Gender Inequality at Workplace and its consequences on Women’s Wellbeing

Name

Institution

**Research Concept**

Human beings are generally termed as the product of their genetic predispositions that they attain from their ancestors and their environmental factors in form of interactions with parents, siblings, peer group, colleagues and other members of the society. When an individual is born, he has nothing but a blank slate (empty mind)—the *tabula Rasa* of John Locke; enriched with innate predispositions in form of reflexes aimed at ensuring his survival (Smith, 1898).

With the passage of time, individual meets new people, interacts with them, starts verbal and gestural communication, learns socially and morally appropriate standards and benchmarks of behavior and his *tabula rasa* undergoes eventual imprinting (Smith, 1898). Hence, social interactions play significant role in the development of human personality; positive and constructive interactions lead to a healthy personality development whereas negative and unfavorable interactions lead to develop undesirable personality.

In a nutshell, nature of social interactions attempts to develop our personality. Personality is referred to as the combination of human rationality and explicit behaviors. Wellbeing is the most general pleasant sense that is utilized by the Psychologists to define an individual’s state of self; his thinking patterns, feelings, emotions, perceptions, preferences, outlooks, orientations, attitudes, intellectual tendencies, coping, satisfaction, motivation, memory, learning, planning and behaviors.

A human is said to have a satisfactory well- being when his environmental constraints and challenges are neutralized by his internal strengths and external support systems. Wellbeing is typically divided into physical and psychological domains (Diener, 1994). Physical wellbeing is the sense of satisfaction and positive emotions associated with the fulfillment of physical needs such as hunger, thirst, intimacy, safety and security. On the other hand, psychological wellbeing is referred to as the sense of positivity and fulfillment about one’s state of mind. For instance, a person who makes careful decisions in hard times and becomes mindful about both positive and negative consequences of the action; is less likely to feel stressed when he is offered with a failure. This state defines his psychological wellbeing (Diener, 1994).

My second variable is the gender inequality which is defined as the lopsided treatment of society towards specific gender group. Gender is defined as the host of obligations, attributes, responsibilities and roles that are *unintentionally* and *unrealistically* associated with the individuals having different biological sex—without any scientific validation (Nakdimen, 1984). The gender beliefs have become so incorporated that they perpetuate into the cultures and generations aversively.

Gender provides a strong basis to discriminatory practices as well. For instance, women are thought to be emotionally weak as compared to the men due to which men are mocked when they develop mental or emotional disturbances and seek professional help (Nakdimen, 1984). Women, on the other hand, are considered as household entities and are favored less in employment and business platforms.

**Explanation**

The above mentioned section provides brief definition of the problem phenomena such as gender inequality and wellbeing. In this section, a more profound explanation will be presented based on the psychological theories and models about psychological wellbeing and gender discrimination.

The most well- acknowledged and groundbreaking theory of wellbeing was presented by Carol Ryff in 1989, named *Six Factor Model of Wellbeing.* In this theory, Ryff presented six factors that determine the psychological wellbeing of individual; self acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others and autonomy (Ryff, 1989). Relating this theory to the workplace, it can be inferred that organization must offer individuals with such practices that nurture their self acceptance, enhance their purpose in life, enable them to improve their environmental mastery through skill development and professional competence, ensure their growth as a person and offer a positive climate where they could build healthy interpersonal relationships with each other. When an organization fails to nurture the psychological wellbeing of his employees, the outcome becomes obvious—decreased productivity of employees.

Moving towards gender discrimination; the Terror Management Theory (TMT) provides the best possible explanation behind the indulgence of human beings in discriminatory practices. According to TMT, from the time of birth, human beings are innately predisposed with the fear of being dead. They develop substantial *unintentional* deathanxiety that compels them to adopt necessarily unrealistic worldviews for protecting their sense of self- esteem, sustainability, certainty and worthiness—allowing them to believe that they play significant role in the meaningful world (Greenberg et. al., 1986). For that matter, they tend of identify themselves with the powerful social group or class; considering out groups as fragile and weak. This might be the potential reason behind discriminating others even without an apparent cause. Males nurture their sense of dominance and terror management through sexism and this belief runs into cultures and society as an aversive phenomenon.

**Problem**

After presenting the problem variables thoroughly, this section will attempt to link the gender discrimination and mental wellbeing. As mentioned earlier, our psychological wellbeing is the combination of self acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others and autonomy. Here, the most significant factors in relation to workplace setting include positive relations, personal growth and sense of autonomy. At workplace, when an employee is dignified, respected, involved in important decision- making, recognized, given rewards and incentives, provided with the advancement opportunities and prevented from bullying or disrespect; the outcome results in the development of enhanced wellbeing of individuals which in turn increases his job satisfaction and organizational commitment and he plays significant part in the development of organization (Travis, 2014). Contrary to this, based on the gender discrimination phenomenon, employees, particularly women are treated unequally in the workplace terms of pay gaps, lacking autonomy and recognition that threatens their wellbeing to substantial degree. It decreases their productivity and professional competence that in turn interferes with their skill development and finding suitable employment.

**Support and Viability**

Now that it is clear that how gender discrimination at workplace affects the wellbeing of women; six peer reviewed pieces of research would be identified and explained in order to settle the arguments on the logical and rational grounds of scientific literature. Identified articles with their profound elaboration are defined below:

A survey study (Ahn et. al., 2016) attempted to study the impact of income inequality on the life satisfaction of employees. In this study the comparative analysis was made between the life satisfaction of men and women workers from 1997 to 2008 under the influence of pay gaps. Results indicated that during these years there had been dramatic gap between the incomes of male and female workers that attempted to decrease their life satisfaction to a considerable degree. It was found that income inequality directly affects the physical and mental wellbeing status of US workers. Income inequality might be in terms of fixed wage or incentives and individuals measure their wellbeing through comparing their lives with workplace employees rather than average population.

Basleven & Kirmanoglu (2018) attempted to measure the life satisfaction of working and non- working employees with respect to gender inequality. It was a survey study and data was collected using questionnaires from working and non- working women all over the Europe. Hence, this study eliminates the threat of sample biasness. Findings indicated that working women reported more wellbeing as compared to the non- working women in those countries where there is less gender discrimination in form of pay gaps whereas non- working women reported more wellbeing as compared to the working women where there is an increased gender discrimination in form of pay gaps.

Rivera & Tilcsik (2019) studied the prevalence of gender equality in North America through developing a scale point system. This scale indicated the level of discrimination from 6 to 10 points. It was then distributed to the bulk of male and female college students in North America. Findings indicated that female students reported more gender biasness in terms of intellectual abilities as compared to the male students. This study indicated that in the current era, gender discrimination is still prevalent in institutions which then lead to develop inequalities in the workplace.

Travis, M. (2014) designed a study to explore the pay disparities among males and females and named her study as *disabling the gap between men and women.* Along with the peer reviewed journal articles, she included numerous news articles, blogs and legislation codes to support her arguments. She argued that government and institutions have moved forward to mitigate the pay gaps between men and women and more is yet to come. Her findings indicated pretty much optimistic findings particularly among the literature indicating enhanced gender inequalities.

Vokis et. al., 2017 examined the gender inequalities in European countries and collected both primary and secondary data for data analysis. Sample consisted of highly educated men and women. Findings indicated that women realized that men are the breadwinners of their families while women are homemakers; this notion required much more efforts for the women to struggle and counter the existing trend. However, women who are highly educated are preferred more for a job position where higher salaries are offered.

Williams & Rosenstock (2015) studied the effects of pay disparities on the health outcomes of men and women. They also used survey design for data collection and descriptive statistics for analyzing the obtained data. Findings indicated the pay gaps resulted in healthcare disparities among women particularly with reference to their mental health; anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and aggression. These disparities can be eliminated if women are treated comparable to men in the labor market.

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