# Women Participation And Challenges In Contemporary Workforce

[*1]Dr. Gargi Pant Shukla, [2]Shlok Nitin Gupta

## Abstract

*Over the past 10 years a rapid increase in number of women employees in tech firms has been seen in India however the salary inequalities remain the same. Women often bear the brunt of gender disparity in the workplace. Their pivotal role in the corporate sector is indispensable for the advancement and prosperity of nations worldwide. Despite numerous challenges, women globally persist in making remarkable strides. Globally the gender gap is close to 68.1% and the percentage of women employees in top 5 IT companies is not more than 40% of the total task force. India has improved his score and rank in the global gender gap index and scored 135th rank out of 146 countries.*

**Keywords:** *gender disparity, women employment, corporate life, IT sector.*

## Introduction

Science, technology and innovation have transformed the economic structure with embark of fourth revolution. The sustainable development goals can be achieved through STI. For increase in inequalities and exclusion of disadvantages groups STI has worked as a catalyst The social inequalities will be reinforced by the existing underrepresentation of women in the technology industry. Despite the rising involvement of women in Science, Technolog[1]y, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education, a substantial gender disparity persists in employment. Therefore, there is a pressing need for greater focus on comprehending the obstacles and hurdles encountered by women in the technology industry workforce. (Soma Roy Dey Choudhury 2016) India's tech-based businesses have long been a source of controversy and discussion around gender equality. Even though India's IT sector has grown significantly over the last ten years, gender equality has remained contentious. Projections suggest that the promotion of gender equality could contribute an additional US$ 2.6 trillion to China's annual GDP by 2025, US$ 325 billion to Japan, and US$ 160 billion to the Republic of Korea (McKinsey Global Institute, 2018). According to another report, closing the gap in lifetime labor earnings between women and men could result in a 'Gender Dividend' of US$ 172 trillion for the world. (Wodon et al., 2020). According to the available data, women's employability will increase from 41.25 percent in 2021 to 51.44 percent in 2022. According to this, there are 9.2 crores of employable women in metropolitan India. As the employability of women rises, more and more females join the workforce which leads to a higher employment rate for women. The percentage of women who are now working in our nation is 20.3% overall, and 18.2% in urban regions. More women work in the IT industry in India than in any other private sector in the nation. According to Nasscom, the trade body for the sector, around 36% of the five million workers in the IT sector is women. Nonetheless, prejudice against women is still pervasive—

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[*1]Assistant Professor Himalayan School of Management Studies Swami Rama Himalayan University
[2]Research Scholar Doon Business School
Corresponding Author: Dr. Gargi Pant Shukla*

research from 2021 claims that women are taking on more tech-related occupations. Although there are a lot of women working in the sector as a whole, they are underrepresented in positions of power research from 2022 claims that just 7% of them are in executive roles. According to projections by the World Economic Forum (WEF), if current trends persist, it will take approximately 136 years for the global gender gap to close entirely. In the East Asia and Pacific region, however, this process is expected to take significantly longer, estimated at 165 years. The number of employees in Top 5 IT companies is mentioned below:

**Table 1: Number of employees in Top 5 IT companies**

| Rank | Company | Jobs | Women Employees (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tata Consultancy Services | 2,10,000 | 35.00% |
| 2 | Infosys | 1,24,498 | 40.00% |
| 3 | Wipro | 88,946 | 36.00% |
| 4 | HCL Technologies | 62,780 | 28.00% |
| 5 | Tech Mahindra | 642,774 | 34% |

The above table gives a basic idea about how many female employees work in top 5 IT firms in India. TCS not only employs most women in the IT sector but also more than any other company in India with more than 210,000 female employees. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the 500 most valued company that employs the most women, according to Hurun research. As for 2022 DEC women make up more than 35% of the workforce in TCS. Compared to other IT giants like Google and Apple with 33% and 31.4% of the workforce being female TCS and Infosys takes the lead. Infosys stands as the 2nd most prominent IT firm in India having 40% female employees in the workforce. Infosys has the highest percentage of female employees in India. The second highest in percentage is Wipro with 36% of female employees in the workforce followed by HCL Technologies and Tech Mahindra with 28% and 34% respectively.

**Fig. 1: Global Gender Gap Index**

The World Economic Forum's index indicates that the global gender gap has narrowed to 68.1 percent. If progress continues at this rate, it is estimated that it would take nearly 132 years to achieve full gender parity worldwide.
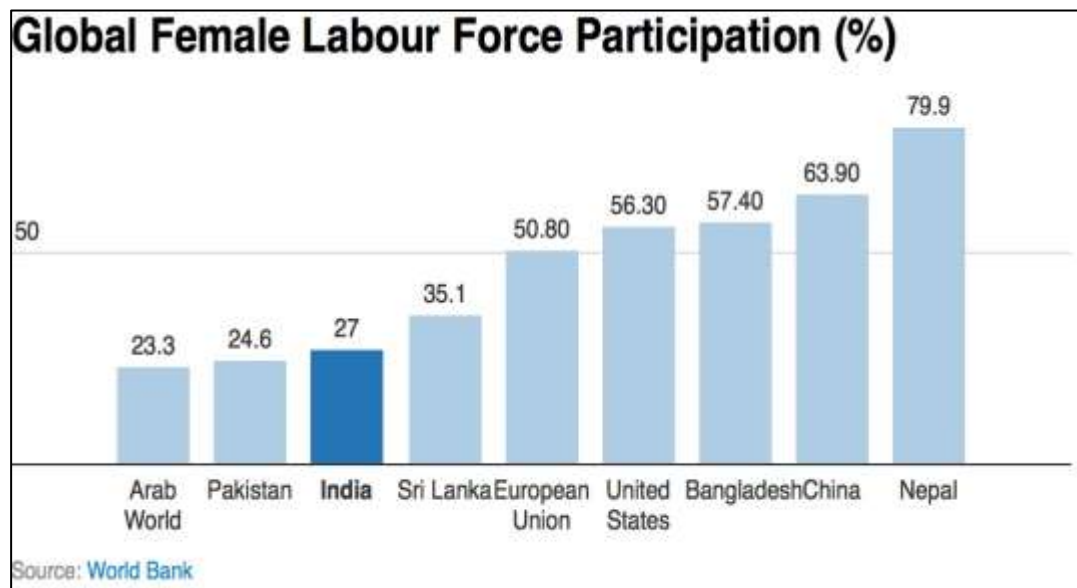


**Fig. 2: Global Female Labour Force Participation**

**Barriers to gender equality in IT Industry:**
From the initial hiring process, gender bias is evident in employers' preference for males and discrepancies in salaries. Despite gaining admission, women often encounter elevated attrition rates stemming from inhospitable work environments and workplace harassment. Additionally, they bear the dual burden of managing both job responsibilities and household duties. Moreover, the presence of a glass ceiling inhibits female advancement into leadership roles.

**Compensation Gap**

When there's a disparity in compensation for individuals performing identical roles based on gender, it's commonly known as gender pay gap. In order to combat this, equal pay is mandated by law in the majority of structured sectors. The difference between men's and women's average earnings is measured by the gender pay gap. The gender wage gap in India is influenced by a myriad of complex factors, including structural and socioeconomic issues. Gender disparities in education, familial restrictions on women's employment, and the burden of caregiving responsibilities all contribute to women earning significantly less than men over time. According to the 2019 Monster Salary Index (MSI), women in India earned 19% less than men in March 2019. The report revealed that men had a median gross hourly wage of 242.49 in 2018, while women earned 196.3, indicating a substantial difference of 46.19.

The poll found that there is a gender pay disparity in many important industries. Men earn 26% more than women in the IT services industry, whereas, in the manufacturing sector, men earn 24% more than women. But this is merely a portion of the overall picture. Women frequently receive much lower pay than males in the unorganized sector, particularly in industries like agriculture, due to perceived abilities that are different from men's. The gender pay gap may not begin to narrow unless social stigma against working-class women in India and the wider climate of social injustice against women are addressed.

**Cultural Biases**

Women in the IT sector may experience cultural prejudices in relation to training and skill development as another manner. Women might not have as many opportunities to hone their technical abilities, which could result in a lack of knowledge and confidence in the profession. As a result, women may be less likely to be selected for leadership positions in the sector. As for 2022, only 7% of executive positions are held by women in India. The deeply rooted patriarchal society that still exists in many areas of India is the root cause of the country's cultural prejudices. This results in fewer chances for women in STEM disciplines, where males make up the bulk of the workforce. Furthermore, there is a pervasive notion that women are better suited to more conventional occupations like teaching or nursing than tech-based businesses.

In the computer sector, cultural biases can appear in a variety of contexts, such as hiring, training, and promotion. For instance, because they think that males are more qualified for technical tasks, many recruiters may have a bias in favor of male candidates. This can lead to women being passed over for work despite their qualifications.

**Societal prejudices**

Societal prejudices might hinder women's job advancement. While pursuing promotions, women may encounter opposition or bias, or they may be turned over for possibilities because of their gender. This may contribute to a need for more diversity in senior positions and the maintenance of the industry's male-dominated culture.

Lack of Female Representation in STEM Fields: One of the leading causes of gender disparity in India's tech-based businesses is the underrepresentation of women in STEM areas. The proportion of women pursuing degrees in STEM professions is still low, despite efforts to boost their representation. Due to the underrepresentation of women in STEM areas, there is also a dearth of female talent in tech-related industries, which might contribute to the continuation of discrimination on the basis of gender. The lack of women in STEM professions is a result of a number of issues. The dearth of female role models and mentors in these industries is one contributing reason. The idea that STEM areas are male-dominated and unwelcoming to women may deter women from entering them.

**Hiring Process**

Hiring procedures are one way that discrimination based on gender takes place in the workplace. Companies may be biased in favor of male candidates, which results in fewer prospects for women in the field. In India's tech-based industries, gender-based discrimination in the workplace is a significant problem. In terms of hiring, promotions, and compensation, discrimination against women occurs frequently in various fields. Cultural prejudices and the underrepresentation of women in STEM disciplines are also contributing factors in this. It can be challenging for women working in tech-related fields to grow in their professions or even keep their positions due to problems like harassment.

**Work-life balance**

Balancing work and personal life can be particularly difficult for working women. It can be challenging to manage work and home life because women frequently shoulder the majority of household and family responsibilities. Stress, burnout, and a variety of physical and mental health issues might result from this. The balance that people achieve between their personal and professional lives is referred to as work-life balance. For physical and emotional well-being, as well as for job satisfaction and general quality of life, it's crucial to strike a healthy work-life balance. Women shoulder a disproportionate burden of household responsibilities compared to their involvement in economic and political leadership roles. On average, women in Asia and the Pacific region dedicate approximately four times more hours to unpaid care and domestic work than men. (ADB and UN Women, 2018).

**Workplace harassment**

Workplace harassment encompasses offensive and intimidating behaviors directed at individual employees or groups, taking various forms such as discrimination, personal attacks, physical harassment, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment. While workplace harassment is not exclusive to the technology sector, the prevalence of male dominance within technology firms and the uneven gender power dynamics in funding technology startups exacerbate instances of sexual harassment and discriminatory behavior against women. (The Elephant in the Valley, 2016; O'Brien and Segall, 2017) For women, sexual harassment at work is a major issue that can have a negative impact on their physical and emotional health, as well as their job satisfaction and career advancement. The fact that it makes the workplace inhospitable for women is one of the main issues with sexual harassment. Women may feel uneasy and unsafe at work when they are the target of unwelcome sexual advances or behavior. A variety of unfavorable physical and emotional reactions, including stress, depression, and anxiety, may result from this. Women who suffer sexual harassment at work could also think their worth as workers or the seriousness of their work is being undervalued.

Sexual harassment may hinder women's career advancement is another issue. Sexually harassed women could believe that their possibilities for promotion are scarce or that they are unable to develop in their careers. They might also be reluctant to report the behavior out of concern for reprisals or other negative effects, which can further obstruct their ability to grow in their careers. Moreover, sexual harassment can be detrimental to employee morale and productivity. Employees' capacity to collaborate effectively can be harmed when they are the targets of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can also lead to stress and conflict in the workplace. This may result in lower job satisfaction, higher turnover, as well as a number of other detrimental effects.

Limited maternity leave policies offered by many tech organizations might make it challenging for new mothers to take the time necessary to care for their infants. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, for example, increased the length of maternity leave in India from 12

to 26 weeks, although many tech businesses continue to provide less time off than is required by law. Restricted maternity leave rules can also put new mothers under a great deal of financial strain because they could be forced to take unpaid time off or use up all of their sick or vacation days in order to care for their infants. Although many computer occupations are demanding and may require long periods of time, this can be particularly difficult for women in the industry.

Long-term career implications for women in the tech sector may result from inadequate maternity leave regulations and a lack of childcare assistance. Women who take long leaves of absence, for instance, can lose out on crucial projects or promotions, which might make it more challenging for them to succeed in their jobs. It may be more challenging for women who must take time off from work to care for their children to be treated seriously in the workplace due to prejudices and preconceptions. Several IT businesses have begun to create more generous maternity leave policies and offer more extensive childcare help in an effort to solve these problems. These can include on-site childcare facilities, flexible work schedules, and other programs meant to assist new moms in balancing their job and family obligations.

## Stereotypes

Women are notably underrepresented in the IT sector, which contributes to stereotypes being reinforced and makes it more challenging for women to acquire the knowledge and expertise required to develop in their professions. The underrepresentation of women in technology may be exacerbated by the absence of visible mentors and role models that might result from this lack of representation. It's common for stereotypes to exist for women in technology, which can both limit their prospects and keep them from realizing their full potential. For instance, it may be harder for women to be taken seriously in the job since they are perceived as less knowledgeable or technically adept than males.

## Remedies to combat gender disparity:

There are several ways to combat gender disparity in India's tech sector. Some of these remedies are:

Girls can be encouraged to pursue STEM careers by receiving exposure to and support from their families, schools, and other community organizations. Access to STEM resources, mentorship programs, and female role models may all be part of this. Efforts for Education and awareness-raising can help in getting rid from cultural biases. These efforts can aid in dispelling the myth that women are not suitable for careers in tech-related professions and can motivate more women to seek them. Various NGOs are working in rural areas to tackle this problem by educating people. It is essential to improve gender equality in the IT industry by narrow the gender wage gap. Businesses should implement policies that encourage pay equity and transparency, and ensure that women are compensated similarly to their male coworkers for performing the same work. Companies may actively seek out and hire talented women for technical jobs. This will help to encourage diversity in their hiring methods. This may contribute to a more varied and inclusive workplace and increased representation of women in the business. Companies like TCS and Infosys are promoting women hiring for technical job roles. Companies can offer networking and mentoring opportunities for women in tech, assisting them in developing their talents and widening their networks of contacts. This can entail giving women the chance to network with other experts in their sector and pairing them with mentors who can offer advice and support. Businesses can help women manage work and family commitments by providing flexible work arrangements like telecommuting and flexible schedules. This can be crucial for women who care for others and may struggle to balance job and family obligations. Women working in tech-related fields should have access to training and professional development programs. This can enable women to take leadership positions

in the sector and help them gain confidence. This will lead to an increase in confidence and can set an example for other women who are working.

Businesses may provide initiatives geared specifically towards women in technology. These courses may cover technical instruction, coaching, mentoring, and leadership development. By providing these programs, companies can assist women in acquiring the information and skills necessary to grow in their jobs can assist women in acquiring the information and skills necessary to grow in their jobs by providing these programs. Conferences and networking events may be great places for women in IT to learn about emerging technologies and trends, network with peers in the industry, and expand their professional networks. Businesses may help women in technology by giving them the chance to attend conferences and networking events and by paying for their attendance. Businesses can also provide cross-functional training so that women in technology can learn about various facets of the industry. Training in sales, marketing, or product development can fall under this category. Companies can assist women in acquiring a wider range of skills and improving their value as contributors to the firm by offering cross-functional training.

Taking action against gender-based discrimination: Companies may take action against gender-based discrimination by putting policies and procedures in place that support equality and guard against it at work. This might involve having strict laws against discrimination and harassment as well as frequent training on these topics. In order to increase the number of women in executive roles and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, it is important to support and promote female entrepreneurship. This can be aided by programs that provide finance, mentorship, and networking opportunities to female entrepreneurs.

## Conclusion
Although there have been recent improvements, gender equality in India's tech-based industry is still an issue. Many groups are taking action to guarantee that women have equal chances and respect when they slowly break into the business. Yet there is still a long way to go before gender parity is realized, and everyone involved—policymakers, educators, employers, and people themselves will need to work together. We can strive towards a more inclusive and fair business that benefits all parties by fostering awareness and education, developing supportive policies and practices, and encouraging women to explore professions in technology.

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