

The Study of the Gender Wage Gap

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Abstract. The gender wage gap is a prevalent phenomenon in the world, which exuberates inequality and discrimination. This article is a qualitative study that mainly discusses the gender wage gap by analyzing the causes of some prevention to alleviate the gender wage gap. The purpose of this article is to figure out the influencing factors of the gender wage gap and carry out some possible preventions of the gender wage gap getting bigger. According to previous researches, gender discrimination can be roughly defined as the basis of the gender wage gap, and the social background of patriarchy is the other original factor that leads to the gender wage gap. In other words, the gender wage gap is the microcosm of gender discrimination and it implies the present social problems.

Keywords: gender discrimination, gender inequality, wage gap.

1. Introduction

The concept of the gender wage gap has been controversial for a period of time. The gender wage gap refers to the difference in wages between men and women who do the same work, but men are paid more than women. It is known as the basic form of gender discrimination in the market. In many ways, female workers are still very different from male workers, and women are still in the same league. To the disadvantage, this is reflected in the fact that women's wages are still generally lower. But the good news is that efforts are being made to reduce the gap step by step these years. However, the gap definitely cannot be eliminated in such a short period of time. People who live in the new era should continuously struggle with this problem. The main research purpose was to find out why the gender wage gap existed, also, to analyse the factors that cause and influence the gender wage gap, and finally to figure out the methods on how to prevent the gap from getting bigger and how to try our best to eliminate the gap. It is well-known that the theme of the 21st century is to advocate gender equality. However, in this context of the era, women are still facing a huge amount of gender discrimination in all aspects. Almost everyone thinks that women are inferior to men in every way. Women are poor at maths, and technical science so they cannot pursue careers that require a logical mind. Women are too sensitive and vulnerable, which makes them unfit for many positions. There are even some outrageous and ridiculous ideas such as women are supposed to serve men, the only task of women is to carry on the family line, the whole world should be dominated by male power, while women are only auxiliaries and accessories. And this discrimination is certainly the main reason why the gender wage gap was formed. People have been living in a patriarchal world since ancient times. The accumulation of these thousands of years cannot be completely cleared in a decade or two. Many old thoughts cannot be removed easily either: Women wearing short halter skirts are said to be indecent, and women who do not want to marry and have children are said to be disobedient. The whole society is still unable to get rid of misogyny. Oppositely, it is telling women to act like “women” all the time. Plenty of discipline, objectification and rules are propelled to women. The gender wage gap can explain this phenomenon well since it is the microcosm of the patriarchal society. Despite the seemingly fair competition in the labor market, women are also subjected to unequal treatment. It's not difficult to see that we need to spend a long time and huge efforts fighting for equal rights in society.

2. Literature Review

According to previous researches, there are serious gender wage gap in China, female workers are in a relatively disadvantageous position in the market right now. The fulfillment of fair and reasonable wage treatment of men and women is not only conducive to improving the operation efficiency of enterprises and institutions but also conducive to promoting the equality of social status of men and women and the sustainability of economic development. Despite the increasing educational attainment of women and the widespread promotion of gender equality by governments, gender discrimination in the labor market remains widespread worldwide [1]. Early scholars believed that gender productivity differences caused by differences in individual characteristics (such as education level, work experience, skill level, etc.) were the main reasons for the gender wage gap. Gender difference, gender inequality and the gender wage gap in the labor market are major problems faced by many countries and regions in economic development, and the differences are reflected in many aspects such as labor participation, employment distribution and wage level. The causes of gender differences include discrimination, social gender norms and gender division of labor, as well as the influence of old ideas and institutions and the lack of corresponding social policies or government intervention [2]. With the rapid growth of the global economy, narrowing the gender wage gap and establishing a more equitable and effective labor market will have more far-reaching significance, which will help improve women's income, employment quality and labor-forced participation. The wage difference between men and women is mainly caused by differences in the industry and the multifaceted discrimination against women [1]. First, under the same conditions, employers give women lower-wage jobs, which can be regarded as discrimination; Second, women get fewer promotion opportunities, resulting in lower wages than men. Therefore, strengthening the supervision of labor law enforcement and creating equal opportunities to eliminate the wage gap between men and women in the same industry is an important way to narrow the wage gap between the two. In addition, actively cultivating the labor market and reducing institutional barriers to industry entry is also a way to eliminate the differences in the distribution of women and men in the industry.

3. Influencing Factors of the Gender Wage Gap

3.1. Marriage and Fertility

Marriage is one of the biggest influencing factors of the gender wage gap. If a woman gets married, then her housework time will increase dramatically. She has to do the laundry, do the table and dishes, cook meals, sweep the floor and so on. These tedious chores will undoubtedly become women's duties after marriage, which greatly increases women's housework time. Long housework hours and tasks may cause women to arrive late for work and leave early. The data shows that married women in the United States spend 1.7 times more time on housework than married men, and the figure for China is 1.83 times [3]. And that is only the situation for women who don't have a baby. Suppose a woman has a baby, she would definitely spend more time caring for the baby. She may have to prepare breakfast and dinner for both her husband and her baby. Besides, she needs to feed the baby, put the baby to sleep, and keep the baby safe all the time...

Fertility problems are extremely complex. The time of childbearing, number of births, and economic support for childbearing can all affect a woman's wage growth. For the time of childbearing, the best age for women to give birth to a child is 22-29, but it's also the best age stage for a woman to improve and develop her undertaking. What if a woman becomes pregnant during this age stage? [4] Probably most of them would give up the opportunity to promote her work, and they give birth to a baby instead. In other words, whenever a woman has a child, it is certain to have a greater or lesser impact on her career development, which also causes their salary level to stay flat or even go backward. The research suggests that delaying childbearing can help improve women's labor market income. Every year of delaying childbearing will increase women's wage rate by 3% and lifetime labor income by 9% [5]. Especially for women with high human capital levels, such as women with

higher education, the income growth effect of delaying childbearing is more obvious. And that's how the time of childbearing influenced women's wages. Apparently, the bigger the number of births, the more a woman's wage level would be influenced. It's worth saying that the economic support for childbearing is also a factor that could also have an impact on women's wage growth. As we all know, raising children takes a lot of money. For both low and high-income women, child support can take up nearly half of their salary. Does the government care about these families which have economic problems? And how they can overcome a hard time without the government's economic support? It can be seen that economic support is also an indispensable part of the fertility problems. Hence, fertility is one of the influencing factors of the gender wage gap. However, perhaps someone may ask: What about her husband? Why almost all the housework is given to women? Then it comes to the next influencing factors.

3.2. Stereotypes

Until today, people still have the traditional thoughts that the safest life for a woman is to get married early and have children, and live a life of caring for her husband and raising her children. What her husband should do is to work to support the family. Therefore, "men in charge of earning money, running the outside part; while women in charge of caring for home, running the inside part" has led to women being looked down upon and not valued in the workplace. Another stereotype is that women are not good at math, computers, or science. Only men are good at logical minds so they are better suited to certain positions. As a result, women's strong abilities and talents are almost completely ignored and they are not paid equally, which causes the gender wage gap. Moreover, many people would say that compared with men, women have more gentle personalities, they are always kind and friendly, which do not fit the position of head leaders or managers. Not only that but because women are labeled as consistently emotional, they will not be qualified for many positions that require leadership and management. However, it is leadership and management jobs that are paid more than other jobs, which has led to the gender wage gap becoming wider.

3.3. Differences in Educational Levels and Professions

The gender wage gap is largely related to career development opportunities, inadequate education and skills training, and expectations about women's family roles. Because of stereotypes and old thoughts, plenty of parents would like to invest more in the education of boys than that of girls. The inequality of educational levels during childhood leads to different knowledge reserves. Women often need more time to take care of their families, which results in them not being able to participate in job-like activities such as organizing meetings, networking and social events, which are all skills necessary to get promoted. This leads to that women are far less competitive than men in the workplace. In addition, male graduates always dominate in high-tech and engineering fields, while female students are more likely to work in social sciences and liberal arts fields. Men also have easier access to support from mentors and colleagues, as well as more opportunities for development, which helps them succeed in their careers [6]. What's more, the hypothesis that women may not be paid equally for taking riskier jobs has been hinted at in much of the previous literature on gender differences in wage differentials related to compensation for workplace injuries [7]. Therefore, the differences in profession may also generate a gender wage gap.

3.4. Social Capital

In today's society, women's rights and interests are still far less than men's, which makes women's lower social capital. This leaves women with less autonomy and decision-making power when choosing a job. In other words, women don't have much rights to choose a job for themselves. Compared with men, women always have a "break" when forming a complete social chain. Women's access to resources, access to resources, and the ability to mobilize resources at the social level are weaker than men's. In addition, entrepreneurs have access to financial resources from their contacts, but the findings show that there are also gender differences in access to and request for financial

resources, with men often more likely to access powerful resources from partners close to them [8]. As a result, they are more likely to be assigned to lower-paying jobs, which widens the gender wage gap.

4. Economic Outcomes of the Gender Wage Gap

4.1. Discourage Women from Working

Talking and thinking from the female perspective, if a woman finds that she receives less wage than her male colleagues who do the same work as her for a long time. She probably can do nothing except be disappointed and angry. The strongly terrible feelings of inequality could happen to her, and her enthusiasm towards work is likely to reduce. The unequal treatment causes female workers to be unwilling to work anymore, which results in a shortage of talented labor force in the labor market.

4.2. Lower Women's Spending Power

Women are the main forces of consumption, the gender wage gap will greatly lower their spending power and spending confidence. If the spending confidence of a consumer increases, his or her spending will accordingly increase. Conversely, as the confidence decreases, the spending decreases too. If women's collective consumption becomes depressed, there will not be enough economic transactions, then the market economics will be depressed. The market acts as a significant part of the whole economy and the depressed market economics may influence the stable development and improvement for the entire economy.

5. Preventive Measures of the Gender Wage Gap

5.1. Enhance Women's Social Status

As we preach the concept of equality between men and women, we should provide equal employment opportunities and salary treatment for both men and women. In the Labour market, equal employment rights for women and men should be guaranteed. Enterprises should implement fair recruitment and promotion systems so that outstanding employees can get their due rewards. The law is also an important means to enhance the social status of women. The state should introduce more perfect and comprehensive laws and regulations to protect the rights and interests of women. At the same time, the act of gender discrimination should be strictly cracked down on, so that offenders should pay for their actions through punishment. Since the emergence of gender discrimination, it has been related to cultural concepts. Society should form a cultural concept that respects the equality of women and men, and let people realize the importance of gender equality. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the supervision of cultural works that harm women and minority groups, so that society can form a healthy and equal cultural environment.

5.2. Improve Women's Education

Education is the easiest and the most basic way to get a higher-wage job. Many developing countries have implemented policies to increase access to education and expand the provision of educational institutions at all levels. The literature shows that these efforts have had a greater impact on girls than boys and have led to a reduction in the gender gap in education globally [9]. The government is supposed to ensure equal educational treatment between boys and girls. Schools should focus on gender education, and let students understand the importance of gender equality and how to respect others who have a different gender from yours. Teachers should focus on the equality of women and men in terms, and spending the same amount of energy on both boys and girls. Parents should also pay attention to gender equality education in the family, and provide boys and girls with the same educational investment so that children can learn not to discriminate against others from an

early age and girls have the opportunities to receive the same education as boys. If all related parties cooperate well in education, after a certain amount of time, gender discrimination will gradually disappear little by little from the root. Obviously, good education in many aspects can indirectly but efficiently reduce part of the gender wage gap. For the additional part, studies have shown that if the correlation of wage expectations is taken as the determinant of education investment, the lower wage expectations of female high school graduates may affect the actual gender wage gap through the lower expected return on education, thus reducing the incentive of education investment. Hence, enhancing wage expectations is also a way to improve women's education [10].

5.3. Protect Women Workers' Rights and Interests

Protecting women workers' rights and interests can also be an irreplaceable part of preventing the gender wage gap. Women should have equal rights to participate in political, economic, social and other fields. The government should strengthen women's participation in decision-making, increase the number of women's representatives in government agencies, business management and other fields, and ensure women's representation and participation in the decision-making process. The government and companies should guarantee the employment and salary of pregnant women after childbirth, and should also give corresponding financial subsidies to women workers after marriage and pregnancy. It is important to address the constraints to women's access to decent work through policies and strategies that expand women's options and remove the barriers they face in finding jobs. Initiatives could include well-designed skills development programs that equally address the different needs of men and women, increase women's access to childcare, and encourage the adoption of shared parental leave.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the basis of the gender wage gap is gender discrimination and the social background of patriarchy. And the biggest influencing factor is marriage and fertility. Marriage can greatly increase housework time, which would affect women's work and indirectly affect women's wages, while fertility will interrupt the constant and sustainable wage development of women. Stereotypes are another huge but invisible influencing factor. The stereotypes of women's personalities, strengths and weaknesses, social responsibility and so on can all have tremendous impact on women's wage level. Also, different education levels and professions can form a gender wage gap. The amount and ease of what they have learned can influence their career choices, which indirectly contributes to gender income inequality. The gender wage gap also brings some economic outcomes. For example, the difference in wage level probably discourages women from working and would result in labor market failure. And the unequal income treatment reduces women's spending confidence so the free market may have a shortage of economic transactions. As we are contributing to building an equal society, narrowing gender discrimination seems to be the most important and primary thing to do. To narrow the gender wage gap, enhancing women's social status, improving women's education and protecting women workers' rights and interests, giving them some benefits and welfare are all possible and necessary to execute. And for the future, society is glad to see that the gender wage gap is decreasing little by little, represented by the decrease in the gender wage gap. This article discussed the gender wage gap on the basis of gender discrimination. It only covers a few influencing factors, lists some outcomes, and suggests several methods to narrow the gender wage gap. This is certainly limited research for this huge topic. It is hoped that future studies could further explore the elements that affect the gender wage gap and develop more comprehensive measures that can make efforts to eliminate the gender wage gap.

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