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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Issues And Challenges Of Women In Career Advancement In Higher Education

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## Abstract

Since times immemorial we have been hearing about the women empowerment in discussion forums and events. Much hype is created on Gender equality in education, career and society. Much of it reflects upon the point that women is the weaker section who needs special attention right from education to career advancement. Government has imposed Equal opportunity laws to favour equal treatment of women at employment and avoid exploitation of women by the employer. But much of the issues are pushed under the carpet and much of it go unnoticed and submissive. Literacy, socioeconomic status and family support has been major challenges for women to overcome the issues faced in the society. Present study focuses on exploring the obstacles coming in way of career advancement of women. Study relies on secondary data gathered from various sources to arrive at findings. Possibilities of overcoming the hurdles are explained as an outcome of the research. Emphasis is on throwing light on the pain points of the women in career advancement.

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

Women has been an important asset in family, society, corporate or in education sector. Since ancient times contribution of women has been highlighted in scriptures and literature. However, still they are failing to gain equality with men. Various challenges stand in the career path of women blocking their advancement.According to Pishgahifard and Poolab (2010) one of the most important factors for development of each country is women's participation in economic, social and political contexts. Women's employment is one of the important factors for economic development and can be considered as significant sign for bright future of nation. [1]

AISHE 2019-20 report states that there are around 2.14 lakh university level teachers out of which 62.9% are male and 37.1% are female. At the college level, the number f teachers are 11.3 lakh with 56.4% male teachers. In stand-alone institutions, total number of teachers is 1.57 lakh with 58% male teachers. Looking at female per 100 male teachers, there are 59, 77 and 72 female teachers per 100 make teachers at Universities, college and standalone institutions respectively.

As per Banker & Banker (2017) In India, only 6.67% of women were in leadership positions, namely, Vice Chancellor, Director or Dean. According to Ghara (2016) it was 15.64% when the positions of Principal, Professor and Equivalent, and Associate Professor were added with the aforementioned positions Although underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions in higher education is a global phenomenon the scenario is too unpleasant in South Asia (Morley &Crossouard, 2015) and India in particular (Banker & Banker, 2017). [2,3,4,5,6]

## 2.Review of Literature

Mayya et.al (2021) studied the factors influencing the decision of women to take up senior leadership positions, a cross-sectional survey was planned in India. Study revealed that about 48% of the participants expressed that they decline opportunities for administrative positions. The distance to the workplace was found to be a barrier to take up senior leadership positions.

According to Khan et. Al (2021) there are multiple factors that can potentially impact the career progression of academicians to professional level. The Conventional view of family commitments as being a hindrance to career progression has not been supported. It is the organizational factors that appeared to be prevalent acting as barriers to career progression. Workloads, lack of resources to undertake research and to generate research performance play a critical role in career progression. [7,8,9,10]

Kurup, A, et. al (2020) in their study stated that a per AISHE 2017-18 report their is decline of teachers in higher education especially the women academicians. They account for 42% of total higher education teachers population with less than 25% at professor level and even more less at Vice-Chancellor level. Authors studied the influence of career advancement on the career satisfaction

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of women academicians. Findings revealed the need for policy makers, government and higher education institutions to focus on ensuring a clear career path with suitable opportunities to ensure the longevity and success of women academicians.

Adu-Oppong, AA &Kendie, SB (2017) studied the concerns of gender and career advancement in the work place; specifically how women perceive workplace processes as inhibiting factors to women's advancement into top ranking administrative positions in Higher Education (HE) management. The findings from the study revealed that there are processes at the institutional levels that are perceived to hinder qualified women from ascending to senior positions in higher education. [11,12,13,14,15]

Wang.Y & Liu, H (2014) studied the female's career advancement in tertiary education field in the University of Gavle and Guizhan University. The study finds out that Hofstede's six cultural dimensions: power distance, collectivism vs. Individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs feminity, long term orientation vs. Short term orientation and indulgence vs restraint could affect females career advancement in varying degree. Study also showed gender stereotyping, lack of networking, lack of mentorship are most so obvious barriers for female career advancement. [16,17,18]

Trivedi.P (2012) studied on glass ceiling practices with working women in education sector at Bhavnagar region. The researcher tried to investigate the factors using two way ANOVA. Results reveal that there is no glass ceiling practices with women teaching staff in education sector at Bhavanagar region. But, social barriers were evident for working women teaching staff to reach top level which is also affecting the promotion and career advancement.

Sharma et.al (2011) did an exploratory study of the glass ceiling in Indian education sector, objective was to cogitate whether there exists glass ceiling in Indian education sector and found that there are no barriers in career advancement in reaching top positions. They also stated that societal norms make women always a second earner. Except few cases having a career is not must for them, as against their male counter parts. Acker (2006) stated that academic life is a circle where women has few barriers to advance. Women professionals had been really successfully especially in the universities. The reality seems to be that academia has been perceived as traditionally elitist, male and patriarchal in its workplace culture, structure and values. According to him, there are three perspectives to explain the continuing under representation of women in senior administrative positions.

1. First perspective being person-centred, which states that the psycho-social characteristics of women like personality, attitude and behaviour. Women always had a challenge of adapting herself to the needs of the traditional male dominant society. Myths like lack of Self-esteem and self-confidence, limited aspirations in the field of management, lack of motivation and ambition to accept challenges, could hinder her mobility in the upward movement in ladder.
2. Structure-centred paradigm states that women are at disadvantageous position in organizational structure which defines the behaviour of women. This approach states that due to the flaws in the structure of the organization leading to fundamental issue. This can be addressed by changing the institutional policies and practices.
3. Third, culture-centred approach links gender centred and organisational structure perspective. Specific role and responsibilities played by gender in society is carried to the work place. Higher education institutions therefore reproduce gender differences 'via their internal structures and everyday practices' because of the cultural perceptions which determine the attitudes and behaviours of individual men and women and form barriers to the equal participation of women in senior management

## 3.Objectives
1. To study various factors hindering the career advancement of women in higher education Institutes
2. To analyse the issues and challenges faced by women in career advancement in higher education Institutes
3. To propose recommendation of how to overcome the block for career advancement of women

## 4.Research Methodology
Study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. Data has been collected from secondary sources like Journals, Magazines and Government reports. Thorough content analysis has been conducted to study various issues and challenges faced by women in career advancement of women in higher education institutes.
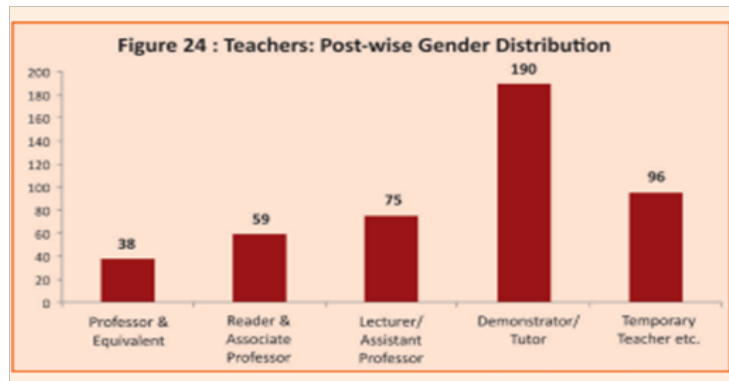
## 5.Analysis
Mayya et.al (2021) expressed in her study that there is dearth of women in senior leadership positions in India. In Karnataka the results were promising as per her study but number of women in managerial positions and declining senior leadership positions is a concern. For career advancement of women, sociocultural, organisations and person-centred factors have been the major barriers for women in academia. Although changes in the sociocultural and organizational scenario would be gradual and are evolving, modifications in the personal factors may be attended to as a priority by women faculty in academia. Women need organizational support through recognition of their work and managerial potential and addressing the organizational barriers which prevent their ascension to senior leadership positions.
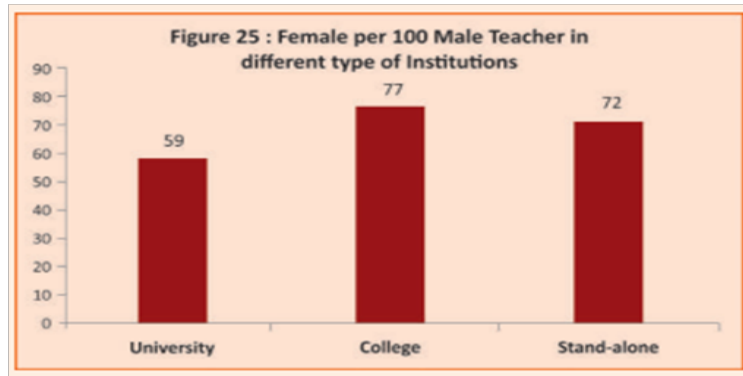
## 6.Issues and challenges for women to progress in Career
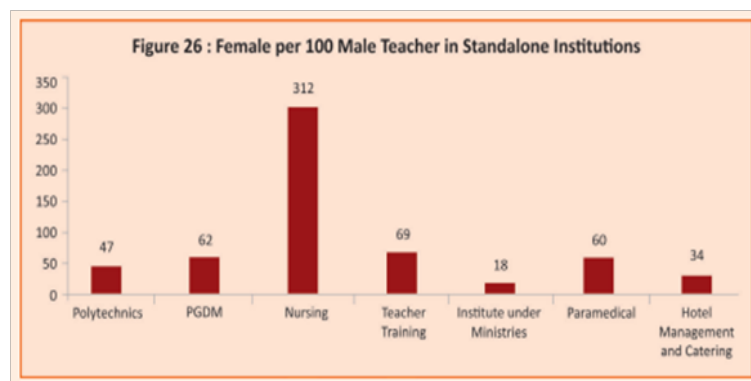**From Personal Front**
- **Support of the family** – Either the women is single or married, having family support is a big challenge. If she is single, obligation of getting married stands in between her and job. Whether it is accepted by society to send her to work is ahurdle. If she is married, acceptance by in-laws and husband to send her to work is another challenge. In this process, her career advancement definitely is affected. Still academia is more chosen over the corporate in view of work timings and fixed salary.
- **Family responsibilities leading to sacrificing the career** - Many women who manage to go for work facing the challenge of getting support from family need to face another tough situation of fulfilling the family responsibilities. More so she would compromise on her growth and give up important assignments which need extra time and effort from her end. Areas

**Figure 24 : Teachers: Post-wise Gender Distribution**

**(Source: AISHE 2019-20 report)**



**Figure 25 : Female per 100 Male Teacher in different type of Institutions**

**(Source: AISHE 2019-20 report)**



**Figure 26 : Female per 100 Male Teacher in Standalone Institutions**

**(Source: AISHE 2019-20 report)**

like research and development, or doing a PhD which will help here in career need contemplation whether she can balance her family with this extra load. Research says that 90% of women holds themselves back from higher responsibilities as family thinks that she is second breadwinner and she need not work for long hours for whatever reason. Taking the responsibility of children and family should be her main priority.

- **Relocation to new place as family obligation** - As women's career is considered as secondary, the decision of relocation is based on the primary bread winner and priority is given to the job choice and opportunities available for men. New job new location, new work culture and more so compromise on the career advancement happens with women in many cases.

- **Work-life Balance**– Inspite of being able to manage work and family, women find it difficult to make people happy at work place or at home. There will be constant complaints and deficiencies pointed out to gender. What

is compromised is her personal care, sometime to spend for her health, both mental and physical.

**7.Institutional front**
- **Stereotyping** – Institutions while allocating the tasks and work, they do show discretion and gender bias. Perceptual errors leading to loss of opportunity by women which is not given to her. This might be because of the maternity break or meeting family obligations of not able to travel or staying for longer hours at work. Especially re-joining after the maternity leave without day care centre support and transportation facility are the biggest hurdle found from research.

- **Denying promotions because of career breaks** – Many Institutes deny promotions and recognition of women compared to men. The reasons being career break or reducing the count of experience as a result of maternity leave or not being able to travel or spend extra time at work for research etc.

- **Lack of encouragement from higher-up's** – Institutes do show concern for women in providing leaves and not allocating extra hours of work or late stay or take care transportation etc. But, when it comes to moving up in the ladder, same points of concern will be escalated as problems which becomes a block. During appraisals, positive affirmation regarding the performance by peers and recommendation by higher-up is lacking for women.
- **Not being transparent in selection procedure** – In academia, the selection procedure is partially biased. The perception of women being hired vs men and the interrogation on continuing of job or taking a break or getting married or having child becomes focus for women unfortunately. Explaining of things which are planned is easier, but at times the questions which women will be bombard with in the interview puts her in dilemma.
- **Inequity in compensation-** Because of flexi-time, travel related jobs in academia like foreign projects which requires travelling, or collaboration for academic projects or research work which required extra hours at work women forego the opportunity and which reflects in inequity in compensation. Same qualification, experience and knowledge but there exists gender bias in compensation.

## 8.Society Front
- **Social taboo** – Women going for work whether its academia or corporate, there exist the thinking that she is not taking care of the family irrespective of the fact that she is managing things at both places efficiently. Any problem or issues happens in either work or home, blame comes to her that she is not justifying her role.
- **Second breadwinner in the family**–Time and again, this is very much heard that women is not the primary source of income in the family, she is only supporting the male member in the family for income. Even in the times where men are losing jobs and women are supporting the home, this idea has never gone from society.
- **Burden to the aged grand parents** – If both mother and father work in the family, taking care of children is a big concern. Instead of choosing a day care option, couple choose to keep their children with grand parents where the children are safer and more cared. Sometimes it is liked by the grandparents and sometimes not. This issue remains as challenge for women.

## 9.How to face the challenges
- Institutes should recognise the efforts of faculty irrespective of gender and reduce stereotyping. Times have changed and its time to change our attitude and perception towards women and provide equal respect and opportunity.
- Institutes should make it mandate where women are allotted specific jobs, and encourage them to apply like, research project heads, PhD guides etc.
- Women should be given opportunities to grow in the administrative responsibilities.
- Institutes should provide required training to women faculty to boost confidence and upskill them to face the challenges
- Culture of the Institute should support and be open to accept that women are equally capable as men. Having women friendly campus, support with day care, transport etc.
- Encouraging women to take up additional responsibilities, providing incentives and providing cooperation from the team
- Reducing the class workload and providing additional responsibilities which will facilitate the growth like research, pursuing PhD etc.
- Encouraging merit-based selection process than gender biased selection process. Without giving an opportunity, it's hard to provide oneself.
- The position of Registrar, Director, Dean to be announced well in advance giving a chance to qualified and capable to apply instead of being biased and non-transparent.
- Organising programs like workshops, seminars, conferences highlighting the achievements of women in academia and their achievements.
- Encouraging women to take up responsibilities as project heads, coordinators and take decisions as well as involve in decision making during meeting.
- Creating awareness to women of what opportunities are available for them to grow in the institute through counselling and mentoring sessions by experts.
- Women themselves need to identify sometime in a day to rejuvenate and take care of their mental and physical health.
- Women should keep their dignity and respect in eyes of others by the way they conduct themselves and also treat other women same.
- Family support becomes very significant for working women, irrespective of their capability as academician. Manging work life balance is only possible when spouse, children and other family members support.
- Women should have high self-esteem and should know how to respect oneself and never underestimate themselves.

**Table showing Number of Teachers in Universities and its colleges**

| Cadre | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professor and Equivalent | 64023 | 24841 | 88864 |
| Reader and Associate Professor | 77610 | 48175 | 125785 |
| Lecturer/Assistant Professor | 438938 | 350691 | 789629 |
| Demonstrator/Tutor | 15714 | 28388 | 44102 |
| Temporary Teacher | 35882 | 35761 | 71643 |
| Visiting Teacher | 5720 | 5137 | 10857 |
| Grand Total | 637887 | 492993 | 1130880 |

## 10.Conclusion

Managing work life challenges is inevitable for women. Women are quite competent and capable in doing so. Research has evidence that women proved themselves to be best in whatever they do and good at multitasking. In the academics, where more sincere and consistent efforts are required, women are somehow given a backseat due to various factors. Present paper tried to highlight the factors responsible for this situation. As women hold the half the responsibility in society and family, same applies for the academics also. So Institute should support her in providing a supportive environment to grow and progress in her career and recognise the efforts and enable to occupy them in higher positions. Women should be supported by their family, as they need to play dual role in life. Women should hold respect herself and exhibit same with others. Its more a collaborative effort from Institutes, family and women herself to make it possible to overcome the challenges and move ahead in the career. "If we think we can do it, we are right, if we think, we cannot do it, we are right" So what we think really matters.

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