Reinforcing Patriarchy: Internalized Misogyny and Narcissism Among Female Faculty in Gender-Segregated Colleges

Rida Fatima[1], Shumaila Abid[2*], Asma Muzaffar[3]

[1,3]Department of Psychology, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan, Pakistan

[2]Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan, Sub campus Vehari.

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The Present study investigated the relationship between internalized misogyny and narcissistic traits among female academics in all female-only public and private sector colleges, exploring their role in perpetuating patriarchal norms within spaces ostensibly designed to empower women. Method: Data were collected from n=300 female lecturers. Internalized misogyny scale and Narcissistic traits measures were used to assess the study variables. Findings: Correlational analyses revealed that internalized misogyny was moderately associated with narcissistic traits ($r = .45$, $p < .001$), age ($r = .42$, $p < .001$), and negatively correlated with job sector ($r = -.55$, $p < .001$), indicating higher levels among older faculty and those in government institutions. A one-way ANOVA demonstrated significant age-related differences in internalized misogyny ($F_{(3, 296)} = 8.5$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$) and narcissism ($F_{(3, 296)} = 4.2$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .04$), with post hoc tests showing lecturers aged 55-59 scored highest. Hierarchical regression analysis indicated that narcissism alone accounted for 15% of the variance in internalized misogyny ($\beta = .38$, $R^2 = .15$), while the addition of age and sector increased the explained variance to 40% (β-age $= .30$, β-sector $= .50$, $R^2 = .40$). Conclusion: These findings imply that internalized misogyny among female professors is influenced by both individual psychological adaptations and institutional circumstances that reward conformity, emphasizing the contradiction of patriarchal reinforcement in women-only academic environments. Addressing such dynamics may necessitate not only targeted faculty development centered on critical gender consciousness but also broader institutional audits and policy reforms that challenge normative hierarchies and promote structural transformation over time.

Keywords: Internalized Misogyny; Narcissism; Education; Academia; Patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

Despite the robust increase of female representation in higher education, the presence of female academic leadership does not always translate to nurturing and equitable environments for female students. In certain circumstances, specifically in conservative societies like Pakistan, women in seats of authority may reproduce patriarchal norms through subtle forms of discipline and social control. Misogyny is defined as the hatred towards women, based on the belief that they are somehow inferior to men. Internalized misogyny is the phenomenon wherein women adopt and enforce patriarchal beliefs, often against other women, becoming an unseen oppressor to conform to societal expectations or maintain proximity to power (Bearman, Korobov et al. 2009).

Such internalization has significant consequences in academic settings, where female professors may consciously or unconsciously reinforce gendered norms that promote inequality (Ramadan 2022). Female faculty members frequently demonstrate internalized sexist ideas by regulating their students' behavior and looks, especially in contexts that encourage moral compliance. In such situations, women in positions of power may distance themselves from female students who challenge traditional standards, utilizing micro-aggressions and public humiliation to assert moral superiority and devotion to institutional principles (Rahmani 2020).

These studies highlight how women, particularly those with authority, unintentionally reinforce the norms that limit female autonomy and expression.

While much global research focuses on overt institutional hurdles to women's advancement in academia, less emphasis is paid to how internalized gender prejudices among women themselves can prolong patriarchal dynamics in these settings (Ali, Chan et al. 2023). This issue is especially relevant in women-only higher education institutions, which are sometimes considered to provide exceptionally supportive or equitable environments. However, growing work suggests that these environments can paradoxically reinforce conservative gender expectations, as professional legitimacy remains tied to hierarchical allegiance and conformance (Morley 2011, Putnam and Ashcraft 2017).

Building on this, narcissistic traits, which are frequently characterized by entitlement, status-seeking, and a desire for external validation (Cain, Pincus et al. 2008), may appear to contradict internalized sexism. However, when evaluated through the lens of internalized oppression (David and Derthick 2014), similar features can function as adaptive reactions within systems that devalue women, allowing individuals to gain recognition by conforming to dominant standards. In academic environments shaped by organizational narcissism and prestige politics (Gabriel 1997, Vargo 2023), these psychological adaptations may entangle with internalized sexism, strengthening rather than challenging gendered hierarchies.

Academia serves as both a venue of knowledge transfer and a social institution for consolidating power. In Pakistan's postcolonial, neoliberal academic contexts, features such as self-promotion, individualism, and moral rigidity, which are closely related to narcissistic tendencies (Majerski 2024), are used to navigate tight hierarchies. Senior female lecturers frequently promote these norms through institutional mimicry and in-group policing, gaining symbolic validity by publicly disciplining peers and students to align with institutional expectations.

Women in academic leadership roles are frequently seen as the most active enforcers of conventional gender standards. Instead of opposing patriarchal systems, they serve as moral guardians of institutional reputation, monitoring female students' speech, appearance, and behavior in ways that reinforce customary expectations (Kelalech 2023). In South Asia, notably Pakistan, such behaviors are consistent with cultural dictates of modesty, with instructors criticizing students not for academic failings but for choices in makeup, accessories, or dress, viewing them as evidence of moral deterioration. Though rarely formalized in formal laws, this informal surveillance serves as a covert curriculum within women-only organizations, eventually normalizing psychological policing and integrating it into broader cultural standards.

However, there has been little empirical research into how these psychological tendencies coexist among female instructors, particularly in the postcolonial and neoliberal setting of Pakistan's women-only universities. This study intends to shed light on how individual psychological adaptations interact with broader organizational cultures to preserve gendered power systems by investigating the interrelationships of internalized sexism and narcissistic features among female academics in these institutions. In doing so, it adds to a growing body of work that questions simplistic assumptions about female solidarity in single-gender educational settings, instead advocating for a nuanced, contextually grounded understanding of how patriarchal norms persist and are subtly reproduced within gender-segregated teaching institutions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily based on Internalized Oppression Theory Pheterson (1986), which holds that members of marginalized groups may accept the dominant group's negative beliefs about themselves, resulting in self-regulation that reinforces existing hierarchies (David and Derthick 2014). In Pakistani women-only academic institutions, this emerges as internalized sexism, in which female teachers adopt and support gender-subordinating practices in professional settings. This approach also allows us to think about narcissistic tendencies as potential compensatory adaptations, in which self-enhancement and external validation offset the devaluation that comes with internalized gender discrimination. To contextualize these interactions within institutional surroundings, we selectively use Kandiyoti (1988) Patriarchal Bargain Theory, which explains how women might strategically comply with patriarchal norms in order to achieve professional legitimacy and

navigate institutional hierarchies. While this study focuses on psychological internalization, the concept of bargaining emphasizes how systemic mechanisms encourage women to perpetuate gendered norms to survive and advance. We understand that these ideas are mostly derived from Western and generic postcolonial studies. Thus, their admission to Pakistani women-only colleges must take into account local sociocultural aspects such as class, geography, and religious customs. This nuanced approach ensures that our theoretical perspective is both resilient and context-sensitive.

METHOD

The data were collected using a cross-sectional correlational research design using purposive sampling. The study consisted of N=300 female lecturers from female-only public and private colleges. Participants' age M=45.93, SD=8.5, range 25-34 years 12.3%, 35-44 years 28.3%,45-54 years 36.3%, and 55-59 years 23.0%. 61.7 % of the participants were from the Government sector, and 38.3% were from the Private sector colleges. Inclusion criteria required participants to be full-time teaching faculty between the ages of 25 and 59 years, with at least one year of experience teaching at women-only higher education institutions. Faculty from co-educational colleges or universities, administrative staff, and those on prolonged leave were excluded. This strategy provided coverage across institutional types while focusing on female academics who were directly involved in teaching responsibilities in gender-segregated educational settings. Internalized Misogyny scale (Bearman, Korobov et al. 2009) α = .81 and Narcissistic traits (Ames, Rose et al. 2006) α = .69 were administered. The instruments were administered in their original English versions, which is appropriate for the study environment given that English is the major medium of instruction in Pakistani higher education institutions. Furthermore, all items were evaluated by two local academic experts to ensure cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance.

RESULTS

Table 1: Inter-Correlation and Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N=300)

	Variables	M(SD)	2	3	4	5
1	Internalized Misogyny	77.40(10.1)	.45**	.42**	-.55**	.078
2	Narcissism	11.4(2.1)	1	.24**	-.30**	-.014
3	Age	45.9(8.5)		1	-.05	.12*
4	Job Sector	1.38(.4870)			1	-.01
5	Experience	2.71(.9269)				1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The descriptive statistics and correlation of the study variables are presented in Table 1. Internalized Misogyny was moderately and positively correlated with narcissism (r=.45, p<.001) and age (r=.42, p<.001), and negatively correlated with job sector (r=-.55, p<.001), indicating that higher levels of internalized misogyny were associated with increased narcissistic traits, older age, and affiliation with government sector colleges. Narcissism was also modestly correlated with age (r=.24, p<.001) and negatively correlated with sector (r=-.30, p<.001). These findings suggest that personality and demographic factors jointly contribute to internalized misogyny.

Table 2: Independent Sample t-test comparing Internalized Misogyny between Private and Government Job Sectors among Female Lecturers (N=300).

Group	n	Mean	SD	t	p	d
Private	115	70.5	8.5			
Government	185	81.2	9.0	-9.60	< .001	1.1

An independent samples t-test (Table 2) revealed a significant difference in internalized misogyny scores between female lecturers in private versus government colleges, t (298) = -9.60, $p < .001$, Cohen's d = 1.1, indicating a very large effect. Government college lecturers ($M = 81.2$, $SD = 9.0$) scored significantly higher on internalized misogyny than private college lecturers ($M = 70.5$, $SD = 8.5$).

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test comparing Narcissism between Private and Government Job Sectors among Female Lecturers (N=300).

Group	n	Mean	SD	t	p	d
Private	115	10.8	2.1			
Government	185	11.8	2.0	-4.20	< .001	.50

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare narcissism scores between private and government sector female lecturers presented in Table 3. Similarly, narcissism scores were also significantly higher in government sector lecturers ($M = 11.8$, $SD = 2.0$) than in private sector lecturers ($M = 10.8$, $SD = 2.1$), t (298) = -4.20, p < .001, d = 0.50, reflecting a medium to large difference.
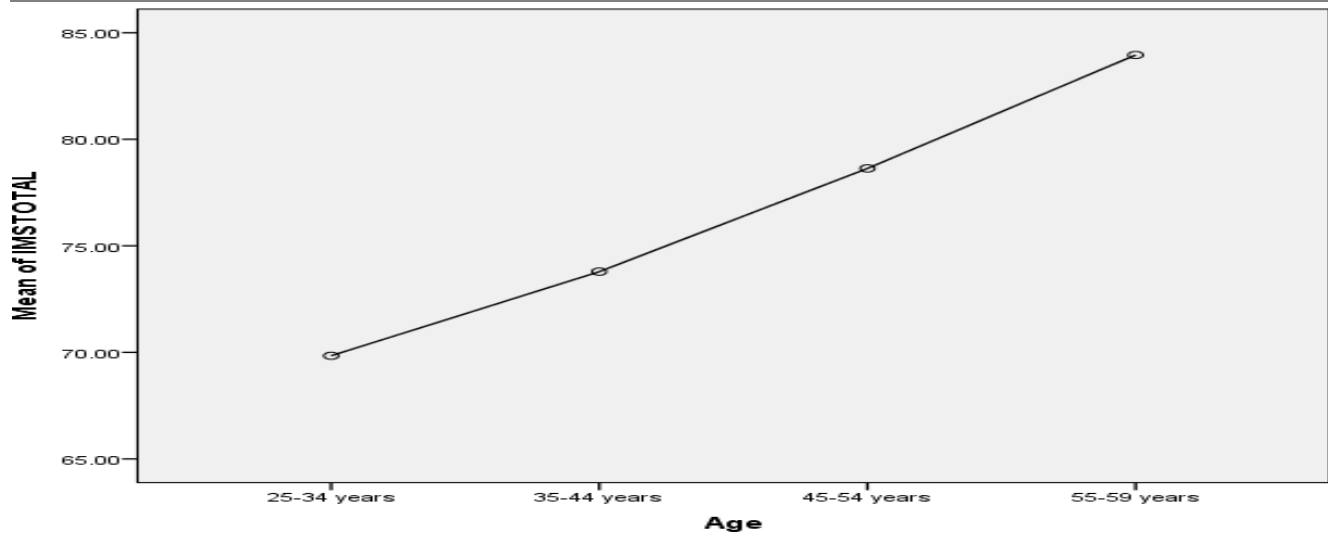
Table 4: One-Way Analysis of Variance of Age on Internalized Misogyny and Narcissism (N=300).

| Variables		SS	Df	MS	f	p	η²
Internalized Misogyny	Between Groups	2392	3	797	8.5	.000	0.8
	Within Groups	27508	296	92.9			
	Total	29,900	299				
Narcissism	Between Groups	53	3	17.7	4.2	.006	.04
	Within Groups	1262	296	4.3			
	Total	1315	299				

Note. η² = eta squared

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of age group on internalized misogyny scores (Table 4). The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between age groups, F (3, 296) = 8.50, $p < .001$, η² = .08, indicating a medium effect size, with approximately 8% of the variance in internalized misogyny explained by age differences. Tukey HSD post hoc tests indicated that lecturers aged 55-59 years reported significantly higher internalized misogyny scores ($M = 82.4$, $SD = 9.1$) compared to those aged 25-34 years (M difference = 6.2, p < .001, 95% CI [3.1, 9.3]) and 35-44 years (M difference = 4.5, p = .002, 95% CI [1.7, 7.3]). Additionally, the 45-54 age group also scored higher than the 25–34 group (M difference = 3.2, p = .014, 95% CI [0.6, 5.8]). No other pairwise differences reached statistical significance (p > .05). These findings suggest that internalized misogyny moderately increases with age, with the most senior lecturers expressing the highest levels.

A separate one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of age group on narcissism scores, F (3, 296) = 4.20, p = .006, η² = .04, indicating a small-to-medium effect size. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD showed that lecturers aged 55-59 years scored modestly higher on narcissism ($M = 12.4$, $SD = 2.1$) than those aged 25-34 years (M difference = 0.8, p = .003, 95% CI [0.3, 1.3]). No statistically significant differences were observed among the other age groups (p > .05). These results indicate that narcissistic traits tend to increase slightly with age, particularly among the most senior faculty.

Figure 1: One-Way Analysis of Variance of Age on Internalized Misogyny (N=300).

Note: IMSTOTAL= Internalized Misogyny
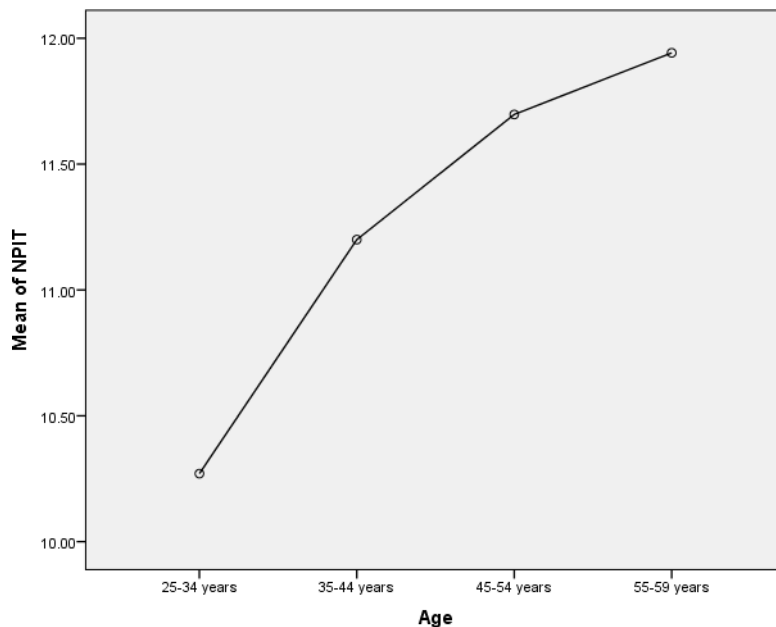
Figure 2: One-Way Analysis of Variance of Age on Narcissism (N=300). Note: NPIT= Narcissism

Table 5: Multiple Regression of Narcissism and Demographics variables predicting Internalized Misogyny (N=300).

Variables		B	$SE\ B$	β	t	p
Model 1	$\Delta R^2 = .15$					
Narcissism		1.20	.25	.38	4.80	.000
Model 2	$\Delta R^2 = .40$					
Narcissism		.80	.24	.25	3.33	.001
Age		.55	.12	.30	4.48	<.001
Job Sector		5.10	.80	.50	6.37	<.001

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether narcissism, age, and job sector predicted internalized misogyny scores. In table 5, in the first model, narcissism alone was a significant predictor, $B = 1.20$, $SE = 0.25$, $\beta = .38$, $t (298) = 4.80$, p < .001, accounting for approximately 15% of the variance, $R^2 = .15$, $F (1, 298) = 23.04$, $p < .001$.

In the second model, when age and job sector were added, the explained variance increased substantially to 40%, $R^2 = .40$, $F (3, 296) = 66.15$, $p < .001$, indicating a large combined effect. Within this model, both age ($B = 0.55$, $SE = 0.12$, $\beta = .30$, $p < .001$) and job sector ($B = 5.10$, $SE = 0.80$, $\beta = .50$, $p < .001$) emerged as the strongest predictors. Narcissism remained a significant independent predictor ($B = 0.80$, $SE = 0.24$, $\beta = .25$, $p = .001$), suggesting that even after controlling for demographic variables, higher narcissistic traits continued to be associated with elevated internalized misogyny scores.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the predictive effects of narcissistic traits and structural-demographic variables (age, experience, sector) on internalized misogyny among female lecturers of Pakistani colleges. The findings will capture and illuminate the psychosocial and institutional mechanisms that underpin internalized patriarchal ideologies within female academic populations.

Narcissism was found as significantly predictive of internalized misogyny in Model 1 (B = 1.20, p < .001), which explains 15% of the variance in the phenomenon. The coexistence of narcissism and internalized misogyny may appear paradoxical, given that narcissism is characterized by grandiosity and entitlement, while internalized misogyny involves accepting and subordinating gender norms. This is in line with theoretical arguments that delimit narcissism as being given by self-enhancement and entitlement, yet paradoxically exists with self-deprecating internalized gender norms (Tyler 2005). However, recent studies indicate that narcissism often involves very fragile self-concepts that are heavily dependent on outside validation (Cain, Pincus et al. 2008). Within such patriarchal contexts, women may gain narcissistic self-enhancement by complying with and exceeding certain gendered expectations, thereby reinforcing internalized misogyny.

This mechanism is further supported by feminist psychological models of self-objectification, which suggest that women can learn to internalize external views within a value system that ironically sustains oppressive norms (Fredrickson, Roberts et al. 1998). This phenomenon would further be theorized through the lens of *patriarchal bargaining* (Kandiyoti 1988), women could internalize and reproduce misogynistic norms to gain symbolic capital in a male-dominated environment. Academic institutions, especially public sector colleges in South Asia, have been shown to valorize hierarchical masculinity, making narcissism a potentially adaptive response for navigating this terrain (Lipton 2020, Vargo 2023). Thus, narcissistic attributes may channel grandiosity even through culturally legitimated but asymmetrical gender roles and thus further internalized misogyny.

In the current findings, age was the strongest individual predictor in the full regression model (B = 0.55, β = .30, p < .001). The rise in internalized misogyny with age may reflect long-term socialization in patriarchal academic cultures. Research shows that older women in academia are more likely to adopt institutional norms. Many of these norms subtly or explicitly reinforce gender hierarchies due to prolonged exposure and career survival strategies (Ashencaen Crabtree and Shiel 2019). This trend connects with post-structural feminist critiques. These critiques argue that institutional power often draws female agents into perpetuating dominant norms under the guise of professionalism or moral discipline (Tyler 2005, Gill 2008). In many cases, senior female lecturers become enforcers of gendered norms, especially concerning appearance and respectability. Anecdotal evidence highlights criticism of students' dress, hair, and behavior.

In predicting internalized sexism, our results highlight the crucial role of age. This pattern can be positioned within more comprehensive feminist theories of socialization and ideological entrenchment in professional settings. Significantly, this relationship might also be a reflection of intergenerational dynamics in women-only universities, where senior female faculty members may serve as unofficial gatekeepers who uphold these norms among their younger colleagues after navigating careers under long-standing patriarchal expectations (Hooks 2000). Senior academics who see adherence to established standards as crucial for institutional

legitimacy and professional survival may experience subtle conflicts as a result of such interactions, while junior faculty members strive for more equitable gender roles.

This interpretation is consistent with post-structural feminist critiques that highlight how horizontal peer enforcement within gendered groups, in addition to top-down patriarchal institutions, preserves power and conformity (Ahmed 2012). Furthermore, according to an intersectional viewpoint (Crenshaw 2013), this association is probably mediated by elements including social status, religion, and local cultural norms. For example, instructors in more conservative or rural areas, or those in particular religious communities, may adopt gender-subordinating attitudes in different ways throughout their lives. Future studies could gain a more comprehensive knowledge of how internalized misogyny is perpetuated and molded differently in Pakistan's diverse sociocultural setting by taking into account these intersecting identities.

Furthermore, an intersectional viewpoint Crenshaw (2013) implies that this association is most likely mediated by religion, social status, and regional cultural norms. For example, lecturers from more conservative or rural areas, as well as those who adhere to specific religious frameworks, may absorb gender-subordinating attitudes in different ways over time. This interpretation is consistent with recent intersectional analyses that show how religion, class, and regional cultures mediate gendered experiences in academia, shaping psychological adaptations such as internalized misogyny in a variety of ways (Gill, Aqeel et al. 2022, Ramadan 2022). Incorporating these overlapping identities into future studies would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how internalized misogyny is developed and sustained differently in Pakistan's diverse sociocultural milieu.

Job sectors, private versus government, showed the strongest standardized effect (β =.50, p < .001). Government college lecturers displayed higher levels of internalized misogyny than those in private colleges. This finding is significant and suggests that institutional culture plays a key role. Government institutions in Pakistan often have more rigid bureaucratic hierarchies and traditional norms of authority compared to private academic institutions, where curricula and dress codes might be more progressive (Hu and Gu 2023). This result aligns with the study by Ashencaen Crabtree and Shiel (2019), who found that female faculty in rigidly structured institutions often enforce traditional gender norms more strictly. Furthermore, the intersection of age and institutional culture may create a feedback loop. Older women in conservative institutions face both vertical mobility and pressures for ideological conformity, which reinforce internalized misogyny.

Theoretical and Sociocultural Implications

These findings highlight how female academics' internalized misogyny functions as both a psychological

adaptation and a result of institutionalized sexism, sustaining gendered hierarchies even inside women-only colleges. Rather than viewing female faculty as passive victims of patriarchy, this study suggests that they may also act as agents of moral and emotional policing, subtly disciplining peers under patriarchal norms, a dynamic consistent with Foucault' (1977) concept of internalized disciplinary power. In postcolonial, neoliberal academic systems like Pakistan's, where competition and hierarchical loyalty are valued, such conformity is frequently rewarded Ahmed 2012, Morley 1999), and it may be exacerbated by intersectional factors such as class, regional cultures, and religious expectations. The observed link between narcissistic traits and internalized misogyny does not reflect self-hatred, but rather how organizational narcissism, institutions that prioritize self-glorification over critique (Gabriel 1997, Vargo 2023), interacts with individual drives for validation, encouraging performances that support dominant gender ideologies. These findings contribute to feminist institutional analyses by shedding light on how internalized misogyny and narcissistic adaptations maintain patriarchal structures under the guise of professionalism and mentorship, emphasizing the paradox of women perpetuating constraints in spaces ostensibly designed to empower them.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study is not without limitations. The first, cross-sectional design also limits our ability to make causal inferences regarding the relationships observed. The use of self-report measures to assess sensitive constructs

such as internalized misogyny and narcissistic traits may have introduced social desirability bias, potentially leading participants to underreport attitudes that conflict with normative expectations.

Future research could adopt qualitative methods like narrative inquiry or phenomenology to investigate how internalized misogyny influences female academics' identities and coping strategies throughout time. Longitudinal studies using depressive symptoms instruments such as the Beck Depression Inventory-II (Beck, Steer et al. 1996) and the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (Fredrickson, Roberts et al. 1998) should shed light on psychological trajectories associated with internalized gender norms. Furthermore, drawing on Bell Hooks' (2000) critique of false notions of safe spaces and Ahmed's (2012) analysis of institutional diversity, future research could look into how women-only educational environments paradoxically maintain patriarchal power, informing institutional policies that promote critical consciousness rather than conformity. This could include faculty development initiatives that challenge gendered assumptions and promote reflective teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

This study provides preliminary evidence that internalized misogyny among female academics in Pakistan is highly influenced by institutional sector and age, with narcissistic characteristics also contributing to these sentiments. While the data are collected from a selective sample of women-only colleges and based on self-reported, cross-sectional measures, the findings reveal significant tendencies. They highlight how patriarchal standards are covertly reinforced in situations typically viewed as liberating for women, particularly through moral and emotional policing techniques implemented by older academics inside institutional hierarchies. This dynamic reflects not only psychological adaptations to prevailing gender standards but also an institutional heritage that fosters compliance with patriarchal expectations. Future studies should include qualitative studies to better understand these processes, as well as intersectional analyses that explore how religion, class, and regional cultures mediate these linkages. Finally, these findings highlight the need for faculty development and institutional policies that actively question gendered power systems, ensuring that women-only academic spaces are truly transformational rather than accidentally contributing to the perpetuation of patriarchy.

Author Contributions

Rida Fatima conceived and designed the study, analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. Asma Muzaffar and Shumaila Abid collected data and drafted the manuscript. All authors critically reviewed and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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