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Gendered Occupations and Wage Outcomes in the Indian Labour Market

Angela Sarkar

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India

Abstract

This study addresses wage inequality in India by focusing on occupational gender segregation, a key factor driving wage disparities across labour markets worldwide. While a growing body of research examines gender wage inequality in India, limited evidence documents how occupational gender composition evolves over time and systematically influences wage outcomes across labor market segments. Given this context, this study investigates the medium-to long-term relationship between occupational feminization and wage outcomes in India. Using nationally representative microdata from the NSSO and PLFS Survey covering 2004-2023, the analysis focusses on working-age individuals engaged in wage employment. A concordance is constructed between occupational classification codes across survey rounds and are classified as female-dominated, male-dominated or gender-neutral using ± 15 percentage points band around the year specific national female labor force participation rate. The empirical strategy estimates regression models that progressively incorporate demographic characteristics, occupation-related controls and state and year fixed effects to account for regional and temporal heterogeneity. Robustness checks are conducted using Oster bounds and a pseudo-panel approach to examine persistence over time. The results indicate that workers employed in female-dominated occupations earn systematically lower wages and experience sluggish wage growth relative to workers in male-dominated and gender-neutral occupations, even after controlling for individual and labor market characteristics. These findings are consistent with the devaluation and crowding out hypotheses. Gender interaction analysis further reveals a persistent male wage premium across occupational categories, suggesting glass escalator effect. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of addressing gendered occupational segregation to promote wage equity in India.

Keywords: Occupational Feminization, gender wage gap, occupational segregation, labor market inequality, India