WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE TO BE THE CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN FACE IN ACADEMIA?

We are living in times where many of the challenges women had faced in academia previously have already been countered and this is evident from increase in the female workforce at every level in academia; yet the basic challenges remain. If we compare the number of women teachers at Lecturer/ Assistant Professor level, they either balance or outnumber male faculty. As we move higher, the number remains limited. I count the advancement and promotion as the biggest hurdle the female professors are facing across the Universities. The major reasons for this are the prevailing biases such as those related to affinity, confirmation and availability tend to prevent their advancement. Lack of critical mass and role models is something that further prevents their growth. Another major hurdle is their acquisition of leadership roles such as Department Chairs, Dean, Directors, Vice-Chancellors. Lately, in India, the number of female academic leaders in academia has increased multifold which is a very good move. What is more appreciated is the willingness to move ahead and occupy the leadership positions by female academicians.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN WHO ARE ENTERING THE RESEARCH FIELD?

They are nowhere lesser capable in any academic job than male counterparts whether it is teaching, publishing, researching or leading the teams. They should come forward and accept responsibilities which are assigned to them from time to time. In fact, we need more female role models in teaching, research and as academic leaders. If we demand equal pay and compensation, we have to showcase greater sense of responsibility to gain due recognition. I understand the challenges the current academic culture within and outside Universities makes it tougher for us to compete but with our kind of sincerity, intellect and hard work we are bound to win. We have to stand with each other shoulder to shoulder to remove these biases that prevail in academia.

HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN CLOSE THE GENDER GAP WITHIN ACADEMIA?

•  More women should be included in recruitment panels (removing affinity bias)
•  Evaluating compensation/ advancement of male vs female colleagues at every level
•  Developing new generation role models in teaching, research and academic leadership
•  Raising awareness and providing in -house and across university support to female colleagues
•  Accepting more responsibilities e.g. in fund generation, editorial boards, leading academic projects, field investigation

HOW CAN PUBLISHERS COLLABORATE WITH INSTITUTES ON CREATING GENDER-BALANCE?

•  Awareness generation of gender issues in academia by collaborating with academic institutes
•  Inviting more women representation in editorial boards and as journal editors
•  Providing training to women researchers (especially in areas where less women exist: Mathematics, Statistics)
•  Attracting more potential publication submission from women through awards, rewards and incentives
•  Promoting gender studies in academia

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