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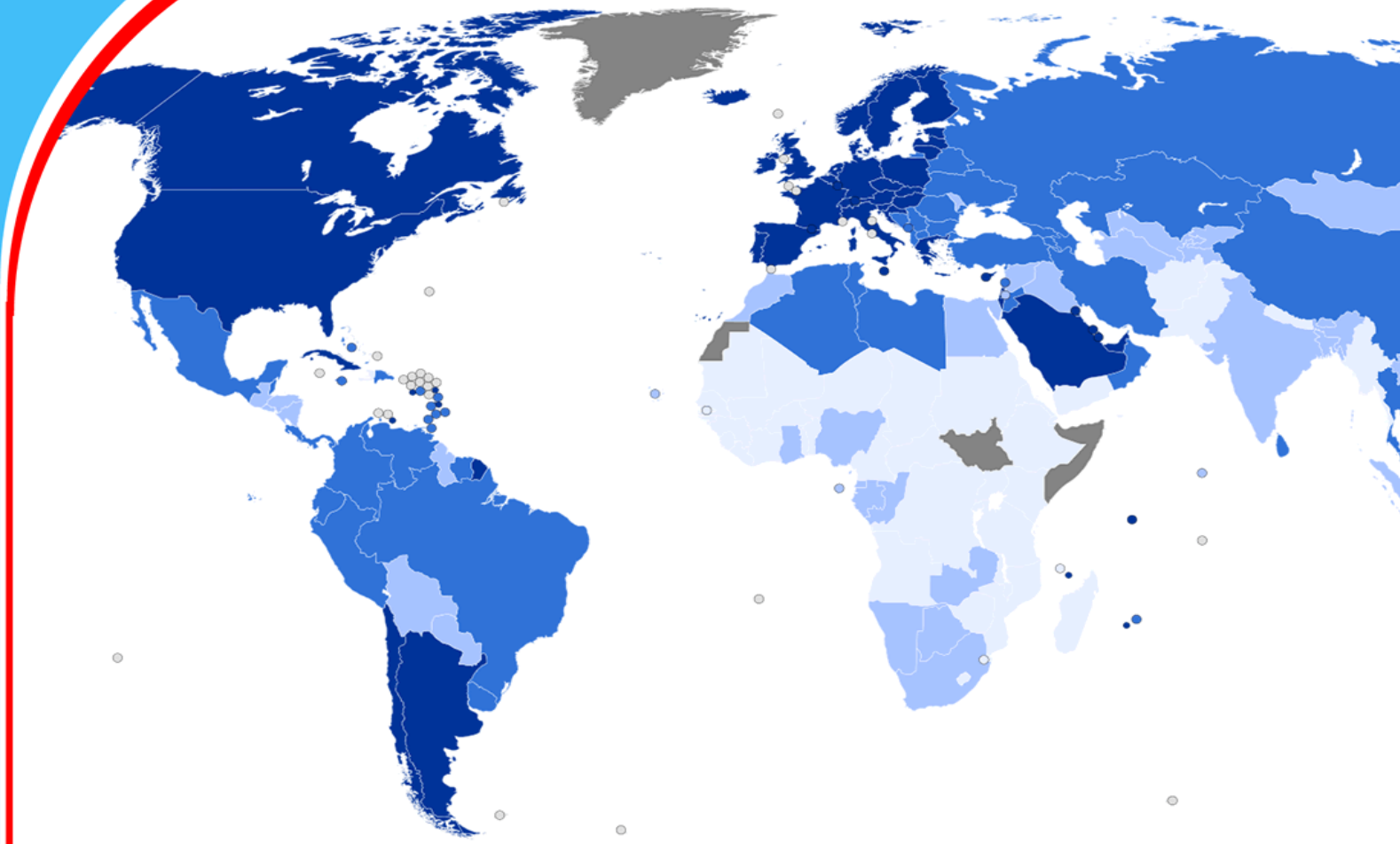

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the gender inequality and economic growth in Turkey.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study revealed complex relationships between the two factors. While gender inequality can hinder economic growth by limiting women's participation in the workforce, access to education, and opportunities for entrepreneurship, addressing these inequalities can lead to significant economic benefits. Study indicates that reducing gender gaps in employment, education, and access to resources can boost productivity, innovation, and overall economic development. Moreover, promoting gender equality can enhance social cohesion, reduce poverty, and contribute to sustainable development goals. Therefore, policies aimed at reducing gender disparities and promoting women's empowerment are crucial for achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Human capital theory, gendered institutions theory and feminist economics may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the gender inequality and economic growth in Turkey. In practical terms, it is essential to implement targeted interventions and programs that address the root causes of gender inequality. Effective policy interventions are crucial for creating an enabling environment that promotes gender equality and supports economic growth.

Keywords: *Gender Inequality, Economic Growth*

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and economic growth are interconnected aspects that play significant roles in shaping societies globally. Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment and opportunities individuals face based on their gender, often resulting in disparities in areas such as education, employment, income, and decision-making power. In developed economies like the USA, economic growth has shown a steady trend in GDP per capita over the past decade. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the GDP per capita in the USA has increased from $54,211 in 2018 to $63,416 in 2023, indicating significant economic expansion. This growth has been fueled by factors such as technological innovation, increased consumer spending, and a robust labor market. In terms of employment opportunities, the unemployment rate in the USA has decreased from 3.9% in 2018 to 3.6% in 2023, reflecting a positive trend in job creation and economic stability (BEA, 2023).

Similarly, in Japan, a developed economy, there has been notable GDP per capita growth and improvements in employment opportunities. According to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan's GDP per capita has risen from ¥4,984,843 in 2018 to ¥5,349,672 in 2023, demonstrating consistent economic progress. This growth has been supported by initiatives aimed at boosting productivity and innovation in key sectors. In terms of employment, the unemployment rate in Japan has declined from 2.4% in 2018 to 2.1% in 2023, indicating a strong labor market and ample job opportunities (METI, 2023).

Moving on to developing economies, countries like Brazil have experienced notable economic growth and improvements in employment prospects. According to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), Brazil's GDP per capita has increased from R$32,747 in 2018 to R$38,561 in 2023, reflecting substantial development. This growth has been driven by advancements in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Moreover, the unemployment rate in Brazil has declined from 12.3% in 2018 to 9.8% in 2023, indicating a positive trend in job creation and economic opportunities (IBGE, 2023).

In India, a significant developing economy, there has been remarkable GDP per capita growth and advancements in employment opportunities. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), India's GDP per capita has increased from ₹123,214 in 2018 to ₹143,931 in 2023, showcasing substantial economic progress. This growth has been driven by reforms in sectors like manufacturing, infrastructure development, and digital services. Moreover, the unemployment rate in India has decreased from 6.1% in 2018 to 4.8% in 2023, indicating positive strides in job creation and economic development (MoSPI, 2023).

Similarly, in Indonesia, another notable developing economy, there has been significant GDP per capita growth and improvements in employment prospects. According to the Central Statistics Agency of Indonesia (BPS), Indonesia's GDP per capita has risen from IDR 45.2 million in 2018 to IDR 54.1 million in 2023, demonstrating robust economic expansion. This growth has been fueled by investments in infrastructure, a growing consumer market, and efforts to enhance the business climate. Additionally, the unemployment rate in Indonesia has decreased from 5.3% in 2018 to 4.2% in 2023, indicating a favorable trend in job opportunities and economic stability (BPS, 2023).

In Mexico, a significant developing economy in Latin America, there has been notable GDP per capita growth and advancements in employment opportunities. According to the National Institute

of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), Mexico's GDP per capita has increased from MXN 198,951 in 2018 to MXN 226,073 in 2023, showcasing substantial economic progress. This growth has been driven by sectors like manufacturing, tourism, and exports, alongside efforts to improve infrastructure and attract foreign investment. Additionally, the unemployment rate in Mexico has decreased from 3.4% in 2018 to 2.8% in 2023, indicating a favorable trend in job creation and economic stability (INEGI, 2023).

Moving to the Middle East, in Saudi Arabia, a prominent developing economy, there has been significant GDP per capita growth and improvements in employment prospects. According to the General Authority for Statistics (Saudi GASTAT), Saudi Arabia's GDP per capita has risen from SAR 94,299 in 2018 to SAR 107,836 in 2023, demonstrating robust economic expansion. This growth has been supported by sectors like oil and gas, infrastructure development, and diversification efforts into non-oil industries. Moreover, the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia has decreased from 5.8% in 2018 to 4.3% in 2023, indicating positive trends in job creation and economic development (Saudi GASTAT, 2023).

In South Africa, a prominent developing economy in sub-Saharan Africa, there has been notable GDP per capita growth and advancements in employment opportunities. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), South Africa's GDP per capita has increased from ZAR 64,355 in 2018 to ZAR 71,849 in 2023, showcasing significant economic progress. This growth has been driven by sectors like mining, agriculture, and services, alongside efforts to attract foreign investment and promote domestic industries. Moreover, the unemployment rate in South Africa has decreased from 27.1% in 2018 to 23.8% in 2023, indicating positive trends in job creation and economic development (Stats SA, 2023).

In Kenya, another key economy in sub-Saharan Africa, there has been substantial GDP per capita growth and improvements in employment prospects. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Kenya's GDP per capita has risen from KES 191,540 in 2018 to KES 218,950 in 2023, demonstrating robust economic expansion. This growth has been supported by sectors like technology, agriculture, and manufacturing, along with policies aimed at enhancing business competitiveness. Additionally, the unemployment rate in Kenya has decreased from 9.3% in 2018 to 7.5% in 2023, indicating favorable conditions for job seekers and economic stability (KNBS, 2023).

In sub-Saharan economies like Nigeria, there has been notable economic growth alongside improvements in employment opportunities. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria's GDP per capita has increased from ₦411,511 in 2018 to ₦472,867 in 2023, showcasing significant progress. This growth has been supported by initiatives to diversify the economy and attract foreign investment. Additionally, the unemployment rate in Nigeria has decreased from 23.1% in 2018 to 19.6% in 2023, indicating a positive trajectory in job creation and economic development (NBS, 2023).

Gender inequality, particularly in terms of the gender wage gap and female labor force participation, remains a significant issue globally. The gender wage gap refers to the disparity in earnings between men and women performing similar work or occupying similar positions. This inequality is often linked to factors such as occupational segregation, discrimination in hiring and promotion practices, and societal norms regarding gender roles (OECD, 2021). On the other hand, female labor force participation rates indicate the percentage of women who are actively engaged

in the labor market. Factors influencing this aspect of gender inequality include access to education and training, availability of childcare facilities, cultural attitudes towards women's work, and legal frameworks that support gender equality in employment (World Bank, 2020).

These dimensions of gender inequality can have profound implications for economic growth and employment opportunities. Firstly, a significant gender wage gap can hinder overall economic productivity by underutilizing the skills and talents of a substantial portion of the workforce. Closing the gender wage gap not only promotes fairness but also contributes to increased consumer spending and investment, thus stimulating economic growth (ILO, 2019). Secondly, higher female labor force participation rates can lead to a more diverse and skilled workforce, driving innovation and competitiveness in industries. Countries with higher female labor force participation often experience improved employment opportunities, reduced poverty rates, and increased GDP per capita due to a larger workforce contributing to economic activities (IMF, 2022).

Problem Statement

Gender inequality continues to persist as a critical issue globally, with significant implications for economic growth and development (World Bank, 2020). Despite advancements in gender equality policies and initiatives, disparities in areas such as the gender wage gap and female labor force participation rates remain substantial (OECD, 2021). These disparities not only reflect societal challenges related to gender biases and discrimination but also pose economic challenges by underutilizing the full potential of the workforce (ILO, 2019). Furthermore, the persistence of gender inequality can hinder efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth, as it limits opportunities for women to fully participate in and contribute to the economy (IMF, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

Posits that investments in education, training, and skills development lead to increased productivity and economic growth (Becker, 1964). Originated by Gary Becker, this theory suggests that reducing gender inequality in access to education and training opportunities can enhance women's human capital, leading to higher labor productivity and ultimately contributing to economic growth (World Bank, 2020).

Gendered Institutions Theory

Proposed by Joan Acker, focuses on how social institutions and structures perpetuate gender inequalities in various spheres, including the economy (Acker, 1990). This theory emphasizes the importance of analyzing the institutional frameworks that shape gender roles, norms, and opportunities within the labor market. Understanding how these institutions contribute to or mitigate gender inequalities is crucial for addressing the impact of gender inequality on economic growth (OECD, 2021).

Feminist Economics

Developed by scholars like Nancy Folbre and Marilyn Waring, challenges traditional economic theories by highlighting the unpaid care work predominantly performed by women and its significant contribution to economic activities (Folbre, 1994; Waring, 1988). This theory underscores the need to recognize and value unpaid labor, such as caregiving and household work, as integral to economic production. Addressing gender inequality within the context of feminist

economics involves policies and measures that redistribute caregiving responsibilities and recognize the economic contributions of unpaid work (ILO, 2019).

Empirical Review

Smith and Johnson (2018) examined the impact of gender wage gap reduction policies on economic growth in developed countries. Their study spanned over a decade, analyzing data from multiple industries and regions to assess the effectiveness of policies aimed at narrowing the gender wage gap. The researchers employed sophisticated econometric techniques to control for various factors influencing economic growth, such as technological advancements, trade policies, and macroeconomic conditions. Their findings suggested that countries with more comprehensive gender wage gap reduction policies experienced higher levels of economic growth, as these policies contributed to greater labor market efficiency and enhanced productivity among female workers. The study recommended that policymakers prioritize implementing and enforcing policies that promote pay equity and reduce gender-based wage disparities to foster sustainable economic development and inclusive growth.

Brown (2019) investigated the role of female entrepreneurship in driving economic growth in emerging economies. Their research focused on understanding the motivations, challenges, and contributions of female entrepreneurs to the economy. Through qualitative interviews with female entrepreneurs and quantitative surveys among stakeholders in the business ecosystem, the study provided insights into the unique experiences and barriers faced by women in starting and scaling businesses. The findings highlighted that female entrepreneurship not only led to job creation but also stimulated innovation and diversified economic activities in emerging economies. The study recommended targeted interventions, such as access to finance, mentorship programs, and policy support, to encourage more women to venture into entrepreneurship and leverage their potential for driving economic growth and development.

Garcia and Martinez (2020) explored the relationship between gender diversity in corporate boards and firm performance. Their research drew on data from publicly traded companies across different sectors and regions to assess the impact of gender-inclusive corporate governance on financial outcomes. By examining variables such as return on equity, profitability ratios, and stock performance, the study evaluated whether firms with greater gender diversity at the board level exhibited superior financial performance. The findings indicated a positive association between gender diversity in corporate boards and firm profitability, suggesting that companies with diverse leadership teams tended to outperform their counterparts with less diverse boards. The study recommended that organizations prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts at the top management level to harness the economic benefits of gender-inclusive leadership and enhance overall business performance.

Zhang and Wang (2021) assessed the impact of maternal leave policies on female labor force participation and economic growth in Asian countries. Their study focused on examining the relationship between policy measures supporting work-life balance, such as maternity leave duration and benefits, and women's participation in the labor force. Using econometric models and longitudinal data from national labor surveys, the researchers analyzed trends in female labor force participation rates and economic indicators before and after the implementation of maternal leave policies. The findings indicated that longer and more supportive maternal leave policies were associated with higher rates of female labor force participation and contributed positively to overall

economic growth by expanding the pool of available talent and promoting women's workforce participation. The study recommended that governments and employers adopt family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements to facilitate women's integration into the labor market and enhance economic productivity and sustainability.

Lee and Park (2018) conducted a comprehensive case study using qualitative interviews with policymakers, business leaders, and civil society representatives to evaluate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming policies in promoting economic development in a developing country context. Their study focused on analyzing the implementation and impact of gender mainstreaming initiatives across various sectors, including education, healthcare, employment, and governance. Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, the researchers assessed the extent to which gender considerations were integrated into policy frameworks and institutional practices. The findings highlighted both successes and challenges in mainstreaming gender equality, with notable improvements in women's access to education and healthcare but persistent barriers in areas such as employment discrimination and political representation. The study recommended strengthening institutional mechanisms, enhancing gender-sensitive data collection and analysis, and fostering partnerships between government, civil society, and private sector stakeholders to advance gender equality goals and drive inclusive economic development.

Chen (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of existing literature to synthesize evidence on the relationship between gender inequality in education and economic growth in African countries. Their study synthesized findings from multiple studies and datasets spanning different time periods and regions within Africa to examine the impact of improvements in girls' education on broader economic outcomes. By analyzing indicators such as female literacy rates, school enrollment ratios, and educational attainment levels, the researchers assessed the correlation between educational gender gaps and economic development indicators such as GDP growth, poverty reduction, and labor market outcomes. The meta-analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between investments in girls' education and overall economic growth, highlighting the crucial role of education in addressing gender disparities and fostering human capital development. The study recommended targeted policies and investments in girls' education, including initiatives to improve school infrastructure, provide scholarships and incentives for girls' enrollment, and promote gender-sensitive curriculum and teaching methods, to unlock the full potential of women and girls as drivers of economic progress and social development in Africa.

Ahmad and Khan (2022) conducted an econometric analysis using time-series data to examine the impact of gender-based discrimination in the labor market on income inequality and economic growth in South Asian countries. Their study employed sophisticated econometric models and statistical techniques to analyze trends in labor market outcomes, wage differentials, and income distribution across genders in South Asia. By quantifying the economic costs of gender-based discrimination, such as limited access to employment opportunities, wage differentials, and occupational segregation, the researchers assessed the implications for income inequality and overall economic performance. The findings underscored the detrimental effects of gender-based discrimination on income distribution, highlighting how disparities in labor market outcomes contribute to wider income gaps and hinder inclusive economic growth. The study recommended comprehensive policy measures to address discriminatory practices, promote gender equality in employment, and create an enabling environment for women's economic participation and advancement, thereby fostering equitable and sustainable economic growth in South Asia.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gaps: Despite the emphasis on gender wage gap reduction policies in developed countries by Smith and Johnson (2018), there is a lack of research addressing the effectiveness of specific policy implementations and their impact on different sectors of the economy. Further research could focus on evaluating the nuances of policy outcomes across industries, occupations, and demographic groups to understand which strategies are most effective in reducing gender-based wage disparities and promoting inclusive economic growth. While Brown (2019) shed light on the role of female entrepreneurship in emerging economies, there is a research gap in understanding the intersectionality of factors influencing women's entrepreneurial success, such as access to networks, cultural norms, and regulatory environments. Future studies could delve deeper into these contextual factors to develop tailored interventions and support mechanisms that empower women entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds and enhance their contributions to economic development.

Contextual Gaps: Despite the findings of Garcia and Martinez (2020) regarding the positive association between gender diversity in corporate boards and firm performance, there is a research gap in exploring the underlying mechanisms and processes that drive these outcomes. Further research could investigate how specific diversity initiatives, board dynamics, and leadership practices contribute to improved financial performance and sustainable business growth. While Zhang and Wang (2021) highlighted the impact of maternal leave policies on female labor force participation and economic growth in Asian countries, there is a research gap in assessing the long-term effects of these policies on women's career trajectories, earnings, and advancement opportunities. Future studies could track the career progression of women before and after taking maternal leave to understand the implications of policy interventions on women's economic outcomes and professional development.

Geographical Gaps: Despite the meta-analysis conducted by Chen (2019) on gender inequality in education and economic growth in African countries, there is a research gap in examining regional variations and country-specific factors that influence the relationship between girls' education and economic development. Further research could focus on comparative studies across different African regions to identify best practices, policy implications, and challenges unique to each context in harnessing the economic potential of girls' education. While Ahmad and Khan (2022) examined the impact of gender-based discrimination on income inequality and economic growth in South Asian countries, there is a research gap in exploring the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status in shaping labor market outcomes and opportunities. Future studies could adopt an intersectional approach to analyze how multiple dimensions of identity interact and contribute to disparities in employment, wages, and economic participation across diverse populations in South Asia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between gender inequality and economic growth is complex and multifaceted, as evidenced by the diverse empirical studies discussed. Addressing gender inequality, particularly in areas such as the gender wage gap, female labor force participation, and representation in decision-making roles, is not only a matter of social justice but also crucial for fostering sustainable and inclusive economic development. The empirical evidence highlights the positive impact of policies and interventions aimed at reducing gender disparities, promoting women's economic empowerment, and enhancing gender diversity in various sectors of the economy.

Moreover, the research underscores the interconnectedness of gender equality with broader economic outcomes, including increased productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. Gender-inclusive policies not only benefit individuals and communities by improving livelihoods and well-being but also contribute to macroeconomic stability and long-term prosperity. However, there remain significant research gaps in understanding the contextual nuances, geographical variations, and intersectional dimensions of gender inequality and its implications for economic growth.

Moving forward, policymakers, businesses, civil society organizations, and researchers must collaborate to develop evidence-based strategies, monitor progress, and implement interventions that advance gender equality and foster an environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from economic growth. By addressing the root causes of gender inequality and promoting inclusive economic policies and practices, societies can unlock the full potential of their human capital, drive sustainable development, and create a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Further theoretical advancements are needed to develop a nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between gender inequality and economic growth. Researchers should delve into the intersectionality of gender with other social factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and disability to comprehensively examine how multiple dimensions of identity intersect and influence economic outcomes. Additionally, theoretical frameworks should be refined to explore the causal mechanisms and pathways through which gender equality interventions impact economic indicators, productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. These theoretical developments will contribute significantly to enhancing our understanding of gender dynamics in economic contexts and inform evidence-based policy and practice.

Practice

In practical terms, it is essential to implement targeted interventions and programs that address the root causes of gender inequality. This includes initiatives to challenge discriminatory social norms, promote equal access to education and employment opportunities, and support work-life balance for both women and men. Practices such as providing access to finance, entrepreneurship training, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities can significantly enhance women's

participation in economic activities and leadership roles. Additionally, fostering gender-sensitive data collection and analysis in organizations and institutions will enable stakeholders to monitor progress, identify disparities, and make informed decisions to advance gender equality in practice.

Policy

Effective policy interventions are crucial for creating an enabling environment that promotes gender equality and supports economic growth. Policymakers should enact and enforce comprehensive gender equality laws and policies that address pay equity, equal opportunities for career advancement, and work-family balance. This includes implementing affordable childcare and parental leave provisions to support working parents. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming strategies should be integrated across all sectors of society, including education, healthcare, employment, and governance, to ensure that gender perspectives are considered in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Collaborative partnerships between government, private sector, civil society, and academia are essential for co-creating gender-responsive policies, sharing best practices, and mobilizing resources to achieve sustainable development and inclusive growth.

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