[In Ontario, three decades after pay equity legislation was introduced, the gender pay gap is still wider for marginalized women – a point specifically raised in a 2015 United Nations (UN) report.]

Note: Pay Equity is equal pay for work of equal or comparable value ➔ [If jobs usually done by women are equal or comparable in value to jobs usually done by men, they must be paid the same.]

A new study by York University graduate Roopkiran Kohout and Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies Professor Parbudyal Singh digs deep to discover why this is happening and what can be done about it. The duo interviewed 23 women defined as marginalized (racialized and/or new immigrants/women of colour).

Three themes emerged and, together, they provide a comprehensive, multi-layered description of what is actually transpiring.

Theme 1: Early employment experiences – difficulties getting jobs in their fields

This was felt more strongly with women who were newer immigrants, who felt disadvantaged in terms of Canadian experience. Their feelings of isolation were often intensified in the workplace, where they felt like their prior work and educational experiences were not being sufficiently recognized.

Theme 2: Cultural challenges at work – identity issues overlay employment experiences

Some felt that cultural backgrounds, and sometimes issues with language, contributed to additional barriers ➔ Isolation and unfairness in the workplace often led to feelings of powerlessness.

Theme 3: Inequities in pay – perceptions of unjust pay and a fear to challenge par systems

The women struggled with the idea that men’s work was given a higher value. Many women felt like they were not given as many opportunities to succeed as their male counterparts ➔ structural and organizational barriers.