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A STUDY ON INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION FOR FOSTERING GENDER PARITY AMONG WORKFORCE IN URBAN BANGALORE

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ABSTRACT

Women's education and empowerment are essential indicators of progress. Educated women contribute significantly to the Comprehensive development of the economy. According to the latest Global Peace Index (GPI) 2024, India is ranked 116th globally, improving from its previous ranking of 126th in 2023. However, a notable gap exists among universities in inclusive practices and gender parity. This study investigates inclusive practices within higher education institutions and their impact on fostering gender parity. Focusing on the perspectives of workforce, the research examines existing inclusive policies and practices and explores the lived experiences related to inclusivity and gender equity. Data collection methods include surveys and document analysis of institutional policies and reports at urban Bangalore college. Quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify regression and correlations between inclusive practices and gender parity outcomes. Qualitative data will be analysed to assess the existing practices and trends. The study aims to identify best practices, highlight challenges, and offer recommendations for higher education institutions to create more inclusive environments that promote gender parity and empower all members of the academic community. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing gender equity in academia and inform strategies for creating more equitable and inclusive institutions.

Keywords: Inclusive, Gender Parity, Higher Educationt

1. INTRODUCTION

Proper education provides stability in life, by being well educated and holding a degree, chances for better career opportunities get increased and new doors get open up for better future. The difference in the average number of years of schooling of male and female was wider in rural areas probably because of the reasons like social structure where women are less exposed to schooling than male. This made a way for the study to explore in the area of gender parity. On a yearly basis, the Global Gender Gap Index compares the status and development of gender parity in four important areas: political empowerment, health and survival, educational attainment, and economic participation and opportunity. Since its launch in 2006, this index has been the most established, monitoring advancements made in

bridging these gaps over time. India was ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in the Gender Gap report, 2023. Equality in employment opportunities and career prospects are impacted by gender disparities in educational access. Deeply rooted gender stereotypes about which careers are appropriate for men and women are linked to gender gaps in career expectations. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a crucial metric for determining this gender disparity.

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In India, females are more attracted towards the profession of teaching than males especially at primary level. During the period of 2012-13 to 2021-22, number of female teachers per 100 male teachers at primary level increased from 100 to 126. At higher levels also, a similar trend was seen. However, representation of female in tertiary education teachers is quite low at 41 % as per 2020-21 data. Where the study tries to understand this gender disparity among the workforce. In order to achieve gender parity in higher education, a comprehensive understanding of the systemic and cultural elements at work is necessary. Higher education has noticed a rise in the number of female faculty members, but they are still underrepresented in senior positions. This discrepancy emphasizes the existence of obstacles hindering women's academic career advancement. The issue of gender disparity in higher education is not new, but its persistence underscores the need for continued research and intervention. Studies have consistently shown that women in academia face numerous challenges, including unconscious biases, lack of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities and difficulties in balancing work and personal life. These challenges are further compounded by societal attitudes and institutional structures that do not fully support gender equity.

The problem is not merely one of numbers but also of culture and systemic practices. Formal policies on gender equality, while essential, do not guarantee equitable outcomes. There's a significant gap between policy and practice, indicating that institutional cultures and practices must also change. This study is set against the backdrop of these systemic and cultural factors, aiming to explore the impact of inclusive practices on gender parity among faculty members. This study focuses on faculty members in urban Bangalore, India. Bangalore's educational landscape is diverse, with a mix of public and private institutions. By focusing on this specific context, the study aims to provide insights that are both locally relevant and applicable to broader discussions on gender parity in higher education.

The unconscious bias that male faculty members have towards their female colleagues can significantly affect the career development of women in the educational sector. This bias often manifests as stereotypes or prejudices held without conscious awareness, impacting decisions related to hiring, promotion, performance evaluation, and access to professional opportunities. Existing study indicates a statistically significant difference in unconscious bias levels between male and female faculty members, with males typically exhibiting higher levels of such bias. This disparity can create an uneven playing field where women are systematically disadvantaged. For instance, evaluators might unintentionally rate women's performances lower than men's due to preconceived notions about their competence or commitment. This can limit women's opportunities for advancement and leadership roles, hindering their career progression. Moreover, unconscious bias can influence everyday interactions, leading to microaggressions or exclusion from informal networks that are crucial for career advancement. Women might find themselves overlooked for important projects or not given the same level of

mentorship as their male counterparts. This not only affects their professional growth but also contributes to a sense of isolation and discouragement.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) How do societal thoughts towards inclusive practices vary across gender?
2) What are the perceptions and attitudes of faculty towards gender parity?
3) What is the impact of inclusive practices in higher education on gender parity.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATIRE

- While female representation in junior faculty positions is increasing, a significant gap exists in senior roles. Specifically, nationally, 44.41% of Assistant Professors are female, but this figure drops to 29.52% at the Professor level. This indicates a "glass ceiling" effect. (Source: inspirajournals.com)
- Formal gender equality policies are insufficient without a corresponding shift in institutional culture and practices. (Source: weforum.org)
- Systemic changes are needed to address unconscious biases and structural barriers that impede women's career advancement. (Source: eric.ed.gov)
- This practice can support dual-career couples, thereby aiding in women's career advancement. (Source: theatlantic.com)
- Equality Maturity Model (EMM): This tool provides a structured approach to assess and improve gender equality within institutions. (Source: mdpi.com)
- Critical Mass Theory: Achieving a critical mass (at least 30%) of women in leadership positions is crucial for meaningful institutional change. (Source: Kanter (1977)
- Institutions should provide mentorship, sponsorship, and networking opportunities to help women overcome structural barriers. (Source: Morrison and von Glinow (1990). Women and Minorities in Management)
- Gender disparities are influenced by intersecting social factors such as race, class, and ethnicity. (Source: Inspira. Journals)
- Ghosh and Sankar (2024). Competency-Based Teacher Education in Gender and Inclusive Practices. 01-09-2024.

2.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

- **Intersectionality Theory** Crenshaw (1989)**:** Highlights the interconnectedness of social categories.
- **Critical Mass Theory** Kanter (1977)**:** Emphasizes the importance of sufficient representation for effecting change.

- **Glass Ceiling Theory** Morrison and von Glinow (1990)**:** Explains the invisible barriers hindering women's advancement.

2.2. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

- The existing study highlights the persistent challenges to achieving gender parity in higher education among workforce.
- A multifaceted approach is needed, encompassing policy changes, cultural shifts, and targeted interventions to execute the inclusive practices to its best for fostering the gender parity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employs a quantitative research design, utilizing independent sample t-tests and ANOVA. Independent sample t-tests are used to compare the means of two independent groups (male and female faculty) on variables such as perceived influence of society, attitudes towards inclusive practices, and perceived inclusiveness. ANOVA is employed to assess the relationship between gender and unconscious bias.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data collected are based on the responses of 97 faculty members (66 male, 31 female) in urban Bangalore, India. The data includes:

- **Perceived Influence of Society:** Measures how much societal influence affects an individual's thoughts on inclusive practices.
- **Attitudes Towards Inclusive Practices:** Measures an individual's personal attitude towards inclusive practices.
- **Perceived Inclusiveness:** Measures the individual's belief that increasing inclusive practices leads to career growth for women.
- **Unconscious Bias:** Assessed as a continuous variable to understand psychological perceptions across genders.

The data has been collected by circulating questioner among the workforce in urban Bangalore.

3.3. ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES USED IN THE STUDY

- **Independent Samples t-tests**: Used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the means of two independent groups (male and female) on three continuous variables: influence of society, attitude towards inclusive practices, and thoughts on inclusive practices fostering gender parity.
- **Levene's Test for Equality of Variances:** Used to check if the variances (spread) of the two groups are equal. It guides the choice of which version of the independent sample t – test to use (equal variance assumed or not).

- **ANOVA:** Used to analyse the variance between groups and their means, particularly employed to understand the relationship between gender and unconscious bias.
- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, standard deviation, and standard error mean are used to describe and summarize the data for each group.

3.4. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted with a sample of 97 faculty members from urban Bangalore. While this provides valuable insights into the specific context, the sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Future research could benefit from larger, more diverse samples to enhance the external validity of the results.

The study is conducted in urban Bangalore, which has its unique socio-cultural and institutional context. The findings may not be fully applicable to other geographical regions or institutional settings. Comparative studies across different regions or institutions could provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing gender parity.

3.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing body of literature on gender parity in higher education. By focusing evaluating inclusive practices within higher education institutions in urban Bangalore and their effectiveness in promoting gender parity among faculty members. It examines the perceptions and attitudes of faculty members towards gender parity, the influence of societal thoughts on inclusive practices, and the impact of these practices on career growth. The research further investigates the presence of unconscious bias and its implications for gender equity.

3.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

To improve the findings' generalizability, future research can broaden the scope by incorporating a more varied sample from different institutional types and geographical areas. To evaluate the long-term effects of inclusive practices, longitudinal research could also follow faculty members' career paths. To give a more complex picture of the obstacles to gender parity in academia, future studies can also examine how gender intersects with other social identities like race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. OBJECTIVES

1) To examine the effect of societal thoughts towards inclusive practices across gender.
2) To explore the perceptions and attitude of faculty towards gender parity.
3) To evaluate the impact of inclusive practices in higher education.

4.2. ANALYSIS

1) This study perceives to understand the impact of inclusive practices on gender equity. This analysis directly compares male and female faculty on key variables related to these objectives: influence, attitude, and perception of inclusiveness.

The Table 1 represents the results of independent sample t-tests, which are used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the means of two independent groups (male, female) on three continuous variables (influence of society, attitude towards inclusive practices, thoughts on inclusive practices fosters gender parity).

- **Influence –** This measure how much society influence the individuals thought on inclusive practices.
- **Attitude –** This measure individuals' personal attitude towards inclusive practices
- **Inclusiveness –** These measures the individual thoughts about increasing inclusive practices leading to increase in career growth of women.

Table 1

Table 1 Independent Sample Text

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Influence	7.047	0.009	10.165	95	0	2.06471	0.20311	1.66148	2.46794
			8.8	42.732	0	2.06471	0.23463	1.59145	2.53798
Attitude	2.593	0.111	-1.211	95	0.229	-0.1922	0.15866	-0.5072	0.12277
			-1.303	70.922	0.197	-0.1922	0.14748	-0.4863	0.10188
Inclusive	4.332	0.04	-1.81	95	0.073	-0.1571	0.08681	-0.3295	0.0152
			-2.081	83.439	0.041	-0.1571	0.07552	-0.3073	-0.0069

Brief on Key Components of the Table:

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: This test checks if the variances (spread) of the two groups are equal. If the Sig. value is less than .05, the variances are significantly different, and the study should use the "Equal variances not assumed" row in the t-test results.

The t-test for Equality of Means serves as the primary statistical tool to compare the averages of two independent groups. The t-statistic itself quantifies the difference observed between these group means. Degrees of freedom (df) are incorporated to reflect the sample size, which is essential for accurately determining the p-value. The p-value, denoted as Sig. (2-tailed), indicates the probability of obtaining the observed results under the assumption that there is no actual difference between the groups being compared; a p-value below 0.05 is commonly interpreted as statistically significant, suggesting evidence against this assumption. The Mean Difference specifies the magnitude of the difference between the group means, while the Std. Error Difference measures the variability or uncertainty

associated with this mean difference. Lastly, the 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference offers a range of values within which we can be 95% confident that the true population mean difference lies.

Analysis of Table 1

1) Influence

The differences in perceived influence between male and female faculty were found to be significantly different according to the Levene's Test. With a mean difference of 2.06471, the t-test, which assumes unequal variances, thus showed a highly significant difference in perceived influence between the two groups. In particular, compared to female faculty members, male faculty members expressed a greater perceived influence of society on their opinions regarding inclusive practices. This implies that male faculty members' attitudes toward inclusivity are more significantly shaped by societal norms and expectations, whereas female faculty members do not perceive the same level of influence from these factors.

- **Null Hypothesis for Influence:** There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of society on inclusive practices between male and female faculty members.
- **Alternative Hypothesis for Influence:** There is a significant difference in the perceived influence of society on inclusive practices between male and female faculty members.
- **Proven Statement for Influence:** There is a significant difference in perceived influence between male and female faculty. Male faculty has a higher perceived influence than female faculty.

2) Attitude

The differences in attitudes toward inclusive practices between male and female faculty were equal, according to the Levene's Test. Assuming equal variances, the t-test thus revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups' attitudes toward inclusive practices. This implies that faculty members, both male and female, generally have similar opinions about inclusive practices.

Null Hypothesis for Attitude: There is no significant difference in attitudes towards inclusive practices between male and female faculty members.

Alternative Hypothesis for Attitude: There is a significant difference in attitudes towards inclusive practices between male and female faculty members.

Proven Statement for Attitude: There is no significant difference in attitudes towards inclusive practices between male and female faculty.

3) Inclusive

Differences in perceived inclusiveness between male and female faculty were not equal, according to the Levene's test. With a mean difference of -0.15714, the t-test, which assumes unequal variances, thus showed a statistically significant difference in the two groups' perceptions of inclusiveness. In particular, compared to their male counterparts, female faculty members thought the academic setting was more inclusive. This implies that female workforce is more likely to acknowledge and accept the beneficial effects of inclusive practices on their professional development.

- **Null Hypothesis for Inclusiveness:** There is no significant difference in perceived inclusiveness between male and female faculty members.
- **Alternative Hypothesis for Inclusiveness:** There is a significant difference in perceived inclusiveness between male and female faculty members.

- **Proven Statement for Inclusiveness:** There is a significant difference in perceived inclusiveness between male and female faculty. Female faculty perceives the environment as more inclusive than male faculty.

Table 2

Table 2 Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Influence	1	66	4.097	0.78622	0.09678
	2	31	2.0323	1.19007	0.21374
Attitude	1	66	4.0417	0.77034	0.09482
	2	31	4.2339	0.62894	0.11296
Inclusive	1	66	4.3106	0.43866	0.054
	2	31	4.4677	0.29398	0.0528

2) This study also analysis between the gender and unconscious bias which they pursue towards each other, to know the psychological perception across the gender which impact women career development.

- **Null Hypothesis:** There is no statistically significant difference in unconscious bias levels between male and female faculty members.
- **Alternative Hypothesis:** There is a statistically significant difference in unconscious bias levels between male and female faculty members.

Table 3

Table 3 Anova Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.99	1	10.99	103.334	<.001[b]
	Residual	10.103	95	0.106		
	Total	21.093	96			

- **Proven Statement:** The study states that there is a statistically significant difference in unconscious bias levels between male and female faculty members.

The data has been collected on the unconscious bias(info)9continuous variable) across the gender (categorical variable) and Anova test analysis has been performed. The output is divided into two main sections: ANOVA, and Coefficients. The Table 2 shows a highly significant F-statistic ($F = 103.334$, $p < .001$). This indicates that the model, with "info" as the predictor, significantly predicts gender which indicates significant predictive power. The study states that there is a statistically significant difference in unconscious bias levels between male and female faculty members. This analysis prove that one gender group exhibits significantly higher unconscious bias than the other, which turned to be the male group with the high mean

Table 4

Table 4 Coefficient Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.187	0.092		23.895	<.001
	info	-0.252	0.025	-0.722	-10.165	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: gender

The negative B coefficient (-.252) and the negative Beta coefficient (-.722) for "info" indicate a negative relationship with gender. This means that as "info" (unconscious bias) increases, gender tends to decrease {i.e. gender tends to decrease from 2(female) to 1(male)}. This indicates male has high unconscious bias towards female.

4.3. INSIGHTS DERIVED FROM ANALYSIS

- There is a significant difference in how male and female faculty perceive the influence of society on inclusive practices. Male faculty reported a higher perceived influence, indicating that societal norms significantly shape their acceptance of inclusive practices for women's career growth. Female faculty, however, reported being less influenced by societal factors.
- No significant difference exists between male and female faculty in their personal attitudes towards inclusive practices. This suggests that both genders, on a personal level, value and are open to inclusivity.
- Female faculty perceive the academic environment as more inclusive than male faculty. They believe that inclusive practices in the workplace contribute to their career growth, highlighting a gendered difference in experiencing and valuing workplace inclusivity.
- The significant predictive power of "info"(unconscious bias) suggests that providing or improving information related to inclusive practices could potentially influence gender distribution or representation among faculty.
- The information related to inclusive practices has a strong and significant relationship with gender among workforce in urban Bangalore.
- The t-tests reveal if there are statistically significant differences between male and female faculty in these areas. This helps identify potential gender disparities in the academic environment.
- Significant differences are found in the independent sample test analysis; it provides evidence for the need to implement interventions to promote gender equity. women perceive less influence; it suggests a need for leadership development programs or policy changes.

4.4. SUGGESTIONS

- Implement gender-sensitive training programs to address and reduce unconscious bias, particularly among male faculty. These programs should aim to create awareness about how biases can affect professional interactions and decision-making processes.
- Develop and enforce clear, transparent policies that promote gender equity in hiring, promotion, and evaluation. Ensure that these policies are communicated effectively and are consistently applied across the institution.
- Establish mentorship programs and support networks specifically for female faculty. These platforms can provide guidance, support, and advocacy, helping women navigate and advance in their academic careers.

- Foster an environment where open discussions about gender issues and inclusivity are encouraged. Regular forums, workshops, and seminars can help raise awareness, promote understanding, and build a more inclusive campus culture.
- Regularly review and update institutional policies to ensure they support gender parity. This includes policies related to work-life balance, parental leave, and flexible working arrangements, which are crucial for retaining and supporting female faculty.
- Conduct additional research to explore the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. This will provide a more nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by faculty and inform more targeted interventions.
- Critical Mass Theory Kanter (1977) can be followed

A critical mass (at least 30%) of women in leadership positions leads to meaningful institutional change.

Application in Higher Education: Institutions should actively recruit and retain female faculty in leadership roles to foster gender parity.

- Glass Ceiling Theory Morrison & von Glinow (1990) can be implemented

Invisible barriers prevent women from advancing to senior positions.

Application in Higher Education: Institutions should implement mentorship, sponsorship, and networking opportunities to help women overcome structural barriers in academia.

Morrison & von Glinow (1990). Women and Minorities in Management.

4.5. PATTERNS AND RELATIONSHIP

- The study found no significant difference in attitudes towards inclusive practices between male and female faculty. This indicates that both groups, on average, hold similar views on the importance and benefits of inclusive practices.
- Female faculty members perceive the environment as more inclusive and believe that inclusive practices in the workplace will contribute to their career growth. This suggests that women faculty members are more likely to recognize and value the positive impact of inclusive practices on gender parity.
- The study indicates a statistically significant difference in unconscious bias levels between male and female faculty members, with males exhibiting higher levels of unconscious bias. This disparity in unconscious bias could potentially affect gender equity in academic processes such as hiring, promotion, and evaluation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of inclusive practices on gender parity among faculty members in urban Bangalore, India, revealing a complex interplay of progress and persistent challenges. While women and men have similar personal attitudes toward inclusivity, there are notable differences between how societal norms are perceived to influence them and how inclusiveness is actually

experienced. Male faculty members reported that societal norms had a greater influence on their acceptance of inclusive practices, suggesting that external pressures greatly influenced their opinions. In contrast, female faculty members dropped hope that the institution would implement inclusive practices despite the influence of society; they believe that integrating inclusive practices will help them advance in their careers, but their expectations on the institution to do so has decreased over time, possibly because they feel neglected.

The study also highlighted a significant disparity in unconscious bias, with male faculty members exhibiting higher levels, potentially hindering women's advancement opportunities. Practically, these results underscore the need for targeted interventions to foster gender parity. Institutions should prioritize gender-sensitive training to mitigate unconscious biases and promote equitable practices. Implementing clear, transparent policies in hiring and promotion, alongside mentorship programs for female faculty, can create a more supportive and equitable environment. Encouraging open dialogues about gender issues and regularly updating institutional policies will further embed inclusivity into the academic culture. By addressing these factors, institutions can make substantial progress towards gender parity by inclusive practices, ensuring equitable opportunities for all faculty members.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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