Gender Inequality in The Workspace

Promoting and supporting diversity in the workplace remains an essential aspect of good people management. It entails valuing everyone in an organization as an individual. However, companies have not been able to reap the benefits of a diverse workforce due to the lack of an inclusive work environment where everyone feels able to participate and attain their full potentials. One of the diversity issues in the contemporary workplace is gender inequality. It remains a serious issue in the corporate world, whereby employees are treated discriminately based on their gender. It has particularly plagued female employees in the workplace for many years and persists despite numerous efforts by women's rights groups. Women remain significantly underrepresented in the corporate pipeline, fewer women are hired at entry-level, more men are promoted than women, women paid less than men, and women have limited opportunities for career advancement and development.

Description and Analysis of the Issue

Gender inequality in the workplace is a multifaceted phenomenon. The issues fueling it are also diverse and remain a challenge to organizations. One compelling justification of the persistence of gender inequality is the continued treatment of women differently from their male counterparts. One of the factors fueling gender inequality in the workplace is unequal pay. Research shows that men earn about 24% higher than women and sometimes just 81% of what men are paid (Abendroth et al., 2017). Today, more women have acquired education than men, and there has been an influx of women into the workforce for the past two decades. For example, on average, American women are more educated than men, with many of them attaining at least a bachelor’s degree in various professions. Shockingly, women in the U.S. workforce are still paid less than men. Bibi (2016) found that women are paid 49 cents for every $1 that men earn. Women earn roughly 20% less than men on average, and the situation is not getting better for them. In addition to this, women fear to ask to be paid what they are worth. They struggle to ask for higher pay due to fear of discussing money matters with their employers. Sharma (2016) noted that 71% of women accept the salary they are offered due to fear of being labelled as greedy or desperate.

Sexual harassment is another factor fueling gender inequality. Sharma (2016) argued that sexual harassment is one of the obstacles many women face in the workforce. It has led to the rise of women’s rights movements such as the #MeToo, which fights sexually harassed women in the workplace. Dilli, Carmichael, and Rijpma (2019) reported that approximately 39% of women had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, with 81% having experienced sexual assault in their lifetime. Sexual harassment is also rampant in medical professions and among women working in law firms, with 58% of female surgeons suffering sexual assault (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2019). Women who are at higher risk include those who work in the hospitality sector and rely on tips for extra income, those lacking legal immigration status, and women with temporary visas or private workers. It is estimated that 75% of women who report sexual harassment ordeals at work experience retaliation, including demotion and being fired.

Racism is yet another facet of gender discrimination. Race influences how women are treated and paid in the workplace. The salary women receive largely depends on their race and

ethnicity in some organizations. For example, Native American and Hispanic women have the lowest median annual earnings ($ 31,000 and $ 28,000 respectively), followed by White women ($40,000), and then Asian/Pacific Islander women ($46,000). These earnings also vary by race when compared to what men are paid. Women are also promoted less often than their male workmates, yet they are more educated than them and make almost 50% of the workforce. A study by Abendroth et al. (2017) found that less than 5% of CEOs at S&P 500 companies are women as most of them resign for various reasons. Reports also show that women of color are worse off because they are invisible in S7P 500 and Fortune 500 companies' boards (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2019). For example, women of color only constitute 10% of first-and middle-level managers and officials, 5% of executive and senior-level managers and officials, and 4% of board positions.

Historical Context of Gender Inequality

One of the historical explanations offered for gender inequality in the workplace is motherhood myths. Verniers and Vala (2018) assessed the validity of this claim, arguing that gender inequality persists despite numerous policy efforts to tackle it. The findings of the study demonstrate that sexism and motherhood myths influence opposition to women's involvement in the workforce. Women experience resistance to their career progression after birth. Even in countries with smaller gender gaps. There is still less approval of egalitarian gender roles and women perform most of the household chores and childcare (Verniers & Vala, 2018). Many communities around the world believe in the specialization of gender roles in the family and participation in the workforce threatens the existence of the family. The authors concluded that motherhood myths shape gender structures in different countries and either exacerbate or reduce gender inequality.

Women are also disadvantaged on the historical gender equality index. Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma (2019) noted with great concern that despite recent progress in policy, women are still underprivileged by their household engagements and impaired access to well-paid jobs. The authors introduced a composite index of gender inequality in 129 countries from 1950 to 2003. The parameters of interest in the study are health, political, household, and socioeconomic statuses of women. The study found that cultural norms and social values that influence the position of women in society persist in organizations. According to the findings of the study, gender inequality is rooted in family systems, power distance, masculinity, limited investment in women's education, and a country's level of involvement in international gender initiatives (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2019). These findings show that gender inequality is deeply rooted in national cultures and a country's commitment to gender equality.

Additionally, the social status of women has also been at the center of gender inequality. Seo, Huang, and Han (2017) studied the impact of social status on women's underrepresentation in the workplace. The authors argued that gender segregation persists at the top management levels in many organizations. The study results indicate that gendered social status results in women's delayed advancement to senior leadership positions. Chung and Van der Lippe (2018) ascertained that family roles, work-life balance, and social class determine flexible work schedules for women. Work-life balance and family outcomes discourage women from accepting job offers in distant places. Padavic, Ely, and Reid (2019) posit that work-life balance affects both men and women, yet it impedes women's advancement and not men's. Women struggle to strike a balance between family obligations and professional job's extended hours.

Consequently, they are underrepresented at senior managerial and leadership levels in organizations. Kossek and Buzzanell (2018) further emphasized that women face issues of maternal and job confidence, limited work-life support for leadership goals, family-work interferences, riskiness in leadership selection, differential leadership expectations, and occupational commitment.

Moreover, there are organizational factors that have been weighing women down for many years. Stamarski and Son Hing (2015) explored the issue of gender inequality from the perspectives of organizational structures, processes, and practices. The authors asserted that HR practices such as policies and decision-making affect the hiring, training, payment, and promotion of women. Levels of sexism by organizational decision-makers influence their probability of making gender-biased decisions.

How the Issue Is Currently Playing a Role in the Management of Diversity

The need for gender equality is shaping how companies are managing diversity. Many organizations are creating and implementing comprehensive plans for supporting and promoting the progression of women. Kossek and Buzzanell (2018) reported that employers are reviewing their organizational structures, processes, and practices to curb discrimination and ensure equality in hiring, training, and compensating women. According to the authors, gender inequality is forcing firms to adopt diverse career and leadership processes that are more gender-inclusive. Sharma (2016) highlighted the role of gender equality or lack of it in improving leadership. Organizations are building the capabilities of their managers and leaders to address women's issues in the workplace and promote equality in the workplace. Undoubtedly, the need for gender equality is shaping the rethinking of career, leadership, and organizational structures to make them more gender-inclusive.

Companies are also working to advance women's careers and reduce the gender wage gap. Wu and Cheng (2018) noted that companies are focusing on gender equality because women are vital to their success. Human resource managers are reexamining their current human resource development (HRD) interventions to support women's career progression to senior leadership positions in their companies (Seo, Huang, & Han, 2017). Bibi (2016) pointed out that employers are working to remove hurdles that women face on their way to upper-level positions in their careers as a way of promoting diversity and enhancing productivity. What is more, companies are focusing on integrating more women with high qualifications into managerial and supervisory roles as a way of reducing the gender earnings gap.

Implications of Gender Inequality in the Future

Gender inequality in the workplace has affected the global economy for many years. The international labor force is likely to lose out on skills, diverse perspectives, ideas, and improved decision-making if gender inequality is not addressed by integrating women as an important part of the workforce (Padavic, Ely, & Reid, 2019). One implication is that organizations will have to alter their hiring practices. They can achieve this by creating gender-diverse workforces, using gender-inclusive job descriptions, having a diverse interview panel, proactively sourcing gender-diverse managers, and having fair compensation schemes (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2019). They will also consider leadership roles for both men and women equally. Besides, gender

equality means that employees will need to pay workers based on job roles and consistent pay structures.

Additionally, it implies that employers will prioritize work-life balance by offering support facilities for childcare and providing paid paternal leaves to fathers. It further means that the future workplace will have stringent and effective policies against sexual harassment and workplace violence (Dilli, Carmichael, & Rijpma, 2019). They will take measures to counter misdemeanors such as racism, sexual assault, bullying meted against women in the workplace. The call to action is that organizations should nurture an open-minded work environment where employees are appreciated for their talents and performance and their individual preferences respected.