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Gender Dynamics in Online Higher Education: Insights from Empirical Evidence

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ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this paper is to discover gender spaces in virtual learning environments at the tertiary level. A considerable study has been done in the global north and global south on gender spaces in virtual learning environments. This study has been conducted using qualitative and review-based studies. It portrays a widespread analysis of published research documents from various speculative contexts. This study blends findings from the past few decades to examine gender spaces and virtual learning environments in higher education. The review emphasizes that such activities serve as vital platforms for virtual learning in higher education. The analysis is based on 116 peer-reviewed research published documents retrieved from reputable digital databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, SAGE, Emerald Insight, and Springer Nature. Data collection has been continued until thematic permeation has been reached. A thematic analysis approach has been employed to present and interpret the qualitative nature of data. The study findings indicated that gender spaces shape participation in virtual learning environments in higher education. The study findings have been based on the empirical review of the published research documents on gender spaces and virtual learning environments in higher education. The study reveals that gender plays a noteworthy role in determining students' experiences, participation, and outcomes within virtual learning environments in higher education.

KEYWORDS: Gender Space, Virtual Learning, Higher Education, Gender Dynamics, Students

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Introduction

A considerable study has been done in the global north and global south on gender spaces in virtual learning environments. A lot of work has been done at a global level on gender spaces and virtual learning environments (Meilinger et al., 2014). Likewise, the study findings concluded that gender dynamics impact virtual learning places as it relates to gender disparities in online learning in developed countries (Valverde-Berrocoso et al., 2020). Other studies referred that the study findings outlined that gender spaces impact the participation and learning outcomes of students and also identify the experience and perception of learners within these gender spaces in the United States (Cheryan et al., 2011). The study findings outlined that females face different challenges in online education, but despite all challenges, the number of females is increasing rapidly in British and Chinese international universities (Lingyu et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of

research and a very small number of research studies conducted in Pakistan. In the same way, the study examined the disparities between genders in higher education (Shoaib, 2023). The key findings of the research indicated that some important elements influence Pakistani e-learning institutions' satisfaction with learners. It provides insightful information on a variety of factors impacting the virtual learning environment, which can help comprehend more general factors such as issues associated with gender in Pakistan (Shoaib & Zaman, 2025). Similarly, other studies referred to as the study indicated how Pakistani male and female students used digital media and e-portals. It examines how gender affected the use of various digital tools and how they affected students' learning experiences (Shah et al., 2022). This is a very serious issue in academia and other social institutions that focus on virtual learning, specifically in gender spaces. However, the main purpose of this paper is to discover gender spaces in virtual learning environments at the tertiary level.

The Data and Methods

This study has been conducted using qualitative and review-based studies. It portrays a widespread analysis of published research documents from various speculative contexts. This study blends findings from the past few decades to examine gender spaces and virtual learning environments in higher education. The review emphasizes that such activities serve as vital platforms for virtual learning in higher education. The analysis is based on 116 peer-reviewed research published documents retrieved from reputable digital databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, SAGE, Emerald Insight, and Springer Nature. Data collection has been continued until thematic permeation has been reached. A thematic analysis approach has been employed to present and interpret the qualitative nature of data.

Results and Discussion

The argument of the study asserted that the constant communication, social networking, and behavioural regulation of Generation Z through cell phones with the web had been found to affect the students' motivational level (Rice & Hagen, 2010). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that Indigenous knowledge was affected due to limitations of internet connectivity at higher levels and also the low performance of students in the study (Schaub, 2019). However, the study findings outlined that the perception and attitudes of students towards online education and physical education had been found to be gender-neutral spaces at university departments (Shoair et al., 2023). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that the psychology of the digital space is among the layers of using and manipulating technology to create genuine and significant interactions between students (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that gender spaces exist in virtual learning environments at the tertiary level and have also been found in gender dynamics (White et al., 2008). Likewise, the study findings showed thatanalysis of connectivity equity from the digital gap to the connection benefit distinctions had found gender inclusivity at the tertiary level (Zeqi et al., 2019). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that in the classroom, the teachers' and administrators' perceptions of gender had been found in gender spaces at higher levels (Morrissette et al., 2018). Further, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that gender-based perspectives on parenting, university and internet violence in relationships among adolescents had been found in gender spaces (Muniz, 2017). In a

nutshell, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that teaching legal investigation with the concept of fairness and participation and the perspectives for electronic and face-to-face classroom leadership had been found to be gender-neutral spaces at universities (Nejdl & Dalton, 2022).

The argument of the study asserted that, according to the instructor's investigation methods, a comparison between the effectiveness of virtual learning and classroom learning found gender inclusivity (Shoaib et al., 2025; Ni, 2013). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that in the programs of social sciences, the teaching pedagogy in online courses had been found in gender spaces at higher organisations (Nunez-Janes & Re Cruz, 2007). However, the study findings outlined that in online social work courses, the reflection of teaching methods related to students of different genders was also found in gender spaces (Shoaib et al., 2025; Richter, 2019). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that younger ladies manage their sexuality and gender status on the internet world and also found gender equality (Shoaib et al., 2025; Boonmongkon et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that learner outcomes for web-based higher learning are impacted by an identity concept (Bull et al., 2024). Likewise, the study findings showed thatputting value first in digital classrooms in the context of gender and also found gender dynamics at the tertiary level (Shoaib, 2025b; Chand & Gabryszewska, 2021). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that examining the impact of instructional methods on learners and also found gender spaces in virtual learning environments at the tertiary level (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a; Ding et al., 2023). Further, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that an investigation of sophisticated weblog activity illustrating different forms of governance in a virtual setting (Shoaib, 2025a; Doerr & Sato, 2011). Besides, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that academic women-biased connections of gender as well as age affected the teacher and student interaction at a higher level (Shoaib, 2024e; Einarsson & Granström, 2002).

The argument of the study asserted that connecting cooperative education with virtual learning environments promoted joint governance digitally (Shoaib, 2024d; Emerson & Gerlak, 2016). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that in inclusive classroom practices, the perception of higher education department students had been found to be gender-neutral spaces (Shoaib, 2024b; Faulkner et al., 2021). However, the study findings outlined that the classroom to digital learning move from offline public spaces to digital learning affected the students' educational performance at the tertiary level (Shoaib, 2024c; Flores et al., 2020). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that assessing the ability of educators to instruct online following completion of a distance learning course during COVID-19 (Shoaib, 2021; Graziano et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that from the perspective of learners, what makes up their presence within a remote classroom (Shoaib, 2024a; Hajibayova, 2017). Likewise, the study findings showed that the participation of gender and culture in online learning is illustrated at a higher level (Shoaib, 2023a; Ingen, 2008). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that students create a transitional space between being regulated and applying freedom in the confusing virtual learning environment in COVID-19 (Shoaib, 2023b; Kwon & Lee, 2024). Further, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that students' learning experiences in virtual flipped learning are impacted at the tertiary level (Shoaib & Ullah, 2019; Lo, Kwan, & Cho, 2024). In a nutshell, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that safe areas on the internet are beneficial for female

students to get an education without any harassment and have also been found to be gender neutral (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021b; Lucero, 2017).

The argument of the study asserted that, from an international point of view, virtual learning is better than physical learning, and also found gender inclusivity (McIsaac, 2002). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that the survey study of instructors in virtual learning examined how they managed the digital education classrooms at the tertiary level (Morris et al., 2025). However, the study findings outlined that overcoming a deadlock between gender and progress in academic settings at universities also found gender inclusivity (Shoaib et al., 2021; Shoaib et al., 2021; Rivas & Purewal, 2024). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that extending oneself and transformative education in online virtual classes had been found to be gender-neutral spaces at the tertiary level (Spadaro et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that expanding knowledge of digital discourse involves an extension of virtual learners' assistance assumptions and gender views (Spence et al., 2023). Likewise, the study findings showed thatvirtual learning assessment evaluation compared to the evaluation in class at higher educational organisations and had been found to have gender spaces (Spivey & McMillan, 2014). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that in the remote learning classroom, investigating the misbehaviours and rudeness of teachers also found gender dynamics at the tertiary level (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2018). Further, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that the significance of physical characteristics in university students' willingness to embrace transgender women in segregated settings (White & Jenkins, 2017). Besides, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that managing a difficult environment is the perspective of female racial teachers in online education (Yao & Boss, 2020).

The argument of the study asserted that an examination into the first perceptions and expectations of instructors among male and female pupils had been found at higher levels of education (Batten et al., 2014). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that a special prediction of male learners' accomplishment is that they are self-observers and also have been found to be learning system inclusive (Covarrubias & Stone, 2015). However, the study findings outlined that violent harassment threats and sexual orientation identity standard enforcement in male and female participants had been found at higher institutions (Depraetere et al., 2021). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that the teachers contrasted male and female students in virtual learning environments and also found gender spaces at the tertiary level (Dods & Treppa, 1978). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that women's and men's differing opinions on family and career had been found among higher education learners (Shoaib et al., 2021; Shoaib et al., 2024; Kaufman, 1999). Moreover, the study findings showed disparities in cognition in how figurative pictures are perceived among students and also found that both genders of students had different levels of perception (Lee & Lee, 2024). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that distinguishing between the observed gender identity of students had been found at the university level (Plante et al., 2009). Likewise, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that virtual learning is based on the demographic characteristics of students at the tertiary level (Thiele et al., 2016). Moreover, as the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted, the settings used for assessments gendered a study examining how male and female learners perform in various evaluation settings (Turner & Gibbs, 2010).

The argument of the study asserted that the graduate male and female students' different experiences at the tertiary level are also found in gender spaces (Brownson et al., 2011). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that gender disparities in STEM fields had been found in an analysis of students (Arshad et al., 2024; Shoaib et al., 2024; Cheruvalath, 2018). However, the study findings outlined that university students during the COVID-19 pandemic had found the anxiety and durability of online and offline participation among students of both genders (Chu & Rose-Ackley, 2023). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that the experience of Afghan female students' digital harassment during online classes had been found in gender spaces (Daqiq & Akramy, 2023). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that the use of students' participation level to build managerial online courses at the university level (Das & Bhuwandeep, 2022). Moreover, the study findings showed the views of learners regarding classroom engagement in social sciences courses at the tertiary level (Deale & Lee, 2024). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that students' performance level differences in online and physical education and also found gender inequality in higher educational organizations (Ali et al., 2024; Shoaib et al., 2024; Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, 2023; Dendir, 2019). Besides, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that factors influence how well Chinese students handle the educational environment when working in groups on the Internet (Du, 2016). Further, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that students' married life and gender were affected due to study pressure, which was found in virtual learning environments (Ermasova et al., 2022).

The argument of the study asserted that comparing virtual and within-the-classroom methods for assessing high and low achievement attributes of the students at the tertiary level (Fendler et al., 2016). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported a comparison with students at universities on male and female disparities in younger individual tendencies (Fernández-Cornejo et al., 2016). However, the study findings outlined that in digital education, social and cultural hurdles for female learners struggling to survive at the university level (Foli, 2022). Moreover, the results of the research articulated that learner achievement and sexual orientation combine in-person and virtual political science classes at the tertiary level (Glazie et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed disparities between genders in the impact of absence on healthcare learning (Hakami, 2021). Moreover, the study findings showed thatweb-based instructional settings evaluated the students' opinions and also found negotiations and contrasts (Hamann et al., 2012). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that assignments utilising the internet boost female students' confidence and also have digital aspects of sources for learning (Kalaf-Hughes & Cravens, 2021). In a nutshell, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that the effects of learners' fear of technology on their adoption of innovation in online courses at universities (Khasawneh, 2023). Moreover, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that students estimated performance advantages of using software in predictable and web courses (Kuyatt & Baker, 2014).

The argument of the study asserted that the flexibility of students' communication readiness in a virtual classroom had been found at universities (Lee & Liu, 2024). Similarly, the analysis of the study reported that re-examining the rules regarding internet legislation is a fundamental idea for online professionals (Lodder, 2013). However, the study findings outlined that student perceptions of the drawbacks and advantages of virtual learning environments had been found at the tertiary level (Mayfield-Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover,

the results of the research articulated that developing online background investigation courses on virtual learning, specifically on gender-related problems (Ovadia & White, 2010). Nonetheless, the argument based on the study findings revealed that the innovations in virtual learning convey depression among students at the tertiary level (Schröder et al., 2016). Moreover, the study findings showed thatan intelligent digital setting for tracking classes had been found in virtual learning settings at the tertiary level (Sharma, 2021). Contently, the study findings concluded and linked with the assumption that consequences for the performance of remote education from the creation and instruction of a digital master of advertising research subjects (Sun & Ganesh, 2014). Besides, the analysis based on the results of the study supported the argument that the internet's long-term capacity for reporting polls conducted among web users regarding the importance of online gadgets' characteristics unique to the web (Wolf & Godulla, 2016). However, the empirical evidence based on the study findings highlighted that developing student-guided resources for learning through continuous learning with dynamic video at the tertiary level (Baker, 2016).

Theoretical Review

Biological Factors: Biological factors influenced gender spaces in virtual learning environments through various methods. Neurological disparities, such as gender-specific variances in cognitive abilities and cognitive patterns, might have influenced how students interacted with and understood digital content. Hormonal changes affected motivation and stress levels, which also affected involvement and output. Some biological theories explain the gender spaces in virtual learning. According to evolutionary psychology theory, the gender-specific cognitive distinctions were produced by forces of evolution and had an impact on how people interacted with learning tools (Gannon, 2002). Neuropsychological theories concentrate on differences in the structure and function of the brain that affect the rate of processing and learning patterns (Vergara-Moragues et al., 2021). The social cognitive theory emphasises that biological variables interact with gendered norms and social forces to affect learning practices (Mutambik et al., 2020).

Psychological Factors: This study asserted that many influential ideas provided an argument for psychological factors influencing gender spaces in virtual learning environments. According to the social role theory, sexual orientation and participation are shaped by society's expectations and roles, which have an impact on how people engage with online learning (Wiseman et al., 2018). The study of cognitive dissonance theory indicated that different opinions regarding gender roles in technological fields might affect students' interactions and academic results (Liu et al., 2024).

Gender Role Socialisation: Gender role socialisation encouraged traditional stereotypes and expectations through online interactions, which had an important effect on gender spaces in virtual learning settings. Students who interacted with online resources frequently came across and managed gendered norms that were similar to those in physical environments, including involvement rates that fluctuated according to gender or differential motivation. For instance, males may be more encouraged to participate in STEM-related conversations, whereas women may experience implicit criticism or be underrepresented in particular sectors (Voyer & Voyer, 2014). According to social role theory, female patterns of involvement result from how society views gender. This included how people behaved online (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Gender schema theory explains how students' engagement with content and one another is influenced by mental processes related to gender roles (Bem, 1981).

Feminist Proponents: Studying gender dynamics in virtual learning environments has been made easier by feminist researchers such as Sherry Turkle, Bell Hooks, and Cathy Davidson. Davidson's investigation on digital engagement and focus illustrated the varied manners in which these domains affected gender (Harung & Travis, 2016). Bell Hooks promoted feminism as a means of promoting justice and diversity in learning environments, including virtual ones (Hooks, 2000). Through examining technology-impacted social relationships and gender roles, Turkle's work sheds light on the complexity of digital environments (Arnd-Caddigan, 2015).

Post-Structuralist Proponents: Post-structuralist theorists who emphasised the expressive nature and flexibility of gender identities, including Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, provided insightful perspectives on gender spaces in virtual learning environments. Butler's theory of performing gender asserted that gender is a dynamic performance compared to a fixed characteristic, and it implies that virtual environments have the power to both uphold and subvert established gender norms (Butler & Trouble, 1990). Online learning settings are influenced by governing ideologies that impact gendered relationships and behaviors, as revealed by Foucault's concepts of power and discourse (Keller, 2017).

Conclusion

The study concludes based on the empirical review of the published research documents that gender spaces have been linked with the virtual learning environment of the students in higher education. The study reveals that gender plays a noteworthy role in determining students' experiences, participation, and outcomes within virtual learning environments in higher education. However, digital platforms offer chances for a bendable and comprehensive scholarship, and the persistence of gender-based patterns in rendezvous, communication, access, and academic performance exacerbates enduring cultural and structural inequalities. Female students often exhibit greater academic engagement but face unequal obstacles related to online safety, digital access, and self-efficacy, specifically in male-dominated subjects. The study findings also assert the need for higher education to implement gender-approachable policies in the design, governance, and delivery of virtual learning. It contains confirming equitable access to technology, addressing implicit biases in pedagogical practices, promoting inclusive and safe online spaces, and developing policies that actively sustain gender impartiality in digital education. Eventually, nurturing truly inclusive virtual atmospheres entails an intentional and sustained promise to gender-sensitive pedagogical institutional and innovation reform.

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