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Challenges and Impediments faced by Women College Teachers in Madurai District

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Abstract

While the teachers in higher education are provided with academic rights and freedom, they are expected to maintain certain standards of responsible professional conduct and growth; otherwise, academic mission established for the progress of society will be at stake. They have to necessarily understand their role of enhancing learning among the students, extending their knowledge of the subject constantly, conducting research in their field to promote utilitarian purpose of education and finally getting awarded for all their service and research in due means. Also, the role of college teachers has changed from mere teaching to curriculum designing, research, publication, e-content writing, conducting online classes, collaborative research, exchange programme, extension activity, add-on/certificate course designing, arranging internship, etc. They have to necessarily come out of their comfort zone; many college teachers find it really challenging to accomplish this change in role expectations while some cross those impediments and emerge achievers. The plight of women college teachers is more challenging and particular due to their gender and the discrimination based on that. The present research proposes to study the challenges and impediments faced by women college teachers in Madurai district from women's perspective. About 40 women teachers from a Government, a Government-Aided and a Self-financing Arts and Science Colleges are selected for the study and the findings through administering of questionnaire are analysed in this paper.

Keywords: Women College Teachers, Change in Role Expectations, Challenges, Impediments

Justification of the Problem



Collegiate teaching is identified as a “Meta-Profession” expecting the teachers to be performing the following activities in addition to the regular teaching: “advising, curriculum development, assessment, service, administration, leadership, team membership, strategic planning, communication, and entrepreneurship” (Arreola 2000). The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has the same as its vision: “To make quality the defining element of higher education in India through a combination of self and external quality evaluation, promotion and sustenance initiatives” (naac.gov.in) by assessing the Higher Education Institutes based on the seven criteria (as shown in the picture) which necessitate the contribution of the college teachers by greater efforts. While all teachers face many different but new challenges women college teachers encounter the same challenges in a different way, due to the gender roles expected of them.

Google Form questionnaire containing 40 statements regarding the challenges and impediments was administered to randomly selected 50 women teachers from 3 colleges in Madurai district; however, only 39 responded; 12 are from a government college (sub-urban), 15 from a government-aided (Madurai city) and another 12 from a self-financing college (sub-urban).

Literature Review

Taorem Surendra Singh's "A Critical Study on the Problems faced by Women Teachers of Government Colleges within Imphal Urban Area, Manipur" (2017) studied lack of security, material amenities like hostel, quarters, transport, medical facilities and lack of support from the families as problems faced by women college teachers. Lakshmi Chopra's paper "A Study of Problems of Women Teachers in School of Amritsar City" (2018) focused on financial problems, administration problems, personal, social status, teacher education, working conditions and work load, evaluation problem areas comparing the government and private school women teachers. "Teachers' Level of Awareness of 21st Century Occupational Roles in Rivers State Secondary Schools" (2016) is an investigation done to study the teachers' level of awareness of 21st century occupational roles in Rivers state secondary schools by Chineze M. Uche and others.

Materials & Methods

Normative survey approach is selected as method of research because it is in accordance with the

requirements of the problem. The main tool used for the study was questionnaire schedule which was constructed by the researcher after having conducted pre-tests through face-to-face interview. The structured questionnaire was to be shared with the selected women college teachers in select colleges of Madurai District and hence "Google Form Questionnaire" was designed to facilitate the data collection in an easy and accurate way. But for the personal data, the other statements are prepared using 5 Points Likert Scale. The data obtained from the questionnaire schedule were analysed through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The interpretations were done qualitatively and quantitatively.

Likert Scale Range: (4.20-5 Strongly Agree); (3.40-4.19 Agree); (2.60-3.39 Neutral) (1.80-2.59 Disagree); (1.00-1.79 Strongly Disagree)

Attitude Mean: 2.50 (Positive Response—Favourable) <2.50 (Negative Response—Unfavourable)

Findings & Discussions

As it is observed by the research on "A Study on Impacts and Challenge of Women in Teaching Profession", "Women and 'feminization' of the teaching profession has been associated with nations where women make up a considerable portion teaching force" (Sundari 2018). The Table 1 reveals the same with Indian and particularly Madurai District scenario

Table 1: Personal Profile of Women College Teachers in Madurai District

Variable	Details		
		Number	Percentage
Type of Institution	Government	12	30.76
	Government-Aided	15	38.46
	Self-Financing	12	30.76
Current Position	Assistant Professor	29	74.36
	Assistant Professor & Head	03	7.69
	Assistant Professor (Senior)	03	7.69
	Assistant Professor (Selection Grade)	01	2.57
	Associate Professor	02	5.13
	Associate Professor & Head	01	2.56
Average Age	41.89 years		



Marital Status	Unmarried	04	10.25
	Married	35	89.75
Residential Status	Own House	37	94.87
	Outside Hostel	02	5.13
Average Distance from the institution	10.04 kms		
Type of Family	Joint Family	12	30.77
	Nuclear Family	23	58.97
	Single Parent	02	5.13
	Others	02	5.13
Religion	Hindu	35	89.75
	Muslim	03	7.69
	Christian	01	2.56
Occupation of the Spouse	Professor	09	23.08
	School Teacher	01	2.56
	Business	04	10.25
	IT	01	2.56
	Banking	02	5.13
	Engineer	03	7.69
	Lawyer	04	10.25
	Others	11	28.23
	Unmarried	04	10.25
Number of Children	1 Child Family	06	15.38
	2 Children Family	27	69.24
	3 Children Family	02	5.13
	Unmarried	04	10.25
Total Number of Respondents: 39			

About the teaching community. Of the 39 respondents (50 selected and only 39 responded), the percentage of women working in Government colleges is 30.76 and Government-Aided is 38.46 and Self-financing is 30.76. Moreover, the average age of the respondents (41.89 years) makes one understand that college teaching is a recent professional choice of young women too and is also steadily being feminised. For this reason, the percentage of women teachers at Government, Government-Aided and Self-financing colleges are on par with one another. It is also understood that the possibility of gender bender among women has enhanced their population in self-financing colleges.

It is also deciphered from the above Table that most of the women teachers (74.36%) are positioned as Assistant Professors, while only 7.69% of Assistant

Professors and 2.56% of Associate Professors are Heads of the Departments; this is mainly due to the delay in career advancements and also due to gender discrimination. Women are not prioritised for the administrative leadership.

It is inferred that 89.75%, a greater majority of women are married and almost all (94.87%) own a house; this shows that a prosperous and peaceful married life is assured by the women's profession as a college teacher. Only a negligible number (10.25%) are unmarried and others have high profile spouses namely 23.08% of professors, 28.23% of professionals other than school teacher, lawyer, businessmen, banking, etc. 69.24% has two children and 15.38% one child and a minimum of 5.13% has three children; this reveals the small and planned family of the respondents. The average distance of

their residence from their institutions (10.04 kms) also proves that they do plan about reaching the workplace on time without much problem. Hence, economical affluence and harmonious family support are secured for women college teachers. This will definitely get reflected in their effective professional abilities and definite achievements.

It is relevant to quote here the population growth of the three major religious groups in India: "Though religious groups grew at uneven rates between 1951 and 2011, every major religion in India saw its numbers rise. For example, Hindus increased from 304 million (30.4 crore) to 966 million (96.6 crore), Muslims grew from 35 million (3.5 crore) to 172 million (17.2 crore), and the number of Indians who say they are Christian rose from 8 million (0.8 crore) to 28 million (2.8 crore)" (Kramer 2021). This is to compare the relative religious group employment in collegiate teaching too: 89.75% are Hindus, 7.69% are Muslims and 2.56% are Christians, which is in direct proportion to the religious group population of India.

Table 1 thus gives a study of personal profile of women college teachers making it clear that many women prefer college teaching and are happy with their choice. However, as it is said by the CEO of Oxfam India, "The inequality in the labour market for gender and other social categories...is not just due to poor access to education or work experience but because of discrimination" (2022). It is also true that the role expected to be played by the women college teachers is ever-changing with plurality ascribed. Development in the field of higher education has not only brought women into the main stream but also necessitated their encountering of departmental rivalries, personality clashes, administrative bottle necks, fights over workloads, work-life balance and much more issues and discrimination, which are professional generic and gender specific.

Tables 2 and 3 bring out the weightage means

of responses to statements regarding the study of attitudes of respondents to the challenges and impediments faced by women college teachers selected for the study. Challenges are within the purview of the women college teachers with regard to their gender and hence biological and personal. Impediments are from the world around being imposed on women college teachers taking their gender for granted in terms of injustice and discrimination.

Regarding the 21 statements in Table 2 on the challenges in their professional life, the overall weightage mean is 3.01 which, according to the attitude mean is above 2.50, meaning that the respondents are in agreement with the challenges faced by them in their profession. For 7 of the 21 statements (S2, S5, S6, S7, S8, S15 & S20) they agree completely, for women always try to be punctual to work and they take up the responsibility of dropping their children at their schools; using their own vehicles they thus manage time. It is reasoned out: "A survey by leading watch maker Citizen Watch Co. Ltd. suggests women may be even more punctual than men, Reuters reported. It found female workers in Tokyo tend to set their watches two or more minutes ahead, while men usually set theirs to the exact time, Kyodo news agency said. The difference in time-setting habits 'may indicate that women are more mindful of punctuality,' Kyodo quoted a Citizen watch official as saying" (Tehran Times). While they agree that (S5) that the restrooms are at an accessible distance they are neutral about the sufficiency of sanitary facilities available on campus (S3), the most-needed basic amenity. It is disheartening to note that these educated women agree that most of the colleges do not have separate toilets for men and women (S8). They disagree with the only statement (S4) verifying the availability of sanitary napkins and incinerators; in total, this shows their ardent need for privacy and hygiene.

Table 2: Challenges faced by Women College Teachers in Madurai District

No.	Statement	Weightage Mean	Interpretation
S1	Women college teachers are not consulted before being allotted any academic duty.	3.23	Neutral
S2	Women college teachers need to drop their child/children at school before reaching their college.	3.46	Agree

S3	Sanitary facilities on campus are sufficient for women college teachers.	2.97	Neutral
S4	Sanitary napkins and incinerators are available in the women's toilets.	2.49	Disagree
S5	Rest rooms / toilets are available at an accessible distance from the staff-room of the women college teachers.	3.72	Agree
S6	I go by my own vehicle to my college.	3.72	Agree
S7	I am always punctual to my college.	4.13	Agree
S8	Most of the colleges do not have separate toilet for men and women.	3.87	Agree
S9	When compared to their men colleagues the number of Refresher courses/Workshops attended by women college teachers is lesser in number.	2.77	Neutral
S10	When compared to men colleagues the number of papers published by women college teachers is lesser in number.	2.85	Neutral
S11	Women college teachers find the dress code prescribed by the college not comfortable.	3.36	Neutral
S12	Administrative responsibilities are always entrusted to men colleagues.	2.90	Neutral
S13	Women HODs are always called authoritative.	3.21	Neutral
S14	When a woman colleague happens to be an organizer of an academic programme meant for all teachers, men rarely turn up.	2.90	Neutral
S15	Many men colleagues volunteer to support when a woman organizes an academic programme.	3.51	Agree
S16	Most of the times women organisers are humiliated by men colleagues.	2.85	Neutral
S17	Compared to men colleagues, women college teachers are not awarded the funds required for their research projects from their college/from approved funding agencies.	3.03	Neutral
S18	Whenever students say "Prof" they meant only men colleagues.	3.00	Neutral
S19	Men colleagues are envious when students rate the classes of women college teachers better than theirs.	3.28	Neutral
S20	Women college teachers are denied of designing the course of their choice when it is preferred by another man colleague.	3.49	Agree
S21	Women college teachers are not preferred for academic awards common for all (both men and women).	3.33	Neutral
Overall Mean: 3.24 Neutral Attitude Mean is above 2.50 hence the respondents are FAVORABLE towards the statements accepting the challenges faced by women college teachers			

Likert Scale Range: (4.20-5 Strongly Agree); (3.40-4.19 Agree); (2.60-3.39 Neutral); (1.80-2.59 Disagree); (1.00-1.79 Strongly Disagree)
Attitude Mean: 2.50 (Positive Response—Favourable); <2.50 (Negative Response—Unfavourable)

Regarding men colleagues' voluntary support during organizing of events by women (S15) they agree; at the same time, they agree (S20) that they are denied of the chance of designing a course when any man colleague shows interest. Their neutral responses to the following statements, S9, S10, S11,

S12, S13, S14, S16, S17, S18, S19 and S21 reveal the slow but steady change in the gender discrimination experienced by women college teachers. They are able to serve as HODs, attend refresher courses, publish papers, receive support from men colleagues, fetch funds for research, obtain respect and reverence from students and colleagues, to become achievers by earning academic awards more or less on equal terms with men. Gender bias and discrimination are not faced by majority of the women college teachers. They find the dress code prescribed by the college (S11) not very much uncomfortable.

Table 3 analyses the responses to the statements regarding the impediments faced by women college teachers. They strongly agree the fact that women college teachers avail leave during the ill health of their family members (S33); it speaks about the gender roles expected of women in Madurai district. The impediments like non-availability of creche, college bus and on-campus hostel are affirmed by their responses to Statements 27, 31 and 39. There is also an understanding that women college teachers no more crumble about the impediments but have learnt to manage and adjust; this is inferred from their neutral responses to the statements on the

expectation of citation index (S38), visiting college during vacation (S37), discouragement from fellow women colleagues while applying for positions like Vice-Chancellor, Principal, etc (S36), non-availability of health care facilities on campus (S26 & S25), allotment of more number of classes (S22). Their neutral response to marriage and pregnancy as a block to career development (S28, S29), and, child-bearing not as a choice provided (S30). It shows that these women have learnt to balance work and life in better terms. However, they agree that there exist all these imposed impediments needed to be encountered and managed.

While agreeing that they do help their high officials by completing their share of the work (S32), they disagree that they are allotted a greater number of classes (S23). At the same time, they take neutral stand regarding the additional duties allotted to them outside the working hours (S24) revealing their readiness to work beyond the time. The need for a comfortable stay for outstation teachers on campus itself is also felt by them (S40) and they are open in agreeing how discrimination is encountered when men colleagues snatch their chance of applying for refresher courses by overtaking their opportunities.

Table 3: Impediments faced by Women College Teachers in Madurai District

No.	Statement	Weightage Mean	Interpretation
S22	Usually, women college teachers are allotted greater number of teaching hours.	2.79	Neutral
S23	I am allotted greater number of teaching hours.	2.26	Disagree
S24	I am allotted additional duties outside the working hours.	3.15	Neutral
S25	Women college teachers are provided with health care facility on the campus.	3.10	Neutral
S26	My college has health care facility on the campus.	3.10	Neutral
S27	My college has Child Care Centre/Creche on campus.	2.03	Disagree
S28	Women college teachers find marriage as a block in their academic journey.	2.64	Neutral
S29	Unintended pregnancy hinders the academic growth of women college teachers.	2.92	Neutral
S30	Childbearing is not given as a choice to women college teachers.	3.00	Neutral
S31	Women college teachers go by their college bus.	2.36	Disagree
S32	Women college teachers are expected to help their higher officials by completing the officials' share of academic work.	3.72	Agree

S33	Women college teachers need to avail leave during the illness of their family members.	4.31	Strongly Agree
S34	While applying for Refresher Courses/Workshops, women college teachers are unable to get priority over their men colleagues.	3.49	Agree
S35	When a woman applies for an administrative position like Principal/Vice-Chancellor, colleagues including women come out with discouraging and warning notes.	2.92	Neutral
S36	In a mixed setting, women are advised not to take up coordinating positions.	2.74	Neutral
S37	During vacation women college teachers are compelled to visit the college for other duties.	2.82	Neutral
S38	Women college teachers are expected to get citation indexes for their publications.	3.38	Neutral
S39	My college has a secured hostel facility for women teachers.	2.38	Disagree
S40	Outstation women college teachers have to depend on outside campus hostels.	3.77	Agree
Overall Mean: 2.99 Neutral Attitude Mean is above 2.50 hence the respondents are FAVORABLE towards the statements accepting the impediments faced by women college teachers			

Likert Scale Range: (4.20-5 Strongly Agree); (3.40-4.19 Agree); (2.60-3.39 Neutral);

(1.80-2.59 Disagree); (1.00-1.79 Strongly Disagree)

Attitude Mean: 2.50 (Positive Response—Favourable); < 2.50 (Negative Response—Unfavourable)

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the women college teachers in Madurai district are facing many challenges and impediments which really affect professional efficiency. They

- need basic amenities like sanitation, health care, transport facility, hostel facility, etc.
- need child rearing duty to be shared by other family members especially men and to be supplemented with on-campus creche
- want new challenges like research, publication, refresher courses to be considered with equal opportunities
- need consultation and personal consent before allotting any work during and after working hours
- need encouragement in organizing programmes, co-ordinating centres and obtaining leadership positions like HOD, Principal, Vice-Chancellor, etc.

If these needs and expectations are fulfilled, it is sure that women college teachers would become stronger and would be able to handle any adverse and stressful work atmosphere. It will ultimately help in the growth and development of the institutions to which they are affiliated to by fetching decent grading based on the seven criteria accreditation by NAAC.

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