

SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY:

Examples from Politics, Business and
Academia in the UK



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DIALOGUE
SOCIETY

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The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue. It operates nation-wide with regional branches across the UK. Through discussion forums, courses, capacity building publications and outreach it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.

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Supporting Gender Equality: Examples from Politics, Business and Academia in the UK

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FOREWORD

The Dialogue Society supports the Equality Act 2010 (Government Equalities Office 2015). We believe we have a duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations within our organisation. Furthermore, Dialogue Society aims to reflect its values in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 within society. Whether it is direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation, any form of discrimination must be condemned in any area of social life. Society will be in its fully developed form when all forms of discrimination are eliminated.

The Equality Act 2010 includes legislation against many forms of discrimination. Sex discrimination is one of the areas covered by the Equality Act 2010. Sex discrimination is the unfair treatment of one as a result of their gender identity, i.e., if they are a man or a woman. Although sex discrimination can be towards both genders, women experience it many times more than men do. Additionally, although many countries have achieved significant milestones towards gender parity across education, health, economic and political systems, there remains much to be done. According to The Global Gender Gap Index 2018 report, there is a gender disparity in political empowerment, which today maintains a gap of 77.1%, and an economic participation and opportunity gap, which is the second-largest gender disparity at 41.9% globally (World Economy Forum 2019). The data illustrates that sex discrimination is one of many problems in the contemporary world. It operates negatively on a number of societal and economic levels: it divides the community, causes a lack of opportunity and representation for women, and excludes women from participation in many aspects of social life.

Equal contribution opportunities for women and men are critical for our community's economic and societal development. The Dialogue Society aims to build dynamic and inclusive economies and societies that provide a future of opportunities for all. In order to achieve this best form of society, we believe women's empowerment is a necessity. Women's empowerment includes promoting professional development for women, implementing practices that empower women in the workplace, and promoting equality through community initiatives. The women's empowerment process focuses on shaping frameworks for closing economic gender gaps, fostering diversity, and promoting women's inclusion and equality. Furthermore, the Dialogue Society aims to increase women's participation in the workforce, help more women advance into leadership, and close the gender gap. To this end, the Dialogue Society organised many projects, research and panel discussions on women's empowerment.

This report aims to inspire ongoing efforts and further action to accelerate the achievement of full gender equality via promoting women's empowerment, recommending and implementing direct top-level policies for gender equality, and ensuring that existing policies are gender-sensitive and practices are safe from gender-based discrimination.

Finally, this report is to engage and illustrate the importance of allyship, awareness and policy implementations that improve the lives of millions of women. We call upon every reader of this report to join the efforts of the Dialogue Society in promoting women's empowerment for an equal society.

Dialogue Society

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Dialogue, as a tool for bottom-up research, serves as a crucial means to enrich both structure and content of policy recommendations.
- Gender inequality in the United Kingdom is a real, lived experience in which women report experiencing disempowerment.
- When observed through the lens of intersectionality, it is clear that racial bias can further disadvantage women in their work setting.
- Despite being independent work environments, navigating through political, business and academic workplaces can result in different experiences, albeit there are overriding prejudices and difficulties seen in all fields.

Policy Recommendations

Women in Politics

- As the representative of the United Kingdom, parliament should reflect its electorate; therefore, parliament must continue its effort to reach the current goal of '50:50' representation. The government must take immediate action to enact section 106 of the Equality Act.
- In regards to sexual harassment, the government must ensure a safe working environment and review the effectiveness of its current 'zero tolerance' policy. The government must also ensure a same-sex member of staff is present when a reporter of an incident comes forward; the mental and physical wellbeing of the individual coming forward must be prioritised.
- Reforms must ensure the 'double burden' experienced by many women is eradicated. For this, the government must ensure a better work-family life balance, exhaust all efforts to avoid voting on Mondays and Fridays to allow more time to travel to and from Westminster, and, a thorough review of maternity leave and childcare services must be conducted.
- All opportunities for raising awareness of gender inequality must be identified and there must be a continuation of the efforts of previous governments to highlight issues of gender representation and attitudes towards women in parliament.

Women in Business

- Organisations and businesses must do all in their hands to ensure women are valued and supported in their work environment. All employees must complete annual diversity training to be alert to biases they may hold.
- Organisational procedures must be subject to frequent review to uphold their responsibility in addressing issues of gender inequality. Recruitment and promotional processes must ensure gender neutrality in advertisements. Pay structures must be monitored to

ensure equality between men and women; the government must reinstate gender pay gap reporting to allow employers to identify wage disparity.

- Culturally focused strategies must be engaged to target negative stereotypes of women. The de-stigmatisation of maternity and paternity leave must be prioritised, and employers must ensure employees are not penalised for taking leave. The promotion of mixed-gender networking opportunities must be encouraged.

Women in Academia

- Academic bodies must ensure women's career progression is not disadvantaged by maternity leave and care responsibilities. Therefore, recommendations include reviewing expected and actual working hours, reviewing and modifying, where necessary, promotional and recruitment procedures to ensure women are not penalised for taking periods of leave, and to ensure all academic staff are aware of their rights to take paid and unpaid leave.
- Academic bodies must ensure thorough and regular reviews of the distribution of leave taken to identify patterns of discrimination towards women. They must ensure women are allowed to gain equal access to funding for research and promote a culture within academia that values teaching and research equally.
- Men's understanding of and attitudes to their female colleagues have a significant impact on workplace culture; therefore, institutions must facilitate gender-awareness training as well as review the language used throughout recruitment, reviews and promotion to ensure that gender bias and stereotypes are not promoted.
- The encouragement of female re-writing of the experience narrative must be encouraged, and funding for research into this female re-writing within academia must be ensured.
- Promotion of solidarity among female colleagues must be ensured through facilitated group discussions to ensure affirmations of the gendered experience to further empower women to speak out.

INTRODUCTION

The identity of women is confirmed and accepted when it fits in the standards of the current international order (Zalewski and Enloe 1995). Otherwise, women's identity is created as an abstract 'ideal' identity. The ideal identity creates a monotype role for women. The monotype role of women is against the feminist theories' understanding of the plurality of the concept of women. The plurality of the concept of women is to show and represent that women can be mothers, the bearers of the nation, as well as political and business leaders, senior workers, or in any position they would prefer to be in. However, this is not well represented outside of the feminist theories in practice. Anna McClintock claims that women never get the same representation and opportunities as the men of the nation do (McClintock 1995). Unfortunately, the statistics support this argument in politics, with 32% female representation in the House of Commons (Watson, Ubereoi et al. 2021); only 7% of top 100 FTSE companies with female chief executive officers (Statista 2021); and with a gender pay gap that pays women 12% less than their male counterparts in academia (University and College Union, London 2021). All these data from the UK show that there is a multiplicity of factors feeding into the suppression of women's participation in every aspect of social life.

The Dialogue Society aims to promote equality and human rights by empowering people and bringing social issues to light.

The Dialogue Society aims to promote equality and human rights by empowering people and bringing social issues to light. Consequently, the Dialogue Society organised a panel series to enlighten this issue of women's lack of representation and oppression in three main areas: Politics, Business and Academia.

Although women face discrimination, lack of representation and opportunities in every aspect of social life, as a first step we chose to explore the contours of women's empowerment in these three settings since they comprise our primary target audience. The Dialogue Society works closely with professionals and volunteers from politics, business and academia. Therefore, we held a panel series titled 'Women's Empowerment', including three panels, each focusing on a particular area: Women in Politics, Women in the Workplace and Women in Academia.

Empowerment is an unfolding, iterative process fundamentally about shifts in power relations (Cornwall 2016). Women's empowerment, therefore, is to shift power relations from an unbalanced nature in favour of men towards those who previously exercised little power over their own lives, in this instance, women (Batliwala 1993). Women's empowerment aims to increase women's self-understanding (Kabeer 1994) and capacity for self-expression (Sen 1997), and women's access to and control over material and resources. With the Women's Empowerment panel series, the Dialogue Society aimed to highlight challenges and discriminatory practices that women face in politics, workplaces, academia and shared social life challenges. The panel series aimed to raise awareness about the asymmetric and unequal treatment of genders and systematic problems and procedures that lead to these practices in the first place. Furthermore, the panel series aimed to create solutions and recommendations that could increase allyship, opportunities, and representation of women in these areas to support the purpose of women's empowerment.

The first panel, Women in Politics: Positions of Leadership, discussed the obstacles to female leadership, the challenges faced by women in politics, gender equity and women's empowerment in politics. The panel covered the reasons behind the widespread attacks against politically active women and the indicators of the negative impact of unequal gender norms on the democratic health of our societies. Despite it being over 100 years since the implementation of the Representation of People Act (1918), allowing women to vote, and seeing the first female MP (Nancy

Astor 1919), there is a lot to be done in terms of policy implementations. The panel discussion ended with recommendations on these necessary policy implementations.

The second panel, Women in Business: Positions of Leadership, discussed the suppression of women's leadership in the workplace, the complexity of this systematic discrimination and the links between sexism, the gender pay gap, occupational dissimilarity and the motherhood penalty. Additionally, the importance of creating a safe and equal workspace through policies as well as through the sector, the significance of allyship and giving women a voice in the workplace, and the necessity to access equal opportunities for both genders were covered by the panel discussion.

The third and final panel, Women in Academia, addressed the unjustified pressure which women academics are subjected to in order to receive fair recognition of their work and the serious disadvantage women face moving up in academia. The panel series showed and concluded that women in academia are expected to work harder, produce more research, participate in multiple projects, take on more service and teaching hours, nurture their students, listen and show compassion for their colleagues, and outperform male academics, to get a chance of equal treatment.

With 11 respected speakers and their valuable input, and a viewership of over a thousand, our Women's Empowerment panel series reached a broad audience. After the presentations from each speaker, every panel had a question-and-answer session in which the audience could raise questions and concerns about the issues discussed. Each panel led to a very interactive and engaging dialogue. The panel series raised awareness amongst our audience and informed them about what more could be done to tackle the discrimination women face in politics, business and academia sectors as well as social life. Most importantly, the panel series created dialogue around lack of representation and served the Dialogue Society's aim of empowering people, tackling social issues, and promoting equality and human rights. We aim to continue our fight for equality for women through new panel series, publications, events and future projects. This policy paper will highlight the findings of each panel, Women in Politics, Women in Business and Women in Academia, to further this aim. The report begins with literature reviews that cover the issues discussed in each panel. The paper continues with policy recommendations and findings from our panel discussions on politics, business and academia, respectively. This paper aims not just to cover the misrepresentation, discrimination and the challenges faced by women, but also to create solutions for them. We wish to base the general and particular theme of this Dialogue Society publication on policy recommendations as we know the potential impact these recommendations can have once implemented. The Women's Empowerment panel series and the policy paper demonstrate what works to support women's journeys in politics, business and academia.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Women in Politics

Underrepresentation of women in politics, against a backdrop of masculine discourses, stereotypes and assumptions, has created a hostile environment within politics towards those who differ from the majority. Entrenched gender issues seen within society are heightened within parliamentary processes, whilst also being continually reproduced in politics more generally. This literature review outlines the dominant issues that face women in politics, highlighting the gendered biases and assumptions that create barriers to leadership positions.

Political systems have existed as a form of collective decision making for millennia, with power to continually reinforce patterns of relations between different groups of people. Framed within historically male-dominated societies, issues of gender equality within politics act as both a reflection of entrenched gender issues throughout society and as a blueprint for the unbalanced distribution of power between male and female decision makers. Indeed, Kenny (2007) conceptualises gender relations as being inherently aligned with power relations, an approach that directly relates politics with gender issues. Moreover, Evans and Kenny (2020, 27) argue that politics

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within the UK is continually 'coded as male', setting a framework for inequity between men and women. Indeed, Kenny and Verge (2016) argue that political institutions are not gender neutral and in fact harbour intense gender biases, with only 34% of MPs being women (Watson et.al. 2021, 3). Consequently, widely discussed outcomes focus on a lack of

female representation within politics, alongside a prevalence of harassment and discrimination against women. With political parties branded by many as 'gatekeepers' to elected office (Ibid., 2013, 111), Evans and Kenny (2020, 27) highlight the continued pattern, evident in the 2017 election, whereby female party members are selected for 'unwinnable seats'. This process is similarly emphasised by Kenny and Verge (2016, 360) as a process that designates women as 'sacrificial lambs'. Such job segregation where women typically occupy lower ranking roles, as only 23% of the current cabinet are women (Watson et.al. 2021, 10), is exacerbated by the gendered impacts of crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, as Campbell et.al. (2020) highlights that mothers will experience the greatest career disruption from lockdown due to childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, cultural sexism embodied within political processes contributes to the obstacles that limit women's career trajectories. Preference for individuals with certain identities within the candidate selection process prior to election campaigns is critiqued by Kenny and Verge (2016) who argue that embedded gendered assumptions surrounding the most suitable or electable candidates are reinforced by continued reservation of the highest ranking roles for male party members. Moreover, consistently high rates of incumbency, with the 2015 election seeing 85% of elected MPs being incumbents, limits opportunities for new entrants and slows the rate of change with the majority of incumbents being men (Maguire 2018, 19). A thriving undercurrent of gender inequality within political processes and institutions, therefore, calls for a move to challenge the status quo that enacts a gendered judgement of who is most capable of effective leadership. Dialogue within parties and political institutions to increase awareness of such issues

would ultimately enhance the democratic process, increasing opportunity for politics to demonstrate greater gender-diversity.

Women in Business

Women in business face many underlying and often overt forms of discrimination and inequality throughout their careers. Gendered societal structures are often seen within the microcosm of the workplace and therefore impact upon women's career development and work experience. Culturally embedded gender issues are explored alongside the complex factors that contribute to the gender pay gap to expose the multitude of inequalities that face women at work, both structurally, culturally and individually.

Business and the workplace provide a second arena where gender inequality continually appears a prevalent issue that impacts a large proportion of the workforce. Organisations that operate under the regulation of a state that is intricately impacted by unequal gender relations inevitably display many of the same discriminatory practices. Quantitative differences between the experience of men and women in the workplace, such as the gender pay gap which stands at 15.5% in

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the UK (ONS 2020), present an opportunity to measure and examine changes in the expression of gender inequality over time. Indeed, Mumford and Sechel (2020, 82) highlight that while female representation in business has increased over the last two decades, such progress is nuanced by changes in the nature of the gender pay gap whereby unexplained 'within-rank' pay gaps have substan-

tially increased. Daly et.al. (2006) provide a structural explanation for this phenomenon arguing that the British system of wage determination has become increasingly decentralised since the late 1970s with Conservative deregulatory reforms. Simultaneously, a key driver of the gender pay gap remains the significant likelihood that men will occupy higher ranks and therefore enjoy greater earning potential (Mumford and Sechel 2020). Indeed, the gender pay gap for forty- to forty-nine-year-olds, remaining above 10%, is significantly bigger than that of a younger demographic, indicating the lower incidence of women occupying higher-paid managerial positions after the age of 40 in comparison to men who on average begin to earn more (ONS 2020). Alongside overt gender issues, however, more culturally embedded subtle expressions of gender inequality within the workplace arguably uphold existing male dominated hierarchies. Indeed, Savigny (2017) depicts 'cultural sexism' as the notion that sexism presents as an everyday occurrence that cumulatively impacts upon women's status and ability to succeed in the workplace. For instance, Connell (2006) argues that despite formalised acceptance of female leadership, in practice, women holding positions of managerial authority are often contested, ignored or challenged. This perception of cultural sexism is emphasised as Mumford and Sechel (2020) highlight the differences in the rewards women receive for the same characteristics as men in the workplace. Collaborative efforts between businesses and organisations, therefore, should extend beyond the introduction of policies aimed at redressing quantitative measures of gender inequality and should promote dialogue that encourages a change of narrative surrounding the gendered assumptions and behaviours that continue to prevail in the workplace.

Women in Academia

The role of women in academia exists in tension with an often male-dominated environment. Systems and processes for academic careers have been built upon a linear, male trajectory and have not catered for a great diversity of experiences. Equally, discrimination and stereotyping of female professors create barriers to career development. This literature explores these themes and highlights the structural and cultural manifestations of gender inequality within academia.

The role of women in academia has developed against a ‘backdrop of masculinist discourses’ (Savigny 2017, 644) defining the structure within which women navigate academic careers. Indeed, despite overrepresentation and a higher achievement level compared to men at undergraduate level, women remain underrepresented in senior academic positions and experience a multitude of gendered barriers to their career development, with only 28% of professors in the UK being women (Watson et.al. 2021, 27). This depiction of a ‘visibility paradox’ (Ibid., 645) promotes the

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notion that women in academia experience ‘glass ceilings’ in career development (Baptist, 2017, 1), an issue that has gained considerable recognition within the UK as men disproportionately occupy higher professional levels in UK universities (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull 2016).

Social dynamics within academic institutions dominated by men therefore both reflect and reproduce gender disparities, as the advantages that social networks provide as a form of social capital express gendered nuances with men occupying a majority (Ibid). Indeed, Kjeldal et.al. (2005) highlights the social identity theory which suggests that one’s validation of identity is built upon defining hierarchical categories based upon similarities such as gender, which in turn impacts the self-esteem of those who are socially excluded. Therefore, while men typically have greater access to and influence within social networks, the lack of female representation within senior positions self-perpetuates the bias towards ‘male’ characteristics within these roles and acts as an obstacle for greater female representation (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull 2016). Moreover, Savigny (2017) argues that such social divisions create a fearful environment for women where the sexualisation of their professional experiences and sexual harassment itself appear less inconsistent with gendered attitudes that exist within a predominantly male-oriented culture. Accordingly, dialogue focused on challenging and re-writing masculinist discourses within academia presents a crucial opportunity to make visible existing gendered power structures and reverse exclusionary informal rules (Savigny 2017). The power of sharing stories from multiple perspectives should not be underestimated in its ability to instigate greater proactiveness in redressing the balance between the experiences of men and women in academia (Kjeldal et.al. 2005).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Existing Policies

UK politics has seen gradual increases in the levels of female representation since the 1990s, largely due to the introduction of quotas by the Liberal Democrats and Labour. This has resulted in a long-term trend for these parties to have a much larger proportion of female MPs than the Conservatives. However, whilst in power, the Conservatives have introduced measures aimed at reducing gender inequality such as their ‘women2win’ campaign introduced by Teresa May.

Existing measures to improve gender equality in the workplace have gone some way in addressing bias and discrimination; for instance, many NHS staff have been required to complete unconscious bias training and, in many workplaces, gender blind application processes have reduced discrimination in recruitment processes. However, the extent to which gender bias is embedded within the culture of many workplaces and integrated within company infrastructures indicates that measures need to go beyond targeting singular issues.

Within academia, measures to improve gender equality are often isolated and contained within individual universities. In 2019, the Centre for Science and Technology (CWTS) introduced a gender indicator for over 900 universities (Wagner 2019), ranking institutions by percentage share of publications between men and women. This goes some way toward measuring cross-institution gender gaps within academia, however there is much further to go to address issues of gender socialisation practices and expected linear career progressions.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Formal equal representation policies/quotas

Political parties are the ‘gatekeepers’ (Evans 2020, 27) of political participation and thus far insufficient progress has been made within parties to work towards equal representation, with just 34% of candidates in the 2019 election being women. Formal policies and quotas enacted by parties redirect recruitment processes, forcing greater inclusivity at the candidate selection stage. Labour and Liberal democrats currently employ internal party quotas, such as Labour’s all women shortlists, where its successes were evident in the 2019 election as 51% of elected Labour MPs were women (Watson et.al. 2021, 5). In contrast, however, Conservatives have not implemented any form of quotas to work towards equal representation and consequently saw just 24% of elected MPs in 2019 being women (Ibid). In light of widespread consensus about the value of quotas, and other formal policies, in improving representation in politics, the government must:

- Ensure equality guarantees from each political party that occupies seats in the House of Commons, whereby parties are to be committed to implementing policies and procedures that actively work towards improving the representation of women and minorities within politics.
- Increasingly mainstream policies to promote equality and diversity within parliament, reflecting such prioritisation in parliamentary debates, rhetoric and budgeting.
- Detail plans for working towards the current goal of 50:50 representation of men and women in parliament, as introduced and promoted by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

- Take immediate action to enact section 106 of the Equality Act, which requires political parties to report the diversity of their candidates, as over a decade since initial creation this law is still not implemented, and it is vital to regularly publish data on diversity within political parties to accurately address underrepresentation.

Reforms that address issues of sexual harassment within politics, and parliament as a workplace

Despite existing policies and codes of conduct that outline procedures for dealing with sexual harassment within government, improvements must be made to ensure a secure environment for women working in politics as sexual harassment continues to be an issue the government must take seriously. Therefore, political parties and the government must:

- Review the effectiveness of current procedures and policies for dealing with cases of sexual harassment within government, ensuring that the zero-tolerance policy promised in the 2018 Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure is adhered to and that appropriate sanctions are always implemented against perpetrators.
- Ensure that same-sex members of staff are always present when meeting with the reporter or victim of an incident, and that those responsible for deciding the outcome of a formal complaint or report of sexual harassment always include at least one woman, or individual who is the same sex as that of the victim.
- Ensure that greater collaboration with law enforcement is practiced when dealing with reports of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment that may be classed as a criminal offence.
- Prioritise protecting the mental and physical health and safety of sexual harassment or assault victims, with individual parties and government more broadly communicating a stronger stance against such behaviour.

Reforms that ensure a political career can be more easily pursued alongside caring responsibilities

The 'double burden' many women face in balancing a demanding political career alongside caring responsibilities presents a significant obstacle for career development (Fraile and Gomez 2017, 603). Consequently, women MPs are significantly more likely to have no children than their male counterparts (Maguire 2018). Government and parties must facilitate greater accessibility to a political career for women and individuals with caring responsibilities and family duties:

- The parliamentary schedule has been debated and adjusted in the past to allow MPs to better balance family duties with their work responsibilities; however, the current schedule still places strain on women who are responsible for childcare and should be better aligned with the school calendar.
- Efforts should be made to avoid voting on Mondays and Fridays to allow travel time, particularly for MPs whose constituencies are some distance from Westminster. This would allow female and male MPs to participate more fully in family life and consequently encourage women with young families and therefore more demanding caring responsibilities to pursue a political career

- Measures taken to improve the working conditions of MPs should, where relevant, be extended to all women employed by parliament. As a workplace, the working hours, maternity leave and childcare services offered to individuals who work inside parliament in any capacity should be reviewed to ensure employees are able to fulfil caring responsibilities

Awareness-raising campaigns

- Campaigns to change attitudes towards women in politics are crucial in overcoming perceptions that women do not belong in, or are not successful within politics, or that politics is not a ‘family friendly’ career. Key movements such as 50:50 Parliament have made valuable progress, highlighting the urgent need to work towards equal representation. However, government needs to place greater priority on civil society and government-led campaigns that raise awareness and drive change.
- The current government must continue and build on the work done by previous Conservative and Labour governments to highlight and address issues of equal representation and attitudes towards women in politics, implementing key campaigns that champion the role of women in politics and recognise the obstacles women face throughout political careers.
- Government should provide funding and support for civil society campaigns that encourage young women into politics, and campaigns that work to raise awareness of specific issues presenting obstacles to equal representation, such as the treatment of female MPs by the media.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Training and support schemes implemented within organisations and businesses

Organisations and businesses have a duty of care towards their employees and should ensure an environment where each individual feels valued and supported. This requires addressing issues of equality and diversity and the impact that these issues have on women’s experiences in the workplace. Many organisations employ effective training and support schemes that go some way to alleviating issues faced by women in the workplace; however, the multitude of embedded social, cultural and institutional inequalities women face require all employers to:

- Promote and provide access to mentoring schemes for women and minorities, particularly those who work within male-dominated sectors, with schemes aiming to empower individuals to realise their own value and potential through a focus on confidence building.
- Ensure all employees complete annual unconscious bias or gender-equality training, designed both to alert participants to the biases they may hold against individuals based upon gender, ethnicity or religion, and to raise awareness of and normalise dialogue around the issue of unconscious bias within the workplace

Monitor organisational procedures and processes

Organisations and businesses of all sizes have a responsibility to address issues of gender inequality. Equipping employees or staff to navigate and alleviate the impact of gender-equality issues on

an individual level, while necessary, is not sufficient in overcoming the negative stereotypes that women face, or in improving diversity within the workplace. Organisations must therefore monitor and modify organisational structures and processes through:

- Reviewing recruitment and promotional processes to ensure gender neutrality in job advertisements and descriptions.
- Frequently monitoring pay structures and salaries for parity between men and women.
- Regularly reviewing discrimination and complaints policies and ensuring that incidents of sexual harassment or discrimination are addressed with appropriate action.
- Setting internal targets to diversify the workforce and publishing plans for reaching targets.
- Anonymising selection processes and using blind evaluation processes where possible to remove gender bias.

The government must reinstate gender pay gap reporting across organisations within the UK to allow employers to identify and address issues of wage disparity between male and female employees.

Culturally focussed strategies that target embedded negative perceptions of women

Beyond structurally embedded gender issues, the role of workplace culture, both within individual organisations and more broadly across whole sectors of society, in issues of gender inequality must be addressed. Organisations must:

- Prioritise the de-stigmatisation of maternity and paternity leave, with promotional criteria reflecting such priorities, ensuring that employees are not penalised for taking parental leave.
- Promote a culture of meritocracy where employers prioritise recognising the valuable contributions of individuals.
- Promote mixed-gender networking opportunities that increase women's exposure to social networks within the workplace and that create an environment where male colleagues are encouraged to discuss, network and build connections with female colleagues at an equal rate as with male colleagues.

A multi-faceted approach to gender equality

Solutions to gender inequality within the workplace should encompass a range of different strategies with organisations and businesses adopting a multi-faceted approach to increasing gender equality. Organisations must:

- Combine strategies that focus specifically on supporting women to succeed within the company with methods that train and educate men on the different experiences and challenges that face their female colleagues and provide practical ways that men can amplify the voices of women and become more aware of their own unconscious bias.

- Adopt gender-equality policies that account for organisational structural issues alongside working to address the potentially negative aspects of workplace culture.

WOMEN IN ACADEMIA

Normalisation of maternity leave and caring responsibilities within academic career development

Linear career progression within academia, where individuals work full-time without taking leave for caring responsibilities, remains the norm. This impacts women's career development and consequently equal representation of men and women in senior leadership roles. Furthermore, such inequalities are reflected in the gender pay gap with the difference in hourly pay between men and women in UK universities at 37% (Ameen 2018). Therefore, academic bodies must:

- Review the expected and actual working hours of academic staff to ensure that all staff are able to balance family and caring duties alongside working hours effectively and without unnecessary added pressure.
- Review and modify promotional and recruitment criteria to ensure that women are not penalised for periods of leave taken for caring responsibilities including maternity leave.
- Ensure all academic staff are aware of their rights to take paid and unpaid leave for caring responsibilities, encouraging a workplace culture that normalises both men and women fulfilling childcare duties.

Greater value placed on teaching and service work within academia

Academic careers encompass a multitude of roles and responsibilities. However, often research is viewed more highly than teaching, and individuals that focus on research are rewarded more readily with promotions or funding for future research projects. Women disproportionately occupy more teaching roles than men, which often coincide with shorter contract lengths, therefore impacting women's career progression. Academic bodies must therefore:

- Conduct thorough and regular reviews of the distribution of tasks among academic staff to identify patterns of discrimination against women.
- Ensure that women gain equal access to funding for research projects through monitoring grant-funding processes and outcomes.
- Promote a culture within academia that values teaching and research equally, with promotional criteria reflecting this shift in attitudes.

Promoting greater awareness among male academics of the different experiences that women and other minorities have in their academic careers

Men's understanding of and attitudes towards female colleagues have a significant impact on workplace culture within academia. Focusing on increasing awareness among male academics of the experiences and challenges that women in academia face is necessary to open up dialogue and collaboration between men and women in working to achieve gender equality. Academic bodies and their employees must therefore:

- Facilitate gender-equality training that aims to bring awareness of the difference in experiences between men and women in academia.
- Ensure unconscious bias training is completed by all members of staff.
- Review language used throughout recruitment, reviews and promotions to ensure that gender bias and negative stereotypes are not overtly or indirectly promoted.

Feminist re-writing of masculinist discourses

Women in academia are in a position to significantly influence narratives and challenge societal norms through the academic medium of research and teaching. Academic bodies must therefore:

- Encourage the telling of female experiences within academia both verbally and in writing.
- Increase funding, grants and partnerships available for female-led research, particularly research that is focused on re-writing dominant masculinist norms and discourses.

Everyday communication and support between female academics

Collaborations between women to affirm their own gendered experiences within academia and promote solidarity in working towards gender equality should be encouraged. Academic bodies must therefore:

- Actively facilitate group discussion between women centred around their unique experiences within academia, providing a support network and allowing shared experiences to validate individuals' feelings and views.

CONCLUSION

The extensive research compiled by the Dialogue Society within this policy paper provides a vital contribution to the discourse surrounding women's empowerment in the United Kingdom. Inspired by a panel series held over the course of three months, the findings stem from a variety of sources including the contributions of academics, practitioners and volunteers from the community: this bottom-up evolution of the paper and contributions from diverse participants furthers its strength. Thus, this policy paper is an example of the impact of dialogue in action.

Specifically, this policy paper identified factors that contribute to barriers to women's empowerment within the three areas of study: politics, business and academia. The paper ends with a section dedicated to listing specific policy recommendations for those in decision-making positions.

Within the sphere of politics, the necessary reforms identified are in the areas of formal equal-representation policies and quotas as a step towards the current '50:50' goals: reforms that address issues of sexual harassment within politics and specifically within parliament; reforms that ensure a political career can be more easily pursued alongside caring responsibilities; and, finally, awareness-raising campaigns.

Within the business sector, the concrete policy recommendations identified are: advocacy of training and the reinforcement of support schemes within organisations and businesses; reforms that ensure regular monitoring and accountability of organisational procedures and processes; campaigns with a cultural focus that target embedded negative perceptions of women in business settings; and, finally the reiteration of the meaningful contributions of a multi-faceted approach to gender equality.

Recommendations in the field of academia also made reference to the necessity for reform to focus on the normalisation of maternity leave and flexibility towards caring responsibilities within academic career development; a re-evaluation of the emphasis given to research over teaching and service work within academia; reform to encourage greater awareness among male colleagues of the different experiences that women and other minority groups face within academic careers; the feminist re-writing of masculinist discourses; and, finally, the encouragement of everyday communication and support between female academics themselves.

Applications of the report

First, the application can be read within the lines of the overt recommendations made throughout, through which decision makers can reconsider the nature of their organisations and support a more inclusive environment for women.

However, as summarised above, the policy paper has identified not only issues within the specific areas of study but also issues which overlap across the work environments of women. A benefit of the comparative approach used within the paper is the identification of common factors across the workplace including the failure to accommodate care responsibilities and the value of encouraging cultural education within work settings on the unique experiences of women. These recommendations can be extrapolated beyond the three settings and encourage gender inclusivity in other settings.

Limitations of the report

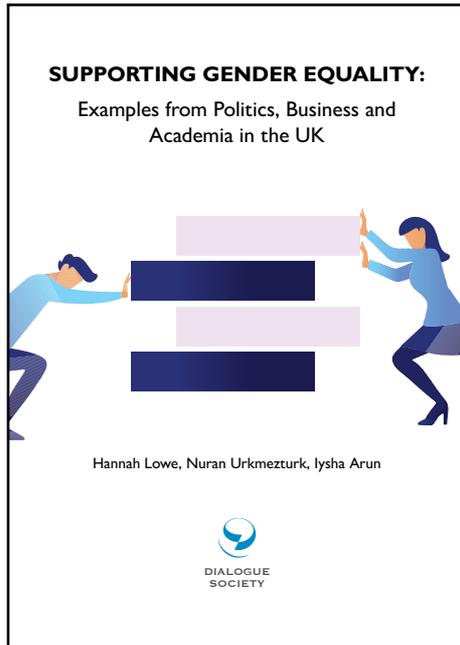
We understand the deep-rooted patriarchal history which contributes to our modern-day issue of gender inequality. Therefore, it would be comical to assume these recommendations alone will dismantle the structural inequalities in society. Thus, we call for further research with an intersectional lens (incorporating sexuality, faith, race and class) to ensure a thorough understanding of the causes and resolutions to the lived experiences of half our population.

The Dialogue Society calls for strengthened bottom-up approaches which incorporate dialogue as a means to further the cause of gender equality once and for all.

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Women's empowerment includes promoting professional development for women, implementing practices that empower women in the workplace, and promoting equality through community initiatives. The women's empowerment process focuses on shaping frameworks for closing economic gender gaps, fostering diversity, and promoting women's inclusion and equality. To this end, Dialogue Society compiled an extensive research to support gender equality and to enlighten the issue of women's lack of representation and oppression in three main areas: Politics, Business and Academia. The extensive research compiled by the Dialogue Society within this policy paper provides a vital contribution to the discourse surrounding women's empowerment in the United Kingdom. Inspired by a panel series held over the course of three months, the findings stem from a variety of sources including the contributions of academics, practitioners and volunteers from the community. Thus, this policy paper is an example of the impact of dialogue in action. The policy paper identifies factors that contribute to barriers to women's empowerment within these three areas of study: Politics, Business and Academia and ends with a section dedicated to listing specific policy recommendations for those in decision-making positions. The paper aims to highlight challenges and discriminatory practices that women face in politics, workplaces, academia and shared social life challenges. It serves with the aim to create solutions and recommendations that could increase allyship, opportunities, and representation of women in these areas to support the purpose of women's empowerment and gender equality.