



Investigating the Workforce Participation Among Educated Women in Urban India

Rashi Mittal

Independent Researcher, Indraprastha World School, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi, India

E-mail: rashi.mittal2008@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v8i8.2849>

Abstract

Over the years, women's role and impact in the workforce have increased, shaping the modern economy. They have become an integral part of the global labour force in diverse sectors, from education, healthcare, science, and technology. The legal framework and gender stereotypes have significantly restricted women's participation in various sectors. Amid all the advancements and challenges, such as gender pay gaps, unequal representation in leadership roles, and balancing work with family responsibilities, still exist. This study examines how gender discrimination affects women's career advancement in four important fields: government, education, business, and entrepreneurship. It highlights the gender differences that affect professional achievements by exploring the intricate elements that influence women's career trajectories, salary discrepancies, and sector-specific challenges. The study emphasises the vital need for ongoing efforts to eradicate structural prejudices and advance an equal, diverse, and inclusive workforce through a thorough and comparative investigation of parameters offered to both genders. The findings of the study highlight that demographic variables have a great impact on how gender equality is perceived by the respondents. The sectoral variations also suggests that the gender wage disparity is influenced by sector-specific organizational cultures, policies and visibility of wage practices.

Keywords: *Women; Career Advancement; Government; Education; Corporate; Entrepreneurship; Economic Participation*

Introduction

Even though the world has advanced significantly in the twenty-first century, women still have a difficult time moving up the organizational ladder. Breaking down long-standing institutional and cultural hurdles that obstruct women's career advancement is essential to achieving true gender parity. Despite years of activism and the implementation of equal pay laws, gender-based income gaps still exist in the majority of developed countries, with women continuously earning less than men. As mentioned by

Cukrowska-Torzewska (2021) emphasizes the complexity of gender disparity in the labour market by pointing out that this wage difference is caused by several interconnected causes. Women's empowerment and employment are inextricably linked, and they meaningfully reinforce one another. India's rapid economic expansion has sparked revolutionary changes in women's lives and raised their level of labour market participation. Despite structural obstacles and prevalent socioeconomic norms, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of women working. The 2023 report on Female Labour Utilization in India states that policy interventions and government initiatives are still crucial for increasing the participation of women in the labour force. These initiatives actively support inclusive hiring practices and work to guarantee secure and fair workplaces for women in all industries.

Due to widespread prejudice against women caused by the deep-rooted stereotype, women are underrepresented across all sectors and businesses. Furthermore, societal norms around gender roles often pressure women to prioritise family responsibilities over career progress. Structural inequalities, such as gender pay gaps and limited access to mentorship and sponsorship opportunities, create barriers to entry and progression. Moreover, the entrenched biases in hiring and promotion processes can disadvantage women, perpetuating a cycle of underrepresentation in leadership positions (Thelma and Ngulube, 2024). Today, despite the tremendous progress made towards gender equality, women are still facing several barriers to reaching leadership positions at the very top levels of the corporate and organizational hierarchies. Top corporate roles such as CEO and board members continue to see a minority representation of women, and it continues to persist globally, with the gender gap in leadership remaining firmly intact, despite increased work entry for women (Ciappei et. al., 2023). This showcases that women at top of the hierarchies are facing similar obstacles in the major sectors.

Review of Literature

Jacob et. al. (2019) explored how longer commuting times affect well-being, focusing on gender differences. It finds that increased commuting lowers well-being for women but not for men. Women in full-time managerial roles or thin labor markets (fewer job opportunities locally) are most affected, especially those balancing work and family duties. Men generally commute longer but are less impacted. According to Abaz and Hadžić (2020), in Bosnia and Herzegovina, up to one-third of women who are economically active, which is half of the working-age population. The results imply that while women are aware of gender bias in the workplace, it does not represent their capacity for employment. To improve female participation in the labour market, effective laws and policies should be in place. On the other hand, an interesting argument by Larsson and Alvinus (2020) have examined in their study the critiqued gender-sensitive leadership research for not considering different work environments. It questions whether gender-specific leadership norms apply in male-dominated (e.g., military), female-dominated (e.g., healthcare), and mixed-gender settings. . The research aims to study self-reported leadership behaviors of men and women and make within-gender comparisons in these environments, . According to Wang and Klugman (2020), China initially advanced gender equality with policies like equal pay and social services, boosting female workforce participation however, economic growth has reversed many gains, with participation dropping and wage gaps widening.

A striking argument by Rembeza and Radlinska (2020) examined if women are still considered "secondary workers" in labor markets, focusing on gender differences in employment and unemployment flows across eight OECD countries. The research highlights progress in some areas but shows that women's labor market disadvantages remain in certain regions. However, in 2021, Tabassum and Nayak's research discussed how gender stereotypes, such as "Think Manager–Think Male," limit women's careers in management. Such stereotypes associate leadership qualities with males and, therefore, limit women's opportunities and reinforce patriarchal norms. Although perceptions have changed to some extent, systemic biases continue to exist around the world.

On the other side Schieckof and Sprengholz (2021) explored how female immigrants integrate into Europe's labour market. It highlights that immigrant women face unique challenges due to their gender and origin, often holding the most disadvantaged positions. Studies from 2000–2020 highlight trends and gaps in understanding these challenges, like self-employment or overlooked regions. Schiestl et. al. (2021) highlighted in their study that the interconnected role of individual, relational, and institutional factors enables refugee women's employment. This study interviewed nine refugee women and ten experts to explore how these women successfully found employment early in their integration process. Similarly, Cukrowska- Torzewska (2021) examined the gender wage gap in Poland, focusing on how education influences wage expectations. It finds that women in fields like mathematics, IT, and physics have higher wage expectations and no difference compared to men. The paper suggested that increasing women's presence in STEM fields could help reduce gender inequality in the labour market.

In 2022, Hobbins et. al. has explored how women balance dissonant culture based on interviews with women in higher ranks. With time, these women's styles become a hybrid of feminine and masculine traits as they accrue experience. By deviating from traditional patterns, they become transformation agents, reshape homosocial norms, then contribute to changing constructions of gender and leadership in organizations. Rimkute and Sugiharti (2022) used a nationally representative dataset, consisting of 32,559 women aged 15-49, from the 2017 Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey to study the household technology and employment among married women. Household technology increases the likelihood that women hold pink-collar (services) and white-collar (professional) jobs; however, it decreases women work blue-collar (manual labour) jobs and in agriculture. On the other hand Huang, C., & Huang, I. (2022) examines how gender discrimination hinders women's career advancement, impacting employee productivity. It highlights the prevalent paradigms of gender discrimination in organizations, particularly in India, and emphasizes the need for equality to foster sustainable growth. In 2022, Yousef Farhan examined the barriers women face in leadership, including sacrifices for family, risk aversion, and the perception that leadership's costs outweigh its benefits.

Moorthy et al (2022) evaluate the impact of gender inequality on women's career progression in Malaysia, focusing on patriarchy, gender stereotypes, organizational culture, family, and individual factors. The study also enhances theoretical understanding of the Glass Ceiling and feminist perspectives in this context. Kaplan's study in 2022 emphasized the invisible work and tasks that go unnoticed, unpaid, and unrecognized in the workplace. It focuses on how this affects men and women differently. Using interviews and surveys in Israel, the study found that women and disadvantaged groups do more invisible work than men, no matter their job or position.

In 2019, Jacob et al. examined the effects of commuting on well-being, highlighting gender differences. The finding of the study was that longer commutes caused by external factors lower well-being for women but not for men. In 2023, Ciappei et. al. has examined the impact of women in top corporate roles, such as CEOs and board members, on organizations. It highlights progress made through laws like Norway's 40% female board quota but notes ongoing debates about the benefits of gender diversity, with mixed results in areas like decision-making, financial stability, and sustainability. Barriers like the glass ceiling persist, though women are shown to enhance corporate social responsibility. The study emphasizes the need for continued support for female leaders and recommends further research to address gaps and evaluate the full impact of gender diversity in corporate leadership. Gender biases in hiring, evaluations, and promotions impose stricter standards on women, who are frequently rated more negatively than men. Men often act as gatekeepers to leadership positions. Tremmel and Wahl (2023) have examined gender stereotypes in leadership using explicit and implicit measures, focusing on how gender affects leadership opportunities and evaluations.

Cha et. al. (2023) highlights Japan's gender gap in leadership, with women holding only 11.2% of managerial positions, despite comprising 69.6% of the workforce. Traditional gender roles and a

significant pay gap hinder women's advancement. Leadership roles are often seen as challenging, deterring many women from pursuing them. In 2023, Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi, in their research, have focused on the issues women are trying to face in organizations to be effective leaders. According to Hernández et. al. (2023), the involvement of women in the labour market of Mexico is measured against the economic growth obtainable for each of the sampled years from 2000 to 2021. A 10% rise in employed women impacts GDP by 7.83% to 10.01%. In 2023, McLean et. al. explored in their study why some U.S. companies have more women in leadership roles while others do not. The research suggests that local cultural beliefs about gender roles strongly influence women's participation in leadership and the labor market. In 2023, Zharylouskaya's research looks at the value of international laws to achieve gender equality in the labor market. Hughes and Hewage (2023) examined how gender diversity reforms impact the inclusion of independent female directors on company boards and overall board independence across 41 countries. Onate et. al. (2023) examine the challenges faced by highly educated migrant women in the Basque Country, Spain, who moved for marriage. These women struggle with language barriers, lack of networks, traditional gender roles, and balancing family responsibilities while trying to find jobs that match their qualifications. According to Thelma and Ngulube (2024), despite progress, women still face barriers like the glass ceiling, stereotypes linking leadership to male traits, and societal expectations that hinder their advancement. Issues such as hiring bias, poor performance evaluations, and unequal promotions persist. Shanthaarchchi (2024) explored gender inequality around construction in Sri Lanka and identified various issues like the remuneration gap between males and females, limited prospects for growth in the profession, and socio-cultural setbacks. Khalid and Aftab (2023) investigated the impact of women's glass ceiling beliefs (denial, resilience, acceptance, and resignation) on their perceived career progression, with education acting as a moderating factor in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The study offers valuable theoretical and practical insights for policymaking and organizational practices aimed at promoting women's career advancement through education.

Ketchiwou, G. F., & Dzansi, L. (2023) explored how gender discrimination hinders the growth of productivity of employees, and how it prevents women from growing in their careers. In 2023, Galizzi et al. this study looks at the struggles women face in Italian accounting universities, where they are often held back by unfair systems and ideas that favor men. According to Hing et al (2023), gender inequities in the workplace focusing on the unfair treatment and outcomes for women as compared to men. Issues such as unequal pay, few leadership positions, and high rates of discrimination and harassment are presented as problems. According to Liu (2024), in Chinese society, traditional gender roles create issues like price discrimination in marriage and gender inequality in the workplace. The article suggests stronger laws, penalties for workplace discrimination, and promoting gender equality. Empowering women financially can reduce men's burdens, improve family harmony, and support social development and stability.

Another study in 2020, Wang and Klugman highlighted the need for better policies to improve opportunities and sustain gender equality in modern China. Another crucial argument put forth by Bhanumati and Vennila (2024) examined how gender discrimination impact on female commercial drivers' performance in Coimbatore's transportation sector. Data from 243 participants reveal that hiring and amenities discrimination significantly hinder performance, reducing organizational productivity. Kerimova (2021) investigated gender equality in career advancement at Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT), focusing on family and work-related factors. Ballesteros et al (2024) evaluated the impact of gender discrimination on women's competency development in the northern region of Peru in 2023. A survey of 450 women revealed that workplace discrimination negatively affects skills development but does not hinder career progression. Khan et al (2024) highlighted barriers to women's advancement in academic leadership in Pakistan, focusing on institutional, organizational, and individual factors. Through interviews with 37 women, it identifies cultural norms, male-dominated workforces, and internalized subjugation as key challenges. In 2024, Das and Sharma analysed how gender discrimination hinders the growth of productivity of employees, based on whether they are men or women.

After conducting an intensive literature review, a critical gap was identified that factors like stereotypes, policy frameworks, and certain specific factors were not much explored altogether. Therefore, this study aims to examine the factors impacting women's career advancement in diverse sectors and scrutinise the role of gender discrimination women face in different sectors.

Research Methodology

Methods of Research

In order to investigate the complex effects of gender discrimination on women's career progression in four crucial urban Indian sectors—government, education, business, and entrepreneurship—this study used a mixed-methods methodology. The research attempts to identify sector-specific subtleties and gender-based inequities influencing career paths and economic outcomes for educated women by combining quantitative data and thematic investigation.

Design and Goals of the Research

The study is organized around two main goals:

- To evaluate how gender differs in a few chosen sectors in terms of career progression, pay disparities, job prospects, mobility, and family-work balance.
- To assess how cultural factors and institutional regulations influence women's professional experiences and results.

Data Gathering Tool: Survey

Google Forms was used to distribute a structured survey that collected primary data. The questionnaire was painstakingly created to record professional experiences, career development trends, opinions of workplace inclusiveness, exposure to policy interventions, and demographic information. To enable complex answers and thematic depth, the poll used a combination of multiple-choice questions, open-ended prompts, and statements on a Likert scale.

Framework for Sampling

To guarantee equitable participation across the four sectors, a purposeful sampling technique was used. The survey was completed by 80 female professionals, 20 from each of the following sectors: business, education, government, and entrepreneurship. In addition to highlighting the unique opportunities and constraints faced by women in a variety of professional contexts, this stratified sectoral distribution facilitates comparative study.

Scope of Analysis

The collected data were subjected to both descriptive and thematic analysis:

- Quantitative responses were organized and evaluated using SPSS (IBM Software, V.23), a statistical tool, to identify patterns in income disparity, access to opportunities, and career stagnation.
- Qualitative inputs from open-ended responses were thematically coded to surface recurring narratives around discrimination, leadership, family pressures, and the perceived impact of institutional policies.

Together, these layers of analysis offer a multidimensional understanding of gender-based career barriers and inform actionable recommendations for inclusive workforce development.

Results and Discussion

This paper aims to shed some light on and discuss in detail and analysis the gender differentials that women go through in the major sectors, especially in the five major areas. These categories include education, corporate world, governmental jobs or positions, and entrepreneurship, which are analyzed by wage gaps, employment opportunities, career mobility, family development, and policy relevance.

Table 1: Cross Tabulation between Sector and Age of the Respondents. (Data collected through surveys).

Sector			Age					Total
			24-30	31-36	37-42	43-48	49-55	
Government	Count		8	6	6	0	0	20
	Row N%		40%	30%	30%	0	0	100%
Education	Count		8	6	4	2	0	20
	Row N%		40%	30%	20%	10%	0	100%
Corporate	Count		12	4	2	2	0	20
	Row N%		60%	20%	10%	10%	0	100%
Entrepreneur	Count		6	4	0	8	2	20
	Row N%		30%	20%	0	40%	10%	100%
Total	Count		34	20	12	12	2	80
	Row N%		42.5%	25%	15%	15%	2.5%	100%

Source: Primary Survey

A total of 80 responses were recorded, with 20 responses for each sector. Table 1 showcases the age demographics, and the survey data indicate a predominant representation of younger professionals, particularly within the 24-30 years age bracket. In the **government** sector, **40% responses** were received from the 24-30 years old age group, **30% responses** from the 31-36 years old age group, and **30% responses** from 37-42 years old age group. In the **education** sector, **40% responses** were received from 24-30 years old age group, **30% responses** from the 31-36 years old age group, **20% responses** from the 37-42 years old age group and **10% responses** from the 43-48 years old age group. In the **corporate** sector, **60% responses** were received from the 24-30 years old age group, **20% responses** from the 31-36 years old age group, **10% responses** from the 37-42 years old age group, and **10% responses** from the 43-48 years old age group. In the **entrepreneur** sector, **30% responses** were received from the 24-30 years old age group, **20% responses** from the 31-36 years old age group, **40% responses** from the 43-48 years old age group, and **10% responses** from the 49-55 years old age group.

Table 2: Cross Tabulation between Sector and Work Experience.

Sector			Work Experience (Years)					
			0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	Total
	Government	Count	12	8	0	0	0	20
		Row N %	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%	100%
	Education	Count	8	6	2	4	0	20
		Row N %	40%	30%	10%	20%	0%	100%
	Corporate	Count	10	4	2	4	0	20
		Row N %	50%	20%	10%	20%	0%	100%
	Entrepreneur	Count	8	2	2	0	8	20
		Row N %	40%	10%	10%	0%	40%	100%
	Total	Count	38	20	6	8	8	80
		Row N %	47.5%	25%	7.5%	10%	10%	100%

Source: Primary Survey

Table 2 shows the work experience of the responses from each sector. In the **government** sector, majority (**60%**) of responses are from female employees with 0-5 years of work experience, followed by **40%** responses with 6-10 years. In the **education** sector, **40%** responses are from 0-5 years of work experience followed by 6-10 years (**30% responses**), 11-15 years (**10% responses**), and 16-20 years (**20% responses**). In the **corporate** sector, **50% responses** are from the female employees with 0-5 years of experience followed by 20% responses with 6-10 years, **10%** (11-15 years), and **20%** (16-20 years). In the **entrepreneur** sector, **40% responses** are from the females' employees with 0-5 years and 21-25 years of experience: followed by **10% responses** with 6-10 and 11-15 years of experience.

Table 3: Bivariate between the Existence of Gender Wage Disparity and Sector

			Sector				
			Govern ment	Educ ation	Corporate	Entrepr eneur	Total
Existence of Gender wage disparity	Yes	Count	6	10	14	12	42
		Column N %	30%	50%	70%	60%	52.5%
	No	Count	14	10	6	8	38
		Column N %	70%	50%	30%	40%	47.5%
	Total	Count	20	20	20	20	80
		Column N %	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%

Source: Primary Survey

Table 3 showcases that a slight majority of respondents (52.5%) affirm that the gender wage disparity exists by indicating that a prevalent recognition of wage inequality, whereas 47.5% suggest that it does not exist. The sector-specific analysis elucidates that 30% government sector respondents, 50% education sector respondents, 70% corporate sector respondents, and 60% entrepreneur sector respondents have affirmed that the gender wage disparity exists. Whereas, 70% government sector respondents, 50% education sector respondents, 30% corporate sector respondents, and 40% entrepreneur sector respondents have dismissed the existence of gender wage disparity.

These sectoral variations suggest that the **perception of gender wage disparity is context-dependent, influenced by sector-specific organizational cultures, policies, and visibility of wage practices**. The divergence in responses underscores the importance of sector-targeted interventions and transparency initiatives to address wage disparities effectively. This implies that **government employment may be associated with more equitable pay practices**. Whereas, in the **education** sector, it reflects the **on-going debates about pay disparity within academic institutions**. In the **corporate** sector, this indicates that the **wage disparity is widely recognized, possibly due to the competitive and hierarchical nature of corporate environments**. In the **entrepreneur** sector, this depicts the **underlying potential concerns about wage gaps in entrepreneurial ventures**.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation between Sector and Recruitment of Women for Leadership and Decision-Making roles.

Sector			Recruitment of Women for Leadership and Decision-Making Roles			
			Based on merit	Rarely considered for leadership roles	Offered in Specific Areas/Department	Total
Government	Count		6	6	8	20
	Row N%		30%	30%	40%	100%
Education	Count		12	6	2	20
	Row N%		60%	30%	10%	100%
Corporate	Count		10	2	8	20
	Row N%		50%	10%	40%	100%
Entrepreneur	Count		6	8	6	20
	Row N%		30%	40%	30%	100%
Total	Count		34	22	24	80
	Row N %		27.2%	17.6%	19.2%	100%

Source: Primary Survey

Table 4 showcases how the recruitment of women for leadership and decision-making roles takes place in various sectors and identifies significant sectoral differences. In the **government** sector, an equal number of respondents (**30%**) confirm that the appointment of women is done based on merit and that women are not often shortlisted for leadership, reflecting a polarized perception of gender equality in leadership selection. Interestingly, **40% of the responses** indicate that women are offered leadership positions in specific departments or sectors, which points towards sectoral specialization rather than inclusive equality. The **education** sector, on the other hand, fares better, with **60% respondents** stating that women are hired on the basis of merit, and merely **10%** stating that women are given leadership positions in particular fields, which indicates a comparatively liberal attitude towards gender-neutral leadership. The **corporate** sector has a mixed picture with **50%** of the respondents recognize merit-based hiring, but a substantial **40%** describe women being presented with leadership posts only within limited fields, demonstrating partial institutional advance but ongoing compartmentalization. The **entrepreneur** sector has the most conservative trend, with just **30%** supporting merit-based hiring and a larger percentage (**40%**) claiming that women are hardly ever considered for leadership positions, in addition to **30%** being considered for specific department or sector roles in particular fields, indicating high levels of gendered barriers and few opportunities for women in entrepreneurial leadership. **In total, these results highlight sector-specific dynamics, where the education sector is at the forefront of equitable recruitment practices, while entrepreneurial and government sectors indicate deep-seated biases and limited gender parity in leadership roles.** This analysis indicates the imperative for targeted policy interventions to foster meritocracy and break down sectoral disparities in women's leadership opportunities in all sectors.

Table 5: Bivariate between Impact of Policies in Women's Career Advancement and Sector

Impact of Policies in Women's Career Advancement			Sector				
			Government	Education	Corporate	Entrepreneur	Total
	Yes	Count	4	16	16	10	46
		Column N %	20%	80%	80%	50%	57.5%
	No	Count	16	4	4	10	34
		Column N %	80%	20%	20%	50%	42.5%
	Total	Count	20	20	20	20	80
		Row N %	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%

Source: Primary Survey

Table 5 explains the different perceptions about the impact of policies on women's career development in four different sectors. The **government** sector have a strong disagreement, where **80%** of the respondents confirmed that policies do not have a significant impact on women's career development, compared to only **20%** disagreeing to it. Interestingly, the **education** and **corporate** sectors have a strong agreement, where **80%** of the respondents confirmed that policies have a significant impact on women's career development, compared to only **20%** disagreeing in each sector. This indicates that policy systems in education and corporate sectors are seen as comparatively effective or prominent in enabling women's career advancement. The **entrepreneur** sector offers a more even vision, with each being equally distributed (**50%** and **50%**) between believing or not that there is a policy impact on it, consistent with the new or scattered nature of women entrepreneurship policy frameworks. These insights stress sector-level disparities in the effectiveness of policies, calling for specially designed mechanisms tackling specific institution-specific challenges. **The extreme contrast between sectors implies that although policies are structurally available, their actual impact on the career path of women is subject to variables like institutional backing, cultural acceptability, and the presence of strong enforcement mechanisms, especially in the government industry.** Collectively, these findings underscore the need for targeted policy interventions and stepped-up implementation measures to close the perceptual gaps and promote fair career progression prospects for women in all fields.

Table 6: Case Processing Summary

Case Processing Summary				Pseudo R-Square Value	
		Frequency	Marginal Percentage	Nagelkerke	.856
Sector	Government	20	25.0%		
	Education	20	25.0%		
	Corporate	20	25.0%		
	Entrepreneur	20	25.0%		
Valid		80	100.0%		
Missing		0			
Total		80			
Subpopulation		35 ^a			

The Nagelkerke R-squared value of 0.856 indicates that this model accounts for 85.6% of the variance in the dependent variable, suggesting an excellent fit. This is often considered the most reliable Pseudo R-square for logistic regression. A Nagelkerke value of 0.856, which is high, suggests that the

model possesses significant explanatory power. This implies that the independent variables present in the model serve as effective predictors of the outcome. A high Nagelkerke value allows for increased confidence in the predictions made by the model. The model is expected to be dependable in forecasting the outcome based on the specified independent variables. In the context of evaluating various models, a higher Nagelkerke value can assist in identifying which model aligns better with the data. Here, a value of 0.856 indicates that the model is quite proficient. The robust explanatory power of the model can support decision-making efforts. For instance, if the model is utilized to forecast outcomes across different sectors (Government, Education, Corporate, Entrepreneur), a high Nagelkerke value signifies that the predictions are likely to be precise and beneficial for strategic planning.

Table 7: Logistic Regression Model.

Logistic Regression Model				
Effect	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	103.839	15.212	3	.002
Work Experience (Years)	125.526	36.900	3	.000
Age	88.635 ^a	.009	3	1.000
Gender wage disparity exists	97.859 ^a	9.232	3	.026
Hiring process (Gender bias)	88.683	.057	3	.996
Gender biases in your sector	95.888	7.261	3	.064
Recruitment of women for leadership and decision-making roles	92.691	4.064	3	.255
Mentorship programs or initiatives to support women's career progression	97.189	8.563	3	.036
Societal expectation affects women's career progression	98.847 ^a	10.220	3	.017
Any policies to support work-life balance for women	89.757	1.130	3	.770
Policies make an impact in the women's career growth	133.621	44.994	3	.000
The chi-square statistic is the difference in -2 log-likelihoods between the final model and a reduced model. The reduced model is formed by omitting an effect from the final model. The null hypothesis is that all parameters of that effect are 0.				
a. Unexpected singularities in the Hessian matrix are encountered. This indicates that either some predictor variables should be excluded or some categories should be merged.				

In Table 7, through a logistic regression model, the respondents' work experience and their reflections on whether policies make an impact in women's career development have been identified as the most significant factors. In this survey, the responses are more predominantly collected from the 0-5 years of work experience, followed by 6-10 years of work experience in the government, education, and corporate sectors. Whereas, in the entrepreneur sector the most responses are collected from 0-5 and 21-25 years of work experience. Therefore, the work experience of the respondents showcases that in this survey female employees of four diverse sectors have participated from beginner' level (0-5 years of work experience) to well-experienced and senior level (21-25 years of work experience). This indicates that the survey has covered responses from the one's who has just started their careers to the one's who have an extensive career. The survey also showcases that for the government sector, there was a strong

disagreement that the policies are having a significant impact. Whereas for the entrepreneur sector, half of them are agreeing to it and half of them are disagreeing. However, in the education and corporate sector, the majority of them support that these policies are making an impact in women's career development. The diverse responses indicate that the policies are working in different sectors and the kind of impact it has on women's career development. This highlights how the different sectors have policies which is making an impact in women's career advancement. Therefore, the sectors can work on implementing more efficient policies in their respective sectors. Furthermore, the work experience plays an important role. Therefore, the experienced employees can implement some impactful policies with reference to their experience and the employees who have just started their career can share suggest and implement policies with reference to the contemporary world.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that demographic variables like age and work experience greatly impact what the respondents think about gender equality, and the younger age groups (mainly 24-30 years old) dominate the responses in all industries, especially the corporate sector, where 60% of the responses came from this age group. This indicates that young career professionals are likely to have enhanced knowledge or sensitivity about gender differences, which is likely to be influenced by modern gender thinking and changing organizational cultures. It also highlights the sectoral variations by suggesting that the gender wage disparity is influenced by sector-specific organizational cultures, policies, and visibility of wage practices. Leadership recruitment patterns show a sectoral stratification; the educational sector shows a relatively progressive position, with 60% supporting merit-based appointment and few perceptions of gendered obstacles to leadership, while the entrepreneurial sector shows strong barriers, with 40% reporting that women are rarely considered for leadership positions. These observations underscore the underlying structural biases inhibiting women's progress, placing a focus on the need for specific policies aimed at creating opportunities for equitable leadership, particularly within entrepreneurial settings. Additionally, promoting awareness and accountability mechanisms is essential in bridging perceptual gaps and articulating policy frameworks into concrete results. In general, the results highlight the importance of being sensitive to gender disparities through a sophisticated, sector-specific approach that acknowledges individual organizational challenges and utilizes sectoral strengths in effectively advancing gender equity.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The primary limitation of this study is its focus on workforce participation among educated women in urban India only. Future research can be conducted on investigating the workforce participation among educated women in rural India and those belonging to lower strata, where an empirical study can be conducted to analyse the patterns, barriers and factors playing an important role among educated women's workforce participation. There is also a scope for further research focusing on the representation of women in leadership roles across various sectors in India. Studies like this could showcase the structural and cultural impediments that may hinder a woman's decision-making and leadership position.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

References

- Abaz, A. K., & Hadžić, A. (2020). Economic activity of women and young women in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the umbrella of traditional views of women's role in society. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 33(1), 2591–2605. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677x.2020.1751671>.
- Ballesteros, M. a. A., Enriquez, B. G. A., Ninaquispe, J. C. M., María, A. L. P. S., Farroñán, E. V. R., Castillo, J. C. A., Godos, K. M. A., & Celis, E. Y. A. (2024). Impact of gender discrimination on women's skill development in the workplace in a northern region of Peru – 2023. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 13(2), 134. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2024-0040>.
- Banumathi, R. C., & Vennila, D. (2024). Discrimination based on gender and how it affects employee performance. *NMIMS Management Review*, 32(1), 21–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09711023241260518>.
- Cha, H., Uchida, Y., & Choi, E. (2023). Gender differences in perceived legitimacy and status perception in leadership role. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1088190>.
- Ciappei, C., Liberatore, G., & Manetti, G. (2023). A systematic literature review of studies on women at the top of firm hierarchies: critique, gap analysis and future research directions. *Sustainability Accounting Management and Policy Journal*, 14(7), 202–231. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sampj-10-2022-0557>.
- Cukrowska-Torzewska, E. (2021). Gender gap in reservation wages and the choice of education field. *Applied Economics Letters*, 30(3), 319–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504851.2021.1985062>.
- Das, D., Sharma, R. K., ICFAI University, Dehradun, & ICFAI University, Dehradun. (2024). The impact of gender discrimination on women's sustainable career growth in organization. *Vidhyayana*, 162–163. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378880169>.
- Farhan, B. Y. (2022). Women leadership effectiveness: competitive factors and subjective and objective qualities. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2140513>.
- Galizzi, G., McBride, K., & Siboni, B. (2023). Patriarchy persists: Experiences of barriers to women's career progression in Italian accounting academia. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 99.
- Galsanjigmed, E., & Sekiguchi, T. (2023). Challenges Women Experience in Leadership Careers: An Integrative review. *Merits*, 3(2), 366–389. <https://doi.org/10.3390/merits3020021>.
- Gong, B. (2023). The Gender Gap in Leadership is Shrinking-A Literature Review. In *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research/Advances in social science, education and humanities research* (pp. 885–890). https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-062-6_115.
- Hernández, E. F., Pérez-Soto, F., & Pérez-Figueroa, R. A. (2023). Women in the labor market and economic growth in Mexico. *Agro Productividad*. <https://doi.org/10.32854/agrop.v16i9.2539>.
- Hing, L. S. S., Sakr, N., Sorenson, J. B., Stamarski, C. S., Caniera, K., & Colaco, C. (2023). Gender inequities in the workplace: A holistic review of organizational processes and practices. *Human Resource Management Review*, 33(3), 100968.
- Hobbins, J., Kristiansen, E., & Carlström, E. (2022). Women, Leadership, and Change – Navigating between Contradictory Cultures. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 31(3), 209–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2022.2098377>.

- Huang, C., & Huang, I. (2022). Women's gender discrimination difference in workplace. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 12(2), 101. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v12i2.19539>.
- Jacob, N., Munford, L., Rice, N., & Roberts, J. (2019). The disutility of commuting? The effect of gender and local labor markets. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 77, 264–275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2019.06.001>.
- Jacob, N., Munford, L., Rice, N., & Roberts, J. (2019). The disutility of commuting? The effect of gender and local labor markets. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 77, 264–275. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2019.06.001>.
- Kaplan, A. (2022). “Just Let it Pass by and it Will Fall on Some Woman”: Invisible Work in the Labor Market. *Gender & Society*, 36(6), 838–868. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432221128544>.
- Kerimova, I. (2021). Career advancement and gender equity in academia. *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research (JEECAR)*, 8(3), 389–410.
- Ketchiwou, G. F., & Dzansi, L. (2023). Examining the impact of gender discriminatory practices on women's development and progression at work. *Businesses*, 3(2), 347–367. <https://doi.org/10.3390/businesses3020022>.
- Khalid, K., & Aftab, S. (2023). Women's glass-ceiling beliefs and their perceived career progression: a tale of two countries. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 36(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677x.2023.2188914>.
- Khan, M., Sulaiman, R., Nazir, O., Khan, S., & Awan, S. (2024). The unseen in the glass ceilings: examining women's career advancement in higher education institutions through a multi-level institutional lens. *Human Resource Development International*, 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2024.2342762>.
- Larsson, G., & Alvinus, A. (2019). Comparison within gender and between female and male leaders in female-dominated, male-dominated and mixed-gender work environments. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 29(7), 739–750. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2019.1638233>.
- Liu, Z. (2024). Causes and analysis of sex discrimination in price Discrimination. *Highlights in Business Economics and Management*, 24, 2307–2316. <https://doi.org/10.54097/3axsby28>.
- McLean, R. D., Pirinsky, C., & Zhao, M. (2023). Corporate leadership and inherited beliefs about gender roles. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*, 58(8), 3274–3304. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022109023000431>.
- Moorthy, K., Salleh, N. M. Z. N., T'ing, L. C., Ling, L. P., Yeng, D. M., Ning, L. J., Sin, L. J., & Mun, L. P. (n.d.). Gender inequality affecting women's career progression in Malaysia. *Virtual Commons - Bridgewater State University*. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol23/iss1/32>.
- Oñate, C. M., Di Martino, M. L., & Aristegui, I. (2023). Highly Educated Women: Exploring Barriers and Strategies for labour integration in an emotional migratory process. *Social Sciences*, 12(12), 687. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12120687>.
- Poletti-Hughes, J., & Dimungu-Hewage, D. (2022). The effectiveness of gender diversity reforms and the impact of a familial culture: a spillover effect on board independence. *British Journal of Management*, 34(3), 1316–1339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12660>.

- Poletti-Hughes, J., & Dimungu-Hewage, D. (2022). The effectiveness of gender diversity reforms and the impact of a familial culture: a spillover effect on board independence. *British Journal of Management*, 34(3), 1316–1339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12660>.
- Rembeza, J., & Radlińska, K. (2020). LABOR MARKET DISCRIMINATION – ARE WOMEN STILL MORE SECONDARY WORKERS? *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 22(1), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.3846/jbem.2020.13648>.
- Rimkute, A., & Sugiharti, L. (2022). The link between occupations, labor force participation of married women, and household technology in Indonesia. *Journal of Population and Social Studies*, 31, 20–37. <https://doi.org/10.25133/jpssv312023.002>.
- Schieckoff, B., & Sprengholz, M. (2021). The labor market integration of immigrant women in Europe: context, theory, and evidence. *SN Social Sciences*, 1(11). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00279-3>.
- Schiestl, D. W., Kittel, B., & Bollerhoff, M. I. (2021). Conquering the labour market: the socioeconomic enablement of refugee women in Austria. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00267-9>.
- Shanthaarchchi, A. A. (2024). Participation of female workforce in the construction sector in Sri Lanka: challenges and policy implications. *Sri Lanka Journal of Economic Research*, 11(2), 119–130. <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljer.v11i2.207>.
- Shim, J., & Kong, J. (2023). Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Empowering Women in the Korean Labor Market after COVID-19. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v15n2.06>.
- Tabassum, N., & Nayak, B. S. (2021). Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on Women's Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review*, 10(2), 192–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2277975220975513>.
- Thelma, C. C., & Ngulube, L. (2024). Women in Leadership: Examining Barriers to women's advancement in leadership positions. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 18(6), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajarr/2024/v18i6671>.
- Tremmel, M., & Wahl, I. (2023). Gender stereotypes in leadership: Analyzing the content and evaluation of stereotypes about typical, male, and female leaders. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1034258>.
- Wang, L., & Klugman, J. (2020). How women have fared in the labour market with China's rise as a global economic power. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 7(1), 43–64. <https://doi.org/10.1002/app5.293>.
- Zharylouskaya, M. (2023). LEGAL ASPECTS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET. *Topos*, 2023–2, 38–54. <https://doi.org/10.61095/1815-0047-2023-2-38-54>.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).