

Uncovering Factors and Solutions to Gender Inequity in the Workplace

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Abstract. With differences in income, promotion, and opportunity continuing to impede progress toward workplace equality, persistent gender inequality in the workplace remains a major concern. The study examines at the complex interplay of factors that cause gender inequality, from cultural standards to organizational biases. A qualitative methodology is used to assess the data from various workplaces. The survey found significant gender differences in pay, representation in leadership roles, and access to professional development opportunities. Additionally, it shows how biases and cultural norms support the upkeep of these disparities. To address these issues, the research proposes a multifaceted approach that includes changes to the law, initiatives for diversity and inclusion, and tactics for personal empowerment. The study can improve society overall and create a more just workplace by putting these solutions into reality. This research explains the problem of gender inequality in the workplace and offers practical mitigation measures. By promoting more inclusive and egalitarian professional environments, we may foster the circumstances for a more just and progressive society.

Keywords: Gender inequality; diversity; workplace.

1. Introduction

Gender disparity in the workplace continues to be a chronic and depressing problem in today's quickly changing world, where progress toward equality has been accomplished in many areas. It seems invisible in our live, but you observe carefully in workplace, it usually appears in interview, promotion, and even the wage. It is a deep-rooted problem that continues to undermine the vitality of the workplace and impede the overall progress of society. In addition, finance is known to be a very popular and lucrative industry, and how many young people are pursuing in-depth studies in this field to graduate and want to further their education in this industry. However, when you look at the top management and even CEOs in the finance industry it's all white men, maybe a few of other races, but very few women, an underrepresented group. When we dig into this issue, we can notice that there is a gender gap in the ratio of people working in the industry. There are more men than women. About 46% of the employees in the financial sector are women, but only 15% of them are in executive positions (data from IE). Despite the multiple insights and explanations of gender inequality in the workplace that are currently being provided by academics, there are still several research deficiencies and gaps on this issue. There are some limitations in the modeling and perspectives presented in the current research on this issue. So, this paper will delve into the multifaceted causes of gender inequality in the workplace with the aim of revealing the underlying factors that contribute to the persistence of this inequity gap. This study will qualitatively analyze and delve into the factors that perpetuate the inequity gap. Based on the current situation, the causes will be identified through different literature and historical evidence, and finally logical reasoning will be used to come up with sensible and reasonable solutions. By uncovering causes and suggesting actionable solutions, this research not only contributes to academic discussion, but also provides insights that organizations, policymakers, and advocates can leverage to create more inclusive and equitable workplaces. The study is broken up into numerous sections to examine this complex issue in detail. This paper will start by looking at the underlying factors that contribute to gender disparity, including societal norms, institutional biases, and individual views. The discussion of legislative modifications, societal adjustments, and personal empowerment techniques will be followed by a dive into viable remedies.

2. Literature Review

A lot of academic research has been conducted on the phenomenon of gender imbalance in the workplace. Some researchers demonstrated the factors that will influence the ratio imbalance between male and female. Devillard et al (2018) suggested that “their relatively greater responsibility for household chores while holding down a job. In Europe at that time, women spent twice as long on household duties as men [1].” Additionally, Ganiyu et al (2018) proposed the role congruity theory that explains male is view as usually carry some traits, includes confident, controlling, and assertive form of behavior, women on the other hand carry the traits like interpersonally sensitive and nurturing form of behavior. As a result, people form the bias that view female as a group of people that will not manage a team very well [2]. Griffiths et al (2019) found that traits associated with women are generally recognized as more important in leadership, while traits associated with men are considered relatively less important. However, the gender bias still exists in the research, men are more confident, and women are more cooperative [3]. Gender, as a personal trait, brings a lot of negative things to women, for example, Folke et al (2020) after their study found that female supervisors face more serious problems of sexual harassment when dealing with predominantly male subordinates than when dealing with predominantly female subordinates. This may be since male subordinates feel threatened by the leadership position of female supervisors and thus resort to hostile behavior, including sexual harassment [4].

Madsen (2018) indicated that unconscious bias tightly related to the perspective from the employee to the women in the workplace. To fix this invisible negative phenomenon, the manager should be familiar with the specialized knowledge for designing the rules and training the staffs in the company [5]. Moreover, Sims and Carter (2019) said that African American women in senior leadership positions find that their families, schools, and communities play an important role in fostering a positive self-image and leadership aspirations. Therefore, there are many benefits the female leader can provide to the whole company [6]. Chang (2020) also introduced a way to improve the equity of gender, that is, inclusion of new assessment criteria: Develop and use objective and fair assessment criteria to avoid the influence of gender stereotypes on decision-making. For example, performance assessment indicators can be combined with gender-neutral work outcomes and competencies to reduce bias against women [7]. There are significant differences in how men and women deal with things in the workplace, for example, Brooks and Saad (2020) found that women were more cautious on COVID-19 issues and were more concerned about risk and safety. This difference may be since men have a lower perception of risk, causing them to be less concerned about COVID-19 [8].

Overall, throughout all companies, no matter what, diversity in the workplace is crucial. It's not just about the company's reputation, but it also goes a long way towards the future of the organization. Lawford-Smith et al (2020) showed that gender diversity can achieve justice by reducing gender discrimination and combating male-centrism. In addition, gender diversity can improve team and company performance, innovation, professional well-being, and corporate governance [9]. And, in a report that describes several solutions to address the lack of female representation, Thomas et al (2021) suggest that, first, companies need to increase the representation of women in the workplace and reduce the number of "Onlys" (people who are the only ones in terms of gender, race or ethnicity). Second, companies should provide networking opportunities so that women can connect across teams. In addition, whenever possible, managers should place women in teams of two or three. These measures can help improve women's experience at work [10,11].

3. Phenomenon Description

3.1. Employment Rate

In ancient times, male was responsible for going out to work, like hunting and farming, while female was expected to manage household affairs based on the social norms. And in modern times, female gradually go out to work as well. However, there is a huge gap between the employment of

female and male. “Female participation at 61.4 percent and male participation at 90.6 percent (data from International Labour Organization). After introducing the data, the subsequent chapters of this article will delve into a detailed analysis of the disparity of genders on employment.

3.2. Executive Ratio

Furthermore, nowadays there are about 350 million companies in the world, these companies made a lot of great entrepreneurs and leaders. However, there are less women that hold the position of leader in a company. According to Zippia, “Women represent 58.4% of the US workforce as of September 2022 but only held 31.5% of senior leadership positions.” Compared to men, they got 68.7% of senior leadership positions (data from Zippia.com). Using the data sets we have at our disposal; I will explore the gender differences cause the gender ratio on the position of executive in depth.

3.3. Wage Gap

Eventually, the wage gap between male and female is an elaborate and persistent problem happened globally. It refers to male and female get the disparity on earning while they are playing similar roles in a company. There is a data can be supported for the observation, “women, on average, were paid 20.3% less than men in 2019. By 2022, that gap widened to 22.2% (data from Elise Gould’ Blog).” The data analysis section will explore women get less wages compared to men and impact on solving underrepresented group is treated not well from the company.

4. Analysis on the Problem

4.1. Employment Rate

A historical perspective reveals traditional societal norms and gender roles. Universally, man went out for hunting, farming, things like working during antiquity. In turn, women stayed at home for domestic responsibilities. This is since men are viewing as strong, responsible, and confident, while women are viewing as tender, delicate, weak. These play a key role in terms of perceptions of their participation in the labor force. Regularly, men would like to seek jobs and participate on it, less women would find a formal job in the society. On account, women who choose to focus on their careers rather than traditional roles may face social stigma or criticism. This invisible pressure would push them to give up the opportunity to seek a job or prevent them to work in certain professions that are considered "unsuitable" for their gender. That is unconscious bias. Moreover, from the perspective of reality, women must make balance between life and work. Since the social norms often place the burden of care on women, and lead to women choosing to work part-time or leaving the workplace. Ultimately, especially in China, women always have maternity leave which they would get salary on leave. As a result, the company would make the decision of reduction in the number of women recruited.

4.2. Executive Ratio

Even though women today have fewer problems with employment than they once did, women still face many challenges like promotion in the workplace. One of the major aspects is the existence of barrier that hinder the advancement to executive position of women. These barriers might manifest in several ways, such as promotion and hiring, people usually have unconscious biases for women, so they got less opportunities on mentorship and sponsorship. This phenomenon is called “Glass Ceiling”, which is a very complex and influenced by varied factors. Same to the reason from the session 4.1, women get less chance to be promoted might be impacted by the unconscious bias, which refers to male are more preferred than female in both hiring, and promotion decisions based on the deep-seated societal beliefs and stereotypes. Furthermore, lack of role model is crucial for women to determine their own career trajectories and overall advancement. Inspiration and motivation may be found in role models. If there are no representations in executive for women, they may limit their

own aspiration and assume that such positions are unattainable for them. It can also lead to women being less confident about pursuing high positions along their career path, which can lead them to forgo promotion opportunities for themselves. Also, over time, the lack of role models has a cumulative effect of fewer women advancing to leadership positions, perpetuating the cycle of underrepresentation.

4.3. Wage Gap

The wage disparity gap refers to male and female get different earnings while they are doing a similar work, which typically the female receives less wage than the male. And this phenomenon is influenced by multiple factors. First is the occupational segregation, which is referring that industries are segregated by gender. For example, women often concentrated in fields that traditionally pay less, like nursing and education. “74.3% of teachers are women and 25.7% of teachers are men. (Data from Zippia)” However, the fields of STEM and finance are dominated by male. There are about 72% male in the industry of STEM, while only 28% female working in the STEM industry (data from AAUW). Obviously, the salary in the industry of STEM higher than the nursing and education. As mentioned above, women usually must make a balance between work and life, which is a huge challenge for women regarding time management. There is a factor called “Motherhood Penalty”, which is women who will become a mother may face the reduced chance for career advancement due to perceived family responsibilities. When a woman has to take on a lot of family responsibilities, she has to choose between work and life. So, the woman may not be able to devote much time and energy to her work, which means that she may not be promoted to a high position, because being a high-ranking member of a company requires responsibility and a lot of energy and time to lead a whole company. Finally, because many companies state that employees cannot know the salaries of other employees. So even though women get their paychecks, they don't know that their paychecks aren't the same as their coworkers' paychecks. As a result, the workplace is usually discriminating against women by stealth.

5. Conclusion

In summary, there is a huge difference in the way men and women are treated in the workplace, not only in terms of the employment rate between men and women, but also in terms of the gender ratio in the top management and the wage gap, which are all discriminatory and oppressive to women as a group. Society should reflect on the results of this series of factors, both from a historical and a modern perspective. And the government or companies should pay attention to this phenomenon and problem. First, the government is suggested to enforce equal pay law. Strengthening and enforcing equal pay laws will be beneficial to both women and other minorities in the workplace, reducing discrimination against women in the workplace and allowing women to receive the wages they deserve. And governments should support mothers' work-life balance with paid parental leave, flexible working hours and affordable childcare options. This will reduce the "punishment" of motherhood and encourage more women to enter the workforce.

In response to the fact that there are more male executives than female executives in the workplace, the Government could encourage leadership diversity by setting targets or quotas for women in executive and leadership positions in government agencies and government-contracted private enterprises. As the government pays for action, of course no business can afford to slack off. Companies can conduct pay equity audits, which are regular reviews of payroll data, to identify and correct wage discrepancies and ensure that every employee is being paid fairly. Additionally, companies can implement more flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting and job-sharing, to meet women's diverse work and life needs and to retain exceptional female employees. Finally, companies can form a diversity hiring panel whose members are trained in this area of diversity, which ensures that diversity is represented on hiring and promotion panels, minimizing bias and creating a more inclusive selection process.

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