

Gender, Social Media, and Feminist Reflections in Higher Education: A Structural Equation Modelling Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships among social media practices, gendered technology, trust relations, gendered experiences, and feminist reflections among students in higher education in Punjab, Pakistan. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed at a public-sector university. The population comprised male and female students enrolled in BS (4 Year) programs across seven departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Using Yamane's formula, a sample of 397 students was selected through proportionate random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire covering socio-demographic characteristics, social media practices, gendered technology, trust relations, and feminist reflections. A pilot study with 25 students was conducted to assess instrument reliability. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .708 to .867 across major constructs, whereas the overall instrument demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .911$). Data were coded, screened, and analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM). The results indicated significant direct relationships among gendered impacts, gendered narratives, gendered representations, reflection of gendered norms, gendered concerns, social structures, and language use and technology. The findings demonstrate that feminist reflections are associated with interconnected representational, cultural, structural, and technological dimensions. The study contributes to understanding how gender is constructed and interpreted within contemporary digital and higher education environments and provides a basis for further research across diverse institutional and social contexts.

Keywords: Social Media, Gendered Technology, Feminist Reflections, Gendered Narratives, Gendered Representations, Gendered Norms, Social Structures, Higher Education

Introduction

Informal support systems increase social media engagement and trust relations among

female students (Cheng, Lu, Lian, & Huang, 2003). It has been recognized that promoting equal awareness of male and female success is a key component of increasing trust in education on internet (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a; Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026b, 2026c; Zhang & Jiang, 2015). It identifies that students' motivation for technological involvement has a positive impact on social media practices (Cohen, 2011). It has been noticed that social media biases are a negative impact on students' academic aspirations and self-esteem (Ali, Abdullah, & Shaoib, 2026; Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026a, 2026b). It has also been noticed that using social media professionally increases students trust relations and promotes a positive educational atmosphere (Ali, Shoaib, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026; Ditta, Noor, Shoaib, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026b; Ferrier, 2014). Similarly, it has been recognized that the issues of gender inequality in technical education remains and shows itself in different educational settings (Adiele, 2024; Larijani, Shoaib, & Abedi, 2026; Nazir, Adnan, & Shoaib, 2026; Nazir, Shoaib, & Bukhari, 2026). It has been accepted that social media practices created interactions between students in education by permitting ongoing interaction and conversation (Nazir, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2026; Nazir, Shoaib, & Mubeen, 2026; Noor, Ditta, & Shoaib, 2026; Slovic & Yang, 2010).

It has been found that social media practices reshape the way students communicate and interact with one another (Noor, Shoaib, & Ditta, 2026; Sarfraz, Kausar, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026; Sarfraz, Sheraz, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026; Zhao, 2013). It has also been linked with the social media practices of various age-related groups (Wang, 2001). Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that individuals use social media for many hours every day (Sarfraz, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2026; Sarfraz, Shoaib, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2026; Sarfraz, Shoaib, & Sheraz, 2026a; Zhu, 2024). Social media practices directly affect the interpersonal relationships among students. It also identifies peer pressure on social media that has been found to have an impact on the decision-making of students (Lockard & Shi, 2014; Sarfraz, Shoaib, & Sheraz, 2026b; Shahzadi, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026; Shahzadi, Shoaib, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026). It has been reported that students' engagement with social media has impacts on sleeping (Yanjiao, 2015). Social media practices by students are restricted by family standards regarding acceptable use in the classroom (Brooks, 2020; Shahzadi, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Shamraiz, Shoaib, Baneen, & Shahzadi, 2026a, 2026b). It has been revealed that differences in student enrolment, opportunities, web development, information technology and classroom settings have also been noted (Gunn, 2002). It has been showed that gender discrimination in education described difference in chances of technological advancement and access of technical education (Hu, 2018; Shoaib, Abbas, Ali, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Abbas, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2026). It has been observed that social media platforms enable everyone's technological safety, trust, and equal engagement (Miao, 2012). Hence, the main objective of this study is to examine the structural relationships among gender, social media practices, and feminist reflections among higher education students, with particular emphasis on how social media practices and gender-related experiences influence students' feminist reflections, using structural equation modelling (SEM).

Review of Literature

It had been asserted that social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Backman et al., 2012; Hellesdatter Jacobsen & Piekut, 2023; Poromaa, 2013; Torkildsen & Erickson, 2016). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that a shortage of female experts in higher education, hierarchical systems, and instructional content had all a negative effect on gendered technologies (Allan, 2025; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that female with disabilities interested in social feminist networks, accessible tools including viewers, descriptions, and photographs were required (Mikander, Zilliacus, & Holm, 2018). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that feminist students used social media devices and other services to arrange events, circulate information, and encouraged unity in higher education (Andersson, 2010; Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c). Similarly, the study findings asserted that professional social media engagement had enhanced interactions between students and generates positive atmosphere for learning in higher education (Widding, 2012). Moreover, the study findings reported that feminist researchers had been identified inequities in technological developments as promote masculine dominance in higher educational settings (Duek & Nilsberth, 2024; Shoaib, Ali, Ditta, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Ali, Hassan, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Iqbal, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026b). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that gendered technology had to be equitable offering security, esteem, and management qualities to assist male and female equally in higher education (Sharkova, 2014). Moreover, the study found that differences between groups had promoted connections of trust in all educational settings (Cole & Hager, 2010; Shoaib, Iqbal, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a; Shoaib, Iqbal, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that developed essentially by male gendered technology had disregarded the requirements of females at tertiary level (Ahmed et al., 2026b, 2026c; Ali, Abdullah, & Shaoib, 2026; Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026a, 2026b; Coppock, 2011). Specifically, the study findings indicated that social media platforms provided incentives for students to participate in educational settings, educate in groups, and engage in critical thinking (Fussy & Iddy, 2024; Shoaib, Iqbal, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026c; Shoaib, Kausar, Sarfraz, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026c).

Social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Laukaityte & Rolfsman, 2020; Olmedo & Grau, 2013; Scheid, 2014; Svensson, 2014). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that trust-building practices had been essential for motivating different groups of students to collaborate on digital learning in higher education (Helleve, 2013; Shoaib, Kausar, Sarfraz, & Abdullah, 2026b; Shoaib, Nazir, & Iqbal., 2026; Shoaib, Nazir, & Kausar, 2026). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that interruptions, disproportionate participation, and social media contributed to spreading information of educational opportunities (Erixon, 2014). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that feminist students used social media platforms to coordinate events, convey news, and create cohesiveness in educational environment (Shoaib, Nazir, & Mir, 2026; Shoaib, Nazir,

& Rashid, 2026a, 2026b; Tarricone, Mestan, & Teo, 2025). Similarly, the study findings asserted that students got part in debates about feminism, educators need to make sure students were represented and had the freedom to express their opinions without thinking to regret or guilt (Berkovich & Hassan, 2025). Moreover, the study findings reported that social media platforms allowed everyone to achieve technological wellness, safety, trust relation, and fair involvement in educational settings (Jonsson & Lillvist, 2019; Shoaib, Nazir, & Sheraz, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Noor, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that students had the opportunity to acquire more trust in their studies using networked project demos, webinars, and conceptual discussions of education (Schmidt, 2013; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025). Moreover, the study found that social media practices related to their academic achievements stimulated students to formulate aspirations in higher education (Shain, 2013; Shoaib, Noor, Mir, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Noor, & Ditta, 2026a, 2026d). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that professionals use of social media strengthened interaction among students and developed an atmosphere of encouragement in higher education (Gulson & Taylor Webb, 2013). Specifically, the study findings indicated that gendered technology had prevented female students in higher education of getting the same rights in educational establishments (Hajisoteriou & Neophytou, 2022).

The studies had been conducted and found that social media practices, gendered technology, and trust relations had affected feminist reflections among male and female students in higher education (Shoaib, Noor, & Ditta, 2026b, 2026c, 2026e). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that technology had to be balanced to provide equitable safety, gratitude, and leadership attributes to assist male and female students in higher education (Pirttimaa, Takala, & Ladonlahti, 2015; Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Ahmed, 2025). Correspondingly, the results of the study pointed out that social media practices among republican students had been restricted the parental guidelines on appropriate use in educational environment (Ongowo, 2022; Shoaib, Noor, Ditta, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Sarfraz, & Kausar, 2026b). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that students' involvement with social media had increased, and its positive consequences had been restrained to power conflicts, social discrimination, and disparities in access to learning in higher education (Fleischer, 2017; Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). Similarly, the study findings asserted that analytical thinking was important in higher education because a lack of motivation led students to seek out misleading material on feminist philosophy on the internet (Svanes & Klette, 2018). Moreover, the study findings reported that both male and female students had to promote feminist views for the male students to mature in appreciation and accountability in higher education (Langelotz, 2013; Shoaib, Sarfraz, & Kausar, 2026a; Shoaib, Sarfraz, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b). Furthermore, the argument of the researcher conveyed that feminist webinars provided students with a variety of perspectives on historical events, narratives, and encouragement at tertiary level (Ramma, Bhoola, Watts, & Nadal, 2018). Moreover, the study found that relationships of trust had been undermined and students felt scrutinized for sharing their thoughts and sensitive data

on social media (Kroksmark, 2015). For instance, the conclusion of the study mentioned that social media engagement in higher education had impacted gendered patterns and trust levels among students from different economic and social strata (Shoaib, Shahzadi, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026c). Specifically, the study findings indicated that feminist researchers had discovered inequalities in technology advancements as encourage male supremacy in higher education institutions (Brown, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in two complementary perspectives: Digital Trust Theory (Frederiksen, 2012) and Intersectionality Theory (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Together, these perspectives provide a conceptual basis for examining how gender, identity, technology, trust, risk, and power intersect within digital environments.

Digital Trust Theory: Digital Trust Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals develop confidence in digital technologies, platforms, interactions, and information whereas simultaneously assessing potential risks and vulnerabilities. In the context of this study, the theory is used to examine students' gendered experiences of digital environments, particularly their perceptions of trust, privacy, safety, surveillance, and technological risk. It helps explain how students negotiate trust when engaging in digital communication, self-expression, and online social interactions.

Intersectionality Theory: Intersectionality Theory emphasizes that gender cannot be understood independently of other dimensions of social identity and inequality, including class, sexuality, ethnicity, stigma, marginalization, and privilege (Cho et al., 2013). From an intersectional perspective, students' experiences of technology and digital trust vary according to the interaction of multiple social positions and power relations. Accordingly, this study applies an intersectional feminist lens to examine how male and female students experience digital expression, trust, privacy, safety, and vulnerability within technologically mediated environments.

Thus, the integration of digital trust theory and intersectionality theory provides a multidimensional framework for understanding how gender, social identities, power relations, digital practices, and trust interact in students' experiences of digital spaces. Based on the foregoing theoretical and empirical literature, the following conceptual framework was developed.

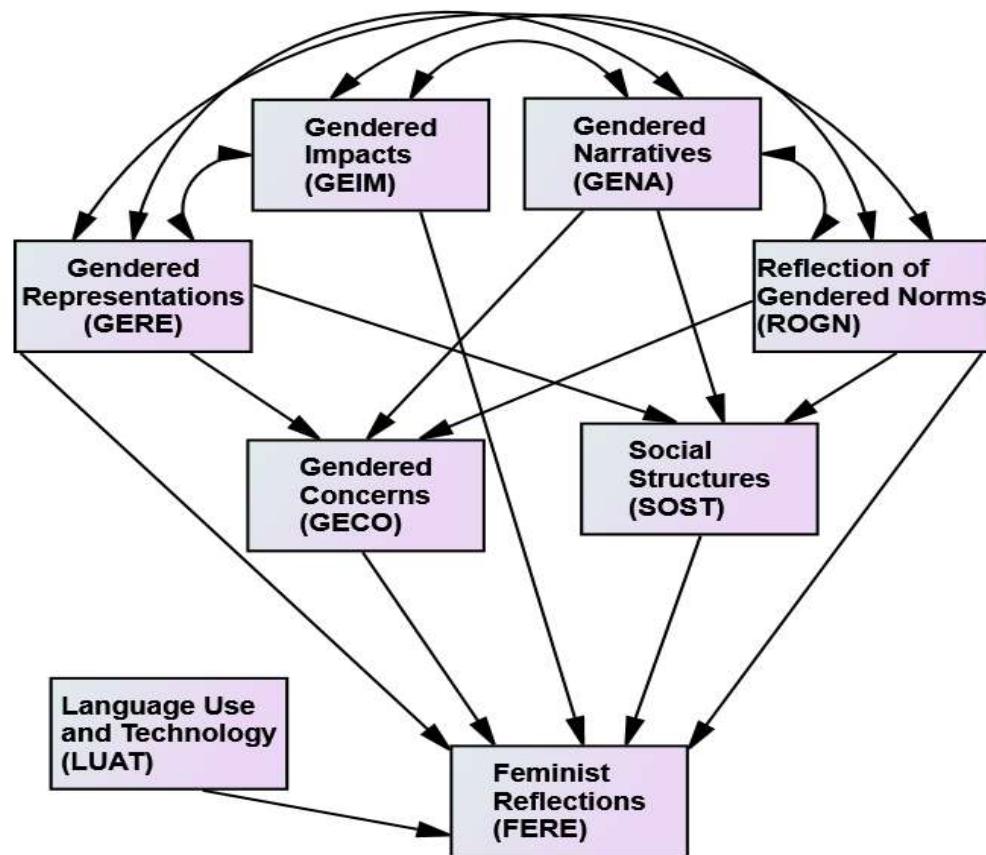


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Model

Data and Methods

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine social media practices, gendered technology, trust relations, and feminist reflections among students in higher education. The study was conducted at one public sector university in the Punjab, Pakistan. The target population comprised male and female students enrolled in BS (4 Year) programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences, including economics, education, history and Pakistan studies, political science and international relations, psychology, and sociology. The unit of analysis was individual students enrolled in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. A proportionate random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from the selected departments. Using Yamane (1967) formula, a sample of 397 students was determined and proportionately allocated across departments. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered in classrooms over approximately one month. The instrument consisted of sections measuring socio-demographic characteristics, social media practices, gendered technology, trust relations, and feminist reflections. Items were measured primarily on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test was conducted with 25 randomly selected students. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .708 to .867 for major constructs, whereas the overall instrument demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .911$). Data were subsequently coded, screened, and prepared

for statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the primary data collected from the students enrolled in public sector university in the Punjab, Pakistan. The details are as followings;

Table1
Direct Effects of the Model

Variable Codes			Standardized Regression Weights	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
GERE	--->	GECO	.157	.160	.050	3.199	.001
GENA	--->	GECO	.237	.223	.047	4.785	***
ROGN	--->	GECO	.158	.144	.044	3.251	.001
GERE	--->	SOST	.203	.211	.051	4.113	***
GENA	--->	SOST	.237	.227	.048	4.750	***
ROGN	--->	SOST	.082	.076	.045	1.668	.095
SOST	--->	FERE	.534	1.473	.083	17.774	***
GECO	--->	FERE	.438	1.235	.085	14.516	***
LUAT	--->	FERE	.136	.403	.084	4.782	***
GERE	--->	FERE	.076	.218	.090	2.425	.015
ROGN	--->	FERE	.064	.163	.081	2.016	.044
GEIM	--->	FERE	.067	.184	.086	2.146	.032
Covariances							
GEIM	<-->	GERE		1.869	.353	5.298	***
GEIM	<-->	GENA		2.372	.386	6.139	***
GENA	<-->	ROGN		2.204	.409	5.383	***
GERE	<-->	GENA		2.138	.368	5.806	***
GERE	<-->	ROGN		1.806	.376	4.805	***
GEIM	<-->	ROGN		2.787	.406	6.872	***
Variances							
GEIM				7.061	.502	14.071	***
GERE				6.485	.461	14.071	***
GENA				7.574	.538	14.071	***
ROGN				8.124	.577	14.071	***
LUAT				6.036	.429	14.071	***
e2				5.927	.421	14.071	***
e1				5.623	.400	14.071	***
e3				16.950	1.205	14.071	***

Model Summary: GFI=.927, AGFI=.918, CFI=.931, TLI=.928, RMSEA=.042

Hypothesis 1: Gendered representations, gendered narratives, and reflection of gendered norms had direct effects on gendered concerns among university students.

Hypothesis 1 had been consisted of different independent variables and one dependent variable. All the independent variables such as gendered representations, gendered narratives, and reflection of gendered norms had significantly direct effects on dependent variable gendered concerns among university students. These direct effects had also been confirmed Beta Coefficient. Hence, hypothesis 1 had been accepted and proved that gendered representations, gendered narratives, and reflection of gendered

norms had direct effects on gendered concerns among university students. The study findings had been aligned and similar to the previous studies (Shoaib, Shahzadi, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Iqbal, et al., 2026; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Shamraiz, et al., 2026c). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that social pressure from peers serves as an essential factor to encourage students to use intellectual social networks to work together and perform better intellectually in higher education (Renshaw & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that institutional credibility, academic discipline, instructors' effort, and students' motivation for technological involvement had a positive impact on social media strategies (Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014). Moreover, the study findings reported that male-dominated technologies constrain the availability and acceptance for a variety of participants in higher education (Harling & Strandler, 2025; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Shamraiz, Abbas, & Abdullah, 2026). Moreover, the study found that trust-building strategies had been demonstrated to be essential to motivate different student groups to team up on digital learning (Oyinlola, 2022). Specifically, the study findings indicated that the structure of platforms had been impacted by the power of men in the advancement of technology, and eliminates feminist academic perspectives in higher education (Puigvert et al., 2024).

Hypothesis 2: Gendered representations, gendered narratives, and reflection of gendered norms had direct effects on social structures among university students.

Hypothesis 2 had been consisted of different independent variables and one dependent variable. All the independent variables such as gendered representations, gendered narratives, and reflection of gendered norms had significantly direct effects on dependent variable social structures among university students. These direct effects had also been confirmed Beta Coefficient. Hence, hypothesis 2 had been accepted and proved that gendered representations, gendered narratives, and reflection of gendered norms had direct effects on social structures among university students. The study findings had been aligned and similar to the previous studies (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Abdullah, & Shahzadi, 2026a, 2026b; Shoaib, Shamraiz, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026b). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that learning institutions embraced social media usage as a morally and ethically sound way to increase respectful conversation among all students (Menberu, 2024). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that feminists' reflection advocates the rules related to tech education to be amended at the tertiary level (Snider, Adraki, Lolig, & McNamara, 2024). Moreover, the study findings reported that educated students equitably, regardless of gender recognition, as it was essential to create trust relations in higher education (Schiebinger, 2021). Moreover, the study found that that critical thinking was fundamental in higher education because a lack of guidance leads students to incorrect online information about feminist thought (Chatterjee, 2012; Shoaib, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c; Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a, 2021b). Specifically, the study findings indicated that students participate in feminism debates, educators need to ensure that they feel heard and unafraid to speak up without fear of blame or shame (Poromaa, 2013).

Hypothesis 3: social structures, gendered concerns, and language use and technology had direct effects on feminist reflections among university students.

Hypothesis 3 had been consisted of different independent variables and one dependent variable. All the independent variables such as social structures, gendered concerns, and language use and technology had significantly direct effects on dependent variable feminist reflections among university students. These direct effects had also been confirmed Beta Coefficient. Hence, hypothesis 3 had been accepted and proved that social structures, gendered concerns, and language use and technology had direct effects on feminist reflections among university students. The study findings had been aligned and similar to the previous studies (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026c, 2026d). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that for male students to develop respect and responsibility, supporting feminist ideas had to involve both males and females (Chetry, 2023). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that gendered technology was mainly created by males; it overlooks the requirements of female or underrepresented groups in educational settings (Pineda & Purdue, 2019). Moreover, the study findings reported that applications develop without having an account of females' privacy concerns or safety requirements from digital learning resources, gendered technology putting females at a competitive disadvantage (Shoaib, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e; Wallace, 2020). Moreover, the study found that social media platforms facilitate equal participation, security, and digital well-being for everyone (Willems, 2021). Specifically, the study findings indicated that encouraging males and females equally in higher education, technology had to be gender-appropriate by providing equal protection, appreciation, and authority features (Newsom, Cassara, & Lengel, 2011).

Hypothesis 4: Gendered representations, reflection of gendered norms and gendered impacts had direct effects on feminist reflections among university students.

Hypothesis 4 had been consisted of different independent variables and one dependent variable. All the independent variables such as gendered representations, reflection of gendered norms and gendered impacts had significantly direct effects on dependent variable feminist reflections among university students. These direct effects had also been confirmed Beta Coefficient. Hence, hypothesis 4 had been accepted and proved that gendered representations, reflection of gendered norms and gendered impacts had direct effects on feminist reflections among university students. The study findings had been aligned and similar to the previous studies (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Noor, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Srosh, Mobeen, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026b). In similar fashion, the argument of the study clinched that students' interactions with instructional platforms had been affected by gendered technology, leading to their engagement, interpersonal interaction, and trust relations (Lund, Berg, Jones, & Setten, 2019). Uniformly, the analysis of the study revealed that students' opinions about their positions had been affected by gendered terminology on educational resources, resulting in disparities in participation as well as emotions of inclusion in higher education (Zaragocin, 2019). Moreover, the study findings reported that students of various socioeconomic and social contexts' levels of trust and gender roles had been affected by social media practices in higher education (Wu, Guttena, & Atmaja, 2023). Moreover, the study found that for female students, informal support

networks increase trust and social media interaction (Godefroidt, Langer, & Meuleman, 2017). Specifically, the study findings indicated that to maintain individuals' trust relations, institutions need to eliminate gendered discrimination in their educational settings (Gorlich, 2021; Shoaib, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Shoaib & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib & Ullah, 2026).

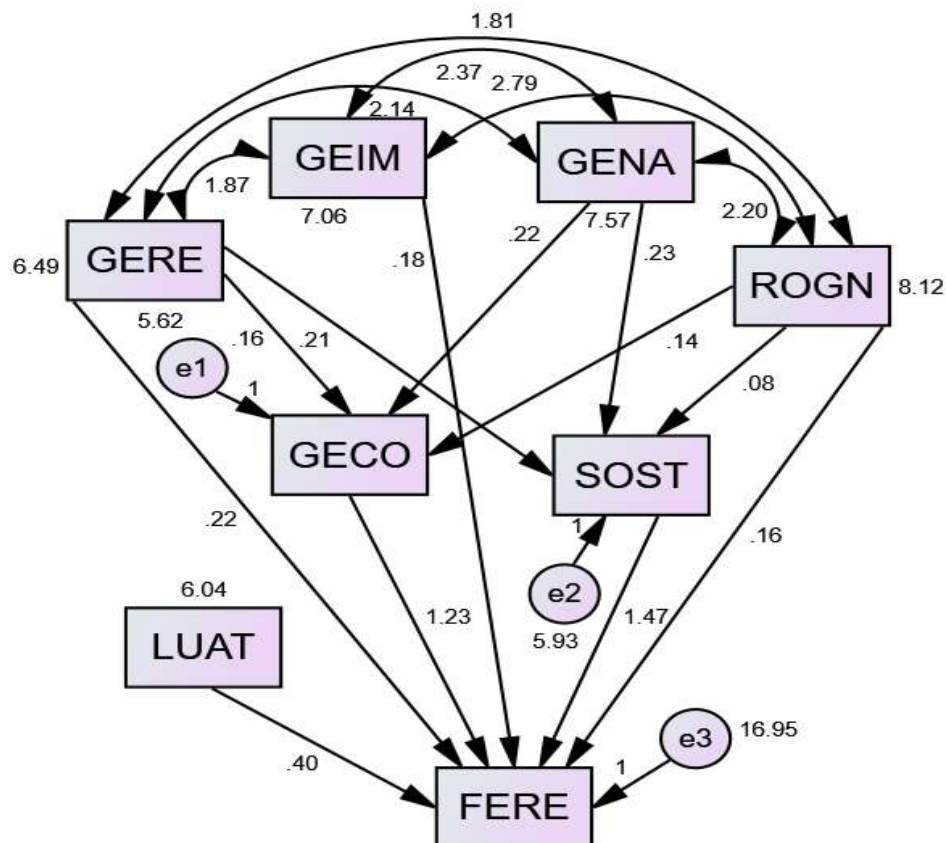


Figure 1: Model Fit Diagram

Conclusion

The structural equation modelling (SEM) results support the relationships among the study's constructs. All hypothesized direct paths were significant, indicating that gendered impacts (GEIM), gendered narratives (GENA), gendered representations (GERE), reflection of gendered norms (ROGN), gendered concerns (GECO), social structures (SOST), and language use and technology (LUAT) have significant direct effects within the model. These findings suggest that feminist reflections (FERE) are shaped by interconnected representational, cultural, structural, and technological dimensions. The significant relationships indicate that gendered experiences and meanings do not operate in isolation; instead, they are embedded in social processes through which gender is constructed, communicated, and understood. Taken together, the findings provide support for the conceptual framework and demonstrate the value of examining these dimensions simultaneously. The results underscore the relevance of integrating experiences with social and technological contexts when interpreting

gender-related phenomena. Nevertheless, the findings should be considered in relation to the sample, measures, and research design. Future studies could test the model across diverse populations and settings, assess its robustness, and explore mediating or moderating effects.

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