

The Gender Equality in University Admissions in Sri Lanka

Sirikanth*, S., Thushanika, P., Jeffry, T.S, Divyavadhana, A. and Dilakshan, R.S

Department of Computer Science and Informatics, Faculty of Applied Science,

Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

Corresponding email: Sivakumaransri.c@gmail.com

Sri Lanka has been committed to provide free education for all children from grade one to bachelor's degree level since the mid-1940s. Gender equality in education is an issue of global concern since it equalizes the formation of human capital and labour productivity between males and females. In this backdrop, the purpose of this study is to identify the status of gender equality in university admissions in Sri Lanka. This study adopts the percentile approach and the main secondary data is derived from several reports of the University Grant Commission in Sri Lanka. In 1980, 43.1% of them were qualified at advanced level, and only 16.35% of them were selected for university. 62.42% of them are qualified in 2019/2020 at the advanced level. From 2006 to 2020, the total of 370,277 students and an average of 26448 students were enrolled in Sri Lankan universities. Among them, 141,865 are male and 228,412 are female. Annually, 38.79% (10,133) of males and 61.29% (16,315) of females are selected for the universities. Overall, male representation is high in the physical science stream, and female representation is high in the arts stream, and more than 60% of the females are selected from other streams. Specifically, in 2020, females are selected highly from the Arts (84.50%), Biological Science (71.18%), and Commerce (66.60%) streams, while only males are selected highly from the Physical Science (66.89%) stream. On average, 84.94% of males are chosen from the E-tech stream, while 77.75% of females are chosen from the B-tech stream. Considering the gender representation among the selected students for the university courses, females are highly enrolled in the Law (85.19%), Arts (84.74%), Indigenous Medicine (76.22%), Allied Health Sciences (75.04), Agriculture (72.27), Dental Surgery (70.00), Veterinary Medicine (69.53), Commerce (68.25) and Management (67.71). When compared to other courses, males are overrepresented in Engineering (74.86%). It clearly shows the unbalanced gender representation in selecting students from the streams and for courses. In this case, in the future, there will be several challenges and issues due to the unbalanced profession for the several fields, and there is a limit for developing a field in a sustainable manner. Therefore, it is necessary to consider gender equality in all fields of higher education. Effective information policies and qualities are vital to the sustainable development of the country through a higher education system with gender equality.

Keywords: Gender, Degree programmes, Equality, Sri Lanka, Universities