Empowering Women: exploring SheRNI's expert profiles with special reference to Library and Information Science in India

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Abstract

The She Research Network in India (SheRNI) serves as a pivotal platform dedicated to connecting and leveraging the knowledge, skills, and expertise of women across diverse sectors in India, empowering them through collaborative initiatives, mentorship opportunities, and knowledge-sharing endeavours. This study investigates the specific impact of SheRNI on empowering women professionals within the Library and Information Science (LIS) field. Utilising data extracted from SheRNI's comprehensive database, this research focuses on women experts in LIS, employing Microsoft Excel for data organisation and analysis to examine their distribution across different states and institutions. The findings underscore SheRNI's role in facilitating a diverse pool of experts across various disciplines, particularly highlighting its significant contribution to the advancement of expertise and collaborative efforts within LIS. Despite these advancements, the study reveals persistent gender disparities within the LIS profession, emphasising the ongoing necessity for initiatives that promote gender equity and inclusivity. This research contributes to existing literature by offering insights into how SheRNI empowers women professionals, specifically within the LIS domain, showcasing its effectiveness in fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and addressing gender disparities in professional representation.

Keywords: Empowering women, Gender wise LIS professionals, Library and Information Science, She Research Network in India (SheRNI), Vidwan women experts

1.   Introduction

Empowering women or women empowerment is about ensuring that women can make choices and decisions about their own lives, have access to education, employment, healthcare, and other resources, and participate fully in society on an equal basis with men. It's essential for achieving gender equality and creating a more just and inclusive world.

Despite progress towards gender equality, women continue to face challenges in accessing opportunities for professional growth and advancement, particularly in fields like Library and Information Science (LIS). She Research Network in India (SheRNI) emerges as a transformative platform designed to address these disparities by connecting and empowering women experts in LIS and other disciplines. This paper examines how SheRNI facilitates networking, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among women professionals in the LIS field, ultimately contributing to their empowerment and the advancement of the sector.

2.   Review of the literature

Arunachalam and Doss (2000) highlighted disparities in publication output and research impact between male and female scientists, indicating systemic barriers and inequalities that hinder women's advancement in scientific careers. Factors such as access to resources, career opportunities, and societal expectations contribute to these disparities, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive policies and interventions to promote equity and inclusion in scientific research and academia. Crawford (2019) identified that despite significant strides towards gender equality, women in fields such as Library and Information Science (LIS) continue to encounter barriers hindering their professional growth and advancement. In 2020 Biswas showed the scholarly communication trends of Indian male and women LIS professionals over LIS-Forum. Indian male LIS professionals are slightly ahead of women professionals in terms of postings but through a correlation-coefficient analysis he explained the decreasing trend of both male and women professionals on LIS-Form. Kaul and Gupta (2010) also examined gender dynamics within the LIS profession in India. They explored issues such as representation, career advancement opportunities, and challenges faced by women professionals. It highlighted disparities in leadership roles, salary scales, and workplace environments, emphasising the need for gender-sensitive policies and supportive frameworks to empower women in LIS. The research underscores the importance of addressing systemic barriers to foster inclusivity and gender equity within the profession. On the other hand, Shah, Gul, and Bhat (2023) explore in their studies, persistent disparities in representation and access to opportunities for women within the LIS sector, including under representation in leadership roles and salary discrepancies compared to their male counterparts. In response to these challenges, the She Research Network in India (SheRNI) has emerged as a transformative platform dedicated to empowering women experts across various disciplines, including LIS.

3.   Objectives of the research

The objectives of the research are

- To investigate the She Research Network in India's (SheRNI) role in empowering women in different subjects

- To explore SheRNI's impact on women's professional development, networking, and contributions to LIS

- To provide valuable insights into the distribution and roles of LIS experts within SheRNI for stakeholders' use

- To explore gender disparities among LIS professionals in India and propose strategies for achieving gender equity

4.   Methodology and limitations of the study

The methodology for this study involves extracting data from the She Research Network in India (SheRNI) database, accessible via https://sherni.inflibnet.ac.in/irins/w/searchc/search. The extraction process focused on filtering the data initially by subject area, specifically targeting Social Science, and then narrowing it down to the subset related to Library and Information Science (LIS). Within the LIS subset, further filtering was applied based on criteria such as state-wise distribution, organisation, and designation of experts. Microsoft Excel has been used for organising and analysing the filtered data, allowing for descriptive statistics such as counts to be generated. These statistics facilitated the interpretation of data

regarding the distribution and characteristics of LIS experts within the SheRNI network.

However, it's important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in the study. These include potential biases in data availability and interpretation, the exclusive focus on LIS within the Social Sciences domain, and the temporal scope limited to data available as of 31stMarch 2024. Despite these constraints, the methodology provided a systematic approach to examining the profile of LIS experts within SheRNI, offering valuable insights into their distribution and roles within the network.

5. About She Research Network in India (SheRNI)

She Research Network in India (SheRNI) serves as a robust platform connecting women experts across diverse domains. It aims to empower women through collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge sharing. SheRNI establishes a nationwide expert profile system for women faculty, fostering exchange of expertise and experiences. By supporting women scientists and faculty, SheRNI cultivates resilient networks for collaboration, mentorship, and career growth. It enables professionals to connect, collaborate, and empower each other, contributing to women's advancement and professional empowerment in India's academic landscape.
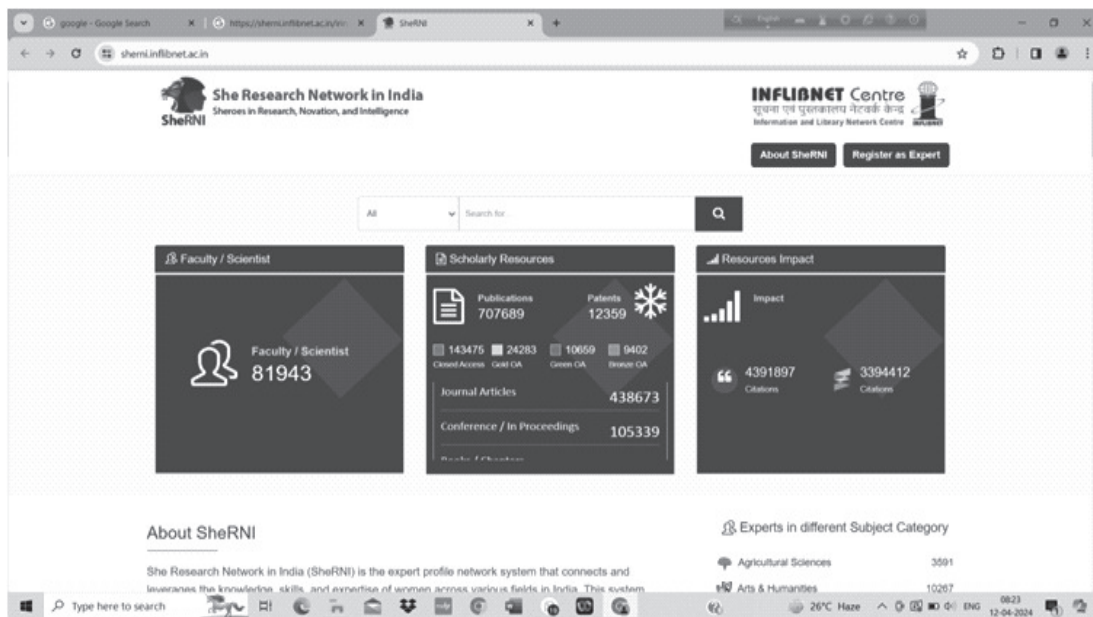

Figure 1: Overview of the participation of women in

She Research Network in India (SheRNI)

Source: https://sherni.inflibnet.ac.in/

SheRNI, the She Research Network in India, focuses on engaging 81,943 faculty members and scientists, offering a robust platform for academic professionals. The network boasts a substantial scholarly repository comprising 707,689 resources, predominantly publications, alongside 12,359 patents, illustrating a commitment to innovation. Resource accessibility is diverse: 10,659 resources are Gold Open Access, 9,402 are Green Open Access, while 24,283 remain closed access, balancing open dissemination with subscription-based access. Scholarly outputs within SheRNI primarily include 438,673 journal articles, 105,339 conference papers, and 35,186 books or chapters, with an additional 128,491 resources in diverse formats. Impact metrics reflect the network's scholarly influence, with a total resource impact of 4,391,897 and 3,394,412 citations, demonstrating significant academic contribution and global reach. SheRNI thus plays a pivotal role in fostering scholarly discourse, knowledge dissemination, and innovation within India and beyond, underlining its importance in advancing academic research and intellectual property generation in the region.

6. Data analysis and interpretations

6.1 *Women experts in different subject category in SheRNI network in India*
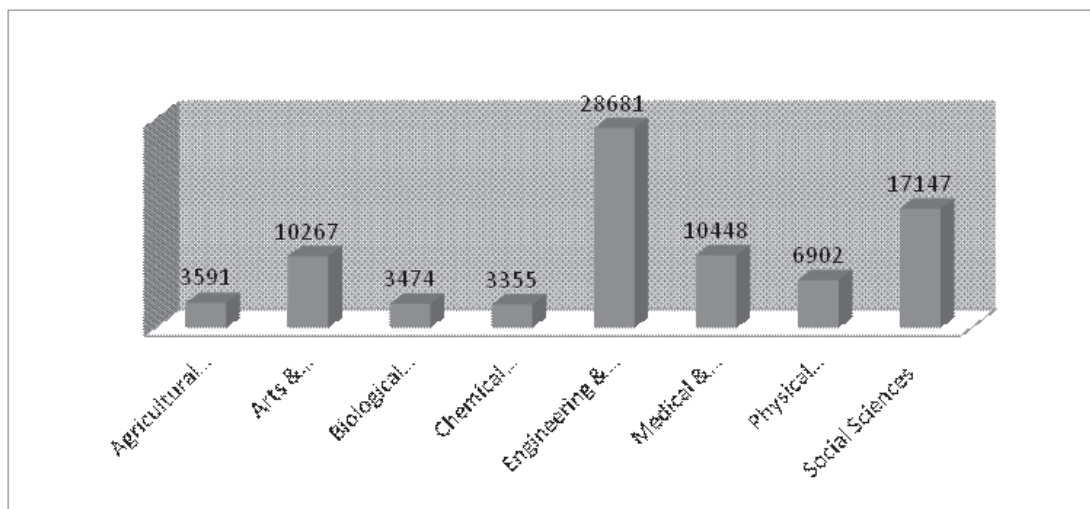

Figure 2: Women experts in different subject category

Figure 2 illustrates SheRNI's diverse expertise across subject categories. In agricultural sciences, 3,591 experts specialise in agronomy and crop science. The arts and humanities benefit from 10,267 experts in literature, history, and philosophy. Biological sciences feature 3,474 experts in biology and genetics. Chemical sciences have 3,355 experts in chemistry and chemical engineering. Engineering and technology are robust with 28,681 experts in fields like mechanical engineering and IT. Medical sciences include 10,448 experts in biomedical research and public health. Physical sciences boast 6,902 experts in physics and geology. Social sciences are supported by 17,147 experts in psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. These categories

highlight SheRNI's interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange among diverse academic professionals.

6.2 *Top 10 subject areas in SheRNI*
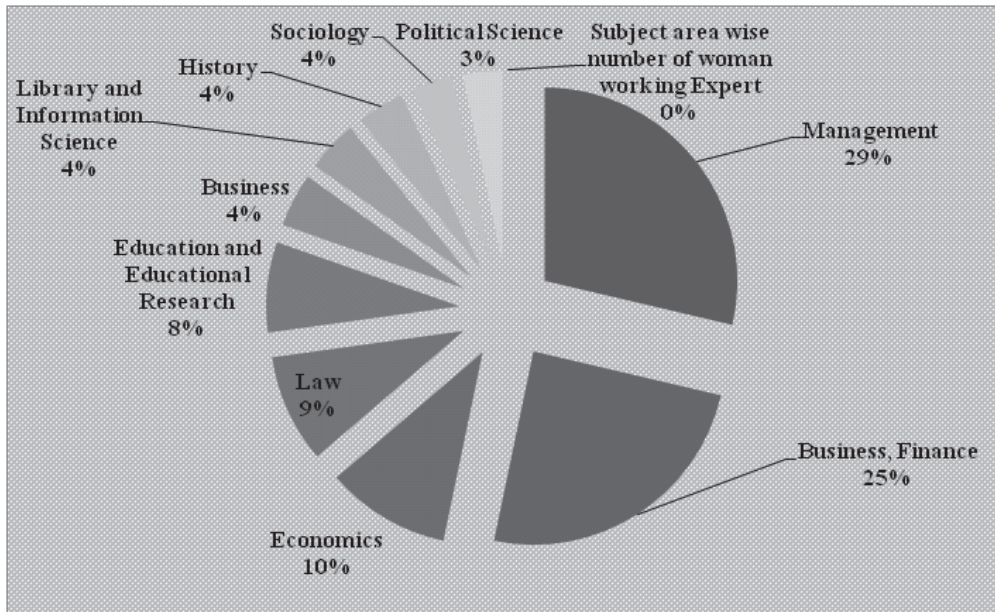
Figure 3:Top 10 subject areas with the highest number of women experts in Social Science

Figure 3 illustrates the top 10 subject areas within the She Research Network in India (SheRNI), showcasing the breadth of expertise across disciplines. Management leads with 3,562 experts (29%), spanning business management, organisational behaviour, and leadership. Business and Finance follow closely with 3,058 experts (25%), contributing to areas like corporate finance and financial management. Economics features prominently with 1,298 experts (10%), focusing on economic theory and policy analysis. Legal expertise includes 1,130 experts (9%), covering constitutional and international law. Education and Educational Research are supported by 938 experts, emphasising pedagogical research. Categories such as Library and Information Science (532 experts), History (497),

Sociology (436), and Political Science (414) highlight SheRNI's interdisciplinary nature, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. These subject areas underscore the network's role in enriching research and scholarship, facilitating interdisciplinary dialogue among professionals in India and globally.

6.3 *The number of experts registered in (SheRNI) within the field of Library Science*

The total number of registered women professionalsin the She Research Network in India (SheRNI) within the field of library science is 532and the top 20 states in India by the number of experts registered in the She Research Network in India (SheRNI) specifically within the field of library science. it is represented by the figure 4.
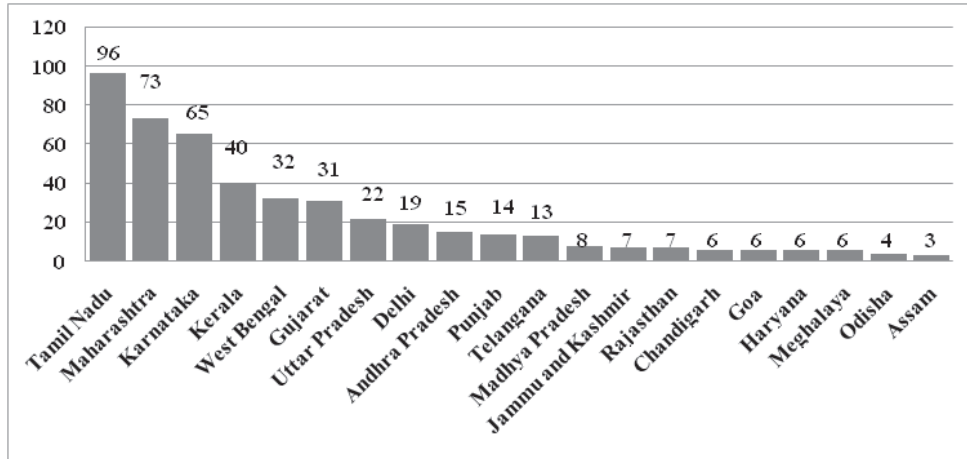
Figure 4:State-wise number of women working experts in LIS

The figure 4 provides a breakdown of the number of experts within the She Research Network in India (SheRNI) across different states and union territories. Tamil Nadu leads with the highest number of experts at 96, followed by Maharashtra with 73, and Karnataka with 65. Kerala, West Bengal, and Gujarat also feature prominently with 40, 32, and 31 experts respectively. Other states such as Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Andhra Pradesh contribute with 22, 19, and 15 experts respectively. However, some states have fewer representatives, such as Assam, Odisha, and Meghalaya with 3, 4, and 6 experts respectively. Additionally, several states and union territories have only 1 or 2 experts each, indicating a lower representation within the SheRNI network. This distribution highlights the varying levels of participation and engagement across different regions, with certain areas having a more significant presence of experts compared to others.

6.4 *Top 20 designation-wise number of experts registered SheRNI specifically within the field of Library and Information Science*
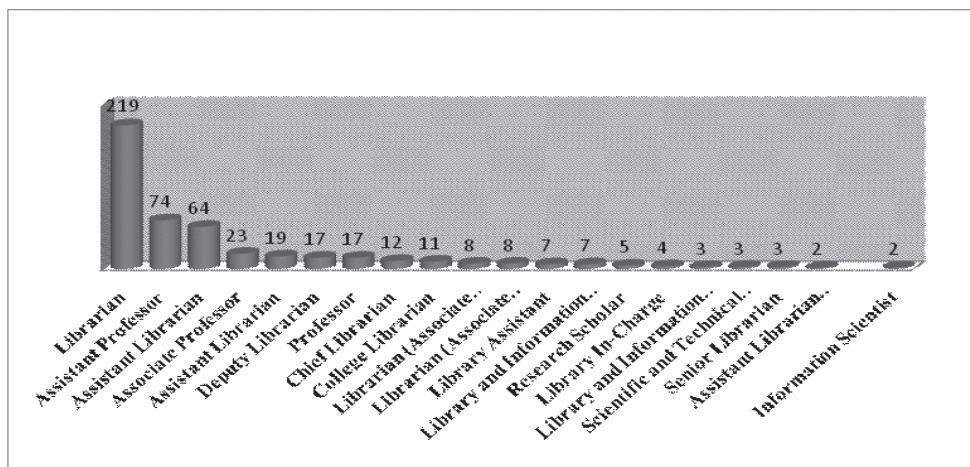
Figure 5:Designation-wise number of women experts in LIS

Figure 5 provides insights into the distribution of experts registered in the SheRNI within the field of Library Science, categorised by designation. The data reveals that Librarians constitute the largest group, with 219 experts registered, followed by Assistant Professors (74) and Assistant Librarians (64). Other significant designations include Associate Professors (23), Deputy Librarians (17), and Professors (17). Additionally, designations such as Chief Librarian, College Librarian, and Librarian in the Associate Professor Scale each have notable representation, with 12, 11, and 8 experts respectively. Furthermore, there is diversity in designation, with various roles such as Library Assistant, Research Scholar, and Library In-Charge also represented, albeit in smaller numbers. This distribution provides valuable insights into the professional landscape within Library Science and highlights the diverse roles and expertise contributing to the SheRNI network in this field.

6.5 *Number of women working experts in LIS registered in several institutes in the SheRNI specifically within the field of Library and Information Science*

Table 1 : Number of women working experts in LIS

Sl. No.	Number of Women Working Experts in LIS	Number of Institute in India where Women Working Experts in LIS
1	10	1
2	6	1
3	5	2
4	4	7
5	3	12
6	2	58
7	1	110

Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of women working as experts in Library and Information Science (LIS) across institutes within the She Research Network in India (SheRNI). The data highlights a spectrum of representation, with varying numbers of experts at different institutes. Notably, one institute boasts a substantial presence, hosting 10 women working as experts in LIS, indicating a concentrated expertise within that institution. Similarly, another institute accommodates 6 experts, demonstrating a significant concentration of expertise. Additionally, two institutes have 5 experts each, while 7 institutes have 4 experts each, further showcasing the diversity in representation across institutions. Furthermore, 12 institutes have 3 experts each, reflecting a broader distribution of expertise. However, the most prevalent scenario is observed in institutes hosting 2 women working as experts in LIS each, with a total of 58 institutes falling into this category. Additionally, a substantial number of institutes, totalling 110, have 1 woman working as an expert in LIS, indicating a widespread but distributed presence of expertise across various institutions within the SheRNI network.

6.7 *Top 50 names of organisations where varying numbers of experts registered in the She Research Network in India (SheRNI) specifically within the field of Library Science*

Table 2: Name of the institute and number of working experts

Sl No	Name of the Institutes	Number of Working Experts
1	Information and Library Network Centre	10
2	Annamalai University	6
3	Rajagiri College of Social Sciences	5
4	University of Jammu	5
5	Calcutta University	4
6	Cochin University of Science and Technology	4
7	Kannur University	4
8	Panjab University, Chandigarh	4
9	SNDT Women's University	4
10	Tamil Nadu Veterinary a nd Animal Sciences University	4
11	University of Mumbai	4
12	Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore	3
13	Banaras Hindu University	3
14	Gandhi Institute of Technology and Manage ment	3
15	IIMT University	3
16	Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women	3
17	Mangalore University	3
18	Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore	3
19	North-Eastern Hill University	3
20	Parul University	3
21	Punjabi University	3
22	University of Kashmir	3
23	University of Kerala	3
24	ATME College of Engineering, Mysore	2
25	Adamas University	2
26	Andhra Loyola Institute of Engineering and Technology	2
27	Anna University	2
28	BLDEA's Commerce BHS Arts and TGP Science College, J amkhandi	2
29	BLDEAS Basaveshwar Arts& Commerce College, Basavanbagewadi	2
30	Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University	2
31	Bahirji Smarak Mahavidyalaya, Vasmat	2
32	Bangalore University	2
33	Bharati Vidyapeeth	2
34	Bundelkhand University	2
35	Central University of Tamil Nadu	2
36	Cherran College for Women	2
37	Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University	2
38	Doon University	2
39	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University, Ahmedabad	2
40	Dr. C.V. Raman University	2
41	Farook College	2
42	Fatima College	2
43	G Narayanamma Institute of Technology and Science (For Women)	2
44	Gujarat University	2
45	Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Nagercoil	2
46	Holy Cross Home Science College	2
47	Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode	2
48	Integral University	2
49	Jain University	2
50	Karnataka State Open University	2

Table 2 lists the top 50 organisations with experts registered in SheRNI's library science domain, showcasing a diverse array of institutions contributing expertise. Leading the list is the Information and Library Network Centre with 10 experts, followed by Annamalai University with 6. Institutions like Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, University of Jammu, and Calcutta University each host 5 experts. Others such as Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kannur University, and Panjab University, Chandigarh, have 4 experts each. Several institutions, including Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore, and Banaras Hindu University, accommodate 3 experts each. Additionally, BLDEA's Commerce BHS Arts and TGP Science College, Jamkhandi, and Bangalore University have 2 experts each. This comprehensive distribution highlights collaborative efforts across SheRNI, enhancing knowledge dissemination and advancing Library Science throughout India.

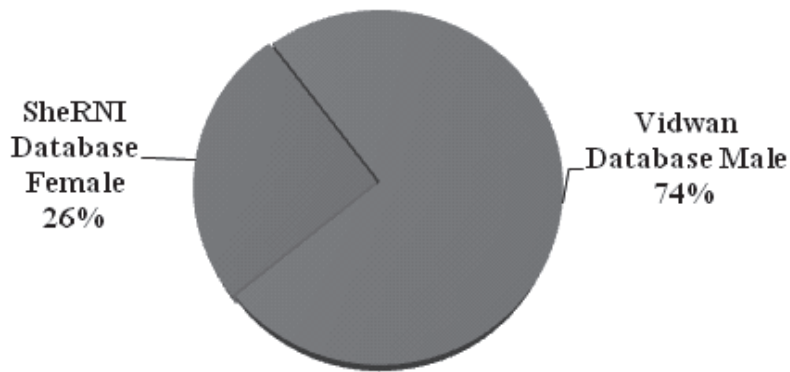**6.8 *Comparison of male and female ratio of LIS professionals in India***

Figure 7: Male and female ratio of LIS professionals in India

Based on data from the Vidwan and SheRNI databases, gender disparities in Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in India are pronounced (Figure 7). Of the total LIS professionals, 1,544 (74%) are male, while 532 (26%) are female, revealing a significant gender imbalance. Addressing these disparities is crucial for promoting diversity and inclusivity within the LIS field. Efforts to support female participation through education and professional development initiatives are essential to mitigate this gap and create a more representative workforce. Khan and Mondal (2021) underscore these challenges, noting specific data from the Vidwan database, where West Bengal has 4,015 experts, with 627 in social sciences and 40 in Library and Information Science across various institutes and research organisations.

7. Findings

The analysis of SheRNI's participation underscores a strong presence of women experts, engaging 81,943 faculty members or scientists. The network hosts a substantial scholarly repository with 707,689 publications and 12,359 patents, emphasising innovation and intellectual property. Resource accessibility shows a balance between open dissemination and restricted access, with a significant portion remaining

closed. Scholarly outputs encompass diverse formats like journal articles, conference proceedings, and books, reflecting comprehensive academic contributions. SheRNI's impact metrics reveal substantial influence, with a total resources impact of 4,391,897 and 3,394,412 citations. The network's multidisciplinary nature is evident through a diverse pool of experts across various subject categories.

In terms of geographical distribution, Tamil Nadu leads with 96 experts, followed by Maharashtra (73), and Karnataka (65). Kerala, West Bengal, and Gujarat also feature prominently with 40, 32, and 31 experts respectively. Librarians constitute the largest group (219 experts), followed by Assistant Professors (74) and Assistant Librarians (64). Other notable designations include Associate Professors (23), Deputy Librarians (17), and Professors (17). The study highlights expertise dispersed across various institutions within the SheRNI network. Key institutions hosting experts include Information and Library Network Centre (10 experts), Annamalai University (6), Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, University of Jammu, and Calcutta University (5 each).

Gender analysis reveals a significant disparity, with 1,544 male LIS professionals (74%) compared to 532 females (26%), underscoring the need for initiatives to promote gender equity within the field.

8. Conclusion

The SheRNI reveals a commendable effort towards fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and professional growth among women experts across various fields. The network's diverse representation of experts spanning different subject categories underscores its commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and inclusivity. Additionally, the significant participation in library science highlights SheRNI's role in advancing expertise and promoting collaboration within this domain. However, the observed gender disparity within the LIS profession emphasises the ongoing need for initiatives aimed at promoting gender equity and inclusivity. Despite the progress made, addressing these disparities requires sustained efforts to encourage and support female participation in education and professional development.

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