GENDER INEQUALITY IN BHUTAN'S PRIVATE SECTOR

An Analysis of Structural Barriers from the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS)

AUGUST, 2025

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study diagnoses the structural drivers of gender inequality within Bhutan's formal private sector, moving beyond descriptive gaps to identify the root causes of disparity, from educational choices to employment conditions.

Methods: Utilizing the full administrative dataset from the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS) as of August 2025 (n=64,864 employees), the analysis employs descriptive statistics to examine gender representation, pay gaps, occupational and sectoral segregation, employment precarity, and qualifications mismatch.

Findings: The analysis reveals profound gender disparity: women constitute only 42.2% of the workforce and face a mean monthly pay gap of 15.6%. This inequality is primarily driven by structural segregation. Women are systematically concentrated in lower-paying sectors (e.g., Accommodation & Food, median wage Nu. 12,000) and occupations, while men dominate higher-paying fields (e.g., Energy, Construction). A critical qualifications mismatch is identified, with women underrepresented in high-value STEM fields (21% in Engineering) and overrepresented in lower-paid feminized fields (61% in Arts). Furthermore, women are overrepresented in precarious "own account" work (61.6%), lacking job security and benefits.

Policy Implications: Achieving equity requires transformative policies that target the entire ecosystem. Recommendations include breaking occupational segregation through education; revaluing feminized sectors; promoting gender-friendly workplaces with childcare and flexi-time; formalizing precarious work; and implementing targeted measures to bring women from the informal sector into the mainstream. This is not merely a social imperative but a critical economic strategy for Bhutan's sustainable development.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Pay Gap, Structural Barriers, Occupational Segregation, Qualifications Mismatch, Labour Market, Bhutan, Private Sector, BLMIS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of gender dynamics within Bhutan's formal private sector, utilizing the full administrative dataset from the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS) as of August 2025. The study examines 64,864 employee records spanning appointments from 1965 to mid-2025, providing a unique longitudinal perspective on workforce composition and employment patterns. A critical caveat is that the BLMIS excludes civil servants and armed forces personnel, meaning this analysis focuses specifically on the corporations, private businesses, NGOs, and foreign firms that constitute the engine of Bhutan's future job growth.

Core Finding: The analysis reveals a significant gender disparity in Bhutan's private sector. Women constitute only 42% of the workforce and face a substantial earnings gap, with a median monthly salary 9.3% lower than their male counterparts. This raw pay gap widens to 15.6% when comparing mean salaries, indicating that men are disproportionately represented in the highest-paying roles.

Primary Cause: Structural Segregation, Not Just Discrimination. The data demonstrates that the gender gap is not primarily a matter of unequal pay for equal work. Instead, it is driven by deep-rooted structural segregation. Women are systematically concentrated in lower-paying sectors (e.g., Accommodation, Retail) and occupational roles (e.g., Clerical, Sales), while men dominate higher-paying fields (e.g., Energy, Construction, Engineering). Furthermore, women are overrepresented in precarious employment types like informal "own account" work, which offers little job security or benefits.

Key Evidence:

- **Occupational Segregation:** 72% of health/social workers are women; 78% of craft/trades workers are men.
- **Sectoral Segregation:** Women dominate Accommodation/Food (60.5%), which has the lowest median wage (Nu. 12,000). Men dominate high-paying sectors like 'electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' (78% male, median Nu. 22,905)
- **Precarious Work:** Women are overrepresented in insecure "own-account-work (61.6%)
- **Education Pipeline:** Gender splits in field of study (e.g., women in art/education, men in engineering/tech) perpetuate the divide.

Urgent Policy Imperative: These findings indicate that achieving gender equity requires moving beyond narrow equal pay policies. A transformative approach is needed to dismantle the systemic barriers that funnel women into less valued economic activities. Strategic interventions must target sectoral segregation, educational pathways, and workplace practices to build a private sector that leverages the full potential of Bhutan's workforce for sustainable and inclusive economic development.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Bhutan's Evolving Labour Market and the Private Sector Imperative

Bhutan's economy and labour market are at a pivotal juncture. Since the early 2000s, the nation has undergone a profound economic transformation, characterized by a gradual but decisive shift from agrarian employment to formal sector jobs. The non-agricultural employment grew from 44% of total workforce participation in 2013 to 58% by 2024, reflecting this rapid diversification.

Historically, the civil service served as the primary employer for Bhutan's educated workforce. However, facing fiscal constraints and saturation, its capacity to absorb new entrants has diminished. This has thrust the private sector into a critical role as the main driver of job creation, economic innovation, and future prosperity. Yet, this transition has been uneven. Critical challenges persist, including skills mismatches in high-growth sectors and—as this report thoroughly documents—persistent and structural gender inequalities. Despite high levels of female educational attainment, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions and overrepresented in low-wage work. Understanding the architecture of this inequality is not merely an issue of fairness; it is an **economic imperative** for harnessing the full potential of Bhutan's human capital and achieving sustainable development goals.

2.2. The Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS): A lens into the Private Sector

This study leverages data from the BLMIS, the national digital platform managed by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE). The BLMIS is a cornerstone of modern labour market governance, designed to facilitate employment, manage foreign workforce, and provide evidence for policy making.

Its strength for this analysis lies in its detailed capture of private sector dynamics, capturing granular data on salaries, working hours, employment contracts, job transitions, and employer characteristics that are unavailable from any other source.

Crucially, however, the scope of BLMIS must be precisely understood to interpret these finding correctly. The system excludes two significant segments of the national workforce:

1. Civil service employees (approximately 8% of the national workforce), who are managed under a separate payroll system.
2. Personnel of the Royal Bhutan Army and other armed forces.

Consequently, this analysis provides a focused lens on 80-90% of Bhutan's non-agricultural formal workforce, encompassing:

- Private businesses and corporations

- NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs)

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) firms and joint ventures

While this means the data cannot present a holistic national picture, it provides an exceptionally clear and targeted view into the private sector- precisely where the most significant growth, innovation, and, and as this report shows, the most challenging inequalities are located.

2.3. Study Objective and Framework

The primary objective of this report is to move beyond simple descriptive statistics and diagnose the **fundamental drivers** of gender inequality in Bhutan's private sector. This analysis seeks to answer the following question: why does a significant gender pay gap persist, and what are the specific structural mechanisms—from hiring patterns to sectoral distribution to job types—that perpetuate economic disparity? By answering this question, the report aims to provide a robust evidence base for designing targeted, effective, and transformative policies to build a more equitable and productive economy for all Bhutanese.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Data Source

This paper presents a secondary analysis of data originally compiled for a broader study on "*BLMIS Employee Data Analysis: Workforce Structure, Employment Patterns, and Job Transitions in Bhutan*" It leverages the comprehensive administrative census from the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), which constitutes the definitive registry of formal private sector employment in Bhutan. The full employee dataset was extracted on August 5, 2025, capturing all records with appointments up to June 30, 2025, providing a snapshot of the contemporary labour market.

3.2. Data Cleaning and Preparation

The initial dataset contained 78,762 observations. To ensure data quality and validity for this specific analysis, a multi-step cleaning protocol was implemented:

- **Scope Definition**: Records for overseas workers were excluded to focus solely on the domestic labour market.

- **Error Removal**: Observations with critical, irreconcilable data errors were removed.

- **Attrition**: This process resulted in a final analytic sample of 64,864 observations, representing a 17.6% attrition rate, which is considered acceptable for administrative data of this nature.

- **Data Corrections and Imputations:**
  - **Implausible Values**: Birth years were corrected where they implied an age below 14 at the time of appointment.
  - **Missing Data Imputation**: To preserve statistical power and reduce bias from complete case analysis, missing values for working hours were imputed using sector-occupation means, and missing salaries were imputed using sector-occupation medians. This approach assumes that missingness is random within these specific subgroups.
  - **Logical Consistency**: The employment status was logically updated to "Resigned" for any individual who had surpassed the typical retirement age of 65.

3.3. Analytical Approach

The analysis is primarily descriptive, aiming to document and quantify structural inequalities. Key metrics include gender representation ratios, median and mean gender pay gaps, and concentration indices across occupational classifications (BSCO) and economic sectors (BSIC). This approach is optimal for identifying macro-level patterns of segregation and precarity that define the landscape of gender inequality.

4. THE LANDSCAPE OF GENDER INEQUALITY

This section presents the foundational metrics that quantify gender disparity in Bhutan's private sector: the representation gap and the pay gap. These headline figures establish the undeniable existence of inequality and set the stage for a deeper diagnosis of its structural causes in the subsequent section.

4.1. The Representation Gap

A fundamental measure of equity is equal participation in the workforce. However, the analysis reveals a significant imbalance in the composition of Bhutan's private sector. Of the 64,864 employees in the dataset, only 27,376 are women, representing 42.2% of the total workforce. Men, at 37,488 employees, constitute 57.8%. This disparity of nearly 16 percentage points means there are approximately 137 men for every 100 women in the private sector.

Table 4.1: Gender Composition of Bhutan's Private Sector Workforce

Gender	Number of Employees	Percentage of Workforce
Female	27,376	42.21
Male	37,488	57.79
Total	**64,864**	**100**

Source: Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), Author's calculation.

This underrepresentation of women indicates barriers to entry, retention, or both, limiting the sector's access to a significant portion of the national talent pool.

4.2. The Gender Pay Gap

Beyond participation, the analysis uncovers a substantial disparity in earnings—a core indicator of economic inequality. The median monthly salary for men is Nu. 16,538, compared to Nu. 15,000 for women. This constitutes a median pay gap of 9.3%, meaning the typical male worker earns over Nu. 1,500 more per month than the typical female worker.

The gap widens considerably when examining mean salaries, which are influenced by high earners. The average monthly salary for men is Nu. 21,903, compared to Nu. 18,490 for women. This mean pay gap of 15.6% is a stark indicator that men are disproportionately represented in the highest-paying roles within the sector, while women are clustered in positions with lower earning potential.

Table 4.2: Gender Disparity in Monthly Salary

Metric	Female	Male	Absolute Gap (Nu.)	Percentage Gap
Median Salary (Nu.)	15,000	16,538	+1,538	+9.3%
Mean Salary (Nu.)	18,490	21903	+3,414	+15.6%
Standard Deviation	25892	28307		

Source: Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), Author's calculation.

The difference in standard deviations further suggests greater variability and inequality in male earnings, with more men at both the very high and very low ends of the income spectrum.

5. DIAGNOSING THE DRIVERS OF INEQUALITY

The significant gender pay and representation gaps are not random anomalies but the direct result of systematic structural segregation. Women and men are channelled into different sectors, occupations, and types of employment, with vastly different economic rewards. This section analyses these patterns to identify the root causes of the inequality documented in Section 4.

5.1. Occupational Segregation: The "Glass Walls"

The workforce is sharply divided along gender lines into different types of jobs. This horizontal segregation, often called "glass walls," creates a fundamental barrier to equity by funnelling women into less-valued roles.

Table 5.1: Gender Concentration in Major Occupation Groups

Major Occupation Group	Gender		Total	% of Female
	Female	Male		
Managers	4,943	6,443	11,386	43.4%
Professionals	3,723	5,758	9,481	39.3%
Associate Professionals and Technicians	1,853	3,895	5,748	32.2%
Clerical Support Workers	3,376	1,940	5,316	**63.5%**
Services and sales workers	8,675	6,071	14,746	**58.8%**
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	112	128	240	46.7%
Craft and Related Trades Workers	1,229	4,830	6,059	20.3%
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	354	3,902	4,256	**8.3%**
Elementary Occupations	2,279	2,341	4,620	49.3%
Missing	832	2,180	3,012	27.6%
Total	**27,376**	**37,488**	**64,864**	**42.2%**

Source: Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), Author's calculation.

Key Findings:

- **Female-Dominated Occupations:** Women are highly concentrated in roles like Clerical Support (63.5% female) and Services and Sales (58.8% female).

- **Male-Dominated Occupations:** Men overwhelmingly dominate technical and industrial roles such as Craft and Trades (79.7% male) and Plant/Machine Operation (91.7% male).

- **Leadership Gap:** While closer to parity, men still hold a majority of Manager roles (56.6%), indicating a potential "glass ceiling" effect even within the professional hierarchy.

5.2.   Sectoral Segregation and the Valuation of Work

The occupational segregation translates into a sectoral divide. Women are concentrated in sectors with lower median wages, while men dominate higher-paying industries.

Table 5.2: Median Salary and Gender Concentration by Sector

Sector Name	Median Salary (Nu.)	% Female	Primary Finding
Accommodation and Food Service activities	12000	60.5%	Lowest pay, highly feminized
Construction	18650	22.6%	Mid-high pay, highly masculinized
Education	22500	49.1%	High pay, near parity
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	22905	22.1%	Highest pay, highly masculinized
Financial services and insurance	22250	46.9%	High pay, near parity
Manufacturing	14951	31.1%	Mid pay, masculinized
Wholesale and retail trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	20000	52.6%	Mid pay, slightly feminized
Total	**15000**	**42.2%**	

Source: Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), Author's calculation.

Key Findings:

- The most feminized sector (Accommodation & Food Services, 60.5% female) has the lowest median wage in the economy (Nu. 12,000).

- The highest-paying sectors (Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, Finance, Education) show much greater gender balance or are slightly masculinized.

- This pattern suggests a systematic undervaluation of economic activities dominated by women

5.3. The Precarity of Employment Types

A further layer of inequality is found in the nature of employment contracts. Women are overrepresented in insecure and informal work arrangements.

Table 5.3: Gender Distribution by Employment Type

Nature of Employment	Gender		Total	% Female
	Female	Male		
Casual/Freelance	545	518	1,063	51.3%
Contract	2,470	3,825	6,295	39.2%
Intern	209	168	377	55.4%
Own account worker (non-agriculture)	6,096	3,804	9,900	61.6%
Regular	17,773	28,917	46,690	38.1%
Training and Employment	169	128	297	56.9%
Unpaid Family worker	114	128	242	47.1%
Total	**27,376**	**37,488**	**64,864**	**42.2%**

Source: Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), Author's calculation.

Key Findings:

- Women constitute a strong majority of own account workers (61.6%), a category often characterized by informal, unstable work without benefits or job security.

- Men hold a significant majority of stable Regular employment (61.9%), which typically offers higher security, benefits, and career progression.

- This indicates that women face not only a pay gap but also a job quality and security gap.

5.4. The Skills and Qualification Mismatch

The data reveals that gender-based economic segregation is powerfully prefigured in the educational pipeline, with a clear inverse relationship between the proportion of women in a field of study and its financial returns (Table 5.4). These qualifications mismatch funnels women into less lucrative career paths long before they enter the workforce.

High-value fields show significant gender imbalances. Engineering and Technology, a critical sector for national innovation with a median salary of Nu. 20,000, has the lowest female representation of any major field at just 21%. Conversely, the most feminized fields are systematically among the lowest paid. Arts (61% female, Nu. 12,000) and Commerce (55% female, Nu. 12,500) offer median salaries approximately 40% lower than the top-paying fields like Law and Medicine.

A notable exception is Education (54% female, Nu. 17,676), which commands a mid-tier salary, likely reflecting its professionalization and public sector influence. However, this does not offset the broader trend of the undervaluation of feminized domains.

A significant data limitation must be noted: over 54,000 records lack field of study data, and this group earns a median salary close to the overall average (Nu. 15,415). While this analysis is based on available data, the scale of missing information suggests the full picture may be more complex.

This analysis confirms that achieving gender equity requires interventions long before hiring. Policy must address the educational "pipeline" that channels women away from high-growth STEM fields and perpetuates the concentration in undervalued sectors.

Table 5.4: Economic Value and Gender Representation by Field of Study

Field of Study	% Female	Median Monthly Salary (Nu.)	Number of Graduates
Law	40	61,776	5
Medicine	37.1	25,540	35
Social Sciences	48.3	24,540	89
Engineering and Technology	21	20,000	771
Business and Finance	39.6	20,000	833
Education	54	17,676	50
Science	35.9	16,185	739
Missing Field Data	**40.5**	**15,415**	**54,829**
General	35	15,081	346
Monastic Study	50	15,000	50
Commerce	55.3	12,500	1,979
Agriculture	48.6	12,000	35
Humanities	16.7	12,000	6
Arts	60.6	12,000	5,097
Overall Median	**42.20%**	**15,000**	**64,864**

Source: Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS), Author's calculation.
Note: The 'Missing Field Data' category is included for transparency but represents a significant data gap
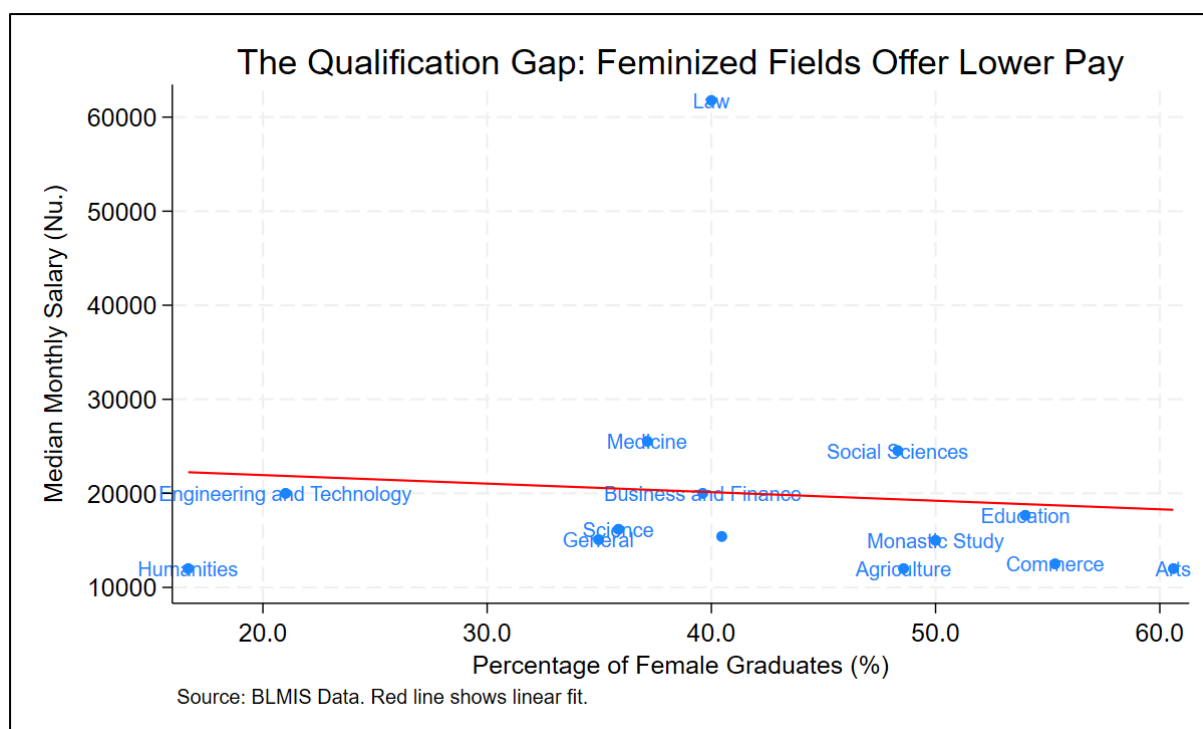
Figure 5.1: The Relationship Between Field of Study, Gender Composition, and Economic Reward

Figure 5.1 provides a powerful visual representation of the qualifications mismatch and the systemic undervaluation of feminized fields. The scatter plot charts each field of study based on its gender composition (x-axis) and its median monthly salary (y-axis). The downward-sloping trend line is stark and revealing: *as the percentage of female graduates in a field increase, the median salary for that field tends to decrease.*

Fields clustered in the top-left quadrant, such as Engineering and Technology and Business and Finance, are high-value but male-dominated. Conversely, fields clustered in the bottom-right quadrant, such as Arts and Commerce, are highly feminized and offer significantly lower financial returns. The position of Education is an informative outlier, demonstrating that professionalization can mitigate the penalty for feminized work.

This visualization underscores a critical argument of this report: the gender pay gap is not merely a function of discrimination within the same job, but is deeply rooted in the pre-labor market segregation that channels women into educational pathways leading to less valued economic activities.

Note: The "Missing" field of study data is omitted from this visualization for clarity.

The gender gaps in representation and pay are directly driven by a four-tiered structural problem, rooted in a foundational educational pipeline:

1. **Qualifications Mismatch:** Women are channelled a way from high-value STEM fields (e.g., Engineering, 21% female) and into fields of study (e.g., Arts, 61% female) that lead to lower-paying economic activities. This pre-labor market segregation lays the groundwork for all subsequent disparity.

2. **Occupational Segregation:** This educational funnel results in women being concentrated in supportive and service roles (e.g., Clerical, Services), while men are funnelled into technical and industrial trades.

3. **Sectoral Segregation:** The sectors where women are concentrated (e.g., Accommodation) are systemically lower-paid than the male-dominated sectors (e.g., Utilities).

4. **Employment Precarity:** Women are more likely to be in vulnerable "own account" work, while men are more likely to hold stable "regular" jobs.

This analysis confirms that the gender inequality in Bhutan's private sector is deeply embedded, structural and systemic issue- with origins in the education system - not merely the result of individual choices or isolated discrimination cases.

6. DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The analysis reveals that gender inequality in Bhutan's private sector is not a singular issue but a systemic outcome of deeply embedded structural barriers. The 15.6% mean pay gap and the 42% female representation rate are symptoms of three interconnected phenomena: occupational segregation, sectoral undervaluation, and employment precarity. This section discusses the implications of these findings and proposes a targeted policy framework to dismantle these barriers.

6.1. Interpretation of Key Findings

The data presents a clear narrative: women's economic participation is systematically channelled into less secure, lower-paying segments of the economy. This occurs through several mechanisms:

- **The Pipeline Effect:** Gender disparities in field of study (e.g., women in education and arts, men in engineering and technology) create a pipeline that feeds directly into the segregated occupational structure observed in the labour market. This suggests that interventions must begin long before individuals enter the workforce.

- **The Undervaluation of "Women's Work":** The concentration of women in sectors like accommodation and food services (60.5% female, median wage: Nu. 12,000) compared to men in utilities (78% male, median wage: Nu. 22,905) indicates a societal and economic undervaluation of care work, hospitality, and sales—functions disproportionately performed by women.

- **The Security Gap:** The overrepresentation of women in insecure own account work (61.6%) highlights a vulnerability that extends beyond monthly pay. This lack of formal employment denies women access to social security, paid leave, and retirement benefits, amplifying economic insecurity over their lifetimes.

6.2. A Framework for Policy Intervention

Addressing these structural issues requires a multi-faceted approach that moves beyond simplistic equal pay rhetoric. Policy must be targeted at each stage of the economic lifecycle. The following framework outlines a strategic path forward:

Table 6.1: Policy Framework for Gender Equity in the Private Sector

Policy Goal	Specific Interventions	Key Stakeholders
1. Break Occupational Segregation	• STEM promotion for girls in schools. • Vocational training for women in high-growth, male-dominated sectors (e.g., green technology, construction). • Scholarships for women in engineering, technology, and finance.	MoESD, MoICE, Private Sector
2. Revalue Feminized Sectors	• Sector-specific minimum wages for undervalued but essential sectors like accommodation and retail. • Productivity grants to help firms in feminized sectors innovate and increase wages. • Certification standards that link business licenses to fair wage practices.	Ministry of Finance, MoICE, Business Associations
3. Formalize the Informal Sector	• Social protection schemes for own-account and casual workers. • Incentives for firms to convert contractual positions to regular employment. • Access to finance and business development services for female entrepreneurs to grow beyond subsistence. • Targeted programs to register and support female informal workers, bringing them into the mainstream to access government benefits.	MoICE, Ministry of Finance, RMA
4. Promote a Gender-Friendly Work Environment	• Promote and incentivize the adoption of flexi-time, remote work, and part-time opportunities. • Establish public-private partnerships to create affordable, accessible childcare facilities at major industrial hubs. • Launch national sensitization campaigns to encourage the shared responsibility of unpaid care work within households.	MoICE, MoESD, MoH, Private Sector
5. Promote Leadership & Transparency	• Corporate governance guidelines recommending gender diversity on boards. • Pay transparency regulations requiring large firms to report gender-disaggregated wage data. • Mentorship programs for mid-career women.	MoICE, Druk Holdings & Investments, Private Sector

6.3. Recommendations for Immediate Action

Based on this analysis, the following actions are recommended as immediate priorities:

1. **Launch a National Dialogue on "Revaluing Work":** Initiate a tripartite discussion (Government, Private Sector, Civil Society) to critically examine why female-dominated sectors command lower wages and to develop a strategy for sectoral upgrading.

2. **Pilot a "Skills Mobility" Program:** Identify women currently in low-wage service roles and provide them with intensive, subsidized training for higher-paying roles in sectors with skill shortages, such as logistics, fintech, or energy.

3. **Initiate a "Gender-Friendly Workplace" Certification Scheme:** Develop and promote a voluntary certification for private companies that adopt policies such as flexi-time, remote work options, and on-site childcare support. This creates a positive incentive for change.

4. **Design an Informal Sector Integration Pilot:** Create a targeted program to register female own-account workers, provide them with business development services, and facilitate their access to social security schemes and government procurement opportunities.

5. **Strengthen the BLMIS for Monitoring:** Mandate and enforce the reporting of gender-disaggregated data on wages and employment type for all registered firms. This will transform the BLMIS from a descriptive tool into a powerful instrument for monitoring equity and evaluating policy impact.

6.4. Conclusion of the Analysis

The findings of this study demonstrate that achieving gender equity in Bhutan's private sector is a complex but necessary undertaking. It is not about privileging one group over another but about building a more efficient, productive, and resilient economy by removing the barriers that prevent half the population from achieving their full economic potential. These barriers are deeply embedded, from the educational choices that create a qualifications mismatch, to the workplace practices that fail to support caregivers. The policies proposed here are not merely social expenditures; they are critical investments in the nation's human capital and future economic prosperity. By dismantling the architecture of segregation- *from the classroom to the boardroom-* Bhutan can unlock new sources of growth and build a more inclusive model of development.

6.5. Limitation

This study is limited to the formal private sector captured by the BLMIS and excludes the civil service, armed forces, and the informal economy.

The cross-sectional nature of the data provides a snapshot in time but cannot definitively establish causality.

While imputation was used to handle missing data, it assumes data is missing at random within subgroups, which may not always be the case.

7. CONCLUSION

This analysis of Bhutan's private sector workforce, drawn from comprehensive BLMIS administrative data, leads to an unambiguous conclusion: gender inequality is a structural feature of the economy, not a temporary or superficial imbalance. The evidence reveals that systematic segregation—beginning with educational choices, and extending through occupation, sector, and employment type—is the primary driver of the significant gender pay gap (15.6%) and representation gap (42% female).

The data debunks the notion that inequality stems simply from individual choice or pay discrimination in identical roles. Instead, it demonstrates a pipeline problem: women are channelled away from high-value fields of study long before they enter the job market, and subsequently into less secure, lower-valued economic activities. The concentration of women in the lowest-paying sectors and in precarious "own account" work, while men dominate higher-paying technical and industrial fields, creates a fundamental divide in economic security and opportunity.

Therefore, the policy response must be equally structural and transformative. Incremental measures are insufficient. Addressing this challenge requires a dedicated national strategy to dismantle these barriers through targeted interventions in educational pipeline, skills training, sectoral re-valuation, the promotion of gender-friendly workplace, and the formalization of precarious work.

Ultimately, achieving gender equity is more than a social goal; it is an economic imperative. Building a private sector that leverages the full talent of both women and men is essential for driving Bhutan's sustainable development, enhancing productivity, and ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are shared equitably across society. This report provides the evidence base; the task now is to act upon it.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Comprehensive Data Tables

Table A1: Full Gender Distribution of the Private Sector Workforce

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	27,376	42.21	42.21
Male	37,488	57.79	100
Total	**64,864**	**100**	

Table A2: Comprehensive Summary Statistics of Monthly Salary by Gender

Gender	Median Salary (Nu.)	Mean Salary (Nu.)	Standard Deviation	Number of Employees
Female	*15000*	*18489.87*	*25891.51*	*27376*
Male	*16538*	*21903.46*	*28306.56*	*37488*
Total	*15000*	*20462.75*	*27365.12*	*64864*

Table A3: Detailed Sectoral Analysis: Salary and Gender Composition

Sector	Median Salary (Nu.)	Mean Salary (Nu.)	Standard Deviation	Number of Employees	% Female
Accommodation and Food Service activities	12000	14858.53	17222.11	10899	60.5%
Activities of households as employers	13000	13355.77	6099.933	52	46.2%
Administrative and support services	20000	29189.05	34259.49	361	46.8%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	13826.25	17522.49	12756.71	1214	35.1%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	12000	13102.8	6260.063	409	46.0%
Construction	18650	23335.24	23247.16	4053	22.6%
Education	22500	27544.12	22237.79	2488	49.1%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	22905	24668.77	10457.67	4370	22.1%
Financial services and insurance	22250	25782.68	16354.84	3450	46.9%
Human health and social work	13000	16576.29	20997.01	238	61.3%
Information and communication services	19585	23487.12	28504.77	2469	38.8%
Manufacturing	14951	18184.14	20233.66	13101	31.1%
Mining and quarrying	15000	18599.53	15675.3	937	15.8%
Other Services	14000	18022.62	16963.99	5042	48.2%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	13825	15802.31	14758.71	1410	38.0%
Public administration and defence; Compulsory social security	10800	13186.42	11587	1099	33.8%

Real estate	16010	20058.22	10245.15	222	49.5%
Transportation and storage	16000	20871.68	27591.15	1535	30.7%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and Remediation Activities	15000	16086.06	10897.74	154	34.4%
Wholesale and retail trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	20000	24953.24	49703.17	11281	52.6%
Total	**15000**	**20458.27**	**27378.08**	**64784**	**42.2%**

Table A4: Detailed Occupational Analysis: Salary by Major Group

Major Occupation Group	Median Salary (Nu.)	Mean Salary (Nu.)	Standard Deviation	Number of Employees
Managers	23112	31882.51	52283.77	11386
Professionals	23977	26393.43	17402.67	9481
Associate Professionals and Technicians	18650	20402.18	12297.28	5748
Clerical Support Workers	14395	15805.48	8696.466	5316
Services and sales workers	12500	16122.85	24091.9	14746
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	12000	12931.33	4953.321	240
Craft and Related Trades Workers	14900	16074.3	14015.64	6059
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	15000	15818.51	7451.885	4256
Elementary Occupations	11473.75	12578.87	7145.586	4620
Total	**15000**	**20665.9**	**27918.25**	**61852**

Table A5: Full Occupational Segregation: Gender Distribution by Major Group

Major Occupation Group	Gender		Total	% of Female
	Female	Male		
Managers	4,943	6,443	11,386	43.4%
Professionals	3,723	5,758	9,481	39.3%
Associate Professionals and Technicians	1,853	3,895	5,748	32.2%
Clerical Support Workers	3,376	1,940	5,316	63.5%
Services and sales workers	8,675	6,071	14,746	58.8%
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers	112	128	240	46.7%
Craft and Related Trades Workers	1,229	4,830	6,059	20.3%
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	354	3,902	4,256	8.3%
Elementary Occupations	2,279	2,341	4,620	49.3%
Missing	832	2,180	3,012	27.6%
Total	**27,376**	**37,488**	**64,864**	**42.2%**

Table A6: Field of Study by Gender

Field of Study	Gender		Total	% of Female
	Female	Male		
Agriculture	17	18	35	48.6%
Arts	3,089	2,008	5,097	60.6%
Business and Finance	330	503	833	39.6%
Commerce	1,095	884	1,979	55.3%
Education	27	23	50	54.0%
Engineering and Technology	162	609	771	21.0%
General	121	225	346	35.0%
Humanities	1	5	6	16.7%
Law	2	3	5	40.0%
Medicine	13	22	35	37.1%
Monastic Study	25	25	50	50.0%
Science	265	474	739	35.9%
Social Sciences	43	46	89	48.3%
Missing	22,186	32,643	54,829	40.5%
Total	**27,376**	**37,488**	**64,864**	**42.2%**

- **Gender Pay Gap:** The difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings. This study calculates both a **median pay gap** (highlighting the typical worker) and a **mean pay gap** (influenced by high earners).
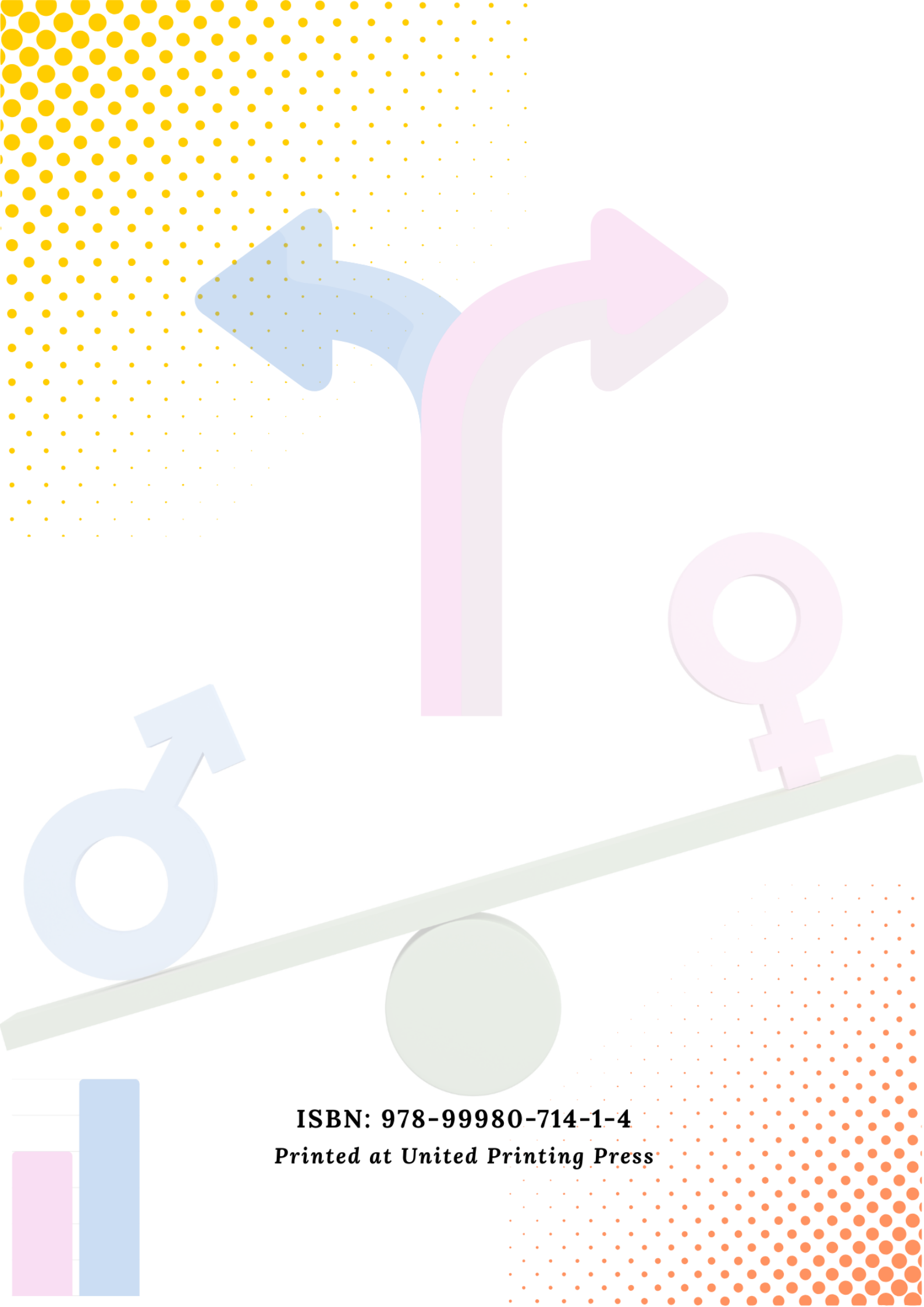
  *Calculation: (Men's Earnings – Women's Earnings) / Men's Earnings * 100*

- **Structural Inequality / Barriers:** Systemic disadvantages embedded in the organization of society, its laws, and its economic and social policies that perpetuate group-based inequality. In this context, it refers to the way the private sector is structured to funnel women and men into different paths with different outcomes.

- **Occupational Segregation ("Glass Walls"):** The phenomenon where women and men are concentrated in different types of jobs and fields of work. For example, women are over-represented in care work and clerical roles, while men are over-represented in engineering and trades.

- **Sectoral Segregation:** The concentration of one gender in specific industries or sectors of the economy (e.g., women in Accommodation & Food Services, men in Construction and Energy).

- **Precarious Employment:** Forms of work characterized by insecurity, low wages, lack of benefits, and unpredictable hours. This includes **own-account work** (self-employed without hired employees), casual, and temporary contracts.

- **Own-Account Worker:** A self-employed person who operates their own business or trade but does not employ any other workers on a continuous basis. This is often informal and vulnerable.

- **Formal Employment / Regular Employment:** Work that is recognized by law, with a formal contract, social security contributions, and legal protections against arbitrary dismissal.

- **BLMIS (Bhutan Labour Market Information System):** A national digital platform managed by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE) to collect, process, and disseminate data on the labour market. It covers formal private sector employment, foreign workers, and job seekers.

- **Imputation:** A statistical method used to handle missing data by replacing missing values with substituted ones (e.g., using the median salary of a specific group to fill in a missing salary for a member of that group).

- **Attrition (in data context):** The loss of data or subjects from a study. In this case, it refers to the 17.6% of records removed from the initial dataset during the data cleaning process.