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## How Do Students Perceive Co-Education in Universities of The Punjab-Pakistan?

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is considered the main driver of development for any society and all the religions in the world are in favor of equal opportunities of education for men and women. In this regard, single sex education and co-education are two different ways used to educate individuals of society. The trend of co-education is widely adopted in universities. This system has benefitted the nations with its positive aspects and at same time it showed some drawbacks as well. The present study was confined to four major universities of the Punjab province. The data were collected from 400 respondents with the help of pre-tested, validated and reliable questionnaire. The information gathered was analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. Present research reported that majority of the male students are involved in unethical activities and they try to demoralize character of female students. However, co-education creates a spirit of competition among both genders. It was suggested that counseling sessions should be arranged for students to delimit their unethical activities.*

**Keywords:** Co-education, Development, Social values, Islamic ideology

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### INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has been blessed with a diversified set of cultures and traditions making it most complex region in the world. It has been dominated by Islamic ideology which is responsible for setting main parameters i.e. moral, political, social and economic of the society (Zaman et al., 2006). On the other hand, majority of the people residing in this country is modernizing itself to meet global standards of livelihood (Ansari, 2011). The differences and contradiction in mindset of people has pushed them to identify different pathways for their development. These differences have not only affected their social, economical and political benefits but also have a great influence on higher education (Majeed, 2010). As education is considered the main driver of development of any society and all the religions in the world are in favor of equal opportunities of education for men and women (Schieman, 2011). However, in Pakistani scenario, this privilege is confined to male segments of the society predominantly. And this prevalence has affected the female segment in achieving different pursuits of education. There are several hindering factors responsible for this discrimination and among these, cultural and social taboos are the leading ones (Ahmad et al., 2014).

In early history, male members were the targeted population for education; however some societies vehemently advocated girls' education. The concept of co-education was launched by Switzerland and after its successful execution; this idea travelled to other countries and they started practicing this ideology in their academic institutes despite of vehement opposition (Ziegler, 2001). However, it has been a couple of decades that Pakistani society is observing co-education in schools, colleges and universities. The credit for this delay goes directly to our cultural and social factors (Hashmi et al., 2008). Certain ethnicities of Pakistan have negligible access to education. Women constitute more than half of the population in this country and despite this fact; the country is leading in terms of female illiteracy. The reason behind this situation is lack of schools for girls and general discrimination against women (Maqsood et al., 2012). However, with passage of time, now a days, our society does not bother co-education system in schools at primary level but show reluctance when sending their children at secondary, higher secondary and graduation level. This shift is occurring in a leapfrogging manner and government is dedicated to increase this rate to 15 percent in 2020 which was 6.3 percent in 2007. Many public and private universities are rendering their services for higher education in the country and majority of them is practicing co-education (Dawn, 2011).

Co-education plays an important in the social development of both male and female. This combined learning environment enables them to acquire social maturity at early stages (Mathieu, 2006). In addition, co-education is considered a great tool in developing self-esteem, character enhancement and competitive environment. Being a muslim and developing country, co-education is heavily criticized by an overwhelming majority. The opponents of this system advocate that this education system will breed vulgarity in young generations. Besides this, it is a potential threat to our Islamic injunctions (Ahmad, 2012). At present, both sexes are competing in universities for higher education. Therefore, the present study was conducted to identify their perspective about co-education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Punjab province dominates the other provinces of Pakistan with respect to quality education. Its contribution in imparting higher education to masses is acknowledged worldwide. The province has also an honor of acquisition of different prestigious universities which are famous for their diversified research and academic disciplines. In addition, the universities located in Punjab province are also loaded with students coming from other provinces of Pakistan. The present study was carried in four major universities i.e. University of Agriculture-Faisalabad, University of the Punjab-Lahore, PMAS Arid Agriculture University-Rawalpindi and Bahauddin Zikriya University-Multan of the Punjab. Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Multan are the most prominent and big cities of this province. A total number of 400 respondents (100 from each university) were interviewed with help of a structured questionnaire. Reliability and validity of research instrument was ensured prior from final data collection. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from the respondents. The collected data were analyzed with help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to draw conclusions and making recommendations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Merits of Co-education

Co-education has many advantages in this age of fast learning. In our country, however, there are numerous opponents of co-education. Those who support it contend that in a poor country like Pakistan, it solves the problems of shortage of schools, colleges and competent teaching staff. Such an atmosphere also encourages healthy competition between boys and girls, while helping equalize the quality of education they receive. It also helps young boys and girls socialize with each other. Today, the job market in Pakistan, in fact, all over the word is hardly segregated, so there is no reason why our education system should be divided along lines of gender (Kağitçibaşı and Poortinga, 2014).

**Table 1:** Mean, weighted score, standard deviation and rank order of affect merits of coeducation

Merits of coeducation	Mean	Std. deviation	Weighted score	Rank order
Development of self-esteem among genders	4.37	0.485	656	1
Promotion of healthy competition among boys and girls	3.94	0.907	591	2
Confidence development	3.35	1.82	503	3
Enhanced social skills	3.18	1.10	477	4
Appropriate education system	3.14	1.81	471	5
Cognitive development of students	3.11	1.37	466	6
Diversified learning environment	2.60	1.45	390	7
Positive relationship between both genders	2.57	0.893	385	8
Exposure to different situations	1.49	0.502	224	9
Behavioural development	1.40	0.695	210	10

In co-educational schools, girls and boys, women and men, share in the joy of learning together, developing mutual respect and understanding for each other. Boys and girls working and learning together in natural settings where gender equality and opportunity is promoted, in both academic and co-curricular activities, reflects the most realistic and authentic learning environment.

The data given depict that development of self-esteem among genders was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with the mean value 4.37, followed by promotion of healthy competition among boys and girls was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with the mean value 3.94. Mean values of given statements fell between disagree and medium category but inclined more towards disagree category. Confidence development was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with the mean value 3.35, followed by enhanced social skills, appropriate education system and cognitive development of students was ranked 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> with the mean value 3.18, 3.14 and 3.11, respectively. Mean value of given statements fell between disagree and medium category but inclined more towards medium category. Diversified learning environment and positive relationship between both genders were ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> with the mean value 2.60 and 2.57. Mean values of given statements fell between agree and medium category but inclined more towards medium category. Exposure to different situations and behavioral development were ranked least (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>) with the mean value 1.49 and 1.40, respectively. Mean value of given statements fell between strongly agree and agree category but inclined more towards strongly agree category.

In Africa education began as a tool to prepare the local youth to take their place in their respective societies. Boys and girls were taught separately to help prepare each sex for their adult roles. Indigenous education systems began to change from being just rituals and rites of passage to an education that could allow African acquire some basic skills during the era of European colonialism and imperialism in Africa. Therefore, before 19<sup>th</sup> century education system emphasized on separation of girls from boys, this led to introduction of single-sex schools because knowledge, skills and values were sex oriented reflecting different roles the society assigned to each gender and unequal status of men and women in most societies. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century more and more coeducational schools were set up and universalized in many parts of the world. The setting up of more coeducation schools was because the co-opting of girls into boys' schools, was adopted due to civil pressure and advocacy for the recognition of equal rights of the girl child in education.

### **Demerits of Co-education**

Those who oppose co-education feel that this system is against our traditions. They fear that it will lead to the development of immoral relationships between boys and girls and they will get spoilt. Also, such distractions will prevent young boys and girls from focusing on their studies. Prejudice apart, there is the need for cool and calculated considerations when dealing with the question of co-education. The world is changing fast and women are being given equal status with men in society. Let us, therefore, accept this system of education and be on the same wavelength with the rest of the world (Mulvey, 2010).

**Table 2:** Mean, weighted score, standard deviation and rank order of affect Demerits of coeducation

<b>Demerits of coeducation</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Weighted score</b>	<b>Rank order</b>
Existence of unethical activities	3.78	1.31	567	1
Male dominancy	3.32	1.29	498	2
Non-conducive environment	3.20	1.64	480	3
Preference given to female students	3.17	0.67	475	4
Development of negatives sense of relationship between students	2.96	1.33	444	5
Chances of distraction should be more	2.84	1.56	426	6
Chances of distractions could be more	2.67	1.45	401	7
Moral corruption	2.66	1.12	399	8
Misbehave of male students with female students	2.45	1.22	368	9

Co-education at the ages of about 11-16 puts young people together at the age when they are most self-conscious about their development and appearance. This is bad enough with those of the same sex but becomes much worse in the presence of the opposite sex and is a huge distraction from their work and consequently from their opportunities in a later life.

The data given in table 2 depict that existence of unethical activities was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with the mean value 3.78. Mean value of given statement fell between disagree and medium category but inclined more towards disagree category. Male dormancy was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with the mean value 3.32, followed by non-conducive environment and preference given to female students were ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> with the mean value 3.20 and 3.17, respectively. Mean values of given statements fell between disagree and medium category but inclined more towards medium category. Development of negatives sense of relationship between students ranked 5<sup>th</sup> with the mean value 2.96, followed by chances of distraction should be more, Chances of distractions could be more, and moral corruption were ranked 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> with the mean values 2.84, 2.67 and 2.66, respectively. Mean values of given statements fell between agree and medium category but inclined more towards medium category. Misbehave of male students with female students was ranked least (9<sup>th</sup>) with the mean value 2.45. Mean value of misbehave of male students with female student's statement fell between agree and medium category but inclined more towards agree category.

The effects of coeducation environment on learning has been identified as; low academic development, low discipline levels and future career choices that are gender stereotypical to both boys and girls. To counteract these negative effects caused by coeducation classroom environment on learning, some coeducational schools have separated boys from girls to create single-sex schools or to teach boys and girls in separate classrooms within the same school. Ahmad (2012) rightly indicates that some coeducation schools have separated boys from girls to create single-sex schools or to teach boys and girls in separate classrooms within the same school. Therefore, it is argued that single-sex classrooms provide better learning environment for both boys and girls, this is because distracters found within coeducation schools are minimized leading to high academic development for both boys and girls.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is evident from the present research that majority of the respondents rated demerits of co-education. They were of the view that male had dominancy in overall environment of the university which ignites them to practice some unethical acts with female students. They also unveiled the fact that the reason behind carrying such activities might be due to their residential background. As majority of students from rural areas face co-education first time in their educational career in universities. Therefore, it is suggested that there must be counseling sessions for newly admitted students in universities. Our religious scholars can also play an instrumental role in minimizing negative thinking of students which will ultimately pave path for overall development of the students

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