

**IDENTIFICATION OF THE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' GENDER BIAS IN CLASSROOM: TAKING STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES**Muhammad Shahid Zulfiqar Ali<sup>1</sup>, Asma Ihsan<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Ghazal Khalid Siddiqui<sup>3</sup>**Original Article**

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**Abstract**

*This study aimed to investigate the male university teachers' practices in the classroom regarding gender bias from students' perspectives. The survey was conducted on 450 students studying in B.Ed (Honors) at two public and two private universities of Lahore. The data were collected with a questionnaire consisted of 6 factors of evaluating gender bias in the classroom with 26 items. The results showed that the "teachers' interaction" is biased for females. They give more positive "feedback" and motivate female students than male students. The results further revealed that teachers attend to female students more attentively and open-heartedly. They show their "expectations" for better work towards females however when there are challenging and managerial tasks, they prefer male students. They also use the man-oriented approach in the presentation of content and "utilization of language". However, they do not object to the "Co-siting" and interaction of students beyond gender. It is recommended that universities should take remedial steps to make teachers assure for dealing with male and female students equally regarding academics.*

**Keywords:** Gender bias, university teachers, feedback, University students, perspectives

**Introduction**

Teaching is an activity to enable the less mature individuals to become such a person who could solve their own problems and be adjusted in society finely. Therefore teaching demands such a proactive role from its practitioners' side that the target students could gain maximum benefit from the teaching. Hence, it could only be possible in a situation where there are equal opportunities for all students lest the teaching may lose its effectiveness (Sarfraz, 2020). A study was conducted to find the teacher's perceptions about their inside classroom

performance. Quantitative portion of the study showed that teachers paid equal attention to both male and female students. But, the qualitative portion revealed the perception of students that showed that equal consideration of male and female students were rarely seen. Boys took part in classroom discussion while mostly girls took part in teacher-student interactions (as cited by Beaman, 2006).

The teachers who are familiar with the gender issues may interact unintentionally in a different way with the boys and girls students (Slater, 2003). The opportunities of a student

to excel would become limited when the teacher supports deliberately to particular sex either male or female students (Mougharbel, 2010). Teachers ask more questions to male students to answer and critique them when they were unable to answer correctly as compared to the female students (Beaman, 2006). Even they get punishment more strictly and categories as those students who have problems (Myhill & Jones, 2006).

Christakis (2013) conducted a study to find out the gender disparities at the elementary school level, he identified that boys got lower grades than girls, even in the math and science subjects. On the other hand, females are also required to attain education as it is their right. They are approximately 50% population of any nation, without the contribution of which it is quite impossible to make progress. That's what the UNICEF has aimed to take such steps by which equal opportunities of education may be provided to all children regardless of their gender, race and ethnicity (UNICEF, 2019). However, it is seen in the past that females were used to be underestimated and given fewer opportunities for education as compare to males. But according to Wikipedia (2019) these are not only females who are being affected by the gender bias. There are males too who are facing gender bias in the way to education.

Buchmann (2008) argued that it has been thought over a decade that only females have been deprived of the equal right to education. However, it is seen that there are males too who have been facing gender bias regarding their education. The UNESCO has aimed at the provision of equality in education for all students and endeavoring for the achievement of this aim. On the other hand, it is included in the aims of sustainable development goals to provide equal opportunities for education to both males and females (UNESCO, 2019).

The provision of equal opportunities of education for both the boys and girls demands

the elimination of gender bias because the aim of education for all cannot be achieved until gender bias is not eliminated from the classrooms (GEM, 2019). It is impossible for any nation to make progress unless the fair equal and unbiased opportunities of education are provided to all children regardless of their gender.

UKFIET (2019) stated that it is not the duty of a single stakeholder to provide equal educational chances for both boys and girls after eliminating gender bias but we all are responsible for this. The government, schools, teachers and our society are all the stakeholders and responsible for this. However, the school and especially teachers are more responsible to take measures for the elimination of gender bias. The teachers should use such teaching methods and tactics which pave the way for equality in education while eliminating gender bias. They should provide equal opportunities to both males and females regarding the discussion, questions, debates and allocation of responsibilities in the classroom (Beaman, 2006).

However, according to Obiunu (2013), it is exhibited in the schools that males and female students are unequal to each other. That's what they are asked to be seated separately instead of inclusively. They are treated unequally by their teachers. On the other hand, both male and female students are treated differently regarding their conduct during class and school. As argued by Reay (2001) that males are more tolerated by the teachers as compared to female students. If any female misbehaves, then it is taken as a flaw in her character whereas if the same misbehavior is shown by any male student, then it is taken as a desire of assertion.

Obiunu (2013) Stated that teachers show their bias towards both genders as they praise female students for cleanliness, neatness and calm behavior whereas boys are been praised by them for being active and independent. As literature showed that

teachers' bias does exist in the classroom, so this study aimed to explore it in the Pakistani context at the university level. So, the current situation can be assessed and remedial steps could be taken accordingly for the elimination of teachers' gender bias herein our classrooms because gender bias can prove to be a hurdle in the way of students' learning and achievement (Frawley, 2005).

Tournaki (2003) collected data from the teachers to identify that there exists a significant influence between student's gender and teacher's attitudes. Teachers react differently to their students on the basis of gender characteristics that had an impact on the academic and practical life of students. Einarsson and Granstrom, investigate in the year 2002 that biases of teachers on the basis of gender exist in the senior schools in the classroom. For this purpose data was collected by making classroom observations in 40 lessons and the results showed that teachers give importance to the students who belonged to the opposite gender.

### Statement of the Problem

Teachers can only be able to teach effectively if they offer their duties neutrally for each student in the class. Both the male and female students are needed to be given equivalent & biased-free attention regarding curricular and co-curricular activities. However, it is observed that students feel that their teachers do not treat them equally. So, this study was conducted to identify the university teachers' practices in the classroom regarding gender bias from students' perspectives.

### Objectives of the study

The study was conducted to:

- Identify the male university teachers' gender bias in the classroom from students' perspectives.
- Investigate the difference between students' perspectives about university teachers' gender bias regarding gender.

### Methodology

The survey was conducted with a sample that included 213 male students and 237 female students studying in B.Ed. Honors at two public and two private universities in Lahore. The sample was selected by using Census Sampling. The questionnaire was utilized to collect the data. It was a dichotomous scale consists of 6 factors for evaluating gender bias with 26 items. These 6 factors include *teachers/ student interaction, feedback, paid attention/ responding time, expectations; use of language, segregation (separate sitting arrangement for male and female students)*. The research instrument was first validated through the expert opinion and later on pilot tested on 40 students other than the actual sample for the research. The Cronbach's alpha was utilized to check the reliability of the instrument which was 0.76. The data were collected by the researcher himself and co-researcher through a personal visit.

### Analysis and Results

The descriptive statistics percentage was deployed for the investigation of 1<sup>st</sup> research objective.

Table 1 *Students' Perspectives regarding Teachers' gender Bias*

Factors	Statement	Male students	Female students
<i>Teacher/ student interaction</i>	The teachers talk more politely with:	18%	82%
	The teachers frequently interact with:	28%	72%
	Mostly questions are posed by the teachers to:	62%	38%
	Mostly teachers interrupt:	65%	35%
<i>Feed Back</i>	The teachers give more positive views on the presentation of:	50%	50%
	Teachers motivate more to:	30%	70%
	The teachers appreciate more the appearance and relevance of the work to:	47%	53%
	The teachers criticize more the work of:	59%	41%
<i>Paid Attention/ Responding Time</i>	The teachers give more time for response to:	34%	66%
	For demonstration/ discussion, teachers mostly prefer:	30%	70%
	The teachers prefer _____ to dominate students of another gender:	48%	52%
	When students raise their hand to respond a question, the teachers prefer to:	39%	61%
	While asking for an in-depth question, the teachers prefer:	55%	45%
<i>Expectations</i>	The teachers help more open-heartedly to:	34%	66%
	The teachers' expectations for better work is mostly exhibited for:	54%	46%
	The teachers' expectations for better discipline is mostly exhibited for:	17%	83%
	The teachers preferably assign clerical work to:	70%	30%
	The teachers give a relatively positive response upon the assignment done by:	33%	67%
	The managerial tasks for the events/ activities are given by the teachers mostly to:	70%	30%
	The challenging tasks/ topics of presentations are mostly assigned by the teachers to:	58%	42%
	Statements	Male Oriented approach	Female Oriented approach
<i>Use of Language</i>	The teachers mostly use the language consists of :	60%	40%
	The teachers mostly give examples related to:	39%	61%
	The teachers mostly utilize the presentations/ teaching content inspired by:	42%	58%
	Statements	Yes	No
<i>Segregation (Separate sitting arrangement for male and female students)</i>	The teachers do not let students be team/ group beyond the gender boundaries.	43%	57%
	The teachers object to the male & female students' co-sitting arrangement.	44%	56%
	The teachers discourage the interaction of male & female students.	42%	58%

Table 1 shows the results regarding 'teacher/students interaction' that 82% of students gave their opinion that teachers talk more politely with female students, 72% said the teachers frequently interact with female students, 62% of students said that teachers pose questions mostly to boys whereas 65% students gave their opinion that teachers mostly interrupt male students. On the other hand, results regarding 'feedback' revealed that students receive positive views from teachers equally however 70% of students said that teachers motivate female students more than boys whereas 53% of students given their opinion that teachers appreciate female students more than males and 59% students said that teachers criticize the male students' work more than the female students. The results regarding 'paid attention/ responding time' revealed that 66% of students said that teachers give more response to female students, 70% of students said that teachers prefer female students for the purpose of demonstration and discussion, 52% of students said that female students are preferred by the teachers to dominate the activity, 61% students said that females are preferred by teachers when they raise their hand however 55% students said that male students are preferred when the teacher wants to ask an in-depth question but 66% said that teachers help female students more open-heartedly than male students. The results

regarding 'expectations' shows that 54% of students gave their opinion that teachers' expectations for better work are mostly exhibited for males whereas 83% said that teachers expect better discipline from the side of female students. Those students who gave their opinion that teachers preferably assign the clerical task to male students were 70%, those who said that teachers give a relatively positive response to female students for assigned work were 67%, those who said that teachers prefer boys for the allotment of managerial tasks were 70% and those who said that challenging tasks are given to the male students rather than female students were 58%. The results regarding the 'use of language' revealed that 60% of students said that teachers mostly use a male-oriented approach while speaking in the class. However, those who said that teachers mostly give examples related to female students were 61% and 58% of students said that teachers mostly utilize the teaching content inspired by the female-oriented approach. The results regarding 'Segregation' revealed that 57% of students said that the teachers let students be team/ group beyond the gender boundaries. On the other hand, 56% of students said that the teachers do not object to the male & female students' co-sitting arrangement in class and 56% of students said that the teachers do not discourage the interaction of male & female students during class.

**Table 2** Comparison of students' perspectives on the basis of their gender

Gender	N	M	U	P
Male	213	166.07	12582	.000
Female	237	278.91		

From the Table 2, it is concluded that the mean score for male students (M=166.07) is statistically significantly lower than the mean score for female students (M=278.91) and ( $U=12582$ ,  $p=.000$ ). As  $p<0.05$ , so it is concluded that the  $H_0$ : There is no significant difference between male and female students' perspectives regarding university teachers' gender bias in the classroom is rejected.

## Discussion

The study was conducted to identify the male university teachers' gender bias in the classroom from students' perspectives. The findings of this study showed that teachers interacted more politely and frequently with female students to motivate them, whereas they asked questions mostly to male students and female students are preferred by teachers when they raise their hand however male students are preferred when teachers want to ask an in-depth question. These results were consistent with the previous study that was conducted by Beaman (2006) according to the results of their study teachers ask more questions to male students to answer and critique them when they were unable to answer correctly as compared to the female students. But the results of the present study were contradictory to the previous studies conducted by Reay (2001) and Obiunu (2013) the results of Reay's study showed that males are more tolerated by the teachers as compared to female students. If any female misbehaves, then it is taken as a flaw in her character whereas if the same misbehavior is shown by any male student, then it is taken as a desire of assertion. Similarly, the results of Obiunu (2013) study were teachers show their bias towards both genders as they praise female students for cleanliness, neatness and calm behavior whereas boys are been praised by them for being active and independent. Reasons behind these discrepancies are may be due to the cultural change of the respondents. The abovementioned studies were conducted in a foreign scenario whereas the current study is conducted in Pakistan. Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that inside the classroom teachers used a manly approach while speaking in the class. However, the teachers do not discourage the interaction of male & female students during class. These results were not consistent with the results of Obiunu's study (2013) that highlighted that in the schools, males and

female students were treated unequally by their teachers. That's what they are asked to be seated separately instead of inclusively. The difference between these results is may be due to the difference in the teacher's perspective that they showed towards their students therefore they provide equal opportunity to all the students to interact and excel.

## Conclusion

The results showed that the male "teachers' interaction" is biased for females as they interact with females quite politely and frequently whereas they interrupt male students mostly. They give more positive "feedback" and motivate female students than male students, while criticize male more than female students. The results further revealed that teachers attend to the female students more attentively and open-heartedly than the male students. They show their "expectations" for better work towards females however when there are challenging and managerial tasks, they do not give due worth to females and prefer male students. They also use the manly approach in the presentation of content and "utilization of language". However, they do not object to the "co-siting" and interaction of students beyond gender.

## Recommendations

In light of these results, it is recommended that universities must take necessary remedial steps in this regard that teachers' gender bias could be minimized and gradually eliminated from their practices. Both the male and female students should be given equal attention regarding academic activities and worth regarding the assignment of challenging and managerial tasks. The male teachers should turn their methodology from biased to neutral for both male and female students.

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