

**A STUDY ON ROLE OF ENFORCING MINIMUM WAGE POLICY IN
PROMOTING EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AN ECONOMY: A CASE OF
INDIAN ECONOMY**

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Abstract

Purpose: The research has the key purpose of examining minimum wage policy of India, as assess its role in promoting equality and social justice in India, wherein, a focus on examining the current state, issues and ways to overcome issues and ensuring effective enforcement has been made.

Methodology: In order to examine the research purpose, an empirical inquiry, utilising a semi-structured method to collect qualitative data has been conducted. The sample for the semi-structured interview comprised 6 Indian economic experts who are selected using the purposive sampling technique. The gathered views of the interviewees are analysed using the thematic analysis technique.

Findings: Based on the evidence gained from India, the enactment of minimum wage policy involving several equality issues/concerns, concerning regional disparity, complex mechanism, diversely varied minimum wage rates, poor rate of compliance, low minimum wage rate, gender-based disparity, no clear definition of methods and urban-rural gaps. In this, the enforcement of minimum wage policy is examined to play a pivotal role in promoting equality and social justice in India by improvising welfare of low-paid workers, reducing pay gaps, unduly low pay issues, reducing regional disparity, poverty, uplifting poor and disadvantaged segment of society and reducing exploitation of labour.

Keywords: Minimum Wage Policy, Equality, Social Justice, India

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	9
1.1 Background Context.....	9
1.2 Research Problem.....	10
1.3 Research Motivation/Rationale	11
1.4 Research Aim	11
1.5 Research Significance	12
1.6 Organisation of Research	13
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Income Inequality and Equality in India.....	15
2.3 Current State and Relevance of Minimum Wage Policy in India.....	17
2.4 Issues Concerning Equality in the Effective Implementation of Minimum Wage Policy in India.....	19
2.5 Relevance of Enforcing Minimum Wage Policy in Fostering Equality, Combating Inequality and Social Justice in India.....	21
2.6 Strategic Measures to foster the Enforcement of Minimum Wage Policy in the economy	22
2.7 Conceptual Framework	25
2.8 Summary and Gaps in the Literature.....	25
Chapter 3: Research Questions and Objectives	27
3.1 Research Questions	27
3.2 Research Objectives	27
3.3 Research Propositions	28
Chapter 4: Methodology	29

4.1 Introduction	29
4.2 Research Methods	30
4.3 Research Philosophy	31
4.4 Research Design.....	32
4.5 Research Approach	32
4.6 Data Collection Method	33
4.7 Sample Size and Sampling Technique.....	34
4.8 Data Analysis Strategy	35
4.9 Research Ethics	36
4.10 Research Limitations.....	37
4.11 Summary	37
Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings.....	39
5.1 Introduction	39
5.2 Thematic Analysis.....	39
5.3 Summary	48
Chapter 6: Discussion	50
6.1 Introduction	50
6.2 Discussion	50
6.3 Summary	53
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations.....	55
7.1 Conclusion.....	55
7.2 Recommendations	57
7.3 Future Research Work.....	59
References.....	60
Appendices.....	67

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire	67
Appendix 2: Codes for Participants	67

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Average real wage index of Emerging G20 Economies, 2008-2019	18
Figure 2: Rate of Non-compliance of Minimum Wage Policy in India by different classes of workers 2009-2010	24
Figure 3: Conceptual Framework	25

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background Context

In the Indian economy, economic reforms play a crucial role in supporting the economic growth of the country, as evident in the last two decades. Economic reforms have reduced the scale of poverty and transformed the patterns of employment with escalating job opportunities in different sectors and a fall in the proportion of agriculture employment. However, the Indian labour market is still featured by extensive levels of informality and segmentation. Out of total employed people in 2011-2012, nearly 206 million individuals were self-employed while 195 million falls in the category of wage earners. Additionally, 121 million were working in casual jobs. It is found that the employment ratio in the organised sector of India has increased, but even in this particular segment most of the jobs are informal and casual in nature. The labour participation rate in the country decreased further recently because of Covid-19, dropping to approx 35 per cent in April 2020 as many individuals lost their jobs in both organised and unorganised sector further augmenting the issue of inequality (Statista, 2020). Wage inequality and unreasonable pay are the adverse challenges for India which must be effectively addressed to attain a decent work environment and assure inclusive growth goals (International Labour Organisation, 2018).

Social justice is the foundation of socialistic economic systems representing a broad concept favouring equal rights in a country by introducing various initiatives for citizens wherein minimum wage policy is a crucial one to assure reasonable pay is given to every individual doing job of same value. Equality depicts the level playing field wherein every individual gets same access to economic wealth and via minimum wage policy countries worldwide try to attain equality so that economic benefits are available to all. The research intends to study the contribution of minimum wage policy in India in respect to strengthening equality and justice in Indian economy (Kauder and Potrafke, 2015).

The Minimum Wages Act was implemented in the country in 1948 and it is one of the most prominent protections extended to casual, as well as regular workers in unorganised and organised segments of the economy. However, still, challenges are encountered in regard to upholding equality in the community depicting issues concerning the provision of minimum wages (International Labour Organisation, 2018). It is also perceived that the minimum wage policy is complicated whereby the rates are complicated as rates which are fixed by the state governments in regard to scheduled employment are ascertain arbitrarily without involving the opinion of social partners (International Labour Organisation, 2019). In this relation, the prime focus of the presented study is to conduct a detailed search over the relevance of minimum wage policy in India with respect to building equality and promoting social justice. The study intends to evaluate the effectiveness of implied minimum wage policy in the nation, investigating limiting factors and finding adequate interventions to foster enforcement in a way that drives equality and justice.

1.2 Research Problem

It is well-known fact that serious wages problem is common in India and as per a periodic labour survey 2017- 2018, 45 per cent of the regular workers depicting people who pertain to the relatively formal and stable sector; are paid less than fixed minimum wage (Khan, 2018). In addition to this, the absence of consensus, lack of binding legitimate procedures concerning the established methodology and high incidence of non-adherence with the minimum wage criteria signified by the government in different industries are the critical issues obstructing equality in the country. India economic growth even after accelerating since the start of the 1990s has failed to resolve rising inequality, even though it managed to reduce poverty incidence to a significant extent. A key difficult regarding the usage of minimum wage standard as the tool of increasing the income of people earning a low wage is the prevalence of considerable heterogeneity in the labour quality; as apparent in the case of the Indian economy.

Herein defining minimum wages at certainly high levels; results in substitution of quality labour force thereby hurting the deprived sections of the workgroups for who the measure is devised to help. The complexity in legal enforcement to numerous domains of the informal sector is expected to accentuate the problem further (Mazundar, 2016).

1.3 Research Motivation/Rationale

Limited uniformity of aspects related to minimum wages which are predominantly applicable to every sector belonging to the Indian economy is the key motivation to pursue a detailed investigation on this issue hindering justice in the country. The minimum wage policy was issued to assure harmony in the compensation of several sectors and occupations driving the economy, however, differences are clearly noticeable in the wage norm of different states for the same sector and occupation which is implicitly causing inequality (Srija, 2014; Rani, 2017). Even after growing income differences have not been accommodated in India and this is mainly because the growth process in the country has resulted in limited absorption of labour in well paid formal sector of the job market; outside agriculture (Mazundar, 2016). Recognising such issues and understanding the need for proposing influential solutions to resolve them, the research intends to conduct a comprehensive study on minimum wage policy and lacking aspects making the policy less effective in controlling inequality and raising social justice. The research by generate evidence surrounding the problem context and exploring dominant reasons contributing to the issue will generate useful strategies which can be embraced by the government of India to combat the related challenges and assure proper implementation of the minimum wage policy.

1.4 Research Aim

The primary aim of the presented research study is to examine the relevance of enforcing minimum wage policy in promoting equality and social justice in an economy, with the significant emphasis on the Indian Economy, which is chosen as the research setting. In

order to achieve the aim, the current study focuses on examining the effectiveness of the minimum wage policy in India and explores the reasons and issues in the robust implementation of the policy.

1.5 Research Significance

The economic growth journey of India in the post-reform decade is characterised by rising inequality followed by considerable control on the prevalence of poverty. This is clearly apparent in the altering pattern of dissemination of average per capita income among all households (Sanga and Shaban, 2017). Inequality in terms of household welfare as depicted by the average per capita households' expenditure is clearly showcased by the table below for 1983, 1983-1994 and 2004-2005. In this regard, inequality means unequal distribution of opportunities, as well as income in society and this is a area of concern for almost every country due to which some people are trapped in poverty with limited opportunity to move up in social ladder (Kauder and Potrafke, 2015). It is very clear that inequality triggered substantially in India in the post-reform years, and the inequality was excessively pronounced in the urban regions. For the latest decades, every measure reveals that inequality expanded more in urban regions and although the degree of the rise was higher in the measures which entitle higher weight to higher incomes, GE(0) index also reflecting a substantial hike. In this context, GE(0) index refers to a measure of income inequality which is obtained from information theory as a means of redundancy in data. It is examined that the issue of low earnings in India is acute with a significant ratio composition of the non-agricultural workforce segment being employed in the informal sector (Mazundar, 2016).

Outlining such issues existing in the country for many years even after the introduction of economic reforms to improve the scenario has driven the research interest in this particular field. The research is likely to generate useful information about the prime reasons responsible for the inadequate impacts of minimum wage policy in comparison to the vision with which it

was introduced. It will help in finding the areas of improvement and propose suggestions to pursue improvements in lacking areas for supporting effective enforcement to clear challenges in the path of equality in India. Apart from this, the research will be useful to future scholars holding an interest in similar problem and academicians as well.

1.6 Organisation of Research

In order to systematically structure the detailed research project, the research has been divided into the below-listed chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the basic aid of the research entailing background detail, the rationale for the research and research significance. The chapter also enlists the core aim of the research project for informing readers about the ultimate motive which will be accomplished by the end of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter covers a review of subject-specific textbooks, scholarly papers, online articles and authentic reports to study the problem context which is issues in effective implementation of minimum wage policy in the Indian economy to expand knowledge about the phenomenon being focused on.

Chapter 3: Research Questions and Objectives

This particular chapter illustrates research questions, objectives and propositions in alignment with the defined focal point.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The chapter defines the methodological choices, tools and approach applied to the study with proper justification for the selection.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

This is a central chapter of the research centred on analysing the information gathered in relation to the research topic by applying the most suited analysis method.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The findings derived in the last chapter are discussed in the light of supporting literature to draw valid outcomes concerning key research purpose.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study are succinctly illustrated in this chapter in a precise way in context to research objectives and a valuable set of recommendations are proposed to promote compliance with minimum wages in India.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Across the world, the determination of the minimum wage rate is a crucial decision and powerful tool to facilitate decent goals of work, alleviate poverty and strengthening social protection floors. Wide popularity has been gauged by the minimum wage policy among the public and policymakers, due to which, legislating the wages floor is examined as an attractive way for reducing inequality and social justice (Soares, 2018; Rani, Belser and Ranjbar, 2013). In this context, the research aims at examining minimum wage policy with specific reference to India to explore its role in promoting equality aspects and social justice dimensions in the economy. For this, the chapter intends to create a robust theoretical base of knowledge on the topic, by exploring and reviewing the past evidence gathered on the context to identify gaps in the existing database, which the current research aims to fill. The chapter provides a detailed review of the authors around several themes, including income inequality and equality in India, state and relevance of minimum wage policy in India, issues concerning social justice and equality in the robust implementation of policy of minimum wage in India and relevance of enforcing minimum wage policy in India. A review of strategic measures that can be used to foster the minimum wage policy enforcement in the economy is also made in the chapter.

2.2 Income Inequality and Equality in India

A study organised by Nath (2015), focused on deeply studying the issue of rising economic inequality in India and proposing valuable policy propositions for this engraved problem of the Indian society. Secondary research has been performed in the research for discovering the key reason behind expanding income inequality in the country during the post-globalisation era and exploring vital options for bridging the gap between deprived and wealthy people. It is found that in India delineations between the economic mechanisms are eventually fading and the challenge pertaining to distributive justice is becoming an avoided problem. The

globalisation process has further escalated income inequality to the next level (Nath, 2015). The national wealth of the Indian economy has risen steadily in the past two decades, however at the same context; inequality between poor and rich and the gap between urban and rural population has widened. The income inequality issue among the Indian states has become a prominent topic of discussion and this is evident from the variance in median income of Odhisa and North Eastern States. The average income of Odhisa is € 103.45 per annum while that of other North Eastern States is € 353.29 per annum which clearly showcases a huge difference (Nath, 2015).

In a similar context, as per the perspective of Dev (2018), rising inequality is likely to generate social costs and gradually result in hampered economic growth apart from the basic dimension of equality. Labour market inequalities are significant across the world and mostly inequality issues are related to labour market processes, structures, results and mechanism are some are impacted by labour market forces and authorities. It is explored that because of globalisation, the trend of informal economic relation has become extensively prevalent in India wherein informal employment entails road-side vending, contractual works and home-based jobs. It is vital to notice that a positive correlation exists between an increase in informal jobs and higher economic inequality and the key reasons behind rising up-surge in income inequality because of soaring informal jobs are low wage in such jobs, informal jobs are not secured in nature and such jobs are not supportive in accumulation of talents and career growth (Dev, 2018).

Therefore, it is examined the engraved issue of inequality in the Indian economy is considerably associated with the accelerating incidence of informal jobs in the country which are neither stable nor associated with reasonable pay. This problem is creating a massive gap between the wealthy and poor people depicting the need for certain amendments in the wage policy to combat these critical challenges from the economy.

2.3 Current State and Relevance of Minimum Wage Policy in India

International Labour Organisation (2014) has demarcated minimum wages as the amount paid as minimum remuneration to the worker by the employer for the undertaken work in a definitive period, and cannot be reduced via the collective agreement or through the individual contract (International Labour Organisation, 2014). In this regard, as per the report published by Wolfson (2019), India is among the first developing countries that have implemented a minimum wage policy, and in the labour legislation, the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 has become a vital piece of legislation, setting the context for the government to fix down minimum wages for a range of scheduled employments. The report highlighted that over the last 70 years, the system of the minimum wage has expanded its coverage, incorporated distinct scheduled employments aspects across states that led to enforce the response of wages to the minimum wages (Wolfson, 2019). In arguing of the views, India Briefing (2020) has reported the current state of the minimum wage in India, highlighting that until 2019 August, the Minimum Wages Act 1948 regulated the purview of minimum wages, but it was changed after passing of the Code on Wages Act 2019 by the parliament. The new code has replaced down four labour regulations, including the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, Payment of Wages Act, 1936 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. Additionally, the code reviewed to prohibits strictly employers from paying less to workers than the stipulated minimum wage. India is examined to offer a competitive wage in Asia by setting the national-level minimum wage around at INR 176 (USD\$ 2.80) per day as a national-floor level wage. This wage rate is claimed to vary according to geographical areas, skill-level, industry, and occupation (India Briefing, 2020).

Further on the current state and relevance, International Labour Organization (2020) has highlighted that prior to the pandemic, the real wages and average real wage index have increased substantially in Asia and Pacific regions, mainly India during 2008-2019 (See Figure

1). However, the Covid-19 crisis has produced an adverse impact on the wage, as in India, a wage cut by 3.6% is evidenced in the formal workers' wages, while informal workers are examined as experiencing a much steep fall of 22.6% in the wages. On the other hand, the local government of India in some states is examined to increase the minimum wage, along with making several irregular adjustments. In this regard, the crucial role of the reforms made by the Code on Wages Act 2019 is examined in India. The reforms extended the coverage of minimum wage via a universal national 'floor wage' system and have reduced down the number of rates to a maximum of 12 rates per state and a minimum of four is established (International Labour Organization, 2020). In this way, the crucial role of the current reform in the minimum wage setting is examined in India for establishing a more efficient and dynamic wage-setting process. PDS Legal (2019) also claimed that in India, the enactment of the code is unifying the wages definition, that is a pivotal step towards providing greater clarity and balancing the interests of employees, as well as employers (PDS Legal, 2019).

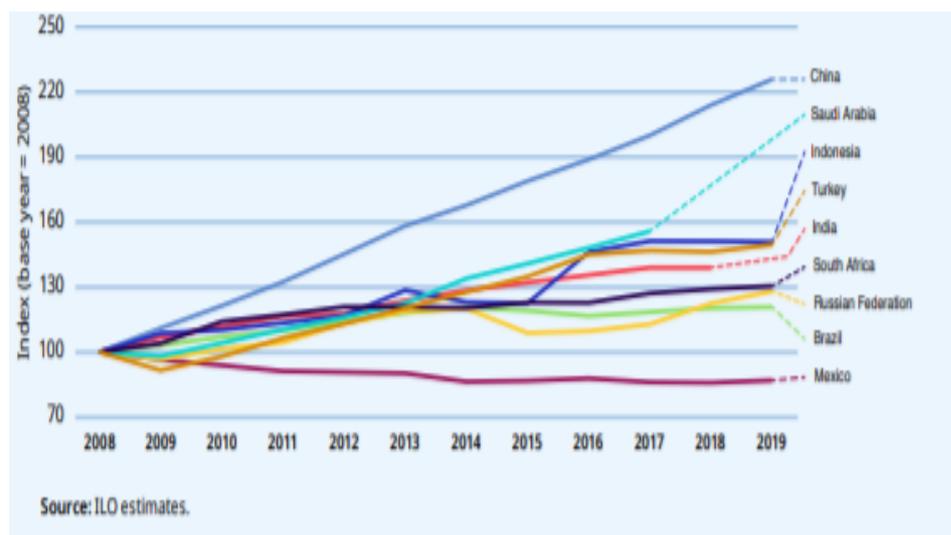


Figure 1: Average real wage index of Emerging G20 Economies, 2008-2019

Source: [International Labour Organization, 2020]

2.4 Issues Concerning Equality in the Effective Implementation of Minimum Wage Policy in India

A report produced by International Labour Organisation (2018a) has characterised the Indian Labour market with a high level of informality and segmentation, wherein, low pay and wage inequality has remained a key threat to India's goal of attaining inclusive growth and decent working conditions. An estimate made in this regard revealed that average daily wages become almost double between 1993-94 and 2011-12, increased more rapidly in the rural areas in comparison to urban, and for casual workers in place of regular workers. The prevalence of gender wage gap is another key issue evident in the minimum wage policy of the country. International Labour Organization (2018) has also highlighted that in India, there prevails more than 1500 schedules or minimum wage rates that are mostly established at the level of state for selected occupation and industries. The central government has set out a non-binding indicative level of the national floor in 2017, as 160 rupees per day. Along with this, the prevalence of the issues of ineffective rules of minimum wages fixation, the poor consultation process with social partners, limited scope, and lack of uniformity and multiplicity of wage rate across occupations, regions and sectors are evidence in the minimum wage policy. These issues are producing several inequality concerns between men and women, casual and formal workers, and urban and rural areas (International Labour Organization, 2018). International Labour Organisation (2018a) further posited that the non-legally binding nature of the national minimum wage floor rate, lack of consensus in determining methodology and multiplicity of wage rate varying across sectors are claimed as the key issues giving rise to inequality issues in the minimum wage (International Labour Organisation, 2018a).

In arguing the views, Cristian and Marius (2014) have criticised the concept of minimum wage policy due to inequality concerns in the light of efficient wage theory. The theory posits that employers should determine a specific category of employees who required

to be provided minimum wage, higher than the equilibrium level. The theory postulates productivity as assuming endogenous to the production process, and thus, the employees believing in working hard should be provided minimum wage higher than the market level (Cristian and Marius, 2014). In support of the views, based on the neoclassical economic theory views, Mărginean and Chenic (2013) have highlighted the introduction of minimum wage beyond the equilibrium rate in the labour market in perfect competition led to reduce employment and give rise of wage costs, mainly for the young and less-skilled people (Mărginean and Chenic, 2013; Sanga and Shaban, 2017).

Moreover, Jayaram (2019) has conducted a detailed analysis of the recently enacted Code on Wages Act 2019 as well and revealed several issues. The code was reviewed to not outline the methodology used for stating an adequate level of minimum wage and the use of need-based criteria of fixation led to prioritising worker's needs, rather than acknowledging workers as factors of production. Ambiguous language, the discretion of administration in the setting of minimum wages, setting of the minimum wage by the state and growing constitution federalism as a consequence of it, and difficulty in measurement of distinct factors are giving rise to wage inequality (Jayaram, 2019). International Labour Organization (2020) has also argued that in India, minimum wages rates diversely vary, not for unskilled workers only, but substantial variations have been examined across states in prescribed wage rates number. It is augmenting inequality and reflecting the complexity of the wage rate mechanism at a high level in the country (International Labour Organization, 2020). Satpathy, Estupinan and Malick (2020) further claimed that in India poor compliance, weak enforcement of the policy, low minimum wages, lack of uniformity, non-explanation of methods and criteria precisely used for fixing floor wage rates are revealed as the key issues in implementing minimum wage policy (Satpathy, Estupinan and Malick, 2020).

2.5 Relevance of Enforcing Minimum Wage Policy to Augment Equality, Combating Inequality and Social Justice in India

With regard to the relevance of strengthening and enforcing effectively the minimum wage policy in India, Varkkey and Mehta (2012) have claimed to revise of minimum wage rate has two-fold objectives; social objective and economic objective. The social objective of the minimum wage rate provides sufficient purchasing power to workers, enables basic living standard, and abolishes poverty and labour exploitation in the long-run. On the other hand, in the economic objective sense, the determination of the minimum wage rate motivates workers that contribute more to economic growth (Varkkey and Mehta, 2012). Similarly, International Labour Organisation (2014) reviewed to stated that the determination of minimum wage policy is examined as highly relevant in protecting the workers' rights and interests against unjustifiably low pay practices of employers, which ensures an environment of equality and just for the employees. It is playing a vital role in reducing inequalities, poverty, gender pay gap and promoting the aspect of right of equal remuneration for a work of equal value (International Labour Organisation, 2014; International Labour Organisation, 2012).

International Labour Organization (2020) also claimed that the primary objective of fostering the implementation of the minimum wage in an economy is to protect workers from unduly low pay, and promoting equality by raising remuneration of workers and improvising living conditions of the people at the lower level of the wage distribution. The establishment of minimum wage at the national level based upon evidence-based social dialogue, measures for supporting informal economy formalisation, and creation of paid employment and productivity growth among sustainable enterprises assisting in promoting economic growth in light of social justice are contributing significantly to less inequality and more social justice (International Labour Organization, 2020). Rani and Belser (2012) have also revealed various functions of the minimum wage that are playing a vital role in promoting equality and social

justice in India. It is playing a pivotal role in combating poverty, promoting regional equality, introducing floor for varied social security benefits, integrating ethical criteria, promoting income dispersion, improvising the living standard of low paid men and women, and reducing unemployment, which is all crucial in fostering social justice and bringing income equality (Rani and Belser, 2012). International Labour Organisation (2018a) further pointed out that the establishment of a fair mechanism and adequate level of the minimum wage is a crucial measure towards balanced growth, reducing wage disparity, social justice and promoting income equality in India. This demands implementation of a sustainable and effective wage policy, ensuring growth in wages in tandem with labour productivity, promoting inclusive growth and reducing inequality. A carefully balanced determination of minimum wage is claimed to play a pivotal role in supporting low-paid workers wages and reducing wage inequality (International Labour Organisation, 2018a).

2.6 Strategic Measures to foster the Enforcement of Minimum Wage Policy in the economy

A report published by International Labour Organisation(2018), suggested that a comprehensive approach is essential as compliance rate is impacted by the degree to which minimum wages are defined in relation to institutional factors; and average wages. In case minimum wages are found very minimal or considerably low, it is very much obvious that only a handful of workers are select to be paid less than the established standard. This means that only when minimum wages are reasonably high, affirming compliance becomes a challenge. Apart from this, an arrangement must be made for promoting the provisions concerning minimum wage in dialects and languages which can be easily understood by workers who require protection. Non-compliance is significantly high in India (as portrayed in the Figure) which is the main aspect demanding attention and for the purpose of designing, putting in place and deploying robust measures and strategies concerning enforcement and compliance, it is

necessary to examine the patterns and extent of non-compliance in a way as elaborated and informative as the available data allows. It is not only pertinent to enhance the efficacy of intervention rather also to support strategic choices surrounding the optimal allocation of available public resources (International Labour Organisation, 2018).

On the other side, Galvin (2016) explained that the recruitment of a sufficient number of professionally trained inspectors entitled to requisite powers and facilities is important for improvising the compliance. Reasonable penalties must also be enforced for infringement of the crucial norms and policies relating to minimum wages. In addition to this, simplification of legal systems and regulations and other adequate means of assisting workers to effectively avail their rights within minimum wage provisions can also help the Indian economy in properly and inclusively enforcing minimum wage policy (Galvin, 2016). In line with the same context, Benassi (2011) claimed that spreading information and raising awareness is imperative for triggering the compliance with established minimum wage policy of a country with the agenda of fostering equality and guaranteeing social justice. A key initiative is making pertinent information regarding valid minimum wages of workers, as well as employers and society as a whole. Apart from disclosing and spreading awareness about the applicable minimum wage, it is crucial to generate awareness about the sanctions with respect to non-compliance. Apart from such measures, persuasive arguments and assisting public discourse might also be focused to nurture the culture of compliance (Benassi, 2011).

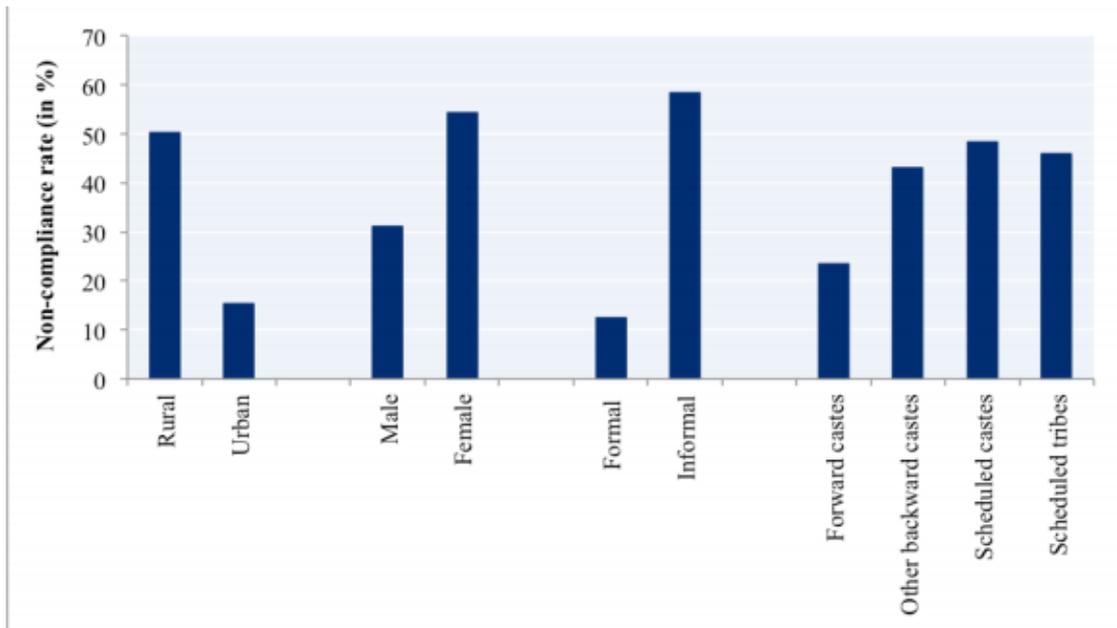


Figure 2: Rate of Non-compliance of Minimum Wage Policy in India by different classes of workers 2009-2010

Source: (International Labour Organisation, 2018)

2.7 Conceptual Framework

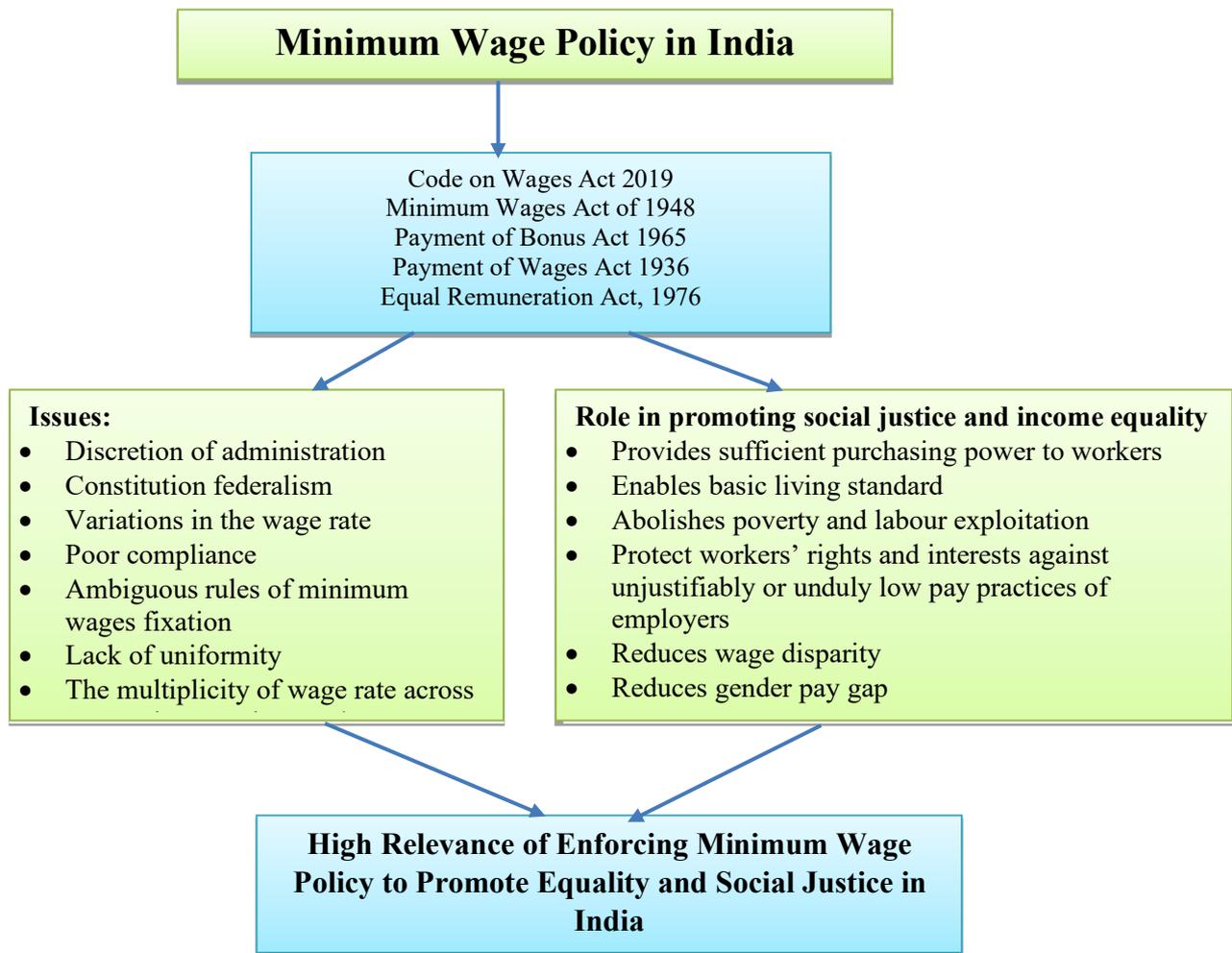


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

Source: [International Labour Organisation, 2014; International Labour Organisation, 2012; International Labour Organization, 2018; Satpathy, Estupinan and Malick, 2020; Rani and Belser, 2012]

2.8 Summary and Gaps in the Literature

On the basis of the overall review of literary sources, it can be summarised that India had taken crucial steps among all the developing countries for implementing a minimum wage policy in the country. In this regard, the Minimum Wage Act 1948 and the Code on Wages Act 2019 are examined as the two crucial legislative pieces of the country for minimum wage. Despite taking proactive steps, several issues have explored in the minimum wage policy of

the country, causing inequality and social justice issues. In this regard, lack of effective administration, constitution federalism, variations in wage rate, poor compliance, ambiguous rules of minimum wages fixation, lack of uniformity and multiplicity of wage rate across occupations, regions and sectors have been reviewed. However, the accurate determination and implementation of a fair mechanism of the minimum wage is examined to play a crucial role in promoting equality and social justice, by reducing wage disparity, gender pay gap, protecting workers rights and abolishing poverty and labour exploitation.

On reviewing the literature, it is explored that a range of information has been gathered on the minimum wage policy of India by the scholars, which is reflecting issues, history, development and current state of the policy. The evidence also suggests the implementation of reforms of Code on Wages Act 2019 recently, that has provided a universal national floor wage system to the country, but, despite it, the issues of inequality and social justice is prevailing in the country, due to several issues in the reform. Lack of evidence are found on exploring the issue of inequality in this regard, as well as the past legislative measures highlighting the effectiveness of the current minimum wage policy of the country in fostering equality and social justice. Along with this, no empirical research has been undertaken on the chosen topic. All these gaps are explored in the datasets, revealing the scope and significance of conducting an explicit inquiry using suitable data collection tools on India's minimum wage policy and its effectiveness in promoting equality and social justice.

Chapter 3: Research Questions and Objectives

3.1 Research Questions

In order to direct the research work in the right direction, the framing of the comprehensive research question is pivotal. The formulation of research questions plays an important role in keeping researcher actions focussed on the research topic. For this purpose, in light of the focus on minimum wage policy in India, the formulation of a range of research questions have been made to keep the researcher actions directed. In this regard, the below research questions have been formulated in light of the literary evidence gathered on the research topic:

Main Research Question:

RQ: What role does the enforcement of minimum wage policy play in promoting equality and social justice in an economy, considering evidence gained from India?

Sub-Questions:

1. How effectively does the minimum wage have been enforced in India to promote equality and social justice in the economy?
2. Why India cannot implement the minimum wage policy effectively?
3. What are the key issues concerning social justice and equity in the effective implementation of the minimum wage policy in India?
4. In what ways, India can foster the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy to attain the goals of social justice and equality?

3.2 Research Objectives

In light of the primary aim of the research and questions designed, the research focuses on addressing a range of objectives by conducting a detailed qualitative inquiry on the research topic. The key objectives designed in this regard are:

- To study the relevance of minimum wage policy in an economy

- To examine the state of enactment of minimum wage policy in India
- To explore the issues concerning social justice and equality in the effective implementation of minimum wage policy in India
- To examine the role of enforcing minimum wage policy in fostering equality and social justice in the Indian economy
- To suggest ways using which India can foster the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy to attain the goals of social justice and equality

3.3 Research Propositions

The key research proposition is to examine the minimum wage policy of India in the current era, with the focus on examining the extent to which, the prevailing policy fostered equality and social justice in the country. In order to address this proposition, the research has intended to employ the qualitative method to collect real data on the topic and generate crucial findings on the role of enforcing minimum wage policy in India to reduce inequalities and promote social justice in the country. The findings generated in this context by the researcher would be of the high-value proposition for the Indian authorities dealing with minimum wage policy, Indian employers and employees, and future researchers, in terms of providing them with a useful base of information and knowledge regarding the effectiveness of minimum wage policy in India. Along with this, the research findings would generate a crucial base of knowledge regarding the strategies that can be implemented by the Indian government to enforce the minimum wage policy in the country in a manner that equality and social justice can be promoted.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Research is a systematic process directed towards investigating the subject, research phenomenon or problem of interest with the purpose of building new knowledge and contributing to the research setting by developing valuable results. Determination of appropriate methodology is imperative to guide the search process towards the fulfilment of articulated research objectives as methodology includes a selection of specific techniques, tools and processes to detect, select, evaluate, synthesise and analyse information concerning the topic (Patten and Newhart, 2017). On reviewing the literary findings, the lack of scholarly recent evidence has been examined with regard to the minimum wage policy of India, revealing a lack of empirical insights on the effectiveness of policy in promoting equality and social justice in India. In this regard, to ground the methodology for current research on the robust ground, an academic article presented by Sanga and Shaban (2017), titled “Regional divergence and inequalities in India” associated with the topic and employing proper methodology has been selected. The article is examined as having diverse gaps, which the current research aims to fill by employing a suitable method. In this regard, the key gaps identified in the paper is the utilisation of secondary evidence only, wherein, convergence analysis has been undertaken to examine the gathered time-series data on the 15 major states in India. Lack of fresh insights, primary data, and direct and detailed views of the respondents are examined as the gaps in the study, which the current research seeks to fill by conducting a more legit inquiry using the interview method (Sanga and Shaban, 2017).

Structuring the methodology section in proper format with precise justification for selected approaches and techniques enables the prospective readers to assess the overall quality, reliability and validity of the investigation process (Miller, 2017). In this context, the

chapter covers details of methods and tools applied to study the relevance of minimum wage policy followed in India in terms of fostering social justice and equality in the community.

4.2 Research Methods

The available choices concerning research methods included quantitative and qualitative methods wherein quantitative research method is one that permits access to statistical and numeric data in regard to the problem or subject being focused on in the study. It is fundamentally concerned with discovering facts about the phenomena assuming that reality is measurable and fixed. In other words, it involves the collection of data by measuring things; which is analysed via statistical inferences and numerical data centred comparison thus offering accurate results (Picardi and Masick, 2013). In order to deeply assess the minimum wage policy of India, examine its current state, its limiting factors and the benefits in respect to promoting equality and justice, it was not sufficient to merely consider facts and numerically assessable data without diving deeper into the entire process, merits and demerits. Thus quantitative research method has been rejected to study the role of minimum wage policy in the Indian economy and the data collection and analysis process are streamlined as per the qualitative method.

The qualitative research method permits proper and deeper understanding of the research problem by understanding and examining pertinent human behaviour and perspectives thereby offering an all-inclusive search capable of facilitating comprehensive study which is the aim of the presented research project (Lyon, Mšllering and Saunders, 2015). Thus, the application of the qualitative method in the current research provided significant support in obtaining closer and relevant insights into the minimum wage policy currently practised in India, its loopholes and qualities in regard to advancing social justice and assuring equality. It also helped to formulate crucial strategies that can play a key role in strengthening the efficacy of implemented minimum wage rule in terms of fulfilling the motive of extending equality and

justice. Therefore, the qualitative research method depicting a multi-method entailing naturalistic and interpretive approach to search the subject matter helped in properly studying the context in natural settings (Hartas, 2015).

4.3 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is recognised as the belief or the presumption regarding the manner in which data about the problem or research subject needs to be accessed, assembled, evaluated and incorporated in research. It is a crucial element of research methodology dealing with the nature, source and building of knowledge base in relation to selected topic (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2017). Positivism research philosophy assumes that society develops the individual and supports the usage of quantitative methods to view a subject. The main objective of positivism philosophy is to uncover the legal aspects governing human behaviour and requires an investigation to be reliable, valid and capable of providing true representativeness (Ryan, 2018). As the main goal of the presented research is to undertake a thorough review of the minimum wage policy in the determined research setting, India by integrating qualitative research method; positivism philosophy is not applied in the current work.

An interpretivism research philosophy has been employed in this particular study as it is inclined towards qualitative research which was essential to comprehensively articulate the contribution of minimum wage policy presently followed in India and identify its shortcomings concerning affirmation of equality and social justice. The philosophy assisted in understanding the reality of wage policy in India by considering different opinions and experiences of people holding knowledge about this dimension (Ryan, 2018). Therefore, interpretivism philosophy sufficiently helped in aligning the research process as per the established motto by providing subjective understanding and knowledge about the role and lacking points of minimum wage policy in the Indian economy.

4.4 Research Design

In light of the gaps identified in the methodological choices made in the study of Sanga and Shaban (2017), it is examined that descriptive research design has been employed in the study. This makes the study lacks ensuring the confidentiality of respondents and does not answer 'why'. In order to fill these limitations of the study, the current research has integrated exploratory research design, using which, as the name suggests, the research focuses on exploring the research questions and helps in examining a problem, which is not yet clearly defined. It helps in exploring the problem, with the aim to provide a better understanding of the problem. This has facilitated increased understanding, the flexibility of data sources and helps in deriving better conclusions on the effectiveness of minimum wage policy in augmenting social justice and equality in India (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). In this way, the application of exploratory research design has proved optimal for the current study to examine the chosen research problem, and access uncovered data and facts on the extent to which the currently employed minimum wage policy has assisted in promoting social justice and equality in India.

4.5 Research Approach

In the research, to inquire about the chosen research problem, the determination of an appropriate research plan is a crucial element that helps to gather pertinent data and examine it in detail, which is the key purpose of the research approach. Inductive and deductive are the two key research approaches, wherein, inductive emphasises providing robust reasoning to develop a theory and deductive focuses on examining existing theories. In light of carrying out the interview, the integration of the inductive approach has been found optimal to provide reasoning focuses on making a broad generalisation on the basis of specific observations (Creswell, 2013). This reasoning has facilitated the collection of qualitative facts on the topic, supporting the collection of wider views and inferences on the minimum wage policy of India.

In this way, by utilising the approach, a focus on deriving theory from the datasets and generating a robust set of knowledge have been made, which would prove beneficial and useful for future scholars.

4.6 Data Collection Method

In the research, to collect qualitative data, primary and secondary range of data collection tools has been used. In order to collect primary data, the use of semi-structured interview is examined as the legit source of data collection for the study. The gaps in the literature review and the study conducted by Sanga and Shaban (2017) have revealed that lack of empirical studies and evidence containing views of the economists or other associated people prevails in the current base of research, which makes the use of interview, a pertinent method of data collection for the study. Hence, in the research, the semi-structured interview is conducted with a specific sample population, which has allowed open-ended response and more in-depth information on the topic, encouraged two-way communication, fairly flexible and reliable way to collect data, and helped in a collected large amount of data on the topic (Mallinson, Childs and Herk, 2013; Ritchie *et al.*, 2013). During the interview with the participants, a range of questions have been asked to gain optimal data and information on the research topic. These are:

Q1. Do you think minimum wage policy is relevant to every economy worldwide? Please support your answer with elaborated reasons.

Q2. What is your opinion regarding the state of enactment of minimum wage policy in Indian economy? Please describe in detail.

Q 3: Is the minimum wage policy of India giving rise to equality concerns?

Q 4: What are the key issues in the minimum wage policy of India concerning equality?

Please explain in detail.

Q 5: Do you agree with the aspect that there is a crucial link between minimum wage policy, and social justice and equality in India?

Q 6: What role does the effective enforcement of minimum wage policy could play in fostering social justice and equality in the Indian economy? Kindly explain your views in detail.

Q 7: What ways you would like to suggest using which India can foster the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy to attain the goals of social justice and equality?

These questions have been asked from the participants due to their direct relevance to the research aims and objectives, which has helped in providing real-time data and insights, specifically on the research context. Moreover, secondary data collection method has been used in the study to make an in-depth review of the existing data sources, involving journal articles, books, credible online sources, reports presented by International Labour Organisation (ILO) and credible reports on the Indian wage system (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

4.7 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

In the current literature base, either the use of secondary evidence and undertaking of the survey with a large sample have been made. This gap is aimed to be filled by the current research study by conducting in-depth interviews and collecting wide qualitative data concerning the views, opinions and knowledge of the experts on the minimum wage policy. In this regard, for collecting relevant primary data on the topic, determining a precise sample is pivotal to determine which, the use of purposive sampling technique has been made (Supino and Borer, 2012). Using it, in light of the research aims and purpose, the determination of a sample size of 6 Indian economic experts having pertinent knowledge concerning minimum wage policy has been selected. Due to the limited count of primary data sources who can make a substantial contribution to the study, the use of the purposive sampling technique is found optimal (Wilson, 2014). Apart from this, 6 Indian economic experts would be an optimal

sample size, as the selection of a greater sample would make the comprehension and analysis of data cumbersome, and selection of a sample less than it resulted to generate an insufficient array of information that would prove the process of data collection ineffective. Hence, 6 would be an optimal sample size to gain the required knowledge and information on the topic and elucidate the findings on the topic effectively.

The selected sample population varied in terms of demographic characteristics, as the economist found of different age, working experience and education. A detailed explanation of all these aspects is made in the following table:

Participants	Age	Education	Working Experience in the field
Participant A	42 years	PhD	17 years
Participant B	56 years	PhD and M.Phil.	25 years
Participant C	61 years	PhD and M.Phil.	26 years
Participant D	65 years	PhD	32 years
Participant E	49 years	PhD	23 years
Participant F	52 years	PhD and M.Phil.	28 years

4.8 Data Analysis Strategy

In the presented study, to derive pertinent findings from the assembled qualitative range of data on the research context, it was integral to apply a suitable data analysis technique in line with the choice of research methods (Gray, 2019). Data analysis, in this context, denotes the process of applying logical techniques to describe, evaluate and condense gathered data and it is identified as an important component that must be effectively selected and applied to assure accurate and proper analysis of the collected data (Miller, 2017). In this relation, the

data obtained by performing semi-structured interview has been assessed and evaluated in detail using a thematic data analysis strategy. The thematic analysis technique is extensively used by qualitative researchers to analyse procured data set by synthesising information, pinpointing common patterns and formulating meaningful results in light of the focused research problem (Swain, 2018). Thus, this analysis strategy provided substantial support in systematically analysing interview responses to extract findings directly addressing the research motto.

4.9 Research Ethics

There are different reasons because of which adherence to ethical norms and principles, is important in a research project including their contribution to promoting the research aims, like truth, knowledge and control of error. In addition to this, ethical standards in a study promote the environment and values vital for pursuing collaborative work, by affirming accountability, dignity, trust and transparency. Many ethical norms such as federal rules regarding misconduct in research and protection of human subjects ensure that researchers are accountable to the public at large. Additionally, ethical principles also contribute in terms of building public support for the study as people are ready to provide requisite assistance in research projects which appear to uphold integrity (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018). In order to procure such benefits, ethical norms have been abided in the current work and the foremost clause followed is confidentiality wherein research participants have been assured that the personal information shared by them will be not be disclosed; and the subject-related information provided by them will be used solely for the study.

In order to assure voluntary participation of the identified audiences, informed consent forms were given with them with a precise overview of the topic and scope; and a genuine request to contribute. They were approached for data collection only after receiving their consent for the same, and originality of work has been ensured by sticking with the norms of

plagiarism. Apart from this, any kind of data mishandling, manipulation and misinterpretation has been strictly prohibited to produce reliable and quality work.

4.10 Research Limitations

Conducting the research using a semi-structured interview method and utilising primary data has some limitations, which created difficulty in the data collection process. In this regard, in the research, while collecting primary data by conducting the semi-structured interview, the limitations concerning gaining trust and confidence of the participants have led to consuming significant time (Myers, 2019). This has resulted to affect the whole data collection process, wherein, the researcher has made dedicated efforts for keeping everything on track. Apart from this, comprehending diverse views of the interviewees, deriving meaningful information and common patterns are other key limitations of the study, as it further consumed substantial time and demanded high critical thinking and analytical ability to analyse the collected data. Managing all these aspects have remained a complex and cumbersome process for the researcher (Salmona, Lieber and Kaczynski, 2019).

4.11 Summary

In order to determine the pivotal role of minimum wage policy in enhancing social justice and guaranteeing equality in the Indian economy, qualitative research has been undertaken with the integration of inductive approach and interpretivism philosophy. Interpretivism philosophy enabled subjective exploration of the minimum wage policy followed in India with a focus on detecting significant contribution and limiting factors of the policy. The search governed via inductive reasoning system helped to gain a wider view of the research phenomenon thus generating widely applicable results to guide effective implementation of minimum wage policy for assuring right efforts are in place to strengthen social justice and equality. The primary data has been generated by pursuing semi-structured interviews with 6 economic experts of India as they appeared to constitute a knowledgeable

audience to facilitate information on the defined topic concerning the relevance of minimum wage policy, and their effective selection process was fulfilled with the deployment of purposive sampling technique. On the other side, to access secondary data concerning research context, the existing data sources exhibiting information about minimum wage regulation in India, have been reviewed. These included academic textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, International Labour Organisation reports and findings, credible online sources and official reports on the wage system of India. The consideration of both these instruments contributed to gaining comprehensive insight into the research topic.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

Data analysis is regarded as the most pivotal part of a research study entailing interpretation of data assembled via the usage of logical, pertinent and analytical techniques for identifying patterns, trends and relationships in the light of the research motto. The data analysis section of every research study is devoted to the systematic and coherent application of logical methods to describe, synthesise and evaluate data in relation to stated research objectives. Accurate and proper analysis of research outcomes is also considered an important component for assuring data integrity (Hackley, 2019). In the light of these important aspects and contributions of data analysis, the analysis section of the presented research project is structured by applying thematic analysis technique with the motto of extracting relevant results reflecting the role of minimum wage policy in advancing equality and affirming social justice in India.

Thematic analysis is a widely used analytical procedure applied to qualitative studies to closely assess the data under common themes designed by integrating repetitive patterns and ideas within the data set. Assessing relevant ideas and meanings under different themes help to deeply understand the responses and draw crucial findings with respect to the research objectives (Swain, 2018). In order to abide by the ethical clause of confidentiality, alphabetical codes have been assigned to research participants while referring to their perspectives and opinions under different themes (See Appendix 2).

5.2 Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Relevance of minimum wage policy in an economy

In order to seek knowledge about the significance of minimum wage policy in an economy, the participants were asked to share their experience and viewpoint in this relation to which different participants provided different perspectives. In this relation, Participant A

stated that *“I believe minimum wage policy assures equality in the society and promotes decent work. It is a way to guarantee inclusive and sustained economic growth by making sure equal pay is awarded to everyone for work of equitable value. I believe a well-designed minimum wage policy can assist in providing an equitable and just share of economy's progress among all.”* Participant B, in relation to the same theme, explained that *“I think the core purpose behind introducing a minimum wage rule in any economy is to safeguard workers against unreasonable low pay. It can also be considered as a policy measure to combat inequality and reduce poverty by strengthening the right to just remuneration among every one performing work of the same value. Herein it is important to assure that minimum wage systems are not used in isolation, rather designed in a manner that reinforces and supplements other economic and social policies. ”*

In line with the same theme, Participant C added that *“The central purpose behind launching a minimum wage policy in any economy is to fix minimum justifiable remuneration that must be paid by every employer to wage earners for work they perform in a particular period. It depicts an amount that cannot be decreased by individual contract or any kind of collective agreement. Its central purpose behind such initiative is to protect the interest of workers and assure equal distribution of the economic development among all regardless of any discrimination.”* Thus, it is interpreted that minimum wage policy is an important measure embraced by most of the economies worldwide to make sure that the growth and development of an economy are shared among all implicitly leading to social justice in the community at large.

Participant D, in a similar context specified that *“I believe minimum wages represent an essential tool for social justice and it is a universal phenomenon prevalent in almost every country except Gulf nations; although differences do exist across nations in terms of coverage, design, levels and enforcement. Such differences indicate national priorities, as well as diverse*

traditions. In every economy, minimum wages regulation plays a profound role in making sure that every person gets an equal share in the fruits associated with national growth.” Participant E, on the other side, asserted that *“I feel the long-term intention behind implementing minimum wage policy is poverty eradication and this is certainly true for developing countries like India. Moreover, higher equity is also ensured by effective compliance with national minimum wage, and the distribution of earnings between low paid and high paid can be narrowed.”* In relation to the same aspect, Participant F stated that *“In my opinion, minimum wage policy is a crucial means for economies worldwide to control the exploitation of workers by labour market monopolists thus affirming reasonable and fair work pay.”* Thus, it is analysed that minimum wage policy represents an influential mechanism to eradicate poverty, affirm fair pay to workers and combating the exploitation of workers due to the existence of certain monopolists in the economies.

Theme 2: State of enactment of minimum wage policy in India

In order to gain clarity and closer insights into the present condition of minimum wage policy in the selected research setting; India, the participants were asked to share their viewpoints concerning this theme to which every participant provided new knowledge. In this context, Participant A said that *“Until 2018, the minimum wage was governed according to the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act 1948; however, this scenario has changed with the passing of the Code on Wages Act, 2019 by the parliament. This Code on Wages Act has replaced four dominant regulations namely Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; Minimum Wage Act, 1948 and Payment of Bonus Act, 1965. The new wage regulation in India prevents employers from paying less than the specified minimum wage. Further, it also mandates review and revision of minimum wages by the state and central government at regular time intervals which must not exceed five years.”*

In the same context, Participant B mentioned that *“I think India sets a good example of competitive wage across Asia by specifying INR 176 (UD\$ 2.80) per day as the national-level minimum wage. However, this wage rate varies according to the sector, occupation, profession, skill set and geographical domains. Furthermore, I would like to highlight that concerning the current state before the emergence of the global pandemic, Covid-19, the real wage index, as well as the real wages have risen; however, this progression turned around with the Covid-19 crisis. This is evident from the wage cut by nearly 3.6 per cent in the case of pay awarded to formal workers whereas a sharp fall of about 22.6 per cent observed in the wages of informal workers.”* Participant C, on the other hand claimed that *“Many state governments are making rigorous attempts presently to expand the minimum wage apart from making numerous irregular adjustments. In this relation, the Code on Wages Act 2019 is playing a vital part by extending minimum wage coverage through universally applicable floor wage system and fixing the number of rates to 12 rates utmost per state.”*

Thus, it is analysed that the Code on Wages Act 2019 has significantly transformed minimum wage rule in India by inserting new dimensions to guarantee equality; however, the outbreak of Covid-19 crisis has resulted in massive fall in pay scale of informal workers as estimated at 22.6 per cent while formal workers also experienced wage cut by approximately 3.6 per cent. On a positive side, the local governments of different states are making constant attempts to strengthen minimum wages while also emphasising several irregular adjustments.

Participant D concerning the same subject specified that *“The Minimum Wage Act although appeared progressive but has also resulted in particular problems. Concerns have been raised regarding the prevalence of a coherent, rational and clear wage policy in India, especially in the unorganised sector. This issue is predominantly because of ineffective fixation norms, implementation, coverage and compliance in different regions of the country.”*

Participant F, on the other hand, stated that *“The minimum wage rulings in India including the*

recent code on wages, introduced in 2019 have undoubtedly helped in reducing poverty to a certain extent and combating the problem of workers exploitation by a handful of powerful employers having a monopoly in different sectors, but as a whole, it has been more effective in safeguarding organised sector in comparison to the unorganised sector.” Participant D perceived that *“At present, the enactment of the Code on Wages Act in India is an important initiative to establish a uniform definition of wages across the country thereby providing greater clarity to employers and employees while also upholding the interest of both sides.”* Therefore, it is inferred that although minimum wages legislation in India has been supportive in reducing pay gaps in the society, bringing down poverty levels and handling the issue of labours exploitation; certain concerns do exist particularly in the unorganised domain. The core reasons for ineffectiveness are weak implementation procedures and coverage in diverse areas of the country. It is examined that this situation has improved with the advent of the new wages code in 2019 as it has helped to bring uniformity in the fundamental definition of minimum wages while also offering clarity to workers, as well as employers.

Theme 3: Issues concerning social justice and equality in the effective implementation of minimum wage policy in India

In order to gain relevant information about the foremost issues in achieving equality and social just via enforcement of minimum wage policy in India, participants were asked to highlight their experience. In this relation, Participant A said that *“I feel the existence of gender pay gap is one of the critical concerns impacting the minimum wage policy in our country. In addition to this, inadequate rules overseeing minimum wages fixation in different sectors and lack of requisite uniformity are also posing barriers in assuring social justice.”* Participant C, on the other hand, asserted that *“Absence of consensus in articulating methodology and consideration of varying wage rate across different sectors are main problems hampering the implementation process of wage policy in the country.”* Participant B perceived that *“In my*

views, *the establishment of minimum wages over the equilibrium rate is the key issue in a perfectly competitive environment which is reducing employment opportunities while fostering wage costs especially concerning less-skilled and young workers.*” Thus, it is analysed that minimum wage policy in the Indian economy is not able to deliver social justice due to inherent issues like multiple wage rates followed in different industries, absence of uniformity and lack of clear and easily enforceable methodologies.

In further reference to the views, Participant D has provided comprehensive views by pointing that, *“As per my knowledge and understanding, India has serious problems in its wage mechanism, as the substantial number of regular workers are evident of paying less than the minimum wage. In it, the poor implementation and compliance of the Minimum Wage Act, gender-based disparity and urban-rural gaps are I think enhancing glaring inequalities and social justice concerns.”* In arguing of the views, Participant F has stated that *“In this, the major issues observed in Indian minimum wage policy are lack of a universal mechanism for minimum wage determination and no clear outlining of the methodology used to determine minimum wage in the country are affecting the effectiveness of the policy. The current methodology lacks clear language, there prevails discretion of administration in the setting of minimum wages and different role of the state in determining rate have remained I think the key issues.”*

In support of this, Participant E also claimed that *“India has diversely varied minimum wage rates across the states and the workers' category, which is giving rise to inequality and social justice concerns. The wage rate mechanism is complex in India, with a poor rate of compliance, low rate of minimum wage, ineffective enforcement of the policy, lack of uniformity and no clear definition of methods and criteria used to fix floor wage rates. These I think, I identified as the key issues in the current minimum wage policy of India, which is augmenting the inequality and social justice concerns.”* From the analysis of the views of Participant D, E

and F, it is examined that the Indian minimum wage policy is mainly facing the issue of lack of a universal mechanism or effective methodology to determine minimum wage policy in India. Along with this, its ineffective enforcement, lack of uniformity and lack of clear definition of methods to fix floor wage rates are further augmenting equality and social justice concerns.

Theme 4: Role of enforcing minimum wage policy in fostering equality and social justice in the Indian economy

The theme has been originated in light of the questions focussing on there is a crucial link between minimum wage policy, and social justice and equality in India, and the role of the policy in fostering equality and social justice in the Indian economy. On this, all the participants have found agreed with the aspect that there is a crucial link between minimum wage policy, and social justice and equality in India, hence, effective minimum wage policy is examined as essentially to be fostered. Further on the role of its effective enforcement, Participant A has pointed out *“Yes, I strongly believe that enforcement of a fair and more comprehensive mechanism to determine minimum wage policy can contribute significantly in attaining multidimensional objectives, in the social and economic context. In social aspects, enforcement of minimum wage policy assists in providing sufficient purchasing power to workers, providing basic living standards, reducing poverty from the nation, reducing the pay gap, uplifting poor and disadvantaged segment of society and abolishing exploitation of labour. In economic terms, the policy would contribute significantly to making a contribution to GDP and fostering economic growth.”* Participant C made the same set of views, revealing *“Minimum wage policy is an important element of a nation’s development policy, and in India as well, the policy would contribute significantly in fostering equality in the environment. The policy ensures the availability of minimum remuneration to the workers by the employers that play a vital role in reducing the gender pay gap, abolishing poverty, balancing interests of diverse groups,*

enhancing the basic living standard and reducing actions pertaining to labour exploitation at the workplace, it basically promotes social-justice-oriented environment at workplace.”

Participant E also pointed out that *“Its effective enforcement is crucial for India to establish a just and equal environment. Minimum wage policy enforcement contributes to safeguarding workers from unduly low pay circumstances at the workplace, supporting low pay workers, improving living condition, and reducing unemployment and poverty. All these aspects are crucial in fostering equality in the economy.”* From the analysis of all the views of the Participants, it is reviewed that the minimum wage policy is a crucial measure to promote social justice and equality in the Indian economy.

In addition to this, Participant B made some distinctive and crucial views on the role by claiming that *“Yes, the policy is a crucial step for Indian economy towards fostering an all-inclusive and social justice environment, promoting equality. However, its effective determination is pivotal to attain all these benefits, and its effectiveness depends upon broad coverage, monitoring of effects, compliance and setting of rates at an adequate level.”* In further reference to the views, Participant D said *“Its establishment reduces income inequality, spurs economic growth, promotes self-improvement and education, enhances employee’s retention, boost employee’s productivity and prevent exploitation of workers at the workplace.”* Participant F also asserted that *“Minimum wage policy is a key variable fostering equality in the Indian economy as it reduces pay gaps, unduly low pay, improvising welfare of low-paid workers, regional disparity, poverty, uplifting poor and disadvantaged segment of society and reduces exploitation of labour.”* Hence from the distinct views of the participants, the crucial role of fostering the minimum wage policy is examined in fostering social justice and equality in the Indian economy.

Theme 5: Suggest ways using which India can foster the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy to attain the goals of social justice and equality 400GS

The theme has been designed in light of the responses gained and patterns observed on the question asking the ways Indian can foster the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy to attain the goals of social justice and equality. In this regard, Participant A has asserted that *“I think, the effectiveness of the policy relies upon a range of factors, involving the extent to which, the workers afford protection in an employment relationship irrespective of the contractual arrangement, industries and occupation.”* An explanation of the views is made by Participant B who pointed out that *“An effective minimum wage policy should be established in consultation with varied social partners, and must involve three key dimensions, including coverage, compliance and level the policy covers the needs of the labour/workers and the families. Along with this, the level of minimum wage needs to adjust on a time-to-time basis by taking into account the cost of living and associated changes, along with the economic conditions. In this regard, adjustments on annual basis in the periods of moderate or low inflation is I think optimal to establish a more effective and equality-oriented policy of minimum wage in the country.”*

In support of the views, Participant D opined that *“The setting and adjustment of the level of minimum wage should be an outcome of the evidence-based social dialogue. Hence, the determination of minimum wage should be made in India on a range of criteria, along with adjusting it as per the economic factors and needs of workers and their families. Herein, the criteria including cost of basic needs, labour productivity, price inflation, employment and average wages should be optimally considered.”* The analysis of the different views of the participants revealed that acknowledgement of affecting factors, time-to-time adjustment, and adherence to a coverage, compliance and level the policy covers the needs of the labour/workers and the families are examined crucial for Indian minimum wage policy to foster effective enforcement in the country.

Further, Participant C made distinctive views by opining that *“To enforce an effective minimum wage policy in India, active support of trade unions, workers and labour associations is required, along with the sincerity of every department of the state to determine the rate on integrating ethical and humanitarian concerns as well to ensure basic subsistence to workers in the unorganised sectors.”* More simple and important views in this regard have been made by Participant E revealing that *“The Indian minimum wage policy requires significant improvement to overcome the issues of lack of a universal mechanism to determine minimum wage, regional disparity and no clear outlining of methodology. This requires strengthening of current enforcement machinery, simplification of procedure pertaining to coverage and minimum wage rate revisions, introduce steps linking rates to the Consumer Price Index Numbers (CPI), and enhancing the involvement of distinct workers organisations to implement the act.”*

Participant F has added more pertinent in this regard that, *“The Indian minimum wage policy requires strengthening and refining of pertinent provisions of the wage rules. This calls for stating rules for universal coverage, the establishment of floor wages and minimum wage at an adequate level, and ensuring meaningful compliance. In this regard, the institutional machinery to set, timely revise and adjustment of the statutory wages should be made, along with putting a significant focus on streamlining all these functioning via appropriate funding, staffing and augmenting technical capacity.”* On the basis of the overall analysis of the views, implementation of a universal mechanism to determine the rate, strengthening of enforcement machinery, floor wages and minimum wages at an adequate level should be made to effectively enforce the policy in India.

5.3 Summary

In the chapter, an in-depth analysis of the views of the participants have been made, which helped in gaining crucial insights on the role of enforcing minimum wage policy to foster

equality and social justice in India. Currently, the enactment of robust legislation and reforms in it has been examined in India. The crucial role of the current reform in the minimum wage setting is examined in India for establishing a more efficient and dynamic wage-setting process. However, on analysing the views, various issues are evident to be prevailing in the current minimum wage mechanism. The issues concerning poor implementation and compliance of the Minimum Wages Act, poor enforcement mechanism, compliance mechanism, urban-rural gaps and gender-based disparity are examined. These issues are analysed to be mitigated as the enforcement of an effective minimum wage policy could contribute significantly to fostering equality and social justice in the Indian economy. For this, the ways involving strengthening of current enforcement machinery, timely revise and adjustment of the statutory wages, simplification of procedure pertaining to coverage and minimum wage rate revisions, and involvement of the dimensions of coverage, compliance are examined to play a pivotal role in the effective enforcement of the minimum wage policy in India.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The discussion section of a research study primarily intends to validate the primary research findings by discussing them in respect to the existing literature base to draw precise, reliable and authentic outcomes. It is an important segment enabling readers to judge the credibility of research outcomes and thus a researcher needs to structure it coherently in a proper format. Considering the relevance of this section, the chapter discusses the findings drawn from the interview process in support of specific literature covering the same topic.

6.2 Discussion

The data findings signify that minimum wage policy is integral to every economy aiming to boost equality and provide social justice to all. It is identified as means to facilitate sustained, inclusive and engaging economic growth by assuring that equal and fair pay is entitled to every person performing work of the same value. It is apparent from the data findings that well-designed and properly implemented minimum wage regulation in a country can sufficiently help in extending equitable and appropriate share of country's development among all. Apart from this, the findings also depict that protecting labours from faulty practices of monopolists and combating the engraved issue of inequality in most of the societies are also the main goals of the minimum wage rule. In this support, the literature also specified that the main agenda of almost every country following minimum wage policy is to control employers from exploiting common workers and providing sufficient income to everyone to afford basic living wage, that is wage enough to meet food, shelter and clothing requirements (Kurta and Oruč, 2020).

Minimum wage legislation imposed in a country basically represents an amount that cannot be altered by any particular employment agreement or contract and the central reason behind introducing such measure is to uphold the interest of workers while also making sure

that the benefits associated with economic development are shared among all. In this relation, the literature also explains that minimum wage ruling is a common phenomenon in most of the nations across the globe, although differences exist in the design, methodology, wage rate and enactment because of economic priorities and ranging values (Bosch and Weinkopf, 2017).

The findings also signify that presently the Code on Wages Act administers minimum wages in India and it is applicable since 2019. This Code has substituted the Minimum Wage Act, 1948; Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Payment of Bonus Act 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. This is a comprehensive regulation preventing employers from paying low wages than what is fixed; and requires state governments in consideration of the opinion of the central government, to undertake period review and revision of defined wages. The findings portray that India presents an effective example concerning the minimum wage rule for other Asian countries by defining a competitive minimum rate at INR 176 (USD\$ 2.80). The literature also supports this fact by stating that the Minimum Wage Policy in India is capable of supporting basic living to all, increasing income of both skilled and unskilled workers and bringing down poverty incidence thereby setting a good example for many other developing Asian countries (Menon and van der Meulen Rodgers, 2018).

It is also examined that real wages and real wage index both increased in India prior to Covid-19, however, the crisis intervened this progression. It is also discovered that minimum wage rules in India especially following the latest code for administering this arena launched in 2019 proved worthy in controlling poverty while also monitoring workers exploitation in the state. The enactment of this code has given a uniform and holistic definition of minimum wages to every sector and helped to overcome the issue of widening wage gaps in the community at large.

In regard to the issues posing hurdles in the effective implementation of minimum wages in India and extending equality to all include cumbersome methodologies, gender pay

gap and absence of uniform procedures. It is also explored that the established minimum wage rates are failing to meet the equilibrium rate as required in a perfectly competitive scenario which is subsequently reducing employment opportunities while also raising wage costs particular in regard to the less-skilled workforce of the country. However, it is found that increased labour charge as suggested by the new code might cause unemployment in the country and also trigger the burden on small and medium-sized businesses working in India (Kapoor, 2020). Due to all these issues, it can be discussed that India is not able to implement effectively the minimum wage policy.

However, with regard to the main research question and findings drawn concerning that, it can be discussed that the effective enforcement of minimum wage policy can play a vital role in promoting equality and social justice in an economy, considering evidence gained from Indian economic experts. The effective enforcement of minimum wage policy is analysed to foster equality by reducing pay gaps, unduly low pay issues, improvising welfare of low-paid workers, reducing regional disparity, poverty, uplifting poor and disadvantaged segment of society and reducing exploitation of labour. Its effective enforcement is examined to reduce income inequality, spurs economic growth, promotes self-improvement and education, enhances employee's retention, boost employee's productivity and prevent exploitation of workers at the workplace. In support of this, the literary evidence has also highlighted that by implementing a robust and effective minimum wage policy, India can promote a more inclusive and equal environment. The effective enforcement of the policy is reviewed as an essential tool to improvise the welfare of the low-paid workers, reducing poverty, inequality and overcoming all the prevailing shortcomings of the policy. Along with this, the crucial role of the policy is examined in reducing the gender pay gap by raising the income of low-paid wage workers earnings, as well as establishing wage floors that helps in protecting vulnerable workers from

the established norms and exploitations to ensure equal pay for equal work (Cacciamali *et al.*, 2015; Satpathy, Estupiñan and Malick, 2021; International Labour Organisation, 2014).

In order to attain all these goals and the importance of the minimum wage policy, there is a pivotal need for fostering the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy for fostering the goals for social justice and equality. For this, the primary data evidence has revealed a number of ways through which India can foster the minimum wage policy enforcement at an effective level in the economy to attain the aims revolving around social justice and equality, which is a key sub-research question to the study. In this regard, the analysis of primary data evidence revealed the ways involving strengthening of current enforcement machinery, the establishment of institutional machinery to determine the rate, timely revision and adjustment of the statutory wages are examined. The literary evidence further highlighted that ways like the simplification of procedure of coverage, inclusion of various criteria, consultation with varied social partners and minimum wage rate revisions, and involvement of the dimensions of coverage, policy and compliance as the key dimensions are the crucial ways to enforce minimum wage policy at the effective level in the country (Satpathy, Estupinan and Malick, 2020; Rani and Belser, 2012).

6.3 Summary

Based on the in-depth review of the primary data findings and detailed discussion in light of the research aims and objectives, it is reviewed that in India, there is a need for more effective enforcement of the minimum wage policy. Despite the enactment of various legislations and policy, various issues giving rise to equality concerns are prevailing in the policy, the effective management of which can assist in improvising low-paid workers welfare, reducing poverty, inequality and overcoming all the prevailing shortcomings of the policy. For this, the ways including the establishment of effective institutional machinery to determine a

fair wage rate, timely revision, statutory wage adjustment, simplification of procedure of coverage and inclusion of various criteria are reviewed.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The presented research study intends to assess the relevance of implementing a minimum wage policy in terms of guaranteeing equality, as well as social justice with particular emphasis on the Indian economy. In order to comprehensively view this topic area, the interview method has been incorporated to observe and evaluate the experiences, understanding and knowledge of economic experts in India concerning the role of minimum wage policy in fulfilling the equality agenda and the issues impacting this phenomenon. The findings drawn from the deeper assessment of the research context are presented below in relation to specified research objectives.

In regard to the first research objective, it is identified that the fixation of minimum wage rate is a part of crucial decisions taken by the government in every economy with the purpose of facilitating decent and reasonable work to all, combating poverty and elevate social protection floors. It is considered as a robust vehicle that guarantees engaging, sustained and inclusive economic growth by assuring that equal pay is provided to every person performing work of the same value. Economies worldwide intend to distribute the results of economic progress equally among all through enforcement of a coherently determined minimum wage rate. It is regarded as a vital means to overcome inequality and exercise requisite control over poverty incidence. It is also observed as a critical measure to prevent exploitation of workers by few monopolists in the market thereby guaranteeing fair and reasonable pay to all and implicitly augmenting social justice.

In the light of the second research objective, the findings portray that India is among the leading developing nations which took an initiative to introduce minimum wage regulation to combat inequality in society and make economic development fruitful to all citizens. It is explored that Indian began efforts towards social justice by the enforcement of the Minimum

Wages Act 1948 which subsequently became a pivotal piece of legislation to ascertain minimum wages for a variety of scheduled employments. The parliament changed this regulation by sanctioning the Code on Wages Act 2019 which was actually a comprehensive framework to govern and direct minimum wages in different sectors by replacing the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and Payment of Wages Act, 1936. The code is adequately prohibiting employers from paying unjustified wages to workers and India by settling INR 176 (UD\$ 2.80) as minimum wage per day has actually provided an effective example to many Asian countries. Till now enactment of the minimum wages legislation in India has helped to propagate equality in the country to a certain extent, but problems are being noticed in this context. The main problem is ineffective fixation procedures followed in different segments, coverage and abidance. Moreover, the new code operating since 2019 has undoubtedly assisted in minimising poverty and reducing exploitation, but it has proved more beneficial in the organised sector.

However, on evaluating the primary and secondary data evidence, it is concluded with regard to the third research objective that there are various issues concerning equality in the effective implementation of minimum wage policy in India. It is concluded in this regard that the issues including regional disparity, diversely varied minimum wage rates across the states and the workers' category, complex mechanism of minimum wage rate, poor compliance rate and low rate of the minimum wage are most prominent in creating equality issues in the implementation of the policy in India. Along with this, the poor implementation and compliance of the Minimum Wage Act, ineffective enforcement of the policy, gender-based disparity and urban-rural gaps, no clear definition of methods and criteria used to fix floor wage rates, lack of a universal mechanism for minimum wage determination and no clear outlining of methodology are other prominent issues. All these issues are giving rise to inequality and social justice concerns in the country. This raised the need for enforcing effectively the

minimum wage policy to foster equality and social justice in the Indian economy. In this context and with regard to the fourth research objective, it is concluded that the effective enforcement of the minimum wage policy in India could play a vital role in fostering equality and social justice in the Indian economy. This has been due to its role in reducing the gender pay gap, regional disparity, poverty, the uplifting poor and disadvantaged segment of society, unduly low pay issues, reducing exploitation of labour, income inequalities, enhancing the income of low-paid workers, and protecting vulnerable workers interests. Along with this, the crucial role of the policy is examined in spurring economic growth by augmenting employee's retention, and employee's productivity.

In order to enforce an effective minimum wage policy in India and establishing a just and equality-based environment, various ways have been examined, which is the fourth key objective of the research. Based on the overall findings gained with regard to the objective, it is concluded that ways like reducing the complexity of the Indian minimum wage rate mechanism by strengthening current enforcement machinery, establishing institutional machinery to determine the rate, timely revision, consultation with social partners and adjustment of the statutory wages are concluded crucial for effective enforcement of the minimum wage policy. Along with this, determination of a fair minimum wage acknowledging various criteria, examination of the patterns and non-compliance in a way, simplifications of the legal systems and regulations, and raising awareness of minimum wage policy of the country to the workers is concluded crucial for its effective enforcement. Thus, on the overall basis, it is concluded that by overcoming all the issues, India can take advantage of the role of minimum wage policy in promoting equality and social justice in the country.

7.2 Recommendations

In order to strengthen compliance and foster justice via the administration of minimum wages, the following measures are proposed:

- In order to assure a high rate of compliance across sectors, it is important to design a coherent and effective enforcement strategy foundational on the robust informational provisions, efficient labour investigations and sanctions in instances of violations are found. Lack of concise and clear information access to workers and employers concerning the minimum wage levels, and potential sanctions in case of any contravention, also decreases the possibility of compliance. Another vital measure could be the higher involvement of NGOs and worker's unions to assure that enforcement machinery is efficacious (Belser and Rani, 2011).
- In addition to a more effective and streamlined enforcement strategy, the alternative of government functioning as the employer of last resort can also be embraced. This is particularly required in developing nations like India and herein government should also commit to employ the whole excess supply of less-skilled and unskilled workers at the defined minimum wage rate (Belser and Rani, 2011). Strict fines and punishments need to be imposed other than what currently exists, and awareness campaigns should be organised in different sectors for the purpose of making them aware of the additional penalties they would have to pay in the situation of violation. The campaigns must also convey to the employers operating businesses in different domains about the benefits of abiding with minimum wage rate in terms of sustainable business growth and accomplishing corporate social responsibility (Williams, and Lansky, 2013).
- The policymakers can make efforts to set the rate which is decent and reasonable minimum wage while also assuming significance in the established framework where the fixed rate can be efficiently leveraged to increase demand and strengthen competition at the bottom. Moreover, it is vital for authorities and decision-makers involved in setting minimum wage that India requires such wage plans to be structured

with the goal of preventing exploitation and assuring bare sustenance of basic life for attaining holistic progression (Kapoor and Majid, 2020).

7.3 Future Research Work

The research has chosen an important and contemporary topic to investigate, which is of high significance to all the developing countries. This denotes a vast scope of carrying out future research on the chosen theme. In this regard, in future work, a detailed inquiry can be conducted to examine the effectiveness of the minimum wage policy across developing countries in promoting equality and social justice in the countries. For this, countries like China, India and Brazil can be selected to examine the effectiveness of the policy and the extent to which, the policy is able to overcome inequality and social justice issues. In future, scholars willing to work on the same topic can consider mixed research method to gain a holistic view of the topic area by considering objective and subjective opinions regarding the efficacy of minimum wages in India to meet the equality goal. In this context, survey, as well as semi-structured interviews can be organised to dive deeper into the research problem and generate realistic solutions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire

Q1. Do you think minimum wage policy is relevant to every economy worldwide? Please support your answer with elaborated reasons.

Q2. What is your opinion regarding the state of enactment of minimum wage policy in Indian economy? Please describe in detail.

Q 3: Is the minimum wage policy of India giving rise to equality concerns?

Q 4: What are the key issues in the minimum wage policy of India concerning equality?

Please explain in detail.

Q 5: Do you agree with the aspect that there is a crucial link between minimum wage policy, and social justice and equality in India?

Q 6: What role does the effective enforcement of minimum wage policy could play in fostering social justice and equality in the Indian economy? Kindly explain your views in detail.

Q 7: What ways you would like to suggest using which India can foster the enforcement of minimum wage policy in the economy to attain the goals of social justice and equality?

Appendix 2: Codes for Participants

Participants	Assigned Codes
Indian economic expert 1	Participant A
Indian economic expert 2	Participant B
Indian economic expert 3	Participant C
Indian economic expert 4	Participant D
Indian economic expert 5	Participant E
Indian economic expert 6	Participant F