

Committee: ECOFIN

Topic: The question of gender equality in employment, pay and benefits.

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Summary

In 2020, the global female labor force participation rate stood at 51.6%, a figure that starkly contrasts with the considerably higher male participation rate, which sat at 94.6%. Furthermore, it remains a disconcerting reality that women continue to be compensated at a rate approximately 20% lower than their male counterparts. This glaring gender disparity is the result of a complex interplay of factors, chief among them being exploitation and deeply ingrained cultural norms.

In this Model United Nations Debate, we intend to delve into the multifaceted issue of gender inequality in the workforce, with a particular focus on the social and cultural factors that perpetuate this inequity. One of the prime considerations will be the influence of traditional values held by different countries, as these values often dictate societal expectations regarding the roles and capabilities of women. Moreover, we will explore the economic factors at play, including the potential benefits of a more diverse and inclusive workforce, which can lead to heightened productivity. However, achieving this requires evaluating whether current infrastructures in all nations are sufficiently equipped to enforce regulations aimed at rectifying this imbalance.

Education is a critical aspect that we will scrutinize, as gender norms can significantly impact access to education and the opportunities available to individuals. Consequently, we must address the imperative of dismantling gender norms that hinder progress and result in detrimental consequences for both individuals and society as a whole.

A key question we will raise is whether these changes will genuinely lead to contentment for all individuals. The pursuit of gender equality in employment, pay, and benefits is a global issue of immense magnitude, and it is essential to recognize that no part of the world has yet achieved true gender parity. Throughout this debate, we encourage delegates to examine existing regulatory frameworks, such as the European Union's policies regarding gender equality in businesses, as potential models for guiding our collective efforts to combat gender discrimination on a global scale.

Definition of Key Terms

- **The motherhood penalty** - the loss of lifetime earnings after giving birth.

- **Discrimination** - the unjust prejudicial treatment of minorities
- **Domestic work** - work that is typically done in the home, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, sick people and elderly.
- **Gender equality** - the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals not being treated differently if they are male or female.
- **Gender equity** - the process of allocating resources, programmes and decisions to all genders.
- **Gender pays gap** - the difference between women and men's hourly pay.
- **Occupational segregation** - the distribution of people across and within occupation and jobs, based upon demographic, characteristics, most often gender.
- **Suffrage** - the right to vote in an election.
- **Unconscious biases** - social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.
- **The wage gap** - The wage gap is the gap between how women and men are paid in similar positions.
- **The income gap** - the overall difference of total wage
- **Intersectionality** - how social categories overlap which lead to increased discrimination

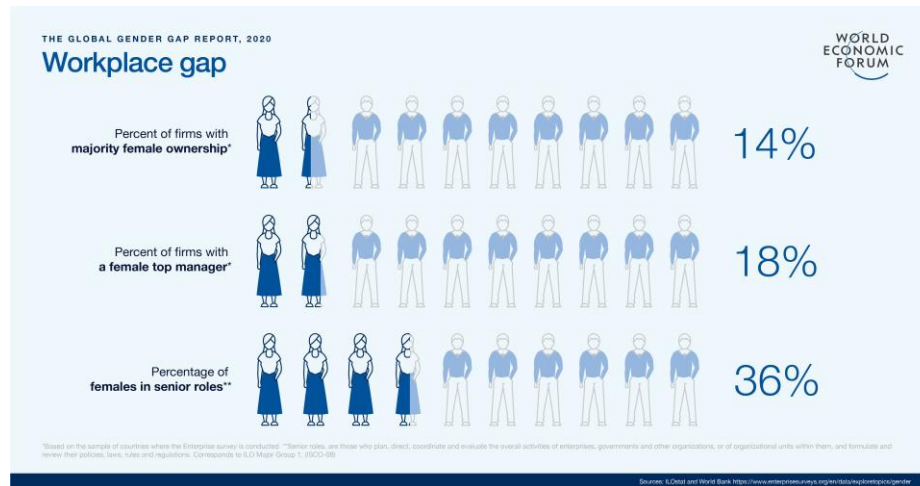
Background Information

In terms of income security, women are amongst the worst effected groups. This was amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic. The United Nations has stated this has led to “negative impacts on employment and now threatens to reverse decades of progress made towards gender equality”.

We can see the divide in pay by statistics such as:

- For all dollar men earn, women earn 77 cents.
- Women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid work than men.
- At the current rate it will take 257 years to close the global gender pay gap.

This inequality persists in all countries and across all sectors. United Nations Women council state that women’s work is undervalued, and women tend to be concentrated in different jobs than men. This is especially prevalent for women of colour, immigrant women and mothers. This is referred to as a motherhood penalty which may out women into informal economies.



Several large firms have been praised for their work in fixing pay gaps, this begs the question of if people should be praised for solving issues which should never have existed to begin with. It is also important to identify the difference between wage gap and income gap. If men hold more senior jobs in firms there is an income gap.

It is also important to recognise intersectionality, this is how social categories overlap which lead to increased discrimination. For example, women may be affected even more harshly due to their race. The main factors which may influence discrimination may be ethnicity, age, religion, class, sexual orientation and disability.

Women in work index

5.8 trillion from increasing the female employment rate across the OEDC (38 member countries) to match that of Sweden’s.

- “ an 18 year old women entering the workforce today will not see pay equality in her working lifetime. At the rate the gender pay gap is closing, it will take more then 50 years to reach gender pay parity. If the rebound from Covid 19 has taught us anything, it is that we can’t rely on economic growth alone to produce gender equality- unless we want to wait another 50 years or more, we must design and develop policy solutions that actively address the underlying causes of the inequality that exists today” - Larice Stielow, Senior Economist, PWC UK

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

- **Hungary** - made the greatest improvement in its ranking rising nine places on the index from 22nd to 13th place in the women in work index in the last decade. However what is interesting is that their constitution does not expressly mention the prohibition of discrimination in earnings.
- **Switzerland** - reported the largest drop in ranking falling six places on the index from 14th to 20th place. However, Switzerland still has made great steps as on 1 July 2020 they revised their equal pay regulations.
- **USA** - the largest economy in the world ranked below average compared to the G7 scoring 62.2. USA gender pay gap has stayed relatively stable in the United States over the past 20 years. And earn 82% of what men earn.

Timeline of Events

March 19th 1911 - First celebration of international women's day: was set aside to honour the women's rights movement.

June 26th 1945 - gender equality enshrined in the UN's charter. However, little progress was achieved.

1970 - the strikes at Ford contributed to the campaign for equal pay and the passage of the equal pay act. This has been a catalyst for an increase in protests for equal pay

June 19th - July 2nd, 1975 - UN first world conference on women in Mexico City. Adopted the official world plan of action. Also pushed for military or corporate intervention

December 18th, 1979 - CEDAW an international bill of rights for women, working to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

September 5th -13th, 1994 - international conference on population and development in Cairo: moved population policy and programs away from a focus on human numbers to a focus on human lives.

September 4th -15th - UN fourth world conference on women in Beijing

September 2000 – adoption on the millennium development goals. 3 of the goal based around gender equality.

October 31st, 2000 – passage of UN security council resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)

July 2nd, 2010 – Creation of UN Women which is the forefront for women's equality.

2010 – men and women are entitled to equal pay and conditions if they are doing the same job.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

1. **Universal declaration of human rights (UDHR):** “Everyone, without any distraction, has the right to equal pay for equal work”.
2. **Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW):** “eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment, including ensuring equal remuneration for work of equal value.”
3. **International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR):** recognises the rights of everyone to just and favourable condition of work.
4. **European Union (EU) treaties and directives:** men and women for equal value and sets out measures to ensure its implementation.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue.

- **Targets or quotas** – the issue with this is that these regulations are too narrow (newer version in possible solution). This partially worked however, only worked to financially solve these issues but did not help to change people's perceptions.
- **Equal pay legislation** – these are laws which address the gender pay gap, many of which prevent wage-based discrimination. Similar to the previous one it will not help to change perspective which may lead to informal forms of discrimination
- **Gender support groups** – this helps to initiate awareness about financial bias in the workforce. This is hard to monitor which may lead to very low effort being put in.
- **Gender neutral job descriptions-** this tries to prevent certain job titles being assigned to a specific gender. Works well, however will take time for people to move on from current norms.

Possible Solutions

- **Affordable childcare** is critical in helping to ease the pressure on motherhood and families. Important to consider where the funding will come from.
- **Policies to support a dual earner- dual carer model would help to shift underlying societal attitudes** around gender roles and care over time. An issue with this is that it may create negative reception around people staying at home to look after children
- **Economic analysis suggests an effective equal paid parental leave system** in the UK would benefit women, as well as men, families, wider society and employers,
- **Gender blind recruitment**- this allows for no bias to be applied when hiring new candidates. However, will not work within person interviews. Therefore, this may only help first steps of recruitments.
- **Government incentives**- this could be tax or financial rewards for meeting goals similar to a pollution permit. However, This may not help with social issues.

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