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Bridging the Divide: Exploring Gender Equity in the Indian Workplace

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Abstract:

This abstract provides an overview of a research paper aimed at investigating the current landscape of gender equity in Indian workplaces. Drawing upon a combination of qualitative survey and data analysis, this study examines the systemic challenges, cultural factors, and policy frameworks that shape gender dynamics in Indian organizations.

It explores the prevalence of gender-based discrimination, unequal opportunities, and biases faced by women in recruitment, promotion, and leadership positions. Furthermore, the research investigates organizational practices and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equity, such as diversity training, flexible work arrangements, and mentorship programs. By critically analysing the effectiveness of existing interventions and identifying barriers to progress, this study aims to provide insights and recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace environment in India.

Keywords: gender equity, workforce diversity, gender discrimination, gender dynamics

Introduction:

The narrative of gender equality in India is as intricate and multifaceted as the nation itself, woven into the fabric of its societal norms, historical legacies, and economic dynamics. As the country strides forward on its journey of progress and modernization, the imperative to bridge the gender divide in the workplace has emerged as a pivotal focal point, resonating across boardrooms, policy chambers, and grassroots movements alike.

This exploration endeavours to delve into the nuanced layers of gender equity within the Indian workplace landscape. It aims not only to dissect the prevailing challenges and disparities but also to illuminate the pathways towards fostering inclusivity, empowerment, and parity. By navigating through the complexities of cultural paradigms, organizational structures, and systemic biases, we endeavour to uncover the untapped potential and transformative possibilities that lie

within the realm of gender equality.

India stands at a crossroads, poised between tradition and transformation, where the forces of globalization, technology, and social awakening converge to shape its future trajectory. In this pivotal moment, the imperative to harness the talent, creativity, and aspirations of all its citizens—irrespective of gender—has never been more pressing. The journey towards gender equity in the workplace is not merely a moral obligation but a strategic imperative for unleashing India's full economic and social potential. Through rigorous inquiry, introspection, and dialogue, we aspire to contribute to the collective understanding and catalyse actionable pathways towards a more inclusive, equitable, and vibrant workplace landscape in India.

As we embark on this expedition, let us heed the call to transcend boundaries, challenge conventions, and pave the way for a future where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive, contribute, and lead with dignity and purpose.

Research Objective:

- To raise awareness and promote dialogue on the importance of gender equity in Indian workplaces and its implications for social justice, economic development, and organizational performance.
- To contribute to the existing body of knowledge on gender equity in the workplace and provide insights and evidence-based solutions for promoting inclusive and equitable work environments in India.
- To assess the challenges and barriers to achieving gender equity in Indian workplaces, including resistance to cultural change, lack of enforcement of existing laws, and the need for intersectional approaches.

Issues Related To Gender Equity At Indian Workplace:

- ❖ **Gender Pay Gap:**-Despite advancements, a significant pay gap persists between men and women in India.ⁱ Studies have consistently shown that women earn less than their male counterparts for similar work, reflecting deep-rooted gender biases in salary negotiations, promotions, and performance evaluations.
- ❖ **Glass Ceiling:** -A pervasive "glass ceiling" phenomenon obstructs the upward mobility of women in the workplace.ⁱⁱ Structural barriers such as limited access to networking opportunities, exclusion from decision-making processes, and stereotypical perceptions of leadership capabilities hinder women's advancement to top-tier positions.
- ❖ **Workplace Discrimination and Harassment:**-Gender-based discrimination and harassment persist in Indian workplaces, creating hostile environments that undermine women's sense of safety, dignity, and professional well-being. Instances of sexual harassment, gender-based

bullying, and discriminatory practices remain prevalent, despite legislative measures such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.ⁱⁱⁱ

- ❖ **Work-Life Balance Challenges:**-Traditional gender roles often place disproportionate caregiving responsibilities on women, increasing work-life balance challenges. Limited access to flexible work arrangements, inadequate support systems for childcare, and societal expectations regarding women's domestic roles contribute to their struggle to reconcile professional aspirations with familial obligations.^{iv}
- ❖ **Lack of Gender-inclusive Policies:** -Many organizations in India lack comprehensive gender-inclusive policies and practices that address the specific needs and concerns of women employees. Absence of measures such as parental leave, childcare support, and gender-neutral recruitment processes further perpetuate inequalities in the workplace.^v
- ❖ **Socio-Cultural Norms and Stereotypes:** -Deep-seated socio-cultural norms and stereotypes perpetuate gender biases in hiring, promotion, and performance evaluations. Prevalent stereotypes regarding women's capabilities, preferences, and leadership styles often lead to their undervaluation and marginalization in the workplace.
- ❖ **Limited Access to Education and Skill Development:** -Disparities in access to education and skill development opportunities continue to hinder women's participation and advancement in the workforce.^{vi} Economic barriers, social norms, and systemic biases often restrict women's access to quality education and training, limiting their employment prospects and career growth.

Literature Review:

Research indicates that despite significant progress in women's educational attainment and workforce participation in India, gender disparities persist across various dimensions of employment. Studies have highlighted lower levels of women's representation in leadership positions, disparities in pay and promotions, and occupational segregation by gender (Desai & Joshi, 2013). Cultural norms and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping gender dynamics within Indian workplaces. Traditional gender roles, patriarchal attitudes, and stereotypes about women's capabilities often hinder women's career advancement and contribute to a hostile work environment (Budhwar, 2014; Gupta & Sharma, 2018).

Organizational policies and practices also influence gender equity outcomes. Research suggests that the lack of family-friendly policies, rigid work cultures, and unconscious biases in recruitment and performance evaluation processes contribute to the perpetuation of gender disparities (Singh & Jain, 2018) Intersectionality, which considers how various dimensions of identity intersect

and shape individuals' experiences, is critical in understanding gender equity in the Indian workplace. Studies have highlighted the compounded effects of gender, caste, class, religion, and other intersecting identities on employment opportunities and outcomes.

Organizations in India have increasingly adopted gender diversity initiatives to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity. These initiatives include mentorship programs, leadership development initiatives for women, unconscious bias training, and the implementation of flexible work arrangements (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Government policies and the legal framework also play a crucial role in shaping gender equity in the Indian workplace. Legislation such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, and maternity benefit provisions have sought to provide legal protections and support for women in the workforce (Pandey & Gupta, 2019). Despite efforts to promote gender equity, several challenges persist, including the lack of enforcement of existing laws, resistance to cultural change, and the need for intersectional approaches that address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups. Future research should focus on exploring innovative interventions, measuring the effectiveness of existing initiatives, and advocating for policy reforms to advance gender equity in Indian workplaces (Bhatnagar & Mishra, 2020).

Analysis and Interpretation:

Data has been collected from the 64 female employees on random sampling method from the private organisations from the different age groups in the Mumbai region.

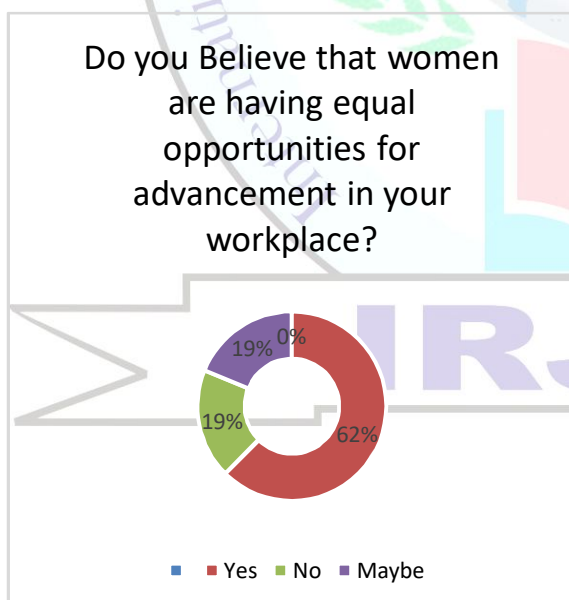


Fig. 1.1

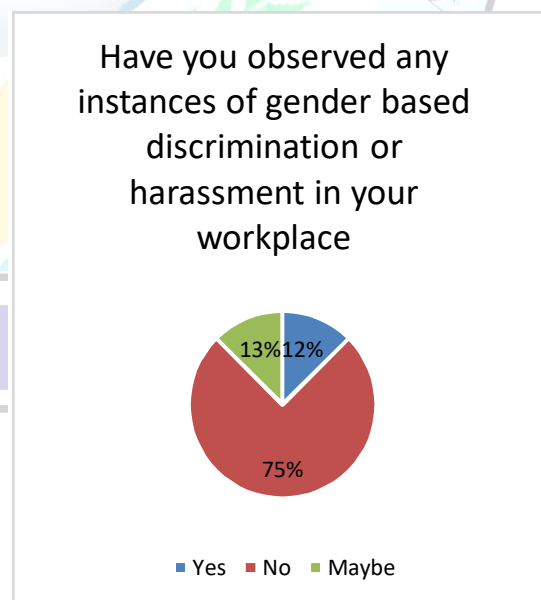


Fig. 1.2

In the fig. 1.1, 63 % of the respondents agree that they are having the equal opportunities for the promotions in their organisation when 19% of respondents do not agree that there are equal opportunities for them. This clearly shows that organisations are making progress on the part of

creating opportunities for the female employees at the workplace.

In the fig. 1.2, 75% of the respondents have not observed gender-based discrimination or harassment at the workplace. Only 12% of the respondents have observed this issue at their workplace. As respondents are from the metropolitan city i.e. Mumbai, discrimination at workplace is less.

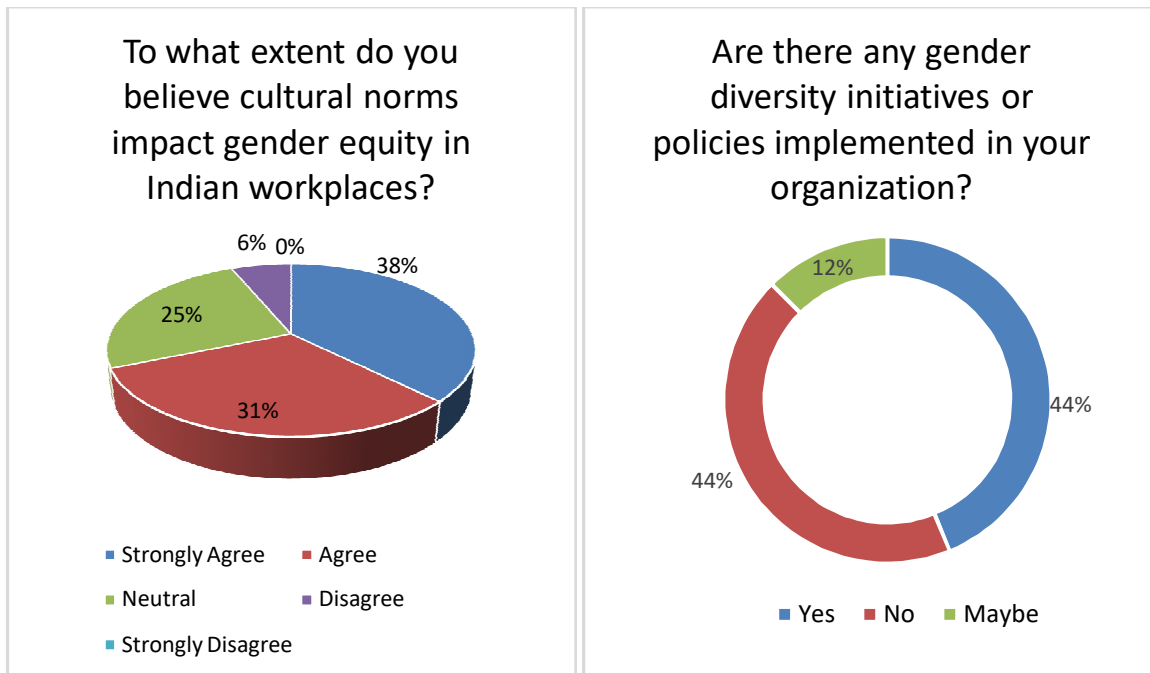


Fig. 1.3

Fig. 1.4

In the fig.1.3, 38% of the respondents strongly agree and 31% of the respondents agree that cultural norms have the impact on gender equity in Indian workplaces. Gender equity depends on the cultural values of the people, stereotype or traditional thinking can create more negative impact on gender disparity.

As per fig. 1.4, 44% of the respondents are having gender diversity initiatives or policies implemented in their organisation and 44% of the respondents are not having gender diversity initiatives or policies implemented in their organisation. It shows that many companies in Mumbai are still not implementing the policies related to the gender diversity. There are not even taking initiatives to create the awareness about gender diversity.

In Fig. 1.5, 81% of the respondents strongly agree that one should raise the awareness and promote dialogue on gender equity in Indian workplace. Maximum respondents are showing concern that proper facilities and policies are still needed to be implemented to voice out this issue.

As per fig.1.6, 44% of the respondents agree that promotion of gender equity will be very effective when 37% of the respondents find it somewhat effective at their workplace. Initiative will help many female workers to have successful career and meaningful life.

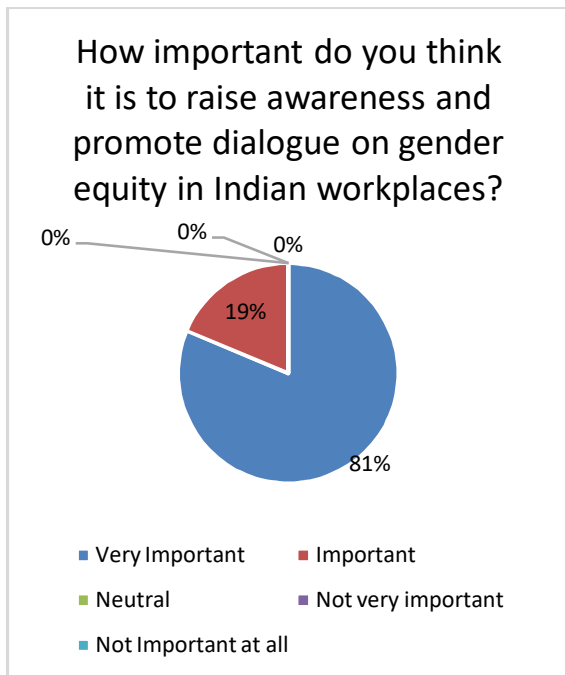


Fig. 1.5

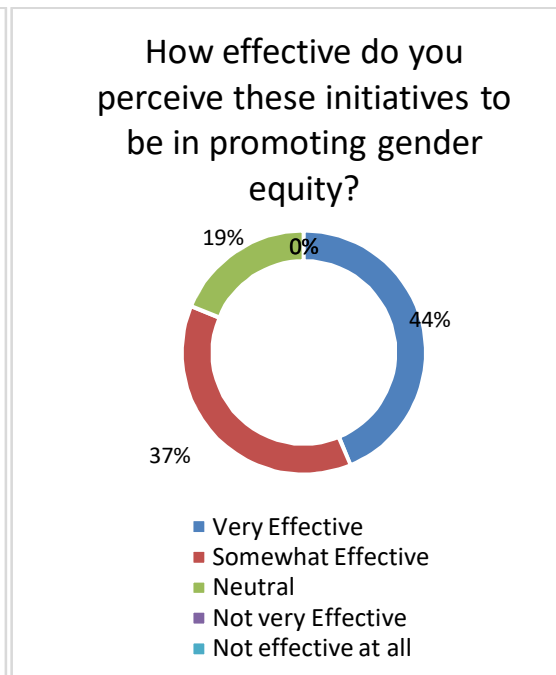


Fig. 1.6

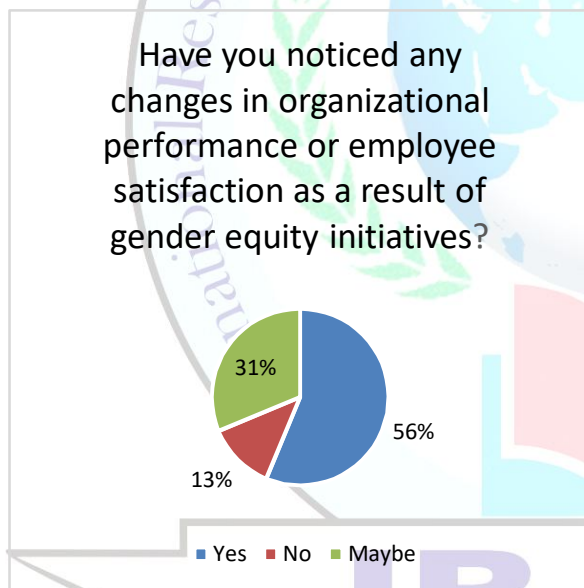


Fig. 1.7

Fig. 1.7 states that 56% of the respondents have seen the changes in the performance or employee satisfaction as there is initiative of gender equity. 31% of the respondents are stating there is maybe a change in the organisational performance or employee satisfaction as result of gender equity initiatives. Respondents have mentioned about the initiative has been taken by the organisation to promote gender equity with the help of awareness programme on POSH, seminar on gender equity, work from home, maternity leaves, equal participation in office activities.

Strategies To Bridging Gender Divide At Indian Workplace:

Enforcing strict policies that ensure equal opportunity for all employees regardless of gender is fundamental. This includes recruitment, promotion, compensation, and training opportunities. Such policies should be transparent and consistently enforced. This may involve setting targets for gender representation at various levels of the organization, implementing mentorship programs for women, and fostering networking opportunities. Conducting regular gender sensitization training programs for

employees can help raise awareness about unconscious biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviours. These programs can encourage respectful interactions and promote a culture of mutual respect and understanding. Offering flexible work arrangements such as telecommuting, flexitime, and part-time work options can help accommodate the diverse needs of employees, enable greater participation of women in the workforce and contribute to their career advancement.

Providing support for work-life balance through initiatives such as parental leave, childcare facilities, and eldercare assistance can help alleviate the burden on employees, especially women, who often juggle multiple responsibilities. Creating a family-friendly work environment can contribute to employee satisfaction and retention. Conducting regular gender pay audits to identify and address disparities in compensation between male and female employees is crucial. Organizations should ensure that pay scales are based on skills, experience, and performance rather than gender. Transparent salary structures and pay equity policies can help eliminate the gender pay gap. Actively promoting and supporting women's leadership development programs can help nurture a pipeline of female talent within the organization. Providing opportunities for women to take on leadership roles, participate in decision-making processes, and access executive mentoring can contribute to greater gender diversity in leadership positions.

Creating safe and inclusive work environments where employees feel comfortable reporting instances of harassment, discrimination, or bias is essential. Establishing robust grievance redressal mechanisms and providing support services for victims of harassment can help foster trust and confidence among employees. Recognizing the importance of engaging men as allies in the journey towards gender equity is crucial. Encouraging male employees to actively support and champion gender diversity initiatives, challenge traditional gender norms, and promote inclusive behaviours can help drive meaningful cultural change within the organization.

Conclusion:

Gender equity in the Indian workplace remains an ongoing challenge influenced by complex interactions between cultural, organizational, and societal factors. While progress has been made, concerted efforts are needed from stakeholders across sectors to address gender disparities, foster inclusive work environments, and promote equitable opportunities for all employees. Government and other legal agencies are working towards the bridging the gap of gender inequality but more awareness needed to change the mindset of the employees to treat every employee on equal terms at workplace.

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