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Student Name: Tamia Cedeno

Student ID no.: 816024165

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Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Jackson

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate and examine the impact of gender inequalities on professional women in Trinidad, particularly as it relates to the home and the workplace as equal opportunity is not only essential for social justice and the economic balance of a society, but also the well-being of women. It seeks to interrogate how various inequalities are presented and furthermore, how they impact the professional and personal lives of these women. Previous research on gender issues pertaining specifically to Trinidad has focused primarily on the high percentage of poverty as a result of the wage gap and the issue of gender-based violence. While these are prevalent problems that women face today, there are other issues that should also be investigated. Surveys were distributed amongst professional women at the University of the West Indies to analyse the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities in the household and how invisible labour impacts the mental health and professional careers of women, to spotlight the inequalities evident in the educational system and how they translate to the workplace and finally, the study pays close attention to the limitations women face in the workplace as well as their impacts. The findings indicate that gender inequality is evident in all three areas and various factors are involved. Women are responsible for a greater amount of household chores that are often unrecognised and this disparity contributes to a great negative impact on their well-being and job security. Moreover, inequalities in the educational system are largely attributed to inequalities in socialisation and subject stereotyping which is also evident in the division of traditional jobs that are overrepresented by either men or women. The issue of the wage gap is also recognised and there are various forms of discrimination in the workplace which have both positive and negative effects.

Keywords: gender inequality, women, workplace, wage gap, domestic responsibilities, education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF FIGURES	4
LIST OF APPENDICES	5
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER ONE	11
CHAPTER TWO	18
CHAPTER THREE	22
CHAPTER FOUR	26
CONCLUSION	33
WORKS CITED	35
APPENDIX A	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing the Percentage of Household Chores Women Undertake	19
Figure 2: Bar Graph Showing How Many Women Agree or Disagree with the Quoted Statement, 1 Being Strongly Agree, 2 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Disagree and 5 is Strongly Disagree	19
Figure 3: Pie Chart Showing Evidence of the Limitations of Subject Stereotyping at the UWI	25
Figure 4: Bar Graph Showing How Many Agree or Disagree with Gender Influence on One's Career.	27
Figure 5: Bar Graph Showing How Many Women Experienced Gender Discrimination in the Workplace	28
Figure 6: Bar Graph Showing How Many Women Experience Different Treatment Based on Gender	28
Figure 7: Bar Graph Showing the Different Influences on the Gender Pay Gap	30

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

36

INTRODUCTION

A gender-equal society exists when women have been emancipated from various kinds of discrimination and oppression. However, it is not a reality yet. Despite the important progress women have made over the years as a result of feminist movements which allowed them to reexamine history, the change is uneven as men still remain dominant in many cases. It is estimated that “more than 2.5 billion women and girls live in countries with at least one discriminatory law on the books” (“Closing the Gender Gap”). For instance, many women live in restricted spaces, unable to make decisions about marriage or divorce. Domestic violence remains widespread as well as instances of sexual harassment in the workplace which has affected one in five women globally (“Closing the Gender Gap”). Moreover, the economic empowerment of women remains unattained as women often earn lower wages than men. This lack of empowerment also applies to the household as a result of the poorly supported and invisible domestic responsibilities of women.

This gender gap is evident in Trinidad, and its historical context is relevant to the way in which Trinidadian society operates. During the years of slavery and indentureship, women had responsibility for the household. While they also worked in the fields, they were expected to take care of the children, cook and tend to the house. This matrifocal practice which centers the woman as the main economic provider, the decision maker and the emotional supporter of the household forms the basis of family units which remain with us today. However, in instances where the man is present in the household, he is often exempted from domestic responsibilities, even when the woman is also working full-time outside the home. As a result, this unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities becomes a burden for a woman as she now occupies two jobs, one paid and the other unpaid and unrecognised. The wage gap continues to be a problem that partly stems

from the inequalities faced by boys and girls in the education sector. Females tend to be more successful, outscoring males in academic assessments in Trinidad (Alexander and Maeda 110), yet the education system remains highly segregated- jobs and subjects that pertain to science and technology are dominated by males while females tend to occupy the humanities and languages sector (Alexander and Maeda 111).

In recent years, some women in Trinidad have made high-profile advances in the public sector. For instance, in 2010, Kamla Persad-Bisessar became the first female Prime Minister in a nation that is dominated by men. She was able to successfully present herself as “the woman candidate and highlighted her femininity, womanhood and motherhood, appealing to both Indo and Afro-Trinidadian women who found the idea of a strong female political figure attractive” (Ranjitsing 6). However, as a female Prime Minister, Mrs. Persad-Bisessar was faced with sexism and challenges that made it hard to change policies and ideals that affected women in Trinidad. Subsequently, Paula-Mae Weekes became the first female President of Trinidad, yet studies show that as of 2021, only “26.2% of seats in parliament were held by women” (“Trinidad and Tobago”). Despite the progress women have made to escape underrepresentation, gender inequality still persists today and occurs in many ways: gender-based violence which is a major issue in Trinidad, the unequal distribution of domestic work in the household, and economic discrimination in the workplace where women face many limitations. Within the context of Trinidad, this thesis will examine the social, educational and economic factors that contribute to the gender inequality women experience in the household and professional sphere and further assess the obstacles that it generates.

Rationale

Gender inequality is a problem that persists in modern day Trinidad. However, while various studies have indicated that there are many factors that contribute to gender inequality, most of the research based on Trinidad focuses on the wage gap and gender-based violence which are predominant issues women face with regards to gender inequality. The key aim of this study is to examine gender inequality as it persists in the home and the workplace. Thus, while previous research has provided important information on gender-based violence and wage gap in Trinidad which also relates significantly to this study, this thesis serves to enhance the documentation with regards to this topic by allowing one to consider a wide range of factors that contribute to the marginalisation of women in Trinidad, such as the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities in the home, gendered subject stereotyping in the educational sector and limitations in the workplace. Additionally, this study aims to bring awareness to the consequences of gender inequality.

Parameters

This study has a certain focus as well as limits that should be noted. It is mainly focused on the gender inequality issues of the 21st century because it is an age where it has become easier for women to challenge the system compared to the previous years where women's limitations were severely strict. For example, the 21st century has witnessed women trying to achieve equity through feminist movements, yet gender inequality persists today. Furthermore, this study will examine the social, educational, economic factors that contribute to inequality in Trinidad and pay particular attention to adult women as well as their domestic and professional lives to gain a first-hand insight on the consequences and experiences related to gender inequality. On the other hand, this study is limited to the region of Trinidad and does not include Tobago because there is more information and research that has been conducted relating to Trinidad. Additionally, because I

currently reside in Trinidad, confining my research to Trinidad makes the research process more manageable and easier to gather information for this study in relation to primary sources like surveys.

Objectives

This study is intended to identify the main barriers to gender equality for professional women in Trinidad as well as assess and evaluate the major consequences and impacts on the women in the region with regards to the personal and professional aspects of their lives. The results produced will fill the gaps identified in the research being done presently in Trinidad which focus mainly on the wage gap and domestic violence.

Methodology

The problem of gender inequality in Trinidad suggests a need for greater investigation into this area. In addition, there has been limited published work on the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities and various limitations in the workplace as it relates to Trinidad. Thus, this paper seeks to fill that void through various data collection methods. The research approach serves to answer the thesis presented and will be framed as a qualitative approach through a survey, with data collection focusing on professional women at the University of the West Indies. Despite its wide distribution the survey attracted only fifteen responses, and the fact that so few women could find the time to respond might be yet another indication of the heavy demands on their time and energy. The incorporation of data in the form of charts and graphs also constitutes a quantitative approach. These qualitative and quantitative methods aim to not only gather information on women's experiences with gender inequality, but also to further understand it. Primary and secondary sources like books, newspaper articles, research papers and academic articles will also be examined to support this project.

Chapter Outline

This study consists of four main chapters. Chapter 1 is the *Literature Review* which provides a brief summary of the sources examined during the research process. The sources are separated based on themes that correlate with the thesis of this study.

Chapter 2 entitled *Unrecognised Emotional and Physical Labour* focuses on the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities in the household. It pays close attention to how this heavy domestic burden contributes to gender inequality at home and is developed to examine how this inequality weighs on the domestic and professional lives of women which can eventually lead to emotional distress.

Chapter 3, *Gender Inequality in the Education Sector*, examines the inequalities and differences between male and female students and how these inequalities persist throughout their lives, mainly in the workplace as women often face discrimination, often choose lower paying jobs and are socialised to be less assertive.

Finally, the fourth chapter entitled *Limitations in the Workplace* looks at gender inequality at work in Trinidad and discusses the various limitations women face in the workplace including the wage gap, discrimination in terms of promotion, etc. as well as its impacts on women.

CHAPTER ONE- LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, numerous studies have examined this phenomena of gender inequality as it relates to both men and women as well as its influences and effects. Such studies sought to highlight the factors that influenced gender inequality and also proposed ways in which one can curb this problem or bring forth awareness in order to achieve equality. This project looks at the social, educational and economic factors that contribute to gender inequality in Trinidad.

Social Factors that Contribute to Gender Inequality

In the book titled *Gender: A Sociological Reader*, various authors discuss and examine aspects of gender inequality as well as how it affects the well-being of men and women. In Chapter 25, Jessie Bernard focuses on marriage to study the dichotomy that exists between wives and husbands in the home, suggesting that the home resembles class stratification, where the men or husbands are superior to the wives. Bernard further explains that marriage is good for men as it helps with their survival and their mental health, “men need marriage more than women do...Although the physical health of married men are no better than that of never-married men until middle age, their mental health is far better, fewer show symptoms of psychological distress, and fewer of them suffer mental health impairments” (208). However, while husbands are able to relax at the expense of their wives after a long day’s work, women are often expected to adopt two jobs which can be overwhelming. Bernard explains that this burden often causes anxiety and depression and as a result, more wives report marital dissatisfaction and frustration and demand divorce. This relates to the aspect of unrecognised emotional labour that is examined in the thesis.

Additional findings by Christine Barrow in her book, *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities* focused on the issues of gender identity in the Caribbean. Barrow references Caribbean history to reveal the marginalisation of women who were confined to

domesticity as a result of the patriarchal society, but simultaneously reveals the mosaic of Caribbean feminine identities as women often formed a powerful matriarch. Women's response to this moulding of identity is also underlined where it is revealed that poverty is often a part of the lifestyle of matrifocal households. This text has provided a better understanding of the roots of not only Caribbean, but Trinidadian society and how it has shaped gender ideologies today.

Like the book, *Gender: A Sociological Reader*, the article, "Socio-economic gradients in Psychological distress: a focus on women, social roles and work-home characteristics" by Sharon Matthews and Chris Power, focuses on the deterioration in women's health as a result of her domestic job and her usual paid job. However, this study provides a more profound explanation on why domestic responsibilities can contribute to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, which I will also examine in this project. Matthews and Power explain that the unpaid job is more physically demanding as it includes more feminine activities like shopping, cleaning and cooking, taking care of the kids, DIY projects and decorating, etc., and this multiple role occupancy by women is the prime cause of distress, "Several studies have also found an increased risk of developing psychological disorder among women who are married, of low socio-economic position, without paid employment outside the home, and who care for small children" (800). While women are in charge of the household, it negatively impacts them and they are not acknowledged for their hard work as housewives. Therefore, equality in the distribution of tasks is important.

Similarly, the article, "Invisible Household Labour and Ramifications for Adjustment: Mothers as Captains of Households," incorporates both elements of the invisible work expected of women and its effects on their well-being which informs my chapter concerning gender inequality in the household. The study finds that often the woman is captain of the household in the sense

that she alone is responsible for household routines like organising the home, shopping and childcare, specifically in terms of being vigilant to the emotions of their children. This was as a result of an assessment of 393 U.S married mothers. While highlighting instances of equality in the home like joint financial responsibilities, the effects of this captainship were further assessed by establishing that not only is this uneven distribution of work invisible, but it also negatively impacts the mental well-being of these mothers and puts a strain on their marriage. This article relates to another, ““Gender, Household Labour and Psychological Distress:” The Impact of the Amount and Division of Housework.” It centers on the same theme of the division of household labour and the mental health status of women, however, it focuses heavily on depression in both men and women and how employment status relates to the division of labour on depression. The study concluded that women do not benefit psychologically from household labour.

Educational Factors that Contribute to Gender Inequality

Trinidad has made various important advances towards gender equality. According to research findings in the newspaper article, “CIWiL renews calls for gender equality in Trinidad and Tobago,” Trinidad was ranked number 37 out of 156 countries that strive towards gender parity as we celebrate women in the highest offices in the country- Prime Minister and President. Additionally, the educational sector has contributed the most to this as girls tend to supersede boys in national assessments. Kevin Baldeosingh in his newspaper article entitled, “Gender gap in basic academic competence...Girls out front” focuses on the underperformance of boys and announces that amongst the top students in SEA and CAPE, boys only constitute one-third of the group (Baldeosingh). However, while women are making advances, both articles respectively explain that they are still victims of gender-based violence and subject stereotyping: while twice as many female students outscore males in English Literature, twice as many males outscore females in

Mathematics. Furthermore, Kevin Baldeosingh examines reasons for this gender gap in education, placing blame on the education system. As a core agent of socialisation (“More gender-sensitive educators”) and “a miniature society” (Vadakkayil and Moshahid) it is suggested in the newspaper article, “More gender-sensitive educators needed,” that the retraining of education policy makers and teacher trainers into a gender-sensitive approach is essential to help eliminate gender stereotypes.

In like manner, the study on “Gender Bias in the Performance of Trinidad and Tobago Students on PISA 2009” delineates a more profound analysis of the noticeable gender differences between male and female students’ performances and assessments. In Trinidad, females consistently outscore males at all levels in the academic system and in almost all subject areas except Mathematics and Physics as males are overrepresented in science and technology while more girls than boys occupy the humanities sector of education (Alexander and Maeda). As a result of gender subject stereotyping, jobs that are male-dominated usually result in higher paying jobs, further extending the wage gap between men and women.

Economic Factors that Contribute to Gender Inequality

Equal pay means that men and women are given equal rewards for the same employment and for performing an equal level of work. On a global scale, women earn 80 cents less than men for every dollar, which is even lower for women of colour, women with children, female migrants and women with disabilities (“Equal pay day in TT an issue”). With this being said, it is evident that the gender wage gap remains an issue in Trinidad. The Guardian newspaper article, “NGO head: Raise income level of women” by Geisha Kowlessar notes that the gender wage gap in Trinidad persists despite the fact that female students consistently outperform male students. However, it is important to note that while we did have our first female Prime Minister and

President, men still dominate every sector except education in Trinidad. The interviewee in this article makes note of this unevenness- although women's wages have been on the rise over the years, men still earn significantly more than women. In 2012, women in Trinidad and Tobago earned an average of \$9000 while men earned an average of \$18 000, although the figure increased to \$12 000 for women and \$30 000 for men in 2014. Moreover, the wage gap ranged from 8.9 percent for technicians and social professionals, but up to 34.7 percent for service and shop sales workers who are often women ("Equal pay day in TT an issue"). Thus, the wage gap continues as a major problem for Trinidadian women, even women with skills that rank higher than men. This inconsistency is further explored in this project. The article, "Equal pay day in TT still an issue" also suggests actions to promote equal pay like reviewing the hiring processes, training to reduce pay discrimination and the implementation of methods where remuneration is based on the position, level of responsibility in the role and level of experience.

Another criticism is found in the research paper, "Influences on the gender wage gap of Trinidad and Tobago: an economic concept or a social construct?" which investigates the presence of the wage gap in Trinidad and Tobago as well as its influences. It was determined that there is a significant difference in wages between men and women, and this disparity is a result of various forms of discrimination which limit women's participation in the labour market. The incidence of poverty is higher amongst women as their domestic responsibilities which are plentiful and unrecognised often confine them to the household and limit their access to the workplace (Roopnarine and Ramrattan 183).

Thus, there are various factors that contribute to the issue of gender equality that affect

the lives of many women in Trinidad today as it relates to unequal domestic responsibilities, traditional influences on subject choices and eventually, job choices and lastly, limitations in the workplace that can lead to problems like poverty.

CHAPTER TWO- UNRECOGNISED PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL LABOUR

The Caribbean has a matrifocal tradition, which has shaped family dynamics in many of its islands, including Trinidad. Christine Barrow in her book titled *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*, explains that the Caribbean reflects its history of slavery which has resulted in large numbers of women-headed families (79). Some households are “women-focused” or “mother-focused” (Barrow 79), where the woman or mother socially and economically tries to support the household or her child(ren) to the best of her ability. However, the term “woman-focused” or “mother-focused” can also refer to the invisible physical and emotional household labour that they perform while also being employed. Traditionally, women often carry the burden of being the “captain of the ship,” (Cicolla and Luthar 467), a burden that reflects the physical and emotional labour of the primary manager and caregiver of the household. On the other hand, the man is usually limited in his household responsibilities, ostensibly because of his job, though most women nowadays have jobs too. This inequality and unrecognised labour can negatively impact the woman’s mental health, causing “psychological distress, depression, role overload and even poor cardiovascular health” (Cicolla and Luthar 467). Plausibly, professional women often become dissatisfied with their lives as unacknowledged caregivers because of the weight of this double burden they carry. This chapter addresses gender inequality with regards to the physical and emotional domestic responsibilities in the home and how it translates to the workplace and finally, how it impacts a woman’s health.

Firstly, it is important to examine the unequal distribution of physical labour in the homes of professional women. Women in Trinidad have experienced advancements in the professional sector, occupying positions of Prime Ministers and Presidents. However, women often experience

a complete change in lifestyle when they enter marriage or simply live with a man as they are expected to traditionally manage the household. In other words, along with a full-time job, they are also met with the job of a 'housewife.' For instance, with regards to women in marriages, Jessie Bernard in the book, *Gender: A Sociological Reader*, explains that "marriage [is] an institution designed to benefit men" (209). Wives are often required to routinely work in their marriage along with their jobs while men are required to work in their professional jobs alone. The home becomes a space of relaxation for the man. Additionally, the housework done by these women becomes a part of an infrastructure upon which the economy rests heavily (Bernard 208) because the woman takes care of the man and prepares him for another day of work. Thus, women's labour becomes critical.

My study, which analyses responses from professional women at the University of the West Indies, mainly lecturers and administrative personnel, heavily supports this notion. Based on their responses, one woman noted that she lives in a household where chores are equally distributed between her and her husband as she is responsible for cooking and laundry, her husband does the dishes and takes out the garbage and they both share childcare. However, the majority of these women are responsible for more than 50% of the household chores, including cooking, cleaning, washing, grocery shopping or the organisation of household purchases and supervising the homework of their children. Of this group, 80% agree that women are not given the full credit for their domestic responsibilities and so, it is regarded as invisible work. It is evident that the traditional expectations of women in the household are still prevalent in Trinidadian society and marriages often work in favour of the man. This correlates with their stance on the notion of 'House Husbands' which allows a man to carry out traditional household duties prescribed to women working outside the home. While some were against this idea, stating that both partners should

manage the household and not be dependent on each other, many agreed that if it works well for the relationship, it should be more normalised, “this concept should be normalised and any stigma attached to it removed.”

If you live with a man, what percentage of the household chores (including childcare) is done by you?

10 responses

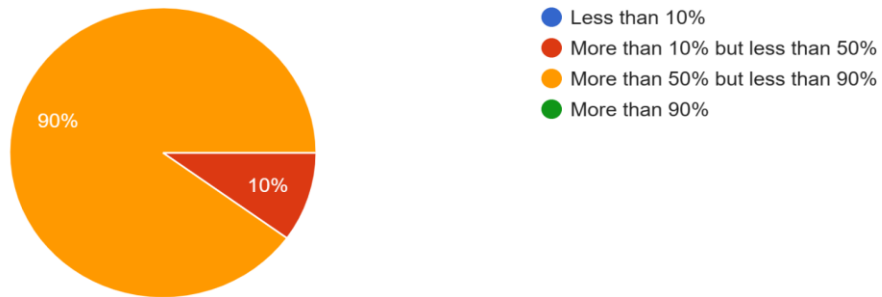


Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing the Percentage of Household Chores Women Undertake

Women "are not given the full credit for the invisible work they do within the home." To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

15 responses

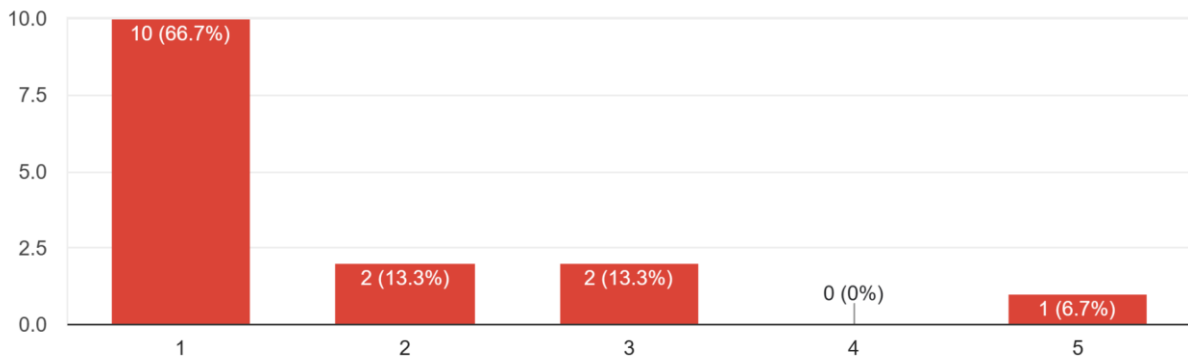


Figure 2: Bar Graph Showing How Many Women Agree or Disagree with the Quoted Statement,

1 Being Strongly Agree, 2 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Disagree and 5 is Strongly Disagree

Secondly, studies show that women are held accountable for the responsibility of being

vigilant to the emotional well-being of others in the household. This double burden not only requires the physical tasks needed to manage a household, but also the social and psychological development of the members of the household. Childcare is often one of the principal components of household labour and hence, the amount of time spent on the household can be “at its greatest for women with children” (Cicolla and Luthar 467). For example, women are expected to instill certain values in their children which would prepare them for the outside world. Additionally, women are also often the primary educators for their children. My study conversely concludes that of the eight women that have children, only one is solely responsible for the emotional well-being of her child as well as her education. However, for the women that are separated from their partners, 66.7% do more than 90% of the childcare which not only contributes to their list of burdens, but also to the inequality that exists in domesticity.

Finally, however, due to an overwhelming job, housework is often linked to the psychological distress of women. The critical housework of professional women is often unrecognised. Thus, housework becomes “a dead-end job” (Bernard 214) with no chance of promotion. Consequently, the lack of social support and the isolation that results from these psychosocial and physical demands results in negative psychological effects. According to Chloe E. Bird in her study, “Gender, Household Labour, and Psychological Distress,” the “equity in the division of household labor is more important to psychological well-being than is the amount of time spent in household labor” (42). Research shows that it is both the inequality in the division of household labour and the amount of household labour that impacts the mental well-being of the woman as it is this inequality that promotes the work overload. Physical and emotional labour can be more physically demanding because of the disparity involved, but the lack of social support and acknowledgement for the hard work of women contribute well to the negative impact on their

mental well-being. This work overload can result in stress, anxiety and depression in women. Based on my study, out of fifteen responses, only four agree that greater domestic responsibility impacts their career while the majority concluded that having a time consuming job and taking care of the household has allowed them to become more efficient as they learn new ways to balance their work. However, when asked about the impact of gender inequality on their well-being, the responses were predominantly negative. Effects not only include mental health issues like low self esteem, depression and anxiety and an increase in stress, but their professional lives and responsibilities are also undermined as they experience a lack of job security, lower wages and poor working conditions. Specifically tied to Trinidadian society, one explained that “abuse, oppression, victimization, poverty, etc.” are main consequences which correlates with the high percentage of domestic violence and poverty amongst women in Trinidad.

Hence, despite the matrifocal tradition of Trinidadian society, women are expected to undertake the burden of traditionally managing the household and their double job status becomes even more degrading because of the invisible and unpaid nature of the job. Moreover, while studies show that women are supposed to be vigilant to the emotional well-being of others in her household, it is concluded that this is not always the case for the professional women who participated in the survey. However, domestic responsibilities are at their greatest for women who are separated from their partner as they are expected to do most of the childcare. Consequently, while some women can become more efficient in the workplace as they learn new ways to balance their domestic and professional tasks, work overload and other negative impacts like stress, poor wages and job conditions, etc. is a direct result of gender inequality.

CHAPTER THREE- GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE EDUCATION

SECTOR

Education is one of the most valuable assets a person can possess. For children, education is equivalent to the uplifting and development of a society (Vadakkayil and Moshahid 193) as it is able to spotlight the personal and social success of an individual. In Trinidad, the importance of unlocking full educational potential is paramount as it dictates the future of students with regards to career paths. Trinidadian students are obligated to write two national examinations: Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and optionally the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) in order to enter the sector of tertiary education. It is important to contextualise that biases and segregation are immediately established with SEA examinations which determine secondary school placement. Students with higher scores are able to attend not only their preferred schools, but schools that are considered more elite, therefore operating on a system of prestige. Additionally, gender has always been critiqued with regards to equal opportunity in Trinidad and it is evident that inequalities and differences persist between male and female students. Students face gendered obstacles that impede their goals and these obstacles are further implemented through socialisation. For instance, teachers have a major role to play in the gendered expectations of students as they “tailor instruction to the particular needs of each sex” (Jackson 173). Moreover, subject stereotyping still exists and heavily impacts workplace participation. This chapter analyses the issue of gender inequality through the lens of education by referencing the factors that contribute to accepted gender norms, subject stereotyping and how this leads to stereotypical career paths.

Gendered roles are embedded in the educational system and there are many factors that

contribute, including the differences in the socialisation of males and females. Socialisation refers to “valued qualities which are perceived as associated with experiences” (Vadakkayil and Moshahid 194) that allows one to learn to behave in a manner that is acceptable within their society. In Trinidad, while there are women that dominate households and excel as lawyers or politicians, many of them are still hampered by a heavier share of domestic responsibility and additionally, men surpass them in many cases. This leads to the socialisation of stereotypical gender roles that are translated into the classroom. For instance, female students are taught “to be seen and not heard” and to work hard to achieve a level of education that would allow a secure and excellent career path which can plausibly allow them to consistently outscore male students. In addition, schools can be perceived as a “second home” (Vadakkayil 194) for students as it also adds to their socialisation process. Consequently, stereotypical labels replicated by teachers can affect the daily interactions of male and female students. For instance, some teachers focus more on female students because their ability to learn is perceived as stronger than boys (“More Gender-Sensitive Educators Needed”), which in turn facilitates the marginalisation of male students. Thus, there is a gender imbalance that exists in schools which works against both parties: male students because they remain beneath female students in academic performance and female students because they are influenced by traditional conventions.

Secondly, this gender imbalance also guides subject stereotyping. Although the gender gap in achievement lies in the female students’ favour, subject stereotyping persists and males are overrepresented in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) sectors which are traditionally masculine, while females dominate the Humanities and Languages sector or do “soft subjects” (Baldeosingh) which are traditionally feminine. For instance, Vivian Alexander and Yukiko Maeda explain in their study that in Trinidad, there exists “a greater enrolment by

females in all subject areas evaluated except Physics. They also reported higher achievement by females in all subject areas assessed except Mathematics” (111). Therefore, traditional gender roles are reflected in subject choices. The results from my study appear to be in accordance with this notion as the majority of professional women agreed that subject stereotyping is a problem, stating that with regards to the UWI class and workplace, “there are fewer males in humanities subjects and fewer women in engineering, medicine and science.” Furthermore, there are also professions that are predominantly female like “teaching, nursing, some areas of the arts” and “jobs that involve physical strength question women’s ability to successfully complete the job.” Despite advances, the country is still deeply patriarchal.

Lastly, this system that reflects traditional gender ideologies is further conveyed in the workforce today. In Trinidad, women are expected to attain higher levels of education in order to prevent unemployment or workplace discrimination. However, statistics reveal that “women have a higher incidence of poverty than men” with about 38% of the poorest households being matrifocal (Roopnarine et.al 183). This is as a result of women’s labour participation which despite its steady increase in the last years, it still remains lower than men who continue to be dominant. Additionally, “the labour market reflects the gender composition of persons even with qualifications” (Roopnarine et. al 184). Women traditionally occupy clerk jobs in Trinidad and more women become nurses and teachers. Additionally, women are still considered the primary care-givers of society and are responsible for raising children who eventually give back to society. My study supports this as it can be concluded that many women experience the workplace limitations and discrimination influenced by subject stereotyping.

With reference to the previous question, are these limitations evident in your current workplace?

14 responses

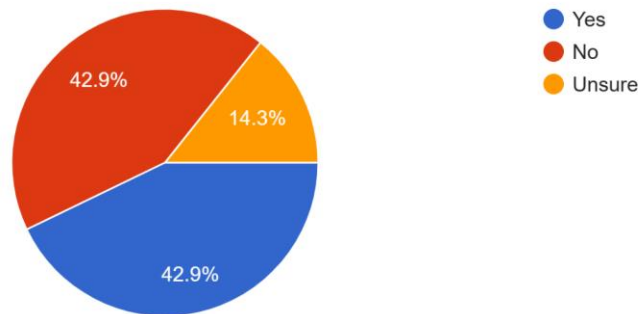


Figure 3: Pie Chart Showing Evidence of the Limitations of Subject Stereotyping at the UWI

Hence, education is an important aspect of one's life. However, it is often influenced by instances of gender inequality. Socialisation leads to the gender imbalance that is evident in schools as female students internalise gendered conceptions which guide their behaviours. This is further reflected in their preferences and the differentiation in subject choices which is also based on gender and propels instances of gender discrimination in the workplace.

CHAPTER FOUR- LIMITATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Women have made prodigious strides towards equality in Trinidad. This progress becomes evident in the celebration of women as President and Prime Minister and the 40.6% of women that make up the Senate. Additionally, girls outperform boys academically which lends to “the greatest advancements for gender equality in the area of educational attainment” (“CIWiL renews calls for gender equality”), and some women dominate their households, allowing Trinidad and Tobago to be currently ranked as 37th out of 156 countries with regards to gender parity (“CIWiL renews calls for gender equality”). However, inequality continues to undermine these positive achievements. While women are represented in parliament, only 26.2% of the lower house incorporates women and the good work of young women in the educational sector “is not translated to wages” (Kowlessar). Moreover, the news article posted by CNC3, “Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL),” announces that women are “still plagued by the scourge of gender-based violence, which has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic” and are accounted for 58% of the labour force, yet the income earned by men is nearly double that of women, (“CIWiL renews calls for gender equality”). As gender inequality takes many forms in Trinidad, this sets the tone for this chapter which will examine the various limitations women face in the workplace, the issue of the wage gap and finally, how it impacts women.

Firstly, women experience many limitations in the workplace as a result of gender. In Trinidad, the division of labour is often “hierarchal, with men on top and women on the bottom” (Hartmann 97). Women face different constraints and discrimination in the workplace than men such as the failure to obtain promotions or they are given less demanding or overbearing tasks and responsibilities which are more time consuming. Women in Trinidad surpass men by gaining

higher educational benefits, yet they earn less and face many barriers in the workplace. For instance, with regards to professional advancement, a shadow is cast over women which Arina Karides explains in her article about the “The Informal-Sector Workers, Gender, and Income Inequality in Trinidad and Tobago:” as a result of gender discrimination in the formal market, “women constitute the majority of workers involved in low-income informal work” (43) as they find it more compatible with domestic responsibilities. This often leads to issues of unemployment or underemployment which is at its highest amongst women, representing 30% (Karides 52).

My study registers specific limitations that impact the performance of professional women. The responses received from professional women at The University of the West Indies highlights that discrimination in the workplace is a prominent issue amongst many. Out of the fifteen responses, seven women disagreed that gender does not influence their career, eight stated that they have experienced gender discrimination in the workplace and nine women were treated differently because of their gender.

How do you experience the workplace: My gender does not influence my career.

15 responses

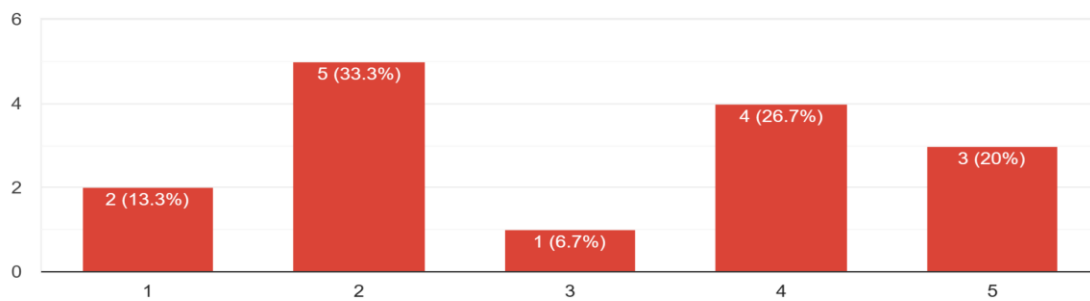


Figure 4: Bar Graph Showing How Many Agree or Disagree with Gender Influence on One’s Career, 1 Being Strongly Agree, 2 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Disagree and 5 is Strongly Disagree

I have not experienced gender discrimination in the workplace.

15 responses

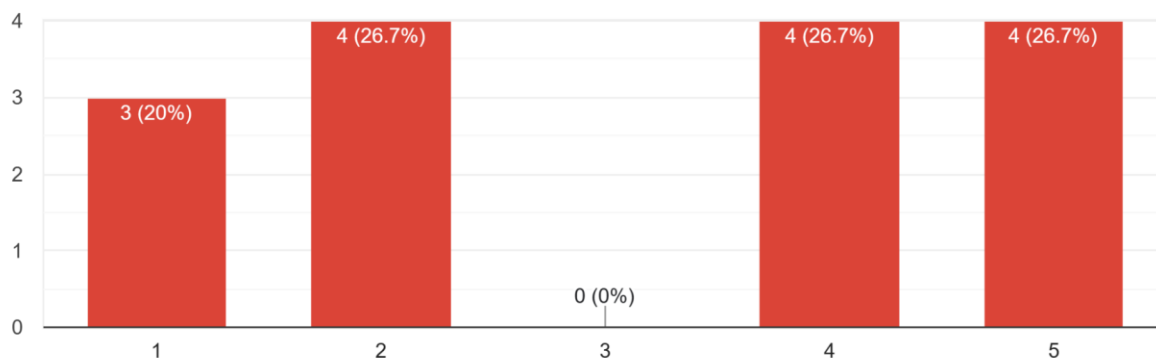


Figure 5: Bar Graph Showing How Many Women Experienced Gender Discrimination in the Workplace, 1 Being Strongly Agree, 2 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Disagree and 5 is Strongly Disagree

My colleagues do not treat me differently because of my gender.

15 responses

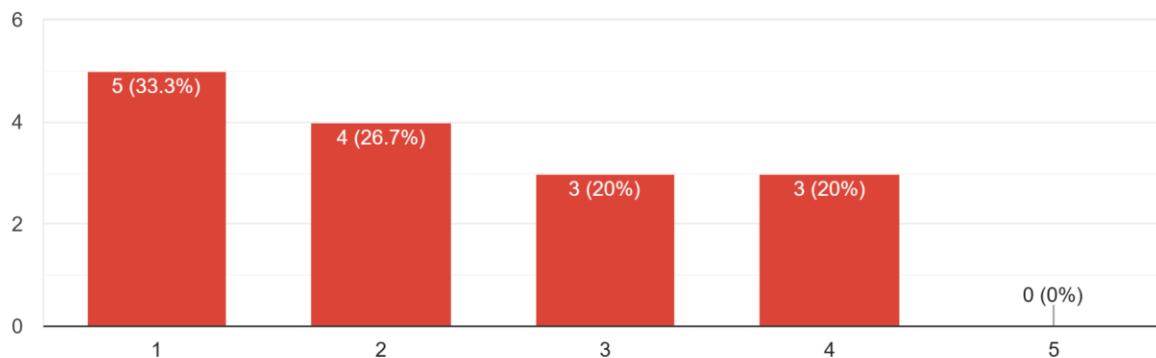


Figure 6: Bar Graph Showing How Many Women Experience Different Treatment Based on Gender, 1 Being Strongly Agree, 2 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Disagree and 5 is Strongly Disagree

This discrimination is further emphasised as it can be concluded that promotion and the distribution of wages are the main areas where employees are not treated equally. The women,

majority of which have been employed at the UWI for at least ten to twenty years, commented that it is “easier for a man to be promoted when there are fewer men in the department,” women operate under positions of power that reduces their “opportunities to be promoted and receive an increase in salary.” Women also face obstacles like short maternity leaves, favoritism discrimination, and heavier administrative work which impacts their professional performance. Thus, the problem of gender inequality in Trinidad appears to be characterised by disadvantages in the workplace.

Secondly, gender inequality is also evidenced by the significant difference in wages that exists between men and women in Trinidad. The phenomena of the gender wage gap refers to the difference in remuneration for working women and men, where women are generally found to be paid less. The gender pay gap exists on a global scale as “across the EU women earn on average 17.5 per cent less than men,” (Mahabir and Ramrattan 145). In Trinidad, “A huge gender wage gap has been identified as one of the biggest challenges facing women” (Kowlessar). Despite the successes of some Trinidadian women, their participation in the labour market “remains significantly depressed” (Mahabir and Ramrattan 143) as there is a high concentration of women in certain industries which further emphasises their gendered performance. More women occupy service workers and clerk positions which earn less than men who work in higher positions and as a result, the gender pay gap between men and women ranges from “8.9 per cent for technicians and associate professionals and up to 34.7 per cent for service and shop sales workers” (“Equal pay still an issue”). Women earn half as much as men (Karides 52).

According to my study, 80% of the women who participated believe that a gender pay gap exists in Trinidad. The gender pay gap also intimately relates to the various forms of discrimination women face in the workplace as it is influenced by gender discrimination in promotion as well as gender discrimination in hiring and differences in experience and hours

worked. Additionally, many agreed that the gender imbalance in bureaucratic and domestic responsibilities also propels the gender pay gap which is understandable as women are often more burdened by domesticity or bureaucratic responsibilities at work which could hinder their performance and thus, lead to lower wages. Hence, the wage gap in Trinidad unfolds as a result of workplace limitations as well as limitations in the household. These professional women suggested some measures to attempt fixing the gender gap which correspondingly focus on clearer guidelines and policies that would allow “men and women to be paid equally based on experience and qualifications” as well as the introduction of paternity leave while extending maternity leave.

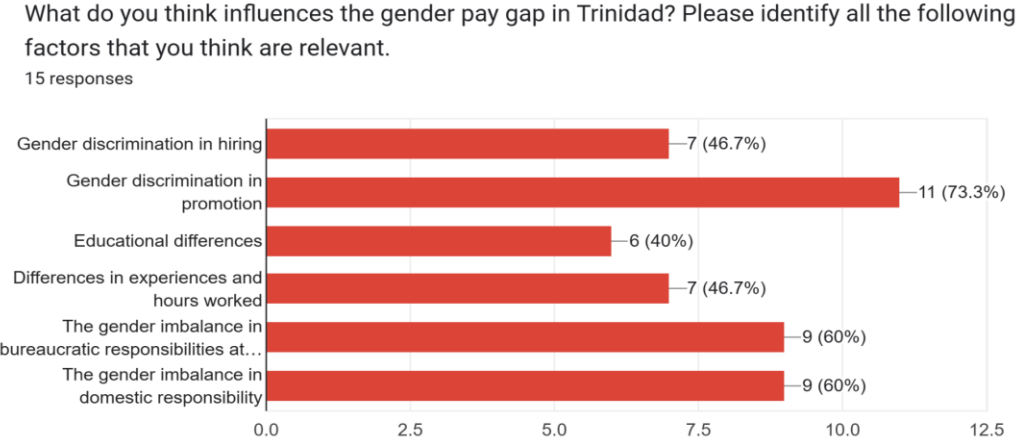


Figure 7: Bar Graph Showing the Different Influences on the Gender Pay Gap

Lastly, one of the major effects on Trinidadian women identified, is the strenuous mental impacts of low income jobs. Women dominate the informal working sector, and the low wages that accompany it perpetuate their dependence on men. This is as a result of the unemployment that hovers over these low income job opportunities and “rather than resolving the gendered distribution of household work, the flexibility of self-employed informal work reifies women as household guardians and mothers” (Karides 49). Thus, the unrecognised labour at home does not

disappear even with the involvement of a paid job, allowing women to be burdened with two jobs as housework is also distinctively another form of work (Mitter 114). Consequently, this job with “high demands and low control...[produces] high strain” (Matthews and Power 799) on women, significantly impacting their mental health and well-being as they continue to occupy various stressful roles paired with the stress of their low income rates. My study also identifies other negative and positive impacts. While workplace limitations have given rise to mental effects like high stress and anxiety levels as well as low self-esteem, stifled women’s ability to advance in their fields and encouraged women to put everyone's needs before their own, some female lecturers and administrative personnel also identified that these unfortunate experiences have allowed them to become more assertive and strong in the sense that they are conscious of and reject any form of discrimination.

Therefore, while women make advances towards equality as statistics show, it is also evidenced that their progress is undermined by male dominance and inequality. Women are not rewarded as they deserve in the labour force, and they can also be victims of other gendered disadvantages such as gender-based violence. This chapter concludes that women are less rewarded in terms of career advancement, facing discrimination in terms of promotion, equal pay, favoritism and are heavily burdened by time consuming bureaucratic responsibilities that highly resemble great domestic responsibilities. In addition, these disadvantages drive the wage gap as they impede women’s performance in the workplace. Lastly, discrimination in the workplace and the wage gap implies many negative consequences, impacting the mental well-being of working women. However, they are also able to learn from these circumstances and become stronger in the face of discrimination.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that despite the efforts made to achieve equality between men and women in Trinidad, it remains unfinished. Gender inequality persists as an issue that has an extensive impact on many professional women in Trinidad today in terms of their personal and professional lives. It impedes both the home and the workplace and can be presented in many forms in various areas. Firstly, the disparity that exists in domestic responsibilities is underlined. Married women or women that simply live with a man are not only expected to shoulder traditional domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping and childcare, but they do the majority of housework in comparison to their male companion or housemate while being fully employed. Additionally, childcare is added to this burden of domestic responsibility for women that are separated from their partner as they are responsible for the majority of the childcare. This form of gender inequality negatively impacts the mental well-being of these women, resulting in instances of stress, low self-esteem, anxiety and job insecurity because of lower wages. However, some report that they have learnt to benefit positively from this burden, becoming more efficient in their daily lives. Additionally, socialisation shapes traditional gender roles that are imprinted in male and female students. This, in turn, influences their subject choices, corresponding to a case of subject stereotyping where male students subscribe to more “masculine” STEM subjects while females do more “feminine” humanities subjects. Despite female students’ ability to outscore males in their academic performances, this takes a turn in the workplace as these stereotypes are translated to a division between more male dominant and female dominant sectors. Lastly, gender inequality in the workplace exists as the heavy administrative work of professional women as well as in many forms of discrimination, the most dominant being discrimination in promotion, which is then further represented by the gender wage gap. As a result, poverty is increased amongst

females who are paid less than men, and women face mental impacts like stress, however, they also become stronger in the face of discrimination. Thus, society is still male-dominated and gender inequality is evident in the domestic, educational and economic sectors in Trinidad, and while there are positive impacts, these are overshadowed by the extensive negative impacts.

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APPENDIX A

Survey on the Impact of Gender Inequality on Professional Women in Trinidad.

My name is Tamia Cedeno. I am a student at the University of the West Indies, double majoring in French and Literatures in English and I am inviting you to participate in my research project by completing the following survey. The aim of this study is to investigate and examine the gender inequalities that persist in the home and the workplace, its main contributors as well as its impacts on Trinidadian women. You are not obliged to answer any of the following questions, however, in doing so, it will not only assist me greatly in completing my research, but it will also enhance my understanding of this topic. The data collected will remain anonymous and confidential.

1. Please state your age:

- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 6 or older

2. What is your highest level of education?

- High school diploma
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree

- Postgraduate Certificate of Diploma
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate

3. Please state your job title below. (**Ex. Literatures in English Lecturer**).

4. How long have you been employed at your current place of employment?

- Less than one year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- More than 20 years

5. Do you feel men and women are treated equally in your current workplace?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

6. Are there specific areas in which employees are not treated equally? If yes, please list them.

7. Do you think women have **more, fewer or the same** opportunities to advance than men at the UWI? Please state a reason for your response.

8. How do you experience the workplace:

- My gender does not influence my career.

1- Strongly agree

2- Agree

3- Neutral

4- Disagree

5- Strongly Disagree

- I have not experienced gender discrimination in the workplace.

1- Strongly agree

2- Agree

3- Neutral

4- Disagree

5- Strongly Disagree

- My colleagues do not treat me differently because of my gender.

1- Strongly agree

2- Agree

3- Neutral

4- Disagree

5- Strongly Disagree

- I have not had any experiences with sexual harassment.

1- Strongly agree

2- Agree

3- Neutral

4- Disagree

5- Strongly Disagree

9. Over the years, there have been many arguments based on whether the gender pay gap exists or not. Do you think the gender pay gap exists?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. What do you think influences the gender pay gap in Trinidad? Please identify all the following factors that you think are relevant.

- Gender discrimination in hiring
- Gender discrimination in promotion
- Educational differences
- Differences in experience and hours worked
- The gender imbalance in bureaucratic responsibilities at work
- The gender imbalance in domestic responsibilities

11. What are some measures and solutions that can be considered to fix the gender pay gap in Trinidad?

12. Do you believe that subject stereotyping based on gender is a problem in Trinidad? (**Subject stereotyping in the sense that there are subjects that are overrepresented by males or females**). If answered yes or no, please state a reason for your answer.

13. With reference to the previous question, are these limitations evident in your current workplace?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

14. How do you think the media impacts the role of women today?

15. Do you live with a man in your household? Please respond accordingly.

- Husband
- Boyfriend
- Father
- Brother
- Other

16. How many children do you have?

17. If you live with a man, what percentage of the household chores (**including childcare**) is done by you?

- Less than 10%
- More than 10% but less than 50%
- More than 50% but less than 90%
- More than 90%

18. If you are separated from the father of your child(**ren**), what percentage of childcare is done by you?

- Less than 10%
- More than 10% but less than 50%
- More than 50% but less than 90%
- More than 90%

19. Do you take care of an elderly person? If yes, who in your household is most responsible?

20. Do you feel that your greater domestic responsibility has had a negative impact on your career progression?

21. If you live with a man, what type of household chores are you most responsible for?

22. Who manages the finances in your household?

- Jointly, by myself and my partner
- Mainly by myself
- Mainly by myself
- Other

23. Women "are not given the full credit for the invisible work they do within the home." To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

1- Strongly agree

2- Agree

3- Neutral

4- Disagree

5- Strongly Disagree

24. What are your views on the concept of "house husbands?" (**House Husbands- a man who lives with a partner and carries out household duties traditionally done by a housewife rather than going to work**).

25. Have you ever experienced any form of gender discrimination? If yes, please explain.

26. How has it impacted your life? Please explain.

27. What do you think are some effects of gender inequality? Please list all the effects that you think apply.

28. Do you believe gender equality is important? Please state a reason for your response.

I truly appreciate your insight and for taking the time to complete this survey.

Thank you!