

DISPARITY IN GENDER EQUALITY AT WORKPLACE IN INDIA

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Abstract: Gender inequality is the concept explaining the unequal treatment between males and the female counterpart. The global HDI for females is 5.90% lesser than the male counterpart. South Asian region has the highest disparity in HDI of women to men with women HDI's being 16.30% lower. 25% of business entities across the globe representing a quarter of entire business industry are operating without any women in the top management position. This research aims to evaluate the gender biasness prevailing at the workspace in India with emphasis on the corporate and the SME's sector. Further a collation of a comprehensive dossier providing possible corrective measures has been made. The research methodology entails participatory observation coalesced with active research. The research findings provide that wide gender disparity exists in the Indian industry. Conceivable reforms have been suggested for adoption at workplace so as to bridge the gender inequality gap.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Workplace Equality, Gender Pay Gap, Gender Inequality Index

I. Introduction

Gender equality, as the name suggests, refers to the elimination of discriminatory outlook between men and women. The concept of Gender equality is universally applied in every kind of enterprise. Ranging from business entities, welfare societies, non-governmental organizations to government departments, being gender unbiased is the crucial aspect that needs to be adhered to. The Constitution of India through the Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and through the Preamble has copiously laid down gender equality as a constitutional requirement and the birth right of every citizen. However it is disheartening to note that even after attainment of 72 years of self-rule, the issues such as women empowerment, up gradation in status of women, development of girl child hit headlines of leading newspapers almost daily. Social exclusion of women, gender biasness, political segregation and economic marginalization has resulted in plummeting levels of women empowerment indicators and highly skewed levels of human development in India. Gender gap within the Indian context persists in almost every scenario, for instance job opportunities, growth prospects and even in access to basic facilities. As per Evidence for Policy Design¹, Harvard Kennedy School (Oct. 2018), only 38% of Indian females possess a mobile phone while on the other hand 71% of Indian males possess a mobile phone. 33% disparity in access to a basic facility such as a mobile phone is an appalling fact. Moreover the women in Indian subcontinent experience the world's highest disparity in social prestige, safety, equality and technological accessibility.

The importance of gender equality is being realized at the national as well as the international level. Numerous international conferences, seminars, summits, plan of action and referendums have been signed and agreed to work upon bringing parity between male and female counterparts.

In India, the probability of females working in an organization is 52% less than that of the male equivalent². Therefore any gender biasness in the work culture must be carefully looked upon. Gender equality at workplace is the holistic implementation of egalitarianism framework with the purview of

¹ A tough call: Understanding barriers to and impacts of women's mobile phone adoption in India. Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School (Oct. 2018), https://epod.cid.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/A_Tough_Call.pdf

² International Labour Organization (ILO). 2014 "ILOSTAT database"

providing equal growth prospects to all the employees. Ensuring gender equality within the workspace is no more considered as policy separate from the foundational functions of the HR department. When the concept of gender equality is meticulously analyzed, it appears that absolute riddance from gender biasness within the organization cannot be achieved unless the requirement of gender equality is imbued within the very values, culture, mission, and vision of the organization. The ideation of gender equality can be fully instilled successfully within the organizational framework only when the entire management chain decides to adapt it comprehensively.

Addressing the presence of gender inequalities, the Gender Inequality Index (“**GII**”) provides a measurement of level of economic loss particularly due to non-development of human resources because of gender disparity. GII provides a reflection of women empowerment, economic development and health standards in the country. Lower GII designates better and prosperous opportunities for women while higher GII specifies deterrence for females in coming out of the economic and social isolation. India ranked 127 amongst 160 countries with a score³ of 0.524 which is marginally better than the neighboring countries of Pakistan (0.541) and Bangladesh (0.542) which are ranked at 133 and 134 positions respectively.

II. Research objectives

The primary research objectives of this research paper are:

- To evaluate the quantitative aspect of gender inequality at workplace in India;
- To evaluate the methodologies that can be implemented for protection and promotion of interests of the female workforce at the workplace.

III. Literature review

Pre-existing empirical researches have covered the aspects of disparity between the male and female workforce across various Indian industries (Chakraborty, S., 2016). Reasons for high gender pay gap in India have been analyzed by few researchers in different dynamics. Sengupta, A and Das, P (2014) have analyzed gender pay gap variation by classifying the data into religious and social groupings providing that pay gap in India has reduced over the past 15 years. Mohanty and Bisht have researched upon Indian state wise disparity relating the woman rights, gender based discrimination and wage gap. Thomas, Reshma Elizabeth (2013) in her research study has provided an insight of the state of gender inequality in India vis a vis other Asian nations. Research findings have provided an appalling conclusion about the deplorable condition of India amongst neighbouring nations. Rosan and Jerdee (1974) have evidenced about women bearing discrimination at workplace detailing out the kind of discriminatory policies and practices being instilled at organizations.

IV. Research methodology

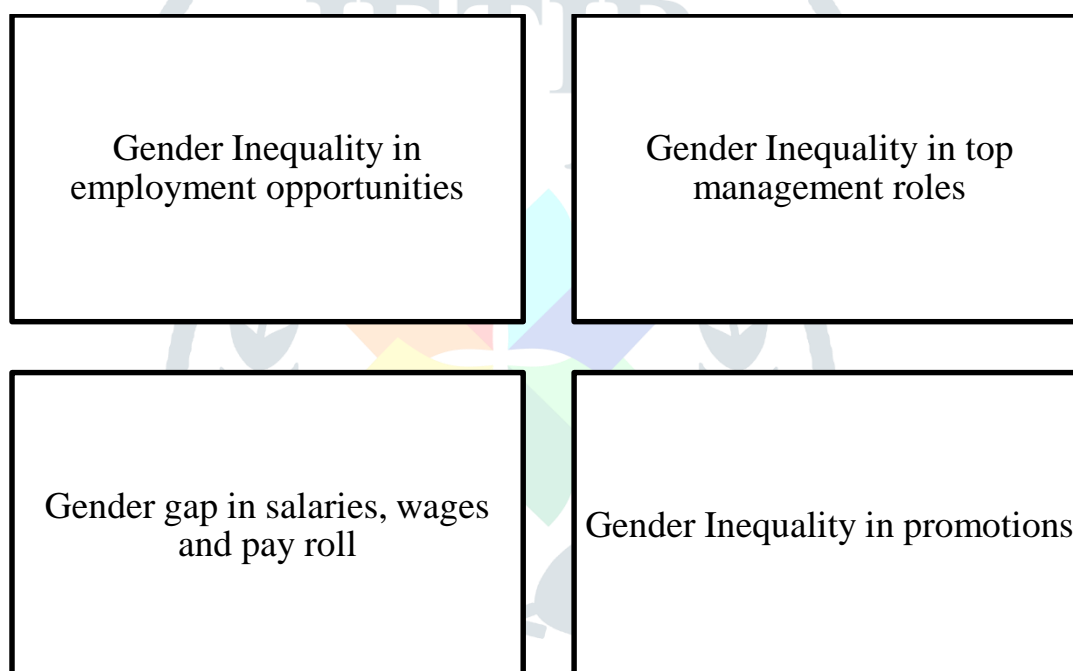
The research data obtained for the present research is secondary in nature. The said data has been obtained from a variety of sources. Empirical evidences established by pre-existing research studies have been employed for determining the proportion of gender inequality. Reports of UNDP and NSSO were referred to for ascertaining different aspects of gender gap in India. Survey was conducted amongst 250 companies. Companies selected reflected 65% from service sector and 30% from manufacturing sector and 5% from other allied industry. 68% of the companies surveyed comprised of large cap conglomerates and listed companies while 32% represented Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (“**MSME**”). Therefore the research data reflected a balanced view about the business entities in India. Research questionnaire comprising of 20 questions was floated amongst the employees of the aforementioned companies. Initially questionnaire was floated amongst test sample, based upon the replies received suitable adjustments were

³ UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update

made and thereafter surveyed at population wide level. Total sample size constituted 2,427 personnel representing 59% males and 41% females. Average work experience of the sample lot was 25 years. From management levels perspective, sample lot represented 68% personnel from top level management, 19% from middle level management and 13% from lower level management thereby representing decent diversity of workforce. 65% of the companies surveyed exhibited employment of around 4% women executives at the highest management level. 5% of the companies surveyed (most valuable companies forming part of the BSE Sensex) have recruited around 30% of entire workforce as women employees. Wide disparity has been observed in organizational policies relating to women employees in terms of number of employees, attrition rate of women employees, provision for maternity benefits etc.

V. Aspects of gender inequality at workplace in India

Gender discrimination may have been imbued in the foundational roots of the HR policies. The entire process from selection to performance appraisal may get affected from a preconceived biasness. The personnel policies directly affect the monetary and non-monetary benefits associated with the job outcomes. Gender inequality has been afflicting the real growth rate of India massively. Inequality in gender balance has been classified broadly into below mentioned four categories:



Gender inequality in employment opportunities and job prospects

Equality in employment opportunities can be categorized into employment in urban areas and employment in rural areas. Furthermore employment by large scale business corporates or MSME sector also determines the level of parity amongst the employees. The general observation about recruitment by the corporate sector (operating mostly in the urbanized area) is that the appointment and selection criterion has been modeled on merit basis and is not affected by gender bias. The medium and small entities in the urban areas have yielded a mixed response in providing equal job opportunity to female candidates. Amongst the medium and small companies surveyed, 18% entities had adopted absolutely unfair selection criteria while 32% have no female colleagues at top and middle level management. The kind of work required by micro level entities (both in urban and rural area) is predominantly suitable for male workforce. The same is the case of medium and small enterprises operating in the rural area. Most of the jobs generated by these organizations are in the nature of support services, labor services or other unskilled work in which male

candidates seems to be more appropriate. Quantitatively⁴, female workforce account for 27.20% of the entire labor workforce while 78.80% being served by male workforce.

Occupational disparities have been noted entailing different quantum of gender inequality per specific industry. For instance, the on-deck cabin crew of the aviation sector predominantly requires more female staff more than the male staffs while the ground crew and the pilot jobs have been demanding male staff majorly. The teaching sector has historically required higher female representation than the number of male educators while the private coaching business has provided equal opportunity for employment of both male and female instructors. Secretarial work in offices and corporates is designated to the female staff as opposed to the male managerial staff.

Gender inequality in top management roles

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 has explicitly mentioned that the disparity in deploying vital functional responsibility to women executives is the key aspect for non-empowerment of women. Active women representation in corporate sector was not witnessed till late 1970's. With the stabilization of world economies, rising integration between the eastern and the western hemisphere and the forthcoming of the Multi National Company ("MNC") era, modern philosophies infusing within the organization values, organizations initiated for gender equivalence. With the second decade of 21st century about to pass, it can be established with absolute certainty that societal status of women has immensely improved however male chauvinism, male dominance and gender preference are yet to be overhauled within the work environment.

Profound instillation of gender balancing policies are possible only through firm commitment from the top management and the leadership. Therefore the leadership must itself express equality and provide equivalent opportunities with no discrimination on gender basis. However merely 7% of leadership responsibilities of Indian business enterprises are presently being handled by women. Furthermore operational work allotted to women is highly skewed with the role of HR being assigned to women majorly. Around 42% of Indian graduates are women however only 24% of the female graduates become fresh professionals. Such low participation of women in Indian corporate sector needs when compared with the global scenario provides inexplicable results. For instance the United States of America ("USA") demonstrated a rise of 78% in companies owned by women between 1987 to 1996. Presently, women owned corporations account for 33% of all business entities in USA employing nearly a quarter of the country's workforce⁵.

Gender inequality in salary, wages and pay roll

In the Indian industry, the Gender Pay Gap ("GPG") has indicted unfavorable figures for the women staff. Prior to 2009, the gap stood at a whopping high of 67%. With focused and continuous efforts, after nine years the gap has been reduced to around 20%. This implies that presently the Indian women staff is earning 20% less than the male counterpart which is substantial. The average per hour wages of female workers amount to Rs. 184.80 while that of the male workers amount to Rs. 231⁶. Furthermore around five years of experience provides 30% higher returns to men workers while upto ten years of work experience provides 49% higher return than the women staff as shown below:

⁴ UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau Report (1996) Facts on Women's Owned Businesses

⁶ Monster Salary Index (Full Report), 2018

Table I: Work Experience effect over GPG*(Median pay amount expressed in per hour INR)*

Years of Work Experience	% Pay gap in female wages	Male	Female
25 years – 30 years	6.64	288.89	270.90
20 years – 25 years	20.81	311.81	258.10
15 years – 20 years	50.81	335.77	222.65
10 years – 15 years	35.31	333.26	246.30
5 years – 10 years	48.83	277.86	186.70
< 5 years	29.01	154.87	120.05

(Source: Women and Men in India – 2017, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Indian Labor Market and Position of Women: Gender Pay Gap in the Indian Formal Sector)

Huge pay gap disparity exists amongst different states of India. Pay gap may be existing because of variety of reasons such as differences in education patterns, ability to take risks in performing a project, difference in mental IQ. One of the primary reasons for pay gap may be understood when analyzing the gender pay gap index on age wise basis. There exists low GPG for population under 30 years of age and above 60 years. While huge disparity exists for population within the age bracket of 30 to 60 years. Indian women being in the age bracket of 30 to 60 years associate themselves with various household work, family balancing or other non-commercial work which does not generates any direct income, while men seems to be working actively during this age period. Therefore the GPG gap should not be construed as completely imbalanced. Nevertheless the gender pay gap pre-exists in the Indian industrial scenario and requires prompt actions for immediate reduction.

For ensuring equivalent remuneration policy, the legislature enacted the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and framed rules thereunder. The said law mandates certain prescribed organizations to ensure fair treatment of all the employees without any biasness, further ensuring that no gender based discrimination occurs while ascertaining pay-roll, trainings, and job related benefits for employees at the same designation with similar set of skills.

Gender inequality in promotions

Corporates managed by professional board have laid down explicit criteria for gender unbiased selection in the entire management chain. However promoter owned companies particularly the family run enterprises have been observed to be reluctant in providing top management position to women staff. Out of the promoter owned companies surveyed, 77% have responded the appointment of women staff at executive board merely because of the statue requirement. In family owned businesses the legal requirement of hiring women directors are being served by appointing female family members thereby depriving growth opportunity for talented women outside the family.

VI. Methodologies for protection and promotion of interests of women employees at the workplace in India

The implementation and monitoring of gender equality at workplace in India can be categorized into two aspects. Firstly voluntary cognizance of the need of gender balancing HR policy and secondly mandatory policies as obligated by the statute. Voluntary acceptance of moral responsibility towards the employees can be multi-faceted. The organizations may adopt a combination of multiple policies and programs. The foremost policy that must be implemented is the removal of gender pay gap. By introduction of transparent payroll policies, provision for salary calculators, pay slips and pay brackets may also be disclosed for every specific designation. The work to life balance maintenance is the next important reform to be implemented. Employees have to manage the household operations along with office requirements. Female employees have been seen to be more burdened with household work than the male employees. Therefore suitable adjustments can be made in the work culture for the women employees such as flexible work timings, provision for family leaves, no salary deduction for occasional short working hours. Provision for paternal leaves to male employees and maternity benefits to female staff also provides much needed job satisfaction. Organizations may draft a well documented promotion and transfer policy. Complete transparency in promotion process avoids rumors and reports of prejudice and preferentialism. Specific HR department personnel must ensure that the organizations policies are being implemented with the same intent with which they were drafted.

It is an established fact that while suo - moto initiative can work wonders, it is seen to have been adopted by a very few conglomerates. Catering the interests of the larger community, legal regulations have been framed prescribing the requirement of maintaining gender equivalence. The Companies Act, 2013 has mandated all the listed companies and other prescribed companies to ensure that their Board of Directors comprises of at least one woman as a director. Further the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 provides a statutory firewall for protection of women interests at different kinds of workplace.

At the workplace, overhauling may be made to the entire business channel. An organization derives its values from the culture and attitude of the employees. Therefore organizations culture has to be instilled with gender unbiased work practices and policies. Regular training sessions, periodical top to middle and middle to bottom level management interactions, study tours may be conducted for ascertaining the progress of gender equivalence policy. Dedicated women assistance department may be established in large scale enterprises, while separate HR personnel may be assigned the responsibility for handling women related complaints. Zero Tolerance Policy may be adapted by the organization for swift redressal of women employees complaints.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 as discussed above lays down detailed provisions for eliminating the gender based discrimination. The said law absolutely prohibits any kind of discrimination in recruitment procedure, pay roll determination and daily work routine. Such legal requirements need to be strictly adhered to by the organizations to avoid noncompliance penalties and fines thereby protecting the women interests at the workplace.

Innumerable measures have been taken by the legislature and the executive in our country for ensuring equality for women in India. Gender equality has been guaranteed as a fundamental right by the Constitution of India. In case violation of fundamental rights, the citizens can appeal to the Supreme Court or the jurisdictional High Court. Reservation of seats for women in Parliament, in government undertakings are steps towards women empowerment taken by the Government of India.

VII. Conclusion

There persists considerable gender disparity within the Indian contexts of educational levels, health status, job and business prospects. The preconceived notion about men being better performers at superior position is still plaguing the society and even the corporate environment. While the progress of becoming a complete gender equivalent global workplace have been progressing at a slow pace, the incessant monomaniacal word wide efforts have provided significant positive results. The quantum of female representation has substantially improved over the years as shown:

Table II: Female representation

Particulars	2018	2017	2016	2015
% global entities with woman in top management function	75	66	67	68

Under 4 years the number of global entities not having a single woman executive has reduced by 7% which represents a significant amount considering the number of business entities. Under the predominated Indian patriarchal society, the rights of women have been discussed quite often. Despite of the multiple action steps initiated, gender inequality at workplace has not been targeted fully. Majority of the women executives are not able to reach the zenith of the corporate ladder not because of the lack of talent and professional expertise but due to the biasness prevailing in the organization. An all-inclusive cohesive approach needs to be developed directing about an understanding of the issues, the importance of gender equality, the relationship between gender inequality and human development detailing out an active methodology providing a comprehensive solution framed in the Indian context.

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