

Perception of Healthcare Professionals about Gender Inequality in Research

*¹Jamuna Rani.R and ²Dr. Latha Venkatesan

¹Reader, Apollo College of Nursing, Chennai

²Principal, AIIMS, College of Nursing, New Delhi

Abstract

Purpose: In India, especially the woman researchers face different types of gender discriminations which may affect their overall performance in carrying out research activities to uplift their career. This study sought to assess the perception of healthcare professionals about gender inequality in research.

Design and Methods: Survey approach with Descriptive Research Design adopted for conducting this study. The study was conducted in selected organizations in Chennai. The sample included 33 healthcare professionals, who were selected using purposive sampling technique. The data was collected using Proforma to collect Background Characteristics of healthcare professionals and Rating Scale on Gender Inequality in Research through self-administration method. The data was collected through online Google survey method.

Results: Thirty-three respondents were included in the present analysis. The result revealed that most of the healthcare professionals strongly disagreed (34%) about the existence of gender inequality in research.

Conclusion: There is no statistical significance with age and the educational qualification of the respondents to perception on gender inequality in research. The physiological aspects of a women have an impact on her performance in the field of research.

Keywords: Perception, healthcare professionals, gender inequality, disparity

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*Author's Correspondence


👤 Jamuna Rani.R

📍 Reader, Apollo College of Nursing, Chennai

✉ jamunapsg@gmail.com

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Introduction

"A gender-equal society would be one where the word 'gender' does not exist: where everyone can be themselves."¹

— Gloria Steinem

Gender inequality is a complex construct. Gender inequality exists as far as men disproportionately hold the position of power and influence in the society.² Now a days, women are working professionals in different fields. Process of transformation in terms of perception of women is rather slow in many countries; it will take time to change.³

Women normally are considered as the vulnerable group in the society. The male dominance at home, work place and currently in the field of research is high to the core. This study aims in assessing the perception of healthcare professionals on gender inequality in research. The study intended to reveal the various gender inequalities faced by them in and outside the research field.

Statement of the Problem

A Descriptive Study to assess the Perception of Healthcare Professionals about Gender Inequality in research at selected organization in Chennai.

Objectives

1. To assess the perception of healthcare professionals about gender inequality in research.
2. To find out association between selected demographic variables and perception of healthcare professionals about gender inequality in research.

Research Methodology

Survey approach with Descriptive Research Design was adopted for conducting this study. The study was conducted in selected organizations in Chennai. The samples were 33 healthcare professionals which includes doctors, nurses, allied health workers both in academics and hospitals, who were selected using purposive sampling technique. The data was collected using proforma on background characteristics of healthcare professionals and Rating Scale on Gender Inequality in Research through self-administration method. The Rating Scale on Gender Inequality in research consists of 35 items divided into 10 aspects namely physiological aspects, job opportunities, religious factor, social and cultural factors, economic aspect, press and media, teachers/guides, organization/officials, feelings of family and public outlook. The content validity of the tool was obtained through 15 experts in the field of medicine, nursing and allied sciences. The modifications and suggestions of expert were incorporated in the tool. The reliability of the data collection tool was tested for its internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha (α) and the r-value was 0.999, which shows the reliability and stability of the tool.

The study was conducted after obtaining permission from the Ethics Committee of Apollo College of Nursing, Chennai. An assurance was given regarding the confidentiality of data collected. The data was collected through online Google survey method.

Results and Discussion

A total of 33 respondents were surveyed the frequency and percentage distribution for selected characteristics is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables.
N=33

Demographical Variables	f	%
Age in years		
20-30	13	39.4
31-40	11	33.3
41-50	7	21.2
>51	2	6.1
Gender		
Male	4	12.1
Female	29	87.9
Educational Qualification		
Baccalaureate	6	18.2
Masters	26	78.8
Doctoral	1	3.0
Marital status		
Married	27	81.8
Unmarried	6	18.2
Number of children		
No children	10	30.3
One	13	39.4
Two	10	30.3
Type of Family		
Nuclear	24	72.7

Joint	9	27.3
Area of Residence		
Rural	3	9.1
Urban	30	90.9
Working Sector		
Government	4	12.1
Private	29	87.9
Family Income(in Rupees)		
10000 -30000	18	54.5
31000-50000	12	36.4
51000-70000	1	3.0
71000-90000	2	6.0

Table 1 reveals most of the respondents were in the age group of 20-30 years (39.4%), females (87.9%), with masters qualification (78.8%), with 81.8% married with one child (39.4%) living in rural area (72.7%) from urban area (87.9%) working in private concern (87.9%) with monthly income of Rs.10,000-30,000 (54.5%), married (81.8%), with one children(39.3%), living in nuclear family (72.7%), from urban area (90.9%), belongs to Hindu religion (72.7%).

Fig. 1 reveals most of the respondents (36%) agreed that physiological aspects of a women interfere with her performance in the field of research. Almost half (45%) strongly disagreed on the gender-based disparity in job opportunities. Most of the healthcare professionals strongly disagreed gender inequality in terms of religion (35%), social and cultural acceptance of women in the field of research (35%), economic aspects of women (37.4%), press and media influence on gender bias (37.4%). Half of the respondents (47.51%) strongly disagreed on gender preference to male is more than that of female in research. Most of the healthcare professionals perceived (31.2%) that there is no preference shown by officials in the organization based on gender. About 29.7% of respondents felt that the public outlook towards female’s participation in research shows disparity in terms of gender. About 43% strongly disagreed on family influence on females participating in research.

Fig. 2 shows most of healthcare professionals strongly disagreed (34%) about gender inequality in research.

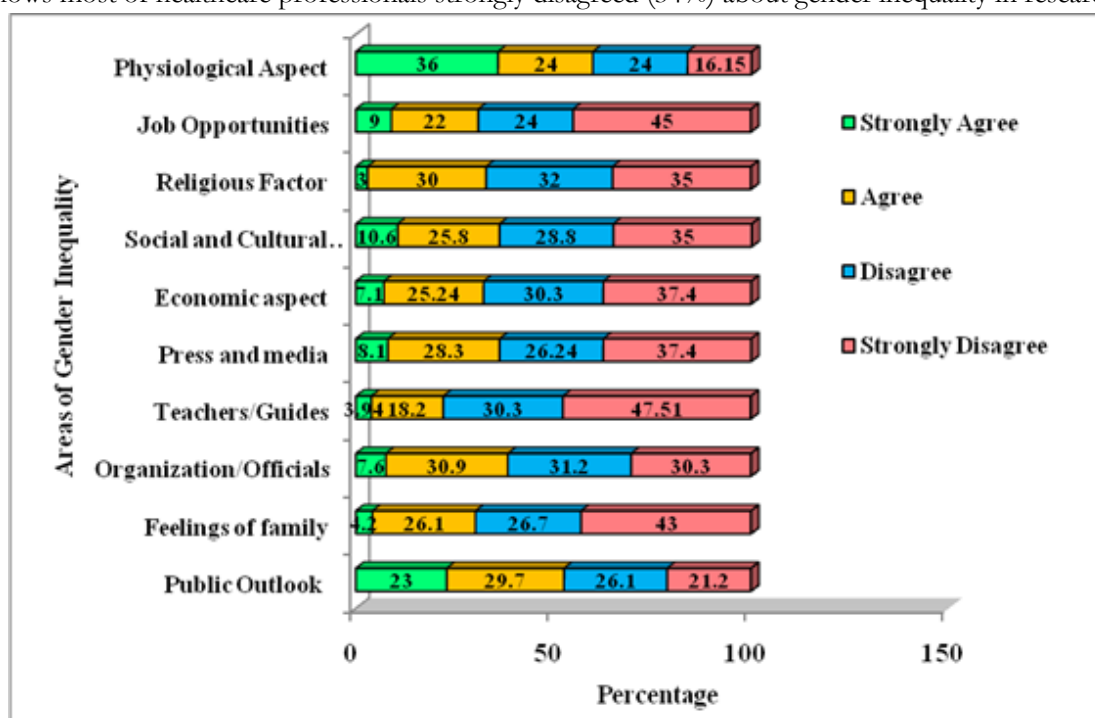


Fig.1: Percentage Distribution of Areas of Gender Inequality in Research.

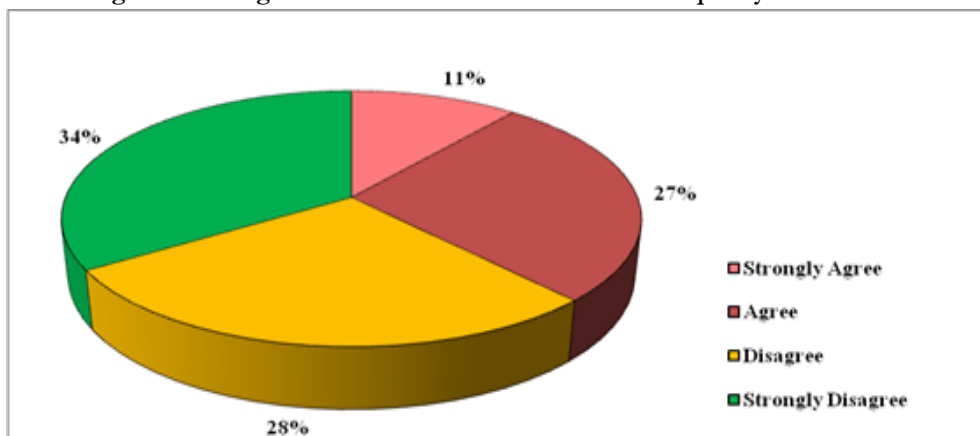


Fig.2: Percentage Distribution of Perception of Healthcare Professionals about Gender Inequality in Research.

Discussion

Gender inequality and age has a relation at workplace, about (39.4%) of respondents were in the age group of 20-30 years, females (88%). Workers in the age group of 30 – 40 years report comparatively little levels of perceived age-based inequity when compared to older or younger workers. At all ages, women are notably more likely to face any gender- or age-based inequity than men, but the space is large among workers in the age of 40 years.⁴

Females perceive that they are not equivalent to males in terms of opportunities. About 88% of females, with master’s qualification (78.8%), working in private concern (87.9 %) stated that gender inequality does not exist in terms of recruitment or any other opportunities but has responded it exists during the recruitment either for job or for the research projects. An equivalent study supports the finding that the gender inequality persists in the recruitment of Medical Scientist Research Programs as women undervalue their capability in comparison to the males.⁵

Literature on children and adolescents attends to show differences between girls and boys from their school which results in high school completion, enrolment in post secondary education.⁶ Education is the best tool with all women to have equal opportunities in research. In this study majority of the respondents were with master’s qualification and disagreed with gender inequality in the field of research.

The first objective was to assess the perception of healthcare professionals about gender inequality in research and the finding shows 34% of healthcare professionals perceive there is no gender difference exists in research area. Research on gender inequality in organizations reveals the unexposed areas of disparity. In this study about 30.3% of respondents disagreed on gender discrimination. Despite many changes happening in the society with perspectives on gender equality in recent decades, female remain under represented in terms of the voice of power and positions.⁷

The perception of teacher and guide about gender inequality (48%) also adds on to equality among the gender as the approach by teacher was non-biased. The feelings of the family (43%) disagree on inequality amongst the gender.

The second objective was to find out association between selected demographic variables and perception of healthcare professionals about gender inequality in research and the findings reveal that there is no statistical significance with regard to age and the educational qualification of the respondents to perception on gender inequality in research as the χ^2 is 1.456 and 1.14 at $p < 0.05$ respectively.

Most of healthcare professionals strongly disagreed (34%) about gender inequality in research. Although the number of women-graduates with a doctoral degree of sciences increased from 15% to 52% within 1969 – 2009, the share of women at professorial level achieves only 18% according to Education Rankings & Advice⁸. Women perceive that educational achievements with family support enables her to perform to the best of her ability in any given field. It is only with self to perceive how best they are in comparison to men in the field of research.

Conclusion

This study provides an excellent framework to look at how healthcare professionals perceive about gender inequality in research with respect to physiological aspects of females, the outlook of public about them and the approach of officials in an organization. Gender inequality exists in almost all professions but the women education has helped her to compete in this challenging world.

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