

# ***Analysis of the Roles of Men in Gender Equality : A Case Study of China***

**Xi Chen<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*ULink College Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, 510000*

*a. xichen2311@ulinkcollege.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** Gender equality is one of the social issues that deserves high attention. This research program used an online questionnaire as the research method to indicate different people's thoughts toward gender equality according to their gender and age groups to discuss the roles of men in gender equality. The result shows the benefits of gender equality levy on both men and women, but some men think that the promotion of such a movement will violate their rights. Many reasons contribute to this misunderstanding, including cognitive differences between age groups and the understanding of gender dividends, etc. Especially for men, this situation can cause their stereotypes towards feminism and gender equality, which affect their involvement in the development of gender equality. The solution is to enlighten men to being part of such a movement since they can contribute to a much better result and outcome. Meanwhile, they will benefit from the achievement of gender equality.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Gender Dividend, Women's right, Gender gap, Case Study

## **1. Introduction**

Gender equality means that everyone, regardless of gender, enjoys the same conditions for the full realization of their human rights and can equally participate in and benefit from political, economic, cultural, and social development activities[1]. The topic of gender equality has become a hot idea in the 21st century in all nations. This topic has occupied our attention to a large extent, including the major media. In China, the idea of gender equality has spread widely in the past few years. But the thoughts of different genders and age groups towards gender quality are slightly different due to the cognitive competence and differences, especially for the male population. Some Chinese men may think that the promotion of gender equality may affect their rights. This idea can affect their perception of gender equality. This essay will focus on men's role in gender equality through a social research survey and what men can do in the future in order to boost the development of gender equality. The research can be useful for promoting gender equality and finding a solution for getting men involved in the development of gender equality.

## 2. Men and Gender Equality in China

### 2.1. The Status Quo of Gender Equality in China from the Global Gender Gap Report

The Global Gender Gap Report is a report published by the World Economic Forum(WEF). The index measures gender equality across countries in four dimensions: women's economic participation, political participation, education level, and health and survival[2]. Based on these statistics, the researchers evaluated each country separately and came up with a "gender equality index", with the closer to one, the higher the level of gender equality. According to the 2022 Annual Global Gender Gap Report(AGGGR), China has a score of 0.628 and is ranked 102nd in the whole world. Honestly, this is not a high mark in the world. More to say, since 2006, when the WEF started to publish the global gender gap index annually in March, the report has shown a descending trend in the performance of China's gender equality level. To be noted, although the mark of China is rising, worldwide, the other countries are also rising, so this caused the drop off the ranking of China. Table 1 shows the summary of the data from 2006-2022.

Table1: China's AGGGR data from past years[3]

Year	Point	Ranking
2006	0.656	65
2007	0.664	73
2008	0.688	57
2009	0.691	60
2010	0.688	61
2011	0.687	61
2012	0.685	69
2013	0.691	69
2014	0.683	87
2015	0.682	91
2016	0.676	99
2017	0.674	100
2018	0.673	103
2019	N/A	N/A
2020	0.676	106
2021	0.682	107
2022	0.682	102

In 2022, China ranked 107th out of 156 countries, dropping 44 places from the Global Gender Gap Index, which included 115 countries in 2006. However, its overall score improved by 0.026 and its scores on all measures of gender equality rose. China has indeed made efforts and achieved some progress in gender equality, according to the index figure. It means China still has a lot to do in the process of gender equality.

### 2.2. The Reasons Why Men Oppose Gender Equality

Many factors affect the promotion of gender equality. Here the paper will mainly discuss and explain from the perspective of some men's possible obstacles and the reasons behind them.

The idea and the development of gender equality vary from the area. In urban areas that are highly developed, citizens have more access to a variety of information and social news, and are also exposed to those advanced ideas. So, they tend to be more open-minded with their broadened horizons compared to people who live in places that are relatively backward. Usually, in such areas, some traditional values like "The men plow and the women weave," "Men outside the women inside," etc.

from ancient China are rooted. This difference in the idea causes families to always weigh men much heavier than women, which is pedantic.

The concept of gender dividends refers to certain welfare, convenience, and preferential treatment obtained by the disadvantaged party in a society in a broad sense. In a narrow sense, it refers to the welfare, convenience, and preferential treatment obtained by women[4]. Nowadays, some citizens in Chinese society don't realize the existence of the gender dividend; some don't even know this term, especially men. For thousands of years, men in China have been enjoying the benefit that the gender dividend brought to them for a long time. However, some men might also abuse their physiological advantages in this way. From the case of the Tangshan beating incident, we can realize that if men didn't control or behave themselves, their advantages could become a tool that was used to harm others easily. Or, while enjoying themselves, some of the men are not willing to take the corresponding responsibility for doing so. They refuse to give away their benefits. If men do not feel pain, they will not acknowledge their "privilege". They believe that gender equality deprives them of the advantages brought by gender dividends.

It is impossible to deny that the generation gap has resulted in such disparities in people's perspectives. Not only in the way they think but also in people's ideas of the world. As youngsters are being exposed to so much information and a wider view of a series of issues, it must be admitted that people think differently. In the old days, the elderly may have believed that some difficult tasks could only be accomplished by men, but nowadays, more and more girls are accomplishing so many significant things that men didn't or couldn't do. The new generation proves again and again that women are underestimated by society. For example, Eileen Gu is a talented skier who dared to win the championship with a difficult move for the first time in the Winter Olympics as a girl. This is an unbelievable choice. This is the legendary story of a talented girl. She can also set an example in all aspects, even though she is only a young person herself. As a woman, her many qualities make her perfectly suitable for all the imaginations of young people today for role models, and she can influence the values and outlook on life of contemporary young people[5]. It also broke the stereotypes that people used to have about female athletes. But the elders cannot understand it or can say this violates their deeply rooted traditional ideas — a preference for sons always over daughters. In some of the more traditional parts, this idea is so common that it has been ingrained for a long time. Old people even think that gender equality is against the concept of their ancestors.

Empathy ability is understanding and entering the others' feelings. Some of the men may not have the ability to imagine women's difficulties in their way or can say they don't want to do so. Too many men — don't understand that equity, justice, inclusivity, and safety for women, girls, and nonbinary people serve and save us all. Broken masculinity harms societies[6].

### 3. Research Method

Microsoft forms were used to create the online self-report questionnaire. There are a total of 12 multiple-choice questions, which standardize the answers and enhance the reliability of the survey. There are three sections. In section one, participants will answer three questions about their personal information: gender, age(including the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s). Additionally, they will be asked whether their psychological gender is the same as their physical gender. The purpose of posing this question is to check whether LGBTQ groups will have different views towards gender equality as a special population. In the next section, participants will get questions about gender dividends. They are first asked whether they know the concept of this term or not. If the answer is yes, they will be asked specifically whether, in Chinese society, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The last section is about the participants' thoughts about gender equality now in China. They will share their thoughts about whether China has achieved gender equality or not. Then they must decide which gender benefits the most when there are gender qualities worldwide. After that,

they will receive questions about the feminist movement, including whether the effects on men will be positive or negative, and whether men should get involved in the feminist movement or not. Finally, they will be asked whether they should or should not keep promoting the process of gender equality. After completing the structure and outline of the survey, it was uploaded onto social media websites as an opportunity sampling technique to recruit participants online. The link was sent to five different universities' online forums for postgraduates to do the survey. The reason for doing this is to get as many replies as possible. Also, through these means, the survey can be exposed to participants who are from distinguishable social backgrounds and age groups. This increases the ability to a representation of results since there is a variety of people's data. The total number of questionnaires that were sent out is 800, and the number of answers is 755 in total. The recovery rate is 94%.

## 4. Results and Reflections

### 4.1. Gender and Age Groups

According to the 755 answers, there are 315 males and 440 females. The percentages are 42% and 58%, respectively. It can be predicted that females tend to be more interested in the topic of male and gender equality. The percentage of 58%, which is higher than the female participant figure, is more likely to be the reason why females show more attention toward the topic. For question two, there are only 33 people who have different psychological and physical genders(4% of total). For age groups, all age groups are covered but with different ratios. Figure 1 demonstrates the ratio:

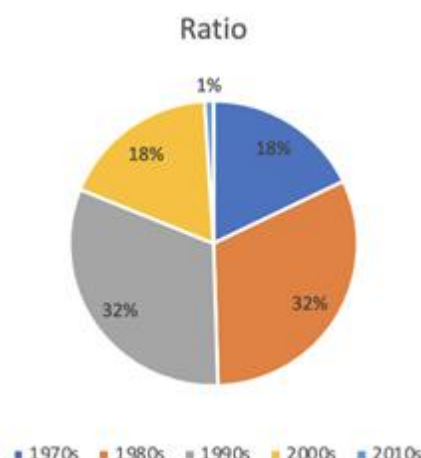


Figure1: Age group ratio

As the data has shown, the majority of the participants are 1980ers and 1990ers. There are only four 2010ers, which may be due to their young age, so they might have no cell phones. However, the results covered all ages. Otherwise, it might have caused bias in the results, which made the study less reliable and valid.

### 4.2. Gender Dividend

First, people may not realize the existence of a gender dividend in China, or they might know that a single gender might benefit in Chinese society just because of their physical gender, but they don't know the term "gender dividend" and find it hard to match the concept of the words to the reality. Both circumstances are possible, so the percentage of those who don't know the gender dividend is very high — 54%(410). The rest, 46%, knew the term. For those who know the term "gender dividend," they will analyze the impact of the gender dividend on men specifically.

#### 4.2.1. Don't Know the Term "Gender Dividends"

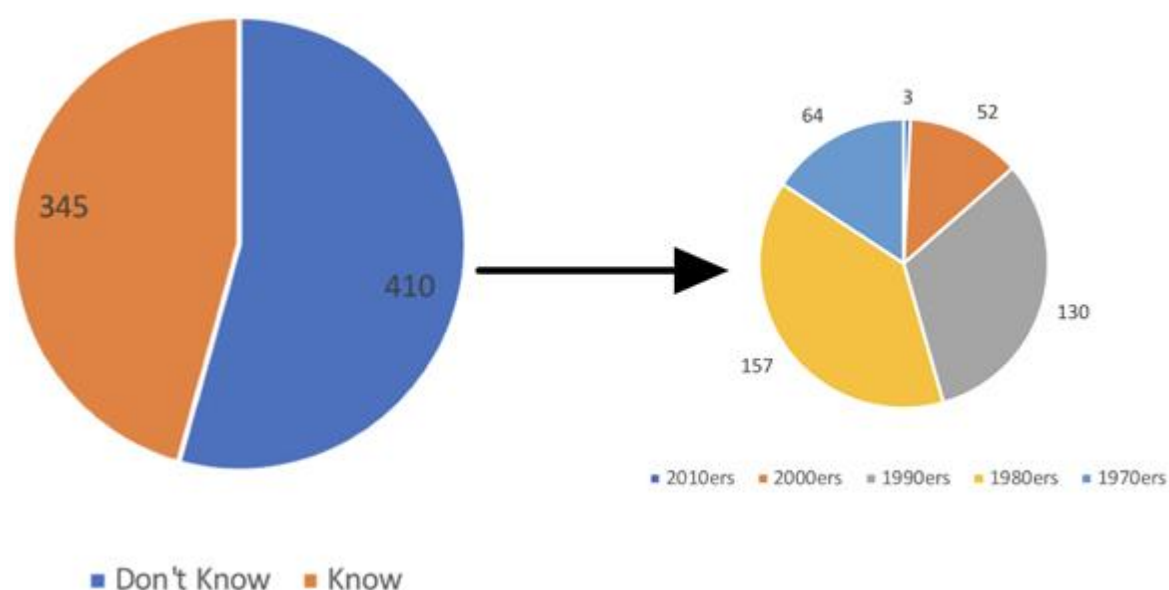


Figure2: Ratio of participants who know and don't know gender dividend (Specified to age groups)

Have a closer look at those who don't know the term gender dividend. 3 out of 4 2010ers don't know the concept (the total number of participants is too small, so ignore it), and 52 out of 410 are 2000ers. 130 are 1990ers, 157 are 1980ers, and 64 are 1970ers. It turns out that 39% of the total number of 2000ers don't know the gender dividend and 54%, 64%, and 47% for 1990ers, 1980ers, and 1970ers, respectively. It can be seen that more 2000ers knew the term "gender dividend" or can say that they realized that a gender dividend existed. This proves that differences in cognitive abilities can be varied from age to age. The number of women who don't know the gender dividend (54%) is almost the same as men's (46%) and even more. This means that gender does not affect perceptions of the gender dividend. Even for the male population that has a larger gender dividend, more men than women are largely aware of the existence of a gender dividend. So, this cannot be an excuse for men to ignore their responsibility while enjoying the benefits and conveniences that gender dividends bring to them.

#### 4.2.2. Knowing the Term "Gender Dividends"

Of those who knew the gender dividend, 82% of them thought it brought more positive results than negative ones. Of the rest, 12% think negative sides outweigh positive sides; 34% are female and 66% are male. As a result, men are more likely to perceive the negative consequences of greater gender dividends. It can be one of the excuses that they don't want to bear the responsibilities. According to the data, more females than males believe that the gender dividend benefited men (87%). The majority of them are 2000ers (93%). Again, the data proves that cognitive differences between age groups exist and can be one of the reasons why men are against gender equality.

#### 4.3. Gender Equality in China

78% of all the participants think that China hasn't reached gender equality yet. Of those who believed that inequality still existed, 391 of them were female (89% of total female participants). Meanwhile, 64% of the total male participants held the same idea. Males are less likely to admit the inequality in

Chinese society, which may be due to the gender dividend that they are enjoying or didn't even realize or have the idea of gender equality. Also, there are differences in age groups' thoughts. All the 2010 participants thought inequality hadn't been solved yet. The ratio of those who believed gender equality hasn't been reached yet and the total participants of the age groups 2000ers-1970ers were 92%, 82%, 74%, and 65%. Obviously, the ratio is decreasing as age groups increase. Youngsters are more likely to consider gender equality as a social issue and tend to think critically about whether equality has been achieved or not. This can explain the effect of a cognitive difference since 2000ers might have more excesses to various types of information, which possibly caused the differences in thoughts. Also, for all the participants, the differences in the results can also embody the possibility of the lack of empathy of some men.

The interesting point is that among 164 who thought China had already achieved gender equality, about 70% of them were men, which is much higher than the number of women. The 2000ers were much less than the 1990ers, 1980ers, or 1970ers. Among those who thought that inequality still existed, only 12% thought women benefited more than men in inequality, while the remaining 82% thought men benefited worldwide. But 54 of them still thought China didn't need to promote the development of gender equality(9%).

The next two questions are both about feminism, which is the subject most prone to misunderstanding and understanding deviation. The myth of "feminism is about provoking gender opposition" and "fighting for women's rights is hating men" can cause this trend. Those who think the feminist movement will infringe on men's rights are in the minority(31%), while the others all thought it wouldn't. The ratio of females and males in this part is almost half and half(47% and 53%). This can show that not only men might misunderstand feminism. But for this group of participants, the majority of them still thought that men should get involved in the revolution of feminism, with only 29% against men's involvement. As for those who think the feminist movement won't infringe on men's rights, 64% were female and 36% were male. The data shows that this group of participants is less likely to be against the involvement of men in feminism(13%). As for the remaining two questions, the majority of participants shared the same idea that gender equality is desirable for the whole society but not for a single gender. The percentage is 90%. 87% of participants thought China need to promote gender equality. Of the remaining 13% of the others who thought there was no need to promote gender equality, 35% of them were women and 65% were men.

## **5. Men and Gender Equality**

### **5.1. The Benefits of Men Get Involve in Gender Equality**

Gender equality has some visible benefits for men. Highlighting the benefits that gender equality brings to men is an easy way to think and seems to be the most attractive way to promote gender equality. Firstly, from the perspective of gender dividend, those responsible men who bear the stress that gender dividend brings to them in order to raise their families, especially when their wives are pregnant, are also suffering from inequality[7]. After reaching gender equality, females can have an equal chance to do work and find a job even when they are pregnant, which will share men's financial pressure to a greater extent. Gender equality is also good for companies. Research by Catalyst and others shows that the more a company treats men and women equally, the better it is for its employees. Employee happiness will be higher, the turnover rate lower, and the employees will be more attentive to their work. Such a company finds it easier to attract talent and employee loyalty higher job satisfaction and higher work efficiency[8]. Gender equality can also improve men's quality of life and effectively improve the quality of family and the parent-child relationship. Even more, men join non-remunerative labor to narrow the income gap between the sexes, which is more conducive to improving the overall economic anti-risk ability of society[9].



## 5.2. Things that Men Can Do to Help the Promotion of Gender Equality

The key change for men's participation should be how to make men build empathy in this cognitive process, face the vested interests of men relative to women, and perceive the pain of women in this process. One of the points that are useful to changing men's ideas is when they are young, and another is the point men become fathers[7]. The essence and key point of that transformation are known. Men grow into this world becoming who we're expected to be or who we think we're expected to be based on cultural expectations and inaccurate historical narratives. It was ingrained in some men that to prove their masculinity they had to display physical prowess — intimidation. The injury that some men do to themselves and the women around them comes from fear of losing control, of lack of external affirmation, and simply out of shame[6]. The point is to guide men when they are at a young age to have a correct understanding of manliness, which is not about stronger physical ability alone, but also being responsible and having courage. Here is the importance of education. Women need allies, but not saviors or protectors. Allies don't be condescending, don't "perform" feminism, and don't claim to know everything. Men's feminist allies are women's companions, mentors, patrons, advocates, and megaphones, and at the same time push other men to awaken and ultimately achieve systemic change. Hira Ali found that men tend to be less aware of the internal and external challenges women face in the workplace. Men aspiring to be good allies need a deep understanding of the pressure women carried[10].

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, the main reasons for men's opposition to the promotion of gender equality are a lack of empathy and a correct understanding of gender equality. Their misunderstanding of feminism can also cause the issue. Gender equality is not a zero-sum game where either side wins or loses, but for each side — a win-win situation for everyone. It must be clarified that women and girls can only truly achieve equal rights when men and boys join the movement and form an alliance. But whether it is suitable for Chinese society is still a question that needs more investigation. China is required to develop its own way to promote gender equality. This essay only focused on a small part of the participants who are in Guangdong province, so the results may be hard to generate for a wider population and be representative of Chinese society. As a result, additional research into various areas in China may be conducted.

## References

- [1] United Nations Educational. 2017. *Scientific and Cultural Organization. Guidelines for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education*[M]. Beijing: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7.
- [2] Wikipedia, *Global Gender Gap Report* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_Gender\\_Gap\\_Report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Gender_Gap_Report)
- [3] *China-Global Gender Gap Index*, <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/global-gender-gap-index/china>
- [4] Zhi-lei shi [No. 24, 2020] *Gender Dividend: Understanding socioeconomic development from a gender perspective* [https://www.sohu.com/a/401887696\\_771479](https://www.sohu.com/a/401887696_771479)
- [5] Dong Xuran. (2022). *Gu Ailing's media image and its communication value in social media*. *New Media Research*, 8(10), 4.
- [6] Jimmie Briggs, 2022, *3 things men can do to promote gender equity* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG6NHP9nV3g>
- [7] Nikki van der Gaag, *Why feminism needs men - and men need feminism*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Xu2JE2LoEY>
- [8] Michael Kimmel, 2016, *Why Gender Equality Is good for Everyone- Men Included* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7n9IOH0NvyY>
- [9] *Men's participation in gender equality? WHY?* <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/I-t3uK4vkV21kdiVTY41cg>
- [10] Hira Ali, 2021, *Her Allies: A Practical Toolkit to Help Men Lead Through Advocacy*. Neem Tree Press.