

Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)**Motivation and Self-Esteem Among University Teachers of Rawalpindi and Islamabad: A Gender-Based Comparative Study****Dr. Farah Gul¹, Dr. Asghar Abbas², Dr. Um E Rubab³**

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Abstract: *This study looked at motivation and self-esteem among university teachers and compared how male and female teachers experience these two factors. A quantitative, descriptive survey design was used. The population of the study consisted of university teachers working in social sciences departments in public and private universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. From this population, a sample of 80 teachers was selected, made up of 40 male and 40 female teachers drawn from four universities. Data were collected using two questionnaires developed by the researchers, one measuring motivation and the other measuring self-esteem. Both instruments were reviewed by experts and piloted on a small group before the main study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent-samples t-tests. Overall, university teachers reported a fairly good level of motivation and self-esteem. However, male teachers scored higher than female teachers on both variables, and the differences were statistically significant, $t(78) = 4.45$, $p < .001$ for motivation, and $t(78) = 10.56$, $p < .001$ for self-esteem. These results suggest that institutional support, fair treatment, professional recognition, and gender-sensitive policies could help raise motivation and self-esteem among university teachers, particularly female teachers. The study offers practical evidence for university leaders and policymakers who want to strengthen faculty well-being and professional commitment.*

Introduction

University teachers play a central role in shaping the quality of higher education. They do far more than deliver lectures — they guide students, carry out research, take part in institutional decision-making, and help build the academic culture of their departments. Doing this entire well takes more than subject knowledge; it also takes motivation and a healthy sense of self-worth. Teachers who feel motivated and valued tend to be more creative, more committed, and more willing to keep going even when the work gets difficult. Addison and Brundrett (2008) pointed out years ago that a lack of recognition and support can quietly de-motivate even experienced teachers, which is exactly why institutional climate remains such an important piece of this picture.

Motivation can be described simply as the mix of inner drive and outside encouragement that pushes people to act, keeps them going, and shapes the direction they take. For teachers, it affects everyday things — how they plan a lesson, how they treat their students, and how willingly they take part in academic life. According to Self-Determination Theory, people feel more motivated when three basic needs are met: a sense of independence in their work, a feeling of being good at what they do, and a feeling of connection with the people around them (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Applied to a university setting, this means teachers tend to stay motivated when they have some academic freedom, receive support from their institution, get chances to grow professionally, and are treated with respect.

Newer research keeps confirming that motivation does not exist in a vacuum — it is closely tied to the environment teachers work in. Li and Xu (2024) found that institutional support, along with teachers' own sense of competence, played a major role in how actively Chinese university teachers engaged in research. In a related study, Li et al. (2025) showed that teachers who were intrinsically motivated and confident in their abilities were more likely to try innovative teaching methods. Work by Luitel (2024) on university students in Kathmandu similarly found that motivation is not identical across genders, with male and female students showing different patterns of intrinsic and extrinsic drive — a reminder that gender is a variable worth examining seriously rather than assuming it makes no difference. Together, these findings point to the same conclusion: motivation is shaped as much by the surrounding institutional climate, leadership style, and recognition as it is by personal character.

Self-esteem is the other psychological factor at the heart of this study. In simple terms, it is how a person judges their own worth and ability. Teachers who have healthy self-esteem usually feel more confident standing in front of a class, are more willing to try new approaches, and can handle setbacks without losing their sense of purpose. Cast and Burke (2002) linked self-esteem closely to identity and how people relate to others socially, while Branden (1994) argued that self-esteem grows out of self-awareness, honesty with oneself, and taking responsibility for one's own actions. For a teacher, this might show up in how they run a classroom, how they respond to a difficult question from a student, or how they take feedback from a colleague or supervisor.

Gender is likely to shape motivation and self-esteem because male and female teachers often face different expectations, different family demands, and different levels of institutional support. Female teachers, in particular, may deal with extra pressure balancing home responsibilities with career demands, along with unequal access to recognition, mobility, or advancement. Because of this, comparing motivation and self-esteem across genders can give universities and policymakers useful direction for building fairer and more supportive academic workplaces.

This study focuses on university teachers working in social sciences departments in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It looks at their overall levels of motivation and self-esteem, and then compares male and female teachers on both. By bringing in recent literature, the study aims to present its original findings in a way that is current, clear, and ready for publication.

Statement of the Study

Teacher well-being more broadly has become a major topic in education research. Zhou et al. (2024), reviewing a large number of studies, found that motivation coming from within, along with hope and psychological resources, were some of the strongest predictors of teacher well-being. Gámez-Genovart et al. (2025) pointed out that although research on teacher well-being has grown quickly between 2020 and 2025, it is still scattered across many different definitions and approaches — which is exactly why more focused, context-specific studies like this one are needed. In Pakistan specifically, research that looks at motivation and self-esteem together, especially comparing male and female university

teachers, remains fairly limited.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of motivation and self-esteem among university teachers of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.
- To compare male and female university teachers on motivation.
- To compare male and female university teachers on self-esteem.

Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female university teachers regarding motivation.

H02: There is no significant difference between male and female university teachers regarding self-esteem.

Significance of the Study

Self-esteem is the other psychological factor at the heart of this study. In simple terms, it is how a person judges their own worth and ability. Teachers who have healthy self-esteem usually feel more confident standing in front of a class, are more willing to try new approaches, and can handle setbacks without losing their sense of purpose. Cast and Burke (2002) linked self-esteem closely to identity and how people relate to others socially, while Branden (1994) argued that self-esteem grows out of self-awareness, honesty with oneself, and taking responsibility for one's own actions. For a teacher, this might show up in how they run a classroom, how they respond to a difficult question from a student, or how they take feedback from a colleague or supervisor.

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Literature Review

Teacher Motivation in Higher Education

Motivated teachers tend to be more committed, more supportive of their students, and more willing to improve their own teaching. In universities specifically, this motivation comes from two directions. Intrinsic motivation includes things like genuine interest in teaching, enjoyment of academic work, and a feeling that one's work matters. Extrinsic motivation includes more practical rewards — salary, promotion, job security, and recognition. Ryan and Deci (2020) argued that motivation lasts longer and runs deeper when the workplace supports autonomy, a sense of competence, and positive relationships. A recent systematic review of interventions built around this same theory found that programs designed to strengthen autonomy, competence, and relatedness in educational settings reliably improved motivation-related outcomes (Wang et al., 2024), which adds further weight to the theory's relevance here.

More recent studies back this up. Li and Xu (2024), studying university EFL teachers in China, found that institutional support — through resources, mentoring, and a genuinely supportive environment — helped teachers engage more with research. Li et al. (2025) found something similar: teachers who were intrinsically motivated and confident in their own ability were more likely to try innovative teaching approaches. What both studies suggest is that universities can boost teacher motivation more effectively by building supportive academic cultures than by relying only on formal evaluation or

pressure from above.

Closer to home, Hamid et al. (2020) found that a positive school climate was linked with higher motivation and self-esteem among teachers, though their study was carried out at the school level rather than in universities. Even so, the finding is relevant here because institutional climate shapes confidence and commitment regardless of the education level. Nadeem and Hashmi (2022) added to this picture, finding that motivation was positively connected to both self-esteem and academic achievement among prospective teachers at the university level in Pakistan. Taken together, these studies suggest that motivation and self-esteem tend to move together rather than operating as separate, unrelated traits.

Self-Esteem and Teachers' Professional Functioning

Self-esteem, at its core, is how a person evaluates their own worth and ability. For teachers, this matters a great deal because the job involves constant public interaction, emotional demands, and ongoing professional judgment calls. Teachers who feel good about themselves tend to take more initiative, communicate more clearly, and stay more committed to their work over time.

Branden (1994) suggested that self-esteem is built through self-awareness, accepting oneself, taking responsibility, having a sense of purpose, and acting with integrity. Cast and Burke (2002) framed self-esteem as tied closely to identity and to how much recognition a person gets from others — an idea that builds on Rosenberg's (1965) foundational work describing self-esteem as an overall attitude a person holds toward themselves. Inside a university, this could mean a teacher's self-esteem is shaped by how much respect they get from colleagues, the feedback they receive from students, whether their workload feels manageable, and whether they see a realistic path toward promotion. When teachers feel respected and valued, their confidence and professional identity tend to grow stronger.

Recent work also links motivation directly to self-esteem. Ullah et al. (2024) found that academic motivation had a positive effect on the self-esteem of university students in Pakistan. While that study focused on students rather than teachers, it supports the broader idea — one that this study also tests — that motivation and self-esteem are closely intertwined psychologically, and this connection is plausibly just as true for teachers.

Teacher Well-Being, Workplace Support, and Gender

Motivation and self-esteem do not exist in isolation; they are part of a teacher's overall well-being. The World Health Organization (2024) has noted that decent, well-structured work supports mental health by giving people a sense of purpose, achievement, connection, and routine. In a university setting, this translates into fair workloads, supportive leadership, opportunities to grow, and respectful working relationships.

Zhou et al. (2024) found that autonomous motivation, hope, psychological capital, and job-related competence were among the strongest predictors of teacher well-being, along with better work engagement and lower turnover intentions. These findings matter for university teachers too, since motivation and self-esteem likely affect not just how individual teachers feel, but how well the institution performs as a whole.

Gender differences in motivation and self-esteem likely stem from a mix of social, professional, and institutional factors. Female teachers often carry more responsibility at home, may face slower or less visible paths to promotion, and sometimes receive less recognition for their work. Male teachers, meanwhile, may face a different set of institutional expectations tied to their own professional identity. This is why a gender-sensitive lens is useful here — it allows the picture to be more balanced and grounded in real workplace dynamics rather than assumptions.

Research from outside Pakistan reinforces how much gender still shapes academic experience. Yang et al. (2026), studying teacher identity formation among physical education students in China, found clear gender differences in how academic self-perception and professional confidence develop. Lin and Abu Talib (2025), reviewing studies published between 2019 and 2024, confirmed a consistent link between self-efficacy and motivation among university students across many different cultural settings — a link that plausibly extends to university teachers as well, given how closely motivation and confidence tend to move together in professional life.

Research Gap

Motivation and self-esteem have both been studied extensively in educational psychology, but not much of that work has focused specifically on university teachers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Much of the recent literature looks at student motivation, school-level teachers, general teacher well-being, or research engagement among faculty — leaving a real gap in gender-based evidence on motivation and self-esteem among university teachers in Pakistan. This study addresses that gap directly, comparing male and female university teachers and framing the findings within recent, up-to-date literature on motivation, self-esteem, workplace support, and teacher well-being.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a quantitative, descriptive survey design. This approach fit the purpose of the study well, since the goal was to collect numerical data from university teachers and compare male and female respondents on motivation and self-esteem. Survey research is a common choice in education studies where the aim is to describe attitudes, opinions, or psychological traits within a group (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Population and Delimitations

The population for this study was university teachers working in social sciences departments across public and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Within this population, the study was narrowed down to four universities: PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Preston University Islamabad, and Fauji Foundation University Rawalpindi. It was further limited to teachers working specifically within social sciences departments at these institutions.

Sample and Sampling Technique

From this population, a sample of 80 university teachers was selected, with 20 teachers drawn from each of the four universities. The sample was evenly split between 40 male and 40 female teachers, which allowed for a fair, balanced gender-based comparison. Respondents were chosen from the target population using simple random sampling.

Research Instruments

Two questionnaires were used to collect data — one for motivation, one for self-esteem. Both were developed by the researchers after reviewing existing literature on motivation, self-esteem, and teachers' professional lives, including foundational work on self-esteem measurement (Rosenberg, 1965) and self-determination-based motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Responses were scored numerically, which made it possible to run descriptive statistics and t-tests later on.

Validity and Pilot Testing

Before the main data collection, both questionnaires were reviewed by experts in education and research, and their feedback was used to improve clarity and relevance. The instruments were also piloted on a small group first, to check that the items were easy to understand and appropriate for the

participants. For future publication, it would strengthen the study to report reliability values such as Cronbach's alpha for each scale.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the participating teachers. Before handing out the questionnaires, they explained the purpose of the study to each respondent. Teachers were asked to answer honestly, and participation was entirely voluntary. Once collected, each questionnaire was checked for completeness before being included in the analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Mean scores and standard deviations were used to describe overall levels of motivation and self-esteem, while independent-samples t-tests were used to compare male and female teachers on each variable. The t-values reported in this updated version of the manuscript were recalculated from the gender-wise means, standard deviations, and sample sizes reported in the original study tables.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed standard ethical practices for educational research. Participants were told the purpose of the study in advance, and taking part was voluntary. All data were used strictly for research purposes, and no personal identities were reported at any stage — confidentiality was maintained throughout analysis and reporting.

Results

Table 1

Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	50.0
Female	40	50.0
Total	80	100.0

As Table 1 shows, the final sample included 80 university teachers, split evenly between 40 male and 40 female teachers.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Motivation and Self-Esteem by Gender

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD
Motivation	Male	40	150.18	14.72
Motivation	Female	40	137.52	10.35
Motivation	Total	80	143.85	14.16
Self-esteem	Male	40	109.46	8.14
Self-esteem	Female	40	90.64	7.79
Self-esteem	Total	80	100.05	12.34

Table 2 shows that male teachers reported higher average motivation ($M = 150.18$, $SD = 14.72$) than female teachers ($M = 137.52$, $SD = 10.35$). A similar pattern appeared for self-esteem, with male

teachers scoring higher ($M = 109.46$, $SD = 8.14$) than female teachers ($M = 90.64$, $SD = 7.79$). The combined totals were recalculated from these gender-wise figures.

Table 3

Independent-Samples t-Test for Gender Differences in Motivation and Self-Esteem

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M (SD)	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Motivation	150.18 (14.72)	137.52 (10.35)	4.45	78	< .001	0.99
Self-esteem	109.46 (8.14)	90.64 (7.79)	10.56	78	< .001	2.36

As shown in Table 3, there was a statistically significant gender difference in motivation, $t(78) = 4.45$, $p < .001$, with male teachers scoring higher than female teachers. Based on this result, the first null hypothesis was rejected. Self-esteem showed an even larger gap, $t(78) = 10.56$, $p < .001$, again favoring male teachers, so the second null hypothesis was rejected as well.

Discussion

This study set out to examine motivation and self-esteem among university teachers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and to see how male and female teachers compared on both. Overall, teachers reported reasonably good levels of motivation and self-esteem — but male teachers scored notably higher than female teachers on both measures, and the gap was statistically significant in each case.

One likely explanation is that male and female teachers simply have different day-to-day experiences at work. Differences in institutional recognition, family responsibilities, and access to opportunities could all play a role. In many workplaces, female teachers carry a larger share of household and family responsibilities alongside their professional duties, and when institutions do not offer flexible arrangements, mentoring, or gender-sensitive policies, this extra load can weigh on motivation. This pattern is consistent with broader research on teacher well-being, which shows that things like work-life balance, workplace climate, and social relationships strongly shape how engaged and motivated teachers feel (Zhou et al., 2024). It also echoes findings from outside the teaching profession — Luitel (2024), for instance, found that male and female university students in Kathmandu showed different patterns of motivation, suggesting that gender-based differences in motivation are not unique to this study or to Pakistan.

The gap in self-esteem tells a similar story. Self-esteem is not just about personal confidence — it is also shaped by how much recognition, respect, and support a person receives from the people around them. When teachers feel genuinely valued, their self-esteem tends to rise. Hamid et al. (2020) found much the same thing: a supportive school climate was linked to higher motivation and self-esteem among teachers, reinforcing the idea that institutions themselves have real power to shape how confident and committed their teachers feel. Yang et al. (2026) found comparable gender differences in how academic self-perception and professional identity develop among teacher trainees in China, which suggests that these patterns may hold across quite different educational and cultural settings.

These findings also line up well with Self-Determination Theory. Ryan and Deci (2020) argued that people feel most motivated when three needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For a university teacher, autonomy might mean having some academic freedom and a voice in decisions; competence might come from training, feedback, and chances to develop professionally; and relatedness might mean feeling genuinely supported by colleagues, students, and administrators. If male and female teachers are not getting equal access to these three things, it would help explain the differences in motivation and self-esteem found here.

Recent research on higher education continues to point in the same direction. Li and Xu (2024) found

that institutional support was closely tied to how much university teachers engaged with research, while Li et al. (2025) showed that intrinsic motivation and self-confidence were key drivers of innovative teaching. Lin and Abu Talib (2025), reviewing several years of research on self-efficacy and motivation, likewise found a consistent link between the two — reinforcing the idea that confidence and motivation tend to rise and fall together, whether the person in question is a student or a teacher. Together, these findings suggest that universities have real, practical options for improving teacher motivation and self-esteem: recognizing teachers' work, easing unnecessary workload, and offering genuine opportunities for growth.

Overall, this study reinforces just how important motivation and self-esteem are for how teachers perform and how they feel about their work. The gender gap found here should not be read as some kind of fixed, unchangeable difference between men and women. Instead, it is better understood as a signal — one that points universities toward examining their own workplace culture, how they handle promotions, how workload gets distributed, and what kind of mentoring and support systems exist for both female and male faculty.

Conclusions

- University teachers in the selected social sciences departments showed a reasonable level of motivation and self-esteem.
- Male university teachers reported higher motivation than female university teachers.
- Male university teachers also reported higher self-esteem than female university teachers.
- The gender differences in both motivation and self-esteem were statistically significant.
- The findings suggest that teacher motivation and self-esteem are shaped by institutional climate, professional recognition, working conditions, and support systems.

Recommendations

- Universities should work on improving day-to-day working conditions for teachers, including a supportive academic atmosphere, fair distribution of workload, and respectful professional relationships.
- University administrations should offer regular professional development opportunities to help build teachers' confidence, competence, and motivation.
- Female teachers, in particular, should be given gender-sensitive support — safe working conditions, mentoring, flexibility where possible, and fair access to promotion and leadership roles.
- Institutions should make a real effort to recognize teachers' academic contributions, through appreciation, research support, clear promotion pathways, and performance-based incentives.
- Salary packages, benefits, and other professional incentives should be reviewed periodically to help sustain teachers' motivation and self-esteem.
- University leaders should involve teachers more directly in academic decision-making, since a sense of ownership and autonomy tends to strengthen professional commitment.
- Future researchers could expand on this study using larger samples across different provinces of Pakistan, and could include additional variables such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, psychological well-being, burnout, and institutional support.
- Future studies should also report reliability values for each scale used and consider standardized instruments to strengthen the psychometric quality of the research.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to four universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and only social sciences

teachers were included, which limits how broadly the findings can be applied. With a sample size of 80, the results should be read as indicative rather than fully generalizable. Because the study relied on self-report questionnaires, responses may have been shaped by participants' personal perceptions rather than objective measures. The study also focused only on gender and did not examine other potentially important variables, such as teaching experience, designation, marital status, workload, salary satisfaction, job security, or institutional support. These limitations are worth keeping in mind when interpreting the findings.

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