



PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE LABOUR FORCE IN INFORMAL SECTOR (A Study with Reference to North Andaman, India)

Dr. Gouri Bepari , Dr. Parbati Bepari and Smti. Neesha Halder

ABSTRACT

India has experienced rapid economic growth, a decline in fertility rate, introduction of employment generation programs and policy shifts towards women empowerment in recent years. Yet, a striking feature has been a declining trend in the female labour force participation rates in Andaman Island. The present paper attempts to describe the work force participation rates in North Andaman, India. It also attempts to identify the potential causes of declining female labour force participation on the basis of secondary data. It is observed that social norms, level of education, gender discriminatory practices, policy measures have influenced participation of women in the labour force in India.

KEY WORD: Social Norms, Gender Discrimination, Female Labour Force Participation, Informal Jobs, Agriculture, employment and work force.

INTRODUCTION:

During the struggle for independence Mahatma Gandhi ji - the father of nation who had thought that the development of India could be made possible only when the villages would develop as India is a country of villages. Even after 60 years of Indian independence, 70% of people are living in rural areas and 60.4% people are depending on the agricultural sector for their livelihood. According to the Indian Fiscal commission, "Agriculture is not merely an occupation, it is a way of life which for centuries has shaped the thought and outlook of many millions of people." Agriculture is the first culture that man learnt to practice as a means of living and a way of life. It is the primary sector of any economy either it is developed or developing. Agriculture is considered as the backbone of the Indian rural economy and is a family enterprise. It is an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. India's economic security is heavily dependent on agriculture. In terms of employment, it is the most important source of income, especially for rural women. According to 2011 World Bank Data only, 17.5% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is accounted for by agricultural production. Based on 2012 data, India is home to the fourth largest Participation of Women in Agricultural Production Agriculture: Towards a New Paradigm of Sustainability ISBN: 978-93-83083-64-0 151 agricultural sector in the world. It has an estimated 180 million hectares of farmland with 140 million of which are planted and continuously cultivated.



The International Development Community has recognized that "agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor". However, the agriculture sector in many developing countries is under performing, in part because women, who represent crucial resources in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. The women labour constitutes an important segment of the labour force in India and their participation in the labour force is gradually increasing in the labour market. Wage work in India, as elsewhere, in a number of

fields is sharply differentiated along sexual lines. There are only a few occupations, which are exclusively preserved for either men or women, even when men and women work in the same industry.

REVIEW OF LITRATURE

Mridul Eapen (1992), "Fertility and Female Labour Force Participation in kerala" The functioning of the female labour market may have induced a certain response affecting fertility behavior, decline in work participation rates of married women.

Tariq Masood and Mohd. Izhar Ahmad (2009), "An econometric analysis of inter-state variation in women's labour force participation in India" Education and wages have no significant effect on rural women's labour force participation, Muslim population has negative effect while scheduled tribes and scheduled cast population has positive effect on rural women's labour force participation.

Terni Raney and included Gustavo Anriquez, corppssted, Stefano Gerosa, Sarah Lowder, Ira Matuscke and Jakob Skact, (2011), The role of women in agriculture, "Women comprise about 43 percent of the global agriculture labour force and of that in developing countries, but this figure marks considerable variation across region and within countries according age and social class, women comprise half or more of the agricultural labour force in many African and Asian countries, but share is much less in some". "Women's participation in rural labour market show much heterogeneity at the regional level, but women is over represented in unpaid, seasonal and part-time work and the available evidence suggests that women are often paid less than men, for the same work".

Surjit S. Bhalla and Ravinder Kaur (2011), 'Labour force participation of women in India, some facts, some queries'. "India has one of the lowest labour force participation rates for women in the world, more accurately, one of the lowest rate for urban women". "Female education has a positive effect on labour force participation rate".

Das S, Jain-Chandra S, Kochhar K, and Kumar N(2015) in their study found that females in households with higher per capita spending, are less likely to be in the labour force. Expected wages have a significant and positive effect on the likelihood of being in the labour force for urban females. Also more flexible labour markets encourage higher female participation in the labour force.

Makkena Suneeta (2014), *'Female labour participation in agriculture : A case of A* "The rural area female total workers are increasing than the male total workers, indicating and increase in women work force participation rate in agricultural activities".

The persistent decline in female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India in the face of consistent economic growth is a puzzling phenomenon. It was brought sharply in to focus with the results of latest employment and unemployment survey which declined from 33.3% to 26.5% in rural areas and from 17.3% to 14.6% in urban areas (NSSO 2011) in the period 2004-05 to 2009-10.

According to the Reports of International Labour Organization Global Employment Trends 2013, India is placed at 120th among 131 countries in women's labour force participation.

According to the 66th round of the National Sample Survey (June 2009- June 2010)⁶, the worker's population ratio (W.P.R.) for women, according to the usual status (Considering both principal activity and subsidiary activity), in rural and urban areas was 26.1% and 13.8% respectively⁷. Female labour force participation depends on availability of male workers, cropping pattern, productivity of male workers, productivity of land, size of the holdings and the population depending on agriculture. In addition to these variables, fertility and female literacy also have direct impact on the female labour force participation. However, in agriculture sector there is a negative relationship between literacy-enhancement aspirations for better jobs and a shift from agriculture to non-farm employment. The economic and socio cultural factors also influence the rural female work participation rate. The factors like sex ratio, child-women ratio, per-capita agricultural productivity and percentage of male agricultural workers, female literacy percentage, size of operational holdings, and mechanization will have direct impact on female rural work participation rate.

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The literature survey reveals that, participation of women in the labour force has witnessed a declining trend in India in spite of increase in the GDP of the country. This can have serious implications on the social and economic indicators of development. However, there is very limited research carried out in the Indian context. Therefore, the present study attempts to carry out an exploratory research to examine the trends in women labour force participation and the causes of declining labour force participation rate in the country

AN OVERVIEW OF WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN INDIA

Labour force participation represents a woman's decision to be part of the employed or unemployed population as opposed to being part of the economically inactive population (comprised of those not in work and not seeking work). The relationship between women's participation in the labour force and development is complex and reflects changes in economic activity, educational attainment, fertility rates, social norms and other factors. In India, women represent 48.4 percent of the population. Female labour force participation rate is, however, less than half of that of men. The Employment and Unemployment survey of the National Sample Survey Organization (66th Round), 2009-10 reveals that 23 percent of women are in the labour force as compared to 55.6 percent of men. The latest Employment and Unemployment Survey (NSSO 2011) reveals that from 2004-05 to 2009-10 women's labour force participation declined from 33.3 per cent to 26.5 per cent in rural areas and from 17.8 per cent to 14.6 per cent in urban areas. According to the International Labour Organization's Global Employment Trends 2013 Report, India ranks 120th out of 131 countries in women's labour force participation.

Table 1: Workforce Participation Rates

Gender wise Workforce Participation Rates				
Female WPR			Male WPR	
Round	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
43rd	15.2	32.3	50.6	53.9
50 th	15.5	32.8	52.1	55.3
55 th	13.9	29.9	51.8	53.1
61 st	16.6	32.7	54.9	54.6
66 th	13.8	26.1	54.3	54.7
68 th	14.7	24.8	54.6	54.3

Source: NSSO Surveys

Table No.1 shows that female workforce participation rate has declined in both urban as well as rural areas whereas male workforce participation rate has improved in the urban areas and remained more or less same in the rural areas during the NSSO survey rounds.

The specific objectives of the study are

- 1) To understand the trend in women labour force participation in north andaman.
- 2) To find out the causes of declining women labour force participation in the north andaman.
- 3) To suggest possible measures to improve female labour force participation in andaman.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory in nature and therefore relies on secondary data obtained from published sources.

Causes of declining female labour force participation in the country

1) Social dimensions

In India, women's decision to participate in the workforce is influenced by social norms regarding marriage, fertility and women's role outside the household. Men are considered to be the bread earner of the family and women are expected to take care of household activities. This leads to gender differences in employment. Right to own land and access to financial services is highly unequal. Social norms affecting female participation differ by region, religion and social groups.

2) Measurement Issues

In India, women's employment may be undercounted, since many women prefer home-based work, which helps them to carry out their domestic responsibilities. This may create difficulties in measuring the amount of paid versus unpaid work carried out by the women. In 2011-12, 35.3 per cent of all rural females and 46.1 per cent of all urban females in India were engaged in domestic duties, whereas these rates were 29 per cent and 42 per cent respectively in 1993-94.

3) Level of Education

Less educated women tend to have higher participation rates than women with primary or secondary education. This observation may be related to socio-economic status, as women in poor families have to work to maintain their families. But as men in the family start earning more income, women tend to cut back their work in the formal economy and concentrate more on household activities. It is observed that increasing number of working age women are enrolling in secondary schools. At higher levels of education and income, women again enter the workforce, if they get well-paid jobs that match their education and skills.

4) Household Income

It is expected that women living in households with increased incomes are less likely to participate in the labour market.

5) Jobless Growth

'Jobless growth' implies that growth rate of gross domestic product has been largely achieved due to increasing productivity and not employment. The low female participation may be due to lack of jobs. A large number of rising female labour forces could not get jobs, as most of the net job creation since 2000 has been taken up by men. The burden of jobless growth was borne mostly by women. There has been a general decline in employment opportunities for women, as they face increased competition with men for scarce jobs.

6) Gender Discrimination

There has been some speculation that the low level of female labour force participation in India is due to discrimination against women at the workplace. They receive lower wages and often do not get entry into 'paid' jobs. This may be experienced more by the economically backward communities like the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes who together account for a quarter of the population.

7) Demand side factors

Employment prospects for jobs typically occupied by educated women (particularly white-collar jobs in service industries, including health, education and public service) might have grown less than the supply of educated workers, leading to fewer women entering the labour force. Thus the relative growth in demand and supply of these types of jobs might have affected participation rates.

8) Wage Differentials

Labour force participation rates are also influenced by wage differentials facing women. Notably there is a gender wage gap in both the formal and informal sectors, with male workers earning a higher wage on an average in both sectors. Women are being paid less for a number of reasons -so called break in career due to childbirth and 'parenthood duties', not demanding higher rewards during salary decisions and general attitude towards women in India.

9) Occupational Segregation

Certain industries and occupations, such as basic agriculture, sales, handicraft manufacturing etc. are considered to be meant for women. This reduces opportunities for employment in other sectors of the economy.

Measures for Improving Female Labour Force Participation Rate

A comprehensive approach is required to improve participation of women in the labour force:

- ❖ Women should be provided access to better education and training programs in north andaman.
- ❖ To ease the burden of domestic duties, child care and other supportive facilities should be provided at the workplace.
- ❖ There is need to improve women's safety and create job opportunities for women in the private sector.
- ❖ Awareness and implementation of anti-discrimination laws is essential for expanding employment opportunities for women.
- ❖ Reducing gaps in wages and working conditions of men and women can boost women participation in work in north andaman.
- ❖ The measurement tools used to record and analyse women's participation in the labour market needs revision in north andaman.

CONCLUSION

Female labour market participation in India is very low as compared to other emerging markets. Raising female labour force participation could boost economic growth. Women's employment is driven by a range of factors like education, gender policies, social norms and the nature of job creation.

Gender-responsive policies need to be developed so that women are able to access better jobs or start up a business, and take the benefit of economic growth. Ultimately, the goal is not just to increase female labour force participation, but to provide opportunities for decent work that will, in turn, contribute to the economic empowerment of women in north andaman.

Scope for Further Research

Due to the time constraint, the present study was entirely based on secondary data. Therefore the future research may be based on primary data to seek opinion of the stakeholders.

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