

A STUDY OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT MEASURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED REGULATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

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Abstract

This study pertains to the implementation of the guidelines and regulations issued by the University Grants Commission in its commitment to promoting equity through higher education in the country and ensure Empowerment of Women. Analysis of secondary data collected from the Annual Reports of the Commission for five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20 and documents uploaded on its Saksham portal for the years 2015-16 to 2020-21 revealed that in the period under study, not even one fourth of the Universities in the country have submitted the Annual Return. For Colleges, the maximum rate of compliance during the period is so negligible (2.3%). Not even 25% of the total Universities in the country have constituted Internal Complaints Committee. The disposal of Cases of Sexual Harassment by Colleges has been done more efficiently than the Universities during the period. Since the compliance by Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) of various regulations of the commission, including appointment of Gender Champions has been very low, it is suggested that. all the HEIs must ensure timely compliance of the circulars and letters of the UGC issued in this connection.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Gender Champion, Higher Educational Institutions



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Introduction

The University Grants Commission (UGC), a statutory body of the Government of India is vested with the responsibility of coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education in India and also providing funds for higher education. In its commitment to provide 'Quality Higher Education for all', it aims at ensuring, among other things, increased
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participation of women in higher education. Over the years, the Commission has undertaken various initiatives for empowerment of women and girl students.

In discharge of its responsibility for promoting equity through higher education in the country, for ensuring increased participation of women in higher education, the Commission has issued guidelines and regulations for maintaining a safe and healthy environment for women students and employees in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) in the country. These include

- i) Issue of UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012. These regulations deal with elimination of all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation of any student(s) based on caste, creed, religion, gender, language, ethnicity and disability. The regulations also require the establishment of Equal Opportunity Cell by HEI for promotion of equality among all sections of students.
- ii) Saksham Report (Measures for Ensuring the Safety of Women and Programmes for Gender Sensitization on Campuses), December 2013, which contains the findings and recommendations of the Task Force set up to explore the situation prevailing on campuses of HEI across the country in relation to the safety of women in particular and youth, in general.
- iii) UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015. These guidelines require constitution of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).
- iv) Circulation (in Aug., 2015), of 'Guidelines for Gender Champions in Educational Institutions' formulated in a joint initiative by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development. *Gender Champions (boys and girls of above 16 years of age fulfilling certain academic performance criteria) are envisaged as responsible leaders who will facilitate an enabling environment within their schools /colleges / academic institutions where girls are treated with dignity and respect. They will strengthen the potential of young girls and boys to advocate for gender equality and monitor progress towards gender justice.*¹

Thereafter, the Commission has sent letters to the Universities about appointment of Gender Champions in their campus as well as in the affiliated colleges. The aim of appointment of Gender Champions is:

- i) To make the young boys and girls, gender-sensitive and create positive social norms that value the girls and their rights in the campus of HEI
- ii) to select responsible leaders, who will facilitate an integrated and interdisciplinary approach, understanding the socio-cultural constructions of gender that shape the experiences of women and men in the society

Objectives of the study

- 1) To study the implementation of selected regulations of the Commission in Colleges and Universities in India during the period 2015-16 to 2020-21.
- 2) To study the compliance rate of the Annual Return on Cases of Sexual Harassment.
- 3) To study the efficiency in disposal of complaints of Cases of Sexual Harassment in the HEI.
- 4) To study the pattern of appointment of Gender Champions in HEI.

Method of data collection

Secondary data was collected as follows:

- a) Data on Sexual Harassment Cases in Universities and Colleges and Data on Gender Champions in Universities and Colleges was collected from the 'Saksham' portal of the UGC for the years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 (<https://saksham.ugc.ac.in>) and
- b) UGC Annual Reports for the years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 available on the website of the Commission (<https://www.ugc.ac.in>) were referred to

The collected data was tabulated and analysed using statistical tools.

Findings

A. Annual Return on Sexual Harassment is a compliance, which is mandatory to be filled by the Universities and their affiliated colleges/institutions every year, containing following information:

- i) Number of cases of Sexual Harassment registered with the HEI during the year
- ii) Number of Complaints disposed of during the year
- iii) Number of cases pending for more than 90 days
- iv) Number of workshops or Awareness Programmes about sexual harassment, Gender Sensitisation etc. conducted during the year
- v) Nature of action taken
- vi) Whether Internal Complaints Committee is constituted or not

As mentioned above, the data was analysed as follows:

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Compliance Rate

This is calculated separately for Colleges and Universities. For Colleges, total respondent colleges every year are divided by the total number of colleges at the year- end included under sections 2(f) and 12(B) of the UGC Act, 1956 (as disclosed in the Annual Reports of UGC for that year). For Universities, the respondents every year are divided by total number of universities (as disclosed in the Annual Reports of UGC for that year).

Table No. 1

As on 31st March	Total Number of Universities	Total Number of Colleges
2016	753 ¹	10451 ¹
2017	795 ²	10966 ²
2018	851 ³	11515 ⁵
2019	911 ⁴	12070 ⁵
2020	944 ⁵	12435 ⁵

Table No. 2

Year	No. of respondent Universities	No. of respondent Colleges
2015-16	145 ²	239 ²
2016-17	186 ³	248 ³
2017-18	63 ⁴	11 ⁴
2018-19	167	252
2019-20	187	234

- 1) https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/3710331_Annual-Report-2015-16.pdf, Pages 91,92,122 ,accessed 09/02/2022
- 2) https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/9764381_Complete-AR-2016-17-English.pdf , Pages 78,110 for Table 1 and Page 37 for Table 2, accessed 09/02/2022
- 3) https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/5595965_UGC-ANNUAL-REPORT-English-2017-18.pdf, Page 91 for Table 1 and Page 26 for Table 2, accessed 09/02/2022
- 4) https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/3060779_UGC-ANNUAL-REPORT--ENGLISH--2018-19.pdf, Page 107 Table 1 and Page 30 for Table 2, accessed 09/02/2022

5) https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/1120661_UGC-ANNUAL-REPORT-ENGLISH-2019-20.pdf, Pages 105,147, accessed 09/02/2022

Graphically, the compliance rate is as follows:

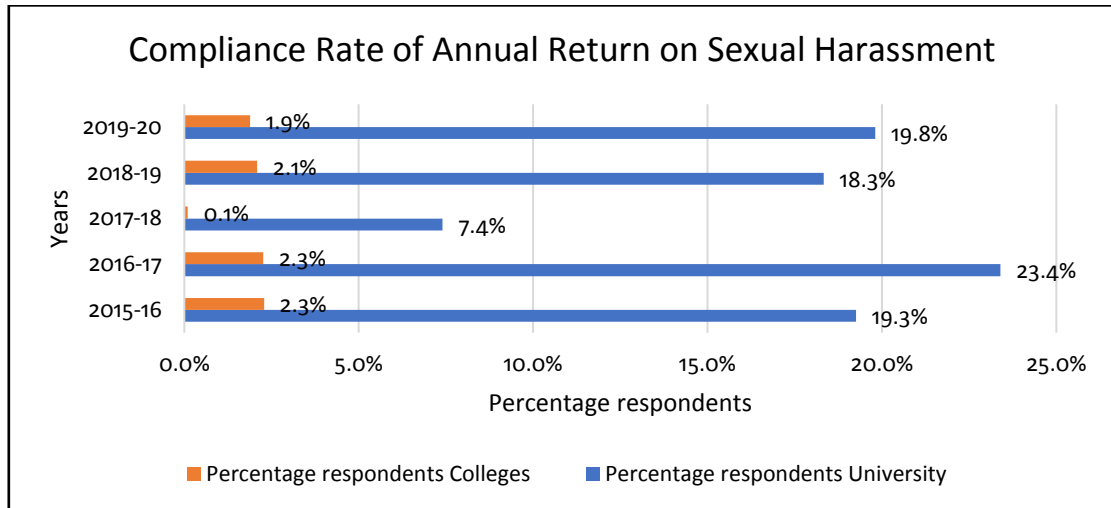


Fig. 1 COMPLIANCE RATE OF ANNUAL RETURN ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

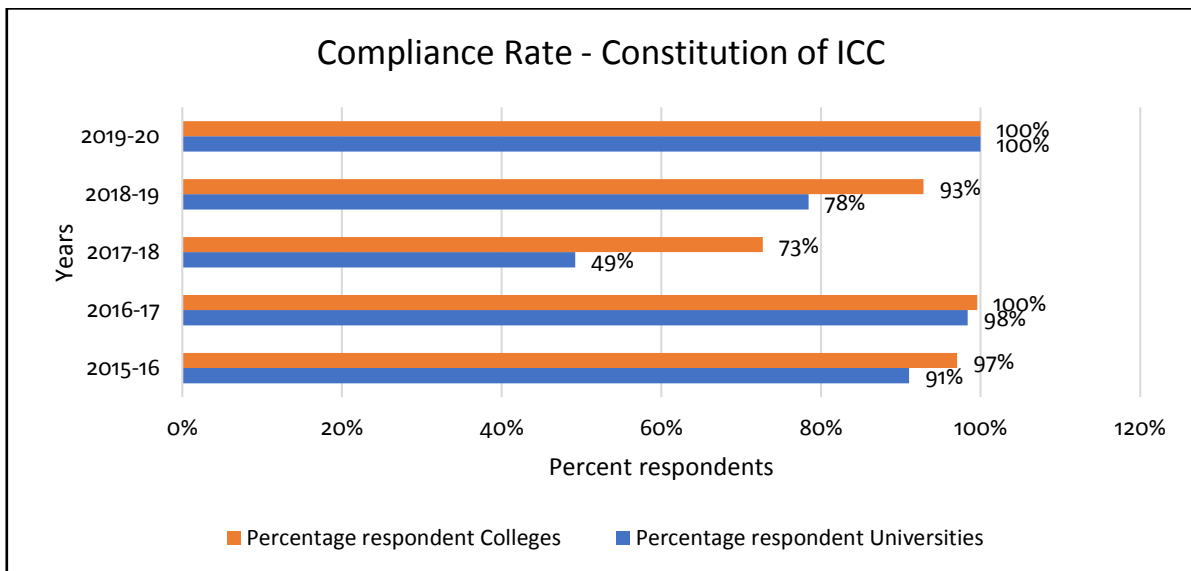


Fig. 2 COMPLIANCE RATE – CONSTITUTION OF ICC

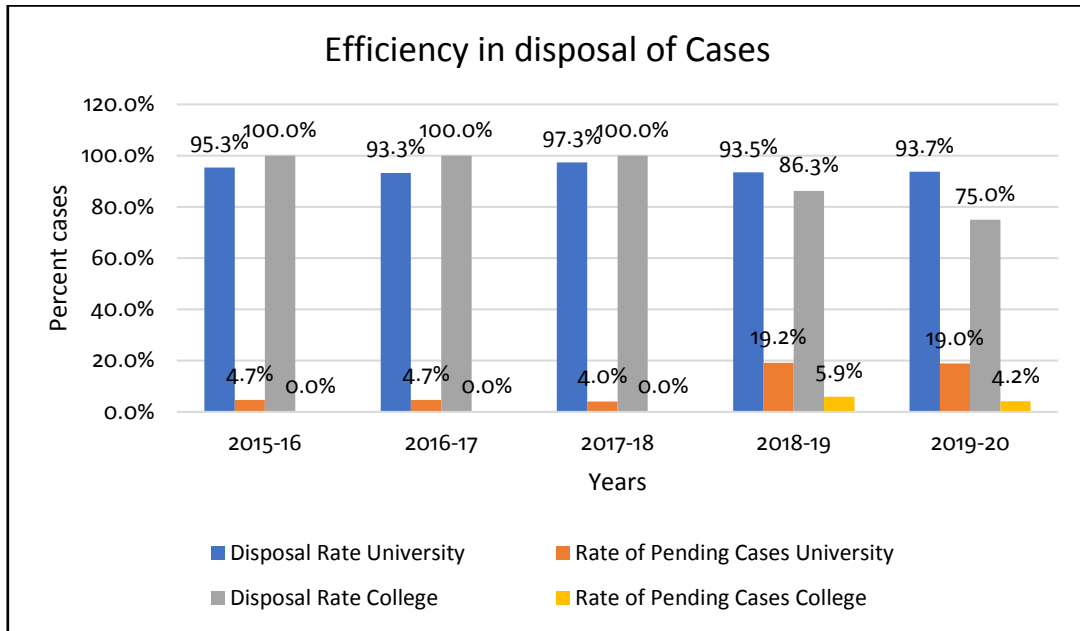


Fig. 3 EFFICIENCY IN DISPOSAL OF CASES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Efficiency in disposal of cases is calculated separately for Colleges and Universities on the basis of Disposal rate and the rate of pending cases.

Disposal Rate = $\frac{\text{Number of cases disposed of during the year}}{\text{Total number of cases registered during the year}} \times 100$

Rate of Pending Cases = $\frac{\text{Number of cases pending for more than 90 days during the year}}{\text{Total number of cases registered during the year}} \times 100$

Lower the rate of pending cases, higher is the efficiency.

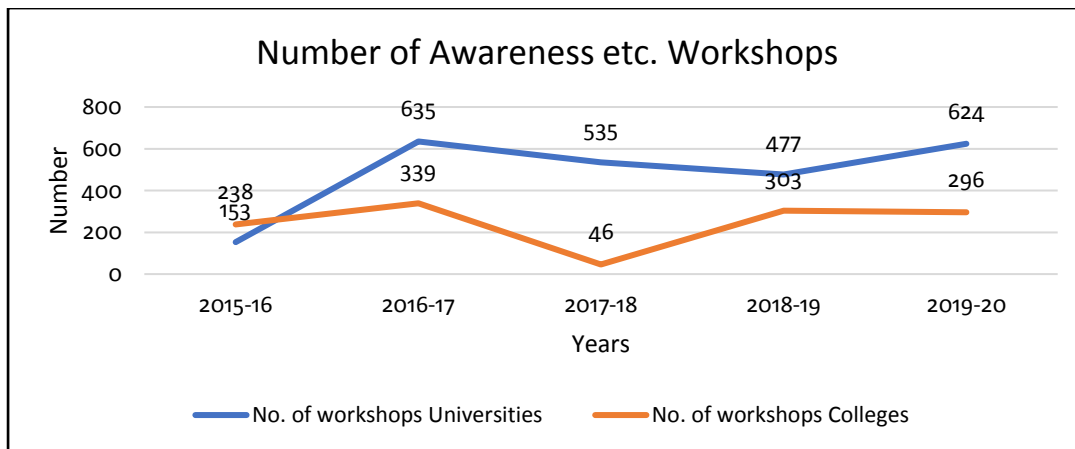


Fig. 4 NUMBER OF AWARENESS, SENSITISATION ETC. WORKSHOPS/ PROGRAMMES

Interpretation:

Though the Compliance rate of Annual Return by the Universities is maximum in the year 2016-17, in the period under study, not even one fourth of the Universities in the country have submitted the Annual Return. For Colleges, the maximum rate of compliance during the period of study is so negligible (2.3%). Not even 25% of the total Universities in the country have constituted ICC. The disposal of Cases of Sexual Harassment by Colleges has been done more efficiently than the Universities during the period under study. For the first three years of study, the rate of disposal for colleges is 100% and rate of pending cases is 0%. In case of universities, the rate of disposal of cases has been above 93%, but not more than 97.5%. In year 2016-17, colleges and universities have conducted maximum number of workshops

B. Colleges and Universities are required to submit Action taken on implementing the Guidelines of Gender Champions in their Institution during one year giving the details of

- i) Number of Boys selected as Gender Champions
- ii) Number of Girls selected as Gender Champions
- iii) Number of Nodal Teachers selected
- iv) Whether the guidelines of Gender Champions are implemented

The details of Action Taken Reports submitted to the UGC by Universities and Colleges have been analysed as follows:

Year	No. of respondent Universities	No. of respondent Colleges
2015-16	115	230
2016-17	26	48
2017-18	9	32
2018-19	17	18
2019-20	55	113
2020-21	34	64

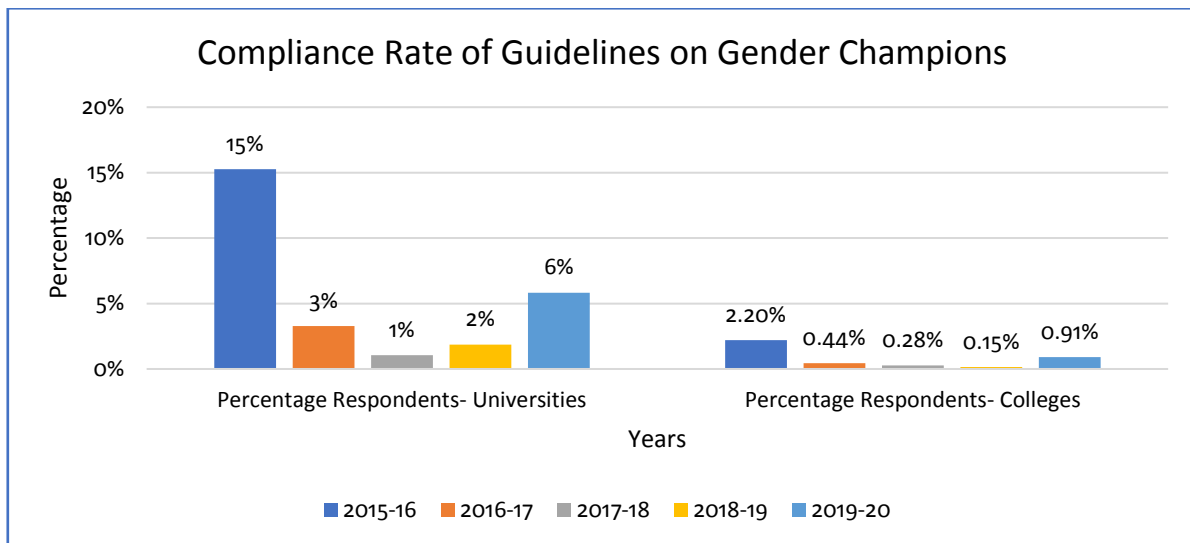


Fig. 5 COMPLIANCE RATE OF GUIDELINES ON GENDER CHAMPIONS

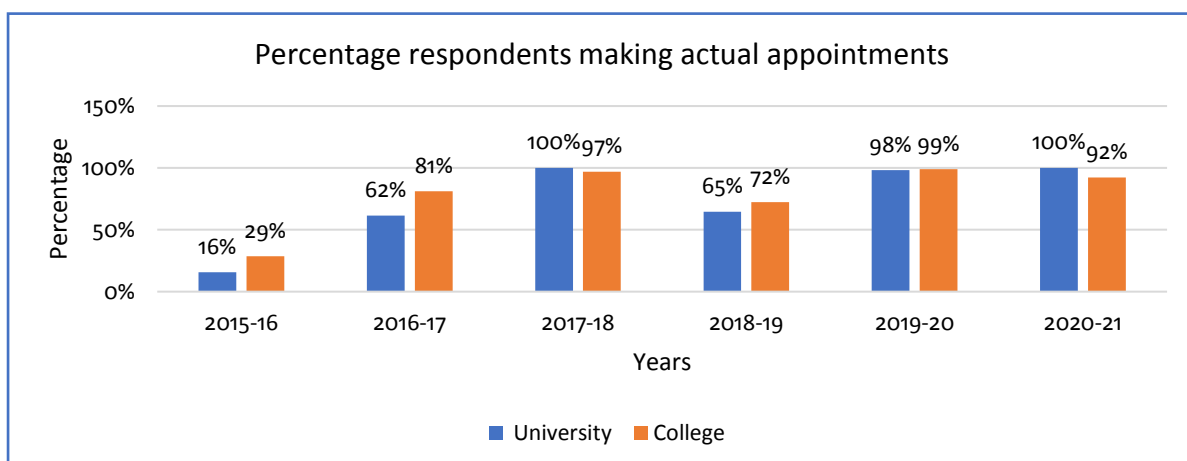


Fig. 6 PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS MAKING ACTUAL APPOINTMENTS

The Compliance Rate of Guidelines on Gender Champions is separately calculated for Universities and Colleges. For Colleges, total respondent colleges every year are divided by the total number of colleges at the year-end included under sections 2(f) and 12(B) of the UGC Act, 1956 (as disclosed in the Annual Reports of UGC for that year). For Universities, the respondents every year are divided by total number of universities (as disclosed in the Annual Reports of UGC for that year). Since the data of total number of Colleges and Universities as on 31st March, 2021 is not yet published, the compliance rate for the year 2020-21 could not be calculated. However, the analysis of appointments is done for the year 2020-21 also, since the data is published.

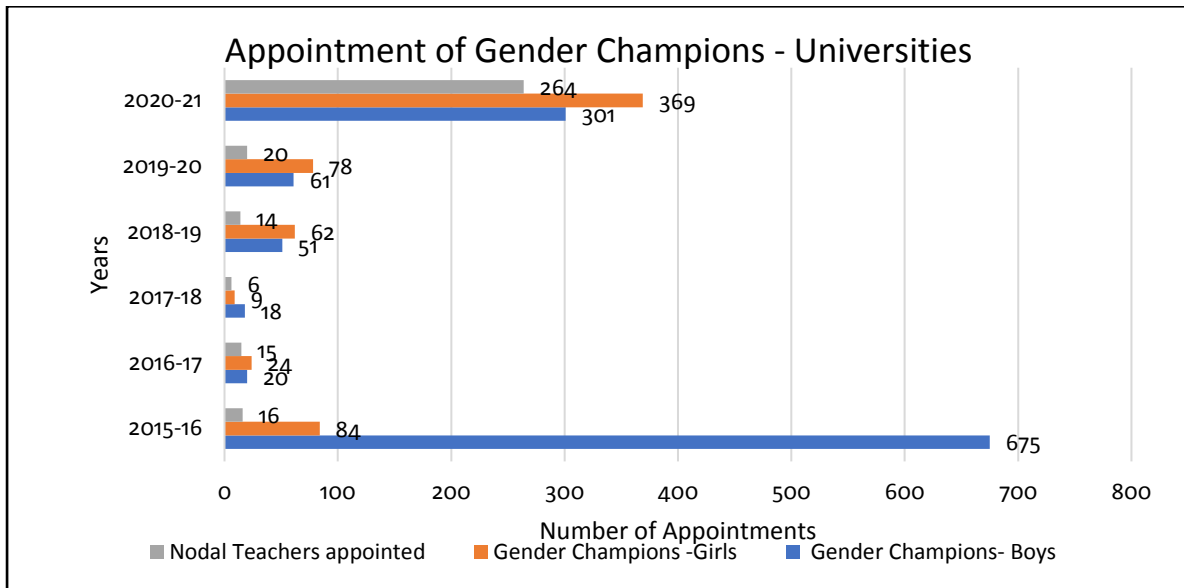


Fig. 7 APPOINTMENT OF GENDER CHAMPIONS - UNIVERSITIES

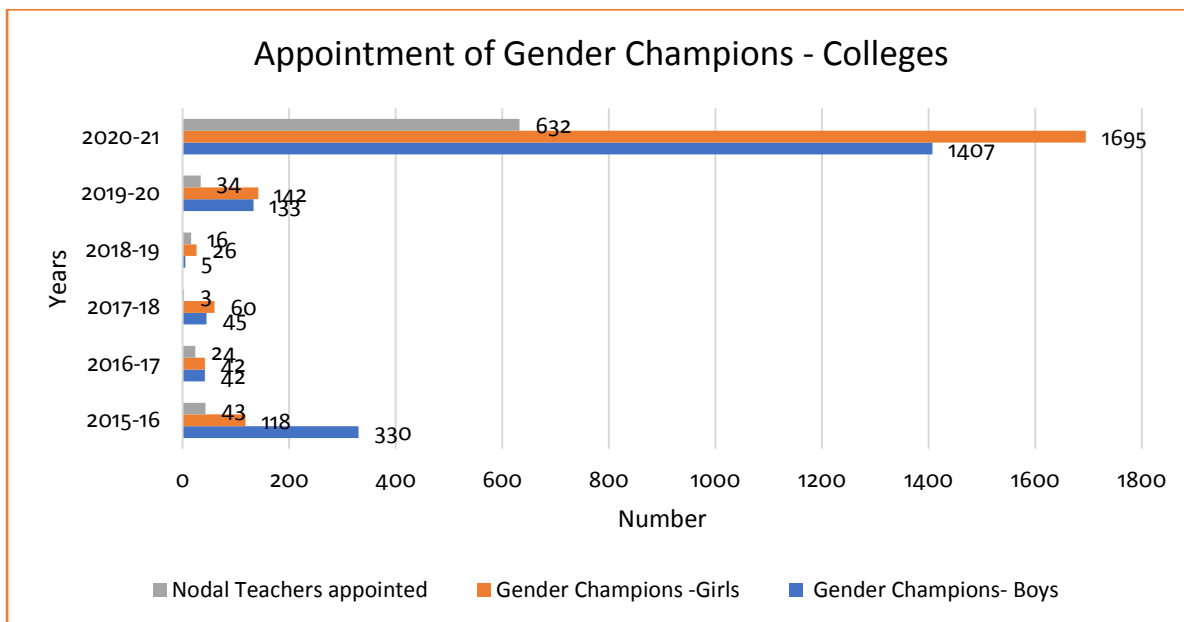


Fig. 8 APPOINTMENT OF GENDER CHAMPIONS - COLLEGES

Interpretation:

The compliance rate is highest for universities and colleges in the first year of implementation, i.e. year 2015-16. Thereafter, it drastically reduced for the universities and the colleges and revived marginally by the year 2019-20. 100% of the responding universities have made appointments of Gender Champions in the years 2017-18 and 2020-21. In case of colleges, the percentage respondents making appointments ranges from 29% to 99% in the period of study.

Maximum number of boys were appointed as Gender Champions by the Universities in the year 2015-16, largest number of gender champion girls and nodal teachers have been appointed by the universities in the year 2020-21. In case of colleges, maximum number of gender champions (boys and girls) and nodal teachers are appointed in the year 2020-21,

Limitations:

The study is based on the data uploaded for the period 2015-16 to 2020-21 on the website of UGC and its Saksham portal (as mentioned in the references), accessed from the months of August, 2021 up to Feb 2022. The data uploaded on the website of UGC has undergone revision during this period, hence, the researcher has made an attempt to include the latest data. For analysis of cases of sexual harassment, up to the years 2015-16 to 2017-18, the Annual Reports of the Commission have been referred to. For the years 2018-19 and 2019-20, the data is collected as mentioned in references section.

Conclusion:

The compliance by HEI of various regulations of the commission has been very low. The average rate of disposal of complaints is satisfactory, but care should be taken to ensure that none of the complaints of cases of sexual harassment should remain pending for more than 90 days due to institution-level causes. There is a need to enhance the awareness about the schemes of women empowerment and the regulations and guidelines regarding gender champions. All the HEIs must ensure timely compliance of the circulars and letters of the UGC issued in this connection.

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