

Research Paper on

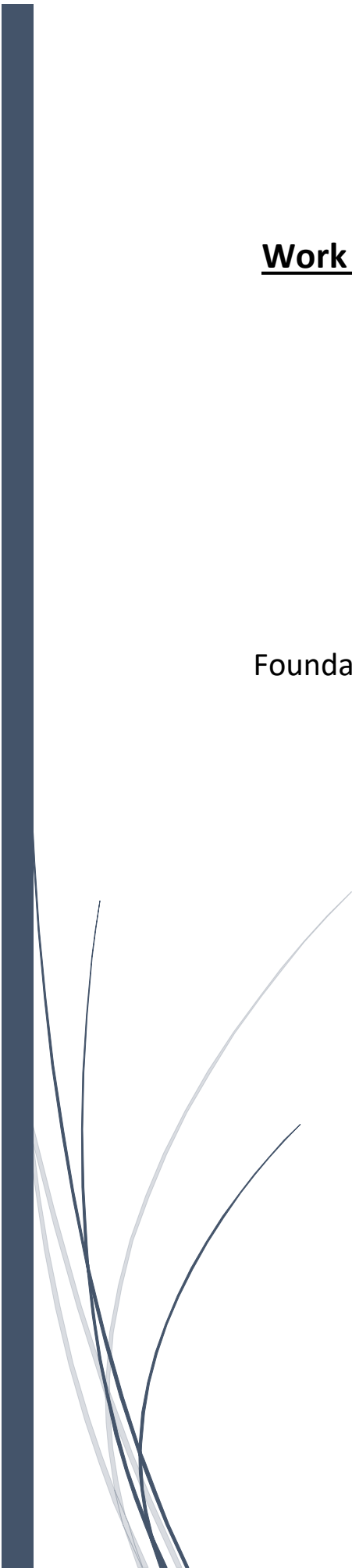
Work opportunities of women of color in USA

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Contents

Page Number

1. Introduction	02
2. Statistics on employment of different groups of society	02
3. Women of color and pay gap	03
4. Work environment and bias	04
5. Women of color and leadership roles	06
6. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Women of color	08
7. Glass ceiling framework	09
8. Intersectionality and Color of women	10
9. Intersectionality and Historical Background	10
10. Intersectionality and ontology	11
11. Intersectionality and Methodology	12
12. Intersectionality and Axiology	13
13. Conclusion	14
14. Reference	16

Introduction

In the work place of the United States of America (USA)' diverse workforce can be seen including white, black, Hispanic, Asians, males, females, white women, color of women, disabled workers ect. This research paper is focused only on women of color, to find out the reasons behind disproportionate rate of women of color in the employment sector of the USA. Is there any particular theory or framework which can effectively find out the fact-in-issue? For the purpose of this research, the Critical Race Theory, Glass ceiling and Intersectionality will be discussed to show how effectively these theories and frameworks explain the fact-in-issue.

By building the assumption that gender and racial disparities are the root causes of such disproportionate rate, this paper will discuss the historical aspects on how structural inequity shaped the society. Finally great emphasis will be placed to discuss on theory and framework (race theory, glass ceiling and intersectionality) to show the actual scenario of women of color in the workplace and how it can be changed. For the purpose of comparison, this paper will mainly focus on the disparity between white women and black women in the workplace.

Statistics on employment of different groups of society

According to the statistics, in 2021, the average unemployment rate was 5.3% in USA. The unemployment rate of black ethnic group was 8.9% (the highest), whereas, white ethnic group's rate was 4.6% (the least), which is even less than the average total national unemployment rate (5.3%). (BLS Reports, 2023).

As per women employment, overall, 56.1% of all women were involved with employment in 2021, whereas male employment participation was 67.6%. Again, Black women unemployment rate was 8%, whereas white women's unemployment rate was 4.6%. so, based on these data, it is clear that the rate of white ethnic group (including males and females) is higher than black ethnic group (males and females). Again, male participation is higher than females. So, white males are the most employed group in USA on that year. However, within the female group, it is shown that white women are employed more than black women. So, there is a clear disparity of rates within the same group named 'women', which is intersected by race again. (BLS Report, 23). These variations continue based on marital status, age, whether they have child or not, how many child ect.

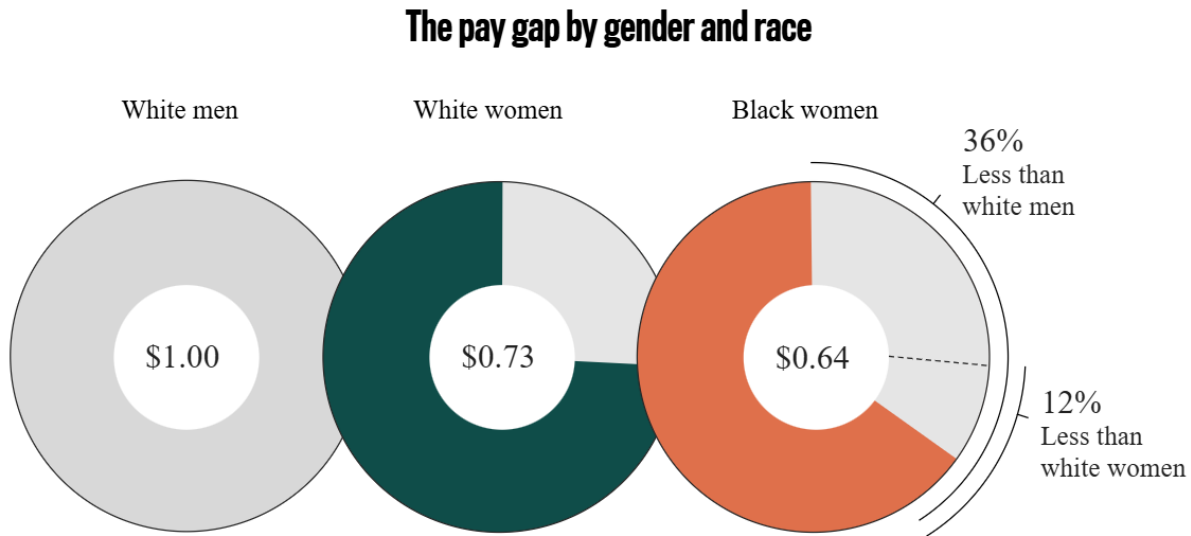
In terms of pay gap, there is also differences. There is a pay gap between men and women where women earn less than men. In case of older women the pay gap is even bigger.

Women of color and pay gap

Women are less paid than men, but research showed that women of color are even less paid than white women. Although white and black, both are under the 'women' group, but within this group, pay gap is different based on their race. As women of color, black women are paid 36% less than white men and 12% less than white women. (Leanin.org). the rate changes according to their ages.

Black women are paid less than white men & white women

On average, Black women in the U.S. are paid 36% less than white men and 12% less than white women.¹



Source: 'Black women aren't paid fairly'. Leanin.org

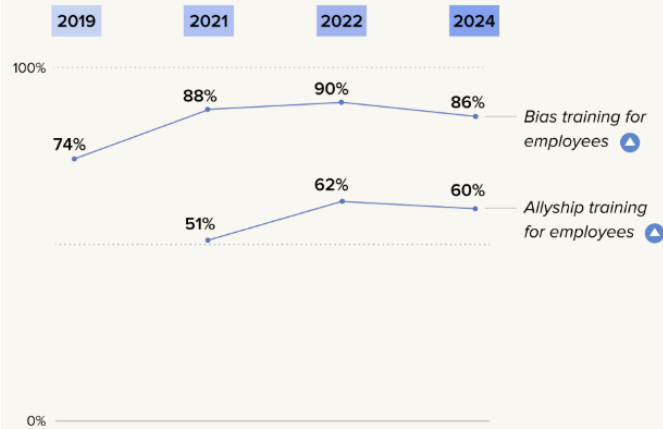
When they are young the pay gap is 19% which raise to 26% when they are at middle aged women and the gap raises up to 39% when their age is more than 55 (Leanin.org). This disparity made the black women as disadvantaged and oppressed as a separate group.

Work environment and bias

Bias is also another form of oppression, that color of women faces regularly in workplace. All women whoever face micro inequity want to change job more than three times than those women who do not face it in workplace.

More companies offer trainings to promote inclusion ...

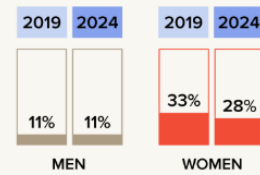
% of companies



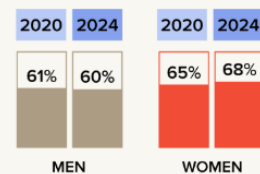
... But employees aren't showing up differently

% of women and men

Recognize microaggressions against women



Consider themselves allies to women of color



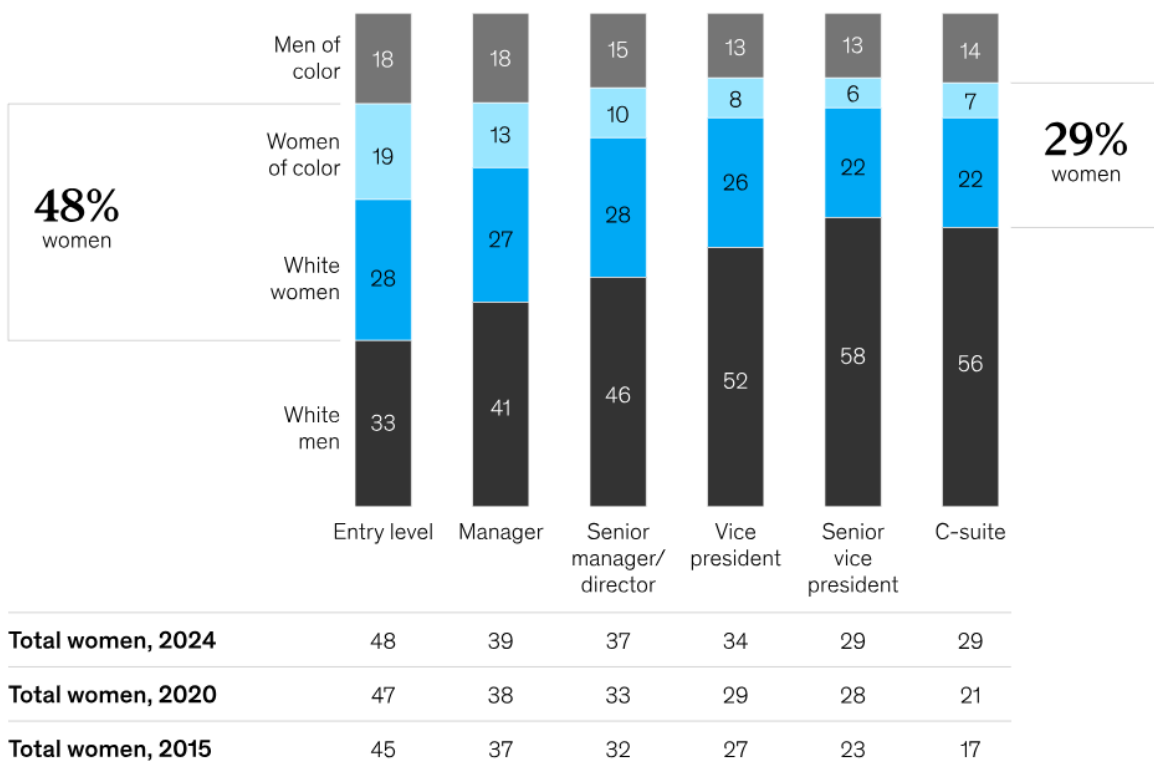
Source: 'women in the workplace 23, Leanin.org

Although, women participation in the employment has increased than before, but the workplace is not favorable for them. It is even harder for women of color. As compared to 2018, more women of color feel that their race is a significant barrier to advancement in their career (Mckinsey.com). Women in the workplace said, the people who gets promoted are favorites of managers in terms of their common factor, their relationship, friendship, companionship. So, women of color feel that their race is barrier because it doesn't come under the common factor or favor for managers.

Women of color and leadership roles

Women representation is more in the entry level of work than in the leadership roles, in corporate America. According to the 2024 McKinsey survey, in the entry level, white women represent 28%, where white men represent 33%. However, women of color represent only 19%. This rate goes even less when the position is high. In the c-suite position, white women represent 22%, whereas women of color represent only 7% shows how acute the disproportionate rate is (McKinsey.com).

Representation in corporate role, by gender and race, % of employees



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding. Total percent of women per level may not sum to overall corporate pipeline totals, because overall figures do not include employees with unreported race data.

Source: *Women in the Workplace 2024*, McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org

Source: 'Women in the workplace 2024: The 10th Anniversary report

Women of color in leadership position is the most challenging part of this disparity and barriers to equity. It is time to recognize for the high positioned people in the work sector that there are talents everywhere and it is beneficial for companies to make workplace more diverse. Often not recognizing the talents from other race, gender or groups happen because of unconscious bias. It is easier to promote and create opportunities for people who looks same or like mined or with common features. Because of unconscious bias often leaders cannot see other potentials within the work place. It is important for business leaders to understand and look beyond their unconscious bias for those people from other groups and create opportunities for them too. Stewart strategy can be a way to neutralize negative thoughts against women of color or people of color or gender as a whole. Negative thoughts connected to negative behavior or dangers against certain group of people creates neural pathways which sustains these stereotypical ideas. By creating new neural pathways, instead of these stereotypical ideas, positive thoughts should be generated about women of color or people of color, such as they are kind, philosophical, hardworking ect. By practicing these thoughts slowly, the new pathway in the brain will eventually sustain. (Choudhury, 2021)

Therefore, we can see that there are groups within groups. People's identities are not simple but interrelated. From the abovementioned data, the disproportion is visible and it appears that the differences are based on race, gender and sometimes both at the same time (black women). Therefore, it is clear that people's identities are overlapping. To explain the inequality of women of color in terms of work opportunity in USA, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality framework, which is closely connected with CRT will

be discussed. Glass ceiling framework will be discussed to explain barriers to leadership positions in the workplace.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Women of color

The CRT emphasizes on systemic racism, that exists and the roots of it are in deep level of society including employment sector. The American anti-discrimination laws are not capable to find out it's reasons and extent to such discrimination related to race. Since the matter is related to structural and due to systemic marginalization, it is not possible to solve the problem with existing anti discriminatory laws. (Bell, 1980).

Derrick Bell, notable theorist of CRT discarded ant discriminatory laws as solution to racism in USA. He also condemned the 'colorblind' policies of America regarding hiring for employment. Colorblind policies are basically those norms which are neutral, in terms of race. This aspect of equality rejected and criticized by Bell, because color blind policies were made by ignoring historical and systemic structural biasness. His critical Race Theory rejected this version of equality and criticized that it failed to address the structural racism within the employment sector, like other institutions of America. (Bell, 1980).

The CRT evaluates women of color issue with factors like race, systemic discrimination. These factors effect on their work life. CRT explains the historical aspect of today's racism which is based on colonialism. The effect of colonialism is still visible in various institutions of the state. As disadvantaged marginalized group, women of color have been often involved with entry level jobs or informal jobs which are not protected by labour law. Their

historical background and for their ethnicity, in workplace they often become prey to stereotypical thoughts, such as, they are less competent, do not have capacity to be in leadership position, ect. The stereotype notion that black women are angry, which in a way hamper their perception in the professional life negatively. Asian women are submissive, this notion may restrict their ability to assertive leadership roles. Therefore, these factors all affects in women of color's work life. CRT recommends systemic change as a solution to this situation.

Glass ceiling framework

Women as a whole face great barriers in workplace to get in to higher posts and these barriers are metaphorically referred as glass ceiling by researchers. This framework was first coined by Marilyn Loden in 1978 during a speech to discuss about workplace barriers of women. According to this framework, gender-based barriers are more acute in higher level than in the entry level. However, racial factor among men is not explainable by using this framework, so glass ceiling framework mostly applicable for gender barriers (Cotter. D et al, 2001). By using this framework on the abovementioned data, it is clear that women are less in number in higher posts than males. But clearly, there is women of color within the gender group, who represents even less in the leadership positions than white women. So, glass ceiling framework is effective to get a perspective on gender discrimination in leadership position, but the intersectionality framework explain it more effectively.

Intersectionality and Color of women

There are various identities of people within the society including their race, gender, class which often interact with each other to gain experiences where the experience may be oppressed or privileged. (Gopaldas.A, 2020).

Crenshaw, who was the first person coined the term intersectionality said, race and gender blend together and the outcome is different which was shaped by various dimensions of work experience of black women. (Crenshaw,1991). Intersectionality is used to explain the various factors when there are multiple identities based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity ect. Privileged and oppressed also can be blended due to overlapping of these identities. Crenshaw described that in the society, race and gender interact with each other in various ways which have impacts on employment sector for women of color.

Intersectionality and Historical Background

The Intersectionality concept has been coined by Crenshaw but many women scholars were vocal and work for the development of this framework. In 1980's and 1990's black movement happened against white men, they did not fight for black women so, the movement was sexist. On the other hand, white women did feminist movement which was racist because they did not raise voice against black women's rights. So, what about black (as racial identity) women's (gender) rights. This is how conditions of black women is marginalized. Therefore, black women then introduced their own movement based on race, sex and class and this is intersectionality framework. Later on, this concept evolved

and expanded in various sectors of research to identify outcomes. Starting from race, color, gender, the intersectionality eventually included age, ethnicity, minority, attractiveness, citizenship, location, body type, height, weight and so on. (Gopaldas, 2020). Therefore, it became very versatile because, it not only includes disadvantaged group based on race, color, gender, sexual orientation, disability, body type, age ect, but also accepts privileged group as white, male, thin body type, heterosexual, citizen of west people. it has the capacity to go for every aspect of people's identity which interact.

Intersectionality and ontology

Intersectionality in a macro level means, interactivity among different identities, for example, race, sex, class, gender etc, on the other hand in micro level, it implies to people's multiple identities that every person has with specific advantage and disadvantages (Gopaldas, 2020).

So, in this research paper, ontological question is, how does employment of women of color perceived. The traditional model will explain this fact by taking demographic variables independently, whereas intersectionality will take these variables as interdependent. Through intersectionality framework, the demographic picture will be different since this model counts the overlapping identities, privileges and disadvantages of people. For the fact-in-issue of this paper, taking in to account of race and gender, the traditional way will conclude with the statistics abovementioned that Men are employed more than women. So, women are facing disadvantaged group. On the other hand, whites are more in employment than blacks, and other ethnicities, so Blacks and other

ethnic people are disadvantaged group. This traditional way of explanation does not count overlapping characteristics.

With the intersectionality model, it explains that, since white women are white in race, so are privileged than women of color, On the other hand, white women are disadvantaged because of being women. On the contrary, black women are disadvantaged both on race and gender issue than white women. So, overall, in this context, Black women and women of color are more marginalized and disadvantaged than others. To answer the ontological question, how they are perceived, is Black women gets less opportunity in terms of getting employment which affects their occupation and work life.

Intersectionality and Methodology

In traditional research, the methodologies are mainly designed to find the differences among the characteristics. It includes qualitative, quantitative, surveys to show differences between groups. Such as White race and Black race, Male and Female, Rich and poor. A cognitive variable evaluates the differences between groups. On the other hand, intersectional method uses on site interviews and their perceptions as primary data, and historical background related to that context to understand the issue from overall perspective. (Gopaldas, 2020). By applying this model, it can be understood what the privileged and disadvantaged people perceive. On the other hand, by going to the historical contexts it will explain, how that privilege or disadvantage started and how it is now shaping the society in that aspect.

By applying the methodology of intersectionality model, in to the present fact-in-issue, primary data will be collected. On site interviews will give solid perspectives, starting from the point of job searching, getting jobs, job roles in the workplace, promotion, pay disparity. From the abovementioned data, we see black women are marginalized. So primary data will give perspective that how black women get jobs in the first place, how many months are needed to get in to jobs, whether their ethnic names have any impact on getting jobs, how are the interview questions, how many job interviews one gives before securing a job, what are their qualifications, in workplace what duties are they performing, did they choose the job responsibilities or it was given to them, how many Black women got promoted to a leadership role, why is the pay disparity, how is the work environment.

Secondly, the secondary data should be collected on the historical contexts and to give perspective, how women of color have ended up in to this disadvantaged marginalized group, what are the colonial histories and background facts behind this. By analyzing all these data, a true picture will come out which will explain the reasons behind Black women in workforce as a marginalized group. Because of the colonial history and slavery, black people and women of color are historically suppressed and it also expressed in the employment sector. As Derrick Bell suggested due to 'systemic structural biasness' black people face discrimination because of racism. (Bell, 1980).

Intersectionality and Axiology

'A paradigm's axiology is its politics. Axiological propositions answer the questions, why should scholars do research at all, and how should they use their findings?' (Gopaldas).

In Traditional research normally shows a cognitive or cultural variable cause the differences between or among groups. The historical perspective, the background behind this difference doesn't usually count and research is explained by the use of moderator. On the contrary, intersectional approach will count historical backgrounds, how society structured or shaped in a certain way and what are the perspectives of this oppression in terms of legal, economical or cultural and how the system maintains status quo. Research with the intersectionality lens, will also deal with the process of transformation for social change by giving value laden proposal to meet equity in the society, as opposed to value neutral approach of traditional researches. (Gopaldas,2020).

Conclusion

The main fact-in-issue of this research paper is to find out work opportunity of women of color in USA. From the statistics, we find that women of color have least work opportunity and employability in USA. Although they get jobs in the entry level, but the number almost vanish in the leadership roles as it goes up in the hierarchy level. The reasons behind this are systemic. Data does not include all the factors of real world. the systemic issue such as racism, colonialism, and it's impacts are not discussed by data. Therefore, with the lens of CRT, glass ceiling and Intersectionality, this paper evaluates all aspects of it. The CRT has limitation to explain the gender issue, on the other hand, glass ceiling framework explains the gender perspective and why there are obstructions for women in the leadership roles. The Intersectionality framework explains the gender as well as race factors and historical context, systemic discrimination simultaneously. The research model of intersectionality evaluates on site primary data, which includes people's

observation and experience. As secondary data, this model evaluates historical background and assess, why women of color failed to make it like other white women. They failed because of colonial history and the structure of USA society made them as oppressed marginalized group. They cannot get to leadership position as much because there is glass ceiling and few women, even from privilege white women can climb the ladder because of glass ceiling. Apart from that work environment, unconscious bias are also reasons behind their situation. Business companies should be aware of this and appropriate policy should be made to bring their position up to not meet equality but equity in the society.

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