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ANTECEDENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO GENDER DISPARITY AT MANAGERIAL LEVELS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY CONCERNING THE SELECT SERVICE SECTOR IN DELHI NCR

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ABSTRACT

This empirical study focuses on antecedents and their relationship with gender disparity at the management level by surveying select service employees in Delhi, the National Capital Region. This research measured the influence of six reflective constructs—biased performance appraisal, inability to access power networks, work-life conflict, unequal HR practices and policies, gender stereotyping, and personal/individual perception—on the dependent reflective construct of gender disparity. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire with 27 statements to measure the above 7 reflective constructs. The questionnaire was administered to the targeted population comprising management-level employees of the IT, media, and banking sectors. Using the information from the 389 responses that were analyzed using factor and structural equation modeling, the author tested his hypothetical framework. The data were normally distributed, as determined by the Shapiro–Wilk test ($p>0.05$), and the instrument retained its reliability and internal consistency, as evidenced by the calculated Cronbach's alpha statistic values, which ranged between 0.73 and 0.81. The effect of the six constructs was tested on the dependent construct of gender disparity. All the three reflective constructs—Inaccessibility to power networks, Unequal HR practices and policies, and gender stereotyping—had positive impacts on gender disparity, which were statistically significant. The authors recommend service industry management to address power networks, HR practices, and gender stereotyping issues.

Keywords: Gender disparity, work-life conflict, HR practices and policies, gender stereotyping, personal/individual perception, select service sector

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INTRODUCTION

It has much to do with the history of mankind. The roots are not just in India but all over the world. Women were taught to accept their status socially and follow the rules and regulations that were made for them without questioning them. They were taught to be obedient sisters, daughters and wives and learn to respect their elders; they are taught certain manners, such as how to walk, talk, sit, and work at home. They are not given freedom to own their individuality. The position of women in traditional Indian society is such that many traditional practices are enforced, such as polygamy, early marriage, and illiteracy, and are restricted to their homes and household work. Unfortunately, many such practices are still running in our country.

This includes a large section of Indian women working ceaselessly towards the upliftment and empowerment of women. That has also happened due to liberalization; this has given a turning moment in the mentality of the women, as they had begun to think about crossing that glass ceiling. However, it was seen only with the passage of time rather than a break-through. There could be different bases on which discrimination can exist in any country. It can be color, sex, religion, caste, etc., and one factor can be more dominant from another depending on country to country. It all depends on the history and culture of that country or territory.

In India, sex or gender has always been a concern because of its deep-rooted patriarchy. It is worth mentioning that we perceive India as an orthodox country because of such notions, but ‘gender’ also plays a vital role in several other countries of the West. The only difference is that it is evident in India, while it is brushed under the carpet in other countries but still exists in more subtle forms.

Gender discrimination occurs when people are treated differently or unfairly because of their gender identity or sex.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study included a number of challenges, including organizational limitations, societal restraints, and psychological hurdles. Women in organizations continue to face threats from both inside and outside the organization, as well as obstacles to progress and gender stereotypes [1]. They do not participate in informal group networks or decision-making processes, and their jobs in organizations are stereotyped. Women become less enthusiastic as a result, and they frequently quit their jobs and never return. People in managerial professions are expected to be masculine, and when women display masculine features, they are not accepted since they do not display feminine traits. In organisational structures, procedures and practice, there is a clear complexity in

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the phenomenon of gender inequality [2]. It follows that human resource practices such as policy, decision making or implementation have an impact on employment, training, wages and the promotion of women.

According to professional selection criteria, stereotypes negatively affect women's individual perceptions, which are positively connected with education. However, as we move to higher management positions, gender bias arises in the form of culture and social norms reported by a small number of female respondents trying to get their hands on greater managerial posts even though these criteria remain unchanged. The reasons for the lack of women in top management positions were questioned by all respondents, with females replying that they were unable to do so because of social pressures. Some women accused other women of contributing to the societal structure by failing to assist their daughters and daughters-in-law in ending this cycle. [3]. In developing countries, ender norms are an obstacle to women fully and equally participating in the labor market [4]. Various kinds of obstacles for women to advance into management positions and perceptions about organizational justice are directly linked. For example, barriers to accessing powerful networks of influence and power and obstacles are related to excellent work-life balance [5].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore and study the antecedents of gender disparity
- To ascertain the impact of these antecedents on gender disparities in select service sectors
- (IT, Media, Banking) in the Delhi NCR.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H1: There is no significant relationship between ‘Work-Life Conflict’ and ‘Gender Disparity’ at the managerial level.

H2 There is no significant relationship between ‘Inaccessibility to power networks’ in the workplace and ‘Gender Disparity’ at the managerial level.

H3: There is no significant relationship between PPA in the workplace and GDR at the managerial level.

H4: There is no significant relationship between “Unequal HR practices & Policies” and “Gender disparity” at the managerial level.

H5: There is no significant relationship between personal and individual perceptions and gender disparity at the managerial level.

H6: There is no significant relationship between gender discrimination/stereotyping and gender disparity at the managerial level.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research framework is based on the model developed by [5], who studied the inequality and disparities between women and men in general and between women and men in top management positions in particular and perceptions of unfairness in women's promotion to higher management. General stereotyping at the workplace (5 items) was based on the model [6], which reported gender-based stereotypes in the workplace and respondents' attitudes toward their own gender. The author also reported the effects of gender-based stereotypes in the context of age, education, managerial experience and attitudes toward female management. The researcher reported personal/individual self-concepts and perceptions using four factors related to women undermining themselves at the workplace on their caliber, knowledge and handling management decisions [7]. Gender disparity was based on the model [8]. Following these studies, a composite theoretical framework was developed and adopted (Figure 1).

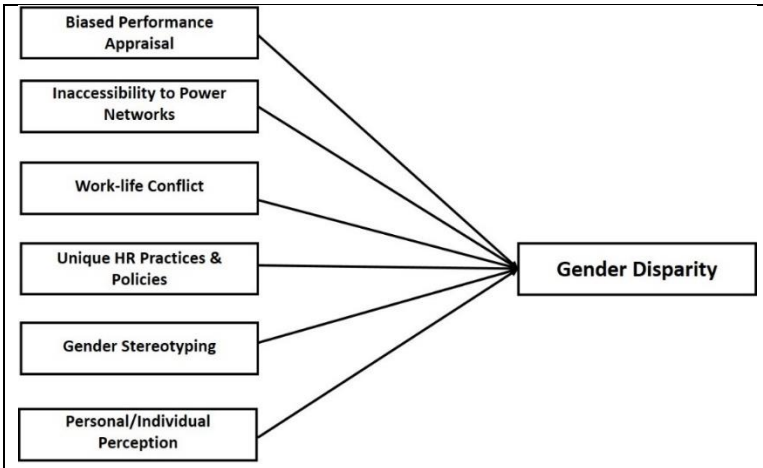

Figure 1: Theoretical framework: Antecedents and its relationship with Gender Disparity

DETERMINATION OF SAMPLE SIZE

As the IT, media, and banking sector population is unknown, Cochran's formula was used to determine the sample size for the unknown population[9]. According to this formula, the required sample size is 386. Our sample size (389) is greater than what [10] suggested for SEM analysis. The study sample included 167 male and 222 female respondents aged 18-25 (89), 26-35 (169), 36-45 (75), and 46-55 (37) years > 55 (21) years with diverse educational backgrounds and employment statuses.

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Measurement/Instrument: The four constructs of biased performance appraisal (4 items), inaccessibility to power networks (5 items), work-life conflict/imbalance (5 items), and unequal HR practices and policies (4 items) were measured following the model and questionnaire of Ramos et al. (2022). General stereotyping at the workplace (5 items) was measured using the model and questionnaire of Mihail (2006), who reported gender-based stereotypes in the workplace and respondents' attitudes toward their own gender. The construct personal/individual perception (5 items) was measured following the model and questionnaire of Goni et al. [7]. Gender disparity (5 items) was measured using the model of [8]. All the questions/statements were slightly modified to suit the present empirical research.The researcher followed a convenient sampling method. A structured questionnaire to measure 7 reflective constructs consisting of 27 statements was developed and published on Google. The link of the questionnaire was provided to the targeted 500 respondents through email, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. A total of 420 responses were received.

DATA ANALYSIS

Factor Analysis: The factor analysis divided the 27 variables into 7 components based on their shared variance. A Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) score of 0.927 indicates sampling adequacy. A Bartlett's test p value less than 0 indicates that the data are suitable for factor analysis.

Table 1: Factor loadings of study variables

Item	Description	Factor loading
WLC1	I believe work schedules and work organization make women's dedication to work difficult	.932
WLC2	I believe women put their family responsibilities before their professional ones	.926
WLC3	I believe the work–family balance affects more women than men	.908
WLC4	I believe motherhood interrupts and delays women's opportunities for promotion	.819
WLC5	I believe women's family responsibilities make their career dedication and promotion difficult	.895
GS1	I believe women face discrimination in allotment of job roles and responsibilities because of their gender	.770
GS2	I believe, women have to face added pressure from family and workplace	.852
GS3	I believe women put themselves at the last as opposed to men	.875

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PN1	I believe women have less access to powerful groups and networks than men	.870
PN2	I believe Women move in groups with lower access to relevant information	.909
PN3	I believe Men in managerial positions prefer to work with other men	.912
PN4	I believe Powerful and influential groups and networks are composed of men	.815
PN5	I believe there are no models of women managers that other women can follow	.767
BPA1	I believe, women have greater requirements than men	.913
BPA2	I believe, women are assessed with higher standards	.832
BPA3	I believe, women need to prove their abilities more than men	.902
BPA4	I believe, women's work and achievements are less valued than men	.837
PIP1	I believe women undermine themselves at the workplace	.851
PIP2	I believe women resist the change required for promotion	.874
PIP3	I believe women undermine them in terms of knowledge and caliber	.840
GD1	I believe males are more active in managerial roles as compared to their female counterpart	.913
GD2	I believe, male staff take higher managerial roles in this organization	.937
GD3	I believe females looking forward to career advancements are denied higher managerial roles because of their gender	.945
GD4	I believe males are given more promotional opportunities as compared to females	.924
HRP1	I believe women receive fewer training opportunities than men	.890
HRP2	I believe Performance appraisal takes into account aspects that benefit men more than women	.933
HRP3	I believe Women have more difficulties than men in being incorporated into the company	.894

Source: Primary data processed

WLC: Work-life conflict/imbalance; GS: General stereotyping at workplace; PN: Inaccessibility to power networks; BPA: Biased performance appraisal; PIP: Personal individual perception; GD: Gender disparity; HRP: Unique HR Practice & Policies

Structural equation modeling results

This section reports the results of the SEM analysis and presents the structural model and model-fit statistics, mediation, and moderation analysis. The study has 7 reflective constructs, and the reliability and validity are assessed to confirm the suitability for further examination to assess reflective measurement [11].

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Measurement model

CFA was performed using AMOS to test the measurement model. All the factor loadings were within the threshold values, and the model fit indices were CMIN/df 1.803, CFI 0.973, GFI 914, TLI 0.969, IFI 0.974, NFI 0.942, SRMR 0.033, and RMSEA 0.045. The PClose value of 0.887 revealed an excellent model fit [12,13,14]. The seven-factor model (WLC: Work-life conflict/imbalance; GS: General stereotyping at workplace; PN: Inaccessibility to power networks; BPA: Biased performance appraisal; PIP: Personal individual perception; GD: Gender disparity; HRP: Unique HR Practice & Policies) fit the data well[15, 16].

The Cronbach's alpha values were > 0.7, and composite reliability > than the threshold values revealed that the model was reliable (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994)[17]. The benchmark and recommended values of 0.70 were not met by the composite reliabilities, which varied from 0.901 to 0.946 [18, [19] (Table 2). Compared to the threshold value of 0.50 [19], the AVE values were greater. The discriminant validity of the model was determined according to Fornell and Larcker (1981 criterion), and the HTMT ratio—a novel technique for evaluating discriminant validity—is being increasingly used. All ratios were below the necessary cutoff of 0.85 [20]. Consequently, discriminant validity (Tables 3 & 4) was established.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity for Study Constructs

Construct	Cronbach alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Work-life conflict/imbalance	0.945	0.946	0.778
Inaccessibility to power networks	0.895	0.915	0.683
Gender disparity	0.913	0.951	0.828
Biased performance appraisal	0.905	0.906	0.708
Unique HR Practice & Policies	0.903	0.908	0.766
Personal individual perception;	0.906	0.915	0.782
General stereotyping at workplace	0.832	0.901	0.753

Source: Primary data processed

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Table 3. Discriminant validity

	WLC	**PNET**	GENDIS	BPA	HPRS	PIP	GENST
WLC	**0.882**						
PNET	0.540***	**0.826**					
GENDIS	0.435***	0.429***	**0.910**				
BPA	0.379***	0.432***	0.326***	**0.841**			
HPRS	0.396***	0.319***	0.409***	0.360***	**0.875**		
PIP	0.589***	0.539***	0.462***	0.496***	0.335***	**0.884**	
GENST	0.658***	0.455***	0.556***	0.336***	0.468***	0.686***	**0.868**

Source: Primary data processed

WLC: Work-life conflict/imbalance; GS: General stereotyping at workplace; PN: Inaccessibility to power networks; BPA: Biased performance appraisal; PIP: Personal individual perception; GD: Gender disparity; HRP: Unique HR Practice & Policies;

Table 4: Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Analysis

	WLC	PNET	GENDIS	BPA	HPRS	PIP	GENST
WLC							
PNET	0.511						
GENDIS	0.412	0.402					
BPA	0.355	0.397	0.299				
HPRS	0.368	0.295	0.378	0.329			
PIP	0.551	0.498	0.428	0.457	0.299		
GENST	0.618	0.415	0.512	0.297	0.429	0.631	

Source: Primary data processed

WLC: Work-life conflict/imbalance; GS: General stereotyping at workplace; PN: Inaccessibility to power networks; BPA: Biased performance appraisal; PIP: Personal individual perception; GD: Gender disparity; HRP: Unique HR Practice & Policies;

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Structural model

The relationships among the constructs were tested using a structural equation model created by AMOS. According to Hair et al. (2010)[18], a well-fitted model is recognized if the Tucker and Lewis index (1973)[21], the confirmatory fit index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990)[12], the GFI (Hair et al., 2010)[18], and the CMIN/df are less than 5. Furthermore, according to Hair et al. (2010)[11], a model was deemed adequate if the standardized root mean square residual (RMR) using AMOS computation was less than 0.05 and the root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) fell between 0.05 and 0.08. The appropriate range is occupied by the indices shown in Table 3.

The squared multiple correlation was 0.37 for gender disparity (Figure 2), which indicates that 37% of the variance in gender disparity is accounted for by six independent variables: WLC, work-life conflict/imbalance; GS, general stereotyping at the workplace; PN, Inaccessibility to power networks; BPA, biased performance appraisal; PIP, personal individual perception; and HRP, unique HR practice & policies (Figure 2).

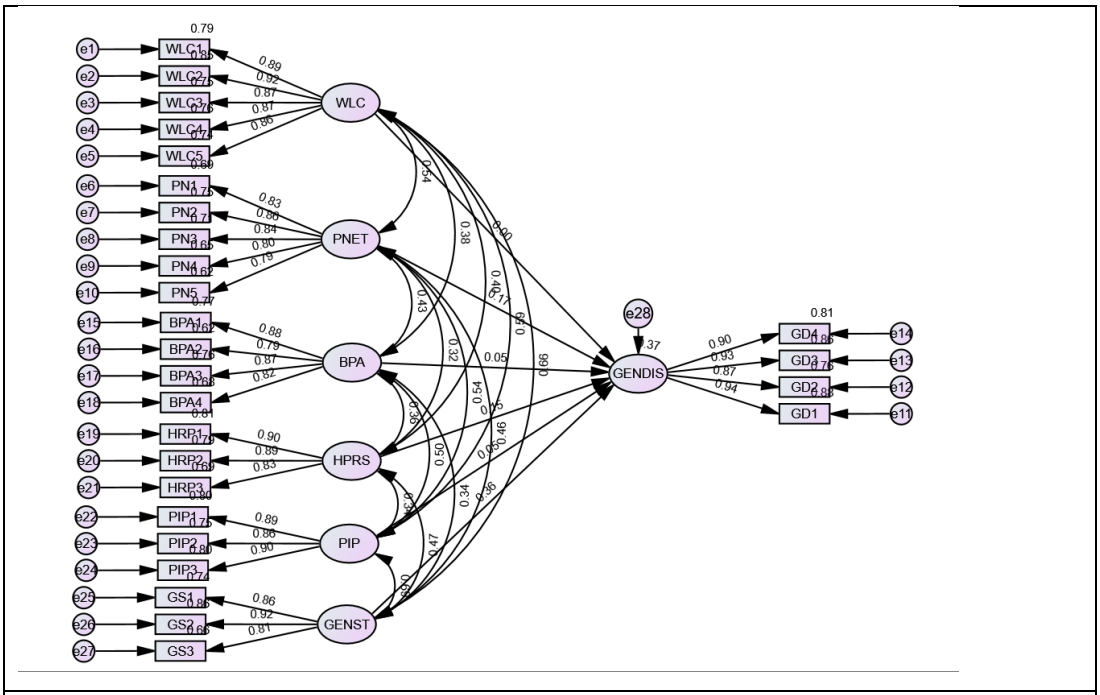

Figure 2: Structural model and the relationships between the constructs

Source: Primary data processed

WLC: Work-life conflict/imbalance; GS: General stereotyping at workplace; PN: Inaccessibility to power networks; BPA: Biased performance appraisal; PIP: Personal individual perception; GD: Gender disparity; HRP: Unique HR Practice & Policies;

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Testing of hypotheses

This study assessed the impact of WLC (work-life conflict/imbalance), GS (general stereotyping at the workplace), PN (inaccessibility to power networks), BPA (biased performance appraisal), PIP (personal individual perception), and HRP (unique HR practice & policies) on GD (gender disparity), the impact of gender disparity on (JC) job commitment, and the impact of job commitment on EPER (employee performance).

The impact of biased performance appraisal on gender disparity is positive but insignificant (ß=0.059 t=0.977, p=0.359); hence, H1): There is no significant relationship between biased performance appraisal at the workplace and gender disparity at the managerial level. The impact of 'Inaccessibility to power networks' on Gender Disparity was positive and statistically significant (ß=0.214, t=2.855, $p<0.05$), hence rejecting the null hypothesis H2: There is no significant relationship between 'Inaccessibility to power networks' in the workplace and 'Gender Disparity' at the managerial level.

The impact of work-life conflict/imbalance was positive but insignificant (ß=0.001, t=0.00, p=0.999); hence, H3: There is no significant relationship between work-life conflict in the workplace and gender disparity at the managerial level. The impact of unequal HR practices and policies on gender disparity is positive and statistically significant (ß=0.127, t=2.818). $p<0.05$), hence rejecting H4): There is no significant relationship between 'Unequal HR practices & Policies' and 'Gender Disparity' at the managerial level.

The impact of gender discrimination/stereotyping on gender disparity is positive and statistically significant (ß=0.494, t=4.551, $p<0.01$); hence, H5 is rejected: There is no significant relationship between gender discrimination/stereotyping and gender disparity at the managerial level. The impact of Personal and Individual Perception on Gender Disparity is positive but not significant (ß=0.080, t=0.641, p=0.521); hence, H6: There is no significant relationship between Personal and Individual Perception and Gender Disparity at the managerial level.

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Table 13: Testing of hypothese				
Hypothesized relationship	ß	t value	p value	Decision
H1: Work-life conflict → Gender disparity	.000	.000	0.999	Not Supported
H2: Inaccessibility to Power Networks→ Gender Disparity	.214	2.855	.004	Supported
H3: Biased Performance Appraisal → Gender Disparity	.059	.977	.329	Not Supported
H4: Unequal HR practices & policies → Gender Disparity	.127	2.818	.005	Supported
H5: Personal/Individual → Gender Disparity	.080	.641	.521	Not supported
H6: Gender stereotyping → Gender Disparity	.494	4.551	***	Supported
R-Square				
Gender disparity	0.37			

DISCUSSION

Gender disparity leaves its traces in every sphere of life. Focusing on the research topic, wherein the focus should be on low representation of women at top-level management in public sector banks, is a matter of keen interest because it is an organized sector and biases and prejudices should be less common. Additionally, the government rules and policies for both its male and female employees are the same, and there are fewer chances of any personal judgments at the time of recruitment, promotion, transfers, etc., because of the uniform and transparent policies in place. However, the low representation of women in this sector leads us to identify real problems.

The four constructs of biased performance appraisal inaccessibility to power networks, work-life conflict/imbalance, and unequal HR practices and policies were studied and reported by Ramos et al. (2022)[8]. The author reported the inequality and disparities between women and men in general and top management positions in particular and unfairness perceptions of women's

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promotion to management. Our results are similar to the results reported by this author. Goni et al. (2011)[7] reported personal/individual self-concepts and perceptions using four factors related to women undermining themselves at the workplace on their caliber, knowledge and handling management decisions. The present study also reported a positive and insignificant impact of personal/individual self-concept among women. Szymanska and Rubin (2018)[22] examined how peers and immediate bosses of male and female managers evaluate each other's work performance differently. Managers' global performance is evaluated differently by peers and bosses based on gender structure theory and the concept of status characteristics. It was also discovered that managers' superiors did not differ between the genders of their subordinates. The authors also presented similar results when studying the impact of six reflective constructs on gender disparity by surveying the managerial-level employees of the IT, media and banking sectors.

Alshamsan (2010)[23] evaluated how pay for performance initiatives affect disparities in health care quality according to age, sex, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Since the quality and outcome framework was implemented, there have been persistent disparities in the management of performance appraisals and promotional opportunities at the managerial level[24]. Pay-for-performance programs should be created with the goal of lowering disparities while simultaneously mitigating gender disparities. Researchers have also reported a positive impact of biased performance appraisals and human resource practices and policies, and their implementation in the context of gender is one of the main reasons for gender disparities in the IT, banking and media sectors of the Delhi NCR [25].

CONCLUSIONS

The authors carried out this empirical study surveying the managerial-level employees of the IT, media, and banking sectors. The final questionnaire was distributed online and offline. Focused group discussions can also be chosen for better understanding. Women at the managerial level (middle and top) were targeted in different sectors to participate in one-on-one interviews. To avoid survey and researcher bias, the sample for this study will include both male and female employees from select service sectors (IT, Media, Banking) in the Delhi-NCR region. Only women employees at the managerial level were included in this study. The probable sample size was between 350 and 400; the sample was determined by the confidence level (95%) and margin of error (5%). However, the authors obtained 389 valid responses that were subjected to statistical analysis and tested the hypotheses, and structural equation modeling optimized by Amos 28 may be used. Factor analysis was carried out to determine the variables based on their shared variance.

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Since this technique is well suited for calculating path estimates and modeling parameters under nonnormal conditions, it is a widely accepted standard method for data analysis, particularly for large sample sizes. The three reflective constructs of Inaccessibility to Power Networks → Gender Disparity H6: Gender stereotyping → Gender disparity and unequal HR practices and policies → Gender disparity are statistically significant and impact gender disparity and gender discrimination-related issues.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is possible that years of repeated job evaluations with lower performance assessments can have a negative impact on the careers of female executives. Although there was evidence of differences in decision-making, the study was unable to establish that stereotypes acted as a mediating factor in these differences. Moreover, moral judgments appeared to influence how decisions were made. Organizations should frame human resource policies to mitigate decisional gender disparities. Therefore, we advise taking the necessary steps to lessen the influence of moral perceptions on decision-making. Instead of trying to be objective, we advise professionals to be clear about their perceptions so that their peers can address and discuss them.

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