

The Impact of New Media on Female Rights and Protection of Gender Equity in the Workplace

Zhaoxin Lin^{1,a,*}

¹*School Humanities & Communication, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China, 310018*

a. Limchornking@163.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: The advent of the new media era has provided a platform for demands of gender equity to be voiced. The article focuses on new media and gender equity in the workplace, citing the unequal treatment experienced by female workers of different age groups and providing a summary analysis. In this paper, research methods such as fieldwork and questionnaires were used to collect the problems encountered by women in the workplace and analyze them accordingly to provide strategies and possible solutions. The result shows that with the advent of the new media era, long-standing discriminatory issues will be tackled one by one. The new mainstream media has enriched the image of women in the new era; the interactive experience between users has spread the demands of working women more widely; the media literacy of women in the media era has improved their working performance; and the public opinion mechanism has made women's voices louder and more persistent, all of which make it possible to achieve gender equality in the workplace.

Keywords: New Media, Gender Equity, Female Workers, Female Rights, Workplace, Gender Dividend

1. Introduction

The advent of the new media era has provided a platform for demands of gender equity to be voiced, and the realization of gender equity can promote the generation of gender dividends, which brings benefits to female workers. In the past, due to lagging social attitudes and the lack of corresponding policies, women have long suffered from unfair treatment in the workplace, which is not conducive to the development of social civilization and the rational exploitation of human resources. In previous studies on gender equity in the workplace, scholars such as Jiang Lai, Lu Jiehua and Han Ningping have discussed the relationship between gender equity and the gender dividend in the workplace [1][2][3]. These discussions are not without significance, but they have not touched on the significant features of the advantages brought by the new media context for gender equity, which provides much room for improvement in the direction of this paper. The article focuses on new media and gender equity in the workplace, citing the unequal treatment experienced by female workers of different age groups and providing a summary analysis by analyzing the possible solutions offered by new media to achieve the goal of gender equity. The article explores the untapped gender dividends in the workplace and further explores the potential benefits of new media for women in the workplace in a systematic and in-depth manner. In this paper, research methods such as fieldwork and questionnaires

were used to collect the problems encountered by women in the workplace and analyze them accordingly to provide strategies and possible solutions. Meanwhile, the article analyzes a report published by Thomson Reuters Group to quantify the data.

Based on the perspective of gender equity research, this article takes female workers as the main subject and studies the discrimination phenomenon they encounter in the workplace in the new media era, and explores the changes of the “glass ceiling” effect of women’s work in the context of the new media, taking into account the policy environment, the role of public opinion, the media context and the industry situation. It is a groundbreaking workplace justice proposal from the perspective of gender equity and gender dividend. This paper focuses on the new media as a platform for women to make their voices heard, and analyzes the unequal treatment of women workers in the workplace based on questionnaire interviews and fieldwork, revealing the double pressure on women in their social and professional roles. It provides a reference for women to use the public opinion communication mechanism to stimulate the demand for gender equality in society in the new media era. It can promote the creation and realization of a gender dividend to meet the needs of women to be treated fairly in the workplace.

2. Method

To understand the current gender inequalities in the professional world, this thesis uses a questionnaire collection method to conduct a survey. The survey was targeted at women who have had experience in job hunting. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: personal information, workplace status and suggestions for improvement. Ten questions were set up, including: “Have you experienced gender discrimination in the workplace”, “The type of discrimination you have experienced”, “The nature of the industry you applied for when you were discriminated against in employment”, “The nature of the position you applied for when you were discriminated against in employment”, “The difference in pay between men and women for the same position”, “The ratio of men to women in the management of the company”, “Do you think that men are better at work than women”, “Do you think that women have to work harder than men to get a promotion”, “Does your workplace give women marriage and maternity leave?” and “What do you think your workplace should do to eliminate gender discrimination?”. The questionnaire was distributed electronically and 200 copies were returned, with a valid sample size of 185 and a valid return rate of 92.5%.

3. Results and Analysis

According to the questionnaire survey, 90% of women have experienced gender discrimination in their job search and employment process. Most women are discriminated against because of stereotypes, and although the formation of such stereotypes has changed with the development of society, their essentially discriminatory meaning for women remains the same. The constraints of the traditional gender division of labour have kept women’s labour potential limited over the course of a long period of social development. In addition, women are inevitably affected by biological gender differences in the process of balancing the relationship between work and family. Gender differences are a major cause of prejudice against women in society. In the survey on 'Types of employment discrimination you have experienced as a woman', nearly 80 per cent of women said they had experienced gender discrimination, and 50 per cent said they had experienced marriage or maternity discrimination in the workplace. Ninety per cent of unmarried women were asked about their relationship and marriage intentions in interviews, and in most cases, the answer to this question had a significant impact on the hiring of female candidates, showing that the current workplace environment is not friendly to all women. Women are naturally endowed with the ability to nurture life and are often the ones who sacrifice the most in the process of childbirth and parenting. In the

long run, most women who focus on raising children are labeled as “Housewives”, while men are rarely referred to as “House Husbands”. This is the result of social stereotyping of women, which has led to unequal treatment. Working women who have been given the expectation of motherhood are under pressure from both work and family, which not only restricts their employment performance, but also forces some working women who wish to have children to give up childbirth or work, resulting in a situation where both sides lose out. In fact, with the improvement of people’s perception and the improvement of the industry system, it is possible for women to combine work and childbirth well.

In the current competitive marketplace, women are indeed or are perceived to be less able to devote themselves to their work for a certain period of time due to the objective attributes of childbirth and motherhood, so the labour market, with its emphasis on profitability, is suspicious of women in terms of hiring. When faced with a situation where both sexes are equally competent, employers often choose men. These unspoken rules of the industry not only discourage some professional women from pursuing careers, but also undermine the ethics of fair employment within the industry. Male workers are often promoted to higher positions because they are favoured by the industry, while female workers find it difficult to break through the glass ceiling, which creates a vicious circle.

4. Advantages of the New Media Era for Gender Equity

4.1. Dissemination of Gender Equity Awareness in the New Mainstream Media

The new mainstream media, such as People’s Daily and CCTV news are the mainstay of promoting gender equality values and have irreplaceable guidance, influence and credibility in the dissemination of gender equality communication culture [1]. With the development and launch of the Gender Sensitive Media Indicators (GSIs), UNESCO has been working to promote and disseminate them globally, so that they are fully implemented and properly applied. According to Chen Ning, who evaluated a sample of new mainstream media in China using the Gender Sensitive Media Indicators, there has been an increase in the gender sensitivity of news coverage in major media, as well as an increase in the gender literacy of media workers and Internet users, facilitated by a number of factors. The new mainstream media are consciously promoting the idea of gender equality and enriching the image of women when reporting news. For example, during the epidemic, there were many stories about female doctors and authoritative medical practitioners, which helped women break away from the stereotype of “housewives”. This is a reflection of the current era in which the media focus on reporting, presenting and promoting the image of contemporary women, and in doing so, they will also be infused with the professional ethics and professionalism of women. In this process, the gender connotations of women are enriched, and women can be emotionally delicate, talented and brave at the same time, and they are not inferior to men. This greatly enriches the image of women in the minds of the community and portrays a good professional image of women.

4.2. Various Ways to Effectively Disseminate the Concept of Gender Equity in the Era of Integrated Media

In the era of fusion media, the channels for the dissemination of gender equality concepts have never been richer, and the prosperous development of self-media has also given women more space for discourse. Through the integration of more than ten carriers, including newspapers, the internet, terminals and screens, the new mainstream media have created a new media matrix suitable for promoting a culture of gender equality, with the People’s Daily alone covering a readership of more than 900 million people [4]. As the Internet empowers and changes the ecological landscape of the public opinion arena, the most interactive comment section is an open platform for contemporary netizen to transmit and feed back information, and many netizen will engage in "the-negotiated-

reading" in the comment section of gender-related news events. The so-called the-negotiated-reading refers to the audience's trust in the media, or from a rational perspective, constantly adjusting their own understanding, such as repeatedly reading the content, thinking about it, searching for relevant information for comparison, so that their interpretation does not completely deviate from the meaning of the media as far as possible, which is a basic recognition of the content and views of the media, forming a situation of negotiation with the original intention of the news report a negotiated situation [5]. It not only effectively increased the publicity of news about gender equality through consultative interpretation among netizen, but it also greatly stimulated netizen' initiative to participate in public affairs, which well popularized and enriched the public's media perception of the concept of gender equality.

4.3. The Public Opinion Mechanism Has Led to the Creation and Improvement of Relevant Policies

Since the outbreak of the epidemic, the number of reports on women workers in social media has risen steeply, and the image of women workers as intelligent, hard-working and capable has been presented to the public more and more often. In 2020, President Xi Jinping stressed at the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women that "the protection of women's rights and interests must be elevated to the level of national will" [6]. The legal policies for the protection of women and children in China were further improved as a result of positive public opinion praising women workers and social reactions. The new social media has created a public opinion field on the topic of gender equality, which is monitoring the behaviour of social groups and promoting the creation and improvement of relevant policies and regulations. It is worth noting that on October 30 2022, the 37th session of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress considered and adopted the newly revised Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, which before its revision consisted of nine chapters and 61 articles. Articles 43, 48, 74 and 83 of the new Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests address painful and difficult issues in the area of the protection of women's rights and interests, such as gender discrimination in employment, and actively address the challenges posed by the adjustment of maternity policies, providing support for women to better balance maternity and career [7].

4.4. The Improvement of Women's Media Literacy Enhances Their Competitiveness in Employment

As the new media era progresses, women growing up in the new media environment have the opportunity to improve their media literacy, which will help them to better cope with events and enhance their employ-ability. In fact, even before women enter the workforce, their ability to become media literate has already had an impact on their lives. According to Zhang Hanyan, university students with high social media literacy have higher skills in information acquisition, evaluation and creation, and are better able to engage in public discourse and content output, and therefore have higher levels of cognitive participation in feminist movements than other groups [8]. By analogy, women who are more media literate are more cognitive and more active. In fact, when women enter the workplace, those with good media literacy are able to deal with problems at work with ease. They are able to legally use their legal weapons to expose injustice and to amplify the impact of incidents through social media platforms. This is a reflection of the urgency of media literacy education for women, which is a pressing issue in a society where "women's access to education is more easily limited by family background factors, while men are more likely to break through them" [9].

5. Discussion

The gender dividend is an economic concept, a new theory based on the demographic dividend and the new economic benefits that can be generated by achieving gender equality [2]. According to some scholars, the gender dividend is achieved through both an increase in the number of women in paid employment and an increase in the productivity of the female population [10]. Both pathways are prerequisites for achieving gender equality. Currently, the female labour force is still underutilized and it is likely that women will be the main driver of economic growth in the near future in the context of a revitalized global economy [11]. This is a clear indication that there is an urgent need to increase the number of women in the workforce and to raise the productivity of the female population. If women are to be able to make the most of their abilities in the workplace, it is essential to break down gender discrimination and achieve gender equality. Both gender economic theory and feminist economic theory point to the persistence of gender inequality in the economy, and argue that the main manifestations of gender inequality in the economy are the gender labour gap, the gender wage gap and the gender entrepreneurship gap [12]. They also agree that achieving gender equality in the economy not only contributes to women's social well-being and gender equality, but also helps to improve the efficiency of society and unlock the gender dividend, creating new dynamics for sustainable economic development. Two different studies from an economic perspective reveal the core relationship between gender equality and the gender dividend, i.e., gender equality is the basis and prerequisite for the realization of the gender dividend.

At this stage, there are certain constraints to releasing the gender dividend in China. Although policies and measures based on the biological differences between men and women were originally designed to protect women, the lack of a gender perspective in policy formulation has led to excessive protection for women, which has in turn intensified the conflict between the needs of gender interests and the economic interests of enterprises in the labour market, invariably reinforcing the disadvantaged position of women and ultimately indirectly leading to the loss of women's rights and interests in the labour market [13][14]. In addition, the existing policy system is fragmented and fragmented, with some of the more principled legal provisions lacking specific regulations and policies to deal with the growing number of "hidden discrimination" issues [15]. Furthermore, the existing governance system lacks strong punitive mechanisms and external oversight of 'hidden discrimination' against women at all stages of their career development, from job search, promotion, training to dismissal [16]. Therefore, we can make use of the power of new media to urge the improvement of relevant policies in the field of public opinion for gender equality, so as to reduce the difficulty of releasing the gender dividend through the improvement of policies and expand the influence of gender equality through the generation of the gender dividend, so as to achieve the maximum benefit of gender equality and sustainable development.

6. Conclusion

According to the results of the questionnaire, nearly 80 per cent of women have experienced unequal treatment in employment, with discrimination in personnel management, technology-intensive and manufacturing industries. Almost all public enterprises and institutions have a maternity leave system, but about 20 per cent of private enterprises still have a vague maternity leave system. More than half of the employment units have an imbalance in the number of men and women in management, and nearly 95 per cent of respondents believe that Women are no less capable of working than men. Gender discrimination in the workplace remains high, but in the new media era these have changed somewhat and will continue to evolve for the better. The diversity of communication channels in the new media ensures that women's voices are consolidated and that more and more women will be in charge of the media in the future. Today, with efficient media communication, women are able to

speak out through more platforms and have access to more people's support. Gender equity in society is a prerequisite for the realization of gender equality in the media, and the breaking down of the "male discourse sovereignty" in the media can also contribute to the realization of gender equality in real life. The gender dividend is mainly generated by gender equity in the labor market, so the stimulation of the gender dividend must start with addressing the discrimination women receive in employment and in the workplace. The basic social system of gender equality and the relevant laws and regulations should be truly implemented. The main focus should be on fairness and equity in employment, supported by complementary policies such as maternity leave systems, preschool care systems for children and equal employment systems for enterprises. With the joint support of the state, enterprises, the social climate and the family environment, women, especially those with higher education and good media literacy, will be given more career options. Thus gender equity in the workplace will be promoted. Throughout this article, there are still problems with the inadequate survey sample, the small scope of the survey and the lack of in-depth research. The author will continue to engage in research related to new media and pay continued attention to gender equality in the workplace.

Acknowledgement

I have had some challenges and setbacks during these months of research and thesis writing, but fortunately everything has been resolved. I would like to show my deepest gratitude to my professor, and my teaching assistant, for providing me with direction in my writing. As well as for my studies at Zhejiang Gongshang University, which have given me a deeper understanding of gender equity. All in all, there is still a long way to go in order to achieve gender equity, both in the workplace and in all other areas.

References

- [1] Jiang Lai. 2014. *The real dilemma and future direction of gender dividend*[J]. *Journal of Yunnan University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, 31(02), 82-89.
- [2] Lu Jiehua, Wang Bin. 2020. *Development Potential of China's Gender Dividend, Constraints and its Strategic Concept-Based on Gender Equality* [Perspective][J]. *Studies on socialism with Chinese characteristics*, (03), 63-71.
- [3] Han Ningping. 2021. *From Gender Equality to Gender Dividend: Realistic Constraints and Realization Path*[J]. *Shandong Social Science*, (03), 70-75.
- [4] Chen Ning. 2022. *New mainstream media and gender equity cultural communication*[J]. *Nankai Journal (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, (02), 82-90.
- [5] Li Hong. 2017. *Reinterpretation of audience negotiated interpretation model in media integration environment*[J]. *Journal of Jingchu Studies*, 18(02), 64-67.
- [6] Nan Chuxin. 2021-01-26. *Observing the new ecology of online public opinion and witnessing the acceleration of gender equality*[N]. *China Women's Daily*, (005).
- [7] Xu Yanhong. 2022-11-08. *What are you most concerned about when the new Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests is passed?*[N]. *People's Political Consultative Conference Daily*, (012).
- [8] Zhang Hanyan. 2020. *The influence of social media literacy on the cognition and participation of college student's feminist movement*[D]. *Shanghai International Studies University*, 52.
- [9] Li Chunling. 2009. *Gender differences in educational status attainment — the influence of family background on the educational status attainment of males and females*[J]. *Women's Studies Series*, (01), 14-18.
- [10] Shi Zhilai, Zhang Tingpimei. 2020. *Gender dividend: A new perspective for understanding socio-economic development*[J]. *Journal of Zhongnan University of Economics and Law*, (03), 61-70+159.
- [11] UN Women. 2011. *The Gender Dividend-A Business Case for Gender Equality*[R]. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/media/publications/en/unwomenthegenderdividend.pdf?la=en&vs=949>.
- [12] Becchio, G. (2019). *A History of Feminist and Gender Economics*. Routledge.
- [13] Yan Jin, Li Xueqin. 2015. *A review of domestic research on women's equal employment policies*[J]. *Journal of Huaihai University of Technology (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 13(10), 16-20.

- [14] Xiao Wei, Zhu Yi. 2009. *An exploration of public policy on employment from the perspective of gender justice - A policy reflection on gender discrimination in employment*[J]. *Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Monthly*, 22(02), 131-133.
- [15] Yang Juhua. 2019. *Fertility support and fertility support policy: basic meaning and future orientation*[J]. *Shandong Social Science*, (10), 98-107.
- [16] Li Yancheng. 2018. *Research on women's right to equality in employment*[D]. *Guangxi University for Nationalities*.