





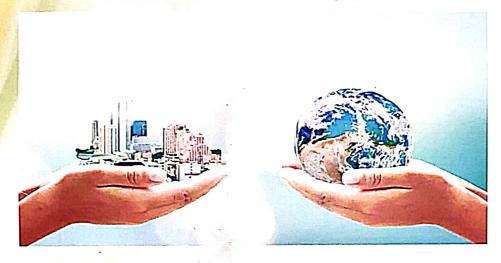
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On

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(In collaboration with Krishna University, Machilipatnam)

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Editors

Dr. D. SURYA CHANDRA RAO
Dr. BUSHAN. D. SUDHAKAR
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Role of Women in science and technology in India – An Overview Department of History, Government Degree College, Avanigadda-521121, Krishna Dt., Dr.D.Rajya Lakshmi¹

Historically, the presence of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics remains mainly trivial. Despite the infrastructural and financial support availed from the government and non-governmental bodies, underrepresentation of women in the field of education has not changed over the years. Also, no information about the current status of women in these fields is available in the public domain. In this paper, we address this lack of information by collecting data from renowned institutions throughout India. The under-representation of women in the science and technology community is depicted, primarily highlighting the maletechnology-driven dominated Indian institutions. The probable causes for such inequality need to be analysed and addressed for remedial purposes. Keywords: Gender inequality, higher education, science and technology, women's participation

Introduction

With the emergence of 'rational thinking', ideas like 'freedom from religion', 'constitutional 'abolition of slavery'. government' and 'equal rights to women' become central to the political debates during the "Age of Enlightenment". The era also known as the "Century of Philosophy" starts loosely in 1620s with the scientific revolution in Europe and paved the way for different political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries (1). India granted voting rights to women immediately after its freedom in 1947. The right to vote was quickly followed by the rights to equal employment and education, to provide better opportunities and social acceptance to women workforce. However, a brief glance of higher education and employment history shows very marginal participation of women, not just in India but also in the world. As a prompt example, the percentage of women Nobel laureates (2.94%) in the fields of Science and Technology along with the Field's medal (1.66%) in mathematics gives us a brief idea. Such evident inequity can be explained by many social prejudices and stereotypes towards women counterpart, questioning their intellectual and leadership ability. The age old concept of 'women being the intellectually weaker section' is often professed by many socioeconomical factors along with psychological stereotypes, such as.

- a) Gender stereotypes: A stereotype of men being better at math and science is inculcated from childhood itself (2, 3). These preconceived notions might discourage female students to pursue their career in science or technology.
- b) Gender stereotyping of subjects: There is also the longstanding belief that science and technology are masculine subjects, since they deals with the technical aspects of nature (4, 5). A recent study tried to explain the role of society and psychological impression over the masculinity of "physics" and thus highlighted the role of symbolic hegemony which perpetuated this idea (6).
- c) Social stereotypes: Historically, the female intelligence was always believed to be inferior to male, fuelled by Eugenics and Genetics (7). The hypothetical relationship between skull size and intellect supports the concept of intellectual inferiority of women (2). This school of thought persisted through time, and still does, despite several successful attempts to debunk it (2, 8).

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Discussion

From the table it can be assumed that qualified women candidates the dearm the same from 1951 to 2018. remained the profile of faculty in the top Howeversities of the country differed may be the fact that these significantly, handle teaching and significantly handle teaching and research mirersities handle basic sciences mostly related to basic sciences rather than mostly subjects. Among the universities, technical subjects. Among the universities, locinical Institute of Sciences, Bangalore was male-dominated while Amritha Vishwa Vidyapeetham and Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune stood out with most halanced distribution of gender within India.

When studied, it became clear that inespective of the year of establishment, eninence and geographical distribution, all the research and teaching institutes in India exhibited a similar pattern in employing female faculty/researcher (merely 10-20% of the total strength) with very few exceptions. distribution of female the Lastly, scientists/faculties amongst the top ten ranked Institutes throughout World showed an average participation of 20.34% (± 3.45) females which is marginally better than the Indian scenario (18.86%).

Such a huge gap between the male and female faculty distribution in the STEM cannot be reasoned only by not having enough female student to start with. The minimal number of female candidates pursuing a career in STEM can be explained by a model, called the "leaky pipeline effect, (15,16) where the leaking happens at primary school, secondary school, postgraduate, undergraduate, doctorate, post-doctorate and faculty level positions. The two of the greatest leaks in this system are transitions from secondary school to college and from post-doc to faculty Positions due to familial and societal constraints (17). This phenomenon is further supported from the data where different research/Re-entry Fellowships/faculty positions, awarded in India over last 5 years, comparatively representation better female (21.88%)Institutes/Universities. than the However, continuous loss of female workforce can be assumed to be a cumulative effect of the many factors (2) such as the followings.

- a) Social responsibility: The absence of women both in primary and higher ranks of scientific community could be reasoned primarily by the family responsibility (18).
- b) Glass ceiling at work place: Furthermore, due to these ingrained stereotypes supported by society and other scientists, women in science became a victim of self inflicted inferiority complex 18 and reduced presentation in senior authorship (19).
- c) Lack of recognition and Matilda effect: The "Matilda effect" which refers to the prejudice against crediting women scientists for their work, and attributing the said work to their male colleagues might also have negative impacts (20). Multiple examples of this effect include renowned female scientists not duly credited for their ground breaking experiments such as Agnes Pockels, Nettie Stevens (21, 22), Frieda Robscit-Robbins (23), Rosalind Franklin (24), C.S. Wu, Jocelyn Bell, and Lise Meitner (20).
- d) Less participation in networking: It is observed that during scientific conferences, male researchers ask 1.8 times the number of questions asked by the same number of female researchers, which might impact the scientific networking negatively (25).

Probable solutions: General improvement in social and financial front especially in developing countries like India is paramount for more inclusion of women in main stream education which can be expected to trickle

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Section Technology desperant and Materialism. (STEM) increase of second role mode specifically have the family or more or propular media and accounting installment theretailibetive to account sections and part bearing unhan Commission comfortable work place flexible were meet precise and theycare Incilities can de enclusived as the coursest infrastructure to anyther the excellent worden workflored in were at such hertilism and obstacles, the security at Champing worldwide, as 130% sources to estrollment of garl students was esperved at ansie deministed subjects such as echnology. meteorieiro statistica and computer science over for period 1990-2013 in the United States (20) in insin, iong term analysis is needed to understand the repercussions of previous policy changes and its impact on social MINITUTE

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