



Gender Wage Gap in the US
Implications for Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

Despite efforts to close the gender wage gap in the US, research shows that progress has stalled over the past two decades. Factors contributing to this gap include implicit gender bias, disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, and a lack of strong policies. Minority women are disproportionately affected by this gap, and the "motherhood penalty" and "fatherhood premium" also exacerbate the problem in gendered workplaces.

Addressing implicit bias and stereotypes at the organizational level, along with implementing more equitable family, compensation, and caregiver-friendly policies, is crucial. Training programs that identify and address implicit bias can lead to fairer compensation and promotion practices. Policy-level changes such as banning salary history and revising paid-leave policies are also essential.

Human resource professionals play a key role in creating a supportive organizational culture and addressing implicit bias. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the gender wage gap, including policies supporting paid leave, salary transparency, and reassessment of minimum wage policies. Overall, a combination of policy changes and organizational efforts is needed to mitigate the complex factors contributing to the gender wage gap in the US. Pay equity is not only important for women's economic security but also for the broader economy's growth and sustainability.

Keywords: gender wage gap, implicit bias, motherhood penalty, fatherhood premium, caregiving, salary transparency, gendered workplace, pay equity

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The gender wage gap persists as a challenge in equitable compensation in the United States, with women consistently earning less than men for similar work. Despite advancements in gender equality and increased awareness of the issue, the gap persists, particularly for women of color.

This wage disparity is influenced by gender norms and implicit gender stereotypes engrained in organizational cultures, policies, and procedures. It also is impacted by the disproportionate caregiving role assumed by women outside of the workplace as well as weak policies in support of gender pay equity.

Human resource professionals, tasked with determining equitable compensation aligned with an organization's resources and mission, face the challenge of addressing this gender-based wage gap. The purpose of this research is to explore the state of the gender wage gap in the United States by examining its causes, impact, and potential solutions.

By understanding the complexities of the gender wage gap and its implications, human resources professionals can work toward advocating for more equitable and inclusive compensation in the workplace.

Background

The gender wage gap has been a persistent and pervasive issue in the United States, with women consistently earning less than men for similar work. Despite advancements in gender equality and increased awareness of the issue, the gap remains substantial, particularly for women of color.

The gender wage gap in the United States has been a longstanding issue. According to Kochhar (2023), in 1982, women earned just 65 cents for every dollar earned by men. By 2008, full-time working women were still earning only 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, representing a nearly 25% lower hourly rate for women with the same educational level doing the same work.

A report by Arons (2008) for the Center for American Progress Action Fund, titled *Lifetime Losses: The Career Wage Gap*, highlighted these persistent income disparities. The report estimated that over a 40-year period, the median amount a full-time female worker loses in wages due to the gender pay gap is \$434,000. Furthermore, women with higher education levels experience even greater income losses: those with a bachelor's degree or higher face a career wage gap of \$713,000, while those with some college education encounter a gap of \$452,000 (Center for American Progress, 2009).

Still today, the gender wage gap continues to be a topic of significant concern, which highlights the ongoing challenges faced by female workers. In fact, according to Pynes (2013), although women make up most of the nonprofit workforce, "they are typically prevented from reaching top executive and policymaking positions," which is attributed to the engrained assumptions and gender-based stereotypes faced by women in the workforce.

Therefore, it is essential for human resource professionals, whose job it is to attract, fairly compensate, and retain talented workers, to advocate for more equitable policies and procedures. This includes implementing equitable hiring, promotion, compensation, and training practices to mitigate the challenge on an organizational level. Additionally, they should serve as advocates for more effective policies that support fair wages for all.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One measure of professional success is a person's salary. As a primary benefit offered to a worker in return for contribution to a workplace, salary should reflect the value of that person's work. Determining a salary that aligns with an organization's resources and mission is one task undertaken by human resource professionals. As such, equitable compensation despite a worker's gender falls under the purview of human resource management within an organization; however, organizations, like other aspects of community life, are gendered.

As a result, many of the gender norms and stereotypes engrained in our culture influence an organization's culture, policies, and procedures too. At times, these gender norms even impact an

organization's compensation system, which has resulted over many decades in significant wage disparity between male and female workers.

The gender wage gap has been a persistent and pervasive issue in the United States, with women consistently earning less than men for similar work. Despite advancements in gender equality and increased awareness of the issue, the gap remains substantial, particularly for women of color.

Still today, the gender wage gap continues to be a topic of significant concern, which highlights the ongoing challenges faced by female workers. It is also a challenge for human resource professionals, whose job it is to attract, fairly compensate, and retain talented workers regardless of gender.

Historical Perspective of the Gender Wage Gap

To gain insight into the pervasiveness and longstanding issue of the gender wage gap in the United States, consider that in 1982, women earned just 65 cents to each dollar earned by men (Kochhar, 2023). Then, seventeen years later, Arons (2008) published a report for the Center for American Progress Action Fund entitled, *Lifetime Losses: The Career Wage Gap*. This report highlights persistent income disparities between men and women at that time. Arons (2008) states that on average, full-time working women earned 78 cents for every \$1 earned by men. This represents an almost 25% lower hourly rate for women versus men with the same educational level doing the same work.

The report also estimates that the median dollar amount a full-time female worker loses in wages over a 40-year period due to the gender pay gap is \$434,000 (Arons, 2008). Even worse, women with higher education levels experience greater income losses over the life of their careers. The Center for American Progress (2009) estimates that women with a bachelor's degree or higher "face a career wage gap of \$713,000," while those with some college education encounter "a career wage gap of \$452,000." Even for women with a high school degree, the career wage gap is estimated to be nearly \$400,000; for those with less than a high school education, the gender wage gap persists at "a career wage gap of \$270,000" (Center for American Progress, 2009).

Current Perspective of Gender Wage Gap

Although one could argue that these numbers are not reflective of the current state of gendered wages and that strides have been made toward more equitable compensation for women, the reality is that little has changed over the past two decades. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, the wage gap between men and women barely has changed. "In 2022, women earned an average of 82% of what men earned" (Aragao, 2023). These results are similar to where the pay gap stood in 2002, when women earned 80% as much as men" (Aragao, 2023).

Then, in the most recent statistics reported as part of the National Equal Pay Day in March 2024, President Joseph Biden stated, "Women working full-time and year-round are paid an average of 84 cents for every dollar paid to men. In more than 90 percent of occupations, women earn less than men" (Biden, 2024). These statistics prove the persistence of this gender wage gap.

While women at the entry level of professional work typically earn similar wages to men, “they lose ground as they age and progress through their work lives, a pattern that has remained consistent over time” (Kochhar, 2023). This wage gap persists despite the fact the more women attend and graduate from college (Aragao, 2023).

In fact, according to recent data, the pay gap that exists between women and men with college degrees is not any narrower than the gap that exists between women and men who have not earned a college degree (Aragao, 2023). Therefore, despite investment in education, women still suffer wage disparities.

A further subset of the enduring gender wage gap that needs to be identified consists of women of color. Historically, women of color are among the lowest-paid workers in the United States, and this disparity persists today. According to Haan (2024), Black women in 2024 earn only 64% of non-Hispanic white men, while Latinas are compensated at just 55% of non-Hispanic white men. These statistics reinforce the disparities that exist even worse among women of minority backgrounds.

These numbers may appear shocking to those who believe that men and women are treated equally in today’s workforce. While it seems like common sense that women and men should be paid the same salaries for the same work, these numbers indicate that a significant disparity between salaries exists. Despite strides, the data shows significant lag over the past two decades in closing the gap between the salaries of men and women. This data shows unquestionably the inequity of salaries between working men and women; what it does not show, however, are the complex reasons for this persistent gender wage gap.

Factors Contributing to the Gender Wage Gap

There is not one sole explanation; rather, there are many interrelated factors driving the continued gender wage gap. According to Bleisweis (2021), these include, but are not limited to motherhood and women’s disproportionate caregiving responsibilities outside of the workplace; longstanding gender and racial biases, inequalities, and discrimination, particularly for women of color; and lack of strong policy that supports paid leave and salary transparency.

As President Biden succinctly stated in March 2024, “The pay gap is a product of the systemic barriers that women have long faced when it comes to accessing good-paying jobs and opportunities” (Biden, 2024). This systemic issue requires comprehensive analysis to determine best practices for human resource managers to make strides toward equality.

Disproportionate Caregiving Responsibilities

Although parenthood impacts both men and women in the workplace, research shows that the impact is very different for men versus women. Specifically, women are often penalized in the workforce for taking time off for caregiving responsibilities, particularly during their peak earning years. In contrast, men often experience what is now called the “fatherhood premium”, which refers to a trend of men experiencing income increases parallel to becoming a parent (Haan, 2024). Therefore, while women experience lower wages and missed opportunities for advancement, both

of which contribute to the wage gap that persists in the US, men are advancing disproportionately. To delve into this factor more specifically, consider the following statistics. The impact of parenting on earnings is most pronounced among those ages 25 to 54, which is a timeframe during which they are most likely to have young children at home. According to research reported by the Pew Research, “In 2022, mothers ages 25 to 34 earned 85% as much as fathers the same age” (Kochhar, 2023). In contrast, men experience a “fatherhood premium,” with their income increasing by 6% on average when they become parents. (Haan, 2024).

One explanation for this income disparity is that women are more likely than men to take time off work or switch to lower-paying careers to accommodate caregiving responsibilities. Fathers, on the other hand, tend to increase their work effort, seeking promotions and working longer hours to support their families. Furthermore, the widening of the pay gap with parenthood seems to be driven not only by time off and advancement losses experienced by women, but also and more significantly by an increase in the earnings of fathers.

Although there are some differences between earning levels for men, the fatherhood wage premium began to increase in the late 1990s; more so for high-earning men than for low-earning men. By the early 2010s, “high-earning men received a much larger fatherhood wage premium than low- or middle-earning men” (Glauber, 2018). This reflects a significant reason for one of the complex ways that the wage disparity grows between men and women during early to mid-career professionals in childbearing years.

Implicit Gender Biases

More than twenty years ago, Ann Crittenden wrote about what she calls the “motherhood penalty” in her 2002 book, *The Price of Motherhood*. She herself, a former foreign correspondent and financial reporter, experienced a loss of status and relevance when she became a mother. This penalty refers to the financial and societal costs that women face for choosing to be parents. (Haan, 2024). In her book, she notes that hour reductions or even time off from work for mothers are only one concrete cause for wage loss.

Research shows that bias against mothers and in favor of fathers also plays a significant role. Despite putting in the same or even more effort than fathers and women without children, mothers are often perceived as less committed and competent, leading to lower earnings and fewer opportunities for advancement (Haan, 2024).

The Impact of Implicit bias and stereotypes on the gender wage gap can be significant. Studies have shown that even after accounting for factors such as education, experience, and job performance, a substantial portion of the wage gap remains unexplained, suggesting that bias and stereotypes play a role.

This implicit bias is underscored by experimental evidence conducted by Correll et al. (2007). This study involved evaluation of resumes of “equally qualified same-sex job applicants who differed only in parental status” (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Women who identified as mothers were perceived as “less competent and less committed to paid work, and lowering starting salaries were recommended for them” (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

In contrast to this, according to Blau and Kahn (2017), men who identified as fathers were not penalized. In fact, they were perceived “to be more committed and recommended higher starting salaries for them.” Furthermore, prospective employers only called mothers in for interviews “about half as often as nonmothers, while fathers were not disadvantaged in the hiring process” (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

Research also indicates that direct or indirect discrimination based on gender potentially leads to lower wages for women through biases in areas of performance evaluations, promotion decisions, and access to opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, within a gendered workplace, cultural stereotypes and biases also can impact perceptions of women’s competence and value in the workplace. This, too, can lead to lower compensation and fewer advancement opportunities for women.

Research shared by law professor Joan C. Williams, whose areas of expertise include gender dynamics in the workplace, indicates that mothers are often perceived as lesser employees compared to women without children. (Haan, 2024). This perception leads to biases in how their behavior is interpreted. Mothers are often viewed through a lens of femininity, which can lead to them being perceived as less aggressive and ambitious as well as less reliable (Haan, 2024).

This type of implicit bias illustrates attitudes or stereotypes that affect workplace actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. Because they often are shaped by societal and cultural norms, they reinforce a negative view of women, mothers, which in turn negatively impacts their opportunities for growth in the workplace, including earnings.

Implicit bias and stereotypes can manifest in various ways in the workplace, leading to the perpetuation of the gender wage gap. For example, women may be steered towards lower-paying jobs or industries due to assumptions about their abilities or preferences. In male-dominated fields, women may face barriers to advancement and unequal pay compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, women may be less likely to negotiate for higher salaries or promotions due to concerns about being perceived as too aggressive or unlikeable, further contributing to the wage gap.

Experimental research conducted to examine these implicit biases support the analysis above (Haan, 2024). Mothers are often judged as less competent and committed than non-mothers. This bias extends to hiring practices, with non-mothers being more likely to be recommended for hire and offered higher salaries (Haan, 2024).

These biases have significant financial implications for women, with mothers experiencing the “motherhood penalty” in the form of lost earnings and missed career opportunities. Prejudice against mothers is considered the “strongest form of workplace gender discrimination,” resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost income for women” (Wade, 2017). Furthermore, women of color may experience even greater wage disparities due to intersecting biases based on race, ethnicity, or disability. The discrimination they experience is “influenced by a complex history of racism, stereotypes, and structural biases that have shaped policy decisions and opportunities for women of color” (Glynn, 2019).

This reality is critical to understanding the experiences of women on color in the workforce. When examining historical shifts in mothers' earnings and labor force participation rates, it's important to note that while overall trends show change, certain groups of women, especially women of color and working-class women, have long been more likely to contribute significantly to their families' incomes while also providing the majority of family care" (Glynn, 2019).

Lack of Supportive Policies

A third important factor to consider regarding the ongoing gender wage disparity in the US is the lack of strong policy that supports paid leave and salary transparency. There is a growing body of evidence documenting the negative causal impacts of leave policies on the professional progress of women in the labor market. According to Blair & Posmanick (2023), there is a significant example of how the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), despite its good intention, lowered female promotion rates by 8 percentage points despite increasing the likelihood of employment for women by 5 percentage points. Moreover, it was found that California's paid family-leave policy reduced long-term wages for mothers, with first-time mothers experiencing the sharpest declines (Blair & Posmanick 2023).

Both the increased in research demonstrating the unintended effects of family-leave policies and the fact that gender wage stagnated again around the same time as the passage of the FMLA makes it conceivable that the introduction of the FMLA could help explain an additional piece of the gender wage gap puzzle. Although an unintended consequence, the research does indicate that this policy may in fact contribute to the larger wage gap issue rather than help mitigate it. This underscores the lack of supportive policies that need to be in place to reduce the wage gap between men and women.

Additionally, policies related to minimum wage could be reassessed in order to support the improvement of the gender wage gap. Specifically, (Boesch et al., 2021) claim that if minimum wage is increased it would also "help narrow the persistent gender wage gap, which is driven in part by women's concentration in tipped and low-paying jobs." Due to that fact that women are overrepresented in low paying work, an increase could serve to help close the gender wage gap, specifically for minority women (Boesch et al., 2021).

Furthermore, another limitation that women face is the fact the employers access salary history data to make salary offers to potential employees. Implementing a ban on salary history is recommended to help break the cycle of wage discrimination that can follow women and workers of color from job to job (Bleiweis, 2021).

Recent evidence shows that these bans are an important and effective starting point in the fight for equal pay in addition to advocating for policymakers to pursue a robust, comprehensive effort to combat pay discrimination and ensure economic security for women. According to Estep (2023), paid leave and policy measures that would ban salary history from being used in wage-setting decision could help improve women's overall financial health presently and into the future for retirement.

Conclusion of Review

The gender wage gap in the United States persists despite efforts to address it, with women consistently earning less than men for similar work. Historical data from the 1980s to the present shows little improvement, with women earning 82% of what men earn on average. This gap is even wider for women of color, with Black women earning only 64% and Latinas 55% of what non-Hispanic white men earn. Factors contributing to this gap include disproportionate caregiving responsibilities for women, implicit gender biases in the workplace, and the lack of supportive policies such as paid leave and salary transparency.

One significant factor contributing to the gender wage gap is the disproportionate caregiving responsibilities placed on women, leading to lower wages and missed opportunities for advancement. Mothers are often penalized in the workforce for taking time off or switching to lower-paying careers to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, while fathers may experience a "fatherhood premium," with their income increasing when they become parents. This disparity in earnings due to caregiving responsibilities is most pronounced among those ages 25 to 54, impacting women's earning potential during their peak earning years.

Implicit gender biases also play a significant role in perpetuating the gender wage gap. Studies have shown that even after accounting for factors such as education and job performance, a substantial portion of the wage gap remains unexplained, suggesting that bias and stereotypes impact salary decisions. Mothers are often perceived as less competent and committed than non-mothers, leading to lower earnings and fewer advancement opportunities.

Additionally, policies that support paid leave and salary transparency are lacking, further contributing to the wage gap. Implementing policies to address these factors, along with advocating for broader societal changes, is crucial to closing the gender wage gap and achieving gender equality in the workforce.

ANALYSIS

Based on analysis of the research currently available, there are three main themes that have emerged: efforts to close the gender wage gap have stalled in the past two decades; minority women are disproportionately impacted by the gender wage gap; the comparison between the "motherhood penalty" and the "fatherhood premium" underscores the gender disparities engrained in the gendered work environment.

First, the gender wage gap has stalled in the past two decades. The research indicates that reasons for this are not simple; rather, they are due to multiple and complex factors. Three of the most significant factors are, implicit gender bias, disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, and a lack of strong and equitable policies.

Consider first the implicit bias that underscores the gender disparities faced by women in the workplace. Research points to a series of concerns about the ways in which women are unfairly judged by peers. First, Pynes (2013) notes that a woman's commitment to her job often is questioned due to reasons such as "their family responsibilities, perceived inability to

relocate, or doubts about their leadership styles.” These implicit assumptions contribute to women being overlooked for promotions, important project assignments, and training and development opportunities.

These assumptions, however, are unfounded; these are implicit biases based on gender that hinders a woman’s professional advancement. Consequently, this contributes to the gender wage gap because without advancement opportunities, women cannot increase their wages at the same pace as their male counterparts. This gap in wage opportunity worsens over time, which in turn impacts women’s long-range economic security.

Despite the progress that has been made, the gap persists, with women experiencing a cumulative loss of trillions of dollars in wages over a lifetime of earning, savings, and retirement (Khattar, 2024). Closing the gender wage gap is crucial for economic security for women and their families. Additionally, it is critical not only for the economic growth of the individual or family; but also, according to Khattar (2024), higher wages for women boost spending and investment. In turn, this has the potential to positively impact the broader economic landscape of the country.

Next, unfounded examples of implicit gender bias tie directly into the second factor identified through research as a contributor to the gender wage gap: disproportionate caregiving responsibilities outside of the workplace. Overall, an objective measure that partially explains the reason women earn less over a lifetime is that they may have fewer total paid work years than men (Khattar, 2024). This difference is largely due to the “gendered nature of caregiving responsibilities” in our country. In other words, women often take time off or work part-time to care for others (Khattar, 2024).

However, the statistics show that the difference in total years worked in full time positions does not account for the total loss of wages. According to Khattar (2024), there is another aspect of the gender wage gap that remains unexplained, but “is generally attributed to discrimination” between men and women. Specifically, even when accounting for the differences in hours or years worked due to caregiving responsibilities women undertake outside of the workplace, women may still not be paid equally to their male counterparts (Khattar, 2024).

Interestingly, research actually shows that the multiple roles women play outside the workplace offer essential opportunities to “practice multitasking and enrich their interpersonal skills and leadership effectiveness” (Pynes, 2013). This shows that women are potentially more effective in management and poised for advancement because of their multiple professional and personal roles. Therefore, despite the negative impression women unfairly have in the workplace, they are potentially more capable for advancement even than their male counterparts.

Next, the literature reveals that minority women are impacted most significantly by the gender wage gap. While all women are negatively impacted by discrimination, Pynes (2013) points out that this work culture does indeed challenge the mobility of women, especially minorities. Just two years ago in 2022, a poll reported that “nearly 1 in 3 women were “very worried” or “somewhat worried” about discrimination or harassment at work with a greater population of Black women” concerned about harassment (Salas-Betsch, 2024).

This experience of discrimination contributes to the gender wage gap, with minority women even more significantly impacted. One study estimates that “more than half of the wage gap between white men and Black women is due to labor market discrimination” (Salas-Betsch, 2024). While all women experience the wage disparity, discrimination exacerbates the problem for women of color.

In addition, the third factor that impacts the gender wage gap is the comparison between the “motherhood penalty” versus the “fatherhood premium”, which further emphasizes the disparities that exist in gendered workplaces. This indicates that parenthood, in particular, directly impacts men and women differently.

In fact, research supports the fact that parenthood is a key contributing factor to gender inequality in the workplace (Yu & Hara, 2021). Part of this issue, according to Yu and Hara (2021) is due to employers unconsciously rely on gender-based stereotypes about mothers versus fathers to determine their value partially because “an accurate measure of productivity” may not be readily available. While this offers some explanation, it does not provide an excuse for this gender and parenthood disparity.

Regardless, the research presented by Yu and Hara (2021) does demonstrate that having a child is linked with “steeper earnings growth” for men, but “hampers women’s earnings growth” especially when they have more than one child. This reiterates the challenges faced by women, and mothers especially, in terms of economic growth and security in the workforce as compared to men.

Eliminating workplace discrimination and harassment, all forms including parenthood, gender, and racial, could have profound economic benefits for women and the economy. According to Salas-Betsch (2024), making strides toward addressing discrimination would help close the gender wage gap, thus increasing women’s wages and their economic security. Furthermore, this would help women spend, save, and invest, which can help improve overall economic growth.

In addition to factors related to gender and racial bias, a fourth factor that needs to be discussed is the overall lack of supportive policies in place to support women in a gendered workplace. While historical policies such as affirmative action and equal opportunity employment are helpful, they are not sufficient to support the women in the evolving workplace. Policymakers must strengthen the enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws, as well as implement new strategies to combat discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

The absence of strong policies supporting paid leave and salary transparency can exacerbate the wage gap. For example, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) unintentionally lowered female promotion rates despite increasing employment likelihood for women, potentially contributing to the wage gap. Research suggests that some family leave policies, such as California’s paid family leave policy, may have reduced long-term wages for mothers, particularly impacting first-time mothers. This underscores the need for policies that do not inadvertently worsen gender wage disparities.

Other policy considerations include reassessing minimum wage policies that could help narrow the gender wage gap, especially since women are overrepresented in low-paying jobs. Increasing the minimum wage could particularly benefit minority women by improving their overall financial situation.

Then, employers' use of salary history data to make salary offers can perpetuate wage discrimination. Implementing a ban on salary history could help break this cycle and ensure fairer wage-setting practices, especially for women and workers of color. Passing the Paycheck Fairness Act would strengthen existing equal pay protections, prohibit retaliation against workers who discuss their pay or challenge pay discrimination, and limit employers' reliance on salary history (Salas-Betsch, 2024). These measures, along with supportive policies like paid leave, could improve women's financial health and contribute to closing the gender wage gap. Overall, the combination of policy changes, including supportive family leave policies, reassessment of minimum wage laws, and banning salary history, could help address the complex factors contributing to the gender wage gap in the US.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research, literature, and analysis, there are several organizational-level and policy-level changes that could be implemented to help mitigate the issue of the persistent gender wage gap. At the organizational level, addressing implicit bias and stereotypes is a key step. In addition, more family and caregiver-friendly policies would be beneficial. A multi-faceted approach to training is essential. Then, at a policy level, a ban on salary history and paid-leave policy revisions are essential.

Human resource professionals within organizations should recognize the importance of creating and supporting a supporting organizational culture. As Pynes (2013) points out, attitudes, values and beliefs are integral parts of the workplace, and they do impact staff behaviors. An important consideration is that research shows that "men, women, and minorities do not have a common culture or organizational life" (Pynes, 2013). Each of these groups brings different perspectives to the workplace, and human resource professionals need to attend to these differences to minimize discrimination and organizational conflicts.

Furthermore, an intentional effort to address implicit bias and stereotypes is another essential step in mitigating the gender wage gap. Programs and trainings that identify implicit bias can help break it down. Then, the result would be to provide more fair and equitable compensation and promotion for all in an organization.

First implicit bias trainings are essential for employees and managers to raise awareness about the ways in which biases can impact important decisions that influence the gender wage gap, such as hiring, promotion, and salary decisions. Another policy would be to implement a performance-based evaluation system with objective criteria. This could help minimize the influence of subjective perceptions in the evaluation process.

Other organizational policies that support flexible work arrangements and family-friendly policies could potentially help reduce the gender wage gap continues to persist. Offering flexible work

arrangements, such as hybrid or flexible hours, can help employees balance work and family responsibilities. As a result, this can help reduce the impact of the motherhood penalty on the gender wage gap. Then, implementing family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave and on-site childcare, can help support employees with caregiving responsibilities and reduce the impact of caregiving on the gender wage gap.

Employers can implement unconscious bias training to raise awareness and promote fairer decision-making. Recruitment and promotion processes can be designed to minimize the influence of bias, such as using blind recruitment techniques or diverse hiring panels. Pay transparency policies can also help mitigate the impact of bias by ensuring that salary decisions are based on objective criteria rather than subjective perceptions.

To address the gender wage gap at the policy level, comprehensive strategies are needed. Khattar (2024) explains, “Pay equity must be a critical priority for policymakers who want to grow the U.S. economy.” To do this, according to Khattar (2024), there are multiple policies at the federal and state levels that can help raise women’s wages and close the gender wage gap.

Policies that support paid leave and salary transparency could help mitigate the negative impacts of caregiving responsibilities on women’s earnings. Furthermore, reassessing minimum wage policies and implementing bans on salary history in wage-setting decisions could help narrow the wage gap, particularly for women and workers of color.

According to Salas-Betsch (2024), there are some policy solutions that could swiftly make equal pay a reality in the United States. Specifically, passing the Paycheck Fairness Act would help strengthen equal pay protections for workers codified in the Equal Pay Act. This also would prohibit retaliation against workers who discuss their pay or challenge pay discrimination, and limit employers’ reliance on salary history to determine fair wages (Salas-Betsch, 2024).

In addition to that, an increase in the minimum wage could help close the gender wage gap. An increase in the minimum wage “to at least \$17 per hour” through the passage of the Raise the Wage Act would be a critical step to raising wages for women (Salas-Betsch, 2024). This would particularly help minority women who are overrepresented in lower-wage positions.

Other policies complementary to wage and compensation are those related to the caregiving economy. Specifically, according to Weston-Williamson (2024), passing paid family and medical leave and sustained public investments in childcare and elder care would help families manage paid work and care responsibilities. Importantly, these investments would limit the financial penalties women often experience from being disproportionately responsible for caregiving, which is one of the primary factors that contributes to the gender wage gap.

Pay equity must be a critical priority for policymakers who want to grow the U.S. economy and drive more inclusive and therefore stronger and more sustainable economic growth. Lawmakers have a range of policy options that they can enact to raise women’s wages and close the gender wage gap. Doing so would help strengthen the economic security of women and their families. As key contributors to the economy, an increase in women’s earnings would more broadly support and strengthen the US economy.

SUMMARY

In summary, the gender wage gap remains a persistent issue in the United States, with women consistently earning less than men for similar work. Despite efforts to address this disparity, such as increased awareness and advancements in gender equality, the gap remains substantial, particularly for mothers and women of color.

The current state of the gender wage gap underscores the ongoing challenges faced by female workers. It highlights the importance of human resource professionals in advocating for more equitable compensation practices.

Efforts to close the gender wage gap in the US have stalled in the past two decades, with multiple factors contributing to this issue. Implicit gender bias, disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, and a lack of strong and equitable policies are significant contributors. Gender and racial biases persist in hiring and promotion decisions, with mothers often perceived as less competent and committed than non-mothers.

Additionally, the lack of strong policies supporting paid leave and salary transparency further perpetuates the wage gap. Minority women are disproportionately impacted by the wage gap, with discrimination exacerbating the issue.

Additionally, the comparison between the "motherhood penalty" and the "fatherhood premium" highlights disparities in gendered workplaces, showing that parenthood impacts men and women differently. While men may experience income increases when becoming parents, women face decreases. This leads to a widening wage gap associated with parenthood.

Policy and organizational changes, such as banning salary history and implementing family-friendly policies, can help mitigate this issue. Eliminating workplace discrimination and implementing supportive policies, such as paid leave and salary transparency, are crucial steps in addressing the gender wage gap and ensuring economic security for women.

Human resource professionals play a crucial role in addressing this gap by advocating for equitable compensation practices. Despite advancements in gender equality, the wage gap remains a significant issue, with women facing substantial income disparities over their careers. It is essential for HR professionals to advocate for fair wages and implement equitable policies to address this challenge.

Based on research and analysis, several organizational and policy-level changes could help mitigate the persistent gender wage gap. Organizational changes include addressing implicit bias, implementing family-friendly policies, and providing comprehensive training. Policy-level changes include banning salary history and revising paid-leave policies.

Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the gender wage gap, including policies supporting paid leave, salary transparency, and reassessment of minimum wage policies. Passing the Paycheck Fairness Act and increasing the minimum wage could help close the gap, particularly for minority women. Additionally, policies supporting the caregiving economy, such as paid

family leave and investments in childcare, could reduce financial penalties for women and contribute to closing the wage gap.

Pay equity is crucial for economic growth, and policymakers have several options to raise women's wages and promote a more inclusive economy. By understanding and addressing these complex factors, human resource professionals can play a vital role in advocating for more equitable and inclusive compensation practices in the workplace with regard to gender wage equity.

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