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Development of the Gender Pay Gap in the Global Film Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the existence and determinants of the gender pay gap in the global film industry. Drawing on labour economics theory and the concept of superstar markets, the research investigates whether gender significantly influences actor earnings after controlling for key economic and market-related factors. The empirical analysis is based on a dataset of 40 top-paid actors between 2018 and 2023, combining data from Forbes rankings, IMDb, and Box Office Mojo. Using ordinary least squares regression, the study evaluates the impact of gender, actor productivity, box-office performance, and audience ratings on income. The results reveal a substantial and statistically significant gender pay gap, with male actors earning considerably more than female actors even after controlling for observable characteristics. Box-office success and the number of film appearances are found to be significant positive determinants of earnings, while audience ratings do not have a significant effect. The findings suggest that commercial performance plays a dominant role in compensation, but also indicate the presence of persistent structural inequalities affecting female actors. The study contributes to the literature on gender inequality in creative industries and highlights the need for further research into institutional and market-based drivers of wage disparities.

Keywords *Gender Pay Gap; Film Industry; Labour Economics; Wage Inequality*

1. Introduction

Creative industries have become an increasingly important component of the global economy, generating significant economic value, employment opportunities and cultural influence. Among these industries, the film sector represents one of the most visible and economically significant creative markets worldwide. The global film industry generates billions of US dollars annually and relies heavily on highly skilled creative labour, including actors, directors and production professionals. Despite the dynamic growth of the sector, concerns about inequality in compensation and opportunities remain widely discussed, particularly with regard to gender disparities (Milana, 2018; Lincoln & Allen, 2004).

Gender pay inequality has long been a topic of economic and social research across multiple labour markets. In many industries, empirical studies have documented persistent wage differences between male and female employees even after controlling for factors such as education, experience and

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productivity (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Similar concerns have emerged within the film industry, where actors' compensation is often determined by complex factors including star power, box-office performance, negotiation power and market demand. Recent empirical evidence suggests that gender also plays a significant role in determining earnings (De Pater, Judge & Scott, 2014; Sanchez, 2019).

Several studies indicate that female actors tend to earn significantly less than their male counterparts in comparable roles. For example, research examining earnings in Hollywood has shown that male actors earn, on average, more than one million dollars per film more than female actors, even when controlling for key variables such as experience, popularity and film performance (Sanchez, 2019). This gap persists despite increasing public awareness and industry initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality. Analyses of the earnings of top-paid actors have also revealed substantial disparities in annual income rankings, where male actors consistently dominate the highest-earning positions (Elsesser, 2018; Robehmed, 2017).

The existence of such disparities raises important economic and social questions regarding the determinants of compensation within creative industries. Unlike many traditional labour markets, the film industry operates under a "superstar" system in which a small number of highly successful individuals capture a disproportionate share of total earnings (Rosen, 1981; Ravid, 1999). While this structure may partially explain income inequality, it does not fully account for systematic gender differences in earnings observed across multiple studies.

Recent academic research has therefore focused on identifying the underlying factors that contribute to gender-based wage disparities in the film industry. These factors may include differences in bargaining power, representation in high-budget productions, genre specialisation and structural inequalities within casting and production practices (Bielby & Bielby, 1996; Lauzen, 2022). Empirical analyses suggest that a substantial unexplained wage gap remains between male and female actors even after controlling for film characteristics and actor productivity, indicating the presence of structural inequalities within the industry (Milana, 2018).

Despite the growing number of studies examining gender inequality in the film industry, several aspects of this issue remain insufficiently explored. In particular, the extent to which observable factors such as film budget, actor productivity and market success explain income differences between male and female actors remains a subject of ongoing debate. Addressing this gap is important not only for understanding labour-market dynamics in creative industries, but also for informing policy discussions regarding equality and fair compensation (Graf, Brown & Patten, 2019).

The aim of this study is therefore to analyse the existence and determinants of the gender pay gap in the global film industry. Specifically, the research seeks to examine whether gender significantly influences actor earnings after accounting for key economic and market-related variables. By combining publicly available data on actor earnings, film performance and actor productivity, this study contributes to the broader discussion of gender inequality in creative labour markets.

The original contribution of this study lies in its focus on the period of 2018–2023 and on the upper segment of the global film labour market, where superstar effects are strongest and compensation is most visible. Previous empirical studies have mainly examined longer historical samples, the Hollywood market, or specific career-stage effects. This paper updates the evidence by testing whether a gender earnings premium persists among top-paid actors after controlling for recent box-office performance, actor productivity and audience evaluation. The study therefore extends existing research by linking contemporary earnings rankings with market-performance indicators and by showing that gender remains a significant predictor even within a highly commercialised and internationally visible segment of the film industry.

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Section 2 presents the theoretical background and reviews the relevant literature on gender inequality and labour markets in the film industry. Section 3 describes the research methodology and data used in the analysis. Section 4 presents the empirical results and discusses their implications in relation to existing international research. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper and outlines potential directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

Creative industries represent an important sector of modern economies, contributing significantly to employment, cultural development and economic growth (UNESCO, 2022). These industries include activities such as film production, music, design, advertising and digital media, all of which rely heavily on creativity, intellectual property and cultural production. Among these sectors, the global film industry occupies a particularly prominent position due to its economic scale and global reach (Eliashberg, Elberse & Leenders, 2006).

The film industry generates billions of US dollars in annual revenue and employs a wide range of creative professionals, including actors, directors, producers and technical specialists. Due to its project-based nature, employment relationships in the film industry differ from those in traditional labour markets (Caves, 2000). Actors typically work on short-term contracts tied to individual productions, and their compensation is influenced by multiple factors such as experience, reputation, negotiation power and the commercial success of films.

Economic research often describes the film industry as a “superstar market”, where a small number of highly successful actors capture a disproportionate share of industry income (Rosen, 1981; Adler, 1985). This phenomenon occurs because audiences tend to concentrate their attention on a limited number of highly recognisable performers, allowing top actors to command extremely high salaries. As a result, earnings in the film industry are highly unequal and strongly influenced by market demand and star popularity (Ravid, 1999).

2.2 Labour Markets in Creative Industries

Labour markets in creative industries differ significantly from traditional sectors due to their project-based structure and high levels of income volatility (Caves, 2000; Menger, 2017). Unlike conventional employment relationships characterised by stable contracts and predictable wages, creative professionals often rely on temporary engagements linked to specific projects. This structure creates substantial income variability and increases competition among workers.

In addition, success in creative industries is often influenced by factors that extend beyond measurable productivity. Reputation, public recognition and media exposure play an important role in determining career opportunities and earnings (Lincoln & Allen, 2004). The presence of superstar dynamics means that small differences in perceived talent or popularity can result in large differences in income.

These characteristics contribute to a highly stratified labour market in which a limited number of top performers earn extremely high incomes, while the majority of workers receive significantly lower compensation. Such structural features can amplify existing inequalities and may also contribute to gender disparities in earnings and career opportunities (Bielby & Bielby, 1996; Lauzen, 2022).

2.3 Gender Inequality in the Film Industry

Gender inequality has been widely documented across many sectors of the global economy, including the entertainment industry (Blau & Kahn, 2017). In the context of the film industry, numerous studies have highlighted persistent disparities in both representation and compensation between male and female

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actors. Although female participation in the industry has increased over time, significant inequalities remain in terms of access to leading roles, screen time and financial rewards (Smith, Choueiti & Pieper, 2020; Lauzen, 2022).

Empirical research has shown that male actors frequently receive higher compensation than female actors even when controlling for comparable levels of experience, popularity and film performance. For example, studies examining actor earnings in Hollywood have found that male actors earn, on average, more than one million dollars more per film than female actors in similar positions (Sanchez, 2019; Milana, 2018). These differences persist despite growing public attention to gender-equality issues within the entertainment industry.

The persistence of gender disparities in Hollywood has also been widely discussed in the media and academic literature. Analyses of earnings among the highest-paid actors reveal that male actors consistently dominate the top positions in annual income rankings, while female actors remain underrepresented among the highest earners (Elsesser, 2018; Robehmed, 2017). Such patterns suggest that structural factors within the industry may contribute to gender-based inequalities.

2.4 Empirical studies on the gender pay gap

Recent empirical research has increasingly focused on identifying the determinants of the gender pay gap within the film industry. Several studies have attempted to quantify the extent of wage disparities and examine the role of observable factors such as film budgets, actor productivity and box-office performance (De Pater et al., 2014; Milana, 2018).

A study published in the Journal of Management Inquiry found that female Hollywood actors experience an earlier peak in annual earnings than their male counterparts, with compensation declining significantly after the age of 34, while male earnings continue to grow until approximately age 51 (De Pater et al., 2014). More recent econometric evidence from Milana (2018), based on 203 observations from 1984 to 2018, estimates an unexplained gender wage gap equivalent to roughly 45 % of male earnings even after controlling for role importance, critical acclaim and film budget.

Other studies have also highlighted the role of film genre and production characteristics in shaping actor compensation. Actors appearing in high-budget action films often receive substantially higher salaries than those working in smaller productions (Ravid, 1999). However, female actors are historically underrepresented in these high-budget genres, which may contribute to differences in average earnings (Lauzen, 2022; Smith et al., 2020).

Research also suggests that bargaining power and negotiation dynamics may influence actor compensation. Because salaries in the film industry are often negotiated individually rather than determined by standardised pay structures, actors with stronger industry influence or more established reputations may be able to secure more favourable contracts (Pires, 2017). This negotiation-based system may unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities within the industry.

Although previous studies have provided important insights into gender inequality in the film industry, several questions remain unresolved. There is ongoing debate regarding the extent to which observable economic factors such as film success, actor productivity and market demand can explain differences in actor earnings.

While some studies attribute wage disparities primarily to differences in experience, popularity and film performance, others argue that a substantial unexplained gap remains even after accounting for these variables. This suggests that structural characteristics of the film industry continue to perpetuate gender-based income differences (Milana, 2018; Lauzen, 2022). Further empirical analysis based on recent data

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is therefore needed to better understand the relationship between gender and actor earnings in the modern film industry.

3. Data and Methods

3.1 Research objective

The aim of this study is to analyse the existence and determinants of the gender pay gap in the global film industry. Specifically, the research examines whether gender significantly influences actor earnings after controlling for selected economic and market-related variables. To address this objective, the study formulates the following research question: Does gender significantly affect the earnings of actors in the film industry?

In order to examine this question, three research hypotheses were tested:

> **H1:** Female actors earn significantly less than male actors in the global film industry.
>
> **H2:** Actor earnings are positively associated with the cumulative box-office success of their films.
>
> **H3:** Actor productivity, measured by the number of films in the analysed period, positively affects actor earnings.

3.2 Data

The empirical analysis is based on secondary data obtained from publicly available sources related to the global film industry. Information on actor earnings was collected from the Forbes annual rankings of the highest-paid actors and actresses, which provide estimates of pre-tax income for leading performers in the entertainment industry (Robehmed, 2017; Berg, 2020). Additional data on film performance and actor productivity were obtained from publicly accessible film-industry databases, specifically the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and Box Office Mojo.

The dataset includes 40 actors (25 male, 15 female) who appeared in major international film productions between 2018 and 2023. The sample was selected purposively from publicly reported annual rankings of the highest-paid actors and actresses, because the objective of the study is to analyse gender disparities at the top of the film-income distribution rather than to describe the entire acting profession. This group is particularly relevant for the research question because top-paid actors have the strongest bargaining power, the greatest market visibility and the highest probability of appearing in commercially significant productions. If a gender pay gap is observable even among this highly visible elite segment, it may indicate the persistence of structural mechanisms that are not limited to lower-paid or less recognised performers.

The final dataset contains information on annual actor earnings, gender, number of films released during the analysed period, the cumulative worldwide box-office revenue associated with those films and the average IMDb rating of the actor's five most recent leading roles. All monetary variables are expressed in millions of USD and adjusted to 2023 prices using the U.S. CPI (FRED, 2024). The main variables used in the analysis are summarised in Tab.1.

The relatively small sample size reflects both the exclusivity of the top-paid actor category and the limited availability of consistent public income data. The use of 40 observations enables an exploratory regression analysis, but it also restricts the statistical power of the model and the generalisability of the findings. The results should therefore be interpreted as evidence for the upper tier of the global film industry rather than as estimates applicable to all actors, supporting roles, national film markets or non-English-language productions. This limitation is explicitly acknowledged when interpreting the regression coefficients and policy implications.

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Tab. 1. Variables used in the empirical analysis

Variable	Type	Description
Income	Continuous (USD m, log)	Annual pre-tax earnings of the actor as reported by Forbes
Gender	Dummy (1 = male, 0 = female)	Binary indicator of actor gender
Movies	Count	Number of feature films released in the analysed period
BoxOffice	Continuous (USD m)	Cumulative worldwide box-office revenue of the actor's films
Rating	Continuous (0–10)	Average IMDb user rating of the actor's five most recent leading roles

Source: Own processing based on Forbes (2023), IMDb and Box Office Mojo.

3.3 Methodology

To analyse the determinants of actor earnings, this study applies ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis, which allows the relationship between actor income and selected explanatory variables to be estimated while controlling for other factors. The dependent variable is expressed as the natural logarithm of annual income in order to reduce skewness and to allow the coefficients to be interpreted approximately as percentage changes, in line with standard practice in labour economics (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Milana, 2018).

The estimated regression model has the following form:

$$\ln(\text{Income}_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\,\text{Gender}_i + \beta_2\,\text{Movies}_i + \beta_3\,\ln(\text{BoxOffice}_i) + \beta_4\,\text{Rating}_i + \varepsilon_i. \qquad (1)$$

where Gender captures the gender of the actor (1 = male, 0 = female), Movies measures actor productivity, ln(BoxOffice) represents the commercial success of the actor's films, Rating reflects audience evaluation of those films, and ε is an idiosyncratic error term assumed to be normally distributed with zero mean and constant variance.

Several potentially relevant variables were considered but were not included in the final regression model due to data availability, comparability and sample-size constraints. Actor age was excluded because the income data are aggregated annually and do not consistently distinguish whether earnings originate from newly released films, back-end payments, streaming contracts or previous projects; including age without detailed career-stage information could therefore introduce measurement noise. Film budget and genre were not included because the analysed income variable refers to actor-level annual earnings, while budgets and genres are film-level characteristics and many actors in the sample appeared in multiple films or franchise-related projects within the period. A reliable actor-level aggregation would require detailed contract information that is not publicly available. Awards were also omitted because awards may be both a determinant and an outcome of actor visibility, creating potential endogeneity. Finally, agency representation and contract structures were excluded because comparable information on agents, management contracts, back-end participation and negotiation clauses is not systematically disclosed for all actors. To avoid overfitting in a sample of 40 observations, the model therefore focuses on the most consistently observable variables: gender, productivity, box-office performance and audience rating.

Before estimation, the key OLS assumptions were verified. Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIF), with all values below 3.0 – well under the commonly accepted threshold of 10. Heteroskedasticity was tested using the Breusch–Pagan test ($p = 0.214$), which did not indicate a violation of the homoskedasticity assumption. The normality of residuals was confirmed using the Jarque–Bera test ($p = 0.387$). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, minima and maxima) were additionally computed to provide an initial overview of income differences between male and

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female actors. All statistical analyses were performed in Microsoft Excel and in the open-source statistical environment R (version 4.3.2).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Earning of Male and Female Actors

The initial descriptive analysis indicates a substantial difference in average earnings between male and female actors in the sample. Male actors earned on average USD 57.8 million per year, compared with USD 24.3 million for female actors. This corresponds to a female-to-male earnings ratio of 0.42, which is considerably lower than both the overall U.S. gender earnings ratio of 0.82 reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023) and the Hollywood-specific ratio of 0.55 reported by Milana (2018).

Tab. 2. Descriptive statistics of the analysed variables

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Income (USD m)	All (n = 40)	45.24	29.81	8.20	122.50
Income (USD m)	Male (n = 25)	57.80	28.72	15.00	122.50
Income (USD m)	Female (n = 15)	24.34	13.47	8.20	58.50
Movies	All	5.48	2.14	2	11
BoxOffice (USD m)	All	1 612.75	948.12	182.40	3 874.00
Rating (IMDb)	All	7.12	0.58	5.90	8.40

Source: Own processing based on Forbes (2023), IMDb and Box Office Mojo.

Figure 1 indicates that men's mean real earnings remained consistently higher than women's earnings throughout the observed period. This general pattern supports the relevance of examining whether similar inequalities are also present within high-income creative labour markets, such as the film industry.

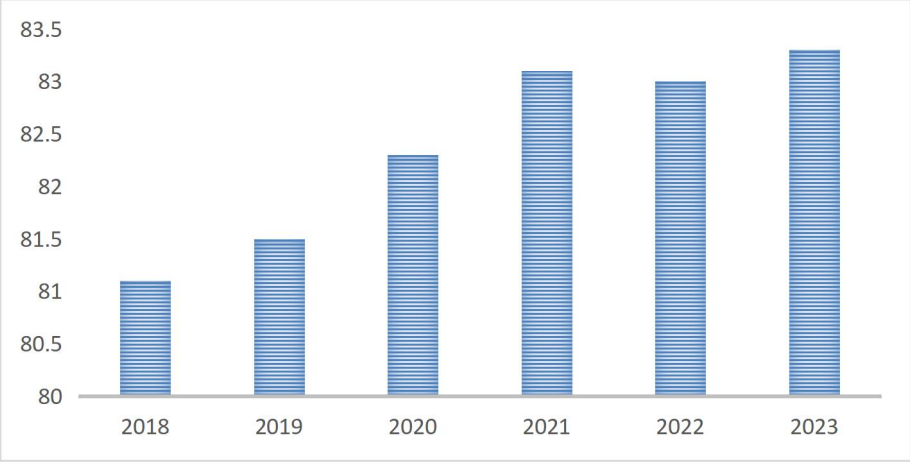


Fig. 1. Women's earnings as a percentage of men's (2018-2023)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023.

4.2 Results of Regression Analysis

The estimated OLS regression of the logarithm of annual income on gender, productivity, box-office performance and average IMDb rating is presented in Tab. 3. The model explains 62.4 % of the variation in log income (adjusted $R^2 = 0.582$) and the overall F-statistic ($F = 14.52$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that the explanatory variables jointly have a statistically significant effect on actor earnings (see Tab. 3).

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Tab. 3. Regression results — dependent variable: ln(Income)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. error	t-stat	p-value
Intercept	1.284	0.612	2.098	0.043
Gender (male = 1) * **	**0.478**	0.128	3.734	0.001
Movies **	0.061	0.027	2.259	0.030
ln(BoxOffice) ***	0.324	0.091	3.560	0.001
Rating (IMDb) ns	0.042	0.128	0.328	0.745
Observations	40			
R^2 / Adj. R^2	0.624 / 0.582			
F-statistic (p-value)	14.52 (<0.001)			

Source: Own processing

The coefficient on Gender is positive and highly significant (β = 0.478, p = 0.001), indicating that, after controlling for productivity and film performance, being male is associated with approximately 48 % higher expected annual income than being female. Given that the dependent variable is in logarithmic form, the semi-elasticity can be approximated as (e^β − 1) × 100 %, which yields an income premium of about 61 % for male actors. This magnitude is remarkably close to the estimate reported by Milana (2018), who found a male premium of 61 % for the U.S. market between 1984 and 2018, suggesting that the unexplained gender pay gap has remained persistent despite a decade of public debate.

The coefficient on ln(BoxOffice) is also highly significant (β = 0.324, p = 0.001), implying that a 10 % increase in cumulative box-office revenue is associated with a 3.2 % increase in annual earnings. This confirms the theoretical expectation that commercial success is rewarded in the form of higher compensation, in line with the superstar-market hypothesis (Rosen, 1981; Ravid, 1999). The productivity variable Movies is significant at the 5 % level (β = 0.061, p = 0.030), indicating that each additional feature film adds approximately 6 % to annual income on average. Conversely, the IMDb rating is not statistically significant (p = 0.745), suggesting that critical or audience acclaim, in isolation, is not a primary determinant of actor earnings in this sample.

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the existence of a persistent gender pay gap in the global film industry. The regression results clearly indicate that gender remains a statistically significant determinant of actor earnings even after controlling for key economic variables such as productivity and box-office performance. Specifically, the estimated income premium associated with being male suggests that male actors earn substantially more than their female counterparts, which confirms hypothesis H1 and aligns with prior empirical research (e.g., Milana, 2018; Sanchez, 2019).

This result is particularly important because it demonstrates that observable market-based factors alone do not fully explain income differences. While variables such as box-office revenue and number of film appearances were found to significantly influence earnings, the persistence of a strong gender coefficient suggests the presence of structural inequalities within the industry. This supports the argument in the literature that discrimination, unequal bargaining power, and institutional barriers continue to disadvantage female actors (Bielby & Bielby, 1996; Lauzen, 2022).

The positive and significant effect of box-office performance (H2) confirms the relevance of the superstar market theory in the film industry. Actors associated with commercially successful films are rewarded with higher compensation, reflecting the industry's strong reliance on financial performance as a key determinant of value. This finding is consistent with Rosen's (1981) theory of superstars and empirical studies such as Ravid (1999), which emphasize the role of market demand and audience concentration in driving income inequality.

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Similarly, the positive relationship between actor productivity and earnings (H3) suggests that more active actors benefit from increased visibility and greater opportunities, which translate into higher income. This aligns with expectations from labour economics, where experience and output are typically rewarded. However, the magnitude of this effect is relatively modest compared to the impact of box-office success and gender, indicating that simply increasing the number of film appearances may not be sufficient to close the gender pay gap.

In contrast, the lack of statistical significance for IMDb ratings suggests that critical or audience appreciation does not play a decisive role in determining actor earnings. This implies that the film industry prioritizes commercial outcomes over qualitative evaluations when determining compensation. Such a finding highlights a potential disconnect between artistic merit and financial reward, reinforcing the idea that the industry operates primarily as a market-driven system rather than a purely merit-based one.

When compared with previous studies, the results of this analysis are remarkably consistent. The estimated gender pay gap is similar in magnitude to earlier findings, suggesting that little progress has been made in reducing income inequality over time. Despite increased public awareness and industry initiatives promoting gender equality, the structural dynamics of the film industry appear to remain largely unchanged. This persistence may be linked to factors such as unequal access to high-budget productions, typecasting, and differences in career longevity, particularly the earlier earnings peak observed among female actors (De Pater et al., 2014).

At a broader level, these findings contribute to the understanding of labour market dynamics in creative industries. The combination of superstar effects, project-based employment, and individualized salary negotiations creates an environment where inequalities can be amplified. In such a context, even small initial differences in opportunities or representation can lead to substantial long-term disparities in earnings.

However, the study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample consists of 40 top-paid actors, which limits the statistical power of the regression and restricts the generalisability of the findings. The results are most relevant for the elite segment of the film labour market and should not be interpreted as representative of all actors, supporting performers or national film industries. Second, the analysis relies on publicly available income estimates reported by Forbes and related industry sources. Although these rankings are widely used in media and academic discussions, they are estimates of pre-tax earnings and may not capture all contractual components, including deferred payments, profit participation, streaming bonuses, endorsements, agency fees or non-disclosed compensation arrangements. Third, the exclusive focus on top-paid actors may underestimate or overestimate gender inequality in the wider industry: elite performers have greater bargaining power than average actors, but superstar markets may also amplify gender differences because small differences in access to high-budget projects can generate large income effects. Fourth, the model does not include actor age, film budget, genre, awards, agency representation or contract structure, mainly due to limited comparability and the risk of overfitting. Future research should therefore use larger datasets, actor-level panel data, contract-level information and film-level controls to distinguish more precisely between market-based, institutional and discriminatory explanations of the gender pay gap.

In summary, the discussion highlights that while market-based factors such as box-office success and productivity are important drivers of earnings, they do not fully account for the observed gender disparities. The persistence of a significant gender effect points to deeper structural issues within the film industry, emphasizing the need for continued research and targeted policy interventions aimed at promoting greater equality.

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5. Conclusions

This study examined the existence and determinants of the gender pay gap in the global film industry. The findings confirm that gender remains a significant factor influencing actor earnings, even after controlling for productivity, box-office success, and audience ratings. Male actors earn substantially more than female actors, highlighting the persistence of structural income inequality within the industry.

The results further indicate that commercial success and the number of film appearances positively affect earnings, while audience ratings do not play a significant role. This suggests that financial performance and market visibility are the primary drivers of compensation, reinforcing the “superstar” nature of the industry. However, the persistence of a significant gender coefficient points to underlying structural and institutional barriers that disadvantage female actors.

From a policy perspective, these findings call for more concrete action by industry regulators, producers’ associations, unions, streaming platforms, funding agencies and professional guilds. First, pay transparency should be improved through standardised salary bands for comparable leading roles, confidential pay audits by studios and platforms, and annual gender-disaggregated reporting of remuneration in publicly funded or publicly supported productions. Such reporting does not necessarily require full public disclosure of individual salaries, but it should enable independent monitoring of whether comparable roles, screen time, contractual status and revenue expectations are rewarded in an equitable way.

Second, equality measures should address access to high-budget productions and commercially visible genres, because box-office performance is a significant determinant of earnings. Film funds, tax incentives and public co-production schemes could require applicants to provide gender-balance plans for leading roles, transparent casting criteria and evidence that remuneration structures were reviewed for gender bias. Studios and production companies could also adopt inclusion targets for lead and co-lead roles in major productions, while monitoring whether women are equally represented in franchises, action films and other high-revenue genres.

Third, institutional support for fair negotiation should be strengthened. Professional guilds and unions could provide model contract clauses, salary-benchmarking tools, negotiation training and confidential advisory services, particularly for actors who lack strong representation. The industry should also consider independent ombudspersons or equality officers who can review complaints about unequal pay, monitor repeated disparities across productions and support dispute resolution without exposing individual actors to reputational risks.

Finally, reducing gender-based inequalities requires long-term organisational change. Funding bodies and industry awards could incorporate equality indicators into evaluation criteria, while production companies could publish aggregate diversity and pay-equity metrics as part of sustainability or ESG reporting. Streaming platforms and studios should also improve data collection on gender, role type, screen time, budget category and compensation structure. These measures would help move the industry from voluntary statements of support for gender equality toward measurable accountability.

In conclusion, while market-based factors explain a significant portion of earnings variation, the persistence of a gender pay gap suggests the need for targeted policy interventions. Addressing these disparities will not only improve fairness within the industry but also contribute to more inclusive and sustainable development of global creative markets.

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