Gender Diversity For Nobel Prizes

The problem with Nobel Prizes is that only 3% of women have won it in the history of the awards. Based on the article adapted by Gibney, E. (2018, September), there has been a rising voice for Nobel committees to consider gender diversity in addition to work quality when nominating scientists.

The Nobel Prizes were established by Alfred Nobel in 1985. There are five different categories of Nobel Prizes: Physics, Chemistry, Economics, Physiology and Medicine. They are now more diversified and commonly known as the: Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, Peace and Economic Sciences.

The reason why women do not win as much prizes as men is due to the fact that the award recognizes work from a period of time whereby women were not as highly regarded as men – this stigma followed the award, leading to the current predicament.

Alfred Nobel's rule for awarding the Nobel Prize is that two different bodies will form committees, which the said committees will then invite notable and distinguished people of the respective fields to nominate candidates to receive the prize.

As the decision lies mostly in the hands of the notable and distinguished people, there is a strong human factor in play in the deciding of the award recipient. To reduce the human factor, the nomination process is now undergoing change to encourage gender diversity to hopefully increase the diversity of winners.

Göran Hansson, secretary-general of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences also admitted that women have been nominated far less compared to men. To curb that, Hansson mentions that the committees will urge their nominators to diversify the choices made in terms of not only gender, but also geography and topic for upcoming prizes. Furthermore, Hansson says in an interview "We don't work in a vacuum. We need the scientific community to see the women scientists, and to nominate those who have made outstanding contributions".

Subtle changes has also been made: nominators being able to put up more than one nominee. It was thought to be underused and thus, was highlighted and nominators were encouraged to nominate more than one nominee for up to three different theories. Iris Bohnet, a behavioural economist at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, says that if people are given more choices, a more diversified and variety of choices tend to be made, increasing the gender diversity.

A body of committee actively increased the amount of women who were able to make nominations in the past two years. Even though research showed that both gender tend to favour men in the nomination process, the amount of women nominees have increased significantly, even though exact numbers were not disclosed.

Curt Rice, president of Oslo Metropolitan University and head of Norway's Committee on Gender Balance and Diversity in Research mentions that even though the Nobel Committee is

raising its voice towards gender diversity, more needs to be done to not sully the reputation of the awards. He further mentions that the Abel Prize has never been won by a women, and the first Fields Medal was only won by a woman in 2014. He ends by saying “So the whole prize thing has serious problems”.

Brian Uzzi, a social scientist at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois says “The way to break stereotypes is with role models. The secret is to have more women winners”, as an analysis showed that women won awards that had more relation to teaching, compared to research. He explained that it was most likely due to the stereotypes about men and women that caused this. Having more women able to win research awards would definitely strengthen the gender diversity for the future of the awards.

In conclusion, I agree to a large extent that there has been a rising voice for Nobel committees to consider gender diversity in addition to work quality when nominating scientists. The text speaks strongly about the rising voices for gender diversity and means to improve it, which leads to my strong agreement to the opinion.