



A review of Recent trends in women's work force participation in India

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Abstract

With sustained periods of rapid economic development from the early 1990s and the New Economic Policy that liberalised the commercial sector, the Indian workforce has seen enormous changes in their lives as well as the country's economy. Growth has been skewed in favour of a preferred gender, though. India is still a long way from reaping its much-hyped demographic dividend because of the hardened glass ceilings, unexplained salary inequalities, unconscious prejudices, or lack of basic facilities like separate restroom

Many things are to blame for the reduction in female LFPR, including household responsibilities, conservative societal values, and a lack of employment models that allow for flexibility. Women's career choices are influenced more by the demands of the home than by their own personal preferences or financial needs.

Keywords: "Dynamics of Gender Inequality and Women's Work in India: Key Issues for discussion and further research".

INTRODUCTION

Female labor force participation (LFPR), which measures the percentage of Indian women who are employed or looking for employment, has fallen precipitously in recent years and is currently even lower than the global average of 47%. Despite structural improvements to the lives of Indian women, such as a drop in birth rates and an increase in women's education, India's female LFPR is decreasing. The World Bank estimates that India's female labor participation percentage has decreased from 26% in 2005 to slightly over 20% in 2019. In comparison to Bangladesh's 30.5 percent and Sri Lanka's 33.7 percent, this is a long cry from what we'd expect.



This grim situation of women's job involvement declining might, however, take a positive turn in the direction of women's employment. It's possible that COVID-19 and post-pandemic hybrid work models might be game changers for many women, delivering flexible and inventive job alternatives with more empathic work environments. The gig economy and established businesses alike may benefit from more diverse work environments if these new employment patterns are adopted.

India constitutes a total population of 1324.17 million; out of this, 652.88 million are females and 697.16 million are males. Although, women account for half of the world's population but their participation in national economy from the producers and consumers point of view is very limited eventually limiting the development of country. Even the passage of more than six decades of Independence, the status of women in country has not shown any marked rise. The work force participation rate (WFPR), a principal economic indicator has demonstrated wide unbridged gap between males and females. According to World Bank estimates the women's WFPR in India has fallen from more than 26% in 2005 to 20.3% in 2019 which is far behind the neighboring countries *viz.*, Bangladesh (30.5%) and Sri Lanka (33.7%) (Kumar 2021). Women receive one-tenth of their income and own less than one-hundredth of their property. In Indian culture, women are considered as comparatively inefficient in terms of work over men. They are often considered as made for the performance of household works *viz.*, taking care of family, child bearing, devoting time in nurturing children and caring for her family irrespective men are regarded as the prime achiever and the bread winner of the family. Women are taken as a secondary party often indulged for performing family's subsidiary works and society at large. In household work, women are considered as someone's dignity and it has always been considered as duty of woman either of wife, mother, daughter or sister or sometime hire-maids to perform household works at no pay expectance.

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As a result of the country's history of ambiguity and inconsistency, Indian conceptions of work have likewise been characterised by a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes economic activity. According to NSSO's conception, the notion of main and subsidiary activities was introduced, as well as the concepts of usual status, weekly status, and 'day-to-day' information on these activities. Agricultural activities aimed for the farmer's personal consumption,



including as farming, harvesting, post-harvesting, collecting wild crops, forestry, hunting, fishing, and other non-market activities, have been included in the NSS since the 50th round (1993-94). Added to it were activities previously excluded, such as the building of one's own homes, roads, wells, and machinery, tools, and other equipment for one's own household businesses, as well as the free construction of any private or communal infrastructure. Participation in such self-financed construction, whether as a worker or a manager, is considered economic activity. Production for personal use rather than export has never been considered an economic activity. Even if they provide income, prostitution, begging, and gambling are all prohibited from the definition of domestic job.

Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20 statistics show that women's involvement in the labour force in India is much lower than that of men. In FY 2020, male involvement was 56.8%, while female participation was just 22.2%. The most recent PLFS polls, which are conducted every three months, show that the situation is becoming worse. With Himachal Pradesh (29.6 percent), Andhra Pradesh (23.1 percent), Tamil Nadu (24.2 percent), Kerala (19.5), and West Bengal (19.5) among the best-performing states in the January-March 2021 quarter. Bihar, which had a participation percentage of 4.4%, was the third-worst performance, after only Delhi (8.8%) and Uttar Pradesh (9.7%).

| Annual Labor Force Participation Rate in India (in percent) (FY2018-20) | | | |
|---|--------|------|------|
| | Female | Male | All |
| FY 2017-18 | 17.5 | 55.5 | 36.9 |
| FY 2018-19 | 18.6 | 55.6 | 37.5 |
| FY 2019-20 | 22.2 | 56.8 | 40.1 |

Source : Annual bulletin of Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20



Review of literature

(Sundari 2020) studied "*Structural Changes and Quality of Women's Labour in India*" It discovered that the structural changes in the Indian economy have had a significant impact on the trends and patterns of change in women's employment structure throughout the years (1983–2018). Women's labour quality is also analysed in terms of selected factors. Structural changes in the economy have not resulted in an increase in women's employment in either quantity or quality. Economic development and an increase in female literacy have had little effect on the "U" curve of female labour supply, suggesting that women have not been adequately employed as a result. It also means that non-economic variables affect the entrance or departure of women from the labour market.

(Kapsos, Silberman, and Bourmpoula 2014) Studied "*Why is female labour force participation declining so sharply in India*" the reasons for India's dramatic drop in female labour force participation and to uncover the elements that have stifled female involvement in India for decades. We look at four important theories on the core causes of diminishing female involvement via a review of labour market data, a series of scenario exercises, and econometric research. This study's results suggest that a variety of variables contributed to the recent substantial fall in the projected participation rates of working-age women in the labour market.

(Sharma and Saha 2015) Studied "*Female Employment Trends in India: A Disaggregated Analysis*" Women make up roughly half of a country's population, and its economic progress is heavily dependent on their involvement in the workforce. In addition, women's engagement in the workforce as a percentage of men's is a significant factor in determining their social standing. Increasing the level of life and well-being of women requires their participation in the labour force.

CONCLUSION

With the development of world towards globalized village the active participation of women is becoming crucial for achievement of peaks across social and economic sectors. Empowering women has always remained imperative across up-liftment of their status and removal of various forms of social, economic and political disparities in order to achieve societal development as a whole. Zhao, 1991 suggested three parameters sector *viz.*, socio-



economic power, socio-economic status and the level of support and chances available to women in society for appraising the status of women in household (ZHAO, 1991). The economic status of women can be estimated from their contribution in ameliorating the status of their particular position by their independent source of income and the consequent increase in women's self-esteem. Elimination of gender disparity in the areas of ownership and property control can further be regraded crucial if the empowerment of women is accepted truly (Andal, 2002).

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