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Empowering Women: Overcoming Gender Inequality in Higher Education and High-Wage Jobs

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Abstract

The system aimed to support higher education inclusion among students with academic merits overcoming the lack of resources for ensuring access. Politicians have referred to this reform in higher education funding as a critical factor for expanding higher education enrollment. By its immediate results, it is a great strategy to cope with inequality and social mobility issues. However, there is little empirical evidence about labor market variables' overall effects, such as gender discrimination. This work attempts to estimate the new instrument's impact on the three standard measures of gender labor discrimination: labor participation, the gender wage gap, and the glass ceiling. The empirical strategy uses a difference-in-difference approach to provide estimates. The results indicate that the CAE policy changed women's labor market participation and contributed to close the gender pay gap in the labor market. However, the glass ceiling increased in the entire labor market, but not in the white-collar job market in specific.

Keywords: Inequality; Higher education; Gender wage; gap Fields of study; Advanced degrees

Introduction

Higher education has long been regarded as a pathway to social mobility, economic prosperity, and a key driver of gender equality. However, despite significant advancements in women's educational

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attainment, gender disparities persist when it comes to high-wage employment opportunities. This article explores the complex dynamics behind higher education and high-wage gender inequality, shedding light on the barriers that women face and proposing strategies to overcome them.

The rise of the fourth industrial phenomenon is carrying several reflections on how national economies and governments should adapt to technological change. As a complex process, the technological revolution opens the opportunity for countries to improve their economic development stage by managing and directing the adaptation and change critical variables related to social welfare and industrial organization. That appears as a highly relevant opportunity to solve one of the most pertinent issues regarding social equity: gender gaps.

Scholars and policymakers have broadly used the concept of the gender gap to define gendered-based differences in the access to goods, services, or treatment by society. Those gender gaps range from differentiated access to educational services to institutional support for fertility and health policies

The Educational Gender Gap

Over the past few decades, women have made remarkable strides in higher education. They now outnumber men in college enrollment in many countries and are often more successful academically. However, this educational gender gap does not always translate into equal representation in high-wage professions. Women continue to encounter significant obstacles in accessing and excelling in lucrative careers.

Occupational Segregation

One of the primary factors contributing to high-wage gender inequality is occupational segregation. Certain fields, such as engineering, finance, and computer science, have traditionally been male-dominated, perpetuating a lack of diversity and limited opportunities for women. This is often attributed to gender stereotypes, biased recruitment practices, and societal expectations. As a result, women are often concentrated in lower-paying professions, such as education and healthcare, which further exacerbates the wage gap.

Glass Ceiling and Gender Bias

The glass ceiling phenomenon is another critical aspect of high-wage gender inequality. Despite their qualifications and experience, women often find it challenging to ascend to leadership positions within



organizations. Barriers such as gender bias, stereotypes, and limited access to mentorship and networking opportunities impede their progress. This perpetuates a cycle where men predominantly occupy executive roles, enjoy higher wages, and have greater decision-making power.

Motherhood Penalty

The motherhood penalty presents yet another hurdle for women in high-wage employment. Balancing family responsibilities with demanding careers can lead to career interruptions, reduced work hours, and limited promotions. Employers may perceive women as less committed or competent due to their caregiving roles, resulting in lower wages and missed opportunities for advancement. The impact of the motherhood penalty is further compounded by inadequate family leave policies and societal expectations surrounding gender roles.

Addressing High-Wage Gender Inequality

To address the persistent high-wage gender inequality in higher education, it is crucial to implement targeted strategies that tackle the root causes and foster an inclusive environment. Here are a few approaches that can help pave the way for gender equality:

Promoting STEM Education: Encouraging girls and young women to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education can help dismantle occupational segregation and increase their representation in high-paying fields. Providing mentorship programs and scholarships specifically targeted at women can help bridge the gender gap in these domains.

Overcoming Bias in Hiring and Promotions: Organizations must implement diversity and inclusion initiatives to counter implicit bias in recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes. Employers can adopt blind recruitment practices, establish clear evaluation criteria, and provide unconscious bias training to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all candidates.

Workplace Flexibility and Family-friendly Policies: Companies should offer flexible work arrangements, including remote work options, flexible hours, and job-sharing opportunities. Additionally, implementing generous parental leave policies, affordable childcare solutions, and creating a supportive work environment can help mitigate the motherhood penalty and allow women to thrive professionally.



Mentoring and Sponsorship Programs: Establishing mentorship and sponsorship programs that connect aspiring women professionals with experienced leaders can facilitate career development, skill-building, and networking opportunities. Such initiatives can help break down the barriers to advancement and equip women with the tools needed to succeed in high-wage positions.

Policy Reforms: Governments can play a significant role in reducing high-wage gender inequality by enacting policies that promote pay transparency, strengthen anti-discrimination laws, and enforce gender quotas for corporate boards. Investing in affordable education, training programs, and lifelong learning opportunities can also empower women to excel in high-paying industries.

Higher education expansion

The cycle of the knowledge economy promoted educational attainment across the world. Based on the rationale of human capital theory, governments invest in workforce human capital accumulation to produce better labor market outcomes. These outcomes are also supported by the workforce's ability to use, adapting, and producing new technologies linked

Conclusion

Achieving gender equality in high-wage employment requires a multifaceted approach that addresses societal norms, organizational biases, and policy gaps. By promoting educational equity, dismantling occupational segregation, and fostering inclusive work environments, we can break the barriers that hinder women from accessing high-wage opportunities. Ultimately, a society that values and empowers women in their pursuit of education and professional success benefits not only individuals but also drives economic growth and social progress as a whole.

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