Analysis of Gender disparity in Employment and wages: Focus on Indian Labour Market

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***Abstract*—Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. It emphasises on gender justice and gender equality in terms of equal job opportunities and equal pay for men and women. However, despite India's commitment to the SDGs and various policy and legislative reforms being undertaken at all levels, discrimination against women in India remains a deep-seated issue. The paper tries to explore gender disparity in the Indian labour market with regard to employment and the structure of wage distribution across gender, work status, and across rural-urban regions. Substantial inequality in the worker population ratio among male and female workers across rural and urban areas is found and women workers earn much lower wages than their male counterparts. In India the wage disparity exists within various categories of workers and it is higher among casual workers. Again, it is higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas. This calls for adopting holistic approach to macro policies which include not only labour and related policies but also all social and development policies.**

***Index Terms*—Discrimination, Gender Equality, Indian labour market, Sustainable Development Goals, Worker Population Ratio**

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2015 the United Nations had proposed a collection of seventeen interlinked goals aimed at achieving a sustainable prospect for all, these goals are widely known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 5 of the SDGs emphasises on eradication of gender-based discrepancies across the globe and targets women empowerment. Goal 8 aims at promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all and goal 8.5 particularly focuses on ensuring equal pay for men and women. It is needless to say that gender justice and gender equality are prerequisite to achieve the other targets of Sustainable Development Goals like economic growth, poverty eradication, inequality, good health and wellbeing for all, among others. The interconnected targets of the SDGs are holistic in nature as these also cover other relevant major areas of concern like child marriage, reproductive and sexual health of women, effective participation of women at workplace, political role of women from parliament to local bodies and also in public life, ownership of land, and laws and policies to ensure effective implementations of these.

India's commitment to the SDGs is reflected by its adoption of Collective Efforts for Inclusive Growth in its national development agenda. The Constitution of India states a powerful mandate for equality of women in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and also Directive Principles of State Policy. India is also a signatory to UN Conventions, like Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In India there are strict laws against sex selective abortion, child marriage and sexual harassment at workplace.

However, despite various policy and legislative reforms being undertaken at all levels, discrimination against women in India remains a deep-seated issue. Women in India get lesser opportunity to work and their economic participation is also low. This is due to the heterogeneity of Indian Labour Market in terms of its nature, skill requirement, mode of operation and others which affect the entry of women in the labour market. Factors like age of entry into the labour force, human capital attributes, marital status, reproduction and social class position govern women's decision to participate and they affect their mobility and so on (Sundaram 2001; Tilak 2002). Moreover, professions that support women workers have witnessed stagnation in women's labour force participation rates

(LFPR) in the 1990s (UN2015). Women's career and educational prospects have been negatively impacted by the society's establishment of gender roles and occupational segregation within the workforce (Bianchi et al. 2012; UN Progresson World's Women; Budig and England 2001; AAUW 2016). It has been seen that even among women who are employed, they have little job diversification and are clustered into poorly paid activities that are seen as less skilled. Women in general, spend more time than men performing unpaid labour, which are usually domestic in nature and consumes a significant amount of time, resulting in women being more likely to be engaged in part-time work or informal labour. In the informal sector, large proportions of women work as a self-employed and operate from home and as a result they are likely to be excluded from the labour force enumeration.

While it is true that wage disparities are bound to exist across occupations, regions and sector and nature of jobs, however it is the existence of inequality among men and women for same job with same level of skill which is a matter of concern, as it highlights the existence of discrimination. Women workers in India face job discrimination along with wage discrimination. Rani (2008); Cacciamali, et. al. (2015) and Mukherjee and Majumder (2011) have investigated the earning differences among various spatial and socio-economic group of workers in India. They have found increasing disparities during last decade caused by both discrimination and endowment gaps. Studies in India have reported discrimination to be the predominant factor behind wage disparities among genders, against endowment difference and found it to be increasing over time.

Against this background we attempt to study the nature of employment and unemployment situation in India for the two genders and try to gauge the extent of employment inequality and wage discrimination by using an index of gender bias in wage payments.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the employment status of workers across the states of India.
2. To study the worker population ratio for persons of age 15 years and above according to the education level.
3. To study the distribution of workers by statuses in employment during NSS 38th round (1983) to 68th round (2011-2012) and PLFS (2017-18).
4. To assess the extent of gender bias in wage payment among both regular salaried workers and casual workers across the states of India.

III. DATA OF THE STUDY

The study is based on secondary data and they have been collected from the various rounds of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Women and Men in India 2019 Report and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Annual Report 2017-18 by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India.

IV. AN OVERVIEW OF WORKERS IN INDIA

Gender inequality in employment can be understood by comparing male and female's *Worker Population Ratio (WPR*) in India across their location of work and gender. From table -1 and figure-1 we can observe that in states like Andaman & Nicobar, Assam, Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerela, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry and Punjab the female WPR is less than 15% both in urban and rural areas on an average. States like Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, D & N Haveli, Meghalaya and Sikkim have comparatively better female WPR. In Delhi for rural areas the WPR is 2.2% for female against 54.6 % for male. In urban areas the WPR is 10.1 % for female against 71.5 % for male. In Bihar also for rural areas the WPR is 2.2 % for female against 42 % for male. In urban areas the WPR is 4.2 % for female against 42.3 % for male. For West Bengal the figures are 15.2% and 59% for female and male respectively in rural areas and 17.4% and 56.3% for female and male respectively in urban areas.

Thus, we find that there is gender inequality in employment in India and this is further evident from all India WPR figures which are 17.5% and 51.7% for female and male respectively in rural areas and 14.2% and 53% for female and male respectively in urban areas.

Table -1: Worker Population Ratio for the year 2017 -18

Worker Population Ratio for year 2017-18					
SL.NO	State & Union Territory	Rural		Urban	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
	1	2	3	4	5
1	A & N Island	13.5	60.4	16.2	57.9
2	Andhra Pradesh	38.1	59.1	22.8	54.3
3	Arunachal Pradesh	10	48.8	6.7	44.8
4	Assam	8.1	54.7	11	57.8
5	Bihar	2.5	42	4.2	42.3
6	Chandigarh	8	53.8	15.5	56.3
7	Chhattisgarh	38.8	55.6	20.8	54.5
8	D & N Haveli	36.2	55.1	15.7	67.4
9	Daman & Diu	22.4	54.6	18.5	71.5
10	Delhi	2.2	45.2	10.1	52.2
11	Goa	20.4	56.8	16.8	49.9
12	Gujarat	16.5	55.3	12.2	56.7
13	Haryana	9.6	47.8	9.3	52.3
14	Himachal Pradesh	40	55.1	16.9	54.3
15	Jammu & Kashmir	22.9	55.4	13.9	53.2
16	Jharkhand	10.5	46.9	9.6	43.4
17	Karnataka	21.1	58.5	16.8	54.1
18	Kerala	16.6	50.9	16	50
19	Lakshadweep	7.8	53.4	7	43.5
20	Madhya Pradesh	25.6	56.3	14.7	53.7
21	Maharashtra	28.9	55.7	14.9	53.7
22	Manipur	13.9	49.3	17.4	45.6
23	Meghalaya	37.3	49.4	21	47.4
24	Mizoram	20.4	56.5	20.2	46.1
25	Nagaland	8.3	43	9.1	40.2
26	Odisha	14.4	53.8	11.7	53.4
27	Puducherry	5.2	46.1	14	51.6
28	Punjab	9.9	54.3	12.3	56.3
29	Rajasthan	21.5	48.2	9.8	49.5
30	Sikkim	34.9	60.3	25.2	62.1
31	Tamil Nadu	29.4	55.9	20.4	56.7
32	Telangana	29.9	53.6	15.9	53.8
33	Tripura	8.2	56.8	11.8	55

34	Uttar Pradesh	9.6	47.1	7.3	48.5
35	Uttarakhand	14.2	47.7	7.3	51.4
36	West Bengal	15.2	59	17.4	56.3
37	India	17.5	51.7	14.2	53

Source- PLFS (2017-2018) data of NSSO

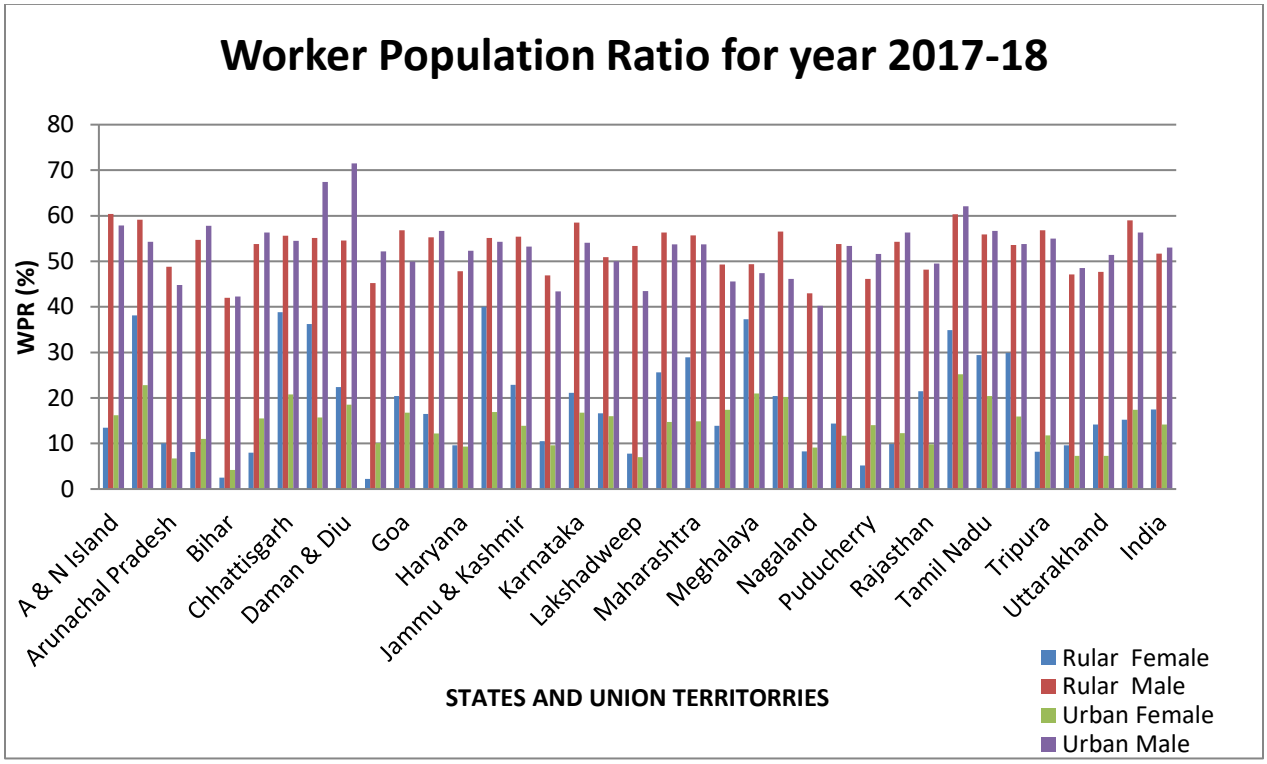

Figure -1. Worker Population Ratio for year 2017-18

V. DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS IN USUAL STATUS (PS+SS) BY STATUSES IN EMPLOYMENT

The workers in usual status (ps+ss) are categorised into three broad categories according to their status in employment and these are: (i) *self-employed*, (ii) *regular wage/salaried employee* and (iii) *casual labour*. The category of *self- employed* is further divided into two sub-categories as: (i) *own account worker and employer* and (ii) *unpaid helper in household enterprises*.

Changes in the status in employment among workers in usual status (ps+ss) between 1983 and 2017-18 in rural areas:

Table-2, depicts the distribution of workers in different statuses in employment obtained from the quinquennial employment and unemployment surveys of NSSO conducted between 1983 (NSS 38th round) and 2011-12 (68th round) and PLFS (2017-18). From the table it can be seen that in rural areas, during 2017-18 compared to 2011-12, while the share of female workers in the category of *self-employed* has decreased by nearly 2 %, it has increased by 3 % among male workers. In the category of *regular wage/salaried employees* in rural areas, the share of female workers has increased by 5% against 4% among male workers. Again, it can be seen that in rural areas, the share of *casual labour* has decreased among both male and female workers by nearly 7 % and 3 % respectively, during this period.

Table-2: Percentage distribution of workers in usual status (ps+ss) by statuses in employmentduring NSS 43rd round (1987-88) to 68th round (2011-2012) and PLFS (2017-18)
all-India

NSS round	male			female		
(survey period)	Self - employed	regular wage/ salaried employees	casuallabour	self-employed	regular wage/ salariedemployees	casual labour
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
RURAL						
43rd (1987-88)	58.6	10.0	31.4	60.8	3.7	35.5
50th (1993-94)	57.7	8.5	33.8	58.6	2.7	38.7
55th (1999-00)	55.0	8.8	36.2	57.3	3.1	39.6
61st (2004-05)	58.1	9.0	32.9	63.7	3.7	32.6
66th (2009-10)	53.5	8.5	38.0	55.7	4.4	39.9
68th (2011-12)	54.5	10.0	35.5	59.3	5.6	35.1
PLFS (2017-18)	57.8	14.0	28.2	57.7	10.5	31.8
URBAN						
43rd (1987-88)	41.7	43.7	14.6	47.1	27.5	25.4
50th (1993-94)	41.7	42.0	16.3	45.8	28.4	25.8
55th (1999-00)	41.5	41.7	16.8	45.3	33.3	21.4
61st (2004-05)	44.8	40.6	14.6	47.7	35.6	16.7
66th (2009-10)	41.1	41.9	17.0	41.1	39.3	19.6
68th (2011-12)	41.7	43.4	14.9	42.8	42.8	14.3
PLFS (2017-18)	39.2	45.7	15.1	34.7	52.1	13.1

Source: Various rounds of NSSO

Changes in the status in employment among workers in usual status (ps+ss) between 1983 and 2017-18 in urban areas:

From table-2 it can be seen that during 2017-18 compared to 2011-12, the share of self-employed persons has decreased by 8 % for females whereas it has decreased by nearly 3% for males in urban areas. In the category of regular wage/salaried employees, the share has increased by 2% for male workers and 9% for female workers during this period. Again, during 2017-18compared to 2011-12, while the share of casual labour has remained the same for urban male workers and it has decreased by nearly 1% among female workers.

VI: ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENTIAL WAGE EARNING OF WORKERS ACCORDING TO STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT

The existence of gender inequality in wages have been supported by most of the studies on gender differentials (Deshpande & Deshpande 1999; Madheswaran & Shroff 2000). The wage differential primarily could be because two reasons- firstly, due to endowment gaps among gender groups and secondly, due to sheer discrimination in terms of low wage rates paid to certain group of workers even within the same occupation (Dolton and Kidd 1994; Mukherjee & Majumder, 2011). To study the extent of wage discrimination among workers according to status of employment we have taken: 1. Average Wage Earning (in Rs.) received per day by Casual Labour in Specified Works, and 2. Average wage/ salary earnings during the preceding calendar month received by regular wage/ salaried employees in current weekly status during July-September 2017.The Average Wage Earning (in Rs.) received per day by Casual Labour in Specified Works(Jul.-Sep., 2017) across all the states and union territories in India is presented table-3. The workers are categorised into three broad categories according to their nature of work in rural areas, these broad categories are: (i) Work otherthan PublicWorks, (ii) Public worksother than MGNREGA PublicWorks and (iii) MGNREGA

Public Works. In urban areas there is only one category and it is Works Other than Public Work.

From table-3 we can observe that for all India the average wage earning in rural areas for Work other than Public Works in case of male is Rs. 282 and female is Rs. 179. The index for gender bias in wage payments is 0.36. Again, for urban areas the average wage earning for male is Rs. 335 and female is Rs.201. In this case the index for gender bias in wage payments is 0.40. The table points out that wage discrimination is prevalent in most of the states in India. The index for gender bias in wage payments is high in rural areas for Work otherthan PublicWorks in states like Bihar, Karnataka and Puducherry and it is 0.68, 0.48 and 0.52 respectively. In case of urban areas the index for gender bias in wage payments is high for states like Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Odisha and Tamil Nadu and it is 0.47,0.49, 0.48, 0.76, 0.57 and 0.48 respectively. In West Bengal the average wage earning in rural areas for Work otherthan PublicWorks in case of male is Rs. 203 and female is Rs. 153. The index for gender bias in wage payments is 0.24. Again, for urban areas the average wage earning for male is Rs. 288 and female is Rs.128 and in this case the index for gender bias in wage payments is 0.55. Interestingly, the table also shows that in rural areas for Work otherthan Public Works, the index for gender bias in wage payments is negative for states like Himachal Pradesh and Manipur and it is 0.01 and 0.02 respectively. In case of public worksother than MGNREGA PublicWorks the index for gender bias in wage payments is negative for Chattisgarh and it is 0.02. In case of MGNREGA Public works the index for gender bias in wage payments is negative for states like Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and it is 0.1 and 0.08 respectively. In urban areas the index for gender bias in wage payments is negative for Bihar and it is 0.20. A negative index for gender bias in wage payments implies that women are earning more than men in these states and for these specified works.

Table-3: The Average Wage Earning (in Rs.) received per day by Casual Labour in Specified Works(Jul.-Sep., 2017)

	The Average Wage Earning (in Rs.) received per day by Casual Labour in Specified Works(Jul.-Sep., 2017)											
	RURAL									URBAN		
	Work other than Public Works			Public works other thanMGNREGA Public Works			MGNREGA Public Works			Works Other thanPublic Works		
	FEMALE	MALE	Index of gender bias in wage payment	FEMALE	MALE	Index of gender bias in wage payment	FEMALE	MALE	Indexof gender bias in wage payment	FEMALE	MALE	Index of gender bias in wage payment
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A & N Island	0	379	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	381	1
Andhra Pradesh	201	298	0.32	133	135	0.1	138	140	0.01	180	346	0.47
Arunachal Pradesh	0	345	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	313	1
Assam	150	251	0.40	0	149	1	0	0	0	271	293	0.07
Bihar	98	281	0.68	0	160	1	0	160	1	357	296	-0.20
Chandigarh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Chhattisgarh	154	182	0.15	160	156	-0.02	0	0	0	173	253	0.31
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0	237	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Daman & Diu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Delhi	0	300	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	300	404	0.25
Goa	305	377	0.19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	172	1
Gujarat	164	184	0.10	150	150	0	0	0	0	155	258	0.39
Haryana	266	300	0.11	0	0	0	160	160	0	171	340	0.49
Himachal Pradesh	327	322	-0.01	0	160	1	176	160	-0.1	150	293	0.48
Jammu &Kashmir	200	366	0.45	0	150	1	0	125	1	350	370	0.05
Jharkhand	165	241	0.31	0	0	0	0	150	1	237	271	0.12
Karnataka	148	283	0.48	150	150	0	160	0	0	217	346	0.37
Kerala	386	425	0.09	160	0	0	160	0	0	361	438	0.17
Lakshadweep	0	547	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	1
Madhya Pradesh	149	187	0.20	150	158	0.05	0	0	0	137	239	0.42
Maharashtra	136	207	0.34	111	151	0.26	0	0	0	174	269	0.35
Manipur	330	323	-0.02	0	0	0	0	160	1	274	341	0.19
Meghalaya	236	282	0.16	0	0	0	154	159	0.03	91	382	0.76
Mizoram	300	339	0.11	0	346	1	0	0	0	0	326	1
Nagaland	0	271	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	245	1
Odisha	144	208	0.30	0	160	1	0	160	1	99	231	0.57
Puducherry	150	316	0.52	0	0	0	0	0	0	252	368	0.31
Punjab	242	307	0.21	160	160	0	160	160	0	201	338	0.40
Rajasthan	227	297	0.23	114	129	0.11	135	134	0.007	211	330	0.36
Sikkim	0	400	1	0	0	0	0	202	1	0	325	1
Tamil Nadu	184	333	0.44	142	150	0.05	128	118	-0.08	190	360	0.47
Telangana	208	262	0.20	150	160	0.06	0	0	0	242	322	0.24
Tripura	219	283	0.22	166	180	0.07	161	163	0.01	264	282	0.06
Uttar Pradesh	159	229	0.30	0	159	1	0	160	1	225	262	0.14
Uttarakhand	0	310	1	0	160	1	0	0	0	250	308	0.18
West Bengal	153	203	0.24	150	152	0.01	171	177	0.03	128	288	0.55
India	179	282	0.36	119	138	0.13	131	142	0.07	201	335	0.4

Source- PLFS (2017-2018) data of NSSO

Table-4 shows the average wage/ salary earnings during the preceding calendar month received by regular wage/ salaried employees in current weekly status during July-September 2017 and the index of gender bias in wage payments for both rural and urban areas.

In urban areas the index of gender bias in wage payments is high and ranges from 0.50 to 0.76 in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Maharasthra, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Lakshadeep, Puducherry and A&N Islands. The index is highest for Chandigarh and Daman & Diu and is 0.76. In urban areas a male in Chandigarh earns Rs.19037.58 whereas a female earns Rs. 4544.40. The index of gender bias in wage payments is low for states like

Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Sikkim and it is 0.05, 0.11, 0.13 and 0.15 respectively. The index is negative for states like Haryana, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh.

Table-4: Average wage/ salary earnings during the preceding calendar month received by regular wage/ salaried employees in current weekly status during July-September 2017

State/ UT	URBAN			RURAL		
	Male	Female	Index of Gender Bias In Wage Payment	Male	Female	Index of GenderBias InWage Payment
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Andhra Pradesh	11892.85	11295.65	0.05	20450.97	19102.38	0.06
Arunachal Pradesh	21201.10	7978.03	0.62	24158.49	19789.69	0.18
Assam	14201.91	9610.12	0.32	21010.64	15384.27	0.26
Bihar	13953.98	8734.32	0.37	16828.28	18875.26	-0.12
Chhattisgarh	8414.39	4803.78	0.42	14506.75	11771.95	0.18
Delhi	15082.79	5882.69	0.60	14346.85	16034.11	-0.11
Goa	17345.85	6367.03	0.63	25265.13	21556.86	0.14
Gujarat	9798.93	8666.38	0.11	14243.27	9809.53	0.31
Haryana	12595.53	23092.28	-0.83	17623.82	17467.36	0.008
Himachal Pradesh	19080.81	7734.81	0.59	18315.79	16055.08	0.12
Jammu & Kashmir	20607.71	13781.34	0.33	22157.08	20651.44	0.06
Jharkhand	15556.59	13498.80	0.13	24751.71	12868.22	0.48
Karnataka	11365.14	6467.52	0.43	20153.52	12592.39	0.37
Kerala	17623.90	13408.65	0.23	18022.12	16140.98	0.10
Madhya Pradesh	11365.35	3559.10	0.68	16512.15	12869.50	0.22
Maharashtra	11071.40	4801.50	0.56	18371.85	13778.35	0.25
Manipur	17144.99	23287.91	-0.35	22472.80	20283.88	0.09
Meghalaya	22861.62	8677.58	0.62	23780.44	18724.78	0.21
Mizoram	21427.01	25491.23	-0.18	24089.51	22266.01	0.07
Nagaland	16433.63	23830.13	-0.45	22365.62	11276.00	0.49
Odisha	11789.95	6334.31	0.46	17854.06	14057.04	0.21
Punjab	16189.07	9904.33	0.38	15995.03	21975.47	-0.37
Rajasthan	13909.62	4871.72	0.64	16939.42	15743.49	0.07

Sikkim	17266.38	14546.05	0.15	12844.11	15364.37	-0.19
Tamil Nadu	12011.95	8399.14	0.30	16099.05	11826.07	0.26
Telangana	16181.22	12190.86	0.24	20694.81	9086.78	0.56
Tripura	15170.45	8736.39	0.42	18432.58	13112.29	0.28
Uttarakhand	19038.51	7058.63	0.62	16030.60	12583.40	0.21
Uttar Pradesh	11494.41	12455.56	-0.08	16891.42	17538.28	-0.03
West Bengal	7852.24	4004.52	0.49	14474.61	11733.02	0.18
A & N Islands	16362.24	8059.37	0.50	30592.09	16493.37	0.46
Chandigarh	19037.58	4544.40	0.76	18935.56	13582.22	0.28
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	11570.02	0.00	1	21572.41	47685.93	-1.21
Daman & Diu	40718.98	9758.93	0.76	16534.75	7000.00	0.57
Lakshadweep	27274.00	10972.89	0.59	22574.70	30792.02	-0.36
Puducherry	14501.08	6655.80	0.54	17266.08	13697.15	0.20
All-India	12658.61	8776.85	0.30	17314.47	13894.53	0.19

Source- PLFS (2017-2018) data of NSSO

In rural areas the index of gender bias in wage payments is high and ranges from 0.45 to 0.57 in states like Jharkhand, Nagaland, Telengana, A&N Islands and Daman & Diu. It is highest for Daman & Diu where a male earns Rs. 16534.75 and a female earns Rs. 7000. The index is low and ranges from 0.008 to 0.12 for states like Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Kerela, Manipur and Rajasthan. The index is negative for states like Bihar, Delhi, Punjab, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Lakhshadeep and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.

In West Bengal in urban areas a male earns Rs. 7852.24 whereas a female earns Rs.4004.52 and the index is 0.49. In rural areas a male earns Rs. 14474.61 and a female earns Rs. 11733.02 and the index value is 0.18. Thus, there is inter-state variation in earnings and index values but it is can be correctly said that male earn more than females and this is evident if we look at the all India figure. From All India figures we can see that in urban areas a male earns Rs.12658.61 whereas a female earns Rs.8776.85 and the index is 0.30. In rural areas a male earns Rs.17314.47 and a female earns Rs. 13894.53 and the index value is 0.19.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study tries to explore gender disparity in the Indian labour market with regard to employment and the structure of wage distribution across gender, work status, and across rural urban regions. We find that there exists substantial inequality in the worker population ratio among male and female workers across rural and urban areas. There is also disparity among male and female workers across the type of employment they are involved in. Focusing on the nature of employment we found that majority of women in rural areas are either self-employed or casual workers and they are mainly engaged in agricultural sector. Again, while half of the women labours in urban areas are found to have regular jobs, it should be noted that they are mostly in informal sector and engaged in low productive low skilled jobs. A substantial wage disparity is found across workers of different regions, sectors and gender and women workers earn much lower wages than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the wage differential is found to be higher among casual workers and it is higher in urban areas as compared to rural areas. The labour market is beset with several imperfections and most of them act against women. Women while trying

to enter the labour market face several barriers which act as a deterrent and discourage them to enter. Several structural deficiencies interact together to create a spread of unequal wages between men and women workers and this huge gap restrains the active and productive participation of women in the economic progress of the country. It is estimated that if there is equal participation of women in all economic activities then the GDP the growth rate in India may increase by 3- 4 per cent by 2030.

Various policies can be implemented by the government and institutions to address this inequality in employment and wages such as skill formation and education of women; encouraging female participation through flexibility in workspace and job responsibilities; eradicating discrimination in wage setting, strict imposition of labour laws; providing safe, secure and gender sensitive work space, crèche facility for children etc. Thus, a holistic approach to macro policies that includes women not only in the labour and related policies but also all social and development policies need to be adopted and only then we can hope for fulfilling the gender inclusion, gender empowerment and gender justice goals of SDGs.

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