

**EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY
FIRST GENERATION FEMALE STUDENTS: A
CASE STUDY OF QAUID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY
ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN**



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By

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Abstract

This study examines the first generation female students' experiences and challenges in the university. It highlights the impacts of these experiences and challenges on their educational performance. The main objective was to explore the lived experiences of the first generation female students in Pakistani university. The study universe was Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. The qualitative research tools and methods are used because the topic demands the in-depth exploration of student's experiences and challenges and their impacts over their educational performances and practical life. For this purpose, I selected 13 respondents who were females and belonged to the category of first generation students. The study dealt with the kinds of issues and challenges that the first generation female students have to face, and the extent to which it all affects the students, when they enter the university. They have to proceed with the new social settings while maintaining their norms and values. The experiences of first generation female students impact their educational performance.

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Chapter No. 1

INTRODUCTION

The study examines the lived experiences of the first generation female students in Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU). It highlights the challenges and issues faced by them in the new environment and how these experiences and challenges influence their educational performance. Students who enter the university have to adjust themselves in a new environment. They belong to different socio-economic backgrounds and have less ideas and guidelines regarding the new environment.

Education has been of central significance to the development of human society. The international community's commitment to universal education was first set down in the 1984 Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR). Usually higher studies are assumed to be the key for achieving economic success and social mobility in almost every society. As this is the era of high competition between societies, every society needs their students to be academically prepared and motivated for the sake of achieving success.

It is important for a country to be developed, to have a significant number of students who can earn post-secondary degrees and credentials because graduates have a broader range of opportunities, higher salaries, and their chances to live longer and relatively healthier lives is higher than those who do not proceed with their academics for higher education (Immerwahr, 2012).

In Pakistan, particularly in rural and suburban areas, women are situated largely at the bottom end of the educational system in comparison to their male counterparts. Traditionally, it is assumed that women are limited to their homes and men are the breadwinners of the family. In this situation, education can play a vital role in enhancing the status of women and placing them on an equal

footing with their male counterparts and it also increases women's ability to secure employment in the formal sector (Ahmad et al. 2014).

Usually higher studies are assumed to be the key for achieving economic success and social mobility in almost every society. As this is the era of high competition between societies, every society needs their students to be academically prepared and motivated for the sake of achieving success.

Nowadays, more and more women are entering college and graduating, and a larger proportion of first-generation college students are females. Despite the increasing numbers, both groups, First Generation Female and those not coming into this category, are often seen as weak in terms of academic success. Much of the research has covered individual audiences. The least attention paid to first-generation female students has only a limited understanding of what the daily college environment offers to enhance academic, social, and ethical experiences (Engle 2007).

The term First Generation College students can be defined as students who are the first in their family to attend college. First generation student has also been defined as, students whose parents have either not attended college or completed a college degree (Hassim, Strydom, and Strydom 2013)

Research has noted that as first generation college students are the first in their family to embark upon this new experience, many of these students are under-prepared, possess lower self-esteem, and originate from lower socio-economic statuses. In recent past decades, the number of students who are first in their families to attend college has been raised significantly.

Literature focusing on first generation college students has shown how these students often come from significantly different backgrounds than their continuing peers. These backgrounds can include being students of color, having minority ethnicities, or being from lower class white families, and pose

difficulties in their transition to a post-secondary institution (Maqsood, Maqsood, and Raza 2012)

Research has shown that women, in particular, are more likely to experience the impostor phenomenon more frequently and intensely than their male counterparts due to the effects of stereotypes related to gender role and early gender socialization. The number of women entering colleges and universities at the undergraduate level has steadily been increased since the 1970s and has continued through the 2000s, and women entering undergraduate studies have increased from 42% to 56% from 2000-2014 (Freeman 2004).

Experiences of first generation college students, and those from lower social class backgrounds, have been explored by many researchers. Their findings can be broken down into two primary groups: (1) academic integration and (2) social integration. Both have been found to correspond with feelings of student belonging. Academically, FGCS are less prepared for the rigors of college than their peers, lacking math, reading, and critical thinking skills. Many FGCS do not have resources to successfully navigate financial aid sites, leading to increased strain from the financial burden of their academic careers (Hassim et al. 2013)

First generation students are not as academically prepared since they often do not have access to standardized test preparation. They also have different motivations than peers to attend college. A common theme is intending to give back to their families by pursuing careers that prioritize financial stability over personal interests. For racial minorities, who often come from a lower socio-economic status, it can be difficult to separate these two social identities that contribute to their experiences.

Research has also revealed that first generation college students are more likely than non-first generation students to be the eldest sibling, having lower income and having dependents. First generation college students are also more

likely to enroll in college on a part-time basis, or choose a two year community college rather than a four year college (Nelson 2015).

Compared to non-first generation college students, first generation students are more likely to begin college in remedial courses and attain credits and other applicable credentials at a lower rate. There are some clear concerns associated with First Generation College students and their lived experiences during college, such as being underprepared and disadvantaged academically, financially, and socially (Wilbur and Roscigno 2016).

As FGF students belong to families, those do not have any background with a university experience. In such a situation FGFs are unable to assume or expect high cooperation from the university environment and often put a hell of an effort in performing their duties , which is usually a lot more than it is actually needed. As a result, FGF students are often seen even more confused and tense, as compared to the non-FGF students. These students shared that these tensions arise when their family members express their expectations from them. Here, one of the FGF students talked about her family(Evans 2016).

In the context of Pakistani society, we can say that we, as a student, feel high pressure from society and family when it comes to their expectations from a university student in general regarding his/her performance in academics. When it comes to being a woman, there comes the implication of more duties with lesser rights. And when we see specifically the first generation female student the situation gets worse.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of first generation females in universities is a topic or subject of interest for sociologists and educationalists. Many studies have been carried out on first generation female students. Scamming literature from different previous researches I came to the conclusion that from the past three decades, a significantly huge number of female population has entered the university

setting and in them quite a majority of female students belong to the FGF student population. There is much research that has been conducted on the FGF student population in the Northern countries. In the context of Pakistan such studies are still absent and issues of this population remained unaddressed. The issues faced by the female population, in general, have been given due attention by many of the social activists and social work organizations in Pakistan. There are many researches that have been carried out on, specifically, the issues faced by the women of developing countries. However, the uniqueness in this research study lies in the fact that this study is not just about the issues faced by all the female in general, but also keeping in focus a specific group of individuals who do go through some unusual as well as diverse kinds of experiences and for this reason I had to cover some extra miles . Eldest children are often considered to be the luckiest in terms of having the perks of getting a huge part of attention of the whole family but with the perks there comes the malfunctions as well.

As having different personalities and backgrounds, students face different kinds of problems in performing their role as a student, which is, generally, expected to be relatively appropriate and according to the approved patterns of contemporary society. Here, some students do show up with relatively higher mental and physical abilities, so it is comparatively easy for them to adopt those changes that the university environment offers. However, there are a number of newcomers at university who face different kinds of problems while trying to adjust to this new environment. Especially the first-generation female students, and more specifically those who are hostellers, are considered to be the most suffered ones.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- 1. To examine the experiences of first generation female students in Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.
- 2. To explore the challenges faced by first generation female students in Quaid-i-Azam University.
- 3. To explain how these challenges and experiences impact their educational performance and progress in their personalities.

1.3 Research Question

The study carried out with the following research questions:

- What are new experiences of female students and how do they become challenging for them?
- How these challenges and experiences impact their educational performance?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important in a sense that it will highlight the academic and social experiences of the first generation female students. This study contributes in several ways. First, the study will provide an insider's view of the issues of first generation female students. Secondly, this study also provides help for the beginners to develop their course of interest to find out new ways to counter the negative experiences of first generation female students in universities. Third, It also provides help to understand the barriers which creates hinder for FGF students which makes their experiences adverse. For the sake of understanding females' specific needs and challenges that they generally face while engaging in the process of efficient educational attainment/learning, we needed to have a close study on specifically the FGF students. Here, we will also throw a glance on some research made upon the experiences of lived hosteller FGF students. We will explore their assumed or so-called settled already roles in the society and their level of effectiveness, and will attempt to check if the society is

playing an effective positive role in their development or it has more been just a drain game. This study shows whether the idea of socio-economic background and values can be molded or be kept in the new social setting by the female students while focusing over their studies. This study will serve as a resource for the future of the first generation female students, and hopefully be enabling them to get adjusted in the university environment more conveniently. It also helps researchers, educational scholars and policy makers to understand the dynamics of first generation students, and further carry research on the issue of these students and make such policies and build an environment at campuses that encourage the FGFs to effectively go through a proper education and learning process.

1.5 Organization of the Study

Chapter one introduced the study. It highlighted the study objectives, statement of the problem, research questions and significance of the study. Chapter two comprehends the literature of the area of study. In this chapter, the need of the research can be better understood by reviewing some previous research papers and by the use of theory. In chapter three, structure, the way of conduct, tools, method of collection and analysis of the data and, lastly, ethical considerations of the research was discussed. Chapter four describes the findings and also deals with data representation. In chapter five, some major themes were explained and results were concluded while highlighting the limitations of the study. The research was ended with some suggestions for any future research related to the topic.

Chapter No. 2

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Reviewing the literature is about exploring into the relevant available knowledge and previously conducted research reports over a specific area or field of interest to find a gap or a loophole. It is necessary to go through this part during the research process. It helps the researcher to know about his/her field of interest in-depth. This chapter presents relevant literature on the issue in hand. The chapter presents findings from many studies carried out in different socio-cultural contexts. Here, we will throw a glance on some research made upon the lived experiences of the hostelite FGF students. In this chapter, we will explore their assumed or so-called predefined roles as a female in the society, and level of effectiveness and impacts of the expectations those they are being related to, so far. Also, we attempted checking if the society is playing an effective positive role in their development or their problems are being neglected. This literature is mainly related to the experiences and socialization of the FGF students, focusing on first generation female students' experiences, support system and expectations. The impact of the challenges over the educational performance has also been explored in the process of reviewing the literature. This research report will keep its focus on the relative literature that would be according to the variables of research. These variables are first generation female students, transition and social integration. Furthermore, the conceptual framework relevant to the topic has also been designed, using these variables.

It is important for a developing country, to have a significant number of students who can earn post-secondary degrees and credentials because graduates have a broader range of opportunities, higher salaries, and their chances to live longer and relatively healthier lives is higher than those who do not proceed with their academics (Immerwahr, 2012).

According to Williams and Butler (2010), FGFs are the: “students whose parents have either not attended college or completed a college degree”. So, the focus of the study is basically the first-generation female students. Thus, the term FGF refers to the female students, first in their families to attend college or university.

Some FGF students revealed that a supportive family is important for emotional reasons however the relationship may fade once the university starts. The sense of security and encouragement by the family members provides a great psychological support. This type of emotional support from family members, especially for female students who are part of some ethnic minority, helps in making adjustments more comfortably into the new environment of the university (Bizzar, Phillay, 2010).

While contrasting the experiences of hostelites and the day-scholars, a research conducted by Pillay and Ngcobo (2010) found a slight difference regarding family and peer support for the students of first year. A psychology class having 79% female and 21% male students, where the majority of the first year male students identified their parents as more supportive as compared to the first year female students. Thus, the result was that female students found friends and peers more supportive than males do. These findings revealed that there will be relatively less problematic situations for the female hostelites as compared to the first generation male students.

Dr. Priscilla Falcon (2011), professor at Northern Colorado at Greeley, describes pressures for example, doing hard-work as a student, doing a job or even two, and at the same time being a caretaker for the family, do prevail for FGF students.

Falcon (2011) presented that the level of priority for the family declines when a First-Generation Female enters the college/university environment. It is now suddenly up to them when it comes to making choices and taking decisions. In

addition, the student's family is usually unaware of what it is like to attend college/university. Therefore, family usually does not take into consideration the demanding environment/routine of the university and keep expecting much from the FGF students regarding their responsibilities towards family and home.

According to Tessema, Reddy and Malone, (2012), the number of female students for college enrollment has increased substantially. For instance, in 2004, 57.5% of bachelor's degrees and 58% of masters degrees were attained by women. Women have comprised a higher number of college enrollments and ended the myth of long standing gender dominance especially in academics. There is a huge need of special care and attention for the first-generation female students' issues, and to be able to better understand their needs and come up with the appropriate solutions to their problems accordingly, a lot of research and exploration is needed.

As FGFs have usually seen their parents struggling and sacrificing much for the sake of the appropriate brought up of their children, so they often try to be of some assistance to them as soon as possible, and in any possible way. So for the day scholars, responsibilities regarding house are relatively much higher as compared to those of the hostelites (Terenzini, 2004).

African American FGC students also have less resources and a social network that does not comprise of people who can adequately assist and guide them academically or professionally (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Parks-Yancy, 2012).

Callanta and Ortiz (2009) in their paper, highlight that there is a great need and importance of handling student affairs of the first generation. They stressed that professionals who work over student affairs, must have thorough knowledge regarding the issues of first generation students. There are multiple pressure sources for the first generation students due to not having cultural

capital, know-how of status matters and institutional support for them. In most of the cases, they remain anonymous and unnoticed until they disclose themselves by doing something extraordinary.

Research also stresses over the need of educational researchers to explore the issues of first generation students for their better guidance. There is also a factor of coming from urban or rural areas as present that leaves a significant impact on their overall experience of the university. Research also highlights that students coming from rural areas face more issues than those coming from urban territories. In his research, Powell (2009) highlights that self-perceptions of first generation female students are very important when entering into the college or university, because of this sense of self they are able to maintain their high esteem in the new community. The idea of self for them is related to their home environment and traditions of the society where they come from. Also this idea of self changes in the college or university and students often are not prepared for this.

Generally, for first generation female students, the idea or concept of self and self-esteem can easily be disturbed by anything continuously rushing around or happening opposed to their predefined pattern of laws. If they face criticism and do not know how to respond, then this may result in low confidence for them. Same is the case with achievements, as gaining anything remarkable results in an increase of their confidence and self-esteem.

According to Webster (2004), it is too difficult for the first generation female students' family members to be able to figure out what it takes to be a university student. They have no idea about the tiresome routine of the FGF students and are often seen unable to deal with them accordingly. They are not able to relate to any of the experiences that the FGFs go through. Moreover, they do not understand how different factors from home affect the performance of a student at his/her campus life.

Research over FGF students shows that these students are fully conscious of the attitude of the society towards them and think that it does not matter much for them what the society thinks but it does matter a lot in a sense that it, practically, has a great impact on their daily lives as a FGF student. They think that family and society's behavior is eventually leaving an impact on them in one form or another every now and then.

Many of the first-generation students, especially the first-generation female students, have often been seen complaining that they need to put an extra effort in order to meet the criteria for average academic performance in comparison to the non-FGF students.

FGF students are often found to be the ones trying to fulfil the expectations of the society and family that is the element which is identified as the one causing pressure. Nowadays, young women are highly motivated for getting education, but they see society as looking down upon them, and devaluing their choices. They see themselves as belittled by society.

For the FGFs, who are less prepared to face the challenges in a new environment, and do not know how to communicate with new people, it becomes harder to stabilize themselves from many aspects. Highlighting the low level of engagement, and effective involvement of students in educational practices Asrat (2010) found that first generation female students had low contribution and engagement in educational practices. He further explored that FGF students were not fully prepared for the university or college education.

Buchman (2012), while talking about the socio-economic status and background of the first generation students, explained that these students specifically have less of a communicative relationship with their teachers and possess low confidence, in general. Usually, these students are unable to flourish to their full potential regarding academic activities. They also contribute little in other extracurricular activities at campus .

A research conducted with intersectional analysis revealed that female first generation students' experiences were categorized on the basis of the amount of knowledge both prior to and during the college experience. The sense of 'not knowing' across the intersections of race, class, gender and place strongly affected respondents' sense of identity, as well as their entire college experience. Repercussions included barriers to personal and academic progress, as well as systemic isolation, resulting in increased self-sufficiency and lack of belonging (Lounsbery 2014).

Our results show varieties in first-generation students' sense of identity, interests, performance/competence beliefs, and family support. These differences can serve as a stepping stone towards understanding the trajectories of first-generation college students. By understanding underrepresented students' identities, performance, and backgrounds, specific strategies can be developed to support these students in our engineering programs (Verdin and Godwin 2015). Kuh (2005) highlighted that outcomes for FG students were not satisfactory because they were having low marks, less persistent dropout rate and more frequent personality collapse issues.

The Research of Northcutt (1991) highlights that for the women, valuing themselves is more important to them in strengthening their sense of self, instead of relying on the outward support sources. We can take the Austin's (1984, 1993) model of input-environment-output. This model was used to examine the impact of environmental variables on the environment, accounting for background characteristics (Austin, 1993). The model assumes that the student's outcome is the function of three elements: input, environment and output. Input is any trait inherited by the student at the time of his/her enrollment. Environment could be anything that happens to the student while his period at university that may affect the outcome and outcome is the desired objective or goal of the overall experience of the student at university. Environment may affect the following outcome when they come to college or

university. He also highlights some prominent characteristics of the female students which includes, looking forward to be independent as soon as possible, to work hard and to take risks(Rascon 2009)

Webster (2004) makes comparative analysis of students having educated and job holder parents and first generation students, and concludes that there are many first generation students who fail to complete their degree due to certain reasons and issues. And unlike first generation students, those having educated parents obtain their degrees without facing any hardships during the degree period(Baldasaro 2014)

A study done by Prospero and Vohra-Gupta (2007) examined how motivation and integration factors influenced the academic achievement of 277 diverse first generation college students attending a community college. This quantitative study employed bivariate and multivariate analyses and findings suggested that motivation and academic integration played a significant role in academic achievement and was associated with higher grade point averages with first generation students. However, the results demonstrated that extrinsic motivation contributed to lower academic achievement resulting in lower grade point averages. Many FGC students are extrinsically motivated with a goal of achieving a degree in order to obtain a well-paying job and improve their “social, economic, and occupational standing(Stebbleton and Soria n.d.)

Vansteenkiste, Lens, and Deco (2006) reviewed various field experiments to explore intrinsic goal framing versus extrinsic goal framing. Findings revealed that when students are presented with a justification and the long term significance of a learning activity, then they better understand the value of learning it. When instructors focusing on longstanding intrinsic benefits such as the students’ personal development, relationship development, improved health, or community building, the student is more likely to participate and comprehend the content more, resulting in higher performance and greater competence(Longwell-Grice et al. 2016)

Aries and Seider (2005) found that FGS attending elite schools had feelings of inadequacy, intimidation, and deficiency in comparison to their more affluent peers in general and especially in the classroom. Furthermore, this lack of preparation could affect students' participation in class, willingness to interact with faculty, attempt for seeking help when needed, and ability to find peers to study with; each of which could be connected to feelings of not belonging (Green 2015).

It is more beneficial for first generation college students to be intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated. Intrinsic aspects such as gaining more knowledge, undertaking challenges, working towards academic accomplishment, etc. It may make it easier for FGC students to assimilate and adjust to college (Padgett, Johnson, and Pascarella 2012).

When one takes account, in general, female students are doing very well when compared to the male students, but college/university persistence and rate of pass-out graduates of first-generation female students is lower than the non-first-generation female students (Strayhorn 2008)

According to research, for some FGF students, a supportive family is important for emotional reasons, however the relationship may fade once university starts. The feeling of security and encouragement by the family members provides a great psychological support. This type of emotional support from family members, especially for female students who are part of some ethnic minority, helps them in making adjustments more comfortably into the new environment of the university. This literature is mainly related to the experiences and socialization of the FGF students, focuses on family and peer support and societal role expectations (Rease-Miles and Lopez 2015)

This study examines the first-generation university students in relation to their financial statuses. It is driven by the question, What is the relationship between first-generation college-student's status at the university and his/her financial considerations among university students? It explores the impact of

such variables as first-generation student's status, parents' educational levels, student's demographics, financial status, and academic considerations on students' financial concerns including the level of student's financial concerns associated with paying for college, the behaviors they might show to deal with these issues, the manageability of campus life's costs, and the worries associated with those costs. The results indicate that first-generation university students usually have to deal with financial concerns and they could show up with unique responses to these concerns, those are tied to their educational and family related backgrounds that influence their financial decision-making.

The findings from 3 qualitative research studies, related to first-generation college students, show themes of strains in family relationships and lack of practical familial support. One study reveals sources of resiliency and persistence of graduate students; another explores a sense of belonging for undergraduates attending 3 types of private institutions; the final study features concerns of Latinos at a 2-year college. Together these studies show that the creation process of a student identity highlights unique challenges for those transitioning into bicultural persons. Advisors who understand students coping with changing family status while attending college can proactively guide them toward their degrees. Furthermore, administrators should provide programs and professional development that may help the advisors addressing the complex issues faced by the first-generation students(Rascon 2009)

Research highlights that most of the first generation students come from low socio-economic backgrounds or from minority groups. Further they are also aware of the levels of differences between them and their fellows. The issue of these students is that there is hardly anyone to give them true direction and authentic advice. So these FGF students are often not as much ready for the new environment as the non-FGFs are, whose surrounding was offering them with the sufficient knowledge and cooperation to cope up with the challenges at campus (Martin 2018)

Schmidt (2003) explores the experiences of first generation college students or African American origin, which were reported being involved in some stressful matters. They faced issues in maintaining the balance between two cultures. They had to face pressure, as they had to maintain their relation with environment of college and related aspirations and home responsibilities (Parsons 2012).

Varying cultural experiences and issues of the first generation students are increased when they join college or university. These research findings suggest that when there is a small number of students belonging to a specific community, they have to face culture shock and isolation feelings (Wainwright and Watts 2019).

There is a study over black students which highlight different stereotypes made against them. It explains that despite the fact that black students were involved fully in studies and their performance was very good, they were victims of some negative remarks by their white counterparts. They were judged negatively and were victims of sexism and racism (Gardner and Holley 2011).

In the research, there had been some key variables which describe the main contextual theme of the research with relation to its research objectives. Different definitions from different perspectives have been given and then Operationalization of these definitions was described in accordance with the topic. Three major key concepts used in this research are First generation students, transition and social integration. I have tried to present these variables in many ways and then explained them further in operationalization.

2.1 Concepts (Variables defined):

Conceptualization shows the process of development and helps in clarification of the concepts in the research process. In this portion I gave all the definitions of the major concepts mentioned in his study.

2.1.1 First Generation Students:

There are various definitions present of first generation students with slight differences. But the common and the most accepted definition of the first generation students is that these are the students whose parents have no experience of postsecondary education (Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

Generally, a first-generation student is the one whose guardians i.e., parents, caretakers have not completed a bachelor's degree. It means that he/she is the first one from their family/immediate surrounding to attend a college/university for the duration of four years to get a bachelor's degree. So, we can say that being a first-generation student means that you are the first person in your immediate surrounding to attend the university (Pascarella et al., 2004).

Inman and Mayes (1999) defined the first-generation students more precisely by limiting the definition to exclude any student who had an immediate family member who attended college. Others defined first-generation students as those whose parents have not attended any form of post-secondary education, in comparison to students whose parents had varying levels of postsecondary education.

2.1.2 Transition:

Schlossberg defined a transition as any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. It is important to note that perception plays a key role in transitions, as an event, or non-event, meets the definition of a transition only if it is so defined by the individual experiencing it. In order to understand the meaning that a transition has for a particular individual, the type, context, and impact of the transition must be considered.

According to the dictionary definition, transition is the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another and students in transition from one programme to another.

2.1.3 Social Integration

The process of social integration is complex and multidimensional. It can be taken as an extent of participation of individuals in different social relationships. It is all about engaging in social activities and relations and having identification and commonality with one's social roles (Brissette 2000).

It can also be defined as the process which minorities or newcomers joined and corporate in a new social setting or environment. Social integration is basically the newcomer's entry and experiences in a society by which he received much (Holt-Lunstad and Uchino 2015).

Operationalization is a process to define the measurement of a phenomenon that is not directly measurable, but its existence is indicated by some other phenomena. It is the process of defining a fuzzy concept so as to make the theoretical concept clearly distinguishable or measurable and to understand it in terms of empirical observations. In a wider sense, it refers to the process of specifying the extension of a concept describing what is and is not a part of that concept. This study is over experiences and challenges which are frequently faced by the first generation female students.

Although definitions of first generation students consider both male and females but here in this study, the focus is over the female students of first generation.

This is an important term in this topic. It is applied here as a variable which takes into account the changes and new adaptations in the personality of female first generation students. During the transition period, students are usually being integrated in a new system and social setting.

2.2 Theoretical, Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework is a very important tool to guide your research in a proper way. On the basis of theory, assumptions are made and on the basis of these assumptions hypotheses are built which are tested by the findings of data.

Theory guides and directs the research in a proper line to prove the hypothesis. This topic can be theorized by multiple theoretical perspectives because of its complexity in nature. But here I applied the IEO model of Alexander Astin, which is closely related to the topic.

2.2.1 Input-Environment-Output Model of Alexander Astin

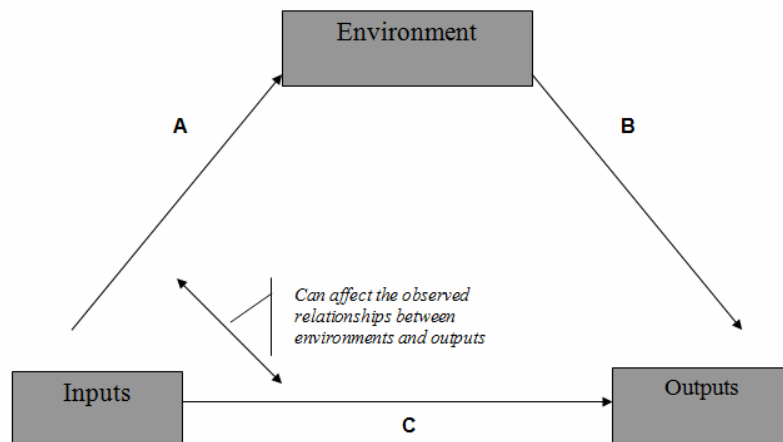
The experiences of first generation students have been highlighted using different models and development theories. There are many relevant approaches which are closely related to the topic but I here have applied this model as it best suits and relates to the topic.

The I-E-O model was presented and used by Astin in 1993. This model discusses three variables and their close relation to each other.

When students enter the university, they do possess different characteristics due to coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. According to Astin these characteristics are called Input. This is what students have when they enter for higher education. These characteristics have a strong relationship with their university experiences because these guide them to behave in certain ways and adopt certain things while living in the new environment and social setting.

Taking the environment Astin says that it is educational experiences, interacting with new people, policies, and programs in which one enters.

The third basic component of this approach is outcomes or output. This is basically what students learn, and these can be seen as their new characteristics in the new environment(Strayhorn 2008).



If we apply this model in this research, we can say that the generational status or socio-economic background, habits and characteristics of first generation female students are the input. On the other hand their meeting with new people like classmates, roommates, and other common experiences resulting from living in the new environment can be seen as transition.

The overall experience of the female students during this period and their impacts over them or their studies are being counted as the outcomes. This study is based on exploring the experiences and challenges of the first generation female students and the perceived effects of their on-campus residential experience and roommate pairings on their overall university experience.

This study was conducted under several assumptions. First, it was assumed that the participants in the study would respond truthfully. Second, it was assumed that the participants had an on-campus residential experience of one or more semesters on the campus of the study site. Third, it was assumed that the study site's residential student population was first-generation college students. (Kjaer et al. 2015)

2.2.2 Application of Model in this topic

This theory is closely related to the topic which is about the impact of the university life experiences over the first generation female students. Because

this model was used to examine the impact of environmental variables on outcomes, accounting for background characteristics, the model assumes that the student's outcome is the function of three elements: input, environment and output. Input is any trait inherited by the student at the time of his/her enrollment. Environment would be anything that happens to the student during his period at university that may affect the outcome and outcome is the desired objective or goal of the overall educational program. Environment may affect the following outcome.

In the case of Pakistan, the research on this specific topic is lacking. The educational researchers need to explore this topic to highlight the experiences and obstacles faced by the students who enter the colleges and universities. Their research in this field can better guide the students and they can better prepare themselves for the new setting and experiences and cope with the challenges in the way in a proper manner. Because college and university are the places where the future of the students is shaped, and with proper guidance and knowledge they can learn in an effective manner.

2.2.3 Propositions:

1. First generation female students from different areas have different socio-economic backgrounds and characteristics.
2. They face many challenges due to having less awareness of the university environment.
3. University's hostel experiences impact their overall educational performance and learning in the university.
4. First generation female students face many challenges in the universities and their generational background has a strong impact over them while adjusting in the new social setting.
5. They have to carry with them the norms and values which they inherited from their specific society and family, and also have to adopt certain characteristics after coming to the university.

6. Socio-economic and educational background of these students is a major factor when adjusting to the new environment.
7. First generation students are usually lacking sufficient resources and social connections that can have positive impacts over their new experiences.
8. Due to lack of resources and social networks they sometimes suffer from lacking guidance and thus getting detracted in many of the academic or professional matters.

2.3 Research Gap in Pakistan

There is so much research that has been conducted on university students' involvement and engagement in the learning process. But in Pakistani context, there is no such study carried out that has been conducted on specifically the purpose of finding out the differences in background of the students (educational status, age, residential status, income, assets, ACT score etc.), involvement in educational practices (Academic challenges, learning levels, student-teacher relationship status, communication and interaction level, enriched educational experiences and extracurricular activities at campus) and at the end comes the desired outcomes by the students (CGPA, institutional satisfaction, and achievement and progress in general), between the FGF students and non-FGF students.

2.4 Theoretical underplaying of the study:

Theories of social stratification and capitals can be utilized for the informed analysis of my data. Theories of social stratification with reference to educational inequality argue that upper class children with educated parents have more productive interaction with the field of education as compared to the middle and lower class. Children whose parents do not have a college or university degree.

Several aspects and elements are reflected in this theory. Parental cultural capital is productive in educational achievements (Bourdieu, 1977). Children whose parents have poor cultural capital (no education , especially a university degree) have less chances of educational achievements (Meger, 1977). Children with privileged backgrounds with educated parents enter universities with good orientation and knowledge of the higher education institution which in return enable them to have the best from the field of education. The experiences of the FGF students also need to be seen in intersectionality as female and male students may have different experiences in the field of education. Female students in general, first generation female students in particular, interact with the field of education differently than the male students do (Ullah, 2013). This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of FGF students in QAU. I assure that the concept of social capital (networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society), cultural capital (accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills that a person) and parallel cultural capital will enable me to analyze the lived experiences of FGF students in QAU.

Chapter No. 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

This section describes the tools and the techniques used in this research process. This research is dealing in qualitative research methods. The reason for using qualitative methodology is to extract some in-depth knowledge of the general experiences of the FGF students in Pakistani universities. The decision to go with the qualitative research approach was based upon the fact that we were looking forward to getting some in-depth understanding of what it feels like to be a FGF student in a Pakistani university. After thorough review of literature, making a well-planned research design is considered to be a fundamental part of any scientific research. This section describes the tools and the techniques used in the research process. I used the qualitative research method for this research.

3.2 Research Design:

According to the nature of the study and data required, I opted for a qualitative approach. The purpose and reason for opting a qualitative approach was to explore the issue deeply. To deeply explore and explain the phenomenon, I wanted an in-depth insight that was just possible by looking from qualitative aspects.

3.3 Locale of Study

This research has been conducted in a public university namely, Quaid-i-Azam University. QAU accommodates students from across Pakistan. The total number of the students in the university is thirteen thousand. Quaid-i-Azam University is the place where students from across the country and from all types of socio-economic and educational backgrounds come for higher studies. So regarding the experiences, challenges and impacts of these over the first generation students, I selected this place as there is a variety of students studying here.

3.4. Sampling and Sampling size

Sample of population of a study has a significant impact on the results of research. It is needed to be chosen with extreme caution. Sampling is the method of extraction of samples from a larger population. This study considers the experiences and challenges of first generation female students and their impacts over them. The population under study was those female students who belonged to the first generation category.

The sample size consisted of 13 respondents. All of the respondents were female students of Quaid-i-Azam University. They belonged to different socio-economic backgrounds.

I stopped the data collection process on meeting the point of saturation.

3.5. Tool of Data collection:

I have used an interview guide as a tool for collecting data. The interview guide was made up of relevant questions that were related to my research topic. It consists of 13 questions. The questions are supposed to lead towards the main objectives of the study when answered by the concerned population. Some questions originated from the literature and some from my personal experience. In addition to the interviews, my observation and experiences as a first generation student remained the source of data.

3.6. Method of Data collection:

It is based on three objectives and falls into the category of qualitative research. The qualitative research tools and methods are used because the topic demands the in-depth exploration of student's experiences and challenges and their impacts over their educational performances and practical life. For this purpose the researcher selected 13 respondents who were females and belonged to the category of the first generation students.

I have conducted 13 face to face In-depth interviews by using open-ended questions in which I spoke less and listened carefully. It helped me to observe and understand the verbal and non-verbal impressions i.e. body language, gestures, information, provided by respondents. It is important to mention here that all interviews were recorded with the help of a cell phone.

3.7. Analysis of the Data:

At the very outset of data analysis, all recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcribed data was coded. Relevant codes were clubs together for generations of broader themes. Broader themes were later on defined into narrow themes. Relevant data under each theme was presented and discussed (see chapter 4).

3.8. Ethical Considerations:

I followed all ethical protocols of research ethics. Respondents' confidentiality has been maintained. They were given the promise that the data will be used for academic purposes.

Chapter No. 4

FINDINGS AND DATA PRESENTATION

This chapter deals with the detailed interpretations and analysis of data gathered from the in-depth interviews with the respondents. The analysis represents the views of respondents about their experiences as first-generation students. The participants experienced many good things as well as challenges. Their views are presented in the following section.

Family support was noted in case of the majority first-generation students. A student elaborated the experience in such a way:

“None of my parents has ever been to a university so they desperately wanted me to go to the university. They were the ones who found this scholarship that I am currently studying on”

First generation female students who come to the universities with the full financial and moral support of their families are found to be suffering less. One of the respondents stated that, *“Yes, I am the first one in my family attending the university and it was both my desire and parents’ consent to get admission here. They fully supported me and were satisfied with my decision of going to the university”*. Moreover, family’s social moral and economical support is important for the first-generation female students. First-generation female students, however, do experience some problems as compared to the other students. Several respondents revealed that they could have different experiences if their parents were educated. One of the respondents argued: that *“Obviously, the case would have been different if I was not from the category of first generation female students, I have had some sort of knowledge about the university environment and adjustment strategies so I could have experienced it differently”*.

Similarly another respondent said that, *“I believe that the girls having educated parents, can guide their children in proper way regarding their studies the university setting because they have the experience of living there”*

These respondents show that parental cultural capital (parental education, especially university education), make it easy for female students to have the best experience. And if otherwise, they think that *“because, when they have no relevant experience, are less equipped,, and have less awareness about the educational process at the university level, they cannot guide about what may be forthcoming in the university”*. Convincing parents and satisfying them that they are doing well is a challenging gap for the first-generation female students. One of the students outlined this phenomena as he said that *“how can our parents know what we experience and are challenged to here, when they have never been to any university for higher studies? It is really difficult to satisfy them that we are doing well here, in general, and there are no such big issues that are unresolvable”*.

First-generation female students came to university with no prior exposure and orientation. These experiences can be better explained in the following extract in which a first-generation female student shared that *“We came here with no guidance from our parents regarding the university environment. Our parents just advised us to focus on our studies and take care of ourselves. Moreover, they directed us to never forget our values and norms on getting into the new social setting”* (extract from the interview).

The above quote shows that the first-generation female students were given permission by their families to go for the university education. Nevertheless, they were constantly being guided and advised to remain loyal to their culture, values and their family repute. In addition to cultural socks, first-generation female students also faced financial issues as a FGF student elaborated that *“due to my financial issues I sometimes feel unable to manage the expenses for*

my studies. In university one must be ready for the extra expenses every now and then because we have to copy notes, books, or even buy them and there are also numerous other expenses as well but we do not have full resources so that we can arrange everything in time”.

Another student mentioned her financial concerns saying that *“Our family supports us but our financial conditions are not that much stable so I do not get any extra amount to cope up with the unexpected expenditures of the university.”* Parents of the FGF students rarely understand the extra expenditures that university life involves. These students sometimes do not want to burden their families by telling them much about their issues, thus they do suffer in silence and this creates even bigger issues for them in future. As one of the FGF found saying that, *“Once, I was unable to prepare the course outline due to lack of books and notes and could not perform well in exams that time.”*

Those students, especially coming from rural backgrounds, face more difficulties because they do not only get to go through, merely, the university experience for the first time but also that it is their first experience regarding living in a big city or an urban area and dealing with its lows and highs. Usually parents also get worried about their female children on sending them to hostels, as one of the respondents argued that *“the family to which I belong, is not that much liberal and my parents strictly advised me just to remain focused on my studies and not to get involved in other kinds of activities”.*

A FGF student telling that her parents’ special concern for her being a female do exist there as she noted that *“For my parents going to a university was never a matter of concern, but the actual reason behind their concerns was that I was*

going far away from the house with expected lack of communication with parents and the origin society (i.e. the immediate social circle that I developed or got to interacted with, throughout my life while living at home), I came from”.

It is often the case that parents get worried for the lack of contact with their child. This may be a big issue for specifically the rural parents. The first generation female students expressed their views about the good experiences of university life and claimed that it is better than the college. One of the respondents said that, *“There is co-education here and earlier when we were in college we never have had any experience of the kind of competition that the male students offer so we cannot compare college life with university life. There are people with diverse backgrounds. We can openly and more freely go for an argument with people of different backgrounds. One can just study in college life but at the university level, I think one actually learns and better socializes oneself.”*

Another student shared her thoughts as she said that:

“I am really independent. If I think of doing something I don't care about people's opinion over it. I feel like society sets these expectations from women to do things in a certain way or expect them to appear in a certain state. I like having differences with the social normal. I'm doing my thing and even though people might classify me as that if only they actually knew me and what I did. I do it for me, I don't do it to impress people or for the society to see me as this instead of that.”

Most of the time parents are concerned with the place given to its women in their society and society's general attitude towards them. However, it may vary from society to society and parents' take on that, their children going to university, is based in accordance to the norms and values of the society they are living in. If being honest, it is a known fact that in spite of

new improvised ideologies on women's status in a society, women are still getting to be treated as secondary to men in many societies of the current era. One of the FGF students gave remarks over this phenomena as she said that society's attitude towards a common middle class female student is like: *"She's not going to get graduated, she's a woman. So, I feel like there is this thing that society in general assumes that it gives us more than we return back and we owe it a lot so for that we have to live up to its expectations from us."*

Every FGF student needs some sort of support or guidance regarding many of the matters as she joins the university. As mentioned before, some studies suggested that for female students peer groups can be a great support but through data analysis we are able to conclude that just like any other theory this theory also has its limitations. One of the respondents talked about her concerns, related to the kind of support the peer group offers. She said:

"...I think my peers support me, but they don't understand my situation. The common ground is school and the demands that it puts on everything. Even though our student definition is a lot different, they come from the traditional families...she [her roommate] doesn't understand the life experiences I have and that I don't have mommy and daddy to rely on. Like when situations come up, you know. But we're weighed on the fact that school is demanding and that we're at the same points in our lives."

Another respondent shared her views as she argued that *"When it is a matter of adjustment, we have to cope with different types of adjustments here. We have to adjust in the classrooms, university environment, we have to adjust in the hostels and lastly we have to adjust in the larger setting like being and living in a new area and city"*. Here the popular notion among the FGF students was

'adjustment'. Adjustment was the thing they all were looking for. However, in some cases FGF students do very well in academics, even then the general concept is that, usually, they do not come to the university with high expectations.

Some of the FGF students mentioned their lack of confidence and insecurities that follow them because they feel unaware and unalarmed of what may be coming next while they spend time in university. FGF students complain about the lack of guidance as the lack of motivation. These students have to get stuck hard for gaining and maintaining their self-esteem. One of the FGF students said that, *"...For me, it's accomplishing things that I know I have to do but don't feel like I can. I feel that reassures my self-confidence. I'm doing the right thing in going to the university and wanting to graduate. It reassures me."*

According to a respondent, new adjustments need special care and time to get set into place. And it demands special attention, moreover she added that, *"When it is a matter of adjustment, we have to cope with different types of adjustments here. We have to adjust in the classrooms, university environment, we have to adjust in the hostels and lastly we have to adjust in the larger setting like being and living in a new area and city."*

Other respondent explaining her situation explained the complex nature of the matter by saying:

"...it's not that they don't want to support me, but I don't think they understand what it means to go to college. Even the other day I had to explain to my mom the difference between an undergraduate and a graduate. They don't understand what I do and they kind of just ignore it when I bring it up". Often parents are not even able to compare both these

situations because they could not think of what it is like to be a university student and its demands and affects in daily lives of the FGF students.

While dealing with the new challenges at the university the FGF students have to go through some sort of issues at family level as well. These students need to find someone who they can look up to and who can show them patterns to be followed and become guides but if they would not be able to get proper guidance then, most probably, it took them many extra miles to cover the gap between a non-FGF student and a FGF student. As a well-known sufi Rumi said that, *“whoever travels without a guide needs two hundred years for a two day journey”*.

FGF students often found needing someone to get their back. It can be in any way possible, be it some emotional support, financial aid or practical assistance from any of their family members or friends. However, these students were seen having trouble with that as one of the FGF shared that *“I wouldn't really want to go to my sister [with issues about college] just because it would feel like I'm putting her into a situation, she would not be able to understand and would relate to”*.

Other than the communication issues with the family members, the FGFs do need to struggle to live up to the high expectations of the family members. Most of the time, the pressure of expectations proves out to be functional but in some cases it exceeds much from the level it would be beneficial at, and becomes troublesome for these students. As one of our respondents argued that *“especially because they [her family] do fantasize. They tell me ‘When you're working and have your career...’ They tell me all these things so it makes me feel like I need to exceed and become someone in life.”*

FGF students often come from lower or middle class family backgrounds. They may not get to grow in an environment which is needed for growing fully up to one's full potential and for their skills to flourish and get significantly polished. When these students enter the university environment, they often try to get full benefit from it as it provides them with all the opportunities of efficient learning and growth. One of the participants responded with some likely thoughts. According to her, university helped her in improving self-esteem. She responded to the phenomena by telling, *"...I do things, I achieve things that I don't think I could do... once I achieve them or even at least put my foot in the door I think, and 'I can do this if I put my mind to it.' It really boosts my confidence. I did that, I can do more."*

According to Wainwrights and Watts(2019) different cultural experiences increase issues of first generation female students. As discussed earlier, the views and take of the society on the matter, their women going to university, varies from society to society. However, in many cases the society was not seen to be much supportive. One of the respondent found complaining about the attitude of the people in her surrounding like this:

"... there's some people who are closest to my family that I've known since high school who look at me like I won't be able to do it, finish college and make it through everything. So when I almost couldn't stay in college anymore, it gave me more of a drive to want to stay in college... hearing how much he [her nephew] looks up to me made me want to do it, not just for myself but for my family. That helped a lot."

Motivation was often related to the urge of becoming a positive role model. They wanted to set a good example for their younger family

members by conquering every academic ground. As the FGFs are aware of the fact that they are going to be the person, every child from the family will be looking up to, in the future. They try to work hard and proceed with caution so they can set a good example for the ones, supposed to be following them through the path. I found the FGF giving a significant amount of attention to this idea, as a student said that, *“... I feel like I’m setting the right path for her [her younger sister] to follow. But it is really tough because I don’t have that support of someone to guide me through the college experience... In the future, my kids will be hopefully going to college. I am going to be able to help them out because I went through that. I wouldn’t want them to go through what I go through.”*

A FGF student explained the necessity of putting an effort by telling that, *“...It’s the effort. It’s how hard you want to try. You can’t just wait around for things to come to you; you have to search for them. You can’t just blame the world for your unhappiness. You have to put in a good amount of effort”*.

The FGF students, from time to time, needed to satisfy their parents about their visits to the campus or living conditions at the hostel. Parents often do show up with a lot of concerns whether reasonable or even unreasonable sometimes. They have to maintain a balance in telling them about the bright and dark sides of university life, so that neither they get over-concerned nor remain unbothered at all. A student came up with these remarks as he said, *“How can our parents know what we experience and challenge here, when they have never gone to any university for higher studies? It is really difficult to satisfy them that we are ok here and there are no such issues”*

Other than the formal setting and the academic activities, these students also suffer in their social lives. They feel themselves unfit as they do not know enough of the similar cases where one knows nothing much about the new

social setting and have to get started all over from point zero. One of the FGF students talked about her fears regarding building a social circle. She said that, *“When I came here for the first time, I was confused and did not know whom to get help from. I did not know how people behave here and treat them. I escaped from being too much open and social with others and sometime I used to feel isolated and disturbed”* Another one of the FGFs approved this notion by sharing some similar thoughts, as she said *“Of course, these types of experiences are new for us and it takes time to get adjusted here”*, FGF students do think that one’s social life affects one’s life over-all. They see a good social circle as supportive in general. As a student shared her views about the impacts of the social lives of the FGF by saying that, *“I think it has impacts over the performance and socialization of the students; these experiences are hard for some students.”*

Moreover, students these days are aware of the fact that they need to be groomed. They realize that socialization plays a significant role in one’s student life as well as the professional life. One of the respondents shared that, *“University socialization actually proves better in your practical life which is waiting ahead, because we have to go for job and these days organizations just pick clever and socialized people for their vacancies”*. Another FGF shared some likely thoughts saying that, *“I think we must involve fully in the environment and meet the people from different backgrounds to expand our thinking and socialize ourselves”*.

Due to the low self-esteem, these students could not get to manage having proper interaction with their teachers and the other faculty members. This affects them in ways as they do not feel comfortable in questioning and get to be having their attention. Our respondent addressed this issue by telling that, *“Infact, it has been an issue with me for a long time, but I have covered it now a days. I used to get tense and could not study properly when I faced such issues”*. These issues affect the study process in a negative manner as

the students do not get to be cleared about a lot of important matters as they hesitate discussing gaps of knowledge in their heads and confusions regarding the knowledge they get. This student-teacher gap often leads to poor performance of the student in academics, eventually.

Chapter No. 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I am going to sum up the study. The findings that were discussed in the previous chapter enabled me to draw some themes from the data. The themes are presented with discussions. The study provided the extract of ‘first generation female students’ sharing their lived experiences during their university life.

As FGFs have usually seen their parents struggling and sacrificing much for the sake of the appropriate brought up of their children, so they often try to be of assistance to them as soon as, and in any way, possible. So for the day scholars, responsibilities regarding house are relatively much more as compared to those of the hostellers.

According to Bizzar(2010) for the first generation female students the support of the family is very important. In this research findings also support this claim because respondents told that support of family is very much critical. They said that they need moral and economic support from their parents and if it is not there, the challenges seem to be increasing for them.

For the sake of understanding females’ specific needs and challenges that they generally face while engaging in the process of efficient educational attainment, we needed to conduct a closer study on specifically the FGF students. This study has been conducted to fill up the gap by closely analyzing these cases.

Female students have to face external and internal pressures and internal pressure is their personal desires to do something and external pressure can be taken from the expectations of family and society.

Women having an educational background and supporting themselves are always supposed to be putting their marriage and children at first place without any leniency or significant cooperation. This concept is known as the superwoman syndrome.

The ratio of students who are first in their families to join universities or colleges, is increasing. Past research also shows that there is a great impact of financial resources over the experiences and educational performance of first generation female students.

This research has focused over the related literature according to the variables of research. These variables are first generation students, transition and social integration.

College or university for FGF students is the place where they have to make their decisions themselves. There are expectations of parents and some demands from the new social setting and environment. They have to cope with the parent's expectations and new environment at the same time.

So they decide what is better for them and adopt certain things to make themselves look fit in the new environment.

The issue of parents is that they do not know the demands of a new setting and environment from their children. They have no idea about what it means for their children to go for higher studies. In this way parents make the mistake of demanding certain things from their children. According to them responsibilities of their children regarding house and family always have to be the first priority.

There are multiple pressure sources for the first generation students due to not having cultural capital, status and lack of institutional support for them. In most cases they remain unknown and un-noticed to other students unless they disclose themselves and make themselves visible by some extraordinary performance .

For first generation female students the concept of self and self-esteem can easily be disturbed by anything or happening. If they face criticism and do not know how to respond, then this may result in low confidence for them. Same is the case with achieving anything which can result in increase in their confidence and self-esteem.

it seems too difficult for their family members to be able to figure out what it takes to be a university student. They have no idea about the tiresome routine of the FGF students and are often found unable to deal with them accordingly. Moreover, they do not understand how different factors from home affect the performance of a student at university. They think that family and society's behavior eventually has an impact on them in a form or another every now and then.

First generation students' experiences were characterized by a lack of knowledge both prior to and during college. This sense of 'not knowing' across the intersections of race, class, gender and place strongly impacted respondents' identity, as well as their entire college experience.

FGCS attending elite schools had feelings of inadequacy, intimidation, and deficiency in relation to their more affluent peers in general and especially in the classroom.

For some FGF students, a supportive family is important for emotional reasons however the relationship may fade once university starts. The feeling of security and encouragement by the family members provides a great psychological support.

5.1. Family Support and limitations:

Majority of the respondents revealed that they had positive and good reactions from their families for their higher education. The respondents said that their parents supported them. A quote is cited to reflect on the situation:

“Yes, I am the first one in my family attending the university and it was both my desire and parents’ consent to get admission here. They fully supported me and were satisfied with my decision of going to the university”

Nevertheless, they (respondents) argued that their parents were lacking university experience and did not guide them about university life.

In this study, respondents also revealed that their parents do not understand the extra expenditures that university life demands.

5.2. Transition from college to university life:

Many of the respondents spoke positive about the learning experiences in the university. They felt good in the university learning environment as compared to the college learning environment. They were positive about the diverse interactions with the students of diverse backgrounds. A quote from the data is cited here to attest the case:

“There is co-education here and earlier when we were in college we never have had any experience of the kind of competition that the male students offer so we cannot compare college life with university life. There are people with diverse backgrounds. We can openly and more freely go for an argument with people of different backgrounds. One can just study in college life but at the university level, I think one actually learns and better socializes oneself.”

These days’ students, themselves, understand that they are going to be facing tough competition in the job market and that they need to get prepared for whatever the hardship coming their way. Another respondent was of the view that, *“University socialization actually proves better in your practical life*

which is waiting ahead, because we have to go for a job and these days organizations just pick clever and socialized people for their vacancies”.

Another FGF shared some likely thoughts saying that, *“I think we must involve fully in the environment and meet the people from different backgrounds to expand our thinking and socialize ourselves”*

5.3. Parents’ concerns regarding the new environment:

If the parents have never been to a college or a university and are now letting their children join one; it would not be so easy for them to do that. Especially in the context of Pakistan it is even more challenging for them. There are a lot of stereotypes in our country, about a woman who steps out of her home in order to study or even for work. Parents trust their children but do not trust much the university environment and their surroundings. A claim by one of the respondents is mentioned below which approves the statement above, that is *“It is really difficult to satisfy them that we are ok here and there are no such issues”*

Parents get afraid in terms of the kinds of exposure their children could possibly be having during their stay at the university , and this concern does not seem to be getting faded. As one of the respondents explains that, *“Our parents just advised us to focus on our studies and take care of ourselves. Moreover, they directed us to never forget our values and norms on getting into the new social setting”*

Before joining the university, usually, it is solely the duty of parents to protect their children and provide them with all the safety, whether it's about keeping them from making wrong decisions and helping them make right choices in their daily matters or providing them with general social security. Now when they're leaving home alone, without anyone close to them by their

side, it definitely makes parents doubtful and worried. A respondent responded to such a topic in these words:

“For my parents going to a university was never a matter of concern, but the actual reason behind their concerns was that I was going far away from the house with expected lack of communication with parents and the origin society”

5.4. FGF’s specific experiences affecting their academics:

The experiences of first generation female students impact their educational performance.

The literature review also highlights the challenges which are faced by the first generation female students and their impacts on students' educational performance. Often parents do not understand how different factors from home affect the performance of a student at university. This study suggests that the FGF students actually think that family and society’s behavior eventually has an impact on them in a form or another every now and then. Society’s impact does influence their decision making and performances as a student as well as an efficient member of the society. Here is an example mentioned in support of the view:

“especially because they [her family] do fantasize. They tell me ‘When you’re working and have your career...’ They tell me all these things so it makes me feel like I need to exceed and become someone in life.”

“I believe that the girls having educated parents, can guide their children in proper way regarding their studies the university setting because they have the experience of living there”

As the first generation students come to the university with achieving a lot of unexpected goals already. They overcome many challenges which their families and even they themselves did not see coming. When successfully deals with the unexpected and sudden challenges of the

university, about which nobody could have informed and prepared them, they feel it more of an achievement and start putting even more faith and confidence in themselves. As a FTF student expressed her feelings in these words, that “...I do things, I achieve things that I don't think I could do... once I achieve them or even at least put my foot in the door I think, and ‘I can do this if I put my mind to it.’ It really boosts my confidence. I did that, I can do more.”

Moreover, they take many elements of the new environment as challenges and show up dealing with them more efficiently than the nonFGFs for giving these challenges some extra amount of attention, being more cautious and putting extra effort in knowing that these are new for them. A FGF here is talking about the healthy competition and specific positive sides of not having prior knowledge of the coming experiences already. She said that:

“There is co-education here and earlier when we were in college we never have had any experience of the kind of competition that the male students offer. Also there are people with diverse mindsets. We can openly and more freely go for an argument with people of different backgrounds. One can just study in college life but at the university level, I think one actually learns and better socializes oneself.”

5.5. Urge of being a positive role model:

Motivation was often related to the urge of becoming a positive role model. They wanted to set a good example for their younger family members by conquering every academic ground. As the FGFs are aware of the fact that they are going to be the person, every child from the family will be looking up to, in the future. They try to work hard and proceed with caution so they can set a good example for the ones, supposed to be

following them through the path. I found the FGF giving a significant amount of attention to this idea, as a student said that:

“... I feel like I’m setting the right path for her [her younger sister] to follow. But it is really tough because I don’t have that support of someone to guide me through the college experience... In the future, my kids will be hopefully going to college. I am going to be able to help them out because I went through that. I wouldn’t want them to go through what I go through.”

Another student shared:

“... there's some people who are closest to my family that I've known since high school who look at me like I won't be able to do it, finish college and make it through everything. So when I almost couldn't stay in college anymore, it gave me more of a drive to want to stay in college... hearing how much he [her nephew] looks up to me made me want to do it, not just for myself but for my family. That helped a lot.”

Having the urge of being a positive role model may prove to be having positive impacts on the life of the FGF today and on many other lives in the future.

5.6. Study Limitations:

This study was carried in one university with limited sample size. A future study may look into the experiences of first generation female students of different universities. The intersectionality of gender and class is important. Similarly, urban and rural comparison will give a more calculated understanding of the issues of the FGF students.

5.3. Conclusion:

Every student who enters college/university for the first time bears a different personality, relatively different social background than many, and holds a distinct set of experiences, norms and values.

All of them experience a pretty much, if not totally, new social setting. As having different personalities and backgrounds, students face different kinds of problems in performing his/her role as a student, which is supposed to be relatively appropriate and according to the approved patterns of contemporary society.

Here, some students do show up with relatively higher mental and physical abilities, so it is comparatively easy for them to adopt those changes that the university environment offers. However, there are a number of newcomers at university who face different kinds of problems while trying to adjust to this new environment. Especially the first-generation female students, and more specifically those who are hostellers, are specially considered to be the most suffered ones..

For the sake of understanding females' specific needs and challenges that they generally face while engaging in the process of efficient educational attainment, I needed to conduct a close study on specifically the FGF students. This study has been conducted for the sake of filling up the gap by closely analyzing these cases by using a sample of students from well-known Pakistani universities.

Here, I will also throw a glance on some research made upon the experience of lived hostelite FGF students. I will explore their assumed or so-called concluded roles in the society and their level of effectiveness, and will attempt to check if the society is playing an effective positive role in their development or it has more been just a drain game.

This study shows how the socio economic background and values can get molded or be kept by the FGF students in the new social setting while focusing over their studies.

The study will serve as a resource for the future and present first generation female students, enabling them to get adjusted in the university environment.

It will hopefully be helping researchers, educational scholars and policy makers to understand the dynamics of the first generation students and do further research over the issues of these students and to make such policies and environment of universities which can encourage them for proper attainment of education.

5.7. Suggestions:

This study provides few suggestions regarding overcoming the challenges of the first generation female students, and making their university experiences better so that they can have proper guidelines before entering into university and be a better example for the youth to be followed .

- The culture of universities is mostly normative towards first generation female students; it should be like responsive and inclusive so that female students find it easy to adapt to its requirements.
- First generation female students possess resilience and strength but there is a lack of basic guidelines for them to have an idea of their basic degree struggle. That is why they have to work harder than it is needed. We should spread more awareness of their sufferings in the society so that people start giving some attention and extra care to their issues.
- In our country there is a need to identify first generation female students' sufferings in the universities and there must be some measurements taken by the authorities in this case.
- 'First Generation female students' experiences' is a topic which needs to be further explored.

- Research scholars should focus on researching in this area to highlight the issues faced by first generation female students in colleges and universities, so that new students can have an idea of these experiences and can prepare themselves better to face the challenges which come in front of them after getting admission into the university.
- There should be some measurements taken by the institutions to spread awareness about the suffering of the FGF students, in the society in general and among their families in particular.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

First Generation Female Student's Experiences in University: A Case Study of QAU Islamabad, Pakistan

**To be filled by the First generation female students residing in Hostels in
QAU**

Questions	Answers
Q. 1 Are you the first female of your family who reached university level	
Q.2 How was this, your own will or parent's consent too, to get admission here	
Q.3 How was your transition from college to university	
Q.4	

<p>Would like to explain your family reaction to your admission is university</p>	
<p>Q.5</p> <p>How do you explain the reaction of your family and relative to your admission in hostel?</p>	
<p>Q.6</p> <p>How do you explain your experience of shifting from the care and comfort of home to the hostel?</p>	
<p>Q.7</p> <p>How did you adjust to the university environment?</p>	

<p>Explain the challenges and opportunities</p>	
<p>Q.8</p> <p>How did you adjust to the hostel environment?</p> <p>Explain the challenges and opportunities</p>	
<p>Q.9</p> <p>How did you deal with your socio-economic background values, versus new environment here</p>	
<p>Q.10</p> <p>Share the good and bad experiences you had during your degree</p>	
<p>Q.11</p>	

What good or bad you think you could have experienced if you were not the first generation in university	
Q.12 What were overall impacts of these experiences, source of stress or encouragement	
Q.13 Have your education performance and learning relation with theses good or bad experiences	

