

Why aren't there more female engineers?

Even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, an alarmingly low number of women begin their career as professional engineers, while a lower number continues being in the profession. This is in spite of the thunderous progress that women have made in every sphere of life in the last couple of centuries, when they have emerged from their role as homemakers to become decision makers and movers in the outside world, increasingly on an equal footing with their male counterparts. Thus, it becomes quite interesting to analyze the probable reasons behind such a skewed ratio against the women when it comes to their presence in the field of engineering.

One possible explanation has been that women have traditionally shied away from career choices that entail much physical or fieldwork. Parochial thinking that women are both intellectually and physically inferior to men has fueled this traditional thinking. However, this theory still fails to explain why the number of professional female engineers is drastically lower when compared to the number of female engineering students receiving degrees every year. Moreover, this trend is present in pretty much every society around the globe, including all the advanced first world countries with much more liberal social milieu when it comes to woman empowerment and equality of opportunity in education and employment.

Various surveys conducted around the globe have indicated that apathy and often hostile behavior from their male colleagues often plays an important role in convincing female engineers to give up on their career goals. This is again because of the intrinsic misogynistic belief among many men that women make poor engineers, and this leads to chilly workplace environments that many women find hard to deal with, and prosper in their careers. Thus, even in an advanced country such as the United States, a reported 11% of the total working engineers are women, while they make 12% of the engineering faculty. This is contrast to around 20% of the engineering degrees being awarded to women every year. Thus, there is a distinct drop in the number of women who make professional use of their engineering degrees, and seek to blossom as eminent engineers in their respective fields of expertise.

Another major reason why many women probably quit being fulltime engineers is that long hours that they are expected to put in every day. This may leave those women who are intending to start a family in a bit of a quandary. Thus, a great many number of fully qualified female engineers may have to make the ultimate career in their bid to start a

family. Moreover, the latent misogyny present among many of their male colleagues often force the female engineers to voluntarily put in extra hours to prove their worth and capability. However, this in turn might put strain upon their family lives, which is a probable reason behind many female engineers not preferring to take it up as a fulltime career option.

Research have further shown that most women who have led a successful career as an engineer often had supportive supervisors while they were just beginning as professional engineers. Thus, it is quite clear that the dearth of female engineers is not simply a women's issue, but rather one concerning the workplace environment, and the challenges surrounding it. It is essential that the male counterparts of the female engineers are made more sensitive about the need to be supportive of all their colleagues, regardless of their gender. This is the only possible way that a remedy can be found for addressing this grave issue, and enable women to realize their potential as successful engineers of the future.

Questions

1. Why, as per the author, is it quite interesting to analyze the number of female professional engineers?
 - a) Because of their wondrous achievement despite limited numbers
 - b) Because of limited participation in this field, unlike most other
 - c) Because of pure academic curiosity
2. Give a suitable alternative to the word 'Parochial' by referring to the context
 - a) Broad-minded
 - b) Narrow-minded
 - c) Indifferent
3. What is the major parochial thought process regarding the suitability of women as professional engineers?
 - a) That they are physically and intellectually inferior that their male counterparts

- b) That they are just as capable as their male counterparts
 - c) That they are lacking in training compared to their male counterparts
4. What sort of behavior do female engineers experience from their male colleagues?
- a) Warm and welcoming
 - b) Demanding and vulgar
 - c) Apathetic and hostile
5. What is the percentage of women who make up engineering faculty members in the United States?
- a) 11%
 - b) 12%
 - c) 20%
6. Why do many women quit their full time career as professional engineers?
- a) Because of demanding hours that makes starting a family impossible
 - b) Because of pressure from their superiors to not start a family
 - c) Because of a belief that starting a family does not befit an engineer
7. What is the common factor that has helped most successful female engineers early on in their careers?
- a) Supportive superiors
 - b) Jealous colleagues
 - c) Demanding work schedule