

## A Study of Women's Participation in Academic Governance and Decision-Making in Higher Education with Reference to Pune City

**Dr. Anuja Ameya Dhorje**

Assistant Professor

MES Garware College of Commerce, Pune.

Mob:-9881134721

Email id:-anujadhhorje@gmail.com

### Abstract

Over the past few decades, there has been a notable growth in the participation of women in higher education. Despite these advancements, women are still underrepresented in positions of academic governance and decision-making, including institutional committees, academic councils, boards of studies, and university leadership. The degree to which women participate in academic governance and decision-making in Pune's higher education institutions is investigated in this study. The study investigates the obstacles that female academicians have while trying to gain leadership positions and take part in institutional governance procedures. Using primary and secondary data, the study employs a descriptive research methodology. Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data from female faculty members at particular Pune colleges and universities. Research articles, policy studies, and scholarly literature about gender equality in higher education governance were the sources of secondary data.

The results show that while women are now more represented in teaching roles, institutional, cultural, and structural impediments still prevent them from participating fully in decision-making bodies. Women's involvement in academic governance is influenced by a number of factors, including gender stereotypes, a lack of mentorship, a lack of leadership chances, and work-family obligations. In order to encourage gender-inclusive leadership and fair participation of women in academic governance, the report makes institutional and policy recommendations.

**Keywords:** Pune city, gender equality, higher education, women's leadership, academic governance, and decision-making.

### Introduction

Institutions of higher learning are vital hubs for innovation, knowledge production, and social change. In addition to disseminating knowledge, universities and colleges also mold governance, leadership, and policy frameworks that have an impact on society as a whole. The decision-making procedures that direct institutional operations, such as policy creation, curriculum development, academic planning, and administrative management, are referred to as academic governance. Academic councils, boards of studies, management councils, and

executive committees are examples of institutional entities that usually oversee these governance procedures.

Globally, women's participation in higher education has significantly expanded in recent decades. In many colleges nowadays, women make up a sizable share of faculty, researchers, and students. Nevertheless, despite these advancements, women are still underrepresented in leadership and academic governance roles. The "leadership gender gap" in higher education refers to the discrepancy between women's engagement in the academic workforce and their presence in decision-making roles.

Despite making up a sizable portion of academic personnel worldwide, women are notably underrepresented in positions of senior leadership. Research shows that although women make up roughly 44% of academic staff globally, they are only about 35% of tenured academics and 30% of university administrators. This decrease is a reflection of the ongoing vertical gender segregation in academia, where women are disproportionately found in mid- and lower-level posts but infrequently in positions of top control.

Women's underrepresentation in academic leadership is a governance concern as well as a statistical mismatch. More inclusive academic policies, enhanced institutional culture, and better decision-making are all facilitated by diverse leadership. Institutions run the danger of ignoring viewpoints that are essential for establishing fair learning environments when women are excluded from decision-making bodies.

According to research, institutional, cultural, and structural hurdles frequently prevent women from taking on leadership posts. Perceptions of leadership abilities are sometimes influenced by gender stereotypes and implicit biases, which usually link leadership traits to attributes that are typically associated with men. Because of this, women academicians may face challenges in their pursuit of leadership or governance responsibilities in universities.

The academic career structure itself is a significant element influencing women's involvement in governance. Long work hours, high standards for research productivity, administrative duties, and professional networking are common in academic jobs. These pressures frequently align with important life phases that disproportionately impact women, such as marriage, parenting, and family caregiving duties.

Academic leadership studies frequently address the "glass ceiling" phenomena. This idea refers to imperceptible obstacles that keep women from rising to high leadership positions even when they possess the required training and expertise. According to research, these obstacles are caused by male-dominated leadership networks, unconscious bias, and a lack of mentorship opportunities.

Women's participation in governance is influenced by societal and personal variables in addition to institutional impediments. In many societies, women are still expected to be the major caregivers and members of the family. These obligations may restrict the amount of

time available for leadership or administrative positions, which frequently call for extra activities outside of teaching and research.

In many regions of the world, the number of women in academic governance is steadily rising in spite of these obstacles. Universities have implemented policies to promote women's involvement in governance structures as they become more aware of the significance of gender equality in leadership. The goal of initiatives like diversity strategies, gender-inclusive policies, mentorship networks, and leadership development programs is to increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

Over the past few decades, higher education has grown significantly in India as well. Women now have more options to pursue careers in academia thanks to the growth of universities, colleges, and research facilities. Gender differences in leadership roles are still noticeable, though. Although they are underrepresented in administrative and governance posts like department chairs, deans, and vice-chancellors, female faculty members frequently hold teaching jobs.

Known as the "Oxford of the East," Pune is one of India's top centers for education. Numerous universities, independent colleges, and research facilities are located in the city, drawing scholars and students from all over the nation. Pune's dynamic academic climate makes it the perfect place to study women's involvement in academic governance and decision-making.

Creating institutional strategies that effectively advance gender equality in higher education requires an understanding of the factors influencing women's participation in governance. Increased female involvement in decision-making bodies can lead to better organizational culture, more inclusive governance, and greater policy outcomes. Therefore, the goal of the current study is to assess the level of women's involvement in academic governance in Pune city's higher education institutions, pinpoint the obstacles they encounter, and offer solutions to advance gender-inclusive leadership in academia.

### Objectives of the Study

The study's primary goals are:

- i. To assess how many women are involved in academic governance at universities.
- ii. To examine how women are represented in groups that make decisions, such as institutional committees, boards of studies, and academic councils.
- iii. To determine the obstacles that female academicians have while attempting to obtain leadership positions in higher education establishments.
- iv. To research the variables affecting women's involvement in academic leadership.
- v. To make recommendations for how to enhance gender parity in higher education institutions' leadership and governance.

## Review of Literature

The literature on higher education governance has extensively addressed the problem of gender imbalance in academic leadership. The institutional, cultural, and structural elements that affect women's involvement in leadership positions have been studied by academics.

The term "work-family conflict" was first used by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) to describe the difficulties faced by female professionals in juggling work and family obligations. This issue frequently hinders women's capacity to assume leadership positions in academics that call for more administrative duties.

There is a substantial discrepancy between women's participation in teaching and their presence in leadership roles, according to research on gender representation in academic leadership. Women make up about 39.7% of researchers globally, according to UNESCO data, but their presence in university leadership is still far lower.

Only a small percentage of universities are governed by women, according to studies on worldwide leadership in higher education. For instance, studies reveal that only roughly 24–25% of the world's best universities are led by women, underscoring the continued gender inequality in academic leadership.

The idea of vertical segregation in academics is another significant topic covered in the literature. Women are overrepresented in entry-level and mid-level academic roles, but at higher leadership levels, their participation sharply declines. This pattern implies that academic institutions have structural obstacles that prevent women from advancing in their careers.

Similar tendencies are also seen in research from universities in North America. Although a sizable percentage of assistant deans and mid-level administrative roles are held by women, their representation falls at higher executive levels, such as chancellors and university presidents.

The influence of institutional culture on leadership prospects has also been studied by academics. University hiring and promotion procedures are frequently impacted by informal power structures and male-dominated leadership networks. These networks may be difficult for women to enter, which may limit their possibilities for leadership.

The absence of mentorship and role models is another factor affecting women's involvement in governance. Research indicates that women who have access to mentors who offer support and guidance are more likely to pursue leadership roles. Women could be reluctant to apply for leadership positions or take part in governing organizations in the absence of such mentoring.

Psychological and social constraints have also been identified in research on academic decision-making. Research indicates that women may be less inclined to apply for leadership

roles because of perceived male-dominated situations, lack of institutional support, or confidence issues.

Academic literature has also extensively addressed the idea of gender prejudice. Leadership traits like aggressiveness, authority, and decision-making are frequently associated with men due to gender stereotypes. These prejudices have the potential to affect leadership selection procedures and provide new difficulties for female candidates.

According to recent research, institutional changes are necessary to achieve gender equity in academic governance. Policies that support women in leadership positions, such as mentorship programs, leadership development courses, and gender-inclusive hiring procedures, must be implemented by universities.

Additionally, encouraging gender diversity in governing bodies can improve the effectiveness of institutions. According to research, diverse leadership teams are more likely to take into account a different viewpoint, which improves decision-making and results in more inclusive policies.

According to the literature, women are still underrepresented in governance and decision-making, despite an increase in their involvement in higher education. Both institutional assistance and cultural change inside academic institutions are needed to address this problem.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

The study examines women's involvement in academic governance and decision-making using a descriptive research approach.

### Sources of Data

#### Primary Data

Structured questionnaires were used to gather primary data from female faculty members employed by Pune city's colleges and institutions.

#### Secondary Data

Secondary data were gathered from:

- Scholarly publications
- Scholarly publications
- Official documents
- Documents containing policies
- Online databases for research

## Sample Size

One hundred female faculty members from different Pune higher education institutes are included in the project.

## Sampling Method

Respondents were chosen using the convenience sampling technique.

## Data Analysis Tools

The gathered information was examined using:

- Analysis of percentages
- A tabular depiction
- Interpretive analysis

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1: Respondent Designation**

Designation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Assistant Professor	55	55%
Associate Professor	25	25%
Professor	10	10%
Administrative roles	10	10%

## Interpretation:

Women are more prevalent in entry-level and mid-level academic roles, as seen by the majority of responders being assistant professors.

**Table 2: Academic Committee Participation**

Type of Committee	Respondents	Percentage
Board of Studies	30	30%
Academic Council	15	15%
Committee for Examination	35	35%
Institutional Committees	20	20%

### Interpretation:

Women are underrepresented in important decision-making groups like academic councils, although they are more prevalent in operational committees.

**Table 3:Obstacles to Women's Involvement in Governance**

Obstacles	Respondents	Percentage
Gender bias	25	25%
Absence of opportunities for leadership	20	20%
Work-family obligations	30	30%
Absence of mentorship	15	15%
Institutional obstacles	10	10%

### Interpretation:

The main obstacles preventing women from participating in governance are work-family obligations and gender bias.

### Findings of the Study

The study's main conclusions are:

- In Pune's higher education institutions, the proportion of women in teaching roles has considerably increased.
- Despite these advancements, women are still underrepresented in positions of senior leadership and decision-making.
- Compared to strategic governing bodies, women are more likely to serve on operational committees.
- Institutional biases and gender preconceptions still have an impact on leadership selection procedures.
- Women's capacity to assume leadership positions is impacted by work-family obligations.
- Women's involvement in governance is restricted by a lack of mentorship and leadership development opportunities.
- Many higher education institutions still lack adequate institutional procedures that support gender equality.

## Suggestions

The following recommendations are made in light of the findings:

Several actions might be suggested to increase women's involvement in academic governance and decision-making at higher education institutions based on the study's findings.

- i. Institutions of higher learning should support gender-inclusive leadership practices that support women's equal representation in governing bodies. Women should be fairly represented in key decision-making committees at universities and colleges, including academic councils, boards of studies, research committees, and management councils. Gender diversity should be emphasized in institutional policy as a crucial element of efficient governance.
- ii. Organizations ought to implement leadership development initiatives created especially for female professors. These courses can include instruction in decision-making, administrative administration, strategic planning, and leadership. Women faculty members can gain the confidence and abilities necessary for positions in governance by participating in leadership training workshops, seminars, and professional development programs.
- iii. Women's involvement in academic governance can be greatly increased by creating networking and mentoring initiatives. Junior and mid-career female faculty members can be mentored by senior academic leaders, who can help them with leadership opportunities and professional advancement. Mentorship networks can also assist women in expanding their professional networks and learning about institutional governance procedures.
- iv. Organizations ought to implement flexible work arrangements that assist women in juggling work and family obligations. Women faculty members can assume leadership roles without sacrificing their personal obligations if they have flexible work schedules, childcare assistance, and family-friendly workplace practices. Universities ought to make a concerted effort to eradicate gender prejudice and stereotypes from the hiring and advancement of leaders. To guarantee that all competent applicants, regardless of gender, have access to leadership opportunities, transparent and merit-based hiring practices should be put in place.
- v. to encourage a culture of gender equality in academic institutions, awareness campaigns and workshops on gender sensitization should be held. The value of gender diversity in leadership and decision-making processes should be emphasized to administrators and faculty.
- vi. Institutions should be encouraged to implement gender equality policies and keep an eye on the inclusion of women in academic governance structures by governmental organizations and regulatory entities like the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Institutions can be encouraged to support gender-inclusive leadership through policy guidelines and incentives.

- vii. Lastly, further studies should be done to look at how gender is represented in academic governance in various places and kinds of institutions. Comparative research can offer insightful information on the best ways to advance women's leadership in higher education.

Higher education institutions can foster an inclusive and encouraging climate that motivates women to actively engage in governance and decision-making processes by putting these strategies into practice. In addition to advancing gender equality, more women in academic leadership positions will improve institutional governance and advance the higher education sector as a whole.

## Conclusion

Over the past few decades, women's participation in higher education has expanded dramatically. These days, women are essential to academic advancement, research, and teaching. They are becoming more prevalent at academic institutions, but their involvement in governance and decision-making processes is still quite small. The current study looked at how many women participate in academic governance at Pune's higher education institutions and examined the variables that affect their engagement in leadership and decision-making positions.

The study's conclusions show that while women are well-represented in teaching roles, their participation sharply declines at higher levels of academic leadership and governance. Though they are relatively underrepresented in important decision-making bodies like academic councils, boards of studies, and institutional policy committees, female faculty members are frequently involved in operational committees like examination committees, cultural committees, or student welfare committees. This implies that although women make significant contributions to the operation of academic institutions, their influence over institutional policies and strategic choices is still restricted.

The underrepresentation of women in academic governance is caused by a number of variables. The study found that the prevalence of unconscious biases and gender stereotypes in leadership selection procedures is one of the main obstacles. Perceptions of leadership abilities may be impacted by the fact that leadership positions are frequently still linked to characteristics that are typically associated with men. Because of this, even when they have the requisite training and expertise, female academicians may have trouble gaining leadership position.

The difficulty of juggling work obligations with family and caregiving commitments is another significant issue influencing women's involvement in governance. The time and flexibility needed to take on additional administrative or leadership duties may be limited because female faculty members frequently shoulder a greater portion of household and

caregiving responsibilities. This work-family dilemma may deter women from aggressively seeking leadership roles in their organizations.

Another major factor restricting women's involvement in academic governance is the absence of mentorship and leadership development opportunities. Many female faculty members may feel less secure or equipped to pursue administrative positions if they lack access to professional networks, leadership development programs, and mentorship. Women can be encouraged to take part in governance and decision-making processes through mentoring from prominent academic leaders.

The report also emphasizes how crucial organizational culture and institutional policies are to advancing gender equality in academic leadership. Institutions are more likely to foster inclusive settings that promote women's participation in leadership roles if they actively support gender diversity in governance structures.

Promoting women's involvement in academic governance is especially crucial in the context of Pune, a significant educational center with a large number of higher education institutions. Higher institutional governance, more equitable policies, and higher academic results can all result from more female representation in decision-making bodies.

In conclusion, even if the number of women enrolled in higher education has increased, the gender gap in academic leadership and governance still needs to be addressed. To guarantee that women have equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and contribute to institutional growth, institutions must take proactive steps.

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