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GENDER EQUALITY – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY AMONG LAW SCHOOL GRADUATES

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Abstract:

Students experience a rational challenge, motivation, and accomplishment in their Law school. A law school transforms an energetic youth student into a professional lawyer who has concern towards their society. Similarly, it is a place for training and grooming a professional. A lawyer from such an educational background works towards a change in the society and growth of the country. There is a perception that men and women students undergo different experiences during their legal education. This study was an attempt to find out the difference in the level of participation of male and female students in law school and satisfaction towards their profession and also aims to find out whether gender differences exists among law school students.

KEYWORDS:

gender differences, lawyer, legal education, satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION:

“Legal Education is essentially a multi-disciplined, multi-purpose education which can develop the human resources and idealism needed to strengthen the legal system”. A lawyer, a product of such education would be able to contribute to national development and social change in a much more constructive manner¹. Prior 1987, Indian legal education was traditionally offered as a three years graduate degree. Today, law degrees in India are granted and conferred in terms of the [Advocates Act, 1961](#), which is a law passed by the [Parliament](#) both on the aspect of legal education and also regulation of conduct of legal profession. Under the Act, the [Bar Council of India](#) is the supreme regulatory body to regulate the legal profession in India and also to ensure the compliance of the laws and maintenance of professional standards by the legal profession in the country. However, with effect from December 2010, all fresh law graduates or those who have already cleared their law graduation but have not yet enrolled with the bar council must clear a bar examination to be entitled to practice before courts or tribunals in India.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Many studies have examined the law school experiences of the students. Some of the important reviews are listed below to give an outline for this study:

Adam Neufeld, Charlotte Sanders & Catherine Wiik (2005)², found that, law school is a different place for men than for some women. Those differences may shape women's academic performance and feelings of social connectedness and change some women's behavior and self – image over their time at the school. They have also added that women undergo more stress than male law students. Lani Guinier(1994)³, states that, women volunteer speak in class less frequently than men and the law

school classroom is more hostile to women than to men, and that women otherwise experience disadvantage in the law school environment.

Celestial S.D. Cassman & Lisa R. Pruitt (2005)⁴, has identified in their research that Gender was also a significant predictor of students' comfort levels with interacting with professors outside of class. Men tended to be more comfortable than women with visiting professors during office hours and stopping by professors offices without an appointment. On average, men also reported being more comfortable than women with approaching professors after class or during breaks, as well as with telephoning professors Cooper, M.J.Brockman & I.Hoffart (2004)⁵, states that recent research suggests that while there is evidence of progress, ongoing bias may prevent women and diverse groups from entering the profession and advancing to positions of power where they might affect meaningful changes to the culture of legal profession.

Melissa Castan, Jeannie Paterson, Paul Richardson, Helen Watt and Maryanne Dever (2010)⁶, has found in their study that the expectations of incoming male and female law students were similar; in fact, the data suggest that they were similar, even for most categories of career expectations. They have also added that it is less clear that students have a realistic understanding of what it means to practice law on completion of their degree.

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY:

On reviewing the previous studies, it is clear that gender differences persist right from the law school environment. So it is necessary to study the reasons and dimensions where in gender inequalities start. More over the studies that talk about law school experiences are all foreign studies and there are only few studies regarding the experiences of law school students have been done in India. It is to be noted here that gender inequalities exists even in western countries, it is not surprising to happen in a country like India. Thus, it is essential to study the experiences of Indian law students' to understand the prevalence of gender equalities.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of the study are

- 1 To ascertain variations in the participation level of students in their class rooms.
- 2 To find out whether students face discrimination in their class.
- 3 To determine their level of satisfaction towards legal education.

5. METHODOLOGY:

This study was conducted among the law school students of Salem Law College, Tamilnadu. Descriptive research was adopted for the study in the form of structured questionnaire which focused on the academics, extracurricular activities, class room participation and satisfaction towards legal education. Both primary and secondary data have been used for conducting the research. Primary data have been collected by using direct interview and questionnaire method. The secondary data have been collected through text books, journals and web references. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the samples. Samples size is limited to 500 respondents, which includes 205 female and 295 male students.

5.1 DATA ANALYSIS

The data which was collected has been analyzed using Chi – Square test and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance).

5.1.1 Chi – Square Test:

A Chi-Square-test was conducted on the dependent and independent variables to identify the statistically significant constructs (if any). The Null and Alternate hypothesis were framed and results were drawn with 0.05 significance value.

Chi – Square test is used to check on the relationship between the below two variables

(i) Relationship between gender and

- class room participation,
- ask doubts in class,
- comfortableness of students with faculties of opposite gender,
- Do faculties treat students based on their gender?
- Whether faculties are biased towards women and
- Whether they have been neglected based on their gender.

(ii) The same Test is applied to find on the relationship between the family members in legal profession and
 · Whether they have been a member or organizer of extracurricular activity during their legal education.

· Choice of career

(i) Test 1:

NULL HYPOTHESIS HO: There is no relationship between gender and class room participation, ask doubts in class, comfort of students with faculties of opposite gender, whether law school teachers are biased towards women and whether they have been neglected based on their gender.

ALTER NATIVE HYPOTHESIS H1: There is close relationship between gender and class room participation, asking doubts in class, comfortableness of students with faculties of opposite gender, whether law school teachers are biased towards women and whether they have been neglected based on their gender.

Table 1, Chi – Square Test

S. No	Factors	Calculated value	Degree of freedom	Table value	Significance
1.	Class room participation	166.700	4	9.488	Significant
2.	Ask doubts in class	238.220	4	9.488	Significant
3.	Comfortable with faculties of opposite gender	0.008	1	3.841	Non Significant
4.	Law school teachers treat based on gender	30.752	1	3.841	Significant
5.	Biased towards women	228.488	1	3.841	Significant
6.	Feeling Neglected	511.168	2	5.991	Significant

INFERENCE:

Table 1 shows that there is relationship between gender and classroom participation, asking doubts in class, Law school teachers treat based on gender, faculties are biased towards women and they have been neglected based on their gender. This reveals that though men and women come from the same educational environment, they undergo different experience.

1. CLASS ROOM PARTICIPATION: The diversity start right from the volunteered participation in class, which is the first factor taken here. Female students were less likely than male students to ask questions in class frequently. Being law students the students, which highly requires active participation; students should come up and engage in the activities irrespective of their gender.

2. ASK DOUBTS IN CLASS: When we analyze the factor 'asking doubts in classroom', it's inferred that women students are not willing to ask their queries to their faculties, which has a negative impact on their academic performance. It is because of the lack of confidence to raise questions in a crowd.

3. FACULTY TREAT BASED ON GENDER: As there is significant relationship between gender and faculty treat based on gender. This discloses that law school teachers treat the students based on their gender. Hence this should be considered in order to have an identical environment for all the students.

4. BIASED TOWARDS WOMEN: When the law school teachers are biased towards women it creates a space between the law school teachers and the students. Thus the faculties should pay equal attention to all the students such that they feel comfortable and so they actively participate.

5. NEGLECTED: It's a human tendency that when individuals are neglected they get degraded and it will reflect on their overall performance; so in order to avoid this circumstances students should be treated equally irrespective of their gender.

5. COMFORTABLE WITH LAW SCHOOL TEACHERS OF OPPOSITE GENDER: From the table it's inferred that gender do not have significant association between relations with faculties of opposite gender. Students are pleased with faculties of opposite gender.

(ii) Test 2:

Null hypothesis Ho: There is no relationship between family members in legal profession and representative during their legal education and choice of career.

Alternative hypothesis H1: There is close relationship between family members in legal profession and representative during their legal education and choice of career.

Table 2, Chi – Square Test

S. No	Factors	Calculated value	Degree of freedom	Table value	Significance
1.	Leader Representative /	1044 .800	4	9.488	Significant
2.	Choice of career	184 .432	3	7.815	Significant

INFERENCE: Table 2 reveals that there exists bond between family members in legal profession and acted as a representative during their legal education and an intended career.

1. Leader / Representative This proves that students from legal profession ambience have a well planned career option and a deliberate participation during their academics. Thus it is concluded that students from legal background are aware of the situation that prevails in the respective field.

2. Choice of career: As choice of career has relationship with the family members in legal profession, it's clear that students belonging to legal profession family have a vision towards the profession. Majority of the respondent's choice of career was academics.

5.1.2. ANOVA

ANOVA is used for testing the difference among different groups of data for homogeneity.

It is a collection of statistical models and their associated procedures, in which the observed variance in a particular variable is partitioned into components attributable to different sources of variation.

HYPOTHESIS: ANOVA is carried out here in order to identify the relationship between gender and analyzing legal issues, quantitative reasoning skills and academic performance.

Table 2 – ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Legal issues	Between Groups	1.801	1	1.801	28.380	.000
	Within Groups	31.607	498	.063		
	Total	33.408	499			
Quantitative reasoning	Between Groups	6.303	1	6.303	6.010	.015
	Within Groups	522.215	498	1.049		
	Total	528.518	499			
Academics	Between Groups	24.190	1	24.190	31.834	.000
	Within Groups	378.408	498	.760		
	Total	402.598	499			

INFERENCE:

(I) LEGAL ISSUES: At 5% significance, tabulated F value for 28 and 1 degree of freedom is 0.000. Thus, calculated value of F (28.380) is greater than the critical value of F (0.000). So the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is significant relationship between analyzing legal issues and gender. It is inferred from the results that both male and female students are good at analyzing legal issues.

(II) QUANTITATIVE REASONING: At 5% significance, tabulated value for 6 and 1 degree of freedom is .015. Thus, calculated value of F (6.010) is greater than the critical value of F (0.015). So the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is significant relationship between analyzing legal issues and gender. It is been found from the responses of the students that male students are good at quantitative reasoning compared to female students.

(III) ACADEMICS: At 5% significance tabulated F value for 31 and 1 degree of freedom is 0.000. Thus, calculated value of F (31.834) is greater than the critical value of F (0.000). So the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is significant relationship between academic performance and gender. Academic performances also indicate male students are better performers than female students.

6. DISCUSSIONS:

A questionnaire investigating about the demographic variables, class room participation, extracurricular activities, legal skills, quantitative reasoning, academic performances, career options, gender discrimination, part time employment, satisfaction towards legal education were circulated among the final year law students. The question exploring about hostility from the class mates of opposite gender, had an optimistic result that none had the occurrence of such circumstances. 76% of students concur that passion towards legal profession was the motive of choosing law as their career. This shows their self interest towards this noble profession. When they were asked whether they will re – choose the profession if they were given an option, 54% of the students responded that they will not prefer to change their profession. This shows their level of satisfaction and zeal towards the profession. On asking whether they would recommend this profession to their friends, 67% of the respondents agreed to suggest the profession.

7. CONCLUSION

As legal education is the base to create a responsible lawyer to the society, this study tries to throw light on the gender differences in law school environment. Gender plays a significant role in the dimension of students experience at law school. So it is necessary to focus not only on the gender differences but also on the possible broader issues of which gender differences may be a manifestation. Efforts should be taken to reassess the practices of law schools to ensure that all students can maximally contribute to and gain from the academic experience. Future studies can focus more deeply on the ways to reduce the participation gap among the students and about the quality of education.

“Legal education is an investment, which if wisely made will produce most beneficial results for the nation and accelerate the pace of development.”

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