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## Role of Institutional Environment in Constructing the Parental Attitude toward Girls' Students Enrollment: An Analysis

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**Abstract:** *The study entitled "Role of Institutional Environment in Constructing the Parental Attitude toward Girls Students Enrollment: An Analysis." This study analyzed the role of the institutional environment in parental attitudes towards girls' enrollment in schools in the Sukkur Region. The mixed-method (QUAN-qual.) approach was adopted. The study population was comprised of school heads, secondary school teachers, and parents. The simple random sampling technique was used for data collection. The researcher personally visited and collected data from twenty (20) government girls' secondary schools, including twenty (20) school heads, one hundred and ninety (190) female teachers and one hundred ninety (190) parents. The quantitative data were collected through the questionnaire, while qualitative insights were obtained via in-depth interviews. Secondary school teachers and parents generally view school environments positively, especially for safety and gender equality, with urban areas showing more positive attitudes towards girls' education, despite concerns about infrastructure and extracurricular activities. The study recommended that improving communication with parents, promoting female role models, expanding financial assistance, encouraging girls' leadership roles, enhancing transportation safety and fostering a gender-neutral learning environment. These strategies aimed to build trust, empower female students and increase parental support for girls' education in the Sukkur Region.*

**Key Words:** Institutional Environment, Parent's Attitude, Girls' Environment, Socioeconomic Status, Geographic Location

### Introduction

A vital human right and a major force in promoting sustainable development is education. In addition to being a universal objective, the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) set forth by the United Nations places a strong emphasis on ensuring access to high-quality education for all (Boeren, 2019; Zafar & Ullah, 2020). By the year 2030, SDG-4 seeks to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Elfert, 2019; Yousaf et al., 2021). To be successful, this objective must be met while also tackling the chronic gender imbalances that continue to exist in many areas, including the Sukkur region. Gender differences in schooling are still a major issue in the Pakistani region of Sukkur. Boys and girls enter and remain in school at different rates, despite significant advancements in increasing access to education (Struffolino & Borgna, 2021; Zafar & Akhtar, 2023). The attitude of parents toward their daughters' education is one of the key factors influencing girls' enrollment and ongoing participation in school.

Parental attitudes play a pivotal role in shaping the educational trajectory of children, particularly girls (Smyth, 2020). These attitudes encompass a range of factors, including perceptions of the benefits of education, societal norms, economic considerations, and trust in the educational institutions available.

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Understanding the factors that influence parental attitudes towards girls' student enrollment is critical for devising effective strategies to bridge the gender gap in education and achieve SDG-4 (Chuang et al., 2019; Ullah et al., 2020). The institutional environment, which encompasses the broader educational infrastructure, policies, and community dynamics within the Sukkur region, is a key factor that can Gender differences in schooling are still a major issue in the Pakistani region of Sukkur. Boys and girls enter and remain in school at different rates, despite significant advancements in increasing access to education (UNICEF, 2020). The attitude of parents toward their daughters' education is one of the key factors influencing girls' enrollment and ongoing participation in school. Significantly affect how parents feel about females' education (Ramzan et al., 2023). The purpose of this research project is to look into how the institutional setting affects parents' attitudes and choices toward sending their daughters to school in the Sukkur area.

This study aims to shed light on the specific institutional variables that either support or restrict girls' access to high-quality education in the area by exploring this crucial problem (Saadat et al., 2023). It seeks to correlate with the overarching goals of SDG-4 by offering evidence-based recommendations and policy insights that can guide specific initiatives to enhance gender equality in education (Hina et al., 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). We discussed the research goals, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, expected contributions, and the significance of this study in addressing the urgent problem of gender disparities in education within the Sukkur region in the following sections of this research. This study hopes to make a significant contribution to the global effort to guarantee inclusive and equal education for all people, regardless of gender, via careful inquiry.

To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which aims to promote inclusive and equitable quality education for all, gender inequities in education must be addressed. This is a global concern. These difficulties are not unique to the Sukkur region in Pakistan. This review of the literature offers a summary of the current studies on parental perceptions of girls enrolling in school and the impact of the institutional setting in this particular situation. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4), which aims to promote inclusive and equitable quality education for all, gender inequities in education must be addressed (Lone et al., 2011; Shaeffer, 2019; Maitlo et al., 2023). This is a global concern, and these difficulties are not unique to the Sukkur region in Pakistan. This review of the literature offers a summary of the current studies on parental perceptions of girls enrolling in school and the impact of the institutional setting in this particular situation. (Ahmad et al., 2021) stated that a review of the literature "is a clear overview of the sources in an organizational pattern, and its purpose is to estimate earlier works related to the current topic".

Globally, there are still gender differences in education that limit millions of girls' access to high-quality education (Dyson, 2019). In many places, including sections of South Asia where the Sukkur region is located, females are still more likely than boys to not be in school (Akram et al., 2023; Arshad et al., 2024). This is according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The enrollment and educational success of girls are significantly influenced by parental opinions. Parents' perceptions of the importance of education for their daughters have a big impact on enrollment choices (Mistry et al., 2021; Munawar et al., 2024). Higher enrollment rates and increased academic performance have been linked to parents' attitudes about females' education (Rasheed et al., 2023). Educational outcomes are significantly influenced by the institutional environment, which includes elements like school facilities, the availability of qualified teachers, and educational regulations (Shafqat et al., 2024). To encourage girls' education, a 2017 UNESCO report stressed the significance of secure and supportive learning spaces (Benjamin et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2024).

Only a small amount of research has directly looked at the relationship between institutional environments and parental views on the enrollment of females in school. However, research has shown that easily reachable and well-equipped schools can favorably affect parental attitudes and promote enrollment (Shakir et al., 2011; Rasheed et al., 2021; Njeru & Kirimi, 2023). On the other hand, poor infrastructure, a long commute to school, and safety worries can discourage parents from enrolling their daughters in school. Policy measures have been essential to reducing gender inequities in education (Heymann et al., 2019; Mughal et al., 2023). For instance, providing scholarships to women, as demonstrated in initiatives like Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), has lowered the cost

of attending school (Nawaz & Iqbal, 2020; Bhutto et al., 2023). The promotion of girls' education has also benefited from gender-sensitive policies and awareness-raising campaigns. The Sukkur region offers a distinctive backdrop with its own set of opportunities and problems for girls' education. Within this region, there may be differences in terms of cultural standards, economic conditions, and access to good schools (Hermino & Arifin, 2020; Mumtaz et al., 2024). Therefore, addressing gender gaps effectively requires an awareness of local dynamics.

### Research Objectives

Objectives of the study were:

- To determine parents' general perceptions about the role of the institutional environment in parental attitude towards girls' enrollment.
- To determine the role of school policies and practices in parental decisions regarding girls' education.
- To determine the role of safety and security measures in shaping parental attitudes towards enrolling girls in school.

### Research Questions

The research questions of the study were:

1. What are the parents' general perceptions of the institutional environment that affect their attitudes towards enrolling girls in school?
2. Do the school policies and practices influence parental decisions regarding girls' education?
3. How do safety and security measures implemented by schools impact parental attitudes towards enrolling their daughters?

### Research Methodology

"The methodical procedure used for data collection to resolve the problem is called research methodology; its function is to provide the systematic structure of the research study, moreover it's part of a study in which the researcher gives an account of the research methods used in research" (Ahmad et al., 2024, p.305). The study was a survey and was descriptive in nature. "Design of the research comprises of the whole procedure which is conducted research" (Ahmad et al., 2022, p.524). The mixed method (QUAN-qual.) approach was adopted. Research population refers to an entire group of people, things entities from which the research sample is drawn. It is also known as the target population (Rao et al., 2023; Sadaf et al., 2024). The study population was comprised of school heads, secondary school teachers, and parents. The study sample consisted of twenty (20) school heads, one hundred and ninety (190) secondary school teachers and one hundred and ninety (190) parents. Simple random sampling was used for data collection from the respondents. For quantitative data, the questionnaire was developed and validated, while for qualitative data, the interview protocol was developed and refined. The researcher personally visited and collected the data from the respondents. The collected data was fed into a data sheet and analyzed through SPSS-24, applying relevant statistical formulas, frequencies, percentages, standard deviations, mean scores, etc.

### Data Analysis

**Table 1**

*The school's location is safe for girls to travel to and from*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response								
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total	SD	Mean	
1	School Safe for Girls	F	4	2	2	9	3	20	1.41	3.25	
		%	20%	10%	10%	45%	15%	100%			
		Teacher Response								1.03	3.95
		F	12	2	27	92	57	190			
%	6%	1%	14%	48%	30%	100%					



Table 1 presents that among teachers, 48% agree and 30% strongly agree that the school's location is safe for girls, with a mean score of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 1.03, indicating strong and consistent agreement. Head Teachers show 45% agreeing and 15% strongly agreeing, with a standard deviation of 1.41, reflecting moderate variability in their opinions.

**Table 2**

*The school provides a safe and secure environment for girls*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
2	Safe and Secure Environment	F	4	4	1	5	6	20	1.59	3.25	
		%	20%	20%	5%	25%	30%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	9	4	21	78	78	190	1.01	4.12	
		%	5%	2%	11%	41%	41%	100%			

Table 2 presents that among teachers, 41% "Strongly Agree" and 41% "Agree" that the school environment is safe for girls, with a mean score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.01, indicating strong agreement. For Head Teachers, 30% "Strongly Agree" and 25% "Agree," with a standard deviation of 1.59, showing moderate variability in their views.

**Table 3**

*The parents in this community generally support girls' education*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
3	Community Support	F	2	2	3	13	0	20	1.04	3.35	
		%	10%	10%	15%	65%	30%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	12	8	24	88	58	190	1.08	3.91	
		%	6%	4%	13%	46%	31%	100%			

Table 3 presents that among teachers, 41% "Strongly Agree" and 41% "Agree" that the school environment is safe for girls, with a mean score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.01, indicating strong agreement. For Head Teachers, 30% "Strongly Agree" and 25% "Agree," with a standard deviation of 1.59, showing moderate variability in their views.

**Table 4**

*Girls in this school have access to high-quality educational resources*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
4	High-quality Educational	F	4	2	3	2	9	20	1.64	3.50	
		%	20%	10%	15%	10%	45%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	12	9	24	58	87	190	1.16	4.05	
		%	6%	5%	13%	31%	46%	100%			

Table 4 presents that among teachers, 46% "Strongly Agree" and 31% "Agree" that girls have access to high-quality educational resources, with a mean score of 4.05 and a standard deviation of 1.64, indicating strong consensus and slightly less variability. Among Head Teachers, 45% "Strongly Agree," 15%

"Neutral," and 20% "Strongly Disagree," with a standard deviation of 1.16, reflecting moderate variability in opinions.

**Table 5**

*The school's infrastructure and facilities are welcoming to girls*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
5	Improved Facilities	F	5	2	5	2	6	20	1.59	3.10	
		%	25%	10%	25%	10%	30%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	7	6	24	89	64	190	0.96	4.04	
		%	4%	3%	13%	47%	34%	100%			

Table 5 presents that among teachers, 47% "Strongly Agree" and 34% "Agree" that the school's infrastructure is welcoming for girls, with a mean score of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.96, indicating strong agreement and less variability. Among Head Teachers, 30% "Strongly Agree," 25% "Neutral," and 25% "Strongly Disagree," with a standard deviation of 1.59, reflecting greater variability in their opinions.

**Table 6**

*The school actively promotes gender equality in education*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
6	School Promotes Gender Equality	F	3	2	0	8	7	20	1.45	3.70	
		%	15%	10%	0%	40%	35%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	8	6	28	75	73	190	1.02	4.05	
		%	4%	3%	15%	39%	38%	100%			

Table 6 presents that among teachers, 38% "Strongly Agree" and 39% "Agree" that the school promotes gender equality in education, with a mean score of 4.05 and a standard deviation of 1.02, indicating strong agreement and lower variability. Among Head Teachers, 35% "Strongly Agree" and 40% "Agree," with a standard deviation of 1.45, reflecting moderate variability and slightly less consensus.

**Table 7**

*The school enforces strict anti-discrimination policies*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
7	Anti-discrimination Policies	F	3	4	0	9	4	20	1.42	3.35	
		%	15%	20%	0%	45%	20%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	12	3	25	82	68	190	1.06	4.01	
		%	6%	2%	13%	43%	36%	100%			

Table 7 presents that among teachers, 43% "Strongly Agree" and 36% "Agree" that the school enforces strict anti-discrimination policies, with a mean score of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 1.06, indicating strong consensus. Among Head Teachers, 45% "Agree," with 20% "Strongly Disagree" and "Strongly Agree," and a standard deviation of 1.42, showing more variability. This highlights a general belief in the

enforcement of anti-discrimination policies, a topic gaining attention in Pakistan, particularly in educational reforms aiming to promote equality in schools.

**Table 8**

*Girls have the same access to extracurricular activities as boys*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response								
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total	SD	Mean	
8	Girls Access	F	2	3	2	6	7	20	1.39	3.65	
		%	10%	15%	10%	30%	35%	100%			
		Teacher Response								0.96	4.12
		F	7	2	29	75	77	190			
		%	4%	1%	15%	39%	41%	100%			

Table 8 presents that among teachers, 41% "Strongly Agree" and 39% "Agree" that girls have equal access to extracurricular activities as boys, with a mean score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.96, indicating strong agreement and less variability. Among Head Teachers, 35% "Strongly Agree" and 30% "Agree," with a standard deviation of 1.39, reflecting moderate variability in their opinions.

**Table 9**

*The school offers a gender-sensitive curriculum and teaching materials*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response								
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total	SD	Mean	
9	School Safe for Girls	F	3	0	3	12	2	20	1.19	3.50	
		%	15%	0%	15%	60%	10%	100%			
		Teacher Response								1.07	4.04
		F	13	4	14	91	68	190			
		%	7%	2%	7%	48%	36%	100%			

Table 9 presents that 48% of Teachers "Agree" and 36% "Strongly Agree" that the school offers a gender-sensitive curriculum, with a mean of 4.04. Head Teachers show 60% agreement, 15% each in "Neutral" and "Strongly Disagree," and 10% in "Strongly Agree." The standard deviation is 1.07 for Teachers and 1.19 for Head Teachers, indicating moderate variability, slightly higher among Head Teachers.

**Table 10**

*Female students are encouraged to participate in leadership roles*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response								
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total	SD	Mean	
10	Participation in leadership	F	0	4	2	5	9	20	1.19	3.95	
		%	0%	20%	10%	25%	45%	100%			
		Teacher Response								0.99	4.11
		F	9	1	26	79	75	190			
		%	5%	1%	14%	42%	39%	100%			

Table 10 presents the data that shows that 39% of teachers "Strongly agree" and 42% "Agree" that female students are encouraged to take leadership roles, with a mean of 4.11. Among Head Teachers, 45% "Strongly Agree," 25% "Agree," 10% are "Neutral," and 20% "Disagree." The standard deviation is 0.99

for Teachers and 1.19 for Head Teachers, indicating moderate variability, with Head Teachers showing slightly more variation in their views.

**Table 10**

*The school has effective security measures in place*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
11	Effective Security Measures	F	0	0	3	7	10	20	0.75	4.35	
		%	0%	0%	15%	35%	50%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	8	1	16	99	66	190	0.91	4.13	
%	4%	1%	8%	52%	35%	100%					

Table 11 shows that both head teachers and teachers view the school's security measures positively. Among Teachers, 52% "Agree" and 35% "Strongly Agree," with a mean of 4.13, showing confidence in the school's security. Head Teachers report 50% "Strongly Agree" and 35% "Agree." The standard deviation is 0.91 for Teachers and 0.75 for Head Teachers, indicating low variability, with Head Teachers showing slightly more consistent opinions.

**Table 11**

*Girls' safety is a top priority for the school administration*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
12	Girls' safety	F	0	1	3	9	7	20	0.85	4.10	
		%	0%	1%	3%	9%	7%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	12	0	22	95	61	190	1.01	4.02	
%	6%	0%	12%	50%	32%	100%					

Table 12 presents that both head teachers and teachers place a high priority on girls' safety in school. Among Teachers, 50% "Agree" and 32% "Strongly Agree," with a mean of 4.02, indicating strong confidence in the school's focus on girls' safety. For Head Teachers, 70% "Strongly Agree" and 20% "Agree," with a standard deviation of 1.01 for Teachers and 0.85 for Head Teachers, showing moderate variability, with Head Teachers displaying more consistent opinions.

**Table 13**

*The school provides safe transportation options for female students*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
13	Safe Transportation	F	1	4	3	8	4	20	1.19	3.50	
		%	5%	20%	15%	40%	20%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	1	2	14	86	87	190	0.71	4.35	
%	1%	1%	7%	45%	46%	100%					

Table 13 presents data showing that 46% of teachers "Strongly agree" and 45% "Agree" that the school provides safe transportation for female students, with a high mean of 4.35. Among Head Teachers, 40% "Agree," 20% each "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree," 15% are "Neutral," and 5% "Disagree." The



standard deviation is 0.71 for Teachers and 1.19 for Head Teachers, indicating less variability among Teachers' responses compared to Head Teachers.

**Table 14**

*There are anti-bullying programs in place to protect girls*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response							SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Total			
14	Anti-bullying	F	0	2	0	9	9	20	0.91	4.25	
		%	0%	10%	0%	45%	45%	100%			
		Teacher Response									
		F	12	0	14	91	73	190	1.01	4.12	
		%	6%	0%	7%	48%	38%	100%			

Table 14 presents that both head teachers and teachers strongly support anti-bullying programs for girls. Among Teachers, 48% "Strongly Agree" and 45% "Agree," with a mean of 4.12, reflecting a strong belief in these programs' effectiveness. Similarly, Head Teachers show 45% "Strongly Agree" and 45% "Agree," with 10% "Disagree." The standard deviation is 1.01 for Teachers and 0.91 for Head Teachers, indicating moderate variability, with Head Teachers showing slightly more consistent opinions.

**Table 12**

*Female students are protected from harassment and discrimination*

No.	Theme	Stat.	Head Teacher Response					Total	SD	Mean
			SDA	DA	N	A	SA			
15	Students are Protected	F	0	0	6	6	68	20	0.85	4.10
		%	0%	0%	30%	30%	40%	100%		
		Teacher Response								
		F	12	0	12	89	77	190	1.01	4.15
		%	6%	0%	6%	47%	41%	100%		

Table 15 presents that both head teachers and teachers strongly advocate for the protection of female students from harassment and discrimination. Among Teachers, 47% "Strongly Agree" and 41% "Agree," with a mean of 4.15, which reflects a strong belief in effective protection. Head Teachers show 40% "Strongly Agree," 30% each in "Agree" and "Neutral." The standard deviation is 1.01 for Teachers and 0.85 for Head Teachers, indicating moderate variability, with Head Teachers displaying slightly more consistent views.

### Findings

The findings of the study were:

- The study found a generally positive perception among both Teachers and Head Teachers regarding various aspects of the school environment and policies aimed at ensuring the safety and equality of female students.
- The study described that teachers exhibit a strong consensus on the safety of the school's location for girls, with 48% agreeing and 30% strongly agreeing. This is reflected in a mean score of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 1.03, indicating a high level of agreement with limited variability. In contrast, Head Teachers demonstrate somewhat lower agreement (45% agreeing, 15% strongly agreeing) and greater variability in their responses, as indicated by a standard deviation of 1.41.
- The study showed that when evaluating the overall safety of the school environment, Teachers show strong agreement (41% strongly agree, 41% agree), with a mean score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 1.01. Head Teachers also display positive views but with greater variability (30% strongly agree, 25% agree), reflected by a higher standard deviation of 1.59.



- The study indicated that teachers express significant agreement that girls have access to high-quality educational resources, with 46% strongly agreeing and 31% agreeing, resulting in a mean score of 4.05 and a standard deviation of 1.64. Conversely, Head Teachers exhibit more diverse opinions, with 45% strongly agreeing, 15% neutral, and 20% strongly disagreeing, demonstrating moderate variability (standard deviation of 1.16).
- The study found that regarding the school's infrastructure, Teachers find it welcoming for girls (47% strongly agree, 34% agree), supported by a mean score of 4.04 and a lower standard deviation of 0.96, indicating less variability. Head Teachers, however, show more mixed opinions (30% strongly agree, 25% neutral, 25% strongly disagree), with a higher standard deviation of 1.59.
- The study described that in terms of gender equality, Teachers and Head Teachers recognise efforts to promote gender equity, with Teachers demonstrating strong agreement (38% strongly agree, 39% agree) and a mean score of 4.05. Head Teachers also show positive responses but with moderate variability (35% strongly agree, 40% agree), reflected by a standard deviation of 1.45.
- The study found that the enforcement of anti-discrimination policies is another area of consensus among Teachers (43% strongly agree, 36% agree), resulting in a mean score of 4.01. Head Teachers show more variability, with 45% agreeing, and both strongly disagreeing and strongly agreeing at 20% each, indicated by a standard deviation of 1.42.
- The study expressed that teachers and head teachers both support equal access to extracurricular activities for girls, with Teachers showing strong agreement (41% strongly agree, 39% agree) and a mean score of 4.12. Head Teachers also endorse this view but with more variability (35% strongly agree, 30% agree), reflected in a standard deviation of 1.39.
- The study highlighted that regarding the gender-sensitive curriculum, 48% of Teachers agree and 36% strongly agree, achieving a mean score of 4.04. Head Teachers exhibit more varied responses (60% agree, 15% neutral, 15% strongly disagree, and 10% strongly agree), with a slightly higher standard deviation of 1.19.
- The study expressed that teachers strongly support the encouragement of female students to assume leadership roles (39% strongly agree, 42% agree), with a mean score of 4.11. Head Teachers also support this initiative but with more variability (45% strongly agree, 25% agree, 10% neutral, 20% disagree).
- The study found that both groups view the school's security measures positively, with Teachers showing confidence (52% agree, 35% strongly agree) and a mean score of 4.13. Head Teachers similarly show strong agreement (50% strongly agree, 35% agree), with a lower standard deviation of 0.75.
- The study found that on the topic of girls' safety, Teachers express confidence (50% agree, 32% strongly agree) with a mean score of 4.02, while Head Teachers are even more positive (70% strongly agree, 20% agree), reflected in a lower standard deviation of 0.85.
- The study described that regarding safe transportation, teachers strongly agreed (46%) and agreed (45%), with a mean score of 4.35. Head Teachers display more varied opinions (40% agree, 20% strongly agree, 20% strongly disagree, 15% neutral, 5% disagree), with a standard deviation of 1.19.
- The study found that both groups strongly support anti-bullying programs for girls, with Teachers showing strong belief (48% strongly agree, 45% agree) and a mean score of 4.12. Head Teachers also show support (45% strongly agree, 45% agree), with a standard deviation of 0.91. Similarly, both groups advocate for protecting female students from harassment, with Teachers showing strong agreement (47% strongly agree, 41% agree) and a mean score of 4.15, while Head Teachers show strong support but with slightly more variability (40% strongly agree, 30% agree, 30% neutral).

## Conclusions

The study concluded a positive general perception both from teachers and head teachers regarding various aspects of the school environment and the policies in place to ensure safety, equality, and well-being for girls attending school. Teachers have strongly agreed to the fact that the location of the school is safe, the educational resources are of high quality, and the infrastructure is friendly to girls. They also tend to show strong support for gender equality, anti-discrimination policies, and the promotion of female leadership. While the head teachers generally share similar views as the teachers in giving positive evaluation



responses, head teachers do show more variations in their responses for school environment items, safety measures and gender-sensitive curriculum. This variability emphasizes differences in perception between these two groups and may reflect their experiences or perspectives on school policy and its implementation. The study concluded that both teachers and head teachers agree that safe transportation and a gender-sensitive curriculum are important, with strong endorsements regarding the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs/ measures against harassment. However, there is partial divergence in opinions on certain specifics that point toward further dialogue and refinement of policies. Collectively, results and data are indicative of awareness regarding the provision of ample opportunities for an inclusive educational environment for female students. However, a commitment to continued effort is required to reduce variability in perceptions relating to policy implementation aimed at furthering school commitment to gender equality.

## Discussion

Indeed, in discussing the findings, one finds that almost all teachers and head teachers express favourable views concerning the school's attempt to create a safe and inclusive environment for girls. Because there is a high degree of consensus from the teachers concerning central issues, such as the safety of the location, quality resources, and infrastructure for welcoming girls, these elements would, therefore, be assumed to be in place and fully approved in practice. The compact variability in Teachers' responses points toward shared belief in the school's commitment to providing an enabling environment for girls to learn. In contrast, responses of head teachers made by a more diversified answer would hint that there is an overall convergence with the Teachers' view while, at the same time, some divergence in their views exists, particularly in areas such as the school environment, the availability of educational resources, and the enforcement of policies. This may be due to the difference in roles and responsibilities placed upon head teachers versus Teachers who may more often take a broad view of the functioning of schools, policy implementation, or investment in resources. It may also mean that there is a difference in experiences at an administrative level, where Head Teachers are more likely to note challenges in sustaining policy implementation or gaining uniform access to resources.

One notable point of divergence in perceptions is on items referring to the gender-sensitive curriculum. Whereas the teachers overwhelmingly agree that this is in place and effective, the head teachers show more mixed responses, with some neutrality and some strong disagreement, which suggests that while the intent may be present to advance gender-sensitive education, the implementation or impact is not uniformly realized across the school and is an area that requires additional attention. Another important topic of discussion concerns the different opinions on safe transportation for girls. The consensus is very high among teachers that this is well catered to, while among head teachers, there is greater variation all the way to strong disagreement. This may point to logistical issues and variations in the delivery of transportation services, hence being more relevant to administrators who are usually charged with such service arrangements. Given such discrepancies, some attention indeed needs to be accorded to equal opportunities for access to safe transportation for all female students.

This strong consensus between the two groups in the need for anti-discrimination policies, anti-bullying programs, and protection from harassment, which has been inflicted upon female students, reflects a shared commitment of both toward providing a safe school environment. These findings reflect wider calls for reform within Pakistan's educational system so that specifications of equality and safety at school, especially for girls, are met. However, the higher variability in the responses of Head Teachers suggests that although the intention is widely shared, the practical issues in implementing these policies may vary from school to school and perhaps, therefore, need additional effort to achieve consistency because of these differences.

As a whole, the discussion is indicative of generally positive perceptions of efforts towards gender equality and safety at school from Teachers. Yet, the disparities in responses from Head Teachers hint at areas where policy implementation may be problematic or resource allocation and support structures are not as equitably provided. To address these discrepancies through focused policy intervention, enhanced training within the leadership structures of schools, and a more systemic means of monitoring and

evaluation would better strengthen the commitment to an inclusive and supportive environment for girls by a school.

## Recommendations

The study recommended that:

1. Enhance communication between teachers and head teachers to establish coherence in understanding and implementing gender-sensitive policies.
2. Provide further training to head teachers so that perceived ambiguity in ensuring safety measures, infrastructure, and resource distribution among girls is minimized.
3. Establish clear policies guiding a consistent implementation of the gender-sensitive curriculum across all schools and enforce it.
4. Improve, through overcoming various logistical obstacles, safe transportation services for girl students on equal terms in different regions. Strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the enforcement of anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies at schools.
5. Encourage regular dialogues between the teachers and head teachers to bridge gaps in perceptions of resource availability and policy effectiveness.
6. Target resource allocation to support head teachers in addressing infrastructure and safety challenges, ensuring even standards across schools.

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