

From Equality to Equity: Advancing Quality of Work Life for Men and Women through Inclusive, Gender-Sensitive HR Practices and Supportive Workplace Culture

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ABSTRACT

Organizational structures, procedures, and practices all exhibit the complex problem of gender disparity. Human resources (HR) procedures perpetuate some of the most detrimental gender disparities for women. This is due to the fact that hiring, training, compensation, and advancement of women are impacted by HR practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and their implementation). We offer a model of gender discrimination in HR that highlights how gender inequality in firms is a reciprocal phenomenon. By putting in place inclusive policies, encouraging gender-neutral hiring practices, and providing training programs that increase awareness of unconscious bias, human resources (HR) plays a critical role in eliminating these inequities. HR's contribution to closing the gender gap through tactics like leadership training, equal pay programs, mentoring, and encouraging work environments. Although there has been progress, issues like unconscious bias and reluctance to change still exist, necessitating ongoing work to create a truly inclusive and fair atmosphere.

KEYWORDS: *Equality to Equity, Gender, Equality, Equity, HR, Work Life (WL), Gender-Sensitive, Workplace Culture*

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INTRODUCTION

In a time of swift technology development and ever-changing international marketplaces, innovation is essential to business success and economic expansion. A key factor in determining an organization's capacity for innovation is its capacity to cultivate an inclusive and diverse culture. Gender equality is one of the many aspects of inclusion that has become crucial in determining how businesses innovate [1]. Equal employment chances and gender pay equity are two examples of gender equality HR policies that have attracted a lot of attention because they have the potential to both address historical inequalities and foster a diverse workforce's creative potential. It is urgent and necessary to investigate the

relationship between gender equality policies and innovation, especially as it relates to the level of research and development (R&D).

Gender equality

All employees, regardless of gender, must be given equal opportunities to grow and thrive in their positions for a company to have gender equality. Equal access to chances for professional growth, equitable compensation, and a workplace free from bias, discrimination, and harassment are all components of gender equality. By eliminating gender-based obstacles, prejudices, and gender stereotypes, gender equality ensures that everyone has

equal access to resources and opportunity for success in both the workplace and society. [2]

Benefits of gender equality

- Increased business performance
Businesses that support gender equality in their workforce will perform better financially than those with less diversity, according to research.
- Enhancing innovation
Gender equality in the workplace encourages and boosts innovation by bringing a variety of viewpoints and thoughts.
- Better workplace culture
When there is gender equality in the workplace, employee satisfaction and morale will increase, resulting in a welcoming and upbeat culture that celebrates both genders.
- Diversified workforce
A diverse and inclusive workforce will continue to draw and keep a wide range of workers. This offers other advantages, such as a deeper comprehension of varied clientele and new viewpoints.

Four key points to promote gender equality in our hiring practices and workplace culture.

- Focus your hiring process on diversity: Assemble diverse interview committees, use gender-diverse candidate pipelines, write inclusive and unbiased job descriptions, and conduct fair and impartial interviews to create a varied and equitable workplace.
- Examine and promote equity in promotions and succession planning: A key component of efficient personnel management is succession planning. By encouraging each employee's visibility and development, you may prevent gender prejudice in promotional methods. Establish clear career routes, make sure training opportunities are distributed fairly, and inform staff members of their options.
- Use equitable incentives and recognition procedures: Employee appreciation shows that workers' efforts are appreciated and acknowledged while also thanking them for their contributions. Fair recognition procedures guarantee that every worker has the chance to get

a fair reward; they also build relationships with managers and foster peer respect. [3]

- Encourage women to find mentors.
Because the mentor develops leadership abilities via interactions with the mentee, mentoring frequently benefits both the mentor and the mentee. According to the study, mentors perceived themselves as leaders more when they offered mentoring support. They also became more assured of their capacity for leadership. Encouraging women to serve as mentors improves their confidence, leadership abilities, and ability to advance gender equality in the workplace.

Gender equity

The process of treating men and women equally is known as gender equality. Strategies and methods to make up for women's historical and societal disadvantages that keep men and women from functioning on an even playing field must frequently be available in order to preserve fairness. Equality follows equity. For there to be gender equality, women and men must be able to enjoy socially valued opportunities, resources, rewards, and products on an equal basis. When there is gender inequality, women are typically left out or at a disadvantage when it comes to making decisions and having access to social and financial resources. [4] Women's empowerment, with an emphasis on recognizing and correcting power disparities and granting women greater freedom to steer their own lives, is therefore a crucial component of advancing gender equality. Gender equality does not imply that men and women become the same; rather, it means that their sex does not determine or limit their access to opportunities and life changes. In order for men and women to fully participate as equal partners in productive and reproductive life, women must be empowered to ensure that resources and private and public decision-making are no longer skewed in favor of men.

We may better understand the processes that cause, spread, and lessen gender disparities by integrating the findings from our evaluation of the literature on gender inequities across organizational domains and practices across the employee lifecycle. We have inductively developed a Model of Cumulative Gender Inequities in the Workplace to demonstrate these findings.

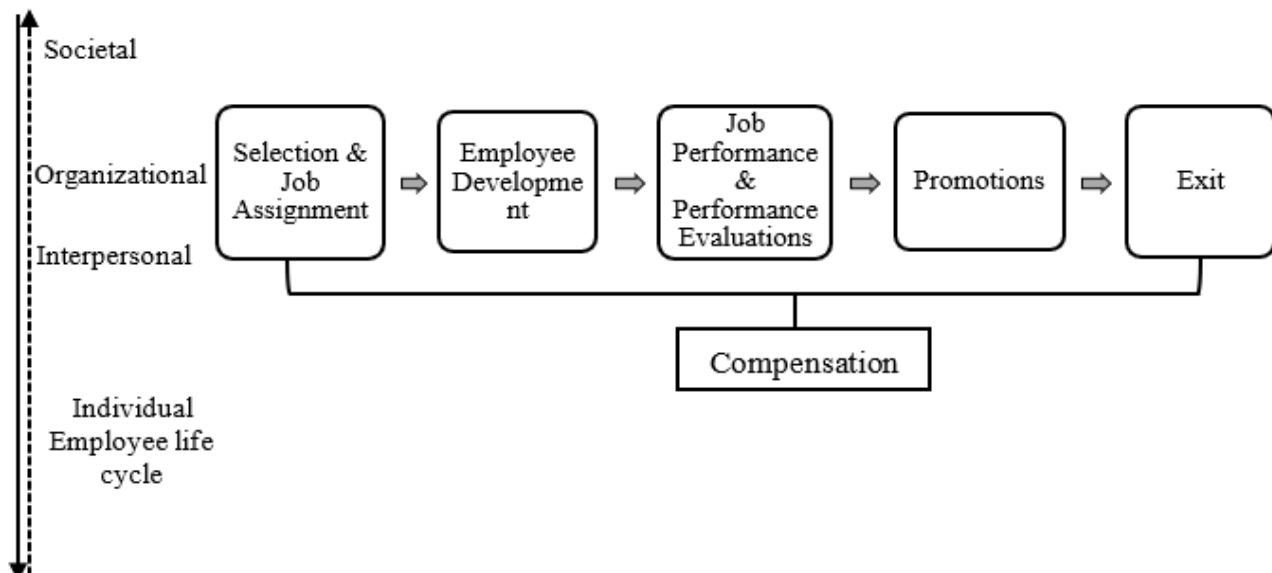


Fig. 1 Gender Inequities in the Workplace

Source: (Leanne S. Son Hing, Nouran Sakr, Jessica B. Sorenson, Cailin S. Stamarski, Kiah Caniera, Caren Colaco, *Gender inequities in the workplace: A holistic review of organizational processes and practices*, *Human Resource Management Review*, Volume 33, Issue 3, 2023, 100968, ISSN 1053-4822, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2023.100968>, (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053482223000190>))

Role of HR

By creating and putting into practice methods that address inequities and promote inclusive practices, human resources (HR) departments play a crucial role in advancing gender equality in the workplace. HR has a special chance to mold organizational culture and impact leadership and employee behavior in ways that advance gender equity since it is the main department in charge of hiring, policy-making, training, and employee engagement. By making gender equality a top priority, HR can make sure that businesses not only follow the law but also set an example for creating inclusive and varied workplaces. Through hiring and recruitment procedures, HR may advance gender equality. [5] Gender biases have always pervaded hiring procedures, whether through hiring managers' preferences for candidates of a certain gender or job specifications that unintentionally favor male applicants. By making sure that job postings are gender-neutral and educating recruiters to assess applicants on the basis of their abilities, experience, and potential rather than gender-based preconceptions, HR can combat these prejudices. HR departments are well-positioned to offer gender sensitivity training that informs staff members about gender stereotypes, unconscious bias, and inclusive conduct. HR may lessen prejudice in routine encounters like performance reviews, project assignments, and team dynamics by creating an atmosphere where workers recognize the value of gender equality. HR is also in charge of making sure that rules and guidelines are in place to eliminate harassment and discrimination while encouraging equity in all facets of employment. These guidelines ought to be unambiguous, open, and uniformly applied throughout the company. HR can endeavor to develop flexible work arrangements, such as maternity leave, remote work choices, and childcare help, that assist employees with family commitments, which disproportionately impact women. [6] By offering the resources required for every employee to succeed, these policies not only aid in striking a balance between work and personal life but also show an organization's dedication to gender equality.

Objectives

- To study gender equality and equity
- To study benefits of gender equality
- To study role of HR
- To study steps women gender equity
- To study work percentage of gender
- To study job satisfaction key points

Review of Literature

The focus of Clarke's (2011) [7] contribution was on female managers who possess good leadership abilities. In order to improve beneficial aspects of a professional pathway and encourage vertical de-segregation, the author outlined a pathway that included a variety of activities like coaching, workshops, and case studies. Soft skills,

emotional intelligence, personal attitudes, and noncognitive skills have also been the subject of some studies (Tomo et al. 2022[8]; Cicellin et al. 2015[9]). These findings may serve as the foundation for future research on the environment, family, and education—factors that might impact and mold women's soft skills. According to Marcenaro-Gutierrez et al. (2021), these studies can offer strategies, perspectives, and policy combinations that can enhance management's capacity to handle diversity through an inclusive and long-lasting corporate culture. [10].

According to a study by Faisal (2010) [11], women are generally unhappy with how well work-life balance and work-life conflict policies are working. Because fewer women hold senior positions as a result of this discontent, this resulted in an impact known as "horizontal hostility" (Huse and Seierstad 2013[12]). Faisal (2010) identified four strategic actions to lessen the issue: developing guidelines for the development of gender equity policies and actions that are not general or universal because they take into account the characteristics of various organizational types; promoting career opportunities and encouraging women; providing professional development pathways to reduce biases and increase gender awareness; and supporting women's professionalization.

Policies govern HR initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion. For example, selection denotes the process of determining the most suitable candidate based on qualifications and related competencies known as "Person-Job Fit" (Chuang et al., 2016), while recruitment refers to the process of identifying candidates who are suitable for a position while encouraging diverse candidates to apply for a particular position (Chidi, 2013) [13]. [14]

Gender diversity has been one of the most significant factors influencing the intellectual capital of firms in the modern period due to the active participation of women in the labor market. Many companies are implementing gender equality HR policies, such as paid maternal leave, equal employment chances for both sexes, and pay equity between male and female employees, in an effort to draw and keep brilliant women. After giving delivery, new mothers are entitled to paid time off with full or partial salary continuance, which is known as paid maternal leave. Equal employment opportunities are one aspect of affirmative action that guarantees equal access to jobs, promotions, and career advancement for both genders. Equal pay for comparable work, regardless of gender, is referred to as pay equity. [15]

Hiring, pay and wages, promotions, training and development, employee retention, and the unequal access to facilities for different genders are just a few of the ways that gender discrimination can appear. Businesses that discriminate against female employees because they lack gender awareness and orientation and the impact this has on their performance will find this research useful. From hiring to retirement, fair HRM practices must be used for the whole of an employee's career (Elsawy & Elbadawi, 2021). [16]

According to Petersion and Theea (2006) [17], the relationship between the individual and the organization appears to be the least strong visible component of the hiring process. Employing managers are well aware of and able to spot gender bias in hiring. They make good use of their time and weigh all the advantages and disadvantages before choosing a guy or woman. What consequences result from gender-based discrimination? They engage in quantitative research (Petersion & Theea, 2006).

Although gender discrimination was brought to light in the 1950s, it wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s that it was considered the most important issue. Women's interests were given priority in that establishment, which would have been dominated by men. Pay, promotion, involvement, and judgment calls are just a few of the areas of administration where gender prejudice manifests itself. Unsuitable challenges and issues based on gender affect a large percentage of employees. Consequently, this study attempts to explore the factors that lead to gender discrimination in the workplace (Abbas et al., 2011; Channar et al., 2011). [18]

An employee or worker cannot do the tasks assigned to him without a work tool. The better the working conditions, the better the level of employee performance. An employee's work, regardless of the outcomes, whether correctly or incorrectly perceived, or the high and low impacts of one's labor, can be characterized as performance. A comfortable workplace allows employees to do their jobs more efficiently. Work facilities are tangible items and spaces that facilitate business operations and are utilized in regular business operations. They offer advantages in the future and have a comparatively long functional life. In 2018, Daraba et al. [19]

Employee performance is directly impacted by the promotion variable, following Gilmore's research from 2022 [20]. Employee development programs that boost performance solely for the firm to offer them a "reward," usually a promotion, can help people grow professionally. It is therefore anticipated that workers and organizations will gain from one another and accomplish the set goals (Gilmore, 2022).

Research Methodology

One strategy for methodically resolving the research challenge is research methodology. It could be viewed as a science that studies scientific research methods. In it, we examine the many approaches that a researcher typically takes to investigate his research problem and the reasoning behind them. The researcher must be familiar with both the methodology and the research methods/techniques. Based on previous research from scholarly journals, annual reports, newspapers, and magazines that covered a broad range of academic literature, the researchers employed an exploratory research approach.

Result and Discussion

Gender equity in HRM is essential for boosting business success, promoting employee well-being, and attaining social justice. The steps from equity to equality are shown in Fig 1. The scholarly environment of gender equity and HRM can be systematically evaluated by bibliometric analysis, which allows researchers to find significant trends, fundamental work, and new research avenues. This study intends to enhance knowledge of gender dynamics in HRM practices by reviewing and analyzing a number of articles, with an emphasis on revealing fresh viewpoints and insights. [21]

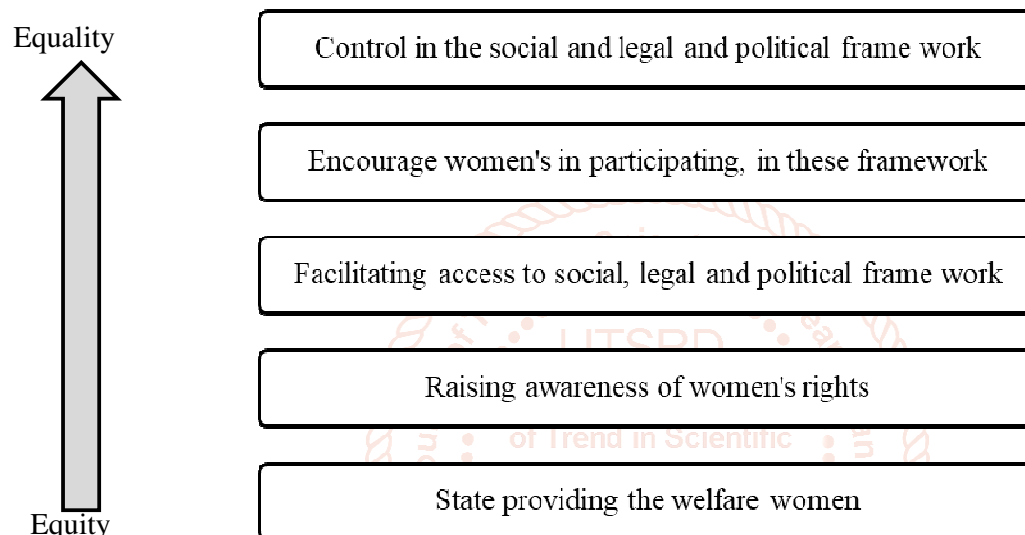


Fig. 2 Women gender equity steps

Source: (Jabeen, G., Goli, G., Kafila et al. A bibliometric review on gender equity in human resource management. *Futur Bus J* 10, 101 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-024-for 00381-x>)

In today's workplaces, women put in 10% more effort than males. Two more statistics add up to this conclusion. First, over 66% of the labor that is assigned to them is actually finished by both men and women. Nonetheless, women are currently given 10% more work than males; the fact that they complete it at the same rate indicates that they are working harder.

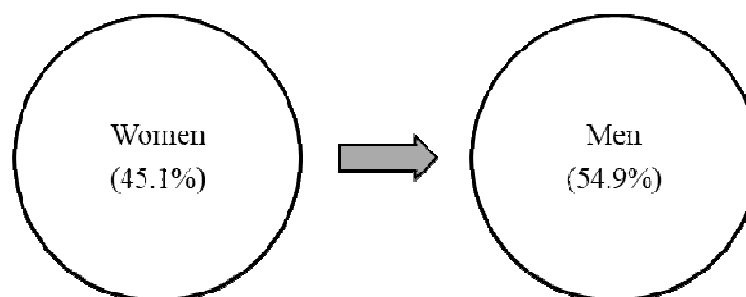


Fig. 3 Work percentage of gender

Source: (<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/10/women-are-more-productive-than-men-at-work-these-days/>)

Women are given more tasks overall (54.9%), and they are responsible for 10% more actions that are performed across all workspaces. [22]

Every individual has different priorities when it comes to work-life balance (WLB) and job satisfaction (JS). Two clusters were found using Ward's method: high-level and low-level WLB groups. Higher JS and stronger support across all components were reported by workers in the high-level group (Figure 2). Figure 2 shows that

family care and personal life expectations received the highest overall scores, confirming Padma and Reddy's (2013) findings.

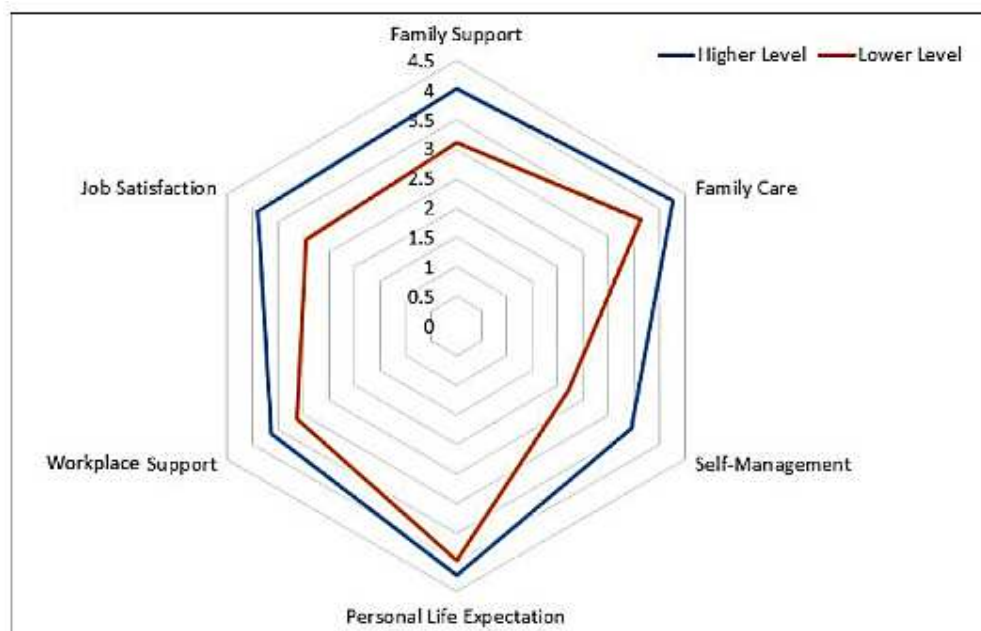


Fig. 4 Higher and Lower Levels of WLB Groups

Source: (Shah, C., Raval, A., Bhatia, M., & Thanki, S. (2025). *Work-Life Balance Among Working Women: A Study with Reference to Service Industry*. *NMIMS Management Review*, 33(1), 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09711023251321667> (Original work published 2025))

Assuming that every employee in an organization has the same set of needs, Fig. 3 depicts the conceptual framework for the study. This gives managers the chance to create work-life plans that will motivate employees and affect job satisfaction. The four main factors that determine the quality of work-life balance are emotional well-being, personal growth, work-life balance, and safety in the workplace.

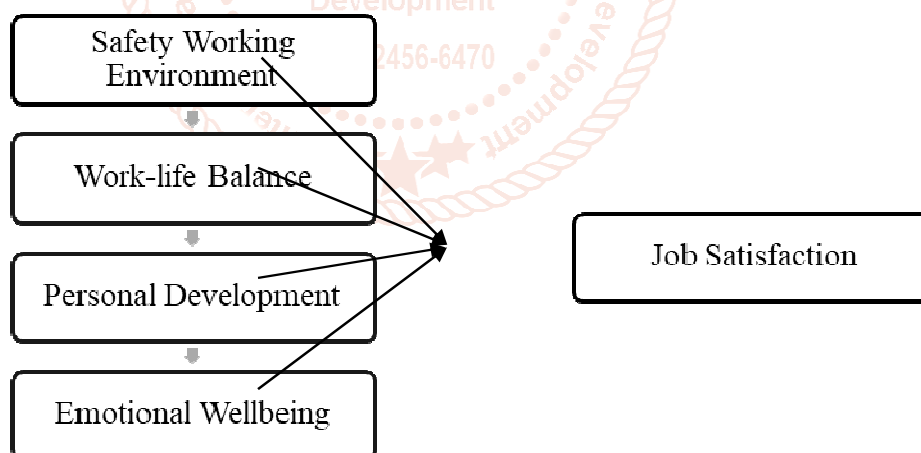


Fig.5 Job Satisfaction Key Points

Source: (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43621-023-00127-9>)

According to the conceptual framework, the four constructs have a major influence and are positively connected with the behaviors associated with job satisfaction. Therefore, in order to get a high quality of work-life balance, management must invest time and resources in putting policies in place that are intended to increase employee job satisfaction and lessen the negative effects of a low quality of work-life balance at work.

Conclusion

The recruiting, training, compensation, and advancement of women are all impacted by the complex phenomena of gender disparity in businesses, which is evident in HR practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and their implementation).

We suggest that gender inequality in broader organizational structures, processes, and practices—including HR policy but also leadership, structure, strategy, culture, and organizational climate—is the root cause of gender discrimination in HR-related decision-making and the implementation of HR

policies. Furthermore, discriminatory HR policies should have reciprocal impacts, meaning that they can sustain gender disparities in corporate leadership, structure, strategy, culture, and climate. In order to close the gender gap, HR departments are essential. HR may significantly advance the goal of gender equality by implementing tactics including leadership development, equal pay programs, mentorship programs, and inclusive workplace regulations. Workplaces will become more inclusive and equitable for all employees, regardless of gender, as the future of work develops thanks to ongoing efforts to incorporate gender equality into corporate culture, which are aided by technological advancements and international movements.

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