

FIP Women in Science and Education

Highlights from the workplace surveillance findings

2025



International
Pharmaceutical
Federation

Colophon

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Executive summary

FIP projections indicate that, by 2030, women will represent 70% (69–72%) of the global pharmacy workforce, which further underscores the growing importance of gender equity in workplaces. Recognising the workplace challenges that women face is a major step toward enabling positive work environments and gender equity.

This report seeks to present the latest workforce findings to inform targeted interventions that foster inclusive professional cultures, support career advancement, and strengthen leadership diversity in pharmacy and pharmaceutical education worldwide. This report also presents evidence-based insights into possible solutions.

While women in science, education (and practice) in pharmacy experience a high degree of personal and professional satisfaction, there are notable systemic and structural challenges that undermine long-term positive workplace sustainability.

Among common workplace issues, such as work-life balance, professional development, leadership, positive work environment and the gender pay gap, women experience greater challenges in achieving work-life balance as well as non-inclusive behaviours and unsafe conditions at work compared with other issues.

It is clear that now is the time to act against these pressing issues. FIP urge all member organisations and stakeholders, including policymakers, professional organisations and employers, to work collaboratively in overcoming these issues and creating positive work environments for all.

1 Background

Gender equity in the global pharmaceutical health workforce is essential for efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes.

Gender equity is a basic requirement for an effective and productive workforce, which is necessary for building resilient health systems, promoting universal health coverage, and achieving sustainable development.^{1,2} Yet, despite comprising 70% of health and care workers worldwide, women remain underrepresented in leadership, holding only around 25% of senior roles, and face an average gender pay gap of approximately 28%.^{2,3} This imbalance limits leadership diversity, hinders the development of equitable policies, and ultimately weakens the overall effectiveness and sustainability of health systems.^{3,4}

The pharmacy profession mirrors these gender imbalances. The FIP 2023 surveillance survey found that women currently accounted for 65% of the global workforce with this proportion projected to further increase by 2030.^{5,6}

Women represent more than 60% of pharmacy school graduates, and in many parts of the world, pharmacy is regarded as a predominantly female profession. Across WHO regions, women constitute 48% of the workforce in the African Region, 75% in the South-East Asia Region, 73% in the European Region, 66% in the Western Pacific Region, 62% in the Americas Region, and 45% in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.⁷ Despite these trends, significant disparities persist. Reports from the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) indicate that women remain underrepresented in senior academic positions, in executive roles within professional associations, and in specialised sectors such as pharmaceutical research and industry leadership.^{8,9}

These challenges are particularly pronounced in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where gender inequalities intersect with resource limitations, restrictive workplace policies, and cultural norms that prioritise caregiving responsibilities over career advancement for women. Women often face conflicts between family responsibilities and the demands of career enhancement, including long working hours, job mobility, and expectations of uninterrupted career progression.^{2,10,11} Persistent issues such as gender pay gaps, limited access to mentorship, underrepresentation in research and academic leadership, and workplace cultures that do not support work-life balance further hinder career growth.^{8,9} These dynamics often lead to reduced retention, diminished morale, and inequitable career trajectories compared to their male counterparts. Workplace environments that fail to promote gender equity not only affect individual career satisfaction but also have far-reaching implications for organisational performance, workforce stability, and patient care outcomes.¹²

These challenges have significant implications for the pharmacy profession. FIP estimates that between 69-72% of the global pharmacy workforce is female by 2030, therefore gender equity in leadership is increasingly critical for the profession's sustainability and effectiveness.⁵ Without deliberate efforts to address inequities, the profession risks underutilising the potential of its largest talent pool.

Recent efforts have increased women's participation in various fields, yet they remain underrepresented across the broader science, technology, and education sectors. In response, FIP launched the [Women in Science and Education \(FIPWiSE\) initiative](#) in 2020 in line with [EquityRx programme](#).^{8,9} This initiative aligns with [FIP Development Goal 10](#) and the [UN Sustainable Development Goal 5](#) on gender equity.¹³ FIPWiSE seeks to break down structural and cultural barriers faced by women in pharmaceutical sciences and education through strategies that promote mentorship, inclusive leadership development, and the creation of supportive professional ecosystems.

Despite progress in ensuring women's participation in leadership or senior roles, full gender equity has yet to be achieved. One effective approach to closing these gaps is the creation of Positive Practice Environments (PPEs). PPEs are defined as healthcare settings that ensure decent working conditions, professional support, and opportunities for growth—all widely recognised as essential for attracting and retaining skilled professionals, improving productivity, and fostering innovation.^{8,12} Core elements of such environments include equal pay for equal work, robust policies supporting equitable work-life balance, institutional mechanisms to prevent discrimination and harassment, structured mentorship programmes, and pathways to leadership and professional recognition.⁸ These lead to improved performance and professional self-worth of health professionals, as well as their ability to remain healthy, motivated and efficient in their working environments.

Establishing PPEs to specifically address the needs and aspirations of women is therefore integral to advancing gender equity and optimising health workforce performance.^{2,8,12} Central to the [FIPWiSE toolkit](#) are five key factors for establishing PPEs for women, drawing on the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)'s Positive Practice Environments campaign, existing literature, and the lived experiences of women professionals worldwide.^{8,12}

Building on this background, FIP conducted the global survey “Breaking down the barriers for women in science and education in pharmacy” to identify factors that commonly affect women in pharmacy and pharmaceutical working environments.

The latest workplace surveillance findings presented in this report inform targeted interventions that foster inclusive professional cultures, support career advancement, and strengthen leadership diversity in pharmacy and pharmaceutical education worldwide.

2 Process and findings

A structured questionnaire was designed and disseminated online through the QuestionPro platform. The survey was anonymised to collect protected characteristics. Participation was voluntary and formal ethics approval was obtained via University College London.

The survey link was shared via email lists and social media platforms to reach the target population of women in science, education and practice in the field of pharmacy.

A total of 414 responses were received with almost half from the European Region (47.1%). responses from other WHO regions included 15.7% from the Western Pacific, 12.8% from the Americas (12.8%), and 12.3% from the African region. Table 1 summarises the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents.

In terms of sector, most respondents reported working in pharmacy practice (67.6%), while nearly one-third were engaged in education (31.2%). A smaller number worked in science (8.9%) or industry (8.5%) (Figure 1).

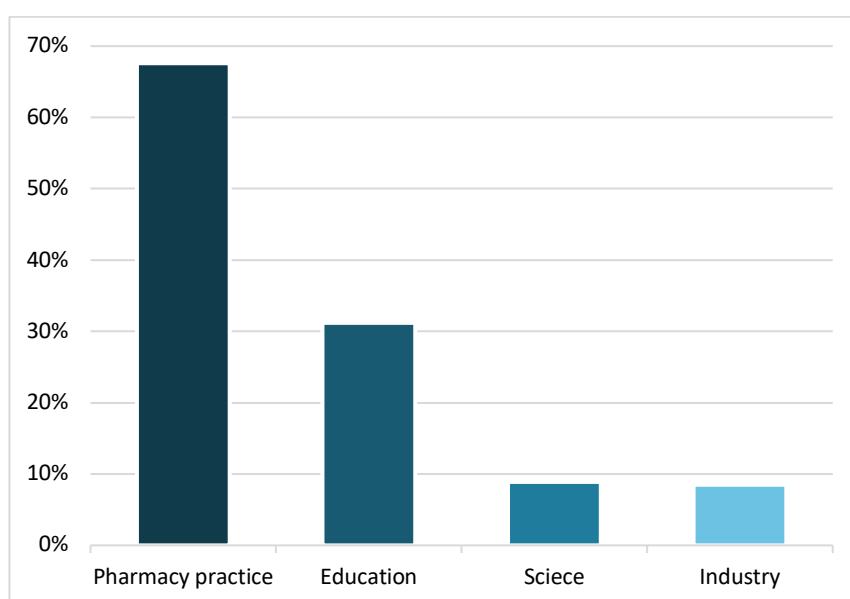


Figure 1: Main sectors of the respondents

The majority of respondents were registered pharmacists (78.5%). Other occupations represented included pharmaceutical scientists (11.8%), academicians (6.3%), pharmacy technicians (1.0%), and other roles such as consultant, manager, executive (2.4%).

More than half of respondents reported late or senior career positions (51.9%). A quarter were mid-career (25.6%), while 22.3% were early career professionals.

Over half of the respondents were married (57.2%) and nearly half reported having dependent children (44.9%), while 36.2% had no children. A smaller proportion had adult but non-dependent children (18.4%), and 5.6% indicated they had plans to have children later in their career.

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Number of responses (%)
Region	
Africa	51 (12.3%)
Americas	53 (12.8%)
European	195 (47.1%)
South East Asia	23 (5.6%)
Eastern Mediterranean	27 (6.5%)
Western Pacific	65 (15.7%)
Main sector	
Pharmacy practice	280 (67.6%)
Science	37 (8.9%)
Industry	35 (8.5%)
Education	129 (31.2%)
Occupation	
Registered pharmacist	325 (78.5%)
Pharmaceutical scientist	49 (11.8%)
Academician	26 (6.3%)
Pharmacy technician	4 (1%)
Other	10 (2.4%)
Career stage	
Early career	93 (22.3%)
Mid-career	106 (25.6%)
Later/Senior career	215 (51.9%)
Marital status	
Single	161 (38.9%)
Married	237 (57.2%)
Children	
I don't have any children	150 (36.2%)
I have a child(ren) who are dependent on me	186 (44.9%)
I plan to have child(ren) later in my career	23 (5.6%)
I have (adult) children but who are no longer dependent on me	76 (18.4%)

Table 2 summarises perceptions of career satisfaction, job satisfaction, and career selection among respondents.

Career satisfaction attributes

Most respondents reported positive feelings about their jobs. Specifically:

- A majority either agreed (40.6%) or strongly agreed (36.0%) that they get a feeling of accomplishment from their work.
- Nearly three-quarters were satisfied with their current job, with 47.8% agreeing and 23.7% strongly agreeing.
- However, dissatisfaction was evident for some. About one in four respondents (24.7%), with 17.9% agreeing and 6.8% strongly agreeing, indicated that the idea of spending the remainder of their working life in a job like their current one is depressing, showing that around one quarter of respondents view their current career path negatively.
- Similarly, about one in six respondents (17.2%), with 12.6% agreeing and 4.6% strongly agreeing, indicated that they often leave work with a bad feeling; however, a majority (66.5%; 42.3% disagree and 24.2% strongly disagree) did not.

Job satisfaction attributes

- 43.7% indicated that they are working in a position they had always wanted,
- A majority (59.2%) felt their current role would help their future career.
- Importantly, 79.5% reported that they were not in their current position because they had no other options, whereas 20.5% admitted they were.

Career selection attributes

- 71.0% stated they had chosen a career they wished for, while 28.7% had not.
- 19.6% reported that there had been parental influence on their career choice, and 4.6% cited influence from their spouse/partner.
- Cultural and societal influence was acknowledged by 16.7% of respondents, while the majority (83.3%) denied such influence.

Table 2. Career and job satisfaction attributes*

Variable					
Career satisfaction	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Feeling accomplished in the job	3 (0.7%)	23 (5.6%)	71 (17.1%)	168 (40.6%)	149 (36.0%)
Feeling satisfied in current job	8 (1.9%)	44 (10.6%)	66 (15.9%)	198 (47.8%)	98 (23.7%)
Depressing to stay in the job	80 (19.3%)	144 (34.8%)	88 (21.3%)	74 (17.9%)	28 (6.8%)
Leaving work with a bad feeling	100 (24.2%)	175 (42.3%)	68 (16.4%)	52 (12.6%)	19 (4.6%)
Job satisfaction	No	Yes			
Job aligned with career aspirations	233 (56.3%)	181 (43.7%)			
Job as a stepping stone for future career development	245 (59.2%)	169 (40.8%)			
Job driven by limited alternatives	329 (79.5%)	85 (20.5%)			
Career selection	No	Yes			
Career based on personal aspiration	119 (28.7%)	294 (71.0%)			
Career influenced by parents	333 (80.4%)	81 (19.6%)			
Career influenced by spouse/partner	395 (95.4%)	19 (4.6%)			
Career shaped by societal or cultural factors	345 (83.3%)	69 (16.7%)			

* abridged text from survey items.

Table 3 highlights respondents' attributes of their working environments across four key domains: gender pay gap, work-life balance, professional development, and positive work environments and leadership.

Gender pay gap[‡]

- The majority (71.8%) believed that men and women are paid equally for equal work in their current workplaces, with the lowest values reported in the AMR region (52.2%).
- In addition, 63.3% indicated that their workplace promotes a culture of equal pay, while 59.1% reported having access to adequate opportunities for continuing education, specialisation, or career development.
- Access to professional development opportunities was also confirmed by 69.1% of respondents.
- However, concerns remain around transparency and fairness: only 37.9% agreed that promotion and payment processes are transparent, and fewer than half (35.9%) believed their workplace has a fair award system.
- In addition, only 46.7% agreed that there are equal values determined at their places of work.

Work-life balance

- Just over half of respondents (52.1%) reported being able to balance their work and family responsibilities, with the lowest values observed in the AFR and EMR regions (47.8% and 40% respectively).
- Around one-third (33.8%) agreed that flexibility in working hours was limited.
- Childcare responsibilities were cited as a challenge to balance with work by 31.6% of respondents, with the greatest burden reported in EUR (36.7%).
- Elderly-care duties were also challenging to balance with work for 20.1% of respondents, with the highest values recorded in the EMR region (25%).
- Overall, 21% agreed that their workplace lacks maternity, paternity, and special leave policies to support adequate work-life balance, with the highest proportion reported in the SEAR region (27.2%).

Professional development

- Family support for professional development and advancement was strong, with 78.4% of respondents reporting sufficient support, and the highest values reported in the EMR region (90%).
- Support from peers and senior colleagues was more mixed as 60.2% overall agreed, but this dropped to 47.8% in the AFR.
- Workload and extended hours limited professional development for 37.1% of respondents, with AFR reporting the highest impact (47.8%).
- Financial constraints were identified by 43.3% as a barrier to professional development, most pronounced in AFR (65.2%).
- Lack of mentorship was reported by 40.2% as a barrier to professional development, with the highest values observed in EMR (50%).

Positive work environments and leadership

- Less than half of respondents (46.7%) reported being able to apply for leadership or senior roles when ready.
- In addition, only 42.9% agreed that sufficient leadership roles were available in their workplace, with the lowest values observed in AMR (26.1%).
- Access to professional development opportunities that prepare for leadership was also reported by less than half of respondents (41.7%).
- Gender disparities persisted as 45.6% agreed that men are more likely to be selected for leadership roles, with the highest agreement in SEAR (59.1%).
- Encouragingly, 67.5% expressed interest in pursuing leadership positions, with AFR reporting the strongest interest (84.8%).
- Peer and senior support for pursuing leadership positions was reported by 46.3%, with lowest in AFR and EMR (34.8% and 30% respectively).
- Overall, 56% agreed that their workplace culture supports women in pursuing leadership roles; however, family obligations remained a barrier for 28.5% of respondents, most pronounced in the WPR region (36.5%).

[‡] AFR: African Region, AMR: Americas Region, EUR: European Region, SEAR: South-east Asia Region, EMR: Eastern Mediterranean Region, WPR: Western Pacific Region.

Table 3. Attributes of working environments*

Variable	AFR	AMR	EUR	SEAR	EMR	WPR	Total
1. Gender pay gap							
Equal pay for equal work	41 (89.1%)	24 (52.2%)	46 (74.1%)	17 (77.2%)	13 (65%)	45 (71.4%)	186 (71.8%)
Access to continuing education and career development resources	19 (41.3%)	32 (69.6%)	38 (61.3%)	20 (90.9%)	14 (70%)	41 (65.1%)	164 (63.3%)
Workplace culture supporting pay equity	30 (65.3%)	23 (50%)	36 (58.1%)	16 (72.7%)	10 (50%)	38 (60.3%)	153 (59.1%)
Availability of professional development resources	29 (63%)	35 (76.1%)	41 (66.1%)	19 (86.3%)	13 (65%)	42 (66.7%)	179 (69.1%)
Limited transparency in promotion and compensation	19 (41.3%)	15 (32.6%)	21 (33.9%)	10 (45.5%)	5 (25%)	28 (44.5%)	98 (37.9%)
Fairness of workplace reward systems	15 (32.6%)	17 (36.9%)	22 (35.5%)	10 (45.4%)	3 (15%)	26 (41.3%)	93 (35.9%)
Equity and value recognition in the workplace	26 (56.6%)	22 (47.8%)	24 (38.8%)	11 (50%)	8 (40%)	30 (47.6%)	121 (46.7%)
2. Work life balance							
Ability to balance work and family commitments	22 (47.8%)	30 (65.2%)	89 (48.1%)	14 (63.6%)	8 (40%)	36 (57.1%)	199 (52.1%)
Limited flexibility with working hours	14 (30.4%)	8 (17.4%)	76 (41%)	7 (31.8%)	8 (40%)	16 (25.3%)	129 (33.8%)
Childcare responsibilities affecting work-life balance	11 (23.9%)	15 (32.6%)	68 (36.7%)	4 (18.1%)	3 (15%)	20 (31.7%)	121 (31.6%)
Elderly-care responsibilities affecting work-life balance	10 (21.8%)	9 (19.5%)	11 (17.7%)	5 (22.7%)	5 (25%)	12 (19.1%)	52 (20.1%)
Insufficient maternity, paternity, and special leave policies	10 (21.7%)	11 (23.9%)	41 (22.2%)	6 (27.2%)	3 (15%)	9 (14.2%)	80 (21%)
3. Professional development							
Support from family for professional development	38 (82.6%)	39 (84.8%)	43 (69.3%)	18 (81.8%)	18 (90%)	47 (74.6%)	203 (78.4%)
Support from peers and seniors for professional development	22 (47.8%)	30 (65.2%)	35 (56.5%)	16 (72.7%)	13 (65%)	40 (63.5%)	156 (60.2%)
Limited support for professional development due to excessive workload or long hours	22 (47.8%)	12 (26.1%)	25 (40.3%)	7 (31.8%)	9 (45%)	21 (33.4%)	96 (37.1%)
Limited support for professional development due to financial constraints	30 (65.2%)	18 (39.1%)	26 (41.9%)	8 (36.4%)	11 (55%)	19 (30.2%)	112 (43.3%)
Limited support for professional development due to lack of workplace mentorship	21 (45.7%)	18 (39.1%)	28 (45.1%)	8 (36.4%)	10 (50%)	19 (30.1%)	104 (40.2%)

Variable	AFR	AMR	EUR	SEAR	EMR	WPR	Total
4. Positive work environments and leadership							
Ability to apply for leadership or senior roles	19 (41.3%)	18 (39.2%)	29 (46.8%)	13 (59.1%)	11 (55%)	31 (49.2%)	121 (46.7%)
Availability of sufficient leadership or senior roles	16 (34.8%)	12 (26.1%)	29 (46.8%)	13 (59%)	10 (50%)	31 (49.2%)	111 (42.9%)
Access to professional development opportunities for leadership preparation	18 (39.1%)	18 (39.1%)	25 (40.4%)	12 (54.5%)	11 (55%)	24 (38.1%)	108 (41.7%)
Perceived gender bias in selection for leadership positions	17 (37%)	21 (45.7%)	29 (46.8%)	13 (59.1%)	10 (50%)	28 (44.4%)	118 (45.6%)
Support from peers and seniors when pursuing leadership roles	16 (34.8%)	25 (54.4%)	27 (43.6%)	12 (54.6%)	6 (30%)	34 (54%)	120 (46.3%)
Interest in pursuing senior or leadership positions	39 (84.8%)	30 (65.3%)	34 (54.8%)	17 (77.2%)	15 (75%)	40 (63.5%)	175 (67.5%)
Workplace culture supporting women in leadership	28 (60.9%)	29 (63.1%)	34 (54.9%)	12 (54.5%)	11 (55%)	31 (49.2%)	145 (56%)
Challenges in applying for promotion or senior roles due to family obligations	12 (26.1%)	10 (21.7%)	20 (32.3%)	5 (22.7%)	4 (20%)	23 (36.5%)	74 (28.5%)

* abridged text from survey items.

According to the survey responses, support for work-life balance (218; 52.7%), support for early leadership (177; 42.8%), mentorship (175; 42.3%) and developing regulations encouraging women's leadership (135; 32.6%) would enhance promotion opportunities for more senior or leadership roles.

The results show that 46.9% of respondents indicated having experienced an unsafe circumstance at work, such as psycho-social risks, threatening behaviour, or violence. Lack of regulations and policies (34; 8.2%), lack of work culture where everyone is valued (74; 17.9%), lack of resources (41; 9.9%), and lack of open communication and functionality (76; 18.4%) have been experienced as unsafe circumstances.

Respondents suggested that enhancement of safer working environments could be supported through regulatory change mandating more positive behaviours (59; 14.3%), better mental health support (55; 13.3%), enhanced workplace recognition of excessive workload (69; 16.7%), greater enforcement of policies to combat gender-based aggression (31; 7.5%) and specific protection from exposure to occupational risks (41; 9.9%).

Qualitative data concerning difficulties faced in working environments were categorised under the following six themes:

1. Work-life balance
2. Professional development
3. Leadership
4. Workforce
5. Positive work environment
6. Payment/salary.

The major difficulties were identified as work-life balance issues (62%). This included lack of time for childcare, older adult care, hobbies/leisure activities, holiday/sick leave, and social and family activities. Other common themes included working environments (31%), such as dictatorial-style leadership or unstable management, lack of support or recognition, poor structures within the workplace, and working hours. Themes such as poor remuneration (9%), workforce shortages (9%), poor access to professional development and developmental activities, such as training and congress support (8%), and leadership (5%), which included commentary about male domination and lack of support (Figure 1).

Conversely, 3% reported being satisfied with their working environment.

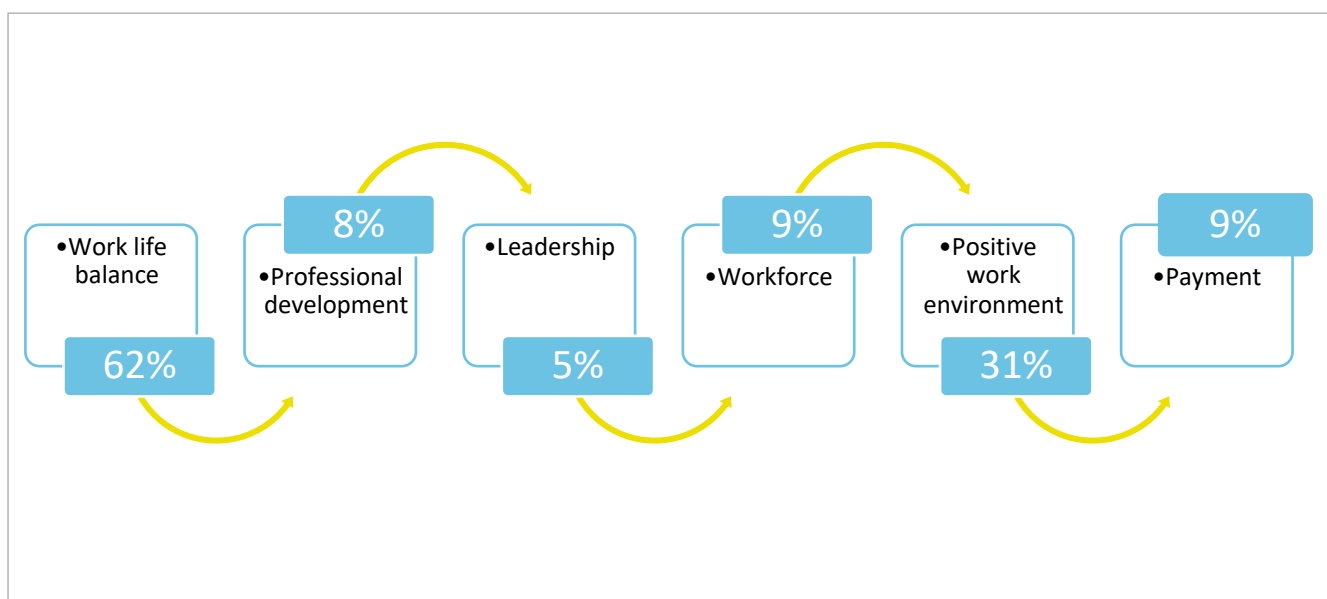


Figure 2: Common themes for the difficulties faced in the working environment

3 Conclusions and the way ahead

These preliminary findings demonstrate that while pharmacy professionals do experience a high degree of personal and professional satisfaction, there are notable systemic and structural challenges that undermine long-term positive workplace sustainability.

The most pressing issues include workplace safety, insufficient work-life balance recognition, inequities in pay and promotion processes, barriers to leadership for women, and gaps in workplace culture and safety. Addressing these areas is essential to fostering a resilient, motivated, and equitable workforce.

Work-life balance within careers emerged as a critical issue, with many citing challenges in balancing professional responsibilities with childcare, eldercare, and personal life. Gaps in maternity, paternity, and leave policies were also highlighted.

Nearly half of the respondents reported experiencing unsafe circumstances such as threatening behaviour or violence. This finding highlights the urgent need for targeted measures and enforcement of policy actions to improve safety and well-being in the workplace.

While most respondents believed in gender equity in pay and professional opportunities, concerns about transparency in promotions, fairness in award systems, and equal value recognition persisted. Access to continuing education and career development was acknowledged by a majority, yet barriers such as workload, financial constraints, and lack of mentorship were common.

Leadership opportunities were often reported as limited, with gender disparities and workplace cultural barriers persisting. However, interest in pursuing leadership roles was high, especially in some regions. Respondents emphasised the importance of mentorship, supportive policies, and family-friendly environments to enable women's leadership pathways.

Respondents identified regulatory changes, mental health support, and measures against gender-based violence as essential to safer working environments.

Open-ended responses reinforced that work-life balance, positive workplace environments, and remuneration were the most frequently reported challenges. These align with existing literature and thus demonstrate that women in the pharmacy profession are not immune to gender challenges.

We recommend the following actions for:

- **Policy makers (including law-makers, and regional or national pharmaceutical regulatory and leadership organisations):** Strengthen terms and conditions of employment to balance work-life balance policies.
- **Professionals in pharmaceutical sciences and pharmacy education:** Foster positive workplace cultures.
- **Employers and managers (e.g., those in academic and research institutions, the pharmaceutical industry and other science and education workplaces):** Ensure adequate staffing and resource allocation
- **Employers and managers (e.g., those in academic and research institutions, the pharmaceutical industry and other science and education workplaces):** Collect regular data on workforce satisfaction, safety, and equity to track improvements.
- **Professionals in pharmaceutical sciences and pharmacy education:** Share good practices across regions to reduce disparities and promote global learning.

FIP member organisations and stakeholders, including policymakers, professional organisations, and employers, can create a more inclusive, supportive, and sustainable professional environment that empowers pharmacy professionals to thrive in their careers.

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