

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultural value orientation and attitudes toward  
workplace gender equity across generations:  
Insights from Delhi and National Capital region,  
India

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**Abstract**

The present research aims to explore the role of Hofstede's cultural values and conformity in shaping people's attitudes toward workplace gender equity (WGE). Furthermore, it explores the mediating role of conformity between cultural values and WGE using the Hayes Process Macro. Results reveal that both cultural values and conformity significantly predict employees' preference for gender equity, and conformity significantly mediates the relationship between ones' cultural orientation and their attitudes toward gender parity. Furthermore, gender, sector, and generation-based comparisons on the aforementioned variables indicate significant differences. The study has important implications as it proffers a theoretical model that explains the various contextual factors responsible for employees' gender-related attitudes.

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**1. Introduction**

The last few decades have witnessed a drastic change in the gender composition of the working population. Gender-based division of labor remained in practice well after the Industrial Revolution, continuing until the 1960s when the second wave of the feminist movement began, resulting in a surge of female workforce (Brunell & Burkett, 2002; Rosenthal, 1973). While this movement influenced European societies to challenge gender-based boundaries, Asian countries were still far from initiating a change toward gender-balanced participation in paid work.

In non-Western societies, including India, the participation of women in the workplace is a relatively recent development (Frayer & Kumar, 2023; Verick & International Labour Organization [ILO], 2014). While the change itself was positive, it came with its own set of challenges. Speaking specifically of India, gender disparities have long been embedded in the local culture, and with women entering the workplace, these disparities extended into organizations as well. However, given the recent transformation in gender roles, there is a shortage of research on gender-related issues in the workplace in non-Western societies. Stark cultural differences limit the generalizability of findings from Western studies to non-Western contexts. In an attempt to fill this existing knowledge gap, the

current research aims to explore the cultural underpinnings of workplace gender equity (WGE) in India.

## 1.1. Cultural value orientation and gender equity

Culture is known to be an important determinant of gender equity within a given society. As put by Ştefanovici (2009, p. 632), “sexual inequity is rooted within the social structure itself, through the allocation by society of segregated roles for each sex. The very existence of activities and responsibilities maintain an imbalance of power between the sexes.” Therefore, culture can be considered a significant predictor of gender equity. Several frameworks have been proposed to elucidate cultural values, with Hofstede’s model (1980) standing out as one of the most prominent. Hofstede’s model includes six distinct cultural value orientations: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint. Individualism/collectivism, the two dichotomies exist across a continuum, where individualism is defined as a “loosely-knit social framework,” while collectivism refers to a “tightly-knit social framework.” Power distance is the extent to which people are unconcerned with functional and/or structural inequities within society. Uncertainty avoidance refers to how individuals cope with uncertainties about the future and their tolerance levels for such uncertainties. Within the dimension of masculinity/femininity, masculine values include attributes such as competitiveness, achievement, success, and heroism, while a feminine orientation embodies values such as cooperation, care, and concern for others. Furthermore, a long-term orientation includes a more future-oriented perspective alongside a pragmatic approach that emphasizes belief in future planning, saving, and fostering social change. In contrast, a short-term orientation places greater significance on the past and present, focusing on normative approaches and the pursuit of quick results. The final dimension pertains to indulgence/restraint. Indulgence refers to the degree to which a culture allows for the free gratification of basic needs and desires, embracing the enjoyment of life and freedom from various restrictions. In contrast, restraint characterizes the extent to which a culture or society attempts to limit basic needs and desires, imposing restrictions that curtail the fulfillment of these desires.

## 1.2. Cultural value orientation and conformity

While these values are shared within cultures, the individual proclivities to internalize them depend on conformity. Conformity represents a form of social influence by which we transmit and preserve the values of our culture, fostering a network of shared cultural norms and common values. In simpler terms, conformity refers to the potential change in individuals’ overt behavior in situations involving others,

contingent on the degree to which individuals succumb to societal or group pressures. Consequently, conformity holds the potential to significantly influence people’s behavior and attitudes, including their attitudes toward women’s participation in paid work and gender equity as a whole. In the present study, we aim to explore whether the tendency to conform significantly mediates the relationship between cultural values and individuals’ attitudes toward WGE.

## 2. Literature review

Research evidence suggests that the cultural values identified by Hofstede (1980) are predictive of people’s attitudes toward gender equity (Bertsch & Warner-Söderholm, 2012; Holmberg & Akerblom, 1998; Malaquias *et al.*, 2022; Plueddemann, 2009). In the present study, attitudes toward WGE are operationally defined in terms of two key factors: employment skepticism and traditional roles preference. Employment skepticism refers to the degree of skepticism regarding women’s ability to work outside of home, while traditional roles preference is the extent to which individuals believe that women are naturally suited for household chores. Gender equity, in this context, is defined as the absence of cognitive biases and skepticism toward women and their capacity to engage in work outside the home.

The existing body of research demonstrates that cultures characterized by greater individualism (Davis & Williamson, 2019; Dohi & Fooladi, 2008; Malaquias *et al.*, 2022) and lower power distance (Lee *et al.*, 2020; Malaquias *et al.*, 2022; Plueddemann, 2009) tend to exhibit higher levels of gender egalitarianism. However, the findings concerning uncertainty avoidance, future orientation, and masculinity/femininity have yielded inconclusive results. With regard to uncertainty avoidance, some studies reveal that it can coexist with (Holmberg & Akerblom, 1998) or even promote (Malaquias *et al.*, 2022) gender equality, while others equate higher degrees of uncertainty avoidance with a greater preference for traditional gender norms that discourage gender parity (Bertsch & Warner-Söderholm, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2020; Terzi *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, with respect to future orientation, certain studies have found a positive association with greater gender egalitarianism (Bertsch & Warner-Söderholm, 2012), while others have demonstrated the opposite (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, some studies have identified high femininity scores as positively correlated with gender equity (Carrasco *et al.*, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2020; Milner & Collins, 2000), while other studies have not discovered a significant association between masculinity and gender egalitarianism (Terzi *et al.*, 2022).

The extent to which individuals embrace cultural values, and, subsequently, their appraisal of gender equality, is contingent upon the society’s inclination for conformity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Research

indicates that collectivistic cultures exhibit a high emphasis on conformity (Kim & Markus, 1999). Some scholars even consider conformity as a behavioral manifestation of collectivistic values (Fincher *et al.*, 2008). Due to the close alliance between conformity and collectivism, conformist cultures are arguably less gender egalitarian (Long, 2011).

Furthermore, as previously noted, people’s propensity to conform to societal norms varies across cultures, and the interaction between culture and conformity determines their attitudes toward non-conventional gender roles. This relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

In alignment with these findings, we propose the following hypothesis: (H1) cultural values and conformity tendencies would significantly predict attitudes toward WGE, and conformity tendencies would significantly mediate the relationship between cultural value orientation and WGE.

However, the preference for conformity and cultural values is not fixed; it tends to evolve over generations (Twenge, 2010). A generation is defined as a group of people born in the same general time span who share some life experiences, including significant historical events, pastimes, heroes, and early work experiences (Weston, 2001; Blauth *et al.*, 2011). It is imperative to emphasize that the classification of generations is deeply rooted in their shared life experiences, common values, and sociocultural, political, and economic context. For this very reason, the classification of Indian generations differs from the Western taxonomies. In the West, five generational cohorts have been recognized, according to Steelcase Workspace Futures (2011b). These include Traditionalists (born between 1922 and 1944), Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979), and Generation Y or Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000). In India, Steelcase Workspace Futures (2011a) has identified four cohorts, namely, Freedom Fighters (born between 1900 and 1946), Traditionals (born between 1947 and 1964), Generation X (same age cohort as Western Gen X), and Generation Y (same age cohort as Western Gen Y).

Research indicates that Millennials exhibit lower levels of collectivism (Sverko, 1999; Teck & Hennessy, 2011)

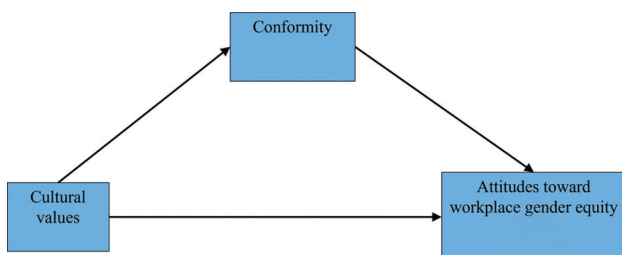


Figure 1. Proposed model depicting the relationship among cultural values, conformity, and workplace gender equity

and conformity (Tolbize, 2008) in comparison to their immediate predecessors. With respect to power distance, generational differences are not conclusive. Some studies suggest that Gen Y requires strong supervision and prefers authoritative leadership, reflecting a higher power distance orientation (Twenge, 2010), while others reveal a strong tendency among this generational cohort to question authority, indicating a lower power distance inclination (Teck & Hennessy, 2011). Moreover, with increased diversity, Gen Yers can be expected to display greater comfort in handling ambiguous situations and tend to score lower on uncertainty avoidance in comparison to previous generations (Clarey, 2009).

With respect to generational variations in conformity tendencies, there is a paucity of evidence. Nevertheless, by considering research findings that indicate a constant decrease in collectivism in India (House *et al.*, 2004) and following the premise that collectivism is positively correlated with conformity (Triandis, 1994), we can tentatively infer that conformity has substantially decreased over generations in the Indian cultural context. Consequently, it can be anticipated that Generation Y is the least conforming among all generations in India.

Regarding gender parity, Parry (2014) has asserted that Gen Y has grown up in a more gender-egalitarian atmosphere, making them more supportive of gender equality. Recent global trends have also shown a narrowing of the gender pay gap across three generations (Pew Research Center, 2013). This observation clearly signifies a substantial decrease in workplace gender inequalities, explaining why younger female employees perceive greater parity at work and view discrimination as a *concept of the past* (Eisner & Harvey, 2009).

These research findings suggest that cultural values, ideologies, and preferences change across generations. Consequently, each generational cohort can be expected to possess a different set of values and cultural orientations, even within the same cultural milieu. In light of these findings, the present study aims to investigate differences in cultural values, conformity tendencies, and preferences for WGE across three generations: traditionals, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers in India. Informed by the aforementioned research findings, we propose the following hypotheses: (H2) There would be significant differences between Traditionals, Gen X, and Gen Y employees on the dimensions of cultural values, conformity tendencies, and WGE.

In addition to generational differences, gender-based variations also exist with respect to individuals’ cultural orientations (Kashima *et al.* 1995), preferences for conformity (Griskevicius, 2006), and acceptance of egalitarian gender norms (Ellis *et al.*, 2008). The

interactional effect of generation and gender has also been explored in relation to these aspects, revealing that Millennial women tend to be more future-oriented and make career choices that prioritize work-life balance, while Millennial men tend to take more risks and focus on individual growth and success (Jobvite, 2017). Similarly, more female Millennials aspire to hold positions of power than their male counterparts (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Several studies have demonstrated that women tend to outscore men on collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; Venkatraman & Reddy, 2012) and long-term orientation (Nurmi *et al.*, 1994). In contrast, the pattern is reversed when it comes to power distance (Désert & Leyens, 2006). Regarding uncertainty avoidance, no significant gender differences have been found so far (Stedham & Yamamura, 2002; Budin & Wafa, 2013). Moreover, gender differences on the masculinity/femininity index are inconsistent, with some studies showing an absence of any gender differences (Stedham & Yamamura, 2002), while others suggest that men outscore women (Budin & Wafa, 2013).

With respect to gender differences in conformity tendencies, research has consistently found that women tend to exhibit greater conformity than their male counterparts (Eagly & Chryvala, 1986; Bond & Smith, 1996). Likewise, women tend to hold more positive attitudes toward gender equality (Prasad & Baron, 1996) and also have greater awareness of women’s issues, such as domestic violence, than men do (Alazmy *et al.*, 2011). Guided by these research findings, we hypothesized that: (H3) There would be significant differences between male and female employees on the dimensions of cultural values, conformity tendencies, and WGE.

Since organizations served as the context for this research, it was essential to consider organizational characteristics. Therefore, we also explored sector-based differences with respect to the variables of interest. The previous studies offer evidence of sectoral differences in cultural values (Venkatraman & Reddy, 2012), indicating that public sector employees tend to be more collectivistic (Badarch, 2013), while private sector employees are more comfortable in situations involving uncertainty (Granrose, 1997). With regard to sector differences in power distance, although no empirical evidence has been found, power distance tends to be higher in organizations where power is centralized (Investopedia, n.d.). Consequently, it can be expected that public sector employees would score higher on power distance due to the bureaucratic structure and unequal distribution of power in such organizations (Andrews *et al.*, 2009). Sector differences in long-term orientation are not consistent, as some studies suggest that public sector employees are more long-term oriented (Pimpa, 2012), while others suggest otherwise (Mathur *et al.*, 1996). In

contrast, private sector employees, being more achievement-oriented and competitive, tend to score higher on the masculinity index (Hausman & Sauer, 2007; Karl & Sutton, 1998) than their public sector counterparts. However, no empirical evidence could be found regarding sector-based differences in conformity tendencies. Nevertheless, given that collectivism has been found to be strongly and positively related to conformity (Kim, 2005), one can expect that public sector employees might be more conforming due to their collectivistic orientation (Badarch, 2013).

Furthermore, sector differences have also been observed in people’s preference for gender equity. The World Development Report (2012) highlights that public sector employees generally hold more positive attitudes toward WGE than their counterparts in the private sector. However, interestingly, in India, the pattern appears to be contrary to the aforementioned finding. Women’s inclusion rate on the boards of companies has been found to be relatively better in private sector organizations (Zehra & Sarim, 2017). Therefore, we propose that: (H4) there would be a significant difference between public and private sector employees on the dimensions of cultural values, conformity tendencies, and WGE.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants for the present investigation consisted of 300 employees within the age group of 20 – 60 years, each of whom possessed a minimum of 1 year of experience working in IT companies, whether in the public or private sectors, located within the Delhi National Capital Region (Delhi-NCR). The selection of participants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique. An unequal proportion of participants were drawn from three generational cohorts, further bifurcated on the basis of gender and sector (Figure 2). During the data collection

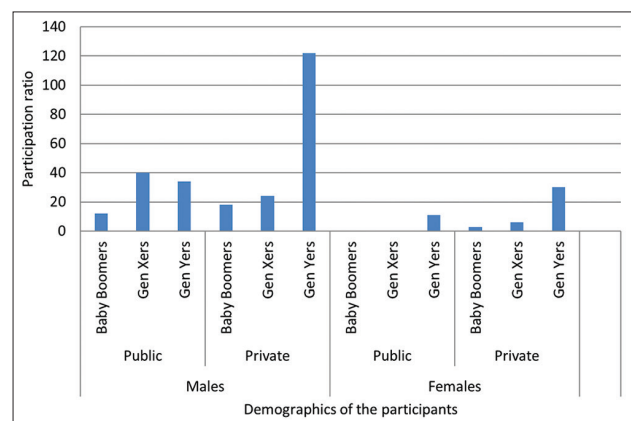


Figure 2. Group-wise representation of participants

phase (March – December 2014), participants from the Traditionals, Gen X, and Gen Y cohorts fell within the age ranges of 50 – 60 years, 35 – 49 years, and 20 – 34 years, respectively. The participants exclusively consisted of permanent employees and were derived from a total of 13 companies, with four operating within the public sector and nine within the private sector.

### 3.2. Design

The present study employs a  $2 \times 2 \times 3$  factorial design to draw comparisons across gender, sectors, and generational cohorts.

### 3.3. Psychometric tools

The psychometric tools utilized in this study are detailed as follows:

- a) Cultural Value Scale (CVSCALE): developed by Yoo *et al.* (2011), CVSCALE was designed to assess employees' cultural values. This instrument measures five of the six core cultural values identified by Hofstede, including Individualism/Collectivism, Low/High Power Distance, Low/High Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity/Femininity, and Long/Short-Term Orientation. It comprises 26 items rated on a 5-point scale. The CVSCALE has exhibited satisfactory reliability (Paul *et al.*, 2006) and validity (Patterson *et al.*, 2006).
- b) Generalized Conformity Tendency Test (GCTT): to assess employees' conformity tendency, the GCTT developed by Rao (1968) was used. This 14-item situational test yields higher scores for individuals displaying a high inclination toward conformity. The split-half reliability for this tool is reported to be 0.50 (Rao, 1968).
- c) Multidimensional Aversion to Women Who Work Scale (MAWWWS): the MAWWWS, developed by Valentine (2001), was employed to assess employees' attitudes toward WGE. This 10-item measure assesses two dimensions: Employment skepticism and traditional roles preference, with items rated on a 4-point scale. Higher scores on this instrument indicate a stronger aversion to gender equity. The tool exhibits an alpha reliability of 0.88 and demonstrates sufficient Criterion and Convergent Validity (Valentine, 2001).

All of the employed tools underwent rigorous standardization and validation procedures. Reflective tools (CVSCALE and MAWWWS) were subjected to tests for convergent and divergent validity (Appendices I and II), while the GCTT, which is a formative tool, was standardized using indicators of both relative and absolute contribution (Appendix III).

#### 3.3.1. Validation of psychometric tools on the study subjects

To validate the psychometric tools on the participants, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted using SmartPLS (version 2.0). In the first round of analysis, it was discovered that the CVSCALE is a first-order formative-second-order reflective construct (Thien *et al.*, 2013), while MAWWWS, with composite scores, is a reflective measure (Valentine, 2001). The GCTT was found to be a formative measure due to its situational and non-interchangeable items (Bledow & Frese, 2009). Subsequently, the outer model was created and tested based on these revelations. Following the recommendations of Hair *et al.*'s (2014) recommendations, eight items (item number 4: masculinity; item number 2: power distance; item numbers 2 and 5: uncertainty avoidance; item numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4: long-term orientation vs short-term orientation) with factor loadings  $< 0.6$  were removed from the CVSCALE, resulting in a refined CVSCALE with a total of 18 items that indicated satisfactory validity on the participants. All items of the MAWWWS were retained, as they exhibited satisfactory levels of individual and composite reliability. The average variance extracted values confirmed the convergent validity of the two tools, and discriminant validity was established using Cross-loadings and Fornell-Larker criteria. Finally, GCTT was validated using measures of collinearity, such as tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, as well as outer weights and outer loadings.

#### 3.4. Procedure

The investigator obtained permission from the HR personnel of various IT companies in Delhi-NCR for the purpose of data collection. Individuals who met the study's specific criteria were purposively selected for inclusion. Before data collection, all selected participants were provided with a comprehensive briefing regarding the study's objectives, and any questions or concerns were addressed to ensure clarity. After being given all the necessary instructions, participants were requested to complete the questionnaire battery. In addition, a substantial portion of the data was collected through online surveys using Google Forms. Following the data collection phase, the collected data underwent statistical analysis using the SPSS software.

#### 3.5. Statistical analysis

The normality of the data and homogeneity of variance were assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Levene's test of equality of variance, respectively. Moreover, mediation analysis was performed using Hayes Process Macro (Model 4) to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of cultural values on attitudes toward WGE. Comparative analyses based on sector, generation, and gender were conducted

using mean-comparison techniques, complemented by descriptive statistics. *Post hoc* analysis was applied for intragroup comparisons, wherever applicable.

#### 4. Results

As depicted in Figure 2, the distribution of participants across the three groups is notably imbalanced, which can pose a potential challenge to the robustness of statistical analyses. Furthermore, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test revealed a departure from the normal distribution in the data, while the non-parametric Leven’s test of equality of variance (Nordstokke & Zumbo, 2010) indicated that the variance across different groups was not homogeneous. Therefore, Welch’s *t* and *F* tests, which are well-suited for non-normally distributed data with unequal group sizes and heterogeneous variance, were carried out for mean comparisons. Moreover, adjusted omega square (Adj.  $\omega^2$ ), as a measure of effect size, was calculated, and the Games-Howell test was employed for post-hoc analysis. Effect size was computed using the formula by Olejnik and Algina (2000):

$$Adj\omega^2 = \frac{df_{(bet)}(F-1)}{df_{(bet)}(F-1) + N_T} \tag{I}$$

In addition, Hayes Process Macro was employed to explore regression and mediation effects.

As represented in Table 1, it was found that collectivism emerged as a significant predictor of conformity (Path coefficient = 0.0640,  $p < 0.05$ ), but not gender inequity

(Path coefficient = 0.0060). On the other hand, conformity demonstrated a significant predictive association with gender inequity (Path coefficient = 0.4920,  $p < 0.01$ ). Moreover, the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of collectivism on gender inequity (0.0315), which ranges from 0.0054 to 0.0788, does not include zero. This indicates that the indirect effect is statistically significant. This implies that conformity significantly mediates the relationship between collectivism and gender inequity.

Table 1 provides additional insights into the relationships between various cultural values and gender equity. It is evident that masculinity significantly predicts gender inequity (Path coefficient = 1.0094,  $p < 0.01$ ) but does not predict conformity (Path coefficient = 0.0774). On the other hand, conformity demonstrates a significant predictive association with gender inequity (Path coefficient = 0.3640,  $p < 0.01$ ). Importantly, with regard to the mediation effect, conformity emerges as a significant intermediary variable between masculinity and gender inequity (Indirect effect = 0.0282, 95% CI = 0.0001 – 0.0832). This positive predictive relationship between masculinity and gender inequity is consistent with the previous research evidence, as demonstrated by Milner & Collins (2000), who found feminine cultures to be more gender-egalitarian. Along the same line, Hofstede (2003) also noted that, as compared to masculine cultures, women’s participation in the workforce is greater in feminine cultures.

Moreover, power distance is found to be a significant predictor of both conformity (Path coefficient = 0.1950,

**Table 1. The mediation effect of conformity in the relationship between different cultural values and the absence of gender equity**

Predictor	Dependent variable	Path coefficient	p-value	Indirect effect of X on Y	95% confidence intervals	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Collectivism (X)	Conformity (M)	0.0640	0.0347*	0.0315	0.0054	0.0788
Collectivism (X)	Gender inequity (Y)	0.0060	0.9344			
Conformity	Gender inequity	0.4920	0.0005**			
Masculinity (X)	Conformity (M)	0.0774	0.0885	0.0282	0.0001	0.0832
Masculinity (X)	Gender inequity (Y)	1.0094	0.0000**			
Conformity	Gender inequity	0.3640	0.0021**			
Power distance (X)	Conformity (M)	0.1950	0.0000**	0.0643	0.0080	0.1386
Power distance (X)	Gender inequity (Y)	0.3870	0.0001**			
Conformity	Gender inequity	0.3300	0.0194*			
Long-term orientation (X)	Conformity (M)	0.3089	0.0000**	0.1161	0.0263	0.2574
Long-term orientation (X)	Gender inequity (Y)	0.6371	0.0006**			
Conformity	Gender inequity	0.3759	0.0074**			
Uncertainty avoidance (X)	Conformity (M)	-0.0489	0.4596	-0.0234	-0.1052	0.0390
Uncertainty avoidance (X)	Gender inequity (Y)	-0.3372	0.0322*			
Conformity	Gender inequity	0.4779	0.0006**			

Notes: \*Significance at 0.05 level; \*\*Significance at 0.01 level.

$p < 0.01$ ) and gender inequity (Path coefficient = 0.3870,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, conformity not only significantly predicts gender inequity (Path coefficient = 0.3300,  $p < 0.05$ ) but also serves as a mediator in the relationship between power distance and gender inequity (Indirect effect = 0.0643, 95% CI = 0.0080 – 0.1386). The observed relationship between higher power distance and greater gender inequality is consistent with previous research outcomes (Plueddemann, 2009). The underlying reason is that cultures characterized by high Power Distance tend to legitimize unequal power distribution between the two sexes.

The findings of this study suggest that long-term orientation significantly predicts both conformity (Path coefficient = 0.3089,  $p < 0.01$ ) and gender inequity (Path coefficient = 0.6371,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, conformity has been revealed as a significant predictor of gender inequity (Path coefficient = 0.3759,  $p < 0.01$ ). Moreover, the mediating effect (Indirect effect = 0.1161, 95% CI = 0.0263 – 0.2574) reveals that conformity significantly mediates the relationship between long-term orientation and gender inequity.

The significant predictive relationship between long-term orientation and gender inequity, as observed in this study, contradicts previous research that suggests cultures with a futuristic orientation tend to be more egalitarian (Bertsch & Warner-Søderholm, 2012). However, the present study aligns with the assertion made by Ahn & Cunningham (2017), indicating that long-term oriented cultures may exhibit lower gender parity due to the core characteristics of this cultural value being rooted in Confucius' teachings (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), which place greater emphasis on social status. Consequently, this may "reflect an endorsement of the status quo (i.e., power imbalance), and thereby reify men's dominant roles in society and in organizations" (Ahn & Cunningham, 2017, p. 863).

Both uncertainty avoidance (Path coefficient =  $-0.3372$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and conformity (Path coefficient = 0.4779,  $p < 0.01$ ) significantly predict gender inequity. However, conformity does not mediate the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and gender inequity significantly (Indirect effect =  $-0.0234$ , 95% CI =  $-0.1052$  – 0.0390). The finding that uncertainty avoidance has a negative predictive association with gender inequity implies that high uncertainty avoidance leads to low gender inequity, aligning with the existing literature (Keating & Martin, 2007; Amin & Sogra, 2014). Holmberg & Akerblom (1998) have suggested a positive relationship between gender equality and uncertainty avoidance, as careful planning to avoid future ambiguities can enhance gender egalitarianism. Overall, four out of five cultural dimensions significantly predict attitudes toward gender equity.

Similarly, conformity is a significant predictor of gender inequity, consistent with the previous empirical findings suggesting that cultures encouraging traditional gender role attitudes and exerting pressure to conform tend to exhibit greater gender disparity (Smith & Bond, 1999). Long (2011) has explained gender inequality in terms of contextual factors, arguing that individuals within specific cultural contexts experience strong pressure to conform to certain gender roles, often resulting in gender disparity. To contextualize this finding, one might argue that in Indian society, which operates on patriarchal norms strengthening male hegemony (Chhokar *et al.*, 2007), high normative conformity predicts greater gender inequality.

Furthermore, this study's findings also suggest that, with the exception of the cultural value of uncertainty avoidance, conformity significantly mediates the relationship between the remaining four cultural values and gender inequity. This outcome is consistent with previous research findings (Smith & Bond, 1999; Long, 2011), which have confirmed that conformity mediates the relationship between cultural values and gender equality. It implies that a society's cultural values and the societal pressure to abide by these norms cumulatively determine the degree of preference given to gender equity within that cultural context. Our finding confirms that despite its detrimental impact on social structure, gender inequity remains highly prevalent in cultures where it is socially acceptable and in line with existing sociocultural norms (Demographic and Health Survey, 2007). India, being a highly patriarchal society that adheres to conventional gender roles (Chhokar *et al.*, 2007), exhibits lower gender equity due to the readiness of individuals to conform to these traditional gender norms. In this context, gender inequity is often perceived as "normal" because of its historical presence in society. Therefore, the findings partially support H1, which posits that "cultural values and conformity tendency would significantly predict attitudes toward WGE, and conformity tendency would significantly mediate the relationship between cultural value orientation and WGE."

As observed in Table 2, the three generations exhibit significant differences in their acceptance of the cultural value of power distance (Welch's  $F_{(2,76.7)} = 3.547$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.01$ ). The results indicate that Gen Xers ( $M = 9.9$ ) are the most likely to accept unequal power dissemination, followed by Gen Yers ( $M = 8.8$ ), while Traditionals remain the least accepting of centralized power ( $M = 8.1$ ). Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, *post hoc* comparisons suggest that Traditionals and Gen Xers significantly differ on this dimension, with a mean difference of 1.8 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

While there is no empirical support for the current finding due to the dearth of research in this area, one

**Table 2. Mean values, standard deviation, Welch's *F* statistics, and effect size (adjusted  $\omega^2$ ) for generation-based mean comparisons (N=300)**

Variables	Generation	n	Mean values	Standard deviation	Welch's <i>F</i> test				Adjusted $\omega^2$
					Statistic	df1	df2	<i>p</i> -value	
Conformity	Traditionals	33	2.6	2.1	5.252	2	82.8	0.007**	0.02
	Gen X	70	3.9	1.9					
	Gen Y	197	3.4	2.3					
Power distance	Traditionals	33	8.1	2.9	3.547	2	76.7	0.034*	0.01
	Gen X	70	9.9	3.9					
	Gen Y	197	8.8	3.0					
Uncertainty avoidance	Traditionals	33	12.2	1.8	2.846	2	76.4	0.064	N.S.
	Gen X	70	12.6	2.3					
	Gen Y	197	11.8	1.8					
Collectivism	Traditionals	33	19.8	4.4	5.375	2	76.6	0.007**	0.02
	Gen X	70	22.6	4.4					
	Gen Y	197	20.9	4.1					
Masculinity	Traditionals	33	6.5	2.9	6.827	2	79.2	0.002**	0.03
	Gen X	70	6.1	2.6					
	Gen Y	197	7.4	2.8					
Long-term orientation	Traditionals	33	6.4	1.6	3.789	2	81.4	0.027*	0.01
	Gen X	70	7.3	1.5					
	Gen Y	197	7.1	1.7					
Employment skepticism	Traditionals	33	8.5	2.9	6.085	2	82.6	0.003**	0.03
	Gen X	70	8.6	2.2					
	Gen Y	197	9.7	3.1					
Traditional gender roles	Traditionals	33	10.2	2.5	0.031	2	86.7	0.969	N.S.
	Gen X	70	10.1	2.5					
	Gen Y	197	10.2	3.2					

Notes: \*Significance at 0.05 level; \*\*Significance at 0.01 level; N.S.: Not significant.

plausible explanation could be that Traditionals, having been born right after Indian's independence, grew up in a culture that glorified equity and condemned unequal power dissemination. Moreover, they witnessed the dawn of democratization in India, which may explain their inclination toward parity. Furthermore, the higher score on power distance for Gen Xers might result from their presence in powerful positions. According to Hofstede, power distance is "the extent to which the less powerful members of a society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 45). In a culture where subordinates expect the leader to have more power, individuals in leadership positions have to exert authority, possibly explaining why Gen X population, which currently occupies top leadership positions, demonstrates a greater preference for power distance.

Furthermore, scores on collectivism vary significantly across the three generational cohorts (Welch's  $F_{(2,76.6)} = 5.375$ ,

$p < 0.01$ , Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.02$ ). Traditionals ( $M = 19.8$ ) appear to be the least collectivistic, followed by Gen Yers ( $M = 20.9$ ) who exhibit a slightly greater preference for collectivism, while Gen Xers have the highest score ( $M = 22.6$ ) on this dimension. This implies that Gen Xers are the most group-oriented generational cohort. *Post hoc* comparisons revealed that Gen Xers scored significantly higher than Traditionals (Mean difference = 2.75,  $p < 0.05$ ) as well as Gen Yers (Mean difference = 1.65,  $p < 0.05$ ) on the measure of collectivism.

These findings are consistent with the research of Putney & Bengtson (2004), who found that Gen X is more collectivistic than previous generations. In addition, Putney *et al.* (2007) described the increase in collectivistic and humanistic values among Gen X people as a consequence of egalitarian family structure. Moreover, Robbins *et al.* (2010) argued that Gen X's inclination toward collectivism can be attributed to their current position in the organizational hierarchy. Gen X employees have mostly



**Table 3. Results of Games-Howell *post hoc* multiple comparison test for the three generational cohorts**

Dependent variables	Generation	Generation	Mean difference	p-value
Conformity	Traditionals	Gen X	1.37	0.006**
		Gen Y	0.80	0.124
	Gen X	Gen Y	0.57	0.113
Power distance	Traditionals	Gen X	1.80	0.031*
		Gen Y	0.71	0.426
	Gen X	Gen Y	1.09	0.090
Collectivism	Traditionals	Gen X	2.75	0.013*
		Gen Y	1.09	0.390
	Gen X	Gen Y	1.65	0.019*
Masculinity	Traditionals	Gen X	0.46	0.724
		Gen Y	0.87	0.265
	Gen X	Gen Y	1.33	0.001**
Long-term orientation	Traditionals	Gen X	0.94	0.021*
		Gen Y	0.70	0.077
	Gen X	Gen Y	0.24	0.522
Employment skepticism	Traditionals	Gen X	0.09	0.984
		Gen Y	1.2	0.003**
	Gen X	Gen Y	1.1	0.004**

Notes: \*Significance at 0.05 level; \*\*Significance at 0.01 level.

reached top management positions, where they have an obligation to maintain and monitor group cohesiveness and interpersonal relations at the organizational level, which is why they turn out to be more group-oriented than other generations.

Furthermore, Traditionals' low score on collectivism indicates that this cohort is the most individualistic generation. This is consistent with Twenge & Campbell's (2009) explanation, who initially proposed that Baby Boomers were the first generational cohort to develop individualistic traits. While this argument was originally applied to Western Baby Boomers, our findings indicate that Indian Traditionals also exhibit similar traits. This highly individualistic orientation of Indian Traditionals can be described in the light of socio-historical context. They were the first generation to witness an independent India after years of colonization, and this significant nation-level transition was manifested at the individual level as well. Consequently, "independence" at the individual level began to gain social acceptance, giving impetus to the rise of individualistic values.

In addition, our investigation reveals a decline in collectivism among the Gen Y population, supported by Teck & Hennessy's (2011) findings, which demonstrate that

Millennials have a strong inclination toward uniqueness and aspire to be independent and different from others. Thus, they tend to score high on individualism. This trend is consistent with the findings offered by Sverko (1999), who discovered that early and late Gen Xers differed significantly in terms of individualistic values, with late Gen Xers displaying stronger individualistic values than early Gen Xers. This demonstrates that collectivism decreased over time, and by the time Gen Y entered the workforce, individualism had already become predominant.

Regarding the dimensions of masculinity (Welch's  $F_{(2,79,2)} = 6.827, p < 0.01, \text{Adj. } \omega^2 = 0.03$ ), Gen Yers ( $M = 7.4$ ) have outscored both Traditionals ( $M = 6.5$ ) and Gen Xers ( $M = 6.1$ ), indicating that Gen Y employees are more likely to believe that women are inferior to men when it comes to their ability to work as professionals. Post-hoc comparisons further reveal significant differences, particularly between Gen Xers and Gen Yers, in terms of masculinity scores (Mean difference = 1.33,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Although no empirical data could be found to support our findings, one plausible explanation could be that Gen Yers score highest on the measure of masculinity because they are more open, straightforward, and vocal about their opinions (Parment, 2011), unlike previous generations. Especially in the Indian context where gender roles are deeply ingrained, we can expect all three generations to hold similar attitudes toward working women, but Gen Yers express them more openly than other generations.

Finally, significant generational differences were observed regarding long-term orientation (Welch's  $F_{(2,81,4)} = 3.789, p < 0.05, \text{Adj. } \omega^2 = 0.01$ ). Gen X ( $M = 7.3$ ) emerged as the most future-oriented, while Traditionals ( $M = 6.4$ ) were identified as the least futuristic cohort (Mean difference = 0.94,  $p < 0.05$ ). While there is a gap in the existing body of knowledge regarding generational variations in long-term orientation, we can explain this finding on theoretical grounds. Gen Xers are currently at a stage where they are required to think and plan for future, while Traditionals are closer to Erikson's (1959) *Ego Integrity* stage and, hence, are more consumed by their past than the future.

However, in terms of uncertainty avoidance, no significant generational differences were observed (Welch's  $F_{(2,76,4)} = 2.846$ , not significant [N.S.]), which contradicts existing research evidence (Clarey, 2009). One plausible explanation for the absence of generation-related variations in uncertainty avoidance is that all these generations have witnessed ambivalence and volatility in various forms. Ranging from drastic technological changes to unexpected economic downturns, individuals across these generations have collectively experienced uncertainty and have come to perceive it as being inevitable.

With reference to conformity, the three generational cohorts in this study exhibited significant differences (Welch's  $F_{(2,82.8)} = 0.252, p < 0.01, \text{Adj. } \omega^2 = 0.02$ ). Mean values reveal that Gen Xers ( $M = 3.9$ ) scored highest on conformity tendency, followed by Gen Y employees ( $M = 3.4$ ), while Traditionals surprisingly scored the lowest ( $M = 2.6$ ) on this construct. The effect size, however, is small, indicating that merely 2% of variations in conformity scores can be attributed to generational differences. In addition, *post hoc* comparisons (Table 3) indicate a statistically significant difference between Traditionals and Gen Xers in terms of conformity tendency (Mean difference = 1.37,  $p < 0.01$ ).

These results correspond with the observed generational differences in collectivism. It is empirically established that collectivism is positively associated with the tendency of conformity (Triandis, 1994). Therefore, it is evident that Traditionals exhibit the least conformity, as they scored the lowest on collectivism, while Gen Xers, who scored the highest on collectivism, are the most conforming generation. Furthermore, the lower preference for conformity among Gen Y can be supported by previous research by Tolbize (2008) and Pettigrew (2014), who have described this generation as non-conforming.

Regarding generational differences in gender inequity, we found that the three generations exhibit a statistically significant difference in the dimension of employment

skepticism (Welch's  $F_{(2,82.6)} = 6.085, p < 0.01, \text{Adj. } \omega^2 = 0.03$ ). Gen Yers ( $M = 9.7$ ) are most skeptical about women's participation in the workplace, while Traditionals are the least skeptical ( $M = 8.5$ ). Post-hoc comparisons revealed that Gen Y has outscored both Traditionals (Mean difference = 1.2,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Gen Xers (Mean difference = 1.1,  $p < 0.01$ ) in this dimension. Nonetheless, the practical significance of this difference is relatively small, as only 3% of score variations can be attributed to generational differences. In contrast, when it comes to the preference for traditional gender roles, there are no generational differences (Welch's  $F_{(2,86.7)} = 0.031, \text{N.S.}$ ). The framing effect might explain the presence of generational differences in only one dimension of gender equity.

These findings are inconsistent with previous research findings by Parry (2014), who proposed that Gen Y is characterized by a more gender-egalitarian approach compared to the previous generations. This inconsistency can be explained by Millennials' straightforward and highly vocal attitude (Parment, 2011). Therefore, the findings partially support H2, which states that "There would be significant differences between Traditionals, Gen X, and Gen Y employees on the dimensions of cultural values, conformity tendency, and WGE."

As depicted in Table 4, the two genders do not appear to differ significantly on any of the dimensions of cultural

**Table 4. Mean values, standard deviation, Welch's *t* statistics, and effect size (adjusted  $\omega^2$ ) for gender-based mean comparisons (N=300)**

Variables	Gender	n	Mean values	Standard deviation	Welch's <i>t</i> -test			Adjusted $\omega^2$	
					Statistic	df1	df2		p-value
Conformity	Female	50	2.9	2.1	3.712	1	73.4	0.058	N.S.
	Male	250	3.6	2.3					
Power distance	Female	50	8.6	3.3	0.926	1	69.9	0.339	N.S.
	Male	250	9.1	3.3					
Uncertainty avoidance	Female	50	12.3	1.7	0.548	1	78.6	0.461	N.S.
	Male	250	12.1	2.0					
Collectivism	Female	50	20.6	4.1	1.237	1	73.3	0.270	N.S.
	Male	250	21.3	4.4					
Masculinity	Female	50	6.3	3.1	3.823	1	66.6	0.055	N.S.
	Male	250	7.2	2.8					
Long-term orientation	Female	50	6.9	1.7	0.727	1	71.2	0.397	N.S.
	Male	250	7.1	1.7					
Employment skepticism	Female	50	7.3	1.8	58.900	1	109.1	0.000**	0.16
	Male	250	9.7	2.9					
Traditional gender roles	Female	50	8.2	2.7	31.136	1	72.4	0.000**	0.09
	Male	250	10.6	2.8					

Notes: \*Significance at 0.05 level; \*\*Significance at 0.01 level; N.S.: Not significant.

value orientation, including power distance (Welch's  $t_{(1,69.9)} = 0.926$ , N.S.), uncertainty avoidance (Welch's  $t_{(1,78.6)} = 0.548$ , N.S.), collectivism (Welch's  $t_{(1,73.3)} = 1.237$ , N.S.), masculinity (Welch's  $t_{(1,66.6)} = 3.823$ , N.S.), and long-term orientation (Welch's  $t_{(1,71.2)} = 0.727$ , N.S.).

Our findings contradict existing research evidence that supports the existence of gender differences in these cultural orientations (Venkatraman & Reddy, 2012; Désert & Leyens, 2006). This contrast may be attributed to the fact that most of these studies were conducted in Western societies. Since collectivism (Chhokar *et al.*, 2007), power distance (Matsumoto & Kupperbusch, 2001), and long-term orientation (Hofstede, 1984) are deeply ingrained in our social fabric, individuals tend to align with these values, regardless of gender. Moreover, the absence of gender-based differences in uncertainty avoidance and masculinity is supported by research findings obtained by Stedham & Yamamura (2002) and Budin & Wafa (2013), respectively.

Therefore, on the basis of our current findings, we propose that gender differences are not prominent in cultural value orientation, as these values operate at a broader societal level. These findings also lend support to previous research outcomes suggesting that cultural norms tend to overshadow the sense of individual agency among collectivistic societies (O'Connor & Shimizu, 2002; You *et al.*, 2011).

In contrast to previous research, which demonstrated that women tend to conform more than men (Bond & Smith, 1996), our findings indicate that the two genders do not significantly differ in terms of conformity (Welch's  $t_{(1,73.4)} = 3.712$ , N.S.). This could be explained in terms of sociocultural differences, as conformity is positively associated with collectivism (Trommsdorff, 1995), and Indian society, being collectivistic as a whole, naturally promotes conformity. Eagly & Chryala (1986) have opined that conformity proclivity depends more on situational factors than gender differences. Hence, individuals tend to conform less on topics they are knowledgeable about, irrespective of their gender. Moreover, our results suggest that in the Indian context, conformity is not significantly influenced by gender since it is accepted at the societal level, and all individuals face implicit pressure to conform to existing social norms, irrespective of their gender identity.

In terms of attitudes toward gender equity, our study revealed that men outscored women on both dimensions, indicating less favorable attitudes toward WGE. On the dimension of employment skepticism, scores for both genders showed statistically significant variation (Welch's  $t_{(1,109.1)} = 58.900$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Mean values suggest that males

( $M = 9.7$ ) exhibited greater skepticism regarding women's ability to work efficiently outside the home compared to females ( $M = 7.3$ ). In addition, men ( $M = 10.6$ ) expressed a stronger preference for traditional gender roles than women ( $M = 8.2$ ). This difference is statistically significant (Welch's  $t_{(1,72.4)} = 31.136$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, the effect sizes for these gender differences, as indicated by adjusted omega-squared values, demonstrate their practical significance. Gender accounts for approximately 16% of the variation in employment skepticism (Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.16$ ) and 9% of the variation in traditional gender roles preference (Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.09$ ) indicate that gender explains about 16% and 9% of the variation in the two dimensions, respectively.

These results underscore the observation that men exhibit less favorable attitudes toward WGE when compared to women, a phenomenon previously corroborated by Budin & Wafa (2013). In the context of Indian society, these findings are unsurprising, given that our culture continues to predominantly assign roles and responsibilities based on gender. However, what is particularly intriguing is that Indian men hold this viewpoint more firmly, while women tend to believe in the equal capabilities of both genders in all aspects of life. This phenomenon aligns with Ridgeway's (1992) argument that, in general, men tend to perceive women as not "good enough" to compete; however, when a woman attains a competitive position, they exhibit greater apprehension toward her than toward a male competitor. This apprehension might be a potential explanation for why men harbor more reservations about working alongside women. Moreover, men tend to endorse traditional gender roles more strongly, as these norms solidify male supremacy by assigning them greater power and authority (Castro & Hernandez, 2004). Consequently, H3, which posits that "There would be significant differences between male and female employees on the dimensions of cultural values, conformity tendency, and WGE," has been partially supported by the research findings.

As presented in Table 5, the two groups exhibit a significant difference in power distance, with a small effect size (Welch's  $t_{(1,184.1)} = 22.312$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.06$ ). Mean values on this dimension suggest that employees in the private sector ( $M = 8.4$ ) are less inclined to unquestioningly accept the prevailing patterns of power distribution compared to their counterparts in public sector organizations ( $M = 10.2$ ). It is important to note that these sector-based disparities account for only 6% of the variability in scores on this particular dimension. These findings align with Budhwar & Varma's (2011) argument that employees within conventional public sector organizations in India exhibit greater power distance

**Table 5. Mean values, standard deviation, Welch's *t* statistics, and effect size (adjusted  $\omega^2$ ) for sector-based mean comparisons (N=300)**

Variables	Sector	n	Mean values	Standard deviation	Welch's <i>t</i> -test			Adjusted $\omega^2$	
					Statistic	df1	df2		<i>p</i> -value
Conformity	Private	203	3.2	2.4	10.769	1	228.8	0.001**	0.03
	Public	97	4.0	1.9					
Power distance	Private	203	8.4	3.2	22.312	1	184.1	0.000**	0.06
	Public	97	10.2	3.3					
Uncertainty avoidance	Private	203	12.1	1.8	0.061	1	158.3	0.805	N.S.
	Public	97	12.1	2.3					
Collectivism	Private	203	20.7	4.4	8.585	1	206.4	0.004**	0.02
	Public	97	22.2	3.9					
Masculinity	Private	203	7.5	2.9	7.984	1	222.2	0.005**	0.02
	Public	97	6.4	2.5					
Long-term orientation	Private	203	7.2	1.9	3.087	1	266.8	0.080	N.S.
	Public	97	6.9	1.3					
Employment skepticism	Private	203	9.5	3.1	0.028	1	231.0	0.867	N.S.
	Public	97	9.3	2.5					
Traditional gender roles	Private	203	10.7	2.3	6.159	1	252.9	0.014*	0.016
	Public	97	9.9	3.2					

Notes: \*Significance at 0.05 level; \*\*Significance at 0.01 level; N.S.: Not significant.

and a reduced inclination toward active participation. It has been asserted that the landscape of power distance in India is undergoing transformation with the emergence of new sectors (such as IT and Business process outsourcing [BPO]). Nevertheless, in traditional bureaucratic services, power distance remains high, due to a multitude of socio-political and historical factors, including India's "long imperialist history" (Budhwar & Varma, 2011). In addition, the centralization of power and authority in public sector organizations contributes to this difference. Power distance tends to be more pronounced in organizations where power is centralized (Investopedia, n.d.). Consequently, it is more prevalent among public sector employees, given that public sector organizations typically adhere to a strict bureaucratic structure characterized by unequal power distribution (Andrews *et al.*, 2009).

Moreover, a significant difference is evident between the two groups in terms of masculinity (Welch's  $t_{(1,222.2)} = 7.984$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.02$ ). Private sector employees score higher ( $M = 7.5$ ) than their public sector counterparts ( $M = 6.4$ ), suggesting that individuals employed in private sector organizations tend to hold more conservative views regarding the equal capabilities and competence of women, while their public sector counterparts are less likely to believe in gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the effect size of this difference indicates that sector-based disparities can account for only 2% of the

variation in masculinity scores, which is too small to draw practical inferences. These findings align with previous research (Haussman & Sauer, 2007; Karl & Sutton, 1998) that established the tendency of private sector employees to score higher on the masculinity index compared to their public sector peers.

In terms of collectivism, a significant difference is observed between the two sectors (Welch's  $t_{(1,206.4)} = 8.585$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.02$ ), where private sector employees exhibit lower levels of collectivism and group orientation ( $M = 20.7$ ) compared to their counterparts in the public sector ( $M = 22.2$ ). However, it is worth noting that the effect size remains small, signifying that a mere 2% of the variation in collectivism scores can be attributed to sector differences. These findings are consistent with prior research conducted by Venkatraman & Reddy (2012) and Badarch (2013), both of whom reported that public-sector employees tend to be more collectivistic than their private-sector counterparts. This difference can be attributed to the longevity of association with one's employing organization. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, the average job tenure for public-sector employees was 7.7 years, while private-sector employees had an average job tenure of only 3.7 years. Similarly, research conducted in the Indian context indicates that private-sector employees exhibit lower commitment to their organizations (Sharma & Bajpai, 2010) and tend to change

employers more frequently. In contrast, public-sector jobs offer greater career stability, leading to less job-hopping among employees (Sharma & Bajpai, 2010). Consequently, one plausible explanation for the greater emphasis on group belongingness among public sector employees is the longer period of their association with the organization, which fosters stronger bonds with the organization and its members. Private-sector employees, on the other hand, often change organizations in pursuit of better personal growth and opportunities for success. As a result, they identify themselves less with their employing organization and prioritize personal benefits over group achievements.

Moreover, when considering the dimensions of uncertainty avoidance (Welch's  $t_{(1,158.3)} = 0.061$ , N.S.) and long-term orientation (Welch's  $t_{(1,266.8)} = 3.087$ , N.S.), the two groups did not exhibit any significant differences. While research in this area is scant, these inter-sector similarities can be attributed to the provision of similar training programs by both sectors. These programs instill a futuristic vision in employees and equip them to tackle ambivalence. This commonality explains why employees in both sectors display resemblances in their inclination toward a futuristic orientation and their tendency to avoid situations involving uncertainty and risk.

With regard to conformity tendency (Welch's  $t_{(1,228.8)} = 10.769$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), the two groups exhibit a statistically significant difference, with private sector employees demonstrating lower conformity ( $M = 3.2$ ) than their public sector counterparts ( $M = 4.0$ ). Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the effect size for this observed difference is very small (Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.03$ ), implying that only 3% of the variance in conformity scores can be attributed to the sector in which one is employed. Although no prior research specifically addresses sector-related differences in conformity proclivity, the current finding can be explained on theoretical grounds. Public-sector employees' inclination toward conformity can be attributed to the collectivistic values practiced and fostered within public-sector organizations (Badarch, 2013). Conversely, private sector employees are less inclined toward conformity due to their adherence to more individualistic values, which drive them to strive for personal growth and success rather than seeking group acceptance.

Significant differences between sectors were observed regarding the dimension of traditional gender role preference (Welch's  $t_{(1,252.9)} = 6.159$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Adj.  $\omega^2 = 0.016$ ). Mean scores indicate that private-sector employees exhibit greater support for traditional gender roles ( $M = 10.7$ ) in comparison to their counterparts working in public-sector organizations ( $M = 9.9$ ). However, it is essential to note that the effect size for this sector difference is rather small and lacks practical significance, with a meager 1.6% of the

variation in scores on traditional gender role preference being attributed to sector differences. These findings are consistent with existing evidence suggesting that public sector employees tend to harbor more positive attitudes toward WGE than their private sector counterparts (World Development Report, 2012). Furthermore, given the higher levels of competition prevailing in the private sector (Rocheleau & Wu, 2002) and the perception of women as strong competitors (Ridgeway, 1992), employees' preference for traditional gender roles can be viewed as a defensive strategy employed to deter women competitors from entering the workforce and exacerbating an already intense competitive environment.

Moreover, concerning employment skepticism (Welch's  $t_{(1,231)} = 0.028$ , N.S.), no significant difference was observed between the two sectors. This finding can be explained in the light of the *Framing Effect* (Scott, 1993), which postulates that participants' responses are, to a great extent, determined by the way questions are framed. In addition, the Social Desirability Effect (Meehl & Hathaway, 1946) may have played a role in shaping participants' responses. Given that our culture promotes conventionality, particularly with respect to gender roles, participants may have perceived it as more socially acceptable to express a preference for traditional gender roles rather than explicitly expressing their skepticism regarding women's participation in paid employment. Consequently, the results in this study offer partial support for H4, which postulates that "There would be significant differences between public and private sector employees on the dimensions of cultural values, conformity tendency, and WGE."

## 5. Conclusion

The present research aimed to explore the influence of individuals' cultural orientation and conformity tendencies on their attitudes toward WGE. It also examined the mediating role of conformity in connecting cultural values and the inclination toward gender equity. The findings from the mediation analysis revealed that, among the five cultural values identified by Hofstede, four significantly predicted individuals' attitudes concerning gender equity in the workplace. Moreover, conformity emerged as a significant predictor of gender equity and also acted as a mediator in the relationship between cultural values and WGE. With respect to inter-group comparisons, no significant gender differences were observed in the realms of cultural values and conformity. However, a significant observation was made in the comparison between men and women, with men displaying a significantly lesser preference for WGE. On investigating sector-based differences, it became evident that the two sectors exhibited disparities in specific

cultural values and conformity tendencies. Moreover, a significant difference was observed between public and private sector employees in just one dimension of gender equity, namely traditional gender roles. Finally, an examination of the three generations indicated distinctions in certain cultural values, conformity tendencies, and the employment skepticism associated with gender equity.

In summary, the present study highlights the sociocultural and attitudinal impediments that hinder gender parity, and it carries tremendous implications by introducing a framework that underscores the importance of contextual factors, such as cultural orientation, conformity, and generational effects. These factors are often overlooked by organizational management and policymakers while chalking out strategies for reinforcing and fostering gender parity in the workplace. Existing research indicates that countries in the Asia-Pacific region rank second in terms of gender disparity, surpassed only by Middle-Eastern nations (Gupta *et al.*, 2019). These differences are undoubtedly influenced, at least in part, by broader socio-cultural factors, such as conformity, gender role expectations, and other cultural practices. Addressing such inequalities necessitates macro-level, research-driven reforms. The findings presented here lay a foundation for further empirical investigations in this domain and offer key insights into the intricate nexus of factors that curtail holistic gender parity in the workplace. They throw light on the urgent need for organizations to conduct gender-sensitivity training programs to address biased attitudes toward women in the workplace.

Despite the valuable implications of this study, it is important to acknowledge several methodological limitations that should be considered when generalizing the findings. One notable limitation is the use of a small, unequal, and non-representative sample size. The results should be interpreted with caution in light of these sample characteristics. In addition, due to the non-normal distribution of the obtained data, the application of MANOVA was not feasible, which prevented us from examining the potential interaction effect of gender, sector, and generation. Furthermore, the current research did not account for extraneous variables (e.g., organizational culture and values), which may have impacted the responses received from participants. It is essential to recognize that the data that were exclusively collected from the IT sector, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other employment sectors. Therefore, researchers are recommended to collect data from various sectors such as banking, hospitality, telecommunications, and others in future studies, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of inter-sector differences in cultural values, conformity, and gender equity. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that this study employed a

binary and cis-heteronormative understanding of gender throughout the research. To foster inclusivity and broaden the scope of the literature, it is recommended that future studies strive for a more comprehensive approach by including non-binary individuals in their investigations. This approach will significantly contribute to a more diverse and enriched body of literature.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## Author contributions

*Conceptualization:* Nasrina Siddiqi

*Formal analysis:* Nasrina Siddiqi

*Investigation:* Nasrina Siddiqi

*Methodology:* Nasrina Siddiqi

*Writing – original draft:* Nasrina Siddiqi

*Writing – review and editing:* All authors

## Ethics approval and consent to participate

The present research has been approved by the research ethics committee of Jamia Millia Islamia (Approval ID: 09-2844), and it is conducted in compliance with the protocol approved by the institution.

## Consent for publication

Informed consent was taken from participants for publishing their data.

## Availability of data

Data used in this work are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Further disclosure

These findings were a part of the doctoral thesis of Dr. Nasrina Siddiqi at Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi, India.

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Appendix

Appendix I. AVE values for reflectively measured constructs

Constructs	AVE
Collectivism	0.50
Masculinity	0.71
Power distance	0.55
Uncertainty avoidance	0.57
Long-term orientation	0.62
Gender inequity	0.51

Abbreviation: AVE: Average variance extracted.

Appendix II. Discriminant validity testing using Fornell-Larcker Criteria

Constructs	Average variance extracted	Collectivism	Conformity	Gender inequity	Long-term orientation	Masculinity	Power distance	Uncertainty
Collectivism	0.5	0.71*	---	---	---	---	---	---
Conformity	---	0.206	---	---	---	---	---	---
Gender inequity	0.51	0.052	0.280	0.71*	---	---	---	---
Long-term orientation	0.62	0.230	0.225	0.238	0.79*	---	---	---
Masculinity	0.71	0.165	0.365	0.558	0.264	0.84*	---	---
Power distance	0.55	0.261	0.315	0.285	0.216	0.290	0.74*	---
Uncertainty	0.57	0.251	0.043	-0.119	0.153	0.045	0.147	0.75*

Note: \*Square root of average variance extracted.

Appendix III: Table indicating the outer weights, *t*-values, *p*-values, and outer loadings of Generalized Conformity Tendency Test

Indicators	Outer weights	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Outer loadings
CON1	0.603	4.648	0.00**	0.550
CON2	0.049	0.367	0.71	0.189
CON3	0.428	2.612	0.01**	0.336
CON4	-0.175	1.269	0.21	0.298
CON5	0.563	4.245	0.00**	0.493
CON6	0.030	0.185	0.85	0.224
CON7	0.191	1.217	0.22	0.394
CON8	0.388	2.814	0.01**	0.301
CON9	0.015	0.099	0.92	0.198
CON10	-0.231	1.344	0.18	0.090
CON11	0.245	1.976	0.05*	0.215
CON12	0.110	0.905	0.37	0.268
CON13	-0.123	0.947	0.34	0.034
CON14	-0.208	1.666	0.10	-0.144
Collinearity assessment	Tolerance		>0.2	
	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)		<5	

Note: \*\*Significance at 0.01 level; \*Significance at 0.05 level.