

# Gender Equality at the Workplace: A Reality or an Enticing Illusion?

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## Abstract

This study investigates female employees' perceptions of gender equality in their workplace, in order to determine whether gender inequality exists in their organization or not. A survey was conducted from which a response of 39 employees, which included 27 female respondents and served as the basis for research analysis. Responses of the question asked regarding gender inequality were encoded in a numerical form to perform the statistical testing: "Yes" was assigned a value of 1, "No" a value of 0, and "Maybe" a value of 0.5. Using these scores, a one-sample T-test was performed to check whether the average response from female participants significantly deviated from the ideal score of 1, which represents full agreement with gender equality.

The findings highlight a gap between organizational ideals and employee experiences, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to address gender-based disparities. This research highlights the importance of listening to employee perceptions and using data-driven approaches to foster a more equitable workplace culture.

**Keywords:** Employee perceptions, Gender disparity, Equitable workplace culture, organizational ideals.

## 1. Introduction

India has been a country where Gender Inequality is the biggest curse. Be it the Sati System, Female Infanticide or not allowing the females to gain education or earn for a living, India has applied many practices to ensure that there is Gender Inequality in the country and females feel lesser than males.

With the modernization, the trends have also changed. Now females are allowed to work and become independent, but at what cost? Achieving genuine gender equality in the workplace has become quite a challenge for organizations all over the world. Even after formulation of formal policies, rules and regulation, the actual experiences of the female employees reveal a significant gap between pre decided values and actual practice. For female professionals, this gap can result in the reduction of their access to career-advancing opportunities, unequal and unfair pay and a lack of meaningful representation in leadership. Understanding how women perceive their organization's stated promises and commitment to equality is really crucial for driving a significant change. So, to actually find out whether the Gender equality for females is a reality or an illusion, A survey of the candidates was performed out of which majority were Employed. The structured questions were asked from them to find out whether they feel equal to the opposite gender working in their organization or not. Descriptive data was also collected in which the statement-based questions were asked to the candidates to understand their perspective in a better way.

Perceptions of gender equality are not merely anecdotal; they shape morale, influence retention, and affect overall organizational performance. While qualitative accounts provide valuable insight into individual experiences, a quantitative assessment offers a rigorous way to gauge the extent of perceived inequality. This study employs a structured survey alongside statistical analysis to transform subjective viewpoints into measurable data. By focusing on a single key survey item—employees' belief in the existence of gender equality—this research isolates a clear indicator of perceived fairness. The SDG that primarily followed in this study is **SDG 5 = Gender Equality**

To quantify those perceptions, responses were encoded on a scale from 0 (indicating perceived inequality) to 1 (indicating perceived equality), with an intermediate value for uncertainty. A one-sample T-test was then applied to determine whether the average response among female participants significantly diverged from the ideal benchmark of full equality. This method allows for a precise evaluation of whether women, as a group, experience or observe sufficient gender parity in their workplace.

The findings of this analysis offer concrete evidence regarding the presence or absence of perceived gender equality among female employees. By contextualizing these results within broader organizational practices, the study highlights areas for targeted intervention. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of using data-driven strategies to bridge the gap between corporate gender-equality commitments and the real experiences of women on the job.

## 2. Literature Review

Gender inequality in professional settings remains a persistent global issue, despite decades of advocacy and policy reform. This review explores the multifaceted nature of workplace gender disparities, focusing on structural barriers, cultural norms, and organizational practices that hinder women's advancement.

- According to an article in “**The Secretariat** by **Prakriti Bakshi**, Females earn 34% less than Males in high skilled jobs which requires advanced education and technical knowledge. If we talk about medium skilled jobs which covers roles like technicians, Females earn 21% less than Males. In the low skilled jobs which mainly includes manual labour, Females earn 29% less than Males”.
- The data from the “**Periodic Labor Force Survey** (April–June 2024), the average monthly earnings of ₹26,105 for Male employees versus ₹19,879 for Female employees in urban areas, and ₹18,200 versus ₹12,396 in rural areas, highlights the pay disparity on the basis of gender”.
- According to the article of “**Sattva Insights** on gender wage gap, the difference between the average monthly wages among men and women in India, i.e. the wage gap, is about INR 4,014. On average men earn INR 12,048 per month while women earn INR 8,034, i.e. about 33% less than men”.
- An article in “**The times of India** by Trisha Tiwari highlights that in the banking and financial services sector, Females earn 26.3% less than Males whereas the energy sector shows 15% disparity”.
- **Potratz** in his research notes that despite of educational development of the women, their development in working sector is still meagre.
- An article in “**The Hindu** states that India has been placed at 129<sup>th</sup> out of the 146 countries with 64.1% of Gender Equality Gap”.

Gender inequality in the workplace is a serious issues rooted in historical, cultural, and institutional factors. Addressing it requires a strategic and holistic approach that combines policy, education, and organizational accountability. Continued research and advocacy are vital to creating truly equitable work environments. This not only hampers the performance of the employees who are facing this inequality but also hampers the performance of the Organization.

**Equal Remuneration Act, 1976:**

The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 is an Indian law which has been made in order to remove the gender pay disparity and make sure that men and women receive equal pay for the same or similar work, and also to prevent gender-based discrimination at the workplace. It prohibits employers from discriminating in the cases of recruitment, training, and promotion and requires them to pay the same amount of salary, whether in cash or kind, to workers of the opposite gender for duties of equal level. The Act's main motive is to uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work, derived from the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution.

But if we observe carefully, we could actually figure out that the policy of **Equal Work, Equal Pay** is just for the namesake which has zero relationship with reality.

**3. Research Methodology:**

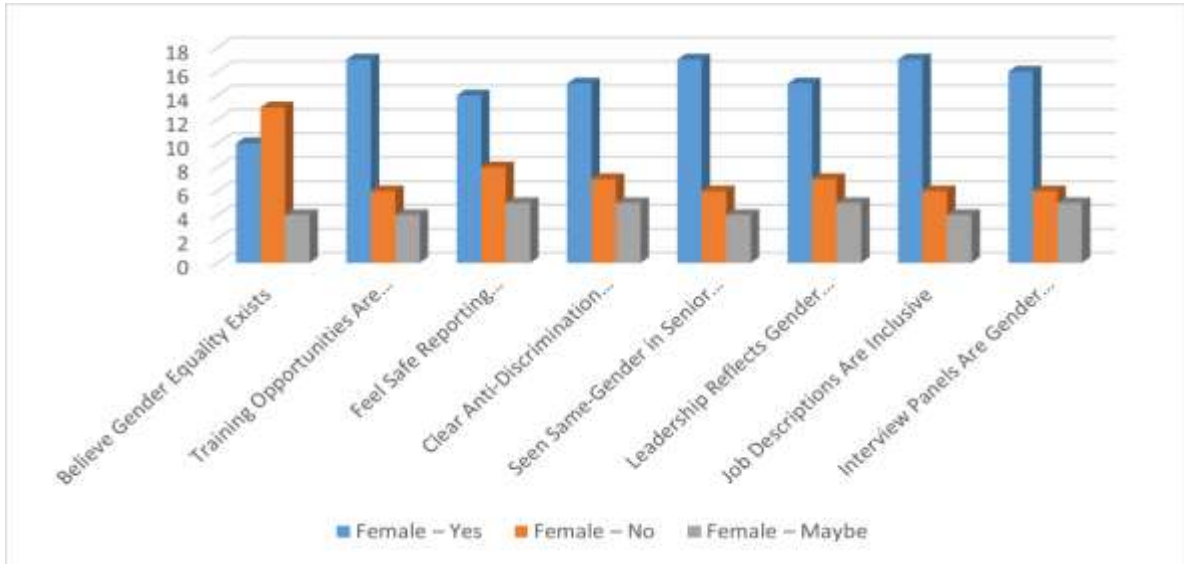
To begin with the research procedure, the research problem or the research question was thought of. In this case the Research question will be **Is the Gender Equality at workplace a Reality or An Enticing Illusion?**

To find out the data related to the same question, the data was collected through **Sample Survey Method** where the **Simple Random Sampling** technique was used. A questionnaire was prepared and sent to the candidates and they were allowed to give the answers freely. The total responses that were received from this survey was **39** responses out of which the Female respondents were **27** and Male respondents were **12**.

**The Responses are as follows:**

Survey Question	Female – Yes	Female – No	Female – Maybe	Insight
Believe Gender Equality Exists	10	13	4	Majority do not perceive equality
Training Opportunities Are Equal	17	6	4	Generally positive, but some gaps
Feel Safe Reporting Discrimination	14	8	5	Over 40% feel unsafe or unsure
Clear Anti-Discrimination Policies Exist	15	7	5	Mixed awareness of policies
Seen Same-Gender in Senior Roles	17	6	4	Encouraging visibility
Leadership Reflects Gender Diversity	15	7	5	Some concerns remain
Job Descriptions Are Inclusive	17	6	4	Mostly inclusive
Interview Panels Are Gender Diverse	16	6	5	Positive trend

The representation of this data has been described in a Bar Graph for a better understanding:



After the collection of all the responses, a **T-test** was conducted for investigating the Gender Inequality for Females.

#### 4.1 Formulating the Hypotheses

Every statistical test begins with a clear hypothesis framework:

- **Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no gender inequality for females — implying that female employees perceive their workplace as gender-equal.
- **Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** Gender inequality exists for females — suggesting that female employees perceive a lack of gender equality.

This numerical framing allows us to test whether the perception of gender equality among female employees significantly deviates from a benchmark of full equality.

#### 4.2 Data Extraction and Encoding

From the uploaded survey, I focused on responses to the question:

“Do you believe there is gender equality in your organization?”

To quantify these qualitative responses:

- **Yes** was coded as **1** (indicating perceived equality)
- **No** as **0** (indicating perceived inequality)
- **Maybe** as **0.5** (indicating uncertainty or partial agreement)

This encoding transforms subjective opinions into a numerical scale suitable for statistical testing.

#### 4.3 Female Respondent Statistics

Out of 39 total survey responses, **27 were from female employees**. Their encoded responses yielded the following descriptive statistics:

- **Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) = 0.481** — suggesting that, on average, female employees lean toward disagreement or uncertainty about gender equality.
- **Standard Deviation ( $\sigma$ )  $\approx$  0.507** — indicating moderate variability in responses.
- **Sample Size (n) = 27**

Since the calculated t-value (**-5.31**) is far beyond the critical threshold, **we reject the null hypothesis**.

Additionally, the **p-value < 0.001**, which provides overwhelming evidence that the observed difference is statistically significant and not due to random variation.

#### 4.4 Conclusion of the T-test: Gender Inequality Confirmed:

The T-test results lead to a clear conclusion: **There is statistically significant evidence that female employees perceive gender inequality in their organizations.**

The T-test analysis confirms that gender inequality remains a significant issue in the workplace. Female employees report lower levels of perceived fairness, safety, and representation compared to their male counterparts. These differences are not anecdotal—they are statistically significant and reflect broader systemic challenges. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that combines policy reform, leadership development, and cultural change. Organizations must move beyond symbolic gestures and commit to meaningful action. Only then can they create environments where all employees—regardless of gender—feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

#### 5. Results:

The final result that has been drawn from the T-test clearly indicates that the gender inequality is actually prevailing at the workplaces. The Null Hypothesis assumed was that there is No gender discrimination felt by females who are working in the organizations whereas the alternate hypothesis was that the females are going through the situation of gender discrimination or gender inequality at their workplace. For performing the research, we performed a survey in which the questions of both objective type and subjective type were asked from the candidates and the method of sampling that was used by me was a Simple Random sampling method. The response count of 39 was drawn out of the survey out of which 27 were female respondents and 12 were male respondents. The responses were then systematically arranged in a tabular form showing the responses of females to analyze that whether they are facing the situation of gender inequality at their workplace or not.

The response on the question “Do you believe there is gender equality in your organization” clearly showed that out of 27 female employees, 13 candidates selected the option “No” whereas 4 candidates selected the option “Maybe” which depicts the dilemma of these candidates. Moreover, different questions about the experience of the females about gender equality in different sectors like Leadership, Training and development, Clarity of gender equality policies, hiring procedure and performance evaluation were asked which ultimately concluded that the policy of “Same Work, Same Wage” is a myth or we can say that it is a captivating illusion when might feel very comforting to listen but in reality it doesn’t even exist. To confirm this statement, I performed a one sample t-test of the data where Calculated t was (-5.31) and the Critical t that was calculated was (-1.706)

So, as the p value is less than 0.001 and the calculated t-value is far beyond the critical threshold, We Reject the Null Hypothesis which assumed that there is no gender inequality for females at the workplace. The statistical representation of the t-test actually proves that our country which is :

- world's fourth-largest economy by nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP),
- the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP),
- The second-largest by labour force, standing at 586 million workers.
- On a per capita income basis, India ranks 136th by GDP (nominal) and 119th by GDP (PPP) global.

Even after the achievement of being the world’s fourth largest economy, there is still prevailing this brooding issue of gender inequality which is atrociously cruel and disheartening. This clearly indicates the difference of development in different sectors. Our country is performing tremendously well when it comes to Financial sector which is commendable. The terrible economic situation of India in the year 1947, where our economy was underdeveloped, there was widespread poverty, the per capita stooped

really low and the major dependence for survival was on the agricultural sector and growing from that situation gracefully and then strong headed is applaudable.

But, at the same time if we compare it to the development in the social sector, it can be clearly observed that not much development has been made. Plenty of efforts were definitely made to spread equality in the country, whether it was the creation of Article 14-18 in the Indian constitution or creating the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976. But even after all these effort, not much development could take place.

Now, the question arises is that what might be the reasons that the gender inequality is still prevailing at the workplace?

## 6. Discussion

After effective research, and an efficient discussion on the results drawn from the statistical evidences from the T-test that was done on the basis of the collected responses from the survey, Now, it has become essential to figure out that what might be the reasons for the gender inequality that is prevailing at the workplace. But for that, first of all we have to find out the various aspects where the female candidates are experiencing the discrimination.

- **Remuneration:** The first and the foremost area where the gender inequality has been observed is the area of Remuneration. A trend of gender pay disparity has been followed since a very long time and even after constituting various policies in order to promote equality and prohibit discrimination especially in the case of the basic pay, no changes have been there. In many organizations, the female employees are generally paid less as compared to male employees, despite of having similar level of qualifications and being placed at the same level of job. There can be many reasons for gender pay disparity and one of the reasons is the obstinate stereotypes that started since a very long time and are being passing on to the coming generations. Our society was already a patriarchal society which is an undeniable fact. No matter how many social reforms acts have been done by our leaders, the seed of male chauvinism has been bowed since forever which is why their roots are too strong to be broken. Moreover, the fear of female employees leaving the job due to family issues, marriages and children among the employers make them give less salary to the female employees.
- **Hiring process:** Another area where gender inequality is being experienced is the recruitment process. It has been observed many times that the team which conducts the interviews of the candidates to hire them doesn't really shows any gender diversity. Either the team will consist of all the males or if the females are included in the team, then their number will be less. While going through various articles and doing the literature reviews, the result for the exclusion of females in the hiring team is the Unconscious bias. Due to this unconscious biasness, the females are generally overlooked for the opportunities and promotions and it doesn't really matter to the organization that those female employees are equally qualified, skilled and knowledgeable.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Many times, it is observed that females are deprived of the leadership opportunities at their workplace. Even if they are provided with the leadership opportunities, the scope of the same is really limited. Gender inequality in leadership roles is a very crucial topic. While going through the responses from the survey conducted previously, many females shared their response that they aren't included in the leadership roles. Also, they have rarely seen females as their superior which clearly indicates that females have a lack of career advancement opportunities which actually creates a "broken rung" in their ladder of leadership.

- **Unclear Policies:** The next area where gender inequality can be seen is the lack of clarity of policies made by the organizations to address the problem of gender discrimination and the creation of certain rules, regulations and punishments in order to keep a watch on the unfair practices that might happen in this case. Most of the organizations do not even create such policies to curb the gender discrimination. Even if these organizations formulate such policies, the employees are not provided with a clarity of the same resulting in the decreasing of the employee's morale, reduction in their efforts and productivity and ultimately a failure in the achievement of the organizational objectives.
- **Training Opportunities:** The lack of equality in provision of the training and development opportunities is also one of the critical issues to look after. Many organizations do not provide the training opportunities equally to all the employees as a lot of times, only the male employees are provided with the training opportunities, resources and career advancement opportunities which results from the conscious and unconscious bias and stereotypes prevailing among the people. This often affects the motivation of female employees in a negative way as they feel like there is no bright future to their career as due to lack of training and development opportunities, they might lack behind from the other employees and might not keep pace with the changing trends. This reduces their morale and leads to an increase in the gap between both the gender

After carefully analyzing the areas where female employees might face gender discrimination, it has become really necessary to find out the ways by which the gender inequality can be curbed and rectified at the workplace. This will not only help the females to feel empowered and upliftment, but also it will lead to their boosting their morale and career advancement which will ultimately lead to the achievement of the organizational objectives efficiently and effectively.

Ways to reduce the gender inequality a workplace:

- **Equal work, Equal pay:** The first way to reduce gender inequality at workplace is to stick to a fair pay policy. This means that the female employees will be getting equal salary just as the male employees who are working at the same level are getting. This does not only include the basic in hand salary but, the other monetary benefits, perks and perquisites are also included here. This will boost the morale of female employees and they will not be thinking themselves as lesser than male employees in any way. Moreover, this will also give a clear perception of gender equality to the male employees and other people who take gender equality as a joke. By doing this the female employees will be highly motivated to perform the tasks given to them which will ultimately benefit the organization.
- **Equal representation in Leadership:** Allowing the females to participate in the management activities and becoming a part of leadership team is also one of the most important steps that can be taken to curb the problem of inequality at workplace. Every employee who is working in an organization has the right to put forward their opinions in the organizational matters. But, it has been clearly observed from the conducted research analysis that the female employees are not included in leadership and management activities. Moreover, if they try to share their opinions or suggestions for the betterment of the organization, their opinions are not given due attention and importance which results in the female employees being demotivated and unequal. So, the organization should actively address the "broken rung" which refers to the situation where promotion of female employees is postponed or delayed. The sponsorship programs should be organized and mentorships should be conducted efficiently. A more inclusive environment for the female employees should be created where their opinions are heard and given importance.

- **Job descriptions involving Inclusivity:** The job description is a document which describes the roles, responsibilities, duties, educational qualifications and skills required to perform a particular job. Many times, the language of the job description showcases gender inequality. The job description usually mentions the gender of the employee who is required by the organization. This trend should be changed and the language in which the job description is created should be made more inclusive which is easier said than done. The words which are gender coded like for females the words like Empath, Sensitive, Affectionate, Kind etc and for male, the words like Fearless, Confident, Aggressive etc should be avoided. By doing this, the situation of gender inequality can be removed or atleast avoided at the workplace.
- **Gender Diversity in Hiring Team:** A very important step to avoid gender inequality at the workplace is to create gender diversity in the hiring team. It has been observed in many organizations that the team constructed in order to conduct the recruitment process to hire new employees in the organization consists of only males. Even if there are females in the team, the number of female employees is really less. So, in order to spread gender equality at workplace, females should also be included in the hiring team. Moreover, they should be given the chances to conduct the interviews for hiring new personnel as it will give them a sense of superiority and build their confidence along with providing them the knowledge and practical experience about how the hiring process is actually conducted.
- **Equal provision of Training:** Training is really very crucial for every employee working in the organization and this has no relation to gender. But, in many organizations the heavy training especially the mechanical and on the field training which requires more physical endurance, is not provided to the females. The reason might be the conscious and unconscious bias prevailing in the organization. People might think that the females won't be able to go through heavy physical work which is required for the training. In today's times where females are equally participating and winning the competitions like heavy weight lifting championship, Wrestling, boxing and much more, still this stereotype of females not being able to do the heavy physical tasks is prevailing in the society. But, this needs to be changed. The awareness among the people should be spread, seminars on gender equality at workplace should be organized to spread gender equality at workplace. Moreover, the females should also take the initiative to reach out to their seniors and communicate about their participation in training process.
- **Clarity of gender equality policies:** Many organizations do not formulate the gender equality policies. Even if these policies are created by the organization, the clarity about the same are not provided to the employees working in the organization. That's the major reason why the employees do not take the topic of gender equality seriously. But, in order to strengthen the gender equality at workplace, it is the responsibility of the Top level Management of an organization to formulate clear policies and also communicate about the same with each and every employee working in the organization. The punishments should also be decided for the ones who will try to violate the gender equality so that everybody in the organization take it really very seriously.

## 7. Conclusion:

Gender equality in the workplace? Still more of a superficial term rather than an actual reality, no matter how many times you see it mentioned on company websites or written into their HR booklet. Definitely, the laws have been made to promote equality, but when we walk into any office and we can feel the gap. It's not an abstract concept—it is the reality which is being faced by the women every single day. Taking

a look at the numbers from the study, a mean score of 0.481, t-statistic at -5.31, that's not exactly proving gender equality. What we really need is a change in how workplaces think and act. Less words and more work which means actually listening to women, actually pulling them to the table, and making sure they have a say and a paycheck to match. Leadership shouldn't just look different; it should act different. So, bottom line is, this study isn't just a collection of numbers and facts but, it's a wake-up call. We can't keep pretending equality is just present there when it is not. Not unless everyone stops talking and starts doing. Because right now? Gender equality in the workplace is a facade.

### 8. Acknowledgement:

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