

**Impact of Higher Education in Punjab on Stereotypical Gender Roles: A Study of
Undergraduate Students' Perceptions**

By

Tehniat Tirmizi

Thesis submitted to Lahore School of Economics

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MPhil in Development Studies

2016-2018

Supervised by:

Dr. Fareeha Zafar

Co-supervisor:

Dr. Ahmad Nawaz

Abstract

Patriarchy echoes loud in both the public and the private spheres of Pakistan. Pertinent to the development of this social construct are family, culture, education, technology and peers, according to the theory of *social constructionism* (Lindsey, 2016; Deutscher & Lindsey, 2005). Higher education as one of the prime factors has long been attributed for inculcating critical thinking in students, consequently if successful; higher education can lead to equality of opportunities and outcomes for women in a country (Hoodbhoy, 2009; Kabeer, 2005). Therefore, it is particularly significant to study whether higher education in Pakistan is challenging gender role stereotypes or reinforcing them. There is not much literature present on the difference in students' perceptions towards gender roles through the course of university education. Hence, the overarching question driving this research is whether university characteristics (discipline of study, years of study and university type) and students' background (demographics and household characteristics) hold a significant impact on students' perceptions towards gender roles in a society. In order to gauge students' perceptions, along with a Gender Role Perception scale, students were presented with images of the widely glorified placards from the *Aurat March* 2019 and they had to ascribe labels to each. The findings of the study reveal that students enrolled in an undergraduate math discipline exhibit far more anti-feminist and patriarchal beliefs compared to students enrolled in sociology and business disciplines, with sociology students being the least patriarchal. Moreover, having studied in a public university increases patriarchal beliefs among students as compared to students who have studied in a private university.

Keywords: *Gender roles perception, Feminism, Aurat March, Stereotypes, Higher education, Patriarchy.*