



Gender Discrimination And Ways To Eliminate Gender Bias In The Workplace-An Overview

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Abstract

The terms gender and sex tend to be used interchangeably, but there is a notable difference. "Sex" refers to the individual's biological identity, being male or female. "Gender" refers to the overall characteristics that society views as masculine or feminine and what the individual identifies as, regardless of what he/she is labelled as on the birth certificate. No matter what the discrimination is based on sex and gender discrimination is illegal in the workplace, if you want to learn about the general umbrella of employment discrimination. Gender discrimination can take various forms in the workplace and the law applies to both men and women (although women are the predominate victim). Generally, gender discrimination is when a corporation treats an employee differently because the individual is a man or a woman. Workplace gender discrimination comes in many different forms, but generally it means that an employee or a job applicant is treated differently or less favourably because of their sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Gender discrimination at the workplace limits people's full potential and reduces workplace productivity. Global data shows that gender based discrimination have caused 50% of the population to be unable to realize their true potential. For workplace gender discrimination to be considered illegal, it has to involve treatment that negatively affects the "terms or conditions" of your employment. Terms or conditions of employment are all the responsibilities, rules, and benefits of a job. Most of the time, they are set by an employer or negotiated by a worker and the employer at the time of hire. In unionized workplaces, they are negotiated and agreed on as part of the "collective bargaining" process. "Terms and conditions" include but are not limited to things like your job responsibilities, work hours, dress code, vacation and sick days, starting salary, and performance evaluation standards.

Key Words: - Gender discrimination, employment discrimination, sexual orientation, global data, collective bargaining.

Introduction:

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Wayne (1995) says that no law has ever attempted to define precisely the term 'discrimination', in the context of workforce, it can be defined as the giving of an unfair advantage (or disadvantage) to the members of the particular group in comparison to the members of other group. Narrating the decisions of the courts, Ivancevich, (2003) writes that in interpreting title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and other laws, the United States' courts have held that both intentional (disparate treatment) and unintentional (disparate impact) acts of covered entities may constitute illegal employment discrimination. Despite the progress made over the years regarding gender equality in the workplace, most studies on the subject show that businesses still have a long way to go.

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Objectives:

- To study about gender discrimination in the work place
- To know about ways to eliminate gender bias at workplace
- To find out consequences of workplace gender
- To elucidate about to combat gender inequality at work
- To know about empower a future of gender equality in the workplace.

Literature Review:

Erik et al., (2006) have conducted the research on whether women are discriminated through sticky floor or glass ceiling effects in Sweden. They have found through their research that women in Sweden suffer more from sticky floor effects than glass ceilings. Their study also showed that women with small children face a largest gender penalty in careers. Gender penalty is larger for younger and older women and less for middle aged women. There was no any empirical support in their study that women have lesser career opportunities in the private sector than in public sector, relative to men.

Susan et al., (1998) have focused on the work place gender discrimination rational bias theory. According to this theory, decision makers may choose to discriminate if they believe that their superiors or others having power over their careers expect or prefer it. The findings of their research showed that businessmen discriminated women and people at the top of the organization are most biased against women than people at the bottom. Their study has also confirmed that management support discrimination, though those discriminations were less than the findings of earlier research, reflecting increasing equal opportunity. It was also confirmed through their research that the discrimination is more because of external pressures than from internal.

Habib, (2000) has studied the effects of Brick Wall and Glass ceiling in public administration of Bangladesh. His analysis has shown that women are discriminated in civil services of Bangladesh from entry to the higher posts (Glass Ceiling). Social cultural factors are the principal stumbling blocks and build a wall for entry of woman into civil services. Their career path was hindered by the impediments of the systematic and attitudinal reasons. Government laws and regulations in this regard are proving ineffective. However, that discrimination was not for the women who came from upper class. This disparate treatment against women had implications for their morale, motivation and performance.

Uzma, (2004) found out that identity is created through the society, environment and parents. It is a two-way process - how people view you and how you view yourself. Attitude of parents towards their children formulate their identity. Parents usually consider their daughters as weak, timid, and too vulnerable; they need to be protected by the male members of the society. Because of this reason females cannot suggest or protest. This is the first step of subjugation and suppression. According to her; even the

educated females have the double identity – professional and private. Another finding of her research was that the income of the women is not considered as the main financial source for the family, but as supplementary to the income of their males. She also found that those results were not valid for the upper and advanced families, where complete freedom is given to their females.

Methodology:

The present paper “Gender Discrimination and Ways to Eliminate Gender Bias in the Workplace-An Overview” is based on secondary source of data. The secondary data is collected through articles published in assorted journals, newspapers and a variety of websites.

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace:

Gender discrimination can create significant issues in the workplace. For many reasons, it should be avoided at all costs. Peninsula explains why. Every employee is protected from discrimination based on their sex. But sex or gender discrimination doesn't only apply to women's rights. It applies to everyone. When it comes to sex, you must ensure employees aren't treated unfairly because of it. If you ignore their equal rights, it could alienate staff and make them feel undervalued. Employees could raise discrimination claims - leading to fines and brand damage. In this guide, we'll look at what sex discrimination is, what law applies, and how to promote equality in the workplace.

While a significant number of men do report gender discrimination at work, it's still far and away an issue that women face most predominantly. Let's take a look at some of the most common types of gender discrimination women face in the workforce today to be able to understand what both employees and employers can do to prevent it.

Pregnancy Discrimination:

Companies might hesitate to hire female workers because of their potential desires to start families and effectively leave the workforce for a period of time. For the same reason, women might be passed over for promotions and senior positions. Working mothers still make less money than their male colleagues, regardless of credentials and experience and female workers are often penalized for taking time off to give birth, bond with their child, or receive prenatal care.

Harassment:

In male-dominated industries, women are disproportionately more likely to be victims of some form of sexual harassment at work. In 2017, only 16.5% of sexual harassment charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) came from men. The fact that more than 80% of sexual harassment cases were reported by women is a huge cause for alarm and one of the reasons why working in male-dominated industries could be more challenging for women. Even when not necessarily sexual in nature, sex/gender-based discrimination is also very present in the workplace. Gender-based harassment

most often targets women, transgender people, and gender non-conforming or non-binary people. This type of harassment usually involves frequent and severe usage of derogatory terms aimed at women and other gender minorities in the workplace.

The Pay Gap:

Many workplaces are not transparent about the amount of money they pay their workers or what these decisions are based on. Still, under federal law, “it is illegal for an employer of 15 or more employees to discriminate against an employee based on their sex, race, colour, religion, or national origin.” This means that employers aren’t legally allowed to refuse to hire, pass on for promotions, harass, or fire their employees due to any of the above-mentioned categories. Yet, according to the above-mentioned Pew Research Centre study, one-in-four working women say they have earned less than a man who was performing the same job.

Ways to Eliminate Gender Bias at Workplace:

So, here are following steps to take to help eliminate gender bias in your company.

1. Be Transparent:

Report on your gender statistics transparently. This is the law for companies over a certain size in the UK. Accompany it with a clear action plan on the steps you are taking as an employer to close the gender pay gap, with clear targets and milestones. Communicate this openly and honestly with your workforce, explaining the tangible progress you plan to make.

2. Support Women into More Senior Roles:

Accenture, Barclays, Credit Suisse UK and KPMG have all set gender targets, broken down by business lines and functions. They have clearly defined interim milestones and deadlines, so they can continually measure themselves against their targets. Furthermore, managers and decision makers are held responsible and accountable for meeting those targets.

3. Implement Gender Neutral Recruitment Processes:

Carefully word your job adverts. Research shows that adjectives such as ‘competitive’ and ‘determined’ put off women. On the other hand, words such as ‘collaborative’ and ‘cooperative’ tend to attract more women than men. Standardise interviews, anonymise resumes and use blind evaluation processes. Unilever and Vodafone have found that blind evaluation procedures including work sample tests and neuroscientific tests of an applicant’s aptitude and skills have helped them recruit from more diverse backgrounds.

4. Review Salaries and Standardise Pay:

Frequently review salaries for parity between genders and races. When recruiting, set the pay range offered on years' experience with some leeway for special achievements, not on how well the candidate negotiated their last pay package.

5. Provide Training on Unconscious Bias:

Educate employees about their own unconscious bias. Although this does not guarantee that attitudes will change, it does help employees to understand their biases and to work towards eliminating them.

6. Have a Clear Policy on Discrimination:

A Unilever study found that women and men struggle to acknowledge gender discrimination and inappropriate behaviour (most likely sexual harassment) in the workplace. 67% of women said they feel pressured to get over inappropriate action. And most women (64%) and slightly more than half of men (55%) said that men don't confront each other when witnessing this behaviour. Create a clear, unbiased, non-retaliatory discrimination policy that ensures employees have a proper way to comment or report on inappropriate treatment in the workplace. Make sure everyone knows and understands the policy. Implement severe penalties for sexual discrimination and harassment.

7. Provide Flexible Working and De-Stigmatise Shared Parental Leave:

Shift your company mind-set to assessing workers' performance on their delivery and achievements rather than time spent in the office. This not only benefits working mums but dads too, those caring for elderly parents and everyone in general. Even millennial, perceived to have fewer responsibilities at home, are increasingly valuing and looking for flexible working. Telstra, the Australian telecoms firm, has made flexible work the default option. In the UK, parents can share up to 50 weeks of leave, and up to 37 weeks of pay between them. Ensure your employees are aware of policies like these.

8. Diversify the Board:

Set targets for gender diversity on your board and look beyond your existing talent pool. A growing number of companies are eschewing traditional board candidates retired chief executive officers, who are predominantly older white men and opting for diverse members, many of them first-timers with no experience.

9. Ensure you're Actively Encouraging Women to Progress:

Make sure that female employees are applying for promotions and asking for pay rises. At KPMG UK, when a promotion is advertised, lines managers are encouraged to check whether their high potential female colleagues have applied and if not ask why. Martin Blackburn, People Director at KPMG UK

explains: 'Where the men would apply for a role if they had 80% of the [required] skills, women would think they were missing 20% and not bother'.

10. Promote a Culture of Meritocracy:

Promote a culture where great ideas come from all levels, genders and races and all voices are welcome and respected around the table. When President Obama took office, two-thirds of his top aides were men. Women had to elbow their way into important meetings. And when they got in, their voices were sometimes ignored. So, female staffers adopted a meeting strategy they called 'amplification'. When a woman made a point, other women would repeat it, giving credit to her. This forced the men in the room to recognise the contribution and denied them the chance to claim the idea as their own. It's no surprise then that during Obama's second term, women gained parity with men in the president's inner circle.

Consequences of Workplace Gender Inequality:

Gender discrimination within the workplace hinders personal success as well as company success. Below are just some of its negative impacts.

Economic Drawbacks:

Because women are often overlooked for promotions, they're also stuck with lower compensation. As a result, female employees might be more likely to change jobs or industries or leave the labour force entirely. This undervaluation also impacts company success. When female employees' contributions aren't recognized, organizations miss out on ideas, projects and sales that could have positioned them as industry leaders

Mental Health Implications:

Sexism is also a mental health issue, threatening female employees' well-being. Working as hard as their male counterparts without receiving the same recognition is draining. Discrimination and sexual harassment can quickly lead to burnout and a decline in productivity. Burnout from discrimination contributes to why women prefer to work remotely. After the pandemic, many women of colour were especially hesitant to return to the office because of their experiences of isolation and discrimination there.

Stunted Innovation:

Diverse perspectives drive innovation. So, when women are excluded from key decision-making, research and development (R&D) can stagnate, fostering gender diversity, equity and inclusion results in increased employee engagement and better employee retention. When companies fully invest in their employees, they can spend less time hiring and training and more time innovating.

Combat Gender Inequality at Work:

How can gender inequality be addressed in the workplace? By prioritizing the following actionable steps, companies can ensure that their DEI initiatives go beyond a marketing promise.

Equal Pay and Transparency:

States with pay transparency laws, such as New York, require employers to list salary ranges in the job description. This transparency supports salary parity by creating more competition for human resources and higher salary offers for employees. Beyond pay, organizations can share the hard numbers of their employee demographics. Making these records publicly available holds C-suite leadership and human resources departments accountable for their diversity and inclusion plans.

Development and Mentorship Programs:

Personal development and mentorship initiatives create more equitable workplaces for women. Creating a diversity and inclusion training program, like those that prioritize LGBTQ+ employees and racial minorities, results in more diversity within leadership roles. Allowing women to network with female role models in C-suite and management positions opens opportunities for them to take the same path. Companies can also offer and support leadership programs for women within the organization. This helps women develop the skills necessary for stepping into management and C-suite roles.

Flexible Work Arrangements:

Implementing flexible work hours within the organization means that fewer women are side lined due to family obligations. Including options such as remote and part-time work also helps women maintain work-life balance. Additionally, providing parental leave for fathers gives women more childcare support and increases equality among parents.

Anti-Discrimination Policies:

Anti-discrimination policies within a company provide security for employees and attract more diverse talent. For example, creating standardized diversity and inclusion procedures for hiring can help prevent unconscious bias and the persistence of gender stereotypes. Internal anti-discrimination policies might also include protocols for reporting misconduct, discouraging backlash against female employees who lodge discrimination complaints.

Addressing Unconscious Bias:

Unconscious bias training in the workplace creates awareness of the hidden assumptions that influence decision-making. When employees are trained on how to recognize gender bias, women are not only included in key conversations their ideas are more likely to be heard.

Empower a Future of Gender Equality in the Workplace:

Empowering a future of gender equality in the workplace requires a multifaceted approach that combines policy reform, cultural change, and education. Firstly, it's crucial to establish strong anti-discrimination policies and ensure they are rigorously enforced. This includes creating transparent processes for reporting and addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment. Companies should also implement equitable hiring and promotion practices, focusing on diversity and inclusion at all levels of the organization.

Conclusion:

In addition to policy changes, there must be a shift in workplace culture. This involves regular training and workshops for employees at all levels to foster an understanding of gender biases and how to combat them. Promoting a culture of respect and inclusion, where all voices are heard and valued, is essential. Mentorship programs can be particularly effective, especially when they support underrepresented genders in leadership development and career progression.

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