

## Gender Equality and Differences in Library and Information Science in Odisha (India)

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### Abstract

Gender inequality affects every aspect of the society, most prominently in the education system. Women face discrimination right from the childhood and the same continues throughout their life time. The gender disparities very well prevail in the professional career as well. The present paper investigates into the issues gender equalities and differences the field of Library & Information Science in the state of Odisha, both in the education and in profession. The research found that there is a huge gap in the percentage between male and female student while pursuing education where the female students dominates the male counterpart. On the other hand, there is a reverse scenario in the job positions of library professionals in different universities. Gender differences may not be in the minds of the LIS professionals of Odisha, as depicted in the present survey, but in reality the gaps exist in senior level job positions, pay and working conditions. Female are still under-represented at more senior level jobs, especially in the national level institutions such as IITs, IIMs, universities etc.

**Keyword:** Gender Equality; Gender Differences; Gender Equality and Different in Library Science.

### Introduction

Gender equality means equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life [1]. For centuries the male race has dominated the female race in every domain. Even though we claim that the modern society gender discrimination is an alien phrase, but the stereotype is still followed and practiced in every field. Gender disparity in education and professional career is an old phenomenon. Traditionally, girls have been at a disadvantage in most part of the globe and they continue to be so even today [2]. Wainwright (2011)[3] observes that library and information science has always been a field that tends to attract many interested females. In fact, librarianship has traditionally been regarded as a women's profession. Males continue to represent only a small percentage of students in graduate program and within the profession and this imbalanced ratio of males to

females in library and information science education, and library occupations persist. However, in the present scenario the equations have been changed. Even though women predominate in the LIS education, men predominate in the employment of LIS jobs.

### Objectives of the Study

- To explore whether any gender bias exists in LIS education in Odisha.
- To find out the gender ratio of students in different LIS schools in Odisha.
- To find out whether any gender differences exist in regard to technical skill, knowledge and work efficiency of the LIS professionals.
- To find out the gender equality and differences in the social status of LIS professionals in Odisha.
- To find out the reasons for gender bias in librarianship in Odisha.
- To suggest possible remedies for maintain a gender balance in librarianship.

### Statement of the Problem

The LIS profession in Odisha is in a very gloomy state as the profession has not yet received the same

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status and recognition as has been prescribed by the UGC, AICTE and other such accrediting authorities. The professionals are unevenly treated, underemployed and starving for appropriate status. There is a huge gap between the public sector and private sector as regards to salary and other benefits to library professionals. In addition to the main issue, librarianship in Odisha encounters another issue of gender inequality. There a visible gender-gap exists in the job positions. In this background the present study proposed to find out the answer to the following research questions from the perspective of the library professionals themselves:

- Whether any gender differences exists in LIS education in Odisha?
- Whether any gender inequality exists in LIS jobs in Odisha?
- Are the LIS professionals in the state being discriminated on the basis of their gender?
- Is the recruitment process in LIS is biased toward a particular gender?

## Methodology

In the present study titled "Gender equality and differences in Library and Information Science in Odisha: A Case Study", a questionnaire survey was conducted among the LIS professionals in the state of Odisha. The survey questionnaire included two broad sections, (1) Gender equality and differences in

recruitment of LIS jobs and (2) Gender equality and differences in social status of LIS professionals.

## Data Analysis and Discussion

The librarianship in Odisha has been there for more than four decades. Librarianship was identified and accepted to be a mainline profession in Odisha since LIS courses were started in the universities in the state. The first university to start BLISc course in 1976 was Sambalpur University in western Odisha. The other universities followed the path and as of today all the 5 general universities in the state are imparting LIS education at BLISC., MLISC, M.Phil and Ph.D levels. Over the years thousands of passed out LIS graduates joining the profession. The majority of the passed out graduates from LIS schools in Odisha are women. But the situation in LIS jobs market in Odisha is just opposite.

From the above table it is revealed that the total no of 251 students studying at various levels in the six LIS schools of Odisha during the session 2015-16. Out of them 107 (43%) are male students and 144 (57%) are female students. Again the female to male ratio varies from organization to organization. The female to male ratio of LIS students is highest (3.7: 1) in North Orissa University followed by Sambalpur University with the ratio 2:1. The overall F/M ratio of LIS students in the state of Oisha is 1.3:1. It is quite clear from the data that there is almost equal participation from both the gender in LIS education in Odisha.

**Table 1:** Institutions wise distribution of LIS students during 2015-16 academic year

Name of the University/ College	Students in BLISc			Students in MLISc			Students in M.Phil			Total		F/M ratio
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male (%)	Female (%)	
North Odisha University	-	-	-	43	09	34	-	-	-	21	79	3.7 : 1
Utkal University	-	-	-	46	26	20	08	03	05	54	46	1.2 : 1
Sambalpur University	-	-	-	36	11	25	05	03	02	34	66	2 : 1
S.M.I.T, Berhampur	48	26	22	24	12	12	-	-	-	50	50	1 : 1
U. N. (Auto.) College of Sc. & Tech., Adaspur, Cuttack	34	14	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	41	59	1.4 : 1
AWDI, Rourkela	07	03	04	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	51	1:1
Total	89	43	46	149	58	91	13	06	07			1.6 : 1

**Table 2:** Library Professionals in University Libraries of Odisha

Sl. No.	Name of the university	Name of the Library	Total no of LIS professionals	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
1	Sambalpur University	Prof. B. Behera Central Library	9	6	3	66.66	33.33
2	Utkal University	Parija Library	31	24	7	77.41	22.58
3	Sri Sri University	Central library	2	2	0	100	0
4	Centurion University of Technology & Management	Central Library	4	3	1	75	25

5	Koraput Central University	Central Library	3	3	0	100	0
6	Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University	Central Library	4	3	1	75	25
7	Revenshaw university	Kanika Library	5	2	3	40	60
8	F. M. University	Dr Harekrushna Mahatab Library	8	7	1	87.5	12.5
9	Berhampur University	Central Library	27	12	15	44.44	55.55
10	North Odisha University	Central Library	2	1	1	50	50
11	KIIT University	Central Library	66	37	29	56.06	43.93
12	NIT deemed University	Biju Patnaik Central Library	8	7	1	87.5	12.5
13	VSSUT University	Central Library	2	1	1	50	50
14	National Law University Odisha	Central Library	7	4	3	57.14	42.15
15	IIIT University	Central Library	5	2	3	40	60
	Total		183	114	69		

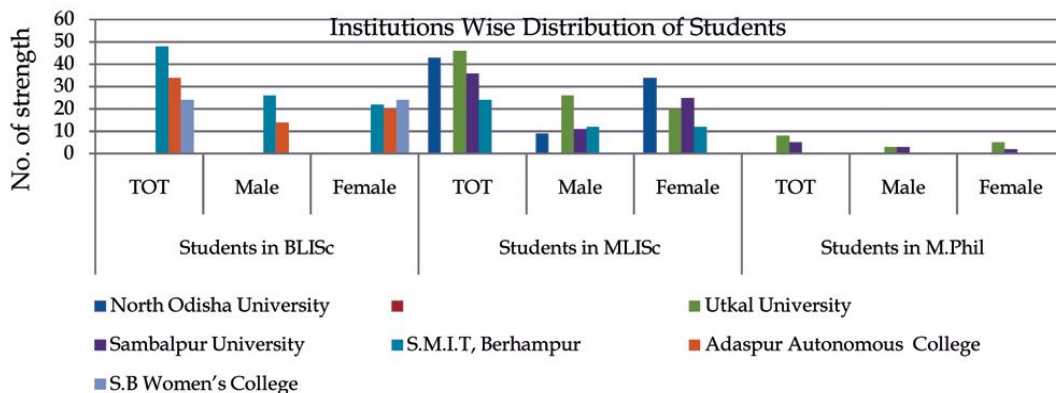


Fig. 1: Institutions wise distribution of LIS students during 2015-16 academic year

Librarianship as a career in Odisha was visible only during the recent past when there was growth of engineering and management institutions both by the government and by the private agencies. A good number of library professionals are now working in public, private and corporate establishments in the state both as interns and in permanent professional positions. In order to trace the distribution of LIS professionals on gender the following data relating to universities in Odisha were collected as reflected in Table 2.

The above table revealed that the total number of library professionals working in the universities of Odisha (mentioned above) is 183 out of which 114 (62.3%) are male and 69(37.7%) are female. In Berhampur University, the number of female professionals (15) is more than the male (12). KIIT

University has also maintained parity in gender of LIS professionals. It is quite clear that, in Odisha the male are the dominating gender over female in LIS jobs.

#### Gender Issues in LIS Education

In the past when librarianship as a modern discipline was not popular among academics, it was considered as book science and believed to be more suitable for women. But in the present time, traditional libraries have become intensively ICT centered and has attracted students beyond any gender bias. In order to find out what is the opinion of LIS professionals in Odisha towards gender issues in the profession, they were asked the four questions as reflected in the Table 3.

Table 3: Gender equality in LIS education in Odisha

What do you think?	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	No gender issues	Percentage
LIS education is biased towards	46	30.26	24	15.78	82	53.94
LIS course content is more suitable for	16	10.52	42	27.63	94	61.84
Student performance in LIS education better for	22	14.47	52	34.21	78	51.31
LIS education has better scope for	18	11.84	32	21.05	102	67.10

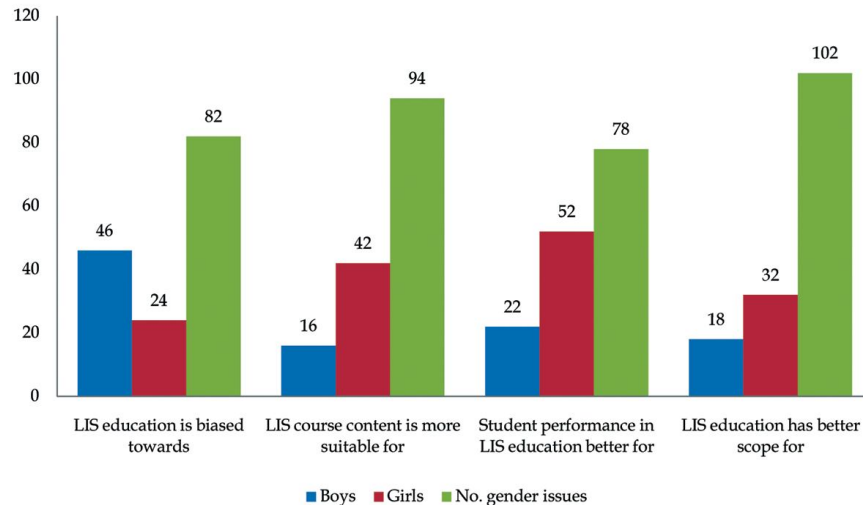


Fig. 2: Gender equality in LIS education in Odisha

As regard to the first question, whether LIS education is biased towards any particular gender, more than half (53.94%) respondents viewed that there is no gender bias. However, one third (30.26%) of respondents opined LIS education is biased towards the masculine gender. In response to the question relating to the LIS course content being suitable for a particular gender, majority 61.84% opined no gender issues. Similarly, more than half of the respondents responded that there is no gender issues as regards to performance of the students. Similarly, a majority of respondents (67.10%) felt that LIS education is equally suitable for both male and female and no gender issues.

#### Gender Issues in LIS Skills and Competency

The skill and competency have never been gender specific at all in many of the professions. Both the male and female could deliver excellence in their own professions depending upon their knowledge base, experience and exposure. The respondents in the present survey were questioned to express their opinion with regard to the statements on gender issues relating to skill and competency of LIS professionals in Odisha. The responses are reflected in the Table 4.

The above table and figure show that the gender differences in LIS skills and competency. Majority of respondents (51.31%) perceived male are better in

Table 4: Gender differences in LIS skills and competency

Who is better in.....?	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	No gender issues	Percentage
Library administration	78	51.32	20	13.15	54	35.52
Technical skills	82	53.95	22	14.47	48	31.57
Computer & ICT skills	74	48.68	16	10.52	62	40.78
Setting up Digital library	66	43.42	28	18.42	58	38.15
Communication skill	22	14.47	42	27.63	88	57.89
Dedication and Commitment to work	36	23.68	25	16.44	33	21.71
Professional networking	54	35.53	24	15.78	74	48.68
User services	20	13.16	24	15.78	88	57.89
Independence in work	36	23.68	24	15.78	82	53.94

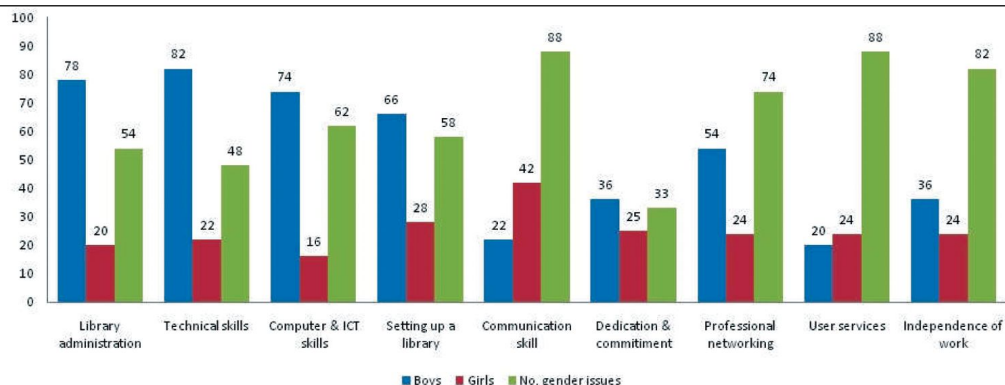


Fig. 3: Gender differences in LIS skills and competency

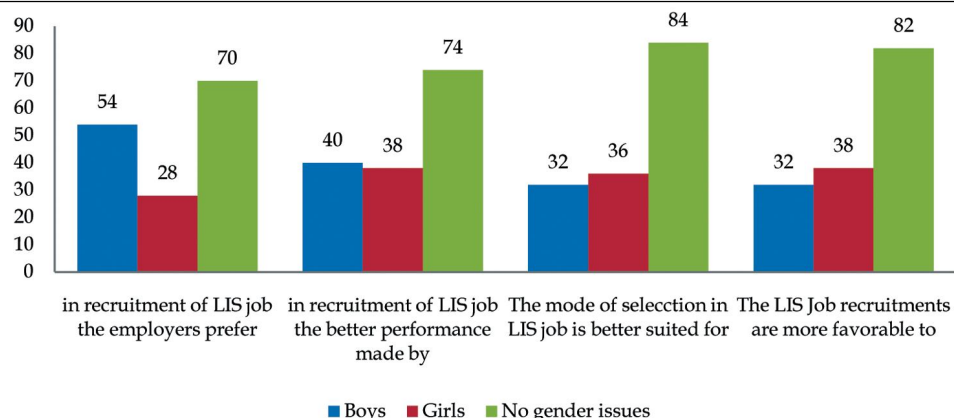
Library administration than female. Similarly, with regard to technical skills, majority of respondents (53.94%) believed male are more technically skilled than female. In computer and ICT skills 48.68% of respondents thought male are better than female. When it is the question of setting of digital libraries, 43.42% of respondents viewed male professionals are better in their female counterparts. However, in communication skills, professional networking, dedication and commitment, user services, etc. majority opinion is no gender issues.

*Gender Equality in Recruitment and Selection in LIS Jobs*

If someone observes the recruitment process and selection into LIS jobs in Odisha, it appears like the recruitment is biased towards male. Experience establishes the fact that employers in many cases, especially when there is one library post in the institution, would prefer to have a male rather than a female professional. The following table reflects the opinion of the respondents with regard to gender differences in recruitment of LIS jobs in Odisha. The responses are reflected in the Table 5.

**Table 5:** Gender equality in recruitment and selection of LIS professionals in Odisha

What do you feel.....?	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	No Gender Issues	Percentage
In recruitment of LIS jobs the employers prefer	54	35.52	28	18.42	70	46.05
In recruitment of LIS jobs the better performance made by	40	26.31	38	25	74	48.68
The mode of selection in LIS jobs is better suited for	32	21.05	36	23.68	84	55.26
The LIS job recruitments are more favorable to	32	21.05	38	25	82	53.94



**Fig. 4:** Gender equality in recruitment and selection of LIS professionals in Odisha

In majority opinion, there is no gender issue involved in the recruitment and selection of LIS professionals in Odisha. While 35.52% of respondents are felt employers prefers male 18.42% respondents thought female are preferred. But majority of 46.05% respondents believed that there are no gender issues. As regards to the performance in the selection process, 26.31% respondents think boys are better performers, 25% respondents think girls are better, but a majority 48.68% respondents think there are no gender issues. With regard to mode of selection in LIS jobs, 21.05% feel it is better suited for boys but 23.68% of

respondents think it is better suited for girls and majority 55.26% of respondent are think there are no gender issues.

*Gender Equality in Social Status of LIS Professionals*

The sociological indicators of LIS profession has always been a subject matter of research. In order to find out the social status of LIS professionals in the state of Odisha in the views of professionals, the questions as reflected in the Table 6 were proposed.

**Table 6:** Gender equality in social status of LIS professionals

	Male	%	Female	%	No.of Gender Issues	%
In LIS Education in Odisha which gender gets more status/recognition?	76	50	28	18.42	48	31.57
Which Gender of LIS professionals are more liked in matrimonial?	24	15.78	64	42.10	64	42.10
Contribution of LIS professionals towards social causes is more by	46	30.26	42	27.63	64	42.10

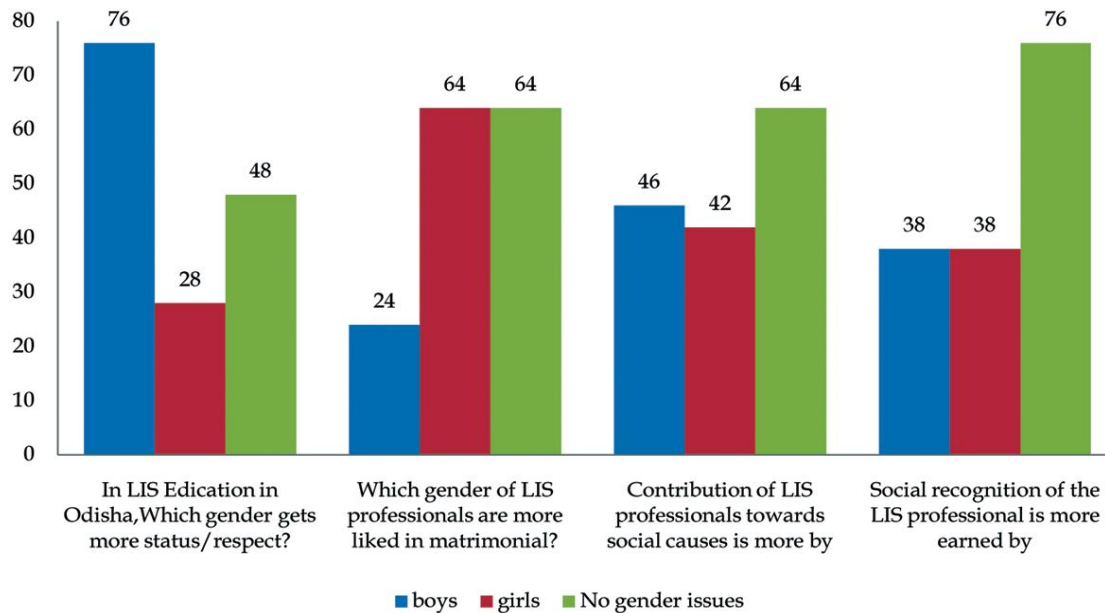


Fig. 5: Gender equality in social status of LIS professionals

The above table on 'Gender equality in social status' indicates that a half of the respondents think that male professionals get more status/recognition as compared to their female counterpart. However, 31.57% respondents think there is no gender issue. For matrimonial purposes, the professional status of the person is a prime indicator in Indian society. In the views of a majority of LIS professionals (42.10%) females are more liked for matrimonial. But an equal number of LIS professionals also believed there is no gender bias as regards to matrimonial.

#### Research Findings

As a result of the systematic analysis of data obtained for the present study, the following facts about were observed regarding gender equality and differences in LIS education and profession in Odisha.

- i. The LIS education in Odisha dominated by female students with almost double the size of male students enrolled in different LIS schools.
- ii. From the sample drawn from university libraries in Odisha, it was found that the male LIS professionals dominate with almost double the size of female professionals.
- iii. Majority of respondents in the survey opined no gender issues involved with LIS education in Odisha. There is no a gender preference or bias with regard to the course content, study performances and scope of LIS education.
- iv. In the opinion of the respondents, male

professionals are more skilled and competent specifically in the technology application, digital library and general administration of the library. However, in the areas of communication, networking and user services no gender bias was perceived.

- v. In recruitment and selection of LIS professionals no gender is in advantage. Majority of respondents viewed that no gender preferences exist with regard to suitability and performance of LIS jobs in Odisha.
- vi. So far as social recognition to LIS professionals in Odisha is concerned, majority of the respondents viewed the male get more social recognition than their female counterpart. However, for matrimonial, female LIS professionals are more liked as a life partner than their male counterpart.

#### Comments and Suggestions

The respondents in the survey were asked to submit their specific comments or suggestions so as develop gender equality and to reduce gender disparity in the profession of librarianship. A few of the selected comments are as follows:

*"The employers shouldn't doubt females' technical skills and communication skill. Equal distribution of work with equal status is important for the growth of gender equity in LIS profession".*

*"In most of the parts of Odisha male LIS professionals are getting more preferences during the time of employment than female LIS professionals. Its a general mindset of the recruiting*

*authorities that female LIS professionals may not able to carry the overall responsibilities and deliver as per expectation in the work field. This mindset needs to be changed and equality and fair treatment with regard to recruitment and selection must always be encouraged in LIS profession".*

*" Many institutions of the state prefer to deploy male candidates rather than the female candidate because they can use them in many more purposes like exam duty, extra duty after official hours, accounting purpose etc. But they should decide first, whether they want a good librarian or a multitasking employee. If this attitude of the management is changed, then there is no problem in gender bias in the profession."*

*" The female LIS professionals should update their technical knowledge more specifically their computing skill keeping pace with the latest developments in LIS. This will certainly stop the discrimination with regard to the employability of the female into the professional positions"*.

### Suggestions

Gender differences may not be in the minds of the LIS professionals of Odisha, as depicted in the present survey, but in reality the gaps exist in senior level job positions, pay and working conditions. Female are still under-represented at more senior level jobs, especially in the national level institutions such as IITs, IIMs, universities etc. Women often work part-time as it facilitates combining work and family responsibilities, but this frequently comes at a cost to their long-term career and earning prospects. This calls for a comprehensive and systematic set of measures:

- Development of specific mechanisms to improve the gender-balance in senior librarian positions both in public and private sectors.
- Strengthening the flexibility, transparency and fairness of employment systems and policies to ensure fair pay and equal opportunities for talented women and men in LIS with a mix of backgrounds and experiences.
- Improve work-life balance options, in particular opportunities for flexible work arrangements and workload management.
- Encourage women who have completed their LIS courses to work in libraries and information centres by means of internships and apprenticeships to as to acquire exposure and experience.
- The government should introduce targets and measures to monitor progress on female

representation in libraries of listed organizations.

- The women professionals should not be discriminated as they cannot do outdoor works (non library tasks) because the primary job of the LIS professional is to perform the library related work.
- There should be lavatories for women in the working places in the library building itself.
- The women LIS professionals, if working late in the evening may avail the institutions vehicle for going back to residence after working hours.
- Onsite training may be provided to women LIS professionals as it is difficult for them to attend such trainings held outside because of their family responsibilities.

### Conclusion

In this era of globalization gender differences and discrimination of the professionals is a shameful event. The gender equity would be very much essential for greater work place order of efficiency. Particularly, in the LIS jobs there should be equal participation of male and female professionals, because both the genders have their own characteristics, strengths and weakness. The present study found that gender differences do not persist in the minds of the professionals. Hence, the authorities and the government need to take appropriate steps to maintain the gender equality for sustainable development of LIS education and profession in the state of Odisha.

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