

# Research on the Current Situation of Gender Inequality in China- From a Female Perspective

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## Abstract:

The rise of feminism has prompted more and more people in the world to pay attention to the issue of gender equality. In China, which has a large population, this issue has also become very prominent. This paper studies the current situation of inequality in China from women's perspective, and analyzes the current situation and reasons of inequality mainly from three aspects: workplace, education and family. The causes are analyzed from three perspectives: history, social welfare policies and family. The influence of Confucianism and patriarchal society on women, the neglect and lack of implementation of some bills of rights for women and the influence of family on women are the main causes. Corresponding solutions are proposed to address the existing phenomena. The government needs to improve women's employment and maternity leave policies and strengthen the family subsidies for women, innovate the pension insurance system and marital property system, and raise the social awareness of affirmative action. Equality between men and women was essential for the advancement of women and the development of society.

**Keywords:** Women; education; gender.

## 1. Introduction

With the growing awareness of affirmative action in society, women's thinking has been liberated and improved, and there has been an increase in concern about the unequal treatment of women. Examples include discrimination against women in the workplace, unequal treatment of women in education and women's subordinate position in the family. Previously, work was mostly based on physical strength, and the biological differences between men and women made it easier for men to obtain work. However, as a result of structural changes in society and the continuous improvement of technology, most of the jobs that used to rely on physical strength have been replaced by artificial intelligence, and a large number of women have left their homes and transformed themselves from housewives to working women. With the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic around the world, it has impacted the global economy, and many people have lost their jobs as a result. Women's work has been drastically affected by the impact of the epidemic globally, mainly in terms of employment levels substantially lower than those of men, a significant drop in income, a widening of the gender pay gap and difficulties in employment, and so on. Not only that, but women also experience unfair treatment in

education issues. In ancient China, traditional thinking favored men and bound women, and parents tilted educational resources in favor of men and the contrast between urban and rural education. Although compulsory education has been fully universalized and women's access to higher education has increased, society is still prejudiced against women's choice of subjects. In addition, the focus of society is also on the family, such as the distribution of parental time, the unfairness and problems of the property system between husband and wife, and the gender differences in the social pension system.

This paper analyzes the current situation of gender inequality in China from the perspective of women, describes the current situation of women's unequal treatment in three different aspects: workplace, education and family, and analyzes the reasons for the unequal treatment as well as the reasonable solutions to such problems. Gender equality does not mean that women are pursuing privileges, but that they are pursuing legitimate rights. When the society pays more attention to the problem of unequal treatment of women, it will promote the development of gender equality in society. This reflects the improvement of people's education level and the development of the overall quality of society, and accordingly, the problems of population aging and the excessive gap between men

and women in society will also be alleviated [1].

## 2. Research Status

### 2.1 Occupational Inequalities

#### 2.1.1 In the area of women's welfare benefits

Scholars have analyzed the situation in terms of the industries in which women are mainly engaged and the welfare benefits provided by the Government. According to the survey, women are mainly engaged in the tertiary sector, which was more affected by the quarantine measures during the epidemic. In 2020, it is projected that globally more than 54 million female jobs are expected to be lost globally due to the impact of the epidemic [2]. In such jobs, women are mostly located in lower-ranking sectors, so they receive few guaranteed State benefits [3]. Although some women are subsidized, the amount is relatively small. The impact of the epidemic on women's work is persistent. Some women's confidence in returning to the workplace during the epidemic has been severely undermined, as has their pay, a phenomenon that has a lasting impact on women.

#### 2.1.2 In the area of female employment

Similarly, the problem of women's employment also appears in the case of female college graduates. In recent years, the number of graduates in China has gradually increased, and the employment problem of college graduates has become more important. The employment environment for women is worse compared to that for men. For example, when applying for a job, according to the 2010 Survey Report on Employment and Entrepreneurship of Female College Students, it was found that on average, men sent out 2-3 resumes to get an interview, while women needed to send out 8-10 resumes to get an interview [4]. In the course of job hunting, female university students are easily asked questions about marriage and childbirth, and some organizations choose to recruit more male staff in consideration of female childbirth. Although some women are successful in finding employment after graduation, their initial wages are reportedly still lower than men's and most women tend to move away from the more traditionally female sectors of the workforce. One of the inequities faced by women in the workplace is the issue of maternity.

#### 2.1.3 Women's fertility in the workplace

One of the inequities that women face in the workplace is the issue of maternity. National laws allow women to take paid leave, but companies are concerned with their own interests [5]. Some companies choose to hire more men in

order to make the most of their labor force and save on labor costs. Some women experience a drop in salary or lose their jobs during maternity leave, possibly because their businesses have found substitutes. Several scholars have addressed the unequal treatment encountered by women in the workplace from different aspects and perspectives, and the unequal treatment they have received has varied at different times, but the phenomenon has always existed.

### 2.2 Gender Inequalities in Education

Education plays a very important role in national development and social stability. Realizing the importance of education, China has endeavoured to improve the level of education and access to education for its citizens. Similarly, there is also the problem of gender disparity in education. Scholars Zexia, Wang have studied and analyzed gender inequality in higher education. According to the report, China's gender equality ranking in achieving a high level of equality in education is 122, which is in the middle level. Although there has been progress, it is still lagging behind relative to the rest of the world [6]. Scholars believe that gender inequality is one of the negative products of educational inequity, and that China's culture and history have had an impact on its production of inequality [7]. Ancient China was a patriarchal society. China has a long history and a deeply rooted patriarchal society, and the oppression of women has existed for thousands of years. Despite the spread and popularization of the idea of equality in modern times, the deep-rooted patriarchal system still affects many people, and prejudice and unfair treatment of women still exist.

#### 2.2.1 Hong Kong

Hong Kong, China, is also influenced by this traditional thinking, with many families choosing to give schooling opportunities to males rather than females. Moreover, the textbooks in Hong Kong refer more to males, which will mislead elementary school students and this is a kind of invisible inequality. This is similarly reflected in textbooks on the mainland, where a small percentage of women appear in textbooks.

#### 2.2.2 Mainland region

In mainland China, due to the urban-rural divide, most women living in rural areas are less educated than men. Because of family economic reasons, parents usually give up the opportunity for their daughters to receive education. Some scholars in the study of the urban-rural education gap found that the education level of urban parents is relatively high, and the parents' education level, work and thoughts can directly affect the children's pre-school period [8]. There is a large gap between rural and urban ed-

education, mainly in terms of reading level and specialized education. Despite the fact that rural education is moving closer to urban education, there is a lack of resources, educational environment and infrastructure in rural areas compared to urban areas. In rural education, a higher proportion of males than females are educated, but as the urban-rural gap has narrowed, the proportion of gender inequality in education has declined [9].

### **2.2.3 Current status of men's and women's choice of disciplines**

By 2000, the proportion of women had increased rapidly and by 2010 had surpassed the proportion of men. In terms of subject choice, women are more likely to choose humanities and social sciences, and the phenomenon of men studying science and technology persists. This is a reflection of people's acceptance of gender socialization [10]. People have long been influenced by gender stereotypes that make them choose majors that are compatible with their gender roles.

## **2.3 Family (Marriage) Inequalities**

In the family, men and women have the same responsibilities, but in today's society, men and women have not achieved full equality either. Gender equality in work within the household has a significant impact on gender equality at the social level.

### **2.3.1 Gender inequality in childcare**

In the area of childcare, although men's childcare time has increased, women's childcare time is still much higher than men's. Scholars cite several examples of families of different class and economic levels where mothers are the primary child caregivers [11-13]. In fact, women tend to take on a disproportionate share of childcare, and one important finding is that fathers have the option of taking care of their children in their free time, but they do not act on it [13]. Traditionally, women have taken on the role of unpaid family caregivers, while men work outside the home for pay, and rightly so, childcare is considered women's work. The researchers argue that the impact of the conflict between work and family on child care is gendered. Mothers want to be good mothers and take care of their children despite their stressful jobs. Fathers, however, who are under the pressure of work, feel that the family and the care of the children are an obstacle to their work.

### **2.3.2 Gender inequalities in the property regime**

In addition, there is gender inequality in the matrimonial property regime. Women are bound by traditional beliefs to take care of the family more, so she is at a disadvantage

when it comes to work and so on, but in terms of the couple's property, it is only on the surface who earns more money, which is a kind of hidden inequality, so the value of women's labor in the family cannot be ignored. China's matrimonial property regime has unequal substance in terms of the attribution of gifts and appreciation of personal property, and the relevant rules should be gradually improved.

### **2.3.3 Gender inequality in pension insurance**

As China's population is aging, the problem of pension insurance is also relatively prominent, but the problem of inequality between men and women under this system has also gradually emerged, and scholar Liu Xiuhong believes that women do not receive the same protection in the pension insurance system [14]. The retirement age in the pension system is increasingly unfavorable to women, who retire early and receive smaller pensions for shorter periods of contribution. Moreover, the higher and more stable the contributions to the social security program, the lower the amount of money received after retirement. However, the majority of women's incomes are in the central and lower parts of the country, a system that to some extent exacerbates the problem of gender inequality in the country.

## **3. Reason**

### **3.1 Historical Reasons**

In ancient China, Confucianism was practiced, which honoured the superiority of men over women, i.e., women were inferior to men and were subordinate to men. Confucianism established a complete hierarchy, with women at the bottom of the hierarchy. Confucianism had an impact on patriarchy in ancient China. Patriarchy is a system of male oppression of women. In this system, men determine women's gender roles and social status through laws, language, customs, etc., and keep women under their jurisdiction, while women are at the bottom of the social ladder. The inequality between the status of men and women is at the root of the modern inequality between men and women in terms of career, family and marriage. Traditional culture creates a social bias against women that affects the division of labor in society, in the family, and in the distribution of education.

### **3.2 Reasons for the Social Welfare System**

The social welfare system is an indispensable condition for the governance of the country, and the *Act on the protection of women's rights* clearly establishes women's rights during maternity leave, but the implementation of the Act has not been sufficiently concrete, and many en-

terprises still reduce the salary of women during maternity leave and dismiss them from their jobs. Secondly, the system of retirement insurance for men and women and the matrimonial property regime, which ensures that men receive the same benefits as men, is not sufficiently developed to ensure that women do not enjoy the same benefits.

### 3.3 Family Factors

The greatest influence on children in the family is the perception of the parents, which in turn is influenced by traditional culture. In traditional Chinese culture, there is a preference for men over women, so women are hindered in their education. Traditional culture believes that sons are the only ones who can carry on the family's legacy, and that parents need to rely on their sons to support them as they get older, so traditional parents tend to favor boys over girls in their children's upbringing.

## 4. Suggestion

### 4.1 Occupational Measures

The government should improve the policy system to establish a more inclusive labor security and social security system, focusing on the protection of women's rights at work. The social security system is designed to protect women at the bottom of the labor ladder, in order to prevent unemployment and a significant drop in salary levels in the event of a major crisis. The government should also introduce preferential policies that not only encourage women to enter the workplace, but also subsidize women's maternity, so as to reduce the unemployment rate of women during maternity leave. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the discipline of enterprises, supervise the strict implementation of the relevant laws and regulations, and reduce the discrimination against women in finding jobs.

### 4.2 Measures in Education

People need raise awareness of gender equality in society and reduce prejudice against women. Schools should strengthen the education of students on the awareness of equal rights, and at the same time pay attention to whether there is unequal treatment of men and women by their parents and teach them about it. The Internet can also be utilized as a medium to spread awareness of gender equality between men and women, and correctly guide women to strive for fair treatment. The Government may choose to establish girls' schools to help female students who are deprived of education due to parental prejudice.

### 4.3 Measures at the Family Level

The Government has improved its policies on benefits

for women in the area of childbearing and on barriers to women's participation in the labor market. Reasonable adjustment of parental leave for men and women can improve the problem of unequal parental time between men and women. In addition, China's pension insurance system and matrimonial property system should be reformed; with the development of society, the initial pension insurance system and matrimonial property system are no longer in line with the actual situation. The retirement age should be adjusted, and there should be corresponding family allowances for women, so as to reduce women's constraints on the family and emphasize the protection of the weaker party in the marital relationship.

## 5. Conclusion

At present, although China has done some research on the current situation of gender inequality, it is difficult to fully realize gender equality between men and women because of a variety of problems, including the current state of society and historical factors. As the social structure slowly changes and people's thinking improves, the differences in gender equality between men and women will be mitigated to a certain extent, but it will take the continuous efforts of the Government and the people to overcome the difficulties and realize gender equality between men and women. In conclusion, the main purpose of this study is to examine the current situation of gender inequality in China from a female perspective, where women encounter difficulties in finding jobs, lower salary levels, and reproductive discrimination in the workplace. In education, there are inequalities in educational resources for females compared to males, hidden gender inequalities in textbooks, and inequalities in education between urban and rural development. Women also suffer from unequal treatment in the family and matrimonial. For example, there is inequality in childcare time between men and women, inequality in the property system between men and women, and inequality in the pension insurance system. This paper proposes measures to address the inequalities that have arisen, which will help to alleviate the problem of inequality between men and women. It is a great way to raise the awareness of gender equality in society, eliminate gender discrimination. There is also a need to reduce gender inequality that may exist in various fields. Increased awareness of gender equality will not only improve the social status of women, but also enhance social benefits. The contribution of men and women to social resources can provide better quality services and labor, thus promoting the development of society as a whole.

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