

Gender Gap in Workforce Participation in West Nusa Tenggara Province

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ABSTRACT

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Gender participation gap in the workforce is influenced by various factors, including income, age, education, marital status, family size, culture, and social norms. In Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), understanding these factors is crucial to addressing gender disparities in employment participation. Despite widespread acknowledgment of cultural and social norms affecting gender roles, their actual impact on workforce participation remains unclear. This study aims to analyze the impact of income, age, education, marital status, family size, culture, and social norms on the gender participation gap in the workforce in NTB. This explanatory research uses a survey sampling method, with 140 respondents. The data is analyzed using multiple linear regression to test and estimate the hypotheses. The hypothesis testing reveals that income significantly affects the gender participation gap in the workforce. However, age, education, marital status, family size, and the cultural and social norm control factors were not found to have a significant impact on the gap in NTB. Culture and social norms, although expected to influence gender roles and household work division, did not significantly contribute to the differences in work hours between men and women. The study concludes that while income plays a significant role in gender workforce participation in NTB, cultural and social norms are not as influential as anticipated. Further research may explore the deeper effects of these norms on gender roles and expectations in the workforce.

INTRODUCTION

The gender gap in workforce participation presents a major challenge for individuals, societies, and economies on a global scale (Akhtar et al., 2023; Bala, 2023; Joshi & Parmar, 2024). Women often face a variety of barriers ranging from cultural and societal expectations to systemic biases that are prevalent in recruitment and promotion processes. Balancing work and family responsibilities, enduring the wage gap, and facing limited access to career advancement opportunities all contribute to continued inequality. Recognizing and understanding these challenges is critical to formulating effective strategies to narrow the gender gap, thereby fostering a more inclusive workforce (Du, 2024; Sil & Lenka, 2025; Singh & Seal, 2025; Smith, 2025).

Examining the gender gap in labor force participation has very important relevance in a contemporary perspective. As society moves towards greater inclusivity and diversity, non-governmental organizations and institutions, companies, and the government as policymakers

increasingly recognize the importance of unlocking the full potential of the workforce. Addressing gender imbalances is not only in line with the principles of social justice, but it also provides tangible benefits to organizations and companies, including increased innovation, productivity, and worker satisfaction.

The labor force participation rate is a measure of the percentage of the total working-age population engaged in economic activities, whether they are working or actively looking for work. This concept is often used in labor market and economic analysis to understand the extent to which a country's or region's labor force is engaged in economic activities. Decent work is a key aspect in efforts to alleviate poverty, reduce unemployment, and serves as one of the indicators of sustainable development progress.

Based on BPS 2023 (www.bps.go.id) data, the labor force participation rate (TPAK) in Indonesia was 68.63 percent in 2022. This figure increased by 0.83 percent compared to the previous period, which was 67.8 percent in 2021. If TPAK is disaggregated by gender, men dominate the labor force in 2022 at 83.87 percent, while women reach only 53.41 percent. In addition, TPAK by education level shows that participation in the labor market generally increases with higher levels of education. College graduates have the highest labor force participation rate in 2022 at 82.28 percent. Although still the highest group, this figure decreased slightly from the previous year, which reached 82.67 percent in 2021, while the lowest TPAK is among junior high school graduates, at 56.82 percent.

The next factual picture is related to the labor force participation rate (TPAK) by district/city in West Nusa Tenggara Province by gender, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 TPAK of West Nusa Tenggara Province by Regency/City and Gender (Percent)

No	Kabupaten/Kota	TPAK (%)	
		Laki	Women
1	Bima	82,73	63,75
2	Dompu	84,82	55,88
3	West Lombok	83,70	60,02
4	Lombok Tengah	85,10	62,59
5	East Lombok	82,81	57,50
6	North Lombok	87,44	65,64
7	Sumbawa	86,87	55,88
8	Sumbawa Barat	88,51	62,14
9	Bima City	79,60	60,14
10	Mataram City	74,85	51,60
11	Nusa Tenggara Barat	83,27	59,16
No	Kabupaten/Kota	TPAK (%)	

Based on the table above, it can be explained that the average male labor force participation rate (*Tingkat Partisipasi Angkatan Kerja* [TPAK]) in Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) Province is 83.61%, while the average female TPAK is 59.48%; thus, the gap between men and women is 24.13 percentage points. The relatively low participation of women in the labor market suggests that discrimination exists between male and female workers.

Reducing the gender gap in labor force participation (PAK) is a priority goal in many countries, including Indonesia in general and NTB Province in particular. In fact, this became

a specific target among G20 countries following the 2014 commitment to reduce the gender gap in PAK by 25% by 2025 (OECD-ILO, 2021). In many countries, the narrowing of this gap is primarily driven by increased participation among women rather than decreased participation among men. This reflects a range of developments, including early retirement reforms and increases in the retirement age (especially for women), greater investment in women's education, professional advancement, declining fertility rates, increased demand for women's labor in sectors such as health care, and policies designed to maintain women's attachment to the labor market, such as strengthened parental leave provisions and childcare subsidies (Pfau-Effinger, 2023; OECD, 2019).

In general, the gap between women and men in NTB Province reflects differences in the opportunities and challenges faced by the two groups. Some of the factors affecting the gap in labor force participation between women and men include occupation or field of work (Himanshu, 2019); wages or income (Oreffice, 2014; Himanshu, 2019; Anna Stansbury et al., 2023); education (Anderson and Kohler, 2013; Lee, Calonge, and Hultberg, 2019; Kim, Tertilt, and Yum, 2021; Alison Preston, 2023); age and marital status (Goldin, 2014; Singh, 2022); number of family members; social norms (Alesina et al., 2013; Farr & Vella, 2013; Fernández, 2013; Fernandez and Fogli, 2009; Bertrand et al., 2015); cultural and traditional factors, in which a greater domestic workload for women can become a barrier to full-time labor force participation (Oreffice, 2014; Fernández & Fogli, 2009; Fernández, 2011); discrimination and inequality, particularly gender discrimination (Field et al., 2016); and childcare and caregiving responsibilities.

Current understanding identifies several determining factors influencing women's PAK, providing a multifaceted picture that includes labor market characteristics (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2016; Attanasio et al., 2008), the availability of childcare facilities (Attanasio et al., 2008; Carta and Rizzica, 2018), and generally improved maternal health conditions (Albanesi and Olivetti, 2016). However, these factors provide only a partial explanation, given that the literature indicates women's decisions not to work are often related to household and childcare responsibilities. This means that if a woman does not conform to prevailing "social norms," she may bear the burden of social stigma from society (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000) or even feelings of guilt within herself (Barigozzi et al., 2018).

This research provides additional support for existing studies on gender role attitudes and labor supply. The first contribution lies in the use of a representative sample of adult workers that includes both men and women. Some existing studies have focused on specific groups, such as married couples or mothers (Cavapozzi et al., 2021; Fernández et al., 2004; Khoudja and Fleischmann, 2018), girls and boys in explaining intergenerational impacts (Johnston et al., 2014), or second-generation women (Blau et al., 2013). Relatively few labor supply studies have included men in their analyses, except for studies by Fortin (2005) and Lietzmann and Frodermann (2021).

The problems raised in this study are based on the results of an analysis showing a wide gender gap in fixed-wage or salaried employment that is significantly biased against women. It is also evident that many young women who are married by the age of 22 are involved in entrepreneurial activities, family economic activities, or unpaid work (Singh, 2022). Another finding revealed that women's participation in paid employment remained significantly higher than that of men among unmarried young adults. Regarding educational attainment, the

findings have important policy implications because improving the quality of education at both the primary and secondary levels, as well as postponing the age of marriage and facilitating transitions to vocational or tertiary education, can reduce the gender gap in wage or salaried employment.

Educational factors, particularly secondary and higher education, urban residence, stronger reading skills at the age of eight, and frequent computer use, have significant and positive effects on reducing gender gaps. Meanwhile, marital status is a negative and significant factor, indicating that it is one of the largest contributors to the gender gap in labor force participation rates. It has further been revealed that marriage is one of the most important life-cycle events and has a significant impact on labor force participation (Raveendran, 2016).

The urgency of this research is underscored by NTB's status as a priority region for poverty alleviation and women's empowerment under Indonesia's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commitments. SDG Target 5.5 specifically calls for ensuring women's full and effective participation in economic decision-making at all levels. Additionally, the G20 commitment made in 2014 aims to reduce the gender gap in labor force participation by 25% by 2025 (OECD-ILO, 2021). Without region-specific evidence, policymakers cannot design targeted interventions that address the actual drivers of gender disparity within NTB's unique sociocultural context. The persistence of a 24% participation gap represents not only a social injustice but also a substantial economic loss for both the province and the nation.

The initial objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the gender gap in PAK, offering valuable insights for academics, policymakers, and business leaders. By identifying existing problems, solutions can be directed toward removing barriers and creating an environment in which everyone, regardless of gender, can actively participate and thrive in the workforce.

Based on the integration of various theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, this study aims to provide a better understanding of the factors affecting the gender gap in labor force participation. In addition, this research seeks to contribute insights that can inform policies and practices, thereby encouraging a fairer and more efficient labor market. This study addresses the research question of whether the gender gap in labor force participation between men and women in NTB Province is influenced by income, age, education, marital status, number of family members, and control variables such as cultural factors and social norms.

METHOD

The approach used in this study is a quantitative approach, using an explanatory type of research. The data collection method is a survey sample. With gender considerations (male and female workers) in 10 city districts in NTB Province, from the existing population, the target sample of respondents (quota sampling) is 140 respondents. The method to estimate and test the hypothesis is to use the Multiple Linear Regression model based on the main variables and control variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of estimating and testing the influence hypothesis of X1 (income), X2 (age), X3 (education), X4 (marital status), and X5 (number of family members), cultural factor control variables (C1), and social norms (C2) both partially and simultaneously on the gender

gap of labor force participation measured by the gap in the outpouring of working time between men and women, the results of multiple linear regression estimation with the OLS method are presented in the following table.

Table 2 Multiple Linear Regression Estimation Results of Participation Gender Gap Labor Force (with Control Variables C1 and C2)

Dependent Variable: GAP				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.033961	0.006378	5.324824	0.0000
X1 (Income)	1.08E-09	3.13E-10	3.436735	0.0008
X2 (Age)	-2.85E-05	8.67E-05	-0.328795	0.7428
X3 (Education)	0.000503	0.000383	1.311255	0.1920
X4 (Marital status)	-0.001601	0.001994	-0.802911	0.4235
X5 (Number of Family Members)	-0.000631	0.000421	-1.497694	0.1366
C1 (Cultural Factors)	0.000125	0.001337	0.093723	0.9255
C2 (Social Norms)	-0.000411	0.001356	-0.302886	0.7625
R-squared	0.129090	F-statistic		2.795082
Adjusted R-squared	0.082905	Prob(F-statistic)		0.009595
		Durbin-Watson stat		2.292852

The effect of income on the gender gap in labor force participation.

The results of the hypothesis testing concluded that the effect of income on the gender gap in labor force participation is evident (the hypothesis is accepted). This research supports the research conducted by Goldin, C. (2014); Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. (2017). The effect of income on working time can be explained that a person's income tends to affect the amount of time they devote to working, however, the effect can differ between men and women. Men with higher incomes often work longer, in part due to perceptions and social pressures that consider them to be the primary breadwinners.

Work-life balance for women means that women with higher incomes may be more likely to seek a balance between work and personal life, especially if they have other responsibilities such as housework or childcare. As a result, women may choose to work part-time or more flexible work arrangements, leading to lower work hours than men.

Based on another perspective, gender stereotypes often cause differences in the amount of work time. Men are more often in more time-consuming work sectors, such as managerial or professional positions. In contrast, women often work in sectors that are more flexible but may have lower pay, which contributes to the gender wage gap.

The influence of household income means that when combined household income increases (for example, when both husband and wife are working), some women may reduce their working hours to manage household or care for children, while men often stay on full or longer hours. Some research results show that the influence of income on working hours is not always linear. At higher income levels, both men and women tend to lower their hours because they have the ability to prioritize leisure or other activities outside of work.

Effect of age on gender gap labour force participation gap

The results of hypothesis testing concluded that the effect of age on the gender gap in labor force participation is not proven (Hypothesis rejected). This study does not support the

research conducted by Goldin, C. (2014); Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz (2010), and Glauber (2013). Which in essence reveals that age and life cycle influence work choices between men and women, especially related to working hours and income gaps.

Further disclosures based on the findings of this study are as follows. Men in their early career stages (their 20s to early 30s), tend to allocate more time to work because they often pursue opportunities to move up the ranks and increase their income. At this age, men's work time is generally higher than that of women. Women of the same age may allocate the same or slightly less working hours than men, but this depends on family decisions, such as marriage and the birth of children. Research suggests that women who plan to have children may start reducing their working hours or opting for more flexible jobs, thus creating a gap in working hours from an early age.

The gap in working time is increasing in the 30s to 40s, the gap in working time between men and women is often wider. The main reason is childcare and other household responsibilities, which are usually carried out more by women. As a result, women are more likely to opt for part-time jobs, time off, or flexible work arrangements. At this age, men are often in a high stage of productivity and career achievement, which leads to longer working hours. Gaps in working time are often most significant at this age stage.

Reducing the work time gap when reaching the age of 50 and beyond, the gap in working time between men and women tends to start decreasing. At this stage, many women have returned to full-time work after childcare responsibilities have diminished. Additionally, some men may begin to reduce their hours as they prepare for retirement. Influence on career advancement Some studies show that, in old age, women are more likely to participate in part-time work, while men are still more likely to remain in full-time employment, although their working hours are also starting to decline.

The influence of education on the gender gap in labor force participation

The results of the hypothesis testing concluded that the influence of education on the gender gap in labor force participation is unproven (hypothesis rejected). The results of this study do not support the results of the research conducted by Goldin, C. (2006); Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. (2017); Mandel, Hadas, and Moshe Semyonov (2006). Which concludes that education has changed women's labor force participation and their choices regarding the outpouring of work time

The argument that can be expressed is that education not only determines access to job opportunities, but also influences individual choices in terms of the amount of time spent working. Educational differences between men and women can affect their working time gap in a variety of ways. Men and women with higher education mean that highly educated individuals, both male and female, tend to have higher participation in the workforce and work in jobs that require specific skills. However, although women with higher education also have high participation rates, their outpouring of work time is often affected by responsibilities outside of work, such as childcare or housework, resulting in a gap in working time with men.

Another argument related to the effect of "double burden" on educated women can be explained that although women with higher education are more likely to work full-time, they often face a double burden of having to balance professional work and domestic responsibilities. This often causes women to reduce their working hours compared to men at the same level of education.

Differences in the selection of job sectors, where men with higher education are more likely to work in sectors such as engineering, management, or finance, which often require long hours. In contrast, women with higher education are more likely to choose sectors such as education or health, which offer more flexibility and may not require long working hours, reducing the gap in working hours.

Another dimension is the influence of education related to part-time employment opportunities, where women with lower education tend to work in low-wage jobs or work part-time due to limitations in access to higher-wage jobs or greater flexibility. The influence of education on awareness and negotiation of work arrangements, meaning that women with higher education tend to be more aware of their rights in the workplace and better at negotiating flexible work arrangements, such as part-time or remote work. While this can help reduce the participation gap, it is often lower in terms of hours of work compared to men. Whereas in professional work environments, although men and women with higher education start their careers with similar outpouring of work time, women are more likely to reduce their hours after having children, while men are more likely to maintain or even increase their hours.

The effect of marital status on the gender gap in labor force participation

The results of this study reveal that the influence of marital status on the gender gap in labor force participation is unproven (hypothesis rejected). The results of this study do not support the results of the study revealed by (Raveendran, 2016), which revealed that marital status is a negative and significant factor, meaning that marital status is the largest contributor to the gender gap in the level of work participation. It was further revealed that marriage is one of the most important life-cycle events and has a significant impact on labor force participation.

The argument can then be explained that marital status plays an important role in determining the gender gap in labor force participation. When individuals are married or living in partnerships, household responsibilities and childcare are often divided unevenly, which impacts working hours and participation in the labor market. The phenomenon is that married men often tend to increase their work time. It is related to traditional social norms and gender roles, where men are seen as the main breadwinners of the family. Studies show that married men tend to work longer hours than their unmarried counterparts. In contrast, married women often reduce their working hours, especially if they have children. Household responsibilities and childcare roles are often directed more towards women, which leads them to choose part-time or flexible work. This widens the gap in working time between men and women in households.

The influence of children and household responsibilities, childcare as the main factor: The presence of children in the household significantly affects the outpouring of work time, especially for women. Women often adjust their working hours to meet parenting responsibilities, which is rare for men. Women who are married and have young children tend to work fewer hours compared to women who are unmarried or childless.

The effect of reduced working hours after marriage or childbirth: Some studies show that women often significantly reduce their working hours after marriage or childbirth, while men are more likely to increase or maintain their working hours, reflecting the influence of "premium fatherhood."

Married men choose jobs with longer hours or more overtime opportunities because of additional financial incentives and responsibilities as the primary breadwinner. This is in

contrast to women who may prefer jobs with flexibility of time or distance. On the other hand, married women, especially those with children, often choose part-time jobs to balance household responsibilities. This creates a significant work time gap compared to men who tend to work full-time.

Related to the division of labor in married households is often influenced by the negotiation of gender roles and the economic status of the couple. In many cases, even though both partners work, women reduce their hours more than men. Men's economic status and social pressure to become the main breadwinner often make men maintain longer working hours.

The effect of the number of family members on the gender gap in labor force participation

The description in the previous explanation concluded that the results of testing the hypothesis of the influence of the number of family members on the gender gap in labor force participation were not proven (the hypothesis was rejected). The results of this study are supported by the results of research revealed by Raley, Sara, Bianchi, Suzanne M., and Wang, Wendy (2012), in their article revealing that the increase in the number of children often causes women to reduce their working hours to accommodate parenting responsibilities, while this is less true for men.

The argument that can be expressed is that the number of family members (e.g., the number of children or family members who need care) can affect the gap in working time between men and women. The presence of children and other caregiving responsibilities in the family often leads to changes in working hours, especially among women, due to the greater parenting roles they typically carry.

It can further be explained that men in households with children tend to maintain or even increase their working hours, mainly due to their social role as the main breadwinners. In situations like these, men often face so-called "premium fatherhood," where they are more likely to work longer hours and pursue increased income to support the family.

On the other hand, women with a larger number of children often reduce their working hours. Research shows that women, especially those with more than one child, tend to switch to part-time jobs or reduce working hours to allocate more time to parenting and housework. As a result, the gap in working time between men and women increases with the increase in the number of children.

Women are more likely to be primary caregivers when families have members who need special care (e.g., elderly parents or family members with special needs), women are more likely to reduce their working hours to accommodate these caregiver roles. This creates a wider working time gap between men and women. Whereas men although they may also be involved in parenting responsibilities, are more likely to maintain their full working hours. This is due to social perception and pressure to remain the main breadwinner, even when there are family members in need of care.

Related to the preference for part-time working hours, women with large families tend to prefer jobs that offer flexibility, such as part-time work, thus allowing them to balance work and household responsibilities. This contributes to a larger working time gap between men and women. While the differences in career choices and job sectors that men and women also tend to choose jobs in different sectors depend on the size of the family. Men tend to stay in sectors

with longer working hours and higher salaries, while women may choose jobs in more flexible sectors more often.

The influence of cultural factors and social norms as control variables on gender gaps in labor force participation

The results of testing the hypothesis of the influence of social factors and social norms on the gender gap in labor force participation were not proven (hypothesis rejected). The results of this study do not support the results of the research revealed by Blau, Francine D., and Kahn, Lawrence M. (2013), who concluded that social and cultural norms influence women's labor force participation and work time choices, as well as how cultural differences between countries affect the gap in working time.

The argument that can be expressed is that cultural factors and social norms play an important role as control variables in influencing the gap in working time between men and women. Culture and social norms influence gender roles, the division of labor in households, and social expectations related to work and family, all of which contribute to the difference in the amount of working time between men and women.

The role of culture in shaping the division of labor based on gender is related to traditional gender norms and social norms towards women. In many cultures, traditional gender norms place men as the main breadwinners and women as the main caregivers in the family. This norm causes men to tend to have longer working hours, while women more often reduce their working hours to manage household and childcare tasks. Whereas in cultures with more conservative norms, there tends to be a larger gap in working time between men and women because women are more likely to face social pressure to prioritize household and family responsibilities over their careers.

The control of social norms and work preferences can be revealed that women in the job market placing women as the primary caregivers can lead them to choose jobs with higher flexibility or shorter working hours, which can adjust to household responsibilities. In countries or societies with more progressive norms, women may be more likely to participate in full-time jobs or pursue more demanding careers. Conversely, in social norms tend to encourage men to work longer hours and become the main breadwinners, thus encouraging men to stay in jobs with long working hours and less flexibility. The explanation for this argument is that it can strengthen the gap in working time based on gender.

The influence of cultural context on work policies and practices is that in countries with strong family policies, such as paid parental leave or childcare support, the gap in working time between men and women tends to be smaller. This is because these social norms and policies allow men to participate more actively in childcare. Whereas in countries with intense work cultures, such as Japan or South Korea, expectations of working overtime and a high commitment to work are more often imposed on men, while women may be more limited due to the pressure to fulfill traditional household roles.

CONCLUSION

The results of the partial hypothesis test revealed that only income variables significantly affected the gender gap in labor force participation in West Nusa Tenggara Province, while age, education, marital status, number of family members, and the control variables of cultural factors and social norms were not proven to have a significant effect. These findings indicate

that income disparities remain the primary determinant of differences in labor force participation between men and women in the province. Although cultural factors and social norms were expected to influence gender roles, household division of labor, and social expectations related to work and family responsibilities, their effects were not statistically significant in this study. Future research is therefore recommended to explore these sociocultural dimensions using broader indicators, qualitative approaches, or longitudinal data in order to better capture the complex relationship between cultural norms, gender roles, and labor force participation.

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