

Bi-causality between gender inequality and wage gap and its impact on economic growth

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Abstract: It is imperative that research be conducted on the intricate and important subject of how gender inequality and the pay gap connect to the development of India's economy. There are significant differences between the genders in a range of social, health, educational, and professional possibilities in India, just as there are in many other regions of the globe. In India, this is also the case. The main factor that contributes to the gender pay gap is the fact that women get less money than men do for doing the same job. A cycle of gender inequality is maintained and exacerbated by the salary disparity that exists today. In addition, the gender pay gap restricts women's ability to achieve economic independence, which in turn restricts their opportunities to pursue higher levels of education and healthcare. This has repercussions for the expansion of human capital, which plays an essential role in the development of the economy. Women who earn less than males are less inclined to invest in their own education and professional development, which in turn lowers the general level of competition in the labour market in developing countries.

Keywords: *Economic growth, Gender inequality, Structural equation model, Wage gap.*

1. Introduction

Bi-causality between gender inequality and the wage gap, and its impact on economic growth in India is a multifaceted and critical topic that warrants comprehensive exploration. Gender inequality in the Indian context, like in many parts of the world, encompasses disparities in economic opportunities, education, healthcare, and social norms. This disparity, in turn, significantly contributes to the wage gap, as women often find themselves earning less than their male counterparts for similar roles. This wage gap perpetuates and exacerbates gender inequality in a vicious cycle (Imai, 2014).

The interplay between gender inequality and the wage gap has profound implications for India's economic growth. When a significant portion of the population, namely women, faces unequal access to opportunities, it hampers the country's potential for economic development. Women's underrepresentation in the workforce, particularly in leadership and decision-making positions, means that a significant talent pool remains untapped. This not only limits the nation's ability to innovate and adapt to changing economic landscapes but also results in a loss of productivity.

Furthermore, the wage gap limits women's financial independence, leading to lower spending power, which affects their ability to invest in education and healthcare. This, in turn, has consequences for human capital development, which is a cornerstone of economic growth. When women are paid less than their male counterparts, they are less likely to invest in their own education and skills development, which ultimately hinders the country's workforce from being competitive in a global context (Kabeer, 2016).

The consequences of gender inequality and the wage gap are not just social but economic. Policies that address these issues, such as equal pay for equal work, promoting female entrepreneurship, and improving access to education for women, can contribute significantly to bridging the wage gap and reducing gender inequality (Duflo, 2012). By doing so, India can unlock the potential of half of its

population and enhance its overall economic growth. This discussion underscores the importance of considering the bi-causality between gender inequality and the wage gap in India's economic policymaking and reinforces the need for comprehensive strategies to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth (van Staveren, 2014).

1.1. Problem Statement

The investigation of the contributions that women have made to the expansion of the economy has recently come to the forefront as a subject of interest within both academic and official policy circles. There has been a huge increase in the number of working women across a broad variety of industrialised and developing countries over the course of the previous half-century. There has been a discernible movement in the rates of women's workforce involvement towards those of their male counterparts in a variety of nations and over the course of a number of different historical periods. In addition to this, there has been a noticeable narrowing of the wage difference between men and women (Santoso, 2019). There were two primary contributors to the gender gap that shrunk from 32% to 26% between the years 1980 and 2009. This improvement may be traced to the period of time ranging from 1980 to 2009. To begin, there has been a significant jump from 50.2% to 51.8% in the percentage of women who are actively participating in the labour market around the globe. Second, the percentage of men actively participating in the labour market has decreased, going from 82% to 77.7% during the same time period. These changes in the rates of labour force participation among the sexes were a contributing factor in the narrowing of the gender gap that was seen over the period of time that was indicated (Pearse, 2016). Despite this, it is essential to point out that there is still a significant gender gap in the ways in which women's skills and capabilities are used and distributed in society. The current gender gap in access to education of high quality causes a problem for the development of girls' human and social capital in a number of developing countries (Klasen, 2017). This problem is compounded by the fact that girls' education is often inferior to that of boys. The result that was found was a decrease in the number of work possibilities and the amount of compensation available to female persons within the labour markets. The contemporary picture of female involvement in the workforce continues to be hampered by significant impediments (Karoui, 2018).

The level of involvement of women in the labour market is affected by a variety of supply-side limitations, which include aspects such as fertility, marriage, and the responsibility of raising children. These aspects have been recognised as major criteria that have a role in determining the extent to which women participate in the work market (Inglehart, 2017). The existence of societal hurdles on the demand side is a substantial barrier that prevents women from achieving fair access to a wide variety of vocations, avenues for the development of their skills, and reasonable pay. It is a well-known fact that there is a gender disparity in the world of education and employment in both developed and developing countries (Henry, 2013). However, it is important to note that Asian nations, in particular, see this problem as a subject of the highest significance in their national agendas. This is something that should not be overlooked. The information shown in Tables 1 and 2 provides convincing evidence of large gender differences in educational access, academic achievement, and involvement in the labour market across a number of Asian countries and industrialised nations (Milazzo, 2019).

Therefore, the process of employing people involves both negotiations and the process of bargaining, and both immaterial and material concerns may have an influence on the outcome. The result of the approach that was just described will decide whether or not these choices may have a beneficial influence on the capacity of women candidates to participate in the market, as well as the circumstances that allow them to join and maintain their presence in the labour force. The analysis of the interrelationships between residential houses, which represent the non-economic domain, and the marketplace, which represents the economic sphere, forms the focal point of the second topic at hand (Kabeer 2020). This is because residential dwellings represent the non-economic domain, while the marketplace represents the economic sphere. The dual functions of housekeeping and the accumulation process are at the heart of the discussion that is still continuing. One school of thought maintains that doing chores around the home may be seen as a way to simulate and channel "human energies," so fostering the expansion and maturation of individual members of the household. On the other hand,

detractors of the accumulation process believe that it makes a profit off of these energies by turning them into a business venture. It is possible to see, from the outside looking in, that there is a change taking place in the manner in which energy resources are being allocated. More specifically, it is possible to see that a part of the energy that was once utilised for human reproduction is now being diverted into the manufacturing of household goods. Within the limitations of home areas, the process of creating items plays a crucial part in aiding the achievement of the overarching goal of reproduction. When seen from this angle, it is possible to see that the processes of reproduction and creation are, in fact, intertwined and interdependent aspects of a single ongoing and linked process. On the basis of the postulates that have been stated, it is possible to make the observation that there has been a significant change in the primary activity of the economy, which means that it has deviated from its original aim of maintaining and ensuring the continuation of life. This shift is defined by a diminished focus on non-commercial household work, which serves a critical role in supporting the reproduction of life but is receiving less and less attention as a result of this change.

2. Literature Review

The prevalence of gender-based discrepancies in educational achievement has been clarified by a multitude of academic research. These gender-based disparities in educational attainment have been shown to impair long-term development. As a direct consequence of this, a noticeable correlation has been discovered between the phenomena of economic expansion and the level of educational attainment possessed by women. According to the findings of the study, it is indicated that in a scenario in which men and women have equal endowments and distribution of skills and capabilities, the existence of inequality might lead to the inclusion of less competent males and the exclusion of potentially highly capable females (Jayachandran, 2021). This conclusion was reached based on an examination of the data collected by the researchers. The hypothesis that investing in the education of girls will result in a comparably higher marginal return may be tested under the conditions of a situation in which men have access to more educational possibilities than females do, the former being routinely excluded from educational programmes and the latter having restricted access to educational resources. This statement is stated within the context of the notion of diminishing returns, which argues that if inputs are raised gradually, the corresponding outputs will ultimately reflect declining incremental gains. This argument is made within the framework of the concept of diminishing returns. The guiding premise behind the idea of human capital, also known as the "focal principle," postulates that there is a direct association between economic development and the amount of money spent on education (Inglehart, 2017). This hypothesis serves as the primary focus of examination within this particular area of study. This presumption is founded on the hypothesis, which has not been subjected to a great deal of scrutiny, that having a formal education has a beneficial influence on one's level of production. Concerning this idea, questions have been asked, and some people have said that the visibility of productivity is up for debate, while others have stated that there are gender inequalities in income levels and job demands that are not directly connected to educational accomplishments. Both of these claims have been made. As a result, the findings that were produced from these empirical studies reveal that there is a negative correlation between educational disparity and economic development (Santoso 2019). This is due to the fact that educational disparity results in the waste of a workforce that may potentially be very skilled. It is essential to point out, however, that these studies do not show a causal link between women's investment in or pursuit of higher education and their future incomes or access to more productive professional positions. It is for this reason that it is necessary to make this point clear (Perrin, 2021).

There is empirical data relating to the externalities that are associated with women's education. These externalities include a decrease in the childbearing rate, a decrease in the incidence of infant mortality, and improved opportunities for succeeding generations to get an education. The existence of high birth rates has the potential to bring about decreased levels of investment in health and education, in addition to decreasing rates of long-term savings. These results make sense when taking into consideration the fact that the variable relevant to a person's future schooling has not been properly studied in the vast majority of research papers. In addition, it is important to note that the initial variable that is being considered may possibly be influenced by endogeneity concerns that have not been

sufficiently handled. This is something that should be taken into account. The corpus of research that already exists on pay and employment disparity is rather small, and there is a lack of comprehensive studies in this field. In addition, the few studies that have been done show substantial differences in their theoretical frameworks, which has resulted in an immense amount of discussion and controversy about this topic. Several recent research in this area have concentrated their attention on investigating the myriad of long-term variables that influence the expansion of supply and productivity. In addition, the development of models that maximise the profitability of producers by identifying the optimum quantity of human capital is the focus of a number of ongoing research projects. As Esteve-Volart pointed out in 2004, it is important to remember that the availability of human capital might be limited when people who have the potential for productivity choose not to engage in the market. This is something that should be taken into consideration. It has been noticed, on the basis of the results of a variety of research, that the underrepresentation of women in the workforce has important ramifications. The distortion of the total employee potential inside businesses is a major effect that comes as a result of this. This error is brought on by the low participation rate of women, which limits the full utilisation of their capabilities, knowledge, and skills. In addition, it has been pointed out that the effect of this underrepresentation is made worse by uneven access to technology and other crucial resources for production, which makes it even more problematic. These kinds of inequalities may be detrimental to the workforce's overall levels of productivity since they make it more difficult for women to fully use technology improvements and other resources that are essential to doing their jobs in an efficient and effective manner. In a nutshell, the currently available research sheds light on the negative consequences that result from the underrepresentation of women in the labour market. This phenomenon not only distorts the total capacity of the workforce as a whole, but it also has the potential to hamper productivity, especially in situations where there are differences in access to technology and other resources.

Scholars have developed models of economic development that integrate a sequential introduction of variables in order to analyse the indirect repercussions of participation and education inequities. Through a set of equations, these variables are related to a variety of growth factors, such as investment, which are coupled with one another. However, it is still unclear if the effect of women's lower salaries on earnings, which may lead to a fall in average wages and consequently alter what is referred to as the "efficiency wage," is the fundamental driver behind the influence of equality on the distribution of economic growth. This is because it is possible that a decrease in average wages may come from the impact of women's lower wages on earnings. When it comes to the fair distribution of salary increases that are the consequence of improvements in productivity among female workers, one of the most important factors to consider is the effect that the institutional structures of the economy have on the capacity of women to negotiate their salaries.

Disparities in pay are one factor that might shed light on whether or not there is a connection between unequal pay for men and women in the workplace and increased economic development. There is a disparity in work opportunities between men and women, which may lead to lower salaries for women. This might be a possible barrier to growth. These discrepancies, in turn, make it impossible to capitalise on lower labour costs as a method of establishing a competitive edge, which eliminates the possibility of doing so. When applied to this specific situation, it is possible to make the case that the concept of pay equality leads to less desirable results than the practice of pay difference does. The aforesaid statement is consistent with the actual information that is already available about the progression of the economic situation in some nations, notably those that are located in Latin America. These countries have gone through times of economic development that have corresponded with parallel increases in income inequality, losses in real wages, or increased levels of unemployment. These trends have persisted throughout these eras of economic expansion. The nations in the Andes region in the early 2000s provide a particularly noteworthy illustration of this tendency. Despite this, the volume of currently available empirical evidence is inadequate to effectively support this line of thinking.

It is fair to hypothesise that there may be a possible association between the expansion of export-led economies and the predominance of women's work in domestic agriculture or food production sectors. This is in addition to the phenomena of wage competition, which has been well-researched and

documented. An interesting subject of discussion is the possibility of a link existing between lower pay in particular industries and the consequent influence on the cost of food. The suggested action has the ability to increase the overall competitiveness of the economy while simultaneously placing downward pressure on the levels of average income that are now being paid. This occurrence, on the other hand, may have the potential to result in advantageous consequences for the export industry. It is necessary to have access to a big dataset that encompasses multiple countries in order to be able to perform full research into the possible impacts that may be related to gender. Additionally, one must have a comprehensive awareness of the internal demand patterns that are specific to each nation's market. Because of this, researchers will be able to investigate this specific line of inquiry in more depth, as well as investigate other possible lines of inquiry that include consequences connected to gender. The data that has been collected and the conclusions that have been drawn from a variety of research indicate that growth may possibly have opposing impacts on gender equality. The existence of gender imbalance within an economy has the potential to have a variety of effects, some of which are favourable while others are detrimental, on a variety of economic indices. For instance, certain economic aggregates may enjoy growth as a consequence of gender differences, whilst others, such as consumption, may be adversely impacted owing to major demand-related issues. This is because gender disparities influence economic activity in different ways. In a society where the majority of businesses are run by charitable groups, initiatives that seek to improve the financial standing of women in the name of greater fairness have the potential to encourage economic growth. However, it is essential to recognise that such policies may also have negative effects on both exports and investments, which might finally result in the economic system coming to a complete halt. In addition to the possible consequences of decreased male employment and output, it is worthwhile to explore the potential obstacles that may develop in attaining persistent economic growth as a result of these transitory changes in demand. These issues may be caused by the fact that male employment and production are expected to decrease. Therefore, despite the fact that achieving gender parity has the capacity to eventually improve the quality of the labour force, it is essential to recognise that in the short term, it may give birth to disruptive ramifications that divert nations from their planned path of long-term growth. It is for this reason that achieving gender parity has the potential to ultimately improve the quality of the labour force. There is a need for more research to determine the length of time that these deviations have been occurring from the long-term pattern that has been established.

2.1. Objectives

- The main objective of the study is to understand the factors influencing Gender Inequality and Wage Gap and its impact on Economic Growth.
The critical goals of the study are,
- To analyse the impact of Gender Inequality in impacting the economic growth of the nation.
- To apprehend the influence of the wage gap in addressing economic growth.
- To understand the role of the growth of Female labour force participation in enhancing economic growth

2.2. Conceptual Framework

Economic Growth = Constant + a x gender inequality + b x gender pay gap + per capita growth + c x growth of Female labour force participation

2.3. Research Methodology

The researchers used a descriptive research methodology to assess the reciprocal relationship between gender inequality and the wage gap, and its impact on economic growth. The data-gathering methodology used in this study was the administration of questionnaires. The researchers used a multi-stage sampling method in the selection of participants. The sampling area was East Champaran, Bihar. The sampling unit is the labourers of informal and private firms especially in the Dairy / Agricultural sectors. Furthermore, the researchers conducted an extensive search across several web databases.

2.4. Data Analysis

The current section involves presenting the data analysis based on the information collected by the respondents. The major tools used are Frequency analysis; Correlation analysis; Regression analysis; Chi-square test and SEM.

Table 1.
Frequency analysis.

Age groups	Frequency	Per cent
Less than 30 years	57	36.80
31 - 40 years	44	28.40
41 - 50 years	18	11.60
Above 50 years	36	23.20
Nature of industry	Frequency	Per cent
Manufacturing companies	69	44.50
Service-related companies	61	39.40
Consultancy and others	25	16.10
Type of family	Frequency	Per cent
Nuclear family	91	58.70
Joint family	64	41.30
Level of management	Frequency	Per cent
Home maker	23	14.80
Lower-level management	71	45.80
Middle-level management	36	23.20
Top level management	25	16.10
Work experience	Frequency	Per cent
Less than 5 years of experience	50	32.30
5 - 10 years	38	24.50
10 - 15 years	24	15.50
15 - 20 years	31	20.00
Above 20 years	12	7.70
Total	155	100.00

The analysis shows that 36.80% of them are Less than 30 years of age, 44.50% are in a manufacturing company, 58.70% of them are in a Nuclear Family, 45.80% are in lower-level management, and 32.30% possess experience of less than 3 years.

Table 2.
Correlation analysis.

Correlations	Gender inequality	Pay gap	Per-capita growth	Female labour force	Economic growth
Gender inequality	1	0.890**	0.825**	0.865**	0.834**
Pay gap	0.890**	1	.858**	0.870**	0.886**
Per-capita growth	0.825**	0.858**	1	0.837**	0.813**
Female labour force	0.865**	0.870**	0.837**	1	0.928**
Economic growth	0.834**	0.886**	0.813**	0.928**	1

The researchers consider the independent variables as Gender Inequality; Pay Gap; Per-capita Growth; and Female Labour Force, whereas the dependent variable is Economic Growth. Based on the above correlation analysis it is noted that the highest correlation coefficient is between the female labour

force and economic growth with a value of +0.928, the correlation coefficient between the Pay Gap and economic growth value of +0.886, whereas the correlation between gender inequality and economic growth is +0.834, per-capita growth and economic growth with coefficient value of +0.813. Hence it can be concluded that all variables possess a strong positive correlation towards the dependent variable.

Table 3.
Regression analysis.

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P value
Regression	208.869	4	52.217	295.004	0.000b
Residual	26.551	150	0.177	Adj R Sqd	0.887
Total	235.419	154			
Regression	B	Std. error	Beta	t	P Value
(Constant)	-0.377	0.133		-2.824	0.01
Gender inequality	-0.077	0.072	-0.07	-1.061	0.03
Pay gap	0.376	0.073	0.37	5.161	0.00
Per capita growth	-0.014	0.061	-0.013	-0.224	0.82
Female labour force	0.742	0.069	0.678	10.698	0.00

From the above table, it is noted that the adjusted R squared is 0.887 or 88.7% which shows that the model is the best fit, also the regression equation can be framed as

Economic growth = $-0.377 - 0.077 \times \text{Gender Inequality} + 0.376 \times \text{Pay gap} - 0.014 \times \text{Per-capita growth} + 0.742 \times \text{Female labour force}$

2.5. Chi-Square Analysis

This test is used to test the hypothesis framed by the researcher.

2.6. Hypothesis 1

Null: There is no significant difference between gender inequality and economic growth

Alternate: There is a significant difference between gender inequality and economic growth

Table 4.

Gender Inequality	Value	df	P value
Pearson Chi-Square	296.728a	16	0.00
Likelihood Ratio	224.908	16	0.00
Linear-by-Linear Association	107.156	1	0.00

From the above table, it is noted that the p-value is 0.00 hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted, therefore it can be stated that there is a significant difference between gender inequality and economic growth.

2.7. Hypothesis 2

Null: There is no significant difference between Pay Gap and economic growth

Alternate: There is a significant difference between Pay Gap and economic growth

Table 5.

Pag gap	Value	df	P value
Pearson chi-square	313.555a	16	0.00
Likelihood ratio	216.121	16	0.00
Linear-by-linear association	120.833	1	0.00

From the above table, it is noted that the p-value is 0.00 hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted, it can be stated that there is a significant difference between the pay gap and economic growth.

2.8. Hypothesis 3

Null: There is no significant difference between per capita growth and economic growth

Alternate: There is a significant difference between per capita growth and economic growth

Table 6.

Per-capita growth	Value	df	P value
Pearson Chi-Square	250.209a	16	0.00
Likelihood Ratio	189.4	16	0.00
Linear-by-Linear association	101.897	1	0.00

From the above table, it is noted that the p-value is 0.00 hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted, therefore it can be stated that there is a significant difference between per capita growth and economic growth.

2.9. Hypothesis 4

Null: There is no significant difference between the Female Labour Force and economic growth

Alternate: There is a significant difference between Female Labour Force and economic growth

Table 7.

Female Labour Force	Value	df	P value
Pearson Chi-Square	345.370a	16	0.00
Likelihood Ratio	263.345	16	0.00
Linear-by-Linear Association	132.578	1	0.00

From the above table, it is noted that the p-value is 0.00 hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted, therefore it can be stated that there is a significant difference between the Female Labour Force and economic growth.

2.10. Structural Equation Model

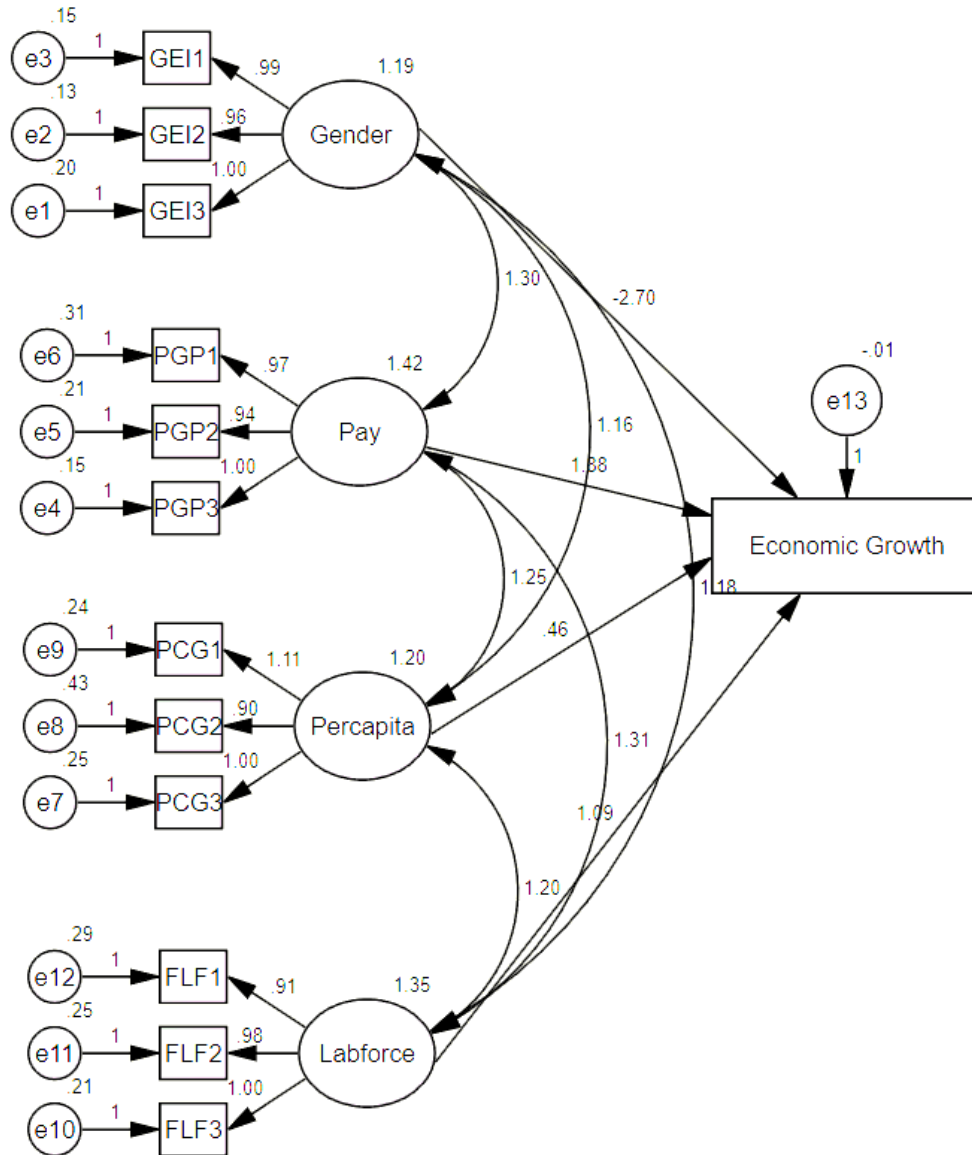


Table 8.

S. no	Index	Adequate fit	Values
1	CMIN/Df	Less than 5	1.61
2	GFI	Greater than 0.90	0.906
3	AGFI	Greater than 0.80	0.825
4	RMSEA	Less than 0.10	0.08

2.11. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The above table revealed that for absolute fitness all the indices values are approximately fulfilling the required criteria i.e. CMIN/Df is $1.61 < 5$, GFI is $0.906 > 0.9$, RMSEA is $0.08 < 0.10$, and even AGFI is $0.825 > 0.80$ (Hooper et al., 2008). Hence, it can be stated that the model is a good fit.

Table 9.
Regression weights.

Variables	Estimates	S.error	P value
Gender inequality	2.701	2.658	0.01
Pay Gap	1.885	2.229	0.00
Per-capita growth	0.463	0.525	0.00
Female labour force	1.087	0.446	0.00

From the above table, it is noted that all the factors considered for the study: Gender Inequality; Pay Gap; Per-capita Growth, and Female Labour force possess a positive influence in creating Economic growth.

3. Findings and Suggestions

Addressing gender inequality and the wage gap to promote economic growth in India is a complex but essential endeavour. India, like many countries, faces significant disparities between men and women in the workforce, and mitigating these disparities can have profound economic benefits.

Encouraging girls' education is crucial in breaking the cycle of gender inequality. This can be achieved through scholarships, incentives for families, and awareness campaigns that emphasize the importance of educating girls. Invest in vocational and skills training programs that equip women with marketable skills. This helps bridge the gender gap in traditionally male-dominated sectors like technology and manufacturing, expanding opportunities for women and enhancing their earning potential.

Enforce stringent equal pay laws that mandate the same wages for the same work, irrespective of gender. Strengthen the legal framework and penalties for companies that violate these laws to deter discriminatory practices. Encourage and support female entrepreneurship. Providing women with access to financial resources, mentorship, and training for running businesses can enhance their economic independence and contribute to economic growth. Implement progressive parental leave policies that allow both men and women to balance work and family responsibilities. This helps women maintain their careers and reduces the motherhood penalty.

Consider affirmative action policies in public and private sectors to increase women's representation in leadership positions and boardrooms. This provides role models and opportunities for other women to advance in their careers. Ensure women have equal access to credit and financial services. This enables them to invest in businesses, education, and other opportunities that can lead to economic growth.

4. Conclusion

The correlation between pay disparity and gender inequality has a substantial bearing on the rate of economic expansion in India. If a sizeable section of the population, in this example women, is denied fair access to resources, the progress of the nation's economy will be hampered. Because women are underrepresented in the workforce, especially in positions of leadership and decision-making, there is a significant pool of potential that is not being fully used. This not only reduces the overall output of the nation but also limits its capacity for innovation and adaptation to the ever-shifting economic landscape.

Inequality in terms of both income and gender may have ramifications that are seen not just in the workplace but also in society as a whole. Policies that address problems such as equal pay for equal labour, boost female entrepreneurship, and increase women's access to education may have a substantial influence in decreasing gender inequality and narrowing the wage gap. These policies may also make it easier for women to get an education. If India accomplishes this, it will be able to accelerate its economic development and harness the potential of about half of its people. This conversation has brought to light the need to include the bi-causality between gender inequality and the salary gap in India's economic policies, as well as the requirement for comprehensive strategies to promote inclusive and sustainable development. In addition, this debate has brought to light the necessity of including the bi-causality between gender inequality and the wage gap in India's economic policies.

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