

Gender Disparity in selected Urban Cooperative Banks in Belagavi Taluk

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ABSTRACT

“It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing”.

-Swami Vivekananda

‘Cooperative’ form of organizations enable individuals and communities to come together to achieve group goals. It is evident also in inclusion of women for productive purposes under Cooperative Movement. This has helped to achieve the objective of socio-economic development as women’s participation in cooperatives enhances income, status, livelihood of them and their communities. Most of the Women Cooperatives in India have proven very successful, but they are very small in number. Women’s cooperatives are less than 2% of the total number and their membership comprised less than 1.5% of the overall membership of the total cooperatives in the countries. (ILO National Advisory Council, ‘Development of Cooperatives in India’ 2018)

Therefore, this research study is an attempt to find out gender disparity in randomly selected Urban Cooperative Banks (UCB) in Belagavi Taluk. This research paper is based on primary data collected by officials of UCB’s located in Belagavi and the secondary data such as annual reports, research papers, articles and books depicting the overall participation of women at all levels in cooperative banking sector.

Key words: Cooperative banks, Gender disparity/equality, women participation

I. INTRODUCTION:

An important phenomenon of the 20th century was the entry of women into the work force. More and more women are choosing careers either out of necessity or for self-fulfillment. After Industrial Revolution and the consequent technological developments in the 19th and 20th centuries, a tremendous change has been witnessed in the status and role of women. Women in order to

supplement their meager family income, have moved away from the boundaries of rural homes to factories, mills etc. However, Statistics from the United Nations report on World’s Women 2015 reveals that women and girls comprise nearly half of the world’s population, but their socio-economic status is far below its potential. Inequalities still exist, including disparities in work, education and literacy levels, discriminatory statutory and customary laws, and levels of gender-based violence. So, internationally, only half of working-age women participate in the labor force, compared to three-quarters of working-age men. When women do work, they continue to be denied equal pay for work of equal value and are less likely than men to receive a pension. Consequently, women face large income inequalities throughout their lives. Across all sectors and occupations, women on average earn less than men; in most countries, women in full-time jobs earn between 70 and 90 percent of what men earn.

In developing countries, up to 95 percent of women’s employment is in the unorganized sector that is in jobs that are unprotected by labor laws, or which do not benefit from social protection. Women spend, on average, three hours more per day than men on unpaid work in developing countries. They work more hours, caring for children, elderly relatives and carrying other domestic chore burdens as well. This restricts their time and mobility for economic activities or entrepreneurship. Also, societal and cultural norms often impact their financial independence and/or decision-making abilities within the household. (United Nations 2015b)

In India, where gender inequality is a persistent challenge, data from research shows that, women spending more time handling housework and child care responsibilities are more likely than men to adjust their career for family; in the current pandemic situation it is still worse. Though work from home format is implemented, balancing the demands of office work and house hold chores

when all family members are at home and children are not going to school for uncertain duration is not easy for women. Further, low representation of women at the workplace is a global predicament but in India the picture of women at workplace is extremely gloomy as gender inequality at workplace is highly prevalent (Bhardwaj, 2018)

Operational Definitions:

1. **Urban Cooperative Banks** refers to primary cooperative banks located in urban and semi-urban areas. These banks, till 1996, were allowed to lend money only for non-agricultural purposes. These credit institutions function individually as there are no separate higher tier institutions functioning for them at the district and state level. The area of operation of them extends to more than one state. Such institutions are formed by like-minded individuals with a common objectives, purposes and goals.
2. **Disparity** refers to the existence of human differences on the grounds of colour, race, ethnicity, gender, identity, age, physical attributes, ethical values, nationality, education, personality, experiences and knowledge base.

Present research article considers only gender based disparity.

2a. **Gender disparity** is the social process by which men and women are not treated as equals. The treatment may arise from distinctions regarding biology, psychology, or cultural norms. Some of these distinctions are empirically-grounded while others appear to be socially constructed.

Objectives:

1. To sensitize and orient Indian organizations specifically financial institutions on issues pertaining to the low and negligible participation of women.
2. To generate awareness on disaggregated data collection, analysis and use by UCB's to identify gender disparity
3. To understand women's participation on Executive (BOD's) and Non-executive (Employees) levels of Select UCB's in Belagavi
4. To recommend measures to create a more women inclusive UCB's

➤ Status of Gender Disparity in Indian Organizations

Since 1990 the overall Workforce Participation Rate (WFPR) reflects the marginal

progress made to close the gap in male-female workforce participation but few women on top position is not enough to bring about true equality to traditionally male dominated commercial activities. In India, McKinsey estimates that 70 percent of the potential economic gains of promoting women's equality would result from raising women's labor force participation, and those 68 million more women could be added to India's workforce by 2025. Yet, the IFC-GRI practitioner's guide notes that in India, employers still commonly question interviewees about their marriage and childbearing plans. Such questions, illegal in other countries, perpetuate biased notions that female employees will stop working after having their first child, discourage employee disparity and gender equality from the beginning itself.

In Indian organizations, the status of encouraging gender diversity is at its initial stages emphasizing upon equality in hiring, remuneration and representation in leadership positions (Das, 2018). Gender diversity and inclusion in Indian organizations reveals alarming statistics as top-listed companies have only 20% female workforce out of their entire permanent workforce (Bothra, 2019). According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2017) India ranked 108 out of 144 countries on the gender equality scale which has slipped from 87 in 2016. In 2018, this gap has become more glaring as India ranked 142 among 149 nations. Despite the adoption of numerous initiatives and affirmative actions for boosting gender disparity and inclusiveness in Indian organizations, India has not achieved success to raise the status of women in top and middle level positions (Verma & Basu, 2019). Women constitute only 27% of the total workforce, 17% of them are in senior management positions and only 3% women are CEO's in India (The Economic Times, 2017). Historical and current status of women workforce participation in Indian organizations reveals that a huge gap exists between the proportion of female labor force and their male counterparts.

➤ Statistics of Gender Disparity in Indian financial setups / Banks

The gender disparity / diversity results from a set of attitudes, beliefs and practices about gender that often cannot be challenged because of the lack of gender disaggregated data - a vital monitoring and program planning tool for identifying the bottlenecks and challenges to women's participation. Overall, gender diversity in Indian banks is about 23 percent, although some

banks report higher rates including Federal Bank (41 percent) and Bank of India (35 percent). The financial sector, even grouped together with insurance, real estate, and business services, represents just 0.61 percent of total female employment in India according to the NSSO's 2014-15 statistics.

A recent McKinsey study revealed the disparity among executive teams at Indian financial institutions: Women hold an average of 21% of all executive roles. But of that 21%, only 7% are in line roles (as opposed to staff roles, which tend to have less direct decision-making power within the business). A diverse and inclusive work environment goes beyond equity in gender representation, but it is a good start especially since women-led teams and organizations are 17% more likely to feel confident about successfully creating an inclusive culture.

➤ **Need for the Study:**

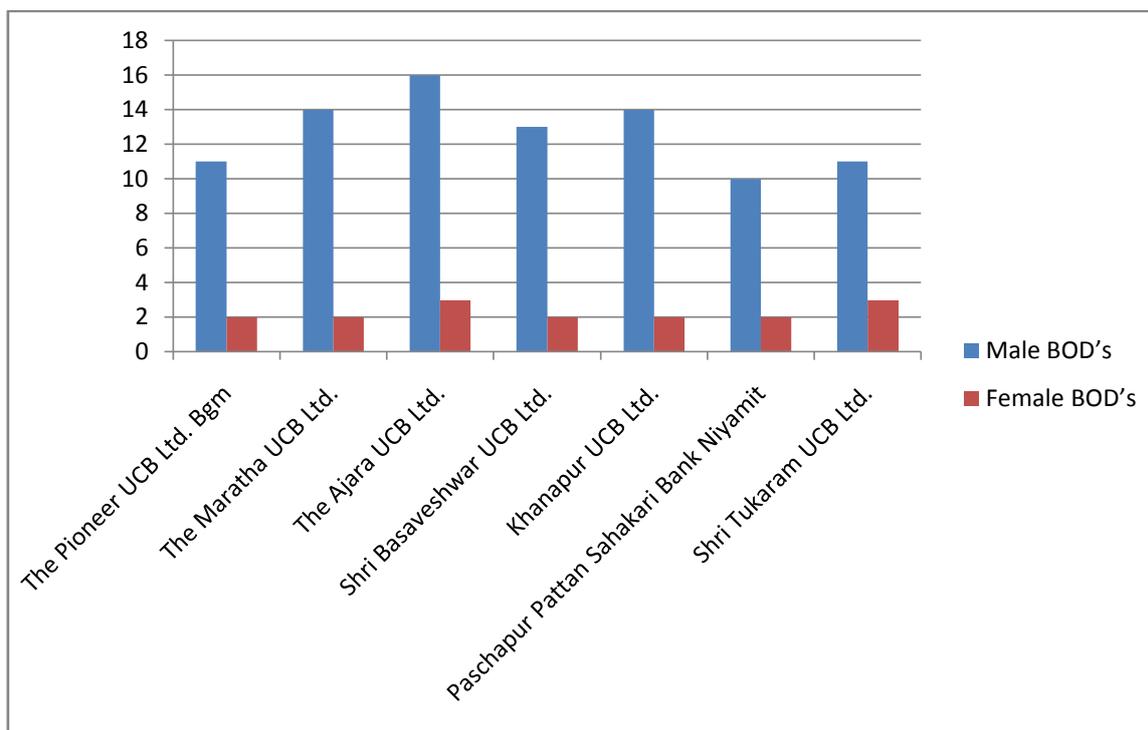
In rural setup especially, women are largely illiterate, and cooperatives are a more suitable organization for their financial inclusion. Especially from several studies already carried out and on the basis of understanding, cooperatives seem to be the best institutional mechanisms for the economic transformation of women and require development minded banks to utilize women's cooperatives more advantageously. The cooperative movement in India has had both success and

failures. However, the validity of cooperative for the women to improve their economic status and working conditions in the self-employed and handicraft sector cannot be questioned. Cooperation is an important instrument through which the underprivileged can get access to credit, production inputs, marketing facilities and the like. Superficial scenario suggests that corresponding to the number of cooperatives, women participation in co-operatives has also been increasing. The number of exclusive women co-operatives has gone up with diversification in the types of co-operatives being formed. In cooperative method women can fully utilize their potential of becoming an entrepreneur or intrapreneur.

Therefore, in this study, an attempt is made to find out the gender disparity persisting in few urban cooperative banks. A growing body of research suggests that having more women on board can be financially rewarding. A 2016 study by researchers at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) showed that across two million European firms, there was a strong positive link between return on assets and the share of women in senior positions. Despite consistent evidence proving the connection between diverse workplaces and profitability and performance, the male dominated industry has been largely unsuccessful in leveling the gender equity playing field. Women are significantly less likely to hold leadership positions within these organizations.

Table 1: Male – Female: Board of Directors / Chairpersons / Vice chairpersons in select UCB's in Belagavi.

Name of theUCB	Men BOD's	Women BOD's	Total	% of Women to total Members
The Pioneer UCB Ltd. Bgm	11	2	13	15.38
The Maratha UCB Ltd.	14	2	16	14.28
The Ajara UCB Ltd.	16	3	19	15.78
Shri Basaveshwar UCB Ltd.	13	2	15	13.33
Khanapur UCB Ltd.	14	2	16	12.50
PaschapurPattanSahakari Bank Niyamit	10	2	12	16.67
Shri Tukaram UCB Ltd.	11	3	14	21.42
TOTAL	89	16	105	15.23



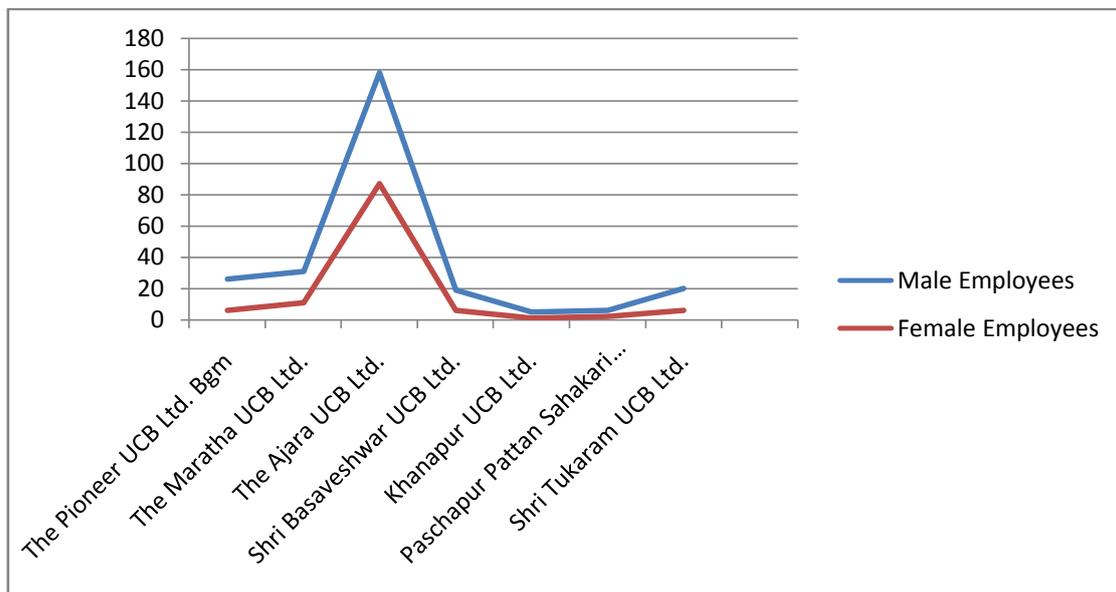
(Source: The Male – Female Board of Directors: data is collected from annual reports of respective banks of the year 2018-19 and mentioned here in a gender disaggregated tabular manner.)

From the above table and chart, it is confirmed that women's representation on boards in select 7 (due to limited time) UCBs in Belagavi is lower than men, which stands only 15.23 percent. The study indicates that the decision-making role of women is also low due to their low participation on boards. The Male – Female Board of Directors: data is collected from annual reports of respective banks of the year 2018-19; using a **gender disaggregated tool** and mentioned in tabular

manner which was missing in all the above UCBs. Most common reasons cited for not collecting disaggregated data by cooperatives are: lack of staff and financial resources; lack of skills and expertise; other reasons include difficulty in eliciting women-related information due to cultural barriers. However, it is indeed a reflection of the low priority given to this vital tool for increasing the participation of the women in cooperatives.

Table 2: Male – Female: Employees (performing Non- executive role) in select UCB's in Belagavi.

Name of UCB	Men Employees	Women Employees	Total Employees	% of Women to total Employees
The Pioneer UCB Ltd. Bgm	26	6	32	18.75
The Maratha UCB Ltd.	31	11	42	26.19
The Ajara UCB Ltd.	158	87	245	35.51
Shri Basaveshwar UCB Ltd.	19	6	25	24
Khanapur UCB Ltd.	5	1	6	16.67
Paschapur Pattan Sahakari Bank Niyamit	6	2	8	25.00
Shri Tukaram UCB Ltd.	20	6	28	21.42
TOTAL	247	119	366	32.51



From the above table and chart, it is understood that women's representation as an employees in select 7 (due to limited time) UCBs in Belagavi is also lower than men, which stands only 32.51 percent. There seems to be no conscious effort to recruit more in these setups. When women are viewed as equal partners, the efforts have to be made to create awareness of the possibility of transforming them as an important resource.

II. SUGGESTIONS:

➤ How to create more women inclusive UCB's?

Building a gender-inclusive UCB's does not mean hiring more women and promising pay equity. While this is certainly a good first step, gender inequity is a deeply rooted systemic issue, and therefore requires some work at the foundational level. Creating a culture of support and inclusivity lays the groundwork for diverse and underrepresented voices to be heard, and for their work to be valued. In order for women to be successful in the workplace, a supportive culture of inclusion and equity is necessary. A truly inclusive work culture ensures that every employee, regardless of their gender identity, feels supported and respected. In addition to this sense of belonging, a work culture focused on gender inclusion has the power to elevate previously unheard voices and value diverse experiences, fostering an environment of authentic respect and trust. This type of environment not only attracts more diverse applicants, it has all of the structural supports in place to set them up for success. Here are few steps that can be taken up to promote the growth of a more women inclusive culture:

- Make a commitment to gender inclusivity in hiring and promotion processes.

A gender-inclusive workplace begins with hiring process. In situations where it may not be possible to hire or promote employees to address a gender imbalance, make sure of elevating the voices of marginalized groups wherever possible. When it comes to raises and promotions, never base these numbers on what the employee may have received previously. Because women statistically make less money than their male counterparts, salaries that are based on previous earnings tend to propagate this gendered pay gap.

- Inclusion, on the other hand, is the collaborative environment that enhances belongingness, participation and contribution as it provides respect to people across varying parameters of difference. Presently, as organizations have initiated to acknowledge that women constitute a significant source of human capital, it becomes essential to create female friendly workplaces to encourage gender diversity in organizations. The present scenario identifies gender diversity and inclusion of workforce as the key to business success and growth.

- Back up commitment to women inclusive culture with inclusive facilities such as women rest rooms, provision of safety and acceptance and making structural and cultural changes that demonstrate that commitment. Gender friendly and inclusive workplaces can be developed by facilitating working mothers, protecting their employment, removing unconscious biasness, offering flexible working hours, fostering an inclusive and respectful working culture, fixing and achieving gender diversity goals. Setting up a Women's Committee was another important suggestion

National Cooperative Development Corporation,

III. CONCLUSION:

The analysis of disaggregated data collection and its use by UCB's to identify gender disparity clearly shows that it still persists. Though there is, significant increase in literacy rate, social status, awareness of rigorous legal and political reforms, technology transformation in the modern world, men tend to be seen as more authoritative and women more communal in orientation. Therefore, in workplaces, this led people to expect and concede to men in charge and to look to women to carry on routine maintenance activities. In job interviews as well, men and women have the same qualifications but men get more offers according to traditional assumptions about gender inclinations. At present, for Urban Cooperative Banks it is essential to understand this issue holistically for formulating an effective strategy to achieve improvement of women's socio-economic conditions. Further, in the researcher's opinion, to be more specific about how gender differences and hierarchies' function and end up being recreated again and again further study can be taken up in this field.

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