

ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN WORKPLACE

Lina Farsia

Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Corresponding author: lina.farsia@unmuha.ac.id


ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains a significant challenge, affecting various aspects of employment, including hiring, promotion, and compensation. Despite advancements in gender equality, women are often treated less favorably than men, irrespective of their qualifications and performance. This issue is pervasive and can be influenced by deeply rooted cultural and religious beliefs that shape attitudes and decisions in professional settings. Women frequently face barriers to leadership roles and receive lower wages compared to their male counterparts. This paper explores the ongoing gender discrimination in workplaces, highlighting its causes and impacts, and proposes actionable strategies to foster a more inclusive and equitable work environment for all employees.

KEYWORDS: *Equal Opportunity, Gender Equality, Workplace*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of workplace discrimination because diversity is still happening in many workplaces. Discrimination still plays a main role in the hiring, firing, and promoting of employees. One of the major issues in equal opportunity at the workplace is the discrimination on the gender diversity. Given that, women are treated less equal to the men regardless their merits or excellence. This inequality appears in almost all aspects of development including education and workplace. According to Lloyd and Smith (2001), problems faced by women in workplaces have received relatively little attention in Indonesia. Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (IBCWE) (2023) reported that women holding a seat in the board of directors in listed companies in Indonesia are still underrepresented. Many Indonesians, both men and women, oppose gender equality because it contradicts the traditional division of



labor, in which husbands are the breadwinners and wives care for the home. In fact, this is the primary allegation leveled against the gender equality bill. This division of labor has grown engrained due to cultural and religious beliefs, and it is visible throughout Asia (Sinaga, 2012).

In some workplaces, the cause of discrimination is religious belief and other part is because cultural influence, especially in the regions where the people are very strongly affected with religious and cultural believes in their daily life including in decision-making. Hence, sometimes both religious and cultural influence can cause unequal treatment on women. Therefore, this paper discusses about the gender discrimination at some workplaces and proposes some solutions to be implemented in workplace to overcome this problem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People have become more concern about gender issue. Discrimination against women has decreased gradually in Indonesia. In fact, the government and several other agencies in increasing women's role and participation have taken many solutions. For example, since 1992, UN Women has been supporting the Government of Indonesia and civil society partners address national priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment. Based on UN Women's report (2014), the programs they provide include encouraging women's participation in politics, providing training and skills for household women and supporting the government of Indonesia in providing regulations based on gender problems. Napoli (1998, p. 4) states that a manager has to do in line with the equal opportunities as seen in the following:

Being an equal opportunity employer says something about the way employees are treated after they are employed. It means those employees are treated with fairness and respect at all stages of their employment including the job interview, promotions, conditions of employment and termination. Employees will not be judged by such attributes as their sex, the color of their skin, their age or their sexual preference, but on their merits as individuals, each with different skills and talents to bring to the organization.

Kabeer and Natali (2013) mentioned a finding from Klansen and Lammana, which included both developed and developing countries, that women's share of formal employment was more significant for economic growth than their share of the overall labor force. Thus, it is very essential to get people know of the importance of women's role in development process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper used a literature review approach. A literature review refers to “a piece of academic writing demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the academic literature on a specific topic placed in context” (Institute for Academic Development, 2024). The paper focused on the topic of equal opportunity at workplaces for their employees and also proposed some notion on how a workplace could provide the equal opportunity for its employees in order to avoid the discrimination

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The workplace management has to ensure that all educators and staff have the same opportunities to maximize their potential and improve their self-development and their contribution for their workplace. The vision statements are:

- 1) The workplace to have a good written diversity policies with a clear procedure and qualification for certain position (Zainol et al., 2019)
- 2) The managers of the workplace are aware about this problem (Du, 2024).
- 3) More female teachers are included in the decision-making committee and are given the same chances to be a leader of the workplace (Jansen & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023).
- 4) All employees or staffs have awareness about the woman and men equality.


According to Hartel et al. (2007), three key points can be done to have a diversity management at the workplace, as follows:

- 1) Developing diversity policies (i.e., HRM policies and procedures) that are grounded in a commitment to honoring and valuing diversity in the workplace
- 2) Ensuring that the organization’s leaders and managers are supportive to handle the discrimination issue
- 3) Providing staff with training and experience

Therefore, the following steps can be taken to help workplace provide equal opportunity for men and women are:

1. Developing diversity policies.

The Human Resource Management policies and procedures have to be created with the respecting and honoring diversity at the workplace. It is very important to have a strong, clear and unambiguous equal opportunity policy is a powerful tool for preventing discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace (The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2010). This is important because



employee bring their own stereotyping, biases and prejudice into the workplace which cause different expectation what is right or wrong but with the presence of the clear policy then everyone can be judged based on the policy and know what their right and responsibilities (Cortis et al., 2022).

The policies are clearly defined set of rules around how to engage with relevant individuals if there is a dispute or challenge to a decision (Rocha, 2021). By providing the policy and procedure transparently will help teachers and staff know what their right and responsibility are (Kemper et al., 2019). They are will not be judged regardless their biological difference but based on the merits and talent that each and everyone have. The policy also have to have a clears procedure the clear qualification when promoting staff to a higher position, in this case no matter man or woman when they are qualified they can have equal chance to compete for the promotion position. Additionally, the managers have to make sure that everyone understand the policy and is grounded amongst the staff and teachers so that they can respect the diversity amongst themselves that later slow but sure can be implemented well.

2. Making sure the leader and manager of workplace are " the right one"

First, it is very essential in order to ensure that the leader and manager have high appreciation and strong commitment to the development of a diverse workforce (Hebl & King, 2019). It is very difficult to create a proportional situation where male and female teachers can have equal treatment if the leaders cannot manage this well. Next, it is imperial to find out if the high boards are themselves open and embracing of difference because in order to change teachers' paradigm on gender equality, the leaders can take a very important role as an example of broad thinking and understanding (Cavero-Rubio et al., 2019). In addition, finding out that these leaders are emotionally intelligent and skilled at conflict management is needed because in creating a comfortable situation in the workplace where all teachers can work together regardless their physical differences, the leaders have to have a good and comprehensive knowledge in dealing with social problems especially in regarding with discrimination issues (Hideg & Krstic, 2021).

Here, Hofstede (1994) states what can a leader or manager do in diversity management is that to create opportunities for collaboration, global leaders must not only learn the customs, courtesies, and business protocols of their counterparts from other countries but must also understand the national character, management philosophies, and mind-sets of the people. The workplace boards can make a research and about the leaders and managers at workplace and design an approach

to talk to them about the problem. Apparently, to have a good engagement with the leaders and managers of the organization is one of the strategic steps to be taken because they are the ones who have a strong authority and influence in developing gender quality in workplace.

3. Providing training and experience for the workplace staff and teachers.

Providing sufficient information about gender equality is one of the most important steps that can be taken in order to overcome the problem, especially in remote areas where information is hard to get (Latura & Weeks, 2023). Providing more knowledge that female has the same position and role as male in the development can change people's paradigm about women's ineffective role-play even though it is not easy and it will take some time because changing the cultural believe is completely no an easy task.

According to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) (2013), one of the ways to make the workplace become meritocracies is by raising awareness regarding all areas of unconscious bias and addressing them through unconscious bias programs. This includes educating employees about gender diversity and the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes and also offering mentoring programs networking opportunities to support women's careers and equip them for leadership roles. Here, one of the ways to provide the information is by providing the training and experience to the teachers and staff.

Information is the key value in developing gender equality in workplace (Guthridge et al., 2022). Thus, some trainings and experiences have to be provided for the staff in order to increase their awareness towards gender issues around them (Adeniyi et al., 2024). Every individual must realize that he or she can take the same opportunity in every aspect of development without being neglected regarding with their biological differences. Moreover, the activities can enhance sense of teamwork because male and female teachers can work together, have the same opportunity to express their ideas and creativities and have the same appreciation for everything they do.

Another advantage by providing the trainings and experiences is to increase the teachers' and other staff's knowledge on cultural practices and beliefs of cultures other than their own (Vokić et al., 2019). Even though generally the officials in workplace have the same or different religion, they do not come from areas with the same cultural that sometime can be problem especially in regarding with gender issues. Therefore, providing knowledge about respecting other believes and cultures can also change the teachers' paradigm in dealing with sexual difference problems so

that they can respect and appreciate each other. In addition, in more global purpose, the trainings can also develop the teachers' knowledge about different beliefs and cultures in worldwide so that they can learn how to live in a social life equally as part of worldwide communities (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).


CONCLUSIONS

Workplace managers have to take equal opportunity especially in the gender issue for seriously to treat in a thoughtful, responsible and professional manners no matter what attributes employees have as individuals including their sex but their performance at the workplace and will be judged properly based on their qualities or merits. Workplaces have to develop a good culture and atmosphere, which provide the equal treatment between man and woman. A clear diversity management plans, influencing the leader or the manager of the workplace about the gender issue and training or workshop for all workplace members to raise their awareness about to change the unfair assumptions and stereotypes and make them aware how important to have gender equality at school are the approaches can be done in relation with this issues. Both men and women are great resources that can help the workplace to reach its goals. The stereotype, predisposition and unfair assumption that women are not supposed or cannot to be leaders have to be deleted

REFERENCES

- Adeniyi, A. O., Akpuokwe, C. U., Bakare, S. S., & Eneh, N. E. (2024). Gender equality in the workplace: A comparative review of USA and African Practices. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6(3), 526-539.
- Cavero-Rubio, J. A., Collazo-Mazón, A., & Amorós-Martínez, A. (2019, September). Public recognition of gender equality in the workplace and its influence on firms' performance. In *Women's studies international forum* (Vol. 76, p. 102273). Pergamon.
- Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA). (2013). *Woman in leadership: understanding the gender gap*. Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA). Retrieved from <http://www.ceda.com.au/media/310731/cedawiljune%202013final.pdf>
- Cortis, N., Foley, M., & Williamson, S. (2022). Change agents or defending the status quo? How senior leaders frame workplace gender equality. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 29(1), 205-221.
- Du, J. (2024). Advancing gender equality in the workplace: Challenges, strategies, and the way forward. *Journal of Theory and Practice of Social Science*, 4(04), 46-50.
- Hartel, C. E. J., Fujimoto, Y., Strybosch, V. E., & Fitzpatrik, K. (2007). *Human resource management: Transforming theory into innovative practice*. Pearson Education Australia.

- Guthridge, M., Kirkman, M., Penovic, T., & Giummarra, M. J. (2022). Promoting gender equality: A systematic review of interventions. *Social Justice Research, 35*(3), 318-343.
- Hebl, M., & King, E. B. (2019). Gender equality in the workplace: An introduction. *Archives of Scientific Psychology, 7*(1), 1.
- Hideg, I., & Krstic, A. (2021). The quest for workplace gender equality in the 21st century: Where do we stand and how can we continue to make strides?. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 53*(2), 106.
- Hofstede, G. (1994). Management scientists are human. *Management Science, 40*(1), 4-13.
- Institute for Academic Development. (2024). *Literature review*. The University of Edinburgh. <https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/study-hub/learning-resources/literature-review>
- Jansen, D., & Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. (2023). Factors hampering the implementation of gender equality in the workplace. *Insights into Regional Development, 5*(4), 80-91.
- Kemper, L. E., Bader, A. K., & Froese, F. J. (2019). Promoting gender equality in a challenging environment: The case of Scandinavian subsidiaries in Japan. *Personnel Review, 48*(1), 56-75.
- Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (IBCWE). (2023, December 24). *The number of women in executive positions in 200 listed companies is still underrepresented*. Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment (IBCWE). Retrieved from <https://ibcwe.id/the-number-of-women-in-executive-positions-in-200-listed-companies-is-still-underrepresented/>
- Latura, A., & Weeks, A. C. (2023). Corporate board quotas and gender equality policies in the workplace. *American Journal of Political Science, 67*(3), 606-622.
- Napoli, J. (1998). *Understanding equal employment opportunity*. Prentice Hall Australia.
- Kabeer, N., & Natali, L. (2013). Gender equality and economic growth: Is there a win-win? *IDS Working Papers, 2013*(417), 1-58.
- Rocha, M. (2021). Promoting gender equality through regulation: the case of parental leave. *The Theory and Practice of Legislation, 9*(1), 35-57.
- Sinaga, A. (2012, July 23). *The importance of gender equality*. The Jakarta Post. Retrieved from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/07/23/the-importance-gender-equality.html>
- Lloyd, G. J., & Smith, S. L. (Eds.). (2001). *Indonesia today: Challenges of history*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. (2010). *GUIDELINE: Preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment*. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.
- UN Women. (2014). *UN Factsheet on Asia and Pacific: Indonesia*. Retrieved from <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/countries/indonesia>
- Villegas-Reimers, E. (2003). *Teacher professional development: An international review of the literature*. International Institute for Educational Planning.

- 
- Vokić, N. P., Obadić, A., & Ćorić, D. S. (2019). *Gender equality in the workplace: Macro and micro perspectives on the status of highly educated women*. Springer.
- Zainol, S. S., Samsuri, A. S., Rahimah, T., Arifin, T., Hussin, S. M., & Mohamad, Z. Z. (2019). Promoting gender equality in workplace: A conceptual view. *International Journal of Advanced Scientific Research and Management*, 4(5), 44-55.