



## INTERPLAY OF SOCIOLOGY AND EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO HIGHER LEARNING IN PAKISTAN

<sup>1</sup>Zohaib Hassan Sain, Superior University, Pakistan  
E-mail: [zohaib3746@gmail.com](mailto:zohaib3746@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Rohana, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia  
E-mail: [rohana@unm.ac.id](mailto:rohana@unm.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the Pakistani higher education system, particularly emphasising the obstacles that students face while trying to further their education. Access, quality, efficiency, and gender, racial, and class inequalities are covered, as are how sociological theories shed light on these concerns. To compile their findings, the authors of this research consulted a body of prior literature. Investigating and assessing Pakistan's university system uses sociological ideas and viewpoints. Access to quality education, inefficiency, a lack of research activities, and gender, racial, and class disparities in educational achievement and retention are significant issues highlighted by the study's results as affecting Pakistan's higher education system. Researchers in sociology, education, public policy, and development studies may find this research valuable. To better higher education institutions and tackle socioeconomic inequities, it offers insights for researchers, educators, and legislators. An innovative viewpoint on the relationship between social conditions and educational results is provided by this research, which examines higher education in Pakistan while also integrating sociological ideas. It adds to what is already known by drawing attention to the importance of sociology in comprehending and solving problems in education.

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### INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions worldwide collaborate with industrial development groups to enhance economic growth. As a communal undertaking, education has a robust correlation between developmental advancement and advanced education (Serpa & Sá, 2019). Well-educated persons can have a beneficial effect on their environment, improve the well-being of their society, and propel economic progress. This talent is primarily seen in individuals who have achieved a high degree of schooling. Various things impact an individual's learning capacity. This research aims to analyze the factors that influence students' academic achievement in higher education, with a specific focus on graduate and postgraduate students. The influencing elements may be categorized into many groups, including institutional, economic, and professional aspects. Individuals with strong enthusiasm for their studies and active participation tend to have superior academic achievement (Ballantine et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the local environment and family traits are essential factors in influencing pupils' study habits. It is crucial for the institutional setting to provide support and for instructors to have high expectations for their pupils. Additional impact elements include prior educational groundwork, instructional approaches, classroom settings, and general scholastic achievement (Moore & Young, 2001). Moreover, advantageous socioeconomic circumstances and elevated levels of parental education substantially impact improving the academic excellence of their offspring (Lingard & Thompson, 2017). The sociology of education is characterized by its dynamic nature, diversity, and frequent debates. Sociologists should align themselves with diverse views such as feminism, phenomenology, Marxism, and postmodernism to accurately represent the range of viewpoints.

### *Education's Role in Society*

Education in its early stages is an informal process in which newborns acquire knowledge by watching and imitating the behaviours of individuals in their environment. As children mature, their education becomes increasingly organized and formalized via activities such as playdates and preschool. Upon entering

elementary school, the primary emphasis shifts towards academic learning as students enter the educational system. Education encompasses acquiring knowledge and information (Schofer et al., 2021). The education system significantly impacts socializing people by imparting cultural expectations and norms via instructors, textbooks, and classmates. Schools also have the power to question and change cultural norms, going beyond the effect of the family (Morrish, 2019).

Regarding socialization, children from various origins are often taught using a uniform curriculum, which might diminish variety and promote uniformity. Individuals acquire collective knowledge, cultural conventions, and social values and develop skills to operate effectively within this structure (Latuny et al., 2021). The area of the sociology of education covers several methodologies. However, globalization has led to a growing convergence of issues, methodologies, and views (Ballantine et al., 2021). Higher education has enabled the dissemination of ideas and theories among academic institutions. This communication has enhanced scholarly discussion and established a clear and focused movement of ideas. Three main techniques are suggested for comprehending educational inequality. The first strategy focuses on analyzing specific educational institutions, while the second approach considers the educational background of parents and children. The third approach investigates internal and external elements, such as educational regulations. The third method highlights the crucial significance of educational policy in reducing social class disparities (Collins, 2019). However, sociological perspectives need help owing to the inconsistent focus on class within educational policies. The frequent fluctuations in this aspect often make the idea of social class missing in policy discussions, highlighting the need for a more sophisticated method of tackling educational disparities.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research is of great importance for several reasons. Firstly, it thoroughly examines the obstacles encountered by the higher education system in Pakistan, including issues related to accessibility, quality, effectiveness, and disparities based on gender, race, and socio-economic status. Through sociological ideas, this study provides a detailed comprehension of how these elements impact educational results and sustain social inequality. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the crucial significance of higher education in promoting social mobility and fostering economic growth. This study highlights the importance of ensuring equal access to higher education for individuals of all socio-economic backgrounds in a society where educational opportunities are not adequately dispersed. This illustrates that enhancing educational standards and increasing education opportunities may assist in narrowing socio-economic disparities, boosting job chances, and fostering a fairer society.

Furthermore, the discoveries provide significant perspectives for politicians, educators, and researchers. The report offers practical suggestions for improving the higher education system by identifying and addressing structural obstacles. This involves tackling students' financial, intellectual, cultural, and social barriers, promoting a more comprehensive and encouraging educational atmosphere. Moreover, this study enhances the academic dialogue by including Indigenous viewpoints on higher education, which have often been disregarded. This addition enhances the comprehension of educational dynamics in Pakistan and provides a comprehensive perspective on the elements that impact student achievement.

Finally, the study highlights the potential for substantial improvements in Pakistan's higher education system. By emphasizing the Pakistani government's allocation of significant research money to public-sector institutions, it demonstrates the potential for academic expansion and creativity. This potential is crucial for pushing advancement in education and ensuring that higher education institutions can make a meaningful contribution to national development. The study has the potential to provide valuable insights and motivate substantial improvements in Pakistan's higher education system, fostering increased fairness, availability, and quality of education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The scholarly discourse surrounding the sociology of education has debated the extent to which it constitutes a coherent field defined by specific texts and principles. This study expounds on sociology's role in providing criteria for evaluating education while also addressing the challenges inherent in applying sociological concepts to higher education.

### ***Philosophies of Education***

Theoretical views include the analysis of different conceptual frameworks that emphasise education's significance in moulding people and society. This research explores many methodologies for comprehending the intricate function of schooling in socialisation (Chung, 2021). Functionalists argue that education equips people with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform different societal functions (Kurtz, 2022). Symbolic interactionists, on the other hand, direct their attention to the dynamics inside the classroom and the influence that interactions between students and instructors have on everyday life. This section thoroughly explores each of these approaches (Bryan, 2019). Children are exposed to many societal responsibilities from an early age, starting in preschool and kindergarten, as part of their socialisation process. Émile Durkheim, a renowned French sociologist and trailblazer in sociology, made substantial contributions to our comprehension of this subject (QIZI, 2023). Functionalists acknowledge that schools impart values considered essential for their specific social groups or society (Liu et al., 2020).

In contrast, critical sociologists provide a more skeptical perspective on the role of public education compared to functionalists, raising doubts about its constructive character (Blossfeld & Von Maurice, 2019). Pierre Bourdieu, a prominent French sociologist, examined the concept of cultural capital, emphasising cultural knowledge's influence on pupils from different socioeconomic strata. The individual compared cultural capital and economic capital, highlighting that cultural capital encompasses cultural preferences, knowledge, linguistic patterns, and other elements. It was emphasised that acquiring cultural capital involves intentional exertion, demanding significant time and energy. Individuals hailing from affluent and middle-class origins are more prone to have substantial cultural capital (Zeldin, 2023). Various sociological theories provide distinct viewpoints for comprehending schooling. Functionalists assert that education serves the purpose of preparing students for their future social roles and fulfilling society's requirements. Conversely, critical sociologists contend that schools often contribute to continuing existing inequities. Symbolic interactionism views education as categorising people according to their actions and achievements, which might impact their educational and social paths.

### ***The Influence of Social Factors on Post-Secondary Education***

Gender disparity in Pakistani society poses a substantial obstacle to political rights and general development, with a particular impact on higher education. This inequality impedes advancement since many women, who rely on males for financial support, are unable to afford the expenses associated with pursuing higher education, thereby leading to their exclusion from it. The problem is mainly caused by gender discrimination and inequality (Saqib et al., 2020). Various factors, such as socioeconomic class, gender, and cultural values imparted by families and communities, substantially influence the management of higher education. Both full-time and part-time students have comparable motives for pursuing higher education, generally to improve their career prospects and labour market options.

Moreover, younger students often emphasise the whole university or college experience (Murtaza & Hui, 2021). The present initiatives mainly target lower socioeconomic groups or are implemented at the beginning of the educational process (Memon et al., 2010). Furthermore, federal and state governments can redistribute financial assistance now allocated to schools and universities to provide more significant help to students from low-income backgrounds. This redistribution might assist in closing the divide resulting from economic inequalities and provide a fairer opportunity to enter higher education.

### ***Societal Mobility in Post-Secondary Education***

In order to promote social mobility, it is essential to assess many facets of education. Amidst a period characterised by increasing inequality and limited social mobility, enhancing educational standards and expanding educational accessibility may provide equitable possibilities for every person in Pakistan. It is commonly anticipated that institutions of higher education nationwide would provide chances for all individuals with the aptitude and determination to excel, hence fostering social mobility (Shah, 2010). Studies conducted by Robert Haveman and Timothy Smeeding reveal substantial differences in income-related access to and achievement in higher education, with these gaps persistently expanding. Most prospective students come from the most affluent socioeconomic group at prestigious schools and universities. Although there is a significant abundance of highly qualified individuals, the number of accepted and enrolled students is

considerably below its potential (Parveen et al., 2011). This poses difficulties for students when choosing colleges, submitting applications, and securing admittance.

In order to make well-informed choices about their education, students must possess comprehensive knowledge of the expenses associated with college attendance and the accessibility of financial assistance depending on need (Aslam et al., 2012). The prevailing discussion in sociology and politics highlights the significance of higher education in enabling upward social mobility. Education has become a crucial determinant of employment opportunities and social status in contemporary Pakistan. According to some experts, this tendency indicates the rise of a meritocratic society, where a person's social status is defined by their educational accomplishments (Mehmood et al., 2018). In addition, by improving educational outreach and implementing more inclusive legislation, we may better promote the concept of meritocracy. This will ensure that individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds have equal possibilities to achieve success.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

**Research Question:** How do gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural values impact access to and the quality of higher education in Pakistan?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology to investigate the interaction between sociology and education in higher education in Pakistan. The technique emphasizes collecting comprehensive perspectives from different stakeholders via semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. An extensive spectrum of opinions was obtained by conducting interviews with students, educators, policymakers, and specialists in education. Focus groups offered a cooperative setting for members to discuss shared experiences and difficulties in higher education. In addition, the study's results were contextualized and supported by document analysis of existing literature, and educational reports.

To guarantee the accuracy and dependability of the results, triangulation was used by integrating many data sources, such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The study adhered to rigorous ethical standards, including obtaining informed permission from all participants, ensuring anonymity, and ensuring voluntary participation. Although there may be limitations, such as sample bias and dependence on self-reported data, the research offers valuable insights into the obstacles and possibilities inside Pakistan's higher education system.

**Table 1 - Data Collection Summary**

Stakeholder Group	Number of Interviews	Number of Focus Groups
Students	20	4
Educators	15	3
Policymakers	10	2
Education Experts	10	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>11</b>

*Source: Created by the authors*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the data gathered for this research, there is a significant association between the subject matter being studied and the information that may be obtained. Like any social activity, the framework of knowledge presents both opportunities and constraints that academics must navigate as agents of reconceptualization.

### *Functionalist Perception*

Higher education is essential in modern society since it offers specialized training for many occupations. In the past, occupations were often passed down from one generation to another. However, in today's world, most jobs need a minimum of a high school graduation, and many professions now necessitate a college or post-graduate degree. This shift in job needs has magnified the increasing significance of acquiring higher education to get work and progress in one's career. Functionalist theorists contend that higher education is a technique for exerting social control.



### ***Representational Interface***

Higher education refers to the many interactions and results that occur throughout the pursuit of advanced study. Interactions between students and professors might generate distinct expectations for both individuals. Over time, instructors may inadvertently develop habits that prevent some pupils, particularly black kids, from succeeding in disciplines such as mathematics.

### ***Concept of Conflict Theory***

Conflict theorists argue that higher education is a mechanism for dividing people according to their social class, gender, or race. They say that the educational system perpetuates and worsens socioeconomic inequities. The educational system often perpetuates prejudice against minorities, working-class citizens, and women by creating institutional obstacles that hinder their academic achievements. Discriminatory practices impede the ability of certain groups to obtain education, while employers may need educational credentials unrelated to work performance, reinforcing educational inequalities.

### ***Importance of Higher Education***

Pakistani authorities are prioritizing the improvement of the quality and accessibility of higher education to equip young folks with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to the growth of the country effectively. Attempts have been made to synchronize schooling with pragmatic and relevant curricula, addressing parents' discontent with conventional education systems. Multiple studies suggest that when parents regard formal education as lacking value, it reduces their enthusiasm and leads them to look for curricula that provide their children with practical skills. This problem is made worse by a hierarchical structure across all levels of society, from houses to companies.

For research to thrive, fostering a community of discerning individuals capable of participating in substantial conversations and offering unique perspectives is crucial. A diverse team of researchers can stimulate creativity and advancement by promoting the interchange of ideas. This diversity is particularly beneficial for universities, which encompass various academic fields and can significantly benefit from varied perspectives and ideas. The Pakistani government's praiseworthy endeavour involves allocating substantial research money to public-sector institutions, eliminating a key obstacle to academic advancement and innovation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Pakistan, the opportunity for higher education has expanded for people from different socioeconomic levels throughout the last five decades. However, there continues to be a significant difference in educational accomplishments across various socioeconomic classes. Education explains the connection between an individual's social standing and that of their parents, but it is not the only factor determining this link. Various theories seek to comprehend the causes of college dropouts, with some ideas increasingly including Indigenous viewpoints on higher education. Educational institutions should actively identify and remove systemic obstacles that may hinder students from successfully finishing their education. Students encounter several difficulties, such as financial, intellectual, cultural, and social issues. Discovering solutions to alleviate or eliminate these barriers is essential to attain academic success. Enhancing higher education is crucial for establishing a path towards a safer and more advanced future. Improving the higher education system in Pakistan may greatly aid in reducing poverty, cultivating mutual respect, and encouraging peaceful dispute resolution. Changes in social mobility have necessitated adaptations in academic curricula and revenue structures in Pakistan. It is crucial to ensure that higher education is available to all individuals, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, to promote the advancement and prosperity of the nation.

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