

Gender In-Equality

Ahmed Nabil Ismail, Nicola Hariaz, Sonja Sparn

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Abstract

The unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender is a serious problem, that worldwide remains a major barrier to human development. The discrimination and under-representation of women and girls in education, health, politics, work and other areas of life is deeply anchored in the past and widespread amongst both, the developed societies and the developing countries. As the gender inequality topic is a very complex issue, the following report focuses only on inequalities in labor market, especially in Europe. In this context it is important to pay attention to the pay gap and potential reasons for it. Some mentioned points are the under-representation of women in executive positions, discrimination in the workplace and traditional gender roles. Afterwards a short overview of the consequences of gender inequality is given and, finally, the benefits of closing the gender pay gap are outlined. A large amount of information in the report is based on existing studies of European Commission and statistics provided by the European Union Statistical Office (Eurostat).

The second part of the report brings up another topic which comes along in context of gender inequality and discrimination: violence against women. In this work different forms of domestic violence are outlined, which are a persistent and serious problem globally.

keywords: Gender discrimination, economic development, cultural norms, pay gap, domestic violence

1 Introduction

The unequal treatment men and women in labor market is a global and continuing problem. Gender inequality has been clearly identified as one of the major causes blocking development [1] and intensifying poverty. The discrimination and under-representation of women and girls in education, health, politics, work and other areas of life is deeply anchored in the past and widespread amongst both, the developed societies and the developing countries. However, the past also showed alternatives. Women in ancient Egypt enjoyed a status that significantly contrasts the status of many women today. In ancient Egyptian civilization women were treated with respect and considered equal to men in many ways. They had the same rights under law as men like signing contracts, owning property and holding professions under the same payment as men that allowed them to have economic freedom from male relatives [2]. Unfortunately the present situation shows that ancient Egyptian exemplary model of equal treatment was not able to serve as an example at global level.

2 Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the difference between men's and women's pay, based on the average difference in gross hourly earnings of all employees. According to data compiled in 2013 by Eurostat women in the EU earned, on average, 16.4 % less per hours then men [3]. The gap differs from below 10 % in countries like Slovenia, Malta, Poland, Italy, Croatia, Luxembourg, Romania and Belgium till differences wider than 20 % in Czech Republic, Germany, Austria and Estonia. The

difference was most pronounced in Estonia with 29.9 %, but it is surprising that economically developed countries like Germany, United Kingdom and Spain show a higher pay gap than the average for the EU. By contrast, Slovenia has the narrowest gender pay gap at 3.2 %.

The reasons for this are diverse and influenced by a high number of interrelated factors. One of the main reasons is the under-representation of women in decision-making or leadership positions, particularly in politics and business. Management and supervisory positions are overwhelmingly held by men. In 2016, women accounted for just 23.3 % of board members of the largest publicly listed companies registered in the EU countries. When it comes to female chief executive officers (CEOs) women account currently for 4 % in top European companies. Moreover, according to European Commission report only a third of engineers and scientists across Europe are women.

Regarding family planning it is still chiefly women who take a career break to raise children or decide to work part-time to reconcile their family and career more effectively. In a few countries, including the United States, women also suffer from lack of paid maternity leave.

Furthermore young women still choose occupations that have been traditionally done by women. Various studies show that women working in leading positions in typically 'feminine' careers are paid substantially less than women working at the top in typically 'masculine' careers.

In some workplaces women are even discriminated against directly. Although it is illegal under EU law, in certain cases women with the same qualifications as men earn less for doing the same jobs.

3 Consequences

Gender inequality or discrimination in the working place may occur during the hiring process, whereby men are hired first or hired instead of women. As mentioned in Chapter 2 gender inequality may also appear in the context of income disparity whereby men are paid more money than women. If so, the following effects can be noticed in workplace:

- feminization of poverty: women are unequally more affected by poverty on a global scale. This concept is seen not only as a result of low income, but as a result of the general inequality of opportunity between men and women .
- pension poverty: in developed and developing economies, the risk of poverty in retirement falls disproportionately on females. In 2012, the gender gap in pensions amounted to 38 % in the EU on average [4]. In spite of the fact that the difference between pensions varies from country to country — from 5 % in Estonia to 45 % in Germany — the tendency for men to receive higher pensions than women is observed in all Member States.
- productivity loss: whether a man or a women is discriminated at workplace, loss of motivation and self-esteem cause instantly loss of work efficiency and therefore influence the companies productivity.
- family planning: pregnant women, women planning a pregnancy or young mothers may experience push-back in case of personal interviews or job offers. A qualified female candidate may be passed over under consideration of family responsibilities.

4 Benefits of closing the gender pay gap

Considering gender inequality as a major cause blocking development, an equal treatment of men and women would have a positive impact on the economy and society in general. Closing the gap can help to reduce poverty in general and particularly preventing poverty in retirement. Equality in labor market would improve the situation for businesses, workers and the economy as a whole.

Companies that respect equality plans and strategies within their workplaces create the best workplaces for everyone. Having a positive working environment helps a business to attract customers, improve performance and boost competitiveness. Furthermore there is evidence that workers who are treated with dignity and given fair and performance-based pay for their work are more likely to be productive and remain loyal to an employer.

5 Domestic violence against women

Violence against women and girls occurs frequently and in different forms in all countries. These forms may include: domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, trafficking in women and girls, forced marriages, honor killings, dowry violence, acid throwing, female genital mutilation, etc.

According to UNICEF, gender-based violence represents the most frequent human rights violations worldwide [5]. In 2013 the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that at least one in three women worldwide has experienced either physical or sexual violence in the course of their lives.

The most common form of violence against women is physical violence by a trusted person at home. According to WHO estimates, 40 to 70 % of the murdered women in Australia, Israel, Canada, South Africa and the United States have fallen victim to their husbands or boyfriends [6].

Extreme cases in which domestic violence leads to death are found as dowry deaths, in which women are killed by their husband or mother-in-laws due to non-compliance of the dowry requirements. Not infrequently, the dowry exceeds the annual income of a whole family. Dowry deaths are particularly common in India, where over 8.000 women were murdered for this reason in 2012 [7], as well as in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Iran. Often enough women fall victims of bride burning, which is usually disguised as a kitchen accident, but women are also poisoned or supposedly died during surgery.

Girls and women who have been victims of violence often suffer the consequences all their lives. Even if most societies forbid this violence, it is still all too often reality that it is hushed up or tolerated.

References

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