



**FACTORS HAMPERING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE
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Abstract. The level of gender equality is different in every country and every culture, and, therefore, the history and conceptual framework for each country and culture are different. The article examines the causes of the inequality experienced by women in a general context, drawn from a qualitative approach that utilises a desktop analysis of secondary sources. Based on the advantages of the Gender and Development (GAD) approach explored in the study, such as its focus on women's needs, gender relations, and the state's role, it was determined that the GAD theory provided the most suitable framework for this study. The findings explore that there are varied causes of gender inequality divided into ideological factors, social system factors, economic factors, and political factors. Added to this are the causes of gender inequality in the workplace, which refers to human resource practices, job segregation, pay gap, lack of commitment, glass ceiling and escalator, and the lack of female role models. The study suggests that gender equality can bring employee satisfaction to the workplace and positive economic growth to society. The importance thereof in the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially sustainable development goal number 5 (SDG5) (gender equality and women empowerment), can thus not be disputed.

Keywords: gender; gender equality; gender mainstreaming; Sustainable Development Goal 5; qualitative analysis

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1. Introduction

The terms 'sex' and 'gender' have become synonymous, with the two terms being used interchangeably. Budlender (2001: 20, in Vyas-Doorgapersad 2017:168) suggests that gender characteristics include biological sex, sex-based social structures or gender identity. It is, therefore, important to distinguish between the two terms. The concept of *gender* is essential to determine how female subordination and male domination are socially created and how this can be changed or ended (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] 2003:17). Pryzgoda and Chrisler (2000:554) provide an essential distinction by indicating that sex refers to the biological features of a person being a male or female. In contrast, gender refers to women's and men's social, behavioural, and psychological traits. Aguilar (2004:1) confirms this by indicating that gender is not grounded in the biological differences between women and men but is instead formed by social relations, culture, and the environment. The concept of gender includes individuals' expectations regarding the characteristics,

capabilities and prospective behaviour of men and women (UNESCO 2003:17). The expectations placed upon men and women and the roles they perform are learnt behaviours (UNESCO 2003:17) and therefore differ extensively among societies (United Nations Population Fund [UNPF] 2005:1).

A shared understanding of concepts should be considered, especially when matters such as equality are addressed. According to Ansari (2012:1), *gender equality* indicates that people, irrespective of gender, can make choices without being limited by stereotypes, showing that their needs and contributions are equally valued. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) (2016:2) elaborates on this definition by indicating that “gender equality is a rights-based concept, and it includes all the aspects of gender equity. It is a rights-based concept because gender equality corresponds with human rights agreements and declarations. Gender equality includes justice and fairness regarding the needs and interests as described in gender equity, and therefore equality includes all aspects of equity”. However, it is significant to note that *gender mainstreaming* was recognised as a strategy in international gender equality policy. Later, through the Beijing Platform for Action, it was adopted as a tool to promote gender equality at all levels (Council of Europe [COE] n.d.:1) of government.

The article applies the Gender and Development Theory. The study responds to the following question: What factors hamper implementing gender equality in the workplace?

After the introduction, there is a literature review grounded in theory, followed by a contextual study of gender equality. The significance of women in the workplace is discussed, and the methods and challenges are included in the following section. The last section summarises the study's findings under the conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework: Gender and Development Theory

Political writing dating back to earlier centuries showcased archaic opinions regarding the role of women, reflecting the belief that women are only suitable for domestic functions. It suggested that women had no place in politics, as their capabilities were better utilised as wives and mothers (Rai, in Bari 2005, cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad 2016:140). Feminist movements attempted to address these misconceptions, resulting in the development of gender ideologies such as the Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD) approach (Vyas-Doorgapersad 2016:140-141). Development originated in the 1950s as a male-dominated area, functioning as a gender-blind approach on the assumption that it affects men and women in the same way (Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:49). Feminists have exposed the misconception that sterile measures of economic growth are sufficient to evaluate goal achievement (Barriteau 2000:165). Feminist activism has profoundly transformed the discourse of development, making it clear that focusing solely on improving savings and investment functions is no longer adequate when dealing with development issues (Barriteau 2000:165).

Muyoyeta (2004:5) questioned whether or not female development is separate from the broader development issue and found the following: “Women have not benefited from development processes, programmes and projects to the same extent as men; women are very often not included in the planning or implementation of development; development can undermine the role, status and position of women in society; development affects women and men differently, often with a negative impact on women”. The question of whether or not women have benefited from development resulted in the emergence of three distinctive models which seek to explain how development affects women and why there is a difference in how development affects men and women (Muyoyeta 2004:5). The 1970s witnessed a flood of literature on women in development (Kandiyoti 1988, in Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:49) which steadily evolved from women in development (WID) to women and development (WAD), and gender and development (GAD) (Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:49). According to Vyas-Doorgapersad (2018:97), these theories opened the path for recognition that women are a vital part of their societies which requires full participation by both men and women.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach considers the influence of development on both women and men, aiming to ensure their equal participation and benefits, emphasising equality in terms of advantage and control (Muyoyeta 2004:7). It focuses on the social relations between men and women in the workplace and other settings, and challenges issues related to male power and privilege (Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:57). This approach provides interventions to address any unequal gender relations which prevent equitable development (UNESCO 2003:18). Its goal is to ensure that both women and men have opportunities to participate, make decisions, and share benefits (UNESCO 2003:18).

The GAD approach further assisted in recognition of the ‘triple roles’ given to women and how the analysis and value of these roles affect the way development projects will prioritise or ignore particular challenges, such as the provision of childcare, which is a priority for women but not for men (Muyoyeta 2004:8). The triple roles, also known as the triple burden, refer to the gender division of productive work, reproductive work, and community activities (Moser 1993, in McLaren, Wong, Nguyen & Mahamadachchi 2020:1). Barriteau (2000:168) describes how feminist theories have contributed to the widespread investigation of women’s labour exploitation, the disparity in wages for the same work, the feminisation of certain occupations when women enter the labour force, and the accompanying decrease in wages and status. The GAD approach goes beyond women’s reproductive sphere by adopting a holistic approach emphasising women’s social, economic, and political aspects (Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:59). Development is therefore regarded as a complex process influenced by social, economic, and political factors (Muyoyeta 2004:8). By highlighting production factors, the GAD approach emphasises formal economic activities such as large-scale production and waged labour – areas where women are underrepresented and their contributions undervalued (Barriteau 2000:167). The approach advocates for a fundamental reassessment and reevaluation of social structures and institutions while focusing on women’s practical and strategic needs (Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:58). The GAD approach primarily aims to meet practical and strategic gender needs by challenging prevailing divisions of labour and power relations (Reeves & Baden 2000:33). Sustained, long-term commitment is therefore required for the GAD approach to be successful (UNESCO 2003:18).

Women’s disadvantaged position in socio-economic and political structures and restricted bargaining power places them in an unfavourable position. One of the tactics proposed by the GAD approach is women’s self-organisation at national, regional, and local levels (Tasli 2007, in Vyas-Doorgapersad 2018:95). Self-organising will provide women with an influential political voice to reinforce their legal rights and grow the number of women in decision-making positions (Muyoyeta 2004:8). Women are not regarded as passive recipients of development. Still, instead, they are active agents of development (Rippenaar-Joseph 2009:59). The GAD approach may be considered the most suitable theoretical framework for exploring factors influencing the effective implementation of gender equality.

3 Literature review: the importance of gender equality in society and the workplace

Half the world’s population consists of females, representing half of the world’s potential (United Nations [UN] 2020a:1). However, women continue to struggle to achieve equality in society and the workplace. According to the UNPF (2005:2), gender equality exists when both genders have equal opportunities for economic freedom through work or entrepreneurship; share control and influence; share responsibilities for caregiving at home; have equal access to education and opportunities for personal development, ambitions, and talents; and are free from oppression, intimidation, and gender-based violence both at home and work (UNPF 2005:2). Gender equality is challenging for every sector. Still, according to Lenka (2023:123), economics, education, health, and politics are the four essential pillars to achieve gender equality. Women who participate in the workplace improve their economic equality and have been the impetus behind successful commercial enterprises since the 17th century, yet only some women are in leadership positions (Lenka 2023:123). The second pillar, equality in education, is one of the sub-goals of sustainable development goal 5 (gender equality) and, together with political equality and health,

significantly impacts women and gender equality (Lenka 2023:123). Cultural differences require a degree of contextual specificity when political interventions for gender equality are designed (Merma-Molina, Urrea-Solano & Hernandez-Amoros 2023:3). Contextual factors include rules, procedures, standards of behaviour, and departmental cultures (Merma-Molina et al. 2023:3). The last pillar forms part of sexual and reproductive health and rights are regarded as fundamental norms of gender equality (Sanders in Barbè & Badell 2023:275). Irrespective of origin or residence, gender equality is a fundamental human right (UNPF 2005:2). Gender equality is both intrinsically and instrumentally essential and plays a vital role in a wide range of developmental outcomes (Dilli, Carmichael & Rijpma 2019:32). The advancement of gender equality has a two-fold justification: entrenching human rights and social justice, and sustainable people-centred development (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues [OSAGI] 2001, in Lawal, Ayoade & Taiwo 2016:354). Promoting gender equality is essential for all facets of a healthy society, including poverty reduction, the promotion of education, health, and the protection of children (UN 2020b:2). Women play significant and diverse roles, encompassing homemaking, contributing to societal well-being, seeking employment, and providing job opportunities (Lawal et al. 2016:354). Gender equality, therefore, has a positive effect on various aspects of society, including, but not limited to, the economy, the workplace, policy development, health, and education. Dilli et al. (2019:32) state that gender equality is viewed as “smart economics”. Kaushik (2019:103) explains the statement by clarifying that increased female labour force participation leads to more rapid economic growth as a result of increased productivity (cf. UN 2020a:1). Female empowerment has ripple effects on the family, children, society, and the entire nation (Lawal et al. 2016:354). The workplace also benefits from gender equality. Cardoso, Fernades & Teixeira (2023:45) found that “a 1% increase in female representation at the top decision-making level results in a 2.21% growth in a company’s value”. Gender discrimination turns employees into suspicious, paranoid, angry, and fearful individuals and eliminating gender inequality is essential for employees’ motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and enthusiasm (Mamun-Ur-Rashid 2018:225-226). As highlighted by Human Rights Careers (HRC) (2020:1), diversity also plays an important role, emphasising that diversity in general, including gender, race, and sexual identity, enhances productivity and innovation in an organisation. Mead (n.d., in Onley 2016:6) supports this by quoting that companies with more women in their workforce experience higher average returns, fewer incidences of fraud, enhanced decision-making, lower turnover, and higher productivity. Gender inequality has a predominantly adverse impact on women and girls, leading to their disadvantage and exclusion from decision-making processes and access to social and economic resources (UNPF 2005:3). According to UNPF (2005:3), gender equality is therefore crucial in promoting women’s empowerment, addressing power imbalances, and providing women with autonomy to manage their lives.

Autonomy may enable women to take action regarding their own and their family’s health and education. Empowered women who have the option to decide on their children’s education are more likely to ensure quality education not only for boys but also for the girls in the family. Disadvantages in education lead to a lack of skills and restricted opportunities in the labour market (UN 2020b:2). Females making autonomous decisions within a family regarding matters such as the timing of births, age at marriage, and the use of contraception will enhance the attainment of gender equality (UNPF 2005:2). Numerous studies have shown that empowering women contributes to children’s well-being (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF] 2011:5). Children growing up in a gender-equal environment perform better and achieve more than children raised in an environment with inequality (Human Rights Careers [HRC] 2020:1). Young girls are affected the most by poverty, and gender inequality keeps women and their families imprisoned in a cycle of poverty (HRC 2020:2).

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) were developed in 2015 and allowed the European Union to articulate a renewed vision regarding its global agenda (Barbè & Badell 2023:279). Gender is linked to all SDGs. This is because females make up 49.6% of the worldwide population (Richie & Roser 2019:31). By excluding almost half of the worldwide population, the eradication of poverty, protection of the planet, and attainment of prosperity for all are undermined, setting the SDGs up for failure from the onset. It is unrealistic to expect an end to poverty

and the achievement of food security while half of the population lives with hunger. The SDGs' success relies not only on women's contribution but also on the interdependence of each goal. Achieving sustainable development goal number 5 (SDG5), which focuses on gender equality, is crucial due to its impact on all the other goals.

4. Methodology

The study utilised the qualitative research method, which is primarily exploratory. Qualitative research is employed to understand underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations; it provides insights into a problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative research is also employed to reveal trends in thoughts and opinions and gain an in-depth understanding of the problem under investigation (DeFranzo 2023:1). The data was collected through a literature review of available and published secondary data. Secondary data is information that has previously been interpreted and recorded. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that the secondary data is appropriately assessed by reviewing the quality of the information, the validity of the arguments, and the writer's reputation (Walliman 2011:71-72). Comparing the information obtained from various sources is sound research practice to identify bias and inaccuracies (Walliman 2011:72). The data was analysed through conceptual analysis, which is a method of managing concepts as categories of relationships, items, assets, and procedures; it involves accurately defining the significance of a specific concept by recognising and stipulating the conditions under which it could be classified (Furner 2004:233).

5. Challenges of attaining gender equality

Gender inequality, perpetuated by men and women, arises from the disparity in social power between genders (Bosch 2019:1). Despite recognising and incorporating the instrumental and intrinsic value of gender equality as an objective in the sustainable development agenda, gender inequality persists as an inescapable phenomenon (Branisa, Ziegler & Klasen 2009:2). The causes of gender inequality can be broadly classified into four main factors with various sub-factors. The five main factors under discussion are ideological, social, economic, political, and institutional. The article only focuses on institutional factors causing gender inequality in the workplace. The other factors may form part of future publications.

Thorpe (1990:1361) describes gender discrimination as an inescapable evil which affects the work atmosphere. Lewis (2019:13) indicates that "hostile work environments still exist for professional and middle-class females," hampering gender equality on the professional front. Onley (2016:1) posits that "women and men are still not represented equally in the workplace, especially at the senior management level". Companies continue to ignore gender-sensitive policies and the working conditions required for women's health and well-being. Women are forced to adapt to a work environment and policies created for men (Lewis 2019:14). McKinsley & Co and Learning.org (in Onley 2016:1) hold that it will take more than 100 years to reach gender parity at the current rate of progress. Kaushik (2019:107) asserts that gender inequality, viewed as a whole, appears to be an enormous, overwhelming challenge within workplace processes that encompass human resource (HR) practices, job segregation, pay gap, lack of organisational commitment, glass ceiling and escalator, and lack of female role models, as discussed below.

5.1 Human resources practices

Stamarski and Son-Hing (2015:1) explain that some of the most detrimental gender disparities are endorsed within human resource (HR) practices, such as decision-making, policy development, and policy endorsement, adversely impacting women's appointment, promotion, training, and remuneration. Gender discrimination contributes to a loss of self-confidence and frustration in the workplace, and proper policies and practices are necessary to minimise workplace gender discrimination (Mamun-Ur-Rashid 2018:222). Administrative measures need to be taken to ensure that human resource policies such as recruitment and selection, sexual harassment, and

language practices do not discriminate directly or indirectly against women (Gender Links 2012:54). The HR professionals are in a unique position to ensure change. They are not only responsible for HR policies, recruitment, and compensation within organisations, but the profession itself is dominated by women (Onley 2016:2). Therefore, HR intervention is essential from the beginning of an employment term. Mudgal (2019:252) indicates that the differences between women and men at the beginning of their careers accrue over the years, serving as a foundation for the gendered organisational context. HR practices influence the three main stages of employment, beginning with the recruitment and selection process, which includes providing benefits. This is followed by the appointed employee's training, development, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Progression in an organisation is different for men and women, with different trajectories for successful female and male executives (James 2019:149). Discrimination in the recruitment and selection phase is usually the beginning of a series of unequal practices (Al-Jedaiah 2020:370). Unintended name bias begins with the submission of an application for a vacancy. It continues with the requirement that a salary history be provided, which automatically places women in a disadvantageous position to receive the same remuneration as their male counterparts (Onley 2016:4). Once appointed, development and promotion opportunities are also affected by gender discrimination. Research has indicated that female employees do request development and promotions. Still, they receive a different response and are less successful than their male counterparts (Healey 2014:43). James (2019:149) found that women's developmental needs are different to those of men, and to realise their full potential women's development initiatives must be viewed from a different perspective. Senior managers also tend to favour male subordinates for assignments that stretch their abilities and knowledge to broaden their experience (James 2019:150), further impacting promotion opportunities. Performance evaluation processes used to determine compensation and rewards are also biased, resulting in inequality (Al-Jedaiah 2020:371). According to Stamarski and Son-Hing (2015:4), face time is a key performance measure that rewards employees who spend additional time at the office. Since women are generally the primary caregivers, they prefer flexible work arrangements and, as a result, face career drawbacks because they have less face time than their male counterparts. The result of these biased criteria in performance evaluation policies contributes to gender inequality (Stamarski & Son-Hing 2015:4). Onley (2016:3) holds that only one question should be answered objectively: does the person have the ability to do the work? When the tools are in place to achieve this, an equal scorecard can be obtained, leading to pay equality (Onley 2016:3).

5.2 Job segregation and pay gap

The gender wage gap can be attributed not only to the differences in the level of work experience, education, type of occupation, location, sector, and the number of hours worked but can also be described in terms of the concentration of women in lower paid jobs, undervaluation of women's work, the perception that women are economic dependents, and the lack of female representation in unions (Wirth 2001:48). According to Onley (2016:5), parenthood is as one of the most significant reasons for pay gaps because women usually have more caregiving responsibilities than men. Women are more likely to work fewer hours, work part-time, and choose positions that will not regularly require working long hours because of their family responsibilities (Wirth 2001:48). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2013:174) describes the phenomenon of a gender pay gap in the workplace as "family responsibility discrimination" which occurs despite narrowing gender educational gaps. Family responsibility discrimination occurs when women with more family responsibilities are less likely to find employment (UNDP 2013:174). The UNDP (2013:174) continues to attribute family responsibility discrimination to organisations' investment in employees' firm-specific skills. Employers are less likely to hire women, who they predict are more likely to depart from the labour market due to care responsibilities. According to Wirth (2001:57), employers may practice statistical discrimination when they assume that all women will interrupt their careers. If women have children without reducing their hours, employers believe they have reduced commitment.

Wilson (2019:3) indicates that women struggle with requesting higher remuneration. Davis (2019:7) agrees that women are less successful in negotiations, and the resulting discrepancy in starting remuneration has a long-term effect on career advancement. Kolb (2013, in Davis 2019:7) opines that the emphasis on women's hypothetical incapacity to negotiate has become problematic, as the genders are positioned differently for negotiation. Women's lack of negotiation skills can be attributed to the view held by women that negotiating remuneration is often seen as desperation or greed, resulting in women hesitating to demand their value in the workplace (Wilson 2019:3). Donovan (n.d. in Onley 2016:4) opines that although the perception has been created that women are less skilled negotiators than men, the reality is that women face obstacles during salary discussions based on unfair discrimination in the workplace. Human resources practices and policies affect gender equality in the workplace and significantly influence women's careers. They guide decision-making, but it is the organisational decision-makers, including HR personnel, who, directed by policy, must assess job candidates and decide how an approach will be applied to individuals (Stamarki & Son-Hing 2015:4).

5.3 Lack of organisational commitment

Organisational commitment is essential for achieving gender equality. Rayomo (2018:1-2) identifies and defines three categories of factors that can assist in closing the gender gap in organisations: an empowering environment, bold leadership, and comprehensive action. An empowering environment is where employees are trusted and respected as individuals, providing freedom to train and be creative while offering work flexibility (Rayomo 2018:1-2). Bold leadership is seen as a diverse team that openly determines, communicates and measures equality targets (Rayomo 2018:1-2). Comprehensive action refers to the practices and policies that support both males and females, are family-friendly, and are free of bias in attracting and retaining people (Rayomo 2018:1-2). Human resource management (HRM) must participate in every step of the employee life cycle to ensure gender equality (Onley 2016:2). Although human resource management (HRM) performs a vital role in influencing the organisational culture, they cannot achieve equality on their own and require buy-in from top management to make gender diversity initiatives effective (Onley 2016:6).

5.4 Glass ceiling and escalator

Women are generally situated at the lower level of the organisational hierarchy and are not often decision-makers, authorities, or managers (Mamun-Ur-Rashid 2018:225). It is, therefore, important for organisations to identify the factors hampering female career prospects to ensure their positive career advancement (Mudgal 2019:253). James (2019:149) highlights the deterioration of gender balance when transitioning from middle to senior executive levels, emphasising women's challenges in advancing to senior management positions. Davis (2019:2-3) describes this challenge as a result of two forms of workplace inequity that are linked and are more present in female-dominated professions, namely the glass ceiling and the glass escalator. The term "glass ceiling" was first used in *The Wall Street Journal* as a metaphor to describe the invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing in their careers (Mudgal 2019:253). The other side of the continuum is the glass escalator, which refers to men's rapid promotion in management positions within female-dominated fields (Broner 2013:2). The percentage of women decreases disproportionately at every step of the career ladder, indicating the restricted achievement and shortage of women in advanced, decision-making positions, despite their increased numbers in the labour market (El-Arnaout, Chehab, Rafii & Alameddine 2019:5-6).

Additionally, Mudgal (2019:255) attempts to understand why the glass ceiling remains persistent despite women being declared the new managers of the 21st century. The reason provided by Mudgal (2019:255) refers to "masked masculinity", where masculine values still prevail but are concealed by an ideology most managers hypocritically support. This results in women being excluded from top management due to the indirect workings of gender discrimination. Men experience an advantage over women in occupations and sectors traditionally regarded as highly feminised (Wirth 2001:52). The "glass escalator" concept describes the preferential treatment

of men in professions dominated by women by promoting them into leadership positions. The glass escalator operates more prominently as an occupation becomes increasingly female-dominated (Davis 2019:5). Men are seen as more suited for management positions than women as they are perceived to be more ambitious and competitive than women (Wirth 2001:52). Wilson (2019:4) cites one reason why women are not moving into senior management positions: the lack of female role models, which makes women feel that senior management positions are unattainable.

5.5 Lack of female role models

Females in senior positions serve as role models for other women by encouraging their career development and ensuring the pipeline of experienced and qualified women remains open (Healey 2014:24). Access to prominent and influential networks is essential to moving up the leadership hierarchy and some research regards networking as more critical for advancement than job performance (Mudgal 2019:252-253). Pavlou (2019:5) opines that "the swiftest solution to correct a lack of women in leadership roles is to appoint women in leadership roles". This seems evident because appointing women in leadership roles may increase the number of female employees at all levels of the organisation and eradicate inequality. However, it is not the only reason. Men in leadership tend to prefer interacting with and promoting other men, which creates an advantage referred to as "the patriarchal dividend" (Davis 2019:5-6). Women appointed to leadership roles are more likely to establish and promote women in similar positions for two reasons (Pavlou 2019:5): better understanding of women and acting as role models. Women understand other women's potential and can advocate for them. A female also understands how a team can benefit from gender balance, and women act as role models for others who may be cautious about applying for a post in an all-male team. Although there has been some progress in eradicating gender inequality in the workplace, it remains a global phenomenon that the management positions in organisations are occupied primarily by men (European Commission [EC] 2013; ILO 2010, in Mudgal 2019:253). Gender inequality is a direct result of gender discrimination in the workplace. The causes of gender inequality discussed in this section are not exhaustive but only address the most prominent discrimination factors.

6. Conclusion

The article recognised that causes of gender inequality include various factors and sub-factors; however, only the institutional factors were discussed. The article's purpose is to highlight the lack of progress made towards achieving gender equality in the workplace and to ensure that the debate and battle for equality do not dwindle. The plight for gender equality started more than a century ago, yet the actual achievement is evading organisations and society.

The various causes identified all relate in one way or another to the most significant aspect that differentiates men from women – the ability to fall pregnant and give birth to a child. Women must deal with the stereotype that all women are planning motherhood, automatically resulting in a decreased commitment to the organisation. Once appointed, all employees are entitled to benefits the company provides or prescribed by legislation. In most countries, women are granted the benefit of maternity leave upon the birth of a child. Ironically, this benefit often becomes a reason why women are not appointed to managerial positions. Organisations are hesitant to appoint individuals who may potentially take time off for childbirth. The appointment of men circumvents this challenge. Through the organisational culture, men are also compelled not to take family responsibility leave when a child is sick or requires care. This leads to the expectation that women will take time off to care for children, leading to increased absenteeism.

During performance management, women, once again, encounter discrimination through what is known as 'face time', resulting in poor performance reviews based on absenteeism, irrespective of their performance. Stereotypes regarding women's lack of ambition for promotion contribute to them needing to be noticed when filling senior

management positions. As a result, women often find themselves stuck in lower-level jobs and, consequently, face lower remuneration levels. Workplace discrimination does not only affect women. Discrimination affects all employees, which can contribute to a work environment with emotional and disgruntled employees and a high turnover rate.

The factors hampering gender equality directly impact the workplace, leading to gender inequality. Processes in the workplace hampering gender equality were identified as HR practices, job segregation and pay discrepancies, lack of organisational commitment, glass ceiling and escalator, and lack of female role models. The most harmful gender inequalities are sanctioned within HR practices, and appropriate policies and procedures are necessary for minimising workplace gender discrimination. Job segregation and the gender pay gap were attributed not only to aspects such as level of education and number of hours worked but also to the concentration of women in lower-level positions, the undervaluation of women's work, and caregiving responsibilities associated with parenthood. The primary cause of lower female representation in the workplace is identified as motherhood. Decisions regarding programmes to address gender inequality and management's responsibility to ensure their implementation are part of the organisational commitment. Women tend to be concentrated in lower-level positions in an organisation, and their representation significantly declines as they move into senior management roles due to two forms of workplace inequity, namely the glass ceiling and the glass escalator. The glass ceiling is the invisible barrier preventing women from entering senior management positions. At the same time, men benefit from the glass escalator, allowing them rapidly to ascend into senior management, including occupations traditionally regarded as feminised. One of the reasons for the prevalence of masculine values is the lack of female role models. Women in leadership positions can be role models by encouraging other women's career development. Gender equality is a fundamental human right that is important for developmental outcomes. Gender equality positively impacts various aspects, including sustainable development, poverty reduction, the economy, the workplace, policy development, health, and education, which positively affect families, children, society, and the nation as a whole.

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