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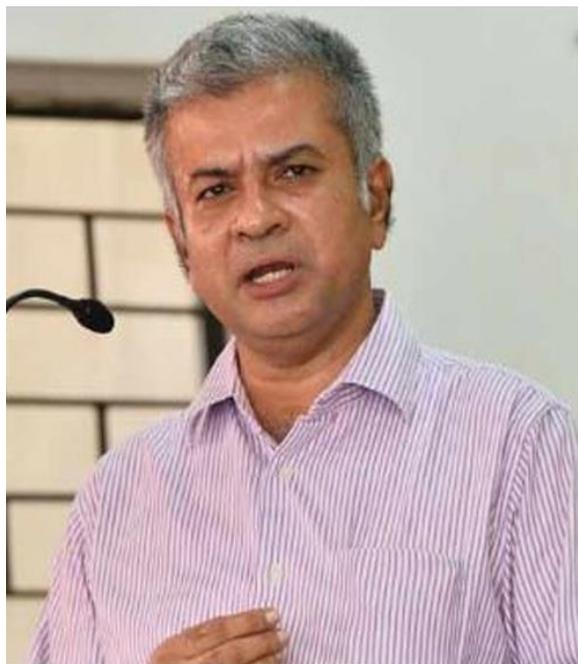
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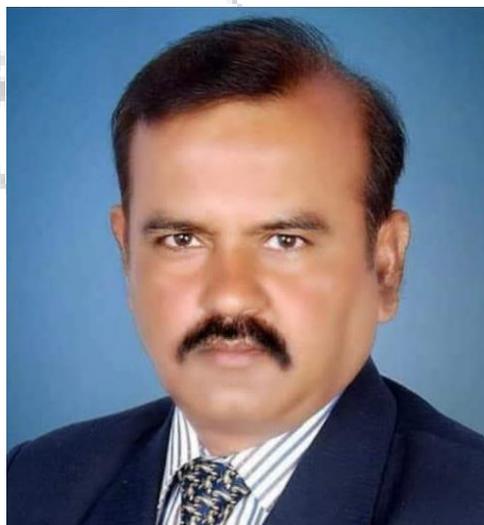


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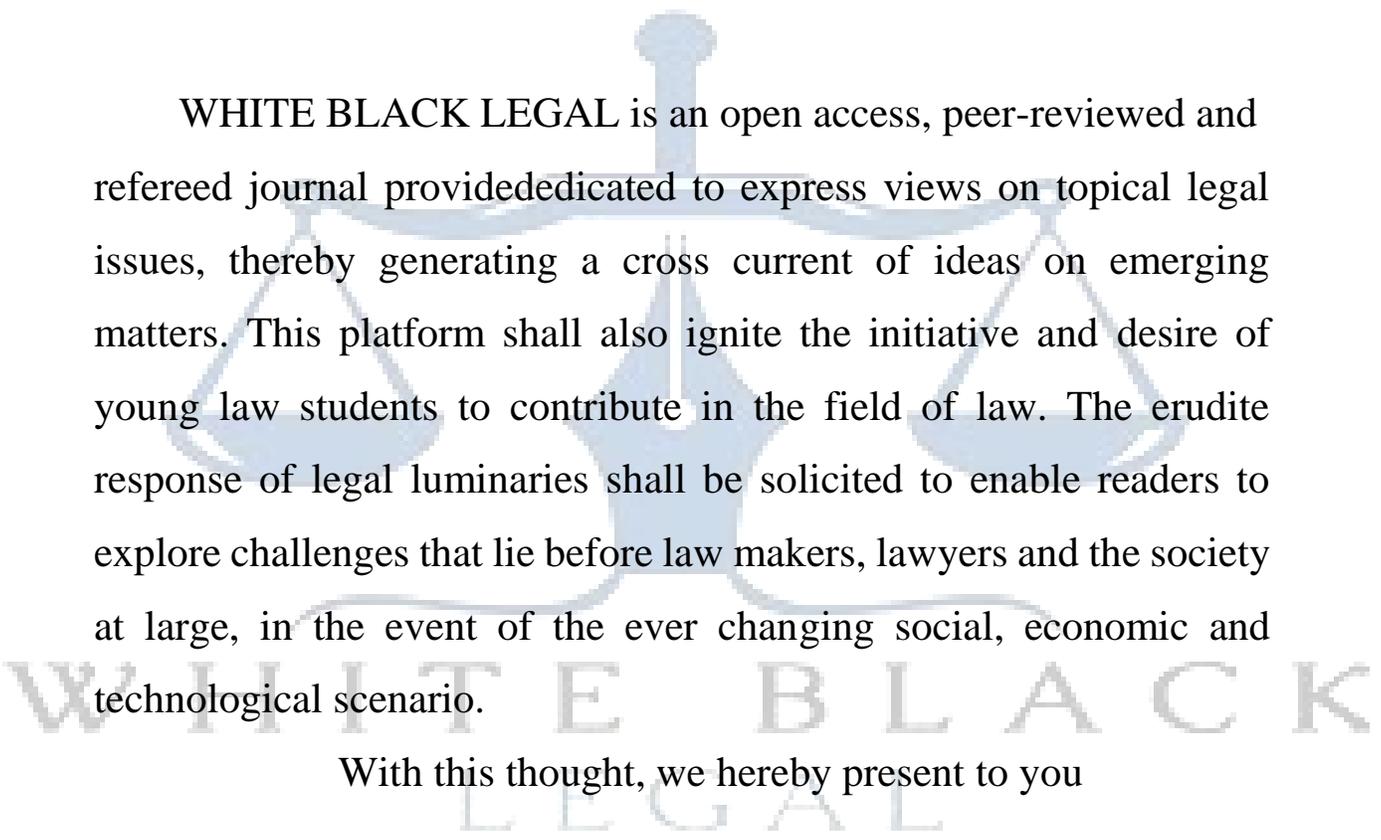
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With this thought, we hereby present to you

REVISITING GENDER JUSTICE IN THE WORKPLACE: A STUDY ON MATERNITY PROTECTION, EQUAL REMUNERATION, AND LABOUR REFORMS IN INDIA

AUTHORED BY - HRIDYA SASIDHARAN

ABSTRACT

Women's protection and welfare in the workforce represent form a vital component of modern labour law and pursuit of gender justice in India. Despite India's constitutional guarantees of equality and the enactment of progressive statutes such as the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, significant disparities still persist and working women continue to face systemic barriers and inequality in employment. This paper undertakes a critical analysis of the implementation and adequacy of the existing laws concerning equal pay, maternity benefits and gender-specific workplace challenges. It further evaluates the effect of contemporary policy reforms introduced under the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Code on Wages, 2019, and evaluates India's compliance with the international standards set up under ILO Conventions Nos. 100 and 183, emphasizing the alignment between national legislation and global commitments.

Using a doctrinal and comparative research methodology, the study explores the intersection of law and policy and how socio-cultural norms and institutional practices collectively influence women's labour experiences in both informal and formal sectors. The findings reveal persistent gap in implementation, weak enforcement mechanisms and a lack of inclusivity for women in the unorganised sector. It underscores how the workplace biases, structural inequities and patriarchal mindset continue to undermine the legal reforms. The paper concludes by highlighting that protecting women's welfare requires a holistic approach and a comprehensive strategy that combines strict enforcement of labour laws, implementation of inclusive policies and widespread awareness campaigns to address these cultural and organisational challenges. It emphasizes that legal protections alone are insufficient and must be supported by accountable institutions, effective monitoring and a societal shift that recognizes and empowers women as vital contributors to economic growth and social development.

Keywords: Women workforce, labour rights, maternity protection, bias, gender equality, social security.

1.INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in the workforce is not only a measure of social progress but also a key driver of India's economic growth and development and it has evolved significantly through the years. Over the past few decades, the role of women in formal and informal sectors have increased, showcasing the changes in urbanization, education and labour market dynamics. Yet, India's workforce still reflects gender disparities that hinder this development. Various constitutional provisions such as the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and recent reforms such as the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Code on Wages, 2019 have been brought to force. In addition, India's labour laws are guided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, which emphasize equal remuneration for work and maternity benefits for women and guarantee equality and decades of labour legislation. However, women continue to face systemic prejudice and barriers in the workplace. This includes workplace discrimination, wage disparities, inadequate maternity protection and other socio-cultural biases.

India has established these statutes with the main aim to protect women in their workplace and to eliminate any challenges faced by them. However, major enforcement gaps have led to the poor effectiveness of these statutes. Lack of awareness and institutional limitations and exclusion of inform among many, are the reasons which prevent women from getting fully benefitted by these laws. Ensuring women's welfare is not just a matter of legal compliance but also necessary for pursuing overall social and economic development. Addressing gender disparities require coordinated efforts from employers, policymakers and the society at large. Effective and strengthened enforcement of the labour laws, challenging cultural biases and adopting inclusive workplace practices are essential for real progress. Empowering women in their careers enhances innovation, productivity and sustainable growth. Ultimately creating equitable workplaces allow women to work to their full capability for the economic and social advancement of the country. By examining the legal frameworks, international standards and implementation challenges, this study aims to provide a roadmap for creating workplaces where women's welfare, rights and economic potential are fully recognised and valued. True gender justice in the workplace demands

not only equitable laws but a transformation in the social and institutional mindset that governs them.

2. Legal Framework for Women's Welfare in the Workforce

India's labour laws have evolved throughout the years to recognise and protect the unique needs of women, particularly in areas such as wage equality, maternity benefit and workplace safety. The legal framework includes both specific statutes and broader consolidated labour codes aimed at ensuring equitable wages and social security for women employees.

2.1 Maternity Benefits

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 is one of the most significant and earliest legislations to safeguards the women during the pregnancy and postnatal period¹. It is a cornerstone labour legislation in India, recognising both social and biological responsibility of women associated with childbearing and early childcare. This statute was enacted to secure women's health, guarantee job security during pregnancy and provide financial support through paid maternity leave. Historically, the Act applied mainly to women employed in establishments with ten or more workers, including both public and private sectors. Its provisions were among the first in India to really acknowledge the need for balancing women's reproductive roles with workforce participation.

The 2017 amendment to the Maternity Benefit Act marked a significant enhancement to the maternity rights and workplace support. Key changes in the amendment included the extension of paid maternity leave from twelve to twenty-six weeks for women with less than two surviving children, provision for twelve weeks of maternity leave for women with two or more surviving children and up to twelve weeks of leave for adoptive and commissioning mothers. Another important feature was the introduction of crèche facilities in establishments employing fifty or more workers and allow breaks for mothers to attend their children. These reforms reflect India's attempt to align the domestic maternity protections with international or global standards while addressing contemporary workplace challenges, thereby encouraging greater participation of women in the workforce.²

¹ The Maternity Benefit Act, No. 53 of 1961, India Code (2017 amendment)

² Sharma, V. (2025). Maternity Benefits: Challenges and Judicial Responses. International Journal of Innovations & Research Analysis

Despite these advancements in law, significant implementation challenges still persist which hinder the potential of women in workforce. This is specifically seen in the informal sector which comprises of agricultural, domestic work, small-scale enterprises and gig-base employment. Many women are still unaware of the rights and entitlements that they have. What makes this situation all the challenging is the poor enforcement and unbothered nature of the employers in such sector. They neglect compliance due to inadequate regulatory oversight. The notion that these statutes are outside the purview of unorganised sector and hence not applicable on them is a huge misconception that still persist. This exactly is what the employers take advantage of. In *Municipal Corporation of Delhi v. Female Workers (Muster Roll)*³, the courts held that female daily-wage workers with continuous service are entitled to maternity benefits under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, emphasizing that temporary employment should not deny statutory rights. However, social and cultural norms, along with workplace discrimination often discourage women from claiming maternity benefit, while monitoring mechanisms remain insufficient, creating gap between statutory provisions and their actual enforcement and real-world impact.

India's maternity protection framework is also shaped by international labour standards, such as the International Labour Organisation's Maternity Protection Convention No. 183 (2000)⁴, which mandates a minimum of fourteen weeks maternity leave, cash benefits, workplace health protections and safeguards against dismissal. India's domestic statutory provisions, especially after the 2017 amendment, exceed the minimum standards. However, gaps remain when it comes to informal sector workers. The integration of maternity benefits with social security schemes under the Code on Social Security, 2020 offers a pathway to extend the protection to non-traditional and gig-base employment as well, though practical enforcement of the same still remains a vital and developing challenge.

Overall, while the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and its subsequent amendments provide a strong legal foundation for protecting women during pregnancy and early motherhood. Yet, their effectiveness is contingent upon proper awareness and enforcement. Closing the gap between legal provisions and practical implementation, particularly in the informal and unorganised sectors

³ *Municipal Corporation of Delhi v. Female Workers (Muster Roll) & Anr.*, (2000) 3 SCC 224

⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO), Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), June 15, 2000

remain a pressing challenge even today. Addressing these challenges require stronger monitoring, supportive workplace practices, etc. Having examined the legal provisions and challenges related to maternity benefits, the focus now shifts to one of the most important aspects of bridging gender disparity in workplace. This aspect is really important in order to see how women are compensated in the workforce, particularly in light of wage inequality and it is known as equal remuneration.

2.2 EQUAL REMUNERATION AND WAGE PARITY

2.2.1. Statutes and Reports

The principle of equal pay for equal work forms the cornerstone of gender justice in labour jurisprudence and represent a foundational pillar of India's policy and constitutional framework. Rooted in Article 39(d) of the Directive Principles of State Policy, it mandates that both men and women receive equal pay or remuneration for the same work. To give effect to this provision, the Parliament enacted the Equal Remuneration Act in the year 1976⁵, a landmark statute which aimed at prohibition of any kind of gender-based discrimination in employment conditions, recruitment and wage discrimination. This Act was one of India's earliest efforts to bridge the gender disparity in workplace which was one such issue that had loomed over the country since long back. It was a great effort done to align the domestic labour standards with international obligations such as the ILO Convention No. 100 (Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951)⁶, which India later ratified in 1958. This, in a way, established a global standard of equal pay among men and women in the workplace in the initial years.

The Equal Remuneration Act aimed to eliminate discrimination by ensuring a gender-neutral pay structure and to constitute advisory committees promoting women's employment and therefore encouraging women's participation in the workforce. It required employers to maintain registers detailing wages and prohibited discrimination in promotions and employment opportunities. However, despite the progressive outlook and mandate of this Act, it faced significant implementation challenges. Factors such as inadequate awareness among the workers, absence of standardized job evaluation systems and the near exclusion of employees working in informal and agricultural sector from its coverage led to persistent wage gaps despite the formal legal protection.

⁵ The Equal Remuneration Act, No. 25 of 1976, India Code.

⁶ *International Labour Organization (ILO), Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100), June 29, 1951.*

The Code on Wages⁷ which was introduced in 2019 sought to modernize and consolidate the Equal Remuneration Act along with the Payment of Wages Act, the Minimum Wages Act, and the Payment of Bonus Act, marked a significant change in the applicability as it expanded the Act across all possible employment types, including those working in the unorganized sector and gig workers, groups that were historically excluded from such protection, thereby addressing one of the major limitations of the earlier Act. Section 3 of the Code explicitly prohibits gender-based discrimination when it comes to wages and recruitment, showcasing a significant development and positive advancement in the legislation. Additionally, the Code introduces uniform definitions of payment and mandates digital wage payment systems, thereby promoting transparency and accountability.

However, the pay gap between men and women still continues even today and this exposes the actual extent to which legislative reforms are actually implemented in the country. According to the International Labour Organization's Global Wage Report (2024-2025)⁸, the gender wage gap in India is around 25% and the average earning of women in India are less as compared to men. This is a gap that has remained unchanged for a long period irrespective of policy interventions. The International Labour Organization's Global Wage Report (2020-21)⁹ note the same, with women earning 20-30% less on an average than men for similar or comparable work. The report also emphasize that women are more in number in the unorganized or informal sectors, where access to basic rights such as social security and maternity benefits remain minimal in nature. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (2022-23)¹⁰ show that the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) has doubled from 22% in 2017-18 to 40.3% in 2023-24 when it comes to women workers. However, wage inequality still persists in informal and gig-related sectors. These disparities stem from undervaluation of women's labour, occupational segregation and the persistence of gender-based economic hierarchies set up by the society at large, which limits the opportunities accessible to women when it comes to higher-paying positions and leadership roles.

⁷ The Code on Social Security, No. 36 of 2020, India Code.

⁸ *International Labour Organization, Global Wage Report 2024-25: Is Wage Inequality Decreasing Globally* (2024).

⁹ *International Labour Organization, Global Wage Report 2020-21: Wages and Minimum Wages in the Time of COVID-19* (2021).

¹⁰ *Annual Report, Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), July 2022–June 2023*, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India.

2.2.2. Judicial Decisions

The judiciary has played a significant and instrumental role when it comes to delivering judgements that uphold the value of women's contribution in the workforce. They have, in many circumstances, reinforced the constitutional ethos of wage equality. For example, in the case of *Randhir Singh v. Union of India*, (1982) 1 SCC 618¹¹, the Supreme Court emphasized on the principle of equal pay for equal work. In this case, the petitioner contended that the pay scale was less than the other driver-constables of the Delhi-Police Force¹². The Supreme Court stated that the doctrine of equal pay for equal work is not merely a directive principle but a constitutional right derived from Article 14 and Article 16 of the Indian Constitution. After almost a decade, in the case of *State of Punjab v. Jagjit Singh*, (2017) 1 SCC 148¹³, the court extended this right to contractual, daily wage, or ad-hoc government employees, highlighting that pay parity must be evaluated based on the nature and quality of work rather than the employment status of the worker. In another landmark case of *Mackinnon Mackenzie and Co. Ltd. V Audrey D'Costa* [1987] 2 SCC 469¹⁴, which involved a claim for equal remuneration between male and female stenographers, the Supreme Court held that the establishment is bound to pay the same remuneration to all the workers irrespective of their sex. These judgements underscore the judiciary's role in reinforcing the constitutional mandate of gender equality when it comes to remuneration for similar work, reinforcing the values of substantive justice and human dignity.

2.2.3. Strategies for Achieving Pay Equity

The amount of progress does not negate the fact that there are still challenges persisting in the area that need to be tackled. Employers of small and informal enterprises use advantage of a loophole to evade compliance and this leads to weak monitoring. Additionally, the lack of standardized job evaluation system hinders effective enforcement of the same. Furthermore, unpaid domestic and care work, predominantly done by women, remain unaccounted for in conventional economic metrics, which further diminishes the full contribution and recognition of women's labour.

Achieving wage equality therefore requires more than just legislative reform. It requires a

¹¹ *Randhir Singh v. Union of India*, (1982) 1 S.C.C. 618

¹² *Randhir Singh v. Union of India*, MANU-SC-0234-1982)

¹³ *State of Punjab v. Jagjit Singh*, (2017) 1 S.C.C. 148

¹⁴ *Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co. Ltd. v. Audrey D'Costa*, (1987) 2 S.C.C. 469

multifaceted approach that caters to tackling the difficult challenges in the way. It demands for structural and behavioural transformation, making sure that there are transparent pay audits, institutional accountability and real active participation of women in the decision-making processes. The UK Equality Act 2010 ((Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations¹⁵ could serve as a valuable and effective model for India. Mandatory gender pay audits along with penalties for non-compliance would be a great way to move forward. Additionally, corporate sensitization, conducting gender-inclusive hiring practices and various awareness campaigns on a periodic basis could also lead the pathway to creating a more equitable work and labour environment. With wage equity examined, it is equally important to address broader issues that come under the purview of gender-specific challenges such as harassment, occupational segregation and the burden of unpaid work that still continue to shape a woman's role in the labour market. Understanding this is essential not only to ensure fair pay but also to make sure that there is safe and inclusive environment provided by each and every establishment where women work.

3. Gender-Specific Workplace Challenges

Women in the workforce are most often vulnerable to various types of harassment that goes beyond wage disparities. This includes occupational segregation, sexual harassment and other structural barriers that hinder their career advancement. These issues affect not just the economic participation but also health, well-being and long-term professional development. Addressing such challenges are very crucial for achieving substantive gender equality in India's labour market.

3.1. Workplace Harassment and the POSH Act, 2013

Workplace harassment, specifically sexual harassment, is one of the most important aspects to take into consideration when touching upon the topic of women's participation in formal employment. Recognizing the severity of the issue, India enforced the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013¹⁶ also widely known as POSH Act. This Act mandates establishments having ten or more employees to constitute an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) for addressing complaints related to sexual harassment. The Act

¹⁵ *The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017*, S.I. 2017/172 (U.K.).

¹⁶ *The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013*, No. 14 of 2013, INDIA CODE (2013).

provides mechanisms for protection against retaliation, grievance redressal and appropriate penalties for non-compliance. The legal framework for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace traces back to the landmark case of *Vishaka v State of Rajasthan* (1997) 6 SCC 241¹⁷ in which a social worker was gang-raped after she tried to oppose a child marriage. This case laid down comprehensive and detailed guidelines for preventing sexual harassment against women in workplaces, recognizing it as a violation of fundamental rights under Article 14, 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution. The POSH Act basically codified all of the guidelines into one single statute, making it easier for effective implementation.

However, despite these legal safeguards, reporting of such incidents of harassment remains very much limited due to factors such as social stigma, potential repercussions on career and a major lack of trust in the institutional mechanisms. According to a news article by Economic Times, the number of complaints lodged by women under this act has gone up to a striking figure of 79% in the last five years¹⁸. However, another article published by Ashoka University states that even though high number of cases are being reported, only a fraction of companies is reporting the cases whereas several companies have been reporting zero case since many years.¹⁹ It emphasizes that often only a part of such cases is actually reported and that many women feel unsafe or uncomfortable in doing so due to various reasons, especially when the perpetrator is someone who is in a position of power. Another incident was when the NHRC took Suo motu notice after an Indian Express article on May 4 highlighted violations of the POSH Act. The report revealed that among India's 30 sports federations, five lacked an ICC, four had incomplete member composition, six had no external member, and one had multiple panels but no independent member.²⁰

This highlights that legislation alone is not sufficient to make a real change in the workplace. Fostering a safe, supportive and responsive environment is also equally important in order to make

¹⁷ *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan*, (1997) 6 S.C.C. 241

¹⁸ Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Labour & Employment, *Enhanced Female Workforce Participation in Economic Activity: Data Shows Improved Employment Indicators over Last Six Years*, Press Release No. 2074399 (Nov. 18, 2024)

¹⁹ Sneha Thomas, *A Decade of the POSH Act: What the Data Tells Us About How India Inc. Has Fared*, CEDA (May 16, 2024)

²⁰ National Human Rights Commission, *Notice to National Sports Federations on Non-Compliance with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act, 2013*, NHRC Notice No. 2023-5-15 (May 15, 2023)

sure that women can work freely in their establishment without any fear of judgement.

3.2. Occupational Segregation

Occupational Segregation is also a vital concern and a persistent barrier, with women being constantly concentrated into low-paying and traditionally female-oriented jobs such as teaching, nursing, and administrative support. Due to this, most of the time they are underrepresented in leadership technical and high-paying sectors. The phenomenon of glass-ceiling showcases the invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching executive or senior-management positions despite having qualifications and experience. This structural inequality is further increased by biases in recruitment, lack of mentorship opportunities and significant societal expectations that put only men in the frontline for leadership roles. According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2023²¹, women constitute only 21% of senior management positions in India, reflecting the slow pace of change in shifting the entrenched professional hierarchies.

3.3. Unpaid Care Work and Career Impact

Another major factor that is hindering the participation of women in the labour force is that of disproportionate burden that they carry of doing the unpaid domestic and caregiving work. Women are, most of the times, expected to carry out this “double burden” where they have to somehow balance both their personal and professional duties. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO, 2022–23)²² report stated that women spend an average of 5.7 hours per day doing unpaid domestic work, compared to 1.7 hours by men. This leads to an imbalance such as limited opportunities for flexible work arrangements, affects productivity and reinforces systematic disadvantages in professional settings. This ultimately puts a huge barrier when it comes to women’s career growth.

3.4. Vulnerabilities in Informal, Gig, and Platform Workers

Women employed in gig, platform or informal sectors often face obstacles due the lack of legal protections, social security and formal contracts. Many female workers employed in unorganized sectors, agriculture and digital platforms remain outside the purview of labour laws which makes it difficult for them to avail rights such as maternity benefits and wage parity. The Code on Social

²¹ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023* (June 20, 2023)

²² National Sample Survey Office, *Survey on Household Consumption Expenditure: 2022–23*, Report No. 591, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India (2024)

Security, 2020 seek to extend such protections to gig and platform workers as well, but the enforcement and awareness regarding the same remain largely limited. These gaps exacerbate economic insecurity, reduce bargaining power, and increase susceptibility to exploitation.

4. Comparative and International Perspectives

Examining the global practices in gender equality provides valuable insights for India to strengthen its policy and legal framework. Experiences from different countries showcase that legal reforms alone are insufficient. Many other factors such as supportive workplace, safe environment and comprehensive social policies are also important.

4.1. Scandinavia

Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden, Norway and Denmark are known for their progressive gender policies and equality measures. In Sweden, parents can take up to 480 paid parental leave which can be shared between both mother and father. This allows for incentivized participation of father in the childcare, thereby aiming to reduce the burden on mothers in such scenarios. Flexible working arrangements, accessible childcare and gender-responsive labour policies have significantly increased the participation of women in the workforce and have narrowed down wage disparities.

4.2. Australia and the United Kingdom

Both Australia and the UK have implemented policies to ensure transparency and accountability in remuneration. The UK Equality Act, 2010²³ requires organizations with more than 250 employees to publish annual gender pay reports, fostering accountability and public scrutiny. Australia's Fair Work Ombudsman enforces anti-discrimination and pay equity provisions, allowing workers to lodge complaints and seek redress. These highlight the role of monitoring, reporting and enforcement in effective reduction in gender disparity.

4.3. Lessons for India

India can adopt several key lessons from these countries who have successfully implemented

²³ *Equality Act 2010*, c. 15, S 1–213 (U.K.)

policies, statutes and measures to reduce gender-gap in their countries. Policies such as extending parental leave and providing flexible child care options can significantly reduce the burden on female employees and can encourage them further to continue with their work. Mandatory pay audits and transparency can also lead to an efficient and productive workplace. Moreover, integrating informal sectors and addressing their rights and challenges and thereby safeguarding them can also lead to improved work culture and overall environment.

5. Challenges in Implementation

Despite the presence of strong and progressive legislative frameworks aimed at safeguarding women's rights in the workplace, India continues to face substantial challenges when it comes to translating these provisions into actual effective outcomes. One of the most significant challenges is weak enforcement. Although the *Maternity Benefit Act, 1961*, *Equal Remuneration Act, 1976*, and *POSH Act, 2013* outline comprehensive legal safeguards, their implementation remains inconsistent due to insufficient monitoring mechanisms and limited administrative capacity. Labour departments often face delay in redressal, shortage in staff and overall limited administrative capacity. Resulting in inadequate inspections reduced transparency. This leads to the consequent evasion of accountability by the employers.

Another major obstacle is the lack of awareness among people, which include both women employees and their employers. Many women, who are particularly engaged in the informal or unorganized sector are unaware of their rights and entitlements such as maternity leave, equal pay and protection against workplace harassment. Employers in similar enterprises or establishments may also lack the knowledge of what their legal obligations are. This gap severely restricts women from successfully exercising their rights and ultimately lead to an increase in underreporting and silence in cases of harassment.

Societal and cultural norms also add to the concern. Patriarchal mindset prevalent in the society becomes a barrier for women in workforce. The expectations of the society for a woman to balance both her professional duties as an employee and her personal duties as a caretaker of her home and children really hinders her overall career growth. Such pressure on women, even in urban areas, undermine the effective enforcement of the legal provisions. Such challenges are severe when it

comes to women employed as domestic workers and agricultural labourers. Despite statutes such as Code on Social Security, 2020, the absence of reliable registration systems, fragmented data, and weak institutional coordination hinder effective implementation. As a result, millions of women remain outside the scope of statutory protections and social benefits.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, India's effort to promote gender equality is an ongoing battle. Even though as a country, we have made significant progress in the area, a lot is still left to be learnt and implemented in an effective manner. Legislations covering maternity benefits, equal pay and protection against harassment is a huge way forward. However, their benefits are diluted by weak enforcement, persistent socio-cultural awareness and inadequate awareness. The reality of the situation is the legal statutes and reforms are hugely insufficient if the social institution itself fails to value and uphold women's rights. Therefore, to bridge the gaps, a comprehensive approach is necessary accompanied by strong structural and institutional mechanisms.

To truly bridge the gap between law and lived experience, India must move beyond symbolic reforms and focus on meaningful enforcement. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, ensuring greater accountability from employers, and widening the safety net to include women in informal and gig sectors are vital steps forward. Equally important is building awareness and fostering workplaces that respect caregiving responsibilities, encourage reporting, and value women's contributions beyond traditional roles.

However, legislative reform alone cannot dismantle centuries of structural inequality. Real progress depends on a collective shift within institutions, families, and society toward viewing women not as beneficiaries of protection but as equal partners in shaping the economy. Only when workplaces evolve into spaces of respect, opportunity, and equity can India realize the full potential of its women workforce and build a future defined not by disparity, but by shared progress and dignity for all.