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Between Identity and Performance: A Sociological Analysis of Gender Identity, Expression, and Roles among Students at Tertiary Level in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the construction and performance of gender identity, expression, and roles among students at the tertiary level in Pakistan, situating gender as a socially constructed and contextually negotiated phenomenon. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, data were collected from 316 students enrolled in BS (4-Year) programs within the Faculty of Social Sciences at a public sector university, using a structured questionnaire with an attitudinal (dis)agreement scale. The study applies sociological frameworks, including Goffman's dramaturgical theory, Butler's theory of gender performativity, Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, to analyze how students enact, regulate, and negotiate gendered behaviors within academic and social spaces. Findings indicate that students' gender expressions are shaped by a combination of institutional norms, cultural expectations, and individual agency, reflecting both conformity to traditional roles and resistance to restrictive norms. The study highlights tertiary education as a critical site for understanding the relational and performative nature of gender in the Pakistani socio-cultural context and contributes to broader debates on gender, youth, and higher education.

Keywords: Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Gender Roles, Tertiary Education, Performativity, Sociological Analysis

Introduction

Gender identity, expression, and roles constitute central dimensions of social life through which individuals negotiate meaning, belonging, and social positioning (Connell, 2005; Goffman, 1959). Within tertiary education, these dimensions become particularly salient as universities function not only as sites of academic instruction but also as arenas of identity formation, symbolic interaction, and performance (Butler, 1990, 2004). In Pakistan, where gender relations are deeply embedded in cultural norms, religious



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interpretations, and institutional structures, students' experiences of gender are shaped by intersecting expectations of family, society, and educational environments (Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c; Shoaib, Iqbal, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026). However, higher education is often associated with meritocracy and progressive values, it simultaneously reproduces gendered hierarchies through curricula, classroom interactions, peer cultures, and informal institutional practices (Bourdieu, 1984). Drawing on sociological perspectives of gender as a socially constructed and performative phenomenon, this study examines how students at the tertiary level in Pakistan understand, express, and enact gender identities and roles within academic and social spaces. By situating gender between identity and performance, the research highlights the dynamic interplay between individual agency and structural constraints, revealing how students both conform to and contest dominant gender norms. In doing so, the study contributes to sociological debates on gender, education, and social inequality in the Global South, offering empirical insights into how higher education mediates gendered subjectivities and everyday practices in contemporary Pakistani society.

Study Context

The study is situated within the context of tertiary-level educational institutions in Pakistan, encompassing public and private universities that operate within diverse socio-cultural, religious, and institutional settings (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b; Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026; Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026). Pakistani universities represent critical social spaces where students from varied class backgrounds, regions, and gendered socializations converge, making them important sites for the negotiation of identity and social roles (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Waris, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025; Waris, Shoaib, Sharif, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). However, higher education is often associated with meritocracy, rationality, and progressive values, these institutions remain deeply embedded in broader patriarchal structures, normative gender ideologies, and moral regulations prevalent in Pakistani society (Shoaib, Waris, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Waris, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b; Shoaib & Zaman, 2025; Shoaib, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025). Within this context, students experience tensions between familial expectations, religious prescriptions, institutional codes of conduct, and emerging global discourses on gender, individuality, and self-expression (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b). The study context also reflects gender-segregated practices, informal surveillance, and unequal access to academic and social opportunities, which collectively shape how gender identity and expression are performed and regulated on campus. By focusing on tertiary institutions as socially structured yet contested spaces, the study contextualizes gender identity and roles as dynamic processes shaped by both structural constraints and students' everyday interactions within Pakistan's higher education landscape.

The Data and Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research design and employed a cross-sectional survey to examine the study variables. The population comprised students enrolled in the BS (4-Year) programs within the Faculty of Social Sciences at a public sector university, and the sampling frame was obtained from the concerned department. Stratified random sampling was used to draw a representative sample, resulting in the participation of 316 students. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of multiple sections designed to capture students' attitudes and perceptions. Prior to the main survey,



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a pilot study was conducted with 30 randomly selected students, and the instrument demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.700. Responses were measured using an attitudinal (dis)agreement scale, and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, primarily frequencies and percentages. The study's conclusions are based on primary data gathered from students enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Results

Gender Identity: Table 1 provided the response of the student's reference to gender identity variable. The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., "your gender identity has been easily identified". The primary analysis of the data indicated that 10.4 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and the 11.7 percentage of respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement "your gender identity has been easily identified". However, 37.0 percentage of the female and male pupils were in favor of agree and 40.8 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the declaration as mentioned in the table "your gender identity has been easily identified". The data asserted that more than half of the male and female students were agree with the statement i.e., "your gender identity has been easily identified".

Table 1

Response of the Students towards Gender Identity

SD=Strongly Disagree to SA=Strongly Agree

Sr. No.	Statements	SD f (%)	D f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)
i	Your gender identity has been easily identified	33 (10.4)	37 (11.7)	117 (37.0)	129 (40.8)
ii	Your identity has been based on physiological needs	20 (6.3)	72 (22.8)	160 (50.0)	64 (20.3)
iii	Your gender identity has been identified at the time of birth	28 (8.9)	42 (13.3)	126 (39.9)	119 (37.7)
iv	Your gender identity has been looked with genetic makeup	29 (9.2)	46 (14.6)	138 (43.7)	103 (32.6)
v	You are performing social obligation as your identity	21 (6.6)	63 (19.9)	157 (49.7)	75 (23.7)
vi	Your academic achievements influenced by your gender	31 (9.8)	69 (21.8)	145 (45.9)	71 (22.5)
vii	Your gender identity affects your team work in class	31 (9.8)	93 (29.4)	121 (38.3)	71 (22.5)
viii	Your gender identity effects your group discussion	40 (12.7)	60 (19.0)	142 (44.9)	74 (23.4)

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., "your identity has been based on physiological needs". the primary analysis of the data indicated that 6.3 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 22.8 percentage of the male and female students were in favor of disagree with the statement "your identity has been based on physiological needs". However, 50.0 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agreeing and 20.3 percentage of the respondents



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were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your identity has been based on physiological needs”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your identity has been based on physiological needs”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender identity has been identified at the time of birth”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 8.9 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagreeing and 13.3 percent of the male and female respondents were disagreeing with the statement “your gender identity has been identified at the time of birth. However, 39.9 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 37.7 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender identity has been identified at the time of birth”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents in favor of were agree with the statement i.e., “your gender identity has been identified at the time of birth.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender identity has been looked with genetic makeup”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 9.2 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 14.6 percent of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your gender identity has been looked with genetic makeup”. However, 43.7 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 32.6 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender identity has been looked with genetic makeup”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender identity has been looked with genetic makeup.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you are performing social obligation as your identity”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 6.6 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagreeing and 19.9 percentage of the male and female respondents were disagreeing with the statement “you are “performing social obligation as your identity”. However, 49.7 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 23.7 percentage of the respondents were strongly agreeing with the statement as mentioned in the table “you are performing social obligation as your identity”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you are performing social obligation as your identity”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your academic achievements influenced by your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 9.8 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 21.8 percentage of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your academic achievements influenced by your gender”. However, 45.9 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 22.5 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your academic achievements influenced by your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your academic achievements influenced by your gender”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender identity affects your team work in class”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 9.8 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 29.4 percentage of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your gender identity affects your team work in class”. However, 38.3 percent of the female



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and male respondents were in favor of agree and 22.5 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender identity affects your team work in class”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender identity affects your team work in class”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender identity effects your group discussion”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 12.7 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 19.0 percentage of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your gender identity effects your group discussion”. However, 44.9 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 23.4 percentage of the students were strongly in favor of agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender identity effects your group discussion”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender identity effects your group discussion”.

Gender Expression:

Table 2 provided the response of the student’s reference to gender expression variable. The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender has been identified with your body features”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 11.7 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 15.2 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your gender has been identified with your body features”. However, 39.6 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 33.5 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender has been identified with your body features”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender has been identified with your body features”.

Table 2
Response of the Students towards Gender Expression
SD=Strongly Disagree to SA=Strongly Agree

Sr. No.	Statements	SD f (%)	D f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)
i	Your gender has been identified with your body features	37 (11.7)	48 (15.2)	125 (39.6)	106 (33.5)
ii	Your gender has been represented by your behavior	13 (4.1)	50 (15.8)	152 (48.1)	101 (32.0)
iii	Your body language reflect your gender	19 (6.0)	47 (14.9)	156 (49.4)	94 (29.7)
iv	You wear dress as per your gender	22 (7.0)	38 (12.0)	139 (44.0)	117 (37.0)
v	You present yourself as your gender	24 (7.6)	34 (10.8)	151 (47.8)	107 (33.9)
vi	You communicate with others as per your gender	19 (6.0)	52 (16.5)	141 (44.6)	104 (32.9)
vii	You participate in class following gender roles	22 (7.0)	48 (15.2)	157 (49.7)	89 (28.2)



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vii	You present your gender roles outside of the room	23	47	148	98
		(7.3)	(14.9)	(46.8)	(31.0)

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender has been represented by your behavior”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 4.1 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 15.2 percentages of the male and female students were in favor of disagreeing with the statement “your gender has been represented by your behavior”. However, 48.1 percentages of the female and male respondents were agreeing and 32.0 percentage of the students were in favor of strongly agreeing with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender has been represented by your behavior”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender has been represented by your behavior”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your body language reflects your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 6.0 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 14.9 percentages of the male and female respondents were disagreeing with the statement “your body language reflect your gender”. However, 49.4 percentages of the female and male students were in favor of agree and 29.7 percentages of the respondents were strongly agreeing with the statement as mentioned in the table “your body language reflect your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were agree with the statement i.e., “your body language reflect your gender”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you wear dress as per your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 7.0 percentages of the respondents were strongly disagree and 12.0 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you wear dress as per your gender”. However, 44.0 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 37.0 percentages of the students were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you wear dress as per your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were agree with the statement i.e., “you wear dress as per your gender”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you present yourself as your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 7.6 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 10.8 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your percentages yourself as your gender”. However, 47.8 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 33.9 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your percentages yourself as your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you present yourself as your gender”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you communicate with others as per your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 6.0 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 16.5 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you communicate with others as per your gender”. However, 44.6 percentages of the female and male respondents were agreeing and 32.9 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you communicate with others as per your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement



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i.e., “you communicate with others as per your gender”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you participate in class following gender roles”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 7.0 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 15.2 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you participate in class following gender roles”. However, 49.7 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 28.2 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you participate in class following gender roles”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you participate in class following gender roles”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your percentages your gender roles outside of the room”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 7.3 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 14.9 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you present your gender roles outside of the room”. However, 46.8 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 31.0 percentages of the students were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you present your gender roles outside of the room”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you present your gender roles outside of the room”.

Gender Role:

Table 3 provided the response of the student’s reference to gender role. The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your assigned role is based on your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 12.7 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 19.3 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your assigned role are based on your gender”. However, 46.8 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 21.2 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your assigned role are based on your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your assigned role are based on your gender”.

Table 3

Response of the Students towards Gender Role

SD=Strongly Disagree to SA=Strongly Agree

Sr. No.	Statements	SD f (%)	D f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)
i	Your assigned role are based on your gender	40 (12.7)	61 (19.3)	148 (46.8)	67 (21.2)
ii	You are aware about your gender performance	16 (5.1)	55 (17.4)	167 (52.8)	78 (24.7)
iii	You prefer to perform role in public as per your gender	21 (6.6)	49 (15.5)	153 (48.4)	93 (29.4)
iv	You are confident to perform your role	18 (5.7)	41 (13.0)	146 (46.2)	111 (35.1)
v	You are confident learning this subject with choice	19	52	148	97



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		(6.0)	(16.5)	(46.8)	(30.7)
vi	Your gender role choose the subjects you are enrolled	29	69	138	80
		(9.2)	(21.8)	(43.7)	(25.3)
vii	You perform extracurricular activities in university	29	64	137	86
		(9.2)	(20.3)	(43.4)	(27.2)
vii	Your gender role has impacts on learning achievements	33	91	130	62
		(10.4)	(28.8)	(41.1)	(19.6)

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you are aware about your gender performance”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 5.1 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 17.4 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you are aware about your gender performance”. However, 52.8 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 24.7 percentages of the students were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you are aware about your gender performance”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you are aware about your gender performance”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you prefer to perform role in public as per your gender”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 6.6 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 15.5 percentages of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you prefer to perform role in public as per your gender”. However, 48.4 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 29.4 percentages of the respondents were strongly in favor of agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you prefer to perform role in public as per your gender”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you prefer to perform role in public as per your gender”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you are confident to perform your role”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 5.7 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 13.0 percentage of the male and female respondents were disagreeing with the statement “you are confident to perform your role”. However, 46.2 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 35.1 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you are confident to perform your role”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you are confident to perform your role”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you are confident learning this subject with choice”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 6.0 percentages of the respondents were strongly disagree and 16.5 percentage of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you are confident learning this subject with choice”. However, 46.8 percentages of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 30.7 percentages of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you are confident learning this subject with choice”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you are confident learning this subject with choice”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender role chooses the subjects you are enrolled”. The primary analysis of the data indicated



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that 9.2 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 21.8 percentage of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “your gender role choose the subjects you are enrolled”. However, 43.7 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 25.3 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender role choose the subjects you are enrolled”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender role choose the subjects you are enrolled”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “you perform extracurricular activities in university”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 9.2 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 20.3 percentage of the male and female respondents were in favor of disagree with the statement “you perform extracurricular activities in university”. However, 43.3 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 27.2 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly agree with the statement as mentioned in the table “you perform extracurricular activities in university”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “you perform extracurricular activities in university”.

The analysis presented the frequency and percentages of the statement i.e., “your gender role has impacts on learning achievements”. The primary analysis of the data indicated that 10.4 percentage of the respondents were in favor of strongly disagree and 28.8 percentage of the male and female students were in favor of disagree with the statement “your gender role has impacts on learning achievements”. However, 41.1 percentage of the female and male respondents were in favor of agree and 19.6 percentage of the respondents were strongly agreeing with the statement as mentioned in the table “your gender role has impacts on learning achievements”. The data asserted that more than half of the male and female respondents were in favor of agree with the statement i.e., “your gender role has impacts on learning achievements”.

Discussion

Gender Identity: The study findings indicated that gender identity had been easily identified by students. Similarly, the study finding asserted that identity had been based on physiological needs of the students. However, the primary data analysis pointed out that gender identity had been identified at the birth. The study findings had been linked with the study findings as mentioned in review. It is worth to mention here that the study finding outlined that the intersectionality in race class and gender had critical lenses and framework (Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b; Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib & Ullah, 2025). Moreover, the argument of the study revealed that different researches explored the cause of intersectionality in educations are the socio-economic background and less accessed of resources (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025c; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Ahmed, 2025). Nonetheless, the study findings showed that the expectations of society with males also create disparities in education (Shoaib, Rasool, Kalsoom, & Ali, 2025; Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a, 2025b). Further, the study findings included that the social identities like gender, race, and class gave more access to sons as compare to daughters (Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Rasool, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b).



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Gender Expression:

The study findings indicated that gender of the students had been identified with student's body feature. Similarly, the study findings asserted that gender of the students had been represented by student's behavior. However, the primary data analysis pointed out that body language of the students reflected their gender. Constantly, the statistical analysis confirmed that students wearied dress as per their gender. It is important to mention here that the study findings had been linked with the study findings as mentioned in review (Shoaib & Bashir, 2025; Shoaib, Batool, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Iqbal, & Iftikhar, 2025; Shoaib, Iqbal, Rasool, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Kausar, Ali, & Abdullah, 2025). The study findings outlined that the intersectionality of class and gender had different categories which influenced learning goals (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Ali, & Kausar, 2025). Moreover, the argument of the study revealed that the students faced different challenges and problems from their different background and class and gender which effected their academic goals (Shoaib & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Ahmed, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Ahmed, & Usmani, 2025a, 2025b; Shoaib, Ahmed, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025). Nonetheless, the study findings showed that the girls faced different challenges to achieved their learning goals because of social pressure and disparities (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a; Ali, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2025; Iqbal, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025; Larijani, Shoaib, & Abedi, 2025; Shoaib, 2025a, 2025b). Further, the study findings included that the factors of gender and class must be understand disparities of girls in society (Ahmed, Shoaib, & Zaman, 2025; Ali, Shoaib, & Ali, 2025; Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b; Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025b).

Gender Role:

The study findings indicated that students assigned roles were based on their gender. Similarly, the study finding asserted that students awared about their gender performance. However, the primary data analysis pointed out that students preferred perform their role in public as per their gender. Moreover, the primary data analysis highlighted that students performed extracurricular activities in university. In a nut shell, the study findings summarized that gender role of the students had impact on their learning achievements (Shoaib, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e; Shoaib, Abdullah, Naqvi, & Ditta, 2024; Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, 2024; Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024a, 2024b; Shoaib, Zaman, & Abbas, 2024). The study findings had been linked with the study findings as mentioned in review. The study findings outlined that the studies highlighted the essential educational practiced for male and female intersecting identities (Ali, Zaman, & Shoaib, 2024; Shoaib, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c; Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2023; Shoaib, Rasool, Anwar, & Ali, 2023; Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2023). Moreover, the argument of the study revealed that the multifaceted approaches require to address the intersectionality of class and gender (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, & Abdullah, 2022; Shoaib, Anwar, & Mustafa, 2022; Shoaib, Anwar, & Rasool, 2022; Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2022; Shoaib, Tariq, Shahzadi, & Ali, 2022; Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a; Shoaib, Usmani, & Ali, 2022). Nonetheless, the study findings showed that different programs helped to support social norms identities and parental engagement to overcome discrimination in society (Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021; Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, et al., 2021; Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, 2021; Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021; Shoaib, Iqbal, & Tahira, 2021; Shoaib, Rasool, & Anwar, 2021; Shoaib & Ullah, 2021b). Contently, the study findings included that the intersections focus on divers culture of education, it had



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strongly impacted on student's future goals (Rafique & Shoaib, 2015; Shoaib, 2021; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2020, 2021; Shoaib & Rafique, 2015; Shoaib & Ullah, 2019).

Theoretical Insights

The present study is grounded in sociological theories that examine the interplay between identity, social structures, and performance in the construction of gender roles. Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach provides a central framework, conceptualizing social life as a series of performances where individuals manage impressions to align with societal expectations; this perspective helps to understand how students enact gendered behaviors in academic and social settings. Complementing this, Judith Butler's (1990, 2004) theory of gender performativity emphasizes that gender is not a fixed trait but is continuously constituted through repeated social acts, highlighting the ways in which students' expressions of masculinity and femininity are enacted, negotiated, and sometimes contested in the university environment. Additionally, Bourdieu's (1984) notion of habitus and symbolic power informs the analysis of how institutional norms, cultural capital, and structural constraints shape students' gendered practices, reinforcing or challenging dominant gender ideologies. Connell's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity further elucidates the relational nature of gender, demonstrating how certain forms of gender expression are valorized or marginalized within educational contexts. Collectively, these theoretical insights provide a robust framework to analyze the dynamic processes through which gender identity, expression, and roles are constructed, performed, and regulated among tertiary-level students in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The study concludes that gender identity, expression, and roles among tertiary-level students in Pakistan are dynamic and socially constructed, shaped by the interplay of institutional norms, cultural expectations, and individual agency. Students navigate multiple pressures from family, society, and university environments, leading to performances of gender that are context-specific and often negotiated or contested. The findings reveal that whereas traditional gender norms continue to influence behaviors and interactions, students also engage in acts of resistance and adaptation, reflecting changing attitudes toward gender roles in higher education. The study underscores the significance of tertiary institutions as sites where gendered identities are both reinforced and challenged, highlighting the importance of recognizing the relational and performative nature of gender. Overall, the research contributes to sociological understandings of how young adults construct, express, and negotiate gendered subjectivities within the socio-cultural and institutional landscape of Pakistan's higher education system.

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