

## **Analytical study of women workforce in India**

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### **Abstract-**

Female employment in India has an intrinsic relationship with female empowerment. Female employment and empowerment have been considerable issues over the years. The rise in economic growth in India has brought significant change to the lives of Indian women and ultimately affects the female employment. The national Household survey, Periodic Labour Force Survey, conducted by National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), reveals the female employment status in India. No doubt that the Female labour force participation (FLFPR) rate in India, which refers to women who are either working or looking for a job, is below the global average of 47 percent for several years. But the commendable fact is that the women empowerment over the years has taken the female employment at the rising steps. Though it is still not at par with global average, however, it's improving over the years. Now, India is a country where one third of women have joined the labour force.

### **Abbreviations-**

PLFS - Periodic Labour Force Survey    LFPR- Female Labour Force Participation Rate

### **Introduction**

Female participation in the labour force and access to decent work is very much essential for an inclusive and sustainable development of the country. At the macro level, greater participation of female in the workforce is good for the overall economy. In India, female labour force participation is growing significantly over the years. Although, the female labour force participation rate is lower than global average, but it is moving upwards notably.

### **Objectives of the study**

- ❖ To present a picture of female in labour market
- ❖ To summarize the reasons of low female labour force participation in India
- ❖ To identify the areas of work where women, who are not in labour force, are engaged.
- ❖ To familiarize with female labour market information for gender analysis and policymaking .

Encouraging and welcoming female higher participation in the labour force is vital for economic growth. The latest Report of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2021-22 is evident of increased Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in India. Though it is lower than the male, but female LFPR is significantly increasing over the years and at present, around one third of women have joined the labour force. As per the latest PLFS report, around 32.8% female of working age (15 years and above) were in labour force in 2021-22 which was just 23.3% in 2017-18, registered a surge of 9.5% points during these years. The major push came from the rural sector than the urban sector, where it increased by 12.0 and 3.4 percentage points, respectively.

In rural areas, female LFPR has increased to 36.6% during 2021-22 as compared to 24.6% in 2017-18, showed an increase of 12.0% points. On the other side, female participation in urban areas was significantly lower than the rural areas. Female LFPR was 23.8% in 2021-22 as compared to 20.4% in 2017-18 in urban areas, showed an increase of just 3.4% points.

The female participation in labour force has increased by 9.5% points in 2021-22 over the year 2017-18, this upward trend in female LFPR is the result of various influential factors. Out of the total females of age group 15-59 years, 35.6% females were in labour force during 2021-22 as compared to 25.3% during 2017-18, a total increase of 10.3% points during the span of 2017-18 to 2021-22. Around 39.3% females of age group 15-59 years in rural areas were in labour force during 2021-22, registered an increase of 12.7% points from the year 2017-18. In urban areas, around 26.5% females were in labour force during 2021-22 as compared to 22.3% in 2017-18.

**Factors responsible for low Female Participation in labour force-**

The participation of women in the labour market are primarily driven by various factors, viz., economic development, education levels, fertility rates, access to childcare and other supportive services and, ultimately, the cultural and normative context of society and social norms. These factors react as the “Push and Pull factors” for female participation in employment.

However the rapid economic growth, rising education, and declining fertility, results in increasing women participation in labour force but women faces barriers in accessing economic opportunities. World Bank Report “Reshaping Norms: A New Way Forward” reveals that the economic development and increasing income levels don’t seem sufficient to reduce stubbornly high gender gaps across multiple dimensions in the region. Social norms about gender can be considered as a key obstacle towards gender equality. The periodic labour force surveys capture the information on the reasons for not being in labour force. According to the PLFS 2021-22 results, the percentage distribution of men and women not being in labour force by the main reasons are as follows-

Out of the total women, who are outside the labour force, around 44.5% women were not in labour force due to “Child care/personal commitments in home making” and 33.6% women want to continue their study instead of joining labour force. Around 3.4% women were outside the labour force due to “social reasons”. There is no analogy in the hindrances faced by men and women to participate in the labour force. The main reason for men not being in labour force was continuation of their study. Around 71.7% men wanted to continue their study and it keeps them outside the labour force. Here, it can be easily understood that most of the work of women is home based such as caregiving, contributing to non-market activities, which have economic benefits for households. Women play the multidimensional role in the family and are, therefore, burdened with housework or house commitments.

The measurement is another key issue in the arena of low female LFP. Social norms are informal, unwritten rules of behaviour and social conduct . The prevalent social norms for female are “Female Homemaker norm” which assigns that the role of taking care of home and children to Woman, and for males are “Male Breadwinner norm” which assigns the responsibility of household expenses to the man.

Following factors explain the low female labour force participation in India:

- a. Unpaid domestic duties/Unpaid care work
- b. Pervasiveness of various gender biased social norms
- c. Rising household income which works as disincentive for female participation in labour market
- d. Salary/Wage Disparity .

Here, it is observed that female participation in unpaid works is truly high and that are unlikely to be considered as work. Around 49% females (almost half of the female population) are engaged in performing their domestic duties, child care, free collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, weaving,

etc. for household use. Thus, it is apparent that the large proportion of females of age 15 years & above is outside the labour force due to the unpaid household activities and studies.

Female employment in rural areas has grown over the years, but female are still largely concentrated in agriculture as self-employed or casual labour. According to the PLFS results, 19.7% of total females of age 15 years & above in India were self-employed in 2021-22. Looking at rural and urban sector, it is observed that more rural females were working as Self-employed than the urban females. 24.2% of total rural females were self-employed as compared to 8.6% of total urban females. A bulk of rural females, 20.6% of total rural females were engaged in “Agriculture sector” and major portion 14.2% females are working as helper and only 6.4% females are own account worker/employer. Only 1.4% of total rural females were engaged in “Services Sector”. In urban areas, 3.4% of total females were engaged in “Services Sector” as self-employed. As per PLFS 2021-22, 5.3% of total females of age 15 years & above in India were Regular wage/salaried employees.

Correlation of Female Education and Employment- Over the time, the access to education for females has increased and as education empowers women, employment choices for them become more stringent. Both social norms and lack of quality employment opportunities have an impact on the employment options for women with secondary and tertiary education. At present, women enrollment in school education and higher education has increased nearly twice as fast as male enrollment over the last four decades. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to male GER, has increased from 1 in 2017-18 to 1.05 in 2020-21. Female GER has overtaken Male GER since 2017-18 .GER for male population at all India level is 26.7 and GER for female population at All India level is 27.9.

Ministry of Education In this context, narrated that ,As household income increases, female gets chance to get more education and it keeps them away from labour force. When the education and income are low, the high participation rate is explained by the need to have an income source. Female labour is also positively correlated with wage rates. More educated and skilled women have more probability to have higher wages, consequently, as education level increases, women move back to the labour force. Education is a lucrative investment, both in terms of greater employment opportunities and in retributive terms. A person with higher education qualification is more likely to enter the labour force and, in the long term, to achieve higher salary levels.

The followings are the main highlights on women workforce and education level-

Around 37.3% women of total women with education level Post graduate & above are working. Around 18.2% women of total women with education level Higher Secondary are in workforce. Out of total illiterate women, around 40.4% illiterate women are in workforce. Out of total women educated upto primary level, around 39.2% women are in workforce.

It shows that 59.6% illiterate females are outside the labour force, around 26.6% illiterate females are self employed, 54.6% females with education level Post-Graduation & above are outside the labour force.

The significant portion of females with higher education level and diploma/certificate course is employed as “Regular Salaried/wage employees”. Proportion of illiterate females is highest in Self-employed category, mostly in the agriculture sector. The percentage distribution of females attending the domestic duties (care, collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, etc.) are higher than other activity status irrespective of education level. The participation of females in labour force is

lowest in middle level of education, i.e. Secondary & above. This is perhaps due to the reason that significant portion of the females at Secondary & above education level is pursuing higher studies. Vocational/technical training seems to be an important factor to improve the labour market prospects in the era of digitisation and emergence of technologies. The technical/vocational training programmes provide occupation specific knowledge and job related skills to participants. Vocational/technical trainings are closely related with the economic growth and are capable to create employment for their income generation. Vocational and technical trainings are designed to develop the skills, ability and knowledge necessary for employment, income support and development of women empowerment. Textiles and handlooms, apparels is the most prevalent field of training among rural females . Around 30.1% of total rural female who received vocational/technical, are trained in Textiles and handlooms, apparels field. Around 30.2% of total urban females who received vocational/technical, are trained in IT-ITeS field. Around 5.0% rural females and 8.6% urban females received training in Beauty and wellness field. .

**Government Interventions** The Government has taken various steps to improve female's participation in the labour force, to ensure their economic security and quality of their employment. E.g. For Survival and Education of Females Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme. The scheme was launched for creating awareness among the people to educate all girl children in the country. It was launched with the objective to guarantee the survival, safety, and education of female children.

#### **Conclusion-**

A number of barriers continue to exist for women to enter the labour market and obtain decent jobs, and they are disproportionately subject to a wide range of challenges regarding access to employment, choice of work, working conditions, job security, wage parity, discrimination and balancing work and family obligations. The Report "Female Labour Utilization in India" is an attempt to present the various components of female labour utilization, either in labour force or outside the labour force, in order to have robust, reliable and richer information on female labour utilization for policy formulators. It summarises the barriers that stop female to participate in labour force with facts and figures. It provides a glance of correlation between female employment and education. I wish to place on record my appreciation for the painstaking efforts to Shri Amit Nirmal, Deputy Director General (Employment), Dr. Shikha Anand, Director (Employment) and their entire team in bringing out this publication with data pooled from various sources. I hope this Publication will serve as a valuable tool in the bands of policy makers, planners, administrators, researchers and other stakeholders for enhancing the female participation in decent and quality work.

#### **References -**

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