

Dilemmas and Solutions for Women in the Workplace

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Abstract: Nowadays, many women are discriminated in the workplace because of their gender. Equal employment for women is at the centre of this study, and the dynamic equilibrium between the reproductive policy and the related supporting policies, especially the public service policy, together constitute the policy background to the issue of women's employment, while at the same time the social has some negative evaluation of women's employment. At present, China's traditional labour division model of "men focusing on the outside and women focusing on the inside" has been turned into a labour participation model in which females devote themselves to both work and family, i.e., internal and external labour participation, while men still continue to "focus on the outside" one-dimensional labour model. The increase in women's labour force participation rate has, on the contrary, put women in a more unequal situation. This paper first describes the current situation of gender-based discrimination against women in the workplace in terms of three aspects: recruitment, promotion and pay. It then analyses the causes of these phenomena and looks for ways to address them to better protect women's equal rights in the workplace.

Keywords: women in the workplace, corporate system, legal policy, social climate, family

1. Introduction

Feminism was introduced to China during the May Fourth period, and has been around for nearly 100 years. However, to this day, there is still a long way to go before "equality between men and women" in a substantive sense. And gender discrimination against women, especially in the workplace, is still common.

Labour market discrimination is depicted by the gender level. This is the issue with job discrimination on the basis of gender. [1] It is now a social fact that women are marginalized and treated differently in the workplace, making them one of the underrepresented groups there [2]. This is primarily seen in the following areas: First, the entry bar; despite the fact that both men and women have an equal amount of human capital, businesses still favor hiring males and frequently view women as inefficient. Second, gender segregation, which refers to the practice of assigning employees to specific jobs or positions based on their gender, resulting in a glaring disparity in the distribution of occupations between men and women. Third, women often face disadvantages when promoted inside businesses because they typically rank lower in the occupational ladder than men. Fourth, the work-family conundrum. Women experience more "work-family" conflicts in daily life, and family obligations like marriage and childbirth have an impact on women's labor supply,

resulting in shorter average working hours for women than for men, as well as a greater propensity to engage in informal jobs with erratic hours, instability, and no social security status. [3]

The promotion of equal employment for women is of great practical significance, not only for the promotion of social equity, but also for unleashing the potential for economic and social development. Chinese women make up one fifth of all females worldwide, as noted in the 2015 White Paper on Gender Equality and Women's Development in China. In addition to demonstrating China's advancement as a civilisation, gender equality and women's progress in China have historically contributed to global peace, development, and equality. [4]

Finding solutions to women's employment inequality from the perspective of policy adjustment is a useful attempt, and has profound theoretical and practical significance for achieving gender equality in the labour market, improving women's social status, enhancing social welfare and benefits, perfecting the construction of employment policies.

2. Status of Women in the Workplace

Based on the research study, this paper will interpret the current situation of women facing workplace discrimination from three perspectives.

2.1. Recruitment Level

For women in the hiring process, the issue of gender discrimination is particularly acute. During interviews with female applicants, inquiries like "Are you married?" and "Do you have any plans to have children?" are routinely made. Female applicants are not only required to respond to these in-depth personal questions, but they also feel obliged to be honest or face rejection. Furthermore, despite the fact that these roles are not directly related to gender convenience, many industries have the "unspoken rule" that only men are recruited or given preference over men. In these situations, female job seekers are frequently turned down even though their overall performance is superior to that of their male counterparts.

2.2. Promotion Level

Women frequently face a "ceiling" effect that keeps them from advancing to higher positions and pay. This effect is entirely dependent on gender and is unrelated to working conditions. Senior management prefers to place men in leadership positions and women in other support roles when given the same opportunity for advancement, perpetuating the stereotype that women are not "competitive, influential" managers. This unconscious selection bias makes it more difficult for women to pursue careers in the workforce.

In addition, women now face a "stumbling block" in their quest for career progress related to childrearing. The age range of 23 to 40 is the concentrated peak of female fertility and the important point at which women's career development enters an upward mobility phase.

2.3. Remuneration Level

While very few women work in these high-paying sectors and businesses, a substantial number of males work in high-paying industries like finance, logistics, and the Internet, and most of them pick high-paying positions like sales and technology. And there is a large wage gap between the industries and fields, which has led to the pay gap between men and women in some respects.

It's also clear that when female managers do well at work, they tend to credit timing and luck more than their own skills, and when they perform poorly in particular circumstances, discrimination against them intensifies and is met with harsh criticism and accusations. Because of

this, female managers rarely receive recognition for their achievements, and the incentives they do receive are far smaller than those earned by their male counterparts.

3. Causes of Sex Discrimination Faced by Women in the Workplace

The causes of gender discrimination against women in the workplace are many and are summarised at three levels: corporate, social and legal.

3.1. Enterprise Level

Businesses will attempt to minimize labor costs and optimize financial gains in order to limit costs. Objectively speaking, employing men allows companies to exchange the same labour costs for a more productive workforce. Women can retire five years sooner than males under China's current retirement system, which inevitably lowers the value of women's labor. Businesses are hesitant to hire women in order to achieve their aims of increased efficiency.[5]

Furthermore, businesses must incur indirect losses due to a reduction in labor skills during the maternity leave period in addition to direct expenditures like salaries, job openings and the lack of updated knowledge that may occur when women return to their jobs after giving birth. Employers will therefore avoid these expenses by restricting the hiring, placement, and advancement of women out of self-interest. Thus making women face problems such as difficulty in finding jobs, poor development, and low treatment. [4]

3.2. Social Dimension

The issue of women's employment is subject to the clash of old and new cultures. Nowadays, society and women themselves are increasingly recognising that women should pursue a certain degree of career, but the idea that "women should be in charge of the family" is still rooted in people's concepts. The whole society has formed the expectation of women's dual roles: be a office lady and a good wife [6], expecting them to create value in the market but also expecting them to take good care of their families. This concept, on the one hand, pushes women to keep moving towards market employment, but on the other hand, it also creates the social role dilemma of women's employment and childbirth, which hinders women's employment in the new era.

3.3. Legal Aspects

China's laws and regulations on protecting women's legal rights in employment are not very comprehensive. China's existing anti-discrimination provisions are scattered throughout the Constitution, the Employment Promotion Law, the Labour Law, but there is no specific anti-discrimination law. The Labour Law also makes only some provisions in principle, neither defining clearly the constituent elements of gender discrimination in employment, nor specifying the main parties responsible and the penalties to be imposed. As a result, women who encounter gender discrimination in the workplace do not have the ideal legal weapons to defend their rights. [7]

4. Recommendation

4.1. Improvement of Relevant Laws to Promote Women's Equal Rights and Interests

The legal procedures for guaranteeing equal employment for women in China can be improved in the following three areas.

The introduction of a special Anti-Employment Discrimination Act. In this special law, on the one hand, the definition, criteria and classification of gender discrimination in employment should be clarified; on the other hand, clear provisions should be made on the Government's supervisory methods and duties, and the level of penalties.

Improving employment laws and regulations. The wording of the existing laws on occupational taboos and special employment regulations for women during their physiological period can lead employers to misunderstandings such as "female employees are too delicate", which reinforces the stereotype that women are inferior to men. [8] In this regard, the interpretation of these laws should be gradually adjusted to omit ambiguous words and clearly define relevant terms. In short, on the basis of both special protection and gender equality, the boundaries between special protection and "equal treatment" should be clearly delineated, so as to reduce the misunderstanding of women and return to the original intention of the law to protect women.

bolstering anti-discrimination policies in the workplace. Women's equal employment rights will be better protected through the creation of a specialized anti-discrimination organization like to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which is akin to opening a green channel to deal specifically with job discrimination.

4.2. Establishment of Specialised Oversight Bodies

In order to promote the operability of policy implementation and the effective solution of gender equality issues, special regulatory organisations can be established. While focusing on the establishment of a special organisation to carry out the function of promoting equal employment in a phased or sustained manner, the civil society can also form some social organisations on its own initiative to further promote it. The relevant organisations from both the official and private sectors will focus on their respective functions and roles, and complement each other to jointly promote the realisation of women's equality in employment.

4.3. Establishment of Diversified Childcare Institutions

The establishment of childcare facilities by the Government can effectively alleviate the family pressure faced by women so that they can better engage in their work. For example, the Government can provide nursery schools for children aged 0–5 years and kindergartens for children aged 3–5 years, with an emphasis on educational services. There are also other child-care institutions, such as public mixed child-care centres, joint child-care centres, family-run child-care institutions, early education centres, and so on, to meet the different forms of child-care needs of parents.

4.4. Government Encourages Enterprises to Create a Family-Friendly Employment Environment

Encouraging gender equality only through government action is insufficient; businesses must take greater responsibility as well. Enterprises are an important part of the market economy and are the main carriers of employment for families of childbearing age, so they must actively fulfill their corresponding social responsibilities in promoting equal employment for women.

The Government shares the costs of childcare for female employees borne by enterprises through economic measures such as compensation and incentives. First, the Government should apply tax incentives, such as tax deductions and exemptions for business enterprises that pay the usual benefits to female employees during the period of childbirth and breastfeeding; second, the Government should draw a certain percentage of fiscal revenues for matching support for the payment of maternity insurance by enterprises, changing the burden of maternity insurance from

that of the enterprise alone to that of society as a whole, in order to alleviate the pressure on the enterprise's financial resources.

5. Conclusion

Childbearing is a natural physiological attribute of women, and employment is an economic and social attribute of women, both of which are inseparably united in order to form contemporary women in the full sense of the word. Firstly, in order to completely eliminate discrimination against women in the workplace, laws and policies pertaining to this issue must be strengthened. Secondly, policy orientation between the State and women's individual interests must be coordinated; thirdly, it is necessary to intensify the formation of family support policies to provide solutions for women to balance their work and family; and finally, to achieve complete equality between the sexes in all economic and social domains, the concept of gender must be more integrated throughout society. In order to establish full equality between the sexes in all economic and social arenas, it is also required to increase the integration of the social idea of gender in society at large.

Without gender equality in society as a whole, it is difficult to maintain gender equality in individual areas. Therefore, women's equal employment should be based on the continuous promotion of gender equality in society as a whole in order to be stable and long-lasting. Therefore, in promoting equality between men and women and fulfilling the commitment to gender mainstreaming, we should update the mindset of social groups in terms of behavioural patterns. However, behind the institutional deficiencies are the deficiencies in the values of public policymaking—the lack of sufficient attention to the plight and needs of vulnerable groups. Therefore, in formulating laws to protect women's equality in the workplace, it is necessary to consider women's interests from the perspective of their needs.

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