Gender Inequality in the Workplace

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Abstract

This paper references various published articles, the United States government reports and reputed organization reports based on gender inequality in the corporate workplace. It provides insight on how the United States is lagging behind in gender equality as compared to other countries in the world. It explores the common causes like the wage gap, occupational segregation, and unequal representation. The paper provides viewpoints for gender inequality and ways to improve gender equality in companies. Employee statistics in terms of gender are taken from top multinational companies in the United States and found that women lack equal representation in the workplace. The paper details the cause of gender inequality, steps that organizations are currently taking to reduce the gender gap, and the best possible ways with evidence to make gender equality profitable for organizations.

Keywords: gender, discrimination, workplace, rights, employment, corporate.

Gender Inequality in the Workplace

Gender inequality in the workplace refers to the lack of equal rights for men and women like the gender pay gap, occupational segregation, and unequal representation in the workforce. In the United States, gender inequality has been on a decline throughout its history but has not been completely eradicated and is still present in the modern era. Gender inequality is a vicious cycle of discouragement for women in the workplace which can be broken by making a conscious effort to address issues causing gender inequality, increasing representation of women in the workplace, and having more women in senior leadership roles who can serve as role models and sources of encouragement for other women to enter the workforce.

The United States, a country with one of the largest economies in the world and considered the most powerful country, is lagging behind in gender equality. According to the Global gender gap report [1] published by the World Economic Forum in 2017, it has been found that the United States is ranked 49th overall in terms of gender equality out of 144 total ranked countries. Countries like Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Rwanda are top-ranked and countries like Iran, Chad, Syria, Pakistan, and Yemen are bottom ranked in terms of gender equality. This rank is calculated based on four sub-indexes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sub – index** | **United States rank** |
| Educational attainment | 1 |
| Economic Participation and Opportunity | 19 |
| Health and Survival | 82 |
| Political Empowerment | 96 |

Table 1

According to this report [1], the United States has closed the gender gap in overall education but needs improvement in economic participation and opportunity. In addition, this report clearly indicates a serious need for the United States to step up and close the gender gap in health and political empowerment of women.

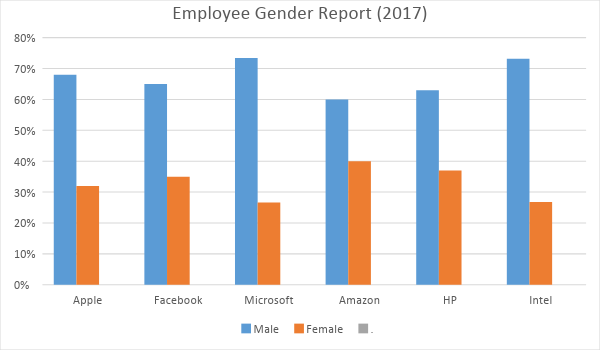
**Wage Gap**

Women are equally, if not more, educated than men in the United States. That, however, does not translate to equal or more pay for women than men. Pew Research Center (2017) states that 42 percent of women in the United States have faced the problem of gender discrimination on the job. The wage gap is a major issue; one in four women, around 25 percent, said that they have earned less than a man in spite of doing the same job as compared to one in twenty of men, around 5 percent, state that they earned less than female as a co-worker. As per Pew Research Center (2017), women earn around 82 percent of the men’s earning, and analysis is based on earnings of both full and part-time workers in the United States. All the above point to a widespread issue that is entrenched in the United States. Although there are some strides being made towards equality in wages, clearly work still remains. According to Equileap Company report(2018), General Motor is a good example of equal wages in the United States.

**Occupational Segregation**

According to the United States Census Bureau, (2017) [6], around 80 percent of females are mostly interested in being professionals like registered nurses, pharmacists, social workers, librarians, hairdressers, etc. Occupations like software developers, construction managers, law enforcement, and agricultural workers are male dominated, in which around 80 percent of the workforce is male as compared to the female. Fields like financial managers, insurance sales agents, real estate brokers, and designers are pursued by around 45 percent female and 55 percent male, but men earned almost double than women in these fields. Overall, women in the majority of the fields earn less than men by occupation. Highly paid professionals in the United States are pharmacists, software developers, financial managers, registered nurses, etc. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Organizations [18], (year) women should take more interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) because STEM fields currently have more job demand in the United States and a higher number of highly paid jobs.

Efforts like Grace Hopper conference [15] (2018) which is held yearly, focus on evangelizing fields of computer science by encouraging women to pursue STEM education. Many companies in the United States have also started to conduct a “Women in technology” event [7], showcasing their company’s work and benefits that they provide to women. Women in senior leadership roles share their experiences and hardships to encourage women to join their company.

**Unequal Representation** 

**Figure 1**

Figure 1 data has been taken from the top six tech companies (Apple, Microsoft, HP, Facebook, Intel, Amazon 2017) employee workforce in terms of gender in the United States.

From Figure 1, it can be observed that the female workforce is less than male workforce in companies in the United States. At Microsoft, the ratio of female workforce is 26.6 percent as compared to 73.4 percent of the male workforce. According to data [5] from Apple, it can be seen that the ratio of male to female employees are the same in 2016 and 2017. This shows that Apple, which is one of the biggest technology company in the United States, is struggling to improve their gender ratio of employees. Many companies do not publicly post their employee data that shows gender representation. For example, IBM, Oracle, SanDisk, Qualcomm, EMC, and Broadcom have not disclosed data about the gender ratio of their employees. Clearly, there is a need for conscious effort to improve equality in gender representation in corporate America. Many companies have started taking steps to remove bias from their recruitment processes, so as to give all candidates equal opportunities. Amazon recently shelved a bot [14] which was responsible for filtering out resumes of candidates because Amazon found out that the bot was exhibiting bias in selecting male candidates over the female.

**Current Efforts**

According to the study [16] by McKinsey & Company (2015) on Women in the workplace, companies which make gender equality a target in their workplace over a three-year period have seen growth in a number of female employees at entry levels, whereas companies without target have lost ground on gender equality in their workplace.

According to Equileap Company report [4] (2018) on Gender Equality Global Report and Ranking, General Motor (GM) in the United States, is the best example of gender equality whereas L'Oréal was at the top spot in 2017. GM is one of the companies in the world that has an equal number of men and women as their employees. GM [4] is one of the two global giants, (Starhub is the other) which has implemented equal pay from top-level executives to entry-level employees and has hired a female as Chief Financial Officer (CFO). According to World Economic Forum [1], a business that supports workplace flexibility for individuals and companies, 70 percent of women who dropped out of the workplace said that they would still be working if they had more flexibility. GM also made policies against sexual harassment and provides flexible work locations. As per the report [4], GM’s focus on diversity in their workplace has helped them to expand their supply chain. According to a McKinsey Global Institute report (2018) [16], if all countries empower women to their full economic potential, as much as $28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025. This demonstrates the benefits of having a diverse workforce.  Other big multinational companies [4], who have capitalization of more than 2 billion dollars in 23 developed countries, like L’Oréal (France), Kering (France), Merck (United States), National Australia Bank (Australia), Swedbank (Sweden), JP Morgan Chase (United States) and Star Hub (Singapore), etc., are working for gender equality in workplace. Out of the above mentioned top ten world companies working on Gender equality, three are from the United States. Other companies should emulate these examples and step up their efforts towards improving gender equality.

**Conclusion**

As established above, major contributors regarding gender inequality in corporate America are the gender pay gap, occupational segregation, and unequal representation in the workforce. To improve gender equality, a few companies have started taking steps like long maternity and paternity leaves, equal wage, equal job opportunities, work from home which have proven to be popular and more successful in improving the gender gap. Data [4] shows us that companies that have worked towards increasing diversity are proving to be more successful in the global arena. Women in senior leadership roles prove to be good role models; this creates a more positive support network and in turn, encourages more young women to apply to join the workforce. The best source to eradicate the gender inequality is awareness to dispel the gender biases. Strides are being made in this area and there is already more information about gender inequality than we had before. Through my research, I have concluded that gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but it is also a vital thing to do.

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