

Social Media Practices, Gendered Technology, Trust Relations, and Feminist Reflections: A Qualitative Sociological Study of Higher Education Students in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study explores how social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations shape feminist reflections among higher education students in Pakistan, with particular emphasis on how students experience, negotiate, reproduce, and challenge gendered norms, relations, and inequalities within digital and educational spaces. A qualitative research design was employed using secondary qualitative data obtained from academic databases, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and relevant scholarly literature. Sources were purposively selected based on their relevance to gendered experiences, social media practices, digital interactions, and trust relations. Qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify recurring concepts, patterns, themes, and narratives concerning gendered communication, online identity, interpersonal relationships, privacy, credibility, digital safety, and trust formation. The findings demonstrate that gender, social media, and trust are closely interconnected dimensions of contemporary digital interaction. Students' online experiences are influenced by gender norms, cultural expectations, interpersonal relationships, and perceptions of authenticity and safety. Trust develops through communication, consistency, mutual respect, and previous experiences, whereas privacy concerns and misrepresentation constrain participation. The study emphasizes digital literacy, privacy awareness, respectful communication, and responsible online engagement among higher education students.

Keywords: Social Media Practices, Gendered Technology, Trust Relations, Feminist Reflections, Higher Education

Introduction

Social media has become an important component of contemporary higher education, influencing how students communicate, construct identities, exchange information, and participate in digital social spaces (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Noor, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Srosh, Mobeen, & Abdullah, 2026a; Shoaib & Ullah, 2026). In Pakistan, the increasing use of social networking platforms has created new opportunities for interaction whereas also reflecting existing gender norms, cultural expectations, and social inequalities (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Srosh, Mobeen, & Abdullah, 2026b). Gendered technology highlights how technological practices and digital environments shaped by gendered assumptions, experiences, and patterns of participation (Shoaib, Shahzadi, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c; Shoaib, Shamraiz, Abbas, & Abdullah, 2026). Similarly, trust relations are central to students' willingness to communicate, share information, establish relationships, and engage with digital content (Shoaib, Sarfraz, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Shahzadi, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026). Concerns related to privacy, authenticity, surveillance, misrepresentation, and online safety influence these relationships (Shoaib, Noor, Ditta, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Sarfraz, & Kausar, 2026a, 2026b). From a feminist sociological perspective, social media also provides spaces through which students recognize, negotiate, and challenge gender inequalities and dominant social expectations (Shoaib, Noor, & Ditta, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d, 2026e). Examining these interconnected dimensions provide deeper insight into students' everyday digital experiences and the relationship between technology and social structures. Therefore, this study explores social media practices, gendered technology, trust relations, and feminist reflections among higher education students in Pakistan, emphasizing their meanings, experiences, and sociological implications.

Data and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine the relationship between gender, social media, and trust from a sociological perspective. Secondary qualitative data were collected from relevant academic databases and scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and published studies addressing gendered experiences, social media practices, digital interactions, and trust relations. The literature was purposively selected according to its relevance to the research objectives and conceptual focus of the study. Qualitative content analysis was used to systematically examine the selected literature and identify recurring concepts, patterns, meanings, themes, and narratives concerning gender, social media, and trust. Particular attention was given to gendered communication, online identity construction, interpersonal relationships, privacy, credibility, digital safety, and processes of trust formation. Relevant textual information was coded thematically and organized into broader analytical categories. The emerging themes and narratives were subsequently interpreted through a sociological lens, connecting individual digital experiences with broader gender norms, cultural expectations, and social structures. Finally, the findings were synthesized and presented narratively to

develop an integrated understanding of gendered social media experiences and trust relations.

Results and Discussion

It had been observed that trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Shoaib, Nazir, & Sheraz, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Noor, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Noor, Mir, & Abdullah, 2026). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that females' aspirations for freedom and higher education were severely constrained by patriarchy social systems, and inequities in accessibility to gendered technologies in educational settings (Shoaib, Nazir, & Kausar, 2026; Shoaib, Nazir, & Mir, 2026; Shoaib, Nazir, & Rashid, 2026a, 2026b). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that feminist reflection had reflected female's general educational achievement at the higher education level was impacted by unequal access to social media supported extracurricular events (Shoaib, Kausar, Sarfraz, & Abdullah, 2026b, 2026c; Shoaib, Nazir, & Iqbal, 2026). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that feminist thought had reflected academic fields male dominancy significantly affects female's mentoring in higher education level. Similarly, the study findings asserted that gendered technologies were negatively impacted by feminist reflection in higher education, power structures, and educational content (Shoaib, Iqbal, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c; Shoaib, Kausar, Sarfraz, & Abdullah, 2026a). Moreover, the study findings reported that early involvement with gendered based technological products affects students' knowledge and skills in educational environment at tertiary level (Erixon Arreman & Holm, 2011). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that recognizing females' academic success was limited by society's emphasis on males' successes leading to adverse effect on learning outcomes through unequal access to social media and technology at tertiary level (Foley, 2025). Moreover, the study found that feminist reflection had reflected gendered insensitive impacts to prevent both genders from participating technologies and engaging equally in learning environment at higher education level (Ongowo, 2022). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that unequal digital literacy initiatives had affected to restrict females' early acquisition of technologies abilities for educational success in higher education (Rolfman, 2020). Specifically, the study findings indicated that feminist thoughts among male and female students in higher education had been influenced by social media practices, gendered technologies, and trust networks (Shoaib, Ali, Ditta, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Ali, Hassan, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Iqbal, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b).

Social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Baneen, 2026b; Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that access and experience of female's unequal access to reliable internet connections and technological devices in higher education (Dalsgaard, 2018). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that inequality in participation, access of gender technologies, socioeconomic, and

geographical elements of the gap between males and females in educational settings at tertiary level (Andersen, 2024). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that feminist reflection had reflected gender differences in higher education classroom rules and regulations to investigate inherent effects on learning, digital marketing, technical education, professional qualities, and safety (Shoaib, Abbas, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2026; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026c). Similarly, the study findings asserted that academic workloads and stress were experienced by distance-learning students and gender imbalances in educational institutions (Enever & Lindgren, 2016). Moreover, the study findings reported that feminist thought had reflected gendered differences in access to digital resources had a significant effect on students' engagement in learning through the internet for higher level education (Shahzadi, Shoaib, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026; Shahzadi, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Shamraiz, Shoaib, Baneen, & Shahzadi, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Abbas, Ali, & Abdullah, 2026). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that all over the world, there are more sponsorship opportunities for academic and extracurricular activities for males and females influenced by social networking sites and technological accessibility with several factors at tertiary level (Ibrahim, 2016). Moreover, the study found that in developing countries traditional gender stereotypes in education had emphasized the needs of males over the needs of females in allocating resources and technologies (Duek, Lindholm, & Uddling, 2024). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that feminist reflection had reflected prejudiced views from parents negatively effects on females' educational decisions and goals at higher education level (Haglund, 2015). Specifically, the study findings indicated that unequal availability of technical resources and information technology had negatively affected the emotional wellness of the students at tertiary level (Lundqvist & Lidar, 2021).

It had been asserted that social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Sarfraz, Shoaib, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2026; Sarfraz, Shoaib, & Sheraz, 2026a, 2026b; Shahzadi, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that used of technology during difficult circumstances at university level students were able to maintain a strong sense of trust and brotherhood within their academic institutions (Sarfraz, Kausar, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026; Sarfraz, Sheraz, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026; Sarfraz, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2026). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that students' knowledge about females' rights at the tertiary level had increased as the result of social media's effort to make information easy to access in educational settings (Fuentes & Entezari, 2020). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that students' confidence, participation, social, digital and technological interaction skills in higher educational settings were enhanced by social media activities (Hofverberg & Sigurdson, 2025). Similarly, the study findings asserted that feminist reflection had reflected preference for males affects females' confidence and academic progress by keeping them from actively participating at tertiary level. Moreover, the study findings reported that feminist thought had reflected financial constraints had affected to push families to prioritized

learning of males over females due to inequalities in technologies for educational success at tertiary level (Junemann & Ball, 2013). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that females were discouraged from pursuing careers in science, technology, digital marketing due to gender stereotypes in academic environments at higher education level. Moreover, the study found that drawbacks of unequal access to gendered technologies females' decreasing skills in digital literacy and their prospects for future employment (Mullen & Bartlett, 2024). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that students' performance at the tertiary level was impacted the differences in gendered technologies, social media behaviors, gendered social expectations, and technical education (Francia, 2011). Specifically, the study findings indicated that parents often encouraged their sons more in science, artificial intelligence, information and technology and other technical education subjects as compared to their daughters at higher level education (Cassar, 2019).

The studies had been conducted and found that social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Nazir, Shoaib, & Bukhari, 2026; Nazir, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2026; Nazir, Shoaib, & Mubeen, 2026; Noor, Ditta, & Shoaib, 2026; Noor, Shoaib, & Ditta, 2026). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that gendered technology was impactful for policy development diminished by a lack of research and technical skills on gender equity in educational environment at tertiary level (Traianou, 2025). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that peer perception against females in technical fields significantly affected to discourages scientific participation at higher education level (Landri, 2014). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that the social media representation of traditional roles had a substantial impact on deterring females from embracing unconventional studies in higher education (Arnesen, 2011). Similarly, the study findings asserted that feminist thought had reflected gender inequality in gendered technology and academic groups were dominated by males depriving girls of leadership roles at tertiary level (Traianou, 2024). Moreover, the study findings reported that females were less exposed to a variety of skill development opportunities and manufacturing technology effects due to inequality in gendered technologies at higher education (Duek & Nilsberth, 2024). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that feminist reflection was represented unequal distribution of resources and gendered technologies greatly effects the distant learning of females in higher education (Cole & Hager, 2010). Moreover, the study found that feminist students used social media and other methods to plan activities, transmit information, and develop unity in the classroom at tertiary level (Fussy & Iddy, 2024). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that feminist reflection had considered the lack of knowledge about equal legal protection and had been observed in higher educational institutions (Zufiaurre, Pellejero Goni, & Weiner, 2010). Specifically, the study findings indicated that social media practices and technologies provided students with resources for assistance along with the chance to pursue their interests in educational settings at higher education (Evans, 2025).

It had also been found that social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Ali, Shoaib, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026; Ditta, Noor, Shoaib, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026b; Larijani, Shoaib, & Abedi, 2026; Nazir, Adnan, & Shoaib, 2026). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that feminist academics expanded their efforts to advocate for gender equality in higher education institutions with trust and satisfaction (Schwartz, 2014). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that feminist reflection had reflected in higher educational settings, male students were more likely than female students to received immediate and complete involvement from lecturers as they face academic challenges. Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that females were less exposed to a variety of skill development opportunities and technologies effects due to inequalities in gendered extracurricular activities at tertiary level (Odenbring, 2019). Similarly, the study findings asserted that feminist thought had reflected allocation of educational resources and gendered technologies significantly effects the educational environment of the students in higher education (Fleischer, 2017). Moreover, the study findings reported that diversified strategy and consideration of the challenges faced by males and females worked toward a balanced educational system was required at tertiary level (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b; Ali, Abdullah, & Shaoib, 2026; Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026a, 2026b). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that students was able to attain gendered technological wellness, trust relationships, and equal participation in educational settings due to social media platforms (Graham, 2025). Moreover, the study found that students in underprivileged communities might less had dependable internet access or the technological tools required for contemporary education, digital gap increases these differences in higher education (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b; Shoaib, Waris, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that feminist's reflection had reflected to achieved gender equality in education was essential to identify and remove biases, provide equal access to technologies, technical education, resources, and encourage diverse participation in positions of power and academics at tertiary level (Pons, 2012). Specifically, the study findings indicated that encouraging positive social media practices, gendered technologies, social relationships and sense of belonging in learning environment at higher education (Hedlin, 2012).

Social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Ahmed, 2025). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that feminist thought had reflected gender-based discrimination in education often results in unfair use of social media engagement at tertiary level (Lahelma, 2011). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that students' aspirations for higher education had been encouraged by social media practices related to their academic successes (Zufiaurre et al., 2010). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that females were discouraged from studying different academic subjects like

digital marketing, and technical education significantly reflected by social stigmas at tertiary level (Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Rasool, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b). Similarly, the study findings asserted that feminist ideas had reflected discriminatory regulations and gendered technologies in several countries prevent females from obtaining higher education (Rougier, 2013). Moreover, the study findings reported that female's confidence in social media practices and decision-making skills had diminished by gender stereotypes in educational environment at higher education (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that in higher education students' learning outcomes were greatly impacted by portable interactive learning activities and other digital learning platforms (Traianou, 2024). Moreover, the study found that financial objectives had impacted to frequently prioritized the education of males over the needs of females in computer and educational technology at tertiary level (Widding, 2012). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that social media practices helped students to improve their collaborative abilities, knowledge, sharing of information, and technical skills competency at higher education institutions (Mertanen & Brunila, 2018). Specifically, the study findings indicated that feminist ideas on social media networks improved confidence in educational relationships and generated concerns about bias in higher education (Shain, 2013).

It had been asserted that social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Shoaib, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Ahmed, & Usmani, 2025a, 2025b). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that inequitable digital literacy initiatives had impeded females early learning of ICT skills necessary for success in higher education (Osler & Yahya, 2013). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that feminist ideas on male and female students frequently had distinct to opportunities and expectations, that affected their learning performance, choices of subjects, and long-term academic outcomes (Ali, Zaman, & Shoaib, 2024; Shoaib, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c; Shoaib, Rasool, Kalsoom, & Ali, 2025; Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib & Ullah, 2019, 2021a, 2021b). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that feminist thought had reflected for higher education male and female students in deprived or rural areas were insufficient resources and poor access to technology for education (Janks, 2013). Similarly, the study findings asserted that unequal access of social networking, inequalities in enrolment of the students, opportunities, curriculum, trust relations, information and technologies, had also been observed (Skervin, 2010). Moreover, the study findings reported that feminist ideas on learning described difference in chances of technologies, knowledge, access resources, and results depending on gender at tertiary level (Foster, 2011). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that females mental and physical growth was limited by the absence of inclusive sports activities and encouraging social media attitudes or web-based learning programs at higher education (Shoaib, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e). Moreover, the study found that feminist thought reflected females were disadvantaged in obtaining experiences

in academia due to unequal gendered technologies, internship possibilities and trust relations among students at tertiary level (Strand, 2025). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that the effects of gender discrimination on female's social media used and performance in educational environments had been systematically examined in feminist thought (Cassar, 2019). Specifically, the study findings indicated that social media activities had increased students' contribution, trust relations, social, digital, and technological interaction capabilities in higher education settings (Lahelma, 2011).

Conclusion

This study concludes that social media practices, gendered technology, trust relations, and feminist reflections are interconnected dimensions of students' digital experiences in higher education in Pakistan. Social media provides important spaces for communication, knowledge exchange, self-expression, networking, and participation; however, these opportunities are shaped by gender norms, cultural expectations, and existing social structures. Gendered technology influences how students experience digital platforms, construct identities, communicate, and negotiate their participation in online spaces. Trust emerges as an important element of digital interaction and is influenced by perceived authenticity, privacy, credibility, mutual respect, and previous experiences. Feminist reflections further demonstrate how students recognize and negotiate gender inequalities, stereotypes, and unequal opportunities within digital environments. The study highlights that social media simultaneously reproduce established gender relations and create opportunities to question and challenge them. Overall, understanding students' digital experiences requires attention to the interaction between technology, gender, trust, and social structures. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive digital practices, digital literacy, privacy awareness, and gender-sensitive online environments in higher education.

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