



Exploring the gender pay gap in Occupied Palestinian Territory: A qualitative study of the education sector

In collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Labour (MoL) and Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), the International Labour Organization (ILO) commissioned an independent consultant¹ to carry out a research study exploring the causes of the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) between men and women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), focusing on the education sector as an example. The decision to focus on this sector was made in tripartite consultation with the National Women's Employment Committee, representatives from the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Palestinian Federation of the Union of Chambers of Commerce. The education sector is one of the largest sectors in Palestine, employing more than 100,000 persons, of whom the majority are women. The study, conducted in 2015 -2016, focused largely on private schools and universities, highlighting the need for further research to ensure full coverage of the education sector.

Background information

The gender pay gap in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The gender pay gap is a worldwide phenomenon that refers to the difference between male and female average earnings. The principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, also known as 'pay equity', is enshrined in the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1953 (No. 100) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

There are two main concepts covered by pay equity. The first concept is "equal remuneration for equal work", meaning that men and women should receive equal pay and benefits for work that is the same, or requires the same skills, effort and responsibility, and is performed under similar working conditions. The second concept is that of "equal remuneration for work of equal value", meaning that even if jobs are entirely different, based on objective criteria free from gender bias, they are of equal value. This concept ensures that men and women receive equal remuneration for jobs which may involve different types of qualifications, skills, responsibilities or working conditions, but which are nevertheless of equal value.

Remuneration includes basic salary, paid leave, allowances, severance pay, bonuses and other forms of financial rewards given to workers. The gender pay gap is the result of remuneration inequality to the detriment of either men or women, although in the vast

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majority of cases it is women who receive lower remuneration. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, data from 2015 points to a significant gender pay gap, with women's median daily wage (USD \$21.2) comprising 76% of the median daily wage for men (USD \$27.8). This GPG persists despite substantive gains women have made in recent years in terms of education and employment experience (PCBS, 2015(a)).

Occupations more frequently filled by women in the OPT – such as clerks, administrative assistants, nurses and teachers – generally receive lower remuneration than occupations more frequently filled by men, while for the same occupations, men and women typically access the same basic wage. Accordingly, it appears that the gender pay gap is driven more by women's lower pay for work of equal value than by women's lower pay for the same work.

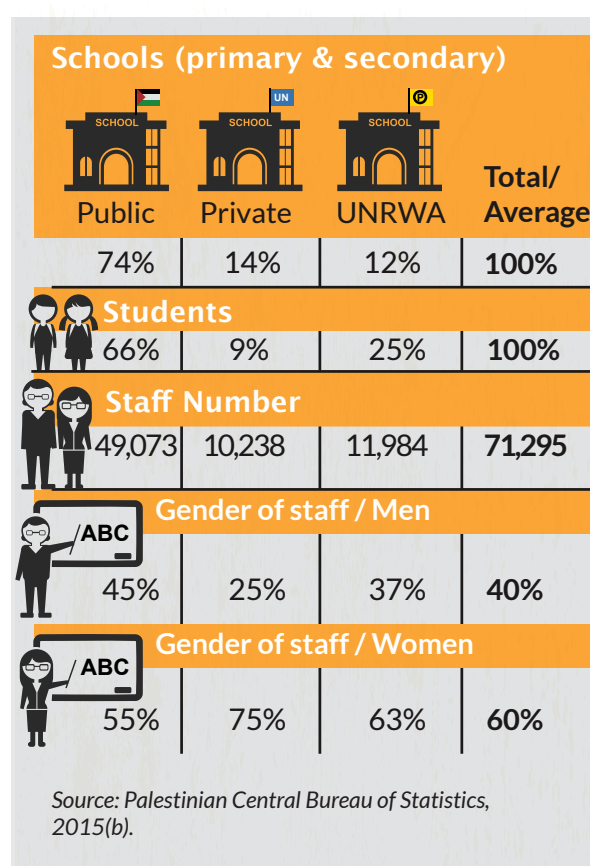
Data suggests that women in the education sector face a considerable gender pay gap, yet the extent of the pay gap varies between divisions within the sector. For example, on average, women in public secondary schools in the West Bank receive USD\$1.30 less in daily wage (USD\$32.40 per month) than men, while women employed in private primary schools in the West Bank receive USD\$6.40 less in daily wage (USD\$160 per month) than men. A higher proportion of men in the education sector are employed in specialised and managerial roles, for which they receive higher remuneration than women.

Distribution of men and women across the education sector

The main education service provider in the OPT is the Palestinian government, which manages around three-quarters of primary and secondary schools in the West Bank and Gaza. In addition to managing public schools, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is responsible for regulatory oversight of the private school sector. The private sector is supervised and funded by

charities, religious groups, private enterprises and individuals. UNRWA schools fall under separate oversight and were not included in the research study.

Women constitute the majority (60%) of the total workforce across all schools in the OPT, including teaching and non-teaching staff although the male to female ratios range significantly between sectors. The public school system employs approximately equal numbers of women and men, the private school system employs predominately women, while the preschool sector employs almost entirely female teachers and supervisors (note the preschool sector falls outside the scope of this study).



The inverse is true for higher education, where women constitute the minority (25%) of the total workforce.

	Staff Number	Gender of staff Men	Gender of staff Women
Universities	9,084	75%	25%
University colleges	1,655	71%	29%
Community colleges	941	73%	27%
Open university	14,667	76%	24%
Total/Average	26,347	75%	25%

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015(b).

Research methodology and limitations

Information collected for the study was largely qualitative and obtained through focus group discussions (22 participants) and interviews (23 participants) with a diverse range of stakeholders in West Bank and Gaza. Stakeholders included workers (i.e. administrative, teaching and support staff) and employers from schools and universities, senior staff from government ministries and regulatory authorities, trade union members and representatives from civil society organisations. In addition, these research methods were complemented by a desk review of articles, studies, reports and statistical data published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the MoEHE.

Stakeholders who participated in focus group discussions and interviews were mostly from private sector schools and universities, in addition to government (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Women's Affairs). Accordingly, there was

limited representation from the public school sector, preschool sector, community colleges and university colleges, highlighting a need for additional research to ensure full coverage of the education sector. Moreover, as recent statistical data on gender pay gaps was difficult to source, the information used for the study was largely anecdotal.

Key findings

The research study identified a number of causal factors which contribute to the gender pay gap within the education sector in the Occupied Palestinian Territory:

Primary and secondary school sector

Terms of employment contracts are inadequate and stipulations are poorly enforced

Participants in focus groups discussions and interviews confirmed that the terms specified within the employment contracts signed by workers and private school employers are often disregarded in practice. Many private schools do not abide by the agreed salary, but instead pay employees less than the legal minimum wage. Schools circumnavigate adherence with contracts by giving workers cash payments that do not match official records. Official records examined by the Ministry of Labour show equal wages for male and female teachers, yet complaints lodged by teachers to MoL reveal a gender pay gap. In other cases, private schools pay the full salary but demand employees return part of the salary to the school, even to the point of requiring workers to cash in their pay-checks.

According to one officer from the Ministry

of Labour, the largest set of complaints submitted to MoL over 2014- 2015 related to the readjustment of employment contracts. Instead of paying full salaries, many schools give their employees shares in the company (i.e. school) or a partnership contract or warranty. This is highly problematic as workers do not receive their wages upfront, and may lose their shares in the longer term if the school runs into financial issues or bankruptcy. Participants also report that it is commonplace for private schools to employ workers on ten-month contracts, instead of the normal twelve-month contract. Under these contracts, employees are not paid for two months over summer vacation nor are they protected from arbitrary dismissal. By law, after the second year of employment, an employee has the right to be considered for a permanent (i.e. tenured) position.

However, private schools frequently break employment contracts before the two-year period comes to an end, thereby preventing the employee from achieving job permanency. These are major factors contributing to the gender pay gap, since the vast majority of workers on these contract types are women.

Women receive lower remuneration with fewer benefits

In public schools, basic salaries are typically equal between men and women for the same type of work. However, allowances and benefits received by men and women vary.

By law, only male employees are eligible to receive family allowances to support their wives and children, based on an unfair assumption that men are the sole or main breadwinners for their households². This does not give consideration to the fact that many women contribute to the household income and in some cases are the sole provider for their families. In the public

school sector, women are entitled to maternity and breastfeeding leave.

Notably, family allowances paid to men are received on a monthly basis in addition to the salary amount, whereas maternity and breastfeeding leave are paid as the salary and received only as applicable.

Similarly, in private schools, the basic salary received by men and women for undertaking the same work was found to be equal, but financial rewards, such as family allowances, monetary bonuses, and health insurance, are given to men more often than to women. Such benefits are optional and allocation is to the discretion of the individual school. Although the preschool sector was not a direct focus of the study, anecdotal evidence indicates that the remuneration received by preschool teachers is far below that of primary school teachers, often falling to minimum wage (of 1450NIS, equivalent to US\$381) or lower. Basic salaries are as low as USD\$52- 104 per month in some early childhood centres. It is common for preschools to hire entirely female teachers, another factor leading to the gender pay gap.

Workers are not aware of their legal rights

The participants in this study indicated that few employees in the private sectors are aware of their rights under Palestinian law. The level of knowledge of the Labour Law was slightly higher among men than women. Staff from MoL thought that women were less likely to lodge complaints about their employers due to a lack of awareness of their legal rights.

2 If both a husband and a wife are working, only the man receives the family allowance. There is an exception for a widowed mother whose children are in her care after the death of her husband, in which case a woman is eligible to receive the family allowance.

A high supply of women seeking teaching positions leads to lower wages for women

There appears to be an ‘oversupply’ of women teachers in the OPT, which is reflected in the high number of women who sit for the entry-to-teaching examinations conducted annually by MoEHE. The supply-demand for teaching positions in the labour market forces women to accept lower salaries if they are to compete for a position in the teaching workforce. It also decreases their opportunity to fairly negotiate the conditions of their contracts. This is especially the case in private schools with limited financial resources, that tend to select women for teaching positions as a strategy to reduce their operational costs.

A high demand for specialised male teachers results in higher wages for men

Anecdotal evidence suggests that specialised teaching positions in private schools (for example, mathematics, physics, physical education and languages) are usually filled by male teachers, and these specialised roles tend to be better paid than regular teaching positions normally held by women. Employing male teachers is a marketing and promotional tactic used by schools to increase student enrolment rates and justify increasing student fees. Consequently, private schools aim to attract male teachers by offering them higher remuneration.

In addition to receiving higher remuneration, male teachers are able to earn extra income by holding private lessons on specialised subjects outside of normal school hours. There is especially high demand for tutoring during periods leading up to examinations. Such opportunities are not equally available to female teachers as many women do not have a teaching specialisation. It may also be difficult for a

female teacher to take on additional paid work after school hours on account of their household responsibilities and restricted mobility.

Women are poorly represented in upper management positions

Despite the high representation of women in teaching roles, most upper management and decision-making positions, such as school principal, deputy principal, financial manager and administrative officers, are occupied by men. The disproportionate presence of male staff in positions at the higher end of the employment scale contributes to the gender pay gap that exists between men and women in the education sector workforce.

University sector

Women are underrepresented in upper management positions

At universities, managerial positions such as deans, chancellors, heads of units, and professors tend to be occupied by men. There are comparatively few women in high-ranking academic posts or in senior general staff roles. While unified pay scales ensure that wages received by women and men working at universities are equal for the same positions, it is the benefits tied to senior positions that contribute most to the gender pay gap.

Women are less likely to receive promotion to higher-ranking positions and have fewer opportunities to improve or upgrade their qualifications. For instance, women receive fewer grants and scholarships that enable them to attend training or work abroad. As women typically have greater domestic and family responsibilities within the household, men generally have more time available to engage in research and publication beyond their teaching workloads.

Recommendations

Closing the gender pay gap within the Palestinian education sector requires a series of societal, structural and policy changes. The following recommendations are proposed for consideration by government ministries, professional organisations, trade unions and civil society groups. These recommendations are based on the evidence stemming from the qualitative research study and take into account suggestions put forward by various stakeholders who participated in the focus group discussions and interviews.

National legislation, and in particular the Labour Law, should be amended in conformity with ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention, 1953 (No. 100) to ensure equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value.

Employer-worker relations in all education sectors should be governed by the Labour Law and a standard employment contract. In accordance with the Labour Law, a standard employment contract, signed by both the employer and worker, should spell out unambiguous and straightforward clauses that ensure appropriate and equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.

Labour inspection and monitoring systems should be strengthened to ensure employers and institutions comply with the provisions of the labour law and standard employment contracts. Regulatory measures alone are not sufficient and should be accompanied by strict enforcement measures.

Independent dispute settlement and compensation mechanisms should be accessible, efficient and well-functioning. Workers should have the right to file labour-related grievances regarding gender pay gaps and other remuneration concerns with the Ministry of Labour, and be assured that proactive and timely measures will be taken.

New standards for government licensing and regulation of private schools and preschools should be introduced to ensure these institutions abide by national laws. The gender pay gap appears to be particularly acute in these two education sectors.

An awareness-raising campaign should be rolled out to inform both men and women employed in the education sector of their rights at work.

Gender-specific, affirmative action policies and procedures related to the hiring and promotion of women should be developed and implemented to increase women's representation in managerial and decision-making positions.

Trade unions, professional associations and civil society organisations in the OPT should advocate for legislative changes, improved monitoring and enforcement of laws that would ensure equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value in all positions and education sectors. Efforts should be made to involve more women as active members and leaders in these organisations in order to increase female representation.

All workers in the education sector should benefit from social security coverage. Contracts for teachers should cover the full 12 months and should not be terminated before the summer break.

Areas for additional research

Due to research constraints, the findings and recommendations outlined in this report are largely applicable to private sector schools and the university sector. As such, there is need for additional research on gender pay gaps within the public education sector, preschool sector, community colleges and university colleges.

In particular, it is important to examine the situation within the public school system, as it is by far the largest education provider and employer within the education sector in the OPT. This would allow for a meaningful comparison of gender pay gaps between the public and private sectors. It is also important to conduct research on the preschool sector, which employs almost entirely female teachers, many of whom are paid below the legal minimum wage.

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