



Exploring Effectiveness of Lifelong Learning Experiences among Senior and Retired Teachers of Schools and Colleges: Evidence from Karachi

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Abstract

*In many developing countries, senior and retired teachers experience an abrupt end to their professional and learning engagements upon reaching the institutional retirement age, regardless of their expertise, skills, or motivation to continue contributing. In Pakistan, where formal retirement typically occurs at 60 years of age, educators often face exclusion from both employment and formal learning opportunities. This quantitative descriptive study investigates gender-based differences in attitudes toward lifelong learning among senior and retired teachers from schools and colleges in Karachi. Lifelong learning is conceptualized as a continuous process of knowledge acquisition through active mental engagement, social interaction, environmental exposure, observation, and real-world application of skills. Data were collected from 60 participants, comprising 32 males and 28 females aged 58–70 years, representing both public and private institutions. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was used to assess participants' perceptions across cognitive, social, and experiential dimensions. Data were analysed using an independent-samples *t*-test at a 0.05 significance level. The results indicated no significant difference between male and female teachers' opinions regarding lifelong learning, suggesting that both genders share equally positive attitudes toward continuous learning beyond retirement. Despite this, participants reported challenges such as limited institutional programs, age-based exclusion, socio-cultural biases, and lack of policy support. The study underscores the need to institutionalize post-retirement engagement through initiatives such as mentorship, adjunct teaching, and consultancy roles, while reforming educational policies to recognize lifelong learning as a national priority that values the experience and intellectual capital of senior educators.*

Keywords: *lifelong learning, retired teachers, senior teachers, experience valuation, Karachi, quantitative study, post-retirement engagement, education policy*

Introduction

Background of the Study

Education systems across the world benefit immensely from the experience, wisdom, and accumulated professional knowledge of their most senior educators. In many Western contexts, retired or elderly educators continue to contribute meaningfully through roles such as adjunct faculty, mentors, external examiners, educational consultants, doctoral supervisors, or members of advisory boards—often well beyond conventional retirement ages. University chancellors in their



70s or 80s, and teachers engaged in continuous professional learning or credentialing, exemplify the value of lifelong engagement in education.

In Pakistan, the situation is quite different. While there is no statutory age limit or compulsory retirement age for politicians, the official retirement age in the educational sector is usually 60. This typically marks an end to formal institutional employment and structured opportunities for professional development. Upon retirement, teachers often lose access to research opportunities, training courses, and other resources that fuel professional growth. They are frequently replaced by young, recent university graduates. While these new recruits are energetic, passionate, well-qualified and eager to learn, they often lack the depth of pedagogical understanding, contextual knowledge, and community relationships that experienced teachers possess. Consequently, this retired cohort represents an untapped reservoir of human capital with the potential to significantly enhance lifelong learning systems and enhance educational achievement.

Karachi, being Pakistan's largest and most educationally diverse city with a widespread network of public and private schools and colleges, is the ideal setting to study these dynamics. Retired teachers from Karachi are a diverse group; some wish to continue teaching, while others seek further education, consultancy work, advocacy roles, or involvement in community-based educational services. Studying their lifelong learning experiences is essential for formulating policies that support their ongoing engagement in education. As Pakistan's population ages and the number of citizens over 60 increases, it has become critically important to retain senior citizens in economically and socially productive activities. Allowing their valuable experience and expertise to lie dormant represents a significant loss for society. Within this context, the education sector presents a valuable opportunity to utilise the knowledge and expertise of experienced educators. Internationally, the World Health Organization's (2002) concept of active ageing promotes the continued participation of older adults in social, economic, and cultural life for the benefit of both individuals and society. The enforced disengagement of senior teachers after retirement, therefore, runs counter to this principle and results in a significant loss of social and intellectual capital (Field, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the potential value of senior and retired teachers, in practice, in Karachi and more broadly in Pakistan:

- * Teachers after retirement are often deprived of opportunities to engage in formal or informal learning, teaching, or other professional activities.
- * Their experience, learning, and expertise are devalued or ignored; younger or less-experienced teachers are often privileged in recruitment, opportunities, or recognition.
- * Societal or institutional norms enforce strict cut-offs, e.g., at the age of 60, restrict the ability of teachers to pursue further qualifications, contribute to educational policy, or to mentor the younger generation.
- * There is little empirical documentation on how retired teachers themselves perceive their learning opportunities, the effectiveness of any programs offered to them, or the barriers they face in staying engaged.

Thus, the problem this research addresses is: *How effective are lifelong learning experiences for senior and retired teachers in Karachi, and what are the key enablers or constraints that affect their continued engagement and recognition?*



Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- * Determine whether there is a significant difference between male and female senior and retired teachers' opinions regarding lifelong learning experiences in schools and colleges of Karachi.
- * Assess overall attitudes of senior and retired teachers toward lifelong learning as a continuous process of knowledge acquisition, social interaction, and skill application.
- * Investigate how institutional type (public or private) and professional experience may influence teachers' lifelong learning attitudes.
- * Propose policy and institutional recommendations to promote structured and inclusive lifelong learning opportunities for retired educators in Karachi and across Pakistan.

Research Questions

- * Is there a significant difference between the opinions of male and female senior and retired teachers regarding lifelong learning experiences in schools and colleges of Karachi?
- * What are the overall attitudes of senior and retired teachers toward lifelong learning as a continuous process of knowledge acquisition, social interaction, and skill application?
- * What institutional, policy, economic, and socio-cultural factors facilitate or hinder their lifelong learning experiences?
- * In what ways is their experience valued (or devalued) in the educational system, by institutions, colleagues, and society?
- * What policy measures can be proposed to enhance lifelong learning opportunities and post-retirement engagement for senior educators in Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to educational research and policy in several important ways:

- * **Empirical Evidence:** It provides quantitative evidence on lifelong learning attitudes among senior and retired teachers in Karachi which has been an under-researched group in Pakistan's educational sector. By statistically analysing gender-based differences, the study contributes to data-driven understanding of post-retirement learning engagement.
- * **Policy Implications:** The findings can inform the formulation of retirement and professional development policies, highlighting the need for structured opportunities that enable retired educators to remain intellectually active through mentorship, consultancy, and continuing education.
- * **Valuing Experience:** The study underscores the importance of preserving the professional wisdom and tacit knowledge of senior educators through institutional initiatives such as mentorship networks and teacher wisdom banks.
- * **Contextualizing Lifelong Learning:** It extends international debates on lifelong learning to the Pakistani context, identifying how institutional structures, cultural attitudes, and policy gaps shape educators' motivation and opportunities for continued learning.
- * **Societal and Psychological Impact:** By demonstrating that retired teachers maintain positive attitudes toward lifelong learning, the study promotes societal recognition of their continuing value, contributing to enhanced self-worth, identity, and mental well-being in later life.



- * **Human and Social Capital:** Finally, it emphasizes the potential loss of valuable human and social capital when experienced educators are excluded from active participation, thereby reinforcing the need for inclusive education policies that harness their expertise and networks for broader societal benefit (Becker, 1964; Coleman, 1988).

Scope and Limitations

- * The study is geographically limited to Karachi, focusing on both public and private schools and colleges.
- * Participants include senior and retired teachers aged between 58 and 70 years, who have either recently retired (within the past 5–10 years) or are nearing retirement.
- * The study focuses on quantitative data collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, designed to measure attitudes toward lifelong learning.
- * Lifelong learning is defined comprehensively to include formal education (courses, degrees), informal learning (reading, workshops, peer discussions), and non-formal learning (mentorship, consultancy, voluntary teaching).
- * The analysis specifically examines gender-based differences and the influence of institutional type (public/private) and professional experience on attitudes toward lifelong learning.

Limitations:

- * The study is limited to a sample of 60 participants, which, although sufficient for statistical comparison, may limit the generalizability of results beyond Karachi.
- * Self-reported survey data may involve bias due to participants' subjectivity or social desirability in responses.
- * The cross-sectional design captures attitudes at a single point in time and cannot account for changes in perceptions over longer periods post-retirement.
- * Limited access to policy and institutional data constrained deeper correlation between organizational practices and participants' attitudes.

Delimitations

- * The study intentionally focuses on senior and retired teachers aged 58–70 years who retired within the past 5–10 years, excluding those who retired earlier to ensure relevance of reflection.
- * It includes teachers from schools and colleges only, excluding university faculty to maintain comparability across similar institutional contexts.
- * It excludes students and younger teachers, as the focus is solely on the attitudes of senior and retired educators.
- * Non-educational or hobby-based learning activities are considered only if they relate to professional or educational learning.
- * The study is descriptive comparative rather than causal, aiming to measure and compare attitudes rather than determine reasons behind them

Literature Review

This literature review provides a comprehensive review of literature across four key domains: the theoretical foundations of lifelong learning, the value of senior educators, empirical studies within Pakistan, and the identification of persistent research gaps.

Lifelong Learning: Theoretical Perspectives



The idea of lifelong learning has transformed from a narrow concept of workforce training to a holistic vision of learning “from cradle to grave” (Faure et al., 1972). A cornerstone of this vision is the Delors Report (1996), which articulated four essential pillars of education: learning to know, to do, to live together, and to be. In retirement, the final two pillars gain particular significance, becoming central to individual satisfaction and social ties (Withnall, 2010). Since retirement is less a single event and more a complex psychosocial transition (Wang & Shultz, 2010), lifelong learning becomes a crucial tool for navigating this change, offering a continued sense of structure, meaning, and community. Lifelong learning is typically conceptualized along three dimensions: formal (degrees, diplomas), non-formal (workshops, short courses), and informal (self-study, peer networks). Its theoretical foundations draw from several key perspectives, including human capital theory, adult learning theory, experiential learning, and socio-cultural models that frame learning as social and contextual.

Human Capital Theory

(Becker, 1964) views learning as an investment that enhances an individual’s productive capacity. For retired teachers, this may translate into improved capabilities for volunteering, consultancy, or part-time work, even when economic returns are not the primary motivation.

Andragogy

(Knowles, 1980) suggests that adult learners are self-directed, intrinsically motivated, and bring a wealth of life experience that enriches the learning process. This framework is particularly relevant to retired teachers, whose decades of classroom practice constitute a valuable foundation for continued learning.

Experiential Learning Theory

(Kolb, 1984) emphasises that knowledge is constructed through the transformation of experience. Retired teachers symbolise experiential learners; their ongoing engagement supports a dynamic cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Sociocultural Theories

(Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991) underscore learning as a social process situated within communities of practice. Retirement often disrupts an educator’s primary professional community, creating the need to establish new networks or reconfigure existing relationships to sustain learning and belonging (Wenger, 1999).

Among adult learners, common motivations for lifelong learning include personal growth, social connection, maintaining mental health, contributing to the community, and staying professionally relevant. Houle (1961) classifies these motivations as goal-oriented (learning for a specific purpose or new role), activity-oriented (learning for social interaction), and learning-oriented (learning for its own intrinsic satisfaction). Conversely, barriers to participation are well documented across cultures and include institutional ageism, financial constraints, inaccessible program design, health limitations, and negative self-perceptions about learning capabilities in later life (Findsen & Formosa, 2012). Beyond instrumental motivations and barriers, lifelong learning in later life can be understood through developmental theories of aging. Erikson (1982) speculated that the final stage of psychosocial development involves a conflict between ego integrity, i.e., a sense of fulfilment with one’s life, and despair. Similarly, Tornstam’s (2005) theory of gerotranscendence describes a shift in perspective with age toward increased life satisfaction and wisdom. For retired



teachers, lifelong learning can be a deliberate practice that fosters this positive development, helping them integrate a lifetime of experience and find new meaning.

Experience, Wisdom, and Value of Senior Educators

Research consistently highlights the implied knowledge of expert educators with skills encompassing classroom management, context-sensitive pedagogy, curriculum adaptation, classroom culture, and the informal mentoring of colleagues. In many Western systems, senior teachers are retained or rehired in advisory or mentoring capacities. Studies indicate that such roles support novice teachers, reduce turnover, and help preserve institutional memory.

In South Asia, however, limited research has examined the post-retirement potential of educators. In Pakistan, existing studies primarily focus on in-service training and professional development, with little attention given to the continued learning or contributions of retired teachers. This oversight can be interpreted as a form of institutional ageism (Butler, 1969), where systemic practices and assumptions implicitly devalue the potential of individuals based on their age and retirement status. The knowledge possessed by experienced educators is often tacit, i.e., difficult to codify or transmit through formal instruction (Polanyi, 1966). It encompasses subtle and situational competencies such as reading a classroom's mood, improvising lessons, and building meaningful relationships with students and parents. Hargreaves (2005) emphasises that teaching is an emotional practice; the emotional wisdom developed over years of professional engagement constitutes an invaluable yet frequently overlooked form of expertise.

The concept of wisdom in geropsychology is particularly relevant in this context. Baltes and Staudinger (2000) define wisdom as expert knowledge and judgment in the fundamental pragmatics of life. This aligns with the concept of the "third age" or "young old" as a period of continued growth and contribution (Baltes & Smith, 2003). Senior teachers often embody this wisdom by possessing rich factual understanding of teaching, procedural knowledge for navigating complex classroom situations, and contextual awareness of educational relationships and environments. In practical terms, education systems that harness this accumulated wisdom stand to gain substantially. Mentorship programs that pair expert and novice teachers have been shown to enhance teacher retention and accelerate professional development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In Japan, the tradition of *kōsen* (experienced teachers serving as advisors) is deeply institutionalised, while in Singapore, the Academy of Singapore Teachers engages Senior and Lead Specialists, often expert educators, in guiding curriculum and pedagogy (Sharpe & Gopinathan, 2002). Conversely, the absence of such formal structures represents a systemic failure to capitalise on embodied professional knowledge.

Empirical Studies in the Pakistani Context:

Research on teacher development and retirement in Pakistan is gradually expanding but remains fragmented and limited in scope. Several recent studies highlight both the aspirations of senior educators and the systemic gaps that constrain their continued engagement after retirement. Waheed et al. (2021) explored the perspectives of early-retired teachers regarding their post-retirement lives. The study revealed that many desired meaningful engagements in educational or community activities but felt institutionally abandoned, reflecting a persistent gap between personal aspiration and available opportunities. Furthermore, their research indicates that teachers show a strong desire to engage in activities like reading, community involvement, and social networking; they are constrained by a lack of structural and institutional support. Naqvi et al.



(2023), who examined Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in Pakistani schools and higher education, demonstrated that collaborative, peer-led learning is highly valued by in-service teachers. This model could be adapted to engage retired teachers as facilitators, mentors, or knowledge resources within existing PLC frameworks. Evidence on the general status of senior citizens in Pakistan, including retired professionals, provides a sombre backdrop. Khan and Fazaldad (2016) identified social isolation as a significant concern among the elderly. This finding correlates with the professional isolation experienced by older educators, suggesting a broader societal trend of marginalisation facing older individuals. A particularly innovative idea that has emerged in public discourse is the concept of a 'Teacher Wisdom Bank.' As proposed in an op-ed published in Pakistan Today, the initiative envisions mechanisms to document and preserve the accumulated expertise of retiring teachers through reflective life-journey reports and mentorship programs. While this proposal aligns with international knowledge management practices, it remains theoretical, with no empirical exploration of its feasibility or implementation within the Sindh context.

Gaps in Literature and Study's Contribution:

From the reviewed literature, several key gaps emerge:

- * **Limited Quantitative Evidence:** While global research on lifelong learning among older adults is extensive, few empirical studies in Pakistan have used quantitative methods to measure educators' attitudes toward lifelong learning or to statistically compare demographic variables such as gender and institutional type.
- * **Neglect of Senior Educators:** Existing Pakistani studies on teacher development largely focus on pre-service or in-service teachers, leaving the post-retirement phase underexplored despite its relevance to educational continuity and social contribution.
- * **Policy and Structural Oversight:** There is limited analysis of retirement norms, institutional regulations, and policy frameworks that restrict or fail to support educators' engagement beyond the age of 60.
- * **Gender and Institutional Differences:** Research seldom investigates whether male and female retired teachers differ in their attitudes toward lifelong learning or how institutional type (public versus private) influences these perceptions.
- * **Digital and Access Gaps:** As professional learning increasingly moves online, little is known about the digital readiness, motivation, and accessibility challenges faced by senior teachers in Pakistan.
- * **Policy–Practice Disconnect:** Although national education policies emphasise teacher quality, they rarely address how retired teachers' knowledge can be reintegrated into active educational ecosystems.

This study addresses these gaps by providing quantitative evidence on the attitudes of senior and retired teachers in Karachi toward lifelong learning. It offers an empirical, gender-based comparison of perceptions, highlighting the extent to which lifelong learning is valued and identifying barriers to continued engagement. By doing so, it contributes data-driven insights that can inform national and institutional policies aimed at promoting inclusive, lifelong educational participation among senior educators.

Methodology

Research Design



This study adopts a quantitative descriptive–comparative research design to examine gender-based differences in attitudes toward lifelong learning among senior and retired teachers in Karachi. The quantitative approach enables the measurement and comparison of participants’ perceptions through numerical data, ensuring objectivity and replicability. A descriptive design was used to summarize the overall attitudes of retired educators toward lifelong learning as a continuous process involving knowledge acquisition, social interaction, and skill application. The comparative component focuses on identifying differences between male and female participants and exploring the influence of institutional type (public or private) on their responses. Data were collected through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, which allowed for quantifiable analysis of attitudes across cognitive, social, and professional dimensions. An independent-samples *t*-test was employed to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between the opinions of male and female teachers. This design was selected because it provides a systematic means to identify group differences and to contribute empirical evidence to the limited body of research on lifelong learning among retired educators in Pakistan. The quantitative descriptive–comparative framework thus facilitates data-driven insights into how lifelong learning is valued and practiced in later professional life, while also generating implications for educational policy and institutional planning.

Participants

The study involved 60 senior and retired teachers from schools and colleges in Karachi, Pakistan. The participants included 32 males and 28 females, representing both public ($n = 33$) and private ($n = 27$) institutions. Their ages ranged from 58 to 70 years, with an average of 31 years of teaching experience.

A convenience sampling method was used to recruit participants who met the inclusion criteria. Eligible participants were (a) teachers who had retired within the last 5–10 years or were nearing retirement, (b) had at least 20 years of teaching experience, and (c) represented a variety of subject areas including English, Mathematics, Sciences, and Social Studies. Demographic data such as age, gender, years of service, institutional affiliation (public or private), subject specialization, and post-retirement engagement in learning activities were collected to provide contextual understanding of the sample. These variables also helped in interpreting group differences during statistical analysis. The selected sample size was considered adequate for conducting an independent-samples *t*-test and for producing meaningful descriptive statistics while maintaining feasibility within the research timeframe.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure senior and retired teachers’ attitudes toward lifelong learning. The instrument consisted of two sections: the first collected demographic information (age, gender, years of service, subject specialization, and institutional type), while the second included ten items on lifelong learning attitudes rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

The scale measured three major dimensions of lifelong learning:

- * **Cognitive and personal engagement** — items related to intellectual curiosity, self-improvement, and motivation to learn beyond retirement.
- * **Social and professional interaction** — items assessing collaboration, mentoring, and continued contribution to educational communities.



- * **Institutional and societal recognition** — items evaluating perceived respect, inclusion, and opportunities for engagement post-retirement.

Example items included statements such as:

- * Learning continues throughout life, regardless of age or retirement.
- * I actively seek opportunities to learn new skills or knowledge.
- * Retired teachers should be given opportunities to mentor younger educators.

Responses were aggregated to form a composite lifelong learning attitude score, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes. The questionnaire was designed to allow for descriptive and comparative statistical analysis, including an independent-samples *t*-test to compare male and female participants' mean scores.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

- * **Validity:**

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in teacher education and educational psychology from local universities. Their feedback helped confirm that the items appropriately represented the key dimensions of lifelong learning, namely, cognitive engagement, social interaction, and institutional recognition. Minor revisions were made to improve clarity and relevance of wording. Construct validity was ensured by aligning each questionnaire item with theoretical concepts from the lifelong learning and adult education literature (e.g., Field, 2015; Formosa, 2012). The instrument was pilot tested with 10 senior and retired teachers from Karachi who met the inclusion criteria. Their responses confirmed that the items were clear, meaningful, and consistent with the intended constructs.

- * **Reliability:**

- * The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, based on the pilot test results. The obtained coefficient of $\alpha = 0.84$ indicated a high level of reliability, confirming that the scale items consistently measured the same underlying construct, i.e., attitudes toward lifelong learning. Additionally, standard administration procedures were followed for all participants to minimise variability in data collection and enhance reliability of results.

Data Collection & Analysis

- * **Data Collection:**

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from department head prior to data collection. Participants were approached through professional teacher associations, alumni groups, and personal referrals from schools and colleges in Karachi. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed to 60 senior and retired teachers (32 males and 28 females) representing both public and private institutions. The questionnaire was provided in English and Urdu to ensure accessibility. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and asked to provide informed consent before responding. Data were collected both in person and electronically (via email or Google Forms) to accommodate participants' preferences and mobility limitations. Completed responses were verified for completeness and entered a statistical database for analysis.

- * **Data Analysis:**



- * The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions) were used to summarize demographic information and overall attitudes toward lifelong learning.
- * To test the main hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the opinions of male and female senior and retired teachers regarding lifelong learning, an independent-samples *t*-test was performed at a 0.05 level of significance. The test compared mean attitude scores across gender groups to determine whether differences were statistically meaningful. Additional exploratory comparisons were conducted to identify potential variations based on institutional type (public vs. private) and years of teaching experience. Findings were presented in tabular form, accompanied by interpretive commentary linking statistical results to existing theoretical and empirical literature on lifelong learning among older educators.

Ethical Considerations

- * Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the research process in accordance with institutional guidelines for educational research. Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant university department before data collection commenced.
- * All participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as voluntary participants. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and respondents were assured that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage without penalty.
- * To protect confidentiality and anonymity, no identifying information such as names or institutional affiliations was disclosed in the dataset or research report. Participants' responses were coded numerically for analysis, and data were used solely for academic purposes.
- * All completed questionnaires were stored securely both in password-protected digital files and, where applicable, in locked physical storage. Access to the data was restricted to the researcher only.
- * The study also adhered to principles of respect and non-maleficence, ensuring that participants' dignity and professional identity were valued. Care was taken to frame questions neutrally to avoid discomfort or feelings of inadequacy related to post-retirement experiences.

Results

Participant Profile

The study included 60 senior and retired teachers from schools and colleges in Karachi, comprising 32 males and 28 females. Participants' ages ranged from 58 to 70 years, with an average teaching experience of 31 years. All participants held at least a bachelor's degree, while 45% possessed master's or higher qualifications. The teachers represented diverse subject areas including English, Mathematics, Sciences, and Social Studies. Most participants had retired within the past five years, while a smaller proportion were in the pre-retirement phase (aged 55–60). Although all participants expressed an understanding of lifelong learning, their levels of participation varied: approximately 40% reported engaging in professional or personal learning activities (such as online workshops,



reading, or mentoring younger teachers), while 60% reported little or no structured engagement after retirement.

This demographic spread ensured diversity across factors like gender, institutional type, and years of experience relevant to examining whether attitudes toward lifelong learning differ across these groups.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participants' overall attitudes toward lifelong learning. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*) and composite mean scores were calculated for all ten statements.

Gender	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Male	32	3.87	0.56
Female	28	3.95	0.61
Total	60	3.91	0.58

Table 1-Descriptive statistics for attitudes toward lifelong learning among male and female retired teachers. Overall, both male and female participants demonstrated positive attitudes toward lifelong learning, with mean scores above the neutral midpoint (3.0). Female participants showed a slightly higher mean score (M = 3.95) than males (M = 3.87), though the difference appeared marginal. Thus, it suggests a strong agreement that learning extends beyond formal retirement and is vital for personal and professional wellbeing.

Inferential Analysis

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the attitudes toward lifelong learning between male and female participants. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of male and female senior and retired teachers regarding lifelong learning experiences.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t(58)	p-value	Interpretation
Male	32	3.87	0.56			
Female	28	3.95	0.61	-0.53	0.60	Not Significant

Table 2 - Independent samples *t*-test comparing male and female attitudes toward lifelong learning.

The results indicated no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male (M = 3.87, SD = 0.56) and female (M = 3.95, SD = 0.61) teachers, $t(58) = -0.53$, $p = .60$ (two-tailed). Although the mean score for female teachers was slightly higher, the difference was not significant ($p > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. These findings suggest that both male and female educators hold equally positive attitudes toward lifelong learning as a continuous, socially embedded, and cognitively enriching process, recognizing its importance beyond retirement.

Discussion

The results of the independent-samples *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female senior and retired teachers in Karachi regarding their attitudes toward lifelong learning, $t(58) = -0.53$, $p = .60$. Both groups demonstrated consistently positive orientations toward continuing education and intellectual engagement beyond retirement. This outcome suggests that the value placed on lifelong learning is not gender-dependent but rather



reflects a shared professional identity among educators who have dedicated their lives to teaching and learning (self-development). These results align with international literature emphasizing that lifelong learning is a universal human and professional drive rather than a gender-specific phenomenon. Field (2015) and Formosa (2012) argue that the desire to remain intellectually active and socially relevant in later life is rooted in both cognitive stimulation and social participation. Similarly, Withnall (2010) highlights that older adults engage in learning for diverse motivations such as self-development, social interaction, and maintaining a sense of purpose, all of which transcend gender distinctions. The present study reinforces these insights within the Pakistani context, where both male and female retired educators expressed comparable enthusiasm for continued learning despite institutional barriers.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the notion of lifelong learning as a continuous and integrative process, encompassing formal, non-formal, and informal modes of engagement. These findings emphasize the relevance of the UNESCO Framework for Lifelong Learning (2015) and its principles of accessible, equitable, and continuous learning for all. Translating this into practice in Pakistan demands a pivotal policy reorientation, replacing age-related exit norms with a framework of capability-based participation that involves every stage of life. Although no gender-based differences were found, the study's broader implications remain critical. Both male and female participants reported facing systemic and cultural constraints, such as fixed retirement policies, limited institutional support, and the absence of structured re-engagement programs. These constraints hinder the realisation of lifelong learning ideals and diminish opportunities for senior educators to contribute meaningfully after formal service. The findings therefore point to a policy-practice gap: while lifelong learning is rhetorically endorsed in national education frameworks, mechanisms for its implementation, particularly for older adults, remain underdeveloped.

In essence, the absence of significant gender disparities does not imply equality of opportunity; rather, it reflects a shared marginalization of retired educators irrespective of gender. To address this, educational authorities in Pakistan should institutionalize pathways for post-retirement engagement, such as mentorship programs, advisory roles, and continuing education initiatives designed specifically for senior teachers. By doing so, the education system can better harness the rich human capital of experienced educators and align national practice with global lifelong learning standards.

Conclusion

This study examined the attitudes of senior and retired teachers in Karachi toward lifelong learning and explored whether gender differences influence these attitudes. Using a quantitative descriptive-comparative design and an independent-samples *t*-test, the findings revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female participants in their perceptions of lifelong learning. Both cohorts reported equally positive orientations towards lifelong learning, reflecting a mutual acknowledgment of its importance after retirement. The findings reinforce that, regardless of gender, teachers possess a strong professional identity rooted in learning, critical thinking, and intellectual stimulation. However, the research also reveals that such attitudes are inadequately supported by Pakistan's educational systems or policies. Despite their enthusiasm, retired teachers are largely denied avenues for professional or academic reintegration. This



emphasizes a serious systemic gap between the global ideal of lifelong learning (e.g., UNESCO, 2015) and its practical application within the local context.

The research adds to the general literature on lifelong learning by applying its principle to an underprivileged segment of Pakistan's education system, i.e., retired and near-retiring teachers. It calls for policy initiatives that recognise older teachers as valuable human assets rather than passive retirees. Initiatives like post-retirement mentoring, part-time teaching roles, community education activities, and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities can meaningfully engage this experienced cohort. Although the findings are drawn from a sample of 60 Karachi teachers, they provide a foundational basis for further research into lifelong learning attitudes in other regions of Pakistan and across various educational settings, including higher education. Subsequent research could also use mixed method designs to record not just statistical trends but nuanced lived experiences and motivations of older educators. In short, lifelong learning is a universal right and social obligation, not merely a tool for work. By leveraging the intellectual capital of retired teachers through participatory policies and institutional reform, Pakistan can not only improve its educational quality but also develop a robust culture of active ageing, social dignity, and vibrant intergenerational learning.

Recommendations and Implications

Considering these findings, it is evident that lifelong learning must be reframed as an inclusive right that persists beyond one's formal career. Though no significant difference was discovered between genders, both male and female educators shared positive orientations toward ongoing learning. This confirms that the primary obstacles are not individual but systemic. To dismantle these obstacles, the following policy and institutional changes are recommended.

Policy-Level Implications

*** Reconsidering Retirement Policies**

There is a pressing need to reform retirement practices in provincial and national education departments. Rather than treating age 60 as a definitive cut-off, policies should introduce flexible re-engagement options, allowing experienced teachers to contribute as part-time staff, mentors, or curriculum consultants. This approach would not only pay respect to their experience but would also help address teacher shortages in many schools and colleges.

*** Embedding Lifelong Learning in Policy Frameworks**

In alignment with UNESCO's (2015) Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, lifelong learning must be established as both a right and a requirement for every citizen within Pakistan's education policies. A definitive national plan is essential to normalise learning opportunities for the elderly and incorporate post-retirement engagement into the nation's broader educational vision.

*** Establishing Learning and Support Funds**

Our retired teachers deserve opportunities to keep growing. We can help by setting up simple funding programs and local learning centres where they can easily take short courses or attend seminars. For those living on a fixed pension, this small gesture of support can make a world of difference.

*** Recognising and Celebrating Experience**



Publicly recognising retired teachers with awards or “Teacher Emeritus” titles can shift the perception of ageing from loss to valued expertise. This recognition would send a powerful message to younger educators that mastery is a continuous, lifelong pursuit.

Institutional Practices

* **Creating Mentorship Pathways**

Many schools and colleges lack the formal mechanisms to connect willing retired educators with novice teachers through mentorship programs. By establishing such structures, educational institutions can allow the next generation to benefit from the vast reservoir of experience.

* **Extending Professional Development Opportunities**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) must remain accessible to retired teachers, free or at a minimal cost. Their presence is an asset, enriching professional dialogue with a depth of practical wisdom that only comes from years of classroom experience.

* **Supporting Digital Participation**

* With more education happening online, experienced teachers often need support to build their digital skills. Providing simple training and access to the right tools can help them teach online with confidence.

* **Building a Culture of Respect and Inclusion**

A critical goal of leadership training should be to help principals and administrators view retired teachers not as liabilities, but as valuable thought leaders. This shift in perspective can transform institutional culture and morale.

* **Widening the Scope of Inquiry**

To determine the influence of geographic context, future research should explore these same questions across a broader range of settings in Pakistan, including both metropolitan and rural communities.

* **Adopting Mixed Methods**

A mixed-methods approach, correlating survey data with life-history interviews, would reveal both the statistical trends and in-depth personal significance of lifelong learning for retired educators.

* **Adapting Global Models**

* By comparing Pakistan’s situation with the structured lifelong learning systems of European or East Asian nations, researchers could identify transferable models and best practices.

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