Journal of Media Horizons
ISSN: 2710-4060 2710-4052 Volume 6, Issue 5, 2025

FATHERS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN GIRLS HIGHER EDUCATION: MOTIVATION AND CHALLENGE

Ms. Maheen Hamid[1], Dr. Humaira Zulfiqar[*2]

[1]*Student, Department of Gender Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi*
[*2]*Lecturer, Department of Gender Studies, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi*

[*2]humairazulfiqar@fjwu.edu.pk

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17374657

Keywords
Father involvement, Daughter education, Higher education, Challenges, Motivation and Socio Culture and Economic difficulties/financial crisis.

Article History
Received: 25 August 2025
Accepted: 04 October 2025
Published: 16 October 2025

Copyright @Author
Corresponding Author: *
Dr. Humaira Zulfiqar

Abstract

The current study explores that within the patriarchal structure of Pakistan, how fathers struggle for the rights of their daughters and encourage them to pursue higher education. The study used a qualitative research approach and explored the obstacles faced by fathers in their struggle of sending their daughters for higher education. For this purpose 15 fathers were interviewed whose daughters were studying in University. The result showed that the fathers have a very important role of in their daughter's education and career. The fathers who stood by their daughters faced many challenges such as social expectations, economic crisis and limited social support. Despite the challenges, they were resilient enough to send their daughters to pursue higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The father's role has long been ignored in supporting his daughters' academic career. However, the father plays a unique and important role in shaping his daughters' academic aspirations and consequences (UNESCO, 2019). According to Mary Wolstoncraft, a leading feminist philosopher, women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear due to a lack of education (Wasstoncraft, 1792). Father's involvement in his daughters' education can have a significant impact on his development, including his self -esteem, confidence and motivation. (Johnson, 1963).

Despite the importance of father's participation, many father face important challenges in supporting their daughters' higher education. Social expectations, cultural criteria, and individual prejudices can all affect to provide effective support to the motivations and abilities of the father (Cramer et al., 2020). In Pakistan, women face many challenges in getting higher education, and father's support is important in making women able to reach higher education. (Laiqat, 2022).

Father's involvement can have a permanent impact on his daughters' lives, increasing their self -esteem and confidence to influence their career options (Head, 2024). In addition, research has shown that the father who is actively engaged in his daughters' education is

more likely to have daughters who accelerate excel and develop the necessary life skills. (Morris et al., 2023).
Cramer et al., 2020Reserach has shown that the father's involvement is associated with various positive results, including increased flexibility and better academic performance (Zhou et al., 2020). A positive and supportive relationship with his father can increase daughters' confidence, inspiration and academic performance (Zia et al., 2015). However, the father can struggle with challenges such as financial obstacles, social pressures and individual prejudices, which can affect their ability to provide effective support. In addition, father's participation can also help daughters to develop important life skills, such as problems and decisions (Hango, 2007).
Education is very important for everyone, especially the younger generation. This helps shape their character, attitude and ways of thinking. Education can be formally (in schools) or non-formal (through life experiences). However, not everyone has the same access to education, especially girls and women. In some places like Velo village in South Buru Regency, parents do not support their daughters in going to college. It is due to money problems and old beliefs that girls do not need much education. To help with this, the local government has started programs to teach parents to teach why education is important and to provide financial assistance to families who need it. (Liligoly et al., 2023).
The purpose of this study is to contribute to the father's role in the father's role to support the higher education of the father's daughters, in which the father is confronted and focusing on strategies to overcome these challenges. By searching for a complex interplay between family values and social expectations, this research tries to report the policy and study initiative aimed at promoting girls' education and empowerment.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of current study were

- To find out fathers' inspiration behind educating their daughters.
- To identify the challenges faced by fathers to support their daughters for higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research studies have questioned conventional wisdom on men's role as offenders of gender-based violence and injustice, emphasizing their capacity to effect change. They contend that men's participation is necessary to achieve gender equality and that they have the ability to question and alter the societal norms and hierarchies of power that uphold inequality. According to the authors, men can play a crucial role in bringing about a more fair and just society for all if they advocate for good masculinity and take into account the experiences and viewpoints of men (Vess et al., 2013).
According to the mentioned study, there is little family support for females' higher education. The researchers discovered a number of variables causing this lack of support through key informant interviews, including: Parents who have little financial means find it difficult to pay for their daughters' postsecondary education. Women face discrimination in education as a result of gender prejudices that are reinforced by prevailing social constructs and stereotypes (Liligoly et al., 2023).
Prior studies have established how social support affects people's choices to continue their education. In order to determine the different types of social support that influence this decision-making process, the researchers examined previous research papers. Researchers point to a few pieces of support, such as: Encouragement and financial assistance from family members are important factors in people's decisions to continue their education. People might be inspired to pursue further education by having positive interactions with people who share their values. Students' decisions to pursue further education can be greatly influenced by the expectations, support, and direction of their teachers. For those seeking higher education, community services like mentoring programs and grants can offer vital assistance (Liubana et al., 2025).
The characteristics that encourage women to pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) were studied by earlier academics. STEM fields science, technology, engineering, and mathematics have fewer female employees. Even the most supportive female students frequently lose interest in STEM courses as they get older. According to a study conducted by the researchers, social actors including mentors, professors, and family members significantly influenced the decision of female graduates of selected scientific high schools to pursue

a STEM degree. The study found that these social agents' constructive criticism and encouragement boosted the women's self-esteem and drive to excel in STEM. All things considered, the researchers stress how crucial social support is in motivating women to seek and finish STEM degrees (Luo et al., 2022).

Additionally, prior studies have demonstrated that dads of autistic children require distinct forms of assistance compared to moms. They require professional guidance, time for self-care, practical assistance, and emotional support. When they get a diagnosis, fathers frequently experience loss and sadness, overwhelm and stress, and loneliness. Fathers describe strong father-child interactions, personal progress, and self-efficacy despite obstacles. They also express pride in their child's achievements. Scholars emphasize dads' potential as change agents by examining their influence in their children's lives (Seymour et al., 2020).

To learn more about the reasons behind their area of study choice, the aforementioned researchers also polled first-year college students. Numerous students expressed a desire to pursue careers that would positively impact both society and the environment, according to the researchers. Additionally, they discovered that students who were drawn to sustainability and social responsibility were more likely to pursue careers in social work, teaching, and environmental science. As a whole, the survey indicates that a large number of young people are driven to change the world by their professional decisions. Female students are more likely to be driven by social factors, such as assisting others, whereas male students are more likely to be driven by external factors (Oberrauch et al., 2021).

Additionally, researchers have discovered that children's psychological security and achievement goal orientation are positively correlated with father presence, and that the relationship between resilience and father presence is mediated by psychological security and achievement goal orientation (Zhou et al., 2024).

Children's resilience and improved academic achievement have been repeatedly associated with father participation (Amato, 2001; Flouri, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

In this research, a research design was operational to explore the father's opinion and the motivation and challenges to support the father's opinions and the daughter's higher education. A semi-structured interview with FJWU students of Fatima Jinnah Woman University of Public Sector Women-Education University in RWP, Pakistan. Fifteen members were interviewed for this study and all efforts were made to ensure that they came from different backgrounds in terms of socio-economic status without any gender discrimination and more interviews were taken up to data saturation. Interview schedule with guided open final questions was used as a research tool, and interview questions enabled participants to give their own understanding of the face of the situation. These interviews were recorded on the recorder for subsequent transcription. The analysis was done by coding the interviews and then making themes.

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was used to do this study. Interviews were taken to analyze the father's role to support his daughters' higher education with participants.

Data Collection

The study included two stages: participants' selection and intensive interview. Fifteen fathers of students of Fatima Jinnah Women's University (FJWU) in Rawalpindi, Pakistan was selected using purposeful sampling techniques. Participants were chosen based on their diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Participant Selection

Fifteen participants were recruited for intended interviews, including the father of various economic backgrounds. This allowed the researcher to take different perspectives and experiences.

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guideline was prepared, with open-ended questions that enabled participants to express their personal feelings and perceptions about supporting their daughters' higher education.

Procedure

The interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of professional interviewers to ensure that it completes

the best standards. Pilot interviews were taken to ensure questions to correct the questions and adjust with the purpose of research. Interview interviews were taken in Urdu, and informed consent from participants from the participants before the interview was recorded and later for analysis.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, which included recurrence coding and synthesis to identify patterns and subjects. The reactions of the participants were classified into subjects, providing rich insight into the role of father in supporting their daughters' higher education.

RESULT AND FINDINGS:

FINDINGS

The study shows that the father's inspiration to support his daughters' higher education is inspired by a combination of personal experiences, family values and social discretion. The father faced many challenges, including financial stress, cultural resistance and safety concerns. Despite these challenges, the father played an important role in supporting the educational activities of his daughters, providing emotional support, educational guidance and financial assistance.

This study discovered father's motivations, challenges and roles in supporting their daughters' higher education. Through the thematic analysis of intensive interview with 15 fathers, many major topics emerged.

Motivations of Fathers

The father's inspiration to support his daughters' higher education was inspired by a combination of personal experiences, family values and social discretion. Many fathers cited their lack of education or difficulties in gaining employment due to limited education as a major motivator to support the educational activities of their daughters.

Personal Experiences and Regrets:

The father, who experienced difficulties due to his own limited education, was more likely to support the educational activities of his daughters. For example, defendant A said, "I am not educated, I face my problems, because of this problem I want my daughter to take higher education, make myself free."

Empowerment and Independence:

The father believed that education would empower his daughters to become independent and self - sufficient. The respondent said, "I want my daughter to get education and do her work so that she does not have to depend on anyone for her needs."

Societal Change and Break of Stereotypes:

The father saw education as a means to challenge traditional gender roles and promote social change. "I made sure that my daughter's educational achievements were placed in a visible place because the guests meet. Gradually their mistrust was converted into praise."

Challenges Faced by Fathers:

Despite his inspirations, the father faced several challenges in supporting his daughters' higher education, including financial stress, cultural resistance, and safety concerns.

Financial Strain:

The high cost of higher education was an important challenge for many fathers. The defendant A said, "The most difficult thing is to meet the cost of children during this expensive era."

Cultural Resistance:

Due to the traditional approach to girls' education, the father faced massive resistance from family members and society. The defendant said, "My mother said that I was ruining my daughter's possibility of marriage."

Safety Concerns:

The father was concerned about the safety and safety of his daughters, especially in public places. The defendant A said, "This is because it is believed that the outer side is not safe for girls, they experience harassment and rape."

ROLE OF FATHERS:

The father played an important role in supporting his daughters' higher education, including emotional support, educational guidance and financial assistance.

Academic Advocacy:
The father provided guidance and assistance to his daughters in his educational discovery. "I made some anatomy flashcard to use him in my medical entrance exam," the respondent said.

Emotional Support:
The father provided emotional assistance to his daughters, especially during the time of stress or uncertainty. The respondent E explained, "I am present with him through entry, testing and preparation."

Family Mediation:
The father acted as mediators among his daughters and other family members, helping to resolve conflicts and promote a supportive environment. "I worked as a bad policeman for relatives to allow my daughter to focus on studies," defendant M said.

IMPACT OF FATHERS' SUPPORT:
The father's support had a significant impact on his daughters' educational consequences and personal development.

Daughter Transformation and Confidence:
As a result of her father's support, daughters became more confident and independent. The defendant was observed, "Higher education was, he has increased to know the difference between good and bad and also how he should communicate with adults."

Family Pride and Dynamic Shifts:
The father's support for the education of his daughters had a positive impact on the dynamics of the family, which promotes the culture of learning and educational values. The defendant said, "The inspiration in our family to pursue an education has been increased. The second daughter is also the inspiration."

DISCUSSION
The findings of the study reveal a complex and versatile role of the father in supporting the higher education of their daughters in Pakistan. The results of the study resonate with the latest beliefs of educational empowerment and sexually differentiated socialization, which work in a developing environment. In 2021, using the concept of patriarchal bargained by Mutambara and Bhee in Gender systems, it can be seen in such a way that these Pakistani fathers interacted in existing gender systems to build educational opportunities in his daughters.
The concept of patriarchal bargaining is evident in the way Pakistani father interacts in existing gender systems to create educational opportunities for his daughters. Changing expectations about the role of daughters and daughters, the father is capable of working within traditional family systems. This support is particularly important when considered in terms of emotional entrepreneurship, where the father provides financial and upbringing aid to his daughters. The economic boundaries faced by the families can be understood through the lens of funding of education in South Asia, where moderate -income families struggle to pay university fees without compromising themselves. The agency of social change was another important inspiration, in which the father played the role of changes in his families and communities. The father used various strategies to challenge traditional criteria and promote education for his daughters.
Despite his inspirations, the father faced many obstacles in supporting his daughters' higher education. Financial stress was an important challenge, in which many fathers were struggling to meet the costs of education. Cultural resistance was another obstacle, in which some family members and community members opposed the education of girls. Security concern was also a major issue in which the father was concerned about the safety and safety of his daughters in the atmosphere of Pakistan, especially in co-educational settings. These concerns led the father to take various measures to ensure the safety of their daughters. The results emphasize the changing and complex situation of the father as the patron of higher education for their daughters in Pakistan. Father's motivations lie in personal history, urge to empower daughters, and desire to challenge established social norms. Studies show that schools and non-governmental organizations should launch an awareness campaign to target the father, emphasizing monetary freedom, personal development and overall goodness of the family. Such campaigns may include stories of success of educated women and their father's

influence. The findings of the study coincide closely with existing literature on the support of parents for higher education, which highlight the importance of the father in contributing to the achievements of educational aspirations and daughters. The study also indicates active resistance against social obstacles, where the father challenges negative expectations and takes a stand to support his daughters' education.

In addition, this study highlights the father's important role in providing higher education opportunities to its daughters in Pakistan, despite personal encouragement, financial obstacles and social boundaries. Conclusions provide valuable insight into the flexibility and changing approaches of Pakistani fathers, who are prominent players in acquiring gender equality in education.

CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes the crucial role of fathers in advancing girls' higher education in Pakistan, portraying them as individuals who navigate a complex balance between personal aspirations, financial constraints, and cultural barriers. It reveals that fathers who support their daughters' education act not merely as providers but as change agents who challenge societal norms and foster gender equality. Understanding their experiences, motivations, and struggles is essential for designing effective and equitable policies and programs. Despite facing financial hardships, cultural resistance, and safety concerns, many fathers continue to encourage their daughters' academic and professional ambitions. By recognizing and strengthening these efforts, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions that empower fathers and promote girls' education. Ultimately, the study highlights the need to view fathers as key partners in creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment where girls can thrive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests that empowering daughters and enhancing fathers' roles in supporting their higher education requires action at family, community, and policy levels. Families should create open spaces for daughters to share educational goals and encourage fathers' active involvement in these discussions, as even small gestures of support can make a significant difference. Community initiatives can highlight fathers who have supported their daughters' education to inspire others and challenge traditional norms. Schools and NGOs should organize seminars to educate fathers on the long-term benefits of women's education and guide them through academic and financial processes. Moreover, governments and institutions should offer financial incentives or scholarships to ease economic burdens and promote gender-equal educational support. Public awareness campaigns are also needed to challenge stereotypes and emphasize the importance of fathers' participation in their daughters' educational journeys, while also engaging mothers to understand their perspectives.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study highlight crucial policy directions to strengthen existing initiatives led by fathers. Targeted financial support for moderate-income families, improved transportation safety through regulated cooperative systems, and the strategic engagement of fathers as credible advocates in community education campaigns can significantly enhance enrollment and cultural change. Expanding such evidence-based approaches can amplify the impact of educational initiatives at a broader societal level.

REFERENCES

UNESCO. (2019). Global education monitoring report 2019: Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls. Paris, France: UNESCO Publishing.

Mary Wollstonecraft. (n.d.). Retrieved July 12, 2025, from https://www.yourwebsiteurl.com.

Johnson, M. M. (1963). Sex role learning in the nuclear family. Child Development, 34(2), 319-333.

Johnson, C. M., Sharkey, J. R., & Gomez, L. K. (2021). Latino fathers as catalistas (agents of change): Strategies to support Latino fathers in childhood obesity prevention. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 53(suppl 2), 1-9. doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2021.01.014.

Kramer, K. Z., & Kelly, E. L. (2020). Involvement of fathers in their children education: A systematic

review. Journal of Family issues, 41(11), 2811-2836.

Laiqat, S. (2022). Challenges in women's access to higher education in Pakistan. Master's thesis.

Zhou, J., Wei, X., & Xue, L. (2024). Father presence, adolescent girls' resilience, psychological security, and achievement goal orientation: Examining direct and indirect associations. Frontiers in Psychology, 15. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1403403.

Zia, A., Malik, A. A., & Ali, S. M. (2015). Father and daughter relationship and its impact on daughter's self-esteem and academic achievement. Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 4(1), 311-321. doi: 10.5901/mjss. 2015.v4n1p311.

Kramer, K. Z., & Kelly, E. L. (2020). Fathers' involvement in their children's education: A systematic review. Journal of Family Issues, 41(11), 2811-2836.

Flouri, E. (2005). Father's involvement and children's outcomes. Journal of Family Issues, 26(11), 1428-1453.

Liligoly, Y., Sialana, F., & Soumokil, A. (2023). The Role of Parents in Supporting the Education of Daughters Continuing Their Study in Higher Education. JETISH: Journal of Education Technology Information Social Sciences and Health, 2(2), 1225-1232. doi: 10.57235/jetish. v2i2.657.

Vess, J., Barker, G., Naraghi-Anderlini, S., & Hassink, A. (2013). The other side of gender: Men as critical agents of change. Men and Masculinities, 16(3), 259-274.

Johnson, C. M., Sharkey, J. R., & Gomez, L. K. (2021). Latino fathers as catalistas (agents of change): Strategies to support Latino fathers in childhood obesity prevention. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 53(suppl 2), 1-9. doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2021.01.014.

Liligoly, Y., Sialana, F., & Soumokil, A. (2023). The Role of Parents in Supporting the Education of Daughters Continuing Their Study in Higher Education. JETISH: Journal of Education Technology Information Social Sciences and Health, 2(2), 1225-1232. doi: 10.57235/jetish.v2i2.657.

Liubana, A., Kurjono, K., Ahman, E., & Kurniawati, S. (2025). Analysis of social support on the decision to continue higher education: A literature review. Lectura: Jurnal Pendidikan, 16(1), 119-131. doi: https://doi.org/10.31849/lectura.v16i1.24065.

Luo, L., Stoeger, H., & Subotnik, R. F. (2022). The influences of social agents in completing a STEM degree: An examination of female graduates of selective science high schools. International Journal of STEM Education, 9(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-021-00324-w.

Malik, A., & Zhang, Y. (2023). Equitable education funding: A study on approaches to fees based on disposable income.

Arat, Y., & Altnay, L. (2022). University-approved driver cooperatives in Turkey: A successful model.

Saleem, S., & Din, M. (2024). Father-to-father-based outreach programs: A study on enrollment gains in rural Punjab.