



Women Workforce Participation In India

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Introduction :

Women are an integral part of every society. The status of women in the society is directly linked with social and cultural traditions, state of economic development achieved, educational level and political attainment for women in the society. The economic activities are broadly classified as organized and unorganized sector each of which may be the formal or informal sector. When the objective of the development process is to empower the women economically in order to improve their position in society and to make them independent financially, economic empowerment is set as a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women can make enormous contribution to the economy whether in business, in farms, as entrepreneurs or as unpaid care workers at home.

In India, women constitute half of the human resources. But it is very unfortunate to say that for a long time there has been a strong bias against women and thereby there is a tendency away from the Socio-economic opportunity for them. This neglecting attitude towards women is prominent in many respects that is, in the field of Education, Business, Services etc. None can deny the fact that education is the fundamental agent for the economic development of our country. A woman is said to be the backbone of a family playing multiple roles. By educating women, process of development of a nation can be accelerated. In a developing and highly populated country like India, women can play a very important role in the economic development of the country.

According to estimates, India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to grow at its lowest rate for the next few years, which further underscores concerns about the country's financial growth. The down-turn in the economy has led to unprecedented levels of unemployment in the country. In this piece, I agree that an understated aspect which is contributing to the economic crisis is the lack of an all-inclusive workforce, particularly with regard to women. The lack of women in the work force lowers the average Indian household income, which in turn affects average purchasing power and further slows down the economy.

Objectives of the Study :

1. To study the economic status of women in India.
2. To study the relationship between women empowerment and G.D.P in India.
3. To study how India can accelerate its growth encouraging greater economic participation by women.

Methodology :

This study is descriptive in nature based on secondary data published in Research Articles, Journals and E-Journals, Books, Annual Reports Ministry of Human Resource Development Government of India, Census Report 2011 etc.

Participation in Economy :

Enhancing women's participation in economic activities is very critical not only for achieving poverty reduction and economic development, but also crucial for overall social development. Reducing gender gap in participation in economic activities contributes towards many other benefits of economic prosperity such as improvement in child survival, overall family health, reduction in fertility etc.

Participation of women in economic activities in sectors like industries, services and agriculture sector is measurable, but activities of women in informal sector such as house works, training and educating of children and household services are still not measured.

Trend in workforce participation rate:

Women constitute roughly half of the economically active population, but their contribution to economic activity is far below the potential. In 2012 only 27 percent of adult Indian women had a job compared to 79 percent of men. In fact, almost 20 million women had dropped out of the work force between 2005 and 2012. This is equivalent to the entire population of Sri Lanka. India's rapid urbanization has not yet encouraged more women to join the labour force. Rural jobs have been decreasing and not enough rural women have been able to make the transition to working in urban areas.

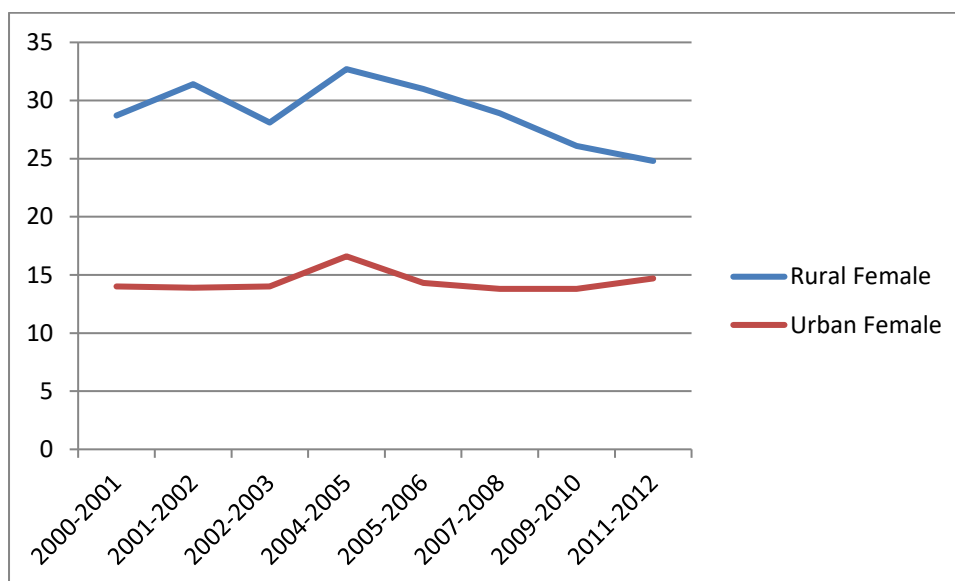
India ranks 120 among 131 countries in female labour force participation rate and rate of gender based violence remain unacceptably high. At 18 percent of G.D.P, the economic contribution of Indian women is less than half of the global average. India could boost its growth by 1.5 percentage points to 9 percent per year if around 50% of women could join the work force in India.

Table – 1 Trend in workforce participation rate 2000-2012.

| Year | Rural | | Urban | |
|-----------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| 2000-2001 | 28.7 | 54.4 | 14.0 | 53.1 |
| 2001-2002 | 31.4 | 54.6 | 13.9 | 55.3 |
| 2002-2003 | 28.1 | 54.6 | 14.0 | 53.4 |
| 2004-2005 | 32.7 | 54.6 | 16.6 | 54.6 |
| 2005-2006 | 31.0 | 54.9 | 14.3 | 54.0 |
| 2007-2008 | 28.9 | 54.8 | 13.8 | 54.3 |
| 2009-2010 | 26.1 | 54.7 | 13.8 | 54.3 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| 2011-2012 | 24.8 | 54.3 | 14.7 | 54.6 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|

The trend of female workforce participation rate in rural areas has been reducing during the period 2000-2001 is 28.7% and 2011-2012 is 24.8% and in urban areas female participation rate slightly increased from 14.0% to 14.7%.



Source : National sample survey office 68th round.

As per National sample survey (NSS) 2011-12 the worker population ratio for female is higher in Rural areas than the Urban. For males the ratio in Rural and Urban areas are (54.3) and (54.6) respectively.

Table - 2 Labour force participation rate for person aged 15 years above (state-wise) 2015-16.

| States | Rural | | | Urban | | | Total | | |
|-------------------|--------|------|--------|--------|------|--------|--------|------|--------|
| | Female | Male | Person | Female | Male | Person | Female | Male | Person |
| Andaman N Island | 39.0 | 86.7 | 63.2 | 29.9 | 82.0 | 57.9 | 36.2 | 85.2 | 61.5 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 59.0 | 82.4 | 70.9 | 22.2 | 67.9 | 44.9 | 48.8 | 78.5 | 63.8 |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 58.5 | 77.4 | 68.2 | 20.1 | 63.6 | 42.2 | 53.2 | 75.5 | 64.6 |
| Assam | 27.5 | 75.3 | 53.1 | 22.1 | 75.6 | 20.1 | 26.7 | 75.3 | 52.7 |
| Bihar | 19.6 | 78.6 | 51.4 | 8.3 | 73.6 | 43.5 | 18.5 | 78.1 | 50.7 |
| Chandigarh | 6.9 | 76.3 | 45.9 | 8.3 | 62.8 | 38.2 | 8.2 | 63.2 | 38.4 |
| Delhi | 21.8 | 76.0 | 51.2 | 12.3 | 66.7 | 41.8 | 12.6 | 67.0 | 42.1 |
| Goa | 24.6 | 80.8 | 51.9 | 25.3 | 71.3 | 47.4 | 25.0 | 75.0 | 49.1 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Gujarat | 25.4 | 79.1 | 53.3 | 10.3 | 71.5 | 42.1 | 20.0 | 76.4 | 49.3 |
| Haryana | 22.9 | 71.7 | 48.3 | 12.6 | 68.2 | 41.5 | 19.7 | 70.6 | 46.2 |
| Himachal Pradesh | 18.2 | 72.9 | 45.7 | 16.9 | 69.4 | 44.1 | 18.0 | 72.5 | 45.5 |
| Jammu & Kashmir | 10.1 | 65.7 | 39.2 | 12.2 | 65.2 | 39.7 | 10.6 | 65.6 | 39.3 |
| Jharkhand | 59.2 | 84.4 | 72.7 | 14.9 | 73.2 | 45.6 | 49.0 | 82.0 | 66.6 |
| Karnataka | 38.1 | 79.3 | 59.3 | 26.5 | 74.3 | 50.8 | 33.9 | 77.5 | 56.2 |
| Kerala | 31.9 | 72.6 | 51.2 | 30.9 | 70.5 | 49.6 | 31.4 | 71.7 | 50.5 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 21.5 | 73.0 | 48.6 | 9.0 | 66.1 | 39.0 | 18.3 | 71.2 | 46.2 |
| Maharashtra | 46.9 | 76.5 | 61.9 | 12.9 | 64.4 | 39.8 | 33.4 | 71.5 | 53.0 |
| Manipur | 58.2 | 74.7 | 66.6 | 31.1 | 79.8 | 54.2 | 47.7 | 76.5 | 62.0 |
| Meghalaya | 54.8 | 78.2 | 66.8 | 49.1 | 71.8 | 60.2 | 53.6 | 77.0 | 65.5 |
| Mizoram | 70.6 | 79.3 | 75.0 | 50.2 | 74.2 | 63.1 | 60.4 | 77.0 | 68.4 |
| Nagaland | 64.8 | 75.7 | 70.6 | 45.5 | 69.6 | 57.9 | 59.6 | 74.1 | 67.2 |
| West Bengal | 24.4 | 83.7 | 55.1 | 16.2 | 75.2 | 46.3 | 22.0 | 81.3 | 52.5 |
| Indian | 31.7 | 78.0 | 55.8 | 16.6 | 69.1 | 43.7 | 27.4 | 75.5 | 52.4 |

Source: Fifth Annual Employment-unemployment survey Labour Bureau Ministry of labour and employment 2015-16.

The Worker population ratio for female aged 15 years and above according to usual status basis are 31.7%, 16.6% and 27.4% respectively. State wise details are given above. Table 1 represents low work force participation rates of women to men in India. It shows a sharp unequal distribution of employment between men and women, women experiencing low work force participation rate.

Table – 3 Main workers in various age group in Rural-Urban India.

| Age Group | Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | Sex Ratio | Female-Male worker ratio | Sex ratio | Female-Male worker ration | Sex ratio | Female-Male worker ration |
| 5-14 | 919 | 683 | 896 | 503 | 913 | 634 |
| 15-29 | 928 | 390 | 928 | 232 | 928 | 336 |
| 30 – 59 | 973 | 381 | 930 | 223 | 958 | 323 |
| 60 + | 1036 | 319 | 1027 | 209 | 1033 | 292 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Total | 949 | 381 | 929 | 227 | 943 | 327 |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|

Source: Census 2011

Female-Male worker ratio in rural area is 381 and in urban areas, it is 227. Female-Male worker ratio in rural areas is higher than the urban areas.

Table – 4 Unemployment rates (in the labour force) according to usual status.

| Round | Year | Rural | | Urban | |
|------------------|---------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| 27 th | 1972-73 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 6.0 | 4.8 |
| 32 nd | 1977-78 | 2.0 | 1.3 | 12.4 | 5.4 |
| 38 th | 1983 | 0.7 | 1.4 | 4.9 | 5.1 |
| 43 rd | 1987-88 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 6.2 | 5.2 |
| 50 th | 1993-94 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 6.1 | 4.1 |
| 55 th | 1999-00 | 1.0 | 1.7 | 5.7 | 4.5 |
| 61 st | 2004-05 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 5.9 | 3.8 |
| 66 th | 2009-10 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 5.7 | 2.8 |
| 68 th | 2011-12 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 5.2 | 3.0 |

Source: National sample survey office 68th round July, 2011 – June 2012.

Table –4 highlights the size of unemployment per thousand males and females in rural and urban areas in India. From the table; it is evident that unemployment rates are higher for female compared to male. This gender inequality in unemployment rates is more pronounced in urban areas of India.

Reasons for the fall in Woman's Labour force participation rate in Indian:

In the year 2017 India's female labour force participation and unemployment level fell to their lowest ever levels since Independence, according to a 2017 World Bank report.

1. **COVID-19** has only exacerbated these Trends. Women faced the brunt of the initial lockdown between the March-April, 2020. 26.6 percent of the female work force moved out of the labour force Vs 13.4 percent of men. Even as of

December, 2020 the size of female labour force, continued to be 14 percent lower than December, 2019 according to CMIE data.

2. **Income effect:** With increasing house hold incomes especially over the last three decades, the need for a 'Second Income' reduced. Consequently, families withdrew women from labour as a sign of prosperity. This income effect can explain approximately 9 percent of the total decline in the female labour force participation rate between 2005-2010.
3. **Gender gaps in higher education and skill Training :** Tertiary-level female enrolment rose from 2 percent in 1971 to only 30 percent in 2019 (World Bank Data) as of 2018-19 only 2 percent of working age, women received formal vocational training of which 47 percent did not join the labour force (NSSO – 2018-19)
4. **Social Norms:** Unpaid care work continues to be a women's responsibility with women spending on average five hours per day on domestic work Vs 30 minutes for man (NSSO 2019). Women regularly sacrifice wages.

In the year 2020-2021 the COVID-19 pandemic has come as a shock, resulting in massive job losses for women, especially informal workers and slow recovery of women led micro businesses. It has also increased domestic work, deepened gender digital divides, disrupted girls schooling and placed millions of female health workers at risk.

Suggestion:

1. Access to microfinance increases female participation in the labour market in the long run. As I.G.C project in India found that greater access to microfinance loan lead to significant increase in female labour force participation with the effect driven by self employment and not by salary Job.
2. Increased women mobility encourages them to continue their education and participation in the labour force.
3. Access to soft skills training can encourage girls and women to feel more independent and pursue employment and business opportunities.
4. Female participation in labour market tends to increase when the time cost of unpaid care work is reduced and shared equally with men.
5. State government and Central Government should also make policies for the work participation to rural women in permanent salary Jobs.
6. Flexible working time arrangement policy that removes distortions against part time worker will boost female participation rate. A report by the National Crime Record Bureau(NCRB) reports 3.59 lakhs registered cases in 2017, where in women faced sexual harassments. Safety issues can drive career choices and work participation decisions for women.

Conclusions:

Indian women make only a minimal contribution to the country's economy. Therefore, there is a need for greater steps toward the economic empowerment of women. After going through this discussion, it can be understood that women empowerment is a tool for development. It is necessary to change the mindset for both the male and female. Only government will not be able to achieve the target of women empowerment. Till today many policies have been introduced by the government but still there is

gender gap. It has been rightly said by Swami Vivekananda – “The best thermometer to the progress of nation is it’s the treatment of women”.

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