İPƏK YOLU, No.1, 2025, səh.53-65
https://doi.org/10.30546/SI.2025.1.5.015

PERCEPTION AND ANALYSIS OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES: A STUDY ON BUSINESSES IN BAKU

Agil Hamzayev, İsmail Özdemir

İstanbul Gedik University, İstanbul, Türkiye
e-mail: agilhamzayevv@gmail.com ozdemir@gedik.edu.tr

Abstract. This study aims to investigate the implementation of gender equality practices in the workplace in Azerbaijan. The research also highlights the importance of assessing the level of impartiality in recruitment processes and ensuring gender balance in leadership positions. For this purpose, data were collected through surveys from 323 employees working in various sectors in Baku, Azerbaijan and analyzed using reliability tests, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, Mann-Whitney U tests, independent samples t-tests and regression analysis. The findings indicate that the level of awareness regarding gender equality is a key factor in the effective implementation of policies. The ultimate result of the study emphasizes the necessity of inclusive strategies to enhance the effectiveness of gender equality policies in practice.

Keywords: Gender, gender equality, sustainability, gender equality policies.

GENDER BƏRABƏRLİYİ SİYASƏTİNİN VƏ TƏCRÜBƏLƏRİNİN TƏHLİLİ: BAKIDA BİZNES ARAŞDIRMASI

Aqil Həmzəyev, İsmail Özdemir
İstanbul Gedik Universiteti, İstanbul, Türkiyə

Xülasə. Məqalədə Azərbaycanda iş yerlərində gender bərabərliyi təcrübələrinin tətbiqi araşdırılmışdır. Burada həmçinin işə qəbul proseslərində qərəzsizliyin səviyyəsinin qiymətləndirilməsi və rəhbər vəzifələrdə gender balansının təmin edilməsinin vacibliyi vurğulanır. Bu məqsədlə Azərbaycanda, Bakıda müxtəlif sektorlarda çalışan 323 əməkdaşdan sorğular vasitəsilə məlumatlar toplanmış və etibarlılıq testləri, təsviri statistika, korrelyasiya təhlili, Mann-Whitney U testləri, müstəqil nümunələr t-testləri və reqressiya təhlili ilə analiz edilmişdir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, gender bərabərliyi ilə bağlı məlumatlılıq səviyyəsi siyasətin effektiv həyata keçirilməsində əsas amildir. Nəticə olaraq praktikada gender bərabərliyi siyasətinin effektivliyini artırmaq üçün inklüziv strategiyaların zəruriliyini vurğulanmışdır.

Açar sözlər: Gender, gender bərabərliyi, davamlılıq, gender bərabərliyi siyasəti.

ВОСПРИЯТИЕ И АНАЛИЗ ПОЛИТИКИ И ПРАКТИКИ ГЕНДЕРНОГО РАВЕНСТВА: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ БИЗНЕСА В БАКУ

Агиль Хамзаев, Исмаил Оздемир
Стамбульский Университет Гедик, Стамбул, Турция

Резюме. Целью данной статьи является изучение внедрения практики гендерного равенства на работе в Азербайджане. В исследовании также подчеркивается важность оценки уровня беспристрастности в процессах найма и обеспечения гендерного баланса на руководящих должностях. Для этой цели были собраны данные с помощью опросов 323 сотрудников, работающих в различных секторах в Баку, Азербайджан, и проанализированы с использованием тестов надежности, описательной статистики, корреляционного анализа, U-тестов Манна-Уитни, независимых выборочных t-тестов и регрессионного анализа. Результаты показывают, что уровень осведомленности о гендерном равенстве является ключевым фактором эффективной реализации политики. В результате была подчеркнута необходимость инклюзивных стратегий для повышения эффективности политики гендерного равенства на практике.

Ключевые слова: Гендер, гендерное равенство, устойчивость, политика гендерного равенства.

1. Introduction

Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of sustainable development goals. Women's equal participation in economic and social life plays a critical role not only in the protection of individual rights but also in achieving global objectives such as economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability [24]. Women's inclusion in the workforce significantly enhances a country's economic performance while strengthening societal welfare and resilience [2; 14]. Therefore, gender equality is considered an indispensable component of sustainable development.

The barriers to achieving gender equality vary between developed and developing countries.While equality policies have become widespread in developed countries, challenges persist due to cultural biases and societal norms. In developing countries, however, this process becomes more complex, hindered by economic imbalances, legal deficiencies and resistance within the social structure [8].

In the context of Azerbaijan, significant challenges are encountered concerning gender equality. While the labor force participation rate of women is approximately 47%, their representation in leadership positions is substantially lower [19]. This finding is supported by data from the International Labour Organization [8], which indicates that women are 30% less likely to rise to leadership positions compared to men. Moreover, wage inequalities and barriers to career advancement are the primary factors limiting women's position in the workforce. This gender disparity presents a critical challenge not only in terms of economic development but also regarding social justice and solidarity [25].

The role of effective policies in achieving gender equality is clearly demonstrated by the successful implementations in Scandinavian countries. Policies aimed at increasing women's participation in the workforce in these nations have supported economic growth and strengthened social cohesion [8]. For instance, measures such as equal pay policies and gender quotas in leadership positions implemented in countries like Norway and Sweden have made significant progress toward gender equality. However, the applicability of such policies in developing countries like Azerbaijan must be carefully evaluated, considering cultural differences and local economic conditions.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the perception and effectiveness of gender equality policies in workplaces in Azerbaijan. The research comprehensively addresses the perception and application of gender equality policies in areas such as recruitment processes, leadership positions, wage equality, remote working practices and future skills development. Furthermore, the study aims to develop concrete recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of these policies in workplaces.

This research seeks to fill gaps in the existing literature by analyzing the impacts of gender equality policies in the Azerbaijani context and contributing to a roadmap for improving

their applicability. The findings of the study are expected to provide significant insights not only for Azerbaijan but also for other developing countries facing similar structural challenges.

2. Methodology

This study was designed to analyze perceived policies, practices and awareness levels regarding gender equality in workplaces. Data were collected using a survey administered to 323 employees working in various sectors in Baku, Azerbaijan. The survey consisted of five sections and 38 questions.

2.1. Research Design

The research design and data collection process were carried out within a descriptive and relationship-oriented framework. A survey form, developed to measure gender equality-related policies, practices and awareness levels, was utilized. The survey comprised 38 questions across five sections and was distributed electronically, with responses collected through the same medium.

2.2. Measurement Tools and Categories

The survey form used in this study consisted of five sections and 38 questions. It was distributed to participants electronically and responses were collected through the same medium. The survey categories included measuring the perception of gender equality policies and practices in the workplace, evaluating awareness levels regarding gender equality, examining opportunities and challenges encountered in the remote working model and assessing training and career opportunities.

2.3. Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using Internal Reliability Analysis, Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Analysis, Mann-Whitney U Test, Independent Samples t-Test and Multiple Regression Analysis.

The study was conducted in compliance with international ethical standards. Written consent was obtained from participants and the data were used solely for research purposes, ensuring the confidentiality of participants' personal information. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary.

2.4. Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following five hypotheses:

H1: There is a relationship between companies' perspectives on gender equality and their Gender Equality Policies and Practices.

H2: There is a relationship between companies' perspectives on gender equality and practices aimed at increasing and strengthening Gender Equality Awareness.

H3: Remote working practices differ by gender.

H4: Practices aimed at equipping employees with future skills differ by gender.

H5: Perceptions of companies' Gender Equality Policies and Practices differ by gender.

3. Findings

3.1. Demographic Characteristics:

The graphs illustrating the distribution of participants by age, gender and education levels clearly highlight the demographic diversity of the sample.

Table 1. Gender distribution

Male	**144**	**44.6%**
Female	**179**	**55.4%**

Of the participants, 55.4% are women, providing a solid foundation for evaluating the impact of gender equality policies in the workplace, particularly from the perspective of women. Additionally, women's perceptions regarding education, remote working and promotion opportunities were better understood.

44.6% of the participants are men, who hold differing views on gender equality policies. It is important to evaluate how men perceive these policies, their levels of awareness and how these policies influence workplace dynamics.

The gender distribution ensures balanced representation, allowing for an evaluation of the effects of gender equality policies on both genders. The higher representation of women in this study provides a significant advantage in understanding the perception and application of gender equality policies and their impact on women's positions in the workforce.

This analysis forms the basis for assessing differences in perceptions between genders and for developing more inclusive policies.

Table 2. Age distribution

Age Range	Percentage
18–25 years	**35%**
26-35 years	**26.9%**
36-45 years	**20.4%**
46-54 years	**17.6%**

The 18-24 age group constitutes the largest segment, representing **35.0%** of participants, indicating strong representation among younger employees in perceptions of future skills. This group is a critical target for adapting to new technologies and digital skills development.

The 25-34 age group, accounting for 26.9%, reflects a cohort with more integration into the workforce and possibly a combination of learning and experience in their view of future skills.

The 35-44 age group makes up 20.4% of the participants and may hold a more strategic perspective on future skills, often associated with mid-level managers or specialists.

The 45-54 age group, with the lowest representation at 17.6%, includes more experienced employees. Their perception of future skills may be influenced by challenges in adapting to digitalization and new technologies.

The distribution by age group highlights how perceptions of future skills may vary with age. Younger groups (18-24 and 25-34) emerge as priority targets for digitalization and skill development processes, while older participants emphasize the importance of workplace adaptation and reskilling initiatives.

Table 3. Distribution by education level

High school	**81**	**25.1%**
Bachelor's degree	**123**	**%38.1**
Master's degree	**90**	**27.9%**
Doctorate	**29**	**8.9%**

These distribution charts provide a clear view of the participant demographics, showing a balance across gender, age groups and educational levels. The largest proportion of participants were bachelor's degree holders (38.1%). This group represents the highest share in the study's overall results and strongly reflects perceptions of future skills. 27.9% of participants were master's degree holders. This group offers significant representation, particularly in areas that may be associated with advanced-level skills. 25.1% of participants were high school graduates. This group exhibited relatively lower scores in perceptions of future skills, illustrating the impact of educational level on skill perception. Doctorate degree holders had the lowest representation among the participants (9.0%). Due to the small sample size of this group, caution should be exercised when assessing statistical significance. The distribution of participants by educational background presents varied perspectives on future skills. The higher representation of bachelor's and master's degree holders suggests that assessments of future skills are more inclusive for employees at these education levels. Meanwhile, perceptions among high school graduates and those with doctoral degrees were

lower. This diversity highlights the need to consider different education levels when developing policies and practices.

The educational distributions provide valuable data for understanding how future skills policies impact various demographic groups.

Table 4. Distribution by employment status

Full-time	**202**	**%62.5**
Part-time	**62**	**19.2%**
Freelancer	**59**	**18.3%**

The data regarding the employment status of the 323 participants in the study are distributed as follows: 62.5% of the participants (202 individuals) are employed full-time, making this group the largest within the study. Part-time employees constitute 19.2% (62 individuals), while freelancers make up 18.3% (59 individuals), ranking second and third, respectively.

Full-time employees emerge as the group most directly experiencing the implementation of gender equality policies. These individuals encounter the impact of such policies in various areas, including recruitment processes and opportunities for advancement to leadership positions. The experiences of this group provide a strong foundation for understanding the overall effects of gender equality policies.

Part-time employees represent an important group for examining the impact of flexible working policies on gender equality. This group may exhibit differing perceptions of equality, particularly regarding access to career development and promotion opportunities compared to other groups.

Freelancers, on the other hand, may experience the direct impact of gender equality policies to a lesser extent. The nature of freelance work often results in limited interaction with organizational policies. However, the experiences of this group highlight the need for gender equality awareness to extend beyond corporate policies.

In conclusion, significant differences were observed among participants based on their employment status. While full-time employees experience the effects of gender equality policies more intensively in their daily work lives, part-time and freelance workers perceive these effects more indirectly. This underscores the necessity of developing gender equality policies that comprehensively address all employment models.

Table 5. Distribution by type of organization

International Company	**68**	**21.1%**
Local Large Enterprise	**112**	**34.6%**
Local Small Enterprise	**92**	**28.5%**
Family-Owned Business	**51**	**15.8%**

The types of organizations where the 323 participants in the study work are distributed as follows: 34.6% of the participants (112 individuals) are employed in local large enterprises, making this group the most represented in the study. Local small enterprises account for 28.5% (92 individuals), ranking second, while participants working in international companies constitute 21.1% (68 individuals). Those employed in family-owned businesses are represented by 15.8% (51 individuals).

Local large enterprises stand out as organizations where gender equality policies are implemented at a more institutional level. These enterprises often encompass larger employee groups, making the impacts of such policies more evident. Additionally, this group provides significant data for analyzing the successes or shortcomings of policies and practices.

Local small enterprises, being less institutionalized in nature, offer a different perspective on the implementation of gender equality policies. Employees in these enterprises may encounter situations where policy applications are more limited or perceived on an individual level.

International companies are often characterized by the implementation of more inclusive and global policies. Employees in these companies are expected to have higher levels of awareness regarding gender equality and experience more impactful policies compared to other groups.

Family-owned businesses provide an environment where gender equality policies are often shaped by personal relationships and family dynamics. This can make the formalization of equality policies more challenging in such settings.

In conclusion, the type of organization significantly influences the perception and implementation of gender equality policies. Local large enterprises and international companies emerge as places where policies are applied more systematically, while in small and family-owned businesses, individual levels of awareness play a more crucial role. This highlights the importance of developing organization-specific strategies during the policy-making process.

Table 6. Distribution by job positions

Worker	174	53.9%
Entry-Level Manager	40	12.4%
Mid-Level Manager	82	25.4%
Senior-Level Manager	27	8.3%

53.9% of the participants are workers, 12.4% are entry-level managers, 25.4% are mid-level managers and 8.3% are senior-level managers.

Table 7. Distribution by departments

Human resources	69	
Finance and Accounting	111	The finance and accounting department, representing 34.4% of the participants, is the most represented sector.
Sales and Marketing	83	
Research and Development (R&D)	38	
Logistics	22	

34.4% of the participants work in the finance and accounting department, 25.7% in sales and marketing, 21.4% in human resources, 11.8% in research and development (R&D) and 6.7% in logistics. The finance and accounting department emerges as the most represented area.

Table 8. Distribution of team management responsibilities

Yes	213
No	110

65.9% (213 participants) have team management responsibilities, while **34.1% (110 participants)** do not. This indicates that a significant portion of the participants are actively involved in management and leadership processes.

Participants with team management responsibilities are likely to experience the implementation and effects of gender equality policies more directly. This group provides valuable insights, particularly for evaluating perceptions of gender equality in leadership positions. On the other hand, participants without team management responsibilities may experience workplace equality policies more indirectly, offering a different perspective on how these policies are perceived across hierarchical levels.

These findings highlight the importance of assessing perception differences between those with and without team management responsibilities and developing strategies to ensure gender equality policies are effective at all organizational levels.

3.2. Reliability Analyses

Table 9. Results of reliability analysis

Category	Cronbach's Alpha
Gender Equality Policies and Practices	0.916
Gender Equality Awareness Campaigns	0.840
Gender Equality Perspective	0.902
Remote Working Practices	0.881
Skills for the Future (Selected Questions)	0.722

The consistency of measurement tools within the subcategories of the survey used in this study was evaluated through reliability analysis. Categories such as “Gender Equality Policies and Practices” (0.916), “Awareness Activities” (0.840) and “Remote Working Practices” (0.881) demonstrated high reliability according to Cronbach's Alpha results. These findings support the validity and consistency of the measurement tools used in these categories. However, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the “Future Skills” category was 0.722, indicating a need for improved measurement tools in this area.

The lower reliability in the “Future Skills” category may stem from a lack of homogeneity in the survey questions used within this measurement tool. The low reliability suggests that some questions in this category may not be sufficiently connected to the overall scale. Upon examining the item-total correlations, questions with low correlation values may need to be revised or removed from the scale. It is recommended to analyze the various subdimensions of this category (e.g., digital skills and leadership skills) separately.

In conclusion, while Cronbach's Alpha values indicate that the measurement tools used in the study generally exhibit high reliability, further improvements are necessary for the “Future Skills” category. Adjustments to the scale are recommended to ensure a more balanced evaluation of perceptions related to future skills.

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

3.3.1. Correlation Analysis

Table 10. Correlation analysis results

Relationship	Pearson Correlation	Pearson p-value	Spearman Correlation	Spearman p-value
Gender Equality Perspective Policies and Practices (H1)	**0.784**	**<0.001**	**0.756**	**<0.001**
Gender Equality Perspective Awareness Campaigns (H2)	**0.404**	**<0.001**	**0.384**	**<0.001**

A strong correlation (r = 0.784) exists between the perspective of gender equality and the implementation of policies and practices. The relationship between the gender equality perspective and awareness campaigns is moderate (r = 0.404). The Spearman correlation results further support these findings with similar values (0.756 for policies and practices, 0.384 for awareness campaigns) and the p-values indicate that these correlations are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

3.3.2. Difference Analysis

Table 11. Difference analysis results

Variable	T-Test Statistic	P-value	Mann-Whitney U Statistic	Mann-Whitney U P-value
Equality perception in promotion for remote/hybrid work	**-4.37**	**<0.001**	**9571.5**	**<0.001**
Equality perception in training opportunities for remote/hybrid work	**-3.95**	**<0.001**	**9932.0**	**<0.001**
Equality perception in skills for the future	**-1.29**	**0.198**	**12060.5**	**0.202**

There are significant gender-based differences in education and promotion opportunities, with female employees perceiving greater inequality compared to their male counterparts. This finding highlights the need to reassess remote working policies to address these disparities.

Differences in the “Future Skills” category were not found to be statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that opportunities related to future skills development are being offered independently of gender.

The unsupported hypothesis reflects the positive efforts of companies regarding gender equality while emphasizing the need for a detailed examination of the perceptual impacts of such policies. To explore this issue further, qualitative studies are recommended in the future. For example, employee interviews or focus group discussions could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of these policies.

Conclusion. This study conducted a comprehensive analysis to understand the relationship between perceptions of gender equality, workplace policies and their implementation, as well as to identify points of differentiation. The findings indicate that gender equality policies significantly influence employee perceptions, yet gender-based perception differences persist in certain areas. Gender equality policies and practices demonstrated high

reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.916, indicating consistency and suitability for their measurement purpose. A strong correlation was found between perceptions of gender equality and implemented policies (Pearson r = 0.784). This suggests that companies viewing gender equality as a core value are more likely to foster perceptions of fairness in hiring and promotion processes. These findings underline the critical role of corporate perceptions of gender equality in ensuring the success of workplace policies, supporting previous literature linking gender equality to organizational culture [12; 18].

A moderate correlation was observed between awareness activities and overall perceptions (Pearson r = 0.404). While highlighting the importance of awareness initiatives, the findings suggest that these efforts are less impactful compared to direct applications. Awareness activities displayed good reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.840. Expanding these initiatives to reach a broader audience, including greater involvement of senior management in training and seminars, could enhance their impact on perceptions of equality.

Significant differences were found in education opportunities ($p<0.001$) and promotion processes ($p<0.001$) between male and female employees. Women exhibited a stronger perception of inequality in remote working policies, with this category showing reliability at Cronbach's Alpha of 0.881. These findings underscore the need to revise remote working policies to better support gender equality. Companies should develop strategies to ensure the active inclusion of women in promotion and training processes. These results align with literature indicating the complex effects of remote working on gender equality (OECD, 2020).

The "Future Skills" category had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.722 and no statistically significant differences were observed between genders ($p>0.05$). This suggests that opportunities for future skills development are likely being offered equally across genders.

In conclusion, a strong relationship was found between perceptions of gender equality and policies. This highlights the critical importance of equality perceptions for the success of policy implementation. Awareness activities, which showed a moderate effect, should be expanded in scope and reach. Remote working policies should be adjusted to reduce negative perceptions among women. Policy and Practice Development: Companies should design gender equality policies with transparency and inclusiveness in mind.

These findings provide significant academic and practical contributions to strengthening gender equality in the workplace. This study serves as a guide for building a more equitable future in the business world.

References

1. Azerbaijan Gender Equality Law (2006), Azerbaijan Legal Portal
2. Brundtland G.H. (1987), Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. Oxford University Press.
3. CEİD (Center for Gender Equality Monitoring) (2022), Gender Equality Index in Workplaces. Ankara: CEİD.

4. European Commission (2020), Circular economy action plan. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/
5. Guliyeva G., Mammadova F. (2020), Gender equality policies in Azerbaijan: Progress and challenges. Central Asian Affairs, Vol.7, No.2, 154-172. https://doi.org/10.1163/22142290-20202020
6. Harvard Business Review (2020), The impact of women in leadership on business performance. https://hbr.org
7. IFC (2021), Women Entrepreneurs and Economic Development. Washington: International Finance Corporation.
8. ILO (2021), Gender equality in the workplace: Key indicators. International Labour Organization.
9. ITU (International Telecommunication Union) (2021), Bridging the Digital Gender Divide. Geneva: ITU Publications.
10. ITU (2021), Bridging the gender digital divide. Geneva: International Telecommunication Union.
11. McKinsey Global Institute (2021), The impact of digitalization on gender parity. McKinsey Reports.
12. Nunnally J.C., Bernstein I.H. (1994), Psychometric Theory, 3rd edition. McGraw-Hill.
13. OECD (2020), Gender equality and economic empowerment. Paris: OECD Publishing.
14. OECD (2020), Women at work: Challenges and opportunities. In Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 11.
15. Pearson K. (1895), Notes on regression and inheritance in the case of two parents. Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Vol.58, 240-242.
16. Schwab K. (2017), The Fourth Industrial Revolution. New York: Crown Publishing Group.
17. Spearman C. (1904), The proof and measurement of association between two things. The American Journal of Psychology, Vol.15, No.1, 72-101.
18. Tavakol M., Dennick R. (2011), Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. International Journal of Medical Education, 2, 53-55.
19. UN Women (2020), Progress on the sustainable development goals: Gender Snapshot 2020. https://www.unwomen.org
20. UN Women (2022), Gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace.
21. UNDP (2020), Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan. Baku: United Nations Development Programme.
22. UNESCO (2021), Education for gender equality. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
23. UNESCO (2021), The role of digital education in enhancing gender equality. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

24. United Nations (2015), Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment
25. World Bank (2020), Gender equality and economic development.
26. World Bank (2021), Cultural dynamics in gender equality: A case study of Azerbaijan. https://worldbank.org
27. World Bank (2021), Female labor force participation data. https://www.worldbank.org