

# ***Gender Discrimination in Contemporary Chinese Women's Income***

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**Abstract:** On the globe, there has been much gender discrimination whereby women are the culprit. China is one of the countries that has not been left out and gender discrimination is very high. In China, women largely experience widespread income discrimination. Women in many companies or firms earn less as compared to men, even in similar jobs. To understand this, this paper aims to explore the gender discrimination faced by Chinese women in terms of income. Through a literature review, this paper finds that despite the increasing participation of Chinese women in the labor market and the progress made in improving the status of women, gender discrimination still exists in the field of women's income. This paper analyzes the status quo of gender income inequality, the harm of gender income inequality, and the challenges faced in realizing gender income equality. The findings show that there has been a significant difference in income gaps between women and men. There have been restrictions on women's career choices and development. Also, there has been a negative effect on women's living conditions. This study is significant as it enables us to understand the plight of women in China and the sufferings that they have been undergoing.

**Keywords:** gender discrimination, income gap, female labor force, cultural factors

## **1. Introduction**

In the world, gender discrimination against women has been on the rise. Many women suffer gender discrimination in their homes and their workplace. Gender discrimination mainly starts in childhood when children are robbed of their chances or rights, especially the girl child. A woman is more likely to be denied his rights as compared to a man. In the globe, many girls are kept away from school, they are forced to be married and many others are subjected to violence. In the workplace, many women face discrimination whereby they are paid less money as compared to men who perform the same duties. Also, their voices are never heard and they continue to be discriminated against. In China, many women continue to face discrimination income discrimination [1]. Many organizations in China pay women less income as compared to men. There has been a noteworthy difference in income gaps between men and women [2]. Inequitable treatment of women in employment is very common in today's China, especially in science-related occupations that are traditionally more suitable for men, such as pay inequality and layoffs. Also, there has been a negative consequence on women's living conditions where gender discrimination has made many women face lower wages and benefits thereby reducing their quality of life and financial security. In this, many women face poverty and financial instability, financial hardship, and lower quality of life. Those women living in low-income

families and poor areas mainly suffer in China and other parts of the world. They also find it hard to afford basic needs, for instance, food, clothing, health care, shelter, and education. Previous research has not touched much on gender discrimination on Chinese women's income and thereby there is a need to do more research on this topic. This paper will analyze the current status of gender-specific income inequality, the harms of gender income inequality, and the challenges to achieving income equality between men and women.

## **2. Status of Gender-Specific Income Inequality**

### **2.1. Differences in Income Opportunities**

There is a striking difference in income opportunities between men and women. This difference manifests itself as a social phenomenon whereby many occupations and industries prefer to recruit male employees or, in some cases, even exclude female employees. This trend is particularly evident in traditionally male-dominated industries and professions, such as technology, finance and healthcare.

While unemployment figures for men and women in China differ, the majority of unemployed women in China are working as homemakers. For instance, in 2000, 73% of unemployed women between the ages of 30 and 34 did not hold work outside the home because they were taking care of household duties. Only 4% of the unemployed men in this age range were giving up paid work to care for their families, in comparison [1].

Young individuals and recent college graduates are also affected by gender-based prejudice. An investigation by the Women's Federation of Jiangsu Province demonstrates this [3]. According to the article, 80% of female graduates in a group of 1,100 college graduates reported encountering gender discrimination while searching for jobs. Male employment rates were 8% higher than female employment rates among college graduates with equivalent credentials.

The hiring, firing, early retirement, fines for breaking family planning rules, salary discrepancies, denial of some social benefits, and sexual harassment have all been signs of gender discrimination in China from the 1990s to the present. It is significantly more expensive to hire female employees than male employees due to laws and regulations designed to protect women, which oblige firms to offer expensive perks relating to maternity, childcare, and basic gender disparities to female employees. Female employees, particularly foreign workers, have a history of having their requests for maternity leave denied by employers, being forced to sign contracts committing them to not getting pregnant, or even having their employment terminated because of pregnancy [1]. The government and even many workplaces no longer offer childcare or other family-related benefits, and women continue to be seen as the primary caretakers in Chinese culture and face the majority of the burden [4].

### **2.2. Different Pay for the Same Work in Different Genders**

Even when women are able to obtain positions comparable to those of men in certain fields, they often face the problem of unequal pay for equal work. Despite the fact that men and women perform the same jobs, there are significantly more employment opportunities for men than for women [5]. Women worldwide are paid 15 to 50 percent less than men for the same work, and both social and biological reasons are used to justify this inequality. Women are perceived to be less physically and mentally capable than men, who have a greater need for income because they are considered the main breadwinners for their families. Chinese law clearly stipulates that men and women receive equal pay for equal work, and in 2011 the State Council issued the Circular of the State Council on Improving the Employment of Graduates of General Colleges and Universities. The State Council released the Circular of the State Council on Doing a Good Job in Employment for Graduates of Ordinary Colleges and Universities in 2011 to address the issue of difficult employment for college graduates. In 2013,

the General Office of the State Council released the Circular of the State Council on Doing a Good Job in Employment for Graduates of Ordinary Colleges and Universities, which calls for the immediate redress of gender discrimination.

However, in practice, women are often discriminated against in terms of pay. Such unfair treatment not only dampens the motivation of female employees, but also further aggravates the inequality of income between men and women.

Reasons for unequal pay for equal work may include prejudice against women's abilities and contributions, and employers' dual expectations of women engaged in domestic work. All these factors may lead employers to pay men more when they are given the same work tasks and responsibilities.

### **2.3. Occupational Limitations of Women**

Women's career choices and development are also restricted. This is manifested in two main ways: first, the relatively narrow range of career choices available to women, and second, the fact that women have fewer opportunities for career advancement.

In terms of career choices, due to a variety of factors such as social attitudes and family expectations, women are often guided or forced to choose careers that are traditionally considered to be "women's domains", such as education, health care and social work. On the other hand, there are fewer women in "male domain" occupations with higher income and status, such as science and technology, finance and engineering. This limited range of career choices further exacerbates income inequality between men and women.

On the other hand, even when women are able to break out of their traditional roles and enter occupations that are considered to be "male domains", they are often limited in their opportunities for advancement. This phenomenon is largely due to gender bias and double standards in the evaluation system. This double standard requires women to not only perform well, but also demonstrate leadership styles and abilities that differ from traditional male leadership traits, which undoubtedly makes it more difficult for women in career advancement.

## **3. The Harm of Gender-Specific Income Inequality**

### **3.1. Problems with the Stabilization and Coordination of the Social Structure**

The issue of income inequality between men and women has far-reaching implications for the social structure. Firstly, income inequality can exacerbate social class conflicts and undermine social stability. In developing countries like China, inequality between men and women in terms of income, education and employment opportunities is still widespread. Such inequality has, to a certain extent, caused social instability, stimulated social conflicts and even triggered social violence and conflicts in some places.

Secondly, income inequality between men and women also affects the coordinated development of society. On the one hand, income inequality has prevented the protection of women's rights and interests in many areas, such as education, health care, politics and the economy, and has marginalized women's social status, restricting the coordinated development of social diversity. On the other hand, income inequality between men and women has also led to inequitable distribution of social resources, resulting in the lagging development of some regions and groups and widening the gap between the rich and the poor in society.

Discrimination against women in the workplace not only creates a huge data gap, but also shows other social prejudices, not only against women. Feminized males are often discriminated against by people, and this misogynistic social culture teaches boys from an early age not to cry and not to act like girls. Some good qualities, such as attentiveness, gentleness, and sensitivity, that a boy is not

allowed to have, actually benefit the economy in today's society, such as communicating with clients and grasping details. Unfortunately, most of these "feminine traits" possessed by men are limited or even stifled by traditional rules. Imagine these qualities being revealed and society would undoubtedly evolve in a positive direction.

### **3.2. Gender-Specific Income Inequality Has a Negative Impact on Women's Living Condition**

Firstly, women affected by gender discrimination may face lower wages and benefits, which can reduce their financial security and quality of life. Women can face financial hardship, poverty and instability, especially those living in poor areas or low-income families. They find it harder to afford necessities such as food, health care and education.

Secondly, gender discrimination may also have a negative impact on women's career development. Due to unequal opportunities for advancement, women may not be able to get the same position and pay promotion as men, thus limiting their career development and professional prestige. In developed countries like the U.S., women make up less than 13% of the boards of directors of large corporations, and only 2% of the Fortune 500 companies. Not to mention developing countries [1]. Thirdly, the impact of sexism on women is not limited to economics. Women who are discriminated against can face a blow to their self-esteem and confidence, which can have a profound impact on their lives. They may feel depressed, lost and helpless, which can lead to physical and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and insomnia.

Lastly, gender discrimination may also have a negative impact on women's social status and family life. Women who are discriminated against may not receive the same social recognition and respect as men, which can reduce their status and influence in their families and communities. At the same time, it may also have a negative impact on their marriage and family relationships, leading to marital unhappiness and family disharmony. Higher socioeconomic level women are more likely to be driven by a strong desire to develop personally, which frequently creates additional tensions when trying to balance parenthood and a profession [2].

### **3.3. Global Economic Losses**

Income inequality between men and women takes a toll on the global economy. First, gender income inequality leads to a global waste of human resources. Although there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of physical and intellectual strength, for social and cultural reasons, many industries and professions prefer to recruit men or give them higher wages and promotion opportunities, which results in the underutilization of a large number of human resources globally.

Secondly, income inequality between men and women also affects the global economy. On the one hand, low incomes and inadequate employment opportunities marginalize women within the family and limit their development in the social and economic spheres. This not only exacerbates women's poverty and marginalization, but also hinders the development of the global economy. On the other hand, income inequality between men and women has also led to inequitable distribution of social resources, causing some regions and groups to lag behind in economic development and widening the gap between rich and poor in the global economy.

The patriarchal perspective often obscures the true contribution of women. In the past, in societies where physical strength was the main force, men were more productive than women. This may indeed have led to male superiority over women. But this is the age of mental labor, and science has shown that there is no significant difference in intelligence between men and women. In fact, for women, they are born with strong communication skills and attentiveness, and these qualities are often superior to those of men. Many women have stopped short of giving full play to their talents. Take a

very common example. In China, as girls, we were often taught by our parents when we were young: girls don't have to work so hard or be too smart, or no one will want to marry you. Many girls obviously have talents that can be better adapted to survive in this society, but they are unable to show themselves. This has caused many talents to be drowned out. This is really a painful phenomenon for the society. The study found that male executives in more market-oriented regions received higher pay after controlling for other personal, economic and corporate governance factors affecting executive pay, and that such overpayment was detrimental to the future performance of the firm [6].

## **4. Challenges to Achieving Income Equality Between Women and Men**

### **4.1. Difficulties in Policy Implementation**

First of all, difficulties in policy implementation are one of the main challenges to realizing income equality between men and women. Although many countries have introduced relevant laws and policies to protect women's rights to work and wages, there are many problems in the actual implementation process. For example, some laws and policies may lack specific enforcement measures and regulatory mechanisms, leading to poor implementation in practice. In addition, some enterprises may resist or modify the implementation of policies, making it impossible to fully and effectively implement them. Therefore, the attainment of income parity between men and women, it is necessary to strengthen the formulation and implementation of policies to ensure their effectiveness and operability. According to studies, women in China made 84% of what men achieved in terms of annual earnings in 1988 [7]. This proportion fell to 80% in 1995, 79.0% in 2002, and ultimately 78.3% in 2018. The most notable immediate impact of this shift in women's standing and influence in many economic sectors has been a greater susceptibility among all women. These findings demonstrate that, despite being legally guaranteed, women's professional rights in China remain challenging to implement. These data show that women's professional rights in China, although guaranteed by law, are difficult to implement

### **4.2. Stereotypes of a "Male-Dominated Culture"**

Stereotypes in male-dominated cultures are also an obstacle to the realization of income equality between men and women. In China, men are seen as the main breadwinners of the family, while women are seen as the main caregivers of the family.

In recent years, academics and feminists have argued that the division of domestic labor is a symbolic representation of gender relations as well as a question of time availability and logical decision-making [8]. According to a gender viewpoint, male dominance is routinely enacted in everyday life, which reinforces gender stereotypes [9]. Married men and women show the greatest disparity in the amount of time spent on household chores, demonstrating the power of the "husband" and "wife" roles [10]. Traditionally, husbands are considered the breadwinners and their wages support and sustain the well-being of the family, while wives and mothers are expected to do housework. In other words, when husbands and wives earn the same level of income, the wife is seen as a co-breadwinner, contributing financially to the family, but she is still responsible for household chores. Many studies have shown that the entry of married women into the paid labor force in China has not been accompanied by an equal increase in their husbands' participation in housework.

This perception largely influences women's career choices and career development. In addition, this perception may lead to discrimination and exclusion of women in the workplace, as companies may consider women less capable than men of performing certain positions or bearing the same work pressure. Strengthening social and cultural education, promoting the value of equality between men and women, and dismantling conventional gender norms are all important to alter this perspective.



### 4.3. Male Dissatisfaction with Shrinking Gender Benefits

The opposition of men in high positions to the impending shrinkage of their own group's benefits also poses a challenge to the realization of income equality between men and women. The low percentage of women in senior positions in China is also related to discrimination and exclusion of women in the workplace. Even so, most men in China believe that workplace society has reached gender equality and are not even aware of the oppression of women in the workplace. However, even if women are able to obtain high positions, their benefits and treatment are not always guaranteed. For example, in some enterprises, high benefits and treatment often vary according to the gender of the employees. This unfair distribution of benefits will bring more pressure and difficulties to women at work, making it more difficult for them to get high wages and good treatment. If women want to receive equal pay, it will certainly make men, who used to enjoy dividends in the workplace without realizing it, dissatisfied.

## 5. Conclusion

Women in China face widespread income discrimination. Women tend to earn less than men, even in the same jobs. Gender discrimination in earnings not only has a negative impact on women but is also detrimental globally. The differences in income gaps between women and men is high. This difference mainly occurs in different organizations where they prefer men over women. Some organizations, even exclude women from some jobs. Income inequality based on gender has also affected women's living conditions. In many cases, individuals face lower benefits and wages that reduce their quality of life and their financial security. The male-dominated cultures can be blamed as an obstacle to attaining income equality between women and men. In China, breadwinners are men and women act as the caregivers of their families. More research needs to be conducted on the wage gap for women in China and what the government needs to do to ensure that the living conditions of women in China are looked upon.

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