


Chapter 5

Acceleration of Innovation Through Gender Equity: Unleashing Diverse Perspectives for Transformative Growth

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how gender equity acts as a powerful catalyst for innovation by integrating diverse perspectives in research, development, and technological

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advancement. It emphasizes the systemic challenges that hinder women's full participation in innovation ecosystems, such as biased funding structures, workplace inflexibility, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. Drawing on innovation ecosystem theory and intersectionality, the chapter highlights how inclusive policies, mentorship, and education reform are essential to harnessing the untapped potential of women in innovation. Case studies from global corporations and startups demonstrate the economic and social benefits of gender-diverse teams. The chapter concludes with strategic recommendations to build inclusive innovation cultures for long-term equitable growth.

INTRODUCTION

Striving for gender equity in innovation has become an ethical need and an organizational priority in the face of fast-moving global technological and socioeconomic transformations. In the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), which has seen exponential growth in AI, robots, and digital ecosystems, not only is it an issue of equity to have women and gender-diverse people in innovation ecosystems, but also an essential facilitator of equitable and sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic further brought into sharp focus and deepened existing structural inequalities regarding access to digital infrastructure, funding for innovation, and leadership positions and roles for women innovators globally (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

In the history of innovation, women's contributions have systematically been underrepresented despite the pioneering efforts of Ada Lovelace and Marie Curie. Even today's innovation ecosystems, in general, and in STEM, AI, and venture capital, continue to have entrenched gender gaps. These gaps are not equally distributed; they are amplified at intersections of race, caste, geography, and socio-economic rank. In high-income nations, women are excluded from boards and experience discrimination in funding; in low- and middle-income countries, women's informal innovation is unseen as well as unsupported (UN Women, 2020).

While current policy discussions and scholarship recognize the gender-innovation linkages, insufficient clarity exists on the empirical and conceptual levels of how gender equity is being realized in improved innovation performance, what the most entrenched barriers are, and what policy measures are being successfully implemented. In addition to these concerns, the sudden emergence of algorithmic bias and women's exclusion from AI and data governance design processes indicate new equity issues in technological development.

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