



Gender Inequalities in Formal Workplace and its Earnings in Botswana: Implications and Possible Solutions

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Abstract

A male-female work and earning disparity has become a global problem that is drawing an increasing attention from researchers all over the world. Botswana like other nations has labour market outcomes that impact greatly on the well-being of the citizenry and most importantly on the survival of women and their children. In Botswana, women are more in managerial and professional jobs than men as opposed to what is obtainable in many developing countries. However, women continued to face disparity in the labour market despite the fact that they are more educated than men and they also continue to earn less than men on the average. Therefore, there is need to enact essential policies that will strengthen existing protections and further combat discriminatory practices that promote wage disparity against women. Beyond this, society must confront cultural biases that continue to harm women by devaluing their work and restricting them to specific gender roles.

Keywords: Botswana; Decent Work; Gender Disparity; Labour Market; Women.

Introduction

Botswana like other nations has labour market outcomes that impact greatly on the well-being of the citizenry and most importantly on the survival of women and their children. Women are also major contributors to the household socio-economic status and community work. Yet, in most developing countries, they are significant part of the poor and the unemployed population which work in the informal sector or low paying jobs. On the other



hand, in most economies including Botswana the labour market is male dominated, despite the fact that females (51.24%) are slightly more than males (Statistics Botswana, 2022). On average, women are more educated than men while they continue to earn less than men (Siphambe and Motswapong, 2010; International Labour Organisation, 2016). Also, both developed and developing nations have attitudes that discriminate against women which reflects in their labour market regulations as legislation exists that prevent women from working in certain occupations (Siphambe and Motswapong, 2010). Furthermore, women around the world earn less than men on average and this is evident in many researches on the gender wage gap (Nielsen and Rosholm, 2001; Siphambe and Thokweng-Bakwena, 2001; Ntuli, 2007). However, the wage gap is getting narrower but it is still a major problem in most countries. Therefore, this research seeks to answer question on whether women in Botswana have been disadvantaged from decent work in all its different manifestations and provide copious policy implication and recommendations.

Gender disparities in decent work

In the effort to bridge the gap in gender disparities in workplace, Botswana in 1996 endorsed the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women. The nation in 1997 also endorsed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) declaration on gender and development. Also, in 1998 the Government commissioned a study on all laws affecting the status of women in Botswana. These policies and programmes were made to address gender disparities and development issues to align the country with other international community. But women continued to face disparity challenges in the labour market. Though, there is an increase in female labour force participation, it is still lower than that of males. The percentage of female employed in the economy has since increased in 2008 from 43% of the total workforce to 49% in 2016, while the labour force participation rate was 56% and 67.8% for females and males, respectively (Khanie, 2019). However, by the end of year 2021, the female labour force participation has not significantly change as it stood at 56.1% while male participation reduced to 62.9% (see figure 1).

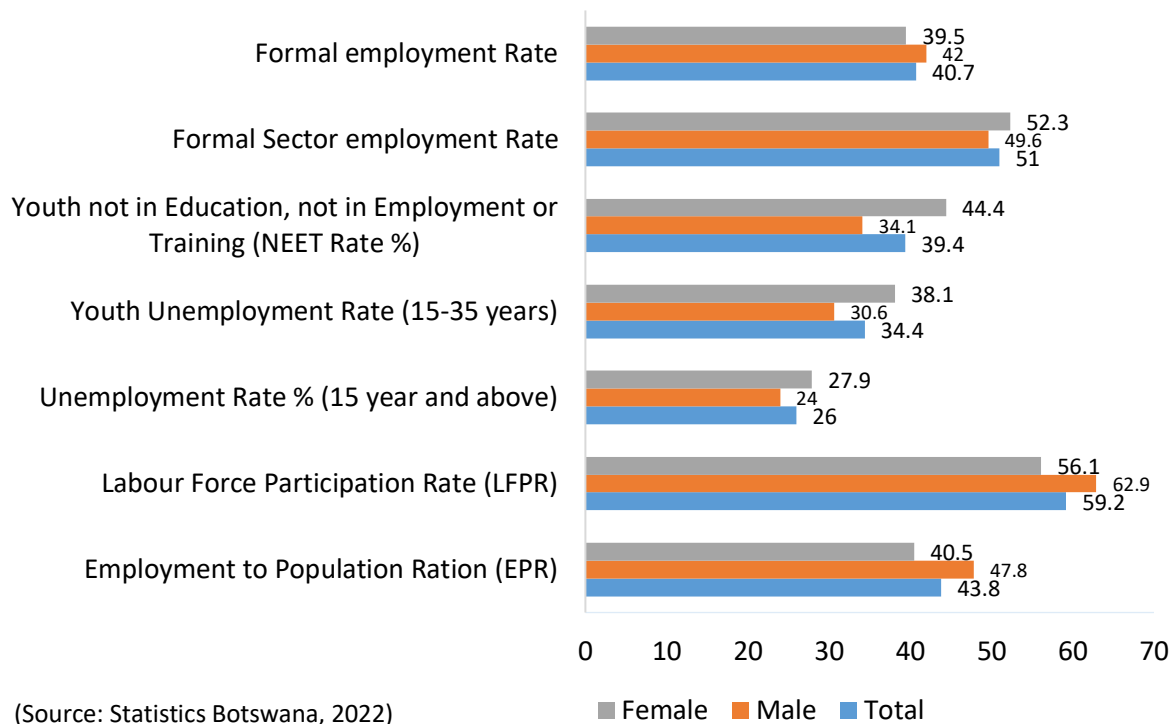


Figure 1: Botswana Labour Force Indicators for 4th Quarter, 2021

Furthermore, women are found to be relatively more in managerial, professional, technician and associate professional, clerical support services, service/sales works and elementary occupations but fewer in skilled agricultural and fishery works, craft and related trader works, plant and machine operations and assembling and other specialized occupations as shown in Figure 2. Hence, Botswana currently has more women in managerial and professional decision-making jobs than men as opposed to what is obtainable in many other developing countries. This may be as a result of the fact that there more females in tertiary education than male. The trends in Gender parity Index for the period 2013 to 2020 showed that the index is in favour of females with the highest index (1.6) recorded in 2020 which indicate that for every 100 male enrolments, there are 160 female enrolments (Human Resource Development Council. 2021).

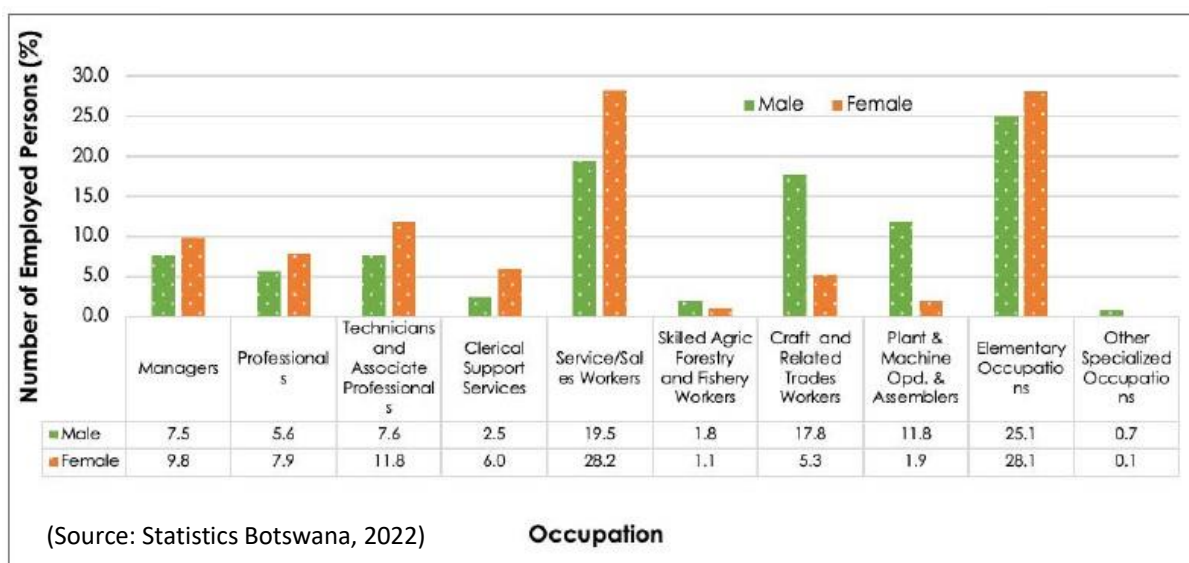


Figure 2: Employment by Occupation and Gender in 4th Quarter, 2021

Differences in earnings in workplace

A male-female wage disparity is a global problem that is drawing an increasing attention from researchers all over the world (Motswapong, 2020). Although, there has been serious campaign and commitment towards gender equality in wages, the success recorded is not encouraging. In Botswana, the situation is not totally different from that which is prevalent in others developing countries.

The earnings as seen in Table 1 shows that on the average, males earn more than females in most of the sectors in Botswana. It shows that on average (monthly) females earn 82.3% of the male average earnings for all the sectors. The table also shows that females, who are citizens, earn considerably less than males (80.2%); while reverse is the case for non-citizens where males earn 39.5% of what females are paid in all the sectors. Paying attention to earning differentials for all employees in different occupations, it is evident that females in managerial positions and clerical support services earn more than men. Conversely, women in professional jobs, technician and associated professions, services/sales works, craft and related trades works, plant and machine operation, elementary occupations and other specialised professional services earn considerably less than men. Generally, it is evident that there exist earning differentials within Botswana’s labour market. However, in a survey of 206 employees serving in the public service in Botswana, it was observed that women in the public sector in Botswana did not perceive themselves to be receiving inferior intrinsic rewards relative to men (Munyae, 2011).

Table 1: Estimated Average Monthly Earnings in Formal Sector by Occupation and Gender in 4th Quarter, 2021

Occupation	Citizens			Non-Citizens			All Employees			Q4 2020
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Managers	15,267	18,193	16,339	13,812	30,021.77	20,917	15,165	19,280	16,696	18,870
Professionals	17,853	14,919	16,060	9,706	14,664	11,868	17,146	14,907	15,802	16,686
Technicians and Associate Professionals	14,360	11,741	12,645	4,907	10,934	6,401	13,350	11,725	12,320	12,086
Clerical Support Services	4,739	5,246	5,095	3,952	25,019	10,163	4,701	5,419	5,200	4,422
Service/Sales Workers	3,967	2,411	3,115	9,517	2,505	7,834	4,035	2,412	3,149	3,009
Skilled Agric. Workers	4,497	0	4,497	-	-	-	4,497	0	4,497	
Craft and Related Trades Workers	5,098	2,960	4,514	4,411	-	4,411	5,035	2,960	4,507	4,211
Plant & Machine Operators	5,069	4,298	4,947	3,009	-	3,009	5,058	4,298	4,938	4,827
Elementary Occupations	1,764	1,188	1,383	1,824	-	1,824	1,764	1,188	1,384	1,320
Other Specialised Professional Services	24,154	11,564	22,191	-	-	-	24,154	11,564	22,191	20,338
Total	6,977	5,593	6,219	6,657	16,872	9,275	6,963	5,734	6,299	6,014

(Source: Statistics Botswana, 2022)

Possible solutions

The lower the workers' earnings, the more likely they are to be exploited by employers. Workers with low earnings also tend to have more volatile earnings and a smaller financial cushion, making it harder to absorb even minimal financial shocks and setbacks. And so, they may need to work into later years to increase their financial security, but may not be able to because family upkeep, health limitations and the difficulty of continuing work in physically demanding jobs. Also, government-funded job training programs and some public benefit programs are underfunded and inadequate in helping to bridge income gaps. Therefore, there is need to enact essential policies that will strengthen existing protections and further combat discriminatory practices that promote wage disparity against women. Also, shifting cultural attitudes that dismantle the patriarchal structures that systematically disadvantage and short-change women and their families should be promoted as earlier suggested by Boesch (2018).

Conclusion

In Botswana, women are more in managerial and professional jobs than men as opposed to what is obtainable in many developing countries but have less access to political positions where top decisions are made. Also, gender wage gap continues to disfavour women. Therefore, a robust work-friendly policy is hereby proposed to truly combat the multifaceted gender wage gap that disproportionate women. Beyond public policy, society must confront cultural biases that continue to harm women by devaluing their work and confining them to specific gender roles.

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