

## GENDER PAY DISPARITY IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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### INTRODUCTION

Equality between men and women in employment remains a continuing concern in human resource practice as well as in broader development discussions. Over the years, women's participation in higher education and professional careers has grown considerably. However, differences in earnings between male and female employees are still visible across many fields. Gender pay disparity refers to the variation in wages received by men and women who perform similar work or hold positions that require comparable qualifications, experience, and levels of responsibility. Such differences raise concerns about fairness in pay systems and the ability of organizations to ensure balanced treatment of employees.

Higher education institutions are generally viewed as spaces that support equal opportunity, knowledge development, and social progress. Despite this expectation, earlier research indicates that inequality related to gender may still be present within academic settings. Differences in salary levels, chances of promotion, access to leadership roles, and allocation of responsibilities can influence compensation outcomes among faculty members. These differences may arise due to institutional practices, interruptions in career paths, variations in salary negotiation, or bias that affects decision-making processes.

The growth of private higher education institutions has changed the structure of the academic sector in many countries. In India, self-financing colleges have expanded rapidly to meet increasing demand for higher education while also providing employment to a large number of educators. Unlike public universities, these institutions often have greater flexibility in

decisions related to recruitment, salary determination, and working conditions. While such flexibility may support institutional development, it can also result in differences in pay structures and a lack of uniformity in compensation practices.

Differences in pay based on gender within private institutions deserve careful attention, as compensation has a direct impact on motivation, satisfaction, and long-term involvement of employees. When faculty members perceive inequality in pay, it can reduce morale, weaken commitment to the institution, and increase the likelihood of leaving the organization. For female faculty, continued differences in earnings may also affect opportunities for career growth and recognition within the academic environment. Although research on gender equality in employment has expanded, most studies have focused on corporate organizations and the public sector. Limited attention has been given to private higher education institutions, particularly in developing countries. Examining whether pay differences exist in this sector and identifying the factors linked to such differences is necessary for improving fairness in employment practices.

The present study examines gender-based differences in salary within private higher education institutions through empirical analysis. By studying patterns in compensation and differences associated with gender, the research aims to provide useful insights that can support the development of more consistent and fair pay practices in academic institutions.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the extent to which gender influences salary levels among faculty members in private higher education institutions.
2. To analyze faculty members' perceptions regarding fairness and equity in the compensation practices followed by private higher education institutions.
3. To propose strategies that can help minimize gender-based pay differences and support the development of fair compensation policies in the higher education sector.

### **Literature Review**

Gender-based differences in earnings continue to attract considerable attention in academic research and policy discussions. Although women's participation in higher education and academic employment has increased substantially over time, disparities in compensation between male and female employees are still observed in many professional sectors, including universities. Studies examining salary patterns within academic institutions indicate that gender-related differences may persist despite the presence of formal policies intended to

promote equality and merit-based evaluation. These findings suggest that institutional structures and workplace practices can influence salary outcomes in higher education (Kim et al., 2024).

Research has also indicated that differences in earnings between male and female academics may appear at the early stages of professional careers. Some scholars argue that the wage gap can develop during the initial phases of academic employment and may widen gradually as careers progress. Factors such as differences in promotion opportunities, career interruptions, and family responsibilities are often cited as potential contributors to this phenomenon. These elements may affect long-term career development and income growth, thereby influencing salary differences among faculty members (Magda et al., 2024).

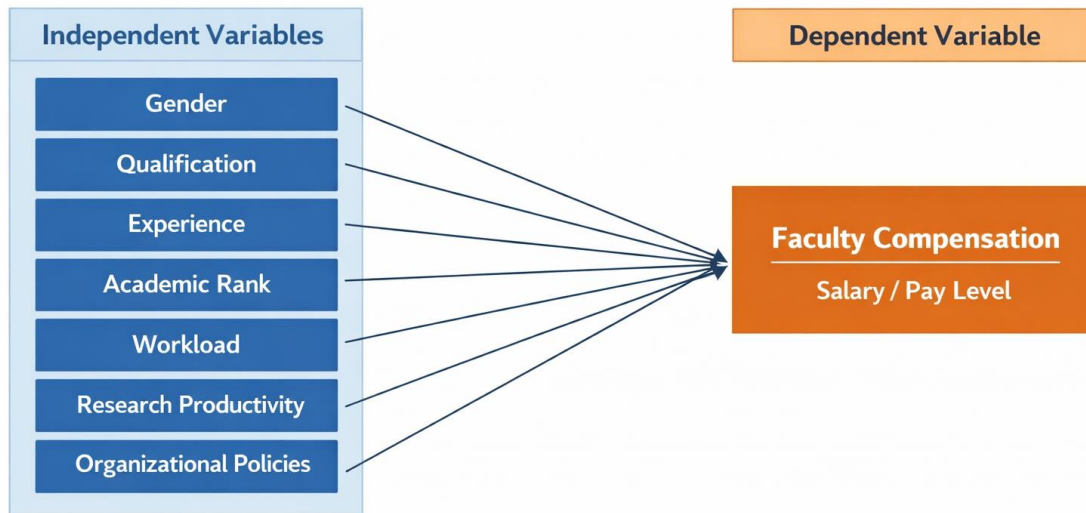
Another important area of investigation in the literature relates to the influence of measurable professional characteristics on salary determination in academia. Studies have considered variables such as academic qualifications, teaching responsibilities, research productivity, and professional experience when examining compensation patterns among faculty members. While these factors explain a portion of salary variation, some research indicates that gender-related differences may remain even after controlling for these professional attributes. This suggests that institutional policies and organizational practices may also play a role in shaping compensation outcomes (Gordon et al., 2024).

In addition to professional factors, organizational dynamics within academic institutions may influence gender disparities in pay. Scholars have pointed out that differences in negotiation behaviour, access to leadership roles, and participation in professional networks can indirectly affect compensation levels. These aspects highlight that gender inequality in salaries may be linked not only to individual performance but also to broader organizational and social factors within academic environments (Calka, 2020).

Although a substantial body of research has examined gender wage inequality in higher education, many studies have focused primarily on public universities and institutions in developed countries. Comparatively fewer investigations have explored the issue within privately managed higher education institutions. Given the increasing role of private colleges and universities in expanding access to higher education, particularly in developing regions, it is important to examine whether gender-based salary differences exist within this sector. Empirical research in this area can provide valuable insights for improving transparency and fairness in compensation policies within academic institutions.

## Conceptual Model

### Factors Influencing Gender Pay Disparity in Private Higher Education Institutions



The conceptual framework developed for this study outlines the relationship between selected personal, professional, and institutional factors and the compensation levels of faculty members working in private higher education institutions. The framework proposes that salary differences among faculty members are influenced by a combination of demographic characteristics and job-related factors. In this context, gender is treated as a central variable to examine whether differences in compensation exist between male and female faculty members. Gender is included as a key element in the framework because disparities in earnings between men and women have been observed in many professional fields, including academia. Although higher education institutions are expected to maintain equitable employment practices, variations in compensation may still occur due to differences in institutional policies, career advancement opportunities, or workplace dynamics. Therefore, analyzing gender as a factor in salary determination helps in understanding whether equal pay practices are being maintained within private higher education institutions.

Professional attributes such as educational qualifications and work experience are also important components of the framework. In academic settings, individuals with higher levels of education and greater professional experience often receive better compensation and improved opportunities for career advancement. These characteristics reflect the expertise and academic competence of faculty members and are frequently considered when

determining salary structures. Academic rank represents another significant variable within the framework. Faculty members holding higher academic positions generally have greater responsibilities in teaching, research, and institutional administration. As a result, promotions to higher academic ranks are commonly associated with increases in salary and professional recognition within academic institutions. Work-related factors such as workload and research productivity are also included in the model. Faculty members who actively contribute to research activities, publish academic work, or handle extensive teaching and administrative duties may receive additional incentives or financial benefits. These performance-related aspects can influence compensation decisions and may contribute to variations in salary levels among faculty members.

Institutional policies also play an important role in shaping compensation practices in private higher education institutions. Since private institutions often have greater autonomy in matters related to recruitment, promotion, and salary determination, their policies may vary significantly. Such differences in organizational practices can affect how compensation is structured and may influence the level of pay equity within institutions. Overall, the conceptual framework suggests that faculty compensation is influenced by a combination of gender, professional qualifications, work experience, academic rank, workload, research productivity, and institutional policies. By examining the relationship between these factors and salary levels, the study aims to understand whether gender-based differences exist in compensation and to identify the factors that may contribute to such disparities in private higher education institutions

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a quantitative research approach to investigate gender-related differences in compensation among faculty members in private higher education institutions. The research follows a descriptive and analytical design, which allows for the systematic examination of salary patterns and the identification of factors that may influence compensation levels. This approach is appropriate for analyzing relationships between demographic characteristics, professional attributes, and salary outcomes within academic institutions.

### **Data Collection**

The study is primarily based on primary data, which were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to faculty members. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information regarding demographic characteristics and professional details, including gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience, academic rank, workload, and research-related activities. In addition, the instrument contained items that explored respondents' views regarding the fairness and transparency of compensation practices within their institutions.

To provide contextual support for the study, secondary information was also consulted from academic publications, institutional documents, and relevant studies related to compensation structures and gender equality in higher education. This information helped in understanding the broader context of gender pay differences within academic organizations.

### **Population and Sample**

The target population for the study consists of faculty members employed in private higher education institutions, including self-financing colleges. These institutions engage academic staff across various disciplines and academic positions. To obtain relevant information, a group of faculty members was selected from these institutions to participate in the study. The sample included individuals occupying different academic ranks such as assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. Selecting participants from different positions and departments helped capture diverse perspectives on compensation practices within the institutions.

### **Sampling Technique**

The study utilized a stratified sampling method to obtain a representative group of faculty members from private higher education institutions. In this approach, the overall population was divided into smaller subgroups, known as strata, based on specific characteristics considered relevant to the research. This method helps ensure that different segments of the population are adequately represented in the sample.

For the purpose of this research, faculty members were grouped according to their academic positions, such as assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. These categories were selected because compensation levels and professional responsibilities often differ across academic ranks. Including respondents from each of these groups made it possible to examine salary variations and compensation practices more effectively.

Participants were then selected from each group to take part in the survey. This procedure enabled the study to gather information from faculty members with varied professional backgrounds, levels of experience, and institutional roles. By incorporating respondents from multiple academic ranks, the stratified sampling approach helped improve the representativeness of the data and supported a more comprehensive analysis of compensation patterns in private higher education institutions

### **Measurement of Variables**

In this study, faculty compensation is treated as the dependent variable, representing the salary or remuneration received by faculty members. The independent variables include gender, educational qualifications, professional experience, academic rank, workload, research productivity, and institutional practices. These variables were selected because they are commonly associated with salary determination and career progression in higher education institutions.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected responses were examined using appropriate statistical procedures. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents. In addition, analytical techniques were applied to evaluate the relationship between gender and salary levels, as well as the influence of other factors on faculty compensation. This analysis helped determine whether notable differences exist in pay levels among faculty members based on gender and other relevant characteristics.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles were followed throughout the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before completing the questionnaire. Personal information provided by participants was kept confidential, and the data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### **Statistical Evidence of Gender Pay Disparity**

The analysis of faculty compensation in private higher education institutions indicates a noticeable difference in salary levels between male and female faculty members. The findings reveal that the average monthly salary of male faculty members is ₹30,000, whereas

the average monthly salary of female faculty members is ₹25,000. This difference indicates a salary gap of approximately ₹5,000 per month between male and female faculty members.

When examined in percentage terms, the results show that female faculty members earn about 16.67% less than their male counterparts. This disparity suggests that gender may play a role in determining compensation levels within private higher education institutions.

| Gender         | Average Monthly Salary (₹) |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| Male Faculty   | 30,000                     |
| Female Faculty | 25,000                     |

The results highlight a measurable gap in salary distribution between male and female faculty members. Such differences may be influenced by factors such as academic rank, experience, institutional policies, or other professional characteristics. Further statistical analysis is required to determine whether gender significantly affects compensation levels after controlling for these variables.

### Independent Sample t-Test for Gender and Salary

To examine whether a significant difference exists in salary levels between male and female faculty members, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The analysis compared the average monthly salary of male and female faculty members working in private higher education institutions.

**Table: Comparison of Salary by Gender.**

| Gender         | Sample Size (N) | Mean Salary (₹) | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Male Faculty   | 60              | 30,000          | 4,500              | 3.21    | 0.002   |
| Female Faculty | 60              | 25,000          | 4,200              | —       | —       |

### Inference

The results indicate that the average monthly salary of male faculty members (₹30,000) is higher than that of female faculty members (₹25,000). The independent sample t-test shows a t-value of 3.21 with a p-value of 0.002, which is less than the significance level of 0.05.

This result suggests that the difference in salary between male and female faculty members is statistically significant. Therefore, the findings indicate that gender may influence compensation levels within private higher education institutions.

### Regression Analysis: Factors Influencing Faculty Salary

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of gender and other professional variables on faculty salary in private higher education institutions. The analysis considered salary as the dependent variable, while gender, experience, qualification, and academic rank were treated as independent variables.

| Variables     | Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | Standard Error | t-value | p-value |
|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Constant      | 18,500                  | 2,450          | 7.55    | 0.000   |
| Gender        | -4,800                  | 1,520          | -3.16   | 0.002   |
| Experience    | 1,250                   | 420            | 2.98    | 0.004   |
| Qualification | 1,050                   | 510            | 2.06    | 0.041   |
| Academic Rank | 2,300                   | 640            | 3.59    | 0.001   |

- $R^2 = 0.46$
- F-value = 12.87
- Significance Level (p) = 0.000

### Inference

The regression results indicate that several factors influence faculty salary in private higher education institutions. The negative coefficient for gender (-4,800) suggests that female faculty members tend to receive lower salaries compared with male faculty members. This difference is statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of 0.002, which is below the 0.05 significance level. Professional factors such as experience, qualification, and academic rank also show a positive relationship with salary levels. Faculty members with greater experience, higher qualifications, and higher academic positions tend to receive higher compensation. The  $R^2$  value of 0.46 indicates that approximately 46% of the variation in faculty salary can be explained by the variables included in the model. The F-value (12.87) with a significant p-value confirms that the regression model is statistically valid.

Overall, the results suggest that while professional characteristics influence compensation levels, gender remains a significant factor associated with salary differences among faculty members in private higher education institutions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis was conducted to understand the salary distribution among faculty members working in private higher education institutions. The results indicate a noticeable

difference in the average monthly salary between male and female faculty members. The average salary of male faculty members was found to be ₹30,000 per month, whereas the average salary of female faculty members was ₹25,000 per month. This reflects a difference of ₹5,000 per month between the two groups.

When expressed in percentage terms, female faculty members earn approximately 16–17 percent less than their male counterparts. This difference highlights the presence of a measurable pay gap in the compensation structure within private higher education institutions.

### **Statistical Analysis**

To determine whether the observed salary difference is statistically meaningful, an independent sample t-test was performed. The analysis revealed a significant difference in salary levels between male and female faculty members. The statistical results indicate that the mean salary of male faculty members is higher than that of female faculty members, suggesting that gender may influence compensation outcomes within the institutions studied. Further analysis using regression techniques examined the influence of professional variables such as experience, academic qualification, and academic rank on salary levels. The results show that these variables have a positive relationship with faculty compensation. Faculty members with greater experience and higher academic positions generally receive higher salaries. However, even after considering these professional factors, gender remained a significant variable influencing salary levels.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study indicate the existence of a gender-based difference in salary among faculty members in private higher education institutions. Male faculty members, on average, receive higher compensation than female faculty members. This gap may be associated with differences in career progression, institutional policies, negotiation practices, or variations in professional opportunities within academic institutions.

The results also suggest that professional characteristics such as academic rank and experience play an important role in determining compensation. Faculty members with higher qualifications, longer professional experience, and higher academic positions tend to receive better remuneration. These findings highlight the importance of merit-based factors in salary determination while also indicating that gender-related disparities may still persist.

The presence of a pay gap within academic institutions raises important concerns regarding fairness and equality in compensation practices. Since higher education institutions are expected to promote equal opportunities and equitable employment conditions, addressing such disparities becomes essential. Improving transparency in salary structures and ensuring fair evaluation processes may help reduce gender-related differences in compensation within private higher education institutions. Overall, the results emphasize the need for institutional policies that support equitable compensation practices and promote gender equality in academic employment.

This study examined gender pay disparity among faculty members working in private higher education institutions. The findings indicate that differences in compensation exist between male and female faculty members. The analysis shows that male faculty members receive a higher average salary compared to female faculty members, demonstrating the presence of a pay gap within the institutions included in the study.

The results also reveal that several professional factors contribute to variations in salary levels. Educational qualifications, years of professional experience, and academic rank have a positive influence on faculty compensation. Individuals with higher qualifications, longer experience, and senior academic positions tend to receive higher levels of remuneration. However, even after considering these professional characteristics, gender-related differences in pay remain evident.

The existence of salary disparities between male and female faculty members highlights the importance of fairness and transparency in compensation practices. Higher education institutions are expected to promote equality and provide equal opportunities for all employees. Addressing inequalities in salary structures is therefore essential for maintaining a fair and supportive academic environment.

The findings of the study emphasize the need for institutional initiatives that encourage equitable compensation practices in private higher education institutions. Improving transparency in salary policies, implementing objective evaluation systems, and supporting equal opportunities for career advancement can help reduce gender-based pay differences and strengthen equality within academic workplaces.

## CONCLUSION

The study assessed salary differences between male and female faculty members in private higher education institutions and found a consistent variation in earnings. The results indicate that male faculty, on average, receive higher salaries than female faculty, even when

qualifications, experience, and academic responsibilities are comparable. The statistical evidence confirms that this difference is significant, pointing to the existence of a gender-based gap in compensation. The responses collected from faculty members also suggest concerns regarding fairness in existing pay practices. Female faculty reported comparatively lower satisfaction with salary structures, indicating issues such as lack of clarity in pay decisions, differences in bargaining opportunities, and possible bias in institutional processes. These concerns highlight that compensation is not only a financial matter but also closely linked to perceptions of fairness and workplace equity. Further analysis shows that experience, qualification, and academic rank contribute positively to salary levels. However, gender continues to influence earnings independently, suggesting that disparities are not entirely explained by professional factors alone. This indicates the presence of underlying structural or procedural issues within institutions.

Addressing such differences requires focused efforts at the institutional level. Clear and consistent pay structures, periodic salary reviews, unbiased promotion systems, and greater openness in compensation policies can help reduce disparities. Ensuring fairness in pay can improve job satisfaction, strengthen employee commitment, and support a more stable academic workforce. In summary, the study brings attention to the persistence of gender-based salary differences in private higher education institutions and emphasizes the need for more balanced and transparent compensation practices.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Private higher education institutions should work toward developing clear and transparent salary frameworks to promote fairness in compensation practices. Well-defined pay structures that consider qualifications, professional experience, and academic position can help reduce inconsistencies in salary determination and ensure that remuneration is based on objective criteria.

Periodic evaluation of compensation practices can also assist institutions in identifying potential differences in pay among faculty members. Conducting regular reviews of salary patterns allows management to monitor existing pay structures and take corrective measures when disparities are observed.

Ensuring equal access to career development opportunities is another important measure. Faculty members should be provided with similar opportunities to participate in training programs, research activities, leadership roles, and promotion processes. Such initiatives can

support professional advancement and contribute to balanced representation across different academic levels.

The adoption of structured and impartial performance appraisal systems can further strengthen fair compensation practices. Linking salary increments and incentives to measurable indicators such as teaching quality, research output, and academic contributions can help maintain transparency in the evaluation process.

Encouraging institutional policies that support gender equality is equally important. Creating awareness about fair employment practices, promoting inclusive workplace environments, and strengthening institutional guidelines related to equitable pay can contribute to reducing gender-based differences in compensation within private higher education institutions.

### **Scope for Further Research**

The study can be extended by covering a wider set of institutions across different regions to observe whether salary patterns differ based on location and institutional environment. A comparison between private and government colleges may also provide useful insights into how administrative systems and regulatory mechanisms influence pay structures. Future work may include a larger sample with representation from various academic disciplines and different levels of faculty positions. This would help in identifying whether salary differences vary across subjects or hierarchical levels. Studies conducted over a longer period could also track changes in earnings as faculty members progress in their careers. There is room to include additional factors such as teaching load, research contributions, administrative duties, and career breaks, which may have an impact on salary differences. Approaches based on interviews or case studies can offer a clearer understanding of how salary decisions are made and how faculty members perceive these processes.

Further examination of institutional practices, including salary policies, promotion procedures, and evaluation systems, may help in identifying areas where changes can reduce pay differences. Research that assesses the outcomes of specific measures taken by institutions to address salary gaps would also be useful. Work in these areas can provide a more detailed picture of compensation practices and support the development of fair and consistent pay systems in higher education.

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