



Women in STEM: Navigating Gender Disparities in AI and Computer Science

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Abstract— *STEM education is crucial for providing knowledge and technologies that drive economic growth and foster societal development. However, the disproportion of women in STEM careers is a worldwide problem, caused by the gender gap in education. This inequality affects various aspects, including publications, salary levels, senior roles, annual production, and resource distribution. The rapid emergence of technology, particularly in the realms of artificial intelligence and computer science, has led to a profound transformation in the landscape of STEM disciplines and associated gender dynamics. In the 20th century, the hierarchy of scientific disciplines was distinctly gendered, with traditionally masculine fields like engineering, computer science, and mathematics commanding higher earning potentials and social status. As AI and digital technologies gain prominence, these fields continue to dominate the job market, offering higher salaries and career opportunities. This shift highlights the need for greater inclusivity and diversity in STEM education and professions. This study will examine the participation of women in emerging fields, such as Computer Science and Design, Data Science, Information Technology, and Computer and Information Technology, by analysing enrolment data for the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Information Technology. Further data from the All-India Survey on Higher Education surveys from 2011 to 2022 are analysed to understand the trend regarding women's participation in higher technical education. The study aims to examine gender, inequality, and social differences to understand the disciplinary choices of women in STEM fields.*



Keywords— *Gender disparity, Computer Science, Information Technology, STEM and Artificial Intelligence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A worldwide market, unbounded by national borders, has emerged as a result of globalisation. The changes in the skills needed for new professions are a direct result of the interplay between universities, businesses, and industries. There has been a corresponding shift in the valuation of natural/pure sciences, which are considered less valuable than applied sciences and professional skills, as well as a further strengthening of the stratification between the arts and sciences (Chanana, 2006). The significance of STEM

(science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education in developing a knowledge-based economy is pertinent. STEM fields foster innovation, technological advancements, and economic growth, which are crucial for both national and global prosperity in an increasingly digitalised world. Equipping the next generation with the skills required for the modern job market is central to this vision, and STEM education plays a crucial role in shaping future opportunities for students. Through various legislative and program initiatives, the Indian government

has been diligent in promoting women's participation in the workforce over recent decades (Bhardwaj & Anshima, 2025). Nevertheless, a significant global issue is the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. The STEM fields, especially computer science, engineering, and mathematics, are notoriously men-dominated and pay exceptionally well. Unfortunately, women still face significant barriers to advancement in these fields, despite efforts to increase gender parity. Biology, physics, and chemistry take a back seat to bioscience-related courses, like molecular biology, microbiology, biochemistry, and biophysics. Advanced degrees in fields such as management, mass communication, and fashion technology have reached the pinnacle of academic achievement. (Chanana, 2006).

Artificial intelligence (AI) term has been coined by John McCarthy in 1956 and Alan Turing, Turing Test, Herbert A. Simon, Allen Newell, Marvin Minsky, Norbert Wiener, Geoffrey Hinton, Yann LeCun and Yoshua Bengio etc., have truly paid attention to it due to its complexity and the lengthy process of developing the concept. The field of artificial intelligence (AI) has been gradually emerging and is gaining increasing acceptance. Over the last several decades, artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved into a vast field that encompasses numerous subfields, including mathematics, linguistics, computer science, and artificial psychology (Wang & Xie, 1999), among others (Shao et al., 2022). Recent years have witnessed significant progress in data science and AI, resulting in widespread adoption across various fields. A thorough examination of the application of data science and AI reveals their revolutionary influence in numerous sectors, including healthcare, banking, advertising, transportation, and more. Organisations can now gain valuable insights, optimise their operations, and develop innovative goods and services. Data science and artificial intelligence have revolutionised decision-making procedures by utilising data analytics, machine learning, and deep learning algorithms. (Costa & Aparicio, 2023). Davenport & Patil (2012) argue that the data science is the most alluring career path in the modern era which comes under scrutiny from academics across a wide range of disciplines. For example, McCQuillan (2018a) describes data science as "machinic Neoplatonism" because it encourages a deficit of critical thinking in societal analysis and decision-making.

The definition of data science has also been the subject of conflicting opinions. Some have argued that data science is merely statistics with a new name (Statistics Views, 2013), while others contend that it encompasses nearly every scientific discipline (Fowler, 2015; Mayernik, 2023). Class IX and class XI students in connected schools will begin studying artificial intelligence in the 2020–21 school year,

per the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP). The Diksha portal and other artificial intelligence projects were brought up by Minister of State for Education Annpurna Devi during a discussion in the Lok Sabha in August 2022. This platform is built using open-source software and leverages AI approaches to provide self-paced learning. It offers content for school education in both states and UTs. (One country, one digital platform) It also offers QR-coded energised texts for every grade. As of March 28, 2023, there are 16.82 million students registered in various courses on DIKSHA. The highest number of learning sessions attended was in Karnataka (9.32 million), followed by 6.10 million in Rajasthan, and 4.45 million in Odisha. The concept of cloud-based education is gaining traction in India as a means to enhance both the digital and physical accessibility of educational resources. Companies like Miko provide children with companion robots powered by artificial intelligence (AI). These robots can communicate, react, teach, entertain, and understand the child's needs, emotions, and preferences (IBEF). Despite progress in technology and AI, women remain significantly underrepresented in its development and leadership, particularly in the field of AI (Maafo, 2025).

Women represent just 29% of researchers in science and development (R&D), decreasing to 12% in specialised AI roles. Only 16% of university faculty engaged in AI research are women, highlighting a notable lack of diversity in academia and research fields. Moreover, women account for only 30% of AI professionals, and the gender disparity grows in leadership, with women holding merely 18% of C-suite positions at AI startups. In many countries, data on women's participation often depend on broad STEM or ICT statistics, which can hide more specific disparities in areas like AI. For example, there is a 44% gender gap in software development roles, compared to a 15% gap across general ICT jobs. Notably, the gender gap in science R&D roles is 21%, whereas in AI research positions, it reaches 38%. There is a 15% gender gap among ICT professionals, which increases to 44% in the field of software development. These disparities become more significant as roles move from entry-level to leadership positions in technology. In AI companies, the gender gap is even more evident: a 23% difference at the director level in STEM workplaces and a 32% gap at C-Suite positions in AI startups (UNESCO, 2024, p. 19; Maafo, 2025).

Women constitute nearly 15% of the technical staff and 18% of the total scientists at the CSIR labs (Ranjana, 2022). The current strength of women students in the biological cluster exceeds that of men, followed by the Chemical Sciences and the Physical and Information Sciences. The proportion of women students in the Engineering Sciences cluster is

approximately one-third of the total applications and final selections. The Biological Sciences had the highest percentage of women students at 57%, while the Engineering Sciences cluster had the lowest proportion of women students at 34%. There is a growing gender disparity in engineering and information technology, according to the latest Universum India Talent Survey 2019. Just 26% of students in these fields are women. Nearly three times as many men as women were involved in engineering (74% vs. 24%). The research conducted by the Oxford Martin School estimated that robots would replace 47% of American occupations; nations in the developing world, including Ethiopia, China, Thailand, and India, are even more vulnerable. In the future, intelligent machines will assist in healthcare, support the elderly and individuals with disabilities, and even educate and care for our children. Women are the ones we already know will be hit the most. The research conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) predicts that 5.1 million jobs would be lost globally by 2020, with women bearing the brunt of these employment losses. There will be a shift in the gender ratio in fields where women currently make up a disproportionate share of the workforce, like architecture, engineering, computers, math, and manufacturing, as well as in workforces where women currently make up a large percentage, like office and administrative jobs, due to these technological changes. Nearly 4 million men will lose their jobs while 1.4 million see an increase (a ratio of more than five to one) (Hayasaki, 2017).

II. EMERGENCE OF AI AND DATA SCIENCE

The rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and computer science over the past few decades has transformed the landscape of STEM disciplines. These fields, once niche areas of study, have become central to technological development and are now among the most lucrative and prestigious career paths available. The increased demand for AI and computer science professionals has generated a growing job market, with high salaries and significant opportunities for innovation. Several industries, including the education sector, are undergoing significant transformations due to the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). Artificial intelligence (AI) may revolutionise higher education by changing the way students learn, increasing their interest in class, and ultimately improving graduation rates. In the STEM fields, particularly, the incorporation of AI shows great potential for fostering creativity, analysis, and problem-solving skills in students. For pupils to succeed in today's technologically advanced society, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education is crucial (Alalawi, 2024;

Nagaraj, 2023). Emerging from the intersection of mathematics, statistics, and computer science, data science is finding use in a wide variety of fields and industries, including commerce, healthcare, academia, transportation, and many others. At the same time, data science education is emerging as a distinct field of study.

Education in data science is growing in tandem with other fields such as social science, business analytics, engineering, statistics, and computer science. In 2016, the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine established the Committee on Envisioning the Data Science Discipline: The Undergraduate Perspective (Haas et al, 2019). Education in data science is growing in tandem with other fields such as social science, business analytics, engineering, statistics, and computer science. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (AI & ML) is a top area for jobs and research, with more jobs in this domain than in any other B.Tech. Program in CSE alone. Incorporating a wide variety of AI approaches and intricate instructional components is a significant issue for AI-STEM, the application of AI in STEM education. Professionals knowledgeable in various areas of data science have been in high demand for data science employment over the past five years (Xu & Ouyang, 2022; Mike et al., 2023).

III. GENDER DISPARITIES AMONG EMERGING DISCIPLINES

The United States has persistent gender gaps in science education, with fewer women students than men students participating in numerous areas. The National Science Foundation (2000), the National Science Board (2000), and the National Centre for Education Statistics (2000a, 2000b) support the idea that women are still underrepresented in scientific and STEM fields, even though these fields are among the most prestigious and influential in the United States (Heller et al., 2016; Hanson et al., 1999). This gender gap in representation in science is a direct result of the prevailing bias that exists within the field. (Hanson 2004). Some of the barriers to participation of women in STEM are gender bias during recruitment, promotions, difficulty in balancing varied roles, the stigma of sexual harassment and the mindset. In India, 11% of colleges are exclusively for women, with the majority offering arts and commerce rather than science, as per Kundu (2019). This could be due to the belief that boys are better at science and girls are not. Among the many fields where women are underrepresented, 70% are enrolled in education, 69% in health and welfare, 56% in the natural sciences (including biology), 36% in STEM on average, and 29% in information and communication technology (ICT) (Equals

Research Group referenced in UNESCO, 2019, p. 23). Even more dismal are the figures in Europe, where women make up just 34% of STEM graduates and 17% of ICT graduates (European Commission, 2021). Comparatively, 9.2% of men tertiary graduates get degrees in information and

communication technology, while only 2.4% of women graduates do so (Herrera & Koeszegi, 2022).

Status of Women's Enrolment in Higher Technical Education

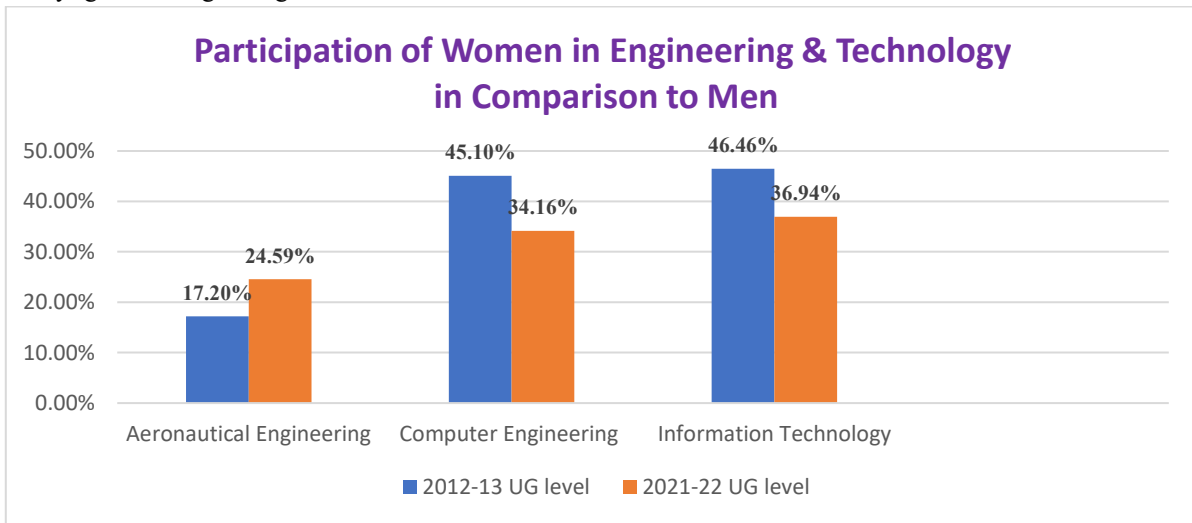


Fig. 1: Representing participation of women in Engineering & Technology in comparison to men from 2012-22 (AISHE)

The AISHE report shows that women's enrolment in Aeronautical Engineering, Computer Engineering, and Information Technology is 17.2%, 45.1%, and 46.46% respectively, at the undergraduate level for the year 2012. In ten years (AISHE 2021-22), a different scenario is revealed; in Aeronautical Engineering, women's enrolment rose to 24.59% but in Computer Engineering and Information Technology, it decreased to 34.16% and 36.94% respectively, at the undergraduate level. Emerging disciplines, including Data Science, IT & Computer, AI & Data Science, AI & Machine Learning, and Automation

Robotics, have women's enrolment rates of 27.9%, 37.8%, 33.15%, 32.80%, and 16.04% at the undergraduate level.

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are a network of premier educational institutions in India, offering undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs in various domains like Computer Science, Electronics, Data Science, and Artificial Intelligence. With 25 IITs across India, some are "Institutes of National Importance" (INIs) and others are part of the public-private partnership model.

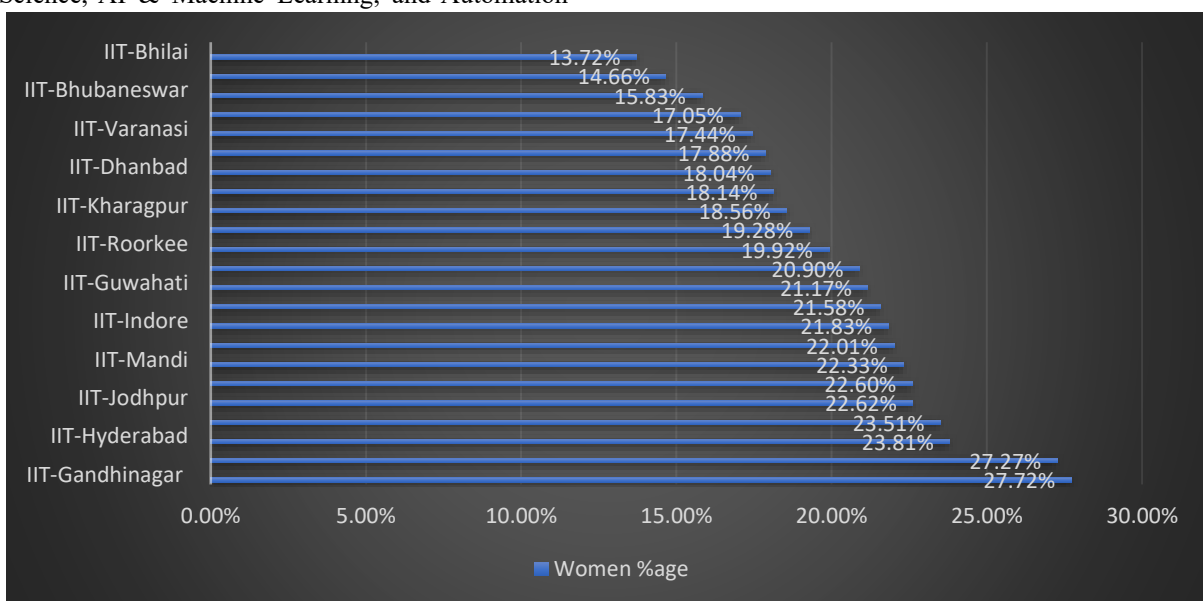


Fig. 2.: The enrolment of women in percentage in comparison to men in IITs (2020)

In 2020, women's enrolment in Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) accounted for less than 30% of total student enrolment, highlighting the gender disparity in STEM education and careers. Despite progress, women continue to be underrepresented, particularly in undergraduate programs related to Computer Science and Engineering (CSE). IIT-Gandhinagar technical institute in Gujarat has the highest enrolment of women, with 27.72%

and IIT-Bhilai (Chhattisgarh) has the lowest enrolment, with 13.72%. It can be presumed that women may be underrepresented in AI and Data Science courses. Berman & Bourne (2015) suggest that the new field of data science and AI professions potentially offer a rare opportunity to disrupt the traditionally male-dominated fields of computing and engineering, narrow the gender gap in STEM and make diversity a priority.

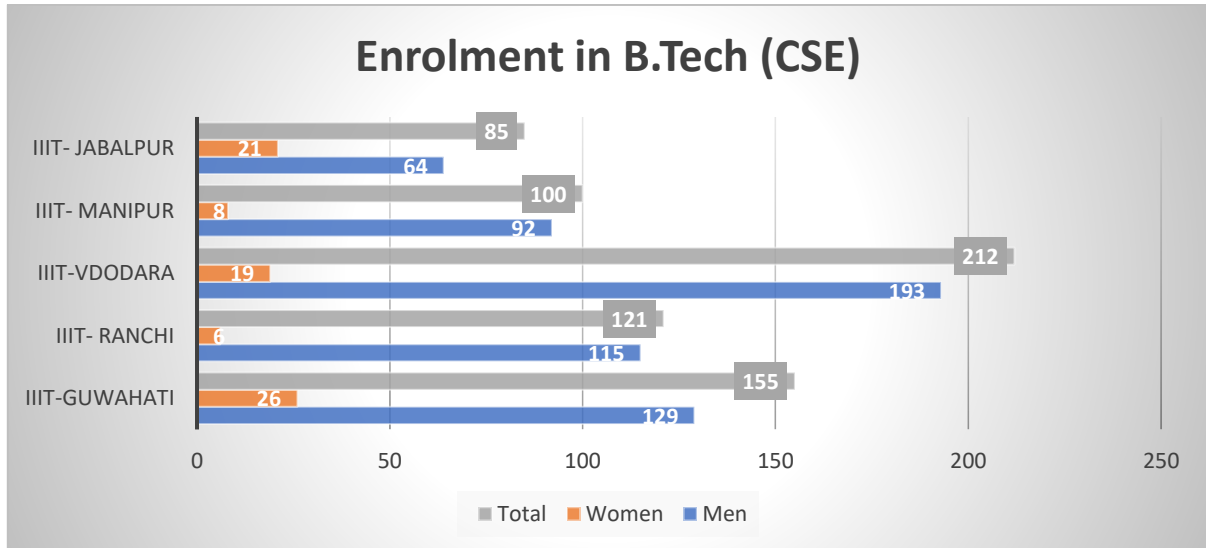


Fig.3.: Representing enrolment in the B. Tech Programme (CSE) in different IITs in 2020.

According to the latest data, women constitute approximately 25-30% of the student population in many IITs, although the percentage varies across different institutes. In top institutes like IIT-Delhi, IIT-Bangalore, and IIT-Hyderabad, there has been a gradual increase in the intake of women in undergraduate IT programs. Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi

(IIT-Delhi) introduced a PG Diploma in Data Science and AI in 2020. That year, 20.5% of enrollees were women and 79.5% were men; notably, women comprised a higher proportion of PhD program enrolments compared to B.Tech. and MTech. programs. At IIT-Jabalpur, 24.7% of students in the B.Tech. The CSE program has women, while 25.5% of CSE PhD students are women.

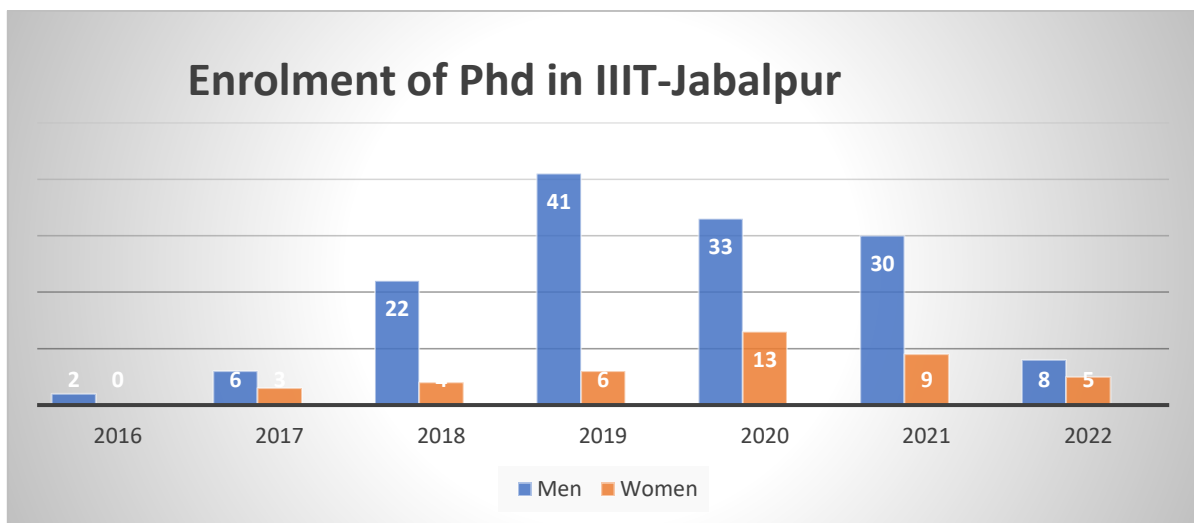


Fig.4.: Representing enrolment of Men and Women in PhD of IIT-Jabalpur (2016-22)

The annual report of IIIT-Jabalpur and IIIT-Guwahati shows a slight decrease in the gender gap in PhD programmes post-lockdown. In the Computer Science program at IIIT-Guwahati, the number of men and women is 18 and 10, respectively. Dutta (2016) found that post-marital, women's attitudes and expectations are influenced by broader social structures and family interactions. Career choices are influenced by material conditions and personal traits, which are affected by social class, age, ethnicity, and gender. This underscores the significance of factors like family interactions and material circumstances when making career decisions. (Raggl & Troman, 2008). In IIIT-Vadodara, women's enrolment was 17.74% in B.Tech. (AI and Data Science) programmes for the batch 2020-23. IIIT-Ranchi had enrolled 13.5% women in CSE & Electronic Communication Engineering (ECE) B.Tech. programmes for the batch 2017-20. However, in IIIT-Allahabad, women's enrolment in B.Tech. and M.Tech. (IT) The percentages were 21.79% and 19.62% for the batch 2019-23. Women's enrolment in the IIIT-Guwahati was 10.84% in B.Tech. for the batch 2015-19. The IIIT-Bhagalpur had enrolled 9% women in B.Tech. CSE in batch 2017-20 and 7.6% in B.Tech. ECE. Women's enrolment in IIIT-Manipur in B.Tech. CSE and B.Tech. ECE 9% and 5.5% for the batch 2017-20.

Although India graduates the highest percentage of women in STEM globally (around 40%), their representation in STEM employment remains low at just 14%, indicating a need for improvement. The under-representation of women in master's and doctoral programs must also be addressed promptly (Aggarwal et al., 2022). Worldwide, women make up 53% of graduates and post-graduates; however, it is only 43% at the PhD level, compared to 57% men. The average percentage of women in research institutes and industries is 28%. At the senior level, there are fewer women in leadership positions, and as a result, in decision-making and policy-making, the gender gap is more apparent (Gonzalez et al., 2019).

IV. CONCLUSION

The gender parity in STEM, particularly in AI and computer science, is a significant challenge despite efforts to improve gender equity in education and employment. The historical gendering of STEM fields has created a legacy of inequality that affects women's participation and advancement in high-growth, high-paying disciplines. Gender bias is a significant hurdle in achieving inclusive development, which is possible only with the equal participation of women in every field. Women today comprise an integral part of the workforce, but they still have a long way to go due to the absolute domination enjoyed in this field by men. When it

comes to data and AI, women are under-represented in fields that require a high level of technical expertise, like the technology and information industry, and over-represented in fields that do not, like healthcare. Statistically, women outnumber men in executive roles across some industries; nevertheless, the gender gap is particularly pronounced in the IT sector and AI roles. The notion of "masculine" versus "feminine" sciences extended beyond cultural attitudes to affect institutional practices. Engineering programs were historically designed to appeal to men, while women were actively discouraged from pursuing technical fields due to prevailing stereotypes about their capabilities. This created a persistent cycle of underrepresentation, as the lack of visible women role models contributed to fewer women entering and advancing in these fields.

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