

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS



Open Access, Refereed Journal Multi-Disciplinary
Peer Reviewed

www.ijlra.com

DISCLAIMER

No part of this publication may be reproduced or copied in any form by any means without prior written permission of Managing Editor of IJLRA. The views expressed in this publication are purely personal opinions of the authors and do not reflect the views of the Editorial Team of IJLRA.

Though every effort has been made to ensure that the information in Volume II Issue 7 is accurate and appropriately cited/referenced, neither the Editorial Board nor IJLRA shall be held liable or responsible in any manner whatsoever for any consequences for any action taken by anyone on the basis of information in the Journal.

Copyright © International Journal for Legal Research & Analysis

EDITORIALTEAM

EDITORS

Dr. Samrat Datta

Dr. Samrat Datta Seedling School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University, Jaipur. Dr. Samrat Datta is currently associated with Seedling School of Law and Governance, Jaipur National University, Jaipur. Dr. Datta has completed his graduation i.e., B.A.LL.B. from Law College Dehradun, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, Srinagar, Uttarakhand. He is an alumnus of KIIT University, Bhubaneswar where he pursued his post-graduation (LL.M.) in Criminal Law and subsequently completed his Ph.D. in Police Law and Information Technology from the Pacific Academy of Higher Education and Research University, Udaipur in 2020. His area of interest and research is Criminal and Police Law. Dr. Datta has a teaching experience of 7 years in various law schools across North India and has held administrative positions like Academic Coordinator, Centre Superintendent for Examinations, Deputy Controller of Examinations, Member of the Proctorial Board



Dr. Namita Jain



Head & Associate Professor

School of Law, JECRC University, Jaipur Ph.D. (Commercial Law) LL.M., UGC-NET Post Graduation Diploma in Taxation law and Practice, Bachelor of Commerce.

Teaching Experience: 12 years, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION of Dr. Namita Jain are - ICF Global Excellence Award 2020 in the category of educationalist by I Can Foundation, India. India Women Empowerment Award in the category of "Emerging Excellence in Academics by Prime Time & Utkrish Bharat Foundation, New Delhi. (2020). Conferred in FL Book of Top 21 Record Holders in the category of education by Fashion Lifestyle Magazine, New Delhi. (2020). Certificate of Appreciation for organizing and managing the Professional Development Training Program on IPR in Collaboration with Trade Innovations Services, Jaipur on March 14th, 2019

Mrs.S.Kalpna

Assistant professor of Law

Mrs.S.Kalpna, presently Assistant professor of Law, VelTech Rangarajan Dr.Sagunthala R & D Institute of Science and Technology, Avadi. Formerly Assistant professor of Law,Vels University in the year 2019 to 2020, Worked as Guest Faculty, Chennai Dr.Ambedkar Law College, Pudupakkam. Published one book. Published 8Articles in various reputed Law Journals. Conducted 1Moot court competition and participated in nearly 80 National and International seminars and webinars conducted on various subjects of Law. Did ML in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Administration.10 paper presentations in various National and International seminars. Attended more than 10 FDP programs. Ph.D. in Law pursuing.



Avinash Kumar



Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC – NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR – Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.

ABOUT US

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH & ANALYSIS ISSN- 2582-6433 is an Online Journal is Monthly, Peer Review, Academic Journal, Published online, that seeks to provide an interactive platform for the publication of Short Articles, Long Articles, Book Review, Case Comments, Research Papers, Essay in the field of Law & Multidisciplinary issue. Our aim is to upgrade the level of interaction and discourse about contemporary issues of law. We are eager to become a highly cited academic publication, through quality contributions from students, academics, professionals from the industry, the bar and the bench. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH & ANALYSIS ISSN 2582-6433 welcomes contributions from all legal branches, as long as the work is original, unpublished and is in consonance with the submission guidelines.

STRIVING FOR BALANCE: UNDERSTANDING GENDER DISPARITIES IN LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

AUTHORED BY - MD IMRAN PERWEZ¹ & RITICK DUBEY²

ABSTRACT

Gender disparities that lead to imbalances have always been a problem. As the population grows, gender disparity continues to be a problem for each developing nation. It unapologetically extends to significant economic setbacks and eventually connects and weaves a path to other everyday issues that arise. These gender disparities are also linked to low labor force participation, which results from underutilizing prospective human resources. Consequently, gender disparities impact the economy holistically, encompassing social and cultural aspects, political facets, and geographic dimensions. These characteristics in turn encourage rivalry on a national and international scale, pressuring decision-makers to confront the pervasive problem of gender inequality.

With an emphasis on societal norms, educational opportunities, economic structures, and governmental regulations, this article explores the complex elements that contribute to gender imbalances and how these imbalances impact a nation's overall progress. In the context of India, it further investigates the relationship between gender disparities and labour force participation, examining the obstacles and possibilities to improve gender equality in the workplace.

KEYWORDS: - Female labour force participation, Gender Disparity, Women's status, Policies, Legal status.

¹4th Year BALLB Law student, Amity Law School, Ranchi, Amity University, Jharkhand, Contact- 7050008894; Email- Imranperwez@gmail.com

² 3rd Year LLB(H) Law student, Amity Law School, Ranchi, Amity University, Jharkhand, Contact- 7261074237; Email- ritickdubey2002@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Gender and labour force participation are important indicators of economic development and social equality. However, there are significant disparities between men and women in terms of their participation in the labour market, both within and across countries. According to the periodic labour force survey annual report 2022-2023, there is an estimated increase in LFPR for both men and women. The ratio of male participation has increased from 75.8% in 2017-18 to 78.5% in 2022-23 and female participation has increased from 23.3% to 37.0% correspondingly.³ It is on the one hand, great news if one has to see the rise in female participation, however on the other hand it shadows the alarming fact that after more than 75 years of independence, the Bharat cannot be called Atmanirbhar in a true sense as the women participation rate is not even 40%.⁴

In this context even globally the gender gap has remained an all-time issue and women's participation across the whole globe is 50% compared to men which is 80%.⁵ It should also be noted that in higher-income countries female participation remains higher than compared to low-income countries, thus reducing the gender gap. In India, the gender gap remains at 57% points compared to other lower-middle-income countries which is 10% points.⁶ This shows how India is lagging compared to other countries.

India's LFPR is massively low and can be studied by two main questions: One, how many women are willing to work, and second, how many are engaged in work for pay. However, the most striking feature in India is that during the 1990s and onwards which was a period of rapid growth of industrialization and export the WPR saw a declining trend, unlike other dynamic Asian economies where participation of women in work doubled.

This labour force participation can be rightly used to indicate the women's status in a country as the studies also show that countries with higher work participation have a better sense of gender equity. When it comes to narrowing the gender gap, equality, and empowerment can also go hand in hand. For any woman, equal opportunities, equal wages, equal power, and equal

³Service, P.N. (2023) *India's unemployment rate falls to 3.2% during July '22 -june '23*, Pragativadi. Availableat: <https://pragativadi.com/indias-unemployment-rate-falls-to-3-2-during-july-22-june-23/> (Accessed: 07 February 2025).

⁴Ibid

⁵WorldBank (no date) *Female Labor Force Participation*, World Bank Gender Data Portal. Available at: <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/data-stories/flfp-data-story/> (Accessed: 07 February 2025).

⁶Ibid

scope can lead to a sense of self-empowerment as well. However, this sense of self-empowerment when it comes to women does not arise by themselves but needs a supporting hand, the hands that have been demoralizing the women's position as a bread-earner of the family from ancient times, especially in India.

LOW PARTICIPATION OR LOW RECOGNITION?

It is indeed a fact that female participation has been significantly lower compared to other lower-middle-income countries. However, an intriguing issue arises: are women unwilling to participate, or is their work going unrecognized? It is not that women do not work at all, but rather that a substantial amount of their work is unpaid and often overlooked. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the shift from "household work" to "household duties," leaving a large number of workers unrecognized.

Suppose one were to consider household duties such as cooking, cleaning, weaving, fetching water, tutoring, knitting, and others as part of economic activity, in that case almost 90% of Indian women are contributing to the workforce.⁷ These household activities hold economic potential when performed by hired workers, contributing to economic activity. However, when women undertake these tasks, they are not considered economic activities.

Even the female workers who are part of the workforce are often engaged in family enterprises without receiving individual remuneration. Their ability to seek employment outside the family enterprise is hindered by the time consumed in other unpaid activities.⁸ Additionally, when they do seek employment, society tends to undervalue them due to the prevailing perception of women being accustomed to unpaid or low-wage work (Sengupta & Puri, 2021)⁹. Consequently, the high gender wage gap in India is primarily a result of the low recognition of women as workers, leading to lower income.

Moreover, women tend to be clustered in unskilled work, particularly in care activities or basic

⁷Deora, S. (2023) *What's going on with India's female labour force participation?: IDR, India Development Review*. Available at: <https://idronline.org/article/gender/whats-going-on-with-indias-female-labour-force-participation/> (Accessed: 07 February 2025, Last visited: 7.45 p.m.).

⁸Samantroy, E. and Nandi, S. (2022) 'Introduction', in *Gender, Unpaid work and Care in India*. 1st edn. Taylor & Francis.

⁹*The gender pay gap in India: Progress made and challenges ahead* (2023) *India Employer Forum*. Available at: <https://indiaemployerforum.org/2023/05/03/the-gender-pay-gap-in-india-progress-made-and-challenges-ahead/> (Accessed: 7 February 2025, Last visited: 8 p.m.)

tasks. This pattern, known as the feminization of work¹⁰ results in both women and men engaged in such activities receiving lower wages. This categorization often relegates women to secondary earners within households due to limited power and mobility. Women find themselves under the control of other male family members, perpetuating their economic vulnerability.

The unpaid work performed by women serves as a substantial subsidy to the economy, essentially functioning as a significant "freebie" that benefits the overall economic recognition. Unfortunately, this work remains largely unrecognized and overshadowed. In conclusion, the core issue lies in the low recognition of women's work, which perpetuates gender disparities in income and opportunities. Addressing this recognition gap is crucial for creating a more equitable and inclusive workforce.¹¹

ABSENCE OF AGENCY

In India, the historical subjugation of women has endured for centuries, relegating them to a lower position in various aspects of life, primarily confined to traditional roles as wives and mothers. Throughout time, dating back to the Rigveda period around 1500 BC, women have not been accorded primary importance within households. The pervasive influence of patriarchy has not only persisted but continues to dominate society, exerting control over agency and decision-making. The absence of women's agency is at the core of patriarchy, effectively governing their labor participation. This control manifests in assigning women to predefined "duties," limiting their mobility and economic autonomy, thereby denying them intrinsic value. Consequently, women, functioning as workers, often find themselves relegated to a role akin to volunteers, lacking the empowerment and recognition they deserve.

PROMISE TO A BETTER SOCIAL LIFE?

Despite the apparent growth in our country's economy and overall development, the issue of gender-based injustice continues to persist among workers. While we proudly celebrate our nation's diversity, encompassing various cultures, traditions, and languages, we often overlook the foundational principles outlined in our Preamble. It is not just about being the

¹⁰ibid

¹¹Stamarski, C.S. and Son Hing, L.S. (2015) *Gender inequalities in the workplace: The effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism*, *Frontiers*. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01400/full> (Accessed: 07 February 2025).

SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC, and REPUBLIC of India; it is about fulfilling certain assurances. Foremost among these is the commitment to SOCIAL JUSTICE, followed by ECONOMIC and POLITICAL JUSTICE. The second pledge is to uphold LIBERTY, followed by EQUALITY, and then FRATERNITY, all aimed at preserving the DIGNITY of our citizens. Additionally, the Preamble implies a promise to foster a better social life, which, unfortunately, remains elusive, especially in the context of persistent gender inequality. Lastly, we are bound to maintain the UNITY AND INTEGRITY of our nation. While these constitutional features aim to dismantle the divisions imposed by colonialism, the challenge of gender inequality remains deeply entrenched.

The Constitution of India further grants Article 14 to all its' citizen including women. It provides protection to all it's people by granting them the right to equal privileges and opportunities and clearly prohibits any discrimination based on religion, caste, race, sex, or place of birth. Although, this is a non-negotiable fundamental right provided in part 3 of our Indian Constitution, yet there have been many instances where equality is uneven giving rise to socio-economic disparities and biases. Therefore, if not absolute equality, equity is essential for a just society. In one of the cases, the court held that there can be no discrimination solely on the basis of gender. Equality cannot be achieved in any field if women will not be given equal opportunities. It was also stated that "the registrar of the Trade Union should not allow or see that no other trade union should make any such provision which is inconsistent with the constitutional provisions".¹² The Apex Court has also quashed an employment rule, which required the unmarried woman to give up her position when she married, as violative of Articles 14 and 15.¹³ Furthermore, the Constitution also lays down the following:

Articles 15(1), 15(2), and 16(2): These articles strongly prohibit discrimination based on a person's sex. This means that no one can be treated unfairly or differently just because they are male or female.

Article 16: This article ensures that equal opportunity is granted to all citizens in matters of public employment.

¹² Charu Khurana v. Union of India, 2015 1 SCC 192

¹³ Bombay Labour Union v. International Franchise, AIR 1966 SC 942; C.B. Muthamma v. Union of India, AIR 1979 SC 1868

Article 19(1): This article guarantees that all citizens have the right to express themselves freely and to share their thoughts and ideas without fear of censorship.

Article 21: This article ensures that every person has the right to live with dignity. It emphasizes the importance of a respectful and decent existence for everyone.

Equality Before Law: The idea of equality before the law means that everyone should be treated the same way by the legal system, regardless of their sex. The constitution supports this principle, suggesting that a person's sex should not matter when it comes to their rights, except when the constitution specifically mentions it (for instance, providing special protections for women under Article 15(3)).

"Sex Blind" Constitution: The phrase "sex blind" means that the constitution does not take a person's sex into account when applying its laws and provisions. In essence, the constitution aims to treat everyone equally, regardless of whether they are male or female, unless there are specific provisions made for certain groups.

The court elaborated *“Sexual orientation is a ground analogous to sex and that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not permitted by Article 15. Further, Article 15(2) incorporates the notion of horizontal application of rights. In other words, it even prohibits discrimination of one citizen by another in matters of access to public spaces. In our view, discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is impermissible even on the horizontal application of the right enshrined under Article 15.”*¹⁴

*Furthermore, Gender identity was held to be an essential part of personal identity and gender expression by the Supreme court.*¹⁵

Thus the principles of equality outlined in a country's constitution have led to specific governance practices aimed at addressing gender issues. Governments are recognizing that their policies and budgets can affect men and women differently. Since 2005-06, India has implemented “Gender Budget Statements,” which are financial documents that aim to allocate resources specifically to tackle gender inequalities. This means that the government is trying to ensure that spending addresses the different needs of men and women. The statement

¹⁴ *Naz Foundation v. NCT of Delhi*

¹⁵ *NALSA v. UOI*, (2014) SCC 438

emphasizes that simply stating that everyone is equal isn't enough; actual money and resources must be directed toward correcting past inequalities that women face. To further this goal, governments are also conducting gender impact assessments, which evaluate how new laws and policies will affect different genders. This helps ensure that the principles of equality in the constitution are put into practice in everyday government decisions. However, there are persistent gaps between what is promised and what is practiced. This gap arises because of various other factors discussed below:

PERPETUATED MINDSET

Mohan Bhagwat said, "Husband and wife are involved in a contract under which the husband has said to the wife that 'you take care of my house and I will take care of all your needs' and till the time wife follows the contract the husband stays with her and if she violates the contract, he can disown her".¹⁶ This statement seems to be working at many levels as it is not an isolated view even though people accept it or not. What is therefore important to note here is that India's growth pattern is unusual wherein the growth without the involvement of all the potential workers in the economy and the growth has relied on inequality of all kinds; by caste, gender, ethnicity, language, place; thus, discriminating most cruelly and systematically. Thus, gendering work participation has impacted women; first because of being a woman and then because they belong to any backward area and marginalized class resulting in discrimination above discrimination. Excluding a privileged few, all these factors create a system where it becomes hard for women to empower themselves. Indian capitalism has relied on these inequalities that extract very cheap labour from one section and enable earning profit to another section, giving a false notion of labour productivity. Instead, the focus should be on how much we are losing as human potential. It is when all the human potential which is a great resource of any country is utilized in a fully efficient manner, it is given that the economy will see a great boost in its income. Thus, not using all the workers and denying them opportunities is a total waste as it does not include the actual number of workers available in the workers who participate in the labor market.

¹⁶Bagish K Jha / TNN / Updated: Jan 6, 2013 (no date) *Marriage is like contract between husband & wife: Mohan Bhagwat: India News - Times of India, The Times of India*. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Marriage-is-like-contract-between-husband-wife-Mohan-Bhagwat/articleshow/17911402.cms> (Accessed: 07 February 2025).

EDUCATION: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REDUCING THE GENDER GAP?

The 2023 Annual Status of Education Report highlights a discrepancy in career aspirations among rural boys and girls in India. While both genders aspire to become Doctors or Engineers, boys tend to dominate STEM courses, revealing a gender gap in the pursuit of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Additionally, the National Achievement Survey of 2017 indicates learning parity between boys and girls in Elementary and Secondary classes nationwide.

Despite a notable increase in the mean years of schooling for girls, from 1.7 years in 1990 to 4.7 in 2018, the gender gap has widened. For males, the increase is more substantial, rising from 4.1 to 8.2 years, resulting in an expanded gender gap from 2.4 to 3.5 years.¹⁷

The challenge is exacerbated by social and economic barriers leading to higher girl dropouts. Deep-seated gender stereotypes limit girls' educational opportunities, as they often face constraints in attending private institutions. The investment in girls' education is disproportionately low, with most enrolled in government institutions, restricting their choices.

POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT

Despite the increase in the introduction of policies in the form of MISSION SHAKTI that includes components such as Women Help Lines, One Stop Centres, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sakhi Niwas (Working Women's Hostels), Palna (crèches for children of working women), etc., increasing the paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, providing reservation nup to 33 percent, UJJWALA SCHEME, and many others whose outcome is female Labor Force Participation is only 25.1 percent as per the report of Ministry of Labor and Employment in the year 2020-21 which is lower than the global average of 47 percent.¹⁸ "India's female labor force participation rate continues to be substantially low and we cannot make peace with just incremental progress," said Rituparna Chakraborty, cofounder, and executive vice president,

¹⁷*Gender equity in education: A focus on early childhood* (2024) *Civildaily*. Available at: <https://www.civildaily.com/news/gender-equity-in-education-a-focus-on-early-childhood> (Accessed: 07 February 2025).

¹⁸*Unemployment rates fall from 5.8 per cent in 2018-19 to 4.2 per cent in 2020-21* (no date) *Press Information Bureau*. Available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1894913> (Accessed: 07 February 2024).

of TeamLease Services¹⁹.

It is indeed a terrible fact that India being one of the Global leaders in the world is unable to ensure more than half of the women of this country employability, empowerment, and safety to women workers and encourage them to join. Aanganwadi workers and ASHA workers are not paid minimum wages. It is said that we run the largest INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCHEME but then why is it the largest scheme; mainly because no other country calls it a scheme but a part of general public employment where the women are treated as regular public employees. We run the National Health Mission under the back of women and the government is without question using this unequal status of women for economic benefits. Thus, a shift from the system of under paid workers who are so-called volunteers to a regular public employee is quickly needed. There is still an immense need to address the issues of gender gaps and gender wage gaps, the high burden of unpaid domestic work, low recognition and acceptance, the quality of education imparted to women over men, and many such factors that have been only recognized in textbooks.

Therefore, more concerted and coordinated efforts are required from the government, the private sector, the civil society, and the women themselves to improve the situation of women and work in India.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR A HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Undoubtedly, substantial efforts have been exerted to narrow the gender gap, dismantle ingrained stereotypes, and disseminate education across all strata of society. Initiatives aimed at facilitating women's progress and fostering equitable competition with men have been implemented. Measures to curb pervasive sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace, have sought to prevent women from withdrawing from the workforce. Schemes encompassing maternity benefits and reservations have significantly contributed to empowering women and enabling their robust participation in various employment sectors.²⁰

However, despite these commendable endeavors, the harsh reality persists, marked by an

¹⁹*Business News Today: Read latest business news, India Business News Live, Share Market & Economy News* (no date) *The Economic Times*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/> (Accessed: 07 February 2025).

²⁰Banerjee, M. (2019) 'Gender Equality and labour force participation: Mind the gap', *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 4(1), pp. 113–123. doi:10.1177/2455632719831827.

augmentation of disparities and injustices to a comparable extent. Despite the well-intentioned schemes designed to address diverse challenges, a discernible negative outcome is evident, primarily attributable to an ineffective redressal mechanism. Complaints lodged by women are often treated as an unfortunate norm of their lives, casually dismissed without due consideration, perpetuating an environment where gender-based issues are not accorded the seriousness they merit. This systemic flaw undermines the intended impact of these initiatives, necessitating a comprehensive overhaul of the redressal system to ensure that women's grievances are treated with the gravity they deserve, thereby fostering a more just and equitable society.

To ameliorate the gender gap in India and augment female participation in the labor force, a comprehensive approach encompassing multifaceted strategies is imperative. Focusing on the paramount principle of gender equity over mere equality, the transformative journey begins with challenging entrenched societal norms and fostering an environment that values and acknowledges the pivotal role of women in both professional and domestic spheres, rural and urban.²¹

A pivotal aspect of this transformative agenda involves fortifying legal frameworks to redress gender-based discrimination and harassment within workplaces. Establishing robust grievance redressal mechanisms within organizations is indispensable, instilling confidence in women to report incidents without apprehension of reprisal.²²

Economic empowerment emerges as a linchpin in this paradigm, necessitating policies that rectify the gender pay gap and ensure parity in compensation for equivalent roles²³. Concurrently, endeavors to propel women's entrepreneurship should be underpinned by financial assistance, mentorship programs, and facilitative market access.

Crafting inclusive policies, augmenting maternity leave provisions, and advocating for paternity leave fosters an environment that embraces shared responsibilities. Flexible work

²¹ UMA (2021) 'Changing patterns of female work participation in rural and Urban India', *VEETHIKA-An International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 7(1), pp. 1–7. doi:10.48001/veethika.2021.07.01.001.

²²Banerjee, M. (2019) 'Gender Equality and labour force participation: Mind the gap', *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*, 4(1), pp. 113–123. doi:10.1177/2455632719831827.

²³*The gender pay gap in India: Progress made and challenges ahead* (2023) *India Employer Forum*. Available at: <https://indiaemployerforum.org/2023/05/03/the-gender-pay-gap-in-india-progress-made-and-challenges-ahead/> (Accessed: 10 February 2025).

arrangements and remote work options are imperative in accommodating the diverse needs of women in the workforce.

In tandem, educational reform is vital, ensuring equitable access for girls by addressing barriers such as affordability, safety, and cultural constraints. Encouraging female participation in STEM education becomes instrumental in diversifying career choices and bridging gender gaps in traditionally male-dominated fields.²⁴

Skill development initiatives tailored for women should be devised to enhance employability, with a focus on vocational training and apprenticeships aligning with the demands of emerging industries. Furthermore, championing financial literacy programs equips women with banking, investments, and financial planning knowledge, fostering economic autonomy. Establishing supportive workplace cultures is paramount, entailing the promotion of diversity and inclusion. Mentorship and sponsorship programs play a pivotal role in guiding and supporting women throughout their professional trajectories.

Government initiatives, strategic use of reservations, advocating for women's participation in decision-making roles, and periodically revisiting and refining policies, form a foundational pillar of this transformative agenda. Concurrently, community engagement becomes instrumental in dismantling entrenched gender roles, fostering a collective understanding of the societal benefits emanating from equal opportunities for both men and women.²⁵

More importantly there should be an effective implementation of various laws enacted for the purpose of gender justice like, Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, Prevention of Sexual harassment at Workplace Act and many others.

Thus, achieving gender equity mandates a concerted and collaborative effort from diverse

²⁴*Encouraging participation of women in STEM* (no date) *The Economic Times*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/information-tech/encouraging-participation-of-women-in-stem/articleshow/90080845.cms> (Accessed: 10 February 2025).

²⁵*The gender pay gap in India: Progress made and challenges ahead* (2023) *India Employer Forum*. Available at: <https://indiaemployerforum.org/2023/05/03/the-gender-pay-gap-in-india-progress-made-and-challenges-ahead/> (Accessed: 10 February 2025).

stakeholders. This transcendent endeavor requires continual commitment, adaptive policy measures, and a cultural shift toward a more inclusive and equitable society.

CONCLUSION

The pervasive issue of gender disparity and diminished participation in the workforce encapsulates a myriad of societal and economic challenges. Child marriages, women's health concerns, maternity issues, intersectionality, marginalization, and sexual harassment collectively contribute to widening gaps that often go unrecognized. These factors collectively impact gender disparities and subsequently hinder labour force engagement. At the core of this predicament lies a deep-seated division grounded in gender, perpetuated by stereotypical notions, biases, and purported masculinity that restricts women from assuming roles traditionally held by men, undermining their status. Consequently, the lack of support and guidance emerges as a pivotal factor in this intricate economic quandary of gender inequality.

Addressing this complex issue demands serious attention, not only for economic prosperity but also to bolster a country's standing on the global stage. Policies and initiatives should transcend mere rhetoric and be meticulously designed to translate into tangible realities, with the active involvement of all segments of society. Government interventions should not merely allocate provisions for women; instead, they must strive to foster a societal environment where opportunities are distributed equitably, prioritizing equity over mere equality. Discrimination in the workplace based on gender hierarchy, race, caste, and other factors should not only be eradicated but also legally penalized.

Moreover, recognizing the economic potential inherent in every individual, regardless of gender, is crucial. Harnessing the talents and capabilities of the entire population, without discrimination, can significantly contribute to economic growth. Exploiting the potential of every human, irrespective of gender, not only promotes fairness but also enhances productivity and innovation. By breaking down gender barriers, societies can tap into a broader pool of talent, leading to a more dynamic and robust economy. Embracing diversity in the workforce is not just a moral imperative but a strategic move that can fuel economic progress and competitiveness on the global stage.

In conclusion, a holistic approach is imperative to combat the multifaceted challenges posed by gender inequality and low workforce participation. Efforts should extend beyond surface-

level measures, involving comprehensive policy frameworks and legal deterrents against discriminatory practices. Achieving true gender equality is not just a societal goal but a prerequisite for a thriving and competitive economy in the global arena.

REFERENCES

1. Sreenivas, M. (2020) '7. women's and gender history in Modern India: Researching the past, reflecting on the present, *Making Women's Histories*, pp. 161–184.
2. Singh L., Singh Shekhar S. (2024) *Gender in Modern India: History, Culture, Marginality*
3. Samantroy, E. and Nandi, S. (2022) 'Introduction', in *Gender, Unpaid work and Care in India*. 1st ed. Taylor & Francis.
4. UMA (2021) 'Changing patterns of female work participation in rural and Urban India', *VEETHIKA-An International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 7(1), pp. 1–7.
5. Sengupta, P. and Puri, R. (2021) 'Gender pay gap in India: A reality and the way forward—an empirical approach using quantile regression technique', *Studies in Microeconomics*, 10(1), pp. 50–81.
6. *The gender pay gap in India: Progress made and challenges ahead* (2023) *India Employer Forum*. Available at: <https://indiaemployerforum.org/2023/05/03/the-gender-pay-gap-in-india-progress-made-and-challenges-ahead/>.
7. *Gender equity in education: A focus on early childhood* (2024) *Civildaily*. Available at: <https://www.civildaily.com/news/gender-equity-in-education-a-focus-on-early-childhood>.
8. Chatterjee, U., Murgai, R., and Martin, R. (2015). *Job opportunities along the rural-urban gradation and female labor force participation in India*. Policy Research Working Paper 7412. World Bank, Washington, DC.10.1596/1813-9450-7412.
9. Das, M.B. and Desai, S. (2003). Why are educated women less likely to be employed in India? Testing competing hypotheses. *Social Protection Discussion Paper Series* (0313), Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/616871468756558333/pdf/278680SP0discussion00313.pdf>.
10. Mehrotra, S., Saha, P., Gandhi, A., Devi, K., & Sinha, S. (2013). Low female employment in a period of high growth: Insights from primary survey in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. *IAMR Report*, 9.