



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE PROSPECTS OF FEMININE LEADERSHIP IN THE ACADEMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT :

The present study is an attempt to analyse the causes and consequences of the challenges in their academic career. It is the main highlight of this thesis. Examining the experiences and constraints of women, as teaching faculty, is an important framework for understanding the ongoing chronic gender imbalances in higher education in Tamilnadu. The main interest in this study stems from the paucity in literature on women in higher education in Tamilnadu. The West has produced a sizeable number of published articles, based on quantitative and qualitative data on gender but lower-income countries had to rely on some gender-disaggregated statistics and quantitative studies, often funded by international organizations. While statistics may be revealing, understanding the experiences of women in higher education goes beyond mere dry figures. A qualitative research study is needed to bring insight into the experiences of women faculties in higher education, especially in collegiate levels, in the parts of Tiruchirappalli District of Tamilnadu. The current study may be the first of its kind as policy and research had tended to focus on the experiences of women in basic education. The authors have dealt in detail about the constraints and problems faced in their work place was elaborately discussed under various heads.

KEYWORDS : Role of Women Professors – Challenges – Prospects – Remedial Studies – Suggestive measures.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in determining the life and profession of an individual. Teaching profession has been regarded as the noble profession. Many leaders, scientists, administrators, advocates, engineers and politicians are created by the teachers. Teaching is no longer merely hard work and it has become a highly stressful profession. Due to changing scenario in socio-economic dimensions and increasing unemployment issues, value of teachers and their professional concerns are associated with diversified changes, leading to increased stress in their profession. Nowadays, responsibilities of academicians had substantially increased and faculties are supposed to play many other roles in addition to teaching and research.



A study on women academicians in higher education is of serious concern to feminist researchers, due to many factors, that operate at different levels. Quantitatively, women's enrolment in higher education has increased. But their career choices are normally relegated to areas deemed suitable for women and at the lower levels of the occupational ladder. Though teaching is considered as a "feminised" profession,

women academics suffer 'glass ceiling' when it comes to their ascendancy to administrative headships. An apex position warrants decision-making power and status. In Colleges and Universities, women administrators are in such a small proportion that they are almost invisible. This makes the situation a gender - structural issue to be examined. The exclusion of women, from formal positions of power and authority, assumes importance as a socio-cultural issue and creates a space for research. The reasons for under-representation of women in administration are related to socialisation process, personality characteristics, rigid attitudes, behaviour skills, legal restrictions, power structure and corporate obstacles of the institution. Administrators are not born but made. Educational institutions are centers to promote human resource development.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The present study is of immense importance in the sense of analyzing the major challenges and constraints, faced by women academicians in the particular region, namely, Tiruchirappalli City of Tamilnadu because it would enable us to understand and observe the clear cut and the novelistic approach of examining their stress in workplace and conflict of work and job satisfaction. The Researcher, from a particular region and specializing in women studies, wanted to understand and analyse the major challenges and constraints faced by women academicians, through a sample of the women academicians at college level, in the study region. Though there are many studies already carried out in this direction, no specific and micro study has been undertaken in this area. This research may be a maiden attempt in micro study but it would trigger further development of research of the particular topic. Many women faculty and professors have not frankly disclosed their workplace problems.

The work life conflict of women academicians clearly shows the way to analyse their problems. After careful evaluation of major findings, bureaucrats could prepare a perspective plan for improving the academic performance of women professors, by eliminating the challenges before them. This research seeks to contribute more indepth and specific information to Tamilnadu's educational policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Women and Child Development, responsible for designing effective and efficient reforms, towards integrating the gender equity dimension in the formulation of policy.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Higher Education are responsible for ensuring equal status for women, enforcing the rights of children and women and promoting the survival, development, protection; and increased participation of both women and children in the development process. Through this study, the Ministry will be able to identify the barriers faced by women in higher education, including continuing persistence of the sex-preferential education of children, and use that as the base for policy formulation.

In this modern world, one finds stress everywhere, whether it is within the family, business, organization or institution. Right from the time of birth, until the last breath, an individual is consistently exposed to various stressful situations.

According to the American Medical Association, Stress is defined as "Any interference that disturbs a person's mental or physical well-being." Stress is a psychological and physiological response to actions that upset an individual whenever one's mind and body react to any situation. Stress is a term, commonly used to describe feelings of tensions or exhaustion, usually associated with work overload or overly demanding work. Stress is a natural phenomenon in an individual's daily life. It is unrealistic and impossible to eliminate stress, totally from one's life.

The faculty members working in colleges, play multiple roles. Many factors, mounting pressure on the faculty, lead to stress, both mentally and physically. The prime source of stress for faculty depends upon his/her character, personality and managing skills, which affect their performance efficiency. Job stress has a high impact on the health, performance and satisfaction.

The current study analyses the impact and strategies followed, to overcome the stress among the faculties. It is very difficult for women to balance their family and personal life. It also evaluates the job

stress in order to analyse the impact and strategies followed to overcome the stress among the faculties working in various arts and science colleges.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

India is enriched with human resources, which can be operationalised through optimum utilization of education. It has a special quality, which gives benefits to the society as a whole. It ensures equitable economic growth. Due to Globalization, knowledge acquired through proper education, becomes vital for meeting out international standards. The development of human capabilities and skill, depends to a greater extent on quality education. The expenditure on education gives benefits to a nation for stable economic growth. Higher education is not new for India. In the ancient times, students lived with their teachers in Gurukuls and Ashrams, and received higher education in particular subjects and human resources thus were developed. Hence an attempt had been made, to analyse the challenges and constraints, faced by the women academicians in Tiruchirappalli District. This research examined the topic, ***“CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ACADEMICIANS IN COLLEGIATE EDUCATION IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT” – AN ANALYSIS*** with statistical analysis.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study was confined to Tiruchirappalli Urban Limit, which consists of selected four colleges. The review of literature and secondary data have been presented from the national perspective. The study employed limited statistical tools and techniques. Assuming headship in educational institution to be a linear progression, the aspirant enters higher education, acquires the required academic credentials, gathers experience in teaching, becomes a senior member of the faculty and thus qualifies herself to compete for selection for the administrative leadership. The general aim of the thesis is to relate career consciousness and administrative abilities of women in higher education. Against this backdrop, this study was specifically concerned with women academicians as heads of university departments and principals of colleges in Tiruchirappalli Zone of Tamil Nadu.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study the various types of challenges and problems faced by the women academicians and their socio economic background.
- 2) To analyze the causes and consequences of the challenges in their career.
- 3) To examine issues pertaining to the work place support for women academicians in collegiate education.
- 4) To explain various reasons for imbalance between the work and family life of the respondents.
- 5) To list out work life conflict of the respondents among different groups.
- 6) To measure the level and extent of their job satisfaction and also analyze the job performance of the respondents.
- 7) To explore further possible avenues of increasing their work efficiency in their career.

HYPOTHESES

There is no significant association between location, work place and the professional imbalance problems of the women academicians in this area.

There exists a significant association between location and work life conflict of the women academicians in this area.

There is larger association between location and financial assistance of the respondents.

There is no significant mean difference between communities' religion of the respondents with respect to challenges faced by women academicians.

There is no significant mean difference between religions and educational qualifications of the respondents with respect to challenges faced by women academicians.

There is no significant mean difference between types of course of the respondents with respect to challenges faced by women academicians.

There is no significant mean difference between married and unmarried with respect to challenges faced by women academicians.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

On the basis of the issues raised, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the early experiences of females that impact their career path?
- 2) What are the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior faculty positions?
- 3) What are the obstacles, challenges, and successes that women experience as a talented faculty?
- 4) What written and unwritten policies have been adopted by universities that influence gender equity?
- 5) What are the attributes and strategies common among women who have succeeded in higher education teaching?

Hence, an attempt had been made by the researcher to address the problems and research questions (Research Gaps) put forward in the execution of the research with some selected advanced statistical parameters.

LOCALE OF THE STUDY

The locale for the study was the Tiruchirappalli City in Tamilnadu State. Tiruchirappalli is known as the educational hub of Tamilnadu. Nine colleges in Tiruchirappalli City offering degree courses, were contacted for the selection of the sample. Among them, four established colleges, namely, **Seethalakshmi Ramaswamy College**, **Urumu Dhanalakshmi College**, a co-education college, under the Government category **Periyar EVR College** and **Govt. Arts College**-Thuvakudi, were chosen for the study. These colleges were offering degrees in Arts, Science, Commerce and other semi-professional courses at graduation and research levels.

METHODOLOGY

The Researcher had selected four colleges in Tiruchirappalli, for collecting data for the present study, by using random sampling technique, from the total population. One was from the women's college category, namely, **Seethalakshmi Ramaswamy College**, another one from co-education institution, namely, **Urumu Dhanalakshmi College**, two colleges from the Government category, namely, **Periyar EVR College** and **Govt. Arts College**, Thuvakudi. The Researcher used **stratified sampling technique**, for selecting the sample among, the different strata namely **HODs, Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors**. The methods used, for collecting relevant data, were questionnaire method, interview method and literature survey. A well structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the selected women academicians. Data were also gathered from Regional Joint Director of College Education, Tiruchirappalli Region.

The present research was an attempt to analyze the **CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ACADEMICIANS IN COLLEGIATE EDUCATION IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT" – AN ANALYSIS**, in a detailed manner. Respondents from the sample colleges were contacted for primary data.

From a **Universe of 453(N)**, a sample of 153 was identified. From the total number of women academician, nearly **34%** were selected as the sample. In the matter of selection of samples, due weightage was given to cover all the sections of the academicians. Each unit had equal chance of being selected as the sample, through probability sampling technique.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The choice of qualitative methods, for my research, was primarily to understand the "voice of interest from the participants' perspective," and not just from the researcher's. **Patton (1985)** defines qualitative research as an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness, as part of a particular context

and the interactions. This understanding is an end in itself and it does not attempt to predict what may happen in the future necessarily. It also seeks to understand the nature of that setting. What it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting.

This study adopted the phenomenological approach, which seeks to elucidate the meaning of the lived experience of a phenomenon of a group of people. **Patton (2002)** notes that a phenomenological study is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience.

This research sought to challenge the silence and subordination to cultural norms by Indian women professors, by revealing the experiences of women faculty and administrators, in institutions of higher education, in Tiruchirappalli.

By conducting this study, the Researcher attempted to understand how cultural and social histories circumscribe education of women's academicians, employment opportunities, career development and advancement, and the challenges these women encountered in their careers in higher education. A phenomenological study requires an investigator to derive research questions that explore the meaning of that experience for individuals and ask them to describe their everyday lived experiences (**Creswell, 1998**). This was done through interviews with individuals, who had experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The main aim in this research was to give a voice to the silenced group of women faculty members, who were the core of this research project. The Researcher employed in depth interviews, to derive from selected participants their lived experiences.

TIME PERIOD

The present study covered a period of one year, from 2016 to 2017. About 12 months time were spared by the Researcher to contact the sample women academicians in Tiruchirappalli. Repeated and frequent visits were made by the Researcher to the four colleges in this district, which consumed a larger time consuming.

PILOT STUDY

It is difficult to plan a major study or project, without adequate knowledge of its subject matter, the population to cover and so on. A pilot study is a small scale replica of the main project.

Pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents and the questionnaire was restructured, based on the suggestions and recommendations made by them.

SAMPLE SIZE

This refers to the number of items, selected from the universe, to constitute a sample. The sample size, for the study, was 153 in number, from the total of 453.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The respondents were interviewed by using judgment sampling. This involved selection of respondents whom the Researcher judged to be the most appropriate for the study. It was based on the judgment of the Researcher.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Simple percentage analysis was used to analyse the tabulated data, collected through the questionnaire. Statistical tools, like mean score and chi square test, Anova, p statistical value and inter-correlation matrices were used, to analyze and prove the formulated hypotheses.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Notwithstanding the comprehensive coverage, the study has certain limitations in the selection and evaluation of projects. First, the study was limited only to the selected four colleges in the study area. Only 34% of the universe was made as the sample size. This kind of study largely depends on primary data and the quality of the study fully depended on the response of the respondents. Some women professors hesitated to give the required information to the Investigator. The sample of women academicians, chosen by the Researcher, was negligible because it was only from the selected four colleges alone. There may be the possibility of the exclusion of leading colleges in Tiruchirappalli District and it could have affected the result of the experiments. However, the response of the respondents was satisfactory and the bias was minimized by several cross checks made while interviewing them.

The present research titled ***“CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ACADEMICIANS IN COLLEGIATE EDUCATION IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT” – AN ANALYSIS***, was conducted during the year 2016-2017, in **Tiruchirappalli City of Tamilnadu State**. This Chapter deals with the methodology, adopted for the present investigation. The methodology, used for the research, has been presented under following sub headings.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The researcher broadly summarizes the major findings of the study on various steps.

As far as workplace support is concerned it was found that 60.9% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 25 to 35 years have moderate level, 17.4% have low level and 21.7% have high level of opinion on workplace support. 48.0% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 36 to 45 years have moderate level, 26.7% have low level and 25.3% have high level of opinion on workplace support. 55.8% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 46 to 55 years have moderate level, 16.3% have low level and 27.9% have high level of opinion on workplace support.

In the case of professional imbalance it was observed that 60.9% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 25 to 35 years have moderate level, 17.4% have low level and 21.7% have high level of opinion on professional imbalance. 60.0% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 36 to 45 years have moderate level, 16.0% have low level and 24.0% have high level of opinion on professional imbalance.

With regard to the glass ceiling the researcher found that 73.9% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 25 to 35 years have moderate level, 17.4% have low level and 8.7% have high level of opinion on glass ceiling.

56.0% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 36 to 45 years have moderate level, 20.0% have low level and 24.0% have high level of opinion on glass ceiling. 53.5% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 46 to 55 years have moderate level, 11.6% have low level and 34.9% have high level of opinion on glass ceiling.

In the case of government colleges job performance it was observed that 65.2% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 25 to 35 years have moderate level, 21.7% have low level and 13.0% have high level of opinion on job performance.

61.3% of the respondents opined that the age group of 36 to 45 years have moderate level, 22.7% have low level and 16.0% have high level of opinion on job performance. 67.4% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 46 to 55 years have moderate level, 14.0% have low level and 18.6% have high level of opinion on job performance.

In job satisfaction strategy it was found that 47.8% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 25 to 35 years have moderate level, 21.7% have low level and 30.4% have high level of opinion on job satisfaction. 30.7% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 36 to 45 years have moderate level, 20.0% have low level and 49.3% have high level of opinion on job satisfaction.

Similarly in the case of financial assistance it was monitored that 34.8% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 25 to 35 years have moderate level, 21.7% have low level and 43.5% have high level of opinion on financial assistance. 44.0% of the respondents belongs to the age group of 36 to 45 years have moderate level, 22.7% have low level and 33.3% have high level of opinion on financial assistance.

SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above foregoing discussion on the challenges of women faculties faced in their work place the researcher has recommended the following suggestions and policy recommendations for better performance of their working conditions and also in solving their constraints and problems.

- ❖ The Higher education department of the Government of Tamilnadu must come forward to form a separate redressal council under the supervision of Regional Director of College Education to solve their problems in their workplaces.
- ❖ It also finds ways and means of identifying suitable policy initiatives to avoid the unnecessary and undue delay in settling their longstanding monetary benefits in their service conditions.
- ❖ To bring more Women Professors in the enrolment of squad in analyzing quicker and immediate steps to break through some family imbalance in their working conditions.
- ❖ Work load norms of women faculties should be reduced during the time of their maternity period.
- ❖ Boost should be given to take up higher education or refresher courses, orientation courses for their time bound promotions in their service conditions.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This present research is on "CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ACADEMICIAN IN COLLEGIATE EDUCATION IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT" Problems faced by the women faculties in educational institutions and conducted the research which includes interviews, from different female professors, who are working in both government aided institutions (Ururu Dhanalakshmi College) like co-education college, women's college (SR College) and government colleges like EVR Periyar College and Govt. Arts College-Thuvakudi. The main sources of collecting data were interviews, direct observation and questionnaires. From the different sources of information especially from interviews, it came to know that there are some problems faced by the women faculties. Maximum of parents and relatives are supportive towards their daughter's encouragement for their noble cause and some of them with personal interest. From this research it was found that most of the faculties are married and had a good work experience in the educational institutions.

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