

Gender Discrimination in Exile: Insights from Syrian Workers in Turkey

Majd Hamsho

PhD Candidate, Istanbul University, Social Science Institute, Department of Business Administration, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors influencing gender discrimination in workplace and examines employees' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward it. Conducted at Omran Strategic Research Center in Istanbul, the research involved semi-structured interviews with 15 employees (9 men and 6 women) from various job levels. The findings identified eight key factors contributing to gender discrimination: wage disparities, cultural and social biases, promotion challenges, sexual discrimination, work-life balance policies, hiring discrimination, unequal job evaluations, and strategies for gender equality. While many participants denied the existence of a wage gap, others acknowledged it, attributing it to job nature and individual performance. Interestingly, perceptions varied between managerial and non-managerial staff. Managers appeared more aware of gender-related issues, including hidden biases and systemic obstacles. The study highlights the complex, multifaceted nature of gender discrimination in the workplace and emphasizes the need for more inclusive policies and practices to foster gender equity across all organizational levels.

1. Introduction

The success of institutions in achieving their strategic goals depends on a number of factors related to the internal and external work environment at the same time. Given that the variables surrounding the institution are many and different, we believe that the institution cannot succeed unless it pays attention to its human resources and their requirements, problems, and issues. This aspect is considered crucial in the company's achievement of its goals, as many studies have revealed the importance of prioritizing human resources (Marthalia, 2022; Shahanipour et al., 2020; Iconomescu et al., 2014). Moreover, employees with better working conditions tend to achieve higher performance, which ultimately impacts the organization's overall performance positively.

Good performance helps increase productivity, improve the quality of products or services, increase customer satisfaction, attract and retain talents, and help the company work effectively and efficiently. Workplace problems can hinder overall performance, delay

* Corresponding author's E-mail address: majd.hamsho@ogr.iu.edu.tr <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0506-8626>

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strategic goals, and negatively affect both internal and external operations. Workplace problems can weaken their performance, create an unproductive work environment, reduce job satisfaction, weaken job citizenship, increase the rate of work turnover, and stifle creativity at work. This situation does not only impact employee well-being or job satisfaction; it goes further by undermining the overall organizational culture and performance. It creates an unhealthy atmosphere instead of fostering productivity and innovation.

Gender discrimination remains a widespread issue within the workplace, evidencing in various forms such as unequal pay, limited opportunities, and incidents of sexual harassment. This discrimination not only affects employee satisfaction, motivation, and commitment but also increases stress levels and undermines organizational performance. Despite efforts to promote gender equality, cultural beliefs and stereotypes continue to perpetuate discriminatory practices. These biases, whether conscious or unconscious, lead to gender stereotyping and unequal treatment in hiring, promotions, and job evaluations. The lack of transparency in salary structures, communication gaps regarding company policies, and societal expectations further intensify the issue. As a result, women often face higher levels of discrimination compared to men, hindering their career advancement and participation in the workplace. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive assessment of workplace culture, implementation of effective anti-discrimination measures, and targeted initiatives to foster a non-discriminatory and empowering work atmosphere. Gender equality in the workplace has been an important and long-discussed topic in discussions surrounding workplace fairness, representation, and opportunity. Understanding the dynamics of gender-related issues within companies requires delving into the perspectives of employees across various positions.

This study aims to explore the specific factors influencing gender discrimination within the context of the Omran Strategic Research Center, a prominent institution in Istanbul specializing in Syrian affairs. By employing qualitative semi-structured interviews, we seek to capture the nuanced experiences and perspectives of employees regarding gender discrimination. The significance of this research lies in its potential to uncover both overt and subtle forms of discrimination that may not be immediately apparent through quantitative measures alone.

2. Literature Review

One of the most important issues facing employees in the workplace is gender discrimination. The concept of discrimination involves unfair treatment based on gender, race, and other factors, and is seen as an obstacle to achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace. It also negatively affects employee satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and enthusiasm, and increases stress levels (Channar et al., 2011). Discrimination takes various forms, including unequal pay, fewer opportunities, and incidents of sexual harassment. (Shaheen et al., 2023). It can also be recognized as a form of inequality affecting women worldwide, limiting their capacity to participate freely and fully in society and causing psychological harm (Pokharel, 2008). Also, it must be noted that women suffer from higher levels of discrimination compared to men (Shaheen et al., 2023; McConatha et al., 2023; Elsayed et al., 2022; SteelFisher et al., 2019) as they face discriminatory practices that hinder the development of their skills and career advancement (Ketchiwou & Dzansi, 2023). Therefore, the term "discrimination against women" suggests that women may be victims of irrational bias, which obscures similarities between men and women and hinders legal equality (Abrams, 1989).

Cultural beliefs about gender are a key driver of workplace discrimination against women. Whereas, whether consciously or unconsciously, individuals translate their ideas about sex into discriminatory behaviors through sex classification and gender stereotypes. Regardless of what other statuses individuals may hold, people tend to categorize each other by gender, leading to gender stereotyping and potentially invoking gender-based in-group/out-group processes. (Abrams, 1989). Many myths, such as the myth of motherhood, are used to justify gender discrimination and restrict women to specific roles hindering their progress (Verniers & Vala, 2018). This bias is evident in societal expectations about women's social roles, which must align with their social identity represented by factors such as gender, age, and race. In organizational contexts, it is reflected in expectations tied to their professional identity as businesswomen, executive directors, leaders, etc.

Discrimination in organizations is closely aligned with societal expectations, and as a result, women face double discrimination (Yacobovitz et al., 2023). As Eagly and Karau (2002) state, stereotypes linked to traditional gender roles contribute to predetermined ideas about people's abilities, promoting discrimination. Unconscious biases, deeply rooted in societal norms, can lead to unintentional discriminatory practices in hiring, promotion, and task assignments, as noted by Greenwald and Krieger (2006). The workplace's organizational culture and policies play a crucial role, as emphasized by Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006), as the absence of efforts addressing gender equality can create an environment supportive of discrimination. Moreover, the presence of glass ceilings and obstacles to career progress, as explored by Morrison et al., (1994), hinders women's advancement in the workplace as well, restricting their access to leadership roles.

Fossati et al., (2024) investigated the gender employment gap among refugees in Germany, Sweden, and Austria, focusing on the potential role of employer discrimination. Contrary to common assumptions, their experimental survey evidence showed that female refugees were generally preferred over male refugees in recruitment processes, except in cases involving motherhood, where refugee mothers did not enjoy an advantage. These findings suggest that the widely observed employment gap between male and female refugees is more likely driven by supply-side factors, such as limited access to childcare or adherence to traditional gender roles within refugee communities, rather than discrimination by employers. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing structural barriers and stereotypes through interventions such as de-biasing training, mentorship programs, and institutional reforms to promote fairer employment opportunities for refugees, highlighting that policies targeting both gender and refugee status are crucial for effective labor market integration.

Reshi and Sudha (2023) suggest that the gender pay gap has a significant impact on women's economic empowerment, limiting their financial independence and autonomy. The ongoing wage gap, as examined by Blau and Kahn (2007), reinforces gender discrimination by undervaluing women's contributions. A thorough understanding of these factors is essential for developing effective strategies to tackle and eliminate gender discrimination in the professional realm. Despite laws aimed at limiting gender discrimination, it manifests itself in wage inequality, commonly referred to as "discriminatory remuneration." This results in women being offered fewer challenging opportunities to showcase their competence, thereby hindering their career progress. Restrictions on their freedom of action, such as the prohibition of forming all-female teams, and the occurrence of sexual comments are additional manifestations of gender discrimination (Goyal et al., 2021).

Ortlieb et al., (2024) examined gendered employment outcomes among refugees in Austria, using six indicators such as pay, contract type, overqualification, career prospects, workplace belonging, and opportunities for social integration. Their findings revealed substantial gender

gaps, with refugee women disproportionately affected by lower pay and temporary employment contracts. Notably, nearly half of refugee women were employed on a fixed-term basis compared to just over a third of refugee men. However, the study also found that refugee women benefited more from high-skill employment, as it reduced disadvantages across several outcomes, including workplace belonging and social support. These results highlight that occupational status mediates gender inequalities and that refugee women in elementary jobs are particularly vulnerable. The authors emphasize the need for policy interventions to promote access to high-skill positions, improve recognition of qualifications, and reduce reliance on fixed-term employment to foster sustainable labor market integration for refugees.

In the field of nursing, for example, career advancement for men is prioritized over women, and gender-based norms continue to be a source of inequality for women in the workplace (Gupta et al., 2019). Moreover, professional women with higher education and children are more likely to report instances of discrimination. Interestingly, professional women in senior positions working in the public sector are less informed about discrimination than their counterparts in the private sector (Faragalla, 2023). While some studies suggest that gender discrimination against women is more common, it is important to note that men also experience gender discrimination. Instances of discrimination against men have been reported in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom, though no such discrimination against men has been identified in Norway and the United States (Birkelund et al., 2022). Certain studies indicate a gender bias regarding the competitive behavior of women both within and outside the workplace.

Tastsoglou and Freedman (2025) highlighted that gender-based violence (GBV) in migration and refugee contexts is deeply rooted in global social, economic, and political structures that reinforce discrimination and inequality. Their research adopted a feminist, intersectional approach, analyzing how factors such as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age interact to produce multiple forms of violence against migrant and refugee women. The findings of the international GBV-MIG research project emphasized the pivotal role of the State in shaping laws and policies related to borders, asylum, and integration, which in turn contribute to conditions that increase the vulnerability of migrant and refugee women—through restrictions on rights or inadequate protection mechanisms. The study also revealed that culturalized perceptions and narrow legal frameworks regarding GBV often overlook both symbolic and physical forms of violence, highlighting the need for more situated and intersectional approaches to fully understand and address the phenomenon.

Gorbach et al., (2024) examined labor market integration of Ukrainian war refugees in France under the EU temporary protection (TP) directive, which provides formal work rights and freedom of movement. Despite this seemingly privileged legal status, two-thirds of the refugees remained unemployed two years after arrival. The study highlights multiple structural and social barriers affecting integration, including lack of language proficiency, limited social capital, single motherhood, and the temporary nature of protection. Moreover, the TP status created a moral hierarchy among refugees, distinguishing the ‘deserving’ from ‘undeserving’ migrants, which affected access to social support and employment opportunities. The authors argue that formal access alone does not guarantee integration and that temporariness, societal perceptions, and institutional practices critically shape refugees’ labor market outcomes.

Odolczyk (2025) examined how the gender-specific needs of refugee women are addressed in the governance of immigrant integration in Warsaw, Poland. The study highlighted a

significant gap in state-level attention to gender, with most gender-sensitive support provided by NGOs rather than public administration programmes. While mainstreaming approaches were employed in public policies, they often failed to incorporate equity measures or tailor services to the unique needs of refugee women. The research revealed that structural and policy-level factors, including the absence of gender considerations in official documents, limited the effectiveness of integration initiatives. Furthermore, the study emphasized that even well-intended gender-sensitive programmes do not automatically translate into gender equity, as outcomes depend on the availability and competence of individual social workers and the capacity of NGOs to implement targeted interventions. These findings underscore the importance of adopting intersectionally sensitive governance strategies, providing mandatory staff training, developing gender-specific programmes, and allocating resources to ensure equitable integration outcomes for refugee women.

Upon reviewing the existing literature addressing gender discrimination in the workplace, our current study aims to employ semi-structured qualitative interviews to investigate the specific factors contributing to gender discrimination directly from individuals' workplace experiences and perspectives. Although there is much research and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in the workplace, gender discrimination remains an important problem, with a review of the literature highlighting the forms in which discrimination manifests itself. Since previous literature reveals various aspects of gender discrimination but lacks an in-depth exploration of the contributing factors, this research aims to identify and analyze the specific factors that contribute to gender discrimination within the Omran Center for Strategic Research, providing an accurate understanding of how these factors impact the work environment. In doing so, the study seeks to inform the development of targeted interventions to promote a more equitable and inclusive workplace.

3. Methodology

A qualitative approach was used in this study to understand participants' opinions and ideas within their social and environmental contexts. We chose a semi-structured interview method to gain deeper insights into the experiences of foreign workers in Turkey as this is a Syrian center. The interviews were conducted in Istanbul in January 2024 and a total of 15 employees, including researchers and employees, participated in these interviews. Participants were selected based on availability and willingness to engage in interviews and they were from different positions: non-resident fellow, director, finance officer, project manager, market research assistant, editor, researcher, news editor and content creator, administrative coordinator, and research assistant.

In selecting participants, a purposive sampling strategy was applied to ensure diversity in gender, job roles, and levels of responsibility within the organization. Participation was voluntary, and employees were approached based on their willingness to share their experiences. The sample included 9 men and 6 women occupying different positions such as managerial, administrative, and research-related roles, which allowed the study to capture a broad range of perspectives. The total of 15 participants was considered sufficient, as thematic saturation was achieved, meaning that no new insights were emerging from additional interviews. This approach strengthened the validity of the findings by ensuring both variation and depth in the collected data.

Interview questions focused on key themes drawn from the literature review and they were carefully designed to explore different aspects of gender discrimination in the workplace. Topics covered included perceptions of potential pay gaps, the impact of cultural or social biases on gender-based treatment, challenges women face in career advancement, incidents of

gender discrimination, current policies that support work-life balance, and potential gender biases in hiring, the differences in job evaluations, and efforts to promote gender equality. The interviewer presented himself as a colleague and moderated in a neutral way, letting participants guide the discussion freely. Data saturation was also achieved at the end of the study, indicating a comprehensive exploration of the themes. But what should be emphasized is that before conducting the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study to ensure transparency. Consent and tape-recording procedures were followed for each interview, lasting between 15 and 20 minutes, with subsequent verbatim transcription of the recorded content.

Upon completion of the interviews, the audio recordings underwent meticulous review by the interviewer to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. Employing a systematic approach, the employees were assigned numerical codes. Also, a computer software package designed for qualitative data analysis was employed. The analysis included examining the texts line by line, where major categories and themes were identified and systematically coded using thematic analysis and the constant comparison method. This process aims to reveal several perspectives and details within the data, which contributes to understanding the influencing factors. Data coding was also conducted entirely by the principal researcher, ensuring consistency and reliability throughout the analytical process.

4. Ethical Considerations

Maintaining ethical standards was a top priority throughout the research process. Strict adherence to ethical guidelines was ensured, starting with obtaining informed consent from each participant before conducting interviews. Participants were transparently informed of the purpose, nature, and potential effects of the study to ensure their voluntary participation. To protect privacy, confidentiality measures were strictly implemented, with the identities of all participants concealed in reporting results. Particular attention was paid to dealing with sensitive topics, especially in discussions related to cases of sexual discrimination and the challenges faced by women. The research team emphasized creating a safe and respectful environment during interviews, allowing participants to freely share their experiences while minimizing potential discomfort. The ethical framework used aims to build trust, uphold the rights of participants, and deal responsibly with sensitive information, thus contributing to ensuring credibility in the research.

5. Findings

Eight primary categories or factors that impact gender discrimination in the workplace have been identified, and selected quotes are provided to exemplify the data.

5.1 Pay Gap

Most respondents, regardless of gender, deny the existence of a pay gap in the company. Some acknowledge it to a certain extent, while others attribute it to capabilities and positions. In the collected interviews, several responses support the idea that there is no pay gap within the organization. Here are the relevant responses from the interviews:

Interview 1 (Non-resident colleague, Male):

"No, Each position or job has a wage according to the tasks."

Interview 4 (Financial Officer, Female):

"To some extent."

Interview 8 (Researcher, Male):

"No, the issue is related to capabilities."

Interview 9 (Market Research Associate, Male):

"I don't think so considering I'm starting over."

These responses consistently emphasize that the pay within the organization is determined based on the tasks and capabilities rather than being influenced by gender. The individuals interviewed in these cases generally perceive the compensation structure as fair, with no apparent gender-based pay disparities. It is worth noting that the pay gap can be considered as cause and a result of gender discrimination, but within the research that was carried out, it was more of a cause than a result, according to the opinions of the participants.

5.2 Cultural or Social Bias

The majority deny the presence of cultural or social bias affecting the treatment of employees based on gender. However, a few respondents, particularly those in managerial positions, acknowledge such biases. To support the findings related to Cultural or Social Bias in the workplace, we can draw upon specific responses from the interviews that highlight awareness or acknowledgment of such biases. Here are segments from the provided interviews that support the existence or denial of cultural or social bias:

Supporting the Existence of Cultural or Social Bias:

Interview 3 (Manager, Male):

"Yes, I feel that there is a cultural or social bias from the surrounding environment... the reluctance of working women from submitting requests for promotion out of their belief in their futility and the lack of seriousness of the higher administrative levels in the process of treating women fairly, promoting them, and supporting them."

Interview 11 (Research Assistant, Female):

"Yes, society still has an inferior view of women and their work, and that men's capabilities exceed their capabilities."

These responses provide insight into the perceived cultural or social biases affecting women's career progression, supporting the notion that such biases may exist within the organization.

Denying the Existence of Cultural or Social Bias:

Interview 7 (News Editor and Content Creator, Male):

"No, recruitment is based on competence, regardless of gender."

These responses indicate a denial of cultural or social bias, suggesting that some employees perceive the workplace as impartial and based on merit rather than influenced by societal or cultural prejudices.

Mixed Responses:

Interview 6 (Project Manager, Male):

"Yes, but it depends on the woman's personality."

This response reflects a detailed perspective, suggesting that while cultural or social bias may exist, individual characteristics, such as personality, may influence the degree to which employees perceive and experience these biases.

5.3 Challenges in Promotion

A few respondents, mainly women, acknowledge challenges for women in promotions, citing societal perceptions and stereotypes as contributing factors. In the context of this result, several responses from female interviewees shed light on their experiences within the Omran Strategic Research Center.

In Interview 2, a female Research Assistant acknowledged the existence of special challenges for women in promotions, attributing them to societal views and stereotypes that still perceive men's capabilities as exceeding those of women. This perspective aligns with the broader societal context and highlights the impact of external perceptions on women's professional growth.

Interview 5, conducted with a female Assistant, revealed a unique perspective. In contrast to the majority, this respondent mentioned not observing any specific challenges women encounter when seeking promotions. This viewpoint highlights diversity in individual perceptions and experiences within the organization, indicating that not all female employees hold the same opinions regarding promotion challenges.

Interview 11, involving a female Research Assistant, highlighted the persistence of an inferior view of women's work in society. This respondent emphasized the societal perception that women have fewer requirements and responsibilities than men, contributing to the challenges faced by women in advancing their careers. This insight emphasizes the intersectionality of workplace challenges, where societal norms intertwine with organizational dynamics.

These responses collectively underscore the need for a more comprehensive exploration of the factors influencing promotions within the organization. While some women acknowledge challenges linked to societal perceptions and stereotypes, others may not perceive these barriers in the same way. Understanding these diverse perspectives is crucial for developing targeted strategies to address the specific challenges faced by women in their career advancement within the Omran Strategic Research Center. Moreover, it is worth noting that challenge in promotion can be also a cause and a result of gender discrimination, but within the research that was carried out, it was more of a cause than a result, according to the opinions of the participants.

5.4 Sexual Discrimination

While many respondents deny instances of sexual discrimination, some, especially women, mention its occurrence in daily interactions between employees. In analyzing the results concerning sexual discrimination, several interview responses provide insights into the presence or absence of such instances within the Omran Strategic Research Center. It is crucial to consider the diverse perspectives shared by respondents to form a comprehensive understanding of the organizational culture regarding sexual discrimination.

Several interviewees, including a female research assistant (Interview 2), a female assistant (Interview 5), a male project manager (Interview 6), and another female research assistant (Interview 11), all unequivocally acknowledge instances of sexual discrimination in daily workplace interactions. Their consistent affirmative responses shed light on the prevalent

challenges within the organization, confirming that this issue is not confined to a specific gender. The collective awareness expressed by both male and female employees underscores the shared experiences and emphasizes the imperative to address and rectify issues related to sexual discrimination in the workplace.

Contrastingly it is essential to recognize that not all interviewees hold the same view regarding the existence of sexual discrimination within the organization. In Interview 7, a male News Editor and Content Creator responds with a resolute "No," rejecting the notion of sexual discrimination. This perspective reveals a divergence in perceptions and experiences among employees, underscoring the complexity of the issue. Similarly, in Interview 13, another male respondent, a researcher, also provides a negative response, indicating a belief that sexual discrimination is not a prevalent issue based on his individual experiences. These opposing opinions underscore the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of diverse viewpoints within the workplace, suggesting that perceptions of sexual discrimination may vary among employees.

By comparing these varied responses, it becomes evident that there is a spectrum of opinions regarding the existence of sexual discrimination at the Omran Strategic Research Center. The acknowledgment of this issue by some employees, especially women, underscores the importance of addressing and mitigating any instances of discrimination and fostering a workplace environment that promotes equality and inclusivity.

5.5 Work-Life Balance Policies

A mixed response on the existence of specific policies supporting professional and personal life balance. Some acknowledge their presence, while others are unsure or deny their existence. These interviews collectively present a mixed perspective on the existence of work-life balance policies within the organization. While some respondents affirm the presence of such policies (Interviews 4 and 15), others express uncertainty or deny their existence (Interviews 5 and 8). This variation suggests a potential communication gap or differing levels of awareness among employees regarding the organization's policies supporting work-life balance. It indicates a need for clearer communication and awareness initiatives to ensure all employees are informed about the existing policies and benefits related to work-life balance.

5.6 Instances of Discrimination in Hiring

Mixed opinions on discrimination in hiring processes based on gender, with some denying it and others suggesting positive discrimination or preferences for diversity. From the provided interviews, Interview 6 (Project Manager, male) contains responses that discuss instances of discrimination in hiring: "Yes, in customer service and sales companies, they prefer to have women work to attract male customers."

In this response, the interviewee acknowledges a form of discrimination in hiring based on gender, specifically in customer service and sales roles. The preference for hiring women in these positions is attributed to the belief that having women on staff would attract male customers. This perspective implies a specific gender bias in the hiring process, highlighting a potential challenge related to gender equality in specific job roles within the organization.

5.7 Job Appraisal Disparity

Responses vary on whether there is a disparity in job appraisal between men and women. Some deny it, while others express uncertainty or believe it might be a form of discrimination.

Interview 3 (Male, Manager):

"I don't know. But there are also no women in leadership positions, so it can only be considered discrimination."

This response suggests an awareness of the absence of women in leadership positions, indicating a potential connection between the lack of diversity in leadership and the possibility of job appraisal disparities.

Interview 5 (Female, Assistant):

"No, appreciation is related to the effort made, and there is often an attempt to support women's efforts more."

The mention of an attempt to support women's efforts more implies a recognition that there may be differences in how efforts are appreciated, suggesting the possibility of job appraisal disparities.

Interview 13 (Male, Research):

"No, because the characteristic of work in general is collective."

While this response denies job appraisal disparities, it indirectly acknowledges the absence of individual assessment, which might be an area of interest in understanding how collective appraisals impact individuals, especially considering gender dynamics.

These specific responses indicate various perspectives on job appraisal disparities within the organization. Some respondents express awareness of the potential issues, while others deny their existence. The contrasting opinions underscore the need for further investigation and potential interventions to ensure fair and unbiased job appraisals.

5.8 Promoting Gender Equality

The responses to promoting gender equality include providing equal opportunities, non-discriminatory work policies, clear job requirements, and encouraging a fair and balanced work environment.

In Interview 4, the respondent, a female financial officer, explicitly mentions promoting gender equality by providing job opportunities and ensuring the same wages for both genders. This response aligns with the theme of promoting equal opportunities and compensation as a means to achieve gender equality in the work environment.

In Interview 5, the respondent, a female assistant, outlines various strategies for promoting gender equality, including clear, non-discriminatory work policies, creating a safe environment at work, strict penal consequences for transgressions, balanced employment between men and women, promoting positive performance regardless of gender, and understanding the conditions of women workers to meet their needs. This comprehensive approach suggests a commitment to fostering a fair and inclusive workplace for all employees.

In Interview 7, the respondent, a male news editor and content creator, indicates that the company promotes gender equality by organizing the relationship between employees and management through administrative coordinators. This suggests a structured approach to fostering positive interactions and communication within the organization. These responses collectively support the idea that promoting gender equality involves creating a fair and

inclusive work environment through clear policies, equal opportunities, and a commitment to addressing any form of discrimination or bias.

The findings from the interviews conducted at the Omran Strategic Research Center reveal a spectrum of perspectives on gender equality within the organization. Respondents displayed diverse perceptions, with some acknowledging existing challenges and biases, while others expressed confidence in equal opportunities. Particularly noteworthy was a significant divergence in viewpoints between individuals in managerial roles and those in non-managerial positions. Those in managerial positions exhibited a heightened awareness of potential biases and challenges related to gender equality, emphasizing the necessity of addressing hierarchical differences in dealing with these issues.

Furthermore, female respondents demonstrated a heightened sensitivity to the challenges faced by women in the workplace. They particularly noted instances of potential discrimination in daily interactions and during promotional processes. A recurring theme in the findings is the presence of a lack of information or awareness, notably in responses related to specific company policies or practices. This suggests a potential need for improved communication and transparency regarding organizational policies to enhance employees' understanding and awareness.

6. Discussion

In this discussion, we analyze the results of fifteen interviews conducted with individuals from diverse roles within a company. The goal is to uncover common themes, variations in perception, and potential areas for improvement in fostering a truly equitable work environment.

In many interviews, people often talk about the difference in pay. The majority of respondents, whether they're men or women, assert that there is no pay gap within the company. Some individuals, however, acknowledge a detailed perspective, indicating that the issue may exist to some extent but is often tied to the nature of positions and individual capabilities. This raises questions about the transparency of salary structures and the need for more comprehensive communication regarding compensation policies.

Another critical aspect explored is the influence of cultural or social bias affecting the treatment of employees based on gender. The consensus among the interviewees is generally one of denial. However, some respondents in managerial roles acknowledge the existence of such biases, hinting at a potential variance in awareness levels between different hierarchical positions. This difference in perception might suggest a requirement for enhanced education and awareness programs at all levels of the organization.

There is a significant contrast in perspectives regarding the challenges women encounter during the promotion process. While male respondents largely deny the notion of these challenges, several female participants express concerns about societal perceptions and stereotypes impacting women's advancement in the workplace. This highlights a gender-specific knowledge gap, underscoring the need for specific initiatives aimed at addressing and dispelling stereotypes that could hinder the professional advancement of women.

The question of whether instances of sexual discrimination occur in daily interactions between employees yields diverse responses. While a substantial number of respondents deny such instances, a significant portion, particularly women, acknowledge the presence of sexual discrimination. This disparity shows the need for a thorough assessment of workplace culture and clear mechanisms to prevent discrimination.

Regarding policies that promote a balance between professional and personal life, there is a range of responses. Some respondents acknowledge the existence of specific policies, while others express uncertainty or outright deny their presence. This suggests a potential communication gap within the company regarding the availability and utilization of work-life balance initiatives. Implementing a more transparent communication strategy could improve employees' awareness and utilization of these policies.

Views on gender-based discrimination in hiring processes vary. Certain respondents categorically reject any form of discrimination, emphasizing that hiring decisions are solely based on qualifications and organizational requirements. On the contrary, some argue for the existence of positive discrimination, particularly in positions where fostering a diverse workforce is considered advantageous. True gender equality requires balancing diversity initiatives with merit-based hiring.

The question of whether there is a disparity in job appraisal between men and women yields varied responses. Some deny it clearly, while others express uncertainty or hint at the absence of women in leadership positions, suggesting a potential form of discrimination. The absence of women in leadership roles may necessitate a closer examination of promotion processes and the creation of targeted programs to foster leadership development among women.

As for promoting gender equality, respondents mention various strategies, including providing equal opportunities, non-discriminatory work policies, clear job requirements, and encouraging a fair and balanced work environment. The consensus is that gender equality promotion should be based on individual merit, creating an environment that values competence over gender.

A critical comparison of the findings with existing studies reveals important insights. For instance, most participants in this study denied the existence of a pay gap, attributing wage differences to job roles and capabilities. However, recent studies provide a contrasting perspective. Shaheen et al. (2023) and Reshi and Sudha (2023) documented persistent wage disparities in organizational contexts, particularly affecting women. This discrepancy suggests that employees' perceptions may differ from measurable outcomes, indicating that denial of the pay gap could be influenced by lack of transparency in salary structures or normalization of inequality in workplace culture.

Another key finding concerns cultural and social bias. While many respondents rejected its presence, several managers acknowledged hidden biases, especially regarding women's reluctance to pursue promotions. This reflects Eagly and Karau's (2002) *Role Congruity Theory*, which argues that societal stereotypes about gender roles shape workplace expectations and can hinder women's leadership opportunities. The difference in awareness between managers and non-managerial staff in our study supports this theory, showing that those in supervisory roles are more likely to recognize systemic obstacles.

Promotion challenges emerged as another area of divergence. Women in the study highlighted difficulties linked to societal stereotypes, whereas most male participants denied such barriers. This gendered perception aligns with Ketchiwou and Dzansi (2023), who emphasize that women's professional growth is disproportionately constrained by discriminatory practices and stereotypes. The contrast between male and female perspectives underlines the importance of designing interventions that specifically address women's experiences, rather than relying on a generalized notion of equality.

Sexual discrimination also revealed contrasting responses, with several female participants acknowledging its existence in daily interactions, while some men denied it. Such contradictions echo findings by SteelFisher et al. (2019), who reported that women often

experience subtle or normalized forms of discrimination that men fail to recognize. This points to the necessity of workplace training and awareness-raising programs that bridge perceptual gaps between genders.

Finally, the variation in responses regarding work-life balance policies and hiring discrimination underscores the role of communication and transparency within organizations. Some employees were aware of supportive measures, while others denied their existence. This gap resonates with Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly's (2006) conclusion that organizational diversity policies are only effective when employees clearly understand and trust their implementation. Without proper communication, even well-designed policies may fail to address inequality.

In sum, the discussion highlights the tension between perception and reality in addressing gender discrimination. By comparing the study's results with prior research and theories, it becomes evident that organizational efforts must go beyond formal policy-making to confront hidden biases, stereotypes, and perceptual divides among employees. The analysis of the interviews offers valuable insights into the diverse nature of gender equality in the workplace. While some common themes emerge, such as the denial of a pay gap and a perceived absence of cultural bias, differences in perception are evident, especially concerning challenges faced by women and the presence of sexual discrimination. The results underscore the importance of ongoing efforts to foster gender equality, including transparency in compensation, awareness programs on biases, targeted initiatives for women's career advancement, and comprehensive anti-discrimination measures. By addressing these aspects, organizations can strive towards creating truly equitable and inclusive workplaces.

7. Suggestions for Future Studies

This study can be extended, based on this research, to understand a number of issues related to gender discrimination, such as enhancing salary transparency, cultural and social bias, qualitative promotion challenges, and sexual discrimination. Assessing the efficacy of work-life balance policies with a focus on awareness, utilization, and satisfaction to refine supportive policies can be a good perspective to be studied. Also, evaluating diversity initiatives and hiring practices to foster an inclusive workforce and understand employee perceptions. Appraising the effectiveness of leadership development programs for women, encompassing mentorship, training, and support mechanisms to overcome promotion challenges can be a related topic to be discovered.

Furthermore, the research could include cross-cultural analysis to examine whether or not cultural differences influence the relationships identified in the study as the differences in culture might affect how employees perceive the concept of gender tracking longitudinal job appraisal disparities by monitoring job appraisal disparities over time to pinpoint contributing factors and assess the impact of organizational changes on fostering equitable appraisal processes can be an important idea as well.

This research has some limitations, such as being applied to only one company, and the relatively small sample size makes the research conclusion relevant to only one case. Therefore, for future research, it is suggested to expand the scope of this case research to include the entire company scope.

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