

## Gender Pay Gap – Seeking Dialogue

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As we make a transition from ancient history to the present world, we can see there has been a constant battle. The battle, against inequality, which is engrossed too deep in our day to day life. Battle fighting miscellaneous forms of discrimination. The unjust and prejudicial treatment within society, on the basis of different grounds such as Race, Religion, Opinions, Gender or any other factor, which makes one human different from another, has been prevalent. One of the most debatable issue faced by all of us, the generation – the global population, is the Gender based pay discrimination. This war has been embedded so deep in our roots, that it now has its presence everywhere. The issue is for women, who despite being equally educated and well experienced, still lags behind her male counterpart, when it comes to getting equal respect for their talent and hard work.

What can be the reason, when both the genders have studied in the same college, (quoting the research conducted by WEF, advocating the fact that education gap is on parity and is now close to 10-year gap) still have unequal wages? When they are studying the same subjects, graduating in the same course and are also at the same experience level, still why one earns lesser than their fellow? This dominant concern of history has now become the obvious problem in our day to day life. With the advancement of technology and subsequent innovation, resulting in increased opportunities for women, it is now possible to expand wings in major domains. But, silently accept the fact that pay difference, in other words Gender pay bias, might be an obstacle to overcome too.

The World Economic Forum stated in 2016, that it could take approx. 170 years to put an end to the disparity existing in wages and employment opportunities for both men and women. The South Asian countries can mend the gap in 46 years, whereas the Western European Nations can achieve the same in 61 years, and Latin American Nations can achieve the parity in 72 years. There are nations with a smaller pay gaps, such as New Zealand, where data is convincing but still doesn't add up to the solution. Women still earn average 5% lesser than that of men, as per the report published by Business Insider in 2015.

Researching on the equal effort, equal salary subject has also drawn attention towards numerous questions and probable answers for all of them. It was hard to digest this fact, that even though we are in 21<sup>st</sup> century, we still face discrimination in workplace when it comes to behaviour towards recognizing the effort of women, accepting the fact that she can also accomplish the same level of expertise, and can also add valuable contribution. According to "The American Association of University Women", and "Labour Department data" it is a noticeable fact that, there is a difference of on average 82 cents to every dollar that male counterpart has been earning for the same level of work women is supposed to do. However, CNN Money states the fact for 80 cents to every dollar of male colleagues. This figure or gap was 79.6 in 2015 though. All of these comparisons have been evaluated on full time workers, for their year-round work.

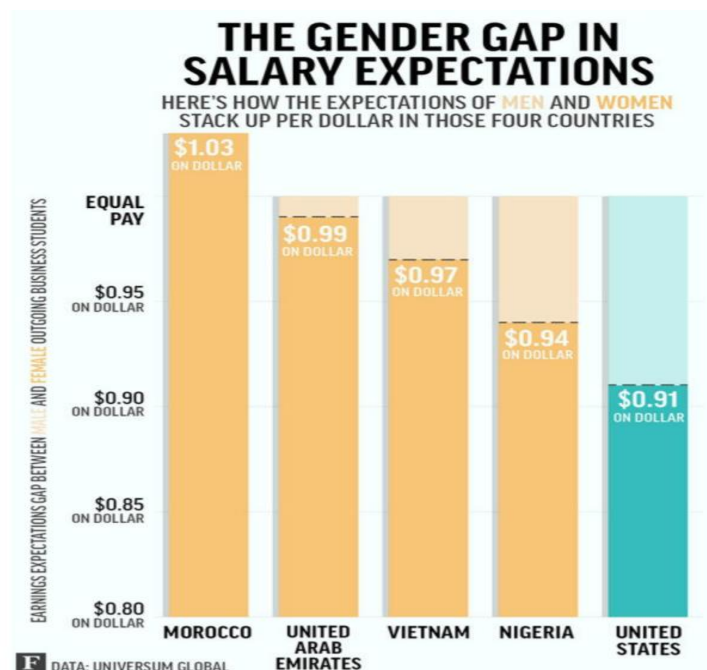
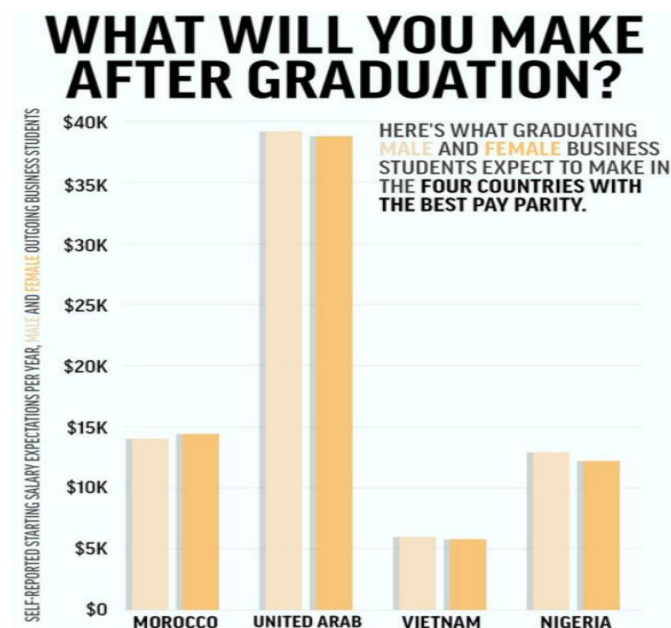
The gap of 20 cents seems insignificant, but when we do maths it is not to be ignored. What this actually adds up to? It means women can lose up to \$10,470 in median earning per year, as per the report published by NWLC in March. If we take a career long scene, this gap hampers the professional health and wealth being. As per the 2015 pay gap research, a 20-year old woman who is just starting her career graph, will eventually lose \$418,800 in a period of over 40 years, in comparison to her male colleagues.

In order to overcome this loss, which she will incur financially, she would have to work for another 10-years if she really wants to be at an equal financial podium.

As per the report published by ILO, which examined the data of 178 nations, women represent 46% of the total worldwide population adding in the workforce compared to 72% men, but this percentage bifurcates to only 46.3% of workforce in service sector, 35.4% in agricultural and 18.3% in industrial sector (The facts and figure stated in ILO's report of 2016).

It is inevitable to discuss the research by drawing data based on factual representation, this will provide the solid and concrete base for further discussion. Presenting below some of the graphical representation of Forbes, and Universum Global Research <sup>1</sup> results of Gender Gap and Pay expectations, available as public data as of January 2017.

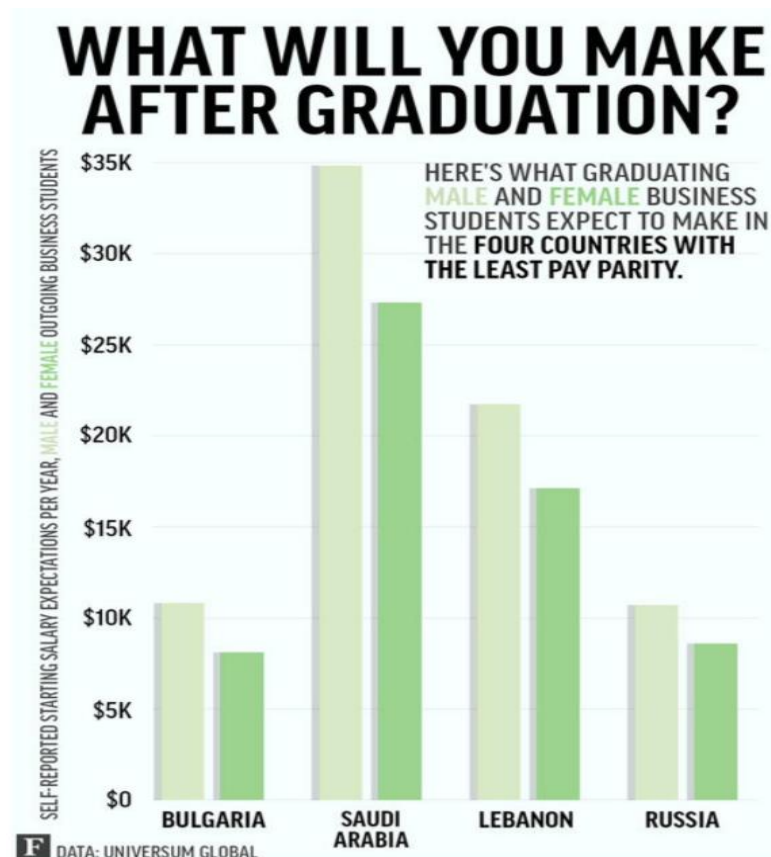
Below is the graphical representation of data from countries currently holding lesser gender gaps.



The above charts provide results and we are not surprised at all. But what is worth the effort of studying the same is, we have Morocco, as only nation where results of the survey are a bit relieving. Women are expected to earn more than men. But, it does not advocate the fact that there is a similarity in their Economic well being. No, only 27% of Moroccan females are adding up in their labour force, in comparison to their 78% men population. The graph above also shows UAE, data where women and men are at parity when it comes to salary, but in the background, only 42% of the women participate in labour work force, when we compare to their 92% males. It is also not to be ignored that in both UAE and Morocco, if women are expected to have higher education, and is one of the major factor that adds up to the factors of parity in gender gap.

We cannot ignore the graph of United States, where there is a maximum gap in salary expectations. Women's salary expectations are 91% of men's salary expectations, and believe it or not data states, that the gender pay gap is 80%. We are talking of maximum pay gap in one of the most powerful nations in the world.

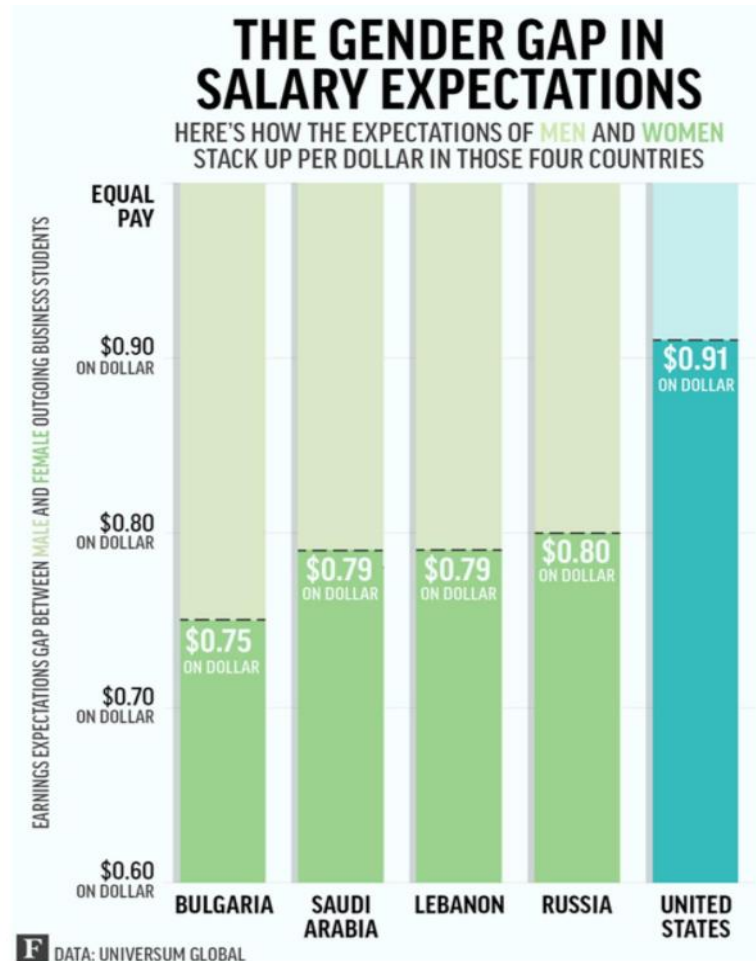
Look at the facts below for countries with widest gender gaps, once both the genders complete the same level of education, How much they are expected to earn now?



Above graph, states Bulgaria has the prominence when it comes to pay gap expectations. Although when compared based on participation in labour force, there are more women participating there, when we compare to Africa or Middle East. There is tie between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. The data from Saudi Arabia comes as no surprise and only 21% of women are looking out to work and participate in labour work force.

The graph below is now a comparison of Gender Gap Salary Expectations, after graduations and adding more nation into the representation, United States.

The results of United States again come as no surprise after the graph above stating the maximum salary expectations in the same compared to countries with narrow Gender gaps. Now, gap narrowed a bit when compared to nations with wider gaps, but still doesn't add more towards the solution.



What is it that we are still discussing the problem, what has contributed to the cause? We have discussed and viewed the facts and now it's time to understand the reason behind the mindset, source in the background which has resulted in the current stage.

If we study the history, it is not to be ignored that Women, have been categorized as fragile, having little power or strength to fight the battles of the world. Their anatomy is as such, that they are more suited to do household chores and support the family, whereas the men in the family is the one who has been an earning source. This conception was challenged during World War II, where women were participating at the front and demanded adjustments to equalize wages. It was a move to shift their image from being a weaker gender to a strengthened one. Also, even in the families when a girl is born, there is a general notion and trend that she will devote most of her time at home and doing activities which suits her more. She is expected to do, what her mother or grandmother has been doing for decades. If she is not falling into the same zone, she is trained forcibly to adjust to the life where she belongs, at home, or mostly at home. No doubt exceptions are always there, otherwise, we would not have been accountable to discuss so much today. There were some who broke the common notion and gave us a way for a change.

Was it also the reason, that there were no role-models to look forward to at that time? Or lesser known women who were flying high and were shattering the glass? No doubt, anyone in the forefront who, is leading by an example and has been receiving the accolades for the same, will definitely advocate the move of others. Less women in power could have been a reason for slow changes, weak policies and lesser votes for the female issues. So, when there was a population in the domain of Politics, Technology, Education and many more, there was no data to be compared to. As governing factors for them were less, whom to compare, what to check in history when this is happening for the first time?

We also, cannot ignore the fact, that being raised with a notion of being weak or inferior to their male counterpart, has added to the inability of arguing less when demanding rightful thing for self. The fear of being judged and sidelined as a problem, was enough to never actually come to a point of change. There were lesser cases of debates and thus pellucid growth.

As stated above, lack of examples and history, it was not known that how much this job or task is going to pay for them. In other words, this led to wage discrepancies and also working under the notion that there should be no discussion over wages, although they might seem unfair at a point. In case you are battling equal right, it was a big deal to take your employer to court and fight for it. Who will be at your side? You are weak, atleast this is what society pictures you as, so how will you win with no one at your shoulder?

Since you are earning less, or your input in the family income is bleak, you tend to be less impactful at home. The task of managing home and taking care of family, are not task at all? It comes naturally to you. This is what is expected from you. You are earning less and thus most of the time of yours should be at home. You get less, so be at home more.

Last but not the least, those who were at power, Men, were also not forcing the market to cut this discrimination among the workforce. Discrimination was always there, but you cannot find it like a hot pan at once. Someone has to dedicate himself to the cause and filter out the scenarios, cases where there is a bias. With typical role stereotypes of women working at front desk, handling files and managing the office paper work, it was hard to notice that they are not at all a part of policies, terms which govern the business and profit. Their input in company's sale, revenue and growth has been zero, since they were never given a chance to play the role, or be the game changer. Even education wise women were better, they were getting better grades and had more pass percentage, then also they were managing calendars of business meetings in offices.

Industries which require physical strength, areas like Civil, Construction, Chemical and Petroleum, Mining, Industrial Manufacturing, even Space, were too scary. Slowly and steadily time changed, all of the above reasons, which were too prominent, which were too loud to be noticed, became soundless.

With all the disparity, prevailing in the history, what were the measures taken even by the concerned few in the power, or by one who were prominent enough to be a voice among silence?

The roar rose, in 1869, after a letter to the editor of New York Times, questioning the fact, why females in government were not being paid equally? That led to a resolution being passed by House representatives, which surfaced for sometime, only to be barred in 1870, as time passed. The Western Union Telegraph company went on strike, but was symbolized as a too early insistence for equal pay. Later in 1911, progress was made, when education sector saw a major change and added equal pay adjustment.

In 1918, due to World War I, the United States Employment Service released the list of professions, can be taken by females and thus fueling the notion in males, to take up role in War. This however didn't work in the equality favor, as a mindset influenced for jobs better suited for females and more aligned for males. The change, didn't work and added a layer on the discrimination brick wall. By the time, World was over with World War II, the gender equality lost its sheen. There was no doubt, world was healing and women, were expected to play their part of being a nurturer, healer and devote more time at home.

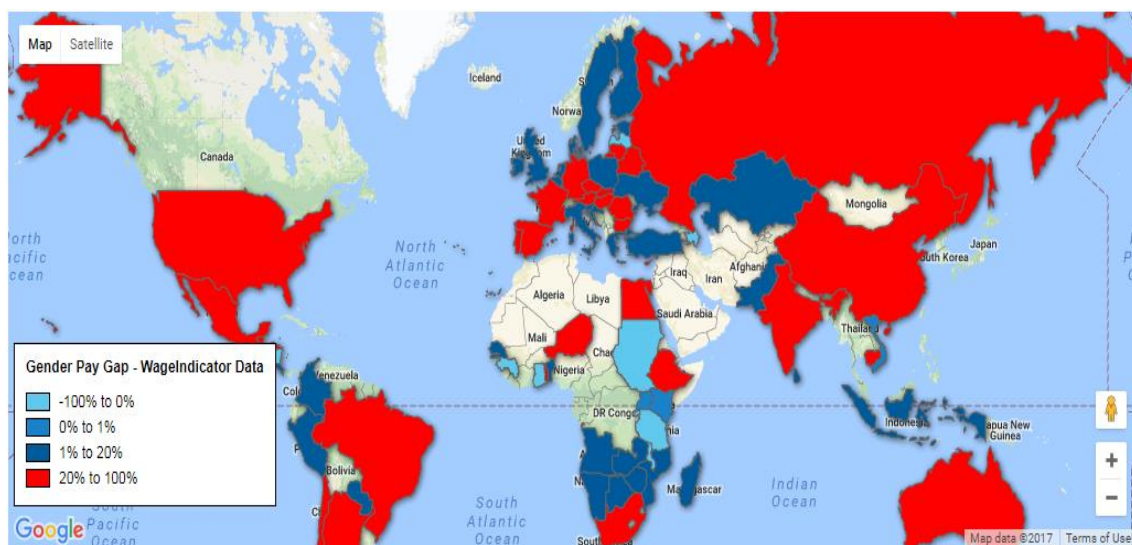
Finally, after two decades, Equal Pay Act of 1963, was signed and acted in year 1963, by President John.F.Kennedy on June 10<sup>th</sup>. After three decades, In India, in the year 1976, the Equal Remuneration Act was also brought into picture, which aimed at bringing parity between women and men, and thus enabling no discrimination on the basis of gender.

Foundation of the same, also helped in more laws to be passed in 1964, which condemned the discrimination based on race, color, religion and sex. There were further win for women aftermath. In 1978, Pregnancy Discrimination Act, made sure to safeguard female employee in her role to continue work. Also in 1991, grant of medical leaves for parents, which was irrespective of gender allowed time away for family duties. Despite of these changes only 58% of women were present in the labor workforce, and pay gap was close to 77 cents, compared to male working dollar.

Change was inevitable and it happened, but damage was deep enough. Deep enough that even after six to seven decades, we still have to work towards the change continuously for 170 years average to come to parity. From history we are now in 21<sup>st</sup> century and data shown further advocates the fact that, we still have much to accomplish.

The comparison of wages, is shown field by field and percentage of males shown in blue and women in red. (Data gathered for United States population).

The chart below, refernced from WageIndicator.org and compares the salaries, Gender Wage Gap around the globe.



Let us state the data from World Economic Forum, representing the statistics which highlight the key sectors of women involvement. With the advancing years, women entered into various domains, professions, which were new to them. Fields such as Technology, Pharmacueticals, Law and Order, Medical, Aerospace saw more women involvement. We come across a stage, where we have women presence spanning over decades and thus giving rise to the debate of equal wages for them.

There are also some low paying professions such as Attendants, Serving Workers, Dining hosts, Cashier, Cokks and Maids, Chilcare workers etc. The comparative wage difference is also shown in the graph below.

## Gender breakdown of top 10 highest-paid jobs

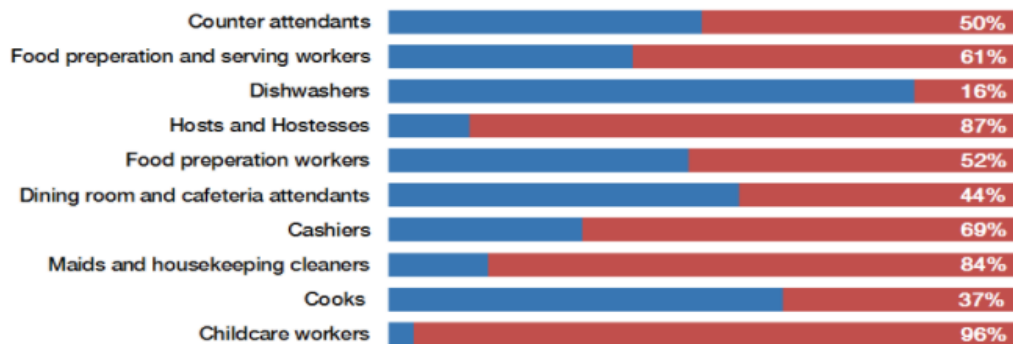
Percentage of male (blue) and female (red) workers in America's highest-paid jobs.



And some of the lower paying jobs data shown below:

## Gender breakdown of top 10 lowest-paid jobs

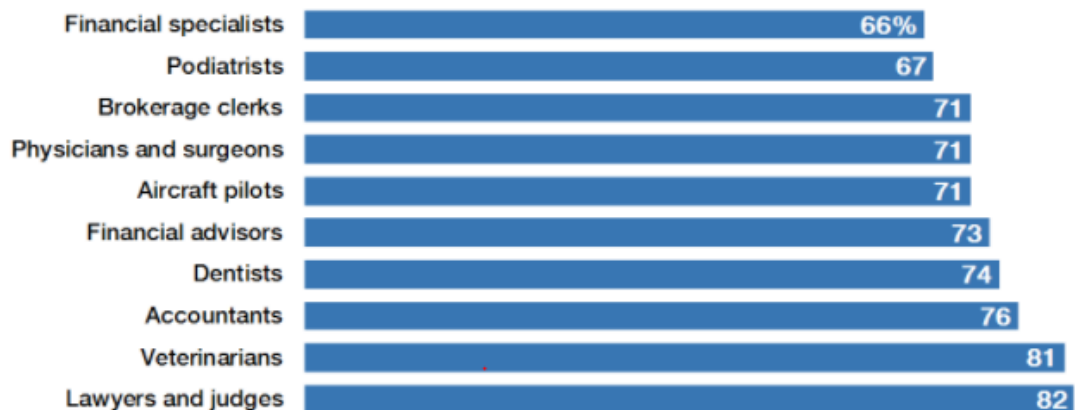
Percentage of male (blue) and female (red) workers in America's lowest-paid jobs.



Also, shown below is the graph, depicting the gender pay gap in some of the highest paying jobs. The data is gathered from the publicly available research from Harvard University, after considering factors of Age, Education and working hours.

## The gender wage gap in some of the highest-paying jobs

After controlling for age, race, hours and education, 2014.





To sum up, the discussion over problem stated above, in order to curb the pay gap, some of the existing scenarios need to be tackled in a different yet effective manner. Women tend to take a back seat once they have children, as it is their natural job to manage family. This task needs to be divided equally now. We are moving towards parental leaves, where both father and mother can take time off to take care of their duties and manage family together. This change will help in better figures than current of 7.3% of employed mothers to 4.9% of fathers'.

Improving the culture and flexible work policies will enable working females to manage their family and career a better way. This change is predestined in jobs that demands long flexible hours. There has to be a significant change in the way work is being rewarded as of now. Provide better feedback, set the expectations from clearly, understand the obstacle women face, use transparency, and focus on increasing the pay equity graph. Evaluate the hiring process, look where we are setting the baseless expectations, and why? Recruit correct skillset, understand the anatomy of both the genders, provide correct set of time offs for both of them. One cannot bear the burden of another. Giving additional task to men will not only fume the feeling of bias, but will also provoke them to be the one who are blamed. Even glass is not full for them, so making sure, we are talking about equality not partiality. Increasing the value of work which is being paid low, as research confirms, women take up low paid job and are stuck there. These job area need better scrutiny, and an encouragement to progress towards better paying targets.

On the other hand, much of the task also needs to be managed from women's part as well. They need to speak up, be more vocal and must have well self-realization of their worth. If they will try to change the world at once, it will be an impossible mountain to climb. So, manage the immediate threat first, change one scenario, speak for oneself, and then move ahead, and World will change on its own.

### **Conclusion:**

As a working female, researching the subject of Gender pay Gap, which is very interesting to me and is equally important for my future, asks me to debate further. I am in the zone for more than half of a decade, and in order to soar to success, it is important to find a solution which will be concrete and might result in a solid base. As an equally capable woman, I demand to be treated equally, expect similar opportunities, equal roles and importance in decision making, drawing policies and coming to terms. No doubt, I believe the laws and amendments are in place for a reason and although there is no denying the fact that discrimination exists, time is changing. As expected, female will continue proving their worth in every field, even playing their role as mother and raising a male child who will appreciate the woman's worth, believe her to be intelligent, is compassionate enough and value the hard work women have put in the well-being of the society.

Let us work together to build a common world, with abundant opportunities for both male and female and pass on the best of our work for future generations.



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