

Exploring the Challenges, Coping Strategies and Motivational Factors of Non-Traditional Pakistani University Students

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The present study aimed to explore the experiences and challenges of non-traditional Pakistani university students. A Non-traditional student is defined as an individual who returns to a college as a part time or full time student while dealing with other responsibilities simultaneously after for a gap of at least 2 years (Cross, 1980).

Methodology: The present study used phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of six non-traditional students from private universities of Lahore. Participants were recruited using snowball sampling technique. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to gather data. Interviews were audio recorded with the permission from the participants and then were transcribed for data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Findings: After analysis of data three themes emerged from the data namely; Problems encountered by non-traditional students, Coping strategies used by non-traditional students and the Motivational factors to continue study despite the challenges encountered by non-traditional students. Among them household chores, family related problems, burden of studies, distractions and less time for study were the main problems.

Conclusion: Study concluded that completing work beforehand, positive self-talk, supportive family and teachers, reinforcement, wanting to do something productive were considered to be the coping strategies and motivational factors for such students.

Keywords: Phenomenological Approach, Snowball Sampling, In-depth Interviews, Thematic Analysis, Coping Strategies.

Introduction

The present study aims to explore the experiences and challenges of non-traditional Pakistani university students. A Non-traditional student is defined as an individual who returns to a college as a part time or full time student while dealing with other responsibilities simultaneously after for a gap of at least 2 years (Cross, 1980). There are variety of reasons that plays the role of an obstacle in continuing the education

Article History

Received:
April 17, 2024

Revised:
June 04, 2024

Accepted:
June 05, 2024

Published:
June 08, 2024

like other traditional students which may include lack of financial resources, lack of social support, managing job responsibilities, raising kids, taking care of household or managing different household chores etc. (McCormick, 2011).

In Pakistani culture and society, woman are the ones who has the greater responsibility of taking care of children or dealing with different household chore, therefore as compared to men, female non-traditional students have to deal with all the pressures of taking care of every aspect of their lives and the lives of the associated individuals. Since they have to deal with more than one role at the time, frequently trying to do justice with every role can have a negative effect on their overall educational experience (Carney et al., 2002). As women lack social support, researchers have found that this constant trying of taking care of these increasing demands and roles may give rise to many mental problems like anxiety, depression and stress (Lin, 2016; Carney et al., 2002). On the other hand some researchers associate these role conflicts with a chance to enhance the mental satisfaction as this would give females an opportunity to experience success at different areas of life and hence it can boost her self-esteem and self-confidence (Johnson & Robson, 1999; Joo-Young, 1997). Therefore, with the help of this research, different experiences of female nontraditional students were looked upon.

Adult Learning Theory

Knowles's elaborated points on adult education in his theory of learning (Merriam et al., 2007). His theory is based on six core principles which he proposed were vital to establish adult education programs. These principles according to him would also help to distinguish between adult and pre-adult learning programs. These principles elaborate that adults have a number of experiences as a resource, are intrinsically motivated to learn and apply knowledge immediately, are self-directing and use their social roles to enhance their learning.

Rationale

The number of non-traditional students has been on the rise since the last few decades. In Pakistan, many females do not get the chance to receive education and when she gets a chance she has to quit going to college because she gets married, has to take care of children and household, or has to get employed. When she finally gets a chance to complete her education there are a whole new set of challenges and difficulties waiting for her. The present study focused such non-traditional students who are married and continuing their education. The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore and understand about the lived experiences of the non-traditional students who are dealing with their household responsibility and studies simultaneously. The findings of the research would help in creating awareness about the challenges they face, so that certain counseling programs and education support program could be established that can help them reach their goals. The awareness would also be made to the families and friends of such women in order to support them for future endeavors.

Literature Review

Chao and Good (2004) conducted a qualitative research with the aim of exploring the perceptions of non-traditional students. The sample consisted of forty three undergraduate students who were recruited through announcements and brochures. Unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted for exploring the perceptions of on non-traditional students. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for subsequent analyses. The findings revealed that career, motivation, financial situation, support systems and life changes play an important part in the learning of non-traditional students.

Manalang et al., (2015) carried out a phenomenological research on non-traditional females who were taking care of dual responsibilities of as a student and as a mother. Using purposive sampling, in depth structured interview were conducted from three females. The themes that evolved from the interviews focused on the struggles they face in maintaining dual roles, and how little involvement in help managing from family affects their familial as well as educational life.

Another study was conducted by Bowl (2001) with the purpose of determining the problems encountered by nontraditional students as they enter higher education. The sample consisted of three married working women. In-depth interviews were conducted. The results revealed that institutional, financial and classroom based obstacles hinder the progress of non-traditional students.

Schue and Slowey (2002) carried out a research with the aim of determining the change in the participation of non-traditional students in higher education across ten countries namely Sweden, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Austria, United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany and Japan. The findings suggested that institutional policies either support or inhibit the participation by non-traditional learners.

Ward (2012) carried out the phenomenological research with an aim of finding the lived experiences of students who were enrolled in occupational science field at the University of Kentucky. In-depth interviews were conducted with three female non-traditional students who were asked about the barriers and challenges they face in a semi structured way. The findings suggested that the obstacle they faced was them being unable to adjust to the environment with traditional students and lack of social support.

Objectives

- To explore the problems encountered by non-traditional Pakistani university students.
- To assess the coping strategies used by non-traditional Pakistani university students to deal with the problems they encounter.
- To understand the non-traditional university students' underlying motivational factors to continue study despite the challenges they encounter.

Research Questions

The following research questions were focused in this research.

- What are the academic problems encountered by non-traditional students studying in Pakistani universities?
- How the non-traditional Pakistani university students cope-up with the problems they encounter?
- What are the underlying motivational factors for the non-traditional Pakistani university students to continue their study despite the challenges they encounter?

Method

Research Design

The phenomenological qualitative research approach was adopted for this research paper since the study was aimed at exploring the experiences and problems encountered by non-traditional Pakistani university students. Phenomenological research methodology explores individuals experiences regarding a phenomenon and their feelings associated with it (Guest et al., 2014).

Participants

The sample of this study comprised of six married female students enrolled in post graduate level of private universities of Lahore age ranging from 23-33 years. Since data progressively become saturated after conducting the fifth interview therefore a sample size of 3-10 is recommended by researchers (Creswell, 2014). Source ID's were allotted to them as S01, S02, S03, S04, S05 and S06 for ensuring anonymity (Guest et al., 2014). Snowball sampling method was used as a sampling strategy. This is the technique in which a participant is approached and recruited among the acquaintances of the already selected participant (Goodman, 1961). Male unmarried students, enrolled in public sector universities and working students were excluded.

In-depth Interview Guide

For the present study six in-depth interviews were conducted in order to obtain the data. Semi-structured interview guide was formulated based on literature reviewed. An in-depth interview permits the participants to feel comfortable so that they can share their personal experiences without any hesitation since the researcher builds rapport with them. At the same time their responses are also not restrained (Legard et al., 2003). Studies related to this topic “non-traditional students” have also used in-depth interviews to gather data (Chao & Census, 2004).

Procedure

Six semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted separately with six different non-traditional university students. Ethical considerations were taken into account. Interviews were conducted and recorded with the consent of the interviewee's, and a written informed consent was signed by all participants. Participants were ensured that their confidentiality would be maintained and their personal information will not be shared with anyone. Moreover, they were given the right to leave the interview at any time. They were also informed that audio would be recorded for each interview. After obtaining informed consent participants were inquired about the time and venue that was convenient to them for interview (Guest et al., 2014). In the interview, firstly the researcher tried to build rapport with interviewee to make them comfortable and relaxed in the situation. Rapport building is essential for gathering data in in-depth interviews (Horsfall et al., 2021). The interviewers also remained non-judgmental throughout the interview sessions and listened compassionately to the experiences shared by participants (Rossetto, 2014). Participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and problems they encountered while studying without any hesitation and interruption. Although, indirect probes were used wherever found necessary to further clarify the information provided by the participants. The researchers remained bilingual throughout the interview conversing in Urdu and English. This helped to build rapport with the participants. Interviews permit the participants to feel comfortable therefore they share their personal experiences without any hesitation this in turn help the interviewer in building rapport (Legard et al., 2003).

Semi structured interviews were held in which predetermined questions were asked from participants. Order of questions was changed according to the flow of interview. Open ended questions were asked to maximize the opportunities for getting information rich responses. Such questions facilitate the conversation¹³. Probing was used to further explore the views of participants (Bryman, 2004). Interviewing techniques given by Kvale and Flick (2017) were used in conducting interviews. Introductory questions were asked to introduce the topic of research. For example, can you tell me what was the motivation for continuing studies after marriage? What problems you encountered in decision making to continue your studies? Probing questions further revealed an in-depth description. For example, did you face any resistance from family members or job? After data collection each interview was transcribed as soon as possible to avoid any decay of information. Research has recommended transcribing an interview in less than five hours (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Data Analyses

After the interviews were conducted they were transcribed in English. Thematic analysis was done to drive themes from initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After transcribing the process of coding took place which comprised of reading the transcriptions again and again, word by word. The codes were then categorized on the basis of similarities and differences. From these categories, themes were drawn and labelled and reported in results.

Results

Three main themes emerged from thematic analysis namely; problems encountered, coping strategies used and motivational factors to continue study by non-traditional students. Three main themes are further divided into minor themes.

Table 1: *Lived Experiences of Non-traditional University Students*

Main theme	Minor theme
Problems Encountered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. House hold chores 2. Meeting deadlines of assigned work 3. Family related problems 4. Social life affect 5. Disturbed Marital Life 6. Discriminating comments 7. Burden of studies 8. Less time for study 9. Distractions
Coping Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completing work beforehand 2. Positive self-talk 3. Catharsis 4. Supportive family 5. Supportive teachers 6. Helpful class fellows 7. Reinforcement
Motivational Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home sickness 2. Feeling of doing something productive 3. Not planning a child/ family planning 4. Special person in family 5. Complying with parents wish 6. Inspiration

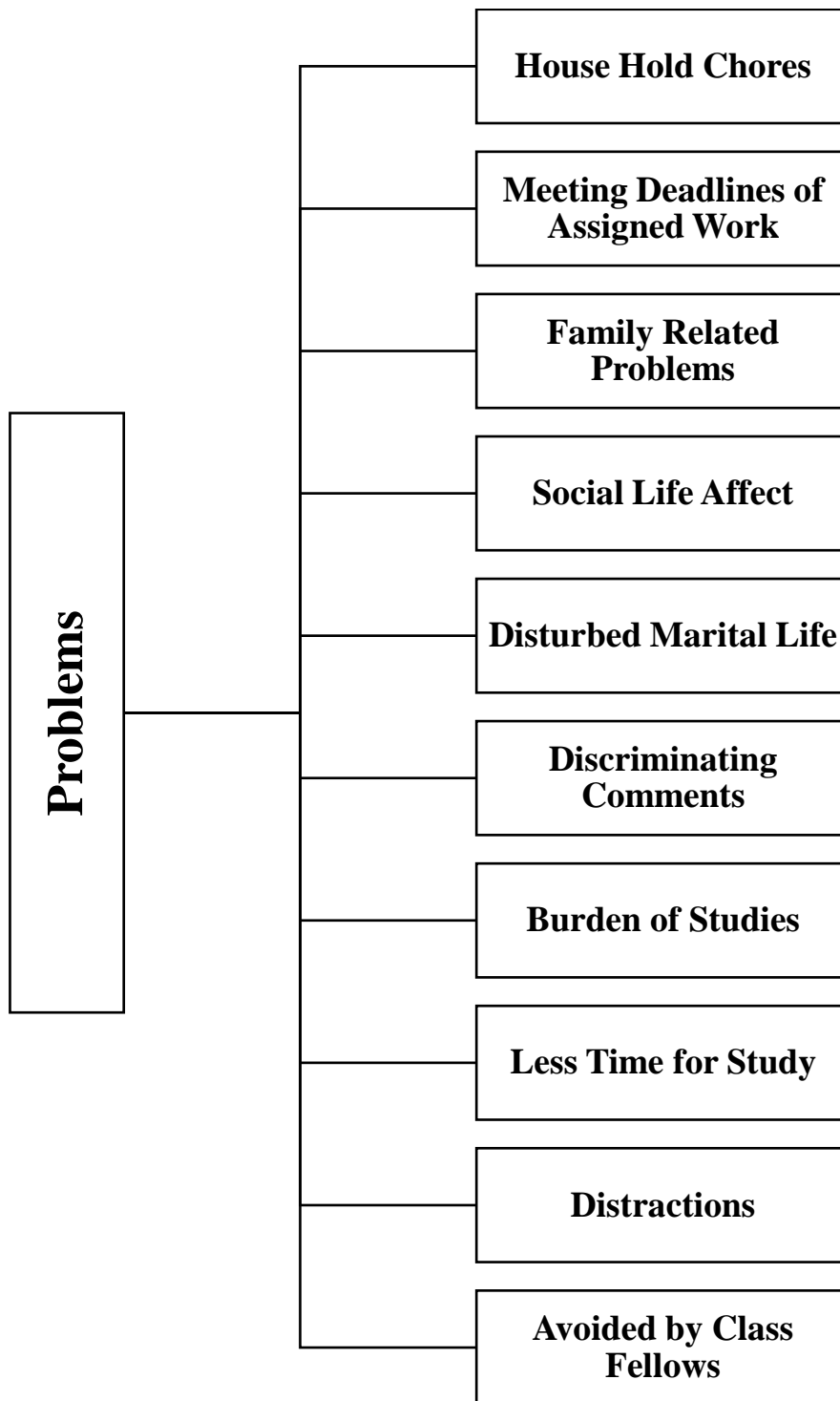


Figure 1: *Minor themes of problems faced by non-traditional students lived dervied from data analysis*

Problems Encountered by Non-Traditional Students

Seven minor themes of problems encountered by non-traditional students emerged from the analysis of the verbatim transcripts (see figure 1).

Household Chores

This was one of the most frequently quoted problems encountered by non-traditional students studying in Pakistani universities.

For example respondent 01 said:

“We have helpers but we are supposed to cook food ourselves. We have a helper, a full-time maid” “I cook food myself, because that is not a common practice in our house. Most of my time is spent in kitchen, in cooking meals; breakfast, dinner, lunch, fulfilling the children’s requests; they want spaghetti, they want sandwiches.”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“She (maid) she does the dishes and everything, except I do everything myself such as I wash the clothes myself and if she goes on a leave then I have to do the dishes myself too. Aside from that, I take care of the overall cleanliness of the room myself. I have to see and do tasks like dusting, and other small chores, such as changing the bedsheets; I do all of that myself.”

Likewise respondent 03 said:

“My household responsibilities include cooking full time. I have to look after my mother-in-law, who is unwell, and take care of everything related to her. I also have to take care of everything else in the house. Small or big, I have to do everything on my own.”

“I cook meals times a day myself. I prepare breakfast in the morning, make lunch in the afternoon, then go to university, come back, and prepare dinner in the evening”

“But now, after marriage, whether you have time or not, you have to fulfill your duties first and then complete your studies. Because of that, the time for studying has become very limited, and as a result, the stress level has increased”

“In the morning, I wake up at 7 o'clock, and after that, I don't go back to sleep. Getting up at 7, I have to prepare breakfast. My brother-in-law goes first, so I have to send him by 7:30. Then I have to wake up my husband, give him his breakfast, and also prepare breakfast for my in-laws along with their medications. I take my mother-in-law to the bathroom and wash her face and hands. After doing all this, I finish my own breakfast by 10 o'clock. After that, there are other chores to complete, and then I prepare lunch. I go to university and come back home in the afternoon, asking first who has eaten and who hasn't. Then, I prepare something for myself to eat and handle other evening tasks. I wait for my in-laws to comfortably go to sleep; for my father-in-law to go to bed, and for all the chores to be completed. Then, I wait for my husband to come home. When he arrives, I go to sleep”

Meeting Deadlines of Assigned Work

Meeting deadlines was another most frequently reported problem faced by non-traditional students. For example respondent 03 said:

“The due date for the assignment or the pressure of pending papers feels like a weight on my head; there's no room for extending the deadline. So in situations like this one, it seems really challenging”

Family Related Problems

Non-traditional students have dual responsibilities since they have to manage their home and studies simultaneously therefore they encounter numerous family oriented problems as well.

For example respondent 01 said:

“One problem is that I feel like I have become a bit detached from my family due to my studies. Like, I used to sit with my mother-in-law and have a chat, but now, its only studies. Another thing is that I used to recite the Quran before, but now, that too is not happening.”

“In a joint family, you have to dedicate more time, and then it becomes challenging to find time for yourself, especially when your husband arrives; at that point, you can't study”

“Cooking, fulfilling my husband's requests, keeping my own space clean, and grocery shopping are my responsibilities.”

“Once my husband wasn't feeling well, so I took a day or two off from here. If my mother-in-law is taking care of the house, so I needed to look after my husband, so I took a few leaves.”

Likewise respondent 03 said:

“Yes, she needs assistance; she can't move without help. If she needs to go to the washroom, she has to be taken with support. That's why she is totally dependent”

“In the midst of it, guests arrived, and because of them, I got occupied for about 3 to 4 hours. When I got done with everything by 10:30, I was mentally and as well as physically exhausted. Despite that, I sat there at that time and did as much as I could, but in the end, my assignment was still pending”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“I used to pick him up immediately after his classes. It was a challenge for me because, as it's evident, when he comes home, his routine is getting quite disrupted until now”

Social Life Affect

Social life is also affected since the non-traditional women have to manage their household responsibilities and studies together therefore they have less time for their social life.

For example respondent A said:

“My life has changed completely after college, especially after marriage. The change after marriage wasn't as significant as when I continued my studies. My life has been confined to the limits of a room”

Likewise respondent 03 said:

“My social life was good before marriage, but now it has decreased a bit. After marriage, I haven't had any hangouts with friends yet, and I haven't done anything with university friends either. They went to McDonald's two or three times, but I couldn't go because I had to get home on time to see the food and other things”

Disturbed Marital Life

Non-traditional students also reported that since they have to study along with their household responsibilities therefore their marital life is being affected.

For example respondent 01 said:

“Yes, marital life does get impacted”. “Sometimes, in the beginning, when such things happened, my husband would repeatedly ask; how much is left, how much is left. Even when he doesn't say anything, I feel like no... I'm ignoring him”

Likewise respondent 03 said:

“It happens, absolutely happens. I mean, when I would in a bad mood, I would be frustrated, nothing feels good to me. When my energy level is low, he feels that she seems different today, and I'm not feeling the same as before”

Discriminating Comments

Non-traditional students reported that they have heard discriminating remarks from their class fellows about them which offended them.

For example respondent 01 said:

“Once a girl said to me, 'what's the point of coming here after marriage? You're married now, enjoy it, what was the need?' And this thing sounded quite stupid because you can't understand right now that when you get married, you would also want to go out of the house in some way”.

Likewise respondent 03 said:

“But some girls in the class were always making comparison comments, like 'do it like this' or 'do this like that.' I've heard such comments related to clothing and other things. Recently, as my health started deteriorating for a while, they were also trying to find out about it, whether there's something going on or not. They wanted to know if there's any news or such things, so I have noticed such things”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“Yeah, there was this thought that when going home, I didn't know what to do. You know, when you go home, what will you do? I said, 'Yes, I HAVE to do it; there are responsibilities to do. Family members may still stay hungry, but your child cannot stay hungry. First, fill his stomach, then do anything else”

Burden of Studies

Burden of studies was also one of the most frequently quoted problems encountered by non-traditional students.

For example respondent 01 said:

“Yeah, I feel a lot of burden on weekends. Both work-related and otherwise because on the day when I don't have college, I have to do the cooking, and then there's no excuse. On weekends, there's a desire to make something special and try something new”

Likewise respondent 03 said:

“That also sometimes becomes a burden. Such as, during exams, there was a tremendous burden on me, and I was mentally overwhelmed”

“But now that the burden of studies has increased, it's becoming challenging to manage time because I also have to give time to the house, and then taking out time from that for studies is difficult. Because of this, I am not getting enough sleep, and the eating routine is also getting disturbed.”

“I absolutely feel the burden. At night, when you're about to sleep, your mind is running with the thought that you have to wake up so early in the morning, complete all your tasks, go to university, and then come back to do all these things. So, there is definitely a burden; responsibilities are felt.”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“Along with that, I had a job, but then I left it because it became quite tough.”

Less Time for Study

Having less time to study is another problem faced by non-traditional students since they are handling their studies and household at the same time.

For example respondent 03 said:

“Because often there is not enough time available for studying. Then, quizzes can't be prepared on time, and assignments often cannot be managed on time, either. At times, I just try to make it work somehow. It's just because of the increased responsibilities at home”

“I feel that my studies are being significantly affected”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“But now, it's like I only have time at night”

Distractions

Non-traditional students encounter numerous distractions while studying.

For example respondent 02 said:

“Earlier, I could memorize things quickly, but now there are a lot more distractions. The most challenging thing is studying with children. Such as, you're trying to memorize, and suddenly they come and say, 'MAMA!' So, the whole effort you put into memorizing a paragraph goes in vain”

Avoided by Class Fellows

Being avoided by class fellows is another problem faced by non-traditional in the desire to gaining knowledge.

For example respondent 02 said:

“It happens that when you are of the same age, you become friends quickly”

“In the beginning, I was very preoccupied in this that how I would manage this. I think at that time, people must have definitely avoided me”

Coping Strategies used by Non-Traditional Students

Seven themes of coping strategies used by non-traditional students emerged from the analysis of the verbatim transcripts (see figure 2).

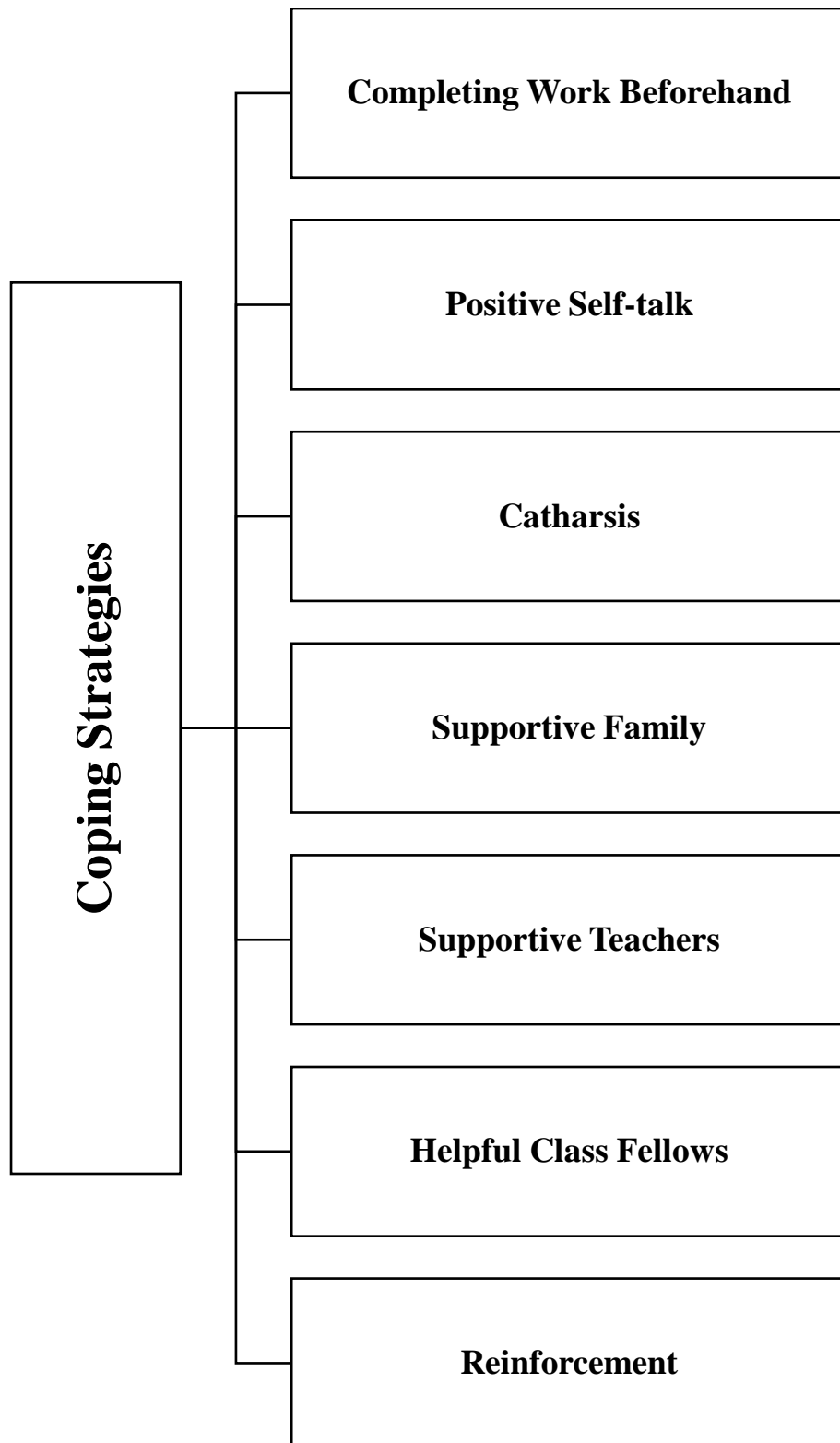


Figure 2: *Minor themes of coping strategies used by non-traditional students derived from data analysis*

Completing Work Beforehand

The most frequently quoted coping strategy used by non-traditional students in this research was completing their assigned work beforehand.

For example respondent 01 said:

“I have learned how to work within the deadline, in fact, I have learned how to work before the deadline; I do the work beforehand. Because if someone comes the next day, I won't tell them at home that I have work to do”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“So, whenever I get an assignment, I just complete it because I know that I won't have time later. I do it little by little, continuously working on it. So I manage to work in advance”

Positive Self-talk

Non-traditional students engage in positive self-talk to cope with tough situations.

For example respondent 03 said:

“I reassure myself and have confidence that once I decide to do something, then I'll manage to do it; I just need to get started”

Catharsis

Catharsis was also quoted as a coping strategy by one of the participants in this research.

For example respondent 03 said:

“I share it with my friends, then I feel relaxed, but the thoughts are still running in my mind, and my mind is somewhere else even in the class too”

Supportive Family

Having a supportive family was one the most popular coping strategy used by the participants in this research. Participants reported that a supportive family is essential to their lives and it is also their motivation. For example respondent 01 said:

“They provided a lot of support, then they gave me a car and taught me how to drive, that, 'Go out and drive on your own.'”

“Men often don't come to the kitchen, but my husband does enough; he helps me. He sometimes even irons clothes”

Likewise respondent S said:

“My husband is very supportive, but the thing is, he is not at home full time”

“He supports me in such a way that he guides me a lot. He advises me on how to do things in a way that will make it easier for me, or if there is some light work, he does it”

“He also supports me in my studies, encouraging me that study no matter how!”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“Even I completely entrust my son to them, telling him that go and eat from your grandmother or go to your father and ask him to feed you; he will go to his grand or father and ask them to feed him. Now, Alhamdulillah, it was good before, and now, I mean, they are cooperative. They all are”

“My mom and dad support me a lot”. “So, my mom and dad are very supportive. They said that we are with you. If we have to bring her, we'll bring her, and if we have to keep her overnight, we'll keep her”

“My mother-in-law, grandfather and grandmother are my support. I say may Allah grant them double lives because they are the reason I can do something”

Supportive Teachers

The supportive attitude of teachers is very encouraging from non-traditional students and it in turn helps them to deal with the problems their encounter.

For example respondent 01 said:

“Supportive; provide reassurance that it's okay, it will work, you can do it. Sometimes, it happened once or twice where the last part of my assignment was pending, and the teacher used to accommodate me by giving an extra day”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“The teachers also encouraged me that, 'If you try, you will succeed”

Helpful Class Fellows

The helpful attitude of class fellows is also the support of non-traditional students and helps them to deal with their daily struggles.

For example respondent 03 said:

“They also provide help. My friends help me etc., such as if I talk about CRs; whenever I've asked them for help, they've assisted me. If I've taken help from any other girl, everyone has guided me well. After marriage, my friends also support me a lot, and everyone I've sought help from has been very supportive.”

“They have started cooperating with me a bit. Like, if I couldn't submit an assignment today, so no problem, I'll submit it tomorrow or the day after, no problem”

Reinforcement

Using reinforcement was a coping strategy quoted by one of the participant in this research.

For example respondent 02 said:

“Reinforcement for everything, reinforcement”

“I keep encouraging myself a lot, I keep reinforcing myself”

Motivational Factors of Non-Traditional Students

Six themes of motivational factors to continue study emerged from the analysis of the verbatim transcripts (see figure 3).

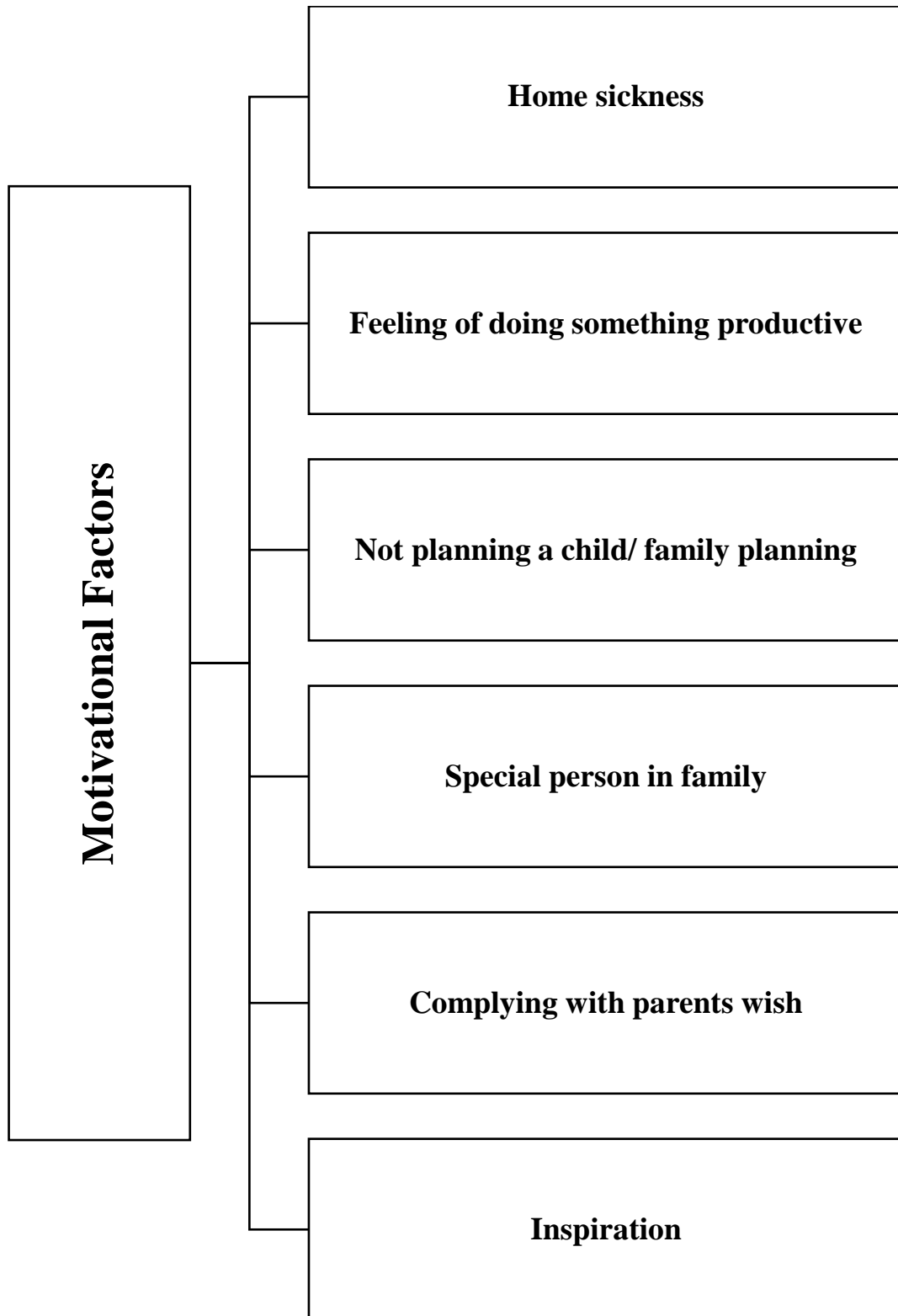


Figure 3: *Minor themes of motivational factors to continue study by non-traditional students derived from data analysis*

Home Sickness

Home sickness was the frequently quoted motivational factor by the non-traditional students.

For example respondent 01 said:

“I was experiencing depression as I had been sitting at home for four months, had become a housewife. So I realized that my emotional well-being was deteriorating. Then, my relationship was getting strained because of that...means I had become very irritable, crying at every little thing, throwing tantrums like a child, and starting to behave inappropriately. This was happening because I had been staying at home...I was very frustrated...”

Likewise respondent 02 said:

“In the beginning, I didn't have any responsibilities, and I was completely free, which caused me to become even more angry/frustrated”

“At the end of the day, I thought I am back to being alone, and I have reached the same point where I started. So, I said to myself that I should do something in a way that I could maintain my mental balance; I decided that I cannot do more now”

“And looking at them, and looking at my brother, I thought it's better to manage things on my own rather than relying on anyone else because he is not going to keep it with me. This was the biggest motivational factor”

“I was becoming quite vindictive, my mind was working in a negative way, thinking about how to seek revenge. But then, I have improved a lot. People are the same, but I have become better”

Feeling of Doing Something Productive

The desire to do something productive and return to the society was reported as a motivational factor to continue study by the respondents. For example respondent 01 said:

“I always had the motivation that I want to do something. I have a strong passion for studying; a strong passion for learning”

“I want to eliminate my sense of idleness. I wanted to do something that brings about change in society, brings change within me, and if I invest my time and money into something, it should benefit me and my family tomorrow, and it should also benefit society”

Not Planning a Child/ Family Planning

Not having a child was reported as a motivation to continue study by one of the participants in this research. For example respondent 01 said:

“The reason for continuing was that I don't have a child. If I had a baby, I would have never done it”

Special Person in Family

One of the respondents reported that they have a special person in their family and wants to help them by learning about their condition by means of study. This in turn is their motivation to continue their studies. For example respondent 01 said:

“And...my brother has autism with epilepsy, so we faced a lot of difficulty in finding a good therapist. So, I thought, why not psychology when I have the permission too”

Complying with Parents Wish

Complying with the wish of their parents was also reported as a motivational factor to continue studies. For example respondent 03 said:

“My motivation is that my mom is very enthusiastic. I may slack off sometimes, but my mom is very eager for me to study, and she even says to pursue a Ph.D. My main motivation is to fulfill my mom's enthusiasm”

Inspiration

Inspiration from colleagues to study was pointed out as a motivation by one of the respondents. For example respondent 02 said:

“I initially worked in a school, and then I got more inspiration from there. So, I thought, why not continue my education further”

Discussion

The proposed study aimed to explore the experiences and challenges of non-traditional Pakistani university students. The results highlighted numerous problems encountered, coping strategies employed to resolve their problems and motivational factors to continue study by these non-traditional students. The findings are in line with the previous researches. Chao and Good (2004) in their research also found that the motivation of such students in continuing their studies depends a lot on the support from their surroundings. Support from family, friends and academic professors were crucial components in their decision. Their commitment to the student role motivated them to negotiate their work, family responsibility, and interpersonal relationships to achieve their goal in completing college education.

Manalang, Liongson and Bayubay (2015) research findings were also in line with the present study. They also found that although participants considered their current situation as was hard even then with the support they get from the people around them made them manage their dual roles of being student and taking care of household jobs. Different kind of support such as moral and financial support from their family, friends, and especially from their husband were the main motivating factors.

The present research finding were also in line with the Ward's (2012) research, which found that women's problems also included the fact that they were the only one who had to take care of everyone and everything. Such students also feel burdened by managing two roles of student and parent simultaneously because of many factors like taking care of family life and responsibilities, clashing of college times with parenting times or when uninvited guests are there and when someone from the family becomes ill and they have to be with them most of the time.

Limitations

The sample size used in the study was small, more sample could draw more unique experiences of such students. Moreover, the data was gathered from private universities of Lahore who have ensured the availability of on campus counseling facility which can enable the students to discuss any academic or personal stressors they encounter. As a result they are able to handle their stress. At the same time the private universities also provided numerous co-curricular facilities for its students ranging from sports to different societies and clubs. Such co-curricular activities help students to engage in healthy activities and distract them from negative thoughts and behavior. Moreover, the co-operative and supported attitude of faculty makes students less prone to encounter stress and inculcate the effective coping strategies to deal with their daily hassles.

Conclusion

The proposed study aimed to explore the experiences and challenges of non-traditional Pakistani university students. The results shed light on numerous problems encountered by non-traditional students

namely; house hold chores, meeting deadlines of assigned work, family related problems, disturbance in social and marital life, bearing discriminating comments, burden of studies, availability of less time for study, distractions and avoided by class fellows. The coping strategies employed to resolve these problems were namely; completing work beforehand, positive self-talk, catharsis, supportive family, supportive teachers, helpful class fellows and reinforcement. The motivational factors to continue study by these non-traditional students were namely; home sickness, feeling of doing something productive, not planning a child/ family planning, special person in family, complying with parents wish and inspiration.

Acknowledgements

None



Conflict of Interest

Authors have no conflict of interest.

Funding Source

The authors received NO funding to conduct this study.

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