CATALYST The

Social Justice Journal

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Stories of people who have faced transphobia

Is Overworking the enemy to Gender Equality in the workplace?

Bridging Gender Inequality: A Case Study of European States

KATRIN HRISTOVA

The Rabbit Hole of Inequality

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the third issue of our journal, where we delve into the complex and pervasive issue of gender inequality. In this collection, we bring together diverse perspectives to shed light on various aspects of this pressing concern. Our contributors examine topics such as the gender pay gap, barriers faced by women in STEM fields, the double burden of housework and childcare for working mothers, sexual harassment and gender-based violence.







We also address discrimination against LGBTQ women, gender inequality in political representation, and the challenges women face in career advancement. Additionally, we include two powerful short stories that depict the experiences of individuals confronting transphobia. Through these narratives, we aim to foster empathy and encourage readers to challenge biases and promote inclusivity.

By presenting these diverse perspectives, we hope to spark conversations, inspire critical thinking, and drive positive change. Our goal is to create a world where all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to thrive. We invite you to immerse yourself in these thought-provoking articles, engage in discussions, and join us in our collective pursuit of gender equality.

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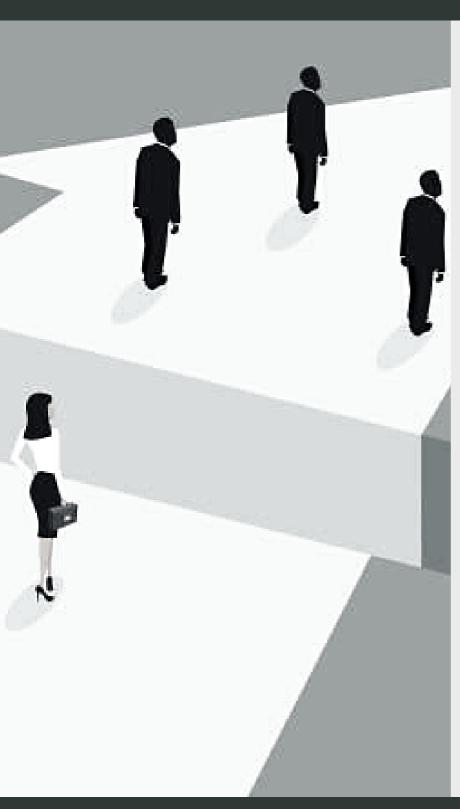
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Dana Koptleuova Editor-in-Chief

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The Catalyst

Uncovering Gender Inequality: Exploring Its Roots and Impact on Society

Through a collection of thought-provoking articles, we aim to shed light on the complex nature of gender inequality and encourage critical reflection and meaningful dialogue on this important topic.

By Yezir Hasan

The Gender Pay Gap: A Persistent Problem

The gender pay gap is the difference in average earnings between women and men. It is a global problem that exists in all countries, regardless of their level of development.

In the United States, the gender pay gap is currently 19%. This means that women earn, on average, 19% less than men for doing the same work. The gap is even wider for women of color. For example, Black women earn 62 cents for every dollar that white men earn.

There are many factors that contribute to the gender pay gap. These include:

Occupational segregation:

Women are more likely to work in lower-paying occupations, such as healthcare and education. Men are more likely to work in higher-paying occupations, such as engineering and finance.

Unequal pay for equal work:

Even when women and men do the same work, women are often paid less. This is due to a number of factors, including discrimination and unconscious bias.

The motherhood penalty:

Women who have children are more likely to be penalized in the workplace. They may be paid less, promoted less, or have their careers derailed.

The gender pay gap has a number of negative consequences. It contributes to economic inequality, it makes it harder for women to support themselves and their families, and it discourages women from entering certain professions.

There are a number of things that can be done to close the gender pay gap. These include:

Encouraging women to enter higher-paying occupations;

This can be done by providing more educational and training opportunities for women, and by changing the culture of certain industries to be more welcoming to women.

Addressing unequal pay for equal work:



This can be done by enforcing equal pay laws, and by raising awareness of the issue of discrimination.

Challenging the motherhood penalty:

This can be done by providing more flexible work arrangements for parents, and by changing the way that we think about work and family.

The gender pay gap is a complex problem, but it is one that we can solve. By working together, we can create a more just and equitable workplace for all.

How to Talk About the Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap is a sensitive topic, but it is important to talk about it. By talking about the gap, we can raise awareness of the issue and help to create change.

Be respectful;

When talking about the gender pay gap, it is important to be respectful of everyone involved. This includes women who are affected by the gap, as well as men who may feel defensive about the issue.

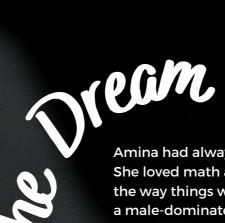
Be informed:

Before you talk about the gender pay gap, it is important to be informed about the issue. This means understanding the causes of the gap, as well as the possible solutions.

Be specific; When talking about the gender pay gap, it is important to be specific. This means talking about real-world examples of the gap, and the impact that it has on women's lives.

Be hopeful:

While the gender pay gap is a serious problem, it is important to be hopeful about the possibility of change. There are a number of things that can be done to close the gap, and we can all play a role in making that happen.



Amina had always dreamed of becoming an engineer. She loved math and science, and she was fascinated by the way things worked. She knew that engineering was a male-dominated field, but she was determined to prove that she could succeed.

Amina worked hard in school, and she graduated at the top of her class. She was accepted to a prestigious engineering program, and she was excited to start her new journey.

Amina's first year of engineering school was challenging, but she thrived. She got good grades, and she joined several engineering clubs. She was starting to feel like she belonged in the field.

But then, her second year of school started, and things changed. Amina's male classmates started to treat her differently. They made comments about her appearance, and they doubted her abilities. They even started to exclude her from group projects.

Amina was hurt and frustrated. She didn't understand why her classmates were treating her this way. She had always been a good student, and she had never been treated this way before.

Amina tried to ignore the discrimination, but it was hard. She started to doubt herself, and she wondered if she had made a mistake by choosing engineering. She even thought about dropping out of school.

But then, Amina remembered why she had wanted to become an engineer in the first place. She loved math and science, and she wanted to make a difference in the world. She knew that she couldn't give up on her dreams because of a few people who didn't believe in her.

Amina decided to stand up for herself. She talked to her professors about the discrimination she was facing, and they were supportive. They helped her to find a mentor, and they gave her resources to help her succeed.

Amina also started to speak out against gender discrimination. She wrote articles about her experiences, and she gave presentations at conferences. She wanted to share her story with other women, and she wanted to help to change the culture of engineering.

Amina's story is a reminder that gender inequality is still a problem in the workplace. But it is also a story of hope. Amina showed that women can overcome discrimination and succeed in male-dominated fields. She is an inspiration to other women who are fighting for their dreams.

BY YEZIR HASAN

By Katrin Hristova

The Fight (Club) Of Gender and Cancer Research

If you have seen Fight Club, do you remember Bob? If you have not seen it (or you do not remember), Bob is a former bodybuilder whose hormonal imbalance due to testicular cancer has provided him with breasts (a condition known as 'gynecomastia').

Meat Loaf's character blends 'male', 'female' and 'gender identity issues' in one—

- (1) Before testicular cancer, he is a spitting image of 'masculinity'—a bodybuilder, highlighting and improving his physical appearance, towering over others in size, and using steroids to improve in width.
- (2) During testicular cancer treatment, and after losing his testicles, he becomes 'feminine'—he develops breasts—one of the most sexualised and objectified body parts. He also appears emotional and nurturing—qualities attributed to the motherly nature of females. He does seem to give the best hugs that cure insomnia (watch the film!).
- (3) Lastly, the blend of the physical attributes (usually considered 'masculine', of course) and the nurturing role (granted as a 'feminine' feature) presents a character whose gender representation is socially confusing. It fits neither here, nor there. Hence challenging the typical gender identity.

Bob breaks the boxes, in a nutshell.

And so should we.

Especially when it comes to something as deadly as cancer.

"Rule 1: You Do Not Talk About Fight Club"—The Underrepresentation of Cancer in Males.

I remember the first time I watched Fight Clubnote: technically, I am not breaking its first (and second) rule because I am talking about the film, not the club itself, so relax.

Meeting Bob, I remember thinking "Males can have cancer, too!"

"Yes, testicular for one. And skin. And lung.", a little voice says.

"And breast cancer, too.", another one adds.

Although the symptoms of breast cancer are the same in any gender, the factors may vary. Visually representing only female breasts to spread awareness limits the said awareness to a 'gender-specific' one.

Every body needs a mammography. Everybody needs a mammography.

If breast cancer in men is underrepresented (and understudied, by the way!), can you imagine how bad it gets for transgender people?

"Rule 2: You Do Not Talk About Fight Club"—Gender Identity and Cancer

Let me ask you a brutally honest question:

Have you ever thought about cancer and transgender people?

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Edward Norton on Bob's chest.



There are hormone-specific factors that can cause cancer—estrogen can potentially act as a spark as it causes cancer cells to multiply and spread.

Estrogen is also used in gender-affirming hormone therapy as it blocks testosterone, therefore it is used to help the development of 'feminine' secondary sex characteristics.

In 2019, a study, done in the Netherlands, concludes that in transgender women, the risk of breast cancer increases during the relatively short hormone treatment. Additionally, the study points out that in transgender women, the characteristics of the breast cancer resemble a more 'female pattern'.

Have we even heard much of the 'male pattern' to begin with, though?

"Rule 3: If Someone Says Stop or Goes Limp, Taps Out, The Fight Is Over "— The Mental Support

(I Witnessed And Fell Inlove With)

The beautiful, inspiring human I call "mom" found out that she has cancer in 2010.

She found out herself because she knew how.

She found out herself and taught me how to perform self-check-ups when I was 12.

I have grown up with the belief that I must go, once a year (at least!), for a check-up-a mammologist and a gynaecologist as a must for a woman.

Yesterday, I went to a mammologist again and I need to share two realisations:

Realisation 1: MY PRIVILEGE

In an article I published earlier this month, <u>Understand Your Privilege</u>, I write about rethinking your privilege. By practising what I preach, and while sitting in the waiting room, I tell my mom (=my mental support!):

"I believe that all women, frankly everyone, should do this. Every July, let's say, you just know—it is mammo time!" Looking at me with her deep blue eyes, my mom says:

"See, a lot of people, especially women, know they should, but also don't know where to begin with, or they are too afraid of what to expect so... Ignorance is bliss, as people say. You just prefer to go on."

But then I thought:

What happens, however, when you either do not even know what "cancer" or "a mammologist" means?

What happens, however, when you do not have access to a doctor? What happens when you cannot afford the

Isn't it sickening that we refer to knowing of cancer and its mortality rate as "educational privilege" and access to the 'remedy' as "socio-economic privilege"?

Health should be a birthright.

"Rule 4: Only Two Guys To A Fight "- Toxic Masculinity

Realisation 2: Putting Support in "Support Group"

My second realisation is born thanks to the heart-warming feeling of receiving support and the rewarding feeling of giving support.

The emotion of "Fear" is so justifiable, but it cannot justify you not going for check-ups if you have the privilege of access to them.

Being conditioned not to exhibit fear-or any emotion-is one of the behaviours that fall under "toxic masculinity".

In Fight Club, the rule specifically says 'guys' in order to highlight male fragility and toxic masculinity in reference to the societal demand of what it is to be "a man".

Weaknesses are not for men.

Weaknesses are for women.

Emotions are weaknesses.

I will say no more than:

"Prevention is better than cure."

"Rule 6: No Shirt, No Shoes"—The Visual Representation of Breast Cancer

I am beyond grateful for the public awareness campaigns, survivor stories, personal experience, public (fundraising) events and every little bit that helps bring awareness.

Awareness saved my mom's life 13 years ago.

That is why I want to address, and conclude by saying that:

- 1. Is breast cancer rare in cis males? Yes. Should we still normalise a discussion about it? Also yes.
- 2. White, cisgender and heteronormative. Should we be louder in addressing a deadly illness and marginalised communities? Hell yes.
- 3. Emotion and Society. Should we talk to the ones least likely to ask for help? Please.
- 4. Our Bodies. Every Body. Should we talk about matters as specific as mastectomy and its portrayal, its emotional and psychological impact? Yes!
- 5. Should we discuss the consequences of responding to any of these questions with "No"? Yes.

Delayed Diagnosis. Limited Awareness. Inadequate Resources. Inaccurate Representation. Treatment Disparities. Mental Health Impact. Lack of support.



Healthcare's Treatment of Women

By Simone White

What others see can change our lives. A decision by a medical professional can determine how we recover and live after physically traumatizing events. Ideas regarding our gender can change over time, shifting how we coexist in the world ("Gender and Health" World Health Organization). These ideas influence laws and procedures that are implemented into our healthcare system, changing the status quo for millions of people. In the past, women have shared horror stories and detailed recountings of how they were treated by the industry. Katie Crino, a journalist, asked women to share their stories of being brushed off and disregarded by the same people who were meant to help. Discussions of medical misinformation, flippant remarks, and inherent bias stretch throughout the article (Crino, 2023). Women are more likely to be seen as weak and fragile, stereotyped to overreact, and become highly sensitive to pain (Crino, 2023). This narrative only seems to come crumbling down when the issues involve women of color, who are three times more likely to die during childbirth (Gress, 2022). The ideas regarding the female gender intersect with LGBTQ+ issues as well as race issues, making life harder for nearly half of the population. With changing legislation and procedures regarding women in the medical industry, reproductive rights, sectionalism within the female gender, and maternity care remain the most divisive and the most important.

The overturning of Roe v. Wade has opened the floodgates to unsafe medical practices for women in the United States (Human Rights Watch, 2022). When safe and sterile medical practices become illegal, it forces a large wave of unsafe practices in the fight to maintain autonomy (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This can make it more difficult for doctors and other practitioners to administer care for highrisk pregnancies when it involves termination; the stalling of termination makes more women at risk for death and medical complications (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The overturning of this landmark court case also leads to incomplete medical information regarding pregnancy, cutting out portions of information that could be interpreted as pro-abortion out of fear of illegality ("Biased Counseling against Abortion" ACLU, 2023). These new standards in the industry lead to physical and psychological issues for women, putting them in harm's way once again ("Biased Counseling against Abortion" ACLU, 2023). The psychological damage that women are bound to experience also has negative statistics.

In research involving the stigma around women and mental health, clinicians and medical students were more likely to dismiss women's pain and prescribe psychological treatment, even if the problem was purely physical (Crino, 2023). Although this may seem like a net positive because women would receive psychological treatment more readily, the stigma around those with mental illness is ever-growing. The American Psychiatric Association estimates that nearly half of people in the workplace are afraid to talk about mental health, furthermore, nearly 1/3 was afraid of being fired or facing repercussions. Mental health treatment can be extremely helpful for those seeking care, but misplaced remedies can lead to social stress and lower self-esteem ("Stigma, Prejudice and Discrimination against People with Mental Psychiatry.org, 2023). While reproductive rights and pressure is being placed on women in healthcare, these stigmas disproportionally affect women of color and trans women, however, health issues experienced by these groups are indicative of a larger societal issue ("Black Women's Maternal Health" National Partnership for Women & Families, 2023).

Sectionalism plays no small part in determining the priority and quality of care in the medical field. Racial bias goes beyond the individual views of doctors and nurses; biases can make it harder for women of color to receive treatment at all due to income gaps and stereotypes regarding pain tolerance ("Black Women's Maternal Health" National Partnership for Women & Families, 2023). Other minorities experience the same sort of stigma throughout their care. The bias against transgender people stretches far and wide. In gender-affirming care, the challenge is rooted within the structure of the system (White Hughto et al., 2015). While knowledge and procedures regarding transgender patients are increasing, insurance payouts and political influence continue to stunt the growth of the medical industry. Societal norms play no small part in this our male/female system can unknowingly reinforce these conditions for the trans communities, further curbing the quality of care received (White Hughto et al., 2015). Aside from upholding traditional gender norms, the implicit gender bias present in the binary system allows legislators to forcefully uphold the binary by using laws and regulations to disavow gender-affirming care. The struggles in healthcare for transgender youth can lead to psychological disorders that affect the lives of millions. Transgender youth are more likely to consider and attempt suicide. Transgender youth were also more likely to experience sexual violence or physical violence. Lending support through the healthcare system is possibly the only way to curb these statistics by offering the correct support and care ("Data on Transgender Youth," The Trevor Project, 2021).



Care for transgender people and women of color can become even more unsafe when regarding childcare and maternity, which serves as a leading cause of medical malpractice in these communities (Gress, 2022).

Maternity is an inherently stressful event, and the United States' healthcare only serves to worsen the stress since the country has some of the highest mortality rates among developed countries (Santhanam, 2021). A mother recovering from childbirth nearly died due to hemorrhages and placenta-based infection. Ensuring that a placenta is delivered is key to maintaining a sterile body. Placentas only serve to aid the body when a baby is still connected to the mother. Once the baby is postpartum, the placenta must be removed or it can cause blockages and infection, one of the leading causes of death for new mothers (Santhanam, 2021). In the workplace, maternity can weaken the reputations and esteem attained by women. Long stretches of maternity leave are often viewed as vacation or as a hiatus by companies. These stretches of leave can be the most stressful portion of a woman's life. The unpaid work that women often do. such as cooking, cleaning, household management, and childcare, can damage mental health when there is nothing else present in that person's life ("Overlapping Stigmas of Pregnancy, Motherhood, and ...," Sage Journals, 2023). Women who may be suffering from child-related injuries often have a hard time pleading their case. Invisible injuries that can't be related to by men are often the least treated and most ignored, highlighting yet another disparity for women globally (Crino, 2023).

Things have gotten harder for women in the nation. Preferential treatment and individual bias from physicians are actively killing women. To combat this, we must break down and reassess the stigmas we all hold so dear. Accepting those around us and challenging harmful narratives is only part of the process (Crino, 2023). Bringing more equity to marginalized groups is the next step to ensuring a safe world for the women around us. With the subtle change in the demographics of physicians, hopefully, this indicates a new era of care without preference. Physicians are getting younger as new waves of medical school graduates are joining the workforce (Mensik, 2023). In the next few years, it is necessary to see changes in gender- affirming care, maternity help, and sectionalism within the medical industry. Without these changes we divide ourselves further, essentially asking to have other rights stripped from women.

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The Rabbit Hole of Inequality



By Katrin Hristova

Dear Reader.

As an Alice-in-Wonderland aficionado, I push you into the rabbit hole of gender and housework inequality.

A little question to put in your back pocket is:

Are you a King of Hearts or a Mad Hatter?

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was published in 1865 with vivid illustrations by Sir John Tenniel (Credit: Alamy)

Foreword

Present day, 2023

A young, light-haired woman is walking in front of a towering Neo-Renaissance building. The building, used as a gallery in the present day, is one of these buildings that makes you feel microscopic.

"Even the letters on the building, I-N-E-Q-U-A-L-I-T-Y, look bizarrely small", Alice tells herself.

Whenever she needs to think, Alice visits the InEquality gallery.

Pushing the massive gallery doors from the 1880s, she is in inequality.

"Today, the labels above the three brown doors have changed", Alice notices.

In front of her, she sees a banner that reads:

"Alternative Reality - Based On A True Story"

and three doors for her to pick from:

"CHILD CARE"

"LONG-TERM CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE/PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES/OTHER CHRONIC CONDITIONS" &

"HOUSEWORK".

As a child, Alice always liked to think about the difference between "a house" and "a home", and while carefully touching the 5 letters - H-O-U-S-E, she pushes the door.

Chapter I: The Book and The King Of Hearts

Enveloped by simplicity and darkness, she sees a little book in one corner and two empty canvases, hanging seemingly from nowhere. Firstly, Alice approaches the blue-coloured thick covers and separates them from one another

"HOUSEWORK IS THE MOST UNEQUALLY SHARED OF THE FORMS OF UNPAID CARE...".

the book shouts out before Alice drops it on the ground. "The most unequally shared? Between who?", Alice thinks.

In the world she knows, everyone is appreciated for their individual abilities.

As brave and curious as she is, Alice opens the book

"GENDER GAPS IN HOUSEWORK PARTICIPATION ARE THE LARGEST AMONG COUPLES WITH CHILDREN.."

The book's loudness and screams almost appear

human-like.

Like nails on a blackboard, the turmoil screeches from the voice, shocking Alice's ears.

"Gaps? Gender gaps. Children.", Alice notes.

"This is not the world I know."

"Oh, but come and see how you got there.."

Startled, Alice jumps to the side.

"Who said that?! Who are you?"

Bathed in a blood-coloured red, the first painting lights

"You are a negligent little one. I am what used to be."

Dark strokes of paint start circling around on the canvas, leading towards the shape of something. Of someone.

Eight pointed golden spires wave at Alice, while a face appears. The round head receives dark olives for the eyes and two strokes of paint for the eyebrows. With the invisible hand painting two more spires – to the left and the right now, - the face receives a moustache, too. A little smile appears, genuine or ironic – Alice cannot tell.

"I am the King Of Hearts. Well, a painting of him, which makes me exceptionally real. I am here to gift you something."

"Oh, I came here just to think, I do not need a gift!", Alice proclaims.

"Of course you do. Let's see which way you will take.

If you take the way I want you to, you will see how you

If you do not, you will never know.

So which is it going to be?

You only have to tell me, are you a boy or a girl?"

"What does that matter?"

"It matters in the old world where I am a King!"

"What if I tell you I am a girl?"

"Well, you get a pink potion, silly!"

"Oh, and if I am a boy?"

"Then I shall offer you a blue potion. Come closer so I see you better."

Carefully, Alice approaches the painting, while still holding the book, as if attached to it.

Bravely, she says,

"When you said "I am what used to be", what is it that you mean?"

"I am what used to be. Take the pink potion, you have no choice. Go ahead and I will show you what it means".

The little pink bottle is in her hand, gracefully welcoming – "Drink Me".

It was all very well to say "Drink me," but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry.

"No, I'll look first," she said, "and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not."



"In the world that I come from, little miss, in the world of Inequality, we have a saying:

"Sentence first - verdict afterwards."

Your sentence is that you were born a girl,

you were born a woman,

you were born a female!",

the King of Hearts shouts heartlessly.

"Your verdict is as follows:

At home.

- 1. When you are born a girl, you shall be taught to be obedient. You shall play with toys that are for you, you shall shadow your mother.
- 2. When you are born a woman, you shall one day become a lady of manners. Otherwise, off with your head in 'tomboy' land.
- 3. When you are born a woman, you shall dress to impress.
- 3.1 When you are born a woman, the "You are asking for it" stamp shall be bestowed upon you if you do not obey the dress code.
- 3.2 When you are born a woman, the dress code is created for the ruler under the name 'the male gaze'.
- 4. When you are born a woman, you shall follow the pamphlet written for women and not worry your pretty little head with any other matters.
- 4.1 When you are born a woman, you shall not question how your body is.
- 4.2 When you are born a woman, a mother you shall be.
- 5. When you are born a female, you shall not listen to your inner compass because these are laws that have been abided by for years.

..."

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH" rings loudly as the lights in the room tremble under the voice.

Startled, Alice looks at all the colours pouring from the second painting.

The canvas is no longer blank, it is a rather peculiar juxtaposition of neon green, blood-red orange, bold lilac and clear white.

"Little girl, there is a place, like no place on Earth. Some say to survive it, you must be as mad as a hatter. Which luckily, I am."

The voice is softer this time.

"Let me show you what will happen if you drink any of these notions"

The peculiar juxtaposition blends in, showing a boy running.

"Where is he running to?", Alice's question drowns in the almost empty room.

A young blonde boy rushes past a building with a "RESEARCH INSTITUTE" spelt on it. Obscurity bathes in black and white, not allowing Alice to read the rest, to find the name.

"Where is that?", she asks without an answer.

By the way the boy is dressed, she assumes he is her contemporary

Entering the white-walled building, he runs to someone's desk.

Tables of data are laid on the table by the young male hand.

"HYPOTHESIS PROVED", Alice reads out loud to herself.

"The hypothesis that the "parental role model is the primary mechanism for entrenching roles in terms of household responsibilities" is confirmed.

Although the narrowest gender gaps in housework participation are among those aged 18-24 years (20 p.p.), only 19 % of young men spend an hour on cooking and housework per day, compared with 39 % of young women.

As most young people of this age live with their parents, it is clear that adolescent girls and young women do more unpaid work in the childhood home than their male counterparts — and gender roles, divisions and habits start early. (Gimenez-Nadal et al., 2019).



Before Alice is done reading it, a purple line merges into a river of orange and red, creating the Hatter again.

"Is... this real?", Alice's voice trembles.

"Is it a dream? Who's to say?", gently he asks.

A little white cup appears in the Hatter's hand.

"Tea?"

Alice responds with silence and a startled look.

The Hatter understands her answer.

he was once upon a time this way himself — not *wanting* to believe the reality he sees.

"You did not drink the pink potion because there is no pink in your world and we pick our own potion. For the King of Hearts, one must read into gender and separate it into only two. The choice is made for you – pink for girls, blue for boys, simple is it not?

The pink potion that the King offers makes you big enough to not leave the home.

The home becomes a house, Alice.

If you are smart enough to trick him into giving you the blue one, you get the world, as the potion would have made you teeny-tiny. If you are born for the blue potion, you can do anything."

"If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't. And to the contrary, what is, it wouldn't be. And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?"

"That is the world you live in. The world where I am just a Hatter.

The world where labels are scratched off.

the world where boxes are folded."

"Yet. In the world where I am, I am still a Mad Hatter!

It is tea time!

What is your poison?"

The canvases vanish. The book turns into ashes.

The lights turn on.

The building is the same. Alice is not.

She slowly moves towards the exit as the Hatter's question rings in

What. Is. Your. Poison?

A little pamphlet greets Alice goodbye.

- 1. The Mad Hatter is the Normal person who questions everything he is fed
- 2. The Mad Hatter is the Normal person who questions everything he has to think.
- 3. The King of Heart is the Feeder.

"I'm older than you, and must know better.", the King of Hearts would have said.

And next to me, in the gallery of this piece, Alice would have whispered:

"That's not a regular rule: you invented it just now."

And just like Alice, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.

- 1. When I am born a girl, I get to live according to my compass.
- 2. When I am born a woman, I get to be equal to men.
- 3. When I am born a female, I get to have a place in this world.

When I am born, I get to live.

Until the next gallery visit,

The Mad Hatter



By Liam O'Brien

Is Overworking the enemy to Gender Equality in the workplace?

In the pursuit of understanding gender bias and stereotypes in the business world, an enlightening Harvard article by Robin J. Ely and Irene Padavic, scholars within the subject, opened my eyes to a new perspective on the issue. Their investigation into workplace inequality using a global consulting firm, highlighted the 'work/family narrative.' An excuse used to downplay gender disparities and this narrative was the catalyst for their research. It goes something like this:

"Top-level job roles demand extremely long hours, women's devotion to family makes it impossible for them to meet the demands, and their careers suffer as a result."

But the statistics demonstrated otherwise. Both men and women were suffering from the burden of long hours and the only real factor affecting female career progression was the strong emphasis that women should take accommodations such as part-time hours which strained their careers as they were unable to meet the demands of the role. This realization sheds light on the need to reevaluate the prevailing attitude towards extended working hours as the catalyst for gender inequality.

The power of the work/family narrative The 'work/family' narrative is a commonly invoked argument many of us have heard used to deflect discussions surrounding workplace gender inequality. It is frequently employed to downplay the issue and shift the focus away from the disparities experienced by women in the workforce. The more I read on the issue it became clear it is difficult to break through the narrative as it is perpetuated by the belief that long working hours are an unavoidable prerequisite for high-level roles.

Encouraging women to simply forgo time off to meet these demands does not solve the issue. shown in Robin J. Ely and Irene Padavicsresearch. The women of the firm who chose to take this approach did not avoid the societal expectations that hindered their career progress, regardless of if they had a Husband who was family orientated. The persistent encouragement from managers for female employees to accept these accommodations, influenced by gender biases towards working poses а significant obstacle dismantling inequality. Furthermore, the male members of the firm who were not taking these accommodations were said to have expressed guilt for the little time they spent with their families, neglecting the real issue of long working hours, and embracing their guilt as a normality. This evidences that meeting a workplaces absurd working demand is not an adequate way to combat the problem.

The 'masculine' approach to the working hours only furthers the inequality, as the men that



The tyranny of long working hours

Erin Reid, a professor at Boston University's Questrom School of Business conducted a study on another consulting firm that identified the employees believed the ideal-worker-like-devotion, committing 60 to 80 hours per week was the only path to success. She described the men at the firm who requested accommodations were "marginalized and penalized in the same ways that women reveal work-family conflict have long been." Erin quotes one tragic instance where an employee requested three months leave to be a stay-at-home parent when their daughter was born, they were only given six weeks and upon their annual review they were told the six weeks they took had affected their evaluation and their performance rating fell from the previous year. They said, "No one questioned my devotion till I had a family." This situation is far too common.

Erin's findings further established the effect this approach to working hours had on the stereotypes of women, and that a key difference was men could deviate whilst appearing to be fully committed. She describes the firms approach as "Women, particularly mothers, were expected to have trouble with these expectations, and the firm offered women many types of formal accommodations such as part-time work or internal roles." And that the views of men and women differed if they did not do overtime. People at the firm viewed women who left at five o'clock as going home to their children when men leaving the same time were likely off to another client. Once again, the inequality in the expectations of gender has been strengthened by the excessively long working hours. The family variable being an obstacle that is clearly associated with women means that without changes to the view of overworking, the gender inequality cannot be fought.

Challenging the long working hour culture

The consensus emerging from various studies is that long working hours do not improve productivity or results of a business. The effect of sleep deprivation on cognitive performance is well distinguished. The longer we stay awake, the worse our reactions, memory, focus and decision making become. Individuals who report poor sleep experience an average loss of 7.2 hours of productivity per week. Reid's findings also indicate that managers were unable to distinguish

between employees genuinely working 80 hours per week and those merely feigning such commitment.

Yet business culture insists on pushing the false relationship between extended working hours and toxic productivity with high performance and success. This attitude seems challenging to change and based on Reid's research, many would rather hide their need for time off than be transparent about it. With the employees and managers all reinforcing the overworking mentality the change becomes increasingly difficult. To combat workplace gender inequality, a fundamental shift in attitudes toward overworking is essential. The notion that productivity and success are directly linked to extended working hours needs to be challenged and debunked. Conclusion

The toxic belief in excessive long working hours as a marker of dedication is a major contributor to gender biases and stereotypes in the workplace. It is a factor that is particularly applicable to the business world and any role that demands long periods away from families. Both women and men suffer from the burden of overwork, but women experience greater professional setbacks due to the associated family variable. If this perspective on work were eliminated, then the platform that allows false 'work/family narratives' and gender stereotypes could be further challenged.

Bringing to light this area of gender inequality will create progress with the issue. Continued thorough research must be done to strengthen the case for increased productivity from lower working hours and employees must feel like they can be transparent with their needs to strengthen their voice. The stronger the case and the louder the voice, the closer we will get to gender equality in the workplace.

By Asfandiyar

Gender Inequality in Media Reporting in Developing Countries

"The way we are conditioned to see the world in our own culture seems so completely obvious and commonplace that it is difficult to imagine that another culture might do things differently. It is even more difficult to realize that what we think are 'normal' ways of seeing the world are really 'cultural' ways of seeing the world." - Edward T. Hall

Our culture has a problem with gender inequality, and it frequently manifests itself in the media as well as other areas of our lives. Gender equality in media reporting is critical for advancing a fair and just society since it is a key weapon for influencing public opinion. However, in terms of gender equality in media reportage, emerging nations have lagged behind. In developing nations, gender imbalance in media reporting is a recurrent problem. In newsrooms, women are frequently underrepresented and face prejudice on the basis of gender. The media frequently supports gender norms and gender stereotypes that restrict women's chances and social involvement. Women's accomplishments and contributions to society are rarely highlighted, and instead, they are frequently depicted negatively.

The media has a significant impact on <u>societal standards</u> and public opinion. It can have a particularly large impact on gender equality in poorer nations, as the media is frequently the main information source for many people. Unfortunately, gender disparity in the media is a pervasive issue in emerging nations. Women are frequently portrayed in stereotyped and sexist ways in news reporting and decision-making jobs, and they are underrepresented in both. It can reinforce gender stereotypes, discourage girls from pursuing media occupations, and make it more challenging for women to participate in public life, among other unfavorable effects.

The former executive director of the <u>Gender and Development Network of the Southern African Development Community</u>. Stella Nkomo, asserts that "the media is a powerful tool that can be used to challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality. But it's crucial to make sure that women have a voice in the media and that it's inclusive."

The 'fourth estate', the media, has the ability to influence public opinion. However, when ingrained gender biases appear in media coverage, it can reinforce negative preconceptions, marginalize voices, and obstruct societal advancement. Only 24% of the individuals seen, heard, or read about in the news in 2020 will be women, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), the largest global program gender in the media. This underrepresentation is particularly troublesome in developing nations, where media may play a critical role in promoting gender equality and challenging conventional assumptions. The underrepresentation of women as news subjects and the dearth of women in positions of decision-making inside media organizations are just two examples of how gender inequality in media reporting presents itself. In print, radio, and television journalism, only 37% of reporters are women, according to the GMMP 2020 report. Because of the lack of diversity in the media, news perspectives are frequently dominated by men.

Additionally, women are frequently presented in traditional positions or as victims in news articles when they do appear. Only 26% of characters in tales about politics and administration are women, according to a **UNESCO** assessment titled "Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism," underscoring women's marginalization from important subjects. Women journalists in the media are increasingly being overlooked for reporting on particular problems. For instance, compared to their male colleagues, female journalists in Pakistan contribute less than ten percent to reporting on climate change. The way that women are portrayed in entertainment and advertising is also affected by gender imbalance in media reporting. In advertising and entertainment, women are frequently objectified and sexualized, which reinforces negative gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the stereotypical representation of women in the media as weak, meek, and submissive strengthens gender stereotypes that restrict women's chances and promote gender inequity. The repercussions of gender disparity in media coverage on society are extensive. It restricts women's prospects for social growth and strengthens detrimental gender stereotypes. Women's voices are muffled and their issues are disregarded when they are not fairly portrayed in media reporting. This may result in a lack of knowledge and comprehension of problems affecting women, such as discrimination, unfair pay, and gender-based violence. This disregard for female perspectives and sources results in an imbalanced and incorrect portrayal of society. While men dominate the news cycle, women's experiences. and contributions views underreported. There is insufficient coverage of important stories involving topics that predominantly concern women, such as maternal health or violence against women. While ignoring subjects typically associated with women, such education, healthcare, and community development, media disproportionately concentrate on male-dominated industries like politics, business, and sport. Narratives that portray males as the main social actors and women as supporting characters become accepted.

Reputable expert in gender and media studies Professor H. Leslie Steeves emphasizes the effects of gender bias on the caliber of media reporting. Media reporting misses out on varied thoughts and is unable to present a whole picture of society when women's perspectives are marginalized.

We cannot succeed if half of us are suppressed, in the words of Malala Yousafzai. "I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard," she said. A multi-pronged strategy that incorporates capacity training, public involvement, and policy changes is required to address gender inequity in media reporting. Media organizations should implement gender-responsive policies, such as standards for reporting that is gender-balanced and initiatives to support women in positions of leadership within media companies.



We cannot succeed if half of us are suppressed, in the words of Malala Yousafzai. "I raise up my voice-not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard," she said. A multi-pronged strategy that incorporates capacity training, public involvement, and policy changes is required to address gender inequity in media reporting. Media organizations should implement gender-responsive policies, such as standards for reporting that is gender-balanced and initiatives to support women in positions of leadership within media companies.

A major issue in emerging nations is the gender gap in media coverage. However, given that media has the ability to influence society beliefs and spur social change, it is a problem that can and must be addressed. We may take steps toward more egalitarian societies by making sure that women's perspectives are heard and appreciated in the media. It is obviously difficult to achieve gender equality in media reporting, but as the Chinese proverb says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." A more equal and just world can be achieved by taking steps to combat gender bias, advance representation, and elevate women's voices in the media.



Bridging Gender Inequality: A Case Study of European States

By Asfandiyar

Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, aptly put it, "Gender equality is not a women's issue, it's a human rights issue. It's a question of justice, dignity, and equality for all."

The term "gender inequality" describes the uneven chances and treatment that people receive based on their gender. Inequality in resources, rights, and opportunities results when one gender receives preferential treatment or privileges over the other. Although it is a worldwide issue, gender inequality is particularly severe in Europe. The gender wage gap in the EU will be almost thirteen percent in 2021, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality, and women will be underrepresented in positions of economic and political leadership.

Gender disparity is a result of a variety of variables, such as social institutions, economic policies, and cultural values. These elements may result in obstacles that keep women from reaching their greatest potential. For instance, discrimination in the workplace and other spheres of life might result from cultural norms that place a higher value on males than women. Women who are positioned in inferior roles within social institutions may find it challenging to get education and other resources. Additionally, it may be difficult for women to make a decent salary due to economic policies that favor males. Gender inequality has a wide range of implications. Women who experience inequality have lower rates of education, employment, home ownership, and political participation. In addition, they are more prone to encounter violence, hardship, and ill health. If we want to build a more just and equitable society, we must confront the significant issue of gender disparity.

In many regions of the world, including Europe, gender inequality is still a problem. Women still experience major gaps in a number of sectors, including education, employment, and political representation, notwithstanding recent gains. With an emphasis on closing the gender gap, this opinion piece explores the problem of gender disparity in European nations. Women continue to face discrimination and marginalization in many spheres of life in Europe, according to research by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). According to the research, "Gender inequality is a complex and deeply ingrained issue that affects women in many ways, limiting their opportunities and creating barriers to their full participation in society."

The job market is one of the areas where gender disparity is most obvious. Women have come a long way in the workplace in recent years, but they are still underrepresented in many professions, especially in leadership roles. Women hold just thirty percent of leadership posts in the EU, and only twenty-five of senior and top management jobs, according to researchby the European Commission. Additionally, the gender pay gap in the EU is sixteen percent, meaning that on average, women still earn less than males. For women with less education and those working in industries historically dominated by women, the wage difference is much more pronounced. Political representation is another well-known example. Despite making almost fifty percent of the population, women remain underrepresented in positions of authority in politics. Almost thirty-two percent of EU lawmakers are women, as per statistics of the International Parliamentary Union.

Addressing the underlying causes of marginalization and discrimination is crucial if we are to close the gender inequality gap. Lack of opportunity for women to pursue education and training is one of the major contributing causes. Women with greater levels of education are more likely to join in the economy and receive better pay, based on a World Bank analysis. To close the gender gap, it is essential to fund initiatives for women's education and training. Providing scholarships, mentorship programs, and vocational training for women are just a few ways that governments and organizations may play a significant part in this. Promoting gender equality at work is crucial for resolving this disgusting problem. This may be accomplished by putting in place regulations like equal compensation for equal effort, flexible scheduling, and mentorship programs. A McKinsey & Company study found that businesses tend to be more successful and profitable when their workforces are more diverse. The problem of gender-based violence, which continues to be a serious obstacle to gender equality, must also be addressed. One in three women have suffered physical or sexual assault since the age of fifteen, revealed by research of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. In order to achieve gender equality and make sure that varied viewpoints are reflected, it is crucial to encourage female and gender involvement in a variety of venues. There are multiple approaches to encourage female and gender engagement in various forums in Europe. Governments and organizations in Europe may take action by putting laws and programs in place that help victims, prevent violence against women, and hold offenders responsible. Gender quotas have been adopted in several European nations in a variety of fields, including politics, business, and education. For instance, there is a 40% quota for women to run in legislative elections in France and a 40% quota for women to serve on corporate boards in Norway. Quotas can aid in boosting the proportion of women in positions of power and advance gender equality. By giving women the support and direction, they need to develop in their professions, mentoring programs may help increase the involvement of women in the workforce. To encourage women to assume leadership positions, several institutions, including the European Commission, have launched mentorship programs. Through networking opportunities and confidenceboosting activities, these programs can help women participate more actively in a variety of forums.

Female involvement can also be boosted by giving targeted support for initiatives that advance gender equality. For instance, the European Union has created a program called "EU Women in Business" that offers cash and assistance to female business owners. This initiative seeks to boost the proportion of femaleowned enterprises and advance gender equality in the corporate world. Many groups have started programs to get men to participate in gender equality activities, like the European Men's Alliance. By increasing the number of males who are actively promoting gender equality, this can aid in its promotion.



Additionally, cooperation with civil society groups helps advance female engagement. Numerous civil society groups, like the European Women's Lobby, aim to advance gender equality and address gender stereotypes. Working with these groups can aid in promoting gender equality and amplifying the voices of women.

Women still experience disadvantages in a variety of spheres of life in European nations, which makes gender inequality a serious problem. The causes of marginalization and discrimination must be addressed in order to close the gender gap. This may be accomplished through funding programs for women's education and training, encouraging workplace diversity, and tackling the problem of gender-based violence. Although it is a difficult task, eliminating gender disparity in Europe is a goal that can be met. We may move closer to a more equitable society by taking on the difficulties and seizing the chances.







The Gender Wage Gap

Written by Emily Hamburger

The gender wage gap is not an uncommon term to hear. Many women have grown up knowing they will get paid less than men. They will have to work a hundred times harder to get to the same place as men, knowing men are handed jobs on a silver platter. It isn't uncommon for many to fight against the wage-gap theory. Many insist that women and men are equal and that women, in fact, do get paid the same. However, that is far from the truth. Women, especially women of color, will get paid less than men, regardless of their experience or education.

The wage gap is enormous for Latina, Black, and Indigenous women. Latinas make 55 cents to the dollar, Black women 63 cents to the dollar, and Indigenous women 60 cents to the dollar. Asian women make 87 cents to the dollar. But even with these statistics, the wage gap seems to be widening. Black women are more likely to work low-wage jobs than other groups of women. Black women participate in the workforce at much higher rates than other groups of women. But the pay gap that they experience is much higher and continues to grow each year. However, the wage gap exists in every profession.

There are some professions where the wage gap is smaller than others. These include food workers, writers, counselors, pharmacists, and social workers. Women earn about 97-99% of what their male counterparts earn in these professions. But in financial occupations, like advisement, managers, and sales agents, women make slightly over half of what males earn. The gender-wage gap focuses on women getting paid less than men and women receiving the same or more education than men and still making less.







Even though they have the same credentials, women with bachelor's degrees are still getting paid 26% less than men. It is not unknown that women in the United States are the largest group receiving bachelor's and post-grad degrees. Yet their education does not seem to make a difference in their salaries. Because women are the leading group holding degrees, they also carry an astronomical amount of debt - a whopping \$929 billion. Society pushes women to receive a higher education to break cycles of poverty and gain independence. Yet women are again buried in post-grad debt. As women attend school, their mind constantly looms on their thousands of dollars in loans. Regardless of their future plans and credentials, the job they acquire will always favor men.

The pay gap affects different women, like women who decide to have kids. Women who are mothers are paid 71 cents in comparison to the dollar that fathers are paid - allowing a loss of \$16,000 a year. Women are the most educated group, but each year they are subjugated to a significant loss that is out of their control.

The wage gap in groups, such as Black women, can be traced back to historic injustices in the United States. Slavery, segregation, and redlining contribute to society paying Black women less. These injustices stopped Black families from receiving benefits and resources, which would prevent them from investing their money in education and building their careers. There is also a very large wealth gap that follows along with the gender wage gap. The median wealth of Black households in 2019 was only \$24,100. This compared to the whopping median wealth of white families, which was \$189,100. This wealth gap is a significant problem in why many Black women are not paid the same as other groups of women or other men in the workplace. Centuries of injustices, inequality, and lack of resources have affected how Black women navigate the world. Although education is an essential factor, it does not and can not shield them from these ingrained ideas and practices.

In the 21st century, we can see these inequalities by comparing white women and Black women. This is prevalent in the navigation of life post-high school







education. In 2022, white women were much more likely to receive financial help from a family member while in college than Black women. Regarding student loans, Black women are 41% more likely than white women to take out a student loan. This could be detrimental financially, as many loans have high-interest rates, and a wage gap can make it even more difficult for them to pay off.

Black women tend to be overrepresented in low-income jobs, such as food service. They still manage to get paid less than their counterparts. Black women are also underrepresented in high-paying jobs, such as engineering or computing. In these professions, only about 1% of Black women work these types of jobs. Many Black women who pursue these challenging careers tend to be driven out due to discriminatory, sexist, and racist practices.

Other groups of women affected – and will eventually be all women in the workforce at some point – are older women. Because of the wage gap, there will be a wealth gap and a retirement or pension gap. This can keep women working longer because they may be unable to financially support themselves. In 2019, men reported a whopping amount of retirement saved – about \$200,000, while women reported \$30,000 in savings. Women will not only be financially taken advantage of during their careers but will still see the effects of these discriminatory factors as they age and begin to think about retirement. That is, if the job that they have chosen offers retirement benefits.

Many women work jobs that do not offer any retirement benefits at all. These tend to be minimum-wage jobs, where women comprise two-thirds of the workforce. Because of the lack of retirement benefits at minimum wage jobs, many women may have to work past the retirement age. To make matters worse, as women get older, they tend to outlive their husbands by 12 years, and often women must care for their husbands. Women's health expenses are 30% more than men's. This could be detrimental financially if a woman does not have any benefits that could support her as she ages.

The gender wage gap does not get smaller as a woman ages. It does not matter how much educati-







-on a woman has, as it will not affect whether or not she gets paid the same as a man. Advocating for women - especially Black and Brown women in the workplace is crucial. This ensures they receive equal pay and benefits and can sustain themselves the same way as men. There are several ways that the gender wage gap can be on its way to elimination. This includes raising the minimum wage, especially when most of those working these types of jobs are women. The idea of pay transparency should be advocated for in the workplace. This means that workers are having open conversations about how much they are getting paid and what benefits they are offered. Creating a safe and relaxed environment for women to discuss their salary can be a tremendous and vital start to closing the gap.

Additionally, the government should also invest in high-quality childcare. This will allow women to stay in the workforce longer and allows children to be cared for safely and affordably. In 2012, childcare costs were higher than the median rent for every state. Employed women with children, especially if they are single parents, will need childcare to keep their job. Involving the government with childcare can help women feel more secure in their position, child, and finances.

It is essential for those not affected by the gender wage gap to advocate for those who are. Implementing wage transparency and supporting legislation raising the minimum wage is the first step in closing the gender wage gap. Because of the racist systems our government has participated in, it can be challenging to overcome these obstacles. But it is important to support the force trying to close the gap. Closing the gender wage gap will not only complete this gap but will close the wealth gap and the gap that will stop women from being able to retire.

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Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Violence

From a young age, women and feminine presenting people are taught to navigate the world as friendly, yet aware and anxious. To memorize people's faces around them and what color shirt they were wearing. Those around women double down on the idea that there can and always will be a boogeyman. That someone will attack in the middle of the deepest, darkest night. That all women are unsuspecting and unprepared. That she must keep her keys keenly between her two fingers. Teaching women to scream fire instead of rape because no one will bat a lash otherwise. The woman must go for the knee to the groin, the fingers to the eyes, making sure that she grasps at his hair and has his skin under her nails for safekeeping. Teaching women to be hyper-aware of where they place their drink. If their skirt is too tight or short, or if their natural body is a secret code for men screaming "asking for it!" In reality, solving heightened gender-based violence with a key to the eye or a knee to the groin isn't always plausible. Those who've had these tactics ingrained in them their entire lives doesn't guarantee a safe life from a threatening man.

Those who have thought out their reactions beforehand do not always act the same in the moment. Many women tend to freeze while an assault is occurring. It doesn't help that 70% of those who have reported sexual assault were less than the age of 17. And that 93% of women reporting sexual abuse knew their abuser. There is no boogeyman, but the fact that many young girls know and can identify their perpetrator but nothing is happening to stop them is part of the problem. Over 96% of people who sexually abuse children are male. This is not surprising when we are amid an epidemic of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is a global issue. Looking at statistics, it's clear that no matter the age, those who identify as female or are feminine presenting are at risk for sexual assault by men. Children are at an extremely high risk for sexual abuse. The younger the child getting molested is, the more likely the perpetrator is a family member. Those who molest and sexually abuse children will use grooming to get what they want. This is where they use gifts and the trust of the child's parents/guardians while also isolating the child from other people they care about. Meeting the child's needs because the parent or guardian doesn't is also common. Grooming is a way for the abuser to get close to a child. They want the child to believe they are mature, older, and are being ultimately trusted to delve into "adult activities." The child views the groomer as someone who treats them like an equal. It is a perfect trap to keep a child in a loop of abuse. Children that come forward about sexual abuse – if they do at all - are often told they are lying. Sometimes their maternal figure may see it as a competition, especially if the paternal figure is the one committing the abuse. However, only 2-8% of reports of sexual abuse or rape are false. That's because many children keep sexual abuse a secret. It should be in a parent's or guardian's best interest to listen to their children, believe their children, and take action.

A lack of action in situations like these keeps abusers in power. Sometimes these allegations aren't taken seriously. Parents/guardians "could never believe" that someone they have a close relationship with could do that to their child. Many children keep abuse a secret because they fear others' reactions. Reactions of their abuser(s), parents, guardians, and those around them. If the child is coming forward about their abuse, it's vital to believe them. It's their responsibility to take action. We should regard this as a child putting themselves in a vulnerable position because they want and need help.

A lack of action in situations like these keeps abusers in power. Sometimes these allegations aren't taken seriously. Parents/guardians "could never believe" that someone they have a close relationship with could do that to their child. Many children keep abuse a secret because they fear others' reactions. Reactions of their abuser(s), parents, guardians, and those around them. If the child is coming forward about their abuse, it's vital to believe them. It's their responsibility to take action. We should regard this as a child putting themselves in a vulnerable position because they want and need help.

The unfortunate reality is that many are aware of how often women are sexually assaulted or raped in their lifetime. Yet the power of men and the patriarchy assists birthright protection against allegations. Those who question the validity of survivors' stories are invalidating their experiences. Misogyny and gender-based violence affect ALL women. Even those who try to rise up in "power" through the patriarchy by adhering to powerful, abusive men are not protected from these men in any capacity. Even if they believe they are.

Victim blaming is an act that puts men on a pedestal. It forces women to become responsible for their and the man's actions. It isn't uncommon for the media to mention the use of drugs, such as alcohol or other substances when shifting blame. Although these substances stop someone from consenting to sexual activities. Women's drug use, clothing, location, who they are, or their personality has nothing to do with why they were assaulted or raped. Men commit these crimes because of power. Separating the everyday existence of women living in a patriarchal society from men using their ability to take advantage of women is crucial. Their use of alienation and control of the narrative allows men to go about their day as if they have not destroyed the lives of women through rape and sexual assault. When there is a lack of support, survivors tend to have lower educational outcomes and may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. They also have higher suicide and substance abuse rates. A staggering 1 out of 6 women will be survivors of a completed rape in their lifetime. So this universal issue, as we look further, affects women and those under 18 at a terrifying rate. Even with organizations that fight tirelessly against gender-based violence, there seems to be no end to these crimes.

Gender-based violence does not only fall in the category of rape and sexual assault. But there is also the epidemic of femicides, not only in the United States but in all countries and territories around the globe. Femicide is defined as an intentional killing with gender-related motivation. Issues such as gender discrimination, gender roles, or harmful social norms may be top-contenders for this epidemic. Low-income countries outside of the U.S. are assumed to be the only places experiencing femicide. In 2021, it's estimated 17,800 women were victims of femicide in Asia – by either an intimate partner or their family. But, over 70% of femicides occur in the United States. The broader picture is that a current or former partner killed over 45,000 women in 2021. Or they were killed by their mother, father, brother, or even uncle. Women are more likely to be killed by someone closest to them. This means that five women are killed by someone in their own family every hour.

Gender-based killings, although reported to an extent, don't count all femicides that occur. It is estimated that the numbers given are actually much higher. Women of color (both Black and indigenous women) and trans women are disproportionately affected by gender-based killings. In countries like Australia and Canada, indigenous women are disproportionately affected by femicide. In Canada, indigenous women are five times more likely than white women to be murdered. 94% of those committing murders are by people that they know.

But what can be done to stop femicides throughout the world? One way to limit femicides is through laws and policies that will protect women. This also includes firearm legislation, which can be an important factor. Deconstructing societal norms about women can also protect women in the long run. How they are supposed to act and look – and the placed expectations that exist before they even evacuate the womb. Those who commit these crimes should be punished. It's vital to stop protecting men committing these atrocious crimes. We no longer allow them to continue living with no remorse or guilt. Not holding people accountable normalizes gender-based violence like femicide, although it has already become an epidemic. This allows the patriarchy to punish women for just existing. Women should be guaranteed the same world as men, yet we punish women for their right to exist safely and normally. While we feed men the idea that they are born with an innate right to decide when he allows women to live and when he will allow women to die at his hands.



Nature Doesn't Discriminate. Neither Should We

By Chase Martin

I firmly believe that nature is meant to be enjoyed by everyone. However, there is a lot of sexism from outdoor enthusiasts, and I am sick and tired of it.

For instance, I've heard people claim that Scouts BSA is superior to Girl Scouts or that the rank of Eagle Scout is more prestigious than earning one's Gold Award. I don't understand why some people feel the need to create competition between these two organizations, and anyone who declares that one of these organizations is "better" than the other is completely missing the point. Both groups are fantastic at introducing children to the outdoors and teaching them essential leadership skills. They should be viewed as allies rather than competitors.

In addition to scouting, I've witnessed many other instances of sexist and derogatory comments while out in the wilderness. I worked at a summer camp for two years. While this camp promoted gender equality, not all staff or campers shared this opinion.

In 2022, I held a leadership position at one of the staffed backcountry locations. Participants backpacked to my camp, and we would entertain them for the evening before sending them to their next destination.

I vividly remember one of my staff members rejoicing that there were no women in our group. He wanted his outdoor experience to be as manly as possible – as if women couldn't be as feral as men (which, let me tell you, is completely false). I quickly put an end to his celebration and told everyone that I didn't want to hear anything like that ever again. It made me furious that someone did not want to work with a particular gender because they thought it would taint their experience.

Another instance that comes to mind is when a medical situation was handled poorly. One night, I noticed one of the groups of participants staying at our camp was acting strangely, so I went to investigate. A young female participant claimed to have a panic attack due to chest pain. Despite the adults in the group insisting the girl was "faking it" for attention, I recognized the seriousness of the situation. The woman was in tears, and I immediately radioed the infirmary at base camp for assistance. However, my concerns were dismissed and not taken seriously.

Frustrated, I told my staff to monitor the patient and ensure her symptoms didn't worsen. Unsurprisingly, her symptoms got worse, and I had to fight with the infirmary team over the radio until they agreed to dispatch a vehicle to my camp.

Once the medic arrived, they quickly realized that the woman needed to return to the infirmary. I talked to the medic as he was leaving, and he told me that the infirmary had thought I was handling the situation poorly but that I was right to push for a medic.

The infirmary dismissed the event because they thought it had stemmed from a panic attack. That was already infuriating from a mental health point of view, but what made me the angriest were the adults who constantly told me to stop giving the participant attention because they were convinced she was faking her symptoms. The dismissal of women's health is a problem everywhere, but it can be life-threatening in the backcountry.

There is no place for hate in the outdoors, and it needs to stop.



The Catalyst

Uncovering Gender Inequality: Exploring Its Roots and Impact on Society

Through a collection of thought-provoking articles, we aim to shed light on the complex nature of gender inequality and encourage critical reflection and meaningful dialogue on this important topic.

By Chase Martin

How Sex and Gender Impact Females with Neurodevelopmental Conditions

According to WebMD (2022), boys are more than twice as likely to have attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) than girls. However, Kessler et al. (2006) found a male-to-female ratio of 1.6 in adults, with some mental health counselors noticing a rise in ADHD diagnoses among older women since the pandemic (Mandriota, 2022). Similarly, Deweerdt's (2017) research found a male-to-female ratio of 3.25 for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which differs from the widely accepted ratio of 4.0. These discrepancies insinuate that some women with a neurodevelopmental condition may not receive a diagnosis until later in life.

Living with a neurodevelopmental condition can pose significant challenges, so obtaining a diagnosis for proper treatment or medication is crucial. This article will explore how sex and gender lead to the underdiagnosis of ADHD and ASD in adolescent females.

A child must be referred to a medical health professional by their parents or teachers to be tested for a neurodevelopmental condition. In other words, someone else has to notice and recognize that a child is displaying symptoms of a neurodevelopmental condition.

It is important to note that published studies have shown a bias towards clinical presentations of ADHD and ASD in males (Kirkovski et al., 2013, Abstract). This means that the general population is more familiar with symptoms commonly seen in males, which can be problematic as these conditions often present differently in females.

Although anyone can experience a range of symptoms related to ADHD and ASD, research suggests that variations in the brain structure between males and females and sex hormonesinfluence how these conditions present themselves (Boltz et al., 2023, Brain biology and Box 2).

Females with ADHD are more likely to have internalized symptoms such as overthinking and intrusive thoughts, whereasmales are more likely to display externalized symptoms such as restlessness and fidgeting (Quinn & Madhoo, 2014). An adult is more likely to recognize when a male displays signs of ADHD because it is typically directly observable.



Females with ASD are more likely to experience "compulsions and/or self-injurious behaviors," and males are more likely to show "repetitive motor behaviours and speech" (Boltz et al., 2023, Behavioural phenotypes). Another study (Mandy et al., 2012) found that "teachers reported males with ASD having greater externalising and social problems than females" (Abstract). Once again, females are more likely to have symptoms that could be harder to notice, especially if a female is high-functioning.

Boltz et al. (2023) also concluded that "autistic females tend to show better social communication skills than autistic males in nuanced ways, which means that autistic features in females might not be sufficiently captured by commonly used instruments" (Behavioural phenotypes). These differences in how neurodevelopmental conditions can manifest in females arepart of why it is more likely that a female will go undiagnosed, especially during childhood. However, another crucial factor isat play here, which is gender

Unfortunately, due to this bias, studies show that adults are more likely to overlook symptoms in females, leading to a delay in diagnosis and treatment. A research team asked parents and teachers to group 144 children (69 female) ages 8- to 9- diagnosed with ADHD according to levels (low/moderate/high) of directly observed ADHD behaviors (Meyer, 2020). Those results were compared to the medically-trained researchers' groupings. Teachers and parents consistently rated males at higher levels than their female counterparts. This study revealsthat, even in a controlled environment, adults are more likely to notice ADHD tendencies in males than females.

Similarly, Deweerdt's (2017) 3.25 ratio for ASD emerged "from studies in which researchers evaluate participants for autism, rather than interviewing parents or reviewing medical or school records." Once again, females with ASD often go undiagnosed as a child because adults overlook or dismiss their symptoms. Future research on all neurodevelopmental conditions must become more inclusive so the general population can become familiar with and recognize common symptoms in males and females. If this does not happen, Ajith (2018) warns that symptoms for girls left untreated often "persist into adulthood, manifesting as underachievement, substance abuse, eating disorders, and financial crises."

If you believe that you are experiencing symptoms related to a neurodevelopmental condition, we strongly advise you to seek help from your primary care provider or a mental health professional. Early diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve one's quality of life and overall well-being. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

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How an American sociologist changed the way social roles are seen around the world

It is common to see discussions all over the internet about feminism, sexuality and gender these days. Nevertheless, these topics were objects of study for great research and intellectuals of the XX century, including the American Margaret Mead, who has been called "The Mother of Anthropology", due to her analysis of different societies and people.

Margaret was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; she went to Barnard College and received her Master's degree and PhD at Columbia University. Her complete academic work was dedicated to studying the differences of behavior between women and men; to that, she even traveled to 'primitive societies' to observe their interactions.

Today, we will show you what her thoughts about three different communities were and what was her verdict on gender and patriarchy!

Arapesh, New Guinea

In the Arapesh society, although there were, in fact, differences in work division between women and men, there was no difference in social aspects, as, for example, in raising a child.

The Arapesh girl was sent to her husband's house when she was only a child, to be raised by him. Only when she reached the reproductive age, she was able to have children. At that time, the Arapesh society pressed both the father and the mother to have equal responsibilities in raising the kid.

Regarding their behavior, the tribe appreciated kindness and cooperation between the two genders, while violence was condemned, resulting in men and women with similar temperaments.

Mundugumor

In the Mundumor society, Margaret found a total new ambient, the opposite of the Arapesh: it was a competitive community, with both men and women being aggressive and hostiles.

In addition, their parentage relationship was curious: the men preferred to have daughters than sons, because when the girl achieved the maturity, the father could exchange her for another child girl of the tribe, so he could get married again; that resulted in a polygamous society.

Tchambuli (Chambri)

The Tchambuli peoples had a matriarchy, where the women were clearly the protagonist of society: they coordinated fishing activities, the negotiation of products and business activities, and for a while time the men dedicated most of their time the —



THE CATALYST

men dedicated most of their time to the arts and aesthetics, and had a sentimental temperament. This community had almost the opposite of the standards of gender and society than the established in the United States and in the occidental world.

The misfits

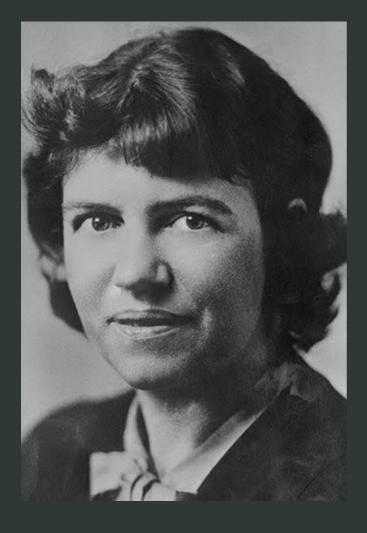
However, in all the communities she went to, there were "misfits": Mundumor women who were fragile, Arapesh men who were absent fathers and submissive Tchambuli women. These people would suffer social exclusion, being the target of gossip, laughter and even severe punishment.

Why is her work so important?

Michelle Mead's work was fundamental to the feminist question during the XX century, and the discussion about her ideas nowadays is able to remember such important topics. After visiting all these kinds of societies, Mead was able to prove that there are not any "biological determination" to the social roles we experience is nowadays. If that was the case, should not men and women have the same obligations in any society, around the world? Would these roles not be based on social construction? These questions should be debated

more often when gender guidelines come up.







Gender inequality in politics: how to change it?

After more than one century when women acquired the right to vote in the United States, politics seem to hesitate when the topic is diversity in leadership roles. In 2023, women occupied only 28% of the Congress. Around the world, the situation does not get better: according to the UN Women, less than one in four Cabinet Ministers is a female (22.8 per cent).

Today, you will know where this problem remains and what are the ways to stop it!

The data does not lie!

According to the annual edition of the map published by UN Women, although women participate in political decisions more often, there is still gender inequality in this ambient; only 9-8% of governments have women as Heads of Government (meaning 19 out of 193 nations!).

In addition to that, the last report of the World Economic Forum showed the statistics of women in parliaments around the world in the last years:

Why does it happen?

There are many factors that create an environment with gender inequality issues, such as job segregation, lack of religious freedom and uneven access to education, but they are all based on one cause: gender stereotypes. In compliance with the Council of Europe,

"Gender stereotypes can hinder women's political representation and reduce women's likelihood of putting themselves forward as candidates, and of being selected within the party. They also affect voters' decisions to elect women for a certain political function and play a role when decisions are made regarding the role of women and male politicians in assemblies."

How to stop gender stereotypes?

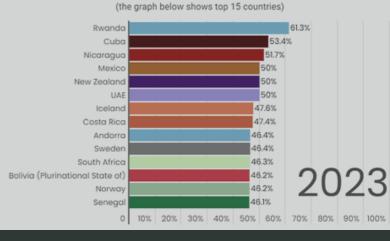
The answer to this question is very simple: primary education! For that, books and study materials should be revised with a certain frequency, to make sure there are not any stereotypes being propagated at this phase of education, which is responsible for creating the first opinions of students. Nevertheless, encouraging young girls to achieve leadership roles, and showing them examples of women in politics turn to be another factor that helps change the inequality in politics. What benefits could an equal political scenario bring?

Although the fact of having an equal political scenario is great on its own, there are plenty of results of having more women in politics. According to studies, women interested in leader-



Countries with most women in national parliaments

Share of women in lower houses of parliament between January 1998 and January 2023



-ship roles have different priorities, such as social welfare, healthcare and ethnic and racial issues. In addition with that, the government may have lower levels of corruption and also make a good impression on society, raising the amount of popular support.

Changes are being made!

Finally, although there are many changes that must be made around the world political scene, women are already making their way until the finest leadership roles around the world, such as Kamala Harris, current vice-president of the United States of America, who was the highest-ranking female official in the US history; Sanna Marin, the Prime Minister of Norway from 2019 to 2023, who back in 20221 leaded a coaliation governemnt composed of four other female leaders and Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh since 2009, which also served as Prime Minister back in 1966; Sheikh is considered one of the longest-serving female leaders in the world.



Fast Chance

By Jessica Xie

"Excuse me, young lady."

"I'm nonbinary," Verr corrected without looking up from their book.

"Young lady."

Clenching their jaw, Verr kept their gaze pointedly on the book, although they were barely skimming as they thumbed through the pages. They supposed they should have expected it at their new school - and, in a way, they did. There wasn't a place in the world where they wouldn't run into at least a few bigots.

Casually, they checked their wristwatch. 8:05. Misgendered in less than an hour? That had to be a record for them.

A hand came down on the book, slamming it into their lap with so much force that it took a remarkable amount of restraint to keep from flinching away. "Young. Lady," the voice said through gritted teeth - a man's. "I expect you to look at me when I'm addressing you."

Very, very slowly, they looked up. The man in front of them was easily in his late fifties, early sixties, skin wrinkled and spotted with age. What was left of his hair barely clung onto his scalp, long gone white and dull. His white button-down was cleanly pressed, an olive silk tie twisting like a snake with every movement. A badge clipped to the breast pocket read Mr. Arkan with a picture of the man that had clearly been taken years before. When he opened his mouth, Verr noticed one of his teeth was silver.

"Are you aware of this school's dress code?"

Verr blinked. Looked down at their uniform. It was schoolissued, with navy slacks and a matching blazer, although a little long. For a brief moment, their eyes flashed to the cufflinks they'd been given a week before school beganthey had a bad habit of forgetting those on particularly rushed days - but no, the golden eagles glinted defiantly in the soft library lighting. "Yes..." they said slowly. "What about it?"

As far as they could tell, nothing was wrong with their uniform, but the twist of Mr. Arkan's mouth told Verr that he thought otherwise. "Girls are expected to purchase the girls' uniform," he said, his lip curling. "And boys are expected to purchase the boys'."

"Right," Verr said, as pleasantly as they could manage. "But like I said before, I'm enby. I'm not a boy or a girl."

"Don't be ridiculous," the man said again, his voice grating against their ears like nails on a chalkboard. "You're a girl."

They took in a deep, calming breath through their nose. "No, I'm not," they said - rather pleasantly, if you asked them. "I'm nonbinary. That means my identity falls outside

of the traditional gender binary. So I chose to wear the boys' uniform, because that's what I'm most comfortable with."

The man's eyes narrowed. "What's your name?" "Verr."

"I mean, what's your real name?" He was already pulling out a pad of pink paper and even though Verr couldn't read the miniscule text the way it was angled, they recognized it well enough. Detention?

They sat up straighter in the armchair. "What's that for?"

"Insubordination, refusal to follow academy dress code, disrespect," the man rattled off. "What's your name?"

"I already told you," Verr said, something uncomfortable wedging itself in their throat. "My name is Verr. Verr Witherby." The man's laugh echoed through the library, sharp and cutting and incredulous. "You expect me to believe that?"

"Yes, I do."

The man's hand stilled, where he was writing something on the topmost page. He looked at Verr through his glasses, the disgust so evident that they could practically feel it burrow beneath their skin, festering and chewing on the defenses they'd so carefully built up since they'd come out. After a pause that weighed on Verr's shoulders, crushing them into the chair, Mr. Arkan finally said, "Five weeks."

"What?" The word exploded out of their mouth, far louder than they'd intended. A girl working at a computer in front of them twisted in her seat, shooting them a dirty look, but Verr couldn't bring themselves to care. "Of detention?"

"Six."

They could see the vicious pleasure in the man's eyes, no matter how even his voice was. He was enjoying this, they realized as their stomach twisted sickeningly. He was enjoying punishing Verr. All because of... what?

"I don't understand," they said, even as the man capped his pen and slid it back into his pocket. He tore off the top slip and held it out to Verr. They didn't take it. "Why am I getting detention?"

He waved the paper in Verr's face so close that it nearly clipped their nose. "Read it and you'll find out."

They hated him. They hated him. They hated him hated his stupid smug smirk hated the way he wiggled the detention slip so mockingly hated his bigotry his insistence on misgendering them hated him hated him hated him -

Don't let other people control your emotions, their therapist's voice spoke quietly in their head.

Fingers curling around the armrests, they schooled their expression into blankness. "I'm following the dress code," they said in a low, controlled voice.

"As I said before," the man said slowly, as if he was talking to a toddler, "girls must wear the girls' uniform."

"But I'm not a girl."



He barked out a short, derisive laugh. "Of course you are!"

More eyes turned to them. Verr fought their instinct to flee under the scrutinizing gazes. "I've already explained," they said, tamping down the anger that threatened to boil over. "I'm nonbinary. That means -"

The man shoved the slip into their face, nearly punching Verr as they barely leaned back in time to avoid a blow. "Take it," Mr. Arkan said, his voice ice-cold, "or I'll have you suspended."

Suspension. Verr almost laughed in his face. He couldn't possibly be considering suspending them over their uniform.

But they could tell from the look on his face that he was serious. Wordlessly, they snatched the paper out of his hand, avoiding looking at his face where Verr knew they would find infuriating, unrelenting satisfaction. They slung their bag over their shoulder, stalking off without another look behind them.

They could feel Mr. Arkan's gaze on them the whole time, beady black eyes burning a hole through the back of their scalp. It wasn't fair, they fumed silently. It wasn't fair that the only options the school had were for boys and girls. It wasn't fair that they couldn't choose which uniform to wear. It wasn't fair that no matter what they did, no matter what they wore, there would always be people like Mr. Arkan sneering at them.

Right at the entrance of the library, they stopped. Looked down at the slip in their hands, the borderline offensive pink searing their eyes. They could still feel the smug gaze of Mr. Arkan on them, taunting and menacing.

Screw it.

Slowly, deliberately, they held out the detention slip where they knew the man could see it and tore it right down the middle. It was quiet, but it seemed to roar in their ears, drowned out only by the pounding of their heart.

They ripped it again. And again and again and again, until all that was left were miniscule bits and pieces clutched in Verr's hand, the fuchsia peeking out from the gaps between their fingers.

They uncurled their fist and let what was left of the detention slip flutter into the trash can beside them, the bright color swallowed up by the darkness of the bin. Mr. Arkan's voice barely registered as they marched away, head held high.

Fat chance.

Coffee runs

"Yes. Yes. Of course!" Forcing a laugh, Anna pinched the phone between her cheek and her ear, leaving both her hands free as she scribbled notes onto the legal pad. "No problem at all. Call us if you have any questions. Have a good day!"

Click. Anna sagged into her seat, pinching the bridge of her nose as she flexed and unflexed her hand, willing the cramp to go away. Her pen clattered to the ground as she twisted in her seat to reach for her coffee and she swore under her breath, bending down to pick it up.

The door slammed open without a knock. Anna shot up, her spine straightening reflexively as her eyes darted to the doorway. She forced the disgust off her face at the man standing at the front of her office - more like a lone cubicle, if she was being honest - with an unmistakable condescension twisting his face.

Dr. Garcia was not a tall man, coming in somewhere around Anna's shoulders, but his impressive mustache made up for it. It covered his entire mouth and most of his chin, dark and bushy like a writhing caterpillar, twitching unpleasantly when he spoke. His white button-down was two sizes too large and hung off his wiry frame like a blanket pinned to his figure in all the wrong places. His beady black eyes narrowed on Anna, who quickly smoothed her pantsuit down.

"Hello!" she said, injecting false cheer into her voice. "Can I help with something?"

"You. Intern." Anna clenched her fists beneath the desk at the sneer in his voice. Would it kill him to learn her name? He held up a white cup of coffee, still hot and steaming from ten minutes ago when Anna dropped it off in his office. His name was scrawled across the side in messy Sharpie. "Were you the one who got the coffee?"

Dread prickled at the back of Anna's scalp. "Yes..." she said slowly. "Is something wrong with it?"

He huffed out a humorless laugh that made his mustache quiver. "Is something wrong with it," he repeated, like she'd asked the dullest question in the world. "Is something wrong with it."

Anna fought the urge to snap at him to just get on with it, but she couldn't afford to lose her only source of income, as meager as her paychecks were. She chose her words carefully. "Did I get your order wrong?"

"Did you get my order wrong." He shook his head in disbelief. Privately, Anna thought that if he was just going to repeat everything that she said with that same disdainful derision, he might as well leave her to her work. "Yes, you got my order wrong."

"I see." Her smile was taped onto her face, a pathetic mask over the irritation stewing in her stomach. "What's wrong with it?"

He shoved the cup forward so violently that Anna thought he was going to spill it all over her. She jerked back, shoving back from the table as her hands flew up to protect herself, but he only slammed it down on the only clear space on her desk in front of her. A little splashed out and soaked into the pad of paper, blurring her notes. "Two sugars," he snarled. "Not three."

Anna swallowed the urge to throw the cup into his face. "Right," she said, her voice trembling with thinly veiled annoyance. "I'll do better next time."

"I don't expect you to do better next time," Dr. Garcia said, jabbing a finger at the coffee. "I expect you to do better now. Go fix it."

"But -"

"Go fix it."

She fumed silently at her desk, but kept it off her face.

She couldn't exactly take the sugar out of the coffee, so she'd have to buy an entirely new one. She wasn't even being reimbursed for the sheer amount of coffee and pastry she had to pick up from the local cafe for all the higher ups at the museum. No, it came right out of her own paycheck, just so she could stay on the right side of their good graces.

And they weren't cheap, either. The most complicated orders cost up to seven dollars each, and when you were just a lowly intern on minimum wage, it hurt every time she took out her card to pay for the simply atrocious amount of caffeine.

There was a quiet knock on the door. Preparing herself for another man to shout at her, Anna leaned past Dr. Garcia to see who it was, but the door opened without her permission anyway. Honestly, why did she even bother.

"Ah, Jason!" Dr. Garcia's expression cleared instantly, Anna and the botched coffee forgotten. "Good to see you, young man."

The name Jason brought a bitter taste to the back of her throat. As good as she was at keeping her emotions off her face, she couldn't help but narrow her eyes at the man who closed the door behind him.

He was tall, blonde, and by all accounts conventionally handsome, if it weren't for the fangs Anna knew he was hiding behind a charming smile. They'd started the same day with the same wage and the same position, but the moment Jason stepped in front of her while she was in the middle - in the middle - of introducing herself to Dr. Wilhelm, the only woman on the entire museum board, Anna knew. She knew that no matter how much she sucked up to the directors and no matter how many extra hours she put in and no matter how hard she tried, Jason would always be better.

"I was just about to find you, actually," Dr. Garcia was saying. "You submitted the application to join in on the Peru expedition, yes?"

Now, that got Anna's attention.

"I did," Jason said with an easy smile, like he already knew what was coming.

Dr. Garcia clapped a hand on Jason's back so hard that it must have hurt, but the man didn't even wince. "You're in, of course," he said, ignoring the way Anna's face dropped. "Couldn't think of any better person to have."

"I'm so thankful for this opportunity," Jason said, like he was reading from a script.

No.

No.

"Excuse me," Anna said, clearing her throat, her voice even despite the way her head spun. "I applied to join too. Weeks ago, actually."

"Hm?" Dr. Garcia barely spared her a glance before turning back to Jason. "Oh. I'm sure you'll find another chance. Now, Jason, we must discuss -"

"But he didn't even turn in the application on time!" Her words burst through her mouth before she could stop them. "The deadline closed a week ago."

A stunned silence blanketed the room, dense with shock. Dr. Garcia slowly turned to face her, a harsh glint in his eye, like he couldn't believe the nerve of her to speak up.



"And how, exactly," Dr. Garcia said slowly, "do you know this?"

Relief crashed down on her shoulders. He knew something was wrong, he knew Jason didn't deserve it, he believed her. "He told me," Anna said, the words rushing out of her like the vicious current of a river. "We were talking about it two days ago. He said - he said he hadn't even considered it until I brought it up, and I told him that the application window was closed, and there wasn't any way he could possibly enter now."

She was telling the truth, and Jason knew it. She'd been talking to Piper, another intern, in the break room about how excited she was for Peru. Because despite it all, despite how badly she'd been treated, despite how little she was respected, she was excited. Peru was a dream come true, and she knew, deep in her gut, that she deserved it. Her resume was perfect. She worked harder than anyone else. She deserved it.

And then Jason came in.

"Peru, eh?" he'd said casually after Piper had left, filling up a small Dixie cup with instant coffee. "I hear it's going to be nice out there."

Anna stiffened. "Nice is a good way to put it." She delivered the words flatly, hovering on the edge of impolite. "Have you applied?"

Jason merely shrugged, tipping up a shoulder. "Didn't feel like it. I've never liked South America all that much - Asia's more my style."

Thank God.

"But," Jason continued, and Anna's grip tightened around her bag. "Maybe I'll give it a shot. I mean, anything to build the resume, am I right?" He flashed her a smile like he expected to laugh at his joke, but all she gave him was a satisfied smirk in return.

"You can't," she said. "Window closed a few days ago. You can try for the next one, I suppose." "Is that so?" He raised his eyebrows at her as he sipped his coffee silently.

There was something unnerving about the way he smiled at her then, but she couldn't quite place it. "That's so," she said, willing her voice not to betray her unsettlement, and she left without another word.

Here they were now.

"Ah," Dr. Garcia said. "You would be correct that Jason's application was late."

The unease seeped into her very bones, chilling her spine, caressing the back of her neck with a single cold finger, filling her up until all she could think was No, it's not possible, they couldn't have, it's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair -

"But," he said, and Anna's heart dropped to her feet like a stone. "As Jason has demonstrated such exemplary performance over the past few months with us, the board decided to make an exception."

An exception.

An exception.

"Don't be too upset about it," Jason said, his voice like nails on a chalkboard, barely filtering past the roar of blood in her ears. "You can try for the next one."

That was how they left her - furious, silent, wronged.

She stormed over to the bathroom down the hall, ignoring the odd looks from the other interns. Emptying the coffee in one of the sinks, she watched as the thin brown swirled along the porcelain bowl, slipping down the drain in a mesmerizing flow. Her heart hammered in her chest, battering against her ribcage. Her fingernails left behind crescent moons in the soft flesh of her palms. Furious red edged her vision.

Anna didn't care that it was five dollars lost. She didn't care that she would have normally choked down the too-sweet drink, just so she didn't have to waste anything. He didn't even make coffee runs.





Pink Tax: The Cost of Being Female

Written by Linn Kyi Cin Oo (Elanna)

Have you ever come across the deodorant section at a shopping mall and noticed that a female deodorant costs more than a male one? If so, congratulations, you have witnessed the pink tax in action. The pink tax, often dubbed as the term "feminine mark-up", refers to the practice of charging higher prices for products and services marketed towards women than those marketed towards men. This raises the question of why women should be required to pay more for equivalent products and services, considering the already existing wage gap where women earn less income than men.

Understanding the pink tax

The pink tax is not a formal government levy; rather, it uses the term "tax" metaphorically to describe the extra amount figuratively "taxed" on women beyond the price of similar products or services targeted at men. The name is derived from the colour's association with femininity, as many affected items feature pink designs or packaging. This issue extends beyond makeup and menstrual products, encompassing everyday goods and services that should ideally have equitable pricing. For example, women's razors, deodorants, clothing, and toys often come with a higher price tag compared to male-targeted counterparts, despite similar functionalities. Even personal grooming services like haircuts, salon treatments, and drycleaning may impose a pink tax, resulting in women paying more than men for equivalent services. Some women may be unaware of this issue due to various reasons, including lack of information or awareness. unconscious bias, habits, and the complex pricing shopping structures employed by businesses - who may attempt to cover up by stating that feminine products should cost more due to the added ingredients or effort involved in the production process. A deep understanding of this gender pri-



-cing gap is crucial because the greater a woman's experience and understanding of gender-based pricing, the higher the likelihood that she will perceive the Pink Tax as unjust and incorrect.

History: This phenomenon officially started in 1994, when the state of California's Assembly Office of Research published a report, revealing that 64% of stores in five major cities charged more to wash and dry clean a women's blouse compared to a men's shirt. Following the discovery, other studies and investigations began to shed further light on this pricing disparity; nevertheless, the underlying issue of the pink tax persists to this day.

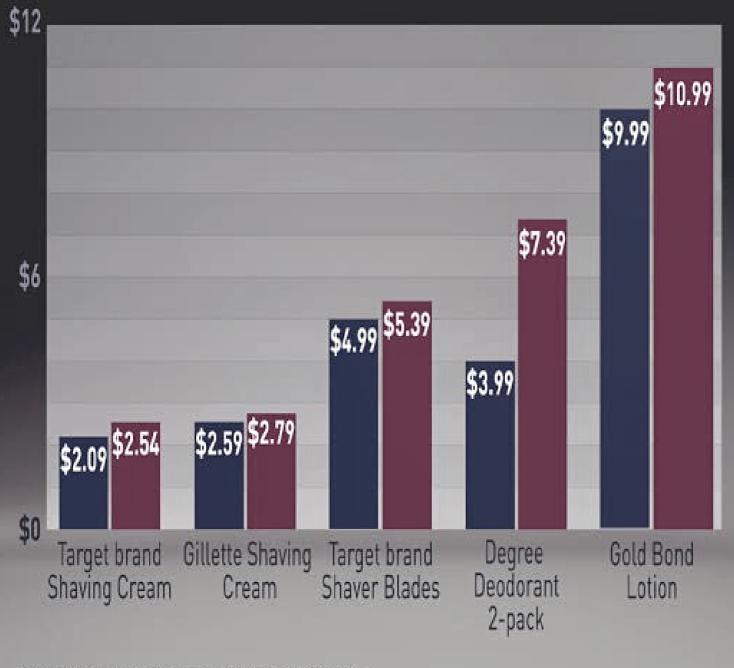
Examples:

- Toys for girls are up to 7% higher on average, with items like elbow or knee pads and helmets approximately 13% higher.
- The current US tariff on women's underwear is 3.5% higher than that on men's.
- In terms of auto loans and car insurance, women pay around \$41.4 million each year nationally due to the pink tax.
- Women's yearly spending surpasses that of men by approximately 6%, with a greater product diversity of about 27% and larger consumption baskets by about 9% in terms of the items purchased.
- According to a 2015 study by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (NYC DCA), women were found to pay significantly more for common goods, with an average of 48% higher prices for shampoo and conditioner, 13% more for girls' helmets and pads, 15% more for supports, braces, and shirts, among other items.
- Research conducted by AMP in 2019 revealed that women were paying 29% more for razors compared to similar products targeted at men, 16% more for body wash, 12% more for underwear, 11% more for shampoo, 9% more for multivitamins, and 5% more for jeans.

Despite the somewhat minimal or inconspicuous variations in costs, the pink tax has resulted in an approximate annual expense of \$1,300 for women, as reported by investment bank JP Morgan Chase.

Legislative Changes regarding the Pink Tax:

During 2019-2020, bill S2679 was passed by both the New York State Assembly and State Senate, effectively prohibiting gender-based disparities. The Gender Tax Repeal Act' in 1995, and



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a similar bill, AB 1287, was enacted in 2022. In 1997, Miami-Dade County in Florida also implemented a law banning the practice of charging more based on gender for products or services. Despite multiple attempts to introduce a national version of The Gender Tax Repeal Act at the federal level since 2016, it has not yet been approved. It is worth noting that due to limited evidence and awareness surrounding the pink tax, these are the only officially recognized legal measures known to exist at present.

However, do not be discouraged because of this! Here are the tips on how you, as an individual, can beat the Pink Tax effectively:

- 1. Educate yourself and the individuals around you to spread better awareness.
- 2. Shop unisex or gender-neutral products.
- 3. Research and support brands that offer gender-neutral pricing.
- 4. Join consumer awareness campaigns online or in person, such as calling brands out on social media by using a hashtag #pinktax
- 5. Be a conscious customer and evaluate what you really need.
- 6. Ask for equal pricing
- 7. Sign this Petition and be a part of eliminating the gender price gap.

The Power of Tradition: How Cultural Norms Impact Gender Equality



Written by Linn Kvi Cin Oo (Elanna)

What are cultural norms and gender roles?

Cultural norms in this context refer to the shared standards and expectations that individuals adhere to based on their gender roles, within a specific society, culture, and community at a given time. Gender roles dictate how we are expected to act and behave depending on our assigned sex from birth. The influence and its tradition have a profound impact on these roles, defining and limiting what men and women should or can do, consequently limiting one's authentic identity and freedom of choice. The persistence of age-old beliefs and unfounded assumptions regarding gender roles over centuries forms the basis of many gender inequality issues seen in the world today because they have led all of us to believe that a certain person should conform to specific behaviours or that 'one' is more superior than 'the other'.

An illustration of this influence can be seen in dress codes imposed by societies, where various restrictions on clothing for both sexes are common. For example, while some cultures may permit men to wear skirts and have long hair, others typically expect them to wear only trousers and short haircuts, the opposite of what is expected of women. Although the scope of gender expectations may vary across time and cultures, the fundamental message remains consistent: to define how men and women should act. Those who do not conform to their culture's appropriate gender roles, particularly young children, may face negative consequences such as bullying, criticism, marginalisation, or rejection by peers or family members.

This is particularly evident in some cultures' treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals, where they are not accepted and experience discrimination, exclusion, and even violence. For instance, in the country where I reside, elderly individuals harbour aversions toward transgenders due to long-standing beliefs deeply ingrained in their minds.

The roles of culture on gender expectations

1. Religion

Religion wields substantial cultural influence over gender roles and expectations, historically dictating specific roles for men and women based on its teachings and practices. Simone de Beauvoir, a French feminist activist, best known for her theories and her book 'The Second Sex', argued that religion serves as 'compensation' for women for their second-class status in society and that it is men who control religious beliefs, using God to justify their dominance over society. The role of motherhood is a given divine status in most religions, manipulating women into thinking that the best choice for them is to stay home

and distance themselves from public life as they would meet harsh opposition and failure if they did not do so. Consequently, women often become financially dependent on men, subjected to unpaid

domestic labour within the family structure. De Beauvoir urged women not to passively accept their religiously sanctioned role of nurturing, caring, and solely giving birth by highlighting that it serves to socialise women into religious beliefs, perpetuating power inequalities.

2. Education

Schools may also inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles by treating boys and girls differently. For instance, teachers might unconsciously assign certain responsibilities based on stereotypes, such as expecting boys to excel in maths, sports, or science and girls in language arts and crafts. Such practices can have lasting impacts on students' career choices, interests, and selfperception. This is one of the reasons women are commonly encouraged to pursue careers in education, healthcare, and social work while men are directed towards fields in STEM.

3. Media

Various forms of media, such as magazines, TV shows, social media, advertisements, and video games, perpetuate fixed gender images, reinforcing traditional ideas about men and women. The first among several stereotypes emphasises beauty, thinness, physical appearance, and sexual appeal as being central to the value of women. A study examining tween programs on popular channels like the Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, and Cartoon Network found that female characters were portraved as more attractive and received more comments about their looks rather than their storylines, compared to male characters (Gerding & Signorielli, 2014). Furthermore, analyses of toy commercials indicate highly stereotypical portrayals, with 58% of doll commercials and 83% of commercials for animal toys featuring only girls, 87% of ads for transportation/construction toys, and 63% of sports toy ads featuring only boys (e.g., Kahlenberg & Hein 2010).

4. Social learning

Social learning refers to the developmental processes by which individuals acquire the values, behaviours, and motivations required to become capable members of their culture through interaction with others, such as family members or peers. Parents or caregivers may unknowingly reinforce gender norms through choices related to clothing, activities, and possessions during their children's early years. For instance, girls might receive dolls and be praised for being cooperative, while boys might be given toy cars and encouraged to display assertiveness.

Gender stereotypes

The cultural norms imposed by these factors contributed to gender stereotypes, which are widely-held beliefs or expectations about the typical characteristics and attributes associated with individuals based on their sex. While gender stereotypes on their own cannot be categorised as right or wrong, there is no reason why every human has to follow the expectations of them by taking the biological sex into account alone because this may hold back people from their true potential. Before attempting to challenge them, it is important to

gain a comprehensive understanding of them; thus, here are the most common ones you will find in society these days:

| Type of stereotype | Women | Men |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Occupational | The belief that women's profession resides in fields like education, healthcare, social work, or language arts | The belief that men's profession resides in fields like STEM and finance |
| Personality | Nurturing, passive, and emotional | Assertive, active, and dominant |
| Parental | Primary caregivers and holds domestic responsibilities | Breadwinners |
| Emotional | Can be vulnerable and be emotional | Cannot cry or show any kind of vulnerability |
| Appearance | Slim, thin, and attractive | Muscular and fit |
| Leadership | Better at cooperation and teamwork | Decisive and natural leaders |

Breaking the invisible chains: the path to gender equality

To embark on the journey towards a gender-equal world and break free from the shackles of cultural norms and gender stereotypes, there are lots we can do:

- Spread awareness by educating yourself and those around you, including family and friends, about cultural norms related to gender roles.
- Support positive role models and participate in campaigns/organisations that advocate for gender equality
- Speak out about your own experiences
- Acknowledge all genders' contributions to history, media, or any other forms of representation
- Cultivate self-esteem and skills based on your individuality, rather than conforming to societal gender expectations, and serve as a positive example for others.
- Address gender bias and discrimination on social media platforms whenever you encounter it.

Last but not least, remember that every small action counts, and by collectively taking these steps carefully, we can together generate a powerful ripple effect toward achieving our goals. So don't be afraid and take action now!



Balancing Work and Family: The Journey of a Working Woman

By Anirudh Mannattil

The life of a working woman is a rollercoaster ride filled with triumphs and challenges. Striving to excel in both a fulfilling career and managing a household can be exhilarating and overwhelming. In this blog, we will delve into the emotional journey of a working woman and explore hard-hitting statistics that illuminate the realities we face in this demanding role.

The tightrope walk between professional aspirations and family responsibilities is no easy feat. As working women, mastering time management becomes crucial. A staggering 71% of mothers with children under 18 are part of the workforce, a testament to the real-life juggle we navigate (Pew Research Center). Striking a balance between work and family requires constant adaptation and prioritization.

Behind every successful working woman lies a strong support system. From partners who share household duties to friends and colleagues who lend a listening ear, their unwavering support keeps us resilient. Notably, women globally spend approximately 2.6 times more hours on unpaid care and domestic work than men, underscoring the value of robust support networks (United Nations). A solid support system fuels our determination to thrive in both personal and professional realms.

Society often expects working women to be superheroes, effortlessly excelling in all spheres of life. However, statistics reveal that a gender wage gap persists, with women earning around 82 cents for every dollar earned by men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Embracing our imperfections and recognizing that we can't do it all is essential for our well-being. Taking time for self-care becomes crucial as we navigate the pressures of work and family responsibilities.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, it is the cherished moments that make it all worthwhile. The sparkle in our children's eyes when they witness our achievements, the warmth of a partner's embrace - these are the memories that transform our homes into havens of love and support. Fostering such moments strengthens the emotional bond with our family members.

As working women, we break barriers and pave the way for future generations. Representing 57.5% of the labor force, we demonstrate resilience and determination in the face of adversity (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Our progress is a testament to the ever-evolving landscape of gender roles in society, encouraging others to pursue their ambitions without limitations.

In conclusion, the journey of managing a household as a working woman is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. The statistics underscore the struggles we face, while the emotional aspects highlight our triumphs and resilience. Embracing imperfections, cherishing meaningful moments, and striving for progress shape our unique journeys. Together, we work towards a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come, standing strong in our commitment to balance work and family with grace and determination.



Unraveling the Web of LGBTQ+ Discrimination: A Call to Action

By Anirudh Mannattil

"If you come here, you'll see homosexuals from Europe and America are luring our children into homosexuality by distributing cell phones and iPods and things like this, and I can explain to you what I really want to do. To kill every last gay person." ~ Ugandan MP David Mahati

The world is witnessing a significant shift in attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals. The Gallup polls conducted in the United States show a remarkable increase, with 7.1% of American adults identifying as LGBTQ+ in 2021, up from 3.5% in 2020. This increasing freedom of expression has allowed young adults from diverse backgrounds to come out of their closets, proudly stating their sexuality and demanding their rights. However, a dark reality persists – many view these brave individuals as dangerous and vile, leading to their discrimination. It's time we delve into the factors perpetuating this unfortunate situation and understand the key players behind the discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ members of society.

Breaking Down the Structures of Power Relations Historical beliefs and customs have structured societies around the idea of two genders – male and female. Any deviation from this norm is often perceived as a violation of cultural norms. Similarly, historical figures like Vincent Van Gogh faced disdain and ostracization for their uniqueness. Today, this mindset translates into workplace discrimination, as highlighted by a 2019 Williams Institute study, which found that 20 to 47% of LGBTQ+ employees experienced harassment at work. This bias is also evident in job interviews, where resumes indicating LGBTQ+ identity received 30% fewer interview opportunities. Clearly, these distressing statistics reveal how a flawed societal structure links sexuality with power and perpetuates harassment against LGBTQ+ individuals.

Criminalization and the Embarrassment to Justice: Criminalization of same-sex relations only worsens discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ people, leading heterosexual individuals to perceive them as heinous criminals instead of fellow members of society. Shockingly, 69 countries continue to criminalize same-sex relations, with some, like Brunei Darussalam, even legalizing the stoning of gay men. Such laws are an affront to true justice, which should be blind to a person's sexuality during legal proceedings. While some may defend these laws as preserving cultural values, the reality is that no human being should be punished for their sexuality. It's time we recognize that we are in the 21st century, and global society must progress to embrace and accept all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Taking Action and Sparking Change: To address the discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, more than just protests are required. We must strive for legal change and challenge biased laws and practices. History has shown that significant revolutions often start with a small spark – a debate, a discussion, or a peaceful protest. The public must unite and take action against LGBTQ+ discrimination. By doing so, we can dismantle the corrupt power wielded by politicians like David Mahati, challenge biased hiring practices, and confront discriminating authorities.

In conclusion, the discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ individuals demands our immediate attention and action. By breaking down societal power structures, challenging discriminatory laws, and embracing the uniqueness of all individuals, we can create a world where LGBTQ+ rights are upheld and respected. It is time for every one of us to stand together and be part of the change that will bring dignity, equality, and justice to our LGBTQ+ friends.

Distorted Reflections: How the Media Shapes Women's Self-Esteem & Perception

The media has long been blasted for spreading unrealisticstandards of the "ideal" life for women around the globe. From glossy, airbrushed magazine covers, filtered Hollywood movies, polished TV advertisements, and heavily edited social mediacontent, we're bombarded by idealized images daily, setting unreasonable beauty goals for many women and girls. Although social media provides women with a platform to share their stories, express their views, and challenge gender roles, it has also created some new issues such as cyberbullying and online exploitation. These issues can harm a woman's mental health, self-esteem, and overall quality of life.

The Barbie Syndrome

It's common for people to blame the media for distorting their beliefs of what beauty is. With the rapid rise of new media platforms and constant exposure to the "perfect" life, body and women are convinced that they must conform to a set of standards and look a certain way to be attractive. As a result, young women develop self-destructive attributes, triggering low self-esteem, consecutively increasing the likelihood of depression, and in some cases, the risk of eating disordersdevelopment.

Research shows that many girls associate and measure their happiness with their body image and self-perception. Thus, these factors are closely linked with aspects of women's social and professional lives. Cirls and women who struggle with low self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction are more likely to obsess over intense diets and workouts and detach themselves from social events altogether due to their fear of being judged by others. Prime examples of this are avoiding the beach or wearing extremely baggy clothes to all events to hide their body.

Barbie dolls are frequently called out for having unnatural body shapes and being one of the reasons girls turn to body alterations and plastic surgery. However, other popular dolls like Bratz, Moxie Cirlz, and Monster High have even more exaggerated body features- larger breasts, smaller waists, wider hips, and taller legs. Like when video games feature characters with superhuman strength and abilities, giving players unfeasible expectations about what they can do in the real world, these dolls make girls self-conscious of what their bodies should look like, hence, the "Barbie Syndrome".

'Body Image' (Vol.37) published a study comparing the effects of playing with thin dolls (Barbie and Monster High) to dolls with more realistic proportions (Dora and Lottie). After seeing ultra-thin dolls, the girls changed their attitudes toward body shape, making them more inclined to prefer thinner bodies. So, even when the girls were exposed to realistic dolls, it didn't reverse the negative effects of seeing ultra-thin dolls. Therefore,implying that exposure to such images in the media has a lasting effect on girls' body image and self-esteem.

On top of that, further research indicated that from the ages of 6-12, a girl's opinions of her body image are shaped and wired in a girl's brain. Simultaneously, this is when society-imposed and internalized gender roles and stereotypes come into play. Besides, this is the age group in which girls shift into adolescence and start to experience society objectifying their bodies and dehumanizing them. Girls who fall down the rabbit hole of seeing their bodies through the objectification lens carry a greater chance of suffering from major depression and anxiety at a young age. Additionally, women lean towards and prefer a certain figure if they see it repeatedly, especially if it's surrounded by framed displays of wealth, happiness, and success.

Internalized Stereotypes & Self-Objectification

There is a tendency in the media to generally present a womanfrom the outside in a way that leaves the impression that women's value lies only in their physical appearance. In turn, they underestimate their talents, intelligence, and qualities, simply building their self-esteem through societal approval. Because of these idealistic depictions of women, it has become so normal, almost a mindless reaction in our cultures to objectify them. Moreso, research shows that the mere choice to not objectify women hinders a person's self-regulation and overall reasoning.

Furthermore, according to an <u>Australian</u> study, women were typically victims of objectification 3-4 times a week! Due to this sexualization, many fall into the trap of self-objectification and ignore all other aspects of their being. In a sense, they begin internalizing gender stereotypes like "a woman shouldn't speak about politics" or "a woman should be thin and beautiful to charm a man." The more a woman hears such statements, the more prone she is to feel ashamed and dissatisfied with her body and overall appearance and avoid taking part in social settings and relations to protect her self-esteem and hide these internalized insecurities.

Circling back to the transition from adolescence into womanhood, at that time, girls are exposed to all sorts of gender stereotypes, sexual objectification, and beauty standards. Whether it's from their friends, family, or through different forms of media. For instance, a study found that entertainment companies like Disney contribute to this internalized stereotyping since they unintentionally confuse young womenabout their role in society. By introducing protagonists like Brave's Merida and Moana who advocate for women's independence, they urge girls not to wait for a "prince" to save them but rather to take charge of their fate, stand up for what they believe, and create their own paths in life- thus, challenging the typical gender stereotypes of a helpless damsel in distress or a timid, "lady-like" princess

Stereotypes & Misrepresentation on Middle Eastern Girls' Self-Esteem

In the words of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Oneof the main issues with the portrayal of Middle Eastern and Arabwomen in the media. They're almost always seen from the extreme sides of the spectrum, in both Western and occasionally Arab media as well. As the Lebanese producer Yasmine Al Jurdiput it, they're either "repressed or obliged to wear veils, or they're sexualized figures."

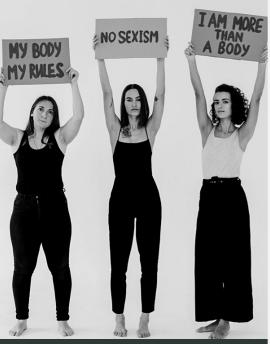
Having these extreme depictions bring about ripples of psychological and social ramifications. It reiterates the princess culture in the Arab world, again, encouraging women to embodythose clichés of being more dependent, helpless, and submissive. Indeed, the influence of Western beauty standards in mainstream media elicited a lack of representation and appreciation of true Arabian features, leaving many women in the community to doubt their worth and physical appearance. This kind of subjective impression only adds to the already existing sense of insecurity and shame. For instance, many women compare themselves to celebrities like Hailey Bieber or Kylie Jenner, feeling disappointed for not matching their features. Mohamed Diab an Egyptian director shared that his 4-year-old daughter expressed her preference for straight hair because she's never seen a main character who has curly hair like hers.

On the flip side, it's worth noting that while trends like <u>lip fillers and tanning</u> have recently gained popularity in the Western world, many Middle Easterns possess naturally full lips and tan skin tones. Before this, many were mocked for these very traits. Revisiting the topics of the Barbie Doll Syndrome and self-objectification, though trends come and go, ethnic features are here to stay. This mindset of following social media beauty trends will only contribute to permanent mental and physical scarring, convincing Middle Eastern women they can only be validated and accepted if their physical features are currently popular or trending.

In closing, the impact of media portrayals on female self-esteem and body image is undeniable, but we have the power to rewrite this narrative. We've come a long way in terms of shattering beauty standards, breaking stereotypes, raising mental health awareness, and paving the way to gender equality. By cultivating media literacy, demanding diverse representation, and promoting self-awareness & compassion, we can enablefuture generations of girls and women to embrace their authentic selves, free of unrealistic standards and stereotypes. We can create a society that celebrates true beauty through channels that have a strong influence on public opinion- the media.

By Raghad H







Addressing Gender-Based Violence: Towards a Safer World for Women

Written by Ziying Zhou

Cender-based violence (CBV) remains a pervasive issue affecting women worldwide. From domestic violence to sexual assault and human trafficking, women are disproportionately affected by various forms of violence. This article aims to shed light on the prevalence, causes, consequences, and potential solutions to this pressing issue, seeking to create a safer world for women.

Understanding Gender-Based Violence:

Gender-based violence encompasses any harmful act directed at individuals based on their gender or sex, predominantly targeting women. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, as well as harmful practices like forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and honor killings. Domestically, violence against women often occurs within private settings, impeding their safety, autonomy, and overall well-being.

The Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence:

The prevalence of GBV is staggering, with statistics indicating that around one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence. The issue affects women across cultural, socio-economic, and geographic boundaries, highlighting its universal nature. However, it is important to acknowledge that certain marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as women in conflict zones, refugees, and indigenous communities, face even higher risks.

Understanding the Causes:

Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in unequal power dynamics, perpetuated by societal norms, patriarchal structures, and rigid gender roles. These beliefs reinforce attitudes that condone violence against women and further normalize and perpetuate this behavior. Social factors like poverty, lack of education, and unequal access to resources exacerbate the issue, making women more vulnerable to violence.

Consequences of Gender-Based Violence:

The consequences of GBV go far beyond immediate physical harm. Survivors often suffer long-term physical and psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and low self-esteem. GBV can also curtail women's access to education, employment opportunities, and healthcare, trapping them in a cycle of vulnerability and depriving society of their valuable contributions.

Efforts towards Prevention and Support:

Addressing gender-based violence requires a multi-faceted approach encompassing prevention, protection, and support for survivors. Here are some key strategies that can be adopted:

- 1. Raising Awareness and Advocacy: Public awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts play a vital role in challenging societal norms, promoting gender equality, and preventing violence against women. These initiatives aim to shift perspectives and foster a culture of respect, empathy, and non-violence.
- 2. Strengthening Legal Frameworks: Covernments must enact and enforce legislation that criminalizes all forms of gender-based violence, providing survivors with legal recourse and protection. Laws should address issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and harmful practices, adequately punishing perpetrators and providing support for survivors.
- 3. Education and Empowerment: Comprehensive sexuality and consent education programs are crucial in schools to counteract harmful gender stereotypes, promote healthy relationships, and empower both boys and girls. Economic empowerment programs can also help women gain financial independence, reducing their vulnerability to violence.
- 4. Accessible Support Services: Ensuring accessible and well-funded support services, including helplines, shelters, counseling, and healthcare, is vital for survivors of GBV. Governments and NGOs should collaborate to provide safe spaces and resources for women to seek help and rebuild their lives.
- 5. Changing Social Norms: Community mobilization efforts, engaging religious leaders, men, and boys as allies, and working with local organizations, can challenge harmful social norms and empower communities to take a stand against gender-based violence.
 Conclusion:

Gender-based violence remains a deeply entrenched issue that demands urgent attention and concerted efforts at all levels. By addressing the root causes, challenging harmful societal norms, and providing support for survivors, we can build a future where women feel safe, empowered, and free from violence. Breaking the cycle of gender-based violence is not only a matter of justice and human rights, but also a pathway to a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

Gender Inequality in Education: Breaking Barriers & Empowering Minds

Written by Ziying Zhou

Education is an essential tool for social and economic development. However, gender inequality continues to pose significant challenges in achieving equal access and opportunities in education globally. This article will delve into the issue of gender inequality in education, examining its causes, consequences, and potential solutions. Understanding the Problem:

In many areas, girls face barriers to accessing education, inhibiting their development and perpetuating gender disparities. Socio-cultural norms, societal expectations, and economic factors contribute to this imbalance. Early marriages, gender-biased curricula, limited resources for female students, and discrimination within educational institutions all contribute to the problem.

Disparities in Access:

In numerous regions, girls encounter challenges in accessing education. Barriers such as distance to schools, lack of transportation facilities, poverty, and gender-specific roles and responsibilities within families prevent girls from attending school. These barriers significantly diminish their chances of obtaining an education, which adversely affects their personal growth and societal contributions.

Gender Bias in Curriculum:

Curriculum and textbooks often contain implicit biases that perpetuate gender stereotypes and reinforce traditional gender roles. Girls may encounter limited opportunities to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields due to societal norms and expectations, resulting in a restricted range of choices for their future careers. This gender bias in curriculum contributes to the perpetuation of existing gender inequalities in various spheres of life.

Socio-cultural Factors at Play:

Deep-rooted socio-cultural beliefs and practices play a significant role in perpetuating gender inequality within the education system. In some societies, girls are seen as subordinate to boys, leading to a lower value placed on their education. Early marriages and child labor further disrupt girls' educational journeys, hindering their personal development and limiting their potential.

Consequences of Gender Inequality in Education:

The consequences of gender inequality in education are far-reaching. When girls are denied education, societies miss out on their valuable contributions in sectors such as science, politics, and economy. Moreover, restricted educational opportunities limit girls' ability to become financially independent, impacting their socio-economic empowerment. Gender inequality in education also perpetuates a cycle of poverty, limiting future generations' prospects.

Addressing the Issue:

To address gender inequality in education, concerted efforts are required at various levels. Governments, non-governmental organizations, and communities must collaborate to create inclusive and supportive environments for girls' education. Some key strategies include:

Policy Reforms: Governments should implement policies that promote equal access to education, eliminate gender biases in curricula, and provide targeted support for girls' education.

Empowering Cirls and Women: Promoting mentorship programs, scholarships, and gender-responsive teaching methods can help empower girls and women to pursue education, challenge societal norms, and achieve their full potential.

Community Engagement: Community involvement is crucial in challenging gender norms and fostering a supportive environment for girls' education. Engaging parents, religious leaders, and community members can help break down barriers and address underlying cultural biases.

Investments in Infrastructure: Adequate investment in education infrastructure, including schools, transportation, and sanitation facilities, is necessary to improve access to education for girls, particularly in remote areas.

Teacher Training: Educators should receive training on gender-responsive teaching practices to create inclusive, nurturing, and equitable learning environments that encourage both girls and boys to excel academically.

The issue of gender inequality in education persists as a significant barrier to achieving social and economic development. Purposeful actions must be taken to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create inclusive environments that empower girls and women. By providing equal access to education for all, we not only address the injustice of gender inequality but also promote a more just and equitable society for generations to come.







SOCIAL

Social justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within society. It is concerned with promoting equal access to basic human rights, such as education, healthcare, and housing, regardless of a person's race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status.

JUSTICE

Social justice also seeks to challenge and address systemic inequalities and discrimination that contribute to the marginalization of certain groups within society. It is a fundamental principle of a just and democratic society, and is often pursued through advocacy efforts.

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