

Gender Discrimination Against Women in Chinese Workplace

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Abstract. This study looks at the persistent issue of gender discrimination in the workplace in China, focusing on the barriers that women encounter because of societal and cultural norms that disadvantage them in both the public and private spheres. The study focuses on the effects of gender prejudice on women's mental health and professional advancement, specifically in the recruiting and promotion procedures. A comprehensive survey disseminated via well-known social media platforms and structured interviews with women who have encountered or observed gender prejudice were both components of the mixed-method technique used. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through the questionnaire, which examined workplace culture, particular cases of discrimination, and the effects on mental health and job satisfaction. According to research, discriminatory behaviors that are made worse by cultural norms and traditional gender roles not only prevent women from advancing in their careers but also significantly worsen their mental health. The study suggests an integrative approach to solve these problems, which includes strengthening workplace regulations, raising awareness, and setting up support networks to promote gender equality. Such actions are necessary to establish a fair workplace that benefits employers and employees alike, which will ultimately boost organizational results.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, workplace equality, mental health, maternity leave, Chinese employment.

1. Introduction

If a female employee is pregnant, she is entitled to 98 days of maternity leave, 15 of which are paid due to the national law. Furthermore, companies must pay a female employee at least three months' salary during her maternity leave. The fact that the company is bound by the law should be a good thing because it gives better rights to women, however, sending out these basic salaries causes financial losses to the company. Besides, the three months of maternity leave cause vacancies that also affect the company. If the management of a company is left vacant for three months due to maternity leave it will have a serious impact on the company. To minimize these losses, many companies reduce the basic salary of female employees. Some companies even raise the interview requirements for female employees compared to male employees in the same position. Many married women delay their childbirth plans because of the significant impact of pregnancy on their careers. Discrimination against women in China's employment process is also evident in civil service hiring, which hurts society. According to China power 2020, about 27% of civil service positions prefer to hire men, while only 8% of positions favor women [1]. The government prefers men in certain civil service positions, especially in gender-restricted positions, where the preference for men is about three times that of women. The Inland Revenue Department and the Maritime Administration, which are two administrative departments that ensure the proper functioning of society, have 44.2% and 25.86% of positions that favor the recruitment of men, respectively [2]. The impact of this apparent difference on women who want to apply for the civil service is negative. First, the competition to apply for the civil service becomes fierce. Furthermore, the government represents the attitude of the state to a certain extent. Therefore, unequal hiring can bring about a large amount of discrimination against women which is not beneficial to the development of gender equality [3]. The individual should wonder what caused this situation. The paper will demonstrate an examination of how male and female employees in similar occupations are treated differently, underscoring the ongoing discrimination against women in the workplace. This inquiry inevitably brings up several crucial queries: What fundamental reasons exist for this gender bias? What effect does discrimination have

on the impacted people's well-being? How can these effects be identified and measured? Most importantly, what steps may be taken to solve these persistent inequalities effectively?

2. Social Background Triggering Workplace Discrimination

In recent years, it has become clear that the social circumstances in China's big cities have an impact on women. When individuals considering the expensive real estate prices and the rising cost of living, particularly in Beijing, made dual-employee families a common phenomenon. However, women are disproportionately burdened with childrearing and childbirth due to cultural expectations. There is a great deal of psychological and occupational stress caused by the simultaneous expectations placed on women to perform well in both their personal and professional lives [4]. Bella Wang is a Chinese woman who is experiencing serious difficulties in the workplace. Bella was excited about her new job, but her excitement was muted by fear that she may be fired because she was pregnant--a reasonable concern considering that a pregnant coworker had just been fired. Eventually, Bella signed a special contract to secure her employment, highlighting the persistent workplace discrimination, especially against married women of childbearing age who often face decisions between career and family. In addition, the story mentions that even when Bella Wang reported her employer's unfair behavior to the police, it didn't seem to make much of a difference. While gender equality is guaranteed in law by Chinese regulations, in fact, they often fall short, especially when it comes to marriage and family. For instance, traditional practices frequently result in real estate being registered under men's names, limiting women's access to property rights upon divorce, even concerning legal requirements for equal property rights. Furthermore, the increasing number of highly educated women choosing to become "full-time mothers" by leaving job opportunities to take care of their family not only results in a stop to their career aspirations but also reinforces gender stereotypes in societal gender stereotypes. The return to traditional gender roles and the promotion of family-centered roles in the Xi Jinping era have made it difficult for women to strike a balance between work and family, limiting their opportunities to pursue professional development [4].

Understanding the immediate effects in the workplace compared to the larger cultural influences makes it clear that these discriminatory behaviors have a significant impact on the career and mental health of educated women. Well-educated women experience severe gender discrimination in the workplace, which not only manifests in recruiting and promotion processes but also has a major negative impact on their career advancement and mental health. According to the survey, 22% of women, approximately 8% more than the percentage of males, reported experiencing substantial gender discrimination throughout the hiring process. In contrast, 9% more men than women--27% of males--think that there is little to no gender discrimination in the workplace. Public mental health has gradually become an important, significant public health concern. Currently, China's female labor force participation rate is 61.5%, ranking first globally. In addition, over 90% of working women are involved in family health management decision-making. However, in the previous year, over 80% of working-age women reported struggling with the challenges of anxiety and depression in the past year [2]. Numerous factors contribute to this ongoing stress, including having strained relationships with superiors, not receiving recognition for working hard, and experiencing a sense of discrimination at work. The story of Yue Wang, for instance, illustrates the consequences of this stress. Despite her attempts to use internet therapy to deal with her issues and work-related stress, she discovered that these programs varied in quality and sometimes lacked practical answers. This reflects deeper problems with mental health services, such as low quality of care, lack of funding, and public ignorance of mental health issues [5]. To make matters worse, among the injustices experienced by women in the workplace is unequal treatment. Research indicates that women earn 77% of men's salaries on average, and experience a significantly greater rate of discrimination based on their gender during the promotion process. In addition to constraints on income and advancement prospects, this uneven treatment is also obvious in limitations on the type of employment and working conditions. Women are severely impacted by gender discrimination and unequal treatment in the workplace,

which not only limits their ability to advance in their careers but also negatively affects their mental health. With no other support system and an unregulated sector, many women are forced to deal with these demands on their own. This is due to the lack of effective psychological treatment. This issue must be handled by strengthening legal frameworks, increasing public awareness, and expanding available resources [5].

3. Severe Situations for Gender Equality in China

In China, individuals should be more aware of the unfair treatment than in other Western countries. They need to do something to handle this unequal situation. Below is what I plan to do that try to solve this problem. A detailed overview of the methods employed to examine gender discrimination in the workplace will be provided, with a particular emphasis on how social and cultural norms shape gender roles in Chinese professional contexts. This section will cover how a questionnaire was created and distributed, as well as how interviews were strategically conducted to collect the qualitative and quantitative data needed for a thorough analysis. The questionnaire will start with the question of basic information about the individual, their gender, their age, their job position, and the years they worked [6]. Then there will be several parts, which are the general perception of workplace culture, specific instances of discrimination, their satisfaction with their job, and personal impact. The survey instrument will be crucial in gathering diverse feedback on individual encounters with gender discrimination, views on gender norms, and the impact of corporate culture on gender parity. It will include a range of questions, from open-ended ones meant to elicit in-depth personal histories and opinions on the subject to closed-ended questions designed to gauge the frequency and severity of incidents of prejudice. This combination of question types will facilitate the collection of comprehensive data and enable statistical analysis to measure patterns and trends. To begin with, the general perception part, my example question will be "How frequently do you feel that your opinions are valued as much as your male colleagues in meetings and discussions?" To determine whether there is an underlying bias in the way that contributions are viewed and appreciated differently across genders, it is important to examine the feeling of equality in professional visibility and voice, which is indirectly probed by this question. In the past year, how often have you considered leaving your job due to workplace environment or culture?" This question indirectly addresses the impact of the work environment on retention, which can be influenced by discriminatory practices or a lack of support, reflecting on overall job satisfaction and workplace loyalty. Then come to the second part, the specific discrimination instances [7]. The question that will be raised would be-Have you ever felt that you have been passed over for a promotion or a significant project because of your gender? (Yes/No). This is a direct question targeting one of the most palpable kinds of workplace discrimination. It asks the respondents if they have ever found gender to be a factor in their not getting promoted or assigned projects. This will serve to discover any possible biases in avenues for advancement that may indicate that meritocracy is compromised by gender perceptions. Policies you might feel are biased towards one gender rather than the other at work? This is a question that will probe for any organization's policy which may unconsciously be biased towards one gender. This may be about maternity or paternity leave, dress code, or even ways of performance evaluation. Knowing their impact assists in judging their equity and inclusiveness, providing insights into how the design and implementation of policies may lead to systemic gender biases. The third part- is their satisfaction with their work. There will be a simple question, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your current workplace environment?" This is the overall perception question of satisfaction feelings from employees in the workplace. By asking about satisfaction, one will be able to know the general work atmosphere, such as feelings of fulfilling work, work/life balance, perceived respect and fairness of treatment at work, and the general culture of the organization. It is a general diagnostic tool that assists in identifying strong areas and those areas needing improvement. It may also be used as a baseline against which changes over time can be tracked to see how various interventions or changes within the workplace affect employee satisfaction. Satisfaction of employees is important in

understanding that the satisfied workforce is usually more productive, highly engaged, and more loyal, therefore impacting organizational success and the well-being of the employees. Then the last part of the questionnaire will be personal impact. How has experiencing or witnessing gender discrimination in your workplace affected your mental and emotional states? This open-ended question is of critical note because the women could express, in their own words, the personal impacts of discrimination in the workplace to deepen an understanding of the emotional and psychological toll such experiences might have. Educated women, who might have greater expectations of receiving equal treatment because of their qualifications and are more aware of their rights, may outline aspects related to workplace dynamics. The nature of the question would thus be captured, in more detail, how gender discrimination hits morale, job satisfaction, and overall mental health—often masked by other more overt forms of discrimination. Gathering personal testimonies underlines not only the emotional and mental effects of such discrimination but also serves to empower the argument for specific interventions and policy changes in these settings. A question is to be expected to bring into view the invisible emotional costs of being a woman in a potentially biased working environment; this will allow a deeper conversation about workplace equality and mental health support. The questionnaire will be distributed via popular social media channels, such as Tencent and TikTok, to which users can fill in their answers using a QR code. This forward-thinking method not only enables ease of distribution but also appeals to a tech-savvy demographic that comprises a significant chunk of the workforce in urban areas. An incentive will also be given to all respondents in the manner of being able to join a raffle draw after they have answered the questionnaire; this would make the entire data collection process more game-oriented and increase the response rate. The research methodology also focuses on structured interviews with chosen participants who have faced or have witnessed incidents of gender discrimination. These interviews will be designed to get more detailed information on complex dynamics and personal impacts that perhaps cannot be elicited by using questionnaires alone. In this respect, neutrality is utmost in such an interview, and the questions set must be open to allow for detailed responses without leading the participant. It is by paying attention to non-verbal cues, and inconsistencies in responses indicative of discomfort or reluctance to discuss sensitive issues, that may provide further insight into the pervasive nature of gender bias [8].

4. Suggestions

4.1. Media and Content Involvement for Gender Equality

A writer will be hired, especially for their ability to create engaging writing—and will be entrusted with producing educational articles that emphasize the advantages of fair workplace policies. These articles will explore the economic benefits of gender equality and how it improves firm performance and reputation in the marketplace, in addition to discussing the moral and ethical justifications for such actions. The organization can reach a large audience and demonstrate its dedication to gender equality by routinely posting these insights on popular platforms like WeChat. This will also draw in potential workers who place a high value on corporate social responsibility. Reporters, on their part, will be charged the highlight actual examples of where the company is doing well in implementing its gender equality initiatives. This could include stories within the company where employees who benefited from proper maternity leave policies, as well as equal pay, are interviewed. Such stories can provide the most poignant testimony to the growth in employees' morale and job satisfaction. It also offers seminars and workshops of its own that are exemplary and that reporters will mention, further educating the employees and stakeholders about the eradication of discrimination in the workplace. This thoughtful use of content and media outreach accomplishes the following objectives: it changes public perception, establishing the company as a leader in ethical business practices; it educates the internal workforce, empowering them to advocate for gender equality both inside and outside the company; and it creates a narrative that may inspire other businesses to follow suit, potentially leading to improvements in the way gender equality is approached across the industry.

4.2. Ethical Data Collection Practices

For the conduct of both the questionnaire and interviews, it would be important to ensure that all data collection is carried out within the ethical bounds of research. It involves informed consent for all participants, assurance of anonymity, and information to participants on the use of data. Employers and HR specialists can derive significant advantages from implementing fair and equitable workplace policies, as they can cultivate a good company culture, increase employee happiness, and create a more productive work environment. To recruit top talent and lower turnover rates, firms may greatly enhance their reputation as an employer of choice by implementing fair maternity leave policies and providing fair remuneration. Additionally, these methods boost employee engagement and loyalty, which are closely related to higher profitability and productivity. Human resources specialists are essential to the implementation of these policies because they may simplify recruiting and retention tactics, increasing the organization's competitiveness and lowering total expenses associated with hiring and training new employees.

4.3. Building in Place Flexible Work Schedules

To mitigate the financial consequences of maternity leave, which can be substantial, organizations want to contemplate implementing flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or part-time employment and engaging temporary personnel to cover employees' leave. By doing this, continuity and productivity may be preserved without placing an excessive burden on the remaining workers. Furthermore, purchasing all-inclusive insurance policies that partially reimburse maternity expenses might lessen the financial strain on the business. Continually training and developing staff to enable them to effectively manage a variety of responsibilities is another smart move that will help the business adjust to absences without losing steam. Furthermore, encouraging an inclusive and diverse workplace culture can have wider organizational advantages, such as improved problem-solving skills and increased creativity. Fair and forward-thinking businesses are more likely to draw diverse personnel, which offers a variety of viewpoints and abilities necessary for creativity and innovation.

4.4. Promoting a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace Culture

In the end, businesses that aggressively fight workplace discrimination through open policies and continual training not only comply with the law but also build a more resilient, cohesive workforce that is more able to meet the demands of a global economy. Implementing these changes will ultimately benefit every employee in the organization, so all levels of management must be dedicated to creating an environment that appreciates and encourages equality.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the urgent problem of gender discrimination in the workplace in China, with a focus on how it impacts women balancing expectations for their careers and families in a culture that is shaped by traditional roles. The study illustrates how these biases negatively impact women's professional advancement and mental health by looking at differences in recruiting methods, promotion procedures, and the effects of workplace policies. This study is important because it highlights the systemic issues that continue to exist despite legislative protections, emphasizing the necessity of taking concrete steps to advance workplace equality. Although the results highlight the significance of equitable policies and inclusive workplace environments, more investigation is required to evaluate the long-term efficacy of reforms that have been put into place and to look at other approaches to dealing with ingrained social norms. By eliminating these differences, companies and individuals alike will gain through a fairer and encouraging workplace for Chinese women.

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