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MENTORSHIP IN THE SPACE INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP
FOR GENDER MINORITIES

Abstract

Every 1 in 5 people in the space industry is a gender minority. Throughout history, fewer gender minorities have opted for a career in the STEM fields. As of now, it is 28.8% globally, and hence majorly underrepresented. One of the reasons that stands out is the lack of female role models and their underrepresentation. Unfortunately, from a young age biases against certain subjects such as science and math have reduced the number of gender minorities opting for STEM. The propagation of equal representation could be a plea for change in today's society. There has been an average of 20% increase in the number of women graduating in the STEM fields. In recent years there have been significant efforts and improvements to inspire gender minorities to take up careers in the STEM fields, which recently has translated to STEAM fields. The objective is to understand the perception of fewer women opting for careers in the space industry and facilitate a growth mindset instead of a fixed one. The aim of this paper is to present case studies that focus on the impact of mentorship programmes such as the IAF Mentorship Programme, Space4Women (UNOOSA), SGAC Mentorship Programme etc and highlight key points for further development for any individual (various races, castes, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds) who aims to be a part of the space industry. It presents a case study to highlight the impact of such programmes and further proposals for developing such programmes. The focus on the journey of gender minorities who have been impacted by such programmes and are currently pursuing a career in the space industry, would be used as an inspiration and guide for the future generation through this study. It is a well-known fact that finding a mentor can be a life-changing experience, both in professional and personal development. Through interviews with mentors and mentees across programmes such as IAF, UNOOSA, SGAC etc. this study curates the importance of mentorship in one's life, the overall impact of mentorship and insights from individuals who are mentors/mentees within the space industry. Moreover, the development of equal representation in the workforce is an integral part of national development and most importantly provides innovation, collaboration and creativity to build technologies of the future. As we aim to further develop a spacefaring civilization, an integral part remains the inclusivity and building of the future of humankind with a predilection for creating an impact