
GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE: CHALLENGES TO EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

Prof. Mahantesh G S, Principal, Alva's Law College, Mudubidiri, Dakshina Kannada,
Karnataka.

Prof. Mamatha R, Faculty (Senior Grade), Alva's Law College, Mudubidiri, Dakshina
Kannada, Karnataka.

ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains a significant barrier to equality in employment and leadership. Despite legal and policy advancements, disparities persist in hiring, wages, promotions, and leadership representation. This article examines the systemic and cultural factors that sustain these inequalities and their impact on individuals and organizations.

The gender pay gap is one of the most prominent forms of discrimination, with women earning less than men for the same work due to occupational segregation, implicit biases, and undervaluation of female-dominated roles. The "glass ceiling" effect further limits women's advancement into executive positions due to biased promotion processes, lack of mentorship, and societal expectations regarding caregiving.

Workplace harassment and hostile environments also contribute to gender inequality. Many women face gender-based harassment, discouraging career progression. Weak policies and enforcement often fail to protect victims, perpetuating a culture of silence and retaliation. Additionally, unconscious biases in hiring and performance evaluations disadvantage female employees, making discrimination more subtle yet pervasive.

Work-life balance expectations disproportionately affect women, as traditional norms assign them primary caregiving roles. This leads to career interruptions and a preference for flexible, lower-paying jobs. A lack of supportive workplace policies, such as paid parental leave and flexible hours, further exacerbates these challenges, limiting women's professional growth and economic contributions.

To address workplace gender discrimination, organizations must implement unbiased recruitment practices, mentorship programs, pay equity measures, and inclusive workplace cultures. Stronger legal enforcement and corporate

commitment to diversity and inclusion are essential. Achieving gender equality is not only a social justice issue but also a business imperative, as diverse workplaces are more innovative, productive, and financially successful. Ongoing efforts from governments, businesses, and society are necessary to dismantle systemic barriers and ensure true workplace equality.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, workplace inequality, gender pay gap, employment discrimination, workplace harassment, equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains a persistent issue despite significant advancements in gender equality laws and policies worldwide. It manifests in various forms, including wage gaps, unequal access to opportunities, biased recruitment and promotion practices, workplace harassment, and limited representation of women and marginalized genders in leadership roles. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, combining legal frameworks, corporate policies, cultural change, and active participation of all stakeholders.¹

Despite the increasing awareness of gender equality, discrimination remains embedded in workplace structures, often operating in subtle yet impactful ways. While some progress has been made, such as the implementation of equal pay legislation and anti-harassment policies, these measures have not fully eliminated the barriers preventing women and marginalized genders from advancing in their careers. Societal norms, cultural expectations, and corporate biases continue to reinforce disparities in employment and leadership opportunities.²

The issue of gender discrimination extends beyond individual workplaces and affects economic growth, social development, and overall workplace productivity. When women and other marginalized groups are systematically excluded from leadership roles and high-paying positions, businesses and economies fail to harness the full potential of their workforce. Research has shown that diverse and inclusive workplaces lead to greater innovation, improved

¹Cailin S. Stamarski & Leanne S. Son Hing, Gender Inequalities in the Workplace: The Effects of Organizational Structures, Processes, Practices, and Decision Makers' Sexism, 6 *Frontiers in Psychol.* 1400 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400>.

² Faiza Ali, *Gender Equality in the Workplace* (2015).

financial performance, and higher employee satisfaction.³

Moreover, gender discrimination is not limited to overt acts of bias; it also includes structural inequalities that disadvantage women and non-binary individuals. These inequalities may include a lack of access to mentorship opportunities, gendered expectations in performance evaluations, and an absence of policies that support work-life balance. Many professional environments still prioritize male-dominated leadership models, making it difficult for women and underrepresented genders to break through systemic barriers such as the glass ceiling and the glass cliff.⁴

UNDERSTANDING GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

Gender discrimination in employment refers to unfair treatment based on gender⁵, which affects hiring, promotions⁶, salaries, job assignments, and other aspects of professional growth⁷. While many countries have enacted anti-discrimination laws, enforcement remains a significant challenge. Some of the key issues include:

1. Wage Disparities

One of the most prevalent forms of workplace gender discrimination is the **gender pay gap**, where women are paid less than men for performing the same or similar work. This disparity stems from various factors, including occupational segregation, undervaluation of traditionally female-dominated professions, and unconscious biases in hiring, salary negotiations, and promotions.⁸

Legal protections against wage discrimination have been enacted in many jurisdictions, including India. The **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**⁹, now subsumed under the **Code on**

³ Cailin S. Stamarski & Leanne S. Son Hing, Gender Inequalities in the Workplace: The Effects of Organizational Structures, Processes, Practices, and Decision Makers' Sexism, 6 *Frontiers in Psychol.* 1400 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400>.

⁴ Anaïs Llorens et al., *Gender Bias in Academia: A Lifetime Problem That Needs Solutions*, 109 *Neuron* 2047 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2021.06.002>.

⁵ Taylor v Jaguar Land Rover Ltd, [2020] UKET 1304471/2018.

⁶ Pao v. Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers LLC, No. CGC-12-520719 (Cal. Super. Ct. Mar. 27, 2015).

⁷ Forstater v. Centre for Global Development Europe, [2021] UKEAT/0105/20/JOJ.

⁸ Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co. Ltd. v. Audrey D'Costa & Another, (1987) 2 S.C.C. 469 (India).

⁹ The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, No. 25, Acts of Parliament, 1976 (India). - The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (Act No. 25 of 1976) aims to ensure equal pay for equal work between men and women, prohibiting discrimination based on sex in employment matters, and for matters connected with it.

Wages, 2019, mandates equal pay for equal work regardless of gender¹⁰. Despite these legal provisions, gender pay disparities continue due to inadequate enforcement and systemic biases.¹¹

Landmark Judicial Precedents

Indian courts have played a crucial role in reinforcing the right to equal pay. In *Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co. Ltd. v. Audrey D'Costa & Ors.*¹², the Supreme Court firmly held that women must receive equal remuneration for equal work, reinforcing the constitutional mandate under Article 39(d) of the Indian Constitution, which directs the State to ensure equal pay for both men and women. This judgment emphasized that discrimination in wages based on gender is unconstitutional and unacceptable.

Similarly, in *State of Punjab v. Jagjit Singh*,¹³ the Supreme Court expanded the scope of the equal pay principle to temporary workers. The Court held that temporary employees performing the same duties as permanent employees are entitled to equal wages. This judgment was particularly significant in addressing wage disparity among contract workers, many of whom are women, thus strengthening their legal claim to fair remuneration.

Causes and Consequences of the Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap is driven by multiple interrelated factors:

1. **Occupational Segregation:** Women are often concentrated in lower-paying industries and roles, such as healthcare, education, and administrative work, while men dominate higher-paying fields like engineering, finance, and technology.
2. **Glass Ceiling Effect:** Women face barriers to career progression, resulting in fewer promotions and leadership opportunities, which impacts their earning potential.
3. **Unconscious Bias in Hiring and Negotiations:** Hiring managers may unknowingly offer lower salaries to women or discourage them from negotiating higher pay.

¹⁰ *State of Punjab v. Jagjit Singh*, (2017) 1 S.C.C. 148 (India).

¹¹ *State of M.P. v. Pramod Baratiya*, (1993) 1 S.C.C. 539 (India).

¹² *Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co. Ltd. v. Audrey D'Costa & Ors.*, (1987) 2 SCC 469

¹³ *State of Punjab v. Jagjit Singh*, (2017) 1 SCC 148.

4. **Motherhood Penalty:** Women often experience wage stagnation or career interruptions due to caregiving responsibilities, which can significantly impact long-term earnings.

The consequences of the gender pay gap are far-reaching. Not only does it lead to **economic insecurity for women**, but it also affects overall economic growth. Studies have shown that closing the gender pay gap could significantly boost a country's GDP by increasing workforce participation and productivity.

2. Hiring and Promotion Bias

Women and gender minorities often face biases during recruitment and promotions. Gender stereotypes, such as the perception that leadership requires assertiveness (often associated with men), hinder career progression for women. Implicit biases also affect hiring decisions, resulting in fewer women being considered for high-paying and leadership roles.

In India, several landmark legal cases have addressed hiring and promotion biases, highlighting challenges to equality in employment and leadership. Notable cases include:

1. **C.B. Muthamma v. Union of India (1979)**¹⁴: Chonira Belliappa Muthamma, the first woman to join the Indian Foreign Service, challenged discriminatory service rules requiring women officers to obtain government permission before marriage and allowing for their termination if married. The Supreme Court ruled in her favour, emphasizing the need to eliminate gender discrimination in service rules.
2. **B.K. Pavitra II v. Union of India (2019)**¹⁵: This case addressed the constitutional validity of the Karnataka law granting consequential seniority to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees promoted under reservation policies. The Supreme Court upheld the law, emphasizing a substantive equality approach over formal equality, thereby supporting affirmative action in promotions.
3. **Manoj Kumar v. State of Bihar**¹⁶: Candidates challenged the fairness of preliminary examinations conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission due to incorrect

¹⁴ C.B. Muthamma v. Union of India, (1979) 4 S.C.C. 260 (India).

¹⁵ B.K. Pavitra II v. Union of India, (2019) 16 S.C.C. 129 (India).

¹⁶ Manoj Kumar v. State of Bihar, (2012) 1 PLJR 542 (India)

questions and answers. The Patna High Court ordered a re-evaluation, emphasizing the need for fair assessment in hiring processes.

These cases underscore the judiciary's role in addressing biases in hiring and promotion, reinforcing the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Indian employment practices.

3. Workplace Harassment and Hostile Work Environment

Sexual harassment and gender-based bullying remain major obstacles to gender equality in workplaces. Many victims hesitate to report harassment due to fear of retaliation, lack of proper redressal mechanisms, and cultural stigmas associated with speaking out against misconduct.

Workplace harassment and the creation of hostile work environments have been subjects of significant legal scrutiny in India. Notable case laws addressing these issues include:

1. **Vishaka and Others v. State of Rajasthan (1997)**¹⁷: This landmark case arose after the brutal gang rape of Bhanwari Devi, a social worker in Rajasthan who was attempting to prevent a child marriage. In response, women's groups filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to enforce the fundamental rights of working women under Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court recognized the absence of domestic laws addressing sexual harassment at the workplace and, drawing from international conventions, laid down the Vishaka Guidelines. These guidelines defined sexual harassment and mandated employers to implement preventive measures, thereby setting the foundation for future legislation on workplace harassment.
2. **Medha Kotwal Lele & Ors v. Union of India & Ors (2012)**¹⁸: This case highlighted the ineffective implementation of the Vishaka Guidelines across various institutions. The petitioners presented evidence of continued sexual harassment and the lack of proper redressal mechanisms. The Supreme Court reiterated the need for effective enforcement of the guidelines and directed both central and state governments to ensure their strict adherence, emphasizing the protection of women's rights in workplaces.
3. **Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K. Chopra (1999)**: In this case, a superior

¹⁷ Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, (1997) 6 S.C.C. 241 (India).

¹⁸ Medha Kotwal Lele v. Union of India, (2013) 1 S.C.C. 297 (India).

officer was accused of sexually harassing a subordinate female employee. The Supreme Court upheld the dismissal of the officer, emphasizing that any unwelcome physical contact or advances constitute sexual harassment. The Court reinforced that such behaviour violates the fundamental rights of women to gender equality and the right to practice any profession.

4. **Dr. Punita K. Sodhi v. Union of India (2010)**¹⁹: Dr. Punita K. Sodhi, a senior anaesthetist at a government hospital, faced continuous harassment and defamation by her colleagues, leading to a hostile work environment. The Delhi High Court recognized that workplace harassment extends beyond overt sexual advances and includes any conduct creating an intimidating or offensive work environment. The Court ruled in favour of Dr. Sodhi, directing the hospital to take appropriate action against the perpetrators and to ensure a safe working environment for all employees.

These cases collectively underscore the Indian judiciary's commitment to addressing workplace harassment and ensuring safe and equitable work environments.

4. Work-Life Balance and Maternity Bias

Women often face discrimination due to assumptions about family responsibilities. Maternity bias occurs when employers perceive women as less committed to their jobs because of caregiving responsibilities. This leads to fewer promotions, job reassignments, and even dismissals based on pregnancy or parental leave.²⁰

In India, several landmark legal cases have addressed issues related to work-life balance and maternity bias, reinforcing the rights of women in the workplace. Notable cases include:

1. **Deepika Singh v. Central Administrative Tribunal (2022)**²¹: Deepika Singh, a nurse at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh, was denied maternity leave after giving birth, as she had previously taken child care leave for her husband's children from a prior marriage. The Supreme Court

¹⁹ Apparel Export Promotion Council v. A.K. Chopra, (1999) 1 S.C.C. 759 (India).

²⁰ Why It Pays for Companies to Fix the Maternity Penalty, *Reuters* (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/comment-why-it-pays-companies-fix-maternity-penalty-2025-02-25/>.

²¹ Deepika Singh v. Central Administrative Tribunal, (2022) 7 S.C.R. 557 (India).

ruled in her favour, stating that a woman's statutory right to maternity leave cannot be restricted due to prior child care leave for non-biological children. The Court emphasized that non-traditional families are entitled to equal protection under the law and benefits available under social welfare legislation.

2. **Air India v. Nergesh Meerza (1981)**²²: Air India had regulations that mandated the termination of air hostesses upon their first pregnancy. The Supreme Court struck down these regulations, deeming them unconstitutional and discriminatory, thereby upholding women's rights in employment.

These cases underscore the judiciary's role in challenging maternity bias and promoting work-life balance, reinforcing the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Indian employment practices.

BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING ROLES

Despite increased participation of women in the workforce, their representation in leadership remains disproportionately low. Several structural and societal barriers contribute to this inequality:

1. The Glass Ceiling²³

The "glass ceiling" is an invisible barrier that prevents women from reaching top leadership positions. It is reinforced by stereotypes, lack of mentorship, and organizational cultures that favour men for executive roles.

2. Lack of Representation in Boardrooms

Women remain underrepresented in corporate boardrooms and senior management positions. Studies indicate that gender-diverse leadership teams enhance decision-making, financial performance, and workplace culture, yet many organizations fail to prioritize gender

²² Air India v. Nergesh Meerza, (1981) 4 S.C.C. 335 (India).

²³ Glass Ceiling, *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glass-ceiling.asp> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

diversity.²⁴

3. Gender Stereotypes and Leadership Expectations

Traditional gender norms often label women as more emotional and less decisive, affecting their chances of being selected for leadership roles. In contrast, men are perceived as natural leaders, further reinforcing gender biases in promotions.²⁵

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Several international and national legal frameworks aim to combat gender discrimination in the workplace. These include:

1. International Legal Instruments

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) mandates equal treatment of men and women in employment.²⁶
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions advocate for gender equality and equal pay.²⁷

2. National Laws and Regulations

Many countries have laws prohibiting workplace discrimination, such as:

²⁴ Women Are Still Underrepresented in Leadership and the Technology, Information, and Media Industry, *LinkedIn Economic Graph* (Mar. 14, 2025), <https://economicgraph.linkedin.com/blog/women-are-still-underrepresented-in-leadership-and-the-technology-information-and-media-industry>.

²⁵ Nusrat Tabassum & B. S. Nayak, Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on Women's Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective, *10 IIM Kozhikode Soc'y & Mgmt. Rev.* 192 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2277975220975513>.

²⁶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Dec. 18, 1979, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13.- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) mandates that States Parties take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in employment.

²⁷ International Labour Organization, Equal Remuneration Convention, No. 100, June 29, 1951, 165 U.N.T.S. 303 and International Labour Organization, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111, June 25, 1958, 362 U.N.T.S. 31. - the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, particularly the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), advocate for gender equality and equal pay for work of equal value.

- The Equal Pay Act (U.S.) ensures equal pay for equal work.²⁸
- The Maternity Benefit Act (India) protects women's rights during pregnancy and post-childbirth.²⁹
- The Gender Equality Act (UK, EU, and several countries) addresses workplace discrimination.³⁰

3. Corporate Policies and Best Practices

Many organizations have adopted gender equality policies, including:

- Equal pay audits and transparent salary structures.
- Unconscious bias training for employees and managers.
- Strong anti-harassment policies with clear reporting mechanisms.
- Maternity and paternity leave policies to promote work-life balance.

CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Despite legal advancements, numerous challenges persist in eliminating gender discrimination:

1. Weak Enforcement Mechanisms

Many workplaces lack strict enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. Employees often fear retaliation or lack access to legal recourse.

2. Resistance to Change

Cultural and organizational resistance to gender inclusivity hampers progress. Male-dominated

²⁸ Equal Pay Act of 1963, 29 U.S.C. § 206(d) (2018) - The Equal Pay Act (EPA) of 1963, a landmark U.S. law, ensures that men and women in the same workplace receive equal pay for performing substantially equal work, prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination.

²⁹ The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, No. 53, Acts of Parliament, 1961 (India) - The Maternity Benefit Act (India) protects women's rights during pregnancy and post-childbirth by regulating employment and providing maternity benefits, including paid leave and medical bonuses.

³⁰ Equality Act 2010, c. 15 (UK), Directive 2006/54/EC and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e (2018).

workplaces often exhibit reluctance in adopting gender-friendly policies.

3. Lack of Awareness and Advocacy

Employees and employers often lack awareness of gender equality laws and rights, leading to unintentional perpetuation of discriminatory practices.³¹

Recommendations for Achieving Gender Equality in Employment and Leadership

1. Strengthening Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Governments play a crucial role in ensuring workplace gender equality by enforcing anti-discrimination laws and strengthening institutional frameworks. Strict implementation of laws like the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976³², and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013³³, is essential to eliminate discriminatory practices. Authorities must conduct regular audits to ensure organizations comply with gender equality regulations. Additionally, setting up fast-track grievance redressal mechanisms and empowering labor courts to address gender discrimination cases swiftly will help victims seek justice without fear of retaliation.³⁴

2. Promoting Workplace Inclusivity and Mentorship

Organizations must foster a culture of inclusivity by actively promoting mentorship and sponsorship programs for women and marginalized genders.³⁵ Establishing structured leadership development programs, networking opportunities, and targeted career coaching can help break barriers that prevent women from reaching executive positions.

³¹ J. Wu, Workplace Inequality – The Discrimination Women Has to Face, 13 *Comm’n’s Hum. Res.* 118, 118–124 (2023).

³² The Act mandates that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work that requires similar skill, effort, and responsibility performed under similar working conditions. It ensures that gender-based wage discrimination is eliminated.

³³ The POSH Act- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) 2013 was enacted to protect women from sexual harassment and provide a safe and secure work environment.

³⁴ Christopherson Puh, K. M., Yiadom, A., Johnson, J., Fernando, F., Yazid, H., and Thiemann, C. (2022). Tackling Legal Impediments to Women’s Economic Empowerment. *IMF Working Papers* 2022, 037, A001, available from: < <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400203640.001.A001> > [Accessed 25 March 2025]

³⁵ Vohra, N., Chari (Coordinators), V., Mathur, P., Sudarshan, P., Verma, N., Mathur, N., Thakur, P., Chopra, T., Srivastava, Y., Gupta, S., Dasmahapatra, V., Fonia, S., & Gandhi, H. K. (2015). Inclusive Workplaces: Lessons from Theory and Practice. *Vikalpa*, 40(3), 324-362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090915601515> (Original work published 2015)

Companies should encourage male allies and senior leaders to participate in mentorship initiatives, ensuring equal access to opportunities for professional growth. By creating a pipeline for diverse leadership, organizations can drive long-term gender parity.³⁶

3. Ensuring Pay Transparency and Equity

The gender pay gap remains a critical issue in workplaces globally. To address this, companies should conduct regular pay equity audits and publish gender pay gap reports, holding themselves accountable for wage disparities. Transparent salary structures, standardized compensation policies, and clear performance-based promotion criteria can help eliminate pay discrimination. Governments can mandate companies to disclose salary data and implement penalties for non-compliance, ensuring that women receive equal pay for equal work.³⁷

4. Encouraging Flexible Work Policies

Work-life balance is a significant factor influencing women's career progression. Organizations should adopt flexible work policies, such as remote work options, flexible working hours, and parental leave for both mothers and fathers.³⁸ Encouraging paternity leave can help break traditional gender norms, ensuring caregiving responsibilities are shared equally. Companies should also establish on-site childcare facilities and return-to-work programs to support working mothers. By prioritizing work-life integration, businesses can create a more inclusive and productive workforce.³⁹

5. Shifting Cultural Attitudes and Biases

Deep-seated cultural biases and stereotypes continue to hinder gender equality in workplaces. Awareness campaigns, diversity training programs, and unconscious bias workshops can help challenge these stereotypes and create an inclusive work

³⁶ McIlongo M & Strydom K, *The Significance of Mentorship in Supporting the Career Advancement of Women in the Public Sector*, 7 Heliyon e07321 (2021).

³⁷ OECD, *Pay Transparency Tools to Close the Gender Wage Gap* (OECD Publishing, 2021), available at <https://doi.org/10.1787/eba5b91d-en>.

³⁸ Chung H & van der Lippe T, *Flexible Working, Work-Life Balance, and Gender Equality: Introduction*, 151 Soc. Indic. Res. 365 (2020).

³⁹ Gheyoh Ndzi E & Holmes A, *Paternal Leave Entitlement and Workplace Culture: A Key Challenge to Paternal Mental Health*, 20 Int'l J. Envtl. Res. Pub. Health 5454 (2023).

environment. Leaders must actively promote gender sensitivity through policies and workplace culture, ensuring that hiring, promotions, and leadership decisions are free from bias. Educational institutions should also play a role in shaping progressive mindsets by incorporating gender equality discussions into curricula. Societal change, along with corporate and legal efforts, is crucial for fostering true gender equity.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains a significant barrier to achieving equality in employment and leadership. While legal frameworks and corporate policies have contributed to progress, persistent structural and cultural barriers continue to hinder true equality. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from governments, businesses, and society to create an inclusive, fair, and diverse work environment. By fostering gender diversity, workplaces can harness the full potential of all employees, leading to innovation, economic growth, and social progress.⁴¹

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains a significant challenge, hindering true equality in employment and leadership. Despite legal frameworks and corporate policies designed to promote gender parity, deep-rooted structural and cultural biases continue to affect hiring, promotions, wages, and overall workplace dynamics. Women face persistent barriers such as unequal representation in leadership, wage disparities, hiring and promotion biases, workplace harassment, and maternity discrimination.⁴² The "glass ceiling" effect limits career advancement opportunities for women, while maternity bias and inadequate work-life balance policies disproportionately impact their professional growth. Even with laws like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, enforcement gaps and fear of retaliation prevent many from reporting workplace discrimination. Although some organizations have implemented diversity and inclusion programs, progress remains slow, and true gender equality is far from achieved.⁴³

Addressing workplace gender discrimination requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving

⁴⁰ Llorens A et al., *Gender Bias in Academia: A Lifetime Problem That Needs Solutions*, 109 *Neuron* 2047 (2021).

⁴¹ Starnski CS & Son Hing LS, *Gender Inequalities in the Workplace: The Effects of Organizational Structures, Processes, Practices, and Decision Makers' Sexism*, 6 *Front. Psychol.* 1400 (2015).

⁴² Leanne S. Son Hing et al., *Gender Inequities in the Workplace: A Holistic Review of Organizational Processes and Practices*, 33 *Hum. Res. Mgmt. Rev.* 100968 (2023).

⁴³ Yashi Agarwal, *Globalisation: A Study from Spectacles of Women*, II *IJIRL* (Issue II) (2023).

governments, businesses, and society. Legal frameworks must be strengthened and effectively enforced through mandatory gender audits, stricter penalties for non-compliance, and incentives for equitable corporate practices.⁴⁴ Organizations should dismantle biases in recruitment, pay structures, and promotions while fostering inclusive work cultures through mentorship programs and leadership training for women. Additionally, societal perceptions regarding traditional gender roles must shift to encourage equal participation in both professional and caregiving responsibilities. A workplace that values gender diversity not only enhances innovation and decision-making but also contributes to broader economic growth and social progress. By creating fair, inclusive, and diverse work environments, businesses and societies can harness the full potential of all individuals, paving the way for a more equitable future.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Gartzia L, *Gender Equality in Business Action: A Multi-Agent Change Management Approach*, 13 Sustainability 6209 (2021).

⁴⁵ Galsanjigmed E & Sekiguchi T, *Challenges Women Experience in Leadership Careers: An Integrative Review*, 3 Merits 366 (2023).