

Gender and Employment: Occupational Gender Segregation in Cities of China

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Abstract: The research object of this paper is the phenomenon of occupational gender segregation in cities in China. In this paper, the current situation, influencing factors, and the negative consequences of occupational gender segregation are mainly studied, and the corresponding governance methods are put forward. First of all, the research background and significance of this paper are introduced, and related concepts are defined, including occupational gender segregation as well as its two types: horizontal segregation and vertical segregation. Next, the current situation of occupational gender segregation is analyzed, including the gender employment structure caused by horizontal segregation and the promotion obstacles and gender wage gap caused by vertical segregation. On this basis of research, the influencing factors of occupational gender segregation are discussed, including gender stereotypes, the conflict between female family roles and occupational roles as well as the factor of education. Subsequently, the consequences of occupational gender segregation are analyzed, including the negative impact on personal income, personal career development, development of industries, occupational prejudice, and social fairness and justice. Then, the governance methods are put forward from four aspects: government, enterprise, individual and media. Finally, the main research conclusions as well as the innovations and the shortcomings of this paper are summarized, and the prospect of this field is made according to the conclusions. The conclusion of this paper shows that occupational gender segregation is still widespread today, and it has a negative impact on individuals, industries, and Chinese society. Therefore, it is necessary to take various measures to reduce occupational gender segregation and achieve gender equality in employment.

Keywords: equal employment, occupational gender segregation, gender stereotype, gender wage gap, gender employment structure

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

Gender equality is an eternal topic in the entire human world. In China, it is also a basic national policy. The Outline of China Women's Development Exhibition (2021-2030) points out that efforts should be made to eliminate gender discrimination in employment, improve the female employment structure, and gradually eliminate occupational gender segregation. Therefore, it can be seen that the

equality between males and females in employment is a core content of gender equality, and it is also an important basis for realizing the fairness of employment opportunities and the distribution system.

Today, with the gradual development of urbanization, people from rural areas are constantly pouring into cities to seek jobs and make a living in pursuit of a higher quality of life and social status. A large labor supply and people's pursuit of ideal jobs make employment in cities a heated topic today. However, employment in China has been an extensive employment mode for a long time, and the concern for employment mainly focused on the overall employment scale and overall employment rate, while the issue of unbalanced occupational gender distribution was not paid enough attention and governance, resulting in a large number of male occupations (the proportion of female is below 30%) and female occupations (the proportion of female is above 70%) in many fields of the national economy [1]. This unbalanced distribution of gender in occupations will lead to great differences between males and females in employment opportunities, income, career status, and career development, which are all manifestations of urban employment in China's labor market.

1.2. Research Significance

As mentioned above, the uneven gender distribution in occupations is a typical manifestation of occupational gender segregation, which will further lead to employment difficulties, industrial development damage, and unfair distribution of social resources, ultimately hindering the process of gender equality and social fairness and justice. However, analysis and research on occupational gender segregation can solve this series of problems. First, paying attention to the current situation of occupational gender segregation will help to raise awareness of gender equality at the social level, promote the mainstreaming of gender equality, and realize the balanced development of the population in China. Second, discussing its influencing factors will help to further understand the gender inequality in employment in the labor market to improve the allocation of resources in the labor market more efficiently and narrow the overall income gap in China [2]. Third, exploring its consequences and the practice of governance against its negative impacts will help to solve the issue at a realistic level and ultimately promote gender equality and realize harmonious and healthy social development. Therefore, it is significant to carry out a comprehensive study on occupational gender segregation.

1.3. The definition of related concepts

1.3.1. Occupational gender segregation

Occupational gender segregation refers to the tendency of males and females to work in different professions [3]. It was first put forward by Edward Gross, which means that workers are assigned and concentrated in different occupational categories in the labor market to engage in different jobs. In the labor market, there are differences in the number of groups (population groups with different gender, age and race) that make up the total labor force. When the occupational distribution within one population group is quite different from that within another population group, there is supposed to be occupational segregation between these two groups. When the division of population groups is mainly based on gender factors, it can be said that there is occupational gender segregation [4,5]. In conclusion, it means that different genders are concentrated in different industries and positions due to social systematic factors, which is one of the main ways of gender discrimination in the labor market. It is divided into horizontal segregation and vertical segregation.

1.3.2. Horizontal segregation

Horizontal now refers to segregation at the same level: it is the extent to which males and females are in different occupations without giving an occupational advantage to either sex [6]. Specifically, it means that it is difficult for females to enter some jobs that are regarded as male, such as occupations represented by manual labor. On the contrary, it is also difficult for males to enter some jobs that are regarded as female, such as jobs characterized by housework or nursing.

1.3.3. Vertical segregation

Vertical refers to a single dimension of inequality, with advantages running from low to high. Aspects of vertical inequality include social stratification, power, skill, and earnings [6]. Vertical occupational segregation exists when males and females both work in the same job categories, but males commonly do the more skilled, responsible, or better-paid work [7]. In this segregation, male and female are in the same industry. Males usually have higher positions and salaries, while females are in lower positions and are paid a lower salary, and they are not easy to be promoted. Even with the same job content, there is often some form of unequal pay for equal work between males and females.

2. Current situation

Many studies have shown that occupational gender segregation is widespread in job recruitment [8]. Also, it is a very common phenomenon in China. Specifically, the participation of females in the labor market is low [4], and they are also at a disadvantage in terms of wages and benefits [2]. Gender discrimination exists in many enterprises, which leads to the loss of interests of females in job hunting, promotion, and income [1]. In addition, occupational gender segregation exists not only in the field of direct employment but also in the field of indirect employment, such as entrepreneurs. These phenomena not only limit the career development of females but also affect the development and progress of society. The following paper will explain occupational gender segregation in China from horizontal and vertical segregation.

2.1. Current situation of horizontal segregation

2.1.1. Gender employment structure

In the horizontal segregation of occupational gender, some occupations are potentially divided into male and female occupations since most of their members have a specific gender. The extremely unbalanced ratio between males and females in these occupations has formed the emergence and solidification of gender employment structure and established a barrier to gender-based differentiation. These occupations are not completely open to all employees but unwittingly exclude the participation and development of other genders. Therefore, people also cannot ignore the gender factor in the process of occupational selection. The existence of these phenomena further strengthens the gender employment structure and occupational gender segregation, which has become an important reason hindering career development and social progress.

2.1.2. Empirical research

Here, two examples are given in this paper to illustrate the current horizontal segregation of gender occupations in China.

The first example is the nurse occupation. It is often noticed that most of the members of the nursing profession in China are female. The report of the National Health Commission of PRC released by China News Network last year showed that by the end of 2021, among the more than 5

million nurses in China, the proportion of male nurses accounted for 3%, much higher than 1.8% in 2012. This data shows the serious imbalance between male and female nurses in China, and it can be said that nurses are a female occupation.

The second example is the construction occupation. The construction site is a male industry, and male workers account for the majority. A survey of immigrant workers in the construction industry in five cities in China found males account for an absolute majority, with an average of 93.8% in 5000 samples [9]. Similarly, table 1 is listed in the article Collection of Women's Studies. It is written about the gender ratio in the occupational categories of production workers, transport workers, and related personnel. It lists occupations that most males do in the right column, including construction workers. The proportion of females is only 8.7% there, which proves that the construction occupation is a male occupation.

Table 1: The gender ratio in the occupational categories of production workers, transport workers, and related personnel [10].

Top five occupations	Female proportion	Last five occupations	Female proportion
Cutting and sewing workers	82.7	Metal smelting and processing workers	17.9
Textile, knitting, printing and dyeing workers	78.4	Mining, quarrying, exploration, drilling, and salt mining workers	11.0
Leather and fur product makers	69.2	Construction worker	8.7
Inspection, measurement, and test analysts	68.0	Stone cutter and carver	6.6
Printers and related personnel	67.2	Transport equipment operator	6.5

In summary, from these two empirical studies, it can be seen that there is widespread horizontal segregation of occupational gender in China, and it does form an employment barrier for males and females.

2.2. Current situation of vertical segregation

2.2.1. Promotion obstacles

In the vertical segregation of gender occupations, females face many employment difficulties, and promotion obstacles are one of them. Today, in China, high-level positions are often more occupied by males. A Survey of Gender Differences in Workplace in 2019 analyses the influence of working years on the promotion of males and females and points out that with the increase of working years, the promotion probability of males and females is different: the promotion probability of males with 3-5 years, 5-10 years and more years of work experience are 1.5%, 12.1% and 8.3% higher than that of female, respectively [11]. Therefore, a conclusion can be reached that females not only exist less in high-level positions, but also are relatively difficult to be promoted.

In many companies, the recruitment and promotion standards for senior positions are often more inclined to males, which makes females face unfair competition in the workplace. In addition, gender bias is also widespread, and females are often considered to lack leadership and management experience, which makes it difficult for them to gain recognition in high-level positions.

In addition to the above factors, females face the problem of family and career balance. Due to the traditional orientation of family roles in society, females often need to take on more family responsibilities, which makes it difficult for them to invest enough time and energy in developing their occupations in the workplace. This problem of balancing family and occupation affects females' career development, but it also brings them great pressure and anxiety.

2.2.2. Gender wage gap

Wage inequality is another essential problem that females face in the workplace. Although the law stipulates the principle of gender equality in salary, in reality, females often suffer from unfair treatment of low salary. The research shows that the wage level of male employees in China's urban labor market is significantly higher than that of females by about 27.23% [12]. Also, nowadays, the gender wage gap has been increasing rapidly in recent years [13]. This wage inequality not only affects females' economic situation but also reduces their status and self-esteem in the workplace.

Different working patterns between males and females, gender differences in education level, traditional gender roles, and unequal gender division of labor in production and reproduction are all influencing factors [14]. In addition to gender differences, other factors may lead to wage inequality. For example, women's personal characteristics, such as age, education, marriage and children, as well as employment departments and occupations [15].

In conclusion, the vertical segregation of occupational gender has brought many employment difficulties for females, including obstacles to promotion and wage inequality. These difficulties not only affect females' career development and economic situation but also hinder the development of gender equality and social progress.

3. Influencing factors

3.1. Influence of gender stereotype

One of the reasons for occupational gender segregation is gender stereotypes. This stereotype leads to social restrictions on the occupational selections and opportunities of males and females. This stereotype generally believes that there are differences in abilities, interests, and talents between males and females, which may lead recruiters to prefer a certain gender in the recruitment process or lead individuals to be restricted in choosing a career. Studies found that female-concentrated occupations often have the characteristics of "feminine technology and working environment," such as "dexterous skills," "secretarial duties," "parenting skills," or "obedience work." However, the occupations in which males are concentrated often have "masculine technology and working environment," such as "emphasizing physical labor," "extremely harsh working environment," "mathematical technology," and "positions of authority" [16].

To explain the consequences of stereotypes, the nursing occupation can be taken as an example. It is generally believed that females are more careful than males and meet the nursing requirements. In clinics, people accept females to engage in the nursing industry [17]. Also, there are some prejudices from patients, such as aggressive males, which will offend patients.

For another example, STEM is often regarded as a male-dominated field. People usually associate the STEM discipline with masculinity and think that people who study and engage in the STEM field must have male personality and interest characteristics [18]. In addition, STEM-related industries are

also more inclined to recruit males, thus reducing the chances of females being hired or promoted in STEM-related industries [19].

The consequence of this stereotype is to strengthen occupational gender segregation. Because people think that some occupations are more suitable for a certain gender, the practitioners in these occupations are often the same gender.

3.2. Influence of the conflict between female's family role and occupational role

The conflict between a female's family role and occupational role is a common problem, which mainly stems from the traditional social and cultural concepts that position females as the main responsible persons of the family. For a long time, females have assumed more responsibilities within the family than males, and the concept of "a female's place is at home while a male's is in the workplace" is popular in almost all countries. With the development of cities and the increased economic burden brought by expensive consumption, females have to participate in paid labor activities, too. Therefore, there is a sharp conflict between females' roles in the home and their responsibilities in the workplace. This conflict is mainly manifested in the fact that females often need to balance work and family life simultaneously, especially when they need to work overtime go away on official business and other professional requirements. In addition, many workplaces have not fully adapted to females' professional needs, lack flexible work arrangements and policy support, and even put forward more demanding requirements for females.

In China's Announcement of the 2018 National Time Use Survey, the unpaid working hours of post-90s males are 1 hour and 32 minutes per day, while those of post-90s females are as high as 3 hours and 48 minutes per day, which is a huge difference. In the report, "unpaid labor" includes housework, accompanying and caring for children's lives, escorting and tutoring children's studies, accompanying and caring for elderly family members, purchasing goods or services, seeing a doctor, and public welfare activities.

It can be seen that it is still a mainstream thought and a common phenomenon for females to do unpaid work at home. Spending too much energy and time at home may have a negative impact on work to a certain extent, leading to the development of females in the workplace not as good as that of males, and also leading to the generation of people's prejudice and the solidification of occupational gender segregation.

3.3. Influence of education

The third influencing factor considered in this paper is education. Education system is a crucial part of society that has an important influence on personal career choice and career development. There may be gender bias or discrimination in the education system, which may lead to students of a specific gender being potentially restricted in certain disciplines or career directions, thus forming occupational gender segregation. For example, the curriculum and resource allocation may affect students' career choices. In some cases, courses and resources in certain disciplines or occupational directions may be more biased towards one gender, resulting in students of the other gender being restricted in these disciplines or occupational directions. It is found that university professors in the field of STEM are more willing to provide career guidance and support for males and recruit them as laboratory managers [19], which shows that the courses and resources of STEM discipline are more biased towards males. In this case, the opportunities and participation of males and females in the professional field are unequal, and occupational gender segregation is easy.

4. Consequences

4.1. Impact on personal income

As mentioned earlier in this paper, occupational gender segregation leads to the gender wage gap between males and females. In the urban employment market in China, high-paying jobs are often occupied by males, while females can only concentrate on low-paying jobs [20]. In addition, because females have fewer opportunities for career promotion than males, their income has been at a low level for a long time. According to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2022, the average salary of urban males (about 7,500 yuan per month) in China is still higher than that of females (about 6,000 yuan per month). Moreover, in the same occupation, the average salary of males is generally higher than that of females. Hence, it can be seen that the direct consequence of occupational gender segregation is a profound impact on personal income.

4.2. Impact on personal career development

Occupational gender segregation will also restrict personal career choice and development. First of all, due to the constraints of gender stereotypes and the imbalance of resources in China's labor market, it is difficult for individuals to escape the limitations of traditional concepts, manifested in their inability to stick to their initial intentions in career choice. For example, although some males are strongly interested in some jobs regarded as females' occupations, they also have certain talents. However, due to the influence of traditional ideas, they have to bear enormous social and psychological pressure when choosing male nurses or male kindergarten teachers and other similar jobs, so they have to give up this choice or engage in jobs they don't like against their professional wishes. Similarly, if females join the male profession, they will also face great psychological pressure, and their career development will be more difficult [1].

4.3. Impact on the development of industries

Occupational gender segregation will also have a certain impact on the development of the overall industry. The development of some industries is inseparable from the contribution of both males and females. However, occupational gender segregation makes those industries exist only in a specific gender, hindering the development of the whole industry. For example, the article in China Youth Daily (2017) mentioned earlier that it is also important to increase the proportion of male nurses in hospitals. It is more convenient for male nurses to prepare the skin by shaving and cleaning the body surfaces of male patients before the operation. Besides, it is mentioned that males' physical strength is also better, so male nurses are more needed in rescue. Therefore, the proportion of male nurses is low, which is not conducive to developing many medical works. In addition to the healthcare industry, other industries also need to balance the ratio of male to female employees. For example, the unbalanced ratio of male to female in the education industry may affect students' learning feelings and experiences, and that in the technology industry may lead to the lack of diversity in some technical fields, thus affecting innovation and product development. Therefore, it can be seen that occupational gender segregation has great negative effects on the development of industries, which is also a reflection of distorting the allocation of human resources and reducing the production efficiency of society.

4.4. Impact on occupational prejudice

Occupational gender segregation also reinforces occupational prejudice. Since males tend to be concentrated in certain occupational fields, while females are concentrated in other fields, this may

lead to the monopoly of males in some occupational fields, thus giving them more advantages in career development. At the same time, due to the concentration of females in some fields, there may be discrimination and prejudice against females' occupations, which are considered less important or less valuable than males' occupations. It is likely that people only regard an occupation as exclusive to a specific gender, thus establishing a high barrier. Then, occupational prejudice will continue to impose gendered roles on people and continue the career path of gender segregation, aggravating existing gender inequality [21]. This will cause a vicious circle and strengthen professional prejudice on people's career choices to some extent.

4.5. Impact on social fairness and justice

Occupational gender segregation is a phenomenon that seriously hinders social fairness and justice. Its existence makes society fail to give males and females the same job opportunities and salaries. Inequitable wage structure and inequitable occupational promotion not only restrict females' career development and cause economic losses to them but also damage the efficiency and innovation ability of the organization and hinder the development of the whole society.

Under occupational gender segregation, gender equality cannot be achieved. The most essential content of gender equality is equality between males and females in employment. The inequality between males and females in employment will lead to and aggravate the inequality of females' economic status in the family, thus making females' social status lower and subject to more prejudice and discrimination in all fields of social life. The essence of occupational gender segregation is occupational gender discrimination. Only by completely eliminating gender discrimination in employment can people realize the true fairness between males and females [1], establish a truly just and equal society, and realize the all-round development and prosperity of society.

5. Methods of governance

5.1. Government level

The government plays an important role in solving occupational gender segregation. Firstly, the government should formulate relevant laws and policies, clearly stipulate gender equality and females' rights and interests, formulate corresponding systems for enterprises, require enterprises to openly recruit male and female employees, and strengthen penalties and sanctions for enterprises that violate policies. This will eliminate gender discrimination and occupational gender segregation and ensure that females are treated fairly in the workplace. Secondly, the government should provide equal employment opportunities and vocational training to encourage females to enter male-dominated occupations. This can be achieved by providing targeted training programs and career guidance to help females acquire the necessary skills and knowledge needed in the occupation and improve their competitiveness in the workplace.

5.2. Enterprise level

Enterprises also play a vital role in solving the phenomenon of occupational gender segregation. Firstly, enterprises should formulate fair recruitment and promotion policies and cannot restrict the career development of employees in terms of gender factor. This means giving all employees equal opportunities and eliminating gender discrimination. Secondly, enterprises should provide equal training and skills development opportunities to help employees achieve occupational promotion. This can be achieved by providing extensive training programs and career development guidance to help employees improve their skills and knowledge.

5.3. Individual level

Individuals are the main body affected by occupational gender segregation, so they should also be responsible for reducing it. First, individuals should establish their awareness of gender equality, eliminate the concept of gender discrimination, and respect and support gender-diverse career choices. This requires education and publicity to help people realize that gender should not be a factor limiting personal career development. Secondly, individuals should encourage themselves to pursue their occupational goals and overcome obstacles and challenges in career development. This can be achieved by providing proper support and guidance. Finally, males should actively participate in family and parenting activities, share family responsibilities, and provide more support and help for females in the workplace. This can help females balance family and work, reduce the burden on them, and enable them to give full play to their abilities in the workplace.

5.4. Media level

The media is an important force in social progress, and it should help solve occupational gender segregation in society through propaganda and dissemination. Firstly, the media should increase publicity and reporting on gender equality and females' rights and interests and enhance public awareness of occupational gender segregation and gender discrimination. This can be achieved through news reports, social media promotion, and other media channels. Secondly, the media should create more works that reflect the role of females in social, economic, and political fields, such as publicizing females' achievements and contributions in different fields and improving the status and influence of females' images in society. Finally, the media should supervise and expose occupational gender segregation and gender discrimination by public opinion to promote changes and progress in all aspects of society, such as reporting related events, exposing problems, and providing solutions to promote social attention and action on gender equality issues.

In conclusion, solving the phenomenon of occupational gender segregation requires the joint efforts and actions of the government, enterprises, individuals, and the media. Only by actively taking measures can people eliminate occupational gender segregation and achieve gender equality and social progress.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Research conclusion

The present situation, influencing factors, and consequences of occupational gender segregation are systematically discussed in this paper, and corresponding governance methods are also put forward. The following is the conclusion of this paper:

(1) Occupational gender segregation is mainly divided into horizontal segregation and vertical segregation. The former shows the imbalance of gender employment structure, while the latter shows the obstacles of females in promotion and salary.

(2) Through theoretical analysis and empirical research, gender stereotypes, the conflict between females' family roles and professional roles, and education are found in this paper to be the primary reasons leading to occupational gender segregation. These factors limit females' career development and social-gender equality.

(3) Occupational gender segregation has a negative impact on individuals, industries, and the whole of society. For individuals, occupational gender segregation may lead to income differences and personal career development obstacles. For industries, occupational gender segregation will hinder the development of the overall industry. For society, occupational gender segregation will aggravate gender inequality and damage social fairness and justice.

(4) To reduce and eliminate occupational gender segregation, four levels of governance methods are put forward in this paper: government, enterprises, individuals, and the media. The government should formulate relevant laws and policies to ensure gender equality and eliminate occupational gender segregation. Enterprises should take active measures to reduce gender discrimination in the workplace and provide fair promotion opportunities and remuneration for women. Individuals should establish gender equality awareness, overcome gender stereotypes, pursue their own career development, and actively participate in actions to promote gender equality. The media should strengthen the publicity and reporting on gender equality and females' rights and interests and play an essential role in public opinion supervision to expose and condemn gender discrimination in the workplace.

The main innovation of this paper is to systematically discuss the influencing factors and governance methods of occupational gender segregation and put forward specific suggestions from multiple angles. However, the shortcomings of this paper lie in the failure to deeply analyze occupational gender segregation in different industries and regions and the lack of further research on the impact mechanism on individual and social levels. It is expected that future research can explore these aspects and provide more comprehensive theoretical guidance for promoting gender equality and eliminating occupational gender segregation.

6.2. Research prospect

In the prospect part, it can be pointed out that although in-depth research on the current situation, influencing factors, consequences, and governance methods of occupational gender segregation has been conducted in this paper, there are still some problems that need further discussion.

Firstly, only the cities in China are concerned in this study, and further research is needed for occupational gender segregation in some rural areas of China and other countries and regions. In addition, although some methods have been put forward to reduce occupational gender segregation, the implementation effect and long-term impact of these strategies need further tracking and research.

Secondly, it is expected that further research can explore more influencing factors of occupational gender segregation, including social culture, economic environment, education level, policies, and regulations. In addition, the consequences of occupational gender segregation need further in-depth research to better understand its impact on individuals, society, and industry.

In the future, it is expected to see more research and policies focusing on occupational gender segregation to promote social progress and gender equality. At the same time, this research also hopes to see more practices and policies implemented in actions to reduce occupational gender segregation to achieve real gender equality and social fairness and justice.

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