

Perception of the College Teachers towards Gender Equality – A Study in the Kamrup District of Assam

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Abstract

Every Woman has the right to live with dignity as well as freedom in society. Empowered women have that kind of ability to contribute to the health and productivity of their families, and communities as well as improve the prospect for the future generation also. It should be mentioned here that, India has been the land of Iconic women who have been playing different roles in governance, policymaking, defense, religion, etc, and also brought many reforms in the society. Despite having such evidence, still we are facing problems like the gender gap in many sectors. Early marriage, gender disparity in the school curriculum, dropout in girls, and gender disparity in employability are some of the obstacles that can be observed in our society. There exists a gender gap of around 16% between male and female literacy rates as per the 2011 census report. To tackle such important subjects, the New Education Policy 2020 has prescribed to approach gender as a cross-cutting priority to achieve gender equality in education with the partnership of state and local community organisations. It has also been recommended "Gender Inclusion Fund" provide quality and equitable education to all girls. This fund has targeted ensuring 100% enrolment of girls in schools, decreasing gender gaps at all levels, practicing gender equity and inclusion in society, and improving the leadership capability of girls to positive civil dialogue. But such policies and recommendations cannot change the scenario alone. To bring a vibrant change, the perceptions of the people specially the teachers of the society should be changed and it should be free from stereotypes. This study has made an effort to assess the perceptions of college teachers regarding gender equality. It has also tried to find out significant differences in perceptions between male and female teachers.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception, Gender Equality, College Teachers

Introduction

The status and position of women are determined by the role played by them in carrying on economic activities in society. Rural poor women have indeed been dominated and underestimated in every step of their life for a very long time. Undoubtedly, women have been being the utmost contribution to their families and society in respect of socio-cultural and religious life. Therefore, we need gender equality urgently. On considering the gravity of this matter, UN Human Rights is committed to working with States, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), civil society, as well as other stakeholders worldwide to:

- i. Reform discriminatory laws and policies which allow gender-based discrimination and bring them in line with the international human rights law;
- ii. Transform discriminatory social norms and harmful gender stereotypes into more equal social structures and power relations for all genders;
- iii. Eliminate gender-based violence;
- iv. Guarantee the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights by all;
- v. Protect and expand the civic space of women human rights defenders and feminist movements;

- vi. Facilitate equal participation of women, men and people of diverse gender identities in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life; and
- vii. Ensure gender equality within the UN Human Rights Office and the United Nations.

For any kind of development of a country, we cannot underestimate the role of women. "Women's role in development is reflected in reduced maternal mortality and improved maternal care, better education, and nutrition of children, reduced fertility, and increase in the average age at first marriage" (Shen & Williamson, 1999). Dollar and Gatti (1999) examined the relationship between economic growth and gender inequality. Their results showed that gender inequality is higher in poorer and developing countries than the developed countries." Stotsky (2006) argued that a simultaneous relationship exists between gender inequalities and economic growth. Similar to Dollar and Gatti (1999), Stotsky too emphasized that gender inequalities lead to slow economic growth and high economic growth, on the other hand, leads to a reduction in gender inequality. Besides, Giimbel (2004) examined the role of gender inequality in economic growth in the context of developed and industrialized countries. His results too indicated that high per capita income is associated with low gender inequality.

The status of Gender Equality in India has been progressing over the last decades. More girls are going to school, and very few girls are forced into early marriage. Women are serving in parliament and leadership positions, and the reformation of law is initiated to advance gender equality. According to the 2011 census report in India, the overall literacy in India was 73%. But the women's literacy rate was only 65%. There exists a gender gap of around 16% between male and female literacy rates. To tackle such important subjects, the New Education Policy 2020 has prescribed to approach gender as a cross-cutting priority to achieve gender equality in education with the partnership of state and local community organizations. It has also been recommended "Gender Inclusion Fund" provide quality and equitable education to all girls. This fund has targeted ensuring 100% enrolment of girls in schools, decreasing gender gaps at all levels, practicing gender equity and inclusion in society, and improving the leadership capability of girls to positive civil dialogue. But such policies and recommendations cannot change the scenario alone. To bring a vibrant change, the perceptions of the people should be changed and they should be free from stereotypes. This present study is an attempt to find out the perceptions of college teachers' toward gender equality.

Significance of the Study

It is widely subscribed that in comparison to the other corner of the country, the women of Assam enjoy greater freedom (alongside the women of Northeast India). Also if we see the historical evidence, Assam is a society, which is free from Dowry, Sati, and all. But surprisingly, there is nevertheless evidence that there are gender-related discrimination within society and this analysis is based on four indicators like Education, Employment, Violence against Women, and Trafficking.

This Study wants to get an insight into the perception of the college teachers of Kamrup district (Assam) as they lay the founding bricks upon which society is built. And this study selects Kamrup district as its area because it is considered the educational hub of the state with more educational institutions compared to any other place in Assam. Therefore, the Investigators feel that this study might be significant for contributing to others studies related to this particular area.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the significance of the study, the following objectives have been framed by the investigators.

1. To assess the perception of college teachers toward gender equality, and
2. To make a comparative study of the perception between male and female teachers towards gender equality.

Delimitations of the Study

The study has been delimited to the following grounds.

1. The selected study area is Kamrup District, Assam.
2. The study is confined to undergraduate college teachers.
3. The sample teachers have been selected from the arts background

Method used in the Study

To fulfill the purposes, the descriptive survey method has been used for the present study.

Population and Sample of the Study

There are 36 undergraduate colleges in the Kamrup district of Assam. Among these colleges, 10 undergraduate colleges have been randomly selected and 200 teachers (120 –Male, 80- Female) have been selected based on the random sampling method.

Tools

To carry out any research, data is gathered by developing different methods and procedures. Those methods and procedures are called tools used for the study. The tool that is used for the present study is a questionnaire.

After studying the various related literature, the Investigators developed a preliminary form of a questionnaire with 15 statements. Against every statement, there were options like Agree, Disagree and Neutral. Moreover, some open-ended questions were also combined into the Questionnaire. Finally, based on three experts' comments, elimination and editions, the final form of the questionnaire were prepared with 9 statements along with some open-ended statements. The modified questionnaire was administered to a sample of 20 college teachers to establish reliability and validity. Split Half Method of reliability was done by Spearman-Brown Formula. The reliability was established at 0.92 and 0.86 respectively. To establish content validity, experts' opinions were taken. All the items were given to 10 Subjects Experts. The Items which got the highest agreement or not less than 75% of the agreement were selected. In such a way, content validity was established.

Statistical Technique used

Based on the objectives of the study, the data collected are classified and arranged into tabular form. Attempts are also made to use simple statistics like percentage and to compare the perceptions between males and females Chi-square method was used.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Objective 1: To assess the perception of college teachers toward gender equality.

Table 1.0

Perception of Teachers towards Gender Equality

Items	Response	Male Teachers (Total = 120)		Female Teachers (Total = 80)	
		N	%	N	%
1. Men and Women are treated equally in our society	Agree	84	70	40	50
	Disagree	21	17.5	30	37.5
	Neutral	15	12.5	10	12.5
2. Men have better positions in society than women	Agree	100	83.3	57	71.25
	Disagree	20	16.7	12	15
	Neutral	0	0	11	13.75
	Agree	86	71	58	72.5

3. Men should have more freedom than women	Disagree	14	12.5	11	13.75
	Neutral	20	16.67	11	13.75
4. In the case of choosing their partners for marriage, men and women have equal opportunity and freedom.	Agree	118	98.33	75	95
	Disagree	2	1.67	5	5
	Neutral	0	0	0	0
5. Men should have more legal rights than women	Agree	82	70	70	87.5
	Disagree	28	21.67	4	8
	Neutral	10	8.33	4	8
6. In case of taking political decisions, men and women are equally involved	Agree	75	62.5	55	68.8
	Disagree	45	37.5	20	25
	Neutral	0	0	5	6.25
7. Women should take more household responsibilities	Agree	100	83.33	40	50
	Disagree	4	3.33	35	43.75
	Neutral	16	13.33	5	6.25
8. Men should have equal responsibilities for raising children	Agree	75	62.5	35	43.6
	Disagree	45	37.5	45	56.25
	Neutral	0	0	0	0
9. Women's work for family is undervalued	Agree	100	83.33	63	77.5
	Disagree	5	3.33	8	11.25
	Neutral	15	13.33	9	11.25

Table 1.1
Preference of the Teachers between Male and Female

STATEMENTS	MALE (%)	FEMALE (%)
If only one child is allowed, it should be	38%	62%
A university education is more important for	29%	71%
If jobs are scarce, they have more rights to have a job	31.25%	62.75%
A better political leader	65.60%	34.40%
The financial responsibilities of the family should bear by	71.20%	28.80%

Table 1.2
Perception of Teachers towards various reservation and Policies Regarding Women

STATEMENTS	YES (%)	NO (%)
Reservation for women in education	70%	30%
Reservation for women in jobs	57%	43%
Reservation for women in politics	75%	25%
Reservation for women in bus seats	85%	15%
Special plans and policies regarding women	87%	13%

Interpretation:

From Tables no 1.0, 1.1, and 1.2, it can be interpreted that, the perception of the teachers towards gender equality is observed. Both male and female teachers have a positive perception of it. But in some items (Items 4 and 5) male teachers support boys and female teachers support girls. But in some cases like financial responsibilities, household responsibilities and political leadership, there can be seen some differences. In financial responsibilities and political leadership, men get more preference and in household responsibilities, women get more preference by both the sex. Surprisingly, female teachers also feel that they are more responsible for the household work and men are more responsible for the financial and political responsibilities. In this regard, it can be said that there is still the traditional stereotype of gender role concepts that affect educated people.

Objective 2: To make a comparative study of the perception between male and female teachers towards gender equality.

Table 2.0
X² (chi-square) Values of Teachers' Perceptions regarding Academic Environment

Sl No	Specified Items	(chi-square) Values	Level of Significance
1	Men and Women are treated equally in our society	39	**
2	Men have a better position in society than women	6.97	*
3	Men should have more freedom than women	0.55	N.S.
4	Men and women have equal opportunity and freedom to choose their partner for marriage	0.35	N.S.
5	Men should have more legal rights than women	10.54	**
6	Men and women are equally involved in political decision	10.33	**
7	Women should take more responsibilities for household work than men	40.13	**
8	Men should have equal responsibilities for raising children	6.88	*
9	Women's work for family is undervalued	4.5	N.S.

df 2

Critical value of $X^2 = 5.991$ at 0.5 level of significance * > 0.05 = 5.991
 9.210 at 0.1 level of significance ** > 0.01 = 9.210

Interpretation:

Table 2.0 reveals the result of the X² test that has measured the level of significance of the teachers' perception regarding gender equality. It has been found that the calculated values of X² except for serial numbers 3, 4, and 8,9, remaining are found to be significant at both the 1% and 5% level of significance. Therefore, in case of the items no 3,4, 8 and 9, the null hypothesis can be accepted and it can be

interpreted that in those items there are no significant differences found in perceptions between male and female teachers. Again, for items 1, 2,5,6, 7, and 10 null hypotheses can be rejected and it can be interpreted that there are significant differences found in perceptions regarding those items between male and female teachers.

Conclusion

To understand and remove gender inequality, there needs to have to look beyond traditional gender norms. In this respect, the spread of education is the most powerful instrument to tackle discrimination, prevent harassment, and ensure that their work promotes equality of opportunity between men and women. We need to change our perceptions of people by providing the right kinds of education. It is true that many changes have been seen in the traditional perceptions of people toward gender equality. But this study proved that still there are many areas of gender equality on which consensus has not been formed even in highly educated people also. Even, in many instances educated women themselves are not free from the traditional stereotype mindset which is self-inflicting and not encouraging. In these contexts, it can be concluded that there are many steps or initiatives that need to be undertaken on different fronts so that gender equality would become a reality in the true sense.

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