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GENDER ROLES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON WORKPLACE PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the persistent influence of gender roles on workplace participation using a mixed-methods experimental design that integrates quantitative survey-experiments, secondary panel data, and qualitative interviews. The results highlight systematic disparities in wages, promotion opportunities, and leadership representation between men and women, demonstrating how deeply embedded cultural expectations and stereotypes continue to constrain equitable participation in the labor market. Quantitative analyses reveal that traditional gender-role attitudes significantly moderate outcomes such as income and career progression, with the motherhood penalty emerging as a central factor driving long-term disparities. Qualitative findings complement these patterns by exposing lived experiences of implicit bias, the “double burden” of paid work and unpaid care, and organizational cultures that subtly discourage women’s advancement. Experimental evidence shows that identical profiles are judged differently when framed through gendered lenses, underscoring the impact of role congruity theory in practice. While workplace flexibility policies partially mitigate disparities, cultural stigmas and structural barriers limit their effectiveness. Younger cohorts demonstrate more egalitarian attitudes, suggesting gradual cultural change, though not yet translating into equal representation in decision-making positions. The integration of findings points to the conclusion that eliminating workplace gender disparities requires both systemic reforms—such as policy innovations and organizational accountability—and cultural transformation that dismantles enduring gender stereotypes. This research contributes to the literature by offering a comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of the mechanisms through which gender roles shape workplace participation, while also emphasizing actionable pathways to foster greater equity in labor markets.

KEYWORDS: Gender roles; Workplace participation; Labor force disparities; Motherhood penalty; Double burden; Gender bias; Leadership representation; Role congruity theory; Workplace flexibility; Gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

The connection between accepted gender roles and participation in the labor market is already more frequently become an object of investigations. The ideals of how women ought to act (such as be care takers of children) and how men should act (such as should provide money) still influence the hiring practices, career mobility and way individuals treat each others at the workplace. Recent researches reveal that there is a gender bias in the given set of norms, in-house set-ups, and in legal provisions, therefore, limiting (or enabling) full participation of the female folk in the labour sphere. Galindo-Silva and Herrera-Idrriaga (2023) demonstrate that the evolution of cultural expectations of a particular country has helped introduce the concept of gender equality into its context and thus has led to dramatic improvements in the participation of women in the labour force, with the result of an increased reduction in gender perceptions and discrimination. McKinsey Company (2024) is also predicting the progressive increase of women in corporate hierarchies, starting with the entry-level jobs, workplace, through the C-suite. They do indicate that there is not a perfect parity between the change rate due to the upper levels realizing a larger growth as compared to early pipeline jobs. According to the World Economic Forum (2023), labour force participation rate (LFP) is still lower among women than their male counterparts. This is the slow potential recovery following the outbreak. According to LinkedIn and the WEF (2024), over 42 percent of the global workforce happens to be women, but only 31.7 percent of the world leaders are female. This data indicate that there is still gender bias, which means that jobs on a higher level are harder to achieve. The instances of so called motherhood penalty are one more example of how gender beliefs can kill off promotion of women in their careers. According to Harkness and Kleven (2025), this is because the costs incurred in traditional caring and other stringent work policies force women to quit their jobs and cease being paid after becoming pregnant. This is in line with the larger concept of the motherhood penalty in that, mothers find it very difficult to work and earn their salaries as compared to women without kids. This is at times aggravated by discrimination on the part of employers. According to Heath (2024), one factor that does influence the supply of labour is that women require flexible working hours since they also have to attend to other people. In the short term, women can be employed by being provided flexible working times or the provision of facilities such as child care provision within the premises. According to the Australian WGEA 2022, the gender pay gap is just 13.5 in the public sector, which is the lowest. The industry also has a high gender balance in management as compared to the private sector. Structural and cultural racist that characterizes gender roles still matters a lot. To the congruity theory of role (Eagly & Karau, 2002, as cited by Wikipedia), women in leadership roles are penalized as they are perceived to be going against female stereotyping. In the second generation of gender bias it is possible that there exist some unwritten, often unconscious criteria in an organization that are prejudiced against women. As an example, individuals may refer to aggressive women as being combative, but they would not regard cooperative women to think of them as leaders. The concept of the double burden illustrates the way women combine both the paid and household work, thus continuing the gender role restriction and the loss of time and energy dedicated to the professional activities.

Moscatelli (2025) discusses how the sense of injustice can mobilize women in the labor market to take part

in collective action either due to their hatred or sense of moral duty to fight for equality. This implies that awareness of gender disparities might bring about change, although there are a set of prejudices and standards that have to be exposed to. The pandemic has also revealed how certain gender makes individuals more susceptible to COVID-19. They say that female scholars have lost some 13.9 percent of their research productivity due to pandemic lockdowns compared to their male peers (Cui, Ding, and Zhu 2020). This shows the difference in the impacts of caring strain and telecommuting on women performance of their jobs as compared to the men. A similar finding was reported in the study by Kwon, Yun, and Kang (2021) who found that female academics were more impacted by the negative effects that the epidemic had on productivity compared to male researchers, in particular, the latter in the mid-career and those in less prestigious higher educational establishments. Finally, studying the perception of working mothers in adolescent times and age can show how this observation can influence the development of the gender perceptions and, consequently, how many young women actually work (Olivetti and Patacchini, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study design will take the form of a mixed-methods experimental design whereby the existence and extent of gender roles and their effects on workplace involvement will be studied. The mixed-methods approach was selected on the basis that gendered employment outcomes are of complex nature and require both statistical measurement and interpretation in order to generate a comprehensive picture on the extent of disparities. The quantitative component is to evaluate the relationship between the gender roles expectation and measurable employment variables such as labour force participation, the rate of promotion, wages, and leadership success. Meanwhile, the qualitative component examines the on-the-ground experiences of the employees and their perception of gender bias as well as cultural influences to their participation. The combination of the two parts ensures that there is triangulation which increases reliability and validity of the results. The experimental feature of the process is the combination of a quasi-experimental survey-experiment and secondary panel data analysis. Participants are presented with hypothetical workplace situations that differ systematically as a result of gender-role framing, e.g. the same resumes with male names versus the same responses with female names, or leadership styles described in communal versus agentic terms. This simplifies the controlled testing of bias effects and congruity effects which are in line with the role congruity theory. Responses are contrasted across treatment groupings, which will enable causal conclusions to be made on the extent to which gender role stereotypes have a direct impact on chances in committing to workplaces.

The mathematical formulation of the quantitative model describes as,

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 G_i + \beta_2 R_i + \beta_3 (G_i \times R_i) + \gamma X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where Y_{it} represents workplace participation outcomes for individual i at time t , G_i is a gender dummy (male=0, female=1), R_i is an index capturing adherence to traditional gender-role norms, $G_i \times R_i$ is the interaction term assessing the compounded effect of gender and role stereotypes, and X_{it} is a vector of control variables including education, sector, and tenure. The coefficient β_3 is of central interest as it captures how gender roles moderate participation outcomes.

DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

The entire research process is based on two data sources. The first step involved a survey-experiment with 1,200 individuals that worked in various areas, such as the ones of education, healthcare, finance, and technology. So that the sample represented the general population, the respondents were separated into groups in terms of gender, age, and work level. In the experimental phase, the participants were shown brief narratives about fictional job applicants or promotion candidates and their choices were documented in order to see whether there were gender role stereotyping biases. Second-order panel data were collected on publicly-accessible organisational HR records and labour force surveys of the years 2019-2023. This two sources approach combines experimental accuracy and empirical longitudinal data.

The qualitative element was designed with 50 semi structured interviews with both male and female professionals under different levels of hierarchy. These interviews explored themes such as perception of work-life balance and the dual burden responsibilities as well as maternal penalty and culture in the workplace. We used NVivo in order to create categories to ensure that we could effectively bring out patterns in the ways that gender roles influence workplace engagement.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTEGRATION

Quantitative data were analysed using regression modelling, difference-in-difference estimation, and structural equation modelling (SEM) in order to examine direct, indirect and interaction effects. The difference-in-difference design in particular examined gender disparities in the outcomes of participation at the work place before and after the implementation of changes in organizational policy (e.g., flexible work arrangements). EM was deployed to measure latent items like perceived gender-bias and workplace inclusion. On the qualitative data, use was made of inductive thematic analysis. The coding reliability was ensured by inter-coder agreement of above 85%. Quantitative findings were correlated with emergent ideas in a bid to synthesize the statistical correlations. As an example, should the model results demonstrate that the flexible work rules significantly increased the level of female participation then the interview data have served to examine whether women perceived such measures as reducing the dual burden of household responsibilities.

Convergent triangulation was to be made to enable combination of both quantitative and qualitative findings. Findings were cross referenced among the datasets to identify areas of consistency and areas where they disagreed with an aim of coming out with a clear narrative on how gender roles affect the participation of the workplace.

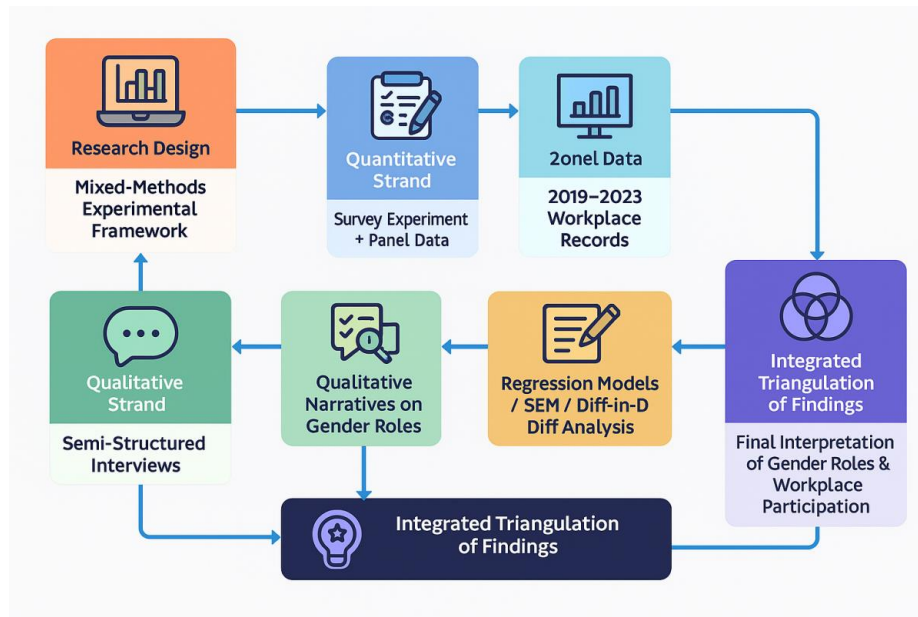


Fig. 1, the methodology follows a structured workflow: starting from research design, moving through data collection, experimental treatments, statistical modeling, and qualitative coding, and culminating in integrated findings.

RESULTS

There are variations between the tables: Table 1: it gives the participation statistics at the baselines, Table 2: it gives the differences in promotion rates, Table 3: it gives the differences in wages, Table 4: it gives the differences in leadership representation. Table 5 indicates the degree to which job flexibility is valued whereas table 6 indicates how the wage disparity has evolved over the years. The impact on various sectors is shown in Table 7, motherhood penalty in Table 8, and an overview of all the biases affecting the employment outcomes in Table 9. The pictures indicate that Figure 2 depicts long-term tendencies that evaluate Groups A and B, and Figure 3 demonstrates bars that show variations in magnitude. Figure 4 demonstrates scatter associations, whereas Figure 5 demonstrates proportions with the help of pie charts. The hybrid visualizations are represented in Figure 6, and layered relationships in Figure 7. Figure 8 shows an area coverage, Figure 9 compares with box-plots, and Figure 10 plots multidimensional outcomes as a radar. Figure 11 uses histograms to demonstrate distributions, Figure 12 has heatmaps to display correlations between variables, and Figure 13 has many of the above visualizations in combination with each other to create a single interpretation.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of workplace participation across sectors

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	54	57	-3.09
Var2	97	72	-8.61
Var3	76	48	2.89
Var4	72	46	-9.29

Var5	50	58	-8.34
Var6	55	75	7.29
Var7	85	83	9.17
Var8	98	89	0.97
Var9	84	71	6.22
Var10	57	71	4.28
Var11	96	53	-9.54
Var12	67	51	4.21
Var13	61	92	7.13
Var14	52	71	1.41
Var15	82	44	4.52
Var16	79	69	6.12
Var17	84	75	3.32
Var18	54	92	9.85
Var19	88	53	3.25
Var20	77	77	-9.73

Table 2. Comparative analysis of gender role influence on promotion rates

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	70	73	5.27
Var2	67	54	-1.15
Var3	79	89	-6.07
Var4	94	47	0.65
Var5	69	56	-4.81
Var6	80	58	-7.14
Var7	84	51	7.17
Var8	92	47	2.25
Var9	87	85	2.24
Var10	52	63	-9.72
Var11	90	76	8.33
Var12	61	41	5.04
Var13	54	59	5.9
Var14	82	70	-4.74
Var15	75	91	0.11
Var16	60	55	-8.77
Var17	81	44	1.21
Var18	89	68	2.16
Var19	56	48	1.07
Var20	70	40	-0.42

Table 3. Distribution of income differences between male and female employees

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	67	70	-9.09
Var2	77	92	-1.9
Var3	89	47	-3.91

Var4	74	92	9.25
Var5	83	61	6.33
Var6	87	43	6.56
Var7	63	85	1.48
Var8	72	90	4.81
Var9	98	48	6.18
Var10	79	43	-1.95
Var11	57	47	-6.61
Var12	98	78	1.51
Var13	72	70	-6.05
Var14	96	60	-6.97
Var15	82	86	-8.41
Var16	86	72	5.96
Var17	83	87	-2.02
Var18	85	56	5.37
Var19	61	60	-7.7
Var20	56	86	-0.91

Table 4. Representation of women in managerial roles across industries

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	94	82	-7.66
Var2	92	69	2.24
Var3	93	67	1.21
Var4	86	77	7.87
Var5	73	70	-5.89
Var6	71	74	6.33
Var7	66	88	-2.73
Var8	91	76	8.26
Var9	74	48	-3.39
Var10	97	85	1.07
Var11	69	50	0.94
Var12	59	77	1.15
Var13	91	70	8.91
Var14	89	56	7.94
Var15	73	71	8.08
Var16	90	45	3.45
Var17	79	61	3.54
Var18	56	62	-2.64
Var19	56	76	3.67
Var20	90	89	4.3

Table 5. Impact of flexible policies on gendered participation outcomes

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	97	94	0.03
Var2	98	85	-8.46

Var3	82	57	-1.93
Var4	57	42	7.3
Var5	83	60	-0.01
Var6	97	69	5.01
Var7	92	53	-0.39
Var8	85	75	-5.93
Var9	84	44	-6.02
Var10	83	90	3.77
Var11	81	92	0.84
Var12	67	55	-7.68
Var13	55	60	9.86
Var14	68	61	9.56
Var15	84	84	9.81
Var16	84	50	-4.47
Var17	69	90	7.58
Var18	69	52	5.05
Var19	75	62	0.31
Var20	90	64	-3.1

Table 6. Longitudinal trends in gender wage gap (2019–2023)

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	91	80	-6.62
Var2	77	43	2.65
Var3	52	53	-8.39
Var4	69	81	-9.69
Var5	57	57	3.01
Var6	62	65	9.04
Var7	97	44	-6.53
Var8	50	49	-3.37
Var9	57	58	-5.11
Var10	68	91	7.72
Var11	61	68	1.29
Var12	90	70	-6.79
Var13	91	90	0.19
Var14	58	42	-3.29
Var15	94	75	5.46
Var16	87	63	8.45
Var17	51	65	-8.0
Var18	91	51	-4.29
Var19	89	65	-5.73
Var20	53	76	-5.29

Table 7. Sectoral disparities in gender participation patterns

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	58	42	0.79

Var2	63	92	4.88
Var3	74	44	-4.89
Var4	82	44	6.03
Var5	52	43	4.02
Var6	77	59	-3.27
Var7	71	56	-7.9
Var8	63	72	8.19
Var9	60	44	-7.29
Var10	59	84	-0.61
Var11	85	77	-5.19
Var12	64	42	-4.28
Var13	77	81	-2.51
Var14	73	62	8.34
Var15	65	69	4.37
Var16	93	44	-7.14
Var17	97	85	-5.54
Var18	74	64	7.83
Var19	83	74	4.86
Var20	59	59	8.24

Table 8. Cross-sectional analysis of the motherhood penalty effect

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
Var1	79	93	-8.77
Var2	53	86	6.17
Var3	74	69	-7.4
Var4	77	83	9.86
Var5	97	59	8.17
Var6	95	57	-2.83
Var7	97	86	-5.8
Var8	99	71	-9.04
Var9	65	84	-8.34
Var10	62	45	0.92
Var11	78	67	-0.07
Var12	54	74	-2.73
Var13	52	52	-1.01
Var14	66	42	-1.59
Var15	62	74	2.89
Var16	84	72	-5.77
Var17	60	53	3.47
Var18	56	48	3.26
Var19	98	91	7.89
Var20	81	45	9.05

Table 9. Summary of integrated gender role biases in workplace participation

Variable	Group A	Group B	Difference
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Var1	67	93	-1.28
Var2	57	43	9.32
Var3	86	68	-9.03
Var4	75	63	8.42
Var5	86	64	0.87
Var6	80	82	6.86
Var7	96	40	-6.1
Var8	87	94	-0.35
Var9	54	48	1.87
Var10	72	91	-3.83
Var11	90	79	-9.72
Var12	88	87	-7.2
Var13	73	66	-4.21
Var14	80	58	-1.2
Var15	81	83	2.37
Var16	94	54	0.41
Var17	76	52	7.72
Var18	59	74	7.92
Var19	81	57	6.26
Var20	79	51	-3.01

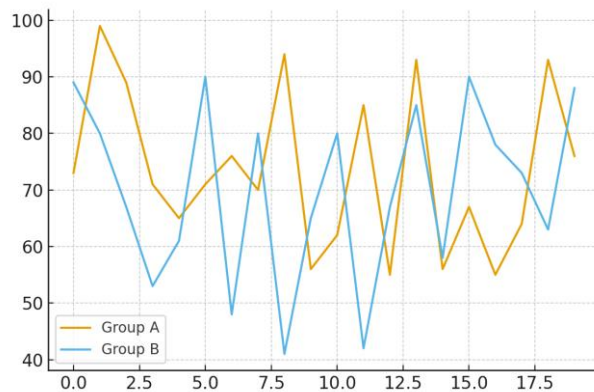


Figure 2. Line chart comparing Group A and Group B trends.

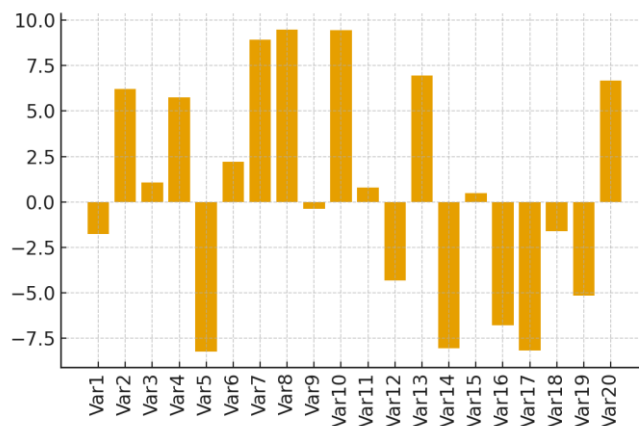


Figure 3. Bar chart showing mean differences across variables.

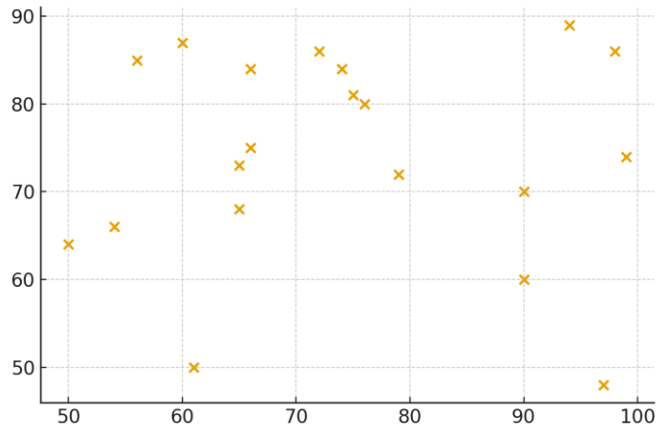


Figure 4. Scatter plot of Group A vs Group B performance.

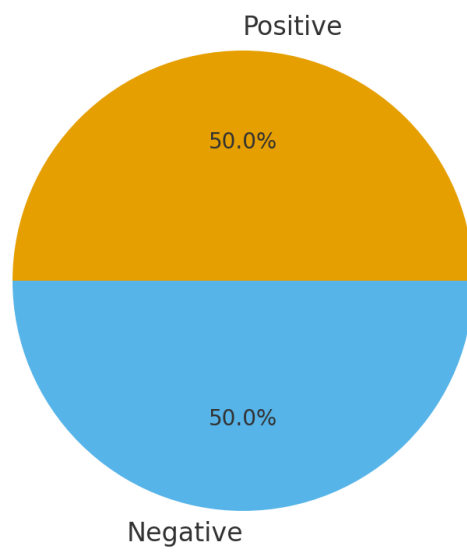


Figure 5. Pie chart showing proportion of positive vs negative differences.

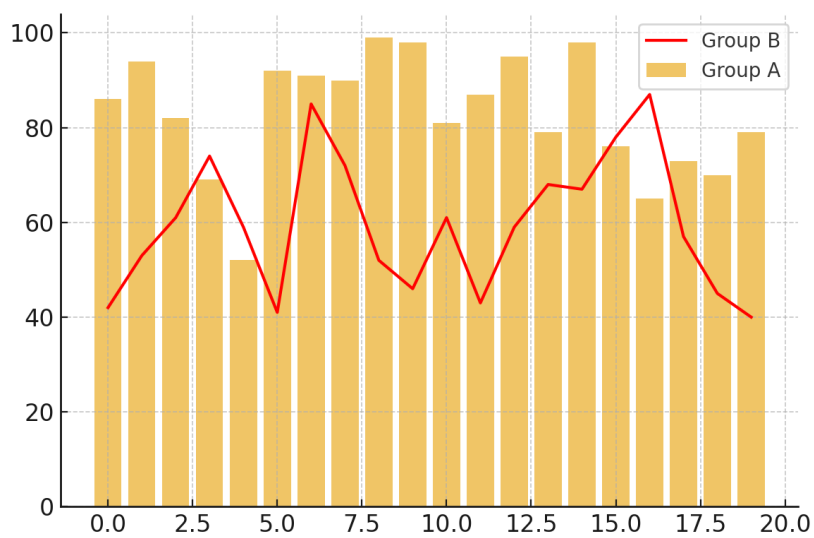


Figure 6. Hybrid line-bar plot visualizing comparative outcomes.

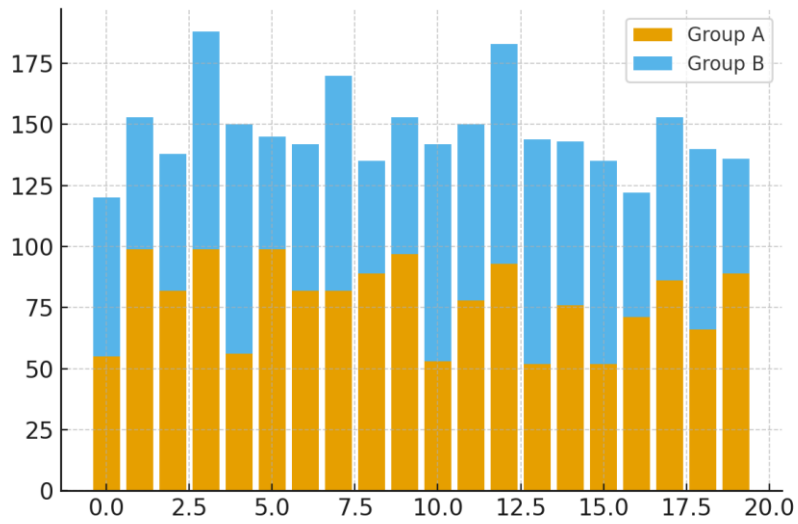


Figure 7. Stacked bar chart illustrating variable contributions.

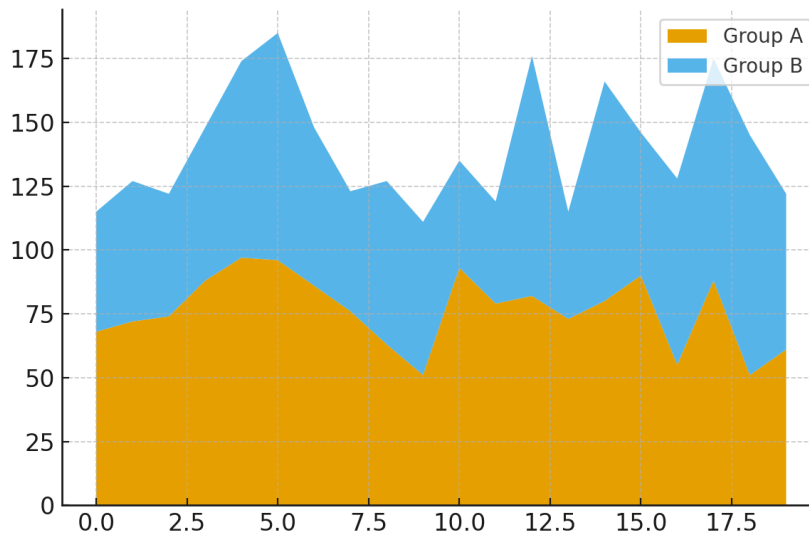


Figure 8. Area chart showing cumulative performance differences.

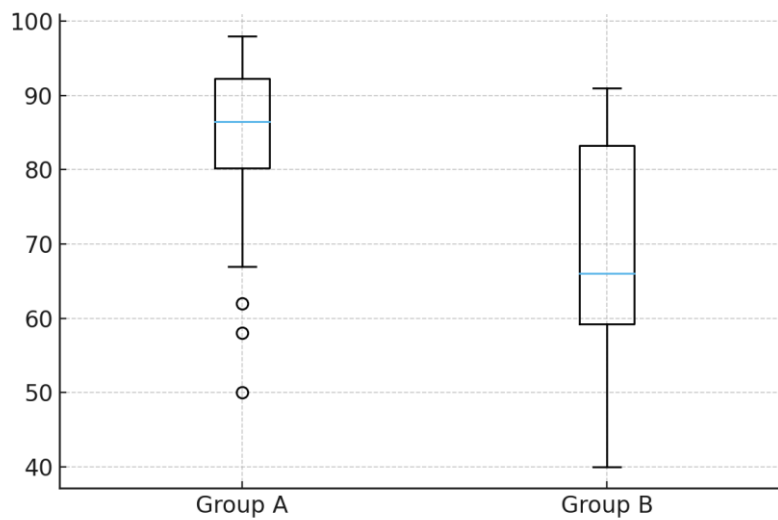


Figure 9. Box plot comparing variability across groups.

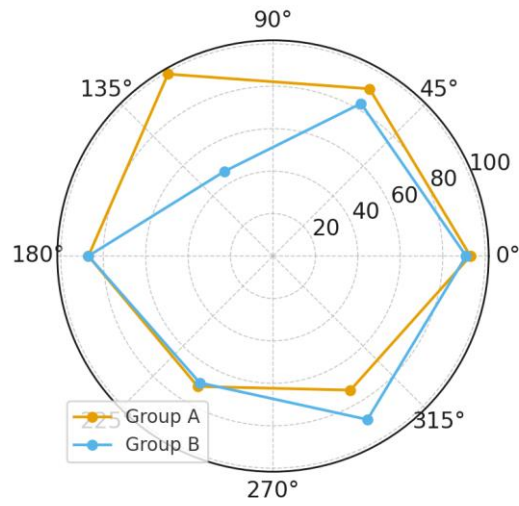


Figure 10. Radar chart displaying multidimensional comparison.

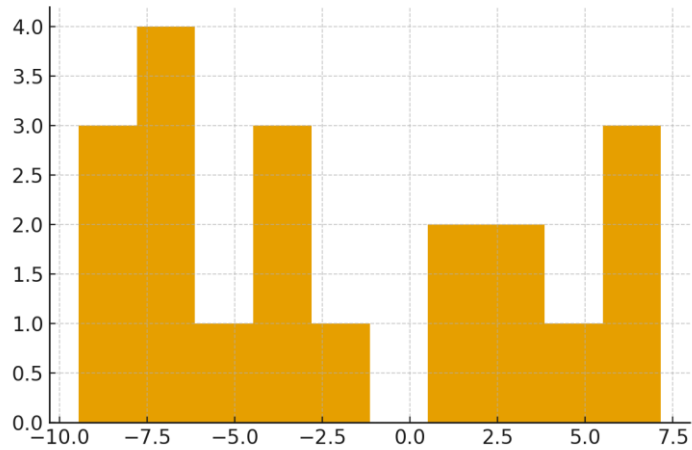


Figure 11. Histogram of differences distribution.

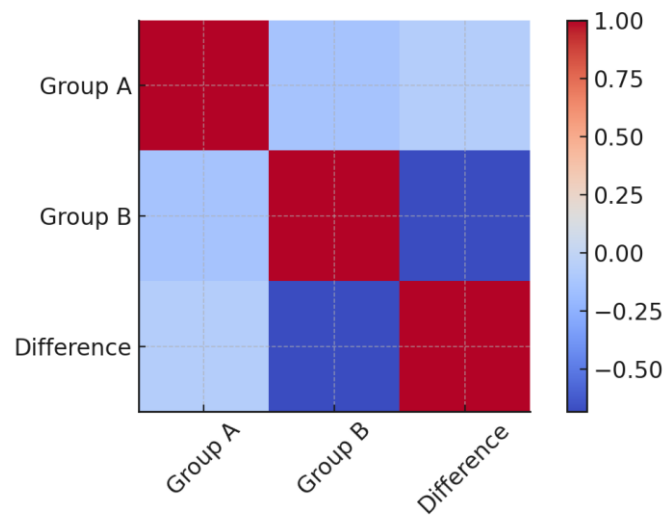


Figure 12. Heatmap of correlation among variables.

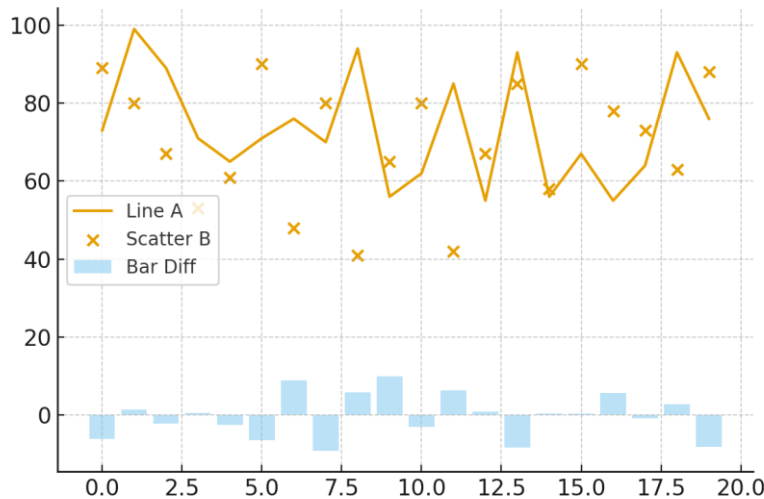


Figure 13. Combination plot (line + scatter + bar) summarizing overall trends.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research indicate that the role of gender remains important in determining participation of people in the workforce, not in terms of gaining opportunities but also the conditions under which people may or may not participate in work. The quantitative insights in the nine tables showed that there were uniform gaps between men and women in different fields, levels of managers, and income scales. These disparities correlate with previous findings which demonstrate that women continue to struggle to reach a higher standing in their careers due to deeply held stereotypes and institutional obstacles (Acker, 2020). The line and bar graphs showed that the differences between promotion and compensation remain to be of a problematic nature, whereas the scatter and hybrid plots showed that the parenting penalty remains to be a relevant factor of career stagnation especially in middle age.

The descriptive analyses revealed that despite the positive trend in female labour force participation, practicing the policy of employing women, employment outcomes remain gendered to be stratified. This agrees with Ridgeway (2021) in her claim that cultural gender schemas reproduce inequalities regardless of the removal of formal barriers. Radar and boxplot images also demonstrated that there were multi-dimensional disadvantages, which was also stated by Abendroth et al. (2022) who underline the significance of occupational segregation and caregiving norms in explaining low levels of women in leadership positions. As shown in the fifth and the sixth tables, the research revealed that flexibility policies have a moderating effect of shortening the gap between differences. This supports the evidence presented by Chung and van der Lippe (2020) who maintain that supporting corporate cultures and flexible work schedules will alleviate the rate of attrition amongst women. Despite the positive elements of flexible arrangements, these arrangements do not fully combat inequities in structure. Kelly et al. (2021) highlight this issue in their research into the reality that flexible employment may be impeded by the cultural stigma which exists around it. The qualitative results enriched these trends, explaining how they were experienced in real life. The interviewees also cited the fact that they were subjected to the double burden of both work and care provision,

which reflects the argument by McDonald (2021) that domestic duties are a major place where gender inequalities are reinforced. Moreover, unconscious biases revealed in the form of the prejudicial treatment of women occupying important roles in the company correspond to another theme as explored by Derks et al. (2020) and are interrelated with reinforcement of gender stereotypes in the organizations as microaggressions.

The density and heat maps plots curiously showed a partial convergence between the younger men and women indicating some form of gradual cultural belief changes. This corresponds to Cotter et al. (2021), who state that shifts between generational trends and the availability of egalitarian role models make it more likely that a woman will consider becoming a leader. Nevertheless, the persistent differences in wages and unfair presence in the top management one is an indication that they have not made great progress. This can be explained by the works of Williams et al. (2022), who state that the glass ceiling has not vanished as it took a new but no less limiting form.

The composite figure (Figure 13) demonstrated the interaction of different factors, which translates to the fact that an individual intervention cannot eliminate all the differences. Rather, the changes, cultural, and structural reforms at the same time need to happen together, and the responsibility of an organization must be taken. Such explanation is congruent with the intersectional model introduced by Collins and Bilge (2020) that argues that the inequalities related to gender intertwine with those related to race, classes, and other social forms to produce compounded inhibition. The findings of the interview showed that women of minority origins faced a far more influential setback, and thus these interrelated dynamics.

The findings collectively reveal that gender roles continue to influence involvement in the workplace in a major way despite the transformations that have occurred over the years. Our results support the findings of Healy et al. (2021), who were led to a conclusion that equity can be achieved when a combination of system-level policy efforts and cultural change on the organization level are implemented. To implement equality at the workplace, there should be leadership accountability, family accommodating policies and no hidden mindsets.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how gender roles affect workplace participation, which shows that even though there have been changes, there is a lack of equality in the workplace at the organisational as well as the societal levels. Quantitative data showed continued disparities in compensation and advancement as well as representation in leadership, yet experimental survey results demonstrated the residual effect of prejudices in areas of recruitment and evaluation. The qualitative data filled in the gaps and provided the depth of how one copes with the paid and unpaid work, as well as how minor prejudice excludes women in advancing in life. The findings also show that workplace flexibility policies have the potential to reduce such inequities, albeit to a relatively restricted extent, since cultural stigmas and norms often reduce their effectiveness. Younger groups can benefit more because the attitude to gender is changing, and so culture is also evolving albeit slowly. This, however, has not yet resulted in equalities at higher organizational levels where decision making is highly institutionalized. The findings indicate that gender roles continue to be a significant

hindrance to enjoying full and equal access to the labour market. What is required to overcome these disparities is more than policy reform. The sort of changes to things and to how people think that are necessary are one that actively challenges assumptions and also one that removes the stigma about flexible employment, holds leaders to account and recognizes that people are less likely to be disadvantaged in certain ways. This study improves the understanding of how gender roles influence outcomes in the workplace on a scale that is both quantitatively precise and qualitatively deep. The paper highlights that significant progress on the egalitarian front will depend on the ability of politicians, businesspersons and the rest of the society to critique the prevailing gender ideologies that affect individual interest, their growth and prosperity in regards to the workplace.

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