Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis in the Indian Context

By

Dr. Ritu Sharma
Assistant Professor
School Of Liberal Studies
Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University
Gandhinagar, India

And

Dr. Tanushri Banerjee
Associate Professor
School Of Petroleum Management
Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University
Gandhinagar, India

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Background:

Gender Equality and Women Empowerment is the third of the eight Millennium Development Goals. [1] Millennium Development Goal number 3 is concerning promoting gender equality and focuses to empower women. Women have diverse requirements and encounter different constraints than men at workplace. Need for Innovative gender development programmes to address inequalities faced by women in accessing assets and opportunities are a global concern. [2]Over last few years contribution of Women gender at workplace has been swiftly increasingly in India. The ratio of representation varies across sector and principally depends on the Job specifications for varied roles. Among several other factors affecting this ratio the mindset and perspective issue of gender and age group involved in decision making process has been vital variable though in a covert way. Therefore, the need to understand how primary level perception across the variable of age group (Generation representative) and gender (Male/Female) can interfere in promoting or validating the need for Gender equality and Women Empowerment.

The purpose of this study is to compare the perspectives and mindset of male and female and generation representatives for the need of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Education Sector. Gender Exclusion from workplace due to difficult work environment has been biggest challenge across various sectors and so education sector has also not remained untouched of the same. Perception regarding the degree of Gender inclusion and Women Empowerment has been the key focus of the study. It illustrates likeness and disparity on broadly two perspectives i.e. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment across Age Group and Gender. In India the most

deep rooted form of inequality built into the structure of traditional society are those based on cast and gender. Irrespective of rural or urban women gender undergoes the outcome of minority representation. [3]

Women Empowerment in Education Sector:

Empowerment of women as a objective for developmental programmes has gained wider approval since 1990s. [4] UNDP report and Carr suggested Social, Economic and political power [5] Economic gain and bargaining power are crucial to understand issue of women empowerment [6]. Millennium Development Goal 3 aims at eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.The key focus area include addressing issues of persisting gender inequality across the global in terms of right for education, work and economic assets and involvement in government. Also, women are largely relegated to more vulnerable forms of employment. [7]In higher education ample growth is explicitly visible due to focus of various government plans of equal right for women in last decade. Scenario of education Industry both as a stakeholder from student perspective and employee is improving, yet more insightful and consist efforts are needed for equal distribution of power .

Gender Equality in Education Sector:

The main concern for employees is reasonable and equitable conduct and management at workplaces. [8]Morley and Louise discusses the gender gains and losses in both quantitative and qualitative conditions. [9] Simultaneously the positive news is there are now more undergraduate women than men in higher education (UNESCO, 2007) .[9] Gender equality issue in policy making, compatible pedagogy, role in classrooms, boardrooms etc are some of the concern areas in education sector. [10] A number of Intervention for Gender Equality have discovered how liberal and strategic interventions for change such as: equality policies [11], [12] gender mainstreaming [13] can contribute same.

Need for Establishment of Governing Body for Women in Higher Education

Understanding the two broad areas of Women Empowerment and Gender Equality need for establishment of formal Governing bodies to address such concerns is felt across emerging Nations like India. The primary focus area of such Governing body will be creating Awareness, Inclusive Work Environment and knowledge dissemination. Further some key objectives relevant in education industry which such Governing bodies can address can be listed as:

1. Student stakeholder perspective about the problems faced by women of all strata due to gender issues.
2. Employee stakeholders Gender justice where men and women work together with a sense of personal security and dignity.
3. Amongst students about the issues related to the youth, girls in particular.

4. Rights and laws related to women.
5. Sense of responsibility in the students and have healthy study and work culture in all schools of the University.
6. Enhancement of self-esteem and self-confidence of girl students, women faculty and staff in the University.
7. To provide opportunities to girl students and women employees to participate in and interact at conferences etc. related to gender issue.

Methodology:

This study aims at understanding comparative perception for women in education sector across age group and gender. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants regarding their viewpoints and possible disparity in treatment based on gender and age group. Open Ended Survey with our stakeholders - University Management, faculty members, administrative staff members and students was executed. University comprises various disciplines like Engineering, Technology, Humanities and Management. Undergraduate and Post graduate students have been approached for this survey. Data has been collected from 93 respondents which includes University Management, faculty members, administrative staff members and students across both genders. Respondent's views on gender equality and hence their feedback to understand the role of governing body's initiative in shaping gender equality and Women Empowerment at University was gathered.

Explicit recommendations from stakeholders for future activities of the Governing body for Women have been documented. From data emerged 3 broad categories of focus which is than compared from different perspectives for male and female and across age group.

The analysis intended to capture the views of respondents on following parameters:

a. Need for Establishment of Governing Body for Women to create Awareness, Environment and disseminate knowledge across Age Group (greater than 30 Years & less than and =30 years) and Gender i.e. male and female

b. Comparison of Future Focus and Role of Governing Body for Women Development across Age Group (greater than30 Years & less than and=30 years) and Gender i.e. male and female

- Gender Need Awareness
- Women Empowerment
- Gender Inclusivity

Results and Discussion:

Responses of the respondents were tabulated across two broad variables i.e. Gender and Age Group. Within the Gender variable response percentage is tabulated in two sub categories i.e. Male and Female.
Likewise, in Age group variable, % was tabulated between the two sub categories as respondents in the age range as 30 and below and respondents more than 30 years.

Table 1.

Perception for Need for Establishment of Governing Body for Women to create Awareness, Environment and disseminate knowledge

Variable		**Yes**	**No**	**Grand Total % of 100**
Age group*	Greater than 30 Years	25.81 %	5.38 %	31.18 %
	Less than and=30 Years	64.52 %	4.30 %	68.82 %
Gender**	Female	41.94%	1.08	43.01%
	Male	48.39 %	8.60 %	56.99 %

*90% said "Yes" of which 64% are from less than and= 30 years age group category. A large percentage of respondents agreed to the need of establishment of Governing Body for Women to create awareness, Inclusive Work Environment and dissemination. ** In terms of Gender, responses for agreeableness on the need of the same was nearly equal, 48 % males and 41 % females.

General Perception towards Need for Establishment of Governing Body for Women to create Awareness, Inclusive Work Environment and knowledge dissemination suggested positive response from all the respondents declaring complete validation. [9].It is explicitly favorable irrerespective of respondent’s age group and gender.

Table 2

Future Focus and Role of Governing Body for Women Development across Age Group

Variable		Gender Need Awareness		Women Empowerment		Gender Inclusivity		Total % of Row	Total Count
		Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count		
Age Group	Greater than30 years	37.93%	11	20.69%	6	41.38%	12	100.00%	29
	Less than and=30 years	57.81%	37	28.13%	18	14.06%	9	100.00%	64
Grand Total		51.61%	48	25.81%	24	22.58%	21	100.00%	93

Across age group within the respondent's category of greater than 30 years the % distribution was as follows: 38% on gender need awareness, 20 % on Women Empowerment and 41 % on gender inclusivity. It clearly indicated that older age group respondents emphasized more on Gender Inclusivity and gender Need Awareness compared to Women Empowerment.

A more clearly skewed response was observed across respondents from age group 30 and less than 30.With % distribution highest on Gender need awareness (57.81%) as compared to Women Empowerment (28.13%) and Gender Inclusivity (14.06%).

Table 3

Future Focus and Role of Governing Body for Women Development across Gender

Variable		Gender Need Awareness	Women Empowerment	Gender Inclusivity	Grand Total
Gender	Female	62.50%	20.00%	17.50%	100.00%
	Male	43.40%	30.19%	26.42%	100.00%
Grand Total		51.61%	25.81%	22.58%	100.00%

Across gender the total responses percentage emphasized highest on need of gender awareness (51.61 %).Interestingly total response percentage on Women Empowerment and Gender Inclusivity was approximately equally distributed (25.81 % and 22.58% respectively).Female response was highest and more skewed on need of gender awareness (62.50%).Male respondents felt the need of gender awareness as most crucial concern to be addressed.

Table 4

Future Focus and Role of Governing Body for Women Development across Gender and Age Group

Variable		Gender Need Awareness	Women Empowerment	Gender Inclusivity	Grand Total
Age	**Gender**				
Less than or equal to 30	**Female**	14.58%	20.83%	42.86%	22.58%
	Male	8.33%	4.17%	14.29%	8.60%
Less than or equal to 30 Total		22.92%	25.00%	57.14%	31.18%
Greater than 30	**Female**	33.33%	45.83%	23.81%	34.41%
	Male	43.75%	29.17%	19.05%	34.41%
Greater than 30 Total		77.08%	75.00%	42.86%	68.82%
Grand Total		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Comparative analyses of % distribution across sub parameters following observation are noteworthy:

- ***Gender Need Awareness***

Variation was recorded as follows: Female respondents in age group category of less than 30 and equal to 30 years felt less (14.58%) need for gender awareness compare to female respondents belonging to age group greater than 30 years (33.333%).Significant difference was recorded among Male Respondents in category greater than 30 years (43.75 %) as compared to younger

age group less than 30 years. (8.33%).Overall respondents in older age group (Greater than 30 years) felt much higher need for gender awareness (77.08 %) as compared to respondents belonging to category equal to 30 years and less than 30 years (22.92 %).It is significant difference to notice generation difference in terms of perspectives.

- ***Women Empowerment***

Variation was recorded as follows: Female respondents in age group category of less than 30 and equal to 30 years felt less (20.83%) need for Women Empowerment compare to female respondents belonging to age group greater than 30 years (45.83%). Significant difference was recorded among Male Respondents in category greater than 30 years (29.17 %) as compared to younger age group less than 30 years. (4.17%).Overall respondents in older age group (Greater than 30 years) felt much higher need for Women Empowerment (75 %) as compared to respondents belonging to category equal to 30 years and less than 30 years (25 %).It is significant difference to notice generation difference in perspectives.

- ***Gender Inclusivity***

Variation was recorded as follows: Female respondents in age group category of less than 30 and equal to 30 years felt more (42.86%) need for Gender Inclusivity compare to female respondents belonging to age group greater than 30 years (23.81%).No Significant difference was recorded among Male Respondents in category greater than 30 years (19.05 %) as compared to younger age group less than 30 years. (14.29 %).Overall respondents in older age group (Greater than 30 years) felt approximately equal need for gender Inclusivity (42.86 %) as compared to respondents belonging to category equal to 30 years and less than 30 years (57.14 %).Gender Inclusivity was discovered to be solo parameter where largely need perception was recorded equal across both age group and gender.

Summary of inferences of respondents' views is discussed as follows:

1. In general agreement was seen across the sample size on the Need for Establishment of Governing Body for Women to create Awareness, Gender Inclusive Environment and disseminate knowledge irrespective of age and gender.

2. While evaluating Future Focus and Role of Governing Body for Women Development across Age Group, it has been seen from the primary research that the responses from younger age group below 30 years of age have indicated a strong need for creating awareness within the community about existence of a Governing body which can be approached for Gender related issues. The sample from age group above 30 years of age have laid equal emphasis on creating awareness within the community and define a strong role of the Gender Governing body in the University's management system. Thus we can conclude that efforts need to be directed towards reaching people within the community to make them aware of the roles and responsibilities of the Gender Governing body within the University which can be approached for all Gender related issues.

Additionally, it needs to be given a strategic role within the institute to be able to participate in decision making and recommend policy changes.

3. Overall respondents in older age group (Greater than 30 years) felt much higher need for Women Empowerment (75 %) as compared to respondents belonging to category equal to 30 years and less than 30 years (25 %).It is significant difference to notice generation difference in perspectives.

Conclusion:

Dube (1986) also argues that unless provision is made to ensure that policy changes are implemented in ways that allow women themselves to participate, to monitor, to hold policy makes, corporation and other relevant actors accountable for their actions, actual potential of women gender is unlikely to be realized.[3] The findings reinforce the notion that a organized Governing body for women in education sector can act as a medium to create a gender inclusive workforce and provide insights into the processes and systems which facilitate in establishing and running Governing body for women at an educational institution.

Value and Implementation:

Results of the existing study are significantly useful to chart the road map for Women in Education Sector. Lutz Stratmann suggested future focus of gender changes in academia should be integration of gender aspects in teaching and research. Inequality must addressed by systematically taking gender perspective in Human Resource Management and Research. [14]Thus, social changes need to be understood and reformulated by understanding it from the lenses of various generations and gender both for newer conceptualization. The study further emphasizes the necessity of sensitization on awareness of both Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

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