

# **GENDER STUDIES AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE IN PAKISTAN: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**



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**SCHOOL OF SOCIOLOGY  
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD  
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# **GENDER STUDIES AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE IN PAKISTAN: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**



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No part of this thesis has been submitted anywhere else for any other degree. This thesis is submitted to the School of Sociology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, in the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Field of **Sociology**, School of Sociology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

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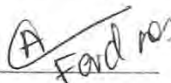
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## **ABSTRACT**

My research is focused on women's gender studies as an academic discipline in Pakistan to discuss issues, contestation, and expectations from the field. Further, it explores the process of institutionalization of the discipline in contemporary Pakistan. The issues include organizational, financial, and advancement challenges of gender studies in patriarchal societies like Pakistan. The objective of the research is to document the history of the discipline and to analyse its issues, challenges, prospects, and current state of the discipline in Pakistan. I have adopted the feminist qualitative methodology, and my theoretical propositions are grounded in the feminist research principles and feminist standpoint theory. To meet my objectives; I have conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with the teaching faculty of the five different universities in Pakistan. The sampling technique is goal- oriented and purposive convenient; on the other hand, it can be concluded that opposition were more linked to the condition of the discipline, its market utility; and connection between theory and praxis, and what kind of knowledge is being produced by the gender studies academics among five leading public sector universities in major metropolitan cities (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Baluchistan, and Peshawar) of Pakistan. Moreover, it also put across the perspectives about content of the women's and gender studies, growth, feminist knowledge production, and the transforming role of gender studies as an academic discipline in Pakistani society.

Further, the data around the future and expectations involves debate of multidisciplinary nature of gender studies, there are varied notions about independent status of discipline and integration debate in gender studies. Here one of the biggest

obstacles is the impetus (funding) to establish and expand gender studies which come from international compulsion by global governance institutions and foreign aid agencies. Still, the implementation of these programs ends up at least partially in the hands of conservative (even anti-feminist) administration at the universities who perceive the enforcement of gender studies as contrary to Pakistani culture and perhaps a threat to religious ideologies, and it has Western Eurocentric in intent and effect. It helps us to see how it get through within already established social sciences because in our context it is still considered an ideological and political, not a purely scientific discipline. It is institutionally a fragile discipline because it is still evolving and making its space within mainstream social sciences in Pakistan.

The policy recommendation for this research could be that the marketability of the field can be done with the support of national machinery regarding gender equality in Pakistan. Further, with the help of academic institutions, universities, researchers, and think tanks should do brainstorming on the execution of more collaborative work on egalitarian terms to redefine the local knowledge production practices and process of doing research with gender perspective in Pakistan. The department of gender studies can be part of the advisory of the different organizations working on gender and social issues. Lastly, the gender experts or gender specialist positions can be generated at public offices, and weightage should be given to those who possess a degree/certificate and/or diploma in gender studies. It can help to create consciousness-raising among the practitioners in the different social sectors.

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# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Everyone has knowledge, it is just that their knowledge is different from yours.*

*Each individual possesses their own knowledge that may differ from your own.*

This chapter deals first and foremost with the political, methodological, and epistemological background of the emergence of feminist scholarship, feminist epistemology, and gender studies as an academic field across the globe. It also aims to theorize the knowledge production within Women and Gender studies (“WGS”) in and by Southern and Northern countries. In addition to this, the present chapter aims to document the historical evolution of WGS in Pakistan. While discussing the inception of this academic discipline in Pakistan furnishes a historical-contextual analysis of WGS. How Women and Gender studies (WGS) became part of the formal education (system) within higher educational institutions (“HEIs”). Similarly, it explores in what ways the state of Pakistan tried to achieve the end of gender mainstreaming (as an international commitment) through the introduction of WGS as an academic discipline. There is also an effort to unpack the global discourses related to this academic discipline reflecting the struggle(s) that it has undergone from antagonism to acknowledgment. Lastly the issues of institutionalization of WGS and unequal division of intellectual labour (that structures the social science in the widest sense) are part of the present chapter.

The story of this work begins with the “s” of knowledge(s). Contrary to the Western Eurocentric understanding of knowledge as universal, rational, objective, or purely

scientific, we depart with the acknowledgment of the existence of the plurality of knowledge(s) and hope to contribute to the rich conversation on the knowledge(s), ‘’. On the other hand, that has been unfolding for quite some time now (Spivak 1988; Escobar 2007; Mignolo 2009; Vazquez 2012; Santos2016; Icaza 2018).

### **Background (Epistemological, Political, and Methodological)**

Global processes of neoliberalism have drastically changed the relationship between (higher) education, the state, and the market. Neoliberalism is understood (in essence) to be the universalization of market-based relations. These trends include internationalization, marketization, and corporatization which have resulted in increased commodification of education and research (Barnett 2011; O'Connor 2014), the intensification of work and erosion of academic autonomy, and the transformation of students into ‘consumers’ (Mackinlay 2017). New managerialism reflects these neoliberal influences, and it is referred to as the adoption of corporate values and practices from the private sector to the public sector, where it has increasingly displaced the traditional academic leadership (Mackay 2021).

Women’s and Gender studies (WGS) historically emerged during the second wave of feminism in response to the growing need to further understand the nature of women’s oppression and uncover methods to resist sexism, gender-based oppression, and economic inequalities. The inception and history of this discipline require not only continued exploration (through maintaining archival records) but also a reflection on the challenges (legitimacy and necessity) it still experiences both inside and outside of the academy (even in those states like USA where its existence dates back to early 1950’s).

Women and Gender studies (WGS) has been recognized as an academic field in numerous countries across the Global South, whether it is well established –even institutionalized or still in the process of emergence. While the presence of WGS in the Global South remains an understudied research interest, the history, evolution, ideas, and concepts of WGS (including feminist studies) are well-researched and documented in Europe and particularly in the USA. Much of this well-documented and researched history/evolution is credited to the (structural) division of knowledge production (gender) between global north and south. (Bouilly 2022). These dynamics impact the way knowledge related to gender is produced and disseminated globally.

Processes of institutionalization of WGS<sup>1</sup> are uneven, complex, unpredictable, and rarely in line; thus, can't be accurately described in generalizing, historical, and unprofessional terms? I offer a required sketch of world-wide research on knowledge production and its relationship with women's gender studies scholarship in North and south through secondary sources, discussing it particularly from the viewpoint of how it collides with and account for the issue of epistemological position.

The need for insight into women's studies as a subject arose within a framework of women's movement and struggle which arose exponentially throughout the world during the last two centuries. But the WGS discipline has grown widely over three to four decades. Although, this discipline needs more flourishing since it's the need of the hour to study

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<sup>1</sup> Women, Gender, feminist, and sexuality studies



such neglected issues related to women. Since the 18th century, this discipline started its journey with global scope. (Khan 2021).

The growth of WGS as a discipline varies significantly across cultures. The discipline emerged in Great Britain between the 1970s and 1995s to register the voice of women across various fields. This expansion as a separate discipline within humanities and particularly in social sciences has contributed to the emancipation of women in economic, socio-cultural, and political spheres. Broadly, the discipline grew in Europe since the 1980s and matured during the 1990s. The roots of the discipline can be traced to the second wave of feminism during the 1960s-1980s (Davis 2006). During this time, evidence-based studies were conducted to point out the issues faced by powerless women. The political scenarios gave birth to the discipline of WGS during the mid-1970s. This discipline also entered the USA just to raise awareness about the issues faced by women at that time: there was no separate discipline designated to stimulate the emancipation of women. The development of women's studies as a separate discipline in Europe and the USA further lead to the feminist movement's growth as by that time; it was considered the academic arm of the movement, and this contributed significantly to voicing against the miseries faced by women (Jaschik 2009). It creates methodologies and theoretical patterns to contextualize and review women and gender as a variable in a broad academic framework of social sciences. The discipline has also contributed to substitute spaces for academics from social sciences with a feminist lens (Louise 1990). In order to debunk the myth that WGS is only a product of the western agenda in the Global South, it is imperative to explore the journeying of WGS in the Global South more specifically in South Asia.

The history of WGS has entirely been written using the nation-state as the unit of measure and in most of those cases, focused almost exclusively on the global north. Therefore, an imprecise history that features the lives of WGS pioneers and the institutional histories of the global north as the dominant narrative of the birth and coming age of this ever-evolving discipline. More disturbing still, depending on who writes the histories, often the pioneers are identified as predominately white. The focus on WGS framed within the context of the global North-mostly analysed country by country has prevented a genuinely global analysis of WGS from coming into a world view. Moreover, this bias toward the histories of the global north has also served to cast the history of the WGS program in the Global South into its shadow, reifying the neo-colonialist impression that WGS and feminism are products of modernity as wholly or predominantly “Western” in nature. Regardless of these challenges, WGS has deep and far-reaching roots throughout the region, with WGS degree-granting programs currently operating on six continents and in no less than fifty-three countries. Adrianna L. Ernst Berger travelled to these eight countries i.e. Cuba, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, The Philippines, and Uganda of the Global South to explore the inception of WGS as an academic discipline. Her work focused on transnational feminism and in her view in each of the above-mentioned countries transnational feminism resulted in conceiving, development, and institutionalizing WGS.

WGS in the Global South is firmly entrenched in transnational feminist networks to incorporate local, regional, and international partnerships. Regional and international conferences serve a vital role as a site for transnational feminism and for the development of transnational feminist networks, both of which have been central to WGS in the Global

South from its inception. The significance of such sites as an initial fomenting ground for the establishment of the WGS, program, be it in Africa or Latin America. There is an emerging debate that what has happened in most of the countries with WGS in terms of contributions and challenges which are part of my literature review. The important question is how does it reach where it is now? It is tied up with epistemology and its continuous transformation in methodologies.

The central concept of feminist epistemology is situated knowledge: the knowledge that reproduces the viewpoints of the knower. Feminist philosophers explore how gender situates knowing subjects. They have articulated three main approaches to this question—feminist standpoint theory, feminist postmodernism, and feminist empiricism—which have unified over time. Conceptions of how gender situates knowers also inform feminist approaches to the central problems of the field: grounding feminist criticisms of science and feminist science, defining the objective principals of scientific inquiry of social and political values in inquiry, evaluating parameters of objectivity, and reforming practices of epistemic authority and epistemic virtue<sup>2</sup>. Feminist epistemologies value plurality: collaboration among multiple perspectives results in more complete, valid knowledge (Barbour 2018). The focus of my feminist interest in epistemology thus began with my attempt to understand my role as a knower and contribute to developing multiple and alternative pieces of knowledge.

Situated knowledge is a foundational concept in feminist epistemologies. There are two related concepts to understand: social location and standpoint. The social location of

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<sup>2</sup> Epistemic authority means those who have privilege to produce legitimate knowledge) and epistemic virtue meaning is it is reflect that belief is an ethical process.

an individual is defined by how that person would experience misogyny, imperialism, religious persecution, class struggle, and other dynamics of power and oppression. While the epistemic standpoint represents the perspective that a person adopts as a knower, informed by the aforementioned social location. To conclude a knower's standpoint influences what they perceive, what they ignore, and how they interpret information. (Poole 2022).

Feminist epistemology conceives of knowers as situated in relation to what is known and to other knowers. What is known, and how it is known, reflects the situation and perspective of the knower (Philosophy 2020). Gender studies is a theoretical discipline (Davi 2014). The epistemic status of the field is important in respect of situating feminist knowledge production. Many feminist scholars understand their work as a project of both value addition in research aggregated and critical intervention in the academy: they are not just invested in the production of knowledge but also centrally, to question and transform existing modes, frameworks, and institutions of knowledge production in the field. (Pereira 2012)

### **The epistemological position of WGS as a problem.**

One of the most thorough contributions of women's and gender studies scholarship is the proclamation that scientific endeavours, outcome, and organisations are composed by, and comprised of, gender power relations. Feminists invoked those perceptions in different ways Code (2006) and Crasnow (2015) but they shared the view that objective science is not a universal claim, discipline, or individual which is equipped with the epistemically superior in knowledge base. They see 'objective science', 'appropriate',

‘educational’, ‘scholarly’, or ‘factual’ as ‘arguments of confinement and distinction’ (Walsh 1995) that restrict altogether the types of knowledge recognised to be error free and admirable, and the kinds of people established as logical knowledge creators (Amâncio 2005; Collins 1990; Haraway 1990; Harding 1991; Kilomba 2007). Scholars like Haraway mentions that ‘policy and moral based attempts for the contend over what may consider as a credible knowledge, whether that is acknowledged or not. For most of the scholars, the categorization of somewhat as empirical is not just an epistemological action (alone) but also essentially a policy one. The props in that category are great as Harding define what counts as scientific also gets a powerful role in scientific research for shaping the picture of the world. So, there is a power nexus in publication and dissemination of knowledge production.

Conceptualizing science through this lens, as discussed above, lessens the epistemological position of WGS as problematic, in the following two ways. One, it is problematic in the way that the epistemic status of WGS is not “stated” rather it is a complicated entity that can be factually examinable, a creation that one can dismantle. Secondly, the very nature of this field and the epistemic status impacts the local circumstances and prospects for WGS research/study and the forms of dissemination of WGS scholarship. Due to that reason, in it is contested in the most places as Western philosophy. It is a fact that whatever is produced in the Global South has limited options for circulation. Evidently, the thought that WGS is not “entirely real knowledge” can have a damaging influence on researcher’s engagement with this discipline. Moreover, it can adversely impact the career prospectus, white collar job opportunities, and welfare of

evolving and accepted WGS intellectuals (Griffin 2005; Keane 2014; Gayle 2006; Morely 1998; Stanley 1997).

WGS is assuredly not the solo discipline whose potential to generate “actual knowledge” is being interrogated; several other disciplines both within and outside the social sciences Arts and humanities (SSAH), have experienced the struggle over epistemological condition in the history and recent past. Nevertheless, the idea that WGS has normally been framed clearly as critical to other social sciences and WGS has tried to make a place within traditional social sciences for knowledge production. But it is a passive dimension of institutionalization.

Although, writings and critiques about epistemic status are not counted. The notion that WGS is not at all, or not in all respects, ‘epistemologically sound’ has been used as argument to dismantle feminist scholars as competent individuals who can make valid accusations about the natural world and types of knowledge production. Since such claims/notions undermines the efforts of feminist’s scholars and their critiques, the epistemic downgrade of WGS requires to be problematized. However, we must be cautious in buying such assumptions that WGS has always been and the only marginalized discipline that cannot negotiate the epistemic condition. It is worth having a peek at; feminist academics’ “own imbroglio in the power-knowledge nexus” and “to look more precisely at displays of power within and across feminism.” (Maureen 1993). The world power does not operate in direct or simple ways in divisions of the borderline of appropriate knowledge, and feminist academics have paradoxical speculations in those delimitations. Since the epistemological position has such notable, but complicated effects, it is pivotal to explore the ways it negotiates.

## **What is the understanding of the epistemic condition of WGS globally?**

References to the epistemic status of WGS appear very frequently in the literature related to the issue of institutionalization, although not in sense of conceptualization and generating new repository related to local relevance for it. those terms. For example under the tags of the ‘practicality of feminist knowledge’ (Coate 1999), its ‘prestige’ (Lykke 2010), ‘empirical position ’ (Varkis 2006), ‘analytical reliability’ (Davidow 2002), ‘academic significance or acceptability’ (Evans 1997), ‘empirical validity in case of Brazil’ (Mayorga 2002) or ‘ educational virtue’ (Brunt, Green, and Jones 1983), countless books were documented at very varied points in time and about definite settings refer to whether WGS’s <sup>2</sup> potential to create pure objective theoretical knowledge is conceded. Usually, these references and documentation are illustrative and highly concise; admits wider (Coate 1999), its ‘prestige’ (Lykke 2010), ‘factual condition ’ (Varkis 2006), ‘intellectual reliability’ (Davidow 2002), ‘academic significance or acceptability’ (Evans 1997), ‘scientific authority in case of Brazil’ (Mayorga 2002) or ‘intellectual virtuousness’’ (Brunt, Green, and Jones 1983), characterization of the situation of WGS around the globe, these authors have diagnosed the epistemological state of the discipline in a term or sentence. In 1974, Rich wrote that ‘Women’s studies are like Developing World studies. It is also seen in the USA as “vogue” and feminist scholars are considered as “unlearned”, “disreputable”, or “ditches” (1995). Around the same period in Australian universities, WGS was being narrated as “nothing else” than ‘awareness raising’ (Crowley 1999). More recent research studies in various nations also indicate that WGS scholarship has often been considered as subservient or deficient based on epistemological logics. The research writing in the early 2000s Aparicio noted that the discipline was viewed in case of Spain

as dissimilatory or less accepted as academic discipline. (Aparicio 2002) and Kaplan and Grewal explained that in USA, it “is contend that Women’s and gender Studies have always been diligent, too political, and too opinionated, dissimilar to the other disciplines, which are supposed to be free of beliefs, biasness, and speculation”. (Grewal 2002).

Narrating experiences in the UK at different points in distant and recent past, various researchers showed that WGS has from time to time been perceived as ‘lacking in depth and trivial’ (Marchbank 2006), ‘not very academically challenging’ (Griffin 2003), and too ‘soft’ (Stacey 1992), as a contaminant in the otherwise destroy the disinfected procedure of knowledge production (ley 1998). As Steinberg concisely puts it, “feminist discourse is marginalized because it is viewed as an incomplete and redundant”. In some regional and international contexts, this mapping of the discipline can putdown WGS to ‘the end of the ranking of esteem and status of academic disciplines as compared to other traditional social sciences (Price and Owen 1998), it showed that WGS scholars may get dismissed as ‘not intellectually equipped’ (Chen 2004) and even as ‘imposters in academic institution that are devoted to the neutral, steady tracking of unbiased scholarship’ (Boxer 1998:161). This is mainly true in within those fields and organization that ‘place a great worth on impartiality, lack of prejudice and relied heavily on symbols of positive science’ (Williams 2000).

### **The politics of naming.**

The position of nomenclature as a form of validation and handling of epistemological position is also apparent in dialogues and writings within WGS about the name of this field. This amounted to one of the most doubtful pieces of debate vis-à-vis the



institutionalization of WGS (Hemmings 2006; Pereira 2013). What is different between those terms? Should researchers opt for vernacular categories? These questions are neither specific to Pakistan nor to the Global South countries. Finding the appropriate terms to designate an object of study has always been a challenge, particularly so in the case of WGS which has a long history of engaging critically with fixed categorization. To comprehend the debate around terminology, one must pay attention to the connection between the global division of labor in social sciences ( Alatas, Farid 2003) and the globalization of gender (Cirstocea et al; Desai and Rinaldo), but it is also necessary to look at how these processes interact with more localized contexts, such as the relationship between the women's movement and academia on one hand, and on the other hand the history and structure of the university system(s). Consequently, the global circulation of these disciplines and their key concepts are complex and multi-layered to important epistemic and theoretical shifts. (Dutoya 2022)

Scholars' debates around the usefulness of terms are grounded not just on the conceptual meanings and theoretical inferences of those names, the naming strategies are linked with the epistemic status in terms of the purpose behind using certain terms in different socio-cultural contexts as well. For example, the scholars who were condemning of the change towards 'gender studies' argued that it is repeatedly assumed to 'aim at larger impartiality by proposing a advanced level of logical accurateness' (Braidotti 2002), 'add an sprit of "convolution" to what might then be seen as a limited or confined domain' (Evans 1991) and align the discipline with a manly creation of knowledge that feminists have been combating against for periods' (Klein 1991). These disagreements narrated that a peculiar title is possibly gesturing a conceptualization of knowledge that does not

accomplish at least some yardstick considered to be significant merits of actual WGS acquaintance.

WGS has a distinctive status world -wide and encounters unique provocation in each local setting. Whereas in some spaces it has become gradually admired (as is, may be, the case in Portugal), in others places it currently finds itself under brutal attack; in some, It has even become the entity of virtuous anxiety beyond the academy, as politicians , policy makers and religious figures in France, Italy, Poland, Brazil and elsewhere decry ‘feminist knowledge’ as a foreign ‘pseudoscience’(Grabowska 2016) terrifying nation-wide identity politics, beliefs, and customs, and eroding the ‘termed” normal functioning of society” (Fiore and Habed,2016). However, it is important to remain watchful to the local conditions of the triumphs, trials, and adversities of WGS.

### **Pakistani scenario.**

The discipline of WGS was started in 1989 in five major metropolitan cities in Pakistan as a trial project for five years. These five major metropolitan cities include Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta. The educated academics thought that there is no need to initiate such discipline in the universities. (Bari 1993). Similarly, the establishment of WGS as a field was one step toward gender mainstreaming through educational institutions as part of the government's commitment to the CEDAW and national plan of action in 2002. There are too many civil society organizations working on gender issues in Pakistan.

In 1989 the Ministry of Women's Development was given the task to communicate with five major universities across Pakistan. They issued a notification for the

establishment of WGS. Initially, the pioneers of WGS were individuals from/within multidisciplinary background(s), experienced in both academia and activism (theory and practice). They carried a double identity, a term used by Amanda Gouws (2012) in her article, "Reflections on being a Feminist Academic/Academic Feminism in South Africa." A few of those academicians also served in various capacities, like Dean of Social Sciences, Faculty of Sociology, Social Work, and Anthropology. Upon receiving a letter from the ministry, the universities were provided with bare facilities including basic infrastructure and human resources. As a result, WGS started with minimum resources across Pakistan. The faculty who wanted to organize seminars or hold meetings faced challenges like unavailability of space and other required resources. Even the news of such events were disseminated through word of mouth or employing the least resources to work within a limited budget. Interestingly, after five years of this project, the government of Pakistan requested the respective universities to integrate WGS into respective departments.

Since WGS was started as the autonomous centre within the universities but it did not have any legal structure at the end of five years. With the promulgation of 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in Pakistan (constitutional amendment) four of these five centres (i.e. Quetta, Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi) were integrated into their respective university as teaching departments only the centre of excellence in Quaid-i-Azam University within the capital (Islamabad) is not integrated and still functioning as a semi-autonomous centre.

Looking at the challenges of WGS in Pakistan, one major issue is the lack of coordination and networking among these five pioneer departments in different universities across Pakistan no funding body in Pakistan can sponsor the networking or create any

discourse or discussion among these departments. It also demonstrated that these departments though working on the same road of gender justice and equity but have the least interaction with each other. Currently, around 20 universities are offering different degree programs at WGS. Among these 15, a few are women's universities, and two or three colleges are also offering bachelor's programs in gender studies.

Historically, before the emergence of WGS as an academic field, there were organizations, like Simorgh, Applied Socio-economic Research Resource Centre <sup>3</sup>. These groups, like APWA (All Pakistan Women's Association), and WAF (Women Action Forum) constituted a space of activism for women's cause outside of the formal academia. Neither have they lobbied for the inception of WGS like other organizations have done in different countries, nor have they opposed any such decision of introducing this field in Pakistan. Instead, the government of Pakistan as part of the Beijing platform of action (also as a signatory of CEDAW that was ratified in 1996) launched this discipline as a development project. Feminist activism soon after the emergence of Pakistan as an independent state remained confined within the bounds of middle-class activism whose approach was conventional in terms of socio, political and economic values, and the focus of the women leaders who have been born in a royal families of the time, was exclusively on the well-being and progress matters including the reintegration of immigrants of partition, education, health, and income generation activities for poor (or less privileged) women<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> *ASR* (*ASR* is a non-profit, non-governmental resource centre set up in 1983 as a multidisciplinary, multidimensional group working towards social transformation. It is Pakistan's oldest organization of its kind, with a women's studies institute in Lahore that offers short courses on gender issues as well as training for academics and practitioners.

<sup>4</sup> Rubina Saigol, *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates and Strategies*, p. 10.

These projects were fairly acceptable for the right-winger patriarchal state of the time as they strengthen the idea of women as “nurture” who are well established to help out their “less blessed sisters”. Aside from these progressive actions, the center of attention at that time was on official amendments to enable women for availing some basic due entitlements from the family. However, these affirmative actions were restricted and did not oppose the family as the foundation of male domination: a construct that is intended to dominate and legalize to control sexuality (especially of women).

On the condition that, focus remained on the well-being and social issues - such as wedding gift as dowry, child matrimony, polygamy, and purdah<sup>5</sup> – women who advocated such issues did not face serious retaliation. To be sure, that time there was acceptance of the accusation that women 's right is western agenda by the elite class proponents of women progress deliberately reject to talk about it due to abusive language discourse of religious lobby. In so far as the agendas were observed in terms of the ‘lift and amelioration’ of the women as a group, the backlash was not intense and remained confined to the religious priests. At this time, rights-based activists acted in coordination with the government and policy makers and the relationship was one of reciprocal appreciation.

The feminist and women rights activism leads the way in by the Women’s Action Forum (WAF), in the decade of the 1980s, was considerably more antagonistic that oppose the government’s measures to altered and convert social, monetary, and party-political structures in line with a shallow philosophy of Islamization hinged by an administration in search of justice. Feminist advocates mostly be allied to the WAF (umbrella group)

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<sup>5</sup> To cover head or full body

campaign acutely for an end to arbitrary legislations and measures against women<sup>6</sup>. Since the early 1990s WAF right based activists confronted rigorously for a secular essence in the concern of equity and freedom.<sup>7</sup> They were opposed by regressive religious fundamentalist groups encompass both male and female at every turn. Nevertheless, the fight for elected and non-religious state by Women Action Forum (WAF) combated all efforts at suppressing, conquering, and compelling women into adherence by a ruthless nation.<sup>8</sup>

Although, WAF's advocacy remained focused on the national and the public domain. Despite a strong feminist consciousness raising, WAF did not overtly confronted with the private realm where the "disobedient and possibly threatening body of woman" is directed, sexuality rigorously controlled, and male domination is constantly fabricated and replicated.<sup>9</sup> The key grounds for absence of attention on the private realm which include the urgency with which the state was approving discriminatory legislations and the existence (also in Women Action Forum) of a large number of conservative and traditional women who did not want to interrogate the piety of the intimate family structure. Women bargain abundantly on family support for sustenance and protection in the non-existence

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<sup>6</sup> Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back . Faria Shaheed and khawar Mumtaz. 1988. Zed Books.

The Women's Movement in Pakistan: Challenges and Achievements. Farida Shaheed Paper for edited book: Rethinking Global Women's Movements, ed. Amrita Basu; Routledge.

The reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan, Afiya Zia, *Feminist Review*, No. 91, south Asian feminisms: negotiating new terrains (200:29-46

<sup>7</sup> Afiya Zia, Faith and Feminism in Pakistan, Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?

<sup>8</sup> Ayesha Khan. 2018. The Women's Movement in Pakistan: Activism, Islam and Democracy.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.10

of state structures, therefore the male-controlled accord requires obedience in the private domain in exchange for help and protection.<sup>10</sup>

However, there were other resistance movements which emerged in Pakistan at the provincial level. *Sindhiani Tehreek*<sup>11</sup> from Sindh (“Sindhiani”) give attention to the public realm of politics and economics. The primary challenges of Sindhiani rotated round the retaliation of elected government and supreme district sovereignty derived from the ethos of federalism.<sup>12</sup> Patriarchy was challenged regarding an emphasis on violence against women in the name of honor and its demonstration in retrogressive pious executions, but the body and sexuality- as fabricated by a masculinity and statist discourse- body and sexuality was considered as taboo and sacred issues that was out of one’s mind.

As a movement of rural women, Sindhiani was not able to criticize the powerful localized authorities and power structures. While Women Action Forum and Sindhiani Tehreek dent the second wave of feminism in Pakistani context which opposed and questioned the state, the third wave creates a disperse formation of practices which few right based supporters do not appraise as a part of the feminist movement, for the most part, on account of donor-driven implementations and focused on applied issues instead of radical plans. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which mushroomed in the 1980s and 1990s may not have account for a movement or pressure group in the limited definition of the term; nonetheless, a fair amount of activism and scholarly work was created during this period. Apparently, this spell may also be considered as a phase of

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<sup>10</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *The Convenience of Sub servience : Women and the State in Pakistan*, pp.77-114

<sup>11</sup> Sindhiani is derived from the Sindhi which is one of the province of the Pakistan

<sup>12</sup> Khan, Nighat Said & Rubina Saigol, *Sindhiani Tehreek: Rural Women’s Movement in Sindh*; in Nighat Said Khan (ed) *Up Against the State: military rule and women’s resistance*, pp. 192-208

theory and reflection in that the funding available enabled a vast number of feminist writings to be created and distributed, meanwhile with a comparative decrease in street activism. The big motive for reducing street activism is democratic values had been crushed which were guiding source against the dictatorship struggle whom resistance was to be mounted. (Chaudhry 2020).

The historical changes and shifts in the feminist politics within Pakistan is linked with the state's vision and commitment toward WGS as field and patronage of right-wing movements under the label of Islam and piety movements in different regimes. Pakistan's annual Aurat March (Women's March as part of celebration of International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> of March every year) signifies a milestone in the culture of feminist protest, but a tense impasse follows a series of encounters between sexual and religious politics, and this has serious implications for rights-based activism in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. On the other hand, the organizers of the Aurat march must face serious violent threats ahead of the rally.

There is the bulk of legislation in the four provinces of Pakistan covers different aspects of the socio-cultural lives of women, the government of Pakistan has introduced the Punjab women empowerment package 2012 which includes a legal section, amendment in inheritance laws, provisions of day-care centres, higher education, health, and skill development for women. In 2017 Punjab women empowerment initiatives were launched. As per the official website of the government of Pakistan, there is a presence of enormous pro-women laws at federal and provincial government structures. excluding international commitments.



There are 58 pro-women laws and amendments which are applicable within the territories of the federal capital (Islamabad). Further, Punjab has 17 pro-women laws until now and Sindh has 12 pro-women legislations, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) has 11 and Baluchistan has only 5 independent pro-women legislation which is fewer as compared to other provinces. Many of the federal laws are constitutionally applied to the provinces as we, do until a provincial government enacts its laws (exception under the provision of 142 to 144 and the 4<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution). There is one national commission on the status of women, it has a provincial chapter in each province. All chapters performed provincial activities. As per official data, 45 laws have been revised. there are too many reports which have been published with donor support regarding diverse aspects of women's rights in Pakistan. (NCSW 2022)

By adding this legislation, I want to mention here that there are numerous steps towards gender equality but there is no facilitation for growth of this field at government levels. Even though Pakistan has ranked 153<sup>rd</sup> out of 156<sup>th</sup> in the (GDI) global gender gap index (2021) by World economic forum yet, there is less stipulation for women's, feminist, and gender studies (WGS) as a teaching and research degree in academic institutions.

The current state of WGS in Pakistan is a consequence of numerous edges connected with wider political streams in national history and the continued evolution and impact of women's movements, both nationally and universally. While connections exist among its foundations and specialists, diversity in skills and positions nevertheless symbolize the antiquities and the contemporary state of WGS in Pakistan. Lastly, there are big questions on the discipline which could be part of it as a new research project like the current state of the production of gender knowledge in Pakistani academia, and whether

similarities and differences within Pakistan in the different departments and centres in the dissemination of gender knowledge is part of the larger picture, but still in the process of exploration. Further the disconnect between Western theories, local knowledge and how the discipline still exists with certain contributions. These departments and centres aimed to redesign the syllabus and inform policy with an understanding to incorporate the perspective on gender issues which unfortunately still needs to materialize.

All these initiatives to reduce gender disparities in Pakistan are part of government websites and policy documents to show that we are progressing; but at ground level, it shows that nothing is going to be changed. To understand the level of issues and complexity there is a need to have dialogues on the universities level to strengthen the cause of gender justice because it is about attitudes and behaviours of male chauvinistic administration towards these departments in the universities.

### **Contextualize the problem.**

Previously, research on the establishment of discipline was only conducted till 2006, and it was conducted by educationist and feminist Dr. Rubina Saigol. There is a lot of work on women's and gender studies as a discipline in South Asia, Europe, UK, and U.S.A but in our context, the things which are usually discussed, and debated around the word 'feminism'. It is a highly controversial tag and contested debate in our Pakistani context. Likewise, Afiya Zia (2022) in her recent article used feminists as cultural 'Assassins' of Pakistan.

My current research is an effort not only to document the history and emergence of WGS as a field but additionally I am talking about the challenges and prospects of the

discipline as well. The research on documentation of the history of the discipline is documented only in two academic articles produced in Pakistan. But as my literature review informed that there is extensive scholarly work related to WGS as a discipline which is done in the north and south global but being a part of the south, our history, struggle, reflections, and narratives do not appear in the most written books and articles by western or even local researchers' outsider formal academia. The global north scholars documented this as a lack of political stability, lack of access to on-digital records, loss or destruction of records, and language barriers. (L.Ernstberger 2020). But gender studies as an institution in academia, its growth, history, and its survival are less documented.

### **Research questions.**

1. How has WGS as an academic discipline evolved in Pakistan?
2. What are the issues, challenges, and prospects of WGS as an academic field in Pakistan?
3. What is the contemporary status of WGS in Pakistan?

### **Academic significance**

Current research is the first kind of research in Pakistan that I am doing to document the history, growth, and institutionalization of WGS as an academic discipline in Pakistan. The academic significance of this work lies in the fact that there is a dire need to document the history of this field and I have also investigated the challenges and issues of WGS as an academic field in Pakistan. Although it is still in the process of evolution/transformation the ground issues are administrative, political, financial, and related to the teaching of this

discipline. This work contributes to the academic debate around decoloniality in Pakistan, and it could be the guideline for feminist institutionalist framework research and ethnography of WGS as a field in the future. It also involved the discussion around epistemology of WGS. It can contribute to foreseeing the challenges of non-traditional disciplines within universities in the presence of mainstream social sciences. It also helps to see the role and obstacles faced by the leadership at the academic level in integrating WGS into universities at the state level. Moreover, this is significant for looking into how local feminists/researchers engage with academia in the peripheries of the region known as the Global South.

#### **Applied significance.**

WGS as a multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary field is very much connected with the practice. This research has practical significance since the national machinery is working on gender mainstream issues through different initiatives with government organizations, so it could be connected initiatives with WGS departments across Pakistan. Moreover, the Higher Education Commission (“HEC”) and the National Commission on the Status of Women (“NCSW”) can use these findings to develop better linkages with academia for baseline research related to gender issues and for networking and alliances among different departments of gender studies. Further, it can help to work as a bridge between academia, practitioner, and policymakers to make headway toward reducing gender inequalities in the context of Pakistan. It is first of its kind of research which is being documenting the history, contemporary challenges, and prospects of the discipline. However, the state of the discipline is largely connected with overall socio-political turmoil of Pakistan.

This research can be used for designing impact studies regarding the significance of such fields within academia. On the other hand, feminist consciousness-raising framework could help to theorize the role of gender studies as an academic field in awareness raising of the younger generation. It is also vital to see the role of WGS degree across Pakistan in terms of increasing gender sensitivity in the society, whereas Pakistan has already ranked lowest in the global gender gap index. The bachelor's program in WGS could be more fruitful along with professional certification courses because the professional gender lens also needs to be revised for gender mainstreaming and policy planning. At the practice level, any organization or government can try to generate discourse among the WGS departments across Pakistan. But when it is being discussed that what content is being taught in these departments, usually the concept of feminism remains central discussion point.

Feminism is a political and intellectual project, a movement for social justice and equality as well as a means of theory development. Hence both academia and activism play a strong role in any feminist movement. Feminist academy not only presents a challenge to male-defined and male-centred knowledge by producing feminist knowledge through research but also plays a central role in inculcating a critical understanding of societal issues through teaching. As a result, the students actively participate in a protest for their rights within the university as well as outside of it. Investing in strengthening WGS departments and autonomous centres would in turn feed into supporting and strengthening the feminist struggle/movement within Pakistan. WGS Centres around the world have relied heavily on the energy and commitment of the feminists associated with it. In many

cases, they were created in the universities in the first place as a result of the struggles of these feminists.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter deals with the thematic review, but it covers overall literature related to how knowledge is produced and what relationships exist between the core and peripheries of the world in terms of knowledge production, power, and knowledge nexus with historical significance. Moreover, this review deals with borderline countries such as South Asia and East Asia, and it also pays emphasis on the emergence of gender studies in the Global South and global north. The previous research usually defined the Global South, including India, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uganda. All these countries' histories and foundations of discipline have been researched and documented as part of the institutionalization of the discipline.

Globalization and latest technologies have affected the methods that knowledge is constructed, circulated, and consumed. At the push of a button, one can find academic articles or research resources from far and wide. Yet the global knowledge market is still a product of its past. The formal royal powers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - the rich countries of Europe and North America that we call in tandem the global North - are still at the centre to produce new ideas. Recent research is now focusing on the Global and the knowledge of the world periphery. There is a new focus on exploring the ways knowledge is generated a longways from the epicentre and in the distinguishing social and financial milieu of the post-colonial countries.

Further, theoretical, and sociological interrogations about how knowledge is constructed, and whether knowledge-generation can be set free from social, political, and economic agendas are not recently developed. There has been discussion over such

inquiries since the sociology of knowledge took shape in the revolutionary 1920s in Germany. The sociology of knowledge has already investigated the knowledge-producing practices of social scientists, the prerogative of the intellectual classes, and the day -to-day social construction of truth. On the other hand, the establishment of the discipline has remained energetically entrenched in the global North, and only in a few post-colonial regions such as Brazil, India, and Southeast Asia have queries of knowledge dependency and sovereignty come into focus. Most recently, the scholarship in the global North too began to label the Eurocentric construction of the knowledge economy and the influence of colonialism on scholars and scholarships around the globe. For example, Raewyn Connell's Book *Southern Theory* was published in 2007, emphasizing both the originality of Southern academic intellectuals and their dismissal in the world's social sciences. A more recent book by Fran Collyer, Raewyn Connell, Joao Maia and Robert Morrell (2019), *Knowledge and Global Power*, demonstrates the way global inequalities in the knowledge economy are not a static shape, but a zestful one, brought into existence in the history of territory and colonisation are continuously fluctuating over the time and now proficient of more transformation (Collyer, Fran 2019). Collyer has also developed a new methodology – context-content analysis (Collyer 2013; Collyer et al. 2019). In the current research, I also propose knowledge to be a dynamic category that is constructed and shaped by its various context and realities.

In *Knowledge and Global Power*, the global arenas of knowledge production projects carried factual and speculative attentiveness together. It offered an examination of three countries in the southern tier and showed that a study of multiple sites of knowledge production is possible and productive. In each country, post-colonial governments created



state-sponsored university systems during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and several independent research institutes. Settler governments launched establishing universities as early as the 1850s, but they gained considerable research ability only in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Production of Knowledge**

Knowledge laborers captivate to interest today because there is an omnipresent idea that we dwell in a piece of the knowledge society, a post-industrial society, or a technological advanced society. Yet, in most areas of disciplinary research, there is an impression that the ideas we operate with, do not proceed from any vacuum in that society. They are just in the aura. As a matter of fact, the daily perspective of science informs us those features, such as one's ethnic or racial group drop it that idea, because knowledge is better, when it is more broadly based. Anyone can come up with and no government/ state or church can restrict the development of knowledge. However, there is an alternative view that wholly de-contextualized knowledge is for good or even viable. Some have mentioned that scholarly writings are shaped by social drives- and not ostensibly but at the most intense level. This idea has been described in detail in the critique of European philosophy by Gyorg Lukacs. Luckas' idea was taken up by Karl Mannheim in his 1929 *Ideology and Utopia*. The notion of the social resolution of the wide framework of mind becomes the fundamental line of action in the sociology of knowledge, while lacking Luckas critical edge. Sociologists in the Mannheim cohort developed an interest in the specific field of knowledge known as science. In this field, Robert Merton, 1973, made a well-known contribution with his book, *The Sociology of Science*. What Merton did not question was how those natural scientists reached to their findings. Moreover, the classic laboratory ethnography by Latour and Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of*

*Scientific facts* (1979) gave its message in the subtitle. Unlike Mannheim and Luckas, they focused on the close observation of the daily routines of knowledge workers and their interaction patterns. They demonstrated how the research papers' definitions of "truth" were shaped by intricate social processes centred on data recordings and interpretations.

Since that period, the social sciences have flourished, though they have separated in a way that will agitate us. One important thought emphasized by Latour and Wooglar is that social processes shape scientific knowledge and social structures shape the institutions of science. Latour has increasingly emphasized the sub-human element in science and technology. Another set of social thinkers demonstrates the importance of social systems. The gendered aspects of their activity and the gendered nature of the study are ignored by these early sociologists of knowledge and the supporters of science and technology studies. A new group of feminist researchers, such as Sandra Harding (1986) and Dorothy Smith, blazed a new path by illuminating the impact of gender relations on knowledge (1990). They argued that science is androcentric in nature and not gender neutral.

The idea that knowledge is accomplished by the condition and benefits of the class creating knowledge influence that knowledge, has come to be known as standpoint epistemology. The study refuses to be excluded from the social practice that shapes reality across historical time and instead acknowledges knowledge as the result of types of social labour rather than as an abstract social structure. The sociology of knowledge and allied subjects are starting to feel the effects of post-colonial philosophy. For instance, Harding's (2008) *Sciences from Below* makes a substantial effort to connect post-colonial theory with feminist science studies.

According to Law (2008), there has historically been a Northern bias in science and technology studies, and recent research has been impacted by the fusion of ethnographic explanations with a centre/periphery dimension (Medina 2013). Compared to the increasing role of, coloniality in the creation of the empirical knowledge economy there is a far stronger epistemological critique of Western knowledge systems. Yet, a growing concern to close the sociological gap and create empirical depictions of knowledge production in Global South contexts has emerged. For instance, Cooper and Morrell (2014) just released a compilation of African studies that present cutting-edge research. They make the case for the necessity of a third space that recognises the significance of colonial histories and the existence of both Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism.

### **The Power and Knowledge Relationship**

We cannot understand the complex world around us without acknowledging the intimate relationship between knowledge and power. One of the most significant thinkers of the twentieth century, Michel Foucault, created a radically different understanding of this relationship. Instead of seeing power as a physical force, he saw power as being the ability to contour knowledge. To understand Foucault, we must let go of our conventional and entrenched idea of truth as an objective and factual entity that exists outside time and history. Instead, we must learn to see truth as a social product, which is created and shaped by politics and power. As Foucault said, 'My job is making windows, where there were once walls. Absorbing Foucauldian intuitions gives us a chance to open windows to entirely new ways of seeing the world.'

The labour process in relevant jobs, including how intellectual work is completed and controlled, is crucially relevant to the study of knowledge (Tancred-Sheriff 1985). The way the labour processes of knowledge workers have evolved because of neoliberal globalisation, with the increased retailing of knowledge and the restructuring of education to conform to market standards, is particularly pertinent. (Collyer 2014b; Robertson 2000).

We haven't adequately analysed how these processes connect to sociability in the Global South or the relationship between knowledge creations. One approach to these issues is to think of technique as a component of the labour process. Although methodology is typically described in intellectual terms, it plays a significant role in labour direction in knowledge-production activities. Rules for data collection, as well as guidelines for appropriate interpretation and transmission, are prescribed by methodology. At this level, sociability controls knowledge-producing labour in a distant, impersonal manner.

It may be successful in subordinating knowledge activity in the South to models and standards produced in the North because of how impersonal it is; these models and norms only appear as definitions of best practice, science, or modernity. Understanding the relationships between knowledge productions requires an understanding of the circumstances that could upset this steering or introduce competing ideals, such as duty to local communities (Smith 2012).

### **Power knowledge Consecution**

Under this heading I have discussed the Foucault, Elias and Bourdieu ideas around the knowledge production, its social history and knowledge production as powerful process.

## **Foucault, Elias, and Bourdieu.**

Elias developed his idea on the domination of knowledge. The other idea he presented was the importance of long-term processes. He focuses on the social history of knowledge and stresses the history of the institutionalization of disciplines in the field of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Moreover, he focuses on professionalization and specialization which took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in early Europe, USA, and elsewhere. His theory of "territorial analogy," which he presents as an example of academic departments as a reflection of miniature states or governments that constantly struggle for their existence and survival to protect their autonomy and sovereignty, can be used to explore some aspects of knowledge production processes (Burke 2012).

Although Elias demonstrated his beliefs on the social history of knowledge by emphasising the natural sciences more than the social sciences, his work is essential to understanding the process of specialization and professionalization. Similarly, Bourdieu's work on the sociology of science and knowledge is also of importance (Bourdieu 1975), as he argued that the institutionalization of a discipline will always take place in a certain historic context. Knowledge production is not just an intellectual endeavour but is part of various power relations within knowledge-producing institutions (Bourdieu 1993).

Feminist scholars have diverse perspectives on the epistemology of gender knowledge. As Harding (Harding 1991) has mentioned, there are three main feminist perspectives on epistemology: feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint, and feminist post-modernism. The main principle for feminist scholars is that knowledge is a social activity. In this view, knowledge is produced through social activity and can be influenced by the

social location of those who construct it. However, this raises an interesting question about the author who has produced the knowledge. Thus, it will be important to investigate the main sources of the production of this organized knowledge in Pakistan, for instance, academia, social movements, the development sector, etc.

To understand the production of knowledge, according to Mohanty, Anthropology and its 'nativization' of third-world women thus form a significant context for understanding the production of knowledge 'about' third-world women. Knowledge production in social scientific disciplines is an important site for struggle. Further, Mohanty said the practice of scholarship is also a form of regulation and resistance and establishes an increasingly important arena of third-world feminism. The material effects of this knowledge production have complications for institutions e.g., the law, the policy community, the educational system, as well as the constitution of identities and subjectivities (Chandra Talpade Mohanty 1991).

There are several recent and important texts on global knowledge. Keim for instance, introduces alternative perspectives from the Global South, questioning current sociological principles and the commonly accepted rules for producing knowledge and offering new visions of knowledge production (Wiebke Keim 2014 ). Burawoy's argument largely overlaps with Keim's on the emergence of counter-hegemonic currents in international sociological knowledge (Burawoy 2010; Keim 2011). Another contribution is offered by Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff with the title, *Theory from the South* (2012). According to Comaroff and Comaroff, the North dominates the South, both destructively and productively. They raise the question of whose knowledge, is it. There are many other works of international scholarship on the politics of knowledge, its

production, and dissemination, for example: (Michael 2000; Brwon 2011; Fiske 1989; Muller 2000). Moreover, literary work by Raewyn Connell in her book, *Southern Theory*, presents the case for a radical rethinking of the social sciences, and its relationship to knowledge, power, and democracy. She emphasizes that the wider knowledge base is disregarded by the mainstream social sciences. She stresses that theorists from the global North dominate the imagination of social scientists (Connell 2007).

The recent international project on the global arena of knowledge production by Connell, Collyer, Maia, and Morrell is supported by the Australian Research Council (2013-2016) and focuses on three areas of major international scientific significance within the past 30 years in three countries on the periphery of the Global North: Brazil, South Africa, and Australia. It illustrates one effort to acknowledge the knowledge produced in the peripheries, and its results have been published (e.g. Collyer et al. 2019). The relationships between disciplines and the institutions within which they are situated is a broader area for researching the shaping of sociological knowledge (Collyer 2013).

The significance of this research can be augmented by the seminal works of poststructuralist Michel Foucault. (Mahon 1995; Foucault 1976). The central inference of Foucault's work for epistemology comes from specific historical conditions in which knowledge is generated in his book, *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970), but this book has not focused on the content of knowledge but rather on the relationship between knowledge and practice. "According to *Genealogy*, (Foucault 1995) Foucault maintained that academic discourse would not manifest through the natural process of scholarly investigation rather it emerges as a result of power relations".

However, in the writings of many social thinkers, a new view of social knowledge (collective knowledge) has gained wide support; known as the idea of 'Situated knowledge'. Viewing knowledge as situated means we always know or come to know about the world from a specific vantage/standpoint. A standpoint may indicate a gender or racial identity or a natural or 'civilization' identity as 'Western' or 'African' or 'East Asian'. But situated knowledge is knowledge specific to situations. Viewing knowledge as situated means that we always know the world from a precise stance.

A standpoint shapes how we see society or a network of societies from a specific perspective, whether we centre our analysis on the private or public world, whether history is understood as a narrative of progress cyclical conflict or so on (Seidman 2012). Theories are scrutinised as social creations of knowledge within political and historical contexts after the first half of the 20th century. If these activities do not create a methodical sub-disciplinary split with a unifying theme, they will remain scattered.

Either historical development within various national traditions or the flow of ideas, or information from the centre to the periphery with an unequal distribution of intellectual labour, continue to be the main points of attention. The majority of these viewpoints were inspired by Said's (1978) critique of Western discourse on Asia, which depicted the region as a by-product of colonial invaders. Throughout the colonialist and royal discourses, the subaltern condition of the colonised was clearly visible as both an ontological and an epistemological endurance. The term "orientalism" refers to a Western interpretive discourse in which the "enlightened" West and the "dreary" East struggle for supremacy before giving it up to the other. According to Said, the political, intellectual, and academic climate of the present still includes a sense of superiority over the Orient.



Taking the *interiorized* position of the Orient, Spivak (1999) inflexibly contextualizes the constriction of the subaltern studies from different positions. She tries to convince the vision of a counter episteme narrative of the subaltern; in her widely read article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Similarly, various critical appraisals of epistemic constructions of sociocultural and philosophical identities of the “other” from different perspectives as discussed by the following theorists such as (Sheppard 2005; Blaut 2000; Lewis and Wigen 1997; Gran 1996; Brohman 1995; Blaut 1993; Amin 1988).

Similar issues were raised by proponents of scientific neutrality (later known as academic imperialism), which emerged from Franz Fanon's (1991) investigation of cultural imperialism in the 1950s and early 1960s, particularly with "les damnés de la Terre," in which he depicted the perspective of the colonised. Fanon tried to expose the colonial setup that causes the colonised to be distorted to the point of complete cultural collapse. According to Fanon, the colonisers established their cultural dominance by ignoring the colonial natives through economic, military, political, and technological methods. By proposing a structural theory of imperialism that generated the division of labour between the centre and the periphery that generates scientific imperialism, Galtung (1971) expanded on the concept of a modern knowledge structure.

The production, dissemination, and contestation of gender knowledge (or knowledge on the issue of gender) is taking place in diverse realms in Pakistan today. Academic scholarship, political movements, nongovernmental organizations, the media, the development sector, and other sites, all claim to understand ‘women/gender’ and disseminate materials to support their claims. These are, of course, informed by the state, the home, the arts, the religious-cultural domain, and more. Gender knowledge produced

in these fields is not necessarily 'feminist knowledge' as it can be non-feminist (what is non-feminist?) or even anti-feminist knowledge.

### **Nature of the academic relation between global north and south.**

Various theorists speak of this division. Baber (2003), for instance, suggests that scholarship carried out by Western researchers in the Global South conventionally name the site of their research and generally offer the product as 'merely' a case study, while Northern scholarship rarely makes reference to the geographical location of the research, assuming the studies to have universal relevance and a capacity to produce generic claims about the processes of class, status, and power in all societies. (Baber 2003).

Alatas' name for the process behind such practices is 'academic dependence', and he takes the claim further, arguing that theoretical and methodological innovations are considered legitimate tasks for scholars in the First World, while the designated role for those of the Third World is empirical data collection. (Alatas 2003). Baber's and Alatas' views are truly applicable in my context because we are just doing empirical data collection and theories are generated and crafted in the first world<sup>13</sup> due to global power dynamics.

The assumption of universalism in Bourdieu's (1984) *Homo Academics*, a study of French educational institutions, is the best illustration of how this division of intellectual work, which is "unstated but existent globally," is perpetuated. This division of labour is illustrated by Kreimer and Zabala (2008), who show how North~~and~~ -South collaborations produce knowledge that can be published for Northern scholars while Southern scholars

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<sup>13</sup> Atlas and Baber both used the term of first world, that is why; I am using it in their views.

participate only as "sub-contractors" and produce knowledge that cannot be applied to the solution of local issues.

In the coming section I tried to explain the origin and growth of the gender studies as field in the global north and south Asia because the above date about knowledge production is linked with the relationship of south and north in the realm of knowledge production.

### **Emergence of gender studies as field in global north.**

Women's studies are now established as an important and recognized field of studies across the globe. It was first appearing in the United States in 1960s, courses and various degree programs rapidly emerged in other western countries and in other parts of the world. The emergence of women's studies at this time was linked to the political movement and the practice of feminism. women, mainly those who were white and from the west, began more vocally to challenge the discrimination which made them unequal to men in areas, such as education, employment and domestic responsibilities. in some countries such as UK , its integration to other disciplines such as sociology, history, literary analysis meant that it has less dependence on specialized courses and centres for its existence. in other parts of the world such centres are crucial to maintaining a high profile and presence of women's studies since 1970s women studies have proved that how both policy and intellectual work are influenced if insufficient attention is being paid to women. Women's studies became linked to the educational wing of feminism in two ways: Firstly, it was realized that women tended to be invisible in academic teaching and research, where the emphasis appeared to be on important men and men's ideas and interests. Secondly,

there was a questioning of how the knowledge was conventionally obtained, with the associated criticism, of method, theories, and concepts deployed were irrelevant to, and in fact, helped to conceal the lives and experiences of women. Women studies scholars and activists aimed to rectify the situation; The author tried to highlight the key concerns related to the growing area of interdisciplinary women's studies. It is followed by some key aspects of the debates about differences. The women's studies look toward post-modernism issues. Globally women's studies are looking toward more interesting and important themes related to women's development. The main issues for women's studies during its first 20 or so years of existence may be grouped into three main categories. These relate to substantive, theoretical, and methodological concerns. The substantive is related to those aspects of existence that are important because of how they structure and frame people's lives and experiences. Further, the women's studies teachers and scholars took responsibility to add women to the existing curriculum in terms of including a section women's education, paid work, women, and health. Then it was realized that the simple addition of women's experiences to what was already known about men was, on its own, insufficient. Thus, new topics were highlighted, and writers started focusing on the production of a subsequent body of knowledge related to women's issues and experiences. Similarly, early women's studies writers were critical of existing theoretical explanations of inequalities and divisions and their failure to recognize gender blindness and failure sufficiently to emphasize women's situation. The third aspect for key concern was the method of social science research in much of the world, research is considered legitimate and reliable if it is based on ideas about science and objective knowledge. (Maynard 2009)

Women's studies have received various support around the globe. For example, in the U.S.A the Ford Foundation has funded women's research centres, and the Canadian, Dutch and Norwegian governments have created professorships in women's studies. The Swedish research council for Humanities has instigated a women's studies, fellowship. (Walby 2001). Moreover, the British Council helped to establish the women's studies program in India, Jordan, Morocco, and Vietnam. In Japan and Morocco, there was an increasing concern about rising cases of violence against women, and in India and Vietnam, attention was being paid to the issues experienced by elderly women.

Marilyn J. Boxer has stated that "women's studies form an integral and transformative part of the history of humanity."

### **Women's studies as academic discipline in Nordic countries.**

Women's and gender Studies established as a discipline at the higher education institutions (HEIs) in all five Nordic countries during the 1970s and 80s. The need to advance science instruction and research on women's status in society was growing under the support of a powerful second wave of feminist mobilisation during this time. University students majoring in the social sciences were not required to learn about women's status and gender power dynamics in society until the 1960s. Without a doubt, the main reason for these denials was that "women" or "their position in the home" were primarily viewed as "innate" phenomena with no interest in the (male-dominated) colleges. Often with a history in the feminist movement, younger instructors founded the first Women's Studies clubs in cooperation with students.

Initially, the resistance to Women's Studies as a university subject was severe. The burden for the expansion of science instruction and research about women's position in has decreased thanks to the support of a powerful second wave of feminist mobilisation during this time. The first hostility to Women's Studies as a university discipline was horrifyingly fierce. The criticism of women's studies as "ideological" and "fallacious" was made. Feminist scholars replied that male-dominated scientific research was itself prejudiced and gender-blind. This was not primarily a moral reason. Instead, it was argued that the scientific quality is agonizing, when old preconception stops researchers from seeing the whole picture. For example, how could economists make an authentic study of the demand and supply of working class in the labor market, if the systematic gender segregation of the workplaces and the gender wage gap differences were not included in the studies?

From the 1970s- and 80s-Women's Studies later called Gender Studies, developed world-wide, and today women's and Gender Studies are a recognized discipline with a hub of research centres and collations. All throughout the world, including in the Nordic nations, Women's Studies stem out of the women's movement, where there always exists a strong desire to understand and respect why women are suppressed and how male domination can be reversed and has been changed. The 'Sex Role Debate' of the 1960s sparked a fresh, organised debate in the Nordic nations. The study of sex roles sought to determine why there is such a great disparity between men and women even after legal equality has been established and prior inequities in the law have been eliminated. It did this by focusing on socialisation, presumption, and ideals. A ground breaking book, "Women's Life and Work," which was the outcome of a Swedish-Norwegian study initiative, was released in 1962. This book served as a catalyst for the development of

women's and gender studies in the Nordic region. In addition, the Norwegian scholar Harriet Holter published her book *male leadership's freed sex objects Sex Roles and Social Structure* in 1970, which signalled the shift away from sex role research in education and towards a more thorough understanding of gender as a social structure in society.

In the Nordic countries, second-wave feminism from the late 1960s to the end of the 1980s was largely characterized by a leftist ideology in its orientation like the student movements in general. But it was also a radical feminist movement that revolted against both the neo-Marxian ideology of the time's disregard for nearly any female perspective and the actual exclusion of women from the movement's leadership. Women had become weary of serving as the male leadership's freed preferred sex objects and making tea for the revolution (Dahlerup 1986). The *Women's Movement and Women's Exploitation under Capitalism*, *The Exploitation of Women in the Labor Market*, or *The Role of the Family in the Political Economy*''', are just a few examples of the new scholarship that reflects the close relationship between the first scholars in Women's Studies and the Feminist Movement. Few studies were printed and distributed at the time in English, as seen by the scarcity of titles on the Mapping List from the first ten years. The majority of publications were written in one of the five Nordic languages—Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish—and were hailed as significant contributions to the new scholarly debate in the Nordic countries, even though the Nordic scholars closely followed what was written in the Anglo-Saxon world, Germany, and France. The Chart, which only displays Nordic scholarly works produced in English for the purposes of international rankings, illustrates the progressive internationalisation of Women's and Gender Studies in the Nordic countries as more work and writings were published in English. 2015 (Dahlerup).

### **Rise of Women's and gender studies in maghrib<sup>14</sup> (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia).**

The introduction of women into academic settings brought about significant changes in the Maghrib (West). In fact, one of the significant effects of women's fights in the Maghrib may be seen at the academic level. The creation and maintenance of postgraduate units in gender and women studies serve as an illustration of this. The creation of these studies in Maghribi universities and the protracted review process that preceded their creation demonstrate that it is impossible to meet the needs of female students and instructors without reconsidering the fundamental assumptions guiding Maghribi scholarship, teaching, and even the organisation of Maghribi universities. Questions were raised by some female university teachers about how women professors have or have not transformed higher education in the past fifty years or so (Sadiqi 2003). Female university teachers had to question their role as academics and showed reflexivity on the outcomes of the "productive" integration of at least some of them in the education hierarchy. Have they managed to transform courses, content, scholarship, and practice, or have they accomplished only by renovating and separating themselves? The awareness of the significance of the role of university women teachers in matters of education and training, convinced that all women's skills and abilities must be mobilized, and recognizing the absolute necessity of scholarly research, many women professors decided to create women's centers, such as the 'Centre for Studies and Research on Women,' which was established on April 23, 1998, in the Faculty of Letters Dhar El Mehraz, Fes, and the 'Centre of Women's Studies,' which was established in the Faculty of Letters, Rabat Both centres were coordinated by women from the departments of English, and both served as a

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<sup>14</sup> as per Fatima sadiqui Maghrib is used to define the following countries in North African Region



springboard to create the first postgraduate units of gender and women's studies. These are considered the first of their kind in the region. The Centres were open to all researchers, both men, and women, interested in gender and women's studies. They aimed to fill the gap in the domain of gender and women's studies, contribute to the development of scholarly research, and change social perceptions, attitudes, and structures that obstruct gender equality.

The main goal of the women and gender departments at the Maghrib was to advance liberal arts courses by redesigning initiatives that would highlight female scholarship. In addition to highlighting the interdisciplinary character of gender and women studies, the demand for totality also highlights the importance of Maghribi academics' insistence that knowledge is never neutral. These centres, the first bilingual and interdisciplinary ones in the universities of the Maghreb, were devoted to gender and women's studies. Theoretical and institutional aspects of the university were re-examined, including the university's emphasis on interdisciplinary research.

Gender and women's studies cannot be contained within the predetermined disciplinary limits, as demonstrated by the conferences, round tables, and study groups that these centres and the graduate units that followed organised. Discipline barriers in the human sciences, which divide study and research into history, geography, sociology, psychology, philosophy, Islamic studies, literature, and linguistics, hinder researchers from different subjects from working together on joint projects. There were difficulties associated with the social sciences' breakdown along disciplinary lines.

The most significant restrictions are institutional and epistemological barriers that prevent the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and the development of novel research paradigms. Consequently, the increase of specialisation within each field of knowledge was closely related to the expansion of the Maghribi educational institutions. The concept of micro-level research started to receive scrutiny by the late 1980s. Gender and women's studies were crucial in this effort to restore the social sciences to their original function of examining social activity as a complex mosaic in which many processes are interconnected. Among the several universities of the Maghrib, the training and research units that have been reconfigured as part of the university reforms are outstanding examples of transdisciplinary.

From gender and women's studies courses, the pioneer center's founders developed a variety of ideas regarding surroundings formed by women. They have also grown to appreciate the rich heritage that is already available to them. Understanding this rich history helped them avoid starting from scratch and instead draw on the lessons learned from other programmes' triumphs. These centres and the postgraduate units they helped build generated the first batches of M.A and eventually Ph.D. students in women's and gender studies starting in 2003. (Sadiqi 2008).

### **West Germany and the U.S**

In the current article, Allen Taylor evaluates the roots and early advancement of Women's Studies in West Germany and the United States, concentrating on varying forms of institutionalization. While most American Women's Studies offerings of courses were from the beginning located in academic institutions, many of the first German courses were

taught outside of universities. The Allen Taylor outlines the conversations that were held in each country about the appropriate institutional set up for Women's Studies. It demonstrates how the resulting methods of institutionalization were related to the administrative structures, and purposes.

Among the most striking features of Women's Studies, as an academic discipline and as a cultural movement, has been its international scope. From its beginnings in the United States in the mid-1960s, Women's Studies spread to many Western countries in the 1970s. A comparative study of Women's Studies in its initial phase in the United States and West Germany shows the importance of political, cultural, and institutional context in shaping the development of the field. One of the most important questions facing early advocates of Women's Studies concerned the appropriate institutional setting for this new form of education. Controversies over institutionalization highlighted many of the central intellectual, political, and educational issues raised by the new field.

### **Growth of gender studies in Hungary**

In Hungary, the downfall of communism in the 1990s made it possible for interested students to study gender studies in their university courses, even though it was not possible to get a degree in the field at the time. During this period, gender studies in Hungary were driven by three intellectual routes. The first was research on social inequality, women's employment, social stratification, poverty, and inequality, which had a long tradition in Hungarian sociology. Following earlier efforts, a Women's Studies Center was established at the University of Economics (formerly known as Karl Marx University). The Faculty of Social Sciences at Loránd University filed for the accreditation

of its master's course in gender studies, and after a two-year-long tedious administrative process, it was sanctioned to start in the autumn 2017.

The second intellectual stream of gender studies in Hungary is the gendering of long-established humanities disciplines such as history, literature, and linguistics. Feminist literature and linguistics played a crucial role in this, as did certain Anglo-American studies departments that were able to integrate gender into their modules. As a result, gender studies centres were founded at universities in Szeged, Debrecen, and Miskolc.

The third stream comes from work done by women's NGOs, which in many countries were able to establish women's centres publishing journals or offering courses on domestic violence, civic engagement, and training women entrepreneurs among other topics. In Hungary, however, such organizations have so far failed to strengthen an educational institution of their own. This is mostly due to a lack of funding, indifference on the side of possible donors, and, most significantly from 2010 onwards, the Hungarian government's open war on civil organizations. Nevertheless, several publications addressing violence against women and social policies concerning women in Hungary were initiated by NGOs. (Pető, Andrea, By, Eva van de Rakt, and Zsófia Deák. 2017).

### **Global attacks on gender studies as an academic field.**

Apparently, Andrea Peto" If the proposed ruling by the Hungarian government is upheld, an accredited, successful M.A programme in gender studies with continuously high enrolment and stellar alumni job records would be cancelled. This programme is offered in Hungary by two institutions, both of which are located in Budapest: the private Central European University in English and the public Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in

Hungarian. Then the government came up with the argument that “there is no need for women’s and gender studies graduates in the labour market”. The stakes are high at this point because academic freedom and gender studies education have come under intense public scrutiny, and everyone has an opinion on what the learning objectives should be.

According to European University Association (EUA) Secretary General Lesley Wilson, "it establishes a legal mechanism to conceal the knowledge that people in power despise. One of the main characteristics of Europe's heterogeneous cultures and the reason they value academic freedom is that it prevents citizens from receiving an education as well as from producing and obtaining knowledge. We have witnessed similar attacks on academic freedom in Turkey and Russia, but this is the first instance of such a thorough and fundamental assault taking place within the European Union’’. When the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) announced on September 1 that it had not helped with the preparation of the draft of the government request to revoke the licence of the master's programme in gender studies, the brainstorming came to an end. The HAC declared that it does not concur with the expert and scholarly justifications offered for the suggested licence revocation. So, it appears that the government is the only institutional player who has put forth a strong ideological and political involvement in the development of an academic study programme. This violates both professional norms and educational freedom. The following argument put out by organisations was that students weren't interested in the course, a claim made without any facts to back it up. (Pető 2018)

## **Gender studies in Gulf region.**

In this section there is detail about how it is emerged and institutionalized in the gulf region because I have discussed the western countries and now, I want to trace the roots of its origin in the gulf region as well.

## **Emergence and institutional marginalization.**

Gulf universities are in sites that already need to be directed with caution, given the current limits to 'academic freedom' posed by governmental top-down control of academic debate. (Nasser and Romanowski 2010; Uddin 2009). The institutional and epistemic marginalisation of gender studies as an accepted academic discipline in the Gulf raises several speculative and radical questions about gender power relations in knowledge production, the disciplinary boundaries of knowledge, the valuable disruptions of feminist pedagogy, and the mind-blowing potential for change that is existing within a feminist agenda.

Gender Studies is not currently offered as a separate degree at any universities in the Gulf. There are, however, two universities that provide graduate degrees in Muslim Women's Studies and Women, Society, and Development, respectively: Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar and Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Women's Studies is also offered as a minor at the American University of Sharjah. Regarding coursework, the Department of International Relations at Qatar University offers four undergraduate courses in gender studies. (Alsahi 2018). Despite the fact that gender research and scholarship continue to thrive in the Gulf, notably in social sciences and humanities departments, gender studies as an interdisciplinary academic area itself is

subject to disagreements about its worth, validity, and notoriety. In addition to a wider background of socio-political, religious, and patriarchal rejection to the information and interventions provided by feminist discourse and gender critiques, the devaluing of Gender Studies is also driven by a lack of academic openness to new areas. Such sorts of conflicts do not just develop when religious discourses and interpretations are under investigation.

The dismissal of gender studies is still informed by the categorization of feminist knowledge, gender theories, and feminism in general as a Western, colonial, and imperialist import. According to Leila Ahmed (1992), the links between feminism and colonialism come from Western colonialists' promotion of feminist discourse in colonised Arab nations, particularly Egypt, which has led to its rejection. But to argue that feminist discourse and, by extension, gender studies, are products of colonial and imperialist structures would be to align oneself with a politics of origins that ignores historical Arab women's movements as well as the significant contributions of postcolonial feminisms and expressions of Arab anti-colonial feminist thought. (Almazidi 2009)

### **Critical Research on the Discipline**

Critical research on the discipline is available related to how feminist pedagogies have established the need to query power structures in terms of curriculum content and teaching praxis. (Kent 2020). Gender studies is an interdisciplinary field that aims to dismantle traditional ways of teaching and transferring knowledge, questioning the hierarchies on which many standardized higher education practices are based. (Hassel & Narisa 2012). Another research by Kath Woodward and Sophie Woodward mentioned gender studies as an interdisciplinary field, and argue that gender studies, and women's

studies, from which gender studies developed, have a distinctive engagement with interdisciplinarity. We trace both the shifts and continuities in thinking between different iterations of feminist thinking to consider the three core fields of gender, sex, and sexuality; intersectionality and activism; theory and methods. It includes what shapes gender relations and how sexual politics shape experience and social, economic, and political relations, gender studies demand robust empirical evidence, including statistical, and quantitative data as well as qualitative, ethnographic, critical, discursive, and psychosocial approaches that seek to understand some of the ambivalence and contradictory aspects of sex, gender, and sexuality. The article aims to open debate over what the constructive possibilities are of a focus on gender, and what the relationship is between theory and activism. Gender studies are part of a developing field, which retains the excitement of interdisciplinary innovation, which characterizes feminism and women's studies, but extends this field of research by presenting engagements with pressing contemporary debates and issues. This is also a contested terrain characterized by a lively debate about the relationship between gender and women's studies, between activism and theoretical frameworks, and about political action and the policy implications, globally and locally of focusing on gender. (Woodward and Woodward 2015)

Critical thinkers across a range of academic fields and terrestrial contexts express a desire to participate in intellectual endeavours that challenge the prevailing epistemic stances and research paradigms employed in conventional research domains (Abu-Lughud 1991; Narayan 1993; 1997; Shah and Khurshid 2018; Smith 2012; Takayama 2011). In order to liberate women, feminist research has long pledged to investigate issues of power and difference from an epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspective.



(Benhabib and Cornell 1987; Benhabib et al. 1995; Connell 2014 2015; Fraser 1989). Decolonizing research, in a similar vein, aims to explicitly challenge colonial knowledge production institutions and the representation of marginalised and indigenous groups (Lugones 2010; Mendoza 2016). In order to refute the traditional self-other difference through their publications, feminist and decolonizing research both aim to integrate the scholarship and opinions of non-Western, nondominant researchers and question established systems of knowledge (Abu-Lughud 1991; Lincoln and Gonzalez 2008; Smith 2012).

Wekker's work, offers an example of how intersectionality can, as a methodology, facilitate a 'practical' turn towards decoloniality within gender studies, when scholars and students turn an intersectional lens on themselves to examine and excavate the contents of the cultural archive that inform their positionings of 'gender' and the broader cultural contexts in which they exist, and how histories of colonialism impact both factors. (Said 1993) It also offers proof of the importance of centring the work of women of colour, and Black women specifically, within gender studies programs, due in part to their essential "distinctive analyses of race, class, and gender" (Collins 1986:S14) emanating from their own lived experiences (Davis 1981; hooks 1981; Lorde 1984; Giddings 1985; Collins 1989; Lim 1998; Lee 2000; Duncan 2002; May 2002; Pande 2015; Wekker 2016). As a result of those experiences, scholars like Wekker offer alternative epistemologies that can help practically facilitate decoloniality within the academy (Mohanty 1984; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006; Lugones 2007; 2010; 2016; Mignolo 2009; 2011; Bhabra, Gebrial, and Nişancioğlu 2018).

There is another perspective written by the Maithreyi Krishna Raj that tried to be argued that women's studies as a discipline are now securely established. Now the time has come to critically evaluate the discipline. This article argued that research on the subject is saturated with more vigor around concepts such as power, empowerment, feminism, and women in work. This includes a greater self-awareness but also an understanding of the past and earlier endeavours and interventions. The research findings should apparently seek to benefit the subject as well. (Raj 2005).

The purpose of this critical feminist epistemology's decolonizing epistemological and conceptual orientation is to remove the participants' lived realities from their deeply rooted sociocultural milieu. (Benhabib and Cornell 1987; El Saadwi 1997). Here we are trying to situate the influence of the state in shaping the discipline and its future in India and Pakistan which has a different socio-cultural milieu than other countries of the Global South.

Making a generalisation about the discipline's institutionalisation process is neither possible nor even correct. That have institutionalised WGS in an area with complicated social and political histories, gender hierarchies and predispositions, academic practises, and association with women's movement are heavily condensed in this research. WGS's growth and expansion in the Asia-Pacific area as a result have been erratic. Some programs are at the point of just starting (e.g., Mongolia in North Asia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and other Central Asian Republics, Lao PDR, Cambodia in Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands). Whereas in other places, such as Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, China, Korea, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam, Australia, and New Zealand, WGS has been thriving. Any evaluation must, at the very least, be reasonable,

taking into account the unique conditions and circumstances under which WGS programmes and departments have developed as well as identifying the issues that jeopardise the organization's chances of surviving in the rapidly changing global environment of today.

The fact that WGS scholars, activists, and specialists face and critique the deeply patriarchal systems of the university and society at each stage of its development is a defining feature of the organisation. The dedication and tactics of intellectuals involved in WGS in this context have been crucial to its development and evolution, and as a result, many types of WGS have been growing in the area over the past few decades. As part of the formation process, which generally started in the late 1970s, the founding cohorts of WGS academics in various countries began to teach feminism or courses linked to it in the departments and disciplines where they were located, usually at the tertiary and post-graduate levels. There were few attempts to teach WGS at the secondary level or even lower because it primarily developed as a response to the demand for greater research on women. Even after three decades, there is still much to be done to advance WGS in secondary education.

At the highest levels of the educational system, new centres emerged from these trailblazing initiatives; some of these centres ultimately developed into more centralised departments, programmes, and fields of study. Although they started off with just programmes, they eventually started to provide degrees, majors, minors, diplomas, and certificates in WGS. In the 1980s and 1990s, a field with epistemological roots in the humanities and social sciences evolved, supported by a burgeoning community of academics with a clear research aim. To provide rational justifications for the mechanisms

sustaining these unequal ties, this agenda is substantially determined by the linkages between knowledge and women's lived experiences of uneven gender relations. The emergence of semi-autonomous and interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programmes that were housed in departments and relied on the contributions of faculty from many disciplines for teaching, research, and supervision was made possible by the clustering of many of these courses. Funding arrangements varied around the world depending on the extent of involvement of national ministries of education and university grants commissions for WGS. (UNESCO 2004: 20-24).

The literature shows that there is a presence of power structure in the knowledge production process. But there are challenges, setbacks and contributions related to the emergence of the Women's and Gender studies (WGS) as field in the global north and the Global South. It is clear in the literature that each country has its own dynamics of its institutionalization as field but globally now it is under attack and the discipline is struggling for its autonomy; and survival is still an emerging issue that has less conceptual depth and practical guidelines. (Shah 2019).

### **CHAPTER 3:**

## **THEORETICAL DEBATES, REFLECTIONS AND ANALYTICAL VERSION**

In this chapter, I have discussed WGS as part of educational institutions. Why I have used the two theoretical propositions as a theoretical framework with feminist research lens. Why did I feel that only the feminist institutionalization framework is not sufficient to explain my data findings? I have used multiple propositions within this theoretical framework including Global North and Global South, Extraversion, coloniality of knowledge, gender as colonial category, epistemic (injustice), and knowledge as relational. Lastly, I have explained as to how my chosen theory is linked within the context and data findings.

But I want to clarify here that we all use theory but doing feminist theory means knowing which theorists are currently in vogue<sup>15</sup> as argued by Davis (2014) but I do not have such intention to use the theory like co-opted, buzz word or by following the current trends. In our context, it is not only linked with conceptual clarity of one's own position, but it is more likely to reproduce the right concepts in the right language and displaying an awareness of the correct positions in the various debates. It is not an easy task to produce a theory. Here in this research, I have also referred to the theorists but being part of Global South, we have less contribution in theoretical knowledge and for completing the requirement of academic criteria for my degree I have done this exercise with an understanding that I am completely aware of this fact that how to engage with a theory.

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<sup>15</sup> In fashion

Further, I feel where the joyful and painful moments are, the eye-openers and when I found something new whether it was a cry or joy for satisfaction. But I also find the doubts and uncertainties which are always a part of our engagement with a theory or theoretical debate.

### **Decolonization Debate and its impact**

While research on gender has increased since 1990s in the Global South, there is still limited recognition and emergence of theoretical debates from the Global South. Similar to Connell mentioned in her work on (Rethinking gender from the south). The decolonizing literature on gender opens the debate with practical knowledge of decoloniality, signifying a practical art of critiquing racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexual gender oppression, as discussed by Maria Lugone (2010). Although in 1989 critical race theorist Crenshaw, McCall, Cho (2013) introduced the intersectionality lens to the research on multiple forms of oppression. But it is not a part of the trend of decolonizing the knowledge in most of the context of south Asian countries. But the academic curriculum and syllabus for teaching women's gender and sexuality studies in Pakistan include the courses on men and masculinities studies, introduction to sexuality studies courses etc. Furthermore, in Pakistan, the structure of the discipline, its curriculum, and major content guidelines are shaped by state structures. However, instructors or course facilitators have some leverage to generate debates on pressing societal issues such as caste, religion, language, class, and ethnicity with local relevance. As Mignolo (2011) said that decoloniality focuses on changes in the term of conversations but changes in terms of local debates and issues are not written and or part of formal academic knowledge in south Asia because the theory is coming from somewhere else. We are not starting point for production

of theoretical connotations. *Our starting point is west*<sup>16</sup>. Due to geographical distance, we are excluded, theories already exist there but due to colonial matrix of power, our sense of experience has been excluded from knowledge production. As Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006, 2011) proposed, decolonial border thinking concepts contribute to changing both the terms and content of conversations around 'gender' as an assumed and stable category of identity and analysis. I claim that dwelling, thinking, and writing from these borders create conditions of epistemic disobedience to the coloniality/modernity discourse of the west. Our struggles in Pakistan are also derived from lived experiences, everyday discipline struggle. The experiences around women's and gender studies teaching in Pakistan are part of border thinking because rights and concept of gender and sexual minorities groups and their rights in Pakistan is shaped by the colonial definitions and colonial legal frameworks.

I argue that 'decolonizing' gender studies could be an effort to make visible and disrupt a particular imperialist conception of 'gender' (Mohanty 1984; Lugones 2007; 2010; 2016) that has historically proliferated in western gender studies programs. The transforming possibility of decolonizing the gender and women's studies scholarship is linked to teaching, scholarship, and writing. In the context of Pakistan, in terms of classroom co-production of knowledge practices is in place as part of alternative epistemologies and teaching pedagogies via classroom activities, videos, movies, and discussions with local scholars. There are alternative ways of knowing and practicing gender in Pakistan as Julianne McShane (2021) mentioned but the butler concept of performativity is also unpacked in the context of the rise of debates around transgender

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<sup>16</sup> Humara qibla west hein

protection bill in Pakistan as contested the state narratives around the transgender official identities. It is referred to the language or dialect that is spoken by people that are inhabiting a particular country or region and knowledge of rights influenced by its colonial past. By the same token, Mascho Gichki argues that understanding the rights of *transgender* people in a *non-Western* world requires tracing the etymological history of such rights language. The author used the India and Pakistan as case studies for discussing the transgender protection bill 2018 in Pakistan and transgender Protection Act 2019 in India. (Gichki 2020). So, the rise of social movements for gender and sexual minorities in both countries is an example of undoing and knowing gender differently via troubling the status quo such as India has a gender and sexuality center. In Pakistan, one of the old and leading university Center, the first transgender woman was offered a visiting teaching position. So, they are disrupting the colonial spaces by doing practical tasks. scholars like Bhabra's Gebrial's and Nisancioglu's critiques (2018) of the institution of the western university is perceived as endowed with 'epistemological authority-as the privileged site of knowledge production. Being in the Global South, we have less epistemic authority within the larger context. Furthermore, the possibility of discussion and debate around gender as an open category of analysis has been opened to some extent in the Global South but it is still a continuous struggle. It is visible in the social movements across India and Pakistan but academically there is a disconnect between social movements and concepts like intersectionality, and hierarchy, in terms of teaching pedagogy except for a few courses on sexuality studies, men, and masculinities studies. The discussion around teaching pedagogies has similar kind of challenges as Kent describes how feminist pedagogies have established the need to query power structures in terms of curriculum content and teaching



praxis. (Kent 2020). But WGS is still fighting for the space within university hierarchical power structures to undo the traditional knowledge scholarship.

The necessity to participate in intellectual endeavors that reorient the preeminent epistemic viewpoints and methodology utilized in conventional research procedures towards particular populations is expressed by critical scholars from a range of fields. In Pakistan indigenous population is in trouble bridging the gap between tribal and non-tribal populations. However, this is not to say that indigenous communities have been mute-passive recipients of the violent manifests of such structures and discourses. Instead, the communities have resisted, fought back, and won against systemic oppression. In the case of Pakistan more than 5,000 people are missing in Baluchistan which is unlawful enforced disappearance., but it is not discussed and documented in mostly controlled academic space of the universities.

Similarly, decolonizing research at universities pursues to clearly focus on colonial structures of knowledge production and the representation of marginalized and indigenous populations in the respective areas, as Lugones (2010) and Mendoza (2016) mentioned in their work. But the work of non-dominant scholars and activists of these movements is unable to break the traditional self-other distinctions in knowledge production structures because nondominant writers in both countries are not well articulated with the colonial English repository or vocabulary of concepts. Both feminist and decolonizing research aim to question the conventional self-other distinction by challenging established knowledge orders and by including the work and perspectives of non-Western, nondominant scholars. (Abu-Lughud 1991; Lincoln and Gonzalez 2008; Smith 2012). When the question is raised

about decolonizing the curriculum or pedagogy it is usually linked with alternative epistemologies.

As a result of those experiences, scholars like Wekker who offer alternative epistemologies that can help paraxially facilitate decoloniality within the academy. The intersectional lens has developed this discipline to broaden the horizon toward class, gender, race, ethnicity, and class studies in Pakistan via linking with broader movements within these two countries. Academics in case of Pakistan are usually not associated with these ‘identities’ movements. That is why I think that one step toward Decolonization and decoloniality is an explicit expression of activism and praxis, but that link is missing in Pakistan as Ompha linked activism as crucial for decolonizing the curriculum. (*Malima 2020*). But here is an important issue linked with the efforts of decolonizing the gender studies and trans studies curricula that could be different for British universities and universities in the case of Pakistan. How can dominant Western ways of doing trans/gender studies be criticized and interrupted? Too often, Western(-based) scholarship and teaching still is a methodologically nationalist, monolithic field ignorant of racism that engages in wanting to “save” women, queer, or trans people elsewhere or randomly appropriates or romanticizes knowledge productions from the Global South or marginalized contexts. if it is considered that the south is less reliable for producing theories then we need to see the work of Tuck and Yang, they argued how can we prevent the decolonizing movement from becoming the neoliberal academia’s next buzzword, emptied of any critical content (Tuck and Yang 2012; Mehta 2019)?

Moreover, what to do with the already beginning tendency of institutions trying to make “decolonizing the curriculum” into a brand to attract student-consumers? we see the

endeavor of decolonizing higher education as a necessarily multilayered and collective process that pays attention to gaps, complex contradictions, and differently positioned complicities. As Tudor (2017) views, any decolonization must bridge the diaspora perspective with approaches from the Global South, connect indigenous studies with migration studies, and question the paradigm of the nation-state. Moreover, feminist, queer, and trans perspectives and their deconstructions of gender and sexuality are crucial for decolonizing epistemologies and spaces within universities. The deconstruction of existing categories could work out for the context of south Asia because their women's, and gender studies centers are still struggling with the binaries and categorial thinking of the dominant academic. Further, efforts to access higher education, representation, and epistemological discussions can be good food for teaching in India and Pakistan context. Most often, the criticism and questions directed toward women's, gender, and sexuality studies are why our women's, gender, and sexuality studies curriculum are so western.

In South Asia largely and in Pakistan now women's and gender studies as a discipline has been institutionalized. Now the time has come to critically evaluate the discipline. The subject is to be saturated with more vigor around concepts such as power, empowerment, feminism, and women in work. This includes a greater self-awareness but also an understanding of the past and earlier endeavors and interventions. (Raj 2005). the examples for the reconstruction of identity through gender studies can be taken from Africa that is different from earlier versions of deteriorating African conditions of western control and domination as written by Edward Namisiko and Waswa Kisiang (2003) highlighted the need to decolonize Gender Studies in Africa. Both the unequal division of intellectual labor that structures social sciences in the widest sense and the institutionalization of

gender studies in the southern countries as mentioned by (Bouilly 2022) and this trend is part of the double logic of marginalization and objectification of social sciences that can be traced to the colonial period as Edward said mentioned in orientalism in the context of both countries colonial logic of funding still operates whereas natural sciences are considered objective and neutral, so they are the priority for the research funds. In the meantime, gender has become a tool for action. These dynamics impact the way gender knowledge is produced, and how the concept of gender circulates.

Here I am trying to situate the influence of the state in shaping the discipline and its future in Pakistan which has a different socio-cultural milieu than other countries of the Global South. Gender studies as an academic field continue to have an interdisciplinary nature. (Woodward & Woodward 2015). In the case of Pakistan, the field is still limited and has less interdisciplinary scope. Tuck and Yang focused on the relationship between theory and praxis are not very healthy. the emergence of changing feminist scholarship in both countries has disconnected from theory. That is why we think that Decolonization has had different meanings across times and temporalities. First Nations scholars Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang have insisted that decolonization is not a metaphor but an ongoing struggle for, autonomy, and self-determination (Tuck and Yang 2012). In Pakistan universities are still going through the struggle for autonomy and self-determination from the border control of universities administration.

Higher education in Pakistan is closely linked with the context of the country's historical and political development. Critical for understanding the present is a description of the state of education of Muslims well before the partition of India. The benefits of increased access are weighed against the problems created by the post-2002 rapid

expansion of the university system. Academic freedom and campus culture are important to examine together with the role universities have played in fostering terrorism and intolerance. The most annoying issue is to define quality of education, without which comparisons are meaningless. It is hold that for social sciences and humanities, the present international ranking system is inadequate and education specialists need to produce a general framework that could consider ground realities specific to countries like Pakistan. (Hoodbhoy 2021) By the same token, social sciences field have deep roots in our education system because it was taught at colleges as well, but gender studies were a new experiment and even an educated professor at the university may ask you what is women's studies? Is it an academic discipline? (Bari 1993).

Western feminist literature has been usually taught at theory level in both countries but there are efforts which are done at local levels to decolonize the academy including the contextualization of the western text and inclusion of local courses and texts such as status of women in education, health, informal sector and formal sector and public policy, etc. Similarly, our universities are not following the western patterns of decolonizing the curriculum, but the discipline of women's and gender studies have this perspective to teach in the curriculum related to specific characteristics of colonialism as Bhaarmba, Gebrial, and Nisancioglu mentioned through the visibility of the non-popular text, dialogues, and debates. In the context of India and Pakistan excavation means highlighting the role of gender as an open and flexible category, and expanding the focus on Dalit studies, cast, race, and trans studies is still an emerging issue that has less conceptual depth and practical guidelines. (Shah 2019).

So, it could be said in view of the above decolonizing literature that critical thought is emerging locally and globally in the field of knowledge production around, women's feminism, gender, and sexuality studies. But there is an intersection of different themes and concepts which are interlinked with the multidisciplinary approach but, there is a disconnect between disciplinary research around gender issues.

Overall decolonial scholars stress on the need to understand and recognize the colonial logics of racialization and gendering imposed on native societies in the past, to work towards transforming the present and envisioning a distinct future (Mendoza 2016). According to Walter D. Mignolo (2007) decoloniality refers to critical thought emerging in the colonies and ex- colonies. This current research is one of the examples of those critical thoughts that is emerging from a postcolonial context because now in educational institutions people have at least tried to debate around the critical issues which are closely linked to their everyday struggles in terms of the economic and political crisis of Pakistan.

### **Decolonial Feminist Theory**

Decoloniality is an epistemic, political, and cultural progress for liberation from these limitations, emphasizing the fact that the accomplishments of modernity are inextricable from racism, hetero-patriarchy, economic corruption, and bias of non-European knowledge systems. Preliminary distinctions between the postcolonial and decolonial discourses had to do with varied forms of colonialism in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. (Madina Tlostanova 2019).

Decolonial feminist theory promotes an epistemic push toward incorporating a universality of knowledge, ideas, and practices in different geographic regions. The

intention is to generate a multitude of knowledge whereby all cultures and all nations persist equal, and as such all people and all societies have the right to be distinct indeed because everyone is considered equal (Paludi, Mariana, Mills Helmes Jean & Milla Albert. 2019).

My theoretical framework for this research has also some background. First, I looked at the relevance of feminist institutionalist approach that how educational institutions are important in shaping the disciplines. In my research, in terms of the evolution of the discipline because institutions are broadly defined as the formal and informal rules that deeply shape political life, I am taking universities as modern corporate capitalist models.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) such as universities and their formal and informal rules are part of the politics and rule books. Political institutions are deeply gendered. A feminist institutionalist lens allowed me to analyse the gendered foundations of these universities; moreover, my field data also addressed the challenges and prospects of this discipline. The feminist institutional lens has been used for political analysis for two decades. It provided the lens to analyse the political dynamics that shape everyday life. Feminist institutionalism critiques and seeks to overcome the gender blindness of existing relationships in the field, to include women as actors in the political process, to 'gender institutionalism' and move the research agenda towards questions about the interplay between gender and the operation and effect of political institutions. (Fiona Mackay 2010) In this current research, it was aimed not to look towards the university as a political institution, as women are already working there as part of the political process. Moreover, this research aimed not to overcome the gender blindness of existing power structures in

the field, rather my data and research questions remained more epistemological. It aimed to answer questions about epistemological challenges related to gender knowledge, feminist knowledge production, and the teaching of a political or radical subject. Therefore, decoloniality theory as a critical framework appeared to be more appropriate and relevant for interpreting my results and analysis related to contemporary challenges and the prospect of the discipline of WGS in Pakistan.

This process involved decolonizing the academy through a wide range of definitions of gendered knowledge and feminist knowledge production. Moreover, it is also concerned with teaching the discipline, its scope, and its role in society because mainstream social sciences have more acceptance and visibility as compared to WGS. It was reflected that knowledge production within the academic world has also been controlled. Even within academic world issues like what kind of knowledge is being produced and whose knowledge should have been taught and controlled. Many feminist scholars emphasised the importance of an open approach to knowledge production by encouraging geo-historical positioning expertise. This discourages ‘safari researchers’ (think of a European researcher going to a non-western country without acknowledging local experts or not giving them due credit that they deserve) used by Rosalba Icaza and thereby contributes to fair knowledge production (Gatterburg 2021). Therefore, it was relevant to my current research since the findings showed that most of the academics shared that they are imitating western theories. Though these western theories are contextualized by the academics in their classroom, the Global North still has the power over (hegemony) knowledge production. A group of critical feminist scholars within the field WGS and development studies, they conducted research on a characteristically unequal political economy of



knowledge production in development studies that is sustained by the sub-alternation of feminized others and more than human others. Faithful to Chandra Mohanty's invitation decades ago, our scholarship has explored the entanglements of power across colonial divides and the emergence of strategies put forward to address and repair the socio-economic, temporal, and epistemic violence of misrepresentation, ventriloquism, and erasure across places and temporalities. (Icaza and Aslam 2022)

Decolonial theory critiques Western representation of the "other" and reveals how knowledge produced in and by the West is layered with the colonial power, thereby creating, and sustaining a politics of Western knowledge dominance and rendering the "other" an object of knowledge (Mignolo 2007; Prasad 2003; Said 1978). Sometimes, this relationship between East and West is sorted out from a different perspective which is also a presupposition that usually Eastern scholars feel that way, but my current research is lived experiences of those who are part of academia of Global South. Our reactions, case studies, views, and categories to be considered valid knowledge is derived through the practices of local knowledge production. Integrating this theoretical lens into our context enabled us to understand knowledge as situated, i.e., knowledge is embedded within a social, cultural, historical, and political time and place that reflects contextual features and lived experiences (Haraway 1988). Decolonial feminist theory values all knowledge and lived experiences as equal, and in so doing provides a new framework within the geopolitics of knowledge production, one that demands respect for the pluralization of differences. In my view, decolonial feminist theory challenges the male/masculine, white/Western, and bourgeois/managerial epistemologies that have come to dominate WGS (e.g., Ferguson 1994; Metcalfe and Woodhams 2012).

As an emerging theoretical concept, decolonial feminism builds upon the work of non-Western(used), Indigenous, and women of colour activists engaged in women's movements in their communities and societies (Lugones 2008). I also felt that being a brown woman, this present research work is situated within decolonial praxis. Although, the decoloniality debate itself is coming from the west, neither it is introduced and analysed by my country, but according to my perspective, this framework gives space to analyse from a broader lens. It implies a new path that is not an imposition or prescription, but a worldview, a way of seeing and doing and understanding gender that emanates from the lived experiences of marginalized women in the Global South. Moreover, the absence of this lens highlights the limited engagement with Global South in a limited understanding of these societies and their contribution. (Manning 2017a 2017b, 2018).

The paradigm of coloniality of knowledge argues that the West's knowledge system attained dominance through participation in colonization and sustained this dominance through persistent intellectual and cultural imperialism that has marginalized and, in some cases, eradicated alternative knowledge systems, and social structures. (e.g., Alcadipani and Faria 2014; Calás and Smircich 2003; Colado 2006; Jack et al. 2011; Mignolo 2007; Misoczky 2011; Nkomo 2011; Quijano 2007; Spivak 1988; Ul-Haq and Westwood 2012; Walsh 2007). Modernity and the coloniality of knowledge enforce Western managerial and organizational discourse and work practices upon the lives of those in the Global South, dictating a Western tradition of managerial and organizational thinking that defines how and what should be studied and practiced (Imasm and Weston 2012). The coloniality of knowledge is concerned with the intellectual hegemony of knowledge produced in the West following practices of Western knowledge production and dissemination.

Colado (2006) explained that the coloniality of knowledge as a means of control by detaching those in the Global South from their native condition and capacity for independent/free thought. Due to the historical process of colonization, individuals in Pakistan tend to have less independence (freedom) of thought and action. Academics capable of publishing in the Global North are often regarded as more esteemed intellectuals and high-profile scholars.

For example, in Pakistan, universities are required to send Ph.D. dissertations to “foreign” evaluators to get a quality check of the work. The external foreign evaluators are considered specialists who can evaluate the academic worth of the work and give their specialized feedback that would amount to approval or disapproval of the work. Therefore, it indicates that we are always looking toward the WEST for the authenticity and quality of knowledge we produce. Coloniality of knowledge has enabled Western-centric (Euro-centric) intellectualism and imperialism to flourish, consequently creating unequal core-periphery relationship between institutions, academics, and systems of knowledge between the West and the “rest” (Ul Haq and Westwood 2012). Faria (2014), Ul Haq and Westwood (2012) argued that most of the academic centres are in the West, and this is where the terms and categories of academic debates and discourse are (mostly) determined. The west, therefore, remains the centre of producing and disseminating knowledge, and “others” are the nations consuming that knowledge. Simultaneously the West also dismantles “other” knowledge, social organization, and ways of life (Mignolo 2007).

From the discussion above, I would say that my theoretical propositions are just concepts and mapping of vocabulary which has some similarity with my data interpretation but coloniality of knowledge, gender, extraversion and feminist epistemology of

knowledge have no theoretical origin and situatedness in Pakistani context. specific context of my local narratives. However, I have employed two frameworks to interpret and analyse the results. In addition to that, the coloniality of knowledge, the domination of the Global North in the production of knowledge, and the concepts of other nations as consumers of that knowledge is still valid. I have tried to do knowledge production in field of gender studies with local context. These debates are relevant to my work because mostly WGS as a field is labelled as a Western academic discipline. The interlocutors of this research shared the impossibility of considering or even imagining the Global North as their dissemination partner, as most universities, enrolled students, and alumni are the only source(s) for dissemination of our research within Pakistan. Further, my work also contributed to WGS's growth and contemporary challenges, and here is one of the biggest challenges: the (impetus) funding to establish and maintain WGS comes from the international pressure of aid agencies. When it comes to the financial support offered by HEC (at national level), they always link that with revenue generation and the strength of the student body. Still, the implementation of these programs ends up at least (partially) in the hands of conservative (even anti-feminist) administrative at the universities who perceive the discipline/teaching of WGS as antithetical to the local culture, perhaps a threat to religious mores, and even Western colonialists in intent and effect.

Formal education as we know it in Pakistan is largely a product of colonialism, and therefore, knowledge production in Pakistan from the very inception of formal education has been Westernized<sup>17</sup>. Theorization, methodologies, approaches, and curricula of

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<sup>17</sup> Westernization has begun with the adoption of the practices and culture, of western Europe by society and countries in other part of the world

learning in Pakistan are rooted in Western thought processes, often serving to reinforce Western dominance while marginalizing local knowledge, thinking, and practices. As Pierre Bourdieu pointed out, concepts often travel without their context, and the way they are interpreted by local actors reveals much about the social context in which they are situated. By creating a connection between decolonial and feminist approaches, I have tried to demonstrate how these two broad schools of thought have both sought to move away from the option of objective and neutral knowledge production, instead recognizing the connection between the personal and political. As a result, I have started with personal reflections on the data since I believe my personality is political too. The way I have experienced everyday life realities at the university (public space) and the narratives of the respondents also relate to them. In *Decolonization and Feminisms in Global Teaching and Learning*, Sara De Jong (2019) offered a series that not only shows how calls to decolonize universities are strengthened when connected to feminist perspectives but also the individualistic and Euro-centric underpinnings of various feminist perspectives. They provided significant insights related to debates on how to decolonize places of teaching and learning.

Over the last few years, calls to ‘decolonize’ the academy have gained momentum, among students and educators mobilizing worldwide to challenge the structures of their universities and their disciplinary canons. These calls for transformation vary widely, from the successful (and unsuccessful) demands to remove statues of colonial oppressors from university campuses. The movements related to decolonize universities, through the re-examination of this question that how knowledge is being produced, taught and strengthened when connected to the feminist perspective(s). Decoloniality is both a

political and an epistemological movement that aims to achieve ecologies of knowledge and pluriverse. The resurgence and insurgence of decolonialization/decoloniality in the twenty-first century are directly ranged against the violence of modernity, colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism. Such violence takes many forms including systematic, structural, institutional, symbolic, and physical. Consequently, it resulted in genocides, poverty, epistemic ides, culture codes, ecocides, linguicides, and even ontologies. Decolonization/decoloniality constitutes a legitimate mode of turning over a new leaf, enabling shift from colonialism/coloniality to liberation and freedom. Modernity, capitalism and coloniality are aspects of the same package of control of economy, and authority, of gender and sexuality of knowledge and subjectivity. The subjectivities of the Global South are not equally presented and highlighted that resulted into epsitemicides.

### **Neo-liberalism**

It is embedded in the principle that marketplaces are the most efficient method of decision-making and the optimum way of supporting human wellbeing. (Harvey 2005)

Thus, neoliberalism is allied with the proliferation of free-market (and choice) policies, privatisation, and deregulation of education services. Hrush (2017), Lubienski (2006) and promotes the hegemony of the marketplaces, competition, rational decision, the global knowledge economy and the instrumental framing of education for individual economic gain. I have used this concept for my research because education is affected by these neoliberal agendas and internationalization of education.

## **Global North and Global South**

The concept of Global South and global North has increasingly been used globally despite varied standpoint of the term and sometimes vicious debates over its accuracy and relevance. Its origins are multidisciplinary, and it draws from many kinds of literature, including postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, and poststructuralism. A main concern of those using the term seems to be about proposing an alternative to existing, adverse categorisations of the world - 'the West' and the 'non-West'; the developed and the developing world; or the 'First', 'Second' and 'Third' worlds. From this perspective, the notion of a 'global North and South' is preferable, because the former categories were clearly negative about the 'non-West', 'fail to reflect the complexity and diversity of global realities', and indeed 'suggest both a hierarchy and a value judgement' (McEwan 2009; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015).

These critiques suggest that the potential for positive change through the North/South terminology is, to some extent, dependent on how it is defined and utilized as a concept in academic and policy literature. Within this literature, a general trend can be identified where the term global North and South is used to denote a metaphorical rather than geographical distinction between countries or other localities (Collyer, et al. 2019; Connell 2007; de Sousa Santos 2014; Grovogui 2011:175–190; McEwan 2009: 13). Connell (2007:viii) makes this point explicit in stating that the South is a social rather than geographical category and that what distinguishes the North from the South is the 'relations - authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnership, sponsorship, appropriation - between intellectuals and institutions in the metropole and those in the world periphery'. For Connell, the North, or 'global metropole', refers broadly to the key intellectual centres

of the well-resourced and capital-exporting countries: although it is not a coincidence that most of these are geographically located in western Europe and North America. (M.Collyer 2021) In my current research I am using the concept of global north and Global South in terms of relationship between north and the south in terms of fields of knowledge production.

### **Extraversion**

I have used this concept of Paulin Hountondji who described the situation in his book “*Endogenous Knowledge*” in 1997. According to him, there is a global division of labour: data is gathered in the colony, but the theory is produced in the metropole. Scientists/Scholars from the Global South travel to USA and Europe for training and recognition, learn Northern intellectual frameworks, and try to get published in North journals. Hountondji called this attitude “extraversion” i.e., being oriented to external sources of authority. It can be found both in settler and colonized societies. Connell (2023) Pakistan is a settler and colonized society, and we experience this in our everyday academic struggle that for our every academic activity we have to look for an external source of authority. This is entirely an issue and not at all personal. Ultimately it has to do with the way the public realm is created in colonial societies. Extraverted thought, which involves importing theories or methods from the metropole, often lacks the broader contextual understanding.

Current trends in universities are intensifying the problem. Neo-liberal policymakers drive our national universities and academics to compete. The key metrics



for this competition involve recognition *in the metropole*, especially, publication and citation in highly ranked metropolitan journals. Collyer (2013)

### **WGS as an Academic field**

GWS as an academic field in this research is limited to the discipline of GWS which is being established in the different universities across Pakistan. It also tries to reflect that universities are not quite places, and the majority of the WGS's struggle relates to the universities, which are considered the hub of knowledge production, however, it is interesting to explore how these institutions have been jeopardized and hijacked by the mainstream academic processes, especially after the internationalization of academia.

### **Feminist Knowledge Production**

It is a political act what defines knowledge production in the field of gender studies. But like wise Kathy Davis (Davis,2014) and Alice R. Dunn (2021) that research is not only about self-reflexivity, but it also involves the process of representation. In writing feminist research, in our texts we usually appear as thinking, acting, and feeling rather than disconnected individuals of the collected facts. (Charmaz Kathy,2012).

At the root of feminist inquiry is attention to power and how knowledge is built. As one of the core philosophies in feminist research process is it started with everyday experiences as an entry point for the researcher (Piatelli, Deborah&Hesse-Biber, NagySharlene,2012).

There is no one feminist point of view that defines feminist inquiry. Feminist researchers continue to engage in dialogue across a variety of approaches to theory, praxis, and

pedagogy (Brooks, Abigail & Biber Nagy Sharlene, 2012). That is why, I am trying to define the feminist knowledge production because I have done effort to produce the feminist knowledge in Pakistan within the field of gender studies. But there is no consensus about fixed criteria for feminist inquiry.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **RESEARCH SETTINGS: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

This chapter discusses the sources of data gathering, research design and how I have envisioned this study being conducted on the ground. It has to do with the political and epistemological justifications for choosing this methodology. This chapter explain the relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology. My research belongs to constructivist paradigm. The reason why I chose this because as per ontology there is no single reality or truth. Reality is always shaped by the individuals in group. Epistemology is how I can know the reality? I have used the critical inquiry and feminist approach to know the answers to my research questions. I go about to find the answers in feminist standpoint research. Finally, by using qualitative interviewing and theme identifications etc. Moreover, this section attempted to map my struggles with this research topic and explains the paradox between the researcher and the researched. As I described above the literature review and conceptual framework. Now I am talking about the actual execution of the research. It also clarifies my positionality, reflexivity, ethical concerns, and the limitations of this research. As a student, alumnus, and a teacher, this is sort of an interesting element of my research because I have observed the unique struggle of this discipline in different phases of my life. My participants and I did not just have an occupation in common; with many, but my other roles as well. I also shared a commitment to feminism and the strengthening of WGS.

To explore the evolution, challenges, and issues of WGS as an academic field in contemporary Pakistan. I have conducted in-depth interviews with academics in five universities across Pakistan. Firstly, WGS as a field were established in Islamabad, Lahore,

Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta. These five universities were leading public sector institutions in urban metropolitan cities of Pakistan, where this field research was carried out. To enter the field, I employed interviewing as a tool in the qualitative inquiry method. One might view interviewing as a series of steps in procedures.

The kvale & Brinkmann (2009) describes seven stages of interview inquiry and report a logical sequence of stages from thematizing the inquiry, designing the study, interviewing, transcribing the interview, and analysing the data, to verify the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the findings and finally to report the study. Kvale (2009) As articulated by these scholars the sequence as not fixed. It allows the researcher to change the question asked, the sites chosen, and the situation to study.

### **Process of Thematic analysis**

As per Braun Clarke (2006) there are six steps of thematic analysis. and A research technique called thematic analysis is used to find and analyze themes or patterns in a set of data; it frequently produces fresh perspectives and understanding (Boyatzis, 1998; Elliott, 2018; Thomas, 2006). But it's imperative that researchers get their own biases out of the way when identifying important themes (Morse & Mitcham, 2002; Patton, 2015).

Step one: Transcription and acquainted with data and selection of code.

This is where the theme analysis process starts. It entails transcribing material and getting acquainted with it. Scholars go deeply into the text to identify key passages and recurring themes. Next, I've chosen quotes that effectively illustrate the data and highlight a range of perspectives and trends relevant to the study's goals.

### **Step two: Choosing of key words (essential terms)**

This stage entails closely reviewing the interview data. I've had to recognize concepts and patterns that keep coming up and label them as keywords. These keywords, which are taken straight from the data, capture the experiences and viewpoints of the participants.

### **Step 3: Coding**

The third phase involves coding, which is the assignment of brief words or phrases, also referred to as codes, to data segments that best express the main idea, meaning, or subject of the data. By putting difficult textual data into a theoretical format, this stage helps to uncover features that are relevant to the study questions and simplifies the data. Since they serve as the framework for the analysis and aid in transforming unstructured data into comprehensible, controllable pieces, keywords are crucial to the coding processes.

### **Step 4: generating themes.**

The process of theme development entails grouping codes meaningfully to spot trends and connections that shed light on the research subject. By developing themes, the researcher moves from a thorough examination of codes and categories to a more abstract interpretation in this stage. These themes include patterned meanings that connect the study questions and data, making them more than just recurrent aspects.

### **Step 5: conceptualization through codes, key words and themes**

Conceptualization is the process of comprehending and defining ideas that emerge from the facts. After identifying social patterns, researchers hone them into definitions that support their findings. To comprehend the connections between the various data themes, I have made use of conceptual frameworks. The degree of clarity, precision, dependability, applicability, and theoretical and practical contributions made by these definitions are used to evaluate their quality.

### **Step 6: Conceptual model**

The final step in the thematic analysis is the development of a conceptual model. This process involves creating a unique representation of the data and it is often guided by existing theories as in my study I have used decolonial feminist theory as model to analyse my data. The model serves to answer the research questions and underscore the study's contribution to knowledge. This step signifies the culmination of the analysis; it encapsulates all the findings and insights derived from the data.

### **Informed consent**

After arriving at the site of research interviewing, the consent is important for the research procedures for data collection. The informed consent is taken in terms of written consent to participate in the research. In our context, there is also a need to discuss that sometimes the respondents have the view that verbal consent is sufficient to start the interviews. However, few respondents were very keen to engage with the research proposal, research objectives, and research questions in advance to get ready for the interviews. Unfortunately, most of them even showed consent in the first informal

conversation but later they were reluctant to talk. In qualitative research, informed consent includes these protocols that even they can withdraw from their decision of participation in the research anytime. Designing a qualitative study is an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colours, different textures, and various blends of materials. This fabric is not explained easily or simply. (W.Creswell 2013). It is like a loom on which fabric is woven, general assumptions and interpretative frameworks hold qualitative research together. This field has many different individuals with different perspectives who were on their looms creating the fabric of qualitative research. So, my research respondents created the fabric related to WGS as a field in Pakistan.

### **Inclusion criteria**

The research participants who were selected from five different universities are working on the teaching posts, as per university merit criteria i.e previous degree marks, demonstration, and job interviews etc., besides they were also serving on administrative posts as in-charge or director. My inclusion criteria to involve those who were having five years of experience because this prospect can help me to conduct this study. First, I decided to take more than 5 years of work experience but as I mention in the background that WGS as a field do not have more than 30 years of history in Pakistan and each department has its challenges in human resource induction and most of the departments have newly appointed teaching staff. Moreover, finding people who were having more than 10 years of experience was not a viable option because in each department people were appointed in the last five or six years. The strength of the total faculty of five departments consisted of 40 faculty members which were predominantly women. I have only included five

leading public sector co-education universities in each province for this research though a degree in WGS is also offered at women's universities as well.

### **Exclusion criteria**

The exclusion criteria included that I could conduct online interviews instead of in-person interviews. They were two reasons for this option; my fieldwork was started during the time of COVID-19, so it was one of the hurdles that I faced. The potential reason for this was to avoid the delay in conducting interviews due to COVID-19 restrictions and lock down because during the pandemic universities were also in a transition period from physical to online in Pakistan. The faculty members in the universities were not trained for the online shift, and it took a lot much time to shift toward online teaching system. Another practical reason for conducting online interviewees was related to the financial cost of traveling to five places which were like visiting each corner of Pakistan. My locale was in four provinces of Pakistan, and it was not a funded project. So, I decided to opt for online interviews, and they turned out to be extremely challenging specially to deal with the respondents.

### **Profile of the Respondents and the Universities:**

I have selected teachers (lecturers, Assistant professors, and Head of the department/centre) from five major public sector national universities of metropolitan cities. Most of them have Ph.D. degree and few of them are having M. Phil qualification as per their highest degree. Interestingly they all had diverse academic backgrounds such as Sociology, Anthropology, International Relations, Philosophy, Gender Studies, Development Studies, and Media Studies. The total faculty members of these five



universities are 45 but I have conducted semi-structured interviews during 2020-2021 during that period the total number was 40. I have conducted 22 interviews. Two of my respondents are founders/pioneers of this discipline from Karachi and Islamabad respectively. Out of all the departments, only the one at Punjab University in Lahore showed an increase in the number of faculty members following my data collection. They belonged to different ethnic groups including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi, however I have not communicated in their ethnic/regional languages since I am not well versed in most of those. The interviews were conducted bilingually i.e., in English and Urdu.

The medium of instruction is English at university level in Pakistan. But all my research respondents are from diverse socio economic and ethnic background. These universities are public sector institutes that means these are funded by the government of the Pakistan and all these five universities have provincial quota for admission from Baluchistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtoonkhawa (KPK) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Only one university has the same ratio of male faculty in their department while the other four departments/centres have female dominated faculties. I would like to mention here that it is very difficult to write and even claim that being a colleague if they were not open to identify themselves with gendered /sexual minorities groups, so they did not allow me to mention how they pronounce themselves. The age bracket of the faculty is between 30-50. Majority of them are urban educated but few are having the rural background.

However, the university's faculty induction criteria are bureaucratic and reminiscent of colonial times, as they consider the marks and grades of candidates from matriculation to M.Phil. level. In many cases, recruitment involves written tests on general

knowledge and subject-specific topics, as well as demonstrations of potential faculty members. There is little consideration for factors such as their thought process and positionality, as well as their motivation for pursuing a career in teaching gender studies as a discipline. Questions such as why they choose to pursue this field as a man or woman are not given enough attention.

The list of above questions is beyond the thinking of those whose primary aim is just to recruit the people as per prescribed criteria for university appointments. The people hiring is also linked with the quantitative indicators of numbers of publications in the well reputed journals.

### **Conceptualization and Operationalization of terms**

#### **Coloniality and Gender in Pakistan**

It is necessary to articulate what I understood from coloniality and its link to gender studies. In my understanding, I am speaking from (Islamabad, Pakistan), for me, the foundation of coloniality is based on power structures and logic generated during the colonial era such as the international division of labor (core/periphery) racial and ethnic hierarchy (West and non-West), the Christian-centric patriarchal hierarchy of gender/sexuality and the interstate system (military and political power)' (Grosfoguel, Oso and Christou 2015).

Coloniality, as Nelson Maldonado-Torres writes, 'refers to longstanding patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of

colonial administration'. (Torres 2007). In unpacking coloniality, Aníbal Quijano (2000) explains that as countries in Western Europe consolidated themselves as the centre of capitalism during their colonial expansion, they possessed hegemonic control over the world's market, means of production, and workforce, and, consequently, became the centre of global knowledge production. (Quijano 2000). Maldonado Torres makes the point that rationality, as determined by the project of modernity, works to exclude various Indigenous, colonized, and feminized subjects from the category of knower/knowledge producer as well as the realm of the human and, thus, of existence. Based on this argument, it becomes evident that knowledge production and research in universities have been fundamental elements in the establishment of coloniality and, more specifically, the coloniality of knowledge. Backed by economic, political, and technological dominance, Westernized universities have had the power to produce and spread a certain type of academic knowledge conceived as universal, neutral, and authoritative produced by a privileged group of 'knowers/subjects' (Ramos 2018)

It is thus crucial that we understand the gravity of this situation when considering or imagining a decolonial feminist challenge to the coloniality of knowledge and being.

### **Troubled Engagement**

My engagement with this process of transcription, reflecting on data again and again was troubled at some stages because the process was always more important for me in the research process; however, the academic structure also required an output. Furthermore, my relationship with my respondents was also very formal, and at least for one and a half years, I have tried to get access. In few cases, first they give consent and

agreement but after having the look at questionnaire they refused to do so. There were a lot of challenges in terms of coordination and respondents' willingness to talk besides COVID-19.

I did not interact except repetitive interviews interactions, and we usually talk about topic and its related questions. We got less chance to do informal conversation. But sure, I have done semi- structured interview in more than one sitting with one respondent.

Being an insider as a faculty of the Gender Studies centre, I am familiar with most of them. There was fear among the respondents of being judged and analysed. It took me a lot of my time to convince my respondents about research objectives and time coordination. COVID-19 was one of the major challenges that I had in my data collection because my fieldwork started at the same time when there was an outbreak of this pandemic. Since all my respondents were university faculty members, they had to manage online teaching classes, research supervisions, and official meetings, etc. Therefore, I have conducted online interviews with them on ZOOM, Microsoft teams etc. Most of these interviews lasted between half an hour to one-hour maximum.

In addition, the majority of Women and Gender Studies (WGS) departments have a predominantly female faculty. Many of these faculty members have childcare and elderly care responsibilities, which is why I had to schedule some interviews during the day and a few others in the late evening. Some of the interviews are completed at intervals of one or two days. There were very interesting dynamics of relationships between the head of the departments and the rest of the faculty members. In one or two places it happened that the faculty mentioned that without permission of their Director/Incharge, they cannot talk to

me. That was one of the reasons for the delay in my research at one place it took me almost one year to engage because in our universities usually, websites mentioned email contacts are not a viable option for contact if you send an email to someone then you have to send him follow up call that please reply. and that trend is not very common in Pakistan where email is considered a professional mode of communication. A few of the faculty members said that we are willing to talk to you, but we need permission from the head of the department. It is an amazing fact for me that we teach the discipline whose basic claim is to be non-hierarchical but there are hierarchical relations operating within the gender studies departments. But it was not a similar case in five places. Whenever I tried to reach out the respondents, they take me in the power position to analyse them, they thought that I would judge their understating of gender, feminism, and feminist knowledge production. Similarly, few respondents showed a willingness to be part of interviews at the start of my research and after several contacts via phone, email, and what's app they refused, and they made excuses for not being included in the research.

Qualitative research begins with the assumptions and the use of interpretative/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human group. In the above definition, I emphasize the process of research as flowing from philosophical assumptions to an interpretive lens and on to the procedures involved in studying human and social problems.

As part of qualitative and feminist research methodology (Neuman 2006: 378) field research enables a researcher to explore, “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3). Instead, qualitative researchers gather up close information

by talking directly to the people. With a few of the respondents, I have had face-to-face interactions over time. The current qualitative research has key characteristics. During my entire research process, I was focused on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that I brought to the research. Another key characteristic of my research was that it was an emergent design. Emergent means in this research that sometimes myths got shattered when u started research. One of the examples could be link to the coordination I was having an assumption that might be due to having same professional affiliation I could get time to talk quickly but I started this process, it came out differently.

Emergent design means that the initial research plan cannot be tightly prescribed and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter to the field. (W.Creswell 2013).

In this process of starting the interviews, the question may change, and the forms of data collection may be altered, instead of current research, my initial plan was to explore gender knowledge production in WGS departments in Pakistan. It was changed due to a lack of access to the last 25 years of archival data or publication in the Higher education commission recognize journals that could be studied for looking into the content of gender knowledge. It was difficult to operationalize what is knowledge, and whose knowledge is it. If I opt for content analysis, then pre-defined coding was an option for me. Another reason was that 25 years' time span for content analysis is very large. I was not keen to explore the meta-narrative and pre-defined code of what is already being done.

The researchers position themselves in a qualitative study. This means that in a later section, I have conveyed (i.e., in a method section, in an introduction, or in other places in a study) their background (e.g., work experiences, cultural experiences, history). How it informs my interpretations of the information in a study and what they must gain from the study. As Wolcott (2010) said,

Our readers have right to know about us. And they do not want to know whether we played in the high school band. They want to know what prompts our interest in the topics we investigate, to whom we are reporting, and what we personally stand to gain from our study. (p.36).

## **Research Methods**

In qualitative research study) there are several different methods and sources through which data can be generated or collected. It is akin to an 'umbrella of activity,' beneath which any technique can be used to gain the desired knowledge (Schatzman and Strauss 1973: 14). The researcher collects “descriptions of behavior through observations, interviewing, documents, and artifacts” (Creswell 2007: 131). To achieve the study's objectives, data collection was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews.

## **Sample of the study**

I have conducted 22 in-depth interviews. The total population of the four departments and one centre consisted of 40 academics. These participants were based in five leading public sector universities of Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, and Karachi.

## **Research Tool**

### **In-depth Interviews**

During the fieldwork, I relied on on-field interviews for collecting data. Field interviews "involve asking questions, listening, expressing, interest, and recording what was said" (Neuman 2006: 406). Interviewing can take many forms as well for instance in person, on the phone, and through the mail, and in modern days through cyberspace i.e., emails and social media. Field interviews always take the form of extended interaction with the interlocutor or members of the community. It involves an open-ended, flexible, unstructured, and non-directive mode of data collection.

I interacted through different mediums including in-person, on phone, and through email. While most of these interviews were conducted in the *faculty* common room gathering, the interactions also went beyond those formal interviews. For instance, communicating through what's app for time coordination and date enabled me to connect with these individuals. All this assisted me to build rapport with them. I have also conducted interviews with some of the senior retired founders of WGS as a field in Pakistan. So, through email exchanges, telephonic engagement, and using technological mediums like Skype and Zoom, I had the chance to get to know their perspectives and experiences.



## Insider-Outsider Puzzle

My initial engagement with the literature produced on gender knowledge and gender studies as a field took me to the “expected sites”<sup>18</sup> of WGS as an academic discipline in Pakistan to explore the dynamics of the contemporary state of the discipline. Gender knowledge in Pakistan is largely associated (although not confined to) with development sector research studies and dissemination events about a specific donor funding agenda. However, I soon realized that WGS as a disciplined struggle in presence of mainstream social sciences within universities in Pakistan have only been (marginal)/limited to degree programs and routine activities of the universities. This fact was also reaffirmed by the literature produced on WGS as a discipline in Pakistan. Scholars like Rubina Saigol (2006), Farzana Bari in two different news articles in (1996,1997), and others have pointed out various aspects of this issue in one workshop report (2003) conducted in the initial years. The most striking aspect of all these report papers discussions was that they all focused on how the field was initiated and what a possible vision for its establishment and growth could be. However, it was once again a question for me: what I wanted to find out was why, despite its activity since 1993 for growth and establishment, there was no written history or struggle documentation, except for one article in 2006, and after that, there was complete silence.

This revelation turned out to be a boon in disguise for me in multiple ways. First, I started looking at sites and places "unconventional" or "non-traditional." It also motivated me to look "outside" and "within again" to explore the dynamics of this question. By

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<sup>18</sup> Usually, gender knowledge is produced at large in Pakistan but less is related to discipline of gender studies

looking outside, I started searching for WGS in the world and the issues of discipline within transnational feminism also known as global feminist knowledge production. On the other hand, looking "within again" was meant to see/explore and unearth WGS' place historically, to explore this "hidden treasure" as aptly put by Helminski (2013). While I was engaged with this inquiry, I stumbled upon a related yet very important aspect, a step further into this journey, the challenges of WGS as a field. Going through already produced literature on knowledge production in gender studies, two important points came forth; firstly, most of the literature documents only *historically* the case studies of the emergence of the discipline across the world. This trend was mostly started by white, feminists, and historians and the history of WGS is replete with the Global North and certain countries in the Global South. This body of scholarship surveyed historical resources including South Asia, East Asia, Europe, and the U.S.A. Secondly, there were few if any studies produced on the contemporary state of the discipline in Pakistan. Recently there is an emerging body of literature that has started documenting the transformation, and evolution of this field in different parts of the world. One significant aspect that has taken much attention is related to the rise of WGS as a field within different public and private sector universities.

Consequently, I started the feminist qualitative inquiry journey in 2020 when I came to know about the fact that if I tried to do google surfing with some keywords related to WGS in Pakistan then nothing came out in Jester, but I witnessed the struggle of discipline since 2007 when I was graduated as pioneer batch student having a degree in gender studies and everyone asked you what gender studies was all about? I started talking with my colleagues and fellows at my first job just to see how people viewed it. After spending a roller coaster journey of one and half years in the development sector I realized

that field is not suitable for me because I find less time to read and concentrate in it, I considered myself more inclined towards theoretical side. After that, I moved to a university teaching job, and started my reading journey again and have shared with my colleagues that I want to opt for this research for my doctorate degree. I started to engage with them in discussions related to gender studies, gender knowledge, and feminist knowledge production and later realized that engagement with them through these informal chats in groups had a deeper level of engagement with this issue on hand.

### **Research Limitation(s) and Challenge(s)**

During my research journey, I was cognizant of my own biases, values, opinions, and experiences as a researcher and as a faculty member of WGS. I was also aware of the elements of power, subjectivity, and the position of a researcher in the field. These issues are considered important aspects of qualitative research methodology, especially in in-depth interviews. Being a female researcher, I initially felt that my gender and the same professional association would be beneficial to get access to them. However, after getting into the field and establishing contact with these respondents my perceptions and preconceived notions were overturned completely. I was welcomed by one or two respondents, but I faced a lot of struggles talking with many respondents, I came to know that they also have some biases towards my organizational affiliation. Through my interaction, I also came to realize that gender identity matter least for them, but I was from Islamabad (the capital) and it has hindered my process of interaction with them due to their

location and position in the peripheries of Pakistan<sup>19</sup>. I had been interacting with different people in Pakistan by visiting conferences and seminars, and other spaces related to gender issues and had the experience that a lot is going on. I was also uncertain of the fact that I might be able to get complete entry and access within my field or that I might be able to get much time to spend with them and their respective opinions. This bias was also challenged by the attitude of the respondents.

Qualitative research can have various limitations and challenges. I also encountered a few challenges during my fieldwork; one challenge was to negotiate my position within these spaces. Apart from being very restrictive to outsiders and strangers, instead of my gender, it was the issue of class that struck me the most. I was from a middle-class background. At the outset, this difference in class struck me but over time I became part of their discussions comfortably and the issue of class became irrelevant. My role as a researcher helped me to overcome this issue in class. There was one biggest challenge that I confronted with my interaction with *faculty* was related to their busy schedule and frequent traveling, however, as a qualitative researcher I remained consistent and negotiated the issue while scheduling the interviews accordingly. In the case of (Ex-Director-Karachi-Centre), this was also true because of her health issues she mostly interacted with me through emails, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms. Sometimes I sent voice notes and in return, I received answers on what's app due to internet connections sometimes zoom interviews were interrupted.

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<sup>19</sup> n different provinces and how the sense of competition and perceptions about certain university exists in their minds.

There were also several limitations of the research, for instance, this research covered work of firstly established four departments and one centre, and it is only related to their issues, challenges, and prospects of the field. This research provided new avenues that can be explored related to the transformation of the discipline and its methodologies. Within the fieldwork, there were some explicit issues as I have narrated above. However other than those issues, there were some implicit issues as well. Initially, I positioned myself as a researcher, but I have also introduced myself as a teaching faculty of one of the centres. Without specifically labelling with any specific ideological position, I presented myself as an individual who is seeking answers to some of the questions I had in my mind and guideline. However, as Patricia Zavella (1993) highlights, as — “insider researchers”, what we find relevant about our identity, or what we assume the respondents relate to as common ground, might be very different from how the respondents perceive us (Zavella 1993: 53-76). My interaction as a seeker became a strength in the field and I was in a better position to connect and became part of their experience-sharing journey.

Qualitative research also yields an extensive amount of data that is sometimes a challenge to handle. Moreover, respondents’ hand over their personal information/experiences, and as researchers, we attempt to weave them into an academic framework. It remained a challenge to filter the data one gets from this kind of research. To overcome this challenge, I have tried to engage my respondents in this process and asked them at various stages of my research their concerns and understanding about the data being collected. This double-checking again helped calm some of my concerns about this field research. Finally, Abu Lughod (1991) problematizes the —speaking to and speaking from that happens when an insider works in her own community. For me, this

was also a challenge to present the narratives of these faculty members since these accounts reflect their perspectives and experiences. This dissertation is written in English and directed toward an academic community. It aims at translation and, like all other qualitative inquires, asks the reader to feel the flow and depth of the world explored.

## **Research Ethics**

I have kept the identity of respondents anonymous. At every possible stage of my research, I have interacted with my interlocutors and have taken their input and suggestions on data collection and representation. I was also aware of the element of confidentiality of my respondents throughout my research work. Through my data collection, I felt an obligation to uphold the confidentiality of the data that I gathered. For instance, a few respondents have shared their personal and intimate experiences with me and have asked me to keep their identities anonymous. The concept of power is also very much part of field research. I was aware of my power as a researcher and the power dynamics. I had with my respondents during the interviews. Since I interacted with both faculty and the heads of the departments, I felt the difference in the engagement at these levels. In the case of the Head of the departments, I sometimes felt the pressure that these individuals are administrative leaders of their respective fields and have substantiated amounts of power. There was also a sense of hierarchy in my interaction with them. However, in the case of lecturers, and assistant professors, I find it less challenging and hierarchical. I have developed a rapport with them. After the completion of my interviews, I shared the recorded data with them and discussed how I am going to analyse it. With their participation and input, as a researcher, I was mindful of my concerns related to the

research. Interlocutors and respondents share their personal experiences, and we must waive those in our academic writing.

This decolonizing and-epistemological orientation is complementary to a critical feminist onto-epistemology where one goal is to unpack the participants' lived realities deeply contextualized in their sociocultural milieu (Benhabib and Cornell 1987; El Saadwi 1997). This reflexive lens pushes researchers to reflect upon and gain better insight into the complex intersectionality that constitutes the lives of their participants (Benhabib et al. 1995; Fraser 1989), as well as repositioning how researchers engage with the subjectivities and representations of participants who are considered 'marginalized' by dominant discourses. (Shah 2019). So, my analysis also included on their understanding of certain concepts in their respective socio-cultural milieu.

### **Positionality**

In an article titled, "who should teach women's studies?" author Farley (1978) concluded that the interests of students opting for women's studies courses (especially male students) do not have any relation with the sex/gender of the person teaching a specific course rather it is the perspective(s) (rather commitment) of the instructor related to feminism that has the most impact on students. The reason why I have mentioned this is most of the research participants and I feel that in our classrooms it matters a lot who is teaching and what is the topic? My female research participant feels like that it is matter a lot either male or female is teaching and what is the topic?

My positionality which is linked with my various lens such as (philosophical, personal, theoretical beliefs and perspective through which I have viewed the research

process), potential influences on my research due to age, political beliefs, social class, and ethnicity. I write from a place within the public sector in Pakistan, and I am a mother of two children. I grew up in a village of the province of Punjab. I studied in public school. My parents gave me a lesson of commitment and hard work in life as a key to success. There's one privilege in my life, which is to belong to and be educated by middle-class family background. Before enrolling in my master's degree in Gender Studies, I was quite clueless about the discipline. Upon admission, I began reading notes and attending class lectures. After two semesters I realized that I have tried to question my presumption about women. I thought I revisited my relationship with my family, after knowing more about subject made me closer to my mother instead of my father, then I realized that she had a lot struggles and sacrifices to make four of us as socially acceptable humans. Before that, I used to idealize my father. In the second stage, I also refined my philosophical position after doing master and M.Phil. program. I first turned to be more inspired by the Marxist and leftist ideas. I was very staunch kind of activist in early years of my new life but then I feel that there is gap in theory and practice. I should be more focused to academic reading and writing instead of chanting only slogans on corners of every street. Still, I do believe in progressive politics within and outside of campus with keeping in view the feminist ethos and principles of relationship between the participant and the researcher relationship. But with the passage of time, I have learned that I do not want to categorize myself under any label or with any brand of thoughts from the available list. I often feel that language keeps me at the periphery, even though I am at the core of Pakistani academia. On the other hand, I am also an advocate of decolonial feminism.



The things which provoked my internal dialogue with me as person is class and language within the academic industry. I also see that is struggle which continues although we claim to be non-hierarchical and classless in our classrooms. But sometimes I went to academic circles and meetings I often used to hear that our local degrees are not considered as worth as compared to foreign degrees because the criteria for authentication and validation is linked to the big names and ranking of the global universities. Most of the people in academia want to prolong this hegemony and they are happy to be recognized as foreign qualified which unfortunately or fortunately I am not. It was necessary to mention this here because we are trained in colonial education system, and we go with foreign stamps. Many people perpetuate this colonial legacy through promoting their foreign degrees and showcasing their exposure in front of their juniors and mid-career colleagues.

It is interesting to observe that while the sex/gender of an instructor deemed to be irrelevant (at least what is reflected in my perspective), their understanding and commitment to the feminist cause determined and impacted the students opting for these courses. But I feel that being a woman teaching and researching gender issues is quite different for me when I see the reactions of the male students when I taught the social construction of gender, feminist theories, and status of women in Pakistan.

### **Reflexivity**

I have a clear understanding about my beliefs regarding gender as a category and identity. I know I have presumptions while doing the research as I am in the field of gender studies since 2007 which is why I felt that my engagement with my respondents was troubled. My biases and judgments can be reflected in my interpretation, but I am aware

that it helped me to run this process smoothly because most of my respondents were women and they were having childcaring and elderly care responsibilities along with their teaching jobs, so being mother of two children. I tried to facilitate them as well. I conducted most of the interviews late in the evenings.

Most importantly, my perceptions about process help me to learn and investigate another side of the coin for example, I tried to write just too went out when I was in stress or in feeling of hurt, but writing pieces come out in the form of newspaper articles or blog piece not necessarily an academic article. All of these I had done in the process of my course work, proposal defence, proposal writing and preparation of interview guidelines and conducting interviews. My beliefs as decolonial feminist can affect my data interpretations and my experiences of teaching as middle-class woman in public sector university can also resonate with the other participants lived experiences.

Finally, being an academician, my job is to critically analyse the content and to reflect upon it from a certain vantage point but in my research process I just presented the plural understanding of concepts around my research objectives, but I do not have intentions to build the narrative round binaries of the right versus wrong and good versus bad authentic versus unauthentic. So, all these above judgments and beliefs help me to examine or unpack my data analysis. So, I am fully aware about my own positionality, but I imagine that my beliefs and judgments are affecting my interpretation of the data to some extent.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

The below-mentioned themes and sub-themes emerged from the primary data that has been generated through this research. The discussion and analysis section has themes that emerged from the data transcription (thematic analysis). All the themes can be divided into three major sections: one historical and evolutionary challenges, second contemporary issues and challenges and last is the future of WGS as an academic discipline especially in Pakistan. Further, these themes are linked with my theoretical framework and literature because universities have a vital role in shaping the everyday life of individuals and society at large. The interviews conducted in this research revolves around WGS as an academic discipline, its philosophy and the issues and challenges. In these different stories of interviews, I see the connection between autonomy, connecting theory, and practice. The data which comes out of these stories informed us that WGS as a degree program is still labeled as a Western established agenda and people who are part of WGS are imitating the Western theories and contextualization of Global North theories into Pakistani classrooms which is not very exciting for most of the participants and students as well, but in the rest of the world, it has transformed now. Though the trends appeared in my data is not common with other South Asian histories and struggles of WGS, there is hope for the future if it expands with market visibility and acceptability because universities as institutions are more concern with generation of revenues and have become grounds of neoliberal capitalist corporate agenda in contemporary times.

## **Framing the Issue and setting the Canvas**

Universities are part and parcel of the building of the nation-state by training its elite and bureaucracy and by providing the knowledge and ideology underlying the very national project. Some of the important questions that can be asked are therefore to explore how the mission of the university is to be re-formulated in the globalized world. Also, if the idea of knowledgeable society implies that knowledge is everywhere; what is the impact of this idea on modern university which was created on the premise that it was an island of knowledge in the society of ignorance? What is the place of the university as a centre of knowledge production and dissemination in society with many other centres of production and dissemination of knowledge? Will academic review and referring practices continue to significantly determine scholarship evaluations and recruitment and promotional opportunities in universities worldwide? Will they continue to do so in a manner that promotes narrowly defined, monoculturally generated conceptions of good scholarship, methodological rigor, and theoretical soundness, as is often the case today? As its best, modern university has been a locus of free and independent thinking and of celebration of diversity, even when subjected to the narrow boundaries of the disciplines, whether in the sciences or humanities. Bearing in mind that in the past thirty years the tendency to transform the truth value of knowledge into the “market truth” value of knowledge has become increasingly strong and prominent. Could there be any future for non-conformist, critical heterodox, non-marketable knowledge, and for professors, students and researchers pursuing it? If not, can we still call university an institution that produces only competent conformist, and never competent rebels, and that only regards knowledge as a commodity and never as a public good?

Six decades of consistent failure in creating a viable higher education system forces the academics to search for reasons that go beyond fiscal and administrative issues only. None of Pakistan's 50+ public universities come even close to being a university in the real sense of the world. Compared to universities in other Asian countries the quality of both teaching and research is far low or compromised. Common/prevaling wisdom has always been that by increasing funding can solve all, or at least most, of the systemic problems that bedevil higher education in Pakistan. On the contrary Pakistan offers an instructive counterexample: a many-fold increase in university funding from 2002-2008 resulted in, at best, only marginal improvements in few parts of the higher education sector. This violation of "common sense" points to the need for some new/critical thinking. (Hoodbhoy 2009).

Higher education in Pakistan is closely linked with the context of the country's historical and political development. It is significant for understanding the present that there is a description of the state of education of Muslims well before the partition of sub-continent. The benefits of increased access are weighed against the problems created by the post-2002 rapid expansion of the university system. Academic freedom and campus culture are important to examine together with the role universities have played in fostering terrorism and intolerance. The most annoying and yet prevailing issue is to define quality of education, without which comparisons are meaningless. It is perhaps loud thinking that for both social sciences and humanities the present international ranking system is inadequate and education specialists need to produce a general framework that could consider ground realities specific to countries like Pakistan (Hoodbhoy 2021). By the same token, social sciences has deep roots in our education system because it is taught at

colleges, but WGS was a new experiment in the higher education sector and no wonder even an educated professor at the university can ask you *what is women's and gender studies?* Is it an academic discipline? (Bari 1993). How does the fear of WGS be absorbed into the administration of the neoliberal university play out in the present moment. Guysheftall articulated in 2008, “despite its growth the women's studies are still institutionally fragile --- they also have inadequate budgets and very little control over their curriculum because they depend on departmental courses and joint appointments and in recent years have faced a tremendous backlash and tightening of resources”. (Guysheftall 2008).

In a university that is marked by the hierarchy of departmental and school structures, must reckon with the need to be placed, identified, and evaluated in terms of the concrete output and data it generates with respect to societal gender disparities. This thrust is further propelled by the new *professionalization* of the subjects. Simply put, there is a push to have well-recognized approaches and methodologies firmly in place — in other words, to be more like the other social science disciplines. Since WGS emerged from a critique of existing disciplines, and as inter/trans-disciplinary subject, it is interesting to note this attempt to mold it to the protocols of a ‘proper’ discipline. This trend is much stronger at a stage well past the undergraduate level where WGS is offered only as one course among many other courses, as if specialization seems to urgently call out for disciplinary legitimacy. (Sreenivas 2015)

All these questions raised in the above section are somehow answered within the analysis of the data because the entire data is closely linked to the idea of decolonizing the western universities. The universities are not quiet places and public sector universities

have historically been embedded within three pillars of modern social system of regulation -the state, market, and the civil society, however, the balance of their presence in the structure and functioning of the university has been varied over the course of time. Consequently, trends favoring the *commodification* of education and research have intensified in recent years. This has impacted non-traditional social science disciplines more significantly compared to mainstream social sciences. The students are enrolled not only to get knowledge and flavour of higher education but also to get marketable degrees. Concerns related to the employability of a WGS degree in the job market are highlighted in the lived experiences of students pursuing gender studies (Aslam 2022).

Thinking through the possibility (or otherwise) of ‘decolonisation’ in the metropolitan university involves many set of challenges. The most important is to undertake an intellectual audit of what is often presented as ‘European’ or ‘Western’ knowledge and to assess the multiple lines of influence in its making. A related task is to assess what valuable insights and perspectives have been occluded or marginalized by dominant disciplinary formations in universities. Being cognizance of explicit or overlooked insights that emerge from a variety of sites, decolonisation is not a matter of relativizing these alongside received knowledge but of putting them in a dialogue. The substantial challenge here is to identify and undo the ways in which forms of knowledge have been undermined, marginalized, dismissed, or appropriated without segregating epistemological resources into a series of alternatives in the name of epistemic diversity (Gopal 2021).

The data generated in this current research deals only with the (first) five national/public sector universities of Pakistan. I want to clarify here that the data is related

to the teacher's/instructor's perspectives of WGS as an academic field and its related issues and challenges in Pakistan. The universities are bureaucratic organizations of the modern corporate world. There are agendas driven by corporate world regarding students' strengths and hierarchy of discipline in terms of academic significance. It is similar to the act of peeling onion which is very complex, layered and taxing. There are commonalities in administrative, financial, and hierarchical structure of the universities. My data is related to four WGS departments and one Centre of Excellence in Gender studies. In terms of administration, departments are treated as integrated within the system and the centre is more autonomous as it is established under the (Act of the Parliament) in terms of its own direct funding from HEC of Pakistan.

The respondents' professional situatedness did not change significantly much in last five years and almost all were working in different institutions at five places, often in the same positions. However, one thing was noticeably different i.e. how they feel from the very first interview, (*I was struck, and often deeply affected*), by how utterly drained and profoundly depleted the interviewees seemed to be their pressured exhaustion was evident in their tone because it was COVID-19 times, and they were always busy with online teaching and official meetings. In some interviews, it also manifested as frantic anxiety, rushed speaking regularly broken up by self-interruption, as if their sense of being in constant hurry bled into, and fragmented their thought and speech. Others, however, spoke slowly and gravely, interviews punctuated by tired sighs and respondent pause as if they had limited energy with which to think and speak. Sometimes, in the background, I could hear the voices of children and other sounds of the chirping of birds. Due to online tools I occasionally had to reconnect with the interviewees because of the internet



interruption and online interaction challenges during those interviews. In the discussion below I have thematically analyzed the data that is supported by the theoretical propositions and debate.

### **Entering WGS as an academic Career**

I am not sure. I am not sure what to respond. I have been here in Baluchistan for the last 15 years. We are just two Ph.Ds. I supervised scholars from sociology, anthropology, psychology. The university ruled out that those who are M. Phil, cannot teach the M. Phil. students. We should remove the limitations for its development. Madam Rubina is teaching but we cannot start Ph.D. due to lack of faculty, there should be flexibility in rules. Its progress is linked with administrative support. There are departmental discrimination issues, I have the right to become head of the department, it is going to be bypassed. They are giving headship to the new ones. In promotion cases there are hurdles, when we do not speak in front of higher authorities then people tease the students. I do not do this. We need to cultivate our mind and heart. (Respondent from Baluchistan University)

Most of the respondents joined the discipline incidentally and there exists no such subjective indicators of appointing faculty in WGS except specialization in certain fields as mandatory bureaucratic criteria along with certain numbers of academic publications. Overall, there is a shortage of trained and sensitize human resource working within WGS departments across Pakistan.

Entering the academic field of WGS in Pakistan marks a significant step towards understanding and addressing gender-based inequalities within the country. Scholars such as Afiya Shehrbano Zia have paved the way by advocating for feminist perspectives in Pakistani academia (Zia, 2017). Institutions like the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) have initiated programs like the Gender and Development Studies to promote critical analysis of gender dynamics in Pakistani society (LUMS, n.d.). Despite challenges, the growing interest in WGS signifies a commitment towards fostering gender equality and social justice in Pakistan's academic landscape.

As one respondent shared,

We are on university payroll. We are working on our mandate. It was established as vulnerable women's right advocacy. Our graduates passed out. our graduates made place in the market. Our field was multidisciplinary. My batch was fourth, at that time options were limited. Now people are getting awareness about women studies. Our hiring structure is getting broader. I joined this field unexpectedly.

Despite initial challenges and resistance, the field of WGS has witnessed notable progress, with graduates finding opportunities within diverse sectors such as human resource management, banking, international organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, as well as in academia within Pakistan and internationally. This highlights the transformative potential of WGS education in shaping the mindset of graduates and creating awareness within society.

Yet another aspect shared by the respondents reflected that most of the faculty members started their career with diverse degree background including, psychology, political science, sociology, media studies, management sciences, international relations, anthropology, economics, and development studies. There are very few individuals who have pursued a degree in gender studies. On the contrary majority of the respondents were having specialization in gender issues. To be precise, they have developed and learned gender lens over time as part of WGS. As said by one respondent, *"I have psychology background, I learned about multidisciplinary perspectives in gender studies"*.

There is emergent discussion around certain taboo issues related to gender in society. Future of gender studies is extremely promising as evident in one response,

When I was a student, there were 14 students. now we are dividing the first year and second year into sub sections. In the same year, 4 girls left psychology and sociology as majors, and they came into gender studies. I did not feel something wrong was going to happen with it.

Few faculty members are also running project with USAID and other UN agencies for awareness raising session for administration and non-teaching staff. In one narration is reflected as:

We have done their sensitization because they took undue benefits of being a girl. We have done through HEC funding we have done administrative staff training at Karachi; I was focal person. We need to develop our linkages. We aim to connect with delinked centres, then I thought our libraries should be connected. At least, we can have catalogue. We possess 4000 books. We have primary sources which we photocopied for Peshawar and Lahore. We should share the content with each other. There should be interlink within our activities. The academic community is enriching their experiences after entering it.

The above shared narrative underscores the significance of WGS as a transformative academic field in Pakistan, contributing to broader societal efforts towards gender equality, social justice, and the empowerment of marginalized communities. The intersection of academic scholarship, legislative advocacy, and societal activism highlights the interconnectedness of efforts aimed at fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

### **Everyday struggles of Hierarchies, Class, and Corporate Capitalism**

*The attitude of administration is problematic, although WGS is a very critical discipline but the treatment, we receive is also very critical. There is no market value attached to it, there is no means of making it profitable. The administration question us what is your output?*

Mignolo, similarly to other decolonial theorists (Mohanty 1984; Lugones 2010), rejects the notion of a ‘binary’ that distinguishes theory from practice: of decolonial border thinking, he argued, “I prefer talking about border thinking and doing — for thinking is doing and doing is thinking” (“Interview — Walter D. Mignolo,” 2017). Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006:208) also resists the conception of knowledge production consistent with

imperialism — one whose merits are predicated on consumption and accumulation rather than the stimulating of liberatory praxis; he has written, “de-colonization works towards the empowerment and liberation of different layer from oppression, and toward the undermining of the assumption upon which imperial power is naturalized, enacted and corrupted” This paradigm shift, Mignolo notes (2011:138), runs inherently counter to the conditions on which the ‘modern’ university operates, competes, and is judged on the global academic stage, given that “the true goals of institutions of higher education is to compete with other institutions of higher education and move up in the several recognized pols of global ranking”. This does not mean decolonial border thinking is an impossible task to carry out from within the university, Mignolo (2011) writes (though he concedes it may encounter challenges of both funding and enthusiasm); rather, he argues that it emphasizes the extent to which the very conception, structure, and purpose of the university pose challenges to the project of decoloniality — making it all the more urgent for the ideas produced inside it to journey beyond its walls. The journey beyond is like a modern university that has been a locus of free and independent thinking and celebration of diversity, even when subjected to the narrow boundaries of the disciplines, whether in the sciences, social sciences or in humanities (Santos 2016). Unfortunately, this is not true in the case of universities in Asia and especially in Pakistan. The diversity is being shown as tokenism and lip services are paid to the growth and establishment of diversity studies and marginalized social sciences. The gender studies departments in five universities have been ghettoized but they are *presented* as a liberal face of the universities.

It is a relatively new field as compared to other social science disciplines like sociology, political science, and psychology. All other social sciences have established

histories and entrenched academic roots. This discipline received basic intakes from the undergraduate colleges. Gender studies started at university, it has no nursery. In views of the few participants in Pakistan, it was started by the psychologists. Pioneers for starting gender studies were mostly psychologists.

I hope that moving forward, we will come closer to our mandate with the initiation of the BS program in gender studies. The approval of the BS program is crucial; without it, achieving our mandate would be difficult due to its foundational nature. I did not feel importance of M. Phil degree, from BS we can directly lead toward the Ph. D degree.

The start of the discipline was good and competent people were hired. As one of the respondents mentioned,

After 10/15 years as I worked in the women university as well, management get changes then we observed its value as discipline has also been decreased. “Due to lack of support from the management. It is important to note that no discipline can survive without management support. If the management is conservative, then it cannot flourish.”

The faculty of Peshawar university repeatedly showed concerns about the insensitivity of the administration toward the department of gender studies. Overall, as reflected by the respondents, the department is not encouraged and supported by the university.

Several prerequisites are necessary for the survival of any academic discipline. One is demand at grassroot level and another is foundational degree at college level. In WGS case, first time students heard about gender studies in the universities because they are not familiar with this name, and they are only aware of disciplines like history, sociology, political science etc. They just decide about getting admission in these disciplines based on

guess work, what to choose and what not to choose for higher degree. As shared by one respondent, “I feel its survival is difficult because how you will measure the social change in attitudes and academically, we are required to ask about outputs.” At college level jobs are not advertised. Students get discouraged with no market scope.

Here, a big problem is linked to the scope of the discipline. For the first time in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are only four seats in quota for gender studies as a degree is introduced and that is only for men. It shows that everyday struggle of discipline is linked with internationalization of education and market which is the pillar of neoliberal rationality. Slowly and gradually this discipline is getting recognition like other social sciences and now from last three- or four-years market is bit opening toward jobs opportunities for gender studies students.

In addition to that still there is a discussion that old universities have basic departmental rights like Punjab university Lahore, and Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad being an old/reputed public sector universities whereas newly emerged universities in other cities and provinces of Pakistan, have no basic rights including infrastructure, support staff and resources. As reflected in one response: “Sometime what matters is the market of discipline. For example, if my department has 500 students then management will be happy to allot more rooms and facilities, if we have 50 students then management will ask us two rooms are enough for your department.”

In the case of one of the oldest universities of Lahore (Punjab), usually students who join gender studies, are aspiring for federal and provincial level competitive exams

(FPSC, PPSC) and/or those who aspire to go abroad for higher studies. Teachers have presumption that:

High intelligence level students do not join WGS, we only get leftovers. They just want to get the flavor of the university. We tried our best to motivate them to own the subject and we do this in a four-year bachelor program. But it is about mindsets. At the start, students are very disinterested in this field. We tried to show them the new world through gender studies, and we got success during 4th semester. It is a big challenge for teachers. I have a psychology background, but I have trained myself in sociology, anthropology, and gender studies. The problem is, students have zero interest, so we must do a lot more struggle.

Similarly, that concern was raised by Karachi university faculty as well on the first day of university students ask questions about their career after getting degrees in WGS. Another respondent stated that, “When we started teaching here, we had unsteady careers because we were not permanent faculty members, I joined as research assistant, later I was hired for this job. When I came to the university my biggest concern was the same.”

The biggest concern for the student is where they will find a desired job? So, as reflected in the data the respondents provide them with guidelines related to their careers in development sector NGOs and other possibilities.

Another everyday challenge of discipline is related to career counselling. Now fifteen universities are offering degrees in gender studies. Few academicians believe that they should do collective lobbying with the government and push them to advertise the jobs and to create new posts for the gender experts in respective areas. NGOs are conventionally considered as the *only career* output for students who have a degree in gender studies. Most of the jobs are open for other social sciences not for gender studies. It is also one sort of challenge which is linked to output, due to such issue WGS has no say

at universities at structural levels. One of the founding Director mentioned that “Gender studies is a half-hearted project.”

It is not taken seriously as a cause to prompt gender justice in a society, but at academic level it was started for strengthening the image of government that they are working to and committed at reducing gender inequalities. In one of the responses, it was reflected as: “I have taken gender studies as a cause to achieve gender equality in a larger context. In my view, people who did not believe in this as a cause, they should not be teaching gender studies.”

This evidently indicates that the pioneers who had established WGS as an academic discipline within universities were driven by a cause and commitment toward a gender-just society. They aimed to challenge gender roles and relations through this degree program. At the outset, the struggle revolved around gaining approval for the course content and achieving visibility within the university system. Interestingly, even educated individuals sometimes question the necessity of this discipline.

### **WGS: a cause *betrayed***

*It is always considered as the jumping pad, and the subject was never owned by the pioneers and there for it never flourished. Apart from administration tried to merge gender studies (few years back in Peshawar university-KPK) into other social sciences department, this way it makes the department very insecure and vulnerable.*

Teaching faculty at Peshawar University and Baluchistan University held the view that the recent budget cuts have put universities in a financial crisis. However, this situation is not exclusive to gender studies only. When university is in a financial crisis, it obviously



has had trickled down affects. As demonstrated in their reflections even a demand of books or any supplementary material for teaching is plainly refused due by the university administration in the pretext of financial constraints. In case of university of Karachi it was reflected as, “Moreover, we resolve the financial issues of department in Karachi university. we used to self-cooperate and collect money for extracurricular activities.”

The academic discipline now known as Gender Studies was initially introduced at five universities: Karachi University, Peshawar University, Quaid-e-Azam University, Baluchistan University, and Punjab University. These five Centres of Excellence for Women’s Studies were established for achieving four main objectives. These objectives were thoroughly discussed at several meetings held in Islamabad for the preparation of the introduction of Women’s Studies, during 1988-89, initially as a five-year project funded by the Government of Pakistan, and later to be incorporated as a regular academic discipline by the various member universities. Most of them who later assumed the responsibility as Directors of the Centers were present at these meetings. It is important to recapitulate these here to assess the progress or failure of WGS in achieving the targets that have been set. These were:

- (1) building up a body of knowledge based on lost or undiscovered lives of women.
- (2) studying the roots and structures of inequality that lead to invisibility and exclusion of women from the concepts and methodologies of intellectual inquiry.
- (3) creating strategies for empowering women in their struggle against inequality and oppression and for effective participation in all areas of society and development; and

(4) developing or creating alternative concepts, approaches, and strategies for development.

This small yet significant venture that was began as a five-year project in April 1989 has surprisingly withstood all the hurdles and roadblocks. The Directors were appointed under the orders of the President of Pakistan. The Ex-director shared the history in these words:

This project was introduced during dictator general Zia-ul-Haq's period. He finalized that. I have a personal interest in it, which is why I am taking it up. The respondents were of the view that five centres were established at the same time, but they could not progress at the same level. When I retired from the centre in 2000, after that, it did not grow. (Ex-Director –CEWS-Karachi).

It was started as a development project. Sabeeha Hafeez was a post-doctoral researcher in sociology at the Ministry of Women's Development. She negotiated with all five universities to establish it for five years and it was funded by the Dutch government. MOWD was negotiating with five public sector universities. At that time, it was Centre of Excellence in Women's Studies. The nomenclature was the center. Sharing more she said:

There was nothing in writing. MOWD did not follow the proper procedure to establish an undersigned act. It was in the air. There is no legal status for all centers. In 1993 the project ended. I joined in 1992. It was the last year of this development project. It was back in 1994 when the IMF stipulated that HEC would not fund higher education.

In 1994 MOWD asked various universities to take over these five centers. Universities asked the state to provide additional budget otherwise they will not be able to do that. The Ministry of education refused to give the required budget. MOWD froze this project until the hiring of employees was halted. MOWD only released the salaries of current employees. In case of QAU as shared by the respondent:

At QAU, I was hired as a consultant. Tasneem Ahmer, as an assistant professor. Only two were hired as the teaching staff of the center, two men were hired as support staff.

It was a huge struggle how MOE<sup>20</sup> will fund it. I was in Islamabad I did a lobby with the ministries and politicians for its survival. MOWD had closed the findings that time, but there was no decision about what would happen with the centers. The education ministry will not take over. It happens every year here that who will take the centers. After a long time, it was decided that MOWD said all entries will be closed except CEGS<sup>21</sup> at Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad.

The respective universities in Karachi, Peshawar, Baluchistan, and Lahore said we will take over the centers under the university wings and later on they were declared as departments. The CEGs- QAU is the only Centre in Pakistan that has retained its original status that was granted at the time of inception. It is telling to share here the founding director of CEGS at QAU shared this in these words:

We had no act; we were in trouble again. I have done lobbying with parliamentarians to establish it through the act. It was me, and two clerical staff due to no budget one of appointed researcher was left centre. I thought that if I put my foot outside the centre, then everything will shut down. I thought strategically, do not let the centre shut down. I paid the salaries of support from my pocket, and I take it back when the ministry releases the budget. I want this Centre to sustain and serve as an academic arm of women's rights. (founding director-QAU Centre)

At the start of this department it was a very challenging time, even to work with limited financial and human resources was the biggest challenge. The administration was not in favour that this degree should run longer so they tried by hook or crook to halt the establishment of gender studies as field in five public sector leading universities. However, hierarchies within social sciences fields are also marked through its establishing history and market scope in academia. One respondent shared the experience in following narration:

civil aviation and in Human resources employ our graduates. Now a gender specialist is being hired in HR. Now they are also working in banking, ILO, world bank and media. one of our graduate Ms. Samina teaches in the Bradford university. One of the girls came two years ago. Her family moved to Canada, now she was crossing the age limit. She could not go with 12 family members, the Canadian embassy asked, what

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<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Education

<sup>21</sup> Centre of Excellence in Gender Studies

are you studying, and they were surprised that Pakistan is teaching gender studies, and they transferred her credits. All studies are not accepted. They sent us a letter that due to her studies in gender, we are taking her to Canada immigration but on the condition that she will complete her study and will serve back to Pakistan. I was very happy about that. Everywhere there are challenges and pros and cons.

Consequently, due to global capitalism and neo liberal economic consequences utility of degree is linked to the placement of graduates at well reputed institution.

### **Political Instability and Religious Conservatism**

In recent years, right-wing populist discourse globally has targeted gender studies, feminism, and queer-rights, employing terms like 'anti-gender' and 'anti-genderism,' and accusing their targets of promoting 'gender ideology' or 'genderism. The term 'gender ideology' implies that gender studies, queer, trans, and feminist movements are seen as producing an ideology that opposes the majority of the population or society/culture, while heterosexuality and a stable gender binary system are seen as un-ideological and natural (Corrêa (2018); Corrêa, Paternotte, and Kuhar (2018); Paternotte and Kuhar 2018; Grzebalska, Kováts, and Pető 2017; Bracke and Paternotte 2016; Hark and Villa 2015).

This above-mentioned trend is also reflected in the rich literature that has developed around the relationship of gender and ideology. There are two broad levels at which religion intersects with society and consequently affects women's location, status, and opportunities. First, the most pervasive is the role religion play in constructing gender at the level of culture. This pertains to the domain of civil society. Second, there is the level of the national polity whereby the religion is deployed as an institutional force in policy formulation, dissemination, and implementation. These two levels, the cultural and the political, are not isolated from and independent of each other.

Scholars like Shahnaz J. Rouse treat each of these contexts separately in her analysis of gender systems in Pakistan. At the cultural level, religion informs the very notions of sexuality, marriage, the family, appropriate gender role, work and so on. These aspects of everyday life are all too often taken for granted and seldom subjected to scrutiny. Yet it is precisely here that the socialization of both men and women as individual agents has been rooted, historically; and it these continues, as well as discourses and institutions that reproduce these practices that must be challenged if systematic changes are to be achieved in women status and social location. (J.Rouse 1994).

Another factor that distinguishes the Pakistani experience from the peripheral societies reside in the very premise for its existence. Pakistan is one of the two countries in the world (the other being Israel) that relied on religion as the *raison d'être* of its existence or being. Even though many Pakistanis argue that Pakistan today is not what its proponents have envisioned during the times of its inception, this position fails to analytically incorporate a critical understanding of the inherent weakness in religious difference as a basis for nation formation.

The people who are part of decision-making process related to gender equality agenda, they are mostly/truly unaware about the basics of gender issues, and they are in most of the cases not gender sensitized as well. For example, one of the ex-founders of the gender studies centre mentioned, that people who decided for gender studies future are usually clue less. She mentioned that during her interview in following words:

It was the minister of education, the ministry of education in 2004 notified that it should shift to the Fatima Jinnah women university, then I went to ministry of education and asked them why you want to shift the Centre of Excellence in Gender studies from Quaid-i-Azam university to Fatima Jinnah women university. His understating was limited, He said it is about women's studies, home making. It

involves cooking, caring, and teaching women about flower arrangements and home economics so it's best to be housed within all women universities. Luckily, I got him convinced that gender and women studies is not about women, it is about gender relations. It is about understating how historically this gender hierarchy has come about in human society. How it is recreated, reproduced, and reinforced. If we want to have more gender just society, this is the discipline which tell you so what is ay forward, it is just like any other social science like sociology and anthropology which help you to understand society and gender studies help you to understand about gender relationships. So, I decided to keep it as gender studies, it gives us an opportunity that many people to come to us, and we explain them. We were already using intersectional approach to address masculinities studies. But it was preemptive measures I case if any goof again comes to the ministry to shift this discipline to women 'university so it would not happen again.

The modern/contemporary world is facing the triple crisis i.e. systematic, epistemic, and ideological in nature. Similarly, those who are part of academia are not exempted from the modern ideological and politics of the universal. Due to the impacts of colonialism on the education system there is a no cultivation of critical thoughts in the inspirits of the gender studies academics of the universities in Pakistan.

As social scientists, it is also reiterated by the respondents, that the scholars often find themselves considering issues beyond simple binaries of good versus bad, positive versus negative. Thus, they should distance themselves from such dichotomies. For example, it is surprising to express disconnect with social movements which are happening in one's own cities/contexts which are related to the political instabilities and religious conservatism, but academics are being afraid to connect with them. There could be numerous reasons including forced disappearance, removal of job, lack of support from administration and colleagues, fear of being judged. Pakistan is one of the most militarized and unevenly developed political economies in the post-colonial world for example, one of the research participants said that:

We should collectively work to eradicate negative elements attached to the department's name. I mean to say that such as Aurat March in Pakistan in each big metropolitan cities on 8th March, if we control these elements, the future of gender

studies seems very bright. If you tell someone you are from gender studies department, they will judge you from the Aurat March perspectives, so we must explain them that we are Muslim and we also do prayer and fast and do our purdah.

From this perspective, the initial observation demonstrated in this research is that even women faculty of the four universities did not like to resonate with the philosophy of *Aurat March* (new wave of feminist political struggle in Pakistan) and they do not want to connect with this movement, moreover they do not discuss these movements as a case study in their respective classrooms. As reflected,

We cannot teach them from a 360-degree perspective. I mean we cannot agitate them against kinships structures and family. We did not teach radical perspective in gender studies. We taught them to respect all genders and we taught about sharing responsibilities.

So, it is evident that radical feminism is also not supported/encouraged by most of the teaching faculty members at different universities in Pakistan. There is also a clear demarcation that *Aurat March* organizers and attendees are not from us (society), we are not those who participate and organize it. It has controversial standing among the academia, even most of the gender studies academics do not want to be associated with it. It was firstly started in 2018 on the eve of international women's Day which has global history for the rights of women's workers across the globe. One of the head of the department mentioned that "university trying to point out fingers toward us after Aurat March, then we tried to explain them that we are not from those, we have no connection and linkage with Aurat March organizers."

*Aurat March* was planned and organized entirely by a diverse group of women (and other gender allies) belonging to different ethnicities, classes, and sections of society. The march itself was not linked to a particular organization, political party, or group. In fact, it included representatives from the Awami Workers Party, the Feminist Collective, women

democratic forum, the Women's Collective and Girls at Dhabas among others. That's what makes it more significant - it was a collective effort, not spearheaded by any one entity, making it a movement that all Pakistani women (and men who support women's rights) can own.

Historically the *Aurat March*, initiated by Sheema Kermani and the independent rights organization 'Hum Aurain,' was originally conceived for Karachi. The idea inspired similar women's rights organizations and progressive forums in Lahore and Islamabad. While the numbers were not as high in Islamabad and Lahore as they were in Karachi, there was still a significant presence that made its way to show their solidarity.

The crowd in each city grew as everyone kept marching on from the starting point till the crowds dispersed. Women (and men) held placards and banners and shouted slogans like 'Ghar ka Kaam, Sab ka Kaam' (household chores are everyone responsibility) and 'Women are humans, not honor'. They had placards that read 'paratha rolls not gender roles', 'freedom does not fear' and 'our rights are not up for grabs, neither are we'. Women wore t-shirts that read 'my favourite season is the fall (of patriarchy)' and 'girls just want fundamental human rights'. Some wore masks of deceased social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch, and one group held a charpoy<sup>22</sup> that said 'patriarchy's janaza' (funeral of patriarchy) on their shoulders. Several prominent personalities put out social media messages in solidarity with those who were marching. There was a video montage circulated of celebrities and activists saying 'equal' and '*barabar*' - many of whom also participated in the walk.

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22 Charpoy means bed or cart



As per the event organizers' intentions, the objective was to encourage women to take to the streets and reclaim public spaces. The March mission was to reclaim the political space and to initiate the debate on political patriarchy in Pakistan. In all cities March showed solidarity with the cause. The most obvious thing which came out after the march was related to the government reaction toward the organizers in terms of filling an FIR against the organizers in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad on the false accusation of blasphemy and unethical to cultural values.

Due to the interference of military regimes in political history of Pakistan, there is an element of control clearly visible in teaching practices, research, and in terms of interactions with the students in the university academic cultures but usually it is considered that the academicians should avoid talking about these hidden elements. The issues of research are very basic in nature. Due to strict control and censorship the scholars are not allowed to talk on sexual orientation and religion. There is no space at university for researching such issues. The respondents shared that they just revolve around our simple issues such as education and health problems. One of the faculty members think that department of Gender studies in Baluchistan university is so vulnerable that their research work is also not taken up seriously. As one of the respondents mentioned that “Gender studies are not a priority of the state.”

WGS is a field which is not explicitly owned by the state and even in gender related policy making it is not encouraged to involve universities as enabling spaces. There are always misconceptions and perceptions about this discipline. For example, few respondents think that “few people labelled you as rebels. Punjab university is relatively conservative. You

must talk in a sugar-coated ways and you must be very careful while talking in the classrooms”.

There were a lot many struggles within the university. The university leaders as chancellors and administration thought it is not proper discipline. The people setting in the universities at that time were not updated much. This observation was shared by one respondent as:

Each chancellor said it is not a discipline. There was no demand from the women’s movement. They were established at top of the tier. It was an alone kind of struggle. I was upset and felt isolated. NGOs have no awareness that this discipline can help them to advance the agenda of women’s rights and the women’s movement. They did not work as our allies. I was getting much support neither from academia nor from the women’s movement. It was my alone struggle. (Ex-Director and founder - CEGS. QAU)

Other centres in charge got additional responsibilities and they were not committed people as such they were not doing lobby with each government. On the contrary one respondent shared her struggle in following words: “I got the approval of decision from every government like PPP, PMLN that we will regularize the centre there was less action as per promises. I constantly fight for this. I keep it alive CEGS-QAU. Finally, it got regularized.”

Later, a new wave came to introduce Gender Studies. Women’s Studies was changed into Gender Studies without revising the curricula, and reading material, and most significantly without any consultation. Thus, for example, at Karachi University, the Centre exists under the former nomenclature, i.e., Women’s Studies but it started publishing the journal as Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies to promote knowledge about different gender issues.

The level of knowledge and understanding about gender studies universities were having is beyond their comprehension. Even in the academic council other faculty members and the registrar shown their concerns that gender and development studies should be situated within humanities. There are a lot many debates in five places of Pakistan when courses are presented in the academic councils and at different statutory bodies of the university for approval. They interrogate intensely and relentlessly about few course contents such as gender and sexuality, introduction to sexuality, the social construction of gender, etc. There were huge debates in the entire meeting hall especially related to introduction to sexuality courses. The meetings were lingered on while discussing the content of gender studies courses. The meeting hall of the universities were used to full of noise around sexuality issues.

One of the participants said that: “It is a political and radical subject.” So personal stories of the individuals who taught this as an academic field are extremely important because gender studies as a field is beyond classroom struggles. Again, one respondent shared the experience in following words:

I was an outsider, I moved from another discipline to this. I have seen struggles at an individual level and on a departmental level since the departmental struggles of the time of its establishment. On the other hand, I struggled to accept diversity and how to promote that diversity.

There are different levels of struggles discipline must go through such as acceptance within the social sciences and creating a conducive space and working relations with the university administration. Perhaps it goes without saying that the ideology advanced through the women’s and gender studies disciplines is progressive. Women’s and gender studies programs are not merely encouraging political engagement and activity, but for the advancement of social change and transforming that including expanding

government redistribution and oversight of society in the name of promoting equality and inclusivity.

While students entering essentially in any higher education institution can expect to find more liberal professors than moderates or conservatives, those considering gender studies should prepare for near uniformity in the political outlook of the department. The outlook of gender studies department is linked with its teaching pedagogy. Unfortunately, it is not true in the case of our country even conservatives' section of society is part of this discipline at teachers as well. Reflecting on the challenges one respondent expressed:

Number one, I was overwhelmed to realize that the department was treated differently by the university, administration, and by departments. This was discipline's biggest struggle. Moreover, acceptability and marketability are lacking from other experiences, for example when Gender Studies is compared as less preferred because of the typical stereotype such as a WGS graduate would not get jobs and employment. Thirdly there are internal department issues related to staff, teachers, and students. The way we, as a discipline see or educate things, that lens is not to present anywhere else. We sometimes must compromise with our core values and rules as well. We, regardless of the normative culture of other departments, encourage transparency and merit and that has been an overall struggle of the discipline.

Another respondent mentioned the socio-political crisis in Pakistan that has impacted the society and social sciences in particular as:

There are Pashtun and Baloch issues. We are not counting ourselves as a nation. We are divided. These things are disheartening for the teachers, such negativity and internal difference may transfer to the students also. For any promotion one's back should be strong enough, a few faculty member's husbands are in administration who uses their resources for undue favour for example, in foreign trip only one man/woman is getting chance again and again. Official things are usually considered. Qabili ana<sup>23</sup>.

In the context of remote areas and provinces issues are layered due to religious connotations. One of the faculty members said that "here students are reluctant to join

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<sup>23</sup> Local ego

gender studies as a field because there are some religious hurdles and there is less acceptance for this discipline in pakhtoon culture.” It shows that there is cultural baggage, and it varies according to the culture and context of a particular province. Sometimes there are misconception about gender studies as academic field. As reflected:

I want to have gender balance in our faculty. I have tried a conscious effort to hire the men. Before Saad, I hired two. One went for a Ph.D., and he did not come back, and the other left for civil service. In my tenure I hired one male faculty member in 2015 before retirement, he seems to be a good experience. He was from International Relations (IR) and had less ground in feminism. But I saw potential in him during the interview. I have seen his progressive tilt. I have biases towards beards, but I have been able to see through beards that he has potential. I was proven correct. He stayed in gender studies. My last two experiences of hiring men were not good. In support staff, I also wanted to have women, but I only got one woman. Unfortunately, I could not fully achieve gender balance in the support staff and faculty. (ex-founder, Center of Excellence in Gender Studies).

I was conscious of one more aspect because I have a low-middle-class background. I studied in Urdu-medium schools. I grew up with that background. Because I am from Mullah [1]. My father was a businessman. We had some money, but he was not very educated. Our background was low middle class. I was very conscious about class. I want a class composition in gender studies. I do not want only to hire elite faculty, but I want to give a chance to low-middle-class people who have potential. One thing, those who will join my center faculty, must be progressive, and another point was to be class background balance. I did these two things consciously during the recruitment of my faculty.

The data indicated that only one of the founders of the gender studies department had the view that her vision was to hire progressive people. All others respective HODs were thinking that progressive thinking and activism could create administrative hurdles within the university setup, and that is why they did side streaming of gender studies as a discipline. All other departments heads never thought like this it was purely a university recruitment criterion which they followed for hiring the faculty in gender studies. Few of the department’s faculty and their head share the view that they must be in the good books of the university. They are working to harness a good working relationship with the administration and other statutory bodies. On the other hand, those who are not on good

terms with the administration of universities feel that there are feminist principles and ethos that we should not compromise at all.

The state of Pakistan has cultivated political conservatism thorough different contenders of power. Due to the long history of military rule, democracy and democratic values have weak roots in Pakistan. Pakistan suffers from deceitful moral policing at the best of times - in homes, colleges and universities, places of religious worship, and the workplace; but the set off for the current passion are the impending different independent movements, marches, and peaceful protests in many cities of the country (Akthar 2020).

### **Neo-liberalism, Market economy, and Commercialization of Education**

Lack of funds, timely support from the Federal government, federal secretaries' interference, and lack of trained and interested faculty are some of the most pressing challenges faced by WGS across Pakistan. Moreover, many academics were concerned that their association with the field would reflect poorly on their resumes and derail their careers in their disciplines. This was happening because those who held courses or gave lectures were not specialized in women's studies but have specializations in other disciplines and were doing this work in their spare time, as an additional activity to the one they were paid for by their universities. Their lack of specialization was often looked upon and the main argument against their acknowledgment as specialists in the field was that they could not teach a discipline that did not exist, and even if it existed, they could not teach a discipline that they did not know. Most of the departments are working through university fundings. They are not getting any foreign funding for running these degree programs. Few respondents have shared:

They do not have library funds, and no logistics support for any conference and seminars. It is all about monetary things. Otherwise, it's about relationship with management, if you have 1000 students in the degree program then they might listen you, otherwise they argue that you only have 50 students, we are paying your salaries and bills for electricity and all that, we cannot fund you for the seminars and conferences. In the case of Punjab university, each department has a separate budget. We do budget generation through evening courses. 60% of the share is for department and 40% is taken by the university. We do our in-house activities from our own funding/savings. There is benefit of that we generated funding for visiting faculty from the field of practitioners so students can get a chance to interact with human rights experts, mass media people, and people from the development sector. There is a bit of monetary autonomy in this scenario for the department at Punjab university.

There are financial issues at Peshawar university as well likewise other universities.

There are issues. During the initial years, the majority of departments were small. Few respondents have mentioned:

Some of our university degree programs have a lot of students, I wonder even how they manage it. Sometimes we make requests for something, we heard university is going through from financial crisis, we were not bad in our own capacity. We used to have our own private account which we managed with external funds; we were pretty sure that we have savings. The problem started when we change our nomenclature university took over our savings account.” Based on my own experience, I can attest that since joining the center, I have not witnessed a major financial crisis of any significant scale. Additionally, with regards to our budget, it is frequently mentioned that we are not utilizing it as we are expected to.

There are few heads of the departments in WGS that shared their perceptions that there are not too many administrative issues because their staff and faculty is cooperative for smooth functioning of the department. As mentioned by one respondent;

In my personal capacity, I am not concerned about the numbers of students being head of department or teacher. but the administration asked me that we do not have adequate admissions. It is not a tension for me. I feel in the subject of gender studies what will I do by admitting the whole world? we need to think how we will place them in place like Peshawar? Where will they find a job?

Our nation is hinged on decades of neoliberal policy making pushing privatization and commercialization of education. Such policies, in the face of genuine economic crisis stemming from the pandemic, as well as ‘natural ‘disasters and population dislocations cause by warfare and accelerating climate change, have been sued to justify the

implementation of so- called austerity measures that have hit non-technical and especially advocacy fields such as the women's studies, gender or feminist studies.

The number of students in degree program is not the concern of the teaching faculty of the universities, but human resource and good financial situation of departments are always linked with the revenue generation for the universities in term of more admissions. This was clearly mentioned by one respondent in these words: "I think it always embedded in the market value of the degree, now government is increasing job advertisement for this degree. NGOs sector in Peshawar is already dormant but COVID has also affected the whole scenario. Now even the NGOs are not hiring new staff."

WGS like feminism and (feminist movement) has also faced huge backlash throughout these years in Pakistan. On one hand the discipline has been labelled as "western" promoting agenda on gender and women that is considered against the culture and society, on the other hand it has encountered sustained discrimination/marginalization from the state/government. Intensity of this backlash has increased since the inauguration of this monumental new wave of feminism in Pakistan (i.e. Aurat March 2018). This backlash is also reflective of deeply patriarchal ideology that is embedded in the social fabric of the society.

Back in 2020 a writ petition was filed in the Lahore High court, Lahore questioning the validity of the existence of WGS in universities across Pakistan. The petition consists of 40 pages requesting court to ban gender studies as an academic discipline. It is interesting to highlight the argument furnished in this petition. The one of the grounds in the petitions was that this academic discipline is against the religious and cultural values



of Pakistan. The petitioner argued that “gender studies is a teaching of homosexuality and it is nowise un-sympathetic towards it, therefore, the teaching of this subject should be banned in universities” (Petition no. 42515, LHC, 2020). Much of the backlash, either institutionally or from within society, displayed the potential of resistance by WGS and feminism to the patriarchal system. Mostly spearheaded by men these waves of backlash demonstrated the fragility of male ego and anticipated fears and anxieties of men.

This was all taking place during the global movement to outlaw the teaching of discipline, and a few occurrences were also documented in Hungary and the US. This is not exclusive to Pakistan; anti-gender attitude has spread throughout the world and picked up steam after 2018. There is less room in academic institutions for the cultivation of radical and political ideas as the growth of commercialization of education and the neoliberal economy have molded education as profit-making organizations.

### **A Room, A Desk, and A Chair: Women and Gender Studies in Pakistan**

*The university lacks ownership.*

*Gender studies are facing an existential crisis in terms of building and infrastructure because we must address this issue every year at our Board of Governance meeting.*

Women’s and gender studies support staff harbours a significant amount of mistrust towards the university administration. The centres are established by an Act of Parliament (1979), so they are autonomous. Currently, there is only one centre of excellence in gender studies in Pakistan. The other four have been integrated into their respective universities following the 18th amendment to the constitution. At few places there is an understanding

that university is not building network and good relationship with the centre's employees and students. One of the incharge shared this as: "I have been working for three years as an in charge. In my experience, there is a lot of mistrust between the university and our support staff. One of my support staff said (Madam, do not shift, they are throwing us out)". The university, itself, is struggling with space and infrastructure. The university does not understand our value system. They are always in the blame game towards our department. "Gender studies have been ghettoized".

This discipline is often tag as something working in isolation model and even other social sciences do not want to resonate with our philosophy. One of the faculty members said:

If we are asking for multimedia setup or want to have chairs our demands are not met as compared to other departments. When centres were initiated, universities used to allot only one large room and asked for its partition in tenure of our ex-director. When we moved here, the university space committee allocated this. It is a lot of struggles. (We were in tears after that; we had gotten this building.) Departments are always a priority for the university. Every time we are asked why you do not have your building. The current space we are occupying is also conditional. If the English department in a university needs it, then we must leave it. It is a constant battle because the centre owns the land, but their PC-1 is not approved because the university prioritizes its building as the number of students grows. Space and infrastructural challenges were the same in the starting years of the five departments/centres. It is more or so like the space challenges us, that brings us to our third space that is the space that we create for ourselves. We received backlash in that space as well.

As Centre, they were governed by the ministry of education, and federal ministries were responsible for them. As one of the ex-directors said,

Indeed, it was challenging at Peshawar university. The space we are occupying is the 4<sup>th</sup> space. The initial building we occupied was constituent college of Peshawar university. It was taken away that college now has been separated from Peshawar university. At the time of 2nd shifting, I was not there. But I hope our current place is

the last destination forever. During my tenure, it was a center, which is still the same. Now it has become part of the university. In 2006, we had room issues. Now we have no issues in terms of infrastructure. By the same token, at the start in 1989, Tahera Aftab in Karachi University started this department in two rooms, later Dr. Nasreen had struggled for the building. We were also students at that time, and ever since it has been our department. Every teacher in the department has struggled to get the space, especially to integrate the upper floor with the lower floor.

In the initial years, universities did not take any responsibility as it used to come under the federal government discretion. (We had, like, one librarian, one clerk, and sometimes yes or no perhaps peon, we did not have sufficient financial and human resources to run the degree till 2003). In our starting years as a center, we just hosted seminars, talks, and conferences.

At Peshawar University, they had shared their thought that if they could have attached to the university, at least they would get a responsibility that would bring them under the wings of the university. That was the basic reason for changing the nomenclature of the university. CEGS at QAU was legally secured as compared to other departments. However, there were budget challenges that limited the working of the centre significantly. This observation was shared by the Ex-director of CEGS as;

We got a budget in our second year. I joined in 1992. Our MSc program started in 2008. I started a certificate course for justification of salaries. Nigar's husband (Dr. Tariq Siddiqui) was Vice-Chancellor at that time. He stopped and said that you could not start a certificate because QAU is a degree-awarding university. But anyway, finally there was another problem with starting an academic program. They said the center has no physical space.

Most of the respondents shared that their departments were started with one room with a partition and then they got schedules from other departments and entered their classrooms

when they were free. Sometimes they have scheduled classes under the shade of trees.

Again, this was reflected by Ex director of CEGS as:

I have struggled a lot to obtain university approval for 10 Kanal of land for a center so that we can build our building. I used to send PC-1 every year. The University sends our PC-1 along with their development project. The planning commission only approved the university development project and the center PC-1. was always not prioritized by the administration. (Ex- Director, CEGS, QAU).

At the development and planning commission they have their own rule of business such as PC-1 for building could be approved at one time, so it depends on the political will and priorities of the university leadership and their networking at the government places.

Respondents explained this as:

My challenges were financial, administrative, and political. They were patriarchal resistance. I felt if I resigned at that time, then everything may finished after its closure under the pressure, it had been very difficult to restart the gender studies program again at a leading public sector university in Islamabad. I did not leave my place. I did lobby for my center, but all others benefited from my struggle.

Therefore, she explained the challenges faced as a part of the faculty of gender studies in the center in following words:

We are located within the premises of QAU, we come under QAU, but we did not get benefit as employees of QAU. We did not get university housing. We are not part of academic staff association, so we did not come under employee's union rights formal bodies of the universities. We did not get the benefit of autonomy. If you are part of ASA (Academic Staff Association), then it helps you to fight for your departmental rights.

In addition to that there are the nature of challenges are different for being a faculty and as an administrative head because the administrator is answerable for each and every single

act and performance of the department. The administrative pressures could not be exerted on the staff and faculty. It is reflected in the narration as:

As an administrator, I've noticed a lack of teamwork. It does not have to be me only to conduct research or even administrative work. But being an administrator only I am answerable. (sirf mujhay hein fiqar hoti hein). Now I can clearly see the hierarchy after joining the seat in charge. Those who have doctorates are not enabling their junior colleagues as Ph. D to grow, I thought they are unable to jell in with seniors. I think they should encourage students as well to work together with the faculty. When I was not in charge at that time, I did not realize it. That is why I always encourage my team to talk about philosophy and mandate of the center. I mean why are we working at gender studies center. What are our goals and how our personal and organizational goals are interacting with each other.

The issues related to infra structure and human resource constraints were more or less similar to five places at the starting of WGS degree program.

We had issues of infrastructure at the start in 1996. Centre of Excellence in Women's Studies (CEWS) Karachi started Master's degree programme. In 2003 they started Master, and 2007 we also launch Ph.D. we moved with HEC policy. Associate degree and now we are moving toward B.S. honours. We were much better in comparison of Sindh, Quetta, Lahore, and Peshawar.

When I joined, it was resolved to some extent. Initially we had only two rooms and the rest of the building occupied by the administration. In 2016 and 2017 we got the whole building at Karachi university. We extended it into practice, and we introduced it to the outer world. People have less understanding about it. People aid what u teach? There is a lot much which needs to do at campus level to spread the awareness that what actually we taught in this discipline.

Why it is significant to study this discipline? before that we had funding issues with HEC. But now, we get it from university, so, sometimes, we need more money as compared to other disciplines. As such we had no administrative issues, we got the same treatment. As a centre we had to face difference.

**Bureaucratic obstacles hindered all attempts of activity/practice.**

*“During my tenure, promised funds were not released. Most of the books and journals were foreign publications that were not easily available locally. My friends abroad helped me, and some even sent gift copies that we needed urgently. During my tenure as the Director, allocated funds were not fully and timely released by the Ministry of Women's Development, which created severe challenges and hurdles.”*

Moreover, this also relies on the decisions of university and departmental administrative heads. During this research the data revealed that only one of the founder and director of the centre tried to do this through making interventions in hiring criteria by putting subjective questions for potential candidates hiring against different reaching positions, but she also shared that she had to pay the costs for her decisions. Sharing this in detail she narrated:

My first hiring of five people including four lecturers and one Assistant professor was halted for almost five years. Sometimes B.O.G chair did not sign list of final applicants due to some political clashes with one of the candidates irrespective of merit. A few times anonymous applications were shown to me by the Vice chancellor that hiring is questioned by one of the candidates. One time they asked me, we had formulated inquiry committee and why you put subjective questions, you want to check the people thinking and perspective, your test is biased. Now we will make entry test for these posts. Finally, they come up with 80 objective questions of general knowledge and same pattern for asking subject-specific questions in gender studies as well.

Therefore, the criteria to appoint the teaching faculty of WGS is still following the colonial mindset by evaluating candidates on the basis of general knowledge test as typical standards. However, in view of some other faculty members hiring in gender studies should be carefully done by keeping in view the political stances and standpoint of respective individuals. These criteria's and hiring indicators are also internalized by the bureaucratic institutions. Additionally, the behaviour of the male secretaries towards attending the board

of governance meetings was bureaucratic and challenging. Their office assistants used to call and check the menu of the meetings before their secretaries arrived. One of the founding directors of Karachi University mentioned:

I do not have a fashionable feminine look, I used to be in rough attire. I did not look so attractive. That is why they tease me a lot. They think she is a mad woman as the director of the centre. What is she going to serve us? I was pure academic. I became irritated by this notion of male secretaries.

It is also interesting fact that all the directors/in-charge of those who took over the charge for gender studies were five women. One of them felt that because she did not have feminine looks that is why she faced more trouble. She thought that they paid attention to more fashionable women as the director and male secretaries have these biases toward women who have less feminine attire/outlook. It demonstrated that attire and feminine looks are important for the male chauvinistic secretaries of the ministries.

Office assistants are not professionally trained. There is also funding cutback of 20% in the universities. Being a centre, it gets direct funding from HEC and one of the Ex-charges mentioned that: “it is blessing and curse as well we go through an audit and so there is less chance of financial corruption. On the other hand, if we want to conduct any workshop then we cannot use our budget heads, we cannot pay to the trainers”.

Another centre at Quetta named as Gender Development department has financial and administrative setbacks as well. They are total 9 faculty members serving there. They are opinioned that they are underequipped, so they are just offering Masters, and M.Phil. programs. They also shared that they have serious financial issues. As mentioned in following words:

We have a financial crunch at university levels across the board. Even though we did not get the salaries, we do not have printing facilities and markers even. The university has borrowed loans from the government of Baluchistan and after taking loans staff get the salaries, even universities are suffering for the basic things likewise stationery and photocopies and prints. Faculty brought it in their capacities. Administrative challenges were too many, we got two rooms after a long struggle.

While Gender studies department in University of Balochistan faced those challenges, similar sort of issues were highlighted by respondents from the University of Punjab, Lahore. As shared by one respondent,

Initially, we had a corner room for faculty. Commencing the M. Phil program posed a challenge. Dean and board of studies people said what people will do by having M. Phil degree in gender studies, they made fun of it. They merge gender studies, when Madam Rana (Gender studies Incharge-Punjab University) left social sciences dean tried to grab us, our budgets and everything was taken over. Dean was acting as head.

In addition to that it was reflected through a narration that Gender studies experienced multiple challenges and issues. One respondent pointed out:

In Punjab University the situation was tough. Sammar Fatima was working on its own saving and her own linkages, but the department has no say. We got budget approvals in three phases but still our budget is not enough. We ask we have more students. We had a total of 4 rooms; we needed to have more space. Now we are doing extension. We got two instalments for making classroom.

The concepts of women's rights, sexual minorities, and gender studies often go beyond the comprehension (common sense) of the administration. Consequently, if there is no push, there is a force for gender studies to be promoted at the university level. In general, they are less inclined to think about gender issues. Much of the discussions were around the administration issues and less concern over structural and ideological issues. One respondent from university of Balochistan shared an incident in following words, “A few days ago, we have a big scandal of harassment at Baluchistan University. There was a harassment committee, but no case was brought by them”. Adding to it he explained,

The gender studies department is not a focal point for harassment cases, we were not involved in the scandal. In 2016, I was one of the members of the committee. My



tenure ended in May 2019. After that, I have no update about the committee and its cases.

Initially, the CEGS-QAU was operationalized in one room with a partition and the first formal master classes were held in open air and sometimes in a cafeteria. These tactics are employed to create the administrative pressures. As one of the respondents shared that,

I was personally transferred to the gender studies centre of Peshawar university in 2005 and came into being in 1989. it was mid-1980s. foremost issue, why we decided to be there? I had been visiting the centre at that time. The director of the centre talks to me that we need to upgrade the centre. How do you think we can do that? The university do not release funds and they were not taking any responsibility. We do not have enough human resources to run the degree and short courses in the centre. So, we decided to become department just to come under the wings of university so they would start taking our responsibility.

Sometimes we must make serious efforts to get something done for the centre. It was the basic reason to change the status from centre to department. The VC at that time was little bit visionary and he had this thought that we should have gender studies in Peshawar university. Before that it was women 'studies, in Peshawar we were not sure that would be the response of the people toward it if we want to have gender studies as discipline. At that point and time in history we thought if we take away centre status and change in department, it will have more market because that was a bit political correction and change in nomenclature, but reason was purely administrative in nature. As one of the ex-incharge mentioned that "I have infrastructure (building) task and an M. Phil agenda to complete during my tenure."

It took almost ten years of struggle to finally start the Master's degree program at QAU. Mainly this was due to university's academic councils and boards of studies repeated attempts to halt CEGS at QAU. When the Centre decided to start the M.Phil. degree program the director shared her struggle as:

Something that works out in my perspective for the launching of M.Phil. is that I started meetings with the people without having our agenda in the board of studies just for support to get support. When you gain support, you become an entity. Alliances also help in pushing our agenda in the academic environment.

Overall interaction and interviews with five department/centers indicated that faculty members of WGS have less networking and alliances in the whole university academic environment. In general, even the faculty is not willing to work on an initiative to cultivate interactive alliances with other departments and disciplines within and outside of university. *It is also reflected in the data that* sometimes administration used other tactics to negatively impact the performance of the WGS and tried their best how to do maximum harm. As recalled by one respondent:

For example, one of our colleagues went on Fulbright scholarship for Ph.D. She was on leave from gender studies, she was doing a doctorate in political and peace studies. When she returned the university appointed her to another department. Our head struggled a lot to convince the administration that she was on leave from gender studies and why you do not strengthen us instead of another program but finally, she was moved to the political science department. So, the department must face a setback.

“We function as a department, although we are technically a centre. We cannot spend a single penny without the approval of the B.O.G.”

One of the respondents from Karachi university said that at the start it was research centre and they received fundings. When it came under the university, they started getting funding from the university. To capture her experience in following words, In ko manwana bohat mushkil tha<sup>24</sup>. The struggle from non-existence to becoming a full-fledged discipline in University of Karachi is reflected in following words:

There is less acceptance till now, in 1989 it was a big challenge, it is still less acceptable. In Karachi university, it was not challenging as much. At administrative level, initially we had two rooms, one director's room, one office and one classroom. It was in a population planning building. MBA got shifted. Karachi university give

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<sup>24</sup> It was difficult to made them sensitize that what is gender studies as discipline.

replicate program. We had affiliation offices, and the student's advisor office. Gradually, the university established admin. Slowly, we got the building. Now we have the full building.

It is observed that WGS as an academic discipline cannot be separated from the rest of the structure of education in Pakistan. Of course, there are multiple administrative issues and the department are supposed to follow the different administrative routes for getting approval for certain things. It was equally challenging to go about the administrative hurdles and shared by one respondent:

When I was inducted, I tried to organize a seminar/conference, Sardar Bahadur Khan University was known as a women's university at that time, and they did not have gender studies as an establishing phase. When I put in a proposal for a seminar on sexual harassment, why do you organize it? We will not allow you to call activists for talk. We do not want these kinds of vocal people to come as guest speakers at our university. Administration said.

The University of Baluchistan is offering three academic degree programs: Master's, bachelor's, and M. Phil in gender studies. One female faculty member argued:

The inaugural M.Phil. program started in 2015, but none of its participants received a degree from the Gender Studies department, irrespective of thesis submission. Ironically, the situation here lacks streamlining. I recall a fellow colleague spending eight years to attain an M.Phil. degree in Gender Studies. (Baluchistan - Female Faculty).

It was reflected that the department did not pose any obstacles whereas the administration remained problematic, and they also displayed high level of incompetence. There are different bureaucratic hurdles for shrinking the research culture overall, and it's specific to targeting WGS as well. One research participant highlighted that appointing a Dean of Research from the commerce field did not resonate well with him/her; and it was feared that how could they effectively engage with gender studies? What could he/she do in the social sciences or gender studies? To quote the response:

Our M.Phil. Scholar chose the topic of girls dropping out of secondary school. He completed fieldwork; his proposal was accepted. The dean of research asked, Why did you choose this topic? We do not allow it. It is a security threat. How is it a security threat? That guy dropped out of the degree program in gender studies, and at the final stage, he was compelled to change the topic. These bureaucratic appointments are here to disturb the people. Its mission is not to facilitate the research process.

The university oversees the management of departmental financial matters. Baluchistan University is grappling with significant financial challenges, exacerbated by allegations of corruption against the former vice chancellor. The university went into a financial crisis. On the other hand, HEC has budget cuts for the university. WGS had to face salary issues. Sometimes the faculty members received it after two months, but it was with the whole university. There was nothing unique to WGS. The situation was remembered by one participant in following words:

The department does not have enough courses, or academic activities, where does the money go? These queries are frequent. We find ourselves indirectly scrutinized about fund utilization. This extends beyond mere accountability to a more intense form of interrogation. That are overall more dominating regardless of the financial issues.

There were few founders of this discipline in various universities who were really in favor of gender balance in these centers at the time of recruitment of support staff and faculty, but as the data of this research indicated, all these five centers have more female faculty. There is only one gender and development studies department at Baluchistan University that has a gender balance among their faculty members.

There were different views about the changing of the name of the discipline. All other universities had already changed the same. We feel that gender issues need to be focused, but women studies are most suppressing part of the society, so it should be women. When we talk about equality and equity, we need to see the most to be marginalized. In my personal views a lot is needed to do. As shared by one respondent:

As a former student, I completed my graduation in 2010 and subsequently secured admission for M.Phil. studies. I completed Ph.D. in Sufism, in 2019. Before joining here, I studied pre-engineering, applied Math. I switched my field. I did pre-engineering. I pursued a Ph.D. due to my interest in gender studies. I became permanent faculty member in 2015, it was started parallel except Karachi. Gradually, they changed the name of women's studies into gender studies.

### **Epistemological Challenges and knowledge production**

*We are merely reproducing, we tend to contextualize the issues but the starting point is coming from somewhere else(i.e. west).*

In context of Pakistan, it is always assumed that WGS is a western inspired philosophy or doctrine which has been introduced here as an academic discipline. We do not have something local or indigenous into it.

“Teaching gender studies is a big challenge when I was newly appointed. Now we learn how to speak and how to say things. Now we have learned what to say and what not to say”. This is the teacher's perspective after getting feedback from the students who accused the faculty members as always openly discussing sexuality issues. One of the male faculty members said, “Gender studies department is not accepted as other social science departments”: In the narration shared below one respondent reflected how WGS has been appropriated for various needs and purposes:

Gender studies have always been used as a jumping pad, and the subject was never owned by the pioneers, and therefore, it has never flourished. Now with the passage of time, perspectives have changed. Due to social media, there are many distractions and controversies around gender issues. Students now ponder over the topic like “mera jism meri marzi” (my body, my choice). The thoughts of our students have enlightened us, whether be it religiously or critically. Now they have the power to analyze and study equality or feminism.

Now there is a visible shift in thoughts that the idea that feminism never meant to eradicate all men, equality means for both men and women to work equally. In contemporary times, no discussions are moving forward toward the solutions of our own problems as few people indicated in this research study. On this critical aspect one respondent argued:

We have feminist values in our teaching. depends on who is teaching? We are not assessing their feminist values. We all have different understandings and views about it. I have a good understanding about feminism. But I cannot tag myself as feminist, because after tag I feel I will bound myself in one specific category. Which is not the actual meaning of feminism. Feminism is about liberating from oppressions. So, it is mean to liberate one's own self-oppression.

Most of the time, in the classes the reaction usually comes from the male students who feel threaten and also feel that the content or the subjects are more focused on women's issues. On the issue of production of knowledge in classrooms it was said:

What sort of freedom we are talking about students' experiences are valid, we should have discussions in the classrooms, I think it is co-production of knowledge. I also feel that gender knowledge is more broad feminist knowledge could be part of it. I think local knowledge production is a more appropriate term. I position myself as an insider but also an outsider. I tried to challenge academic hegemony. Here no one is concerned about the quality. They are in a rat race for publications. We are not discussing new things openly. I look at myself from a distance within academia. I am not very fond of writing papers. I challenge the criteria to become a sound academic it is about selling our intellectual thoughts in my view it is not authentic. We have conscious efforts behind it.

Here it is interesting to highlight that there is an important element related to the epistemological challenges for example consciousness efforts and intention behind the knowledge production on gender issues. It indicated that all struggle in academia is mostly for getting promotions and benefits. Those who are not fond of publishing papers, they are sort of singled out from the academic industry either they are stuck in their career ladder and for those who publish a lot, the quality of their research got suffered sometimes. Therefore those who publish regularly they have career growth, and they feel that they

want to benefit out of this research in term of monetary benefits, pay scale and allowance. There is another layered behind this intention either we are publishing just for academic credits, or one's is really wanted to produce socially relevant and quality research around the issue on hand.

“Feminist Knowledge is very personal for me.” This quote reflected the respondent's engagement with WGS and in what ways that engagement can produce meaningful transformation in a society. Firstly, it addresses the individual, it is not only a philosophy, but also a practice. It is practiced and recognized. Just as philosophy and practice go hand in hand similarly as feminism do and its knowledge production. The basic point of view to it is that certain ingredients are fundamental to talk about and others are to be practiced. Gender is defining identity where is injustice and that has prevailed through these changes.

It depends on one's opinion what is feminist knowledge? Is it dissenting voices? Is it about minority issues? Are we just talking about geographical representation of the data? In classical view, is it only by women and for women is only feminist knowledge. Feminist knowledge is not such a narrow. In my view, it is something that is in one way or another addressing any gender sensitivity, women issues, and equality, promoting human rights, and bringing change in consciousness. The knowledge which we are producing, it always has feminist strain into it. Whatever we produce it has to get through different phases of production. It is related to gender. It is not just a feminist knowledge. It is part of what we are doing in terms of panel discussions, we are participating in seminars, conferences and contributing into it.

There is no belief in feminism as a change agent. We have an oppressive history. Feminism is itself taken with deep suspicion in Pakistan. The same suspicion is aimed toward WGS as an academic field. The situation would have been entirely different if it would have been a natural or biological science discipline. Feminism is fraught with suspicion. On this aspect of feminism and WGS one respondent argued:

Struggle is a main ingredient of feminist knowledge, backlash and struggle will be constant part of it even in 21st century gender knowledge is considered radical. if these things would not be normalized their challenges would not be finished either. So, efforts and backlash are part of every struggle. we are trying to disseminate the feminist perspective and plurality of knowledge. Through Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies and my research, I am producing and disseminating feminist knowledge.

Most of the respondents to this research were of the view that writing journal articles and books are an essential part of knowledge production. As shared:

Once we produce and trained the humans resource, I think we have role in dissemination of knowledge, my team is writing and producing on gender issues, I think through building students gender consciousness we are doing dissemination work for the society at large.

One of the ex-in-charge of the center said in following words:

Books and articles which we publish are knowledge which we produce. In my view, books are long-lasting as compared to articles. I am working on my second book. The knowledge we are producing is from social science as well as of feminist perspective. The main idea is to have social issues with feminist perspective. Our point of view is to sensitize people, not just women. Whatever marginal element of society is we work on it. For example, our department is working on issues of disabled, old age, children's issues, girl child education, school dropouts, in this way are using gender studies to sensitize the people.

The research is being conducted by various departments of faculty and students, but there is a very diverse understanding of it. One of the faculty members said:

The research we and our students are producing is not only feminist. It has a feminist strain to it. It must go through different statutory bodies of the university. It is a mix of feminist but not feminist research. We are running a course on gender and human rights, whether it is through dissertations, papers, or whatever we do in the class. Either we are participating or contributing to knowledge generation. That is how we think. It is a knowledge production what we do in seminars, sessions and at panel discussions. If it is published internationally then it is disseminated automatically due to global outreach, at local level we do dissemination through seminars and conferences. There is agreement among the different faculty members that our theories are not produced here in Pakistan. We usually teach western theories. One respondent said, Production does not happen at the local level.

The core of the knowledge is feminist epistemology; the perspective shared by most of the respondents reiterate that the aim of WGS is to sensitize people, not just women. Whatever



the marginal element of society is, WGS focuses on it. For example, men, women, and blind people (disabled) must all be sensitized. One faculty member stated:

We have produced knowledge related to sensitive subjects such as old age, children, girl child education, school dropouts, and beggar girls. In this way, we have sensitized the notion of Gender Studies. It does not mean that only for women The way I perceive feminism, theory and practice go hand in hand, but they are both necessary for each other. They are both, respectively, different. For example, Mehmood Khan Achakzai has not learned Gramsci, but he is doing his work as Gramsci articulated, and he does not need to read Gramsci.

Most of the respondents were concerned that the teaching of western theories creates difficulties in contextualizing them. Gender studies faculty members in Karachi and Lahore also believed that “we needed to be cautious when using the terms feminism and feminist knowledge”. On the other hand, respondents from the Universities of Peshawar and Baluchistan are relatively different areas concerning the understanding of gender issues and perspectives. There is a lot of cultural baggage concerning each geographical region. One of the respondents mentioned that "In my understanding, feminist knowledge is something that is in one way or the other addressing any gender sensitivity, women's issues, and equality, promoting human rights and bringing change in consciousness." There is a varied stance of each faculty member and head of the departments on how they define/conceptualize feminism and feminist knowledge production in Pakistan. As maintained by one respondent: “Feminism can be a voice of dissident. Is it a minority issue? There are serious issues in it, even some people just discuss and talk about the geographic representation of data in the classes and take it as feminist knowledge generation.”

In addition to that few people viewed those views as only for women and for women is only feminist knowledge consumption. One of the respondents shared in a detailed response:

Feminist research is not as narrow as we did, we used to see research in feminist theoretical paradigm, but we do research in social science paradigm. Feminist research is very advanced. Our research is very basic. We are far apart from western feminism and usually, academics think that feminism is a label or bad tag that most people do not want to use it. There was hesitation and reluctance among most of the participants to accept that. Regarding publication, I did not produce much in terms of journals article. Other people published but they are not published by renowned publishers and international journals. Few of my colleagues published it but it is not that sort of feminist knowledge, Academia is in a rat race of publications for promotions. One of our colleagues has international publications and another might have more than 30s but no one accepts it for publication in the international journals.

There is also thinking in academics that if someone has published an article in international level then that individual may deem to be competent otherwise not. So, the criteria for competency and authenticity is also informed by the west and from western publishers' ranking of journals.

Every one of us is producing knowledge through activism, written or verbal, but I cannot say for sure, if the knowledge that is being produced is critically feminist or not. There are a lot of loopholes in the production that is not entirely feminist knowledge. To make feminist knowledge, authentically feminist knowledge there must be a clear intention behind it. One must know the clear mandate of producing it. Usually, we talk about definitions, we don't talk about creating change. That is why it can be gender knowledge but not feminist knowledge.

Individuals even within the gender studies department at few places are not taking it seriously or understand the essence of this subject. One respondent said: "I have experienced in my case, my work was not considered due to biasness, they did not even read the content and reject it, that is how people are insensitive about the departments." There could be different channels for the dissemination of knowledge. Participation in different seminars or being active on social media is the best form of dissemination for the departments now in the contemporary times.

At Punjab university the slogan of WGS reads as: “changing agent”. When inquired about this it is shared that:

We produced change agents, those who worked for sustainable development. We tried to make WRC25, we made counselling centre, but these are not operational. There were financial issues and higher authorities did not give a chance. Through these we can directly affect the students. we are working to establish the legal counselling centre for women. Due to lack of funding these things are pending. Department contribution gender studies is a lot. All are Ph.Ds graduates working in the UMT gender studies department.

The University of Punjab’s gender studies department has produced 8 Ph.Ds so far.

One of the research participants mentioned that:

We developed the gender lens of the students. It is their back of mind they have this lens; society is shaking I thought, media has played role into it. Gender sensitization is up to the mark. In the portrayal there are problems. But awareness is created by the media. Now common people have understood basic about gender roles and indigenous things. We did not touch our culture, how we can bring equality, how women burden can be lessened. The sense has developed. In general, other than academic people do respond to the gender related concerns. They have tried to make their practical life better. If you think it is worthless then if you are not doing work, it will help you to make your life better. Now people are recognizing us in the university by the name of gender studies faculty. In FJWU, it was low profile, but here was recognized. The higher ups treatment tells you that it is not such fruitful, so we are not accepting it. They have centralized culture. In Punjab university we are now upgraded, and we are developed much now. In PPSC if any of our student is working then overall it is being considered good reference for the future students.

To run gender studies as a discipline, it is essential to have a grasp and thorough understanding of feminist knowledge. Some of the respondents also mentioned how WGS has transformed the lives of many. As shared by one respondent, “The information we share is quite extensive, and we have seen positive changes in the attitudes and lives of participants”. While some sections of the society may associate feminism with radical views, it actually encompasses knowledge of both genders. Many issues faced by women are interconnected with those faced by men. By addressing male pressures women’s lives

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<sup>25</sup> Women Resource Centre

can be successfully alleviated and their problems reduced. This is especially crucial in cases like domestic violence, where a cycle of frustration and violence can occur due to financial difficulties. Being feminist means considering both genders equally, and it does not imply to be anti-male or against societal norms and culture. It is about finding balance and living a fulfilling life or gender just life.

### **Challenges of grounding knowledge production in the Pakistani context**

Scholars like Farida Shaheed, Khawar Mumtaz, Farzana Bari, Fouzia Saeed, and Saba Gul Khattak have done a great contribution to feminist knowledge production. Afia Zia has also produced significant work in this regard. For me, feminist knowledge is grounded in theory. We are not much involved in activism in social movements. Here gender minorities are suffering a lot. To quote the respondent reflecting on this issue:

I am in contact with some individuals who are striving for other nationalities because there is no space for them in Pakistan. Feminists did not work on queer issues; I talk openly in my classrooms about sexual minorities but teachers here in my university did not talk about LGBT issues. We must make them understand individual rights and autonomy. Instead of religion, religion is pretty much your internal matter. Being a gender studies scholar, one is not supposed to define everything in a religious context. We are very much apologetic to bring feminism into Islam or bring Islam into feminism.

It is also one of the contested disciplines in Pakistan. The foremost attack on WGS academics and teaching is on the pretext that it is taking the society into total chaos and this discipline is going to disturb the socio-cultural fabric of Pakistani society. Few of the research participants really felt that feminism is only concerned with class-based politics. As one of the participants stated that;

I thought there is a chance of growth in knowledge production. Currently, we are summarizing western knowledge, and we replicate that, I feel it is awkward and it looks to me as vernacular form of knowledge. We need to move forward; we still teach Judith Butler. Our teaching philosophy should reflect in the teaching pedagogies such

as non- hierarchical. It's about how to refine the good humans. WAF (Women Action Forum) is doing good, I have interviewed founders of Sindhi movements, and they were having reservations with the feminist movement because they want to get funding, they are not doing anything for documenting our struggles.

Being a feminist teacher and practitioner, the faculty members are usually biased.

They are working on unconventional issues and topics. For example, the suffering of Baluch women, their contributions, missing persons' families, and women in PTM<sup>26</sup> are not discussed by Pakistani feminists. *These issues were highlighted by those who are teaching in the Peshawar and Baluchistan university. It is part of their everyday struggles.*

For example, as shared by the one respondent; *In a midnight* raid in Peshawar on January 27, 2020, Pakistani police arrested human rights activist Manzoor Pashteen, charging him with conspiracy, sedition, and other alleged crimes. When the sun rose, more than ten thousands of people took to the streets in protest.

Over the past seven years, Pashteen and his peers have built a civil resistance movement focused on Pakistan's human rights abuses against members of the minority Pashtun tribe. As the leader of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), Pashteen has guided the movement in using nonviolent tactics in their struggle. In response to the PTM's momentum and recent gains, the Government has used physical and administrative repression to suppress the movement and create a counternarrative that plays off stereotypes of Pashtuns being inherently violent, and their territory being overrun with jihadists. In a region profoundly affected by the US War on Terror, the PTM has integrated tribal traditions and international standards of constitutional justice to catalyse a decidedly nonviolent movement for change—a movement so strong that the state could not ignore it

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<sup>26</sup> Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM)

and chose to use violence to counter it. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend these local movements via an intersectional lens in order to produce knowledge about gender issues.

One respondent mentioned:

Nationalist ideologies are different. Feminists do not discuss LGBT. State and religion should not interfere with one's identity. Mera jism meri Marzi (my body, my choice), we do not accept that. Society is very much against women's rights, how they can provide space for gay and lesbian rights? They are grey areas that feminist of Pakistan does not like to study it. Because they will not be getting funds for documenting it. But if they do not talk it does not mean that they do not exist. There is less knowledge production at ground levels. Academic language is difficult for the public to understand. We can use easy language to generate dialogues with the students.

Although the process of knowledge production is happening in Pakistan, much of this is in the context of already existing frameworks and there is less theorization in WGS, it is debatable. This is reflected as:

It depends on how. It depends on individual choice. I can ask about my own research. Feministic approaches at our context are having less acceptability. Should I say ourselves as feminist or not. I supervised one thesis but still my data shows there are reluctance in students. But NGO experts still they did not feel comfortable with the word feminism. We are producing good students, but we are not producing good feminists.

It is also an epistemic erasure that local vocabulary is phasing out because it is very difficult to articulate/translate the text of the foreign authors into local languages for most of the youth of the public sector universities in Pakistan. The youth of the public sector universities carry a lot of cultural baggage. One respondent mentioned:

Absolutely, I would say that we are producing feminist knowledge. Within the HEC, there was a curriculum review committee that questioned the nature of our feminist methodology. They said that our feminist methodology is based on daily experiences. Legislation is influenced by this research.

Decolonial feminist studies problematizes western gender studies research and its role in a postcolonial world. It examines inequality in its various forms, including the intersections between gender, sexuality, ethnicity, history and memory, and geopolitics. Decolonial feminist studies also explore different forms of resistance against global inequalities and neo-colonial power asymmetries, including how social movements, knowledge production, arts, and cultures have mobilized such resistance.

### **Impossibility of Open and Protected Discussions around gender as open category**

*Gender studies mandate is incredibly challenging. It is a revolutionary subject. It tells people how to live a non-judgmental life. How-to live-in peace. It is kind of breathing for me. It should be taught at very basic level.*

It is demonstrated in this research that there is less space to generate debate on gender as open category in most of the universities. The concept of gender is mostly in the society is only limited to women's oppression and few people have this lens to see it from intersectional perspective. Traditional gender and (hetero)sexual norms, when questioned or broken, leads to violence towards women and queer bodies in social-cultural contexts. Within such places, outbreaks of violence are often justified through religious, traditional, and cultural standpoints. Hence, speaking of 'human rights' — and its articulated concepts such as 'women's rights' and 'Queer rights' — are seen to be important interventions within the Global South. With hopeful intentions, international women, and queer networks continue to join hands with various transnational human rights discourse to speak of the gains from global connections (see Grewal 2005; Kapur 2002).

The discipline of WGS was created to work as a change-maker in the society. However, it is now almost cut off from society at large with more focus on research, which is not shared with policy planners and opinion makers. There was an understanding that teaching gender studies is a slightly tricky job, and when someone is teaching at a federal capital university, it is very different as compared to when one teaches in peripheries such as Baluchistan, Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi. Karachi and Lahore as cities are big metropolitan and urban centers in Pakistan. One of the respondents said that:

Teaching gender studies was a major challenge; I have a sociology background, but the ASR course gave me a baseline about gender issues. The first year was trial and error for me. Our head, (Rubina Khilji [1], used to come and sit in my class for peer review. The students were super clueless. There are a lot of issues with Pakhtoon background.

Gender studies have faculty with multiple backgrounds across the social sciences, but this diversity is more apparent at CEGS at QAU. They are from sociology, anthropology, development studies, psychology, philosophy, English literature, and international relations. Three departments have hired their fresh graduates as lecturers. On the contrary there is one centre of excellence in women's studies at the University of Karachi that are having inbreeding because most of their faculty members are gender studies graduates from their department who joined their departments and started teaching there. The current research indicated that people from different backgrounds claimed that they had to develop intersectional skills and they struggled a lot to understand the gender lens, feminist theories, feminist research methods, etc. One of the respondents said:

I have been working in gender studies since 2006, first at a women's university and now in Punjab at a co-educational institution. I have experienced that gender studies faculty is very competitive because I have a psychology background, then I read a lot to teach gender studies because it is not my specialization. So, I develop my skills in anthropology, sociology, and International Relations as well.



Furthermore, few of the faculty teaching at the centre believed that they have their mandate to work on and question their existence in gender studies departments. It implies that they feel that gender studies as an academic discipline struggle do not disconnect from their personal struggles related to class, gender, race, and ethnicity. One of the faculty members said: “I have a personal mandate. I did not keep big goals. I feel if I am done with the sensitization of four or five students in a single class, I have done enough. When we started this degree program, I thought we were far more liberal.”

Another finding came out from this research is that at four places, including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Baluchistan, the content which is disseminated among the classrooms is brief/limited, and one of the faculty from Peshawar University said:

We reduced the content. There can be several reasons for it. We are careful due to some political and religious factors. It happens because we cannot create problems for ourselves. We will have to keep in mind the political and religious situation of our province.

Now that the content has been shrunk, there are different challenges for online teaching.

As shared by one respondent, In classrooms, we are confined within the four walls of the campus. We have more tension online. (quote)

I must be politically correct. I must have thought a lot. That is why I think our mandate is challenging because due to COVID, now in online classes, everything is recorded. I must be careful and politically correct. On the other hand, this discipline makes you oversensitive if you are sensitive alone then it is challenging for you as a person but if you are not then it is a headache for others with whom you socialize. Few of the faculty members have this concern that our goals are difficult, and that we cannot measure our goals. I am not sure if we can increase our outreach. Whether we are successful or not, we are trying. The example of our role is like a boat, in which few people are pushing towards the end, and few are not putting energy into it. But if we all try to take it up, then we can be successful.

Pakistan is a patriarchal and religious state and there are too many issues to be addressed. Issues such as sexual orientation, gendered minorities, and religion are

considered taboo and mostly silenced. Even the same fear and silence prevails in WGS so it always amount to asking the critical question that how can we research controversial issues? As university's marginalized departments WGS revolves around basic issues of our everyday concern and survival. This is also mentioned by one respondent in following narration:

Here, I can share one example with you, sometimes I got a chance to mark the papers of affiliated colleges of the Peshawar university, in a one paper there was a question about Freud theory of psychoanalysis, the student did not comprehend properly because he was unable to express it fully in a paper might be he/she had a thought that it is unsafe to express the ideas in the written exam. When we started this degree, we were far more liberals, now we have shrunk the content. we need to clearly understand our socio-cultural context before discussing. Being a female teacher, I need to be very careful. Students are not in a habit of seeing a female talking about gender issues.

There are various levels of understanding regarding the teaching of gender studies as a discipline. There are interesting perceptions about how academics view others with their discretionary powers, and everyone's feminist perspective and lens is different. Sometimes, with one department, there are adjustment issues in their surrounding environment with co-workers and colleagues. There is a difference of opinion on gender issues and conceptual clarity about the teaching of gender studies. For example, one of the participants mentioned that:

This has been a problem to adjust to here; women faculty here hold patriarchal thoughts. They are focusing on modesty and religion. They are not adaptive and teach feminism-based approaches, as per my understanding. Like they are concerned with purdah, and relationship between girls and boys are considered as bad in their views. They are very critical to them. As we observed at QAU, it was different because I was a student there and now here, they stick to conservative ideologies. I have been around for two and a half years. The way we studied, it's different. The people here at my university are very much inclined toward religion, and they tried to bring Islam and feminism together. It's a very problematic kind of connection.

Some academics think that having no academic degree or training in gender studies is a problem for understanding the philosophy of feminist theory or gender. One of the

respondents said that “The irony of this department is that they have only hired three lecturers. I have noticed that when those three were inducted, they didn't come from a gender studies background. The background is important for theory and practice”.

The disciplinary training of teachers frequently prepares them to treat ‘gender’ as an isolatable category, added on to the existing apparatus of knowledge. Moreover, there is a general impression that specialization in Gender Studies means writing a thesis on ‘women’s issues’, premised on the hypothesis that greater access to government schemes or the benefit of globalization is a panacea for gender discrimination in all forms. Such an orientation can be placed in the context of the two distinct trends that have emerged since the 1990s. On the one hand, the politics of gender and sexuality have problematized the essentialist notion of ‘woman’ as the subject of feminist politics; on the other, within discourses of empowerment and development gender becomes a synonym for ‘woman’, disengaged from structural and historical inequalities. The pedagogic challenges for the faculty of Gender Studies then is to re-connect with the multiple and political histories of Women’s Studies/movement as also with the contestations that animate the present.

However, these questions do not appear to have infiltrated the institutional sites of Women’s Studies; as Rege notes, there may be a serious disjunct between Women’s Studies as an intellectual–political project and the institutional expansion of Women’s Studies in higher education because at every place it is not like an intellectual political project. (Rege, Sharmila 1997).

It’s very challenging, and it is a matter of great concern for the faculty members because students are more inclined towards sociology, political science, International

Relations, and other disciplines. They are not inclined toward gender studies. Most of the faculty members said, “we only got those students who could not get admissions in other discipline.” Gender Studies does not produce such alumni who hold high-level positions. The institutions are just awarding the degree in gender studies. There are scope issues. It has less visibility like other social sciences departments in the university. It is argued by one respondent as:

I do not mean that it is being welcome everywhere and it is being appreciated. The perception is it not a pure discipline. Students have these perceptions as well. People are getting inaccurate perception. They think we only teach sex in it. It is part of liberal politics. We should work in coordination with other departments as you may see what happened at the faculty portal after Aurat March 2022? A message on women day 8th march was circulated by one of our male faculty included.

It is interesting to share a message for the Women Day, 8th of March from the faculty portal and how it generated a conversation over the faculty email portal. The message read like this:

Let us strengthen Families. Why? Because a strong family performs many Economic and non-Economic functions, and thus decreases the burden of society and state. How? In a family, kids receive all cares which a day care in the market can never provide. In a family, daughter, sisters, wives, mothers receive all economic and moral support which they can never perceive to get from the market. In a family, elder and aged receive all protection, love, and care, which is not available in old homes. In a family, disable, weak, mentally retarded receive all cares which they can never imagine outside a family. Therefore, a strong family is a place of protection for all of us in general and women. Therefore, let us strengthen families and thus strengthen men, women, kids, old, society, and state. After that, three or four male and female faculty exchange the thread of emails about strong men and strong women.

All the sudden one male faculty member interrupted and responded that the international women’s day is both a celebration of women, and a recognition that they have as much of a right to live their lives fully and freely as anyone else. He tried to caution all men about their male egoistic selves by pointing out that as male members of the society we should not let our base masculine instincts and mark this day by screaming at female

faculty members on email threads and tell them how they should behave. This is embarrassing.

As a response another thread of messages goes like this that we can all agree that there is a lot of work that needs to be done to improve the conditions of women in homes, workplaces, schools, universities, and yes, streets and all public places where women want to be. Adding to what was said it goes on with following words:

I am also sure that giving your high qualifications and degrees from prestigious Western universities, which many of you insist on listing in your email signatures, you can appreciate the good aspects of western countries and are able to distinguish between baseless propaganda about “western” or “foreign” NGOs and the challenges that women face in this society. Perhaps we can start at home and conduct a study into the challenges faced by our female faculty, admin staff, and students, and take practical steps in making our university a better place for all genders.

Later on gender studies in-charge and two faculty members responded to that. The reason for discussing this event is to raise critical questions like why religion is always factored in when an argument is made about women's roles? Why is it never raised when men sexually harass women, rape them, torture, and kill them? Why are women considered the sole custodians of culture/custom/religion etc., whereas men can do whatever they want?

However as demonstrated in this research it does not aim to make arguments that divide sexes. Mentioning this above cited event here only aimed to show that men generally have a blind spot when it comes to their moral accountability. In any case, it is futile to get into polarized arguments because the result is nil. What if some of the colleagues do not realize is that gender equality is not a western agenda! by saying this, you are doing away with our rich history and civilization of at least 5000 years that (for the most part) treated gender, sex, and many other binaries in the spirit of inclusion - the syncretic tradition of

our past is replete with examples of love and tolerance. Gender has also been treated with intricate complexity instead of the superficial understanding that is generally accorded to it in our society. To quote the response of the in-charge of the Centre on faculty portal, “Whatever I said and write in the faculty portal, it was my opinion, but I am representing Centre as well. So, majority of my written things and comments are seen in that scenario. We should be clear about our own positions.”

It is telling that the above shared narration was done because these are perceptions about the faculty members of WGS prevalent in respective universities and it is very problematic. Disciplines like anthropology and sociology does not have to go through such problematic or harsh screenings. It is very sensitive kind of discipline. The discussions need to be initiated. WGS can spread awareness through YouTube channels and podcast as well. But even the educated people in the university are reluctant to socialize with WGS and they did not welcome the faculty members to have discussion on these issues.

The concept of gender is deconstructed in decolonial feminism as a colonialist invention that perpetuates predominantly biological and heteropatriarchal interpretations of gender. Coloniality of gender as a key aspect of the colonial matrix of power in which modernity is grounded, allows decolonial feminism to join the colonial and the post-colonial past with the decolonial present in which the resistance to global power asymmetries and challenges is channelled through social movements, art and cultural initiatives and knowledge activism. Decolonial feminist research is inseparable from decolonial agency in which knowledge creation, ethics, politics, and societal impact are all working together for the emergence of a positive re-existent model of being, thinking and acting in the world.

Islamophobia has placed the Pakistani feminism and feminist movement at the centre of current issues engulfing South Asia. This is particularly the case now with India's government promoting a Hindutva brand of nationalism, that has profound implications for minorities and women's rights within India, like what has unfolded across the border in neighbouring Pakistan under the extremist Islamist policies put in place by the late General Zia al-Haq during the 1980s. To date, state policies and laws enacted in the name of religion in Pakistan, continue to exercise detrimental ramifications on the country's ideology and consequently, on its citizens' lives and rights.

As the dominant power in the region, India holds a larger population compared to its South Asian neighbours, including Pakistan. India could benefit from observing the experiences of Pakistan to avoid potential regressive consequences. These consequences could impact not only India but also the entire subcontinent, particularly affecting women, religious minorities, and queer identified populations across the region. This kind of ideology and perception about women, transgenders and gender minorities is prevalent in Pakistan. While India has made progress in terms of rights of gender minorities, Pakistan is still grappling with its ideological issues related to gender and women. Similar kinds of observations were also reflected in the data shared by the respondents. There are a total of eight faculty members at Baluchistan's Gender Studies. One of their colleague's opinioned that:

Only two or three would have their feminist ideology. Here, people are against queer community. I find it ridiculous and challenging for the sexual minority community. We do not have such a contribution to society. I am sorry for that. To be very honest, I am disappointed after learning more about my colleagues' thoughts. Sometimes, I even do not want to discuss what is going on with recent legislation related to transgender rights. There is another trend when people are reluctant to share and discuss their thoughts and ideas with their fellow colleagues due to their narrow thinking and misperceptions about certain topics. It shows that overall, at university

campuses there is less space or the acceptance of diversity and there is lack of tolerance as well due to the internal censorship of the people, but it comes from overall academic culture of the universities.

### **Role of WGS in the transformation the Society**

*I see very pivotal role of my department in the society whether it is acknowledged or not.*

There is a strong believe that WGS have transforming potential in the society but most of the research participant views that their role is unacknowledged in terms of support from the universities management. As reflected:

Our role is too big, but we are not doing it as such, we can train the students for community services. For example, in Pakistan we have issue of child sexual abuse. Our students can go to public schools for increasing awareness among the children. At few universities it is part of the degree to serve in the community, but it has no output that is why there is no benefit of it.

It is evident from the views of the respondents that WGS is a field which is mostly discouraged to be opted as a profession or career choice by most of the educated people within and/or outside the university. The role or definition in the views of the research participant cannot be limited and measured with fix indicators. The audience for impact could be wide range as well but likewise for teachers' impact is usually measured through the graduates and their position in the market trends. The university of Punjab gender studies and the Karachi university women's and gender studies department faculty consistently referred that their graduates are working at good places in Pakistan like government jobs, national and international NGOs etc. the same observation is also mentioned by one respondent as:

Our role can be very broad as well. We can work in collaboration with other government departments. I am not in favour of replications. We can collaborate rate attach with the national commission on status of women, we can produce evidence-



based research for them which can be used for the policy making. I think I tried to be included in the government plans and initiatives and I want my faculty to be part of such initiatives. They are part of this effort. So, we are trying to make a place in government offices for our students in Peshawar.

On the other hand, at few places still struggle is going on to build the linkages with the market such as government sector and development sector. Although WGS's syllabus includes the critique of the development discourse and thoughts but still people do believe that it is capitalist world, and our students needs to have good job and well-established careers. One respondent shared:

In the Punjab university we have 700 students including, BS program, M.Phil., and Ph.D. program. We invited experienced people outside the university as well. We have students from Fata, Makran, Zoaband Waziristan (Baluchistan). We are having multi-ethnic representation of students. We have more male students in the gender studies classes. In my personal views, if you teach gender studies to a boy then it will impact whole family, as compared to teaching a woman, because people will label the girl as rebel, and she will be snubbed and if they boy will do the something then he must face the less resistance. For example, if man is asking that I will share the household chores with the wife so, there would be less resistance, if the girl said she is not cooking, caring, and cleaning everyone will react to her. It will make a difference. If the boys are studying the slowly and gradually change will come.

It is significant to understand the role of gender from the family to the global level. As part of a country where no democratic institutions have evolved historically. How is it possible for us? How can we imagine the freedom of speech without democratic institutions. We are part of the social fabric. We are sensitive. In our context, the reality is intersubjective. One of the participants of researched shared in following narration that:

I have a classroom audience. I tried to create awareness through communication. Everything must begin with the debate. Society evolves through interactions and communication. This generation has been deprived of the right to speak freely. It is deeply concerning that being a teacher it is a big statement that this generation has no right to freedom of speech. Why does the state panic over free speech? This is an important issue to discuss because educational institutions are supposed to be the place for cultivation of free thinking. All Pakistani citizens are given the right to freedom of speech and expression, while there are some limitations, such as those related to the dignity of religion, rule of law, and national security. Many groups of individuals, including minorities, media, and human rights advocates, have been victimized by these limitations. Be little conscious, what is our position? As compared to other

departments, we have a smaller number of students. A group of students to whom I know what they are doing, when they spent a year with us, they become little gender aware, we are ok with it because we know everyone due to less strength, so we are fine with smaller number. But we are not liked by the university, that is why they slashed off the resources. My department's strength is that things are getting transformed. Gradually, society is trying to open. They are living in a continuous state of denial. We said we do not have transgender and sexual minorities, and then how can we recognize their issues?

Due to transnational traffic via different media of communication, the change is visible, but how we can use this change for our benefit is not. Society is evolving. How do you use knowledge production? The knowledge that is created, and how it is beneficial for our society. Again, one respondent opinioned:

We have a wide range of cases of harassment and rape at societal level. Prime Minister said due to vulgar dresses, rape cases are increasing. When leadership is talking about it, you can imagine the level of sensitivity. It is about how you are not someone to decide on your clothes. The Aurat March on sexuality is taken up and it is portrayed as highly controversial. They do not understand body autonomy and bodily integrity.

It is demonstrated in this research that teachers are especially important for cultivating any thought in the minds of students. Teachers have a patriarchal mindset. Feminism is also a behaviour. Some of the faculty members have not adopted feminist teachings in that discipline. On the contrary they have exhibited patriarchal thoughts. On this aspect one respondent shared:

I discussed with my senior colleagues that they only promote housework, such as cooking, caring, and cleaning, but she may have a Ph.D. in gender studies. She is just having patriarchal thoughts. If one is not transferring feminist thoughts to students or society, then what is the benefit of that person to the department? We are not educated in feminist thought. At least the teaching faculty should adopt feminist thought. It is not only about salary or livelihood. At least we should contribute something to society.

There is a rift between male faculty and female faculty at the five places. At few places male faculty members thought that their female colleagues are just promoting the same patriarchal thoughts, and, in their views, they have less commitment towards the feminist thoughts and feminist teaching pedagogy.

This discussion generated an interesting fact: usually when someone's personal goals and organizational goals are not matching with each other, then it happens like that. The usual appointment of teaching faculty in Pakistani academia is not done by looking into one's multidimensional skills and level of commitment toward the subject of interest. The hiring criteria is usually quantified with previous degree marks and the number of publications and years of teaching experience. It has less to do with one's political or critical thinking skills. It gives the impetus to think that when one is working in a discipline like gender studies, which has radical pedagogy but if one is unable to adopt it, then what is individual positionality and stake toward the discipline? Interestingly one respondent maintained that:

Our strength is that we know and aware of legal, social rights of women which are stuck in our system. We got a clear idea in gender studies that we are neither following religion, nor the law, we are behind our custom. (hum custom mein psahy huwy hein<sup>27</sup>) When we teach, we get awareness. We should follow Islam and law. We are bound here in front of elders; we cannot say anything in front of elders. The students get confidence in the first semester. They usually stay quiet and try to speak up during fourth semester, they get polished. They go for internships at NGOs in the final semester.

Again, it is significant to mention here that the role of WGS is very important in the society. It is observed that the graduate's mindset is getting changed. It is sustainable process, gradually WGS will get the desired result in the society. WGS has successfully created awareness. If we talk in public, usually girls are not aware. Internship placements are done they go into different sectors, then we tried to apply it, we ask them to do advocacy sessions. Things are applying. We have strengths, and our position is strong, we have voice, and they give weightage to our voice. I was member of harassment committee. Our ex-director was convenor. We talk to registrar that sent this act to all chairpersons and display

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<sup>27</sup> We are stuck within our custom.

into whole university because harassment is everywhere. Centre has created this awareness. We are having reported cases, in wrong reporting we protect the teacher, after investigation if found it was based on the misunderstanding then we try to keep balance with two genders.

If we talk about controversies related to *Aurat March*, these things are superficial, and challenges are there. WGS has no threat, there is legislation regarding workplace harassment and *Khula* and such cases used to be pending for a long, now because of such legislation such cases are decided within three months' time frame along with child custody. Before that, child custody was separate and may take 35 or 36 years to be decided. So, we are moving in the direction of improving women's status in society through legislation pertaining to women's issues.

New fields are emerging for WGS graduates. Now the students who want to appear in competitive examinations like CSS etc also opt for gender studies and look towards WGS as their guides and mentors. Some of WGS departments in Pakistan are working on broad feminist issues. There is malnutrition and tribal issues, the role of women in NGOs, and, these are some of the research topics. As one of the respondents shared the views;

I worked on gender related issues. I was not clear at the start and after I completed Ph. D. and explored it, I realized that it is the most important subject. Men also have rights. *Hum hemsha aurat ka rona karty hein*<sup>28</sup>. It is reflected in one response in following words:

I do not have feminist inclination. I like gender issues. I am an activist. I like to work on gender issues. Local women are discussed here. Before Musharraf, our females were not active, now they are engaged in education and health sectors also. Now medical seats have increased. awareness is raised during the tenure of Zubaida Jalal,

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<sup>28</sup> We always cry for women's rights.

Bushra Rind, Shumaila Achakzai. Now, more and more women are getting education. District Khuzadar's girls are not coming to do master's but are becoming lawyers, teachers and working in the NGOs sector. They are promoting female education in their areas like Sameera did. Now girls and parents are getting awareness. My father takes our consent for marriage of me and my sister. I am active in university politics. Last VC stopped paying our salaries. I did a speech against our VC. Local people call my husband to control your wife, she should keep our culture in mind, but my husband told them that it is her official business I would not intervene. He always stands with me. But it is difficult to survive.

### **Mandate of WGS**

Most of the faculty members are working on the mandate accorded to WGS. I worked in the development issues. There were issues of nutrition and health. One of my students said:

That madam after studying from you we have become such a broad-minded that we can easily express to have girlfriend if one so wishes, but my sister cannot do so. We changed them here in campus, we cannot promote this, we are bound by our customs. Being a teacher, I feel happy that they have grown. I feel happy that at least students are trying to be a bit open. I am confident that I am working on increasing gender awareness.

Again, in one narration it was demonstrated:

We are much settled. They should relate to each other, they can try to make common perceptions, so without coordination with others, we cannot achieve the mandate. We try to make sure that students reflect changes in thinking around their surroundings. We try to motivate them. We cannot impose our thinking on elders. How can we influence them? Now students say we have value in our families.

To some extent, this realization has been developed regarding the status of women in Pakistan but to blame the men all the time is not right. We need to decide, and we need to be aware. we should have urge inside us. No one will give us the package of empowerment. The women need to realise their own importance.

When it was started, we got only 17 students at Karachi, now we have 450 students in contemporary times, now students prefer it, now our boy's strength is getting more with the passage of time. People usually think there is no career scope in it. Now they think that they can work in every sector.

We do seminars, and activities to educate people. We arrange the activities for non-teaching faculty. We do outside the campus for dissemination where do we feel that to spread in the marginalized areas of the cities. We sensitize the citizens. We are doing the dissemination through students. We have 425 students at Karachi university. When they will go out of campus, on buses, and at social gathering they share the information. They share with their colleagues.

A few days ago, a psychology student come for family matter I forward it to her PAWALA., I gave her that advocate number. One-woman from university said there are inheritance issues, she does not know where to go for inheritance certificate after the death of her mother. Our students, and their parents are contacting us. These are 400 families, those who are getting this information through us and our students.

Pakistan is considering amending a landmark transgender rights bill passed in 2018 since some legislators and clerics argued that it contradicts Islamic teachings on gender identity. Rights based activists, however, responded that the law is being misunderstood and the “misinformed” debate against it is further endangering the transgender community. Pakistan hailed as among the more progressive laws on transgender rights globally by the International Commission of Jurists, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act gave transgender people in Pakistan the right to choose their gender identity as they perceived it themselves and to change it on previously issued government documents. Opponents of the law claim the provision to choose or change one’s gender is un-Islamic and could open the door to same-sex marriage, currently prohibited in Pakistan. In the last two weeks, at least four trans women have been killed. Some trans-rights activists blame

lumping “transgender” together with “homosexuality” for the renewed targeting of their community. Homosexuality is a punishable offense in Pakistan.

Hashtags such as “amend trans act” and “take back the vulgar bill” were recently trending on Twitter. One of the members of the conservative political party Jamat-e-Islami, is leading the charge against the 2018 law. It showed that by allowing citizens to choose self-perceived gender identity poses a “danger to the family and inheritance systems,” as it will “open the door for 220 million people to choose to be anything. (Zaman 2022). Similarly, in this year 2023, the government has issued no objection certificate to Jamat-e-Islami for conducting the rally on international women’s day at political space of Islamabad, but *Aurat March* organizers were not allowed to use that space.

The above-mentioned events and incidents are reported on the daily basis in Pakistan but to have constructive debate about why this bill need to revert and why homosexuality is an offense in Pakistan cannot be debated as protected and openly discussed due to the socio-religious context of the country at wider level and lack of tolerance for dissenting voices in the university education system.

Further, this lack of space for raising critical questions also impact the universities internal dynamics such as harassment cases are at peak in the public sector universities, but it is also not being discussed within the academics and usually the vocal faculty of gender studies is not included in the harassment committees of different universities just to hide the procedures of under carpet dealing with the harassers. Few respondents mentioned that “sexual crimes against female students in Pakistan are jeopardizing girl’s education.” There

is also common trend that committees and the officials on these appointments are usually clueless about harassment and its definition.

University Anti-Harassment cells are often consisting of individuals whose own knowledge of harassment watchdog is limited and narrow. Most of them are not aware of how to dig deeper into the matter, while going through evidence and testimony from the victim. Thus, reported cases are left on the backburner, until they are brought forth on social media. There is no denying that social media has emerged as a powerful tool against poor governance and other ills. If various matters of public interest were not presented on social media, they would remain out of administrative and institutional scrutiny. The modus-operandi of educational institutions dealing with sexual harassment has been to hide the incidents to save their reputation. Because of their unprofessional handling of such crimes, sexual harassers and predators thrive and survive. One of the respondents pointed out:

The best achievement we have is that we take up the rejected students who are rejected by other departments and transform them into critical thinkers so much so that these students have conscious understanding toward human rights, popular narrative. Moreover, I have seen students who critically analyse the so-called repressive regime as well.

It helps to see that those students who are usually enrolled in the degree for WGS in most of the cases they are not selected by other departments and usually gender studies degree is last option for them to get enrolled for university education. Having a degree in gender studies is not always their priority and in few universities at the time of admission they are supposed to list down their priorities and generally the gender studies is the last priority for them.



The data to examine perceptions towards the discipline of gender studies has been gathered from one of the public sectors universities show that between 2008-2020, only 37% students listed gender studies as their first choice for field of study in university application. While it is unsettling to see such low interest among young people towards this discipline, these findings not only reflect the low awareness and commitment in Pakistan toward gender justice, but also illuminate how factors such as merit, affirmative action, and broader socio-cultural dynamic in Pakistan contributes towards certain academic disciplines being perceived as less important or prestigious than others. (Aslam 2022) Shared by one respondent in following words:

To be very honest, not completely but we are striving to do our best, there are lot of reasons behind it, we were short of faculty members, we do not have space, we just received physical space, if we analyse it historically, things were not as smooth as they are today, even in the past, in a limited capacity of resources we did our best what we could. Now the question is, we are doing much well now than before in terms of resources; why are we not maximizing our efforts? I think we should contemplate those reasons and the reason in my opinion that we do not have an administrative head that could guide us or lead us; we are dependable on an in charge. All these justifications should not be an excuse to not being able to meet the mandate. Overall, I think we are working on our mandate of 50% or 60%.

In addition to that another respondent pointed out how during the time of pandemic they have managed to keep the student's intake in their respective departments. As mentioned,.

In our academic environment it is taken as slightly easy task to do degree gender studies. Students feel they can easily pass it. They feel we can get good grades in it. We need to talk about the quality of teaching as head of the departments. They do this degree in bit relaxing mode. Most of them come to me and said we want to opt for research. So, we really need to question? Why research it is not an easy task? It means we need to think something went wrong why they feel coursework is hard than research? It is going like this before I joined as in charge. COVID was also one of the big challenges, we went for online teaching. There were different sorts of challenges. We must compromise too many things. In physical classes we can see class dynamics between them. Students learning was compromised in online teaching.

Gender studies is not a field that many people want to work in. WGS usually have lower merit than other social sciences because of the differing university criteria for merit. Some departments have the highest merit, such as philosophy and international relations. The gender studies receive the leftovers students. They are not very committed to study gender studies. On this aspect on respondent shared:

At M.Phil. level, I was teaching gender and work; many students could not pass my course. When I failed them, the Registrar called, and asked me as to why I have failed students since we already have very less students count. He further added that be cautious about failing students if you would do like this then who will come to your department.

It showed that administration usually wanted the university to fill out the seats criteria to get fees and they are least concerned that what is output and what is being taught and expect from them at the ends of the day what matters is quantity of the students who get enrolled and passed out from the universities. During COVID-19, the university was not operating online classes due to limited access to the internet for students in the peripheries of Baluchistan. There are some conceptual issues regarding the understanding of discipline with the faculty and student body at Baluchistan University. One of the participants of the research mentioned that:

When I asked them what relevance of gender studies in our context is in my course paper. They were not comfortable answering. We are not developing their analytical skills. Regarding the quality we are lacking behind, they come with blank papers in my class. I tried my best to teach them. I held myself accountable. They got A grades in most of the courses. We are teaching HEC approved curriculum. But our style of teaching is different in that we are not telling them how to think critically. We are Facing a backlash in women's rights in many fields of social life, lacking the support of strong political agents, strong anti-feminist sentiment, public misunderstanding of the feminist movements and feminist theory, wide media coverage of the "new femininity", an almost total absence of debate on transgender issues, "normalization" of sexism in everyday life and in public debates, right wings coalition of opponents to so-called "gender theory, feminism, gender studies", to name only a few of the most visible trends, create the need for more carefully organize.

I would like to refer to the less connection of WGS with women's and feminist movements, with NGOs' activities and academia, as we are firmly convinced that these studies were/are, and will be a political project, political in the noblest sense of the word. Without a wide coalition of support from all the agents (and with the support of so-called leadership in parliamentary and governmental positions), this research can even be stopped or interrupted, as has emerged from our mapping, as our process of the institutionalization of WGS is at least interrupted, if not endangered.

CEGS-QAU played a role in its scope, as now it is part of the Federal Public Service Commission as one of the core subjects for civil servants. It was an effort of the ex-founder (activist) and director of CEGS-QAU. one of the ex-founders of the Centre stated that,

I want gender studies to be introduced into bureaucracy because they are blank about gender issues. Then I requested they introduce gender studies into the civil service. They did not hear its name in civil service. Then the CEGS team developed the syllabus for civil service gender studies exams, and in the first year, we collectively marked all papers at the centre. Now, through CSS, they are getting familiar with the content of gender studies and students opt for it as an optional subject.

It clarifies that there are some achievements which has been made in the field with the efforts of few individuals who have clear vision and leadership skills to institutionalize this field. At the state level, they tried to appropriate the gender equality discourse through CEDAW and the Beijing platform of action. Development agencies introduced gender integration and gender mainstreaming. But there was no institutional capacity for it. Gender studies graduates catering the demands of the field. One of the Ex-Director mentioned that:

CEGS graduates are working more vibrantly; they were more transformative. They think that in capitalist societies to achieve gender equality goal is almost impossible. We see our graduates as very active in different social movements whether they are for Baluchistan or PTM.

We tried when we teach feminist theory, we want to keep theory and practice together. QAU students' body is different than others. "It is not pure theoretical discipline in my view". Other departments of gender studies' teaching styles are not like ours, and they are pure academics. Our student body has an impact. Aurat March is increasing feminist discourse due to private patriarchy is not changing, they must do all the work, when middle-class educated foreign qualified feminist girls returned to Pakistan, they feel that they must bear with the pressure of toxic masculinity and private patriarchy, and they stand for it. They were studying feminist studies. Gender studies created awareness. What is basic for gender status quo in social and political ways? Gender studies as a discipline increased contextual understanding of gender scholarship in Pakistan and at a global level which is visible in the Aurat march movement as well.

Few people think that the CEGS program, in comparison with other gender studies programs, is more vibrant because other departments did not have feminist women as their heads. One of the Ex-Director said that:

I was an activist. I feel the link between theory and practice is very essential. It links with feminist politics. I have a personal commitment and you cannot separate them both. If you want to continue this struggle, you must be part of the praxis. As a gatekeeper, I have recruited those people who have a sense of feminist politics. Essentially, I hired those who were progressive, and I do believe that they teach feminist perspectives and feminist politics honestly. There are different schools of thought, and I have my inclination toward socialism.

The ex-Director of the CEGs centre does not want to hire conservative people at the centre.

I intentionally blocked entry to those people who were conservative in their thoughts. CEGS-QAU. Faculty is distinct, and its feminist outlook is strong. Until we are not part of a movement, one cannot talk about transformation. This knowledge is about transforming society into gender just society. If one is doing knowledge production in gender, then he/she should be part of those movements.

We are far apart from our philosophy of teaching gender studies as an academic field in Pakistan. We are struggling to start a Ph. D program, but we are unable to achieve it. We are not doing quality of research. However, we may produce something now because of pressure of higher education commission (HEC). One of the Ex-in charge told said, “I really do not want to produce anything under pressure”. At one place, director’s and associate professors’ positions are vacant since the long.

We function as departments, but we are the centre. The people come, teach, and go back to their homes. In my view, if research is having clear intention of simultaneous association between one’s philosophy and organizational mandate, then it should be produced, otherwise, it is a useless exercise under the higher authorities. (Ex-In charge, QAU)

The transforming role of gender studies in the Pakistani society is more linked with religious and socio-political situation of the country that how the institutions and the state view the gender inequalities in Pakistan within larger context. It is a double edge sword for Pakistan. Conservatives, Islamists and pietist organizations guard the cause of female sexual purity closely, and moral policing is essential in maintaining an Islamic sexual and gendered order. Ironically, the women thinkers and feminist groups who profess to be ‘radical feminists’ have deeply offended the pious sensibilities of believing women more than any secular feminist movement ever has.

The foremost assumption among the new students is that gender studies, as a field, is limited to studying patriarchy and social construction of gender, and hence focusing on these issues makes one a feminist. Feminism and feminist activism are some of the most controversial terms in the context of Pakistan, viewed as being against the Pakistani society and harming its social fabric. Moreover, feminist activism, soon after the emergence of Pakistan as an independent state, has remained confined largely within the bounds of

bourgeois respectability, thereby misunderstood, and sometimes even despised, by the masses. As a result, students are often oblivious or unaware about the richness of this discipline and its diverse nature.

At few places of the research site participants really felt like that they are misfit within their academic community due to their radical and progressive thoughts. It is again a dilemma that teaching gender studies are not to reinforce the binaries and categorization but in academic atmosphere, people do pass judgments and label as fascist liberals, and radical feminists all the time to their fellow colleagues, he has no men quality, he behaves like women among the female faculty. Overall, this discipline is solution for changing attitude; hence, it should also be started from schools for betterment of basic concept which can be better as they grow up, they can realise the importance of women in the society. We need to see the gender relations balance in social structures.

### **Connecting Theory /praxis: *An Unhappy Marriage?***

*If any Colonel or General talks about politics, it is considered acceptable, but if a professor does so, it is considered wrong. I believe in active politics.*

Feminism is (mainly) praxis. It stands alone. It is not separate from activism. Most people defined activism from different perspectives. For example, opinion pieces, newspaper articles, and blogs can be defined as one form of activism as well. Those who contribute to writing take it as activism. For example, one of the in-charge of the centre said,

Nazish Brohi (development professional and right-based activist) will never join a street protest anytime). She thinks that she is doing activism through her writings. Furthermore, few of them define activism just in sense of arranging the event,

seminars, and conferences at the campus (within the university) on different occasions such as 8th March and 12th February (National Women's Day of Pakistan). A few of departmental heads whom I interviewed they think that it is a noteworthy discussion to talk about theory and praxis. One of the heads of the department is of the view that Being a government servant, we are not allowed to engage the activism. (Director-gender studies).

One of the respondents mentioned activism as, "We try to keep their hand in hand, so basically, we need to teach how we can apply theory to activism." First, we teach students the overview of societal differences and the difference between a societal perspective and a feminist perspective. Or how might a feminist perspective view gender and sex? We can't put it into action unless we create a broad spectrum, and we can't bring the possibility to activism without a theoretical plan. The definition of activism is usually bound by the university policies for employees. As one of the participants is of the view that:

We are not part of any protests or street activism. Generally, it is not allowed by the university policy. None of our faculty members at Punjab university is active on social media platforms and not on street protest. No one owns Aurat March here. Activism is a practical thing. I think at least we should take part in it if we are not writing publicly about certain issues. I have recently supervised a thesis on this topic and my student conducted interview of Aurat March organizers. Our faculty at Punjab university even did not like to discuss such social movements. When I was teaching in a women's university, we usually discussed it, but we did not write in support of it publicly.

In Punjab university, the teaching faculty of gender studies is not involved in political activism around gender issues. Although they have diverse students and students are part of solidarity marches due to their ethnic affiliations but sure they do not play role in motivating for keeping praxis and theory together. But majority of the respondent comprehend the activism as per their own understanding. However, there is no consensus among the participants of research how this concept is diverse, and it has less link with categories of positive and negative. In Peshawar university, sexual harassment cases prevailed as the last passing batch made a group for reducing sexual harassment at

workplace. One of the participants told that, “I have this idea to make a group of girls of from my department and other departments, it is called Awakened Girl. But unfortunately, this movement could not be continued as the batch graduated”.

It is significant to highlight that theory and practice are interconnected and WGS is not purely theoretical. Theory is not enough to change the mindset until it is being applied. There is a big role in activism. It is not mandatory to agree with all schools of thought. But if one would claim to be a feminist, they must at least talk about it to bring about some sort of change. Gender studies, feminism, and activism go hand in hand, as seen in the *Aurat March* movement. This forms a continuous cycle of thought, theory, and practice. Again, one of the respondents pointed out this key aspect in following words:

Being an academician, I cannot participate in activism. For me, activism takes the form of writing. I can do it through radio, TV, and articles. My students and teaching faculty cannot practice street activism. We do this indirectly by attending talks and organizing a walk on campus on March 8th. In Karachi university, there is also a consensus that we try to keep theory and practice hand in hand, so basically, we teach theory and how to apply it. But it is only at campus through seminars and conferences. We are not active in any street movement. If we do not create the broad spectrum, we cannot bring possibility in activism without a theoretical plan.

It is demonstrated that university authorities and administration are not in support of activism, and they have mentioned this in their rule books for their employees. If the faculty members try to become street activists, they may be treated harshly, and their administrative, financial, and academic procedures may be halted. In QAU context, activism is associated with International Women's Day on March 8th. CEGS has positive and negative activism and have made efforts with the government, where activism aims to bring about positive outcomes. From their perspective, negative actions are not considered activism. The aim was to push for positive legislation. Though the process of change is



slow it is significant to keep in mind what kind of societal mindsets are prevalent in Pakistan.

On the other hand, each of the five participants who were interviewed as part of formal academia and were regular employees of the five universities. They were all under the impression that CEGS (QAU) centre has activist faculty, and that these are the people who are likely to be activists in real life. One faculty member shared her experience of this as:

We are not allowed to do activism. None of our faculty members are practically involved in activism through social media or street protests. No one owns Aurat March here. Activism is practical. Our faculty is not used to discussing March. Even in women's universities, we used to discuss things among ourselves, but no one dared to write anything or participate in it. (Female faculty, Punjab University-Lahore)

Few department students also take part in their ethnic activism, and they are part of student societies. The students do participate in solidarity marches. One of the faculty members from Punjab University said: “A few of our students were arrested due to their ethnic affiliations and politics. We have no role in training them politically. I feel we are not giving them training in activism. Our gender studies have no role in it”. Moreover, they were only five or six respondents to this research who feel that activism is part of feminist theory and praxis. As reflected in the below response one respondent opinioned:

For me, you know, feminist theory is nothing without activism. It is a theory of parallel world order, which cannot be established without transformative change. Gender studies cannot be viewed as a purely academic discipline, nor can other social sciences. (Ex-founder Director- CEGS, QAU).

The theory should be put into practice. I appreciate CEGS- QAU for that reason. CEGS-QAU conducted regular activities and talks. We have been here for two and a half years and have not organized a single talk. This is the commitment of our department toward gender issues. There was a scandal of sexual harassment in Baluchistan University.

But we, as academicians, did not play a role in advocacy and awareness programs. “I remained a student at CEGS- QAU. where they turned theory into practice.”

While on the other hand, student unions are deemed significant for the student politics against the corporate universities’ structures but now student unions are banned at campuses across Pakistani universities. On February 9, 1984, military dictator Zia-ul-Haq imposed a blanket ban on student unions on university campuses across Pakistan citing increasing “violence on campus” and “interference in administration”. These scenarios are similar for the employees of the universities as well. A notification issued by the Establishment Division says no government servant can participate in any media platform except with the permission of the government. (Ali, 2021. Referring to Rule 22 of the Servant Rules, the Establishment Division) says that:

It restrains a government servant from making any statement of fact or opinion which can embarrass the government in any document published or in any communication made to the press or in any public utterance or television program or radio broadcast delivered by him or her.

Due to these government policies and prevalent colonial laws activism is not being encouraged at campus those who practice, they are singled out and labelled as foreign agent, and they are *ghaddar* (not loyal to the homeland/motherland). It is believed that they are foreign funded that is why they raised these questions and talks around critical issues of society but it’s certainly not true in most of the cases.

The question comes here that why if someone is studying the social issues and being a scholar of the society, one is unable to practice the theory, it means that one is in disconnect what’s happening in the surrounding environment. The philosophy and theory are itself very abstract. The people that I interviewed for this research are having multiple

academic backgrounds and cultural and personal baggage as well. In teaching gender studies *personal is political* as reflected in this data interpretation. Like other social sciences sociology, anthropology, and international relations the personal lives of the people are not separated from their professional struggles of teaching feminist theory and praxis within WGS.

To summarize the above debate, it is significant to highlight that unfortunately academics are unable to see that theory as a liberatory practice. it is healing for most people so if by rules and laws the university faculty is not allowed to do the practice it is clearly indicated that their teaching pedagogies are superficial and always abstract because it does not liberate them as teachers to feel healed at certain points and time in their teaching careers. The goals of feminist educational research include dismantling systems of oppression, highlighting gender-based disparities, and seeking new ways of constructing knowledge. “I’ve been concerned about deteriorating relationship between feminist theory and practice.” Most of the research participants felt that we cannot take bold stance. “Our activism is limited since we only listen to Dr. Farzana Bari and only discuss topics that fall within our jurisdiction. Dr. Bari, being a woman, made that decision, and as pure academicians, we are unable to tolerate challenges or the resulting backlash.”

Well-kneaded things can work, you should not stand alone. It will lead towards the sustainability of ideas and practices. Philosophically, it is usually considered praxis, in practice it is not considered as theory and praxis together. As reflected in this research one can see the contradiction in the views of the respondents they do believe that teaching of gender studies is not separate from practice but often practice is just to have linkages with the market and to organize the different events on the eve of national and international

women's day and human rights celebrations but there is limited connection of the emerging movements in the cities in five universities of Pakistan it could be said that social scientists have no direct connections with their surroundings and their outreach and practice is limited to the campus in certain cases but majority is not taking active part in the campus politics related to the issues of the girl's hostels, dress code, harassment cases and female representation in the student councils.

Moreover, the individual life struggles, one's own political and economic position and commitment to teach WGS is also interrelated factor for turning theory into practice. The politics at university level is considered as part of academic staff associations on the one hand but few people think that this staff association is good allies for the staff rights, but they are not considered as visionary and supportive in terms of owning gender studies stance and viewpoints. Most of the teaching faculty is in continuous fear of being single out and labelled as feminists who have broken marriages, so they are conscious about their acts and their role in activism at campus as well. Therefore, I have used the word theory and praxis is unhappy marriage because ideologically it is considered that praxis and theory are together, but it was not visible during the interviews and most of the research participants have clearly identified that they are not associated with the street politics, and it is not their job being a government employee of the universities.

### **The issue of Autonomy /Integration within WGS**

I think in the long run it must be integrated, because it should be taught like another civic subject. It is a set of skills, what are the basic skills of gender, by that time gender studies must be autonomous. Other than that, universities which offer gender studies as a discipline should be autonomous. Autonomy is a hope, if one has no autonomy, there would be no hope for producing local theory. We should have autonomous gender studies departments.

It cannot work in integration; it has worked autonomously. But we have interdisciplinary approach we thought, psychology, sociology, anthropology etc.

The drawback of integration is facing issues of promotions and recruitment if we merge with other social sciences departments in the universities. I think integration would not work. The integration will vanish the philosophy of this discipline.

One of the Ex -in charge said in following words that:

I feel in Pakistan, all disciplines are not going toward a multidisciplinary approach they did not adopt that. It's also a struggle to talk about integration. It means as autonomous we can teach openly. That can influence other departments. In the Pakistani context dual approach is necessary. The academics should have links with feminist networks and practitioners. Gender studies in Pakistan are not at the stage to roll back into integration. It will even take time to go to that extent and even integration within natural sciences is also required.

Apart from that, in the worst-case scenario, if the administration merges gender studies into other social sciences departments, it will make the department very insecure and vulnerable, due to which it will never have the sustainability that it requires to grow.

On this issue one respondent mentioned:

So, in my view, a separate department of gender studies is a better way to grow. We have been a witness to it that the department has always been I trouble whenever it merged with other disciplines, with its integration, it loses autonomy to conduct very important tasks like conducting seminars, conferences, and getting books, or libraries. We have option to become a department if we cannot function as centre, but we need to see it carefully that what is our benefit, I can link it with the example of salt, if you add during the cooking it would be no more visible, if you put on after cooking then it will apparent, same is with the gender studies. I think it should be autonomous, otherwise its purpose will dilute.

Most of the research participants were in favour of the autonomous WGS departments because they have this thought that autonomous status of women and gender studies department is more fruitful, and this autonomy can help the discipline to integrate feminist values in the male dominated universities. As shared by one participant, "In my view's integration is better, things need to be streamlined. You need more power to become

autonomous. Our goal could be achieved via integration. Things go via proper strategies. Autonomy encourages isolation and it should be integrated.’’

The question of whether to struggle for autonomy or for integration with other disciplines has been a constant debate in Women's or Gender Studies (WS/GS) (Griffin 2004; Liinason 2011a; Vasterling et al. 2006; Wiegman 1999). On one hand, the question is about institutional frames, either as administrative and economic independence or as integrated cooperation with other disciplines. On the other hand, the question relates crucially core content of the discipline and its identity as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge production (e.g., Allen and Kitch 1998; Brown 1997; Dever 2001; Friedman 1998; Hark 2007; Jordheim Larsen and Widerberg 2007; Liinason and Holm 2005; Pryse 1998; Pryse 2000; Widerber 2006). The scope and debate related to gender studies as interdisciplinary field of knowledge production is not very common in the South Asia because in south Asia it is still struggling with the narrow definition of the gender which is closely linked to the women and marginalized community.

Almost all the teaching faculty were in the favour of its autonomous position because they think that being a society, we are not at the stage where integration could be the option to sort out. In autonomous department, people feel that at least they have a bit of liberty in terms of designing course outline, readers, and scheme of the study. It should be integrated. Autonomy can be isolated, then we will remain in our side. Women's studies are interdisciplinary, it is related to our social sciences. We are integrated. It will lose its own significance; degree should be separated. Science students, social science students and gender studies could be part of curriculum. We need to educate our whole action. Hence,

WGS scholars have carefully strived for the simultaneous maintenance of the interdisciplinarity and the transformative power of WS/GS as a critical discipline.

### **Future of WGS**

It is a very broad question, if we treat it with sincere efforts, it can be improved, but I do not see it to be going anywhere in the next five or ten years. If we deal with it accordingly it can create a good prospect for it, I will restate we must focus on individuals and we must focus on creating a healthy society. Our focus is to create a space where there is respect and justice. I know I am using the big terms, but I think we need to understand all these problems including gender relations such as patriarchy. We need to understand women, transgenders, and sexual minorities and their issues. There is a need of research on changing forms of patriarchy. Are there any prospects if we look at it from an intersectional point of view. If it is introduced at college level, then we can hope for a change. It depends on the recognition of the discipline. In Pakistan all social sciences, including gender studies are suffering from future challenges. It is linked with rational and critical thinking. I did not see any good days coming for gender studies, I see the discipline struggling. I do not think it will grow or elevate.

The future is bright, (define bright) if we are carrying on the same way it would be bleak like in Baluchistan, if we work as QAU then it is bright. Only Punjab University Lahore and Karachi University are offering Ph.D., and they are banned by HEC. I am personally very keen to do a Ph.D. in gender studies. I must wait that's why I admitted in Pakistan studies, but I want to do M. Phil in gender studies from QAU. I am afraid if you change your criteria for getting admission to a Ph.D. may it be sufficient to have an M.Phil., or one need to get M. Phil in Gender Studies to be qualified for Ph. D in GS from QAU? then what I will do? I think I am struggling here to open the admission criteria because by limiting ourselves we are not getting people.

There is yet another debate that gender is having multi-disciplinary nature in studies, so higher education eligibility criteria should be more inclusive, so we can get more diverse students and it will help us to work on scope issues. Here most academics link the future with scope and market utility. As opinioned by one respondent;

We must sale it every time, (humein is ko her dafa bechana parta hey) even within the educated people every time we must sale. This department needs an importance because it is labelled as western but in other school of thoughts likewise Sufism it is a fluid identity, it is layered, no gender studies have any soul. A higher education is expanding as a market for industry, but it is not serving the purpose of debates, critical knowledge production around the local issues. The future and transformation of

gender studies as a field is closely linked to its every day's struggle of academics those who are working in these departments. The future depends on how much we push together for its growth. The language is closely linked with the future, here language is suppressing us because majority does not understand English but when we tried to make them understand its original meaning phased out.

We have more boys in classes because they are being rejected from natural sciences or sociology or social work and alternatively get admission in this discipline. Only 5% have interest in gender studies. There is no foundation of gender studies at college level. When we ask questions in interviews, they say we do not know what it is? we have much a lot in BS now which we have started from last two years. When students realize that there are no jobs for this discipline then they try to skip their degrees in the middle. They enroll in the private university for another degree program.

Thus far, the overarching solution to the puzzle among WGS scholars, in our setting as well as internationally, WGS stands on “two legs,” meaning thereby WGS needs both integration with other disciplines and its own scientific field. Most importantly, in accordance with that institutionalization and interdisciplinarity, are questions without universal solutions and without a permanent status quo. Hence, it is relevant to look for temporary decisions reflecting local opportunities, challenges, and restrictions.

The future of WGS is closely linked with the political stability of the Pakistan and acceptance of Women's and Gender studies as a field of study. Though there is a lack of acceptability within the universities as compared to other social sciences and the motivation to study gender studies is always questioned and it has intersecting factors related to the student perceptions and teaching faculty motivation to this discipline but in Pakistan, we are not supposed to request them write your motivation to take admission in gender studies.

It is the admission criteria which is less strict for gender studies. As one of the respondents said that “we got the leftovers students in gender studies.” The motivation is linked to the entry in university, its ranking, legitimacy to be at campus and privileges to



be students in the public sector and scope of the discipline are highly influential factors for determine the future of the discipline.

Same is the case with Centre of Excellence in Gender Studies that was created through an act of parliament and has struggled to survive within a male dominated institution of higher education. The centre has grown over the years and in 2015 a few faculty members were hired to join the centre.

Though these faculty members are initially hired based on their knowledge and educational qualifications, further training to cope with multiple roles and responsibilities and hone their feminist research potential is essential. Most important their personal aspirations and academic interests need to be aligned not only with the ethos of a gender studies centre but also to the larger feminist network within Pakistan.

Future of WGS is extremely bright, all departments have grown now yet are not connected with each other. If we really want to improve our future, we need to work in coordination with each other. We should be in mainstream, but ministry should provide the fundings. There should be check and balance from the ministry. Are they following the manifesto or not? Check and balance were prerequisite from the national machineries to have an idea that how field could be further strengthen. In addition to it, research participants were, overall, of this view that it has scope issues and there are public and private sector organization in the Pakistan which still did not open more opportunities for the graduates of gender studies. There is a lack of motivation and commitment for opting this discipline as a career in the future.

In Baluchistan, unfortunately, we cannot have scope at college level. Students want to study, but they are scared from their future. They are facing problems for getting jobs on the basis degree in gender studies. NGOs have been shrunken due to security issues and

NGOs have been closed, so our students have no market value. Now there is bribery everywhere. After doing this degree one has to do another master to obtain job. Our students have depression about their job opportunities based on graduation in gender. But each students have this dream that he will do job after completion of this degree, in our society people think that if the boy does not have job after degree, he cannot get married or engaged with anyone due to lack of economic security.

One of the respondents have the views that, “Being a teacher, I feel that there should be more opportunities for our graduates, there should be more vacancy for gender specialists”. In the scene as it is now, Funding constraints have also limited Peshawar's development sector jobs, but graduates of women's and gender studies programs still anticipate that larger cities will provide more professional options.

## CHAPTER 6:

### CONCLUSION

This work, instead of formulating conclusions, has sparked new queries concerning the evolution and future of this discipline within Pakistan's ever-changing society. It is also hoped that by blending western frameworks and theories with local knowledge and research paradigms situation can improve significantly. This present endeavour is a teacher's account of her engagement with WGS in Pakistan. Furthermore, this account also depicts the local context's perception of WGS in today's academic world. These accounts are rooted in university structures that are embedded in a purely academic environment of objectivity or rationality and have limited room for questioning gender norms. Raised through decolonial lens, questions like why does not WGS have support or patronage of the state? Or why is there a disconnect between market and academics, which can become potential research issues for future. While it is certain that WGS is an academic discipline and not an NGO's work, the academics of WGS who participates in activism are also discouraged. There is no alignment between vision of leadership and ethos of WGS as an academic discipline, and it is always affected by the measures taken by male chauvinist leadership of the universities.

In context of this research, it is crucial to note that most WGS scholars have reflected on issues of institutionalization and *disciplinization* from their standpoint(s) as "institutional insiders" within the present organizational frames of WGS. Indeed, in practice, much effort has been directed towards enhancing the autonomy of WGS, rather than articulating strategies for integration. Thee focus, historically, has been on gaining a stronger position for WGS within the institutional set ups. However, many scholars outside

of institutionalized WGS identify as WGS or feminist researchers. These scholars make significant contributions to the body of feminist scholarly literature, teach WGS, and add diversity to WGS modules and courses. Therefore, it is interesting to contemplate their role vis-à-vis the autonomy, integration, disciplinization and interdisciplinarity of WGS.

In this study, researcher has tried to highlight what Joan Wallach Scott has aptly described that “Women’s and Gender Studies as a place of anxiety and irritability but also a source of energy and existence”. It is one's own ideological and political stance regarding the dissemination of feminist knowledge that keeps individuals motivated to teach WGS at public sector universities.

Historically, most of the WGS departments in Pakistan were forced or pressurized to get forcefully integrated with sociology and anthropology due to administrative reasons when the founding directors step out from their respective universities. Because it was believed that WGS would not become a business enterprise, we are blamed for not generating revenues for our respective public sector universities. In addition to that our progress was (and is still) measured on statistical facts reflected through “performance indicators”.

WGS deals with gender norms, societal attitudes and human behaviours that have been constituted over the period (perhaps over centuries) and to survive within male dominated higher education institutions is a lot much struggle attached to WGS as academic discipline.

Interestingly, this present research reflects that respondents from different universities expressed their desire to establish an interactive environment with WGS departments across Pakistan by creating a formal network to bolster the collective cause of

gender consciousness. As a result, it would help us to translate theory into practice and foster our feminist agenda through networking and solidarity with other departments as feminist activists and academics.

Furthermore, it could be concluded that although this discipline has faced a constant struggle of hierarchies, commercialization of education, neoliberalization, and acceptance, it is true that WGS as an academic field is less accepted worldwide. Some of the research participants also mentioned that they have observed this phenomenon worldwide.

While there are newly introduced departments of WGS in Pakistan (indicating the expansion of this field), there is hardly any discussion about the state of knowledge production, the transition of the discipline with limited human and financial resources, and the impact of the decolonization debate for WGS. All these above-mentioned issues are part of the new horizon that this present research aimed to explore. The research on WGS is not sufficiently global and it has power dynamics. The scholars of WGS are misrepresented in the top journal of feminist research and inquiry. The publication pattern also has power nexus between the Global South and the global north. WGS as an academic field is still less explored in Pakistani context. Though we can see more expansion of this discipline in the form of new departments being opened in different universities, there is still lack of acceptance and understanding related to this discipline within and outside of academia. Most of the research participants are aware what they are teaching but they are not comfortable with the use and adoption of terminologies such as feminist research, feminism, feminist activism etc. All these terms are still considered as notorious tags for most of the students, faculty and educated people at university level.

To measure the consciousness and awareness raising impact of this discipline can be challenging since there are no concrete indicators and criteria for measuring this. As reflected in this research the element of change or acceptance is linked with the performance of the students and their placement at good, reputed organization(s) after graduation.

Further, being an employee of the universities, they are of view that higher degrees are linked with economic empowerment, and usually people enrolled in degrees for getting good employment, but even they quoted their concern and examples how at micro level they act and impact within the campus, but at broader level within their regional spaces they have cultural baggage which bound them to reinforce the existing structures. Unfortunately, the quest for acquiring education is not only linked with getting knowledge in our education system it also has close relationship with capitalist economy. In countries like Pakistan which has history of unstable political democracy and economy they always marginalized and welcome the fields like WGS and development studies.

Although the praxis of resistance is very complex and layered because lobby and networking with the top management of the university is still unable to shatter their certain myths and misconceptions regarding WGS as an academic field, its utility (market scope) and level of acceptance and content of the courses is still questioned in terms of teaching of sexuality studies.

Moreover, co -production of knowledge and debates within the classroom are also used as strategy of resistance in Pakistani WGS departments at some places. On the contrary some practitioners within this field remained concern about their safety especially during Covid-19 time-period when hybrid mode of learning was introduced. During this

time, they were cautious about their lectures (to what extent they can discuss issues within WGS freely/openly) since the classes were online and those can also be recorded. These pressures had affected not only lives, work, teaching and career of the practitioners but also institutions and even the political organization; and also had a deep effect on our lives, scholarship, work, teaching, career, institutions, and political organizing, particularly those that are a sign of or hold consequences for the health and survival of the discipline of feminist, gender, and women's studies.

WGS as a field is not being promoted and taken seriously at academic level in the universities at Pakistan which has shortage of human resource trained in gender sensitive manners, and limited knowledge and vision toward gender just society which is why lacking experts in gender studies as field. Most importantly, such societies like ours are not very keen to have paradigm shift in their socio-cultural set up whereas they adopted the western science and social sciences proudly but when it comes to teaching of radical subject such as feminist studies, sexual studies and women's and gender studies, they thought that certain fields are dangerous for their social order and existing status quo.

Disciplines like WGS are ongoing struggle for changing mindsets and behavior of the society, it involves radical pedagogy to turn theory into practice. Further, critical thinking paradigm is having mission linkages in this whole process of teaching a political and radical subject. WGS has always needs to give a proof of existence in terms of resources and doing cheering and celebrating activities by portraying the stereotypical women issues within boundaries of the universities. But unfortunately, in the contemporary capitalist world universities are more inclined towards the market and demand supply chain relationship, they are trying to bridge the gap with the industry to launch their graduates

and new degree programs to meet the market requirements. Under the academic rat race of promotions, we are not functioning as feminist knowledge producers at universities here in Pakistan which was the purpose of the discipline of gender studies. Education has turned into business, it has less link with humanity, morality and ethics, tolerance, acceptance for diversity over all being a society. With the passage of time, we are turning into mob of the masses which has no direction in gender relationships, to function as gender just society but in our system usually society has remained limited to the literal definition of the housing societies in the urban metropolis which has less realization of potentials to alter the world view through research on local issues.



## **CHAPTER 7:**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations are typically important for both policy and theoretical research. However, in some cases, not all recommendations are comprehensive. I have included recommendations at various levels, including institutional, theoretical, and at ideological. Although, implementing ideological changes cannot be accomplished through solo efforts, as it requires institutional reforms and support structure to reshape and produce the new knowledge generation practices.

#### **Institutional**

Since there is a lack of research (especially within academia) on issues related to gender, there should be dedicated research on gender knowledge production within these departments. This will enable them to collaborate with other social sectors to advance the agenda of gender equality in Pakistan. Moreover, an introductory course of gender studies should be offered as mandatory course across all disciplines at university level in order to increase awareness among individuals in the society about gender issues.

At institutional level, networking, alliances, and ties outside university and within the administration are also extremely significant. Even within the natural sciences one course regarding introduction of gender studies could be introduced as credit course. This will contribute to better integration within the university system, enhancing overall gender sensitivity on campus.

Likewise, research funds should be adjusted on the basis of changing criteria and demand of the hour. The Academic institutions are often entangled in colonial bureaucratic structures and processes when approving creative and innovative research that doesn't align with typical research criteria or frameworks. To avoid these (problematic/unnecessary) bureaucratic steps research approval procedures and processes should be made more democratic, swift and less complicated. Similarly, the ethical approval of research idea should be supplemented along with the feasibility of the project. At the institutional level, universities should establish contracts or MoUs with publishing companies to facilitate publication, thereby enabling the dissemination of research. Lastly there is a dire need to have frequent workshops and training sessions within universities at an administration level to improve their understanding about women's and gender studies. It will help them to be sensitize towards gender issues.

### **Generating Theoretical (knowledge) Repository for Pakistan**

WGS is a newly established field in Pakistan, so capacity building in technical field and more human resource is required to generate the local knowledge database with the support of existing resources. However, this must be accomplished not only with the support of donor agencies and their funding, but also by establishing a linkage between academia (researchers) and the state through government funds. Otherwise, it depends on the stance of each department regarding foreign and development funds. I mean, some departments may want to receive government or NGOs funds, while others may not.

Increasing the local knowledge, production practices, multidisciplinary approach could work on and collaboration between south which is also one of the vital avenues to be explored at regional level to widen the theoretical base for WGS. Conversely,

promoting written works published and researched within Pakistan could serve as another potential source to enrich the repository of concepts related to WGS in Pakistan.

Furthermore, journals (of WGS) could be launched to facilitate the publications (more local) and provide the venues to the gender studies faculty across Pakistan to disseminate their research work. There should be an online webpage or shared resources across Pakistan for gender studies where people inside/outside gender studies particularly who have extensive research work on the subject become part of these networks and departments to exchange the knowledge base within Pakistan and at next level this knowledge base could be extend to the South Asia. There could be local publishers like Zubaan, ASR and Kali for women those who can publish the emerging debates in WGS in the region including South Asia and South-East Asia.

On the other hand, national machinery on women's rights can facilitate the publication process along with academia. This could involve collaborative efforts to establish an epistemic repository for the country, such as Pakistan.

### **Ideological**

Although scholarships around women, feminism, and gender studies are emerging in other social sciences as well, the mission and vision of establishing these departments was more linked to the independent cause of feminist knowledge production on critical grounds in Pakistani academia. Women and gender studies role is not working like NGOs but to work as catalyst for generating critical scholarship in the academia which is totally different from the endocentric basis of the knowledge.

There should be bridge between theory and praxis, a connection that is currently absent in the ongoing academic discourse within gender studies. It is a dire need to determine the future of gender studies in societies like Pakistan which are in ideological confusion like other majority of Muslim states. The state religion is Islam and it always intersect with the social construction of gender roles, identity, power, and women's position in the society. The misrepresentation of the religion by the few cleric sand clergies who control the nation in every sphere of the life such as economic, family and politics etc. Therefore, there is a need to have a clear vision regarding our future directions. We must determine whether we aim to reinforce religious views through this discipline by teaching from an Islamic perspective or if we intend to nurture radical pedagogy and cultivate progressive thoughts within this field of study. In view of the findings of this research, middle way is not going to work, no clarity of our pathways, which is linked with the motivation of teaching this discipline and one's own positionality to apt gender studies as a career. So given this research recommendation, it is very important to see and document for future researchers who are the gender studies experts at universities. If we attempt to unpack this question, it signifies how these experts perceive their teaching philosophy, ethos, class, religion, and economic position within the context of gender studies academia. So clear ideological stance of the teaching faculty is very important for the growth of this discipline. Gender studies is a political endeavor aimed at addressing gender inequalities, necessitating a commitment to take action and combat these inequalities to transform the existing structure. So, it is not only like traditional social sciences just to reproduce and

critique the already produced content, but it requires to go one step further to challenge the existing hierarchies through writings or practice.

### **Policy Level**

The government of Pakistan should constitute a robust facilitation and coordination network with all gender studies departments in Pakistan to conduct baseline research studies on gender issues. Civil society and the national machinery for women's rights should play an active role in collaborating with these departments. Additionally, the government should take affirmative actions, including the provision of allocated seats and reserved quotas in the public sector (and encouragement for the private sector to adopt a similar approach). This should apply to individuals who have studied or obtained degrees in WGS. Such affirmative actions can probably increase the scope of this discipline manifolds. At policy level, intention and willingness to promote this discipline is required because usually policy level is only concerned with the pro- women legislations, and policy initiatives but they are least concerned with issues like engagement with relevant stakeholders (such as universities to expand the research horizon) and application of academic knowledge to the industry (research linkages) that would support future policy recommendations. Research work, dissertations, and research findings remain within the limited spaces of academic institutions (mostly remained on the shelves of the libraries) and are not taken into consideration by the government when they envisioned five/ten years plan for the state. For example, research on issues like changing landscape of Pakistani women in rural and urban areas, issues of rapid growing population, aging, unemployment,

infertility among males, changing forms of patriarchy, gender identities and its expression are critical in context of Pakistan and can generate a positive debate among the individuals in the society.

As social issues intersect with gender issues, the research produced in the field of WGS can be effectively disseminated and shared with other social science disciplines through sectoral collaborations, a concept that has been initiated by the government of Pakistan. The policy makers could reflect upon the question that how innovative and creative ways of research can possibly help their agenda(s) to move forward with gender equity at the state level.

Finally, WGS as a discipline is not solely focused on women rights; rather, it serves as a platform for documenting the voices of marginalized sections of society, including children, gender-diverse populations, ethnic, religious, and racial minorities, the elderly population, and other identities such as the trans and queer population within Pakistani society. So, by implementing policies that promote a broader spectrum of gender studies, it can be highlighted that it's not only for women and their rights but is inclusive of all others who are marginalized within state structures and hierarchies.

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## **Annexure A: Interview Guideline**

### **Gender Studies as Academic Discipline in Pakistan: Issues, Challenges and Prospects**

#### **Objectives of the Research**

- How gender studies as discipline have evolved,
- To find out contemporary state of gender studies as academic discipline
- To analyze the issues, challenges and prospects related to gender studies in Pakistan:

#### **Historical and Evolutions**

What was struggle for starting this discipline?

What sort of challenges you have to face for space?

What are your views about Financial issues of your department/centre?

What do you think about Administrative issues of your department/centre?

How you have been working on your mandate as department/centre?

How many programs are offered and which ones are not offered yet? Why?

#### **Challenges (Contemporary State)**

Q1. How do you see role of your department/ Centre in the society?

Q2. What is your current status as department or centre? (status mean Position and strength within the university)

Q3. What kind of knowledge you are producing as centre or department? Probing hint(feminist, anti-feminist through research, project and published articles)

Q4. What do you think about feminist knowledge production?

Q4. How it is produced and disseminated?

Q5. How did you see the role of your department /centre in activism along with theory?

### **Prospects**

Q1. What are your views about autonomy versus integration debate in gender studies?

Q2. How did you see the future of gender studies in Pakistan?

## Annexure B: University Grant Commission Letter



### University Grants Commission

Sector H-9, Islamabad (Pakistan). Cables: Unigrant

Telephone

No.P&D-12(2)/88/619

Dated: 29.8.1989

From: Imdad Ali Solangi,  
Dy. Director(P&D).  
  
To: Mr. Manzoor Hussain,  
Dy. Registrar(P&D),  
Quaid-e-Azam University,  
Islamabad

Subject: FIVE WOMEN STUDY CENTRES AT UNIVERSITIES VIZ QUAID-E-AZAM  
UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD, UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB, UNIVERSITY  
OF KARACHI, UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR AND UNIV. OF BALUCHISTAN

Dear Sir,

I am directed to say that following amount of recurring and development grant received from the Women's Division for the execution of project titled "Centre of Excellence for women studies at Quaid-e-Azam Univ. according to their sanction letter No.37(2)/12-87/SPD-II dated 4.5.1989 has been released by the University Grants Commission, Islamabad vide letter No. UGC(FD)5199/89 dated August 23, 1989(copies enclosed)

S.N.	Name of University	Recurring	Development
4	Quaid-e-Azam University	186,845	158,500

A copy of scheme on PC-I titled "Five Women Study Centres at Universities" duly approved in the DDWP meeting held on 22nd January, 1989 and 12th February 1989 at a cost of Rs. 19.478 millions (Rs. 0.793 million capital cost and Rs. 18.685 millions recurring cost) for a period of five years is also sent herewith. A copy of Women's Division letter No.37(2)/12-87/SPD-II dated 22.5.1989 conveying administrative approval of the subject scheme is also enclosed herewith for your record and reference.

It is requested that necessary steps for implementation and execution of the scheme with the utilization of funds in accordance with the provisions of scheme may kindly be taken and intimated to this office.

Yours sincerely,

Encl: as above.

Copy forwarded for information to:

1. P.S.to Vice-Chancellor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.
2. Registrar, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.
3. Treasurer, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.
4. Mr. Ashique Hussain Sangi, Senior Programme Officer, Women's Division Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of Pakistan, Islamabad.

(IMDAD ALI SOLANGI)  
Dy. Director(P&D)

2. During the current financial year following funds per co  
will be released :-

Capital cost	Rs.0,1585 million	
Recurring cost	Rs.0,1870 million	
(from April - June 1989)		
Total	Rs.0,3455 million	for 5 Centres Rs.1

You, obedient servant,

(Ashique Hussain Sangi)  
Senior Programme Officer

Copy to:

1. Deputy Finance Adviser, Cabinet Secretariat, Rawalpindi
2. ✓ Dr. H. A. Kazmi, Whole Time Member, University Grants Commission, Sector H-9, Islamabad
3. Finance and Accounts Officer, Women's Division, Islamabad
4. Audit Officer, Women's Division, Islamabad
5. Vice Chancellor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad
6. Vice Chancellor, University of Punjab, Lahore.
7. Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, Peshawar
8. Vice Chancellor, University of Karachi, Karachi
9. Vice Chancellor, Baluchistan University, Quetta.

(Ashique Hussain Sangi)  
Senior Programme Officer

## Annexure C: Rename of Centre

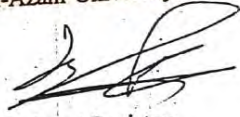
**QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY**  
(Meeting Section)

No.(R)/M-2004-1392

Dated:18.12.2004

**NOTIFICATION**



In continuation of this office Notification No.(R)/M-2004-1296 dated 24.9.2004, it is notified that Govt. of Pakistan, Ministry of Education vide Notification No.F.28-8/2002-NI-II dated 13.12.2004 has notified that "Centre of Excellence in Women Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad has been re-named as "Centre of Excellence in Gender Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University with immediate effect.

  
Assistant Registrar  
for Registrar

**Direstribution:-**

1. Deans of the Faculties
2. Chairmen, Teaching Departments
3. Director Centre of Excellence in Gender Studies
4. Treasurer
5. Audit Officer
6. Secretary to Vice-Chancellor
7. Notification file.

## Annexure C: Turnitin Report

Turnitin Originality Report		
Gender Studies As an Academic Discipline in Pakistan: Issues, Challenges and Prospects by Rabbia Aslam .		
From PhD (PhD DRSML)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Processed on 30-Mar-2023 12:54 PKT</li><li>• ID: 2050800460</li><li>• Word Count: 60692</li></ul>		
<div>Similarity Index 16% Similarity by Source</div> <div>Internet Sources: 14% Publications: 6% Student Papers: 5%</div> <div> <b>Focal Person (Turnitin)</b> <b>Quaid-i-Azam University</b> <b>Islamabad</b></div>		
<b>sources:</b>		
1	< 1% match (student papers from 19-Nov-2015) <u>Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan on 2015-11-19</u>	
2	< 1% match (student papers from 27-Jul-2013) <u>Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan on 2013-07-27</u>	
3	< 1% match (student papers from 12-Apr-2016) <u>Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan on 2016-04-12</u>	
4	< 1% match (student papers from 25-Apr-2017) <u>Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan on 2017-04-25</u>	
5	< 1% match (student papers from 25-Aug-2021) <u>Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan on 2021-08-25</u>	
6	< 1% match (student papers from 05-Jan-2020) <u>Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan on 2020-01-05</u>	
7	< 1% match (Internet from 30-Aug-2021) <a href="https://www.boell.org/en/2017/04/10/report-trenches-debate-around-teaching-gender-studies-hungary">https://www.boell.org/en/2017/04/10/report-trenches-debate-around-teaching-gender-studies-hungary</a>	
8	< 1% match (Internet from 08-May-2020) <a href="http://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/25888/1004195.pdf?sequence=1">http://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/25888/1004195.pdf?sequence=1</a>	
9	< 1% match (Fran M. Collyer, "Australia and the Global South: Knowledge and the Ambiguities of Place and Identity", Journal of Historical Sociology, 2021) <u>Fran M. Collyer, "Australia and the Global South: Knowledge and the Ambiguities of Place and Identity", Journal of Historical Sociology, 2021</u>	
10	< 1% match (Internet from 15-Jun-2022) <a href="https://issblog.nl/category/region/">https://issblog.nl/category/region/</a>	
11	< 1% match (Fabiane Ramos, Laura Roberts, "Wonder as Feminist Pedagogy: Disrupting Feminist Complicity with Coloniality", Feminist Review, 2021) <u>Fabiane Ramos, Laura Roberts, "Wonder as Feminist Pedagogy: Disrupting Feminist Complicity with Coloniality", Feminist Review, 2021</u>	
< 1% match (Internet from 07-Oct-2022)		

**Prof. Dr. Hazir Ullah**  
**Director**  
**School Of Sociology**  
**Quaid-i-Azam University**