

Gender inequality and HRM

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Abstract

In recent decades, researchers around the world have paid more attention to gender inequality in the workplace in the management literature. The research found that human resource management practices play a crucial role in shaping the extent of inequality within an organization by influencing female employees' access to workplace opportunities, including training, fair performance appraisals, career advancement, equal rewards, and development roles. With this in mind, this study aims to review the existing global literature on women's inequality in HRM practices to gain a clear understanding of the extent of this issue. In addition, the previous studies on the following HRM practices - compensation, career advancement, performance appraisal, training, and task assignment - are classified in chronological order, summarized, and the necessary gaps are identified, opening the scope for future research on this phenomenon.

Keywords: Gender inequality, workplace, women employees, HRM

1. Introduction

What is gender inequality?

- Discrimination based on a person's sex or gender that results in one sex or gender being regularly given preference over another is known as gender inequality. Discrimination

based on gender breaches the fundamental human right to gender equality. The world over, gender inequality is currently limiting children's potential for a lifetime and disproportionately affects girls. It begins in childhood.¹

- Situations in law, society, and culture where gender and/or sex dictate different rights and dignity for men and women; this is reflected in the unequal enjoyment of rights by men and women as well as the adoption of stereotyped roles in these domains.²
- A situation in which gender dictates different opportunities and rights for men and women in a legal, cultural, or social context; marked by stereotypes about roles that are defined by culture and society and unequal access to or enjoyment of rights.³

Causes of gender inequality in India

According to numerous studies, a lot of people still think that women are only meant for domestic work in the twenty-first century. There is still gender inequality and discrimination in India due to the country's male-dominated culture. Let us examine the primary reasons behind gender discrimination in India.

- 1. Mental makeup:** Even with today's advanced education and technology, a lot of people still think that women are best suited for domestic work. This demonstrates that women's roles are limited to child-rearing and taking care of their families.
- 2. Male-dominated society:** In Indian culture, men continue to make decisions, and women must silently accept them even though they have a good education and a good understanding of the world.
- 3. Lack of education:** Even so, women are not expected to prioritize literacy or education in today's society. Women are therefore ignorant of their rights. Education can be a very useful tool for women who are fighting for their rights. The first step in this direction is education.

History

- **1840:** First women's rights convention: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were indignant over women being barred from speaking at an anti-slavery convention. They

congregate a few hundred people at their nation's first women's rights convention in New York. They demanded rights like civil, political, and religious for women in a Declaration of Sentiments and Resolution: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal."⁴ And from here this movement was born.

- More than a word, feminism is a movement to provide certain rights to women, like social, political, legal, and economic equal to men. The first document was used by France in 1937, where Charles Fourier used the word feminism to describe women's freedom. At the beginning of the 1900s, it was connected with women's suffrage, but after that, it was developed to carry a more meaningful purpose. In particular, 'intersectional feminism' draws attention to how women face different forms of discrimination based on factors such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. In her 1851 speech "Am I not a woman?", American feminist and former slave Sojourner Truth draws attention to how women experience sexism differently.⁵
- **After 1873**, New Zealand became the first self-governing country where women were allowed to vote.
- **1900** – International Women's Day: A Day for women: In 1911, the first International Women's Day was celebrated across Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland for women's suffrage and labour rights.
- The changing world of work: World War 1 and 2 inspired women to do untraditional jobs, and after that, women's empowerment began.

2. Gender Inequality and SDG

Gender inequality is explicitly addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by eliminating discrimination, violence, harmful practices like child marriage, and the unequal burden of unpaid care work.

Core Targets of SDG 5

The UN outlines several concrete targets to dismantle gender disparities globally:

- **End Violence and Exploitation:** Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- **Eliminate Harmful Practices:** Abolish child, early, and forced marriages, as well as female genital mutilation (FGM).
- **Unpaid Care Work:** Recognize and value unpaid domestic work by promoting public services, infrastructure, and shared household responsibilities.
- **Equal Participation:** Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in political, economic, and public life.
- **Resource Rights:** Grant women equal rights to economic resources, including land ownership, financial services, and property rights.

Global and Local Context

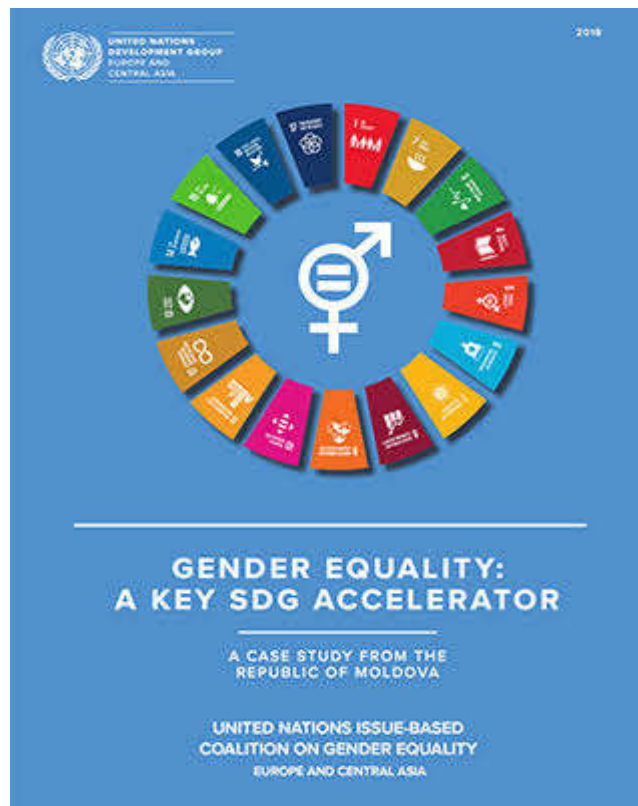
- While there has been significant progress in some areas, disparities remain a major challenge:
- **Legal Protections:** Despite positive legal reforms, roughly 58% of surveyed countries lack adequate legal protections for women's land rights, and women globally still enjoy only about three-quarters of the legal rights to economic opportunities that men possess.
- **India's Performance:** In India, efforts have shown marked improvement. The [NITI Aayog SDG Index](#) score for Goal 5 has improved significantly. The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) ratio of female to male workers has grown steadily, and the vast majority of married women have decision-making power in households, though gender gaps in formal wage earnings persist.

How Gender Intersects with Other SDGs

Gender inequality cuts across multiple development goals, impacting overall sustainability:

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** Women are more likely to live in poverty due to unpaid care burdens and restricted access to paid work.
- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):** Women make up a large portion of the agricultural workforce, yet face severe inequalities in land and resource ownership.

- **SDG 8 (Decent Work):** Closing the gender wage gap and ensuring safe working environments are vital for sustainable economic growth.



[The SDG, Goal 5: Gender equality¹](#)

3. Objectives

The main purpose of this research is to know the role of HR in matters of gender discrimination at the workplace, such as discrimination in compensation, discrimination in career advancement, discrimination in performance appraisal, discrimination in training, discrimination in task assignment, etc.

4. Overview of Literature

¹ https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-SDG-Goal-5-Gender-equality-717_fig7_321934193

Gender inequality in the workplace

- **(Arulampalam, 2007)** This study was conducted for analysing gender pay gap across the public and private sectors. In the conclusion, it was revealed that female employees are underpaid compared to male employees.
- **(Farooq and Suleiman, 2009)** This study has revealed that due to stereotype mindset, female employees are getting less payment than male employees, which they actually deserve.
- **(Broad Bridge, 1998)** This study has revealed that women who are working in middle management are not getting promoted to senior positions.
- **(Jain and Mukherjee, 2010)** This study has done research that women in the workplace are not getting enough opportunities for promotion.
- **(Booth, 1991)** It has been reported that male employees are getting more opportunities for training than female employees in the workplace.
- **(Lunch, 1992)** It has been researched that there are gender differences in training at the workplace; for example, men are more likely to get training regarding job training and apprentice opportunities than women. Women are getting more job training than men do.
- **(Estevez Abe, 2005)** This research has presented that women are not getting enough training in the workplace due to certain reasons, such as marriage, motherhood, family responsibilities, etc.
- **(Ven Velsor and Hughes, 1990)** This research has revealed that there is gender discrimination in the workplace in task management, compared to men.
- **(Ohlott et al.,1994)** reported in a study conducted among a sample of professionals, supervisors, middle managers, and upper-level managers, that women employees had fewer challenging tasks than their male counterparts.

The role of HR

- **(Lens, 2003; Roscigno et al.,2007)** Moreover, the research revealed that organisational policies and practices are deeply influenced by the socially and culturally mandated structures that question the women's abilities, capabilities, and suitability for organisational work and thus result in unconscious bias against them in the following

HRM practices, viz., compensation, training, career advancement, appraisals, and task assignment.

- **(F.O. Ogunrinde, 2010)** Gender discrimination basically started with recruitment and selection. So, it becomes necessary for an HR team to take necessary action against it, like developing women for management roles, safety, health, and welfare policies, etc.
- **(Azra Khan, 2018)** This paper has reviewed the study on the relationship between discrimination against women in HRM practices and organisational justice perception.
- **(Sania Khan, 2023)** This study analyses the impact of human resource management policies on women's safety at work. It also analyses the extent to which measures have been taken to create a safe environment for working women.
- **(Patience Kiwang Oben, 2024)** This study examined the role of human resource management in gender inequality, focusing on the policies of the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC). A descriptive design and gender organisation theory were applied in examining existing gender policies, employee awareness, and perceived impact.
- **(Mohamad Noor Al-Jedaiah, 2020)** This study aims to analyse the unequal treatment of women in the Jordanian commercial banking sector. To achieve this goal, the study investigated both HRP and the unequal treatment of women. The questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. HRP was used as the independent variable, while the resulting inequalities were used as the dependent variable. A simple random sample of female bankers was selected. The results showed that the inequality practises.

5. Gender and the human resource management function

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the modern term for personnel management. This function is the part of the management process that deals with managing people in the workplace and comprises five elements: recruitment and selection of employees for a job; managing reward systems, employee training and development, employee retention through the management of safety, health, and welfare measures in the workplace, and industrial relations (Cole, 1993; Bratton and Gold, 1999). The issue of gender discrimination is a common thread running through all these elements of the HRM function (Berry, 1998), as will be shown in this section.

- **Recruitment and selection**

Recruitment and selection refer to activities undertaken by organisations to contact potential applicants and determine whether it would be appropriate to hire one of them (Bratton et al., 1999).

- **Reward System**

Rewards refer to financial benefits that employees receive as part of an employment relationship (Bratton et al., 1999). Studies have shown that employers are more likely to reward men with families with a higher salary than women with families, probably because women's earnings are seen as complementary to their husbands' earnings - the stereotypical primary breadwinner (Sapiro, 1994; Entifi, 2009).

- **Explaining gendered pay discrimination**

This problem of gender-specific wage discrimination is so serious that it is the subject of several conceptual models. The human capital model, for example, attributes wage inequality to individual career choices: women are paid less because they choose occupations that allow them more time for family responsibilities; however, since these are precisely the occupations in which there is an oversupply of labour, the result is low pay (Nanda, 1991; Johns, 1996; Lindsey et al., 2000).

- **Training and development**

Training refers to learning activities through which the skills required in an occupation are acquired, whereas development refers to learning activities that focus on future needs and career growth rather than immediate task fulfilment (Cole, 1993).

6. Conclusion and Future Research

After reviewing the existing literature, one concludes that equality for women in the workplace is still a distant dream and that it would take centuries more to fully close this gender gap in the workplace. In addition, the review of literature identified the following gaps in relation to the following HRM practises: Compensation, career advancement, performance appraisal, training, and assignment of challenging tasks that provide room for future research.

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