

Women's Gender Discrimination Difference in Workplace

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Abstract

Although many studies have pointed to the fact that women directly experience gender discrimination, relatively little has been explored about which individual and organizational variables of women in the workplace are more sensitive to gender discrimination. This article has been conducted in an attempt to investigate the individual and organizational characteristics of female workers who are sensitive to gender discrimination. A total of 415 participants were included in this study. The results indicate that while participants' age, salary, and position are significantly and negatively related to gender discrimination; tenure years is significantly and positively related to gender discrimination. Besides, participants' education is not significantly relative to gender discrimination. Furthermore, while participants who have no spouses perceive greater gender discrimination than those who have spouses; participants whose careers are ever intermittent perceive greater gender discrimination than those whose careers are never intermittent. In addition, according to the organizational variables, firm size is significantly and negatively related to gender discrimination. While participants who work in production or administrative department perceive greater gender discrimination than those who work in sales department; participants who work in manufacture industry perceive greater gender discrimination than those who work in service industry. The results can serve as a basis for understanding women's cognition of gender discrimination in the workplace.

Keywords: gender discrimination, employ discrimination, salary discrimination, promotion discrimination, training opportunity discrimination

1. Introduction

Researches indicate that gender inequality disadvantaging women persists (e.g. Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013), gender discrimination is a common phenomenon in the workplace. Although men and women occupy the same position in an organization, their income, authority, and prestige are all distributed unequally (Britton & Williams, 2000).

Gender discrimination violates the principle of equal treatment for all employees (McEwan, 2001) and often leads to problems with retention, morale, and performance (Shah, 1998). Besides, perceptions of organizational conditions affect work-related attitudes and behaviors (Sanchez & Brock, 1996). Graves and Powell (1994) found that workers hold a negative working attitude when they perceive others discriminate them. In addition, researches indicated that women perceive to be worse treated than men in the workplace (Graddick & Farr, 1983), see gender discrimination as a barrier when they promote (Guy & Duke, 1991), and emphasize the equity in salary and promotion (Witt & Nye, 1992).

In addition, gender discrimination in the workplace can directly or indirectly reduce job satisfaction by increasing frustration (Bader, Bader, & Schuster, 2017). Triana, Jayasinghe, Pieper, Delgado, and Li (2019) also found that perceived gender discrimination was negatively associated with job attitudes, physical health outcomes and behaviors, psychological health, and work-related outcomes. Therefore, exploring which individual and organizational variables of women in the workplace are more sensitive to gender discrimination is relatively noteworthy. Such as what is the women's perception of gender discrimination in the workplace? Whether the perception of gender discrimination is various among female workers' individual demographics of? Whether the women's perception of gender discrimination is distinguishable between different departments, firm scale or industry? In this article, we attempt to investigate the individual and organizational characteristics of female workers who are sensitive to gender discrimination in the workplace.

2. Theories Relate to Discrimination and Work

Understanding the drivers of gender differences in labor market outcomes is an important topic of study among labor economists (Coffman, Exley, & Niederle, 2020). Researchers investigated discrimination typically draw theoretical frameworks from economic, sociological, and psychological perspectives (see a review, Truman & Baroudi, 1994) and proposed variety of explanations for systematic gender inequity in the workplace, including cultural beliefs, men's actions, employers' actions, and workers' own preferences (Reskin & Padavic, 1994). The relationship between gender discrimination and job-related attitude and behavior could be explicated by equity theory and expectancy theory. Ngo, Foley, Wong, and Loi (2003) proposed that if individuals perceive gender inequity at work as the outcome of discriminatory practices, then they may take actions to reduce such discrepancies and inequity.

Equity theory suggests that people will evaluate an act or outcome as fair or unfair by comparing their own input/outcome ratio to that of a comparison other (Colella, 2001). If an employee believes that his/her ratio of exchange is equal to that of another comparable

employee, the situation is perceived as equitable (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1992). Based on equity theory, if workers perceived the treatment discrimination in the workplace did not base on job-related factors (such as performance or ability) but only base on gender discrimination, they would change their work-related attitude or behavior to achieve equity.

Besides, expectancy theory indicates that employees exert effort when they believe that they can achieve certain performance levels and that they will receive the rewards attached to certain performance levels (Appelbaum & Shapiro, 1992). Based on this theory, workers will be encouraged with an expected treatment and avoid unexpected treatment. Therefore, workers would change work-related attitude or behavior if they believed the gender discrimination in the workplace affected the rewards of expectation.

3. Gender Discrimination

Torre and Jacobs (2021) argue that gender segregation is maintained by a persistent but imperfect system of social control that limits women's choices before, during, and after entering the labor market. In addition, gender discrimination in the workplace generally includes the treatment discrimination of employ, salary, promotion, and training opportunity. In traditional and men-dominated workplace, women receive lower salary, less opportunity to promote, and be excluded from some jobs/positions. Research indicated that 80 percent of the male and 90 percent of the female believe that gender discrimination occurs frequently (Woods & Kavanaugh, 1994). Gordon (1992) also found that gender discrimination existed in every class. Generally, women occupy lower position, lower salary, less opportunity, and are easier to be laid off. Although gender discrimination violates the law of equal treatment for all employees in many countries, sexual inequity still is a common phenomenon in the workplace.

3.1 Employ Discrimination

According to the theory of statistical discrimination, since employers discriminate different responsibility and career between male and female, they would retain some positions or opportunities for men but not for women. Tavakolian (1994) found that gender discrimination occurs in many big organizations because the top leaders in these organizations (are usually men) tend to employ colleagues who are similar to them (men). Therefore, most of women would be excluded to enter the top leadership. Besides, research indicated that employ discrimination exists in not only employers but also employees. Men seek traditionally dominant jobs while women search traditionally subordinate jobs (Slonaker & Wendt, 1991).

Researches had documented the existence of gender discrimination in labor employment contexts such as careers (e. g. Reuben, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2014) or performance (e. g. Bohnet, Geen, & Bazerman, 2016). Employ discrimination causes the segregation between men and women. Since some administrative jobs keep out the entry of women, most of women do based jobs, earn lower salary, and meet more promotion barrier than men in workplace.

3.2 Salary Discrimination

Discrimination also contributes to gender gap in earnings (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Haberfeld (1992) found that there are two reasons to lead the salary difference between male and female: one is legal (such as different jobs, positions or departments) and the other is illegal (gender discrimination). The salary difference between male and female is composed of 64% legal reason and 34% illegal reason. In other words, gender discrimination leads over one-third salary difference.

Researches indicate that although the age, education, experience, and family factors are controlled (Truman & Baroudi, 1994; Wood, Corcoran, & Courant, 1993), the salary of women is significant less than men (Jacobs, 1992). Hampton and Heywood (1993) found that women perceive the gender discrimination in salary and believe they are underpaid. Besides, women earn at least 20% less than their value because they are discriminated (Wright & Ermisch, 1991).

3.3 Promotion Discrimination

Alegria (2019) pointed out that white women experience similar to "glass escalators," where they are promoted to management, but these promotions are a smaller step up—more step stools than escalators. The phenomenon of "glass ceiling" is usually discussed in the gender discrimination of women's promotion. It is assumed that women have less commitment to their jobs and they achieve their positions do not depend on their ability but depend on other reasons. The sex stereotyping hinders women from promoting to high positions (Naff, 1993).

Snizek and Neil (1992) proposed that another reason which leads gender discrimination in workplace is the dominance of men. The standard of promotion of women is stricter than men and this leads women's difficulty in getting higher positions. Researches indicated that women are more difficult to promote to management positions than their male colleagues (Reskin & Ross, 1992; Wolf & Fligstein, 1979) even though the age, education, and tenure are controlled (Stewart & Gudykunst, 1982). Besides, women do perceive the gender discrimination in workplace (Ngo et al. 2003; Snizek & Neil, 1992; Cannings, 1988). In addition, Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer (2009) also showed that although women are entering management broadly, they are not entering the most powerful management positions.

3.4 Training Opportunity Discrimination

The gender discrimination of training opportunity in workplace could be explained by psychology and sociology. From the viewpoint of psychology, the stereotyping that women pay much attention to their families will reduce their opportunity to take part in training. Besides, from the perspective of sociology, the dominance of men in workplace leads less opportunity for women to participate in training. Green (1991) proposed that women have only two-thirds opportunity to take part in training than men. It is not because women are unwilling to attend training but because women are discriminated.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample

The sample was collected from 12 firms and 415 participants in south Taiwan. There are 6 manufacture and 6 service firms included in the sample. Since the workers proportion of manufacture and service industry occupies over 86% employees in Taiwan, we investigate the female workers in manufacture and service firms. The manufacture firms are composed by 3 electronic and 3 metallic manufacture companies, and the service firms are made of 2 banks, 2 insurances companies, and 2 hospitals. In addition, there are 224 manufacture and 191 service industry female workers included in the sample.

4.2 Measures

Gender discrimination is composed of four items: the fairness of employ, salary, promotion opportunity, and training opportunity. We measured this variable by a five-point Likert-typed scale to evaluate participants' perception. A score of 5 indicated that the respondents recognized gender discrimination as very strong and a score of 1 gender discrimination as very weak. In addition, all the four items were included in the same factor after testing of the factor analysis (Cronbach α is 0.89). The average of the scores for these four items constructs the scale of gender discrimination.

Besides, respondents' age, education years, tenure years, salary, position, marriage, and career continuity compose the individual variables. Age, education years, tenure years, and salary are responded by the actual numeral. Regarding the position, we assigned a score of 1 to the subordinate, a score of 2 to the low manager, a score of 3 to the middle manager, and a score of 4 to the high manager. Besides, a score of 0 responded to has no a spouse and a score of 1 responded to has a spouse. In addition, a score of 0 responded to continued career and a score of 1 responded to intermittent career.

Moreover, the organizational variables are constructed by department, industry, and firm size. Regarding the department, we assigned a score of 1 to production department, a score of 2 to administrative department, and a score of 3 to sales department. Besides, a score of 1 responded to manufacture industry and a score of 2 responded to service industry. In addition, the firm size is calculated by the total amount of employees.

4.3 Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics is adopted to portray the distribution of the individual characteristics, organizational variables, and women's perception about gender discrimination in workplace. Besides, we take the correlation to describe the relationship between the variables. In addition, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to distinguish women's perception of gender discrimination between different individual and organizational nominal variables.

5. Results

Variables' means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 1. According to the results, the participants' average age is 33.28, education year is 12.29, tenure year is 8.54

but it is distributed (S.D. is 5.60), and position is low (Means is 1.44). Besides, the average amount of firms' employees is 216.51 and most of the respondents work in production or administrative department (69%). In addition, respondents do perceive gender discrimination in workplace but the perception is various (Means is 2.86 and S.D. is 1.33).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	Means	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Age	33.28	7.19						
2.Education	12.29	2.93	0.11					
3.Tenure	8.54	5.60	0.19**	-0.06				
4.Salary	31.69	16.19	0.23**	0.18**	0.20**			
5.Position	1.44	0.74	0.13*	0.31***	0.24**	0.32***		
6.Firm size	216.51	89.16	0.11	0.13*	0.15*	0.08	-0.05	
7.Gender discrimination	2.86	1.33	-0.19**	0.08	0.15*	-0.29***	-0.32***	-0.18**

Two-tailed tests; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Furthermore, in relation to the individual variables, while participants' age, salary, and position are significantly and negatively related to gender discrimination, participants' tenure year is significantly and positively related to gender discrimination. Besides, education year is not significantly relative to gender discrimination. In contrast, according to the organizational variables, firm size is significantly and negatively related to gender discrimination.

In addition, Table 2 indicates the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) of individual/organizational variables in gender discrimination. Using the Scheffe's multiple comparison, we find the results. According to the individual variables, while participants who have no spouses perceive greater gender discrimination than those who have spouses; participants whose careers are ever intermittent perceive greater gender discrimination than those whose careers are never intermittent. Besides, in relation to the organizational variables, while participants who work in production or administrative department perceive greater gender discrimination than those who work in sales department; participants who work in manufacture industry perceive greater gender discrimination than those who work in service industry.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance

Variable	F value	Perceived gender discrimination
Marriage	7.13**	non-spouse perceived greater gender discrimination than spouse
Career	3.82*	intermittent perceived greater gender discrimination than continued
Department	2.91*	production/administrative perceived greater gender discrimination than sales
Industry	32.91***	manufacture perceived greater gender discrimination than service

Two-tailed tests; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

6. Conclusions and Discussions

This article highlights the perspective of female workers and explores the women individual and their organizational characteristics which are significantly related to their perception of gender discrimination. The results indicate that female workers do perceive gender discrimination in workplace but the perception is different among individuals. In other words, there are distinguishable perceptions of gender discrimination among female workers.

Based on the analysis of female workers individual characteristics, we found that women who are young, low salary, low position, or long tenure perceive greater gender discrimination in workplace. First of all, the young, low salary or low position female workers are generally in unfavorable conditions in the workplace. They would most likely attribute the disadvantageous treatment which they meet to the gender discrimination therefore they would be more sensitive to gender discrimination in the workplace. Besides, female workers who are long tenure would experience more unfair treatments which unequally distribute opportunities, resources, and rewards on the basis of sex (Reskin & Padavic, 1994) in the organizations so they would be more responsive to gender discrimination.

In addition, female workers who have no spouses and whose careers are ever intermittent perceive greater gender discrimination in workplace. First of all, women who have no spouses generally bear heavier financial pressure than those who have spouses therefore they are concerned about the equal treatment in the workplace and are more perceptive to gender discrimination. Besides, female workers whose careers are ever intermittent would generally be more inferior than those careers are continued so they are more sensitive to the gender discrimination.

In contrast, according to the analysis of organizational characteristics, women who work in small firms, production/administrative department, or manufacture industry perceive greater gender discrimination in workplace. Generally, there is a definite salary and promotion regulations in a large company. Employees who work in large firm are easy to recognize the firm's policy and the rules of salary or promotion so they would less attribute the disadvantageous treatment which they meet to the gender discrimination. Besides, employees who work in different departments perceive dissimilar gender discrimination. In general, the rewards in the sales department almost bases on employees' individual performance. Since workers could definitely confirm the relationship between their efforts and rewards, they would not identify the disadvantageous treatment which they meet to the gender discrimination. In addition, the result that employees who work in manufacture industry perceive greater gender discrimination than service industry is also understood. Generally, there are fewer barriers for female employees to participate in and more opportunity for women to develop their abilities in service industry so women have less perception to gender discrimination.

Britton (2017) indicated that placing gender in organizational contexts provides a better understanding of gender inequality at work and can help shape more effective efforts to advance gender equality. Women do directly experience gender discrimination in workplace, and this study indicates that the individual and organizational characteristics of female

workers do be different in perceiving gender discrimination in workplace. Because gender status beliefs play a key role in limiting opportunities for girls and women to advance (Thébaud & Charles, 2018), this study's exploration of women's different perceptions in gender discrimination can serve as a basis for understanding women's cognition of gender discrimination in the workplace.

Note

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