

Investigating Gender Equality in Workplace Law

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Introduction

Gender equality has long been a major concern in society, especially women who have struggled for it in the past. However, there are still remaining unsolved issues in many aspects, including in the workplace. Nowadays, women make up a significant proportion of the global workforce, yet they continue to encounter several challenges such as limited access to leadership roles, unequal pay and persistent gender stereotypes. These challenges are particularly upsetting in the legal field, whereas fairness, equality and the freedom to express one's voice should be the fundamental principles. To address this issue is to acknowledge women's hardship and offer them opportunities to contribute to more diverse perspectives, resulting in a more equitable professional environment. This essay aims to highlight the ongoing problem of gender inequality and proposing possible solutions.

Current female ratio in workplace

In the 21st century, Olanike Abiola Ajowon (2024) found that gender dynamics in the workspace are depicted by progression and growing challenges. Many organizations have been promoting women to leadership roles, and implementing policies to protect them from discrimination along with harassment as a way to stride towards gender equity. As a result, this leads to a rising number of female workers in different fields, which allows industries to solve the labour shortage. For example, there has been a growing presence of women in fields traditionally dominated by men, such as technology and finance (Offermann & Foley, 2020). Especially, in the legal field, women now finally have the opportunity to pursue law education, unlike in the past when it could be illegal for them to speak up for themselves, or even learn how to write in the first place.

Despite these improvements, several burdens still exist. One of the main issues is the gender pay gap, which means oftentimes women earn less than that of male, even though they have the same amount of work. Although this disparity could be interpreted to many factors such as distinct job roles, industries, and by how experienced they are, but the influence of deep-rooted systemic biases and discrimination cannot be ignored as a reason. In addition, women and gender minorities frequently experience challenges that make it harder for them to have a pay rise or promotion (Olanike Abiola Ajowon, 2024). Such challenges can consist of biased evaluations, limited mentorship and sponsorship opportunities as well as workplace cultures that fail to support work-life balance or effectively address discrimination (Blanchard & Blanchard, 2020; Phelps, 2024). According to Hull and Nelson (2000), only less than one-third of women achieved partnership status, they also have a higher chance to exit legal practice before reaching companionship. (Durrani & Singh, 2011).

Obstacles they are facing

The previous section has shown that there are still existing burdens on women while thinking the world may have addressed it all. The next part of this paper will investigate further what they are suffering, especially in the workplace.

Some studies indicate that women remain less likely than equally qualified men to secure positions that offer higher social status and monetary rewards and to gain access to leadership roles (Galos & Coppock 2023; Joshi et al. 2022). These disparities can be explained by several theoretical frameworks, comprising the lack of fit model (Heilman 1983) and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau 2002). Both perspectives suggest that gender bias arises when societal stereotypes about women conflict with traits that are mostly considered male-centered. As a result, women may be perceived as less suitable for stewardship or high status positions, despite having undifferentiated qualifications and capabilities.

Moreover, women face multiple challenges at numerous stages of career developments, including when they seek job-related training opportunities (Milkman et al. 2012), apply for organizational positions (Galos & Coppock 2023), and undergo performance evaluation for promotion (Beckman & Phillips 2005), compensation (Joshi et al. 2015), or other organizational rewards (Klein et al. 2021). These structural inequalities are further compounded by judicial bias, which can operate either consciously or subconsciously. Judicial reasoning can be subtly shaped by gender stereotypes and cultural norms (Madeline E. Heilman¹, Suzette Caleo² and Francesca Manzi³, 2024).

Additionally, income disparity persists in being a major problem between both genders, partly due to structural barriers that limit the ability to challenge unequal pay. The U.S. case *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.* (2007) for illustrative purposes, controlled employees' ability to contest long-standing pay discrimination, which later prompted legislative correction through the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. However, the emergence of such legal intervention exposed that many organizations make little to no attempt to proactively address inequality.

Benefits when giving women opportunities

When women are given the chance to participate in courts, they can contribute to the integrity of human rights adjudication, and help uphold the rule of law. As Kaufman and Lindquist (1995) reinforce, "legal rights do not stand alone; they are embedded in the dominant social and cultural milieu" and interpreting rights is conditioned by a "socially constructed world, where women's experience is seldom recognized" (115-116). Kenney (2012: 163) has convincingly argued that effective deliberations, and justice will be better delivered when a jury or judiciary is drawn from a wide range of societal identities and experiences rather than having been drawn from a restricted part of society. These findings suggest that law should be accessible for everyone as it should be judged based on various perspectives to be precise and equitable without being biased by a particular community.

Solutions

Regular gender-sensitization training should be provided to judges, especially those serving in lower courts and tribunals. This training includes education on unconscious bias, intersectionality, systemic discrimination. As a result, better understanding of the lived realities of gender minorities can make more empathetic and informed decisions (Vyanjna Saini, 2025).

Besides that, implementing pay transparency policies by requiring employers to report income data to ensure both men and women receive fair compensation. Such measures can promote a fair working environment and create harmony among employees which further lead to work productivity as the absence of hidden income disparity reduces distrust.

Conclusion

In this investigation, the aim was to assess the gender inequality towards women, existing in legal aspects. The research has also shown that women still face numerous obstacles, including biased evaluations, limited access to leadership opportunities and persistent stereotypes, which hinder their career advancement. However, providing women with a range of options not only promotes justice and fairness but also benefits organizations and society. Therefore, it is crucial for employers along with policymakers to implement effective measures such as transparent pay systems, gender-sensitization initiatives. These actions will help building a more balanced and equitable society.

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