

# Workplace discrimination against women

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Workplace discrimination happens when a worker is subjected to unfavorable or unfair treatment based on nationality, caste, religion, gender and race. This means that discrimination against women at the workplace is gender based. It is inclusive of the workers who suffer retaliation due to their refusal to accept work place discrimination. The federal law is against workplace discrimination in all areas i. e. recruitment, training, promotion, demotion and disciplinary actions. The laws that protect people against unfair treatment do so based on the protected characteristics rather than the personality or the performance of the worker.

Discrimination can therefore end up being subjective to a large extent and this means that what one person may consider discriminatory, another person might not (Bartos & Wehr, 2002). Forms of workplace discrimination against women Women have a right not to be discriminated against in the workplace as dictated by the international laws. However, the reality on the ground is that people do not necessarily comply with the law and this means that women are still discriminated against. They are discriminated against in several ways. One, they lack access to the labor market.

Studies claim that the rate of unemployment is higher among women compared to men (Gilliland, Steiner & Skarlicki, 2007). It also indicates that women have a lower participation in labor force when compared to men. There are also more women working at part time jobs than men although this might not be their choice. They further indicate that compared to men, there are more women who work for jobs they are overqualified. Statistics continue to show that among the discouraged workers i. e. the unemployed

people who have stopped looking for jobs due to the unavailability of work, there are more women than men.

These people are usually shut out of employment due to cultural, social, structural barriers or basically discrimination (Chirwa, 1999). Secondly, there is a big wage gap between employed men and women doing the same kind of work. Women get 15-30% less for work of same value done by men. Studies show that women are not safeguarded by higher educational achievements especially where high positions count. In several countries, the more educated a woman is, the bigger the wage gap (Gilliland, Steiner & Skarlicki, 2007). Despite the fact that women live longer than men, in a lifetime, they earn less.

This makes them to be less advantaged when it comes to conditions for pension insurance. They also get lesser pensions on retirement. This kind of discrimination is global affecting even the first world nations despite the existence of laws protecting women against discrimination. Thirdly, we have the issue of glass ceiling. This is the practice where women are least considered when promotions are being done. Most companies have 90% and above of men in their executive positions and the same kind of percentage of women in the lowest positions. In most cases, the higher a post is, the lesser the chance of a woman occupying it.

This is irrespective of the educational level of the woman. In fact, women who manage to be at the executive positions are usually an exception to the rule. Even in the companies which are female dominated, you still find more men in the executive positions (Gregory, 2003). The major reasons for such problems are as a result of discrimination against women. The society makes

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women to compensate or pay a gender penalty as mothers. Most employers do not want to handle the hassles which come with motherhood and therefore, they solve the problem by employing more men than women.

However, studies indicate that employers incur an increased cost of 1% or less of gross income of women workers when they hire a woman than when they employ a man. Other than the economic reasons, women are also discriminated against as a result of misguided preconceptions and stereotyping about women's abilities and roles, leadership style and commitment (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). Sociological perspectives Workplace discrimination against women can be looked at through three sociological perspectives.

The first perspective of functionalism which is built upon two emphases: a) use of similarity between society and individuals and b) applying scientific methods to the social world. The first emphasis on the society's unity makes functionalists to hypothesize about people's needs which have to be met in order for a social system to be there. It also makes them to consider the ways through which those needs are met by social institutions. The similarity between individuals and society is focused on the homeostatic features of social systems i. e. social systems are there to maintain balance when it is disturbed by external shocks.

This is basically achieved through socializing society members to certain common norms and values which enable consensus to be achieved. In the cases where socialization is not fully sufficient to achieve so, some social control mechanisms are used to either reinstate conformity or isolate the people who can not be conventional from the society. These include gossip,  
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sneering and sanctions (Gilliland, Steiner & Skarlicki, 2007). The second emphasis asserts that the social world can be studied just like a physical world. Functionalists view social world as real and as one which can be observed through interviews and social surveys.

It also assumes that the values of the investigator's do not have to interfere with search for laws which govern social system's behavior. This perspective tries to show that people's behavior is usually molded by the forces in the society. Individuals are treated as puppets whose behavior is as a result of the internalized expectations and the social structure of where they were brought up or live. In relation to workplace discrimination against women, functionalists would argue that men discriminate against women because that is the way the society is (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997).

Conventionally, women were treated as home makers and children bearers and men as the bread winners. Although the world has evolved and women have become educated, the society still feels that men should provide and women should take care of their families. Working and earning are only seen as additional benefits of women in the society but they have to fulfill their roles as mothers and homemakers. It is not a wonder then when men do not find women competitive enough to handle the roles which men have always thought that they are theirs. At the same time, men may not feel that women should get better positions in a men's world.

The issue of maternity leaves and sick offs for pregnant women make men view them as incompetent. This explains why men are against women climbing up the ladder. Functionalists claim that is the way the social structure dictates (Chirwa, 1999). The second perspective is symbolic

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interactionism. This is a sociological perspective about the society and self which was founded by pragmatists. It dictates that people's lives are lived in the symbolic field. People derive symbols from social objects which have shared meanings which they create and maintain during social interactions.

Symbols usually give provision to the ways through which reality is constructed through communication and language. Reality then becomes product of the society and people's culture, society, minds and self are based on such symbols. These are the ones which determine human conduct (Gilliland, Steiner & Skarlicki, 2007). In relation to workplace discrimination against women, the society has created symbols which guide its thinking regarding how things should operate. For example, the society looks at men as leaders, heroes, heads and people who show others the way forward.

The symbol that the society has created regarding women is that of submission, weakness and people who follow instructions which have already been made by men. When a woman becomes a leader, she goes against the symbols that the society has already established. This is expressed in almost all aspects of life. In movies, the heroes are always men and when we have women, they are created as people who can not make decisions. On the other hand, men who are led by women are seen as weak. This can therefore explain why men do not want to give women leadership positions because that is a symbol of weakness.

When women are subjected to this kind of life, they also accept their position as followers and the ones in leadership positions are seen as exceptions to the symbols in a society (Gregory, 2003). Finally, we have the conflict theory as the third perspective of looking at discrimination against women at the <https://assignbuster.com/workplace-discrimination-against-women/>

workplace. This theory argues that individuals and social classes or groups in a society have different quantities of resources, both non-material and material and that the groups which have more usually make use of their power to take advantage of the ones with less power.

It is believed that the people in power make use of it in order to keep their favorable positions. They use it to keep the less powerful from gaining as this would only jeopardize their position. This can then explain why women are discriminated against at the workplace. Men have had power for a long time which they gained from the favorable position that the society places them in. However, women have caught up and they also have power in terms of money and education and this threatens the men's position in the society.

Men in leadership use their power to act as barriers towards women's progression because they do not want them taking their favorable positions. When women are discriminated against in terms of less payments and lack of career advancement, they lose their leverage to gain the power which is to the advantage of men (Bartos & Wehr, 2002). Conclusion Discrimination against women makes them to be offered employment which is not gratifying. They get jobs which may not allow career advancement, jobs paying less and work which is precarious.

They are also subjected to mobbing, bullying, sexual and moral harassment as well as unfriendly corporate culture. All these contribute to lower labor force participation among women which translates to economic loss in terms of higher social security and unemployment benefits, reduced tax income and lowered economic growth. This means that if men could appreciate the changes in the world and embrace the idea of career women who have equal

opportunities as men, this would not only promote sound economic goals but also, it would improve social cohesion in America.