

# Gender Bias in the Workplace: Definition, Forms, Influence and Solutions

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**Abstract.** This article offers a comprehensive exploration of gender bias within the Chinese workplace, addressing its definition, manifestations, impacts, and proposed solutions. Gender bias presents itself through various channels, encompassing wage disparities, unequal opportunities, limited career progression, and diminished job satisfaction. These biases not only detrimentally affect individuals' mental well-being and professional advancement but also impede organizational performance, innovation, and reputation. Furthermore, they pose significant challenges to a nation's economic prosperity and social harmony. Given the pervasive nature and far-reaching consequences of gender bias, it becomes imperative to undertake a series of concerted measures aimed at its reduction and eventual elimination. These measures encompass the establishment of clear and unequivocal policies and procedures, provision of comprehensive employee training and education, implementation of fair and transparent recruitment and promotion mechanisms, the establishment of robust feedback channels supplemented by counseling services, cultivation of a workplace culture that actively supports gender equality, promotion of diverse leadership teams, and facilitation of government policies conducive to gender parity. Through collaborative and collective efforts, a more equitable and inclusive work environment can be fostered, thereby fostering the mutual development and progress of individuals, businesses, and society at large. By prioritizing gender equality initiatives, we lay the groundwork for a fairer and more prosperous society, wherein the talents and contributions of all individuals are recognized, valued, and rewarded equitably.

## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, gender bias always exists in the workplace. The most obvious ones are salary differences and unequal performance appraisal standards. Approximately 2.4 billion working-age women do not receive equal treatment. economic opportunities, 178 countries still have legal barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the economy. In 86 nations, women encounter various limitations in the workplace, while 95 countries lack assurance of equal pay for equal work. Worldwide, women are granted only 76.5 out of 100 in terms of legal rights compared to men, indicating a persistent gender disparity, indicating women are fully equal under the law. Despite the disproportionate impact of the global pandemic on women's lives and livelihoods, the report highlights that 23 countries made legal reforms in 2021 aimed at promoting women's economic inclusion, representing crucial steps forward [1]. Gender bias in the workplace is a serious social issue that affects individuals, organizations, and the entire nation's development and progress. This article aims to explore the definition, manifestations, and impacts of gender bias in the Chinese workplace, as well as propose a series of solutions. Gender bias manifests in forms such as unequal pay and unfair opportunities, negatively impacting individuals' mental health and career

development, while also undermining organizational performance and innovation, and even threatening national economic stability and development. To address this issue, this research needs to implement various measures, including establishing clear policies and procedures, providing employee training, implementing fair recruitment and promotion mechanisms, collecting employee feedback and providing counseling, fostering a supportive culture for gender equality, and increasing government policy support. Through collective efforts, we can establish a more fair and inclusive work environment, realizing the common development and progress of individuals, organizations, and the nation.

## 2 The definition and forms of gender bias in the workplace

### 2.1. The definition of gender bias in the workplace

The definition of gender bias in the workplace, gender bias in the workplace refers to the phenomenon of unfair treatment or bias against individuals in the workplace based on their gender. A test exhibits bias when individuals of the same ability level, regardless of gender, tend to achieve disparate scores. Various factors, such as

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the testing environment, the phrasing of specific questions, and even a student's attitude toward the test, can influence test outcomes. These elements may fluctuate over time due to variations in test administration methods, revisions to test items, and shifts in students' comfort levels with the test. The resulting error from these factors will impact both men and women randomly [2]. This kind of bias may be reflected in recruitment, promotion, salary, job assignment, working environment, and so on. The existence of gender bias in the workplace not only affects the quality of individual work life but also damages the fairness of the organization and the enthusiasm of employees. In order to understand gender bias, we should learn about the difference between gender and sex. Gender encompasses the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities attributed to individuals, including girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse individuals. It shapes self-perception, interactions, and the allocation of power and resources within society. Gender identity isn't limited to a binary framework (female/male) and is fluid, existing on a spectrum with the potential for evolution over time. There's significant diversity in how people and communities perceive, experience, and express gender through their roles, societal expectations, interpersonal relationships, and the institutionalization of gender norms. In an ideal scenario, we would anticipate minimal divergence among texts delineating individuals irrespective of their gender identities, save for the presence of explicitly gender-specific terms like pronouns or names. Consequently, a machine learning model would struggle to discern statistical discrepancies across gender categories (i.e., gender bias) due to the absence of substantial variations [3]. Sex refers to a set of biological attributes observed in humans and animals, encompassing physical and physiological features such as chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and functionality, and reproductive anatomy. While traditionally categorized as either female or male, there is variability in the biological elements defining sex and their manifestations.

On the other hand, when referring to gender, we address socially constructed norms and expectations for individuals identifying as women, men, girls, or boys. Specifically, societal expectations dictate that girls and women exhibit feminine traits, while boys and men display masculine characteristics. By sex, we mean biological differences assigned to females and males in order to distinguish between the two. The biological characteristics assigned to females and males often consist of primary or secondary sex characteristics [4].

## **2.2 The forms of gender bias in the workplace**

### *2.2.1 Gender wage inequality in China*

Gender wage inequality refers to the phenomenon where there is a significant disparity in the salaries earned by men and women in equivalent job positions. This gap may stem from various factors. Firstly, gender bias and

stereotypes, some employers may hold gender discriminatory views, believing that men are more competent than women in certain jobs, leading to higher salaries for men. Given its enormous labor force, massive economic reforms, and deep-rooted Confucian patriarchy, China has been at the center of empirical research on gender bias in transition economies. Here, we briefly review the important policy changes and closely related empirical studies on gender wage inequality in China [5]. Secondly, gender-based occupational preferences, in China, there are clear gender-based preferences in occupational choices. Some high-paying industries and positions may be predominantly chosen by men, while women may be more inclined to work in lower-paying industries or positions. Thirdly, unfair distribution of promotion opportunities, some companies or organizations may exhibit gender bias in promotions, favoring the advancement of men over equally qualified women, resulting in wage disparities. Fourth, gender bias in the workplace environment: Gender bias faced by women in the workplace is also a contributing factor to wage inequality. This may include restrictions on women's promotion opportunities, hindered career development, and unfair allocation of job opportunities. Fifthly, family responsibilities: Women in China often bear more family responsibilities, including childcare and household chores, which may affect their working hours and intensity, thereby influencing their wage levels."

### *2.2.2 Inequality of opportunities*

In China, women face various forms of unequal opportunities in the workplace. Firstly, recruitment bias, some industries or companies may exhibit recruitment bias, showing a preference for hiring males, especially in technical, managerial, and high-paying positions, leading to greater competition for women in the job market. Secondly, career advancement, in certain industries and companies, women may have fewer opportunities for career advancement, possibly influenced by gender biases. Even if they possess sufficient skills and qualifications, they may be overlooked or restricted. This indicates that, typically, female applicants will need to submit 55% additional applications to achieve an equal number of call backs compared to their male counterparts. It's unsurprising that women still face under representation in academic institutions, particularly in senior positions, decision-making bodies, and editorial boards. Additionally, women tend to receive lower pay compared to men, and their research projects are less likely to secure funding. Secondly, incorporating additional student characteristics into the regression analysis has minimal impact on the coefficient of the female variable. This outcome was anticipated, given the lack of correlation between the female variable and other student attributes.

Furthermore, we expanded our analysis to include firm characteristics and an extensive array of variables, such as submission methods for resumes, recruitment duration, job fair indicators, and dummies for sought-

after college majors. Our findings demonstrate the robustness of the coefficient associated with the female variable, with both its magnitude and statistical significance remaining largely unchanged across varying firm sizes, ownership structures, and industries. These findings underscore that female applicants are significantly less likely to receive callbacks from hiring firms for on-site interviews. [6]. Secondly, workplace culture, some companies have a male-dominated workplace culture, where women may encounter bias, gender stereotypes, and workplace bullying from colleagues or superiors, affecting their performance and competitive opportunities. Thirdly, family responsibilities, and traditional family values are prevalent in Chinese society, with women often viewed as the primary caregivers. This can limit their competitive opportunities in the workplace, especially in roles requiring long hours or frequent travel. Fourth, wage inequality, women may receive lower wages due to their gender, even when performing the same job. They may face wage gaps, further exacerbating their competitive disadvantage.

These factors collectively contribute to the unequal opportunities for women in the Chinese workplace, restricting their career development and personal growth. Feel free to utilize color illustrations for the online edition of the proceedings. However, please note that any printed version will be in black and white, unless prior arrangements have been made with the conference organizer. It's advisable to confirm with the organizer regarding the printing specifications. For black and white prints, ensure that figure captions do not reference color in the illustration or text. Also, consider potential degradation or loss of information in color figures when converting them to black and white during preparation.

### **3 The influence of gender bias in the workplace**

#### **3.1 Impact on individual**

Firstly, impaired mental health, and being subjected to gender bias can damage an individual's mental well-being. Sustained bias may lead to anxiety, depression, self-doubt, and other psychological issues, affecting both work and personal life. Secondly, diminished self-esteem and confidence, gender bias can prompt individuals to develop negative self-evaluations, questioning their abilities and worth, thereby undermining self-esteem and confidence. This negative impact may hinder individuals from fully realizing their potential and achieving career goals. This analysis of China's traditional and social media content suggests that female drivers have been over-represented in the public discussion of traffic accidents. This pattern is more salient on Weibo than in newspapers; Weibo users are more likely to attribute accidents to female drivers' gender. Content about female drivers also receives more exposure [7]. At the same time, our research reveals that social media serves as a platform for discussions on gender awareness,

although the direction of these discussions remains ambiguous. Additionally, barriers to career advancement and encounters with gender bias may restrict individuals' prospects for progress in their careers. Gender bias can impede individuals from accessing promotions, salary increments, or involvement in significant projects, thereby impacting the trajectory and pace of their career growth. Recruitment processes often fall prey to gender stereotypes, presenting a significant bias. Employers may hold subjective beliefs regarding a woman's competency, dedication, and appropriateness for certain positions. These biases can skew assessment and selection procedures, leading to favoritism towards male candidates over equally or even more qualified female candidates facing similar circumstances. Research suggests that women are frequently judged as less capable or less dedicated to their professions due to stereotypes related to caregiving responsibilities or perceived ambition gaps. Consequently, women may encounter barriers in securing job opportunities and may be passed over for promotions [8]. Fourthly, decreased job satisfaction: individuals subjected to gender bias may feel dissatisfied with the work environment. This dissatisfaction may stem from experiences of unfair treatment, leading to reduced motivation and engagement at work. Fifthly, affected social relationships, and experiencing gender bias may make individuals feel isolated and ostracized in the workplace. They may face exclusion from colleagues or superiors, resulting in strained social relationships and a deteriorating work atmosphere. In summary, workplace gender bias not only negatively impacts individuals' mental health and career development but also has adverse effects on the overall work environment and team relationships. Therefore, reducing and eliminating workplace gender bias is crucial for safeguarding individual rights, enhancing work efficiency, and maintaining a positive work environment.

#### **3.2 Impact on business**

Gender bias in the workplace can have significant repercussions on businesses, impacting various aspects of their operations. Firstly, decreased employee morale and engagement, when gender bias occurs within a company, it creates an environment of distrust and dissatisfaction among employees. bias can demoralize affected individuals and reduce their engagement and commitment to their work and the organization as a whole. Secondly, loss of talent and innovation, and gender bias can lead to the loss of talented employees who choose to leave the organization due to unfair treatment. The departure of skilled personnel can impede innovation and creativity within a company, as diverse perspectives and experiences are vital for fostering innovation and problem-solving. Research indicates that when women represent 25% or less of applicants in a pool of eight, they are perceived as less qualified for managerial positions compared to male applicants and are stereotypically viewed as more traditionally feminine in gender-related evaluations. However, when women

constitute at least 37.5% of the pool, as these biases wane, research shows that the effect of gender-stereotyped perceptions on hireability ratings can be elucidated through covariance analysis. It suggests that the impact of gender distribution in the applicant pool can be entirely accounted for by the increased attribution of female stereotypes to women when they constitute 25% or less of the pool. Heilman and Martell conducted a study revealing that bias against female applicants diminished when raters were primed with evidence of women's success in a relevant male-dominated field. However, priming with information about a single successful woman did not yield the same results. Additionally, companies that tolerate or perpetuate gender bias face legal liabilities and reputational harm, bias lawsuits can result in costly legal battles, settlements, and damage to the company's brand and reputation, affecting its ability to attract top talent and retain customers [9]. Fourthly, decreased productivity and efficiency, and workplace bias creates tension and conflict among employees, leading to decreased collaboration, communication breakdowns, and a toxic work environment. This hostile atmosphere can hinder productivity and efficiency, impacting the company's bottom line. Fifthly, negative impact on diversity and inclusion efforts, gender bias undermines efforts to foster diversity and inclusion within the workplace. Companies that fail to address bias risk alienating employees from underrepresented groups and perpetuating a culture of inequality, hindering their ability to attract and retain diverse talent. Sixth, regulatory compliance challenges, many jurisdictions have laws and regulations in place to prevent gender bias in the workplace. Companies that engage in discriminatory practices may face compliance issues, fines, and penalties, further damaging their reputation and financial stability. In summary, workplace gender bias not only harms individuals but also poses significant risks to businesses, affecting employee morale, innovation, legal compliance, and overall organizational effectiveness. Addressing gender bias and promoting a culture of equality and inclusion is essential for fostering a positive work environment and ensuring long-term business success. Biased hiring and promotion practices can detrimentally affect company performance and innovation. Numerous studies indicate that diverse teams and leadership contribute to enhanced decision-making, creativity, and problem-solving. When women are excluded or restricted from decision-making roles, companies lose access to the varied perspectives and talents they bring, impeding innovation and constraining adaptability in a dynamic business landscape [10].

### **3.3 Impact on the country's economy**

Gender bias in the workplace can have profound effects on a country's economy, society, and overall development. Firstly, economic impact, gender bias in the workplace can lead to a waste of human capital and talent. When individuals are denied equal opportunities based on their gender, it restricts their ability to fully

participate in the labor market and contribute to economic growth. This can result in lower productivity, reduced innovation, and hindered economic development. Secondly, income inequality, gender bias often results in disparities in wages and employment opportunities between men and women. This contributes to income inequality within society, with women typically earning less than their male counterparts for similar work. Persistent income inequality can exacerbate poverty and social disparities, leading to broader economic consequences. Thirdly, labor force participation, bias in the workplace may discourage women from entering or remaining in the labor force, leading to a lower overall labor force participation rate. This can limit the pool of available talent and skills, hampering economic competitiveness and productivity growth. Fourthly, human capital development, gender bias can impede women's access to education, training, and career advancement opportunities. This limits their ability to acquire skills and expertise, hindering the development of a skilled workforce essential for economic progress and innovation. Fifthly, social cohesion and stability, gender bias can fuel social tensions and undermine social cohesion. When certain groups are systematically marginalized or excluded from economic opportunities, it can lead to resentment, inequality, and social unrest, posing challenges to national stability and cohesion. Sixth, policy implications, gender bias necessitates policy interventions and regulatory measures to address systemic inequalities and promote gender equality in the workplace. Failure to address these issues can result in policy inefficiencies, missed economic opportunities, and societal backlash against government institutions. Totally, workplace gender bias not only undermines individual rights and opportunities but also has far-reaching implications for a country's economy, society, and governance. Promoting gender equality and combating bias are essential for fostering inclusive growth, social progress, and sustainable development on a national scale. Establish clear policies against gender inequality and bias, such as setting up a reporting mechanism to report gender bias and harassment in the workplace, with protection of the reporter's privacy.

## **4 Solutions**

### **4.1 Establish clear policies and procedures and provide employee training and education**

Establish clear policies against gender inequality and bias, such as setting up a reporting mechanism to report gender bias and harassment in the workplace, with protection of the reporter's privacy. Implement mandatory training sessions on gender equality and anti-bias regularly within the company, including skills training on how to avoid and address gender bias.

## 4.2 Implement fair recruitment and promotion mechanisms

Ensure diversity among interviewers during recruitment interviews, and ensure that recruitment standards are based on talent and potential rather than gender. Similarly, promotion reviews should include diverse reviewers and be based on employees' contributions to the company and work attitude. To enhance gender diversity, companies should take proactive steps to encourage the recruitment and advancement of female employees, thereby fostering a more equitable and inclusive work environment. Additionally, establishing mentorship initiatives can offer invaluable support and development prospects for women within the organization.

## 4.3 Feedback from employees timely and counseling and foster a supportive culture for gender equality

Provide mental health services, counseling, and awareness within the company, and regularly collect feedback from employees. Organize internal activities to raise awareness of gender equality among employees. Additionally, reward and recognize employees and teams who contribute to advancing gender equality. Establish Diverse Leadership Teams: Ensure gender diversity in the leadership team, provide training for employees, encourage female employees to become part of management, and provide support and mentorship to help them succeed. Establish an environment fostering gender equality within the organization. Encourage a culture where employees feel empowered to share their unique experiences and viewpoints, ensuring equal opportunities for all to voice their thoughts. Uphold principles of respect and equality in all interactions with employees. Additionally, consider implementing flexible work arrangements to support individuals in managing both work and family commitments effectively [10].

## 4.4 Government policy and establish diverse leadership teams

Government can provide subsidies to encourage companies to take measures to reduce gender bias, such as increasing the proportion of women in leadership and high-paying positions. Ensure gender diversity in the leadership team, provide training for employees, encourage female employees to become part of management, and provide support and mentorship to help them succeed. Biased hiring and promotion practices can also have an impact on company performance and innovation. Research consistently shows that diverse teams and leadership are associated with improved decision-making, creativity, and problem-solving. When companies exclude or limit women from decision-making roles, they forfeit the valuable and diverse perspectives and talents that women offer,

hindering innovation and constraining their capacity to navigate a dynamic business landscape [10].

## 5 Conclusion

The existence of gender bias in the workplace is not just a moral and ethical issue; it is also a significant real-life challenge that affects individuals, organizations, and the entire society. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the definition, manifestations, and impacts of gender bias in the Chinese workplace on individuals, businesses, and the national economy, and proposes a series of solutions. Firstly, we must recognize the severity and diversity of gender bias, which manifests not only as unequal pay and unfair opportunities but also profoundly affects individuals' mental health and career development. Secondly, gender bias not only damages organizational performance and innovation but also brings legal and reputational risks to businesses, affecting their long-term development and competitiveness. Most importantly, gender bias has a serious negative impact on the national economy and social stability, restricting the full utilization of human resources and hindering sustainable economic growth and social harmony. To address the issue of gender bias, comprehensive measures are needed, including establishing clear policies and procedures, providing employee training, implementing fair recruitment and promotion mechanisms, collecting employee feedback and providing counseling, fostering a supportive culture for gender equality, and increasing government policy support. Through collective efforts, we can create a more fair and inclusive work environment, achieving the common development and progress of individuals, businesses, and the nation.

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