

EXPLORING GENDER-BASED DISSIMILARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL: A REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore gender-based dissimilarities in educational outcomes at the tertiary level using a review of existing literature. This study has been based on a qualitative study and is exploratory in nature. It has been based on the published research documents on the subject, as mentioned above. Different published documents have been extracted from digital databases, including Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis, SAGE, Web of Science, Springer Nature, and other available databases at the academic library of the university. A total of 135 research documents have been extracted from the mentioned databases. The process of article extraction has been continued till the point of saturation. The inclusion criteria include a title that contains gender disparity in learning achievements and is published in a peer-reviewed journal. A thematic analysis has been used to present the data in the results and discussion section of the paper. The study findings assert, based on the existing body of literature, that gender disparities in various educational dimensions expressly affect learning achievements at tertiary levels. Similarly, the study also reveals that the presence of a supportive classroom environment and disparities have been linked to the residential backgrounds of the students, which also play an essential role in shaping learning achievements. Likewise, the study stresses the significance of educational resources, teaching resources based on indigenous culture, unbiased communication practices, vigorous policy, and institutional support in addressing learning inequalities.

INTRODUCTION

Disparities in learning achievement are also significantly influenced by geographic location (Shoaib & Zaman, 2025). However, students in rural or isolated locations frequently face issues including teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to digital learning tools. Students in urban areas typically have better access to top-notch

schools, technology, libraries, and qualified teachers (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025). Since kids in underprivileged communities might not have dependable internet access or the technological tools required for contemporary education, the digital gap makes these discrepancies even worse (Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). Addressing enduring

disparities in education requires learning achievements based on gender (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025b). Promoting an environment in which people of all genders feel appreciated, respected, and supported is essential to building an equitable educational environment that results in equal success for all genders (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025a). The identification and refutation of preconceptions, equitable access to opportunities and resources, and the promotion of varied representation in leadership positions and curricular content are all crucial steps in attaining gender equality in education (Leifler, 2020). It takes a comprehensive strategy to remove institutional impediments, question social norms, and reduce biases to eliminate educational inequities and guarantee that every person, regardless of gender, has the chance to realize their full potential (Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025). In addition to encouraging positive social relationships and a sense of belonging, an inclusive learning environment also lets students express themselves without worrying about prejudice or discrimination (Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025). Teachers are essential in fostering inclusivity because they use pedagogies that are sensitive to cultural differences, confront prejudices, and lead honest conversations that value the opinions of others (Nieminen & Pesonen, 2022). Schools and other educational institutions put in place procedures and rules that not only discourage negative aspects but also foster empathy, teamwork, and respect for others (Rozenfelde, 2016). In the end, fostering an inclusive learning environment helps males and females by equipping them to succeed in a diverse workplace and society (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Iftikhar, 2025; Freire, 2009). The gender gap in higher education is still a major problem, impacting learning outcomes, employment prospects, and socioeconomic mobility (Graham, 2023). Disparities still exist in several academic subjects, research possibilities, career progression, and academic achievement, despite global advances in raising the number of women enrolled in institutions (Greenfader, 2023). Social expectations, lack of representation in leadership positions, gender prejudices, and restricted access to funding and mentorship programs are just a few of the structural obstacles that women frequently encounter (Shoaib, Zaman, & Abbas, 2024). These difficulties affect their academic performance, career development, and

general societal contributions. In order to create an open and equal learning environment where men and women can succeed according to their skills and goals, gender inequities in higher education must be addressed (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010). Furthermore, the gender gap in learning outcomes at the higher education level is the equilibrium between employment, family obligations, and education (Shoaib, 2025). Additional stressors that many female students must deal with include financial limitations, caring obligations, and social demands to marry young (Gullo & Ammar, 2022). These factors can have a detrimental effect on their academic achievement and retention rates. It might be challenging for women to fully participate in their studies because they are often expected to put family responsibilities ahead of their academic and professional goals (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024b).

Objective: This study aims to explore gender-based dissimilarities in educational outcomes at the tertiary level using a review of existing literature.

The Data and Methods

This study has been based on a qualitative study and is exploratory in nature. It has been based on the published research documents on the subject, as mentioned above. Different published documents have been extracted from digital databases, including Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis, SAGE, Web of Science, Springer Nature, and other available databases at the academic library of the university. A total of 135 research documents have been extracted from the mentioned databases. The process of article extraction has been continued till the point of saturation. The inclusion criteria include a title that contains gender disparity in learning achievements, research conducted in higher education, and published in a peer-reviewed journal. A thematic analysis has been used to present the data in the results and discussion section of the paper. Further, the data have been presented qualitatively.

Results and Discussion

The study findings outline that boys' organizations and mentorship programs exclude girls with several factors from influential networking opportunities (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024a; He, 2013). Similarly, the study findings examine that girls are discouraged from choosing learning in the physical sciences by the effects of traditional gender stereotypes (Heilbrun, Cornell, & Konold, 2018). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that boys attending private, better quality education is frequently preferred by families with some cultural factors (Helwig, Anderson, & Tindal, 2001). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that resources for females' activities are restricted by gendered discrimination in extracurricular funding in higher educational institutions (Hernández, 2016). However, the results of the study articulated that personal biases of teachers frequently undervalue students' abilities in academic settings at the university level (Highfield, 2010). Comparably, the study of Hindorff, Bonham, and Ohno-Machado (2018) asserted that the continuation of girls' education is more impacted by some factors of economic instability than that of boys. The analysis of the research reported that females' education is often interrupted by several factors of early marriages in families of rural background (Hitchon et al., 2023). Correspondingly, the study findings show that emotional stress greatly reduces the focus on academic achievements of the students at the higher education level (Horton, 2005). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that gender disparity in access to digital tools significantly affects the online learning participation of students for achievements at a higher level (Hoskins, Janmaat, Han, & Muijs, 2016). In addition, the study findings conclude that all over the world, there are more sponsorship opportunities for academic and extracurricular activities for boys, with several factors (Hsieh, 2022). The study findings outline that inequitable access to libraries hinders the students' capacity to increase their academic knowledge at a higher level (Huet, Springham, & Evans, 2014). Similarly, the study findings examine that allocation of resources and traditional gender roles in education give priority to the demands of boys above those of girls in developing countries (Hunter, Hancock, Weber, & Simon, 2011). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed

out that stereotypical views from parents negatively affect girls' educational decisions and goals at the higher education level (Hyun & Jordan, 2020). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that unequal availability of resources negatively affects the mental health of the students at the tertiary level (Illøkken, Ruge, LeBlanc, Overby, & Nordgård Vik, 2024). However, the results of the study articulated that school counseling and family support significantly affect the factors of students' learning and academic achievements (Ion, Lupu, & Nicolae, 2022). Comparably, the study of Isom Scott and Grosholz (2019) asserted that in schools, male students tend to dominate conversations and silence female viewpoints, with several factors. The analysis of the research reported that unfair educational disciplinary procedures serve to further restrict girls from pursuing higher education, with several factors (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005). Correspondingly, the study findings show that teachers might unintentionally provide guys more chances to take on leadership roles regularly, with several affecting factors at the university level (Jaeger, 2019). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that inequality in representation discourages girls from continuing studies in higher education (James, 2006). In addition, the study findings conclude that cultural codes significantly affect the learning achievements of the students at the university level (James, 2016).

The study findings outline that social norms and family duties greatly impact students' learning in academia (Jena, 2016). Similarly, the study findings examine that fewer mentorship plans lead to leaving girls without academic guidance and support (Jeong & Acock, 2014). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that unequal access to technological resources impacts the participation of students in advanced academic schemes (Johnson, Kuhfeld, Soland, & Davison, 2024). Likewise, the argument of the study reveals that gender discrimination in scholarship programs prioritizes boys' education in needy areas of developing countries (Johnson, 2023). However, the results of the study articulated that the limitation of social stigma effects on conversations about education and future aspirations for girls in developing countries (Johnson-Motoyama, Moore, Damman, & Rudlang-Perman, 2018). Comparably, the study of Jones et al. (2016) asserted that gender

inequality in the classroom significantly affects the performance of students at the higher education level. The analysis of the research reported that disparity in participation in public speaking events greatly impacts the speaking ability of the students in academia (Jones, 2024). Correspondingly, the study findings show that persistent cultural norms and biases affect students' intellectual potential to be undervalued, with several factors (Jordan, Shortridge, & Darden, 2022). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that early marriages of the students significantly limit study time and academic achievements, with some factors (Judge, 2013). In addition, the study findings conclude that inequality in the educational system of developing nations affects the critical ideas of students at the higher education level (Kadio, 2023).

The study findings outline that fewer internship opportunities for females limit their exposure to practical education in developing countries, with several factors (Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, 2024). Similarly, the study findings examine that unequal parental support impacts boys more likely than girls to attend elite schools, with some factors (Shoaib, 2024e). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that social taboos significantly affect the girls' work independence skills for achievements at the tertiary level (Shoaib, 2024d). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that unequal funding for male and female learners affects the learning outcomes of the students at higher education (Shoaib, 2024b). However, the results of the study articulated that the physical health of the students significantly affects the learning skills and achievements of the students, with several factors (Shoaib, 2024c). Comparably, the study of Khoshnaghsh, Irfan, Tukur Jido, and Zahra (2023) asserted that some fear of harassment affects the participation of female students in co-curricular activities at the university level. As the analysis of the research reported that racial or ethnic disparities affect the communication of students in the classroom at higher education, with several factors (Shoaib, 2024a). Correspondingly, the study findings show that the best policies for students practicing in urban areas greatly impact the learning achievements of the students (R. Ali, Zaman, & Shoaib, 2024). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that the academic performance of students and physical health are negatively impacted by unequal sports programs at

higher education (Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, 2023). In addition, the study findings conclude that gender-specific extracurricular activities significantly hinder girls' access to cooperative learning opportunities at higher education (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2023).

The study findings outline that self-perception of girls and academic goals are negatively impacted by unfair media representation, with several factors (Klein, 2001). Similarly, the study findings examine that household duties of students greatly impact the learning skills of the students at the tertiary level (Klein, 2004b). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that there are no gender-focused programs in rural schools to address learning gaps, with several factors (Klein, 2004a). Likewise, the argument of the study reveals that unequal seating arrangement of students affects the participation of students at the higher education level (Kline, 2016). However, the results of the study articulated that gender disparity significantly affects the leadership role of the students in higher education (Kluczniok & Schmidt, 2020). Comparably, the study of Kohen and Guèvremont (2014) asserted that the academic development of students and motivation are greatly impacted by unequal teacher support. The analysis of the research reported that male dominance in class affects the academic performance of the students at the higher education level in developing countries (Kosko & Miyazaki, 2012). Correspondingly, the study findings show that unfair participation of students in technology significantly affects the digital exposure of students at the tertiary level (Krammer, Gasteiger-Klicpera, Holzinger, & Wohllhart, 2021). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that implications on students' health significantly affect the learning outcomes of students at the higher education level (La Salle & Hagermoser Sanetti, 2016). In addition, the study findings conclude that the academic performance of students is adversely affected by unequal discipline policies in educational settings (Lakra, Bhayani, & Sulaiman, 2023).

The study findings outline that teenage females' school attendance rates are significantly impacted by limited opportunities for education, with several factors (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Similarly, the study findings examine that supporting classroom climate greatly impacts students'

performance at the tertiary level (Lasen, Tomas, & Hill, 2015). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that unfair exposure to academic competitions restricts the development and self-confidence of girls in developing countries (Laurimäe, Paas, & Paulus, 2022). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that students' access to better educational institutions is frequently significantly impacted by cultural norms in traditional societies (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025; Leach & Williams, 2007). However, the results of the study articulated that a better learning climate in school education positively affects the performance of students with some factors (Leavitt & Hess, 2019). Comparably, the study of Lee and Lam (2016) asserted that some migration factors significantly affect the learning outcomes of students in higher education. The analysis of the research reported that unequal distribution of resources greatly affects the learning achievements of students at the university level (Lee & Madyun, 2008). Correspondingly, the study findings show that teachers' attitude impacts the achievements of students with several factors in the United States (Lee & Choi, 2024). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that cultural disparities in the classroom negatively affect the students' performance and mental health at the tertiary level (Lehmann, 2023). In addition, the study findings conclude that disparity in gender-based social expectations affects the performance of students at the tertiary level (Lentz & Noll, 2023).

The study findings outline that social norms and gender roles affect the learning opportunities of students with several factors (Shoaib, 2023c). Similarly, the study findings examine that gender-based academic achievement discrepancies result from cultural expectations influencing the educational goals of both male and female students (Shoaib, 2023b). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that parents often encourage sons more in science subjects, with some influencing factors (Shoaib, 2023a). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that the academic performance of girls and professional goals are disproportionately impacted by limited access to educational resources (Abdullah, Usmani, & Shoaib, 2023). However, the results of the study articulated that students' self-esteem and

confidence in various academic areas are impacted by teachers' prejudices in the classroom (Kausar, Manaf, & Shoaib, 2022). Comparably, the study of Long and Pang (2016) asserted that classroom dynamics that favor boys impede girls' academic advancement and confidence by preventing them from actively participating. The analysis of the research reported that many girls are forced to leave school early for marriage, which significantly affects their academic performance (Ali, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2022). Correspondingly, the study findings show that financial constraints push families to prioritize the learning of boys over girls for academic achievements at the higher education level (Ullah & Shoaib, 2021). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that girls are discouraged from pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics due to gender stereotypes (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a). In addition, the study findings conclude that a lack of female academic role models has a detrimental impact on girls' ambition and drive for learning, with some factors (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021b).

The study findings outline that girls are compelled by social pressure to take up household duties, which severely limits their study time and academic advancement (Lusher, 2011). Similarly, the study findings examine that female students' academic performance is hampered by hazardous learning conditions caused by gender-based violence in schools (Ma, Xiao, & Jiao, 2024). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out the drawbacks of unequal access to technology, girls' declining proficiency in digital literacy, and their prospects for future employment (Magalhães, Carneiro, Limpo, & Filipe, 2020). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that girls are frequently less motivated to perform well academically in school because of lower instructor expectations (Mahmud & Gagnon, 2023). However, the results of the study articulated that female students are deterred from concentrating on studies that impact learning outcomes by sexual harassment in schools in developing countries (Makowsky & Martin, 2021). Comparably, the study of Malý (2016) asserted that boys dominate class conversations due to negative peer pressure, which limits girls' participation in higher education. As the analysis of the research reported, participation of girls in extracurricular activities that are essential for cognitive development

is restricted by traditional gender norms, with several factors (Marc Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019). Correspondingly, the study findings show that students' limited mobility in conservative countries has an impact on their academic performance and access to high-quality education (Marks & Kuss, 2001). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that fewer mentorship possibilities for prospective female students significantly affect due to women's restricted leadership responsibilities in education (Marmeleira, Folgado, Martínez Guardado, & Batalha, 2020). In addition, the study findings conclude that persistence of gender differences in learning is caused by a lack of government initiatives supporting gender equality in education (Marshall, Chavez, Mason, & Martinez Tyson, 2022).

The study findings outline that the education of children is impacted by parental illiteracy, with girls receiving less support than boys (Martin, Craigwell, & Ramjarrie, 2022). Similarly, the study findings examine that unconscious bias in instructional strategies promotes gender disparities in students' academic achievement at the tertiary level (Martínez, 2012). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that boys in competitive fields are given greater academic support than girls, which limits their potential with several factors (Mato, 2016). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that financial difficulties cause students to choose their jobs over their studies, which raises the dropout rate in education (Matsaganis & Golden, 2015). However, the results of the study articulated that girls are disproportionately burdened with household tasks that affect their study time and frequency of attendance at school (Melius, 2011). Comparably, the study of Mertens and Flowers (2003) asserted that in conservative areas, girls' pursuit of higher education possibilities is discouraged by religious views in developing countries. The analysis of the research reported that systemic change in education policies that benefit girls is prevented by a lack of awareness about gender equality (Mestry, 2019). Correspondingly, the study findings show that insufficient job counseling significantly limits girls' access to attractive academic possibilities (Mitchell, 2012). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that boys are exposed to more technical innovations than girls, which positively impacts and helps them develop their digital literacy (Mondal & Islam, 2023). In

addition, the study findings conclude that the overconfidence of boys in the classroom greatly reduces the voices of girls in scholarly conversations at the higher education level (Morgenlander, Heron, & Schenken, 2009).

The study findings outline that textbooks frequently show males in authoritative positions, which reinforces students' biases about gender in developing countries (Mulvaney & Morrissey, 2012). Similarly, the study findings examine that girls are subject to subject choice constraints, while boys enjoy greater academic flexibility in Kenya (Mungai, 2012). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that dropout rates among girls in high school have an impact on their ability to obtain better economic prospects, with several factors (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Tahira, 2021). Likewise, the argument of the study reveals that girls are deterred from engaging in competitive academic pursuits by their fear of prejudice in higher education (Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021). However, the results of the study articulated that girls' access to high-quality higher education is limited by the lack of scholarships (Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, 2021). Comparably, the study of Nasser and Birenbaum (2005) asserted that family expectations limit girls' goals while pushing boys toward greater education in developing countries. The analysis of the research reported that traditional practices place a higher value on marriage than on education, which lowers girls' academic performance in higher education (Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021). Correspondingly, the study findings show that stereotypes on social media have a detrimental impact on students' academic goals and self-esteem at the tertiary level (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2021). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that boys are more socially encouraged to take advantage of possibilities for exploratory learning with several factors at a higher university level (Shoaib, 2021; Niehues, Kisbu-Sakarya, & Selcuk, 2020). In addition, the study findings conclude that financial difficulties have a greater impact on girls' education since families emphasize the education of boys at higher education (Nigri, Levantesi, & Marino, 2021). The study findings outline that girls' capacity to regularly attend school is greatly impacted by limited access to transportation in developing countries for higher education (Noria, Borkowski, & Whitman,

2009). Similarly, the study findings examine that the academic performance of students is significantly impacted by school absences due to cultural taboos surrounding menstruation (Oh, 2023). In the same way, analysis of the study pointed out that academic gaps between boys and girls are reinforced by the lack of gender-inclusive teaching methods in many educational institutions (Ali, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2021). Likewise, the argument of study reveals that equality of academic chances for girls and boys is restricted by the absence of inclusive educational policies linked with several factors (Ahmad, Shoaib, & Shaukat, 2021). However, the results of the study articulated that girls are discouraged from pursuing ambitious academic goals by the effects of social stigmas associated with women in leadership roles (Ahmad, Ahmad, Shoaib, & Shaukat, 2021). Comparably, the study of Park, McPartlan, Solanki, and Xu (2023) asserted that disparity in parental support for girls' education remains lower in traditional societies due to gender beliefs. The analysis of the research reported that traditional societies' beliefs significantly impact the learning achievements of the students at the university level (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2020). Correspondingly, the study findings show that effects on female students' limited professional networks make it more difficult for them to take advantage of opportunities for academic progress in developing countries (Shoaib & Ullah, 2019). Furthermore, the study findings indicate that girls are discouraged from taking on leadership roles in educational institutions due to factors of gender conventions (Patterson & O'Brien, 2023). In addition, the study findings conclude that higher rates of maternal illiteracy in developing countries have a detrimental effect on daughters' academic goals and success (Paulus & Nolan, 2021).

Conclusion

The study concludes based on the existing body of literature that gender disparities in various educational dimensions significantly affect learning achievements at tertiary levels. The blend of review of literature and primary data investigation discloses that factors such as gender disparity in enrolment, classroom diminuendos, and the broader learning environment contribute to disparity in academic achievement. The presence of a supportive classroom environment and disparities has been linked to the

residential backgrounds of the students, which also play an essential role in shaping learning achievements. Likewise, the study stresses the significance of educational resources, teaching resources based on indigenous culture, unbiased communication practices, vigorous policy, and institutional support in addressing learning inequalities. Collective learning opportunities, flexible instructional approaches, and fair evaluation methods emerged as key enablers for minimizing gender-based achievement disparities. Collectively, the findings emphasize the multidimensional nature of gender disparities at the tertiary level and the need for comprehensive, approachable, equity-driven pedagogical and institutional practices to foster academic achievement for all students.

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