



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

GENDER INEQUALITY IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

(Dr. Rajwinder Kaur, Head and Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Guru Hargobind Sahib Khalsa Girls College, Karhali Sahib, Distt. Patiala (Punjab), India)

Abstract

Gender inequality in professional education remains a critical issue in India despite notable progress in general educational access. While girls' enrollment in primary and secondary education has improved, significant disparities persist in professional courses such as engineering, medicine, law and management. This paper examines the current trends, causes and consequences of gender inequality in professional education in India. It also assesses governmental and institutional efforts and offers recommendations to foster a more inclusive and equitable educational ecosystem.

Keywords: *Education, Enrollment, Inequality, Professional, Women.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Professional education is central to shaping a nation's skilled workforce. In India, professional disciplines like engineering, medicine, law and management are not only viewed as prestigious but are also essential for upward socio-economic mobility. Despite considerable improvements in access to general education, gender disparities in professional courses persist, reflecting broader socio-cultural, economic and institutional biases. Addressing these gaps is crucial, not just for achieving gender justice, but also for accelerating inclusive economic development.

The Indian Constitution guarantees equality before the law and mandates affirmative action to address historical disadvantages. However, in practice, gender-based inequities continue to surface in access to quality professional education. Girls, especially from marginalized socio-economic and rural backgrounds, are less likely to pursue or complete professional degrees. This paper explores the dimensions, determinants, and impact of such inequality and provides actionable strategies for policy and reform.

Gender inequality remains a critical issue in India, permeating multiple sectors, including education. While access to basic education has improved for girls in recent decades, significant disparities persist in professional education—such as engineering, medicine, law and management. This inequality limits not only individual potential but also national progress.

This paper examines gender inequality in professional education in India, analyzing enrollment patterns, factors contributing to the gap, government initiatives, challenges faced by women, and potential solutions for achieving gender equality in professional education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relevant literature was reviewed in detail to understand the nature and extent of the work done on the related topic. An attempt is made to analyze the nature of the work done during past in the related field. The brief review of literature has been given as below:

Raju et.al (2020) realized that men and women each are equal and play a paramount position in the introduction and development in their households in a specific and the society in trendy. In current instances, ladies are acting highly well in exceptional spheres of activities. Still majority of Indian ladies are going through the trouble of gender disparity and discrimination. The Gender difference in India is more in contrast to other countries. The gender gap index is one in multi-dimensional measures of gender disparity. India turned into scored at 0.67 by the WEF, and ranked 101 out of 136 international locations in 2013. This paper is making an attempt to convey out the elements which are accountable for gender inequality and hows measures to get rid of this trouble.

Seth (2023) stated that a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted nature of gender inequality in India, examining its causes, manifestations, and consequences. Furthermore, it explored the implications of gender inequality on sustainable development in the country. Drawing upon a wide range of empirical studies, reports, and scholarly articles, this article lighted on the pressing challenges faced by women in India and offers recommendations for promoting gender equality and empowering women to foster inclusive development.

Kavita (2023), observed that there is a disparity in literacy between men and women in India. An educated woman is important for decision-making in relation to health seeking, family planning, nutrition, and economic issues, educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and the growth of the population. The education of women is the most powerful tool to change their position in society.

Above discussion shows that education is a key factor for the development of women, in this paper gender disparities in higher education in Indian from 2015- 2022 is studied. This paper is divided into four sections. Section I includes introduction and review of literature, Section II is devoted to the objectives and research methodology, while Section III outlines the Current Scenario of Gender Inequality in Professional Education from 2015-2022. Section IV Factors challenges to achieving Gender Inequality in Higher Education and Section V concentrates on the conclusion and policy implications.

II OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Following are the objectives of the present study are (1) examines gender inequality in higher education in India 2) analyzing enrollment patterns, factors contributing to the gap, government initiatives, challenges faced by women and 3) potential solutions for achieving gender equality in higher education This paper is based on secondary data collected from various published sources of government like Statistical Abstract of Punjab, AISHE etc, journals.

III. CURRENT SCENARIO OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

India has witnessed remarkable strides in girls' participation in education. According to the **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22**, women constitute approximately **48%** of total enrollment in higher education. However, this statistic obscures significant disparities within professional disciplines:

- **Engineering and Technology:** Women constitute only **29%** of total enrollment.
- **Medical and Allied Health Sciences:** Female students make up around **57.6%**, slightly more than their male counterparts.
- **Law and Management:** Gender disparity is more pronounced in top-tier institutions (e.g., IIMs and NLUs), where women often form less than **30%** of the student body.

Despite near parity in student enrollment in some fields, women remain underrepresented in faculty positions and leadership roles:

- Female faculty account for **45.8%** of total teaching staff.
- However, less than **32%** occupy senior leadership roles such as Vice-Chancellors, Deans, or Directors.

This disparity affects mentoring opportunities and institutional decision-making from a gender-sensitive perspective.

Table no. 1 Female per 100 Male Students in important Programmes at Under Graduate & Post Graduate Level in Regular mode of Education during 2015 to 2021

Courses	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
B.A.-Bachelor of Arts	118	121	124	126	127	119
B.C.A.-Bachelor of Computer Applications	65	75	73	70	73	63
B.B.A.-Bachelor of Business Administration	76	66	67	67	68	64
B.Com.-Bachelor of Commerce	90	93	96	99	100	98
B.Ed.-Bachelor of Education	197	203	200	207	215	184
B.Pharm.-Bachelor of Pharmacy	85	83	82	79	93	67
B.Sc. (Nursing)-Bachelor of Science in Nursing	445	384	379	358	385	310
B.Sc.-Bachelor of Science	93	94	100	106	113	112
B.Tech.-Bachelor of Technology	38	39	38	40	42	40
L.L.B.-Bachelor of Law or Laws	44	47	47	49	53	49
M.B.B.S.-Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of Surgery	97	99	101	106	110	100
M.A.-Master of Arts	165	169	173	180	190	172
M.B.A.- Master of Business Administration	61	62	70	75	76	76
M.Com.-Master of Commerce	148	158	168	179	186	180
M.Sc.-Master of Science	157	167	171	174	180	164
M.Tech. -Master of Technology	64	76	55	54	63	47

Source: AISHE, Various Years.

Above table reveals that male percentage is high in professional and technical programmers like B.Tech, M.Tech etc whereas enrollment of female is high in Arts, B.Ed and nursing courses in 2015-16 whereas along with this pattern female enrollment also increased in MBBS, Science, M.A. MCom. In 2020-21

IV. CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Socio-Cultural Barriers

- **Patriarchal Norms:** Traditional gender roles often expect women to prioritize marriage and family over careers.
- **Family Expectations:** Families may encourage sons to pursue professional degrees while limiting daughters to 'safer' or shorter educational paths like B.A. or B.Ed.
- **Early Marriage:** A significant proportion of girls, particularly in rural India, are married before the age of 18, limiting their opportunity to pursue long-term education.

Economic Constraints

- **Cost of Professional Education:** Professional degrees are more expensive than general education. Many low-income families prioritize investing in sons.
- **Return on Investment Bias:** Parents may perceive limited returns from educating daughters due to the assumption that they will not work after marriage.

Safety and Mobility Issues

- **Lack of Transport and Hostel Facilities:** Many professional colleges are located in urban or semi-urban areas, making them inaccessible for rural girls.
- **Concerns about Safety:** Fear of harassment during commute or on campus discourages girls from traveling far for education.

Institutional Discrimination

- **Admission Bias:** Some professional institutions have subtle biases in interviews and counseling.
- **Lack of Female Faculty:** The scarcity of women mentors deters female students from entering male-dominated fields.
- **Unconscious Bias:** Gender stereotyping in classrooms and peer groups often leads to low confidence and marginalization.

CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER DISPARITY IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION:

Workforce Imbalance

Despite earning degrees, many women do not enter the workforce or drop out early due to lack of support, workplace discrimination, or familial responsibilities. This limits India's human capital development and innovation potential.

Lack of Women in Leadership Roles

When fewer women graduate from professional courses, even fewer rise to leadership positions in law, medicine, academia, and corporate sectors. This reinforces stereotypes and slows progress toward gender parity.

Social Inequity

Gender disparity in professional education perpetuates broader socio-economic inequities, especially for marginalized groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, and Muslims.

GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS:

Scholarship Schemes

- **Pragati Scholarship** by AICTE offers financial aid to girls pursuing technical education.
- **Post Matric Scholarships** for SC/ST/OBC girls support continuation into professional courses.

Reservation Policies

Some professional institutions reserve seats for women (e.g., in IITs) or provide special consideration to first-generation learners and those from rural backgrounds.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

NEP 2020 emphasizes equitable access and proposes gender-inclusion funds, flexible learning modes and support centers. However, the policy lacks specific quotas or mandates for professional institutions.

Infrastructure Initiatives

- Building of women's hostels in universities and professional colleges.
- Safe transportation facilities introduced in select states.

Gender Sensitization

Many institutions have initiated workshops, gender equity cells and internal complaints committees (as per UGC guidelines) to create a more inclusive atmosphere.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD :

Community Engagement

- Promote awareness about the benefits of professional education for girls.
- Engage with parents, teachers and community leaders to challenge gender norms.

Financial and Academic Support

- Expand scholarships and fee waivers for girls from marginalized backgrounds.
- Offer academic bridge programs to help girls transition into rigorous professional programs.

Strengthen Institutional Mechanisms

- Make gender audit and inclusion part of accreditation processes.
- Train faculty and administrators on gender-sensitive pedagogy and policies.

Infrastructure and Safety

- Mandate construction of women's hostels near professional colleges.
- Provide subsidized and safe transport facilities for commuting students.

Encourage Mentorship and Role Models

- Promote mentorship programs connecting students with successful women professionals.
- Highlight stories of women achievers in professional domains through media and curricula.

Post-Education Employment Support

- Facilitate campus placements with women-friendly employers.
- Introduce return-to-work programs for women who take career breaks.

V. CONCLUSION

Despite near parity in overall enrollment—around 48 % women—and especially high participation in science undergrad and postgraduate degrees, India's professional education sectors remain male-dominated, particularly in engineering (29 % women), management, faculty leadership and professional roles. Socio-cultural norms, resource allocation biases, insufficient safety and infrastructure and institutional discrimination continue to impede women's full participation. Several carefully designed interventions—scholarships, mentorship networks, quotas, infrastructure investment—already exist but require broader implementation, dedicated funding and regular evaluation. Prioritizing early-stage awareness, nurturing safe and inclusive campuses, and strengthening enforcement of gender-sensitive policy can help India harness the full potential of half its population. The journey toward equitable professional education is both a moral imperative and a smart economic strategy.

While significant progress has been made in general education access, disparities in professional streams continue to limit women's full participation in India's growth story. A comprehensive and intersectional approach—spanning policy reform, institutional restructuring, community engagement and cultural transformation—is necessary to bridge this gap. Ensuring equitable access to professional education is not only a matter of justice but also a strategic imperative for inclusive development.

REFERENCES:

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), Various Years.

Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) Publications.

Ghara, Tushar (2016), "Status of Indian Women in Higher Education", Jpurnal of Education and Practice, ISSN: 2222-288X, Volume 7, No. 34, pp 58-64

Ghara, T.K. (2016): "Classification of the States of India based on higher education development indicators", Journal of Research & Method in Education, Vol-6, No-6, pp. 65-70

Ghosh, Sangita and Kundu, Amit (2021), "Women's Participation in Higher Education in India: An Analysis Across Major States" Indian Journal of Human Development, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353408669>

Mondal, Provashis (2021), "Status of Women in Higher Education in India", IJCRT, ISSN: 2320-2882, Volume 09, No. 07, July, pp 144-152

National Education Policy, 2020.

Raju, Kilari and V. Kumar (2020), "Gender Inequality in India", Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt, ISSN:1567-214X, Volume 17, No. 09

Seth, Darshankumar (2023), “Gender Inequality in India: A comprehensive Analysis and Implications for Sustainable Development”, The Review of Contemporary Scientific and Academic Studies, ISSN : 2583-1380, Volume 03, No. 06, June

Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Years.

