Impact of Gender Diversity and Equality Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, different organisations worldwide started emphasising gender diversity and equality. Different initiatives have been proposed [Figure 1] to bring women on board, especially in STEM. To understand the impact of these initiatives, ACM-W UK conducted a survey from which the following insights can be drawn:

1. *Importance of role models*: 53% of respondents have shown strong emphasis that role models play an important role in their career, and other 47% respondents were positive that role models would change their perceptions towards STEM field.

2. *Importance of mentoring*: 33% of respondents strongly agree when asked whether they would like to have a mentor, other 48% agree on "probably yes", and 14% gave response "may be". This clearly shows that there is a need of strong mentoring program.

3. *Importance of gender diversity in the work place*: 94% of respondents agree on importance of gender diversity.

4. *Training in gender equality*: 63% of the respondents put forward the importance of training in gender equality and diversity at an organisational level.

5. *Persistence of gender stereotypes*: 87% of respondents agree that gender stereotypes do exist in our society. Nevertheless, the respondents confirmed their willingness not to let these stereotypes affect their career progression and their career choice.

6. *Difference in the skill set*: When we ask about whether men and women do have difference in their skill set, the result of this is opposite to what we expected. 63% of respondents reply "no" to this question, which means they think men and women bring same skill set to an organisation and they should not be differentiated based on their gender.

7. *Un-easiness in one gender dominated area*: 77% of respondents agree that they feel uncomfortable if either males or females dominate a workspace.

8. *Gender-based quota in organisations*: This is an interesting result, 65% of respondent disagree that there is a need of gender-based quota in organisations.

Through this poster we will present summaries of our current findings and recommendations for STEM and computing fields to increase female numbers in their programs, such as:

1) Create programs to encourage women to study engineering.

2) Develop mentoring programs for school students. Having engineers to come in and do talks.
3) Promote women visibility as role models through social media – Facebook, forums, Youtube channels etc., efficiently.
4) Build strong peer support network for participants [Bhatia, 2010].
5) Address barriers of isolation and lack of successful women role models at the graduate level.

According to World Bank report, women make 40% of the total work force globally in 2012, where we see women becoming assertive and more empowered today. This new system also brings forward new cultural tensions in force. New policies are needed to facilitate to allow women earn respect of their peers. Recent studies [Hunt], have shown women leave engineering naturally via family issues or more. We argue that policies should help family support, hard work and ambition for nurturing young females.
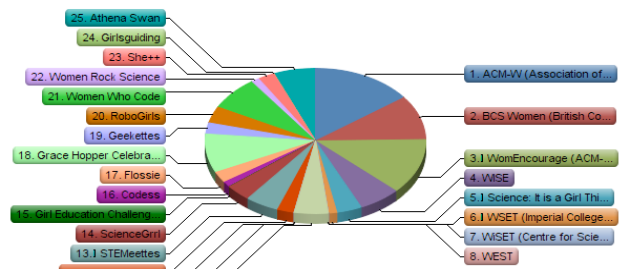

Figure 1. Awareness ratio of different initiatives

Information about respondents: The age groups 20-40 years (94%) and 71% are female, Countries (UK and Europe), Universities (Education 56%, Medicine 1%, IT & Computers 50%), Comprises of Undergraduate, Master and PhD, Research Associates and Lecturers and Senior Lecturers. Science 50%, Technology 56%, Engineering 38 %.

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