom interactions and academic environments.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities for integrating gender sensitive and culturally responsive pedagogies in higher education.
- To analyze institutional and policy level discourses that influence gendered and cultural dimensions of teaching and learning.
- To contribute to the development of theoretical and practical insights for promoting inclusive, equitable, and transformative pedagogical practices in Pakistan's higher education sector.

### **The Data and Methods**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the intersection of gender, culture, and pedagogy within the context of higher education in Pakistan. The qualitative approach is particularly suited for this inquiry, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of social meanings, cultural interpretations, and the nuanced ways in which gendered practices are embedded in educational settings.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this research were collected from existing published research articles, policy documents, and reports available in reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and HEC digital library. The selection of studies was guided by purposive sampling, focusing on literature addressing gender, culture, and pedagogy in the context of Pakistani higher education. Both national and international publications were included to capture diverse perspectives and theoretical insights. The inclusion criteria involved;

- Peer reviewed journal published articles.
- Studies focusing on higher education in Pakistan
- Research addressing gender, cultural, or pedagogical issues
- Articles available in English with full text access.

This approach enabled the researcher to synthesize secondary data and critically engage with existing scholarly debates and empirical findings.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed through content analysis, which facilitated the systematic examination of recurring ideas, patterns, and discourses within the selected literature. The process involved coding, categorizing, and interpreting textual data to identify themes related to gendered practices, cultural influences, and pedagogical approaches. Following this, thematic analysis was employed to present the results. Themes were organized around major conceptual categories such as gender representation in academia, cultural constraints in classroom participation, and gender sensitive pedagogical innovations. This analytical framework allowed for an interpretive understanding of how gender and culture interact within the pedagogical landscape of Pakistani higher education.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the Study: It's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, as they provide a clear understanding of the research's scope and potential biases. The study is based on secondary data, relying on existing literature rather than primary fieldwork. Hence, it may not capture the most recent institutional or experiential dynamics. The availability and accessibility of relevant literature from Pakistani universities may have constrained the breadth of data. The study's qualitative nature limits its generalizability but enhances its interpretive and contextual depth. The research depends on interpretations of previously published data, which may reflect the biases or theoretical orientations of the original authors. Despite these limitations, the study offers a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how gender and culture shape pedagogical practices in Pakistani higher education and provides a foundation for future empirical research.

### **Results and Discussion**

The analysis of existing research on gender, culture, and pedagogy in Pakistani higher education reveals a complex and often contradictory landscape where traditional social structures coexist with modern educational aspirations (Shoib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025b). The thematic analysis identified several interrelated patterns that shape the pedagogical environment in universities. These themes are discussed below:

### **Gendered Participation and Classroom Dynamics**

The reviewed studies highlight that despite notable progress in female enrollment in higher education, gendered patterns of participation remain visible in classroom interactions and institutional culture (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a). Female students often experience limited opportunities for active engagement due to implicit social expectations of modesty, respectability, and deference to authority (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025). In mixed gender settings, many students report feeling constrained by cultural codes that discourage open debate or questioning, particularly when male students or instructors dominate discussions (Shoaib, Ahmed, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025). Teachers, too, are influenced by gendered expectations (Shoaib, Ahmed, & Usmani, 2025b). Male instructors are often perceived as authoritative and competent; female instructors encounter resistance, especially in male dominated disciplines (Shoaib, Ahmed, & Usmani, 2025a). This dynamic reinforces unequal power relations and affects students' confidence, voice, and academic identity formation (Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025).

### **Cultural Norms and Institutional Practices**

Culture plays a pervasive role in shaping pedagogical norms and institutional practices (Shoaib, Ahmed, & Iqbal, 2025). University environments in Pakistan reflect broader societal values rooted in patriarchy, collectivism, and religious morality (Shoaib, 2025a). These cultural scripts manifest in segregated campuses, gender specific dress codes, and moral policing of student interactions (Shoaib, 2025b). Such practices influence not only students' social experiences but also the pedagogical relationships between teachers and learners (Ali, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2025). In some cases, educators consciously adapt their teaching styles to align with cultural sensitivities (Ahmed, Shoaib, & Zaman, 2025). For instance, avoiding controversial topics or discussions on gender equality to maintain institutional harmony is important (Shoaib, Zaman, & Abbas, 2024). However, this often results in the reproduction of dominant ideologies rather than their critical interrogation (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024b).

### **Pedagogical Practices and Gender Sensitivity**

The findings suggest that pedagogical approaches in most Pakistani universities remain largely teacher centered, emphasizing rote learning and hierarchical relationships (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024a). Few educators receive formal training in gender sensitive or inclusive teaching methods (Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, 2024). Consequently, classroom practices often overlook the diverse learning needs and lived experiences of students from different genders and cultural backgrounds (Shoaib, 2024e). However, some promising initiatives have emerged, particularly in universities with international collaborations or gender studies programs (Shoaib, 2024b). These institutions adopt student centered and participatory pedagogies, encouraging dialogue, reflection, and critical engagement (Shoaib, 2024c). Such approaches help challenge stereotypes and empower students to question inequitable social norms (Shoaib, 2024a).

### **Institutional Discourse and Policy Frameworks**

At the policy level, national higher education bodies have made commitments to gender equity and inclusive education (Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, 2023). Documents from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and related agencies emphasize diversity, equality, and access (Shoaib, 2021). Nonetheless, implementation at the institutional level remains inconsistent (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2023). Gender policies often focus on access and representation rather than on transforming pedagogical and cultural practices within universities (Shoaib, Rasool, Anwar, & Ali, 2023). The gap between policy rhetoric and pedagogical reality highlights the need for institutional reform that integrates gender sensitivity into curriculum design, faculty training,

and assessment systems (Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2023). Without such systemic change, gender equity risks remaining a symbolic commitment rather than a pedagogical practice (Shoaib, 2023b).

### **Negotiating Change: Resistance and Transformation**

The reviewed literature also identifies sites of resistance and transformation within the higher education landscape (Shoaib, 2023a; Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2022). Some educators, particularly younger faculty and those trained abroad, are challenging traditional pedagogical models by integrating feminist and culturally responsive approaches (Shoaib, Tariq, Shahzadi, & Ali, 2022). Similarly, students, especially females, are increasingly asserting their voices, engaging in campus activism, and questioning gender hierarchies in academic spaces (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, & Abdullah, 2022). These emerging practices signal a gradual yet meaningful shift toward more inclusive and reflective pedagogical cultures (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a). However, such efforts often face resistance from institutional authorities and conservative segments of society, reflecting the broader struggle between tradition and modernity in Pakistan's educational and cultural domains (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021b). Overall, the findings underscore that gender and culture are not peripheral but constitutive elements of Pakistan's pedagogical landscape (Shoaib, Rasool, & Anwar, 2021). They shape how knowledge is produced, who is considered credible, and whose voices are valued in academic discourse. The persistence of patriarchal and cultural constraints limits the transformative potential of education, yet the growing awareness among faculty and students offers hope for progressive change (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Tahira, 2021). From a sociological perspective, these patterns are interpreted through Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and habitus, where educational institutions reproduce existing social hierarchies through implicit norms and practices (Shoaib, 2023a). At the same time, acts of resistance within classrooms and universities reflect the potential for agency and transformation, illustrating the dynamic interplay between structure and action in educational spaces (Shoaib, 2024d).

### **Theoretical Insights**

Understanding the intricate relationship between gender, culture, and pedagogy in Pakistani higher education is greatly facilitated by a robust theoretical foundation. This study leverages Bourdieu (1986) theory of cultural reproduction and feminist pedagogical frameworks to interpret how social structures, power relations, and cultural norms shape the educational experience. These perspectives not only shed light on the persistence of inequality but also reveal the potential for transformation within university classrooms (Shoaib, 2024d).

### **Bourdieu's Perspective: Cultural Capital, Habitus, and Field**

Bourdieu (1986) theoretical concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and field provide valuable tools for understanding how higher education reproduces social hierarchies in culturally embedded ways. Habitus refers to the internalized dispositions, beliefs, and behaviors shaped by one's social background. In the Pakistani context, students and teachers enter the university field with gendered and cultural habitus formed through family socialization, religion, and social norms (Shoaib, 2024d). These dispositions influence classroom behavior, attitudes toward authority, and perceptions of gender roles in learning environments (Grenfell, 2014). Cultural capital, in the form of language proficiency, communication style, and familiarity with academic norms, privileges students from specific socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007). For example, urban, English speaking, and male students often possess cultural capital that aligns more closely with institutional expectations, giving them greater confidence and legitimacy in academic settings. The field of higher education itself operates as a structured social space where power,

competition, and legitimacy are negotiated (Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2025). Within this field, gender and culture intersect to define what kinds of knowledge are valued and who is authorized to produce it. Female faculty and students often occupy marginal positions in this field, reflecting broader gender hierarchies in Pakistani society (Shoaib, 2024d). Through Bourdieu's lens, it becomes evident that higher education in Pakistan often functions as a mechanism of cultural reproduction, reinforcing existing gender and class inequalities (Shoaib, 2024e). It also presents potential spaces for subversion and transformation, particularly when educators and students develop critical awareness of these structures.

The theoretical framework of this study integrates Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction and feminist pedagogical theory to explain how gender and culture shape the pedagogical landscape of higher education in Pakistan (Shoaib, 2023a). These frameworks provide complementary perspectives: Bourdieu offers a structural lens to understand how educational institutions reproduce social inequalities (Shoaib, 2021). However, feminist pedagogy highlights the transformative potential of teaching and learning for equity and empowerment (Rampton, 2015). Together, they form a comprehensive foundation for analyzing how cultural and gendered practices influence both educators and learners in university settings.

### **Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Reproduction**

Sociological concepts of habitus, cultural capital, and field are central to this study. Habitus refers to the ingrained dispositions, attitudes, and behaviors individuals acquire through their upbringing and social experiences (Bourdieu, 1986). In the Pakistani context, gendered habitus shapes how male and female students engage in classroom interactions, respond to authority, and perceive their roles in the learning process. Teachers' own habitus, influenced by cultural and institutional traditions, also determines their pedagogical preferences and their attitudes toward gender roles in education. Cultural capital encompasses symbolic and cultural resources, such as language proficiency, confidence, and knowledge of academic norms that influence success in educational settings (Schwartz, 1997). In Pakistan, students from privileged social backgrounds, urban areas, or English medium institutions often possess forms of cultural capital that align with university expectations. However, others, particularly females from conservative or rural contexts, face structural disadvantages in participation and performance (Hanks, 2005). The field of higher education represents a social space with its own hierarchies, norms, and power relations. Within this field, gender and culture shape who holds authority, what kinds of knowledge are valued, and whose voices are marginalized (Jenkins, 2014). Through Bourdieu's framework, higher education in Pakistan is understood as a site of social reproduction, where existing gender and cultural hierarchies are maintained through implicit pedagogical practices. However, by recognizing these dynamics, universities also become spaces of transformation, where dominant norms are questioned and redefined (Ma, 2023).

### **Feminist Pedagogical Frameworks**

Feminist pedagogy provides a complementary perspective that emphasizes equality, reflexivity, and empowerment in teaching and learning (Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021). It challenges hierarchical and androcentric educational models and advocates for dialogue, collaboration, and inclusivity (Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, 2021). In the Pakistani higher education context, feminist pedagogical approaches seek to disrupt traditional norms that silence females' voices and limit their participation in academic discourse (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, & Shaukat, 2021). Key principles of feminist pedagogy relevant to this study include:

- Knowledge as co-created: Learning is viewed as a participatory process where teachers and students construct knowledge together rather than unilaterally transmitting information (Shoaib, 2021; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2021).
- Empowerment and critical consciousness: Education should enable students to critically analyze gendered power relations in society and within the classroom itself (Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021; Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, Rasool, et al., 2021).
- Reflexivity and positionality: Teachers must reflect on their own cultural and gendered positions and how these influence their pedagogical practices (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2020; Shoaib & Ullah, 2019).
- Safe and inclusive learning spaces: Classrooms should encourage dialogue, respect diversity, and validate multiple ways of knowing, especially those marginalized by mainstream discourses (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a).

Applied to the Pakistani context, feminist pedagogy offers a framework for transformative education that not only challenges patriarchal cultural norms but also redefines teacher student relationships (Shoaib, Latif, & Usmani, 2013). Teachers employ participatory, dialogic, and gender sensitive approaches, they contribute to the emergence of critical consciousness and agency among students, enabling them to question social inequalities both within and beyond academic spaces (Anwar, Shoaib, & Javed, 2013; Kwan, 2002). Feminist pedagogy offers a critical counterpoint to Bourdieu's structural analysis by emphasizing agency, empowerment, and participatory learning (Shoaib, 2024e). Rooted in feminist theory, it challenges the patriarchal and hierarchical traditions of education, advocating for teaching practices that are inclusive, dialogic, and reflective (Steinberg, 1994). This transformative potential of feminist pedagogy inspires hope for a more equitable and inclusive educational system in Pakistan.

Key tenets of feminist pedagogy relevant to this study include:

- Democratization of the classroom: Shifting from teacher centered instruction to shared learning, where both teachers and students contribute to knowledge creation.
- Critical reflection and consciousness are key aspects of feminist pedagogy. Encouraging learners to question gendered power relations, cultural norms, and institutional hierarchies that shape their educational experiences not only stimulates their intellect but also fosters a deeper understanding of the complex social dynamics at play in the educational system.
- Recognition of lived experiences: Valuing the personal, social, and cultural experiences students bring to the classroom as valid sources of knowledge.
- Empowerment through learning: Promoting confidence, voice, and agency among marginalized groups, particularly females, within academic and professional spaces.

In the Pakistani context, feminist pedagogy emerges as a powerful framework for challenging patriarchal norms that restrict females' participation and voice in higher education. It encourages educators to adopt gender sensitive and culturally responsive approaches that foster equality, respect, and dialogue, thereby paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering educational environment.

### **Integrating Bourdieu and Feminist Pedagogy**

Combining Bourdieu's structural analysis, which examines how social structures and cultural habitus influence educational practices, with feminist pedagogical theory, a teaching approach that promotes inclusivity, dialogue, and critical reflection, provides a holistic understanding of how gender and culture operate in higher education (Sallaz & Zavisca, 2007). This integration highlights a key tension: higher education in Pakistan is simultaneously a site of reproduction and resistance. Cultural and gendered norms constrain the pedagogical process, yet educators and students challenge these constraints through reflexive, feminist informed pedagogies (Grenfell,

2014). Recognizing this duality is essential for developing sustainable strategies for gender equity and cultural sensitivity in higher education (Ma, 2023).

### **Synthesizing the Frameworks**

The integration of Bourdieu's structural perspective and feminist pedagogical theory offers a multidimensional understanding of the relationship between gender, culture, and pedagogy (Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2025). Bourdieu explains how social structures and cultural habitus constrain educational practices (Ma, 2023). However, feminist pedagogy illuminates how agency and critical reflection subvert these structures (Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2025). Together, these frameworks suggest that the pedagogical landscape in Pakistani higher education is a site of both reproduction and resistance to social inequalities, with resistance occurring through cultural norms, gendered expectations, conscious pedagogical reform, and feminist praxis (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025b). This combined theoretical lens enables the study to move beyond descriptive analysis and to critically engage with the power dynamics, symbolic structures, and transformative possibilities within Pakistani higher education (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a). It provides a foundation for interpreting how educators and students navigate the intersections of gender and culture in their pursuit of inclusive and equitable learning environments (Shoaib et al., 2024b). This study has examined how gendered and cultural dynamics intersect to shape teaching and learning practices within Pakistani universities. By drawing upon Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (Shoaib, 2024e) and feminist pedagogical frameworks (Harding, 2008; Kwan, 2002), the research highlights that higher education in Pakistan operates as both a site of social reproduction and potential transformation.

The findings reveal that gender and culture remain deeply embedded in institutional structures, classroom interactions, and pedagogical approaches. Patriarchal norms, religious values, and traditional expectations continue to influence students' participation, teachers' attitudes, and institutional policies (McCall, 2005). Female students, in particular, face cultural and social barriers that restrict their full engagement in academic spaces (Shoaib, Rasool, Kalsoom, et al., 2025). Similarly, teachers' pedagogical practices often reflect conventional, teacher centered approaches that reinforce hierarchical and gendered relations (Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). However, the analysis also identifies emerging spaces of change and resistance, such as the adoption of dialogic, inclusive, and gender sensitive pedagogies by progressive educators and students. These pedagogical practices promote critical reflection, participation, and empowerment, aligning with the principles of feminist pedagogy and contributing to gradual shifts in institutional culture.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study underscores that Bourdieu's concept of habitus explains how cultural and gendered dispositions perpetuate inequality (Verwiebe & Hagemann, 2025). At the same time, feminist pedagogy provides a framework for disrupting these structures through reflective and transformative teaching (Harding, 2008). Together, these perspectives suggest that meaningful change in higher education requires not only policy reform but also a pedagogical reorientation, one that acknowledges cultural contexts fostering equality, critical inquiry, and social justice. In conclusion, the pedagogical landscape of Pakistani higher education is characterized by tension between tradition and transformation (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a). Achieving gender equity and culturally responsive education demands continuous institutional commitment, faculty training, and curricular innovation (Shoaib et al., 2025). The urgency and importance of this continuous commitment cannot be overstated, as it is the key to creating learning spaces that are inclusive, equitable, and transformative, contributing to a more just and reflective society (Shoaib et al., 2024a).

## Conclusion

The study concludes that gender and culture profoundly shape the pedagogical landscape of higher education in Pakistan. Despite expanded access and policy commitments to equality, traditional norms and patriarchal values continue to influence teaching practices, classroom interactions, and institutional culture. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of cultural reproduction, the findings reveal that educational institutions often perpetuate social hierarchies through gendered and cultural habitus. However, the transformative potential of feminist pedagogical approaches, by promoting inclusivity, dialogue, and critical reflection, offers a promising path towards a more equitable, participatory, and socially transformative higher education in Pakistan.

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