

A STUDY ON WORKPLACE GENDER INEQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to developing gender inequality in society, the contemporary workplace is a crucial area. In this chapter, we will take a look at the literature and theories surrounding gender disparity in the workplace. Here, we provide a brief historical context for gender's place in the contemporary division of labor before diving into the facts on gender disparity in the workforce and its intersectional patterns, including both horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation. Next, we'll go over the most popular theories that attempt to explain these disparities, starting with those that focus on individuals and progressing to those that examine organizations and structural factors. Afterwards, we will go over the research on gender disparity in the workplace, starting with studies that looked at how organizations reproduce gender inequality via cultural, relational, and structural factors, and then going on to studies that discussed ways to reduce this imbalance. Our argument is that there needs to be more theoretical and empirical work on how to fix inequality. We cover two schools of thought on the subject: one is a political theory that looks at how women can be change agents in organizations, and the other is an institutional theory that looks at how institutions and actors can undermine gendered organization. Finally, we provide some directions for where this area of study and thought may go from here.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Workplace, Causes, Solutions.

Introduction

Within the scope of this research, a number of different beliefs and ideologies about gender equality and gender segregation in the workplace are investigated and evaluated. An investigation of the ways in which these concepts influence the employed and unemployed members of a society is the focus of the research. Many people have discussed the idea that gender segregation in the workforce is a result of social expectations about employment. This topic has received a lot of attention. First, the research investigates Marxist and radical feminist views. Next, it examines dual system theory and compares and contrasts it with other theories. Following this, we discussed the post-structuralist and human capitalist arguments that were presented in opposition to the principles presented before. For the purpose of providing an economic justification for the gender gap in the workplace, the human capital hypothesis makes an attempt to give an explanation. The needs of capitalism have been at the center of explanations for the segregation of the labor market for a very long time. Because sociologists have taken and enlarged upon some of the concepts that economists have used, this theory is pertinent to the work that is being done. One of the areas that the research deals on is the concept of evolving attitudes, and that is gender equality in the workplace.

Key Concepts Regarding Gender Equality

According to the United Nations (2023), gender equality is achieved when men and women are treated in the workplace in the same manner with regard to their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. A full absence of gender distinction is not what equality implies; rather, it means that people's rights, duties, and opportunities should not be dependent on their biological gender. Equality is not synonymous with gender differentiation. In order to achieve gender equality, it is necessary to

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acknowledge the differences that exist between men and women and to give equal weight to the interests, needs, and priorities of both sexes. It is widely acknowledged that the advancement of gender equality is not only a matter of human rights but also a precondition for and an indication of development that is centered on the requirements of the target population.

Concerns such as the glass ceiling and the gender pay gap have their origins in the long-standing gender stereotypes that exist about the roles that women are expected to play and the power dynamics that exist in the professional environments. When used as a noun, the phrase "glass ceiling" refers to the "invisible barrier" that prohibits women and other members of oppressed groups from climbing the ranks of an organization. In this condition, women are confined to lower levels of an organization, where there is little to no possibility for advancement. This is the defining characteristic of the situation. It is thought that the glass ceiling is always the result of gender norms, which are concepts that govern how each gender should behave based on their gender. The method in which gender stereotypes emphasize the possible weaknesses of one gender in comparison to the other is another facet of these stereotypes. Women are often devalued in comparison to males, despite the fact that women are as capable of achieving the requirements of their work and succeeding in their careers as men are. It is referred to as the gender pay gap when there is a discrepancy in the earnings that men and women get in the workplace. As stated by the Office for National Statistics, the gender pay gap decreased from 19.6% in 2011 to 18.6% in 2022. This is a positive trend that has improved the situation. This applies to workers who are employed either full-time or part-time. In spite of this, the gender wage gap continues to exist, despite the fact that it has been steadily narrowing. This is especially evident in situations when men and women are paid differentially for doing duties that are either similar or nearly equal.

A tremendous capacity to overcome gender inequality has been shown by the increasing number of working mothers and other women who are participating in the labor force. Based on the data provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS 2021), it can be seen that the gender pay gap between working moms and single mothers had a considerable reduction between the years 1996 and 2010. A difference of 5.8% in 1996 and 0.8% in 2010 indicates that women are more eager to work, regardless of whether or not they are mothers. This is the case regardless of whether or not they are mothers. In spite of the fact that there was a 5.9% increase in the number of women who worked full-time between the years 1996 and 2010, the statistics show that part-time mothers did very well overall. This is perhaps something that may be attributed to the fact that women who have family obligations find flexible work hours to be more feasible. Therefore, it is acceptable to infer that women are capable of handling the obligations of a top management post since it is evident from these data that women aspire to take on more responsibility at work and are devoted to their professions.

Objectives

- To examine the issue of gender disparity in the business world.
- To examine the legislation aimed at eradicating such biases.

The Causes of Gender Inequality in the Workplace

- **Sexism**

A number of factors contribute to the unfair treatment of women in the workplace, and sexism is one of those factors. According to the findings of Cope's study, sexism holds a significant amount of responsibility for both the slow progression of women to top positions in enterprises all over the world and the continued existence of the glass ceiling in terms of job opportunities for women. Many times, women are subjected to more stringent standards in the workplace, which are based on variables such as age, height, and attractiveness that are not truly related to the particular profession. In addition, the notion that women are intrinsically less capable than men continues to be prevalent. In addition, they do not recruit women who are married or infertile, and they doubt the capacity of women to balance the demands of job and family since they believe that women should be the ones to take care of housekeeping. As a result of this discrimination, opportunities for women to advance from lower-level positions are more likely to manifest.

The prejudice that occurs in the workplace is directly responsible for the unequal treatment of women in the workplace. According to the World Economic Forum, in the year 2021, males make up 83.3% of the legislative body, senior officials, and managerial posts in China, while just 16.8% of Chinese women occupy similar positions. It has been reported by Khuzwayo that just 18% of top managers in South Africa are female. 79.4 percent of the senior management team is comprised of males. Furthermore, despite the fact that 43 percent of women have technical skills and professional

qualifications that are on par with those of men in their respective fields, this enormous inequality continues to exist. Furthermore, there is a prejudice in society that women are better suited to work in the service industry, which makes it more difficult for women to enter into temporary employment. As far as Naidu is concerned, men entrepreneurs dominate the manufacturing sector, while female entrepreneurs dominate the service sector. There are still not enough women who are starting their own businesses in the manufacturing industry.

Culture

- **Patriarchy in the Society**

According to the findings of Edley and Wetherell's investigation, the patriarchal worldview is thought to have originated inside families and to have been passed down via men. Khuzwayo was of the opinion that the authority of the father would by no means be challenged by anybody. This is something that is practiced by males who are believed to be family leaders and by women who submit to it. As a result of this prejudice, women are seen to have a lower level of capability than men when it comes to being an asset in workplace settings. Additionally, it is more common for people to see women as providing assistance to men who are in positions of authority than the other way around. The study conducted by Khuzwayo indicates that patriarchy is shown in the form of sexism in the workplace, in the roles that men and women are authorized to perform, and in the fact that women do not have the political strength to successfully challenge gender inequity. In addition, patriarchy prevents women from having the right to own property and from having the same social position as males. As a consequence of this, most of IGBO traditional communities do not recognize women as owners of property titles. Despite this, the vast bulk of their activities are carried out on land.

- **Traditional Culture**

Research conducted by Oluwagbemi-Jacob and Uduma indicates that the culture puts a bigger emphasis on male production than it does on female productivity. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that society rewards males for being more manly. As a result of the fact that these characteristics do not carry a large amount of social weight, the realization of desirable feminine features is devalued and unrewarded. Zhang has the belief that in traditional Chinese culture, men are seen to be strong on the exterior, while women are considered to be soft on the inside. On top of that, this is a pattern that is consistent across traditional Chinese ideas. In feudal Chinese society, the fundamental measure of a woman's value was her ability to produce an unlimited stream of spiritual and material wealth for the clan. This was the case particularly in the context of the clan. In today's society, the only way for women to discover their ontological value is via the experience of motherhood. According to the laws and decrees that were in place during the time of feudalism and patriarchy, the capacity of women to have children was the key sign of their value by the government. It is common for women to see advancements for male workers being rescinded because of the cultural belief that women should place a higher priority on caring for their children.

- **Education**

Even in contemporary America, there are many people who are of the opinion that the underrepresentation of women in graduate programs and those working in STEM disciplines makes it more difficult to achieve progress toward gender parity. According to Kane's study on the historical exclusion of women from higher education, this is consistent with his findings. Because no one is educated about it, prejudice based on gender stays undiscovered for an excessively long period of time. A significant number of women, on their own, refuse to acknowledge the presence of gender inequality and instead choose to accept it as the current state of affairs. Kane made the discovery that women's subordination in the gender stratification system continues even after they have completed their postsecondary degree, despite the fact that they may achieve a more powerful economic position. More to the point, a significant number of young women just do not have access to educational possibilities. In this place, they are completely unaware of what gender equality is or how to fight against it. Only 59 of the 181 countries for which data are available had equal enrollment rates for both males and females in elementary and secondary school in 2005. This is about one third of the total number of countries. This indicates that the enrollment rate was somewhere in the range of 0.97 to 1.03 on average. As a consequence, women's inadequate education causes them to choose for jobs that pay less and are more exploitative, and it also leaves them unable to enforce their legal rights when confronted with gender inequality.

Solutions to Gender Inequality in the Workplace

- **Empower Women**

Kim and Kay's suggestion of women's self-improvement or "empowerment" in the workplace has recently garnered the attention of the cultural community as a potential solution to the problem. In addition, the message of women's liberation is a source of optimism since it emphasizes the potential of women's future actions rather than focusing on the negative actions they have committed in the past. They are of the opinion that more negative information places responsibility for the present state of things on the activities that women have taken in the past. Since women's rights have been expanded, there has been an increase in the number of women who are both willing and able to assume leadership positions in the workplace. The findings of Klugman, Kolb, and Morton indicate that there are significant discrepancies in terms of wage, employment, and involvement in the labor market. As a consequence of this, women will be able to make the same choices as males if they are afforded greater privileges. Make adjustments to the process of employing new employees, for example. In situations when the requirements for employment are the same for both men and women, businesses will not discriminate against women on the basis of their characteristics.

According to Kim and Kay, these statistics will demonstrate how far far women have progressed in terms of gaining equal job opportunities for men and women. The evidence that demonstrates that women are capable of finding answers to problems by encouraging themselves to do so is, without a doubt, shown by the data that pertains to women's empowerment. In point of fact, the centuries-old attitude of inferiority that has been prevalent among all individuals is gradually disappearing, while others are gradually gaining a superiority complex that is proportional to their gender, political position, and financial advantages. To provide one example, one method in which women's empowerment enhances their status is via their participation in political activities. Because of this, there will be increased opportunities for women to take key political responsibilities, including those in administration and organizations associated to politics. The findings of Anyalebechi's study indicate that a greater proportion of women in Nigeria hold positions of authority inside the cabinet as well as parliamentary seats. In the government that was in power from 2003 to 2007, for example, women made up 21 out of 360 members of parliament, 10 out of 35 special advisers, and 6 out of 34 ministers during that time period. When women are nominated for office during election campaigns, they are acknowledged as having the potential to become leaders in local, state, and federal politics because of their own potential. Therefore, the only approach to lessen the imbalance between the sexes is to work toward advancing the rights of women.

- **Raise Women's Awareness of Human Dignity**

According to Anyalebechi, Pope John II said that women would not tolerate being considered as nothing more than tools of reason because they are becoming more and more aware of the innate value that they possess as creatures of the human race. Nevertheless, you should continue to ensure that everyone, both in private and public settings, respects human rights. Therefore, empowering women by enhancing their sense of their intrinsic value in the workplace enables them to compete more successfully with males. This is because women are more likely to appreciate their own worth.

- **Law**

It is possible that society may convince women to be more self-conscious by altering the laws and increasing people's awareness of the fundamental characteristics that make up their personalities. From the perspective of Klugman, Kolb, and Morton, the action might revolve on the elimination of institutional and legal barriers that stand in the way of productive work. As part of the reform, restrictions that have been placed on the labor and job opportunities available to women should be removed. Certain provisions of family law, such as the "head of the household" clause, should also be eliminated since they have an unfavorable impact on women. Women should be permitted to own or co-own property, and they should be encouraged to do so. It is imperative that inheritance rules be enforced fairly. The concept of non-discrimination ought to be applied to the application of customary law. A significant number of countries' legal systems have grown much more egalitarian over the course of the last several decades. On the other hand, development has been slow in a number of locations, notably in South Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East at the moment. As a consequence of this, women may have a sense of support from society when the rules are altered to align with their requirements. When it comes to the workplace, it provides women with the confidence to advocate for themselves. As a result, the mental condition of women's inferiority might undergo significant transformations.

- **Education**

It is possible for society to minimize gender inequality and increase girls' feeling of worth by adjusting the way classroom teaching is delivered. Anyalebechi believes that in order to really achieve gender equality, women must first acknowledge the innate value that they possess as human beings and then refuse to accept positions that are submissive to males. Taking this into consideration, the government may create anti-discrimination regulations and textbooks, as well as develop gender-sensitive training programs for teachers and other educational professionals. In addition, schools should adopt comprehensive sexuality education, and teachers should have the appropriate training to teach it. This situation has the ability to quietly affect the perspectives of students on gender inequality in the classroom, which may, in turn, raise the level of knowledge that women have regarding the need of maintaining their own dignity. It is possible to bring about a shift in gender inequality on the condition that the majority of women in society embrace their significance, cease being humble, and begin to refuse to accept unfairness. Considering that a single tree can never grow into a forest, Anyalebechi discovered that in order to bring about a change that is long-lasting, women must come to a consensus. By doing so, it lays the groundwork for what the subsequent generation will be able to do. For the purpose of preventing women from seeing motherhood as a means to a goal, it may be beneficial to increase their awareness of the intrinsic value they possess as persons.

Conclusion

The study sheds light on the multifaceted and enduring nature of gender inequality in the workplace, which is something that women continue to face in professional settings. Even though there has been some progress, there are still significant challenges that women face in the workplace. These challenges include discrimination based on gender in terms of hiring and promotion, poor earnings, and other types of discrimination still exist. This research demonstrates that these disparities represent a vicious cycle since they are founded on social norms and institutional frameworks that have been in place for a tremendous amount of time. To find a solution to these issues, it is required to implement a number of different measures, including legislation that prohibits discrimination, working cultures that are welcoming to all employees, and programs that aim to eradicate unconscious biases. It is necessary to create mentorship programs and ensure that everyone has equal access to resources for professional development in order to make progress toward the aim of creating a workplace that is more egalitarian. It is beneficial for both businesses and their employees to have gender parity in the workplace since it will, in the long term, result in a society that is more equitable and just.

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