

Life Expectancy And Gender

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Introduction

The life expectancy of an individual at birth refers to the statistically estimated number of years an individual is expected to live. Women tend to have a lower mortality rate compared to men at every level of life, beginning at conception. Furthermore, among the babies born prematurely, female babies are more likely to survive compared to male babies. The life expectancy of men is influenced by certain sociocultural factors associated with masculinity and lifestyle behaviours, which include alcoholism and smoking, factors that greatly increase their mortality rate compared to that of women. Hence, the life expectancy of an individual is influenced by biological and sociocultural factors, including gender.

I concur with Carol Emslie and Kate Hunt's argument in their article that women have a biological advantage over men, which is one of the factors that make their life expectancy rate higher than that of men. From the very onset of life, men have a higher mortality rate than women. For instance, considering the genetic difference, when one of the genes of the X chromosome tends to mutate, women have an extra X chromosome that would serve as compensation, which is not the case in men since they have no extra X chromosome. Therefore, men tend to suffer more from sex-linked chromosomal disorders, which increase their mortality rate, unlike the case with women (Carey 45). Furthermore, higher longevity in women has been associated with their role in reproducing offspring and the female hormones they possess.

Hormones such as oestrogen aid in eliminating bad cholesterol and can, therefore, provide protection against illnesses such as heart disease. The testosterone hormone present in women has also been associated with risk-taking, which is absent in men. Additionally, women have a higher resistance to ageing than men and, therefore, have a higher life expectancy.

Research Findings

According to Carol Emslie's article on gender and life expectancy, several social-cultural explanations have shown that women have a higher life expectancy compared to men. I support this argument in that, based on the different gender roles that society associates with specific sexes, men tend to associate themselves with job activities or tasks that render them vulnerable to early death. For instance, having to be the breadwinners of the family, men tend to partake in heavy tasks which may affect their health. They may also suffer frustration and undergo stress if they fail to be in a position to provide for their families.

As Emslie claims in her article on gender and life expectancy, women do not necessarily have to experience these circumstances since their bodies only allow them to carry out simpler tasks like taking care of the family and cannot, therefore, indulge in industrious activities that may affect their health. It is also evident that men pay less attention to matters concerning their health, unlike women, due to patriarchy and certain beliefs that a man's masculinity requires him to be strong and endure certain illnesses without expressing weakness (Chrisler & McCreary 471). Men, therefore, tend to ignore some illnesses, even those that ought to be taken seriously, and this could eventually result in their death.

Comparative Analysis

Findings recorded by Carol Emslie and Kate Hunt after their research indicate that lifestyle behaviours such as smoking and alcoholism also affect the life expectancy of individuals. I believe that this is true since various studies have shown that more men tend to associate themselves with this lifestyle compared to women. Drinking and smoking form part of the activities that several men indulge in during their free time, which has been the trend since historical periods to date. Others resolve to drink to relieve themselves from stress or frustration. As a result, people associated with such lifestyles end up acquiring fatal diseases such as liver infections, heart diseases, and lung infections, which lead to early death. High deaths related to alcoholism among men are caused by taking excessive amounts of alcohol, spirits, and drinks that contain ethanol, which is not suitable for consumption. Recently, the rate of alcoholism and smoking has also increased in women and is slightly at the same level as that of men. Despite this, the mortality rate of men remains higher than that of women.

Just like Carol Emslie and Kate Hunt argue in their article about exploring lay understandings of gender differences in life expectancy, I believe that the life expectancy of men is lower than that of women, especially in countries with more industrial activities that require men as labourers. Male mortality tends to be higher due to the increase in diseases which are typically associated with males. In such countries, it is men who work in industrial areas and, therefore, are more exposed to hazardous situations brought about by different types of pollution associated with their jobs (Brannon 395). Consequently, they tend to suffer diseases that may result in their death, unlike women who hardly get exposed to similar situations. Additionally, a majority of people who die from road accidents are men since most women do not drive, and it is men who are always out and about in the struggle to provide for their families.

Conclusion

Women have a higher life expectancy than men because of the biological advantage they have over men and some sociocultural factors that make their lifespan longer than that of men. The female body is composed of certain hormones that men lack and other genetic factors that give them an

advantage over men. Social factors such as the notion of masculinity and gender roles also contribute to the lower lifespan in men. Current trends show that certain factors such as smoking and alcoholism that cause death in men have also increased in women, but the mortality rate of men is still higher than that of women since, for instance, males smoke more cigarettes than women and are more reckless drivers than women. The gender gap in life expectancy can, however, change since it is solidly based on sociocultural factors that are likely to change.

Works Cited

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