

# WePOWER

## Internship Program Module

### APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS OF THE 2022  
WEPOWER QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTERNSHIP FOR SOUTH  
ASIA REGION ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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## APPENDIX

# Summary of findings and results of the 2022 WePOWER questionnaire on internship for South Asia Region engineering students

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## 1. Background

In early 2022, a survey was conducted among engineering students in South Asia. The answers to the questionnaire helped form the [WePOWER Internship Program Module](#). The survey sought to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and needs of engineering student on internship in South Asia. An anonymous online questionnaire ([link](#)) and a snowball sampling method were used to reach respondents.

A total of 539 respondents (40% female) from seven South Asian countries answered the questionnaire.<sup>1</sup> The findings were used to develop the WePOWER Internship Program Module and help to identify its Key Attributes. This document provides a detailed summary of the key findings from the South Asia Engineering Student questionnaire on Internship.

## 2. Key Takeaways

Based on the results, it is clear that prioritizing/offering a high-quality “structured” internship meets the needs of and benefits both female and male respondents. Overall, the findings indicate a highly unified group of respondents, regardless of gender, country or discipline. For most questions, the responses from both men and women aligned with each other.

- Overall, the respondents were satisfied with their internships (78% female, 74% male) and most of them (87% female, 82% male) felt that the faculty and internship supervisor provided them adequate support.
- Both male and female respondents seemed to prefer technical/engineering roles and research/analytical work during the internship.
- Most respondents valued practical/professional experience. Both men and women prioritized the same reasons for choosing to internship program (learning/networking) and the same factors for selecting internships (compensation/networking/future career opportunities). However, there was a clear demand for ‘women-friendly facilities’ and a women’s internship cohort from women respondents.

<sup>1</sup> The seven South Asian countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Because of a small number of cases in ‘other’ and ‘prefer not to say’ gender categories, only male and female are included in all gender-wise analyses of the survey data. Only one respondent from Afghanistan participated in the survey. Therefore, Afghanistan has been excluded from the country-wise analyses in this study.

- Some differences reflected gaps/barriers and strengths for each country. For example, Bhutan utilities have a strong MoU with the national technical colleges and, understandably, academic requirements seemed to have a relatively stronger influence in choosing internships. On the other hand, Pakistan, where women's facilities and networking opportunities are limited, placed more importance on factors such as 'Women interns cohort' and 'Women-friendly facilities'.
- A gender gap was visible in relation to the lower awareness/satisfaction with sexual harassment training for women respondents (33% female, 26% male).
- [The WePOWER baseline assessment](#) conducted in 2018 suggested that lack of networking opportunities and access to information on jobs/professional opportunities are crucial gender gaps for women. The results of the internship questionnaire indicated the same:
  - A significant number of female who experienced internships said they did not hear back from their companies after the internship (56% female, 40% male).
  - As compared to male respondents who experienced internships, a much smaller percentage of women respondents who experienced internships had different individuals fulfilling the roles of supervisor and mentor (53% male, 33% female).
  - Women placed greater emphasis on social media as a source of information on internship programs (1<sup>st</sup> choice compared to 3<sup>rd</sup> for men). This might also be indicative of women's limited access to a large professional network.

Overall, the findings were quite specific to internships in the engineering and Energy sectors. However, the results aligned with the observations from the fields concerned and the interviews with the WePOWER Partners (WePOWER Internship Working Group).

## 3. Survey Results

### 3.1. Respondent Profile Country and Gender

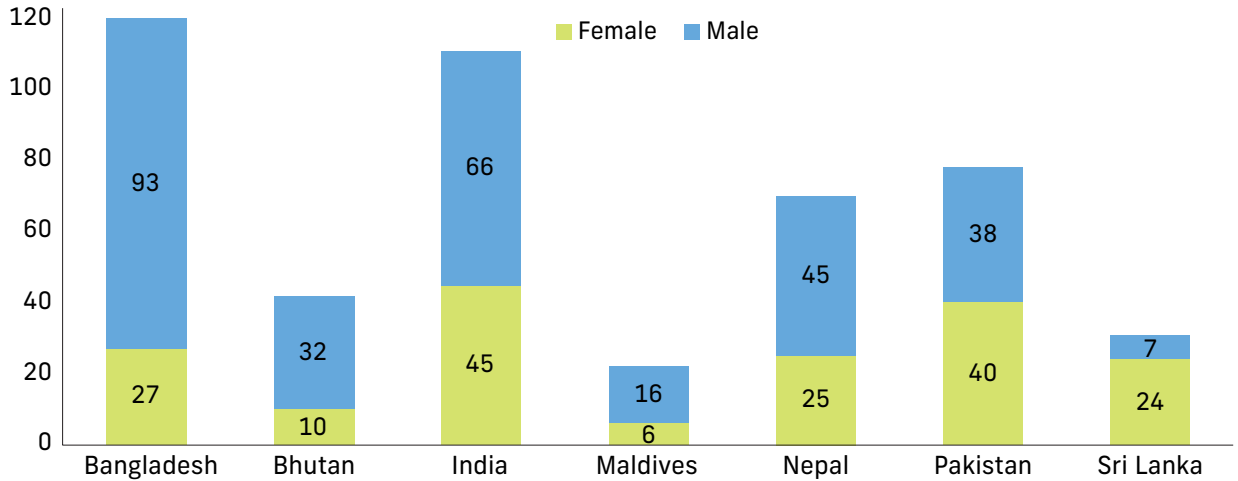


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by gender and countries

In this questionnaire, Sri Lanka and Pakistan respondents represented female Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students outnumbered male students from the seven countries (Figure 1.) In the rest of the countries, male respondents of STEM students dominated and the difference was particularly conspicuous in Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Given that the questionnaire was intended for South Asian Engineering students who are interested in working in the Energy sector, the low female participation in this survey (41%) already suggests a gender imbalance in the sector.

### 3.2. Respondent Profile: Field of Study, Current Degree Program, and Current Academic Year

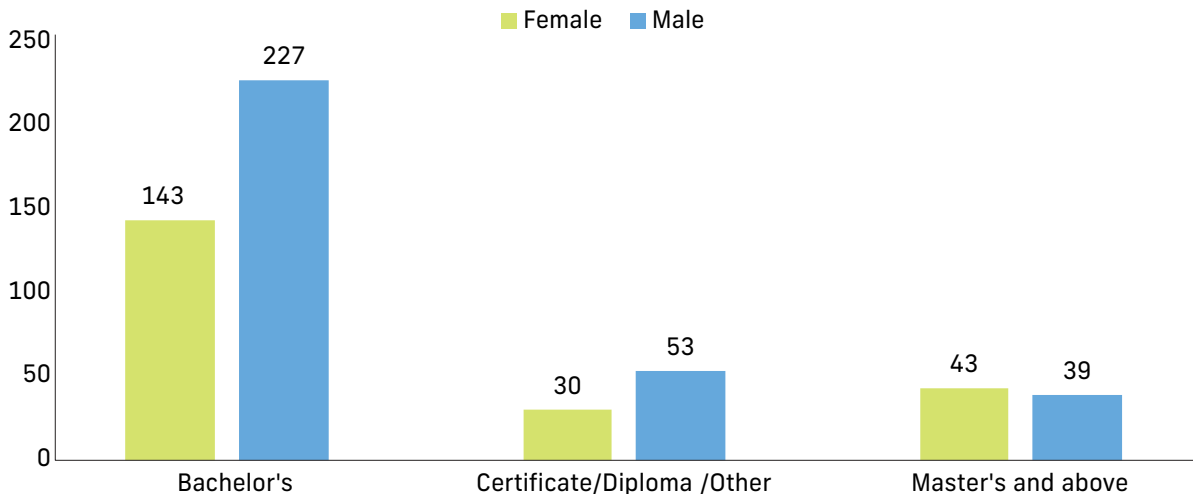
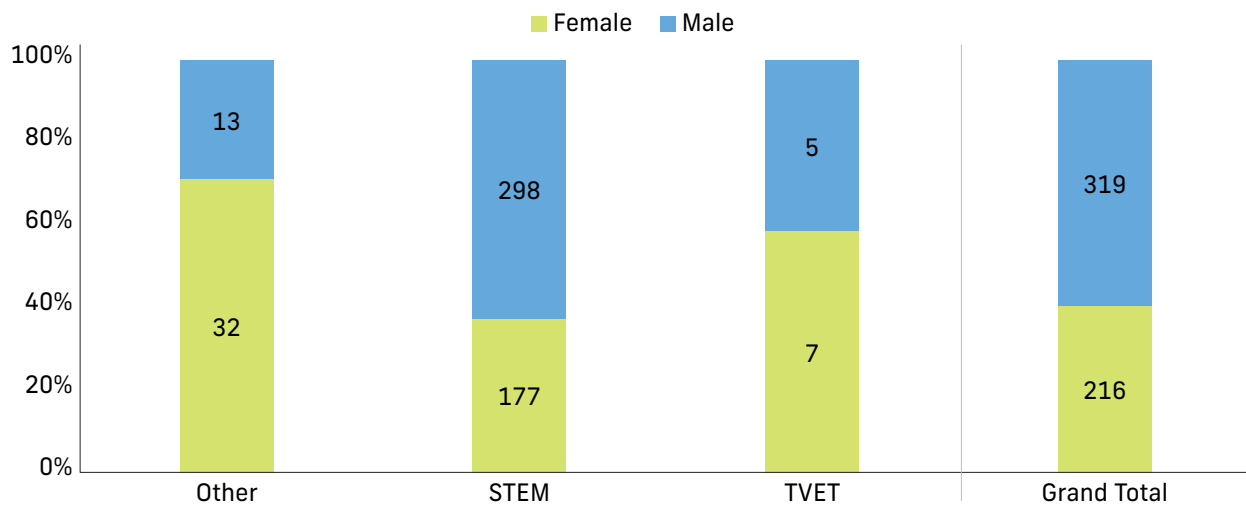


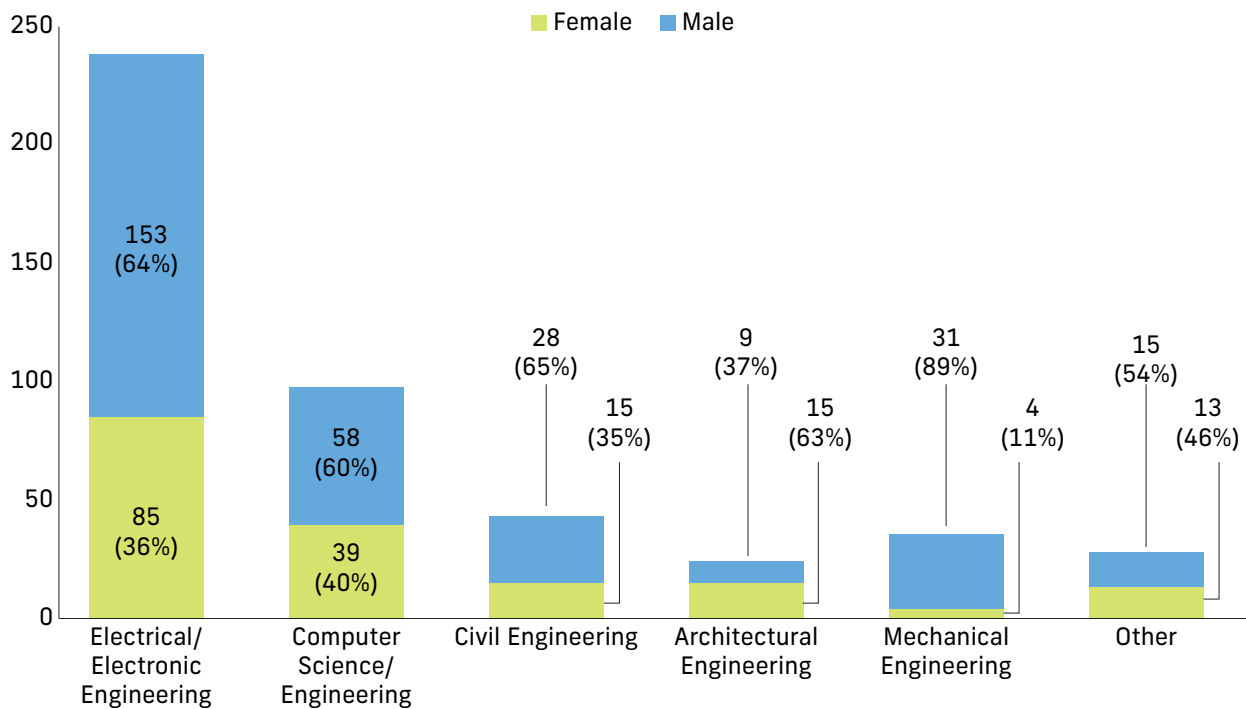
Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by current degree programs

The majority of respondents were from the Bachelor's degree program. In Master's or higher degree programs, the number of female respondents was higher than that of male respondents; the reverse was true of respondents in Bachelor's or lower degree programs.

Women outnumbered men in the 'Other' (constitutes those with background in commerce, humanities and other streams) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) categories while their representation was significantly lower in STEM (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Gender distribution across different disciplines**



**Figure 4. Gender distribution across different branches of engineering studies**

Figure 4 shows that the respondents were mainly from the five disciplines of Electrical/Electronic Engineering, Computer Science/Engineering, Civil Engineering, Architectural Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. Of the five disciplines, only Architectural Engineering had more female than male respondents.

### 3.3. Respondent Profile: Combination of these questions

Sri Lanka, followed by Nepal and Pakistan, had the largest percentage of female respondents in Master's or higher degree programs; and the Maldives, followed by Bhutan, had the largest number of respondents (in both male and female categories) in Certificate/Diploma/other programs. Of the total respondents, about 89% were from a STEM background.

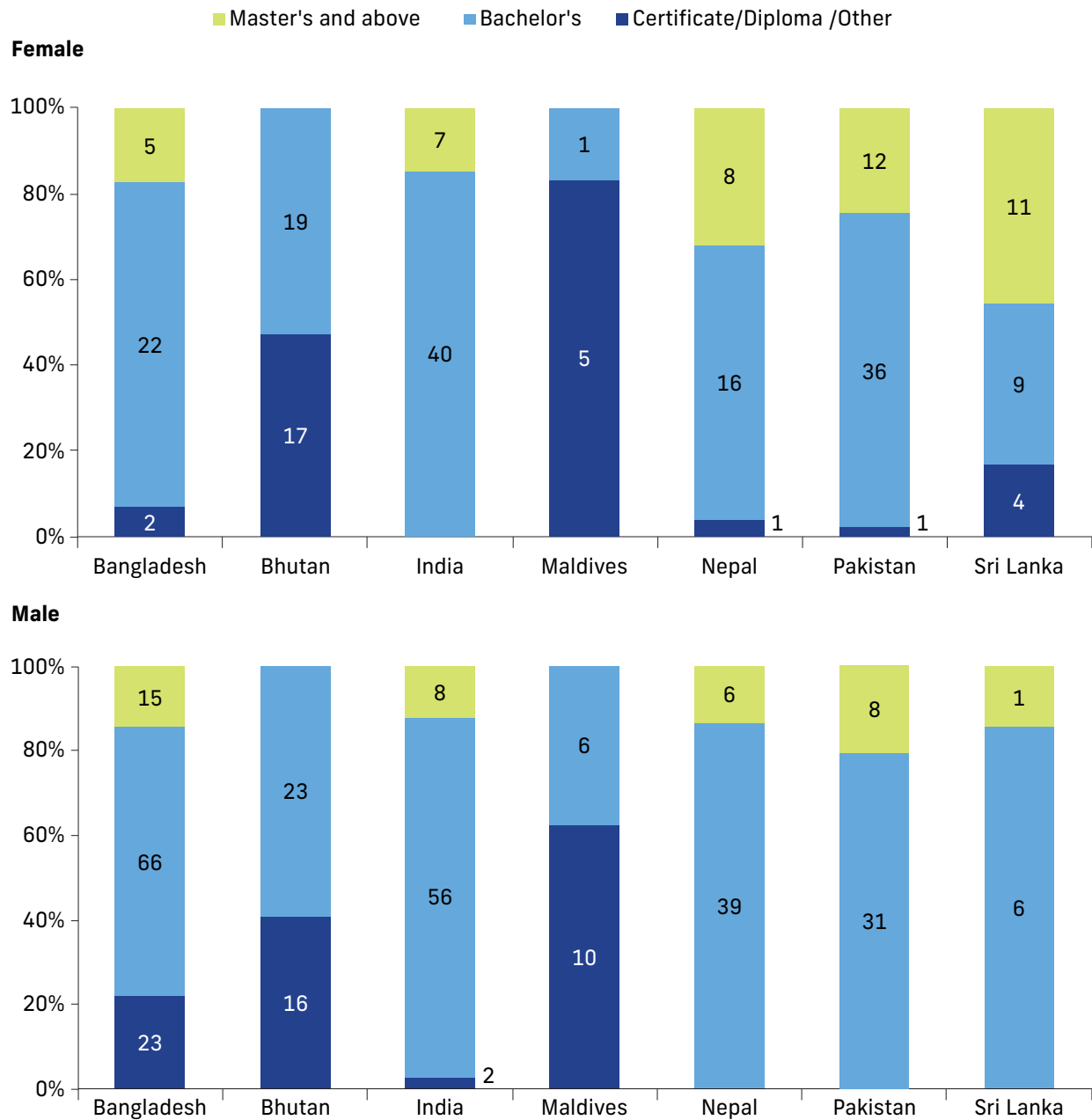


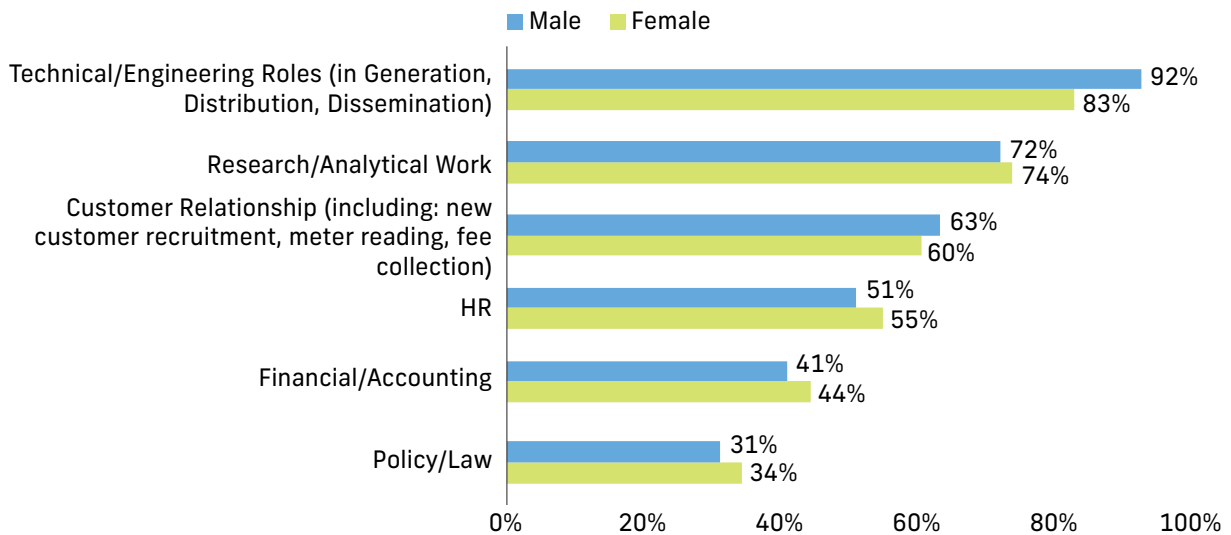
Figure 5. Distribution of respondents by current degree programs within countries









**Question #12. What kind of job function would you like to have as an intern?**

**Figure 12. Job function preferences of male (green bars) and female (blue bars) respondents**

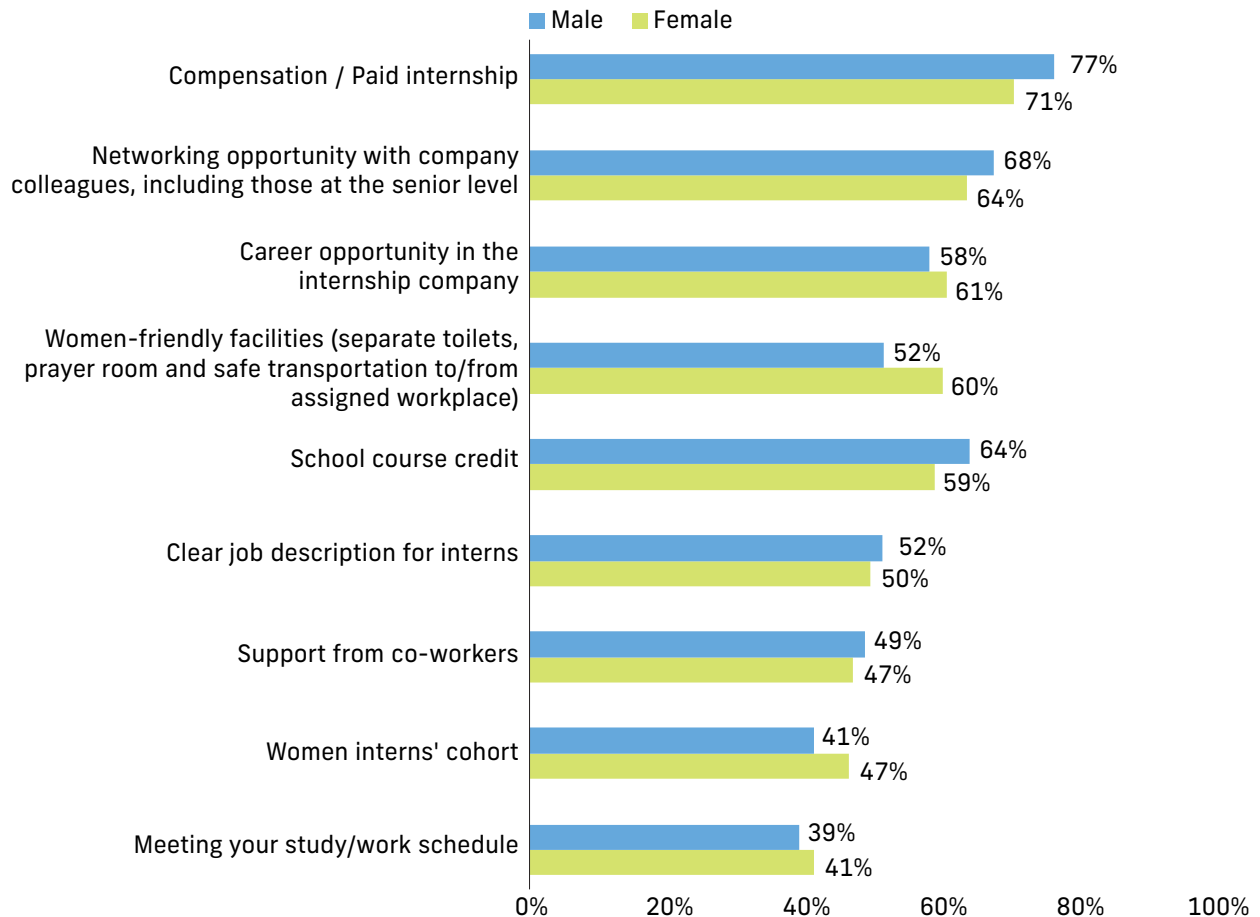
'Technical/Engineering Roles' was the first choice for the majority of respondents (both female and male) as may be inferred from the highest score it received in the ranking exercise. This was expected because over 88% of respondents are from a STEM background and the survey was intended for South Asian Engineering students who are interested in working in the Energy sector. For respondents outside STEM, 'Financial/Accounting' was found to be the most desirable job function. 'Policy/Law' was found to be the least preferred job function across all categories, except for STEM female respondents in the Master's program who chose 'Financial/Accounting' as the least desired job function.

Although 'Technical/Engineering Roles' was the most preferred job function for both female and male respondents, it received a lower score among female respondents (83%) than among male respondents (92%). For all the other job functions except Customer Relationships, the female score is higher than the male score. This implies that a lower number of female respondents (as compared to their male counterparts) ranked 'Technical/Engineering Roles' highest for the job function they would like as interns.

**Question #13. Following the previous question #12: Please describe any other job types you would like as an intern. (Open-ended answers)**

In response to Question #13, followings appeared more frequently than others as desired job functions:

- Web Development,
- Project Management,
- Procurement,
- Quality Analysis, and
- Marketing

**Question #14. Please rank the most important factors for you in choosing an internship program.**

**Figure 13. Most important factors for choosing an internship program for male (green bars) and female (blue bars) respondents**

Both male and female respondents suggested that 'Compensation/Paid internship' and 'networking opportunity with company colleagues' are the top two factors for choosing an internship program; these are followed by 'Career opportunity in the internship company' and 'student course credit'.

Interestingly, for both male and female respondents, 'women-friendly facilities' made it to the top five (out of nine options) in the list of important factors for choosing an internship program. Quite obviously, it received a slightly higher score among female respondents.

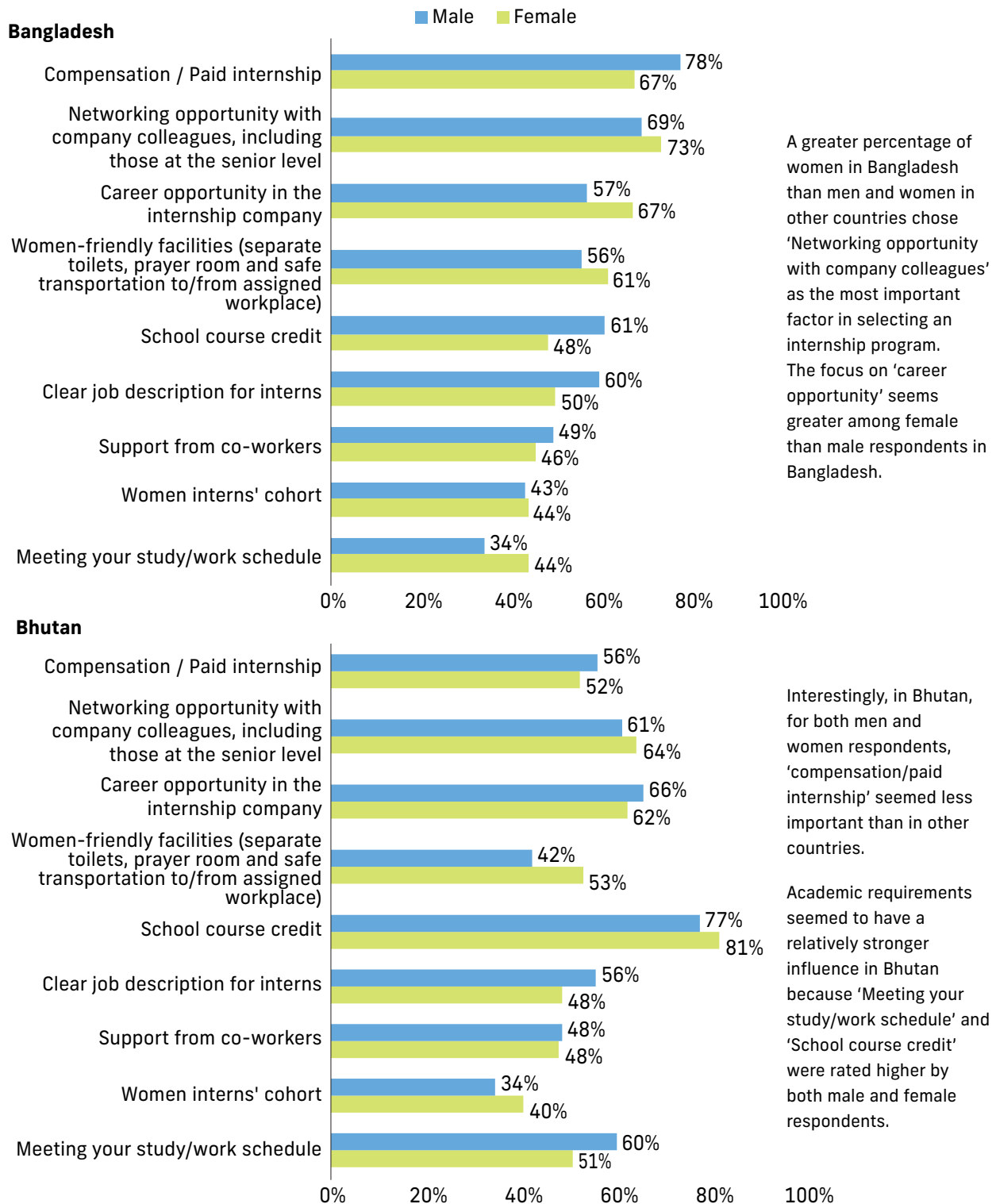
The figures below analyze the country-wise responses to #14 (focusing on Bangladesh and Bhutan with lowest female participation and India and Pakistan with highest female participation) to see if there are outstanding variations in responses across gender and countries.

The findings of the distinction between these countries are:

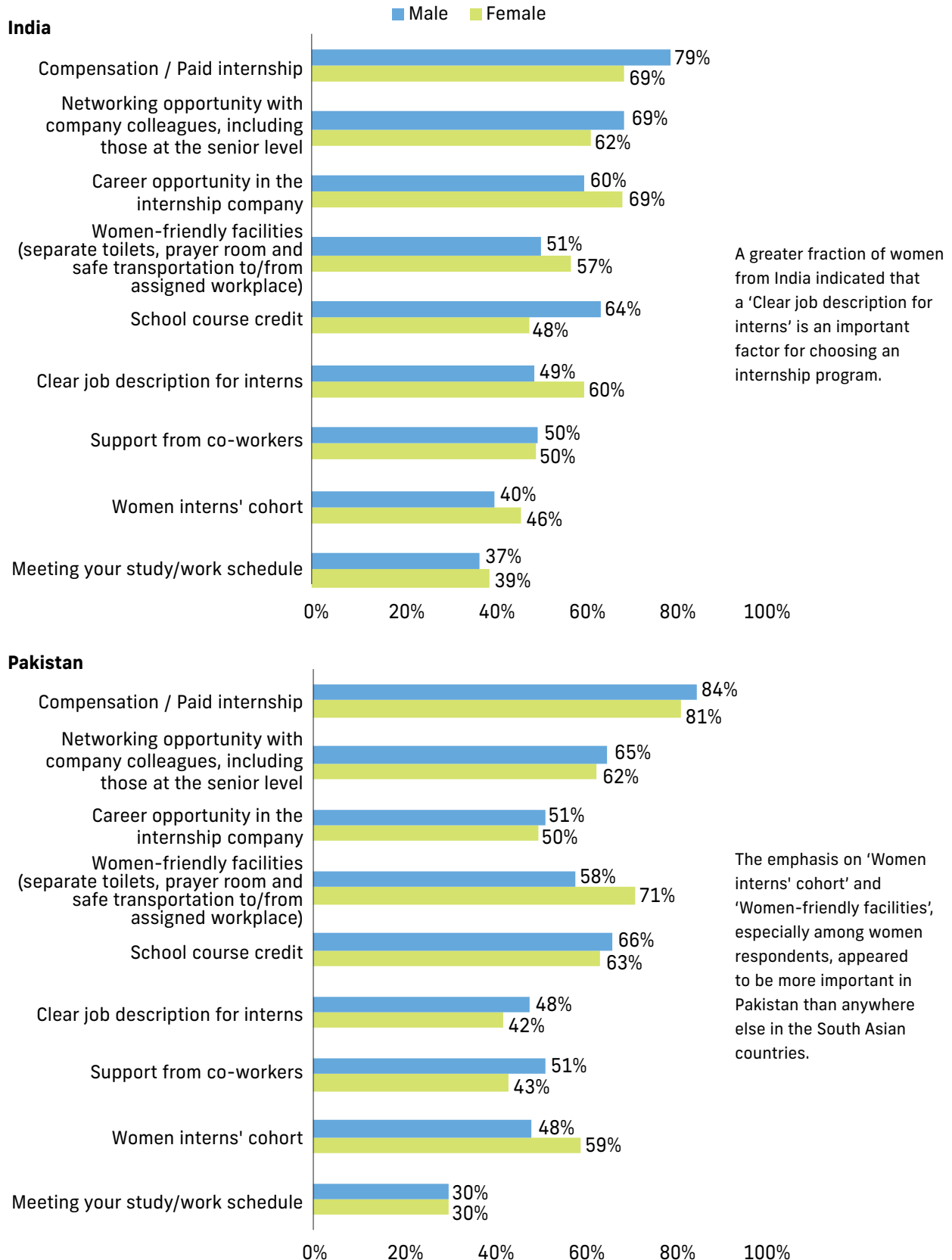
1. **Bangladesh** - A more significant percentage of women in Bangladesh than men and women in other countries chose 'Networking opportunity with company colleagues' as the most important.
2. **Bhutan** - For both men and women respondents, 'compensation/paid internship' seemed less important than in other countries; instead, academic requirements seemed to have a relatively strong influence.



3. **India** - A more significant number of women from India indicates that a 'Clear job description for interns is essential to choose an internship program.
4. **Pakistan** - The emphasis on 'Women interns cohort' and 'Women-friendly facilities,' especially among women respondents, appeared to be more critical in Pakistan than anywhere else in the South Asian countries.



**Figure 14.** Country-wise charts of the most important factors for choosing an internship program for male (green bars) and female (blue bars) respondents



**Figure 14.** Country-wise charts of the most important factors for choosing an internship program for male (green bars) and female (blue bars) respondents

### Question #15. What are the most important resources for accessing information on an internship opportunity? (Select all that apply)

For both male and female respondents, 'Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)', 'Advertisements at educational institutions' and 'Recommendations from your schools (professors and school councilors)' were the most frequently cited resources of information on internship opportunities. While there was little difference in male and female responses, 'Social media' appeared to be more popular among women as a source of information on internship opportunities. And this difference between men and women seemed common across the countries except India, where social media, as a source of information on internship programs, seems to be equally popular among women and men.

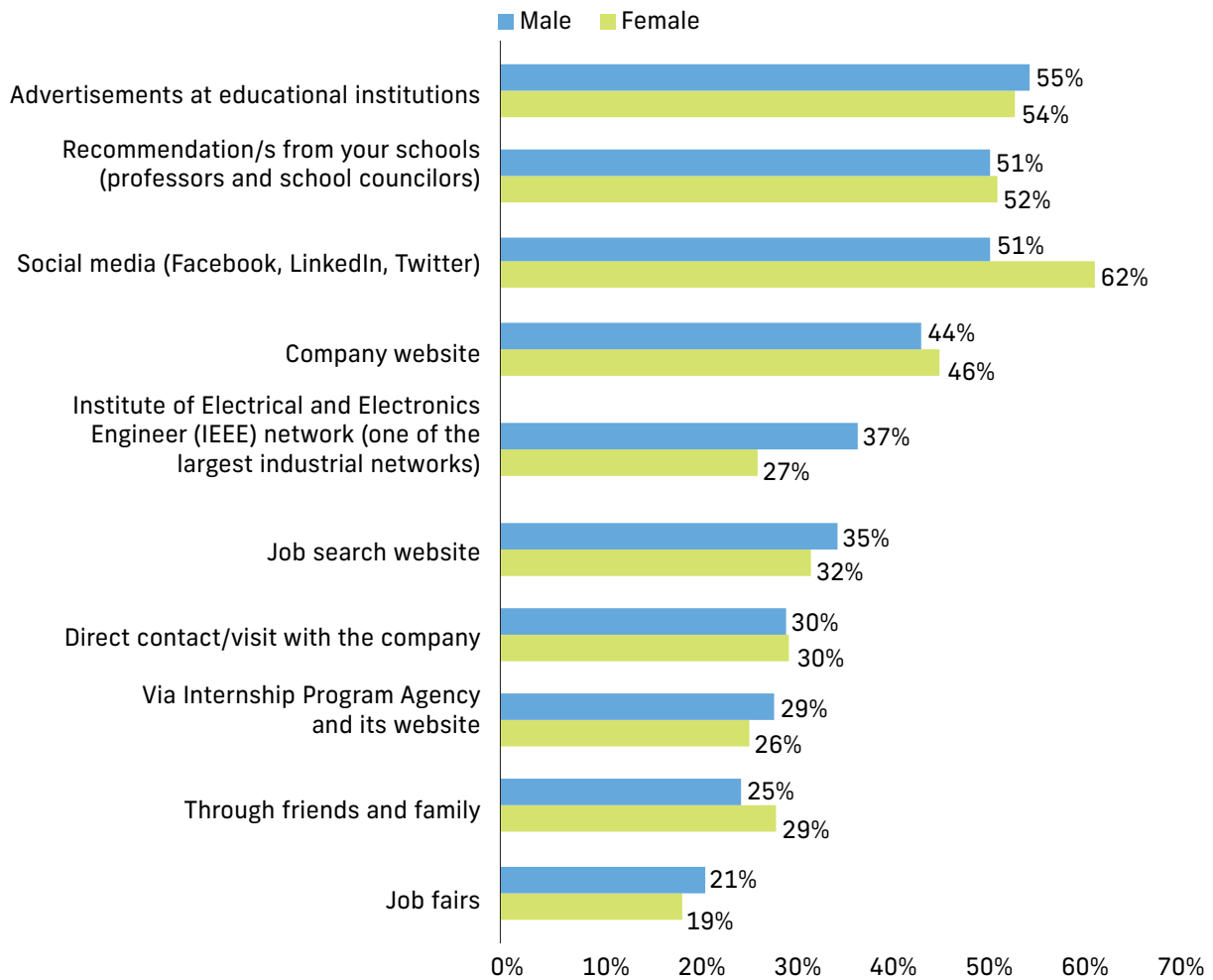
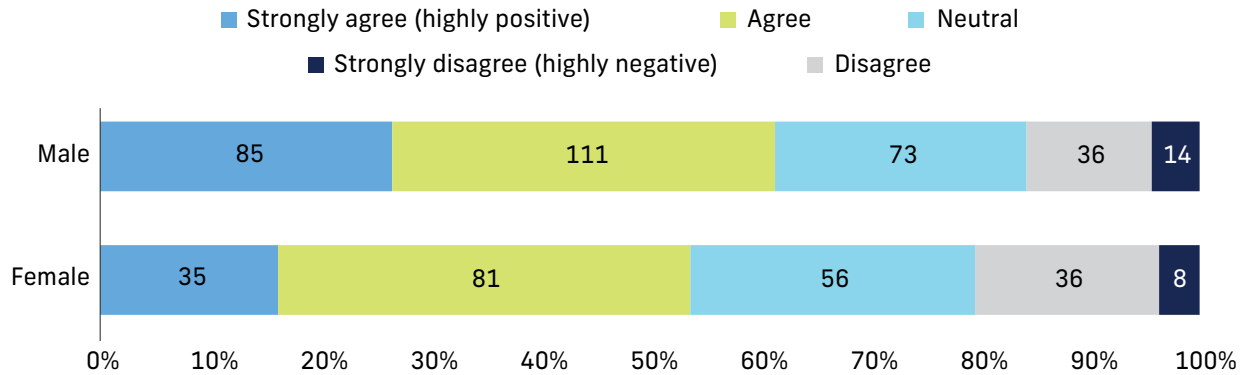


Figure 15. Most important resources for accessing information on an internship opportunity



**Question #16. I find/found it easy to search and apply for the internship opportunity. (Do you agree with this statement?)**

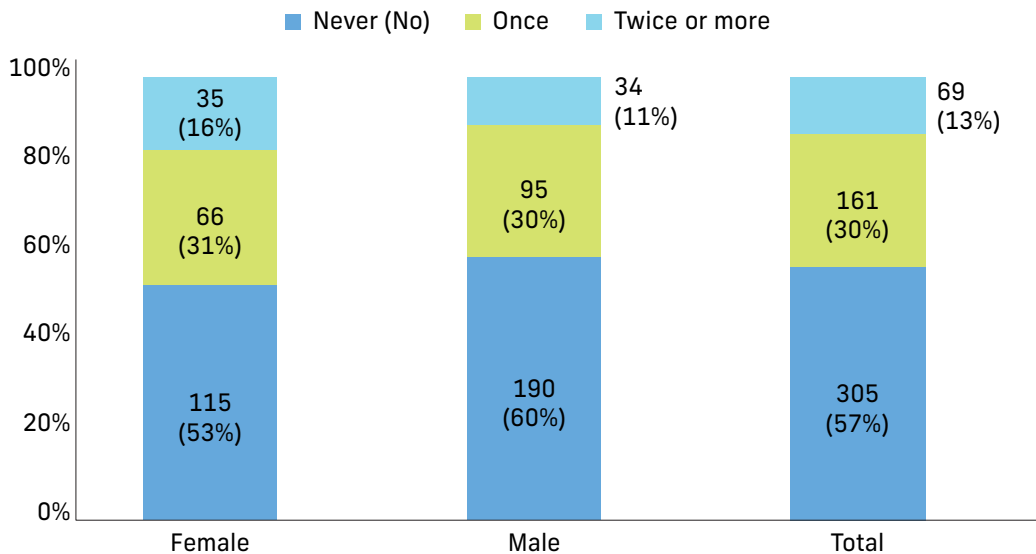


**Figure 16. Respondents' answers to #16**

Average score: male – 3.68; female – 3.46

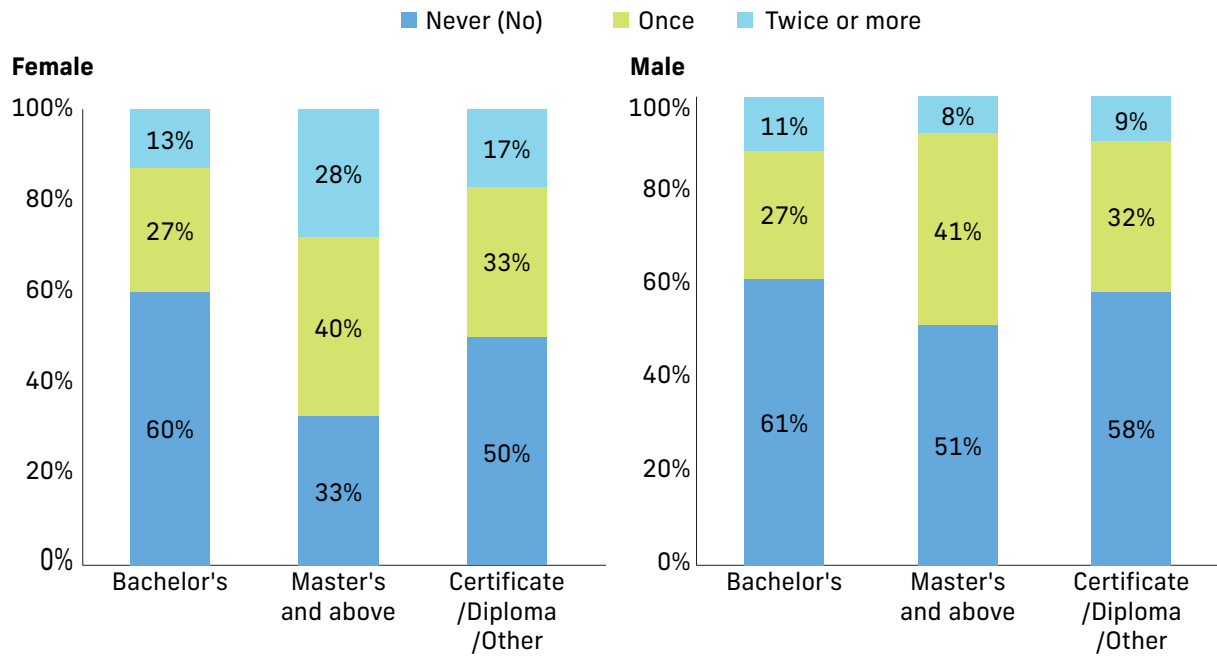
About 61% male and 54% female respondents suggested that they found it easy to locate an internship opportunity and apply for the same. Those who indicated otherwise were mostly from the Electrical/Electronic Engineering background.

**Question #18. How many times have you been in an internship program (in any organization)?**



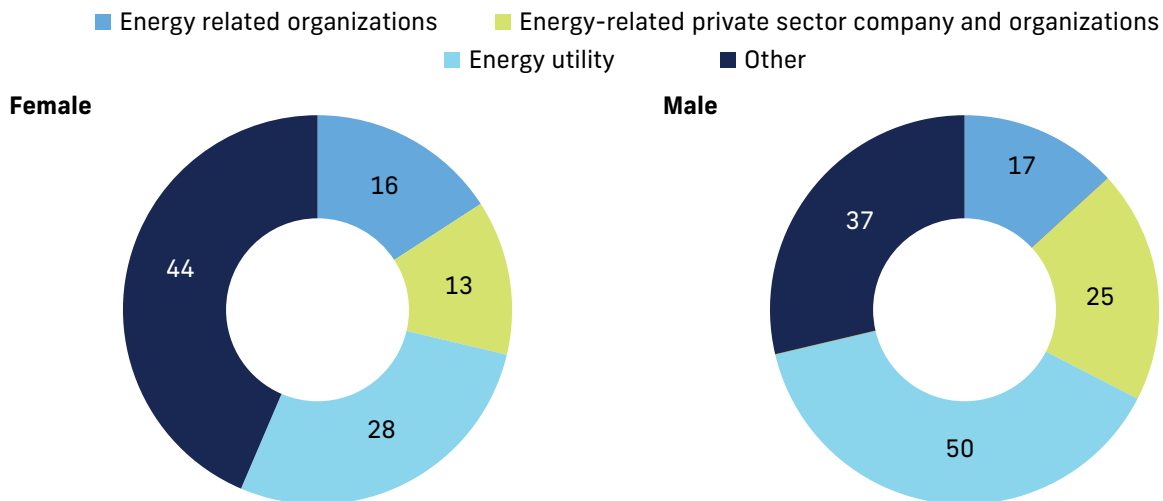
**Figure 17. Total number of times respondents have joined an internship program**

About 57% of the total number of respondents did not have prior internship experience. More than 60% of respondents in Bachelor’s degree programs had never been an intern. On the other hand, a majority of respondents (almost 70% female and 50% male) in Master’s or higher degree programs had internship experience/s.



**Figure 18.** Total number of times respondents have joined an internship program (by gender and current degree programs)

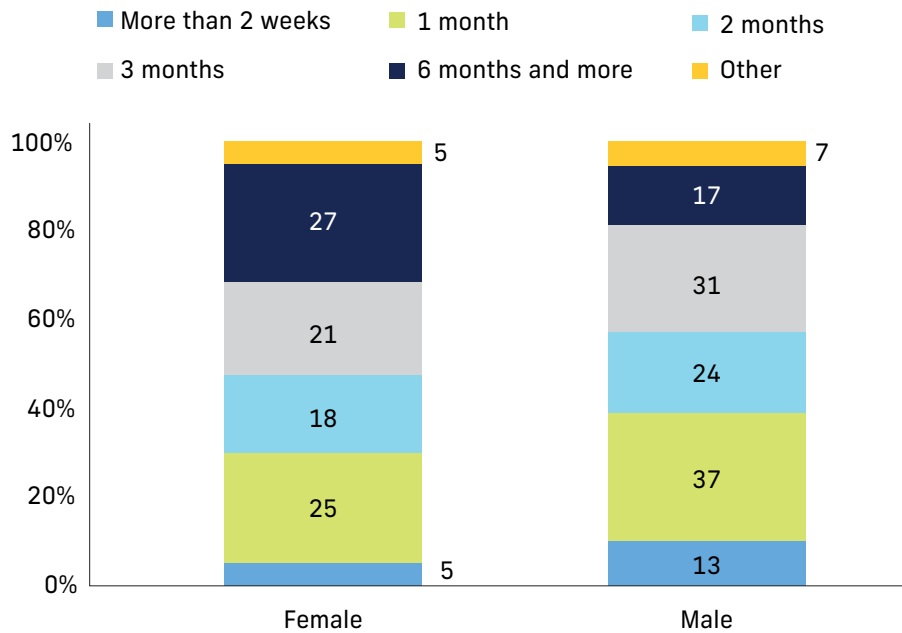
**Question #19. What kind of an organization did you join as an intern? (Please select all that apply)**



**Figure 19.** Female and male respondents' answers to #19

Almost 44% female and 29% male respondents joined entities in non-Energy sectors as interns.

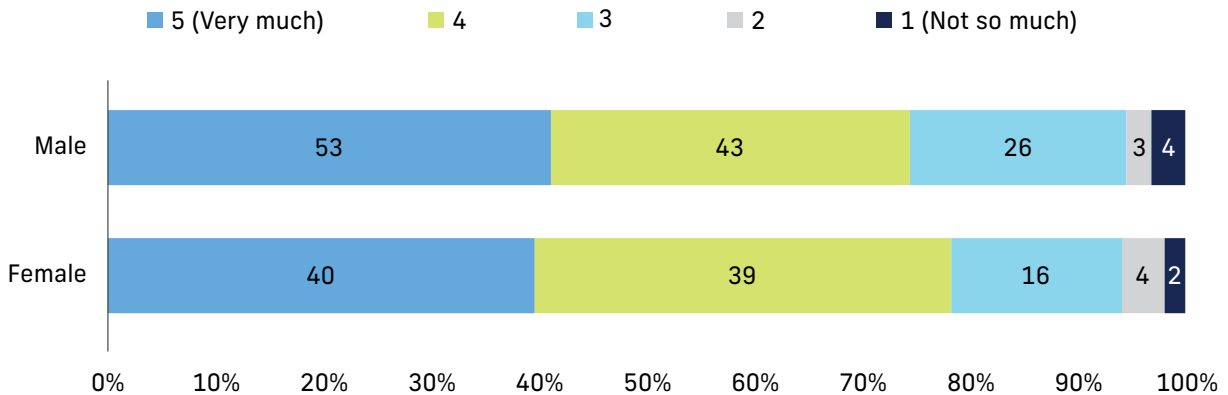
**Question #20. How long was the internship program you participated in?**



**Figure 20. Duration of the internship program for male and female respondents**

Interestingly, more women than men respondents were involved in internships that lasted 6 months or longer.

**Question #21. Please rate your satisfaction with your internship program. (1 star: Least satisfied; 5 stars: Most satisfied)**



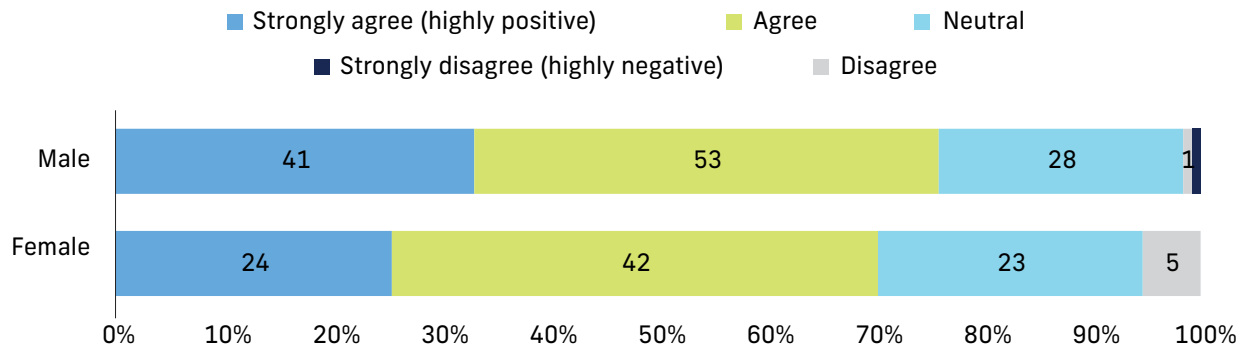
**Figure 21. Respondents' answers to #21**

**Average score:** female – 4.10; male – 4.07

About 78% and 74% of female and male respondents respectively suggested that they were generally satisfied with their internship programs (#21). Responses to the follow-up question seeking reasons for their answers to #21 (#22) are provided in the form of word clouds in Figure 22 (for female respondents) and Figure 23 (for male respondents). There was no similar profile for these individuals that would infer any causation.



**Question #23. My orientation session helped me start my internship program well. (Do you agree with this statement?)**



**Figure 24. Respondent's answers to #23**

**Average score:** male – 4.06; female – 3.90

On an average, a slightly higher margin of male respondents expressed their satisfaction with their orientation session (76% vs 70%).

**Question #24. Following the previous question #23: please describe what the orientation session/s covered. (Open-ended answers)**

Respondents suggested that the orientation session/s covered the following:

- Overview of the company;
- Company policies;
- Interns' roles and responsibilities;
- Introduction to systems and equipment; and
- Safety measures.

**Question #25. What elements do you think should be in an orientation session at the beginning of an internship program? (Please check all that apply)**

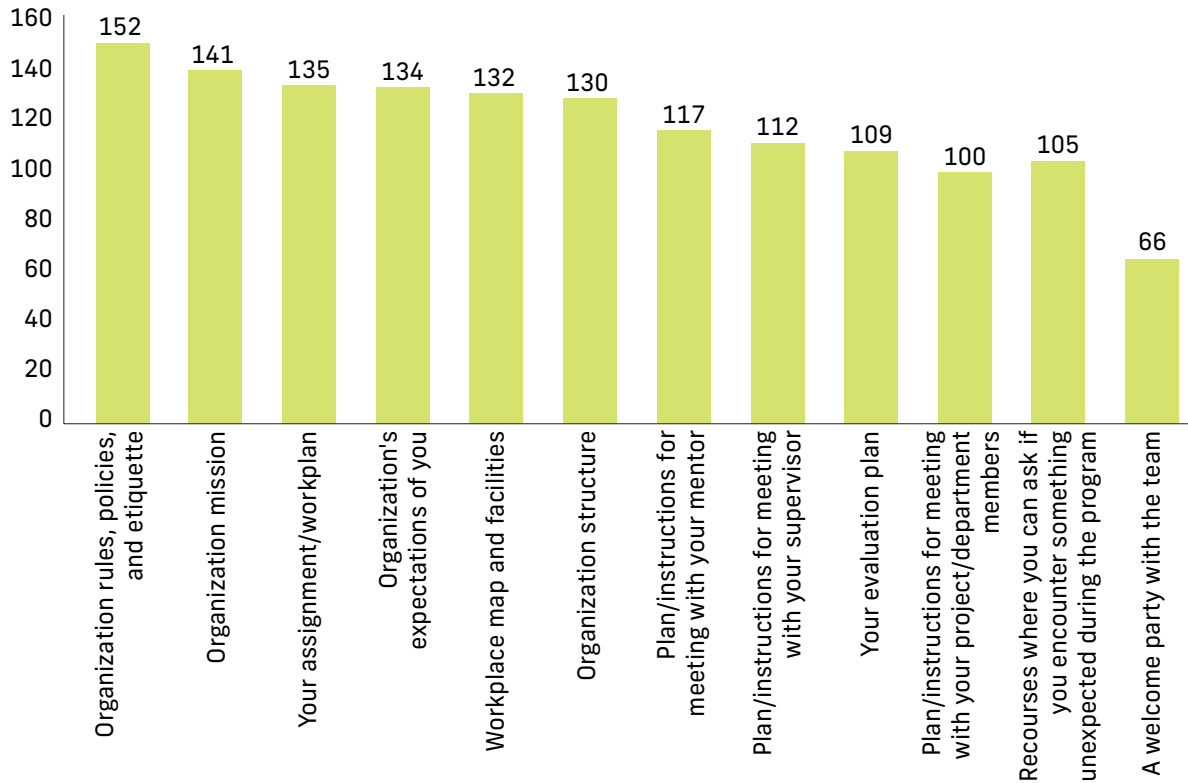


Figure 25. Elements that respondents think should be included in an orientation session

**Question #26. I received adequate training on the organization's anti-sexual harassment policy. I understand when and to whom I should report instances of harassment and abuse. (Do you agree?)**

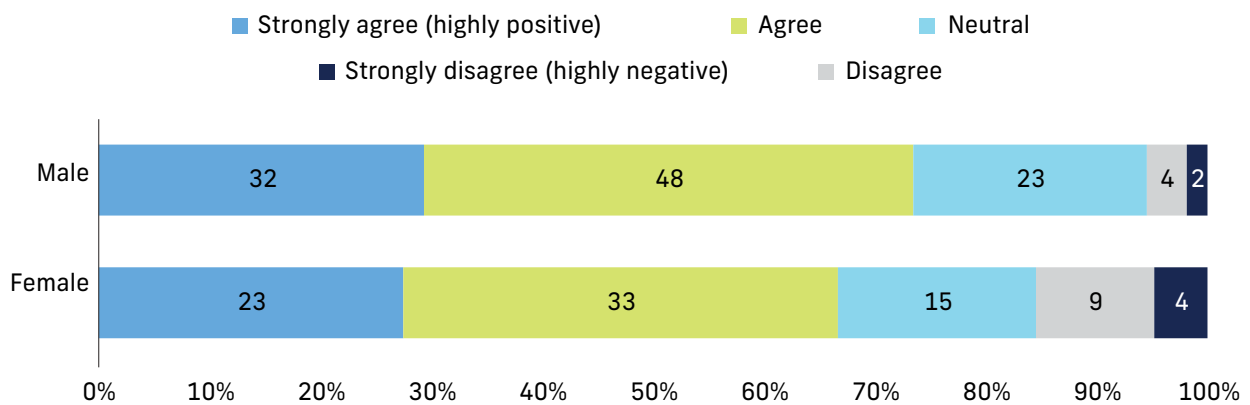


Figure 26. Respondents' answers to #26

Average score: male – 3.95; female – 3.74

On an average, more male respondents agreed to receiving adequate training on the organization's anti-sexual harassment policy (74% male vs 67% female).





**Question #30. I felt I received good support from my SUPERVISOR during the program. (Do you agree?)**

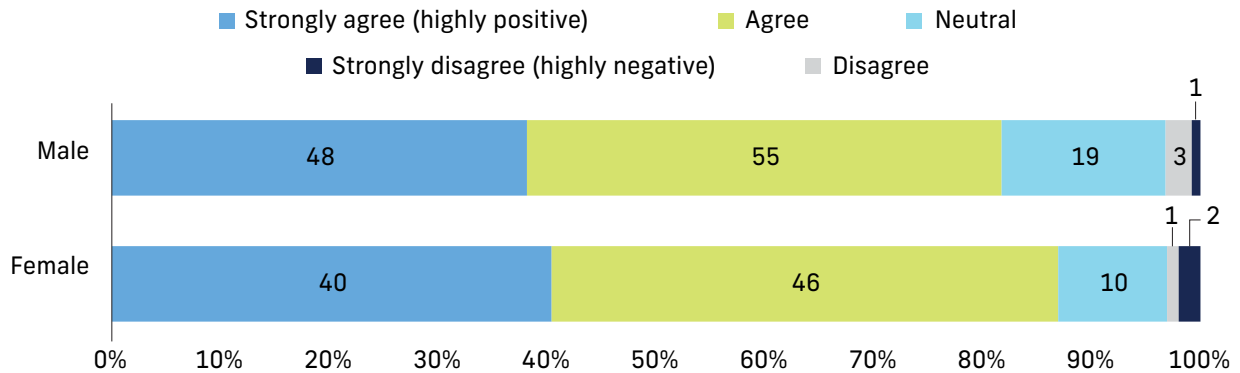


Figure 28. Respondents' answers to #30

Average score: female – 4.22; male – 4.16

On an average, more female respondents seemed to agree that they received good support from supervisors (87% female vs 82% male).

**Question #31. Did you have a mentor apart from the supervisor?**

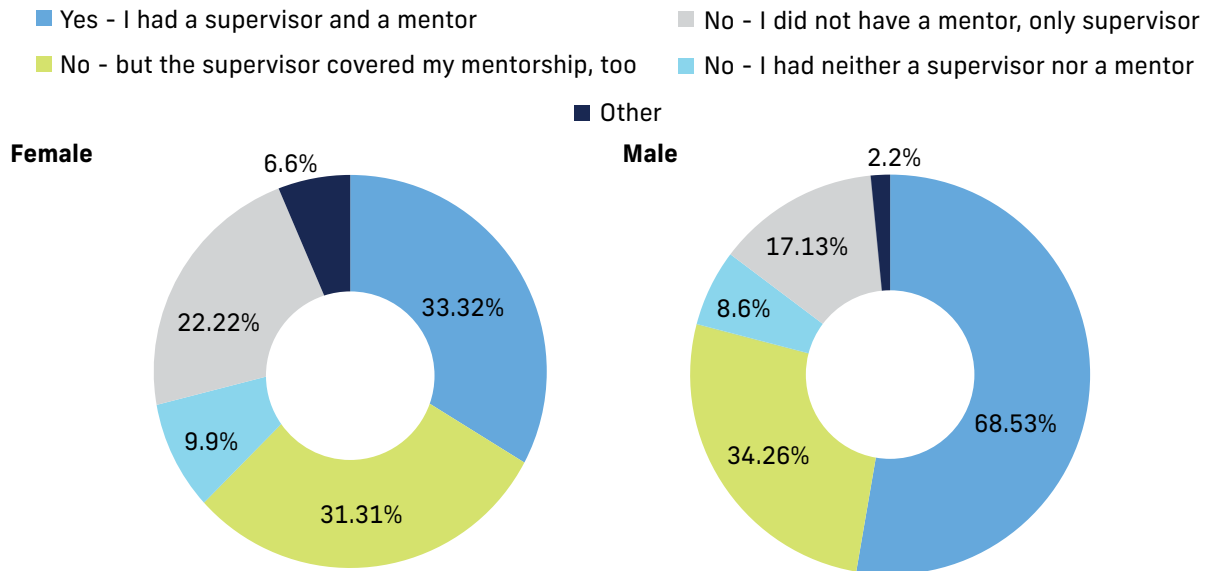


Figure 29. Female and male respondents' answers to #31

The majority of respondents, both male and female, had a mentor in addition to a supervisor. The satisfaction with the internship program was found to be higher for respondents who were assigned both supervisors and mentors.

88% of the respondents who were assigned supervisors and mentors expressed a satisfaction level of 4 or 5 with their internship programs. Only 47% of respondents who had neither supervisor nor mentor rated their satisfaction level at 4 or 5.



The fact that there is a significant difference between the percentage of men and women who have a supervisor and an additional mentor (68.53% vs. 33.32%) shows that women have less connection with the company's professionals than men. It may also explain that women have fewer networking opportunities than men.

**Question #32. Did you have the time to speak with your co-workers (including the SUPERVISOR) closely about YOU? Such as understanding your situation, your needs and wants during the program. (1-star: Not so much, 5-star Very well)**

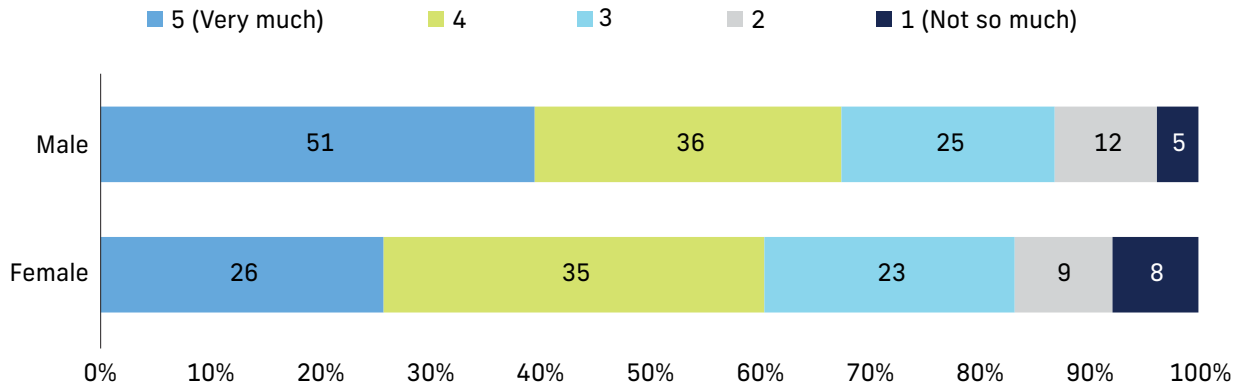


Figure 30. Respondents' answers to #32

Average score: male – 3.90; female – 3.61

Since a mean score between 3.5 to 5 represents a positive attitude, it may be concluded that both male and female respondents generally had a positive experience and attitude to their internship programs. The majority of them seem to have received support in various forms (for example: training, support from the supervisor, orientation session, etc.) The total mean score for female respondents, however, was slightly lower than male. Mean scores for female respondents were particularly lower for Question #16 (Found it easy to find and apply for the internship programs), Question #26 (Received adequate training on company's anti-sexual harassment policies) and Question #32 (Time to speak with your co-worker (including SUPERVISOR)).

**Question #33. Did you have an evaluation for your achievements at the end of the internship program? (Please mark all that apply)**

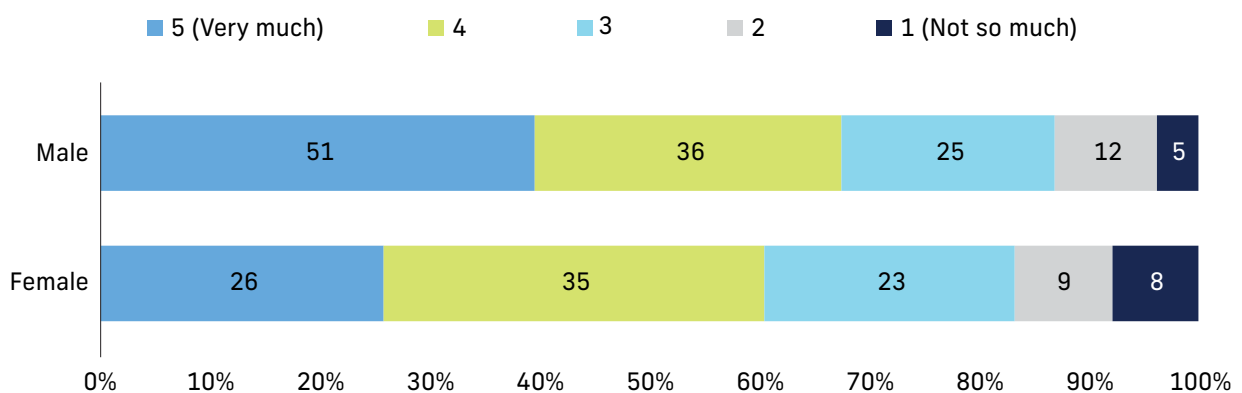


Figure 31. Methods used to evaluate achievements of respondents at the end of their internship programs

A total of 200 respondents responded 'Yes' to Question #33, out of which 99 reported that more than one method was used to evaluate their achievements. Report submission, interviews and presentations seemed to be the most common evaluation methods.

**Question #34. Do you believe you improved your professional skills through the internship program? (1-star: Not so much, 5-star: Very well improved)**

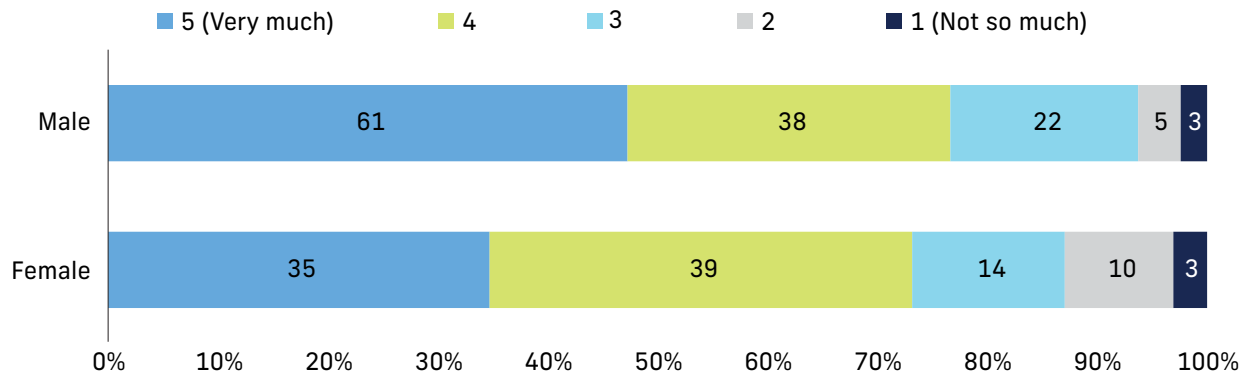


Figure 32. Respondents' answers to #34

Average score: male - 4.16; female - 3.92

**Question #35. Did/does the organization continue to keep in touch with you after the internship program?**

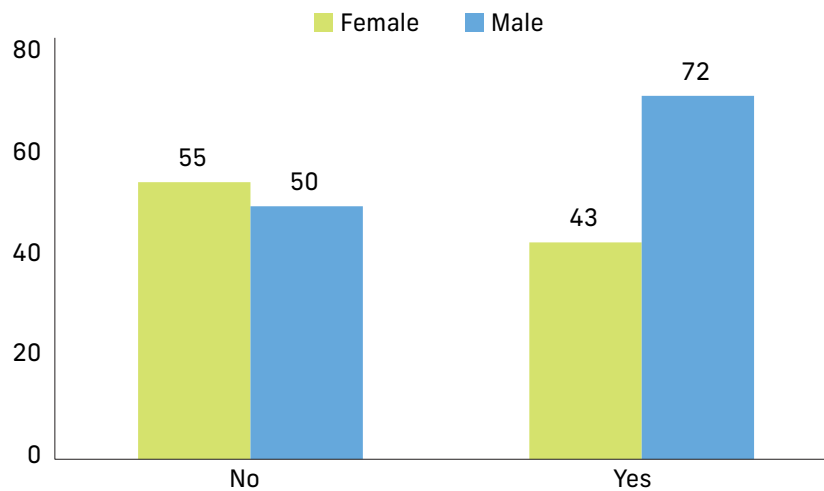
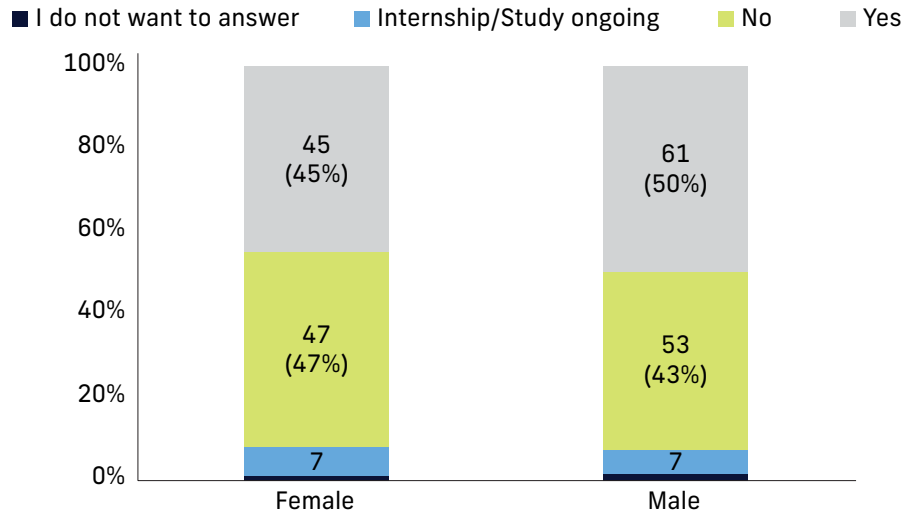


Figure 33. Respondents' answers to #35

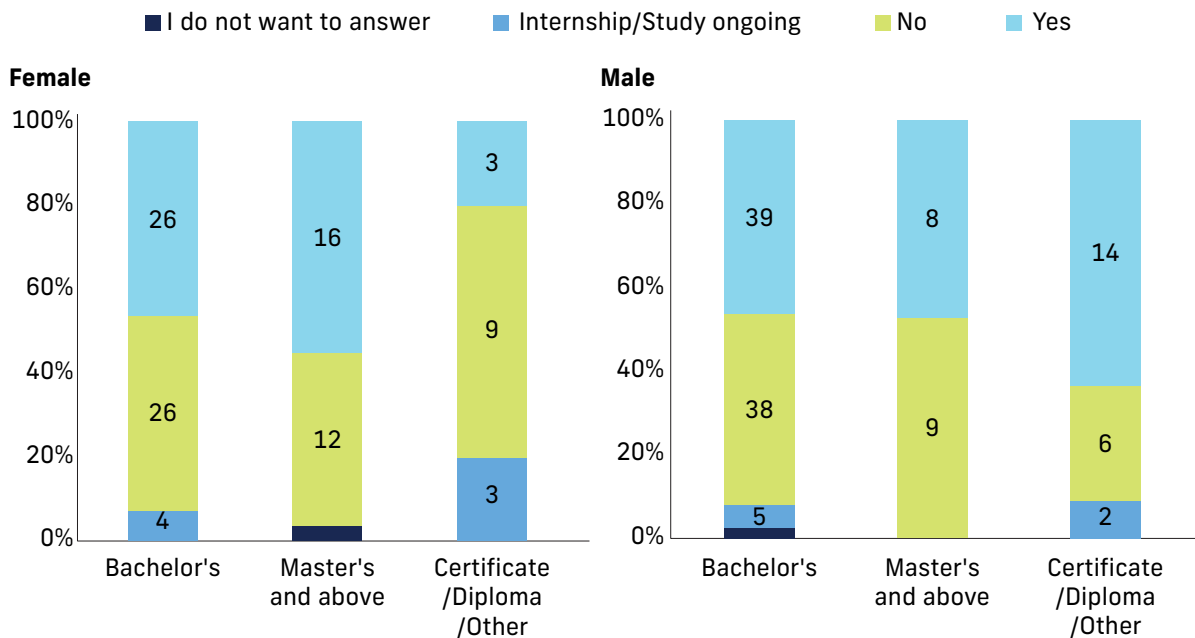
After the completion of the program, a majority of the female respondents were not contacted by the organizations they interned with. However, the opposite was true for male respondents.

**Question #36. Did you get a job after the internship program?**



**Figure 34. Respondents' employment status after the internship program**

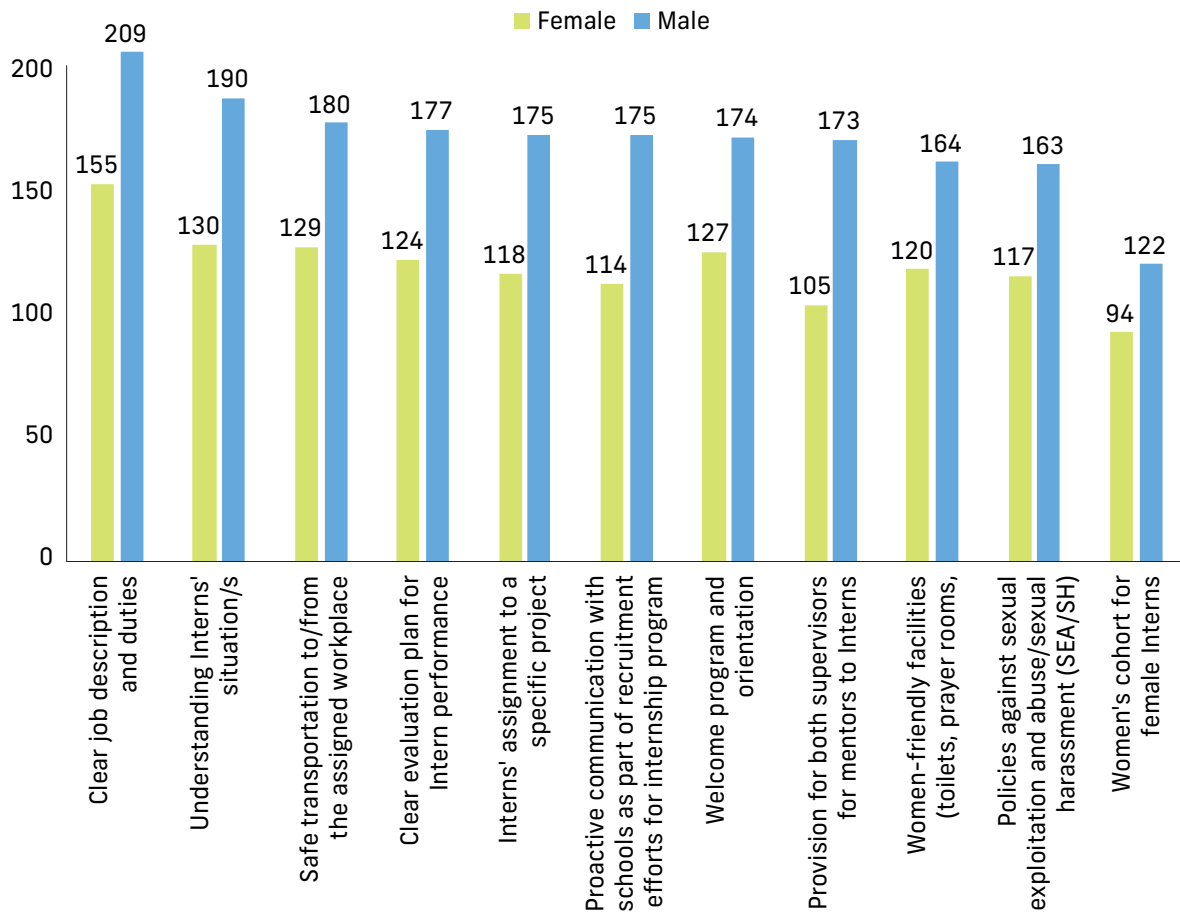
About 50% and 45% of male and female respondents respectively got a job after the internship program. More women in Master's or higher degree programs found jobs after the internship program than men in the same program and women in other degree programs. Among respondents in Certificate/Diploma or other programs, a small number (i.e., 20%) of women respondents got employed after the internship whereas the figure 35 was much higher (i.e., 64%) for male respondents.



**Figure 35. Distribution of respondents based on current degree and employment status after internship**

The percentage of male respondents finding jobs was greater than that of female respondents in all countries except Sri Lanka and Pakistan. It may be worth noting that Sri Lanka and Pakistan also had a greater percentage of female respondents from Master's or higher degree programs.

**Question #37. The WePOWER Attributes we plan to recommend to South Asian Energy utilities for effective internship programs. Would you please check options that you think should be included in the recommendations? (Please mark all that apply)**



**Figure 36. Respondents' recommendations to South Asian Energy utilities**

The first five WePOWER Attributes that the majority of respondents recommended:

Female	Male
1. Women's cohort for female interns	1. Clear job description and duties
2. Women-friendly facilities	2. Understanding interns' situation(s)
3. Policies against sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment	3. Interns' assignment to a specific project
4. Clear job description and duties	4. Clear evaluation plan for Intern performance
5. Clear evaluation plan for Intern performance	5. Safe transportation to/from the assigned workplace

**Question #38. FINAL QUESTIONS: Final Question: Please share/write additional thoughts and suggestions on South Asian Energy sector internship programs. (Open-ended answers)**

Listed below are interesting points related to South Asia Energy sector internship programs as suggested by the respondents:

1. Paid internship programs
2. Job placement for interns based on their performance during the program
3. Better advertisement of internship opportunities
4. Research opportunities
5. Gender inclusion
6. Safe environment for female interns
7. Women-friendly environment
8. Clear job description
9. Longer internship programs
10. Regulations to control exploitation of interns



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