# GENDER PAY DISPARITY AND QUALITY OF WORK-LIFE: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF FEMALE EXECUTIVE MANAGERS IN THE UK BUSINESS CLIMATE

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***ABSTRACT***

*Gender pay disparity has become a contentious issue among female personalities across the world. This study explores the trajectory of gender pay disparity between male and female executives in the United Kingdom corporate business work environment. The study critically examined gender pay disparity and quality of work-life among female executives in the UK business climate. The study utilised descriptive survey research design through the lens of theoretical strategy to underscore the incidence of female executive pay disparity and its negative consequences on their quality of work. The study outcome demonstrated that female executive pay disparity exists among female executives in the UK business environment.*

*The study revealed that human capital theory, social identity theory and theory of tokenism are the vital theoretical stance that underpins the essence of female executive pay disparity in the UK business climate. The study also revealed that the female gender is underrepresented in the UK business environment which has grave consequences on their pay and by extension on the quality of worklife.*

*The study identified various elements influencing the gender pay gap in the UK business environment, including skills competence, tenure, organizational size, and the level of experience of women entering executive positions. The study concludes, that increasing opportunities for women in executive positions, and organizations should work towards reducing the gender pay gap and improving overall diversity in corporate leadership.*

**Keywords:** *Female Executive Pay, Gender Disparity, Quality of Worklife, Gender Pay, Female Managers, UK Executive Managers*

## INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality has become a global concern, causing significant distress and feelings of inferiority among female employees worldwide (Adam & Funk 2012). This inequality often begins at birth, with societal reactions to a newborn's gender revealing deep-seated biases.

The announcement of a female child frequently elicits mixed responses, with some viewing females as inherently less capable than males. This preference for male children, rooted in the belief that only men can achieve greatness and power in society, is particularly prevalent in Africa but has spread globally. This gender-based stereotype has permeated workplaces, influencing female pay structures in organizations. Job assignments and roles often differ based on gender in work environments (Saeed & Riaz, 2023). Harris, Bradley Karl, and Lawrence (2019) found that women are often sidelined, with management reluctant to place them in leadership positions or include them among executives.

Only a few women manage to overcome these barriers and reach top positions. Preliminary research indicates a persistent pay gap even among executive managers in UK boardrooms. This disparity negatively impacts the quality of work life for women in corporate organizations. Consequently, fostering an equitable workplace in the UK, particularly for women, has become a challenging and precarious endeavor requiring urgent attention from researchers and policymakers. The prevalence of gender imbalance at leadership levels and the problematic nature of gender pay disparity in the UK business environment underscore the need for comprehensive examination and intervention.

Gender Pay Disparity prevalence has been rather on increase in favour of men in corporate organisations especially in the global working space. Despite progress, gender pay gaps persist in the UK. The Office for National Statistics (2023) reported that the gender pay gap for all employees was 14.9% in 2022, although this has decreased from 17.4% in 2019. At the executive level, the disparity is often more pronounced. The Hampton-Alexander Review (2021) found that while women's representation on FTSE 100 boards has improved, reaching 36.2% in 2020, pay disparities at the top levels remain significant.

The causes of this incidence were demonstrated in the study by Blau and Kahn (2017) where they identified several factors contributing to the pay gap, including occupational segregation, differences in work experience, and discrimination. For female executives specifically, issues like the "glass ceiling" and "sticky floor" phenomena play a role (Salès-Wuillemin *et al*., 2023). Longhi and Brynin (2017) highlight that the pay gap is even more pronounced for women from ethnic minority backgrounds, demonstrating the importance of considering intersectionality in pay disparity discussions.

This has battered the quality of work-life (QWL) for female executives. Jabeen, Friesen, & Ghoudi, (2018) found that female executives often face greater challenges in achieving work-life balance, which is a crucial component of quality of work-life (QWL). Another study by Catalyst (2018) indicates that female executives often experience higher levels of stress due to the pressures of breaking through the glass ceiling and maintaining their positions in male-dominated environments.

Interestingly, despite pay disparities, some studies like that of Booth and van Ours (2013) suggest that female executives in the UK often report high job satisfaction, possibly due to the intrinsic rewards of their positions. On career progression, Baker et al., (2024) highlights that limited opportunities for career progression can negatively impact the quality of work-life for female executives. However, the implication of gender pay disparity on the quality of work-life of female executives has portend grave consequences. Folke and Rickne (2022) found that pay disparities can lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased stress among female executives, directly impacting their quality of work-life. The combination of pay disparity and QWL challenges can lead to higher turnover rates among female executives, as noted by Kleven *et al*. (2019) in their study of career trajectories. From the lens of organizational culture, Ely and Meyerson (2000) argue that addressing pay disparities is crucial for creating an inclusive organizational culture, which in turn enhances the quality of work-life (QWL) for all employees, including female executives.

In addition, another rationale for this gender study among female executives from the boardroom is found in the study of Grattan and Kirk (2023), citing a recent Michealpage report, highlighting that a significant gender pay gap affects most UK executives, negatively impacting their salaries and bonuses. This disparity is further illustrated by the appointment of only two female executives to board positions in January 2023. Such inequalities ultimately harm women's quality of work life (Kara *et al*., 2018). Given these circumstances, this study is crucial to examine the reasons behind pay disparities for women executives and to propose constructive measures to address these workplace inequities.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

i. To investigate the impact of female executive gender pay disparity on the quality of work-life

ii. To critically analyse the theoretical dynamics that underscore executive gender pay difference

iii. To explore Female representation in management positions and its effect on pay differences

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section investigates the root causes of wage inequalities for women in UK management roles. Through an extensive analysis of scholarly articles, case studies, reports, and academic journals, we aim to shed light on the underlying reasons for the gender pay gap at the executive level. Our literature review centres on a theoretical framework that elucidates the pay disparity experienced by female executives and the quality of worklife. Despite the considerable increase in female workforce participation, women continue to encounter less favourable working conditions than their male peers. These disparities manifest in restricted access to decision-making positions and lower compensation packages (Santero-Sanchez & Núñez, 2022).

Workplace gender equality is viewed as a critical priority and a core value shared across the European Union.

It is deemed crucial for fostering social inclusion, promoting development, enhancing employability, and strengthening social cohesion (Scicchitano, 2014). In line with this, the European Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 has set forth the goal of bolstering gender equity and female empowerment throughout European organizations as one of its primary aims (European Commission, 2021).

Recent data reveals a concerning trend in the UK's corporate landscape, with female representation on boards of listed companies showing a significant decline. Schneider, Iseke & Pull (2021) report that the percentage of women in these positions dropped from 19% in 2018 to a mere 11% by 2021. This regression is particularly alarming given the longstanding focus on gender pay inequality in academic research (Blau & Kahn, 2007). However, despite extensive studies on the broader issue, our understanding of salary disparities specifically for women in executive roles remains inadequate.

The problem extends beyond the UK, with global evidence pointing to persistent pay inequalities for female top executives. Multiple studies, including those by Kulich, Anisman-Razin, & Saguy (2015) and Yanadori, Gould & Kulik (2016), demonstrate that women serving on corporate boards consistently receive lower compensation than their male colleagues in equivalent positions. This disparity highlights the need for further investigation into the unique challenges faced by women at the highest levels of corporate leadership.

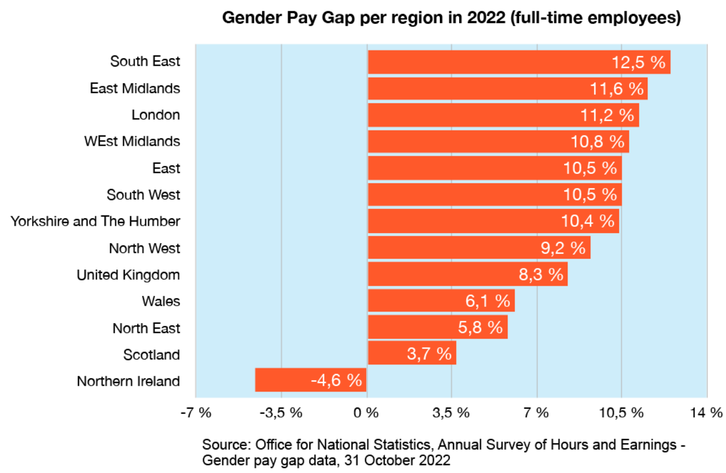



**Fig. 1: Source; Office of National Statistics, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings-Gender Pay Gap**

Public policymakers are increasingly focusing on the persistent gender-based disparities in compensation, particularly concerning bonuses and additional benefits for women. Although recent years have seen some improvement in closing this gap, progress remains frustratingly slow (Kunze, 2018; Theodoropoulos, et al., 2022). A study by Cohen and Huffman (2007) highlights a specific aspect of this issue in the UK, revealing that female executives typically receive a lower percentage of their overall compensation in cash compared to their male counterparts. This disparity takes on additional significance in light of international practices.

In nations where chief executives engage in direct negotiations with boards regarding their compensation packages, a notable penalty has been observed. Specifically, the European Union Committee has implemented a 23% sanction in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia to address this imbalance.

This compositional inequality aligns with evidence of gender-based differences in negotiating positions and pay expectations. Women are found to have lower reservation wages, resulting in reduced bargaining power during wage negotiations (Caliendo et al., 2017). In addition, gender diversity remains a significant challenge for many organizations. The concept of gender diversity is typically defined as a workforce composition of 40% women, 40% men, and the remaining 20% of either gender or other gender identities.

Despite significant progress in women's workforce participation and the dismantling of some barriers, the upper echelons of most UK organizations remain predominantly male. This persistent vertical discrimination manifests in various forms, often described through metaphors like the "glass ceiling" or the "pipeline." These concepts encapsulate the obstacles women encounter in mirroring the career paths and accomplishments of their male peers, subsequently affecting their access to improved labor conditions, including higher wages and better compensation packages (Harris, Karl & Lawrence, 2019).

In examining the factors behind pay disparities for female executives in the UK, Schneider et al. (2021) propose two contrasting viewpoints: a market-driven approach and a power and discrimination-oriented perspective. The market-driven theory suggests that executive compensation is primarily determined by supply and demand dynamics.

Under this model, any observed wage gaps between genders are attributed to individual factors or choices, such as career decisions and resulting variations in human capital development (Murphy & Zabojnik, 2004). This perspective implies that there should be no intrinsic reason for women to earn less than men in equivalent positions.

Leslie *et al*. (2017) present a contrasting view, suggesting that current UK market dynamics could actually justify higher compensation for women in boardroom positions. They argue that the demand for qualified female candidates may outstrip the available supply in the labour market. However, this potential premium is not reflected in reality, as women continue to be underrepresented not only on boards but also in executive roles below the board level. The pipeline of female talent advancing to top positions remains notably thin (Helfat *et al*., 2006). The power and discrimination perspective offers an alternative explanation for this discrepancy.

This viewpoint highlights a systemic bias in career advancement and promotion decisions that perpetuates the "glass ceiling" phenomenon (Francis *et al*., 2015). This bias may account for the persistent pay disparity experienced by women in top-tier positions within the UK business landscape. Prejudice and subjectivity in executive appointments can lead to statistical and evaluative biases for two primary reasons.

The first is rooted in societal expectations: successful executives are often presumed to possess qualities and traits more typically associated with men (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby & Bongiorno, 2011).

Secondly, women who rise to the top in the UK business climate may face sanctions for deviating from expected gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Consequently, men are often preferred over women for executive positions unless women are willing to accept lower pay. Additionally, some men may feel more comfortable working with other men rather than women. Preference-based bias can lead to wage disparities for women ascending to executive roles (Oehmichen et al., 2014). Blau and Kahn (2017) suggest that women may lack leverage in salary negotiations. This could be attributed to male dominance in compensation committees, where membership in "old boys' networks" can give male candidates an advantage in securing higher pay (Bebchuk & Fried, 2003).

Women's limited presence in these networks may result in lower compensation offers compared to their male counterparts (Albanesi et al., 2015). Additionally, women tend to be more hesitant to engage in salary negotiations at the management level (Leibbrandt & List, 2015). When they do negotiate, women in UK business settings often request lower salaries than men, fearing potential repercussions for appearing too demanding (Bowles, Babcock & Lai, 2007).

Executive tenure is considered another factor contributing to pay disparities for women entering management positions in UK corporate environments (Bowles & Babcook, 2013). Tenure refers to the duration of an individual's employment with their current organization. This variable significantly impacts women's executive pay differences. Generally, externally recruited candidates are less likely to demand high salaries compared to those promoted internally (Bachmann & Spiropoulos, 2017).

The landscape of executive compensation for women in UK corporations is shaped by a multitude of complex factors. A recent study by Benedi Lahuerta, Rejchrt & Patrick (2023) sheds light on a particularly significant element: parental value orientation. Their research, which surveyed 200 women aspiring to management roles in the United Kingdom, revealed that this factor plays a pivotal role in shaping career trajectories and, consequently, pay disparities. Their study suggested that the more women prioritize their parental roles at home, the less equality they experience in the workplace. Pay discrepancies are particularly attributed to women's typically shorter tenures on executive boards compared to their male counterparts, offering another explanation for the gender pay gap. Consequently, factors such as length of service, organizational characteristics like firm size, candidate personality, and company performance determine the compensation offered to women in executive positions (Sherman, Brands & Ku, 2023).

Women, especially parents, often develop strong family bonds and may be reluctant to compromise this aspect of their lives. This tendency can significantly impact their approach to pay negotiations (Elvira, Quintana & Villamor, 2023).

Leythienne and Pérez-Julian (2021) identified key factors influencing pay disparities among female executives, including skills, competence levels, and relevant experience. Their research revealed fluctuations in the unexplained gender wage gap, or wage discrimination, in the UK and European Union, shifting from 11.4% in 2010 to 10.9% in 2018. From a societal perspective, workplace characteristics have been found to be more influential than individual differences in explaining gender-based executive pay disparities and inequitable labor market dynamics (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2015).

This holds true even when these characteristics are not explicitly designed to affect women. Gender roles and stereotypes emerge as fundamental factors shaping the dynamics that contribute to women's pay disparity compared to men's salaries (Andrews, 2023). Kumar (2020) noted that age and career progression significantly impact pay disparities in top organizational positions among surveyed female executives in the UK. To address this issue, the UK has implemented legislative measures requiring organizations to disclose information about gender pay disparities at all levels. The UK Equality Act (2010), strengthened in 2017, aimed to promote gender equality through transparent pay reporting.

However, despite these efforts, when the gender pay reporting law was enforced, men in the UK still earned 18.4% more than women (Office for National Statistics, 2017). A striking example of this persistent gap was seen at Citigroup, which reported a 29% gender pay disparity (Citigroup, 2018).

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Conventionally, the gender pay gap among executives has often been explained through the lens of human capital theory (Becker, 1962). This framework attributes wage disparities to individual choices made by women and men regarding their educational qualifications, skill development, and knowledge acquisition (Mincer & Polacheck, 1997). However, this perspective has limitations as it fails to consider the broader social and workplace contexts that shape these seemingly individual decisions. A more comprehensive approach, as proposed by Altonji and Blank (1999), suggests that the factors contributing to pay differences between female and male executives should be examined through a more complex and multifaceted framework.

This expanded view incorporates sociological, institutional, and organizational dimensions, moving beyond the narrow focus on individual choices. The human capital perspective focuses on gender disparities in qualifications, which represent an individual's capacity to work. These qualifications, acquired through education, training, and experience, form the basis for earned wages (Bergmann, 1974).

However, this view alone is insufficient to explain the persistent pay gap.

From an organizational dynamics standpoint, a gendered culture may lead to two types of discriminatory variances. Firstly, it can influence the preferences of employers and those in human resources departments. Becker's (1985) theory of taste discrimination can be applied here, suggesting that organizational management may harbour biases against women, perceiving them as inherently different. This bias may result in women being hired or supported only when their reduced pay offsets the perceived inconvenience of employing them. In the UK, this behaviour might explain the poorer working conditions women often face in male-dominated organizations, where their contributions are undervalued compared to their male counterparts. This theoretical framework aligns closely with social psychological theories of group dynamics and interactions, particularly social identity theory (Brown, 2000).

These theories offer insights into why individuals tend to view and assess colleagues within their own group more positively than those outside their immediate network. When applied to gender dynamics, this concept suggests that evaluations from same-gender groups often yield more favourable and optimistic outcomes compared to assessments from the opposite gender. This inherent bias isn't limited to performance reviews but extends to all aspects of professional life, including compensation and career advancement opportunities. Studies by Maddrell *et al.* (2016) and Lalley *et al.* (2019), focusing on managerial and executive assessments in UK organizations, have provided empirical evidence supporting this phenomenon. Their research underscores how these subtle biases can significantly impact the professional trajectories and compensation of individuals, particularly in leadership roles.

### SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

The social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and the statistical discrimination theory by Phelps (1972) offer explanations for the persistent women-executive pay gap. Conversely, it's anticipated that increased female representation in top management positions would help narrow this gender pay disparity (European Commission, 2021). Such an increase could directly impact organizational gender bias, particularly in promotion practices and work allocation, as well as in the implementation of women-friendly policies that promote work-life balance and family-friendly workplaces (Chadwick & Baruah, 2020). Theoretically, greater women's participation in leadership roles should lead to a reduction in the gender wage gap (Joshi, Son & Roh, 2015).

However, the relationship between the growing proportion of women in management positions and the narrowing of the gender pay gap has not demonstrated the expected correlation, at least in terms of its strength. Existing literature provides various complementary arguments to explain this complex phenomenon.

Firstly, it acknowledges the impact of gender disparities in societal roles and the associated differences in professions and sectors where women and men typically work. The complexities of executive compensation extend beyond base salaries, encompassing various elements that can have disparate impacts on men's and women's earnings in the UK. Blau & Kahn (2017) highlight how factors such as remuneration for extended business travel, the nature of job responsibilities, and specific position characteristics can contribute to wage differentials between genders. Recent literature, adopting a more contemporary and global perspective, underscores the critical role of internal organizational dynamics in comprehending the gender pay gap within the United Kingdom's labor market.

There's a growing emphasis on examining internal processes related to promotion and wage determination as key factors in explaining the pay disparity for women in executive positions (Barth et al., 2021). This shift in focus reflects a deeper understanding that the gender pay gap is not merely a product of external market forces or individual choices, but is significantly influenced by the internal structures and practices of organizations themselves.

**THEORY OF TOKENISM**

Another theoretical position that lays the cogent reason for female gender disparity and the pay gap is found in the theory of Tokenism. Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism suggests that when women are a minority in management, they may face additional challenges that could affect their compensation. Certainly, this theory by Rosabeth Moss Kanter's Theory of Tokenism (1977) and significant implications for female disparity and the glass ceiling effect. Kanter's Theory of Tokenism, introduced in her 1977 book "Men and Women of the Corporation," describes the experiences of individuals (tokens) who are part of a skewed group, where they represent a small minority (less than 15%) within a larger dominant group (Bizzell, 2024). While the theory can apply to any minority group, it has been particularly influential in understanding women's experiences in male-dominated workplaces (Omotoso & Olaronke, 2024).

Tokens are highly visible due to their rarity, leading to increased scrutiny and pressure to perform. The presence of tokens heightens the dominant group's awareness of their commonalities and differences from the token (Childress, Nayyar, & Gibson, 2024). Tokens are often perceived through stereotypes and expected to conform to preconceived notions about their group. The implications of this theory of Tokenism are numerous, and part of the essence is performance pressure, Benan, & Olca, (2020) claimed that Kanter's theory position was that high visibility leads to performance pressures. Women in token positions often feel they must work harder to prove their competence, potentially leading to burnout. Another significant implication is social isolation in society which female executives have experience from time to time.

Tokens may be excluded from informal networks, limiting their access to information and opportunities crucial for career advancement. (Stephenson & Yerger, 2024). Role encapsulation is another challenge faced by women in executive positions. Women in token positions might be forced into stereotypical roles (e.g., the "mother," the "seductress," or the "iron maiden"), limiting their perceived suitability for varied leadership roles. The lack of allies is also one of the terrible issues described by tokenism. With few other women in similar positions, tokens may lack mentors and sponsors, further hindering their career progression.

**Table 1. Female and Male Gender Pay Representative in Senior and Executive Positions in the UK**

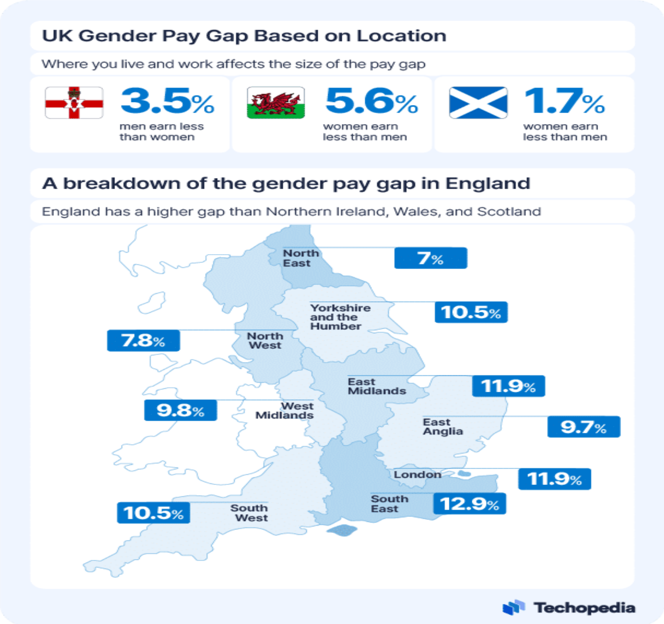
| *Grade Increase in Seniority* | *Increase in Number in Men Worked in This Grade* | *Increase in Number of Women Worked in This Grade* | *Percentage (%) of Women* |
|---|---|---|---|
| AA/AO | 7,989 (24.7%) | 11,463 (31.9%) | 58.9% |
| EO | 7,334 (22.7%) | 8,411 (23.4%) | 53.4% |
| HO/SO | 11,980 (37.1%) | 11,566 (32.2%) | 49.1% |
| Senior/ Executive | 4,583 (14.2%) | 3,689 (10.3%) | 44.6% |
| SCS | 263 (0.8%) | 229 (0.7%) | 46.5% |
| Non-Grade | 163 (0.5%) | 580 (1.6%) | 78.1% |
| **Total** | **32, 312** | **35, 938** | **52.7%** |

Source: HMRC Gender Pay Gap Report, UK, 2023

Table 1 indicates differences and disparity gaps in pay and higher employment in the UK. MRC employs the typical civil service grading structure, which spans from Administrative Assistant (AA) to Senior Civil Service (SCS). Since 2021, HMRC has expanded its staff by 4,672, with the most significant reductions occurring in the AA and Administrative Officer (AO) levels.

The overall workforce growth includes an addition of 2,209 women and 2,463 men. Women continue to be disproportionately represented in administrative positions, which offer lower salaries, while being notably underrepresented in higher-ranking roles. Regarding the Senior Civil Service (SCS), the Cabinet Office oversees pay and grading across the entire Civil Service. The SCS hierarchy comprises three tiers: Deputy Director (SCS1), Director (SCS2), and Director General (SCS3). Each of these tiers has a predetermined pay scale with established minimum and maximum base salary rates.

**Fig. 2 United Kingdom Gender Pay Gap According to Region/Province**



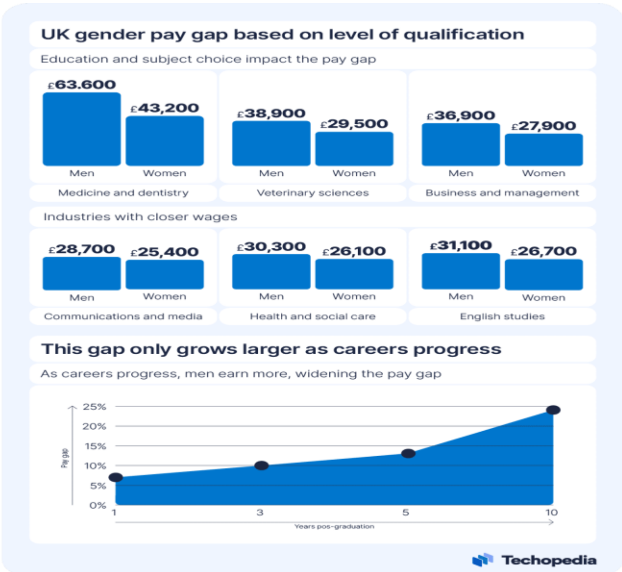

**Source: UK Gender Pay Gap Based on Province, Techopedia, 2024**

The female executive pay disparity and gap in the United Kingdom continues to widen despite the efforts to close the gap by the government. Figure 2 established the gender pay disparity statistics in the UK showing that females earn 14.4% lower than their male counterparts on average, and a female's wage is largely driven by peculiar variables such as industry, province/location, age and ethnicity. It has become mandatory by legislation in the UK to report gender pay gap statistics with organisations having more than 250 employees annually, and an overwhelming majority have men making more than women, on average (Tarkovska, Gabaldon, & Ratiu, 2023)

The figure further indicated that female executive pay disparity demonstrates that all parts of England have larger pay compared to Northern Irelands, Wales and Scotland.

In Northern Ireland, men earn 3.5% more than their females, and women in Wales and Scotland receive higher pay 5.6% and 1.7% less than male, respectively. In the South East, women earned 12.9% less than men, in London, women earned 11.9% below that of men. In the East Midlands, women earned 11.9% less than men, while in both the South West, as well as Yorkshire and Humber women earned 10.5% less than men respectively. In the West Midlands, female executives reportedly earned 9.8% less than men, in The East, women earned 9.7% less than men, in the North West, women earned 7.8% less than men, and in the North East, women earned less than men.

**Fig. 3: UK Gender Pay Gap According to Profession and Qualification**




**Source: UK Gender Pay Gap Based on Profession and Qualification, Techopedia, 2024**

Figure 3 illustrates how educational qualifications and fields of study influence the gender pay disparity. While the gap exists across all degree types, its magnitude varies depending on the subject area. Some disciplines show more pronounced differences:

- In medicine and dentistry, male graduates typically earn £63,600, compared to £43,200 for females.
- For veterinary sciences, men's average earnings are £38,900, while women's are £29,500.
- In business and management, male graduates average £36,900, whereas females earn £27,900.

Conversely, some fields exhibit smaller disparities:

- Communications and media sees men earning £28,700 on average, with women at £25,400.
- In health and social care, male graduates typically make £30,300, compared to £26,100 for females.
- English studies show men earning £31,100 on average, while women earn £26,700.

The pay gap emerges shortly after graduation. A HESA survey on employment status 15 months post-graduation reveals that female graduates' median salary is £2,000 less than their male counterparts with equivalent qualifications (Pfefer, 2024).

This disparity widens as careers progress:

- One year after graduation: Men earn 7% more than women
- Three years post-graduation: The gap increases to 10%
- Five years after graduating: Men's earnings are 13% higher
- A decade post-graduation: The difference grows to 24%

**Female Representation in Management Positions and its Effect on Pay Differences and Quality of Work-Life**

Research consistently shows that women in executive roles often face a "glass ceiling" effect, an invisible barrier hindering their ascent to the highest corporate positions (Kulich et al., 2011). While the obstacles encountered by women in UK corporate environments may become more manageable as they progress in their careers, significant challenges persist (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003; Maume, 2004). Consequently, women occupy a mere 3% of executive positions within organizations (Thelwall et al., 2020).

Kulich et al. (2011) examined 192 executive directors in UK-listed companies and found that women represented only 19% of this group. Their study not only confirmed the existence of gender pay disparities in corporate boardrooms but also revealed that men receive larger bonuses compared to women. Furthermore, they discovered that executive compensation for men is more closely tied to performance than that of their female counterparts.

A recent study by Elvira, Quintana-García, and Vilamor (2023) revealed that only 7.2% of executive positions were held by women among 803 surveyed career executives from leading UK technology manufacturing organizations. This data was reliably gathered from sources such as Bloomberg, Marquis Who's Who, and LinkedIn.

Their research indicated that early career progression and advancement were key factors in the inclusion of the few women who attained management positions in the UK. Interestingly, the study also noted a premium pay above the standard for high-potential women managers, although the primary reason for this remained unclear. Age was identified as a pivotal observable factor responsible for this premium pay. Brown's (2019) research demonstrated that even after the UK government enacted laws on gender pay gap reporting, only 6 females were found among boardroom executives out of 250 surveyed.

Post and Byron (2014) examined the relationship between women's board representation and pay disparity in the UK. Their study found that this relationship was nearly non-existent, contrasting with positive correlations in countries with greater gender equality. This suggests that societal gender differences in human capital may influence investors' and shareholders' assessment of future earning potential for organizations with fewer women directors. Furthermore, Biswas et al. (2023) reported consistently low women's board representation in the UK from 1999 to 2019. Their research employed a multi-theoretical approach, incorporating trickle-down effect, agency theory, and critical mass theory to explore various aspects of gender pay differentials among UK executives. Their findings supported a critical mass effect, indicating that having one or two women on a board is only marginally beneficial for advancing women into senior management positions.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This review has examined the factors contributing to the pay disparity between female and male executives in UK corporate organizations. The study has identified various elements influencing the gender pay gap in the UK business environment, including skills competence, tenure, organizational size, and the level of experience of women entering executive positions.

The review presents a theoretical framework explaining the pay differences for women executives in the UK. It elucidates the reasons behind the declining representation of female directors in boardrooms over the years and provides insights into the gender pay gap at the highest organizational levels. The study concludes that female representation in managerial positions within the UK corporate environment remains limited. To address this issue, the review proposes that bolstering women's executive appointments could be a potential solution to the underrepresentation of women in management roles.

This approach may also help establish a pipeline for future Chief Executive Officer and board appointments in the United Kingdom. By focusing on increasing opportunities for women in executive positions, organizations can work towards reducing the gender pay gap and improving overall diversity in corporate leadership. This strategy not only addresses current disparities but also lays the groundwork for more equitable representation in top-tier positions in the future.

The research implication of this theoretical analysis of female executive pay disparity and quality of work-life is enormous. The analysis is to thoroughly execute the suggested recommendations, tailored to the specific context of each organization and should involve ongoing evaluation and adjustment. It is also crucial to involve both men and women in these paradigm shift initiatives to ensure broad support and effectiveness. Addressing pay disparity and enhancing the quality of work-life for female executives is an ongoing process that requires sustained commitment and effort at all levels of an organization.

The following recommendations are imminent to ameliorate female executive pay disparity and to enhance the quality of work-life.

i. Transparent pay structures and reporting are key to curbing female executive pay disparity.

By implementing mandatory pay audits and reporting, similar to the UK's gender pay gap reporting requirements. Also, establish clear, objective criteria for pay decisions at executive levels.

ii. Address the pipeline issue, by implementing leadership development programs specifically targeting high-potential women, and review promotion criteria to ensure they do not inadvertently disadvantage women.

iii. Regular pay equity reviews, conducting regular pay equity reviews and making necessary adjustments to address any unexplained pay gaps.

iv. Enhance Board Diversity, by increasing gender diversity on boards, which can lead to more equitable decisions for executive pay and promotion.

v. Improve the work environment, by addressing workplace harassment and micro-aggressions through clear policies, reporting mechanisms, and consequences. This will create safe spaces for women executives to network and share experiences.

vi. Redefine the leadership paradigm shift, by challenging traditional notions of leadership that may be biased towards typically male attributes.

vii. Transparency in promotion criteria, by clearly communicating promotion criteria and providing feedback on progress towards executive positions

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