

Special Committee 2

Promoting gender equality with
regards to equal pay



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Forum | Special Committee 2 |
| Issue: | Promoting gender equality with regards to equal pay |
| Student Officer: | Fede Everts |
| Position: | President of Special Committee |

Introduction

For centuries there has been an unbalanced distribution of pay among genders. The UN have made this issue one of its main priorities to tackle and have included this among the 17 sustainable development goals. In western countries, in recent years, this inequality has diminished significantly but this isn't the case worldwide. According the UN Women, women make 77 cents to every dollar earned by men. Women with children are often penalized with an even lower income. In Sub-Saharan Africa the gender pay gap is 31% between women with children and men. Whereas the pay gap is 4% when women are without children. This is known as the “motherhood penalty” pushing women away from formal jobs into part-time employment. This inequality is persistent all over the world due to the preconceived idea that men are more valuable in the workforce than women. Women’s work is undervalued due to cultural ideas and centuries of women being looked at as the inferior gender. The United Nations have made it one of its primary goals to eradicate this pay gap but according to the World Economic Forum, closing the pay gap will take up to 118 years. The aim of the resolution is to find solutions to reduce the problems and to find feasible long-term solutions in order to mitigate the disparity.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender

According to the Cambridge dictionary, gender is defined as the “physical and/or social condition of being either male, female, or other”. Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and women such as norms, roles and often relationships between men and women. Within each society, this definition is often different and open to change.



Equal

Equal is a difficult word to define. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, equal is defined as “the same amount, number or size”. Moreover, equal is defined as of the same importance and deserving the same treatment.

Pay Gap

According to the Cambridge dictionary, the pay gap is “the difference between the average pay of two different groups of people, for instance men and women” .

Un/Equal Pay

In this case, “unequal pay” refers to when women are paid less than men while doing the exact same jobs, work and tasks. “Equal pay” would be referred to as when women and men are given the exact same rewards to completing the same jobs, tasks and work.

General Overview

Mentioned below is a general overview and main points when talking about equal pay.

History of “equal pay”

The gender wage gap is an indicator of the inequality of wages between men and women. Since the equal pay act of 1963, the wage gap is closing at a rate of half a penny every year. During WW2, a lot of women were taking up jobs in industry and the national war labor board urged employers to make improvements to improve the wage gap but this was not implemented. After the war, the men were integrated back into the industries and replaced the women. Over the years, there have been attempts to try to balance the number of men and women in managing roles but out of the CEOs that make up the Fortune 500 list, only 24 are women. Men dominate the workforce and this is only a fragment of what the inequality is like when trickling down the social ladder. Since 2014, 143 out of 195 countries have promised, in their constitutions, equality between genders but clearly there is still a lot that has to be done.

Reasons for gender pay gap

There is a lot of debate and arguments pushing for women to be in more senior roles. It is a fact that there are more men in senior roles than women which has been a consistent



trend since the early 20th century. In order to achieve a senior role an individual must have a lot of experience and for decades the men, more often than not, would work longer hours at the office which result in an unequal distribution of people in managing roles. An argument that is used to dismiss this inequality is the fact that women “choose” to care for children so automatically will prefer a part time job. After childbirth an average woman's hourly wage gets cut a third and many poorly-paid jobs are given to women because of “femine” skills that are required for the job. These jobs include teachers, nurses or assistants where people skills and caring skills are vital. Society undermine the skillset and talent women possess which therefore discourage women to apply for certain jobs.

Differences between MDCs and LEDCs in pay gap

The difference in gross incomes between genders is a prominent issue in both MEDs and LEDs. There is a long lasting history of unequal pay around the world. There are many variables determining this pay gap and it is often based on prejudices. Mainly, in LEDCs, women are seen as less suitable or less qualified to work compared to men due to cultural or religious norms which have been persistent for centuries. In addition, women are often forced to accept jobs with lower wages because of poverty or out of despair. Strikingly, women make up 70% of the world's impoverished. Although in LEDs this problem is much more drastic, women in MEDCs face the same problem. In MEDs, women who are equally skilled as their male counterparts receive 25% less pay. Many begin work at a disadvantage due to the “motherhood penalty.” This penalty is referred to the struggle women have to find a job whilst having children. Women are seen as a liability issue and some companies feel that men are more secure in the workforce.

Major Parties Involved

International Labor Organization (ILO)

The ILO strives and stands for the idea that equal pay for equal work and works hard to implement this idea around the world. In order to fight for the cause, the ILO created a new coalition/global partnership called the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC). The coalition strives for equal pay for all parties by 2030 by supporting the sustainable development goals. In this case, sustainable development goal 5 aims for gender equality.

United States of America (USA)



Within the United States, women only make about 85% of what men make. The United States has been known to be a place where the pay gap has remained large. In a study done, 4 out of 10 Americans do think the pay gap is made up and has been only constructed for political use (Kerenzulli). However, in the past few years, efforts have been taken to increase the awareness about equal pay. There has even been an attempt to further combat the issue through legislation known as the 'Pay Check Fairness Pact'. The aim of this law is to promise equal pay for equal work. While the United States aims to tackle the issue, the problem remains rife.

European Union (EU)

Within the EU, the gender pay gap perseveres. Although equal pay is not present in many EU countries, there is considerable differences between the EU countries. For instance, within Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg there is less than 8% while in places such as Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic there is 20%. In order to assess the gender pay gap, the EU analyzes other indicators linked to the labor market. The EU highlights various factors influencing the pay gap.

UN Women

Like millennial sustainable development goal 5, the organization of UN Women strive for equal rights and women empowerment. UN Women argue that this “stubborn inequality in the average wages between men and women persists in all countries across all sectors, because women’s work is under-valued and women tend to be concentrated in different jobs than men.” (CITATION) In order to combat this, UN Women has begun its own campaign, known as the #StopTheRobbery in order to raise awareness of the gender pay gap.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The organization aims and strives to improve equality and human rights. In regards to equal pay, the EHRC has done several research projects to investigate whether equal pay is achievable. For instance, the EHRC is now investigating whether the BBC pay women and men equally for equal work. The EHRC has concluded through looking at statistics and figures, that the BBC was indeed not paying the same amount for women and men. By doing such research, employers as well as employees begin to understand how common this discrimination is and that measures must be taken to combat it.

Timeline of Key Events



Mentioned below is a timeline of major events in the fight for equal pay.

| Date | Description of event |
|-----------------------------|--|
| February 1869 | A New York Times Editor received a written letter which “questioned why female government workers were not paid the same as male ones” |
| June 10 th 1963 | The Equal Pay Act – this act mandated that “employers cannot award unequal wages or benefits to men and women that require ‘equal skill, effort and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions”. (History) |
| July 2 nd , 1964 | Civil Rights Act – this act forbid discrimination on the basis of ‘race, origion, color, age, and sex’ |
| July 2 nd , 1965 | The creation of the ‘Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’ (EEOC) – this commission is responsible for “enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant due to their race, color, religion, sex, age, etc’. |
| June 23, 1972 | Educational Amendments – By introducing this new amendment, it expanded the reach of the Equal Pay Act to include ‘white collar executive, professional and administrative jobs’ |
| October 31, 1978 | Pregnancy Discrimination Act – This act helped to protect pregnant employees from loss of wages and other damages while they were pregnant. |
| January 29, 2009 | Lily Ledbetter Fair Play Act – This act “allowed women to better fight against gender-based discrimination in the workplace, it put measures in place to help ensure that discrimination does not take place at all” (HRMBA). |
| April 10, 2018 | Equal Pay Day -This date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men have earned in the year before. |

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Relevant UN Resolutions:

- Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, 18 December 1979 (A/Res/34/180)
- Women, Peace and Security, 32 October 2000



- Resolution concerning the Promotion of Gender Equality, Pay Equity and Maternity Protection, International Labor Office, June 2004 (Major Resolutions)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Despite the efforts and tremendous fight to close the pay gap resulting in equal pay, results of studies have shown that the pay gap has only widened in favor for women in the past year. In the past, governments and institutions have created laws in order to help the situation, yet the problem remains present. For instance, in 1970, the 'Equal Pay Act' was a labor law that prohibited gender-based wage discrimination. Since then, pay discrimination remains rife, however, by the creation of this law, all employees gained the right to fight back legally in the case of discrimination.

In order to truly tackle the issue and solve the problem, one must analyze the reasons for the gender pay gap. For example, it is known fact that fewer women are placed in senior or more-high earning roles or women are working more part time. According to a spokesperson from the EHRC: "everyone is legally entitled to equal pay for equal work, but there may be a range of factors behind pay gaps and it doesn't necessarily mean that unlawful discrimination is happening". People continue to search for solutions to this issue, however, the EHRC is highlighting that it may be hard to solve this issue when there may be several factors aiding to the problem. (Overview)

Possible Solutions

Although it may seem difficult, there are several solutions to this issue. Firstly, we must work, edit and improve our education system. According to the EHRC, "Our education system continues to influence gender norms that lead girls into lower paying jobs that are less valued". By altering our education system, children will learn and understand that all jobs are available for every suitable candidate. Moreover, by improving work opportunities for everyone, no matter the candidate, by investing in job trainings. Furthermore, by encouraging both men and women to share childcare responsibilities equally, this leads to paternity leave being more effective and creates less of a tear between job opportunities.

To increase and encourage equal pay, research reports and reports on progress towards reducing the pay gap must be created. These reports should further include reports on ethnicity, disability and collecting annual statistics. This will encourage 'pay transparency'. Pay transparency is the method that forces all employees to understand and acknowledge



how their colleagues are being paid. This would in turn make women aware if they are making less than their male counterparts for the same work or job.

Lastly, study after study shows that women do not perform as well as men when it comes to negotiations. While this may be a general statement, women do often avoid negotiations altogether and accept the first offer presented by a prospective employer. Thus, by avoiding negotiations, women and men should receive the same pay since the employer sets the price and rules for their employees.

Bibliography

Alter, Charlotte. "Equal Pay Day: Here's the History of the Fight for Equal Pay for Women."

Time, Time, 14 Apr. 2015, time.com/3774661/equal-pay-history/.

Editors, History.com. "Equal Pay Act." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 30 Nov. 2017,

www.history.com/topics/womens-rights/equal-pay-act.

Elsesser, Kim. "Two Solutions For The Gender Pay Gap That Can Be Implemented Today."

Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 19 Nov. 2015,

www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2015/11/19/two-solutions-for-the-gender-pay-gap-that-can-be-implemented-today/#1673418c2d35.

"Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value." *UN Women*, [www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/equal-pay)

[focus/csw61/equal-pay](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/equal-pay).

"Equal: Translate English to Portuguese." *Cambridge Dictionary*,

dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-portuguese/equal.

"The Gender Pay Gap Situation in the EU." *European Commission - European Commission*,

26 Oct. 2018, ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en.

"Gender." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 12 Apr. 2019,

www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/.

"Investigation: Does the BBC Pay Women and Men Equally for Equal Work?" *Investigation:*

Does the BBC Pay Women and Men Equally for Equal Work? | Equality and Human



Rights Commission, www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/investigation-does-bbc-pay-women-and-men-equally-equal-work.

Kerenzulli. "46% Of American Men Think the Gender Pay Gap Is 'Made up to Serve a Political Purpose'." *CNBC*, CNBC, 4 Apr. 2019, www.cnbc.com/2019/04/04/46percent-of-american-men-think-the-gender-pay-gap-is-made-up.html.

"Major Resolutions." *UN Women*, www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/major-resolutions.

Nilsen, Ella. "The House Just Passed a Bill to Close the Gender Pay Gap." *Vox*, Vox, 27 Mar. 2019, www.vox.com/2019/3/27/18282775/paycheck-fairness-act-gender-pay-gap-pelosi.

"Overview." *About the EEOC: Overview*, www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/index.cfm.

"PAY GAP: Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." *Cambridge Dictionary*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pay-gap.

"Powerful Global Coalition to Boost Equal Pay for Women at Work." *Gender Equality: Powerful Global Coalition to Boost Equal Pay for Women at Work*, 18 Sept. 2017, www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_575320/lang--de/index.htm.

"Sutori." *Sutori*, www.sutori.com/story/history-of-the-gender-pay-gap.

"What Is the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act?" *Human Resources Degrees*, www.humanresourcesmba.net/faq/what-is-the-lilly-ledbetter-fair-pay-act/.

Whiting, Kate. "This Is What the Gender Pay Gap Looks like in Eight Countries." *World Economic Forum*, www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/gender-pay-gap-eight-countries/.

Appendix or Appendices

Mentioned below are useful links:



Link to #StopTheRobbery campaign video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUDGK_wL1w

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/pay-gaps-strategy-fair-opportunities-for-all.pdf>

