

# The Gender Inequality Between Men and Women in Education and Career

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the studies on gender disparities between men and women in the United States. The gender studies and reports found that the inequality between men and women extends from education to work. In education, women have been disadvantaged groups in certain areas, such as in the STEM field. Gender inequality at work affects women's overall living standards in terms of income, physical health, and mental health. Therefore, the public should change bias and stereotypes about women and provide equal support for men and women to solve the inequality between men and women.

**Keywords:** Gender Disparity, Education, Unequal treatment in the workplace

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The inequality between men and women is a negative social phenomenon that has persisted for a long time. Unequal gender roles in society lead to weaker social cohesion, which causes a lot of antisocial behavior and violence. Countries with higher gender equality tend to be more friendly and connected. People are healthier and more likely to lead happy lives. However, the reality is that women are treated in an unequal way compared to men due to stereotypes and bias in their entire lives. Women are regarded as the weaker group, while men are regarded as the dominant group. This paper reveals people's prejudice and inertial definition of women from early childhood education to higher education, causing women to lose confidence and fail to achieve themselves. Also, the discrimination of women faced in the workplace, including sexual harassment and intersectional discrimination, has led to a decline in women's quality of life, including low income, impaired physical and mental health.

## 2. THE DISPARITY| IN EDUCATION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE

In the current educational system of social development, males and females have always been taught stereotypes and gender discrimination. Girls are required to use pink water bottles while boys are required to use blue ones in kindergarten. The color codes of

uniforms also mandate that people segregate and define two genders in a hidebound way. In addition, people's family education also shows the stereotype between girls and boys. If a child is a girl, people will suppose that she likes pink, which represents her identity as a girl. However, if a girl likes blue, then she will be considered a girl who does not know how to be a proper girl instead of a strong woman by other people. Conversely, if a child is a boy, he has to use blue items. If he likes pink, he will be identified as not manly enough by others. As children grow up, gender stereotypes and biases are extended to children's school education. Academic bias and unfair treatment of men and women are obvious phenomena in children's studies. For example, people from the idea that a boy is better at math than a girl. Cimpian states that when presented with a group of boys and girls of the same race, the teachers rated the boys as better at math [1]. This implies that boys are inherently better at math, which strikes girls' confidence in competing with boys in math. Hill, Corbett, and Rose claim that the social bias of math as a "male's subject" does affect girls' math ability, and such negative stereotypes significantly reduce girls' test scores. The researchers also believe that girls' desire for careers in science and engineering is reduced because of the stereotypes they experienced through their education from childhood to university. When men and women reported on their self-assessments, girls rated their math ability lower than boys when they had similar math scores. At the same time, girls have higher standards than boys in subjects like math, with the

believe that they must excel to succeed in men's fields. Even in the face of good grades and test scores and higher performance standards, girls have lower self-assessments of their math ability [2]. The stereotype that women are not good at math in education causes females' confidence in math to decrease so that girls are unwilling to choose a major in math once they get to college.

Unequal treatment that women received in education is more obvious in the higher education stage. According to the groundbreaking report of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), only 35 percent of students enrolled in STEM higher education worldwide are women. In the higher education stage, study Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are only chosen by 3 percent of female students [3]. According to the statements from Eddy and Brownell, women who stick through undergraduate majors are less likely than men to attend graduate school in 75 percent of STEM subjects [4]. Females play an unrepresentative role in higher education, especially in the "masculinity majors" that people thought, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics which people know as STEM majors. People tend to associate STEM more with men than with women, which causes a STEM gap between men and women. Gender stereotypes, male-dominated social cultures, and few role models all contribute to the stem gap between men and women. Gender scientific prejudice has long been mainly manifested in preventing young women from identifying themselves in the STEM industry, which has a negative impact on their self-identities and key interests in scientific majors. At the same time, it also strikes female students' determination in choosing scientific and reasonable technical majors and pursue scientific jobs in their career path in the future.

Sexism is a key issue in STEM degree programs because women cannot gain equal support from their professors as men have in STEM majors, which drives them away from STEM majors, thus discouraging them from pursuing STEM careers in the future. Among freshmen and sophomores, men were 15 percent higher than women to choose STEM majors [5]. Roll argues that the reason why women drop out of STEM is that society keeps telling us that STEM fields are masculine fields, which sends a signal that STEM is not a field for women, thereby keeping women in these fields [6]. Women's confidence in learning the STEM subject has been hurt due to the bias that women are not good at the "masculinity subjects". Women who enter college reveal lower self-efficacy and scientific identification than men, and the gap did not close as they progressed through their college careers [4]. Studies of academic self-efficacy among first-year students in other STEM subjects also show that men have higher self-efficacy than women.

Moreover, Gender differences in self-efficacy were affected by race and gender interactions. In one study,

researchers tracked self-efficacy among first-year chemistry students at a university with a mix of science majors; results found that Asian American and Latina females bear the strongest disparity between the two genders in their educational careers [4]. Therefore, women face the disparities between genders and races simultaneously in their education path.

However, women's representation in engineering and computing is important. Diversity in the workforce contributes to creativity, productivity, and innovation. Changing the perception that STEM is male dominated, in which masculine could encourage women to participate in similar technologies and reverse the STEM gap. People should break down the stereotypical image and the prejudice against gender in the education field between genders. Blackwood wrote that efforts to reduce the gender differences in STEM outcomes need to be started earlier in students' education stages [5]. Schools can provide equal support for boys and girls in their studies, especially in the subjects that are regarded as male-dominated majors. Teachers can encourage girls to develop confidence in math, science, and other subjects to reverse the stereotype that these subjects are masculine.

Building a sense of trust can help women take on some of the work pressures of learning and training social development in subjects they feel they are not good at. Corbett and Hill felt that this focused on the general professional skills necessary to become a successful technical engineer or computer professional, including less rigid male professional skills such as writing, communicating, and organizing college engineering and computer programs. It helps young women to understand their competence and ability in projects and computer-related work. If the natural environment is suitable for women to get rid of the stereotyped awareness in cultural education, women's self-confidence in assessing the level of their learning and training in a subject defined by social development as inappropriate for them will increase.

### **3. GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

Women do not receive the same support and treatment as men have in their educational careers. In addition, they also experience a lot of prejudice and unfairness once they graduate from college and start working. The first point is that there is an income gap between women and men. According to the data provided by PewResearch Center, Brown states that women only earn 84 percent of men's income in 2020, which implies that if women want to earn the same income as men earn, they have to spend an extra 42 days [6]. The consequences of this gap can affect women throughout their lives. The income gap continues into women's retirement. With lower lifetime earnings, they also receive less social security and pensions. Women's

living standards will be lowered than men's due to the income gap between women and men.

Robertson found that there are six reasons for this gender pay gap. The first reason is the discrimination and bias in hiring and pay decisions. Robertson states that the conscious and unconscious gender bias is still very common around the world even though women in problem-solving, communication ability, and innovation ability [7]. For example, in terms of the sixteen important leadership quality rankings, women are actually higher than that of men [7]. Women have been ignored by employers. When companies want to hire new employees, most of them still tend to regard that men have better working abilities than women. Women were on average thirty percent less likely to be offered an interview than men with the same characteristics [6]. Women without children were 23.5 percent less likely than men to be called for an interview [6]. Women with children face greater discrimination in the hiring process because of the challenge of being a woman and a mother [6]. A woman who has become a mother is on average 35.9 percent less likely to be called for an interview than a man who has become a father [6].

The second reason is the difference in bonuses. Not only are women undervalued in hiring decisions and salary negotiations, but they also receive fewer performance bonuses. According to an Australian study conducted by Mercer, men receive 35 percent more in bonuses than women with the same performance ratings [7]. The third reason is that when women enter a previously male-dominated industry, the average wages they receive fall due to gender bias and social pressure, which diminishes the value of women and prevents women from pursuing high-paying, and male-dominated jobs [7].

The fourth and fifth reason concludes that women are socially defined to take care of the family. They need to spend more time taking care of the family than men do. As child-bearers, when women become mothers, they are still largely defined as those who take time off to raise children [7]. Companies tacitly acknowledge that women do not have enough time and energy to balance work and family. Even when women are willing to return to work after having children, they often have to deal with the so-called conflict between motherhood and work duties. Because too many workplaces do not offer mothers much flexibility, they are often forced to take lower-paying, less-demanding jobs in order to be able to take care of their family and work to earn money.

In addition, women are punished for having children, while men are rewarded. The University of Massachusetts study found that men with children were more likely to be employed than men without children [7]. It shows that companies have different attitudes towards whether women and men have children from the

perspective of families. Men are positive, while women are negative.

Besides the unequal pay between men and women, women are more likely to suffer sexual harassment than men in the workplace. According to the International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation, sexual harassment has less to do with actual biological differences between men and women than with gender or social roles [8]. Sexual harassment happens every day and everywhere. The harassment at the workplace not only makes women's work environments unreliable and threatening but also reduces their ability to express themselves in today's competitive world, which causes serious harm and becomes the strongest reflection of gender discrimination in the workplace. Women are subjected to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sex, or other forms of sexual harassment at work. According to a 2018 survey from Stop Street Harassment, 38 percent of 996 women surveyed have been sexually harassed in the workplace [9]. A large percentage of respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their careers. 86% of respondents reported sexual assault in at least one form, 12% reported sexual intimidation, 61% reported unwanted sexual concerns, and 65% reported Sex-based harassment [9]. However, the data is not accurate because most women who suffered sexual harassment are afraid to report their experiences.

Female employees may face sexual harassment, but they do not know what they can do about it [9]. According to one survey, 75% of workplace sexual harassment cases go unreported, and some women who reported sexual harassment sustained reprisals from their abusers [10]. According to a report released by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2020, 55.8 percent of complaints received during that year were related to retaliation after reporting sexual harassment. Retaliation may involve discouraging victims from reporting, such as demotion, exclusion from staff activities, or adverse reassignment [9].

Women have a 54 percent of chance of being a victim of sexual harassment, more than twice the percentage of men in the gender harassment to sexual abuse data, which means they are more likely to experience a limitation in career development than men [9]. According to ABC and Washington Post, 95 percent of harassers do not receive any punishments. "This is a very worrying number because it shows how the culture of most companies tends to protect the perpetrator rather than the victim" [10]. Harassers without receiving any punishments are encouraged to harass others again because there are no penalties. Victims are discouraged from coming forward and standing out in the future because they know the problem will not be solved seriously, and they even need to suffer from retaliation at their workplaces. Women who are sexually harassed not

only have to bear the risk of reporting it but also suffer severe psychological trauma. A review conducted by Roebig shows that women who have been sexually harassed have severe and long-term negative mental health conditions, such as depression and post-traumatic stress [9]. This stress can last for years. The negative physical and mental health effects can affect work performance and morale, with some women having workplace accidents following sexual harassment. Thus, women's earnings are reduced, which in turn reduces their contribution to social security. Their retirement savings plans, and long-term economic prospects are also negatively affected simultaneously.

Sexual assault robs women of the training, specific mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities that women need in trending jobs. In many fields, career development lies in the professional training and specific guidance of senior staff. If workplace teachers are also harassers, victims of harassment must sacrifice their safety or professional development. Most women forgo opportunities at work to avoid sexual assault.

Moreover, the social phenomenon between women and men in different fields and occupations is that women are more likely to work in low-paid or lower-level fields. Sexual harassment which is regarded as a stumbling block to women's career development plays a decisive role. In many high-paying, male-dominated fields, women have experienced hostile or harassing environments, which exacerbates the occupational gender divide [9]. Since women are not willing to work in an environment with disrespect or unequal treatment, they are forced to abandon their ambition in gaining equal rights in the male-dominated fields. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a comprehensive problem that a lot of women faced nowadays, and it indeed leads to the development of women's careers harder. To virtually eradicate sexual harassment in the workplace and harassment in general, stronger federal and state laws need to involve so that the cultural norms and social attitudes can be changed [9]. In addition to strict anti-harassment policies, regular sexual harassment training and swift action on allegations of sexual harassment are needed.

Gender discrimination in the workplace is also another severe problem that women have in the workplace, which can be broken down to different races of women. Discrimination in the workplace is likely to cause intersectional effect, which means that this problem is likely to be further aggravated by the intersection of social development and economic development status, and it is more harmful to women who are politicized in many ways [9]. Black women are particularly vulnerable to racial and gender discrimination. The Racial discrimination that black women received accounts for about 26 percent of workplace discrimination [9]. According to the

Economic Policy Institute (EPI), black women are the most likely to be underrated in the workplace, even though they have had the highest participation in the labor market for centuries. They are always allocated to underestimating positions with low-paying jobs, and lacking benefits such as sick leave, maternity leave, and flexible work options [10]. According to the National Women's Law Center, Latinos and Hispanics, who make up 17 percent of the U.S. workforce, have the highest participation rate, but they face the greatest income inequality in contrast with other female employees [10]. Asian women in South, Southeast and East Asia are notably vulnerable to discrimination and are often overlooked in the workplace. They are less likely to hold management positions and half as likely as white women to hold senior positions at companies. While Native American and white women have slightly higher income disparities, disproportionate poverty, chronic disease, and education gaps than Latina women, they also face many difficulties both inside and outside the workplace. According to recent data, they earn less than men for the same position [10]. Thus, they may face greater difficulties in health care, childcare, education, and vocational training. Moreover, women have suffered pregnancy discrimination, including the denial of reasonable treatment to pregnant women, demotion of pregnant employees, forced leave, or limited working hours [10]. Therefore, the discrimination that women receive in the workplace will not only limit to one perspective, but it will have a tendency of becoming more severe.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This paper analyzes the stereotype of women in education, which encourages society to give up competing with men for some defined "masculine subjects" even though they show excellent skills. At the same time, women's confidence in themselves is also undermined since people's bias toward them in education. Moreover, the social definition of female "family caregivers" results in women being less welcomed than men in the workplace. As a result, women's wages are reduced by having to choose lower-paying jobs, and they may even face new issues such as intersectional discrimination. Under the phenomenon of gender inequality in society, women suffer a lot of negative consequences, including physical and mental health harm, and more economic pressure in contrast to men. Therefore, stereotypes and biases against women need to be broken, and the government needs to intervene through policies or other means to help women get the same competitive opportunities in educational fields and equal treatment in the workplace as men have in society so that equal gender role in society can be achieved for linking the society to become more connected.

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