LABOUR MARKET INEFFICIENCY, GENDER INEQUALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON WAGES IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

There is a critical issues oof wage disparity, gender inequality and women discrimination specially in Pakistan and a lot of research and policy initiatives have been taken but this issue is still existing and hurting the economy of the country. Therefore, this study aims at examining the sensitivity of gender problem and wage inequality in Pakistan, using primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from 348 participants and applying mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. The selected variables of this study were the labor market inefficiency, gender inequality, Wage disparities, Labor market inefficiency, Education and Public Policies. Wage disparity was dependent variable and all other variables were independent variables. The findings reveal that there is wide range of gender disparities in labor market participation as well as wage disparity and discrimination with working women. In the light of these findings, the study suggest that policy makers should intervene to remove discriminatory practices against women in employment and education.

1.Introduction

Gender inequality is a persistent problem, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. This study focuses on two key aspects of how women are discriminated against: being completely excluded from the workforce or leadership positions, and being denied opportunities for higher education and management roles. These forms of discrimination have significant economic consequences, including lower economic growth, reduced national output, and a distorted allocation of talent. Despite women's efforts to improve their social status while managing household responsibilities, societal norms and cultural biases make it difficult for them to participate fully in economic activities. This issue is particularly concerning as a significant portion of women (around 40%) live below the poverty line. Pakistan's low ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI) highlights the severity of this problem.

1.1 Background of study

The economists like David Ricardo, Berta Esteve-Volart argue that gender inequality is an acute and persistent problem, especially in developing countries. The gender discrimination is considered as complete exclusion of females from the labor market or as the exclusion of females from managerial positions. The discrimination in the allocation of talent between managerial and unskilled positions, and in human capital investment, are the focus of this study. The current literature noted that both types of discriminations lower economic growth; and that the former also implies a reduction in per capita GDP, while the latter distorts the allocation of talent. These types of discrimination have lower female-to-male schooling ratios. Women are striving to improve their social status while performing domestic responsibilities. The societal attitudes and cultural norms perpetuate gender

inequality and hinder women's full participation in the economic activities. Around 40% women are living below poverty line and this issue need urgent policy intervention to address this issue. Pakistan's low global ranking (164the out of 1993 countries) in Human Development Index (HDI) score 0.540 (UNDP, 2023). It is observed that "the widening human development gap shows that the two-decade trend of steadily reducing inequalities between wealthy and poor nations is now in reverse. The failure of collective action to advance our response to climate change, digitalization or poverty and inequality not only hinders human development but also worsens polarization and further erodes trust in people and institutions worldwide. Though disparities and inequalities are existing globally, yet their level is worse in Pakistan due to existence of wide political, economic and social polarization. "Gender equality is not only an ethical imperative but also an intelligent strategy to foster innovation, creativity, and overall institutional performance."

This brief detail is evident that gender inequality is a serious issue and it must be addressed at all level and also need in depth research to diagnose its causes and effects as well as its possible solution. The primary objectives of this study are to investigate the multifaceted consequences of gender inequality in Pakistan. It aims to examine how gender disparities impact salaries, economic development and national growth, focusing on education, employment and labor force participation rates. The study also intends to explore the contributions of women to society, families, and the economy while assessing the link between economic development and gender inequality. The study also seeks to probe into the nature of labor market conditions in Pakistan, particularly regarding gender inequality and evaluates labor market inefficiencies and wage discrimination, in order to provide understanding of the complex relationship between gender disparities and

broader societal and economic dynamics. This study will contribute into the knowledge on labor market participation, wage and gender inequality and its impact on the society and economic development and will provide valuable insights for the policy makers to take effective policy initiatives to   remove these inequalities, which are main challenge for Pakistan's sustainable development.

This study aims to address this critical challenge by investigating the multifaceted consequences of gender inequality in Pakistan. The main research question focuses on how gender disparities affect various aspects of Pakistani society. Specifically, the study will examine how these disparities impact educational attainment, labor force participation rates, wages, economic development, and economic growth. It will also explore the contributions of women in society, families, and the economy. Finally, the study will delve into the nature of labor market conditions in Pakistan, particularly regarding gender inequality and wage discrimination. This empirical analysis will provide valuable insights for policymakers to formulate effective policy framework that promote gender equality and contribute to Pakistan's sustainable economic development.

2. Literature Review and hypotheses development

Bibi et al. (2021) conducted a study on the determinants of gender-based wage discrimination in Pakistan. They found that adverse treatment of female labor market participation is a significant contributor to the wage gap. Additionally, factors such as education and labor market experience were identified as key determinants affecting wage differentials between men and women. This study highlights the need for further exploration into the specific

mechanisms through which discrimination occurs in the labor market and the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing wage disparities.

Yasin et al. (2010) examined the relationship between gender inequality and economic growth in Pakistan. They concluded that gender inequality has a significant and negative impact on economic growth. This study underscores the importance of addressing gender disparities to foster sustainable economic development. Pervaiz et al. (2011) further emphasized the role of reducing gender wage disparity and increasing government spending on health, education, and social infrastructure in promoting economic prosperity. However, there remains a need for more nuanced analyses to understand the specific channels through which gender inequality affects economic growth in Pakistan.

Javed et al. (2022) investigated Pakistan's two-tier urban labor market and found that urban-urban female migrants earn significantly lower wages compared to their male counterparts. This study sheds light on the gender disparities within urban labor markets and highlights the importance of factors such as working hours and human capital endowment in contributing to wage differentials. Additionally, Umair et al. (2020) explored the dynamism in the gender wage gap over time and found that men consistently earn higher wages than women across various points along the wage distribution. These findings underscore the persistence of gender wage disparities in Pakistan and the need for targeted interventions to address them.

Nasir & Nazli (2010) and Ayaz & Hussain (2011) emphasized the importance of education and training for human capital accumulation and lifetime earnings in Pakistan. They highlighted the challenges faced by women in accessing education and training opportunities, which contribute to gender disparities in the labor market. While these studies provide valuable insights

into the role of education in shaping gender inequality, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of policies aimed at improving educational outcomes for women and closing the gender gap in human capital accumulation.

Several studies offer policy recommendations to address gender inequality and promote economic development in Pakistan. For example, Yasin et al. (2010) suggested that policy actions should be taken to create equitable employment opportunities, while Hussain et al. (2016) emphasized the need for creating conducive socio-economic conditions that enable women to participate freely in the labor force. These policy recommendations highlight the importance of implementing gender-sensitive policies and interventions to reduce gender disparities and promote inclusive economic growth. However, there is a gap in understanding the effectiveness of these policies in achieving their intended outcomes and the potential barriers to their implementation.

2.1 Novelty of study

Despite the existing literature's breadth on gender-based wage discrimination and economic development in Pakistan, there remains a notable research gap in understanding the multifaceted nature of gender disparities across different sectors and regions. Specifically, further research could explore intersectionality of factors and impact of Informal Economy. While some studies, such as Umair et al. (2020), have examined longitudinal trends in the gender wage gap, there is a need for more longitudinal studies to track changes in gender disparities over time. Longitudinal analyses can help identify persistent barriers to gender equality and assess the effectiveness of policy interventions in addressing these challenges. Mosly the literature

predominantly relies on quantitative analyses; qualitative approaches can provide deeper insights into the real experiences of individuals affected by gender-based wage discrimination and inequality. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies, can offer a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics shaping gender disparities in the labor market. Addressing these research gaps can strengthen the understanding of gender issues, labor market inefficiency and enable the policy makers to take evidence-bases policy initiatives to promote gender equality and sustainable inclusive economic growth. Addressing these research gaps can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of gender inequalities in Pakistan's labor market and inform evidence-based policy interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusive economic development.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

In the light of reviewed literature and objectives of the study the following hypotheses have been developed for testing through data to be collected from real life in order to understand the relationship between gender inequality, wage disparity and women discrimination and their overall impact on Pakistan's economy and society.

Ho: There is no significant wage disparity, gender inequality and women discrimination in Pakistan

H$_1$: There is a significant wage disparity, gender inequality and women discrimination in Pakistan.

Ho: Wage disparity, gender inequality and women discrimination have no impact on the economy and society in Pakistan.

H$_1$: Wage disparity, gender inequality and women discrimination have significant impact on the economy and society in Pakistan.

3. Data and Methodology

Data have two types' primary data & secondary data. We will use to primary data. Primary data is fresh, distinct information that a researcher directly obtains from a source in accordance with his or her study questions requirements. In order to conduct data research on the topic of labour market inefficiency, gender inequality their impact on wages in Pakistan. The data was collected from 348 participants selected through random sampling method. A structured questionnaire instrument was utilized to collected the data. Before filling the questionnaire, the participants were fully informed of the objective of data collection and purpose of its use. They were assured complete secrecy of their information and its use only for research purpose. This was necessary to meet the requirements of ethical values. The questionnaire containing questions were related to the variables of the study. The selected variables of this study were the labour market inefficiency, gender inequality, Wage disparities, Labour market inefficiency, Education and Public Policies. Wage is dependent variable and all other variables are independent variables. The data collection process was completed within three months from March, 2023 to June,2023.

The functional form of the model of this study is given below: -
Wage = $\beta 0$ + $\beta 1$(Labor Market Inefficiency) + $\beta 2$(Gender Inequality) + $\beta 3$(Education) + $\beta 4$(Wage Disparity) + $\beta 5$(Public Policies). We transform this model into the following mathematical equation: -

$$Y= \beta 0 + \beta 1 X1 + \beta 2 X2 + \beta 3 X3 + \beta 4 X4 + \beta 5 X5 + \varepsilon$$

In this model wage represents the dependent variable while Labour market inefficiency, Gender Inequality, Education, Wage Disparity and Public Policies are independent variables. $\beta 0$ represents the intercept or the base level

of wages assuming all other factors remain the same. β1- to β6 represents the independent variables coefficients, which show the intensity and direction of each variable. The study employed different statistical and econometric techniques such as descriptive statistics, Cronbach Alpha test, Correlation Matrix and Multiple Regression Analysis.

4. Results.

4.1 Reliability Test

The reliability of the items of questionnaire was tested through Cronbach Alpha, which is commonly used by the researchers for the same purpose. Table 1 contains the results of Cronbach Alpha test

Table 1

Results of Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.839	6
Names of the variables	Cronbach's Alpha values
Wage	.804
Labour market inefficiency	.824
Gender inequality	.798
Education	.802
Wage discrimination of gender	.831
Public policies	.814

The values of all variables are between 0.80≤α<90 and the values fall between 0.70 and 0.80 are considered good. Hence, the results of reliability test are acceptable and further analysis can be conducted.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are employed to measure the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of variables. This analysis reveals the equal distribution of data. Table 2 exhibits the estimated results of descriptive statistics.

Table 2

Results of Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Wages	348	5.00	25.00	10.9483	4.33373
Labour market inefficiency	348	5.00	25.00	11.0316	3.92533
Gender inequality	348	6.00	30.00	13.6121	4.76739
Education	348	4.00	20.00	9.2155	3.47359
Wage disparity	348	2.00	10.00	4.3592	1.96958
Public policies	348	3.00	15.00	6.8333	2.88509

Descriptive statistics results show how dependent and independent variables are related with mean and standard deviation. Wage is the dependent variable with mean is 10.94 and std. deviation is 4.33 there are strong positive relationship with all independent variables i.e. labour market inefficiency mean is 11.03 and std. deviation 3.92, gender inequality 13.61 and std. deviation 4.76, education mean value is 9.21 and std. deviation 3.47, wage disparity of gender mean value is 4.35 and std. deviation 1.96 and public policies mean value is 6.83 and std. deviation is 2.88 all above variables have strong and positive relation.

4.3 Correlation Matrix

Correlation Matrix is an important statistical tool to determine degree of association between pairs of variables. Table 3 demonstrates the estimated results of Correlation Matrix.

Table 3

Results of Correlation Matrix

		Wages	Labour market inefficiency	Gender inequality	Education	Wage discrimination	Public policies
Wages	Pearson Correlation	1	.402**	.526**	.552**	.585**	.580**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
		348	348	348	348	348	348
Labour market inefficiency	Pearson Correlation	.402**	1	.550**	.462**	.349**	.417**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	348	348	348	348	348	348
Gender inequality	Pearson Correlation	.526**	.550**	1	.597**	.483**	.526**
		<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	348	348	348	348	348	348
Education	Pearson Correlation	.552**	.462**	.597**	1	.489**	.483**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001

		348	348	348	348	348	348
Wage disparity	Pearson Correlation	.585**	.349**	.483**	.489**	1	.415**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	348	348	348	348	348	348
Public policies	Pearson Correlation	.580**	.417**	.526**	.483**	.415**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	348	348	348	348	348	348
**. The significance threshold for correlation is 0.01 (2-tailed).							

The result of correlation matrix shows that there is a strong positive correlation between the pair of variables since the plus sign denotes a high degree of correlation. The variables Labour market inefficiency is correlated with gender inequality, education, wage disparity and public policies and the correlation is significant and positive in magnitude ($r=0.01$).

4.4. Multiple Regression

Multiple Regression Analysis is a technique which commonly employs to analyze the nature of relationship between dependent and independent variable. Here we analyze the relationship between labour market inefficiency, gender inequality, education and public policy and wage disparity in Pakistan. Table 4 shows the estimated results of Multiple Regression.

Table 4

Estimated results of Multiple Regression

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.224	.579		.113	2.035
	Labour market inefficiency	.037	.051	.034	.732	.465
	Gender inequality	.078	.049	.085	1.596	.112
	Education	.233	.063	.187	3.712	<.001
	Wage disparity	.697	.099	.317	7.012	<.001
	Public policies	.449	.070	.299	6.447	<.001
a. Dependent Variable: Wages						

Labour market inefficiency and Gender inequality do not have statistically significant relationships with wages (p-value > 0.05). However, it's important to consider the direction of the coefficient (positive or negative) along with the significance level for a more comprehensive understanding. In this case, the coefficient for labour market inefficiency is positive (0.037) and the coefficient for gender inequality is also positive (0.078). This suggests that

there might be weak positive relationships between these variables and wages, but the model cannot detect them with statistical certainty at the 5% significance level. Public policies, Wage disparity, and Education have statistically significant positive relationships with wages (p-value < 0.05). This means that for every one unit increase in these independent variables, there is a corresponding increase in wages, on average, while controlling for other factors in the model.

When we analyze overall results, we find that constant term which is expected value of the dependent variable, wage, when all explanatory variables are zero is not statistically significant (p > 0.05). Similarly, labour market inefficiency and gender inequality also positive but statistically insignificant effect on wages (p > 0.05) and (p > 0.05). In contrast, Education, wage disparity and public polies have positive and statistically significant effect on wages and their p-values (Sig.): <0.001, (p < 0.05), and p-value (Sig.): <0.001) are respectively, showing statistically significant impact on wages. Table 5 shows summary of the model.

Table 5:

Model summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.721a	.521	.514	3.02275
a. Predictors: (Constant), Public policies, Wage disparity, Labor market inefficiency, Education, Gender inequality				
b. Dependent variable is wage				

The model summary shows that the R-squared is 0.521. This means that the model explains 52.1% of the variance in wages. However, it also means that 47.9% of the variance is unexplained by the model. There could be other factors that influence wages that are not included in the model.

It is important to examine the residuals of the model to see if there are any patterns that could indicate violations of the assumptions of linear regression. It is also important to consider potential interactions between the independent variables. For example, the effect of education on wages might be different for men and women. In short, the results of the regression analysis suggest that public policies, wage disparity, and education are important factors that influence wages in this sample. However, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of the model and to consider other factors that might also be important. This provides a research gap for future researchers.

5. Discussion

The primary objectives of this study were to examine the impact of gender inequality, labor market inefficiency, education and public policies on wages in Pakistan. The study utilized primary data which was collected from 343 participants through a structured questionnaire. The reliability of the items of questionnaire was checked through Cronbach Alpha test. The normal distribution of data of variables were checked through descriptive statistical analysis. The association between pairs of variables was measured through Correlation Matrix. The relationship between dependent and independent variables were examined through Multiple Regression Analysis. The results reveal normal distribution of data, while correlation results show strong and positive correlation between variables. Similarly, the Multiple Regression Analysis demonstrate positive and significant relationship between dependent

and independent variables. For instance. Labor market inefficiency and Gender inequality do not have statistically significant relationships with wages (p-value > 0.05). However, it's important to note that the direction of the coefficient (positive or negative) along with the significance level for a more comprehensive understanding. In this case, the coefficient for labor market inefficiency is positive (0.037) and the coefficient for gender inequality is also positive (0.078). This suggests that there might be weak positive relationships between these variables and wages, but the model cannot detect them with statistical certainty at the 5% significance level. Public policies, Wage disparity, and Education have statistically significant positive relationships with wages (p-value < 0.05). This means that for every one unit increase in these independent variables, there is a corresponding increase in wages, on average, while controlling for other factors in the model

The value of R^2 shows 52.10% variation in the dependent variable due to combined effect of all independent variables. The rest of unexplained variation in dependent variable may be due to other factors which are not included into the model. It provides opportunity to the future researchers to focus of research gaps identified by this study. The findings of this study are in line with the studies of Rabia, et al. (2019), Lam & Ahmad (2021) Ali, et al (2021), Javed, et al (2022), and UNDP Report, (2023) who investigated into the effect of gender inequality, barriers to women education, labor market inefficiency and public policies on wage disparity and its implication for economic performance.

5.1 Policy implications

This study examined the impact of gender inequality, labor market inefficiency, education, and public policies on wages in Pakistan. The

research, based on a survey of 343 participants, found a strong positive correlation between all the independent variables and wages. This suggests that these factors play a significant role in determining wages in Pakistan. The positive and statistically significant relationship between education and wages highlights the importance of prioritizing education policies. Investments in increasing access to quality education, particularly for girls, and promoting skill development programs would benefit the workforce and boost wages. Public policies also emerged as a significant factor influencing wages. This suggests that strengthening existing policies promoting gender equality and reducing labor market inefficiencies is crucial. Additionally, policymakers should consider the findings from the studies mentioned in the research (Rabia et al., 2019; Ali et al., 2021; Javed et al., 2022; UNDP Report, 2023) to identify specific areas where new policies can address existing barriers. While the study couldn't definitively conclude the statistical significance of gender inequality on wages, the positive coefficient indicates a need for further investigation. Policies aimed at breaking down gender stereotypes that limit women's career opportunities, supporting work-life balance (e.g., childcare facilities), and addressing discriminatory practices in the workplace could be explored.

5.2 Limitations of study

It important to acknowledge some limitations that affect the generalizability and conclusiveness of the findings.

● One limitation is the sample size. The study surveyed 343 participants. While it offers valuable data, a larger sample size would provide more statistically robust results, particularly regarding the impact of gender inequality. With a larger group, the findings would be more generalizable to the wider Pakistani population.

● Another limitation is the study's design. The research establishes correlations between the variables, but it cannot definitively prove causation. For instance, the study shows a positive correlation between education and wages. This could mean that higher education leads to higher wages. However, it's also possible that individuals with higher natural abilities are more likely to pursue higher education and also command higher wages. Further research designs employing methods like randomized controlled trials would be needed to explore causal relationships more definitively.

● The data collection method also presents a limitation. The study relies on self-reported information through surveys. Participants might unintentionally or intentionally misreport their income or other factors. This potential bias in the data needs to be considered when interpreting the results.

● The study also leaves some variance unexplained. The model accounts for 52.1% of the variation in wages, leaving a significant 47.9% unexplained. This suggests there might be other important factors not included in the study, such as work experience, specific skillsets, or industry-specific trends. These factors could be explored in future research to create a more comprehensive picture.

● The generalizability of the findings is limited by the study's focus on Pakistan. The social and economic contexts of other countries might influence how these factors affect wages. Therefore, the results might not be directly applicable to other populations.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The above limitations highlight the need for further research to create a more nuanced understanding of wage determination in Pakistan

The unexplained variance in wages (47.9%) suggests there might be other influential factors not considered in this study. Additionally, investigating how factors like industry or location moderate the wage equation and conducting qualitative research to understand the lived experiences of women facing these challenges could provide valuable insights. Collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and NGOs is key to translating these findings into actionable policies. By working together, they can create a more equitable and efficient labor market in Pakistan, leading to higher wages and overall economic growth.

Data statement

The data that support to the results of this study will be made available on strong request.

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