

Forum: UN4MUN: Commission on the Status of Women I (CSW)

Issue: Reducing gender disparity and discrimination in the workplace

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Introduction(Julianne)

In terms of societal progress, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) has continuously promoted gender equality. Addressing a critical topic: Reducing gender imbalance and discrimination in the Challenges caused by gender continue to exist in the once-thought-of "ideal environment" for equality and career achievements. Despite tremendous progress in recent years, women still face barriers that prevent them from reaching leadership roles, fair pay, as well as better opportunities. Without hesitation, gender discrimination hinders the progress of individual careers along with the economy and society as a whole.

The top leading causes of gender disparity and discrimination in the workplace include lack of representation and leadership opportunities; Over the previous six years (2017–2023), there has been a consistent global growth in the percentage of women in senior and leadership jobs. Global gender parity for this category hit 42.7% in 2022—the greatest level to date, however, this number is not enough. In a report by Payscale, women only receive 83 cents per dollar made by men, leading to assumptions created by others that women should be in lower pay positions and in childcare and homemaker roles.

Some major impacts of gender inequality include multiple economic effects, halting economic growth, creating imbalances, and creating more challenges for women who are working to make ends meet. This also creates a continuous poverty cycle as families continue to try to raise their living standards. Creativity and production by women are also often overlooked by others, as they are often excluded from leadership and decision-making roles in their workplaces. When workplaces lack these new ideas, it creates a barrier to improvement, gradually impacting everyone in the workplace.

Gender inequality is also associated with human rights violations, not only does this deny more opportunities for women, it also creates a sense of agreement with the idea of a patriarchal society.

Definition of Key Terms(Ethan)

Feminism- advocacy for the rights and equality of women based on the belief in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes.

Gender Discrimination- inequality or disadvantages towards an individual or groups of individuals based on gender.

Gender Wage Gap- the difference between the median earnings of men and women relative to the median earnings of men.

Glass Ceiling- an invisible barrier that prevents women and other underrepresented groups from advancing to higher positions in the workplace, despite their qualifications and achievements.

Pay Equity- the legal concept that equal work deserves equal pay.

Sexual Harassment- the act of persistently annoying, tormenting, or intimidating someone, often in a discriminatory manner based on gender.

Workplace Inequality- lack of fairness or justice; an unfair situation, especially in terms of employment opportunities, promotions, or compensation.

Background Information (Ethan)

Pre-existing Gender Stereotypes

Traditional stereotypes, along with cultural and societal expectations frequently assign specific roles for men and women, which perpetuates the idea that women are less qualified for certain careers or leadership positions. Such jobs include construction and building, technicians, engineers, mechanics, carpenters, and much more. These stereotypes lead to implicit biases and preconceived notions about the incompetencies of women, which can negatively influence the decision-making process of hiring, promotions, and salary negotiations. This leads to the formation of what is known as the “glass ceiling”, an invisible barrier that limits women’s mobility in the workplace and prevents them from reaching top executive or managerial positions.

Maternal Bias

Maternal biases are caused by the constant reinforcement of the stereotypical belief that women will lack commitment and that their dedication will diminish when they become mothers. Companies could be reluctant to give their female employees difficult tasks or promotions if they think having a child will

interfere with their ability to pursue their career goals. Because of this discrimination, women are disproportionately excluded from positions that could advance their credentials and experience, which limits their opportunities for professional advancement. This type of discrimination affects women individually, as well as contributing to the wider gender pay gap and further enforces the aforementioned “glass ceiling”.

Sexual Harassment:

According to research conducted by the TLNT, 56% of female employees have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment is an unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including inappropriate physical contact, leering, or a suggestive comment or joke. The prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace leads to a discriminatory atmosphere that adversely affects women’s professional experiences and opportunities. The hostile work environment that such harassment creates negatively impacts the mental health and job satisfaction of the women who experience it. Their ability to perform at their best may be hampered by the elevated stress and anxiety levels brought on by this toxic environment. What worsens the situation even more is that victims of sexual harassment are often afraid to report these incidents in fear of reprisals or damage to their professional image. Due to the lack of accountability for offenders and the failure of the employer to address this systemic issue, discrimination and prejudice in the workplace is perpetuated.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved (Sean)

United Nations Women (UN Women)

In 2010 United Nations Women was formed by merging four bodies of the UN: The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Today, it is known for its goals of ending violence against women and promoting gender equality such as leadership and decision-making roles for women. Its 4 main goals include: (1) increasing women's political participation and other decision-making roles, (2) ensuring secure and decent jobs for women, (3) freeing women from violence, and (4) increasing women’s influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, humanitarian action, and prevention of natural disasters and conflicts. It helps member states and UN bodies such as CSW achieve goals related to UN Women’s goals by holding them accountable for commitments such as The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), setting global standards and norms, and assisting in establishing policies, laws, and programs.

Rwanda

With 61.3% of its parliamentary positions held by women in Rwanda, the highest out of the world, Rwanda is one of the top countries performing in closing the gender gap. Throughout its past years, it has implemented strategies and established programs such as the Gender Equality Strategy (2019-2022) and its Gender Equality Seal Certification Program to tackle the barriers to gender equality. However, despite its efforts to empower and increase representation for women, no country has successfully closed the gender pay gap. The current gender pay gap in Rwanda is 27%(on average, women earn 27% less than men for similar work), 4 percent higher than the global average.

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Afghanistan)

On August 30, 2021, after a 20-year-long conflict between the United States and the Taliban group, the U.S. and other NATO troops withdrew from the Afghan territory, ending the War in Afghanistan. Since, then, gender inequality in Afghanistan has significantly worsened. Recently, the Vice and Virtue Ministry, a government body of Afghanistan overseeing and ensuring practices of Islamic laws, suggested a woman working at a healthcare facility get married if she wanted to keep her job, deeming it inappropriate for unwedded women to work. The Taliban was described as "effectively erasing progress on women's rights in the intervening 20 years" by Press Releases of The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

United States

Despite passed laws such as the Civil Rights Act, complaints and lawsuits of gender discrimination and the gender pay gap still have been a persistent issue in the U.S. For example, in 2023, two Goldman Sachs, an American multinational investment bank, agreed to pay \$215 million in response to allegations of gender disparities made by around twenty-eight hundred female staff. This case showcases the gender discrimination present despite the protection of laws. Notably, only 86 women are promoted for every 100 men promoted, highlighting the imbalance in opportunities provided in the workplace.

A survey conducted by college-graduate job seekers shows that women expected an average of \$6000 lower salary than men. This huge gap showcases the need to not just implement new laws and federal agencies like The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), but to challenge gender stereotypes

Australia

Australia has a gender pay gap of 13% in 2023, ranking 26th worldwide. Throughout the past decades, Australia has made significant progress in addressing gender disparities in the workplace through ways such as the Sex Discrimination Act in 1984 and the establishment of the Workplace

Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). However, with 76% of healthcare workers being women and 86% of construction workers being male, Australia still faces a serious issue of gender segregation and a strong stereotypes.

Iceland

Praised for its great progress in addressing gender inequality by the World Economic Forum, Iceland has ranked number one for gender equality worldwide, with a gender pay gap of 21%. Its great progress may be due to its great commitment to gender equality and implementation of comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Laws and the proactive steps it has taken to close the gender pay gap. In 2017, Iceland passed the equal pay certification, which states that companies with over 25 employees equally pay employees in the same position. In 2012, it passed the Workplace Gender Equality Act, which states that companies with over 50 employees must complete 5 tasks to help reduce gender discrimination in the workplace. Employers may face up to daily fines and jail time if the laws are violated.

South Korea

Gender disparity and discrimination in the workplace is a serious issue in South Korea. Women in South Korea face sexist comments and discrimination with 45% reporting hearing sexist comments from other colleagues and 28% reporting feeling uncomfortable in the workplace and inappropriate comments on their physical appearances. However, efforts such as the revision of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 2018, requiring employers to provide equal pay for equal positions and work and spreading educational videos on gender equality are being made.

Japan

Gender disparity and discrimination in the workplace and gender equality in general has always been a serious issue in Japan. With a 40% gender pay gap, ranking 125th out of 146 countries in 2023, it faces issues with traditional gender stereotypes and roles. Traditional beliefs expect the husband to provide for the family while the wife submits to her husband and looks after children and does chores. The dominance of older men in Japanese companies has created disparities and discrimination against women due to the older men's traditional views of roles and responsibilities of gender.

Equal-Salary

Equal-Salary is a non-profit and Non-Governmental Organization(NGO) that promotes equal pay for equal work and position with no gender biases. It verifies that companies are paying equally despite of one's gender using statistical data. Having this certification as a company shows commitment in sustainable development and equality for all genders and strengthens its rex

putation.

International Labour Organization(ILO)

International Labour Organization(ILO) is an Intergovernmental Organization(IGO) established by the UN in 1919. It promotes decent employment opportunities and environment, including gender disparities. It protects vulnerable individuals through social protection systems and comes up with policies that ensure a safe and inclusive working environment for all.

Timeline of Events (Julianne)

Date	Description of event
1872	Equal Pay Legislation
1918	Passing of the District of Columbia minimum wage law
1923	Adkins v. Children's Hospital
1964	Civil Rights Act of 1964

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties (Sean)

- Women in development, 22 December 2015 (**A/RES/70/219**)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 12 February 2008 (**A/RES/62/218**)
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, 16 December 1983 (**A/RES/38/109**)
- Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 18 December 2008(**A/RES/63/159**)

Possible Solutions (Julianne)

As the Commission on the Status of Women strives to continuously promote gender inequality globally there are still many issues that are not addressed properly, such as the Issue of Reducing Gender Disparity in the Workplace, so here are some potential solutions that can help solve the issue given at hand.

Promoting DEI

Establishing a diverse and inclusive workplace culture that values and appreciates people of all genders should be a top priority for businesses. Establishing an environment at work where everyone is

respected, empowered to express their viewpoints, and has equitable access to chances for professional growth should be the upmost priority for all employers.

Establishing Clear Policies and Reporting Mechanisms

Formal procedures should be implemented by employers to handle discrimination, harassment, bullying, and gender inequality. These regulations must to be included in the employee handbook and explained to all fresh hires throughout the onboarding process. It is critical to implement anonymity reporting protocols to guarantee that any issues or occurrences are dealt with in a timely and proper manner.

Establishing Women's Employee Resource Groups (EGR)

Thoroughly define the objectives and intentions of the women's ERG. Next, outline the specific issues or components of gender inequality that the ERG seeks to resolve. These may include encouraging women to pursue careers, advocating for equal opportunities, building a work atmosphere that is welcoming to women, or addressing particular difficulties that women experience inside the business in question.

Questions for Further Research (Julianne)

Regardless of the stance of countries, further research is crucial to help develop more effective, and efficient solutions which allow nations to adapt to different situations regarding the issue. Here are 10 questions delegates may want to acquire further knowledge about.

1. What are the main causes of the ongoing gender wage disparity, and how do they differ in different sectors and professions?
2. What socioeconomic and cultural variables affect men's and women's job choices, and how does occupational segregation affect gender inequity in the workplace?
3. What obstacles must women overcome to become leaders, and how does the presence of women in leadership positions affect the culture of the workplace?
4. What effect do workplace regulations like flexible work schedules and maternity/paternity leave have on gender equality, and what part do organizational practices play in encouraging work-life balance?
5. How common is discrimination based on gender in recruiting, promotions, and performance reviews, and what effects can implicit bias have on organizations and psychology?
6. What role does workplace harassment and discrimination play in maintaining gender inequality? How does corporate culture either exacerbate or lessen gender disparities?
7. In what ways can gender and other variables—like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status—intersect to provide particular obstacles at work?
8. What are the main variables affecting women's career growth, and what role do sponsorship and mentoring programs play in their success?

9. What legislative or policy reforms could further advance gender equity? How effective are current laws and policies in tackling gender inequality in the workplace?
10. What are the regional and national differences in gender inequities in the workplace, and are there any effective global models or best practices that support gender equality in the workplace?

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