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**GENDER: IS IT AN OBSTRUCTION BRIDGE TO TAKE THEIR OPPORTUNITY FOR EDUCATION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN****Dr. B.V.N. Wijewardhana**

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**Abstract:** Despite the fact that sexual characteristics are attributes commencing from the birth of human beings, this biological substance has generated certain tribulation within the social and cultural context ever since the origin of human society. The said multiplicity is the key factor being discussed within the subject of gender awareness. This diversity which has originated within the social context has fashioned certain disadvantages on females in comparison to the males which is identifiable in varied countries in the world. The proposition of this study is to examine through Sri Lankan society whether there are blockades affecting of rights of education of women in comparison to the males when selecting opportunities for education. The selected study area of the research is comprised by 7 districts namely; Galle, Ampara, Monaragala, Jaffna, Anuradhpura, Kurunegala and Gampaha. The selected number of data providers 700 were selected from each district with the representation of 100 employed women and the age limits were from 18 to 55 years. Data were collected through

questionnaires, focused group discussions, case studies and observations. In concern with the achievement of subsequent education after marriages, it was revealed that 24.56 % of respondents had entered into higher education. It was a factor disclosed that several blockades are there for women to enter into higher education. A noticeable feature was that more positive support is available for males within the family settings in compared to women. Also prominent that needed assistance for male partners for higher education was available from the whole family including, children and wives, yet, it is not the situation on females. Business of domestic issues and responsibilities is the leading factor for above outcomes. Also recommended to interact male persons too, and to implement series of programmes in pursuance of changed attitudes of male partners, policy makers and community leaders to eliminate mythological attitudes based on gender concerns.

**Key words:** Gender, Education, Opportunities, Employed women

## INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men (Ajayi,& Omosule, 2018). It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places (Holmes, 2007). When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion all of which adversely affect health. It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories (Shastri,2014).It is unblemished that woman adorns varied nature of composition in the social context. Also discernible that the role of woman has turned into a complexity in the modern society. Woman brings about multifaceted tasks such as; child births, nourishing them, control of domestic activities, up-keeping family needs and to be employed on varied jobs are some of them. Under this circumstance, the research focused on series of studies based on gender sensitization so as to assess whether the accessibility of females for vital elements are equal to the males.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM

This research paper is argued that Is gender an obstruction bond or trigger factors that have the highest and the strongest impact on education differences that impedes national development?

## OBJECTIVES

- 1) Identify the nature of Education gained by employment women from a contemporary society’s point of view
- 2) Examine how gender differences and relationships affect the overall education of employed women of various strata of society, representing various geo-demographic cross segments.
- 3) Suggest strategies that could be implemented to address the critical factors with an overview of influencing policy and regulatory frameworks

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*Gender discrimination and education in West Africa: strategies for maintaining girls in school* Theresa Tuwor & Marie,Antoinette Sossou 2008, this study shows that girls who complete even primary education become adults who are healthier, more economically productive, and raise children who tend to stay longer in school. In addition, there is a strong relationship between mothers’ educational attainment, individual household earnings, and the economic, social and overall well-being of their family members. West African governments must place more emphasis not only on getting girls to school, but also on retaining them in schools by making provisions such as increased public funding for basic education and mobilizing the needed educational resources to assist teachers, parents and children, and in addition recognize quality education as the right of every child (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). Samidha Pokharel 2008 has done a research *Gender Discrimination: Women Perspective* and this study documents the perception of women in discrimination in various aspects in a male dominated society. The study was designed as a descriptive study based on sample survey. The total of 200 women was selected randomly for this study. The study findings show that there is a discrimination against women in various aspects. Women are aware of discrimination in the societal

and household levels. They perceive more discrimination in the societal level comparing to household level. Married women perceive more discrimination in mobility, property, occupation, and education. Similarly, unmarried women perceive more discrimination in mobility and way of behaving. They consider gender and customary practices as major factors responsible for discrimination. (Pokhrahel, 2008). Euro Fund's 2016 published a report namely, *the gender employment gap: Challenges and solutions and it explores the main characteristics and the evolution of gender gaps in labour market participation, employment and economic status*. It looks at the main determinants of female labour market participation, investigating the interplay with individual and household characteristics. And also explained the fragmentation of family models and individual patterns in the life cycle, due to major changes in demographic trends and the redefinition of gender roles in modern societies, have produced new areas of female inequality: the traditional male-dependent condition of women is replaced by differentiated forms of economic and social vulnerability that call for different types of policy responses depending on the stage of the life cycle (Euro Fund, 2016). *Gender Discrimination In The Workplace: A Study Of Women's Participation In Higher Education Management In Ghana* done by Oppong & Arthur 2015, This research paper explores the issue of gender discrimination in the work place; specifically to assess how gendered assumptions affect women and to find out the factors affecting women's participation in Higher Education (HE) management and to ascertain whether prejudices regarding gender occur in the professional setting and how it hinders women's advancement into top ranking management positions. Data gathered upon interviews with ten women administrative professionals in five public universities in Ghana, are used to assess gender discrimination and the way it has affected the individuals and their careers. The findings from the study revealed that women are indeed underrepresented in the management of Higher Education institutions in Ghana. There are several factors at the institutional levels preventing qualified women from ascending to senior positions in higher education. The study argues that for women to participate in Higher education management effectively some of these barriers must be removed, and suggests ways helpful to enhance women's participation (Oppong & Arthur, 2015). In Sri Lankan context (Gunawardhana, 2016), through his study on Gender Inequality in Sri Lanka has explained Gender equality is both a core concern and an essential part of human development. However, in no society do women yet enjoy the same opportunities as men. They work longer hours and they are paid less, both in total and pro rate. Their choices as to how they spend their time, in both work and leisure, are more constrained than they are for men. These disparities generate substantial gaps between how much women and men can contribute to society, and how much they respectively share in its benefits. As a conceptual tool, gender is used to highlight various structural relationships of inequality between men and women as manifested in the labour markets, income, economic resources, education and training. Discrimination is especially obvious in political leadership and decision-making positions and in economic top management (Gunawardhana, 2016),

However, According to literature, both men and women enjoy relatively high standards in health and education. From this view, the status of Sri Lankan women has been changed last few decades. Though, poor women are facing several problems due to unequal factors of political participation, labour force participation and decision-making process. What is needed, then, is the direct involvement and direct representation of women in planning, policy making and in top-level decision-making bodies. Once the need for development to be more equitable and people-oriented is recognized as a vital concern, then policy makers will be ready to acknowledge the importance of

women's role in development and good governance and to take the necessary steps towards their empowerment. So this task education empowerment is the main key and through this research researcher has argued several disturbance factors to continue their education in Sri Lankan context.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH AREA AND SAMPLE**

A multi-dimensional approach was applied in the selection of geographical area, which had direct focus on the; status of women in both sectors of urban and rural, their tasks, discriminative type attitudes on women and its impact on the national development of the country, was centralized to 7 districts namely; Galle, Gampaha, Kurunegala, Ampara, Monaragala, Jaffna and Anuradhapura. In total 700 informants were selected (100 employed from each district) within the age range from 18 to 55 years.

### **COLLECTION OF THE PRIMARY DATA**

Primary data were gathered through various data collection tools. Two separate questionnaires of 21 pages with sub thematic areas were used which were with the inclusion of close ended as well as open ended questions. **Interviews (Formal and Informal), Focused Group Discussions were used.** When the qualitative responses in this research are concerned focused group discussions (FGDs) were held. Minimum 2 FGDs were held in each district whereas, 6 – 7 women were attended in each FGD. These FGDs were conducted by the Principle Researcher. And also used chain of **Interviews, to purposing to collect** data by moving from group to group and also linking chief data providers into the process. **Observations and Case Studies were used to gather** Qualitative Data from the sample.

### **COLLECTION OF THE SECONDARY DATA**

Related books, magazines, newspapers, abstracts as well as researches accomplished in the context of Sri Lanka and also the research articles published at Global level, Index Journal, Referred Journal and also the articles published through the Web were used as the secondary data.

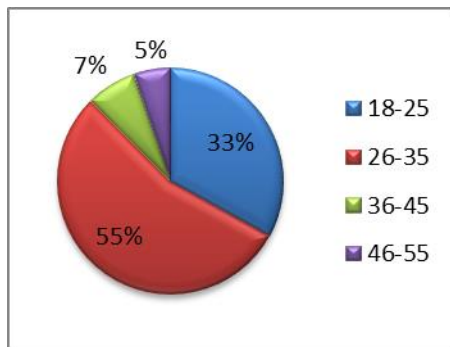
### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis was brought about through quantity based analysis as well as the quality based analysis. In the process of data analysis a qualitative content analysis was chosen as the analytical method of the descriptive information obtained from the participants based on their diverse views. Qualitative content analysis aimed at grasping the evidences and concealed messages of respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Data analysis and discussions related to employed women in rural and urban settings

**Graph No. 1.1. Age structure of employed data providers (N = 700)**

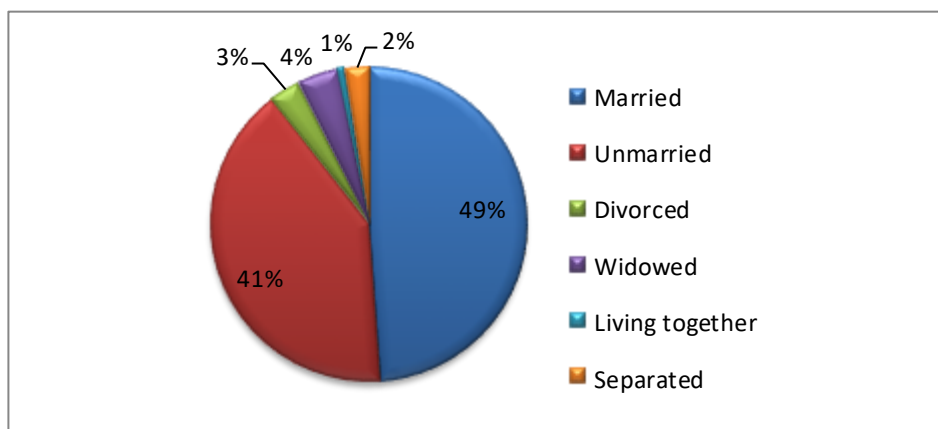


(Source- Field Data 2019)

Within the sample 55 % of employed data providers represented age range from 26 to 55 years. A minute segment of 5 % represents ages from 46 to 55. Accordingly, it is noticeable that the tendency to get them employed between ages of 18 – 25 is satisfactory. Also, appears that women at their age between 18 to 25 had found whatever a job to link themselves with the contribution for economic cooperation.

**Graph No.– 1.2 - Marital status of employed informers within the sample (N=700)**

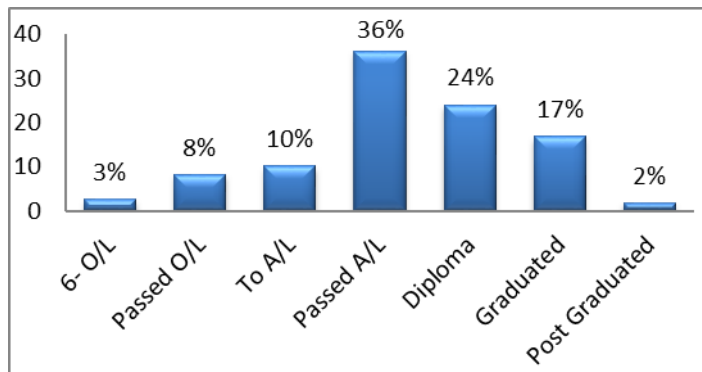
In reference to the bellow graph 49 % of employed informers found to be married while. 41 % are spinsters. Out of the balance, 4 % are reported to be widows, added by 3 % of those were divorced and 2% are separated whereas, 1 % has stated to be living together. Since, 88 % out of the total sample are within the age range of 18 – 35 would have been the reason to show higher percentage of unmarried informers. Even though informers are employed they have postponed marriages with the aspiration to reach certain level of stability prior to the marriages.



(Source- Field Data 2019)

Evidently, the educational background of a person is vital so as to decide his/her roll in terms of progressive carrier prospects. Similarly, for a woman to acquire value within the social structure this factor becomes important. Also, the Rights to attain education is a right of the civil communities.

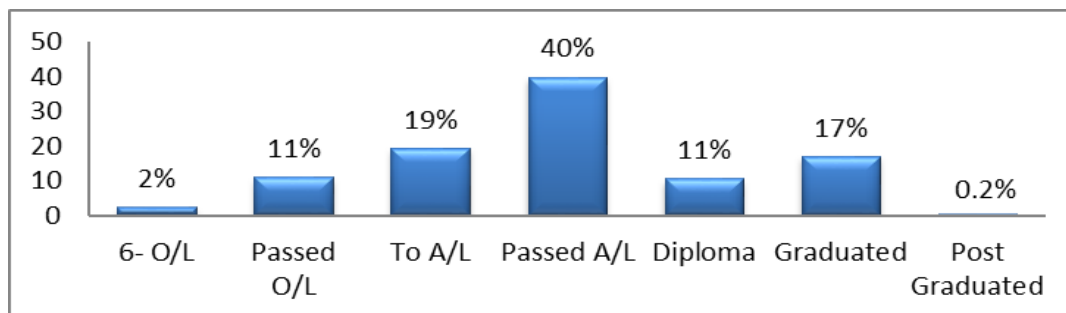
**Graph No. 1.3 – Level of education of the sample (N=700)**



(Source- Field Data 2019)

The structured data had disclosed that 37 % of employed informers have succeeded A'level, while 24% are Diploma holders and the segment of 17 % are Graduates. Another 2 % represents the highest level as Post Graduate. A minute percentage of 3 % embodied as those studied only upto O'level and such women have found jobs in the garment sector. As per this Graph, varied levels of education have been displayed. It can be concluded that data providers of the sample had attained higher educational standards. Also these informers had concentrated on furtherance of education such as Dgrees or Diploma courses depending on the needs of the on-going jobs.

**Graph No. 1.4 - The highest educational qualifications attained by informers prior to their marriages. (N=410)**



(Source- Field Data 2019)

Out of 410 employed Vs. married informers have reached highest educational standards of A'level which represents higher percentage as 40%. The second highest category is those educated upto A' level representing 19 %. whereas, the category of 17 % are Graduates. Also found that 1 employee had attained her Post Graduate degree embodying 0.2 %. Accordingly, a higher segment of informers had attained higher education prior to their marriages.

**Stance of education of data providers after their marriages.**

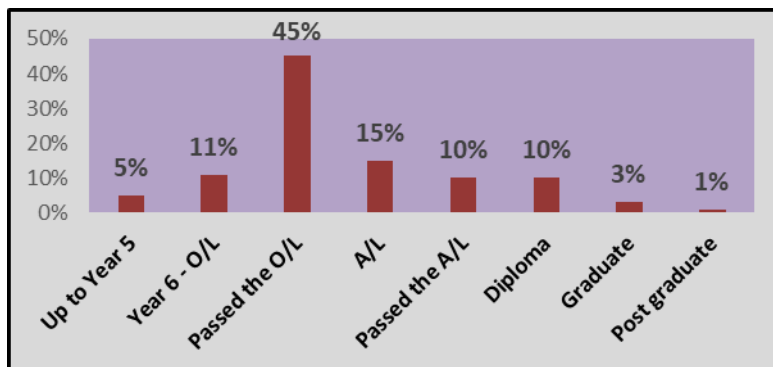
**Table No. 1.1. - Motives of Data providers to attain academic qualifications after marriages. (N=410).**

Response	Number	Percentage
No	306	75.43 %
Yes	104	24.56 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100 %</b>

(Source- Field Data 2018/2019)

In reference to the sample of 410 data providers there was a majority of 75 % of informers who had not managed to pursue further educational qualifications after their marriages while the balance of 24 % had achieved such results. This situation was found as a common feature in all selected DS's divisions for the reasons that they are employed. Other than their business on employments, there were influence either from their husbands or other parties to interuptet to carry on further education.

**'Figure 1.5. Highest Educational Qualification attained before Marriages (N=700)**



(Source- Field Data 2019)

It has been disclosed that, the highest educational qualifications acquired by the majority of 40%, before their marriages was the succeeding of O'Level examination. The second category of respondents were those who studied up to A'level and this category represents as 15%. Similarly another batch of 10 % of the interviewees who had succeeded trough A' level and also qualifying for Diploma certificates prior to their marriages.

In reference to the sample of 410 data providers there was a majority of 75 % of informers who had managed to pursue further educational qualifications after their marriages while the balance of 24 % had not achieved such results. This situation was found as a common feature in all selected DS's divisions for the reasons that they are employed. Other than their business on employments, there were no influence either from their husbands or other parties to limit other tasks to proceed further on education.

**Table No. 1.2. – Problems affecting the informers to achieve their academic targets within their married family setting (N=104)**

Setback	Number	Percentage
Due to the inadequacy of time	213	69 %
Busy life due to domestic affairs	161	52 %
Difficulties of Travel	94	31 %
Unavailability of support from the rest of family members	25	8 %
Weekends to be allocated for education which is problematic	33	11 %
Financial crisis	58	19 %
Causes affecting in Total	149	49 %

(Source- Field Data 2019)

It is noticeable that all informers in their aspirations to attain added academic qualifications have faced problems. Specifically, there are one or more problems affecting under the said situation. Out of such the key problem is the inadequacy of time. This is a leading problem affected 69 % of respondents. Further, 31 % has uttered on difficulties encountered on travel whereas, 52 % had brought up the issue of their business on domestic activities. In addition, lesser support from family members (8%), financial difficulties (19%), also the setback in allocating weak ends for such actions, (11%) were highlighted being obstructing their academic

**Table No. 1.3. In comparison to the level of persuasion extended for male children from the families to what extent it was available for Girl children. (N=700)**

Description	Number	Percentage
Highly Satisfactory	320	(45.71)
Satisfactory	226	(32.28)
Average level	58	(8.28)
Unsatisfactory	23	(3.28)
Very Unsatisfactory	11	(1.57)
No comments	62	(8.85)
Total	700	100

(Source- Field Data 2019)

The extent of persuasion received by girl children from the families on their education was in a very satisfactory level compared to the same prevailed for male children, as articulated by 46 %. Of informers. The same was just in a satisfactory level as uttered by 32% of the sample. In contrary, 4 % were in the opinion that the said pursuance was rather unsatisfactory. A segment of 9% hasn't commented. On the whole, it reflects that the prevailed persuasions in families to encourage girl children to continue education was in a satisfactory level when compared to the same existed on male children. Same could be asserted further through the extract of this statement. Prethieve (38) from Jaffna.

*“During my schooling age I didn’t get extensive influence from my parents. I have two elder brothers. And I don’t remember whether those two brothers had sole intention for a progressive education.*



*May be due to that reason my family made extra-ordinary effort to continue my education progressively.*

**Devika (34) from Kuliypitiya.**

*“It is obvious that we need to follow other courses too, despite the fact that we joined the employment after the Degree. It is not possible to access promotions if we didn’t follow Tamil language. Similarly, if we had followed whatever courses in line with our jobs it becomes a facilitative measure to look for promotions. Even though we have our children, husbands we are bound to attend to these needs. Also came to light that, entering into education by girl children in rural societies before their marriages exhibits certain underrating compared to the male. Nevertheless, it is distinct that the access for education by females in urban settings is in an equal status in comparison to the male children. A distinctive factor emerged from rural social setting was that 21 % of women had studied only upto 1 – 5 Grades and they are doing minor jobs. Herein, numerous factors had affected for above said unfairness in rural sector, such as; intricate geographical milieu, existing socio-cultural background, necessity to assist parents on Agro-based activities, taking care of younger children, moreover, the ideology that females be remained at home to take care children and also the prevailing poverty as a vibrant factor. In concern with the achievement of subsequent education after marriages, it was revealed that 24.5% of respondents had entered into higher education. The persuading factors had been; the need of added qualifications for higher positions and due to the fact that others had followed same. Also the availability of facilities for higher education within their work places, seeking permanency of the jobs and the self-satisfaction had been the factors persuaded them to follow higher education. In concern with married informants 2 % of them had entered into higher education. Ineligible factors affected for an higher percentage to be away from advance studies after marriages as disclosed were; low educational backgrounds, problems within the ratio of child births, business on childcare acts and the domestic affairs, employments of husbands, husbands being away in overseas jobs, dissatisfaction of husband for wife’s wishes on further education, taking care of diseased family members and also due to the difficulties on travel were some of the barriers. It was a factor disclosed that several blockades are there for women to enter into higher education. A noticeable feature was that more positive support is available for males within the family settings in compared to women. Also prominent that needed assistance for male partners for higher education was available from the whole family including, children and wives, yet, it is not the situation on females. Business of domestic issues and responsibilities is the leading factor for above outcomes. Women possess needed support from the family when further avenues are explored on education and able to focus on required preparations on the employment.*

**CONCLUSION**

The following conclusions were identified as revealed through the research study being the forceful key factors resulted over gender discrimination, and causing substantial influences on the national development of the country.

1. Existing blockades suppressing the efforts on long term education.

Series of findings disclosed that female respondents after entering into marriages are compelled to be busy on child care activities and numerous work at domestic level hence to reduce time needed for education, relentlessly.

## 2. Selection of Preferred occupations

When even educated women to apply for jobs they cannot tender their applications for a favored job due to their involvement on domestic work. Next option is to apply for a job specifically based on the womenhood and such unresolved issues have direct and indirect effects on the national development of the country.

3. Absence of a motivatory mechanism for job promotion and the nonappearance of supportive environment for same.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In reference to the findings of the research, woman had confronted with varied nature of differences resulting victimization, owing to the deep-rooted gender disparities. The gender based disparities are originated socially, as well as due to cultural attitudes and owing to parent headed authoritative attitudes, inclusive of gender discriminations. Under the above circumstances, set of long term and short term suggestions are bestowed in order to exclude cultural attitudes from the society such as gender based separation evolved on both rural and urban women in Sri Lanka.

Also suggest to interact male persons too, and to implement series of programmes in pursuance of changed attitudes of male partners, policy makers and community leaders to eliminate mythological attitudes based on gender concerns. Finally it is important to take actions to avoid cultural barriers existing against sexual education.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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