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Chapter 8

The Worth of a Talent? Pay Inequality in Universities

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Abstract

Little research is devoted to how salary allocation processes interfere with gender inequality in talent development in universities. Administrative data from a university indicated a substantial salary gap between men and women academics, which partially could be explained by the unequal distribution of men and women in the academic job levels after acquiring a PhD, from lecturer to full professor, with men being overrepresented in the higher job levels, as well as in the more senior positions within each job level. We demonstrated how a lack of transparency, consistency and accountability can disqualify apparent fair, merit-based salary decisions and result in biased gender differences in job and salary levels. This chapter reflects on how salary decisions matter for the recognition of talent and should be an integral part of talent management.

Keywords: Gender pay gap; gender (in)equality in academia; pay allocation biases; transparency and accountability in decision-making policies and processes; performance criteria; case study

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Introduction

> Centuries ago, according to the New Testament, Jesus told the story about a master and servants, as an allegory for God and Gods people. The master gave Talents to three servants, which at that time was a currency that represented a significant monetary value (Mattheüs 25:14–30). One talent represented the value of the abilities of a person and having multiple talents meant that a person was very resourceful, but also rich. The master instructed the servants to invest their talent wisely during his absence. One had five, one two, one servant only had one talent. The servant with just one was afraid of losing this single talent and kept it hidden until the master returned. The other two used their talents to invest and had their talents grow. As the story evolves, investing the resources to make the talents grow was highly appreciated by the master. Just keeping the talent save resulted in reprimand. Another reading of the story could be that allocating more talents makes growing them easier.

Although nowadays the word 'talent' has lost its immediate monetary meaning, it still represents a valuable resource that individuals and organizations use to invest in growth and performance. Organizations use pay as an expression of the value of human capital, the added value that a person brings to the organization in terms of knowledge, skills and drive (Weiss, 1995). Following the logic of the talent in the allegory of the master and servant in the Bible, talents should reflect the value of the servants' abilities. Yet, in real life, how abilities are valued in monetary value is substantially affected by bias (Joshi et al., 2015). Moreover, higher pay reflects social status of employees (Angermuller, 2017). Social status, the subjective ascription of societal potential of individuals (Harkness, 2014), is known to be subject to stereotype bias (Fiske et al., 2016). Hence, we should be critical about unintended consequences of pay allocation decisions, as consequences may accumulate in many aspects of an individual's career. Inequalities in the salary allocation stemming from non-performance-related criteria can hamper diverse talented employees to grasp the opportunities to build their careers (e.g. Ravlin & Thomas, 2005). Gender bias is one of them: meta analytic findings across occupations demonstrate a persistent pay gap between men and women doing the same tasks or professions that is unrelated to performance differences (Hoff, 2021; Joshi et al., 2015; Schneider et al., 2022).

Salary and Status in Academia

Pay refers to the total amount of income workers receive in return for their efforts, including salaries, bonuses and monetary reimbursements. Salary, the monthly base wage payment, often makes up a large proportion of pay. Evaluation systems applied to jobs, markets and individuals guide the distribution

of salaries across the organization, such that the salary system is competitive and economically viable, on the one hand, and fair and motivating to employees, on the other hand (Bloom, 2004). Salary systems can disperse salaries over multiple levels. An employee's ranking in a dispersed salary systems signals 'the employee's worth' (Bloom, 2008); it becomes indicative of an individual's status in the organization, wherein higher status is associated with higher ascribed performance.

In academia, salary systems with detailed job classifications are very common. Moreover, salary levels are connected to status revealing and reproducing job titles, such as 'assistant', 'associate' and 'full' professor or 'junior' and 'senior' lecturer or researcher (Angermuller, 2017). The underlying assumption is that a full professor is ranked as such, because of their 'talent', that is, excellent performance through various competencies such as analytical skills (critical top-knowledge, analytical and thinking skills), academic skills (drive to innovate and initiate) and social capital skills (networking, collaborating and communicating) (Thunnissen et al., 2021). Hence, universities present themselves as meritocratic institutions, where the result of decision-making in careers of academics is believed to be grounded in objective measures of merit, that is, talent (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; van der Lee & Ellemers, 2018). However, research shows that having a higher ranked title (e.g. full professor) actually results in more resources for success such as more opportunities for grant acquisition, funding resources for research and conferences, visibility, etc. (Clavero & Galligan, 2021; Harzing et al., 2018; Zuckerman, 2001). Thus, salary-level allocation in academia has major consequences for the ability, motivation and opportunity (cf. Jiang et al., 2012) for individual academics to perform and develop their career. Existing gender-informed biases in the allocation of salary in academia can therefore hinder the careers of talented women.

To date, research on gendered policies and practice in salary allocation in higher education is scarce. This chapter aims to answer the question how pay allocation processes lead to salary differences between men and women in higher education, and how these differences contribute or hinder career development of talent in higher educations. We do so by presenting a case study on the salary process, policy and practice in a Dutch university using data from a project on gender salary inequality instigated by the executive board of Tilburg university (see organization report, van Engen et al., 2019). Understanding these processes supported the university in developing interventions to reduce gender salary inequality and creating more transparency and accountability in the allocation of pay.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, we summarize the literature on gender inequality in universities. We also elaborate on the fallacies of different salary allocation systems and how these unintendedly reinforce gender inequality. Subsequently, we present the findings of a case study on gender salary differences at Tilburg university. We end this chapter with recommendations for higher education institutions in tightening the gap and for promoting fair opportunities for women talent in higher education.

Gender Inequality in Academia

Since several decades as many women as men graduate from universities, but the gender representation across university ranks is still skewed in favour of men. Women are underrepresented in high status and high-paid roles in academia, with the chance of men of becoming (associate) professor being more than twice as large as women with equal performance on research, in age and in discipline (Brower & James, 2020). Gender inequality shows in more domains across academic career stages, including in the division of temporary and tenured positions, teaching and administrative load, promotions to higher ranks and in the distribution of grants (Harzing et al., 2018; Winslow & Davis, 2016). Since overt gender discrimination has become uncommon, explanations for these inequalities lie more in subtle biases and stereotypes that influence individual behaviour, evaluations and interactions, as well as institutionalized policy and practice (Winslow & Davis, 2016; Woodhams et al., 2022).

Stereotypes about gender and science are strong and persistent (Carli et al., 2016). When asked about the ideal scientist, people spontaneously mention agentic (male) characteristics. When women, who are stereotypically associated with communal characteristics, are compared to the implicit agentic standards associated with science, they risk being viewed as less competent. For example, a review on gender bias within the discipline of economics and management. Harzing et al. (2018) reported evidence for gender bias in various aspects of evaluations of research, education and management (e.g. in citations, in the representation in editorial boards, in grant income, in task allocation such as 'academic housework', in tenure and promotion decisions). In addition, research on course evaluations showed a negative bias against women academics in student evaluations of lecturers (Mengel et al., 2019) and in performance evaluations by supervisors (King, 2008). In blinded evaluation processes, including peer reviews and grant proposals, there are no distinctions between the quality of the academic work performed by women and men, while other studies indicate that research proposals submitted by women to national grant schemes are evaluated worse than those submitted by men (van den Besselaar & Sandström, 2016; van der Lee & Ellemers, 2015). These findings hint that in circumstances where the gender of academics is salient, bias can disadvantage decisions about women. There seems to be a double standard where women have the challenge to overcome bias to be successful in an agentic job, and risk being penalized for showing non-gender confirmative behaviour (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Despite research evidence for stereotype-based gender bias in relation to careers, in universities, there tends to be a strong belief in meritocracy, the idea that the distribution of jobs along the academic career ladder is a mere reflection of objective performance (Nielsen, 2016a; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014). Universities are believed to be meritocratic institutions, where policies and practice for sustaining decisions about academic careers are grounded in objective measures (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; van der Lee & Ellemers, 2018). However, meritocratic beliefs that inform pay allocation procedures can sustain rather than change gender inequality in universities, as we will explain in the next section.

Salary Systems and Inequality

Salary differences between men and women doing similar work in academia are persistent (Bailey et al., 2016; Freund et al., 2016) and mostly attributable to institutional rather than personal characteristics (Woodhams et al., 2022). Salary systems and practices in academic institutions roughly rely on three decision systems: one based on labour market competition, one based on tournament and one based on merit.

In *labour market-based salary systems*, top talents at the job market are offered a higher salary in negotiations with the underlying reason to keep them away from competitors. For example, university scouts scan for top academic talent in international prestigious conferences and make them a market-based job offer (van Engen et al., 2019). Such competition can have a dampening effect on women's salaries, especially in cases where the room for negotiation is not made explicit, as women are more reluctant to engage in job competitions where salary negotiation is ambiguous (Leibbrandt & List, 2015). Apart from the obstacles to job entry caused by competition-based systems, research shows that that those hired on these premises do not outperform peers and tend to have a more short-term orientation which can even be harmful to the organization (Lokin, 2018).

In the *tournament model*, the salary system stimulates competition between employees to qualify for a few higher ranked positions that have substantially higher rewards than the levels below. The theory behind such tournament is that higher salaries in the top are justified because these motivate employees in lower echelons to outperform their peers (Gerhart & Rynes, 2003). The tournament model is advocated especially in contexts with professionals such as academics because it circumvents the need to closely monitor workers. However, tournament models have notorious side effects in that they can lead to social group dominance – at the expense of less represented groups, for example, women, which will demotivate those with less dominant status.

Although competition-based salary systems such as market- or tournament-based systems dominate in some fields of academia, most universities use merit-based salary systems. *Merit-based systems* build on meritocratic beliefs that hold that the best performers receive the highest rewards (Nielsen, 2016b). Salary is intended to be determined based on objective criteria, which are meant to eliminate subconscious prejudice in decision-making (Abraham, 2017; Adam Cobb, 2016; Castilla, 2012). Although it is generally assumed that merit-based reward leads to less inequality than labour market competition and tournament-based rewards (Adam Cobb, 2016; Castilla & Benard, 2010; Nishii et al., 2018), research shows that formalized systems in themselves do not offer protection and can even increase inequalities with the introduction of meritocratic systems (Abraham, 2017; Castilla, 2015; Nielsen, 2016a; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014).

There are several reasons why merit, as expressed in apparent objective criteria, is sensitive to gender inequality. First, in procedures where decision-makers have some discretion, bias is likely to affect their decisions (Castilla, 2015). When managers are given the opportunity to deviate from the procedures by making exceptions at their own discretion inequality is often the (unintended) result

(Dencker, 2008). One explanation is that without monitoring and transparency, formalized systems ensure that salary decisions are not called into question: not by the employees but especially not by decision-makers. Rather, strict and formal procedures for salary decisions invoke system justification beliefs: the feeling that decisions in the system are fair because the system is fair. Decision-makers are not challenged to evaluate their own assumptions, because of the assumption (Abraham, 2017; Castilla, 2015). Making exceptions also opens the door for informal negotiations, in which men are more likely to engage in than women (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011). This illustrates how confidence in the system leads to biases remaining unnoticed.

A second problem of merit-based formalization of criteria is that many of the criteria that determine the performance of academic staff are shown to be subject to bias (see, for instance, review by Harzing et al., 2018). Rather than being meritocratic, salary allocation criteria this way reinforce existing gender stereotypes. Take, for example, a practice like counting the number of publications as an indicator of merit. Longitudinal research by King (2008), for instance, demonstrates that both the actual number of and relative contribution to publications are overestimated for men academics and underestimated for women, particularly mothers. These estimations by supervisors subsequently weigh relatively strong in career opportunities offered (King, 2008). Moreover, the selection of criteria that are not gender sensitive can (re)produce structural inequalities as well accumulate the effect of gender bias. This underlines how the many faceted sources of gender bias interfere with merit criteria evaluations and warrant inequal opportunities for the development of women in academia.

Finally, efforts to make decision-makers in academia aware of the existence of bias and its cumulative disadvantageous effects on women's careers often lead to resistance, denial and even anger (Handley et al., 2015; van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). However, when efforts to de-bias the decision-making process are successful, more women are hired and promoted (Devine et al., 2017; van den Brink & Benschop, 2012).

Within universities, the belief in meritocracy is dominant (van der Lee & Ellemers, 2018), and even those using labour market competition and tournament models incorporate many aspects of merit-based decision-making. Confident as they are about the value of meritocracy, it proves hard to convince academics about the evidence of gender bias in their institutions (Nielsen, 2016b). It is persuasive to believe that those who are successful in academia are so because they have more merit (i.e. worth, superior quality) than those who are not successful – that is, an exclusive orientation towards talent. One assumes that everyone has an equal chance to be successful regardless of their gender, race, class or other non-merit factors (Castilla & Benard, 2010), but reward allocation and performance evaluation practices that appear meritocratic often result in a skewed distribution of outcomes, regardless of the actual distribution of merit (Joshi et al., 2015). The next section presents a case study on salary differences and salary allocation processes in at Tilburg University, a Dutch medium-sized university in the Netherlands.

Case Study: Pay Inequality in a Dutch University

Tilburg university houses five schools (Economics and Management, Law, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Humanities and Theology). At the time of this research (2015–2018), the Executive Board promoted diversity and inclusion as one of the three top priorities of its formal mission. The university had a roadmap for Equality, a task force working on the execution of the roadmap and an equality committee. Part of the roadmap was developing an intervention to reduce the gender pay inequality in the university. Two studies were executed: (1) a study examining gender differences in pay allocation; and (2) examining formal and informal processes of hiring, selection and promotion to explain pay allocation and gender differences herein.

Study 1: Gender Differences in Salary Allocation

The first study mapped the size of salary differences between men and women, the extent to which the differences in salary can be explained by differences in age- and work-related variables. Next, we analysed how large the salary differences were *within* different types of jobs (e.g. assistant, associate, and full professor).

Data were obtained from the university's personnel information system (salary, position and position level, contract hours, employment status (temporary/tenured), years on the job, years of service, starting salary, data retrieved December 2015) and the research information system (scientific publications, average number of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and books between 2012 and December 2015). The population for the analyses where all academic staff formally receiving a salary from the university. Not included were academics paid by third parties (e.g. the Dutch Research Council). Furthermore, PhD candidates were not included as they receive a set salary (and we indeed found no salary difference between women and men).

The salary scale and the salary step within a scale were used as an indicator of salary allocation. All analyses used the full-time gross monthly salary equivalent of these scales (part-time functions are transformed to full-time gross monthly salary). The type of job and the level within a job were based on the Dutch university job classification (UJC) system, which distinguishes between assistant professor, associate professor, full professor, lecturer and researcher. Different salary levels exist within each of these job types, for example, for the positions assistant professor, associate professor and full professor, a distinction is made between senior level (indicating high-level competencies) and starting level (indicating start-level competencies). Further, we coded for employment contract (temporary or tenured) and the part-time factor (between 0.1 and 1.0 FTE). Work experience is expressed as the number of years an employee has worked in the current position. Finally, the publication history of each person was calculated using the average number of peer-reviewed scientific books, chapters and articles per year calculated over four years (2012–2015). Note that the data represent the entire population of the organization (not a sample), hence differences in salary are actual differences.

Fig. 8.1 summarizes the gender division across the job categories. It shows that women form a small majority among PhD candidates and researchers. However, in the other jobs, men are in the majority, especially in the higher positions. Particularly striking is the difference within the seniority positions within in higher scientific positions. In the associate and full professor jobs, men dominate the senior positions (indicating high-level competencies, with higher salaries), while women mostly occupy the starting-level positions (indicating start-level competencies, with lower salaries). A similar pattern is visible in lecturer and researcher jobs: more men employed in the highest and more women in the lowest job category.

On average, men are slightly older and have slightly more years of service and tenure on the job and more often have a tenured job compared to women. There are no differences in the average number of working hours (about 32 hours per week). More than half of the men and half of the women are full-time employees. Roughly one-third of the men and women have smaller part-time jobs. Large part-time jobs are more common among women than men. On average across all positions, men have 2.3 publications per year; women have 2.1 publications. On average, women in the positions of lecturer, researcher and associate professor have more publications compared to men; in all other positions, men have on average more publications, although the differences are small. Noteworthy is that academics who are parents have slightly more publications than academics without children.

On average, women assistant, associate and full professors earn a gross full-time monthly salary of 5.328 Euro across all jobs, while men earn on average 6.509 Euro (18% difference). This is largely due to the distribution of men and women across the various jobs. When we take the position of the staff into account (assistant, associate and full professor), the salary difference is 403 Euro.

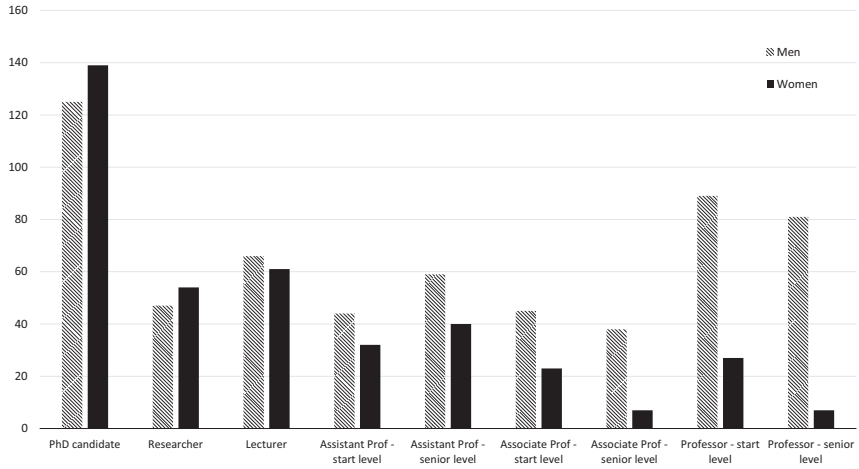

Fig. 8.1. Number of Women and Men Across Different Positions (and Job Levels).

Fig. 8.2 highlights that the gender salary differences for start and senior assistant, associate and full professor levels become more substantial in higher positions. Age appears to be an important explanatory factor for the remaining pay gap. However, if we correct for age and position, the salary difference remains 255 Euro per month. Importantly, in all age categories, men earn more than women. This pattern is similar for lecturers (gender difference of 126 Euro, 13.2% difference) yet not for researchers (98 Euro, 2.6% difference).

Other contractual arrangements also impact pay differences. Professors and researchers on a temporary appointment earn less compared to professors with a permanent appointment (corrected for gender, age, part-time factor, years of employment, average number of publications). This difference accounts for both genders but is larger for women than for men. We also see a part-time penalty, especially for professors in large part-time jobs (0.6–0.8 FTE) as compared to full-time professors. Again, this penalty is larger for women than for men. Finally, the more publications men and women employees have, the more they earn (corrected for age, years on the job, part-time factor and permanent/temporary), although this difference is not large in any of the jobs categories.

Overall, the first study shows a convincing pattern of gender inequality in salary allocation in the university, wherein women structurally earn less than men in comparable positions. Not only do men more frequently occupy the higher ranks in the organization and the senior position within those ranks, also their rewards within these ranks are higher.

In study 2, we explore reasons that explain gender inequality in salary allocations by examining how decisions on pay levels are made.

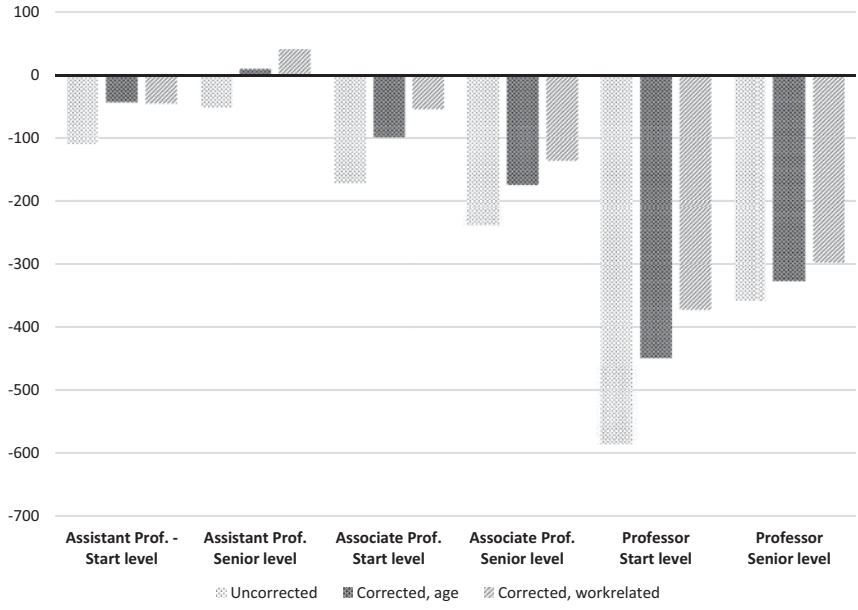

Fig. 8.2. Salary Differences Women–Man Per Job Level.

Study 2: Processes, Policies, and Practices of Hiring, Selection and Promotion

The second study sets out to examine the processes, policies and practice in the university that play a role in salary allocation and how these are related to salary inequality. We are interested in the criteria that govern salary allocations, as these criteria reflect what knowledge, behaviours and skills ('talents') are formally rewarded. Furthermore, we are interested in whether and how these criteria are formalized (policies) and used (practice) by the different stakeholders in the salary allocation process by different stakeholders. We first examined the views of various parties involved in the process of allocating the salary of new hires: the employee himself/herself, the manager involved and the human resource (HR) advisor involved. We used data from an online survey stocktaking criteria used for salary allocations in cases of new hires. Second, we interviewed deans, directors and HR advisors of the five schools in the university about the policies and practice of recruitment, selection, allocation of salary scale and level and promotion decision-making.

Salary Allocation of New Hires

For stocktaking criteria used for new hires, a questionnaire was send to all newly hired academics in 2014 and 2015 and to the HR managers and supervisors who were involved in the salary allocation process for these new hires. Respondents were asked to indicate criteria used during the hiring process to determine salary scale and level of a new hire; first by open recall followed by a list of 35 potential criteria, based on previous research into criteria that play a role in selection, promotion and salary in academia (van Engen et al., 2019). Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate what salary scale and level was first offered and what the final salary scale and level was that they accepted.

The cases included all newly appointed academic employees (assistant professors, associate professors and full professors) hired in two consecutive years (2014 and 2015). Of the 40 new appointments (15 women, 25 men) in 2014–2015, 17 employees completed the questionnaire (11 men, 6 women, 43%). HR advisors completed 37 questionnaires regarding new appointments (90%) and managers completed 29 questionnaires regarding new appointments (71%). For 12 cases (8 men and 4 women new hires), questionnaires were completed by all three parties involved: the employee, the manager and the HR employee.

Respondents generally found it difficult to *spontaneously* recall criteria that determined the salary allocation. 'Experience' was mentioned most often. 'Last-earned salary' was mentioned spontaneously by HR advisors, men new hires and managers of men new hires, however not by women new hires and managers of women new hires. When respondents ranked the importance of the *checklist* of 35 salary allocation criteria, new hires, HR advisors and managers indicated that 'last-earned salary' and the 'University Job Classification profile (UJC)' were the most used criteria. Managers referred more often to the UJC than HR advisors do and more often to education and research competencies than new hires and HR advisors do. Fairness towards colleagues in the group of the new hire is

mentioned relatively often by HR advisors and managers, however never by new hires themselves. Furthermore, new hires, HR advisors and managers differed in ranking the importance of certain criteria used for determining the salary. Two findings are striking when comparing the 12 complete files. First, in about half of the cases new hires, managers and HR advisors had different recollections of the salary and step which was initially offered and which salary was finally agreed upon. When the initial and final offer differed, the final offer was always higher (three men, two women). Second, employees, managers and HR advisors generally differed regarding the criteria they indicated to have played a role in determining the pay allocation for the new hire.

Summarized, although it is difficult to draw conclusions about the extent to which there are gender biases in the criteria used in salary allocation based on the small numbers and the limited responses, the *lack of awareness and transparency* of the criteria, the *lack of uniformity in the application* of the criteria and the *lack of consistency between the actors* (employee, manager and HR advisor) in assessing the importance of criteria in salary allocation is telling. Research shows that a lack of awareness and transparency of salary criteria and a lack of accountability before, during and after the determination, application and monitoring of the salary allocation criteria are the root causes for salary differentiation in new appointments and promotions (e.g. Bailey et al., 2016; Bamberger, 2021; Castilla, 2008, 2012, 2015).

Policies Versus Practice: Decision-maker Perspectives

Nine semi-structured interviews were held with deans, directors and responsible HR advisors. Deans (four men, one woman) and directors (two women, three men) of a school were interviewed simultaneously. Four interviews were held with the responsible HR advisors (one men, three women). In the School of Economics, the HR advisor did not play a role in the salary allocation, so only the dean and director were interviewed. The interviewees were first asked to describe the policies and practice of recruitment, selection, allocation of salary scale and level, evaluation and promotion decision-making. Subsequently, the interviewees were presented with the gender pay gap in their school at the time of the interview and asked to reflect on it. Following the analyses, the interviewees were presented the analyses of the interviews ('member check') and invited to suggest possible policies to overcome the pay gap in their school. Both the interviews and the responses following the member check were used in the analyses.

All interviewees stressed that the UJC system for allocating salary scales and levels is imperative for establishing the salary allocation. Yet, there are large differences between the schools in how decisions regarding the allocation to salary levels of employees are practised and who is ultimately responsible for the scaling process. Below we discuss the criteria that interviewees mentioned for the salary allocation process, followed by a discussion of negotiation practice and decision-making responsibilities.

When asked which criteria are of major importance for assistant – and full professors and how they are applied, interviewees mentioned the following criteria

within all schools: research capacities (publications and impact of journals), educational capacities (experience, development and educational assessments) and administrative qualities. It is striking that none of the schools has a formalized system for assessing the indicators for level of performance on criteria, nor for the way the relative importance of these criteria is weighted. In most interviews, the respondents indicate that the 'total picture' is taken into consideration. Research about selection procedures for panel evaluations for grants of the European Research Council panels (ERC) showed that non-systematic application of the criteria leads to discrimination against women candidates (Schiffbaenker et al., 2022). Three 'biases' play a role in discrimination towards women candidates: 'double standards' (different weighting of women and men on the same criterion), 'halo effects' (a good assessment on one of the criteria 'contaminates' the assessments of the other criteria) and 'homosocial reproduction' (selectors recognize quality sooner in people who resemble them). Since the selection procedures for ERC grants is much more formalized and structured than the salary allocation process examined in the case study, bias likely explains part of the salary gap in the university.

Within most schools (the school of Economics and Management is an exception), the scaling of a new candidate is essentially based on two criteria, namely a candidate's *last-earned salary* and *years of relevant work experience*. When interviewees mentioned last-earned salary as the criterion for salary allocation, they indicated that in principle, new employees receive a higher salary in comparison to their salary at their previous employer. In most cases, this is a salary that is one salary step higher in the university salary table than the earlier salary (this could be the same job, a job level higher or a higher position). Reports by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights show that the last-earned salary can unintentionally lead to inexplicable differences between employees. Moreover, alignment with the last-earned salary can result in the perpetuation of salary differences between men and women on the labour market (see, e.g., Equal Treatment Commission March 4, 2008, 2008-23, under 3.11).

Some interviewees indicated that in previous years, deviations from the principle of taking the last-earned salary as a start level for salary allocation were common when new hires worked in another sector of the labour market with higher salary levels. For instance, in the interview with the dean and director of the Law school, the dean explains the high gender pay gap by referring to the salary of the (men) employees that previously had a career in a legal profession (e.g. as lawyer, judge).

Dean Law School:	'This has to do with a bargaining position, since people in the legal profession often have a high salary, which gives them a good bargaining position'.
Director Law School:	'Yes, those [people from the legal profession] negotiate a few additional steps, but I think the policy of the School has been tightened in recent years'.

As the last-earned salary of these employees was substantially higher, new hires were allocated to a higher salary level and step than their academic experience would warrant. Interestingly, the pay gap was not replenished with alternative compensation options in the form of a temporary allowance or bonus (which is the formal policy regulation in the UJC) but compensated in the allocation to a higher salary position and level. Most interviewees indicated that these practices happened in the past but that these no longer exist.

For the criterion years of relevant work experience, different rules were applied across schools. Some schools apply a broad interpretation of work experience, whereby experience 'in practice' is also considered:

Dean Theology:	'Then it may be that someone, although not having worked as an assistant professor before, will still be able to become a senior assistant professor in terms of positions in his career'.

Other Schools apply a narrower interpretation of work experience, for example, only experience as an academic at another institute is considered.

Although the schools' interviewees strive and stress to handle the assessment and weighting of criteria carefully and consistently, interviews showed that the systematic and practical implementation of these criteria is a matter of concern. These results resonate with the study described above: the transparent, consistent and systematic application of criteria for scaling is an exception rather than the standard. The moment non-academic work experience is taken into consideration in the salary allocation, there is in fact a deviation from the formal policy from the UJC system. These so-called non-neutral standards form a high risk for bias. Earlier research into pay inequality at universities of applied sciences, for example, showed that non-neutral standards are not only more frequently used in the classification of men than women (i.e. experience is considered more relevant) but also seem to weigh more heavily in the salary-level allocation of men than of women (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, 2011, 2012, 2016).

In the School of Economics and Management, the hiring and salary allocation process of new academic staff differs substantially from all other schools. Here department chairs annually offer jobs at conferences that function as job markets. The dean and director describe the process as follows: Three to four staff members from a department of the school, so-called search committees, head out to scout for future colleagues, as do the competing universities. These search committees receive about 100 files of potential candidates in advance:

Dean School of Economics and Management:	'You can really compare it, I think, and Management: with a football transfer market, with bargaining going on. You can reasonably estimate where candidates stand on this market of supply and demand as an employer'.

Candidates use offers from other universities and business schools in the bargaining process (which can be factual or bluff offers). The assigned worth of a candidate is to a large extent based on the reputation of the university where the candidate received their PhD, as well as the reputation of the candidate's supervisor and network. Accordingly, a certain degree of speculation plays a role in the process of scaling that trickles down in the salary offer of both men and women.

In general, research shows that in situations for which selection is based on the market model (relative status of candidates in a 'market') and is less procedurally embedded, gender bias is lurking (Vinkenburg et al., 2014). This may start as early as selecting of the potential list of candidates. Following the job interviews at conferences, potential candidates are invited to present their work, at what time salary negotiations start simultaneously. Thus, negotiating is part of the salary allocation process at this school. Research shows that men negotiate more often than women, and women more often than men avoid salary negotiations (Liebbrandt & List, 2015). The dean is indeed aware of this:

Dean of Economics and Management:	'Women can also negotiate, however, the question is whether they do it, women do it less, I think'.

Research shows that gender differences in the initiation of negotiation are smaller when there is less situational ambiguity in the appropriateness of negotiation (Kugler et al., 2018; Liebbrandt & List, 2015), as is the case in the school. Yet, the outcomes of the negotiation process tend to favour men candidates (Mazei et al., 2015). Women who do negotiate experience negative consequences (backlash) (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010). Negotiating secondary benefits is also a point of attention here. For example, research into the allocation of research budgets to full professors when they are appointed to German universities showed that men, on average, demand higher budgets and get granted a higher percentage of what they asked for compared to women (Hofmeister & Hahman, 2009). Furthermore, business schools in the Netherlands compete for women talent, 'driving up the price of women academics', according to the dean and director, resulting in higher salary offers. Indeed, when comparing the pay gap of the different schools in the university, this school has a relatively low pay inequality. Hence, the practice of recruiting, selecting and negotiating in this school both may simultaneously reinforce and diminish the gender pay gap.

In the other schools, negotiating is not part of the formal procedure of hiring. The interviewed deans, directors and HR advisors of the other schools indicated that there is little to no room for negotiation.

Dean Humanities:	'I think that we, in our School, are currently fairly tight in that, there is little room for negotiation here'.

At the same time, interviewees of the other schools mention 'exceptions' and give examples of concrete negotiations on (future) salaries.

Dean Social Sciences:	'People all differ in all sorts of respects'.(.) you can always deal with that a little bit in a flexible manner'.
Director of Humanities:	'What do we do with such a case? Especially if you feel that there is a risk that someone will leave, while you would like to secure that person'.

Finally, schools differed substantially in *who* is designated to allocate the salary level and who has decision-making authority. For full professors in all schools, it is the joined responsibility of the dean and the director of the schools to decide on the final salary that is offered. There are differences between schools in whether there is formal room for negotiations. For assistant and associate professor levels, the formal role for allocation of salary levels and the decision-making responsibility differs substantially per school. In some schools, the decision-making responsibility for the allocation for salary level and promotions lies with the managing director of the school, whereas in others, it is the HR advisor, the direct supervisor (chair of the department) or both the HR advisor together with the supervisor in making decisions on salary allocation.

In summary, it is clear from the interviews with the deans, directors and HR advisors of the schools that there are major differences regarding which criteria are used and how these are applied, whether there is the room for negotiation and who is involved in the salary allocation process and who has final responsibility for decisions on salary. Although all schools indicate the use of the UJC, in practice how it is used in processes of hiring and promotion is far from uniform. One possible explanation is the large difference in career opportunities for academics in different disciplines. The labour market is far more competitive for academics in Law or Economics, resulting in more pressure to offer fast promotion tracks for these academics than for academics with a background in the Humanities and Theology. These academics simply have fewer alternatives for jobs than those in Economics and Law and to a lesser degree those in the Social Sciences. Another explanation are mimetic mechanisms (Boselie et al., 2003) within disciplines between universities in hiring and promotion practices. For instance, the 'market mechanism' that we found in the school of Economics and Management is quite typical for the discipline worldwide.

Finally, the lack of transparency of salary allocation policies and the absence of accountability in salary allocation practice makes schools vulnerable for biases in the process of salary allocation. All schools had little or no monitoring of structural inequalities and actual salary differences between women and men. Such an oversight is necessary for diminishing structural inequalities.

Discussion

The purpose of salary systems is to distribute salaries in some systematic way that excellent performance is rewarded, being it compared to market, based on a performance tournament or using merit criteria. In this chapter, we discussed how

agentic (masculine) stereotypes of excellence in academia interfere with salary allocation processes and outcomes of academics, causing biased gender differences in job and salary levels. No matter their salary system, academic institutions place a strong belief in merit and objective measures in their salary systems. However, we demonstrated by using data from a university how a lack of transparency, consistency and accountability can disqualify apparent fair, merit-based salary decisions and result in a substantial gender salary gap and an overrepresentation of men in higher job levels. The findings hold implications for the conceptualization of talent in higher education, for the implementation of talent management and for the equal opportunities and representation of women.

First, although talent refers to excellent performance through a palette of analytic, academic and social competencies (Thunnissen et al., 2021), and stakeholders in the case university also mentioned weighing research, education and administrative performance in salary decisions, in practice allocation procedures proved susceptible to bias. Implicitly, the stereotype of excellence in academia emphasizes agentic qualities, in accordance with 'think talent-think male' research (Festing et al., 2015). While gender bias in talent management has been exposed previously (e.g. Daubner-Siva et al., 2017; Festing et al., 2015), there is a lack of research connecting the social context of salary allocations with career decisions and career opportunities, indicative of a blind spot in talent management as well as salary dispersion research.

Second, the findings about salary- and job-level decisions in the university resonate with research on the often informal and implicit practice of talent management. Likewise, a lack of consistency between actors in talent management is also apparent in salary decisions. Both in talent management and salary allocation and policies, decisions are often unknown or even kept secret from employees. Reasons for not being transparent about talent status include a fear of arrogant behaviours by those selected in a talent pool, and the risk of towering expectations and likely breaches (Khoreva et al, 2019). Salary secrecy may relate to social taboos or a fear for conflict over salaries with employees. In both cases, secrecy disguises unclear procedures to justify outcome inequalities. Although research indicates some benefits in salary secrecy for employee performance (Bamberger, 2021), it is also known to reinforce gender wage inequalities (Castilla, 2015). Another parallel between salary allocation and talent management concerns fairness issues because both result in a differential allocation of resources to employees. By ensuring procedural, informational and interpersonal justice in the procedures and communication with employees, organizations could reduce perceptions of unfairness (Gelens et al., 2013).

Third, the gender salary gap and a skewed gender distribution across academic ranks is indicative of unequal career opportunities of men and women academics after acquiring their PhD. Because the assumption of merit is dominant in academia, a professor title and the adhering salary levels are seen as a token ('the talent') of the human capital of individual academics. With women lagging in the higher and senior job levels, their token human capital to secure a network, grant or other resources is also perceived of lower worth than that of men. In a study on peer assessment of talent status, Nijs et al. (2022) demonstrate the importance of

Table 8.1. Policy Interventions to Prevent Salary Inequality.

Transparency and consistency		
Process transparency	Use of formal process flowchart for new hires	• Develop salary allocation process flow system • Designate responsibility for sustaining system at university and school levels • Clarity in timeline of salary allocation steps • Clarity in negotiation bandwidth
	Formal process flowchart for promotions	• Develop promotion steps process flow system • Designate responsibility for sustaining promotion system at university and school levels • Continuous communication to inform all stakeholders about steps in promotion and subsequent salary allocation • Clarity in timeline of different steps for promotion
Process consistency	Clear and measurable criteria for salary-scale allocation	• Formulation of SMART criteria • Formulate clear specification for evaluation of each criterion • Analyse criteria for possible gender bias
	Criteria for allocation are used in a consistent way	• Fixed weight per criteria per job position, established in advance of selection • Fixed order in which criteria are weighted • Evaluate each candidate on a criterion, before moving to the next criterion
	Awareness to sustaining changes in salary allocation processes and criteria	• Communicate salary process flow system to all stakeholders and make publicly available • Create public documentation of criteria and specifications and make available for organizational members • Organize training system for all decision-makers

(*Continued*)

Table 8.1. (*Continued*)

Transparency and consistency		
Result transparency	Clarity in salary allocation	• Bi-annual direct supervisors annually communicate the salary allocation (position and level) of team members • Map work experience to allocated salary level within job positions in organizational units
	(Bi-)annual scan of salary inequality	• Report (changes in) pay gap and actions taken to reduce pay gap • Establish an independent complaint procedure for addressing inequalities in salary allocation
Accountability		
Process accountability	Gender awareness in promotion decision-making	• Clarity and motivation for choice in promotion committee members, gender awareness being one of the selection criteria for committee members • Allocation of (trained) member of promotion committee specifically for safeguarding gender sensitivity • Equal representation of women and men in decision-making bodies related to hiring, selection, promotion and pay allocation
Result accountability	Auditing and monitoring	• Audit (every 2–3 years) of gender pay gap in management reports of schools and the university • Monitor use of salary and remuneration system • Make use of external bodies (e.g. Human Rights Committee) to audit salary allocation process and pay gap • Communicate pay gap and progress publicly

signalling cues for talent recognition. Future research could examine the signalling effects of salary allocation for the organization of status in universities, which is visible through academic positions from PhD to professor (Angermuller, 2017).

As public institutions, universities have a moral and societal task in reducing gender inequalities in talent management. The findings support several

interventions to prevent salary inequalities mentioned in the literature, including improving the transparency of the criteria and salary allocation policies, increasing the uniformity in the application of the criteria and policies and ensuring accountability to advance consistency in use (Bamberger, 2021). The literature further stresses the importance of representation of minority groups in policymaking and decision-making (Adam Cobb, 2016) and ensuring adherence to legal regulations (O'Reilly et al., 2015). Table 8.1 provides an overview of practical policy interventions based on the findings in the case study and literature that together should prevent salary inequality in an evidence-based and sustainable way. The table displays interventions for improving transparency, consistency and accountability in universities. As can be seen from the findings of the case study, salary inequality is a multilayered phenomenon, hence interventions for prevention should be targeted at individual behaviour of employees, department management and school and university policy and practice and should focus both on improving process and result. Tilburg University adjusted their policies based on most of the suggestions in the table. Apart from focussing on transparency, consistency and accountability of procedures, effort was taken to repair differences in salary on a case-by-case basis, using work experience as the key indicator. Fig. 8.3 illustrates how responsibilities concerning salary equality are embedded in the hierarchical structures of the university (van Engen et al., 2019).

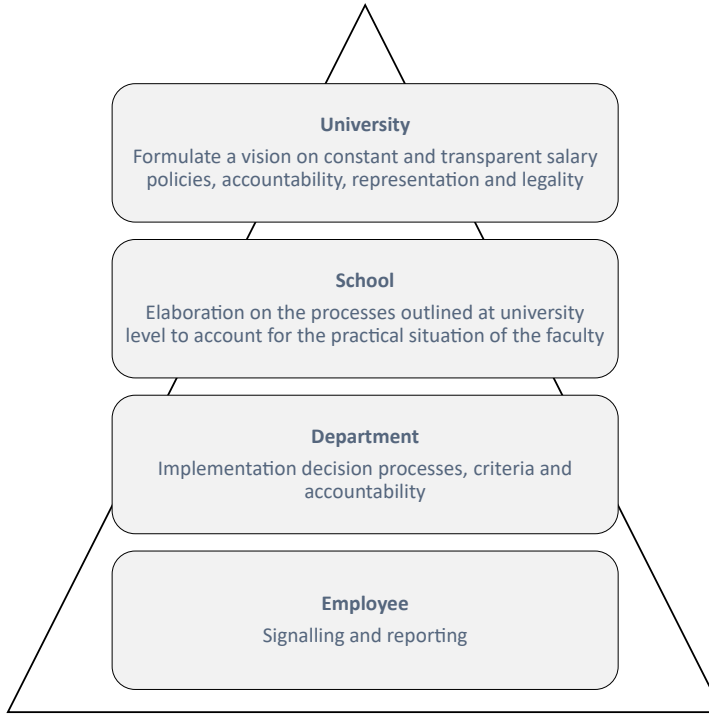

Fig. 8.3. Hierarchy of Responsibilities to Prevent Salary Inequality in Universities.

In this chapter, we built a bridge between salary inequalities and talent management. We plead that future research and practice include salary allocation as an integral part of talent management. This integration aligns with current trends in reward and recognition in universities, which aims to diversify the talent profile of academics beyond grants, publications and student evaluations. As demonstrated, ignoring salary allocation policy and practice creates unintended inequalities that will hamper the opportunities of diverse employees to use their talents.

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