

Perception of Working Women about Gender Disparity in Universities of Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: Gender disparity is a serious issue in higher education systems, which has an impact on workplace experiences and opportunities. The current study explored the perceptions of working women about gender disparity in public and private universities of Punjab, Pakistan. The research design used was quantitative approach with cross sectional design. The sample consisted of 341 respondents who were interviewed using a pre-coded interview schedule and the data were analyzed by SPSS Version 27 with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that there were significant relationships between all the variables studied. The Awareness of Government Initiatives had a strong negative relationship ($r = -0.726$, $p < 0.001$) while the Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity ($r = 0.433$, $p < 0.001$) and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors ($r = 0.600$, $p < 0.001$) had a significant positive relationship. In the regression model, Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace ($R^2 = 0.734$) accounted for 73.4% of the variance. Awareness of Government Initiatives was found to be the most powerful predictor ($\beta = -0.558$, $p < 0.001$) followed by Social, Cultural and Religious Factors ($\beta = 0.410$, $p < 0.001$) and Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity ($\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$). The study results indicate that institutional awareness, workplace experiences and socio-cultural factors play a considerable role in perceptions of workplace gender disparity. The results confirm the need to raise awareness and ensure equitable practices in the workplace to foster gender inclusive universities.

KEYWORDS: Gender Disparity, Perception, Working Women, Higher Education, Disparity

Introduction

Gender disparity has been a longstanding fact that has impacted social, economic and political development across the globe. However, in Pakistan, even today, where gender equality has progressed gradually, there is a considerable gender gap in terms of education, employment, healthcare, and political representation. Punjab is the most populous province of the country with a number of big cities, so the situation of Punjab is peculiar as it enables us to analyse the society under the state of gender differences. Punjab's major cities are of great significance in terms of traditional

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culture, values, and contemporary economic and social correlates, especially in the context of gender inequality in contemporary Pakistan.

Gender disparity is the structural inequality existing among individuals as a result of their gender difference, usually at the expense of females over men, as well as gender minorities. These inequalities are entrenched in society and experienced across a number of different fields, such as education, employment, health and politics. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) explains that gender inequality has been a significant threat to human development, with the global rate of women earning 77 cents for every dollar men earn in equal positions (UNDP, 2023).

In education, gender inequality can lead to a lack of opportunities for girls, especially in low-income and troubled areas, where society and economic conditions emphasize the importance of education for boys (GEMPT, 2022). According to the latest Global Gender Gap Report 2023 by the World Economic Forum, narrowing the gender gap at the executive level globally will take some 131 years unless the current progress is accelerated. This reflects that the problem of gender based inequalities is not impervious and stubborn.

Along with this, knowledge and action on how to overcome gender disparities are also a part of inclusive community development. Various research studies suggest that women need equal access to leadership and decision-making and need to be empowered to make the development process more productive and sustainable (World Bank, 2022). This underscores the need to critically discuss the source of gender inequality and formulate specific steps to tackle it.

The gender gap issue is well documented and a major issue in Pakistan in particular, and in big cities in particular, where modernity and tradition are at odds. As the province with the largest population, Punjab has a unique socio-cultural context in which perceptions of sex roles and equality differ among cities, both generally and at the workplace. This study is focused on deciphering the perception of working women of Punjab province on the gender gap in key universities in terms of education, employment, remuneration, promotion, leadership and mobility.

Gender disparity is a relevant socio-economic and socio-cultural issue in Pakistan, where there are traditional norms, inequalities in the system and historical biases. Despite the tremendous progress in the field of the promotion of gender equality in school reforms, legal frameworks and awareness creation, there are still gender disparities in many areas, including the education sector, employment, wages, healthcare and management. The case showcases the unique nature of this challenge in the province of Punjab, Pakistan, which is the most populous and economically important province with high urbanization, industrialization, socio-economic issues and cultural beliefs (Mumtaz & Salway, 2009).

The major cities of Punjab such as Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Multan, Gujranwala and Gujrat can all be termed as progressive cities as far as their literacy rates, exposure to ideas from the international world and platform for economic activities are concerned. These cities, however, have a strong cultural context of patriarchy which still restricts women's access to public and private spaces. This is compounded by the presence of a culture that expects women to remain at home and look after their children; hence, women are expected to have no role to play outside their homes (Alam & Fatima, 2020).

This contrast of modernity and tradition in the cities of Punjab is reflected in the perception of gender disparity. On the other hand, the awareness of gender equality has been raised, particularly in the younger generations, challenging most traditional norms. Conversely, there are many resistant cultural attitudes that help to create inequalities in decision-making, mobility and opportunity. The type of "Aurat March" media and activism campaigns

has triggered important conversations, which in certain aspects have exposed the rift within the culture of gender rights in society (World Economic Forum, 2023).

The gender gap is not the same and similar in terms of education, socio-economic status, religious inclination, generation, etc. As an example, someone with greater education or one who was exposed to more progressive concepts is more prone to advocate for gender equality. On the other hand, another person or one with a conservative background will see gender roles as something ordained by God or by culture. This deviation indicates that the issues of gender gaps in urban Punjab are not a simple one, and it is important to conduct a study in a social context which reflects the people's perspective and views on the problem and its causes (World Value Survey Association, 2022).

Women's role in the labour market is a key component of the economic and social progress of any country. In recent decades, the international community has worked hard to advance gender equality in particular, notably in the fields of education and employment. But women's access to equal opportunities, fair wages, leadership and professional recognition remains a challenge due to gender disparity. Pakistan has one of the lowest rankings on the Global Gender Gap Index, indicating ongoing gender gaps in education, economic participation and political empowerment. While Pakistan has implemented policy changes and made international commitments, women continue to grapple with various challenges to achieving equal participation in the labor market, especially in professional fields and academic institutions (WEF, 2023).

Women's employment has undergone a great transition over the last few decades. But in both developed and developing nations, women continue to face gender gaps in employment, where they are often subject to barriers to promotion, pay inequity, job segregation and discriminatory work cultures (Chang et al., 2019).

Research Objectives

- ▶ To examine the effect of awareness of government initiatives on the perception of gender disparity among working women in universities of Punjab, Pakistan.
- ▶ To investigate the influence of working women's behavior and attitude toward gender disparity on the perception of gender disparity in universities of Punjab, Pakistan.
- ▶ To assess the impact of social, cultural, and religious factors on the perception of gender disparity among working women in universities of Punjab, Pakistan.
- ▶ To determine the combined contribution of awareness of government initiatives, working women's behavior and attitude, and social, cultural and religious factors in predicting the perception of gender disparity at the workplace.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Awareness of Government Initiatives has a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.
- **H2:** Working women's behavior and Attitude towards gender disparity have a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at the workplace.
- **H3:** Social, cultural, and religious factors have a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at the workplace.

Literature Review

Mukhtar and Ibrahim (2024) investigated the effect of workplace inequality on employee performance at the Academia of South Punjab, Pakistan, with a focus on the moderating role of workplace resilience and the mediating

role of perceived discrimination. The target population of the study was the 470 employees (faculty). The participants comprised a wide spectrum of faculty members from across the academic disciplines, providing a full picture of the effects of workplace inequality in the academic world.

Shaheen et al. (2023) offer a breakdown of various forms of workplace gender discrimination: unequal pay, disparity in promotions, incidents of sexual harassment and fewer opportunities for further promotion, which means that an employee is treated differently or less favourably because of their gender identity. In the world, four out of ten employed women are discriminated against on the job due to their gender. This study aimed to examine the problem of discrimination against working women in the workplace and its effects on their work performance in District Sahiwal of Punjab, Pakistan.

Zahid (2022) focused on an analysis that highlights Pakistan's low female labor force participation rate, massive wage gaps (women earn 34% less), and cultural/social barriers such as mobility restrictions, childcare burden, and occupational segregation. Fewer than 10% of formal sector jobs are held by women, and leadership positions are almost unheard of. These results shed light on economic/social influences and perceptions at the workplace.

Ali et al. (2022) investigate that Boston Medical Center (BMC) and Women's Health (2022) is a mixed-method study in three provinces, in this case, Punjab, that examined factors that perpetuate gender discrimination. Social norms, educational exclusion, limited employment possibilities and cultural bias towards male decision-making were key themes. The qualitative findings revealed suppression of women's voice and agency, thus supporting the strong role of socio-cultural and religious structures in shaping perceptions and experiences.

Rashid (2021) investigated in one of his research papers about university students' perceptions of gender discrimination in the workplace. The purpose of this study was to find out how university students perceive gender discrimination with them, others, as well as how it can impact their careers. The other aspect of the study was to compare the perceptions of the male and female students regarding gender discrimination.

Sarwar and Imran (2019) also find that perceptions vary across different industries, with women in the education and health sectors being more satisfied than women in corporate or law enforcement, where patriarchy is more entrenched.

Rana et al. (2022) found that in Pakistan, gender inequality is entrenched in socio-cultural norms. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum (WEF) 2023, Pakistan is placed at the bottom of the list in terms of economic participation and opportunity for women. Women's participation in the labor force has risen, but their work is largely in low-paid, low-mobility jobs, and without formal safeguards or career progression.

The present study was conducted by Alam and Fatima (2020), who applied Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) panel data in 14 major cities of Pakistan to examine the effect of educational inequality on female labor force participation. They discovered that restricted access to technical and vocational education greatly reduced the connectivity of women in the workforce, and proposed legislation for equal access to education and equal pay. This research related to educational and economic influences.

Methodology

The objective of the study was to explore the perception of working women about gender disparity in the universities of Punjab, Pakistan. In particular, the study examined awareness of Government Initiatives, working women's behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity, and Social, cultural, and Religious Factors as factors affecting the Perception of Gender Disparity at the workplace. To accomplish the objectives of the study, a systematic and scientific approach to research design was used.

Research Design and Methods

A Cross-Sectional research design was adopted to gather data from the respondents at one time. The study adopted a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationships between the study variables and to determine the factors affecting perception of gender disparity in the workplace.

Male and female teaching faculty members and non-teaching staff of public and private universities of Punjab, Pakistan were included in the population. The overall number of employees of the chosen universities was 2,922. The Krejcie and Morgan sample size table was used to determine the sample size of 341 respondents. Stratified random sampling was used to provide adequate representation of respondents by institutional sector and by occupational category.

Data were collected through a self-developed pre-coded interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of four study constructs comprising a total of 38 items. The data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. To summarize the characteristics of the respondents and the variables of the study, frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used as descriptive statistics. Pearson correlation analysis has been used to check the relationship between the variables, and multiple regression analysis has been used to find out the effect of Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior, Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The profile of respondents gives an overview of the study sample and a contextual background to interpret job satisfaction among university employees. The chosen socio-economic variables are institutional affiliation, gender, type of work, age, family type, and educational level.

Results indicate that the respondents were from different universities, including the University of Punjab. In terms of gender distribution, (49.85%) were males and (50.15%) females. According to job position, most of the respondents were teaching faculty members (71.6%), which was mostly representative of the views of academic staff.

Age distribution showed that almost half (46.3%) of the respondents were in the age group 26-35 years and 22.6% were aged 36-45 years, implying that the study mainly included younger to middle-aged professionals. Education level showed that the population was very educated, with the majority of subjects having a graduate (48.4%), M.Phil. (28.2%), or PhD (20.5%) qualification.

Table 1

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 341)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	170	49.85
	Female	171	50.15
Age (years)	26–35	158	46.3
	36–45	77	22.6
	46–60	71	20.8
	61+	35	10.3
Educational Level	Intermediate	10	2.9
	Graduate	165	48.4
	M.Phil.	96	28.2
	PhD	70	20.5

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the scales used to measure the variables in the study was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. Results show acceptable reliability for all the constructs of the study. The Cronbach's Alpha for Awareness of Government Initiatives (11 items) was 0.841, which is considered high internal consistency among the items that measure the respondents' awareness of policies and initiatives related to gender disparity.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics of Study Constructs

Thematic Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Awareness of Government Initiatives	11	0.841
Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity	9	0.855
Social, Cultural and Religious Factors	8	0.890
Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace	10	0.868

Likewise, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity (9 items) had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.855, which indicated a high level of consistency among the items in the scale. The Social, Cultural and Religious Factors construct had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.890, which is considered highly reliable, with 8 items measuring the socio-cultural factors relating to perceptions of gender disparity.

In addition, the Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace with 10 items had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.868, which showed that there was a high level of internal consistency among the items measuring perceptions of gender disparity at the workplace. The overall reliability results indicate that all measurement scales have a good internal consistency and are fit for further statistical analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the central tendency and dispersion of the variables in the study. Overall response patterns of the participants were determined by using mean values, while standard deviations were used to measure the range of respondents' perceptions. The Analysis gives an overview of Awareness of Government Initiatives, working women's attitudes towards Gender Disparity, Social, cultural, and Religious Factors and Perception of Gender Disparity at the workplace.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awareness of Government Initiatives	341	2.45	4.18	3.3132	0.63728
Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity	341	1.00	2.67	1.6263	0.51601
Social, Cultural and Religious Factors	341	1.00	3.00	1.4901	0.54893
Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace	341	1.00	2.80	1.7745	0.57795

From the results in Table 3, it can be seen that Awareness of Government Initiatives has the highest mean score ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.64$) among the variables in the study. This indicates that the awareness of respondents about the government initiatives and policies to address the gender disparity in the workplace was relatively higher. The standard deviation is moderate, suggesting a level of consistency in responses. Working Women Behavior and

Attitude towards Gender Disparity, on the other hand, had a mean value of 1.63 (SD = 0.52) and low scores compared, which means that the respondents perceived the behaviors and attitude of working women towards gender disparity at a moderate level.

Likewise, Social, Cultural and Religious Factors had a mean score of 1.49 (SD = 0.55), indicating that the respondents recognized the impact of socio-cultural and religious factors on gender related experiences in universities. Additionally, Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace had a mean score of 1.77 (SD = 0.58), which means that there were perceived gender disparities at workplaces among the respondents. The overall low standard deviations for all variables indicate low variability of responses and thus the data is appropriate for additional inferential statistical analyses.

Hypothesis Testing (Bivariate Results)

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses of the study in order to examine the effect of Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. Standardized beta coefficients, t-values and significance level were used to determine the significance of each predictor.

Table 4

Summary of Hypotheses Testing

No.	Hypothesis Statement	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H1	Awareness of Government Initiatives has a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.	-0.558	-18.468	<0.001	Accepted
H2	Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity has a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.	0.192	6.485	<0.001	Accepted
H3	Social, Cultural and Religious Factors have a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.	0.410	13.923	<0.001	Accepted

H1: Awareness of Government Initiatives and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace

The result of Hypothesis 1 stated that Awareness of Government Initiatives has a significant effect on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. Results of the regression showed that there was a statistically significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.558$, $t = -18.468$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that the more people are aware of the government initiatives and policies to tackle gender inequality, the less likely they are to perceive gender inequality in the workplace. So, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

H2: Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace

Hypothesis 2 stated that Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity significantly influence Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. Results revealed a positive relationship with a statistically significant value of $\beta = 0.192$, $t = 6.485$, $p < 0.001$. This indicates that negative behaviors and attitudes at work increase perceptions of gender gaps among working women. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

H3: Social, Cultural and Religious Factors and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace

Hypothesis 3 stated that there is a significant influence of Social, Cultural and Religious Factors on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. The results showed that there was a positive relationship that is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 13.923$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that there is a significant role of socio-cultural and religious factors in the formation of attitude towards gender disparity in workplaces. So, Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

Overall, the results support the fact that Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior, Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors are important factors in predicting Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. The Awareness of Government Initiatives was found to be the most significant predictor in absolute value ($\beta = 0.558$), followed by Social, Cultural and Religious Factors ($\beta = 0.410$), and Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity ($\beta = 0.192$) were found to have a comparatively lesser but still significant effect.

Correlation Analysis Results

The relationships among the study variables were analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis. The analysis helped to determine the direction and strength of association between Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity, Social, Cultural and Religious Factors and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	AGI	WBA	SCF	GD
Awareness of Government Initiatives (AGI)	1	-0.291**	-0.275**	-0.726**
Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity (WBA)	-0.291**	1	0.193**	0.433**
Social, Cultural and Religious Factors (SCF)	-0.275**	0.193**	1	0.600**
Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace (GD)	-0.726**	0.433**	0.600**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

Table 4 shows the results of the relationships between all the study variables, which are statistically significant. The result also showed that Awareness of Government Initiatives had a strong negative correlation with Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace ($r = -0.726$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that the more aware of the government initiatives, the less the perception of gender disparity in the workplace. This indicates that those who have a higher level of knowledge of policy and initiatives for gender equality in the workplace are not as likely to see a strong gender gap in their workplaces.

Moreover, there was a moderate positive correlation between Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace ($r = 0.433$, $p < 0.001$). Likewise, there was a significant positive correlation between Social, Cultural and Religious Factors and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace ($r = 0.600$, $p < 0.001$). The results show that negative workplace attitudes, behaviours and socio-cultural influences lead to greater perceptions of gender imbalance in the workplace. Generally, the correlation analysis shows that there are significant relations among variables in the study, and the relations examined in the study are preliminarily supported.

Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Multiple regression analysis was used to explore the impact of Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity, and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. Analysis was carried out to assess the predictive power of the independent variables as well as their respective contribution to predict the variation in the dependent variable.

Table 6

Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.857	0.734	0.732	0.29941

The model summary shown in Table 5 shows that the independent variables have a strong relationship with Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace as the R value is 0.857. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.734$) indicates that the values of Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity, and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors account for about 73.4% of the variance of Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. The value of adjusted R^2 equal to 0.732 further corroborates the strength of the model, implying that the model has significant explanatory power even after taking into account the number of predictors used in the model.

Table 7

ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	83.358	3	27.786	309.957	<0.001
Residual	30.210	337	0.090		
Total	113.568	340			

The ANOVA results (Table 6) show that the overall model is significant ($F = 309.957$, $p < 0.001$). The result of this finding shows that the Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity, and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors have a significant effect when combined together as predictors of Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. So, the regression model is a good fit for the observed data and is suitable to explain the variation in the dependent variable.

Table 8

Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.	VIF
Awareness of Government Initiatives	-0.558	-18.468	<0.001	1.155
Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity	0.192	6.485	<0.001	1.109
Social, Cultural and Religious Factors	0.410	13.923	<0.001	1.098

The regression coefficients shown in Table 7 indicate that all independent variables are significant in influencing Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. The awareness of Government initiatives had a statistically significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.558$, $t = -18.468$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that the higher the level of awareness about government

initiatives, the lower the score for workplace gender disparity. This discovery indicates that knowledge of policy and intervention to reduce gender inequality can help diminish perceptions of discrimination and unequal treatment.

There was a significant positive correlation between Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace ($\beta = 0.192$, $t = 6.485$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that negative workplace behaviors and attitudes are related to high levels of gender disparity among working women. Similarly, Social, Cultural and Religious Factors had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 13.923$, $p < 0.001$), which indicated that socio-cultural and religious factors make a significant contribution to perceptions of workplace gender inequality.

In addition, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were all under 1.2, well below the usual cut-off of 5.0. These results show that there is no multicollinearity among the predictor variables and each construct contributes independently to the explanation of Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on the impact of Awareness of Government Initiatives, Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity, and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors on Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace among the employees of universities of Punjab, Pakistan. The results showed that the scales of measurement in this study were reliable and appropriate for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics showed that overall, the participants had moderate awareness of the government efforts for combating gender issues in the workplace and that workplace experiences and socio-cultural factors indicated that gender issues still exist in the university environment.

Results of the correlation analysis showed that all the variables in the study were significantly related. Awareness of the Government Initiatives was negatively related to Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace, indicating that more awareness of policies and protections for gender equality is associated with lower perceptions of gender disparity at workplace. Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity and Social, Cultural and Religious Factors, on the other hand, showed a positive association with Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace, meaning that negative work behaviors and socio-cultural factors lead to high perception of gender inequality at workplace.

The regression analysis also revealed that all three independents had a significant contribution to the prediction of Perception of Gender Disparity at Workplace. Awareness of Government Initiatives turned out to be the strongest predictor, and it had a significant negative effect, while Social, Cultural and Religious Factors and Working Women Behavior and Attitude towards Gender Disparity had significant positive effects. The results indicated that a range of factors, including institutional awareness, workplace experiences, and broader socio-cultural factors, all contribute to the perceptions of gender inequity in the workplace. The study emphasizes that organizational interventions and social changes are essential for decreasing perceptions of gender inequality in the HEI.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, a few practical suggestions can be put forward to decrease workplace gender disparity and create a more equal working environment in universities. Firstly, universities need to improve awareness-building efforts regarding government policies, laws and institutional mechanisms addressing gender inequality. Periodic awareness programs, seminars, and information-sharing sessions can help improve the understanding of workers' rights and options for protections.

Second, university leadership should prioritize workplace culture and encourage respectful relationships and an inclusive workplace among employees. To tackle negative workplace attitudes and behaviours, training programmes, professional development workshops and anti-discrimination policies should be put in place. Additionally, there should be clear reporting channels and complaint procedures to facilitate effective response to gender issues.

Third, because the social, cultural and religious context was identified as having a significant impact on perceptions of gender disparities in the workplace, universities should facilitate discussion, awareness and learning activities that aim to break down gender stereotypes and foster gender-sensitive attitudes. These initiatives can help to create a more supportive workplace culture and promote greater gender equality.

Lastly, institutional leaders should make sure to be fair and transparent in selection, promotion, training, and decision-making in the workplace. The adoption of organizational accountability policies and equal treatment policies can help decrease perceptions of gender disparities in the workplace and foster a more inclusive university environment.

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