

INDIAN WOMEN'S FALLING PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR FORCE: A GENDER DISCRIMINATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The involvement of women equally in the workforce is central for ensuring female rights and gender impartiality. Women are significant contributors to the economic development of the country but consideration given to her for his services is not sufficient. Traditionally, people believe that higher parity between f–emale and male employees in a similar business led to amicable and effective surroundings; therefore, all workers will be persuaded to contribute to and promote the business greatly. Across the globe, the females aged between 25 to 54 merely 63 per cent are engaged in different employment whereas the participation of men is 94 per cent of the same age. The Global Sustainable Development Goals guarantee to provide decent working conditions and ensure gender fairness and the upliftment of women. The cause could be her socio-economic interferences tarnished by discrimination and her role as a worker and guardian of society. The number of women participating in the labour force is less because of this females are expected to take up jobs which are unsafe and underpaid and under such circumstances, complete growth remains out of range. The paper examines female participation in the labour force in India. The second part of the paper deals with to what extent marital status, educational level and age influence women's participation in the labour force and the last part of the paper discusses various regulations and strategies which can be instrumental in increasing women's participation in the Labour force.

Keywords: Gender-discrimination, Female Participation, Gender, Employment.

I. Introduction

The survey conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data depicts that the overall labour force participation rate (LFPR) of India has dropped to 40%.¹ The Labour force participation was 47 per cent in 2016 which was already low. Astonishingly, the labour participation rate (LPR) fell to 39.5 per cent in March 2022. The percentage of participation was lower equated to the 39.9 per cent participation rate documented in February. The lowest labour participation rate was recorded at 39.6 per cent in the second wave in June 2021. The LPR during April-June 2021 was recorded at 40 per cent. During March 2022 the labour force came down from 3.8 million to 428 million. Since July 2021 this was the lowest labour force in eight months. March 2022 recorded the lowest labour force participation in eight months. The decline in employment was noted from 1.4 million to 396 million.² As per the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MOSPI), data on Employment and Unemployment is composed with the help of the Periodic Labour Force Survey. The latest PLFS for the year 2020-21 shows that the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) on a normal position basis for those who are of 15 years and above 15

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¹ Mahesh Vyas, “The unemployment rate falls from grace, economic” Outlook Apr. 11, 2022.

² Yogima Seth Sharma, “India's labour force shrinks by 3.8 million in March, lowest in eight months”, The Economic Times Apr.14,2022.

years for both males and females was 73.5% and 31.4% respectively.³ As per the data available in 2022 of female labour participation or employability is at 51.44 per cent, where 41.25 per cent in 2021. It shows that only 9.2 crores of women are employable in urban India. Since the last three decades, female labour force participation has declined over the years.⁴ Employed and those who are available for work are part of the Labour force. When we subtract people who are not part of the labour force from those who are participating, we will get an actual number of workers. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey in the year 2019-20, only 28.2% of women in the 15-60 age group were in the labour force. Among this percentage, 30% of women were working without wages in households. As per the survey, only 65% of females who were employed in the labour force earn wages.⁵ Apart from the rate of women's participation the size of the female workforce is also declining. In 2004-2005 the women's workforce was nearly 148.59 million and it came down to 104.1 million.⁶ As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey quarterly, 2021 the women's Labour Force Participation rate had come down to 21.2 % in March 2021 compared to 21.9% in 2020. In the same year, the female unemployment rate amplified to 11.8% in March 2021 from 10.6% the year before.⁷ As per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), there was a 0.9 million enhance in men's employment and women's jobs were cut down to 2.4 million in the employment map.⁸ International Labour Organisation mentioned in its database ILOSTAT That India scores 121 out of 131 countries. India's rank is lower than Pakistan's.⁹

As compared to other developing countries the ratio of women who are employed or in search of work is very low and coming down over the years. There is heavy gender discrimination in the Indian economy. The high-profile posts are generally reserved for men and women are underrepresented. In India, the paid workforce is mainly male-dominated. Industries like Textiles, tobacco, education, domestic services and health are the area where the female

³ Government of India, Report: "*Women participation in workforce*" (Ministry of Labour & Employment 2022).

⁴ Business Wire India, "*Budget 2022 - India likely to see a jump in women workforce participation in urban India by 10 percent*" Business Standard, Feb. 02, 2022.

⁵ The World Bank Group, "*Labour force participation rate, female % of female population ages 15+*) modelled ILO Estimate) Dec.6,2022.

⁶ C Rangarajan, Padma Iyer Kaul, Seema, "*Where Is the Missing Labour Force?*" Vol.46, Issue No.39, Sept.24, 2011.

⁷ Government of India, Report: "*Dip in Unemployment Rate in Urban Areas*" (Ministry of Labour & Employment, Dec. 15, 2022).

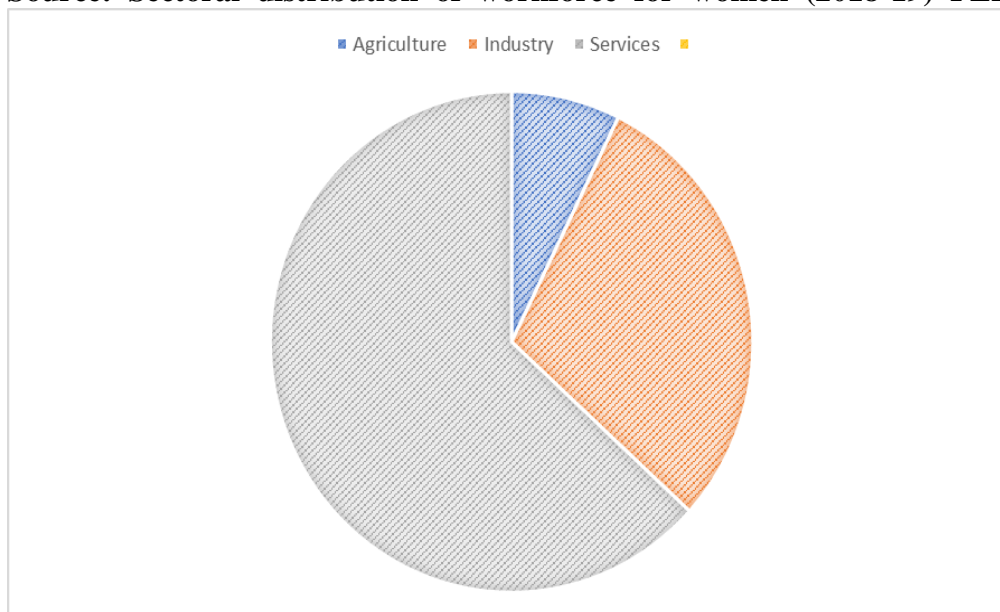
⁸ Samit Vartak, "*Know where the Indian economy stands and where it is likely headed*", Economic Outlook, Feb.8, 2023.

⁹ Statics On the Population and Labour Force Available At <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/population-and-labour-force/> last visited on Feb.9 2023.

workforce remain concentrated.¹⁰ The covid-19 pandemic has worsened the situation.¹¹ In 2018 as McKinsey reported that women contribute only 18% to India's GDP, which is considered to be the lowermost across the world.¹² The most recent Periodic Labour Force Surveys specify an additional decrease in participation. The participation rate during January-March 2021 was (16.9) per cent, the state of Himachal Pradesh reported (29.6), Tamil Nadu (24.2), Andhra Pradesh reported around (23.1) labour force participation in West Bengal reported (19.5) of female participation. The worst Female labour force participation was reported in Bihar, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh respectively 4.4, 8.8 and 9.7 per cent.¹³

Sectoral Assessment of Female Workforce Participation

Source: Sectoral distribution of workforce for women (2018-19) PLFS.



In general, the workforce is divided into three different segments Industry sector, allied service and the agriculture sector. The trend of workforce distribution is in general expectation is it will change from one sector to another. There is a huge transfer from agriculture to industry and then to the service sector. It is noted that labour productivity is much higher in the allied service and Industry sector compared to agriculture, the two Censuses and

¹⁰ Supra Note 1.

¹¹ Rina Chandranan, "More than 40 percent of India's women confined to domestic work, report says", Reuters Mar.7,2016.

¹² Government of India, Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) – Annual Report [July, 2019 – June, 2020] (Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation April 2017.)

¹³ Government of India, Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) – Annual Report [July, 2020 – June, 2021] (Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation April 2020.)

2004-2005 show a decay in the number and portion of workers between 2018–19 engaged in agriculture.¹⁴

As per the Gender perception, around 86.1 million women are engaged in the agricultural sector. Approximately are engaged in the service sector. In the year 2019-20 23.9 million, people were employed in construction and industry and 40 per cent of male workers are employed in agriculture. The service sector and industry engage 27 per cent. The workforce belongs to both areas rural and urban. Of the rural households 71 per cent and 29 per cent belong to urban households.¹⁵ The trend reveals that maximum females are involved in the agriculture sector in rural areas. The other sectors where the maximum female participation is noted are the trade, and hospitality industries. In the urban area, the majority of female participation can be seen in manufacturing, hospitality construction, transport, storage and communications. In the year 2021, 88 million women in India were self-employed. The number of self-employed women increased by 9.4% in 2021. The country had the highest number of self-employed women in the year 2021, and the lowest in the year 2018. As per the World Bank data for 2020, 51.1% of women had engaged in the labour force and only 26.2% of Indian women are involved in the labour force.¹⁶ As per the Economic Participation and Opportunity metric, the position of India is sixth. India's position as per the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021 only better than Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan.¹⁷

In India, the choice for women to take part in employment is the outcome of different social and economic influences. According to ILO, some of the significant drivers for lower participation of women in the workforce include Fertility rates, marriageable age, educational attainment, Economic growth/repeated things and Urbanisation. As per the NSSO data women are employed in labour-intensive, informal work and home-based work which are considered low-productivity sectors. It is reported the percentage of females involved in agricultural activity came down The share from 88.1% in 1977-78 to 73.2% in 2017-18, but for the same period, the percentage of rural men engaged in agriculture declined from 80.6% to 55%. The number of jobs for females in the service sector was 35.7% in the year 1977-78 but it rose to 60.7% in 2017-18. In the service sector, women were engaged in nursing and teaching. Indian women engaged and contribute to the economy in different arrangements but unfortunately, much of their work is not recognized are taken for the official statics. Many Women's work activities within the household such as caring for old and young family members, cooking, and reproduction do not recognize by

¹⁴ Supra foot note.13.

¹⁵ Supra footnote.13.

¹⁶ Supranote.5

¹⁷ World Economic Forum, Report: The Global Risks Report 2023 ,18th Edition, Jan.2023.

the system of national accounts or other economic statics.¹⁸ This is one of the reasons for Low female labour force participation. In India Women's involvement in labour force participation is decided to a great extent by religion, caste, marital status and other sociocultural norms these factors regulate at multi-level and restrict women's mobility and access to employment. The other hurdles are inadequate education, and discrimination in the workplace compel women to end up with non-wage employment or keep away from the labour force.¹⁹

In most South Asian countries, the socio-cultural rules control females' decision to join the labour market. The traditional view of men's role as the main breadwinner in the family impacts females' decision to participate in the workforce. It was stated that low education and sociocultural limits and household responsibilities regulate and limit female participation in formal work.²⁰ It was stated by Farzana Afridi in her article titled, 'What Determines Women's Labor Supply? The Role of Home Productivity and Social Norms', that social standards surrounding women play an important role and restraint on FLFP as it establishes the norm that women are case givers and belong to the home. National Family Health Survey displays that around 13% out of 50% are not permitted to visit village markets alone.²¹ These restrictions are connected to the caste system. It is seen in a society that women from the upper caste are more likely to face social restrictions. There are various causes which contribute to a decline in women's participation the number of educated women has increased when it comes to the participation of girls in the education sector, especially after the right to education Act was enacted, Child labour declined and most important change in domestic responsible also contributed to the decline of FLFP.

Gender equality is a subject of great importance in India. It regulates the rights of men and women. The Constitution protects the rights of women and also provides the right to equality which is a fundamental right to every citizen who safeguards them from every kind of discrimination and different gender issues.

Absence of family backing

¹⁸ Indrani Mazumdar, N Neetha, Indu Agnihotri," *Migration and Gender in India*," Vol XIViii, No 10 Economic & Political Weekly, Mar. 9, 2013.

¹⁹ Thomas, J.J., M. P. Jayesh, "Changes in India's Rural Labour Market in the 2000s: Evidence from the Census of India and the National Sample Survey" ras.org. Vol. 6, No. 1 Jan.-June, 2016

²⁰ Isis Gaddis, Stephan Klasen, "Economic Development, Structural Change, And Women's Labour Force Participation" Journal of Population Economics, Springer; European Society for Population Economics, Vol. 27(3), 639-681, July.

²¹ Farzana Afridi, Moni Sankar Bishnu, Kanika Mahajan, "What Determines Women's Labor Supply? The Role of Home Productivity and Social Norms", Journal of Demographic Economics, 2022.

Nearly 352 minutes spend by Indian women per day on domestic work which is 577% more than men (52 minutes).²² As per ILO among the world, Indian men bear less than 10% of the load of unpaid house workers concerning time spent (an average of 31 minutes).²³ It is noticed across regions; women's employment is more expected to disturb due to marriage and children than men's. Family responsibilities put an extra burden on women. In the case of single motherhood, the care and financial burdens fall on the female's shoulder. Generally, as far as unpaid care work is concerned women are spending more time as compared to men. Across the globe, women spend a significant part of their day fulfilling the requirements of their reproductive and domestic roles. This responsibility is an addition to their job and puts an extra onus on women. The different distribution of unpaid work between men and women depicts a violation of females' right and create hurdle in their economic development. As per NSSO data women have mostly been embarking on labour-intensive, home-based, and informal work focused in low-productivity sectors.²⁴ A major percentage around 30% of females are engaged in domestic activities which will be considered outside of the labour force. The countries with a higher percentage of unpaid care work done by females have a higher percentage of females in defenceless jobs, which consumes energy and time. One of the reasons for gender gaps in the labour force is a disparity in the allotment of unpaid care work among men and women.

Gender Pay Gap

As per the Global Gender Gap Report 2018 conducted by World Economic Forum India scored 108th position out of 149 countries on the gender gap index. . In 2006 the World Economic Forum introduced the Global Gender Gap Index.²⁵ The purpose of it was to provide a structure for seizing the enormity of gender-based disparities and following their development over time. As per OECD data, the Gender wage gap explains the variance between the middle earnings of men and women as linked to the median wages of men.²⁶ In 1993-94 Indian women used to earn on average,48% less as compared to their male counterparts. As per labour force survey data of the National Sample Surveys Office in 2018-19, this gap came down to 28%. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020-21 the pandemic overturned decades of

²² Employment: Time spent in paid and unpaid work, by sex available at <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54757> last visited on 7.2.2023.

²³ Jacques Charmer, "*The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys*" available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_732791 last visited on 7.2.23

²⁴ Government of India, National Sample Survey Organisation 1970-2018.

²⁵ PTI, "India ranks 108th in WEF gender gap index 2018", The Economic Times, Dec. 18, 2018.

²⁶ Gender Wage Gap available at <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm> last visited on 24.1.23.

development and indicates an increase in the gap by 7% between 2018-19 and 2020-21. This contributed to lower female labour force participation. The gap is intensified by the structural and social domination that is faced by all women. One of the reasons behind this gender gap in labour workforce participation is the degenerated sex ratio. The present gender pay gap is huge. Females earned Rs 19 per cent as against men who are earning Rs 46.19 as per Monster Salary Index (MSI) in India.²⁷ The median net hourly wage for men was Rs 242.49 while women used to get Rs 196.3 in 2018.²⁸ For understanding the position of working women in India and their challenges the survey was conducted by Monster.com. In that survey around 71 per cent of men and almost 66 per cent of females accepted that gender parity shall be the major concern for their organisations.²⁹ As far as organised sectors are concerned the gap is considerable but the condition of women is pathetic in the unorganised sector. One of the reasons women are underpaid is that women labourers are not skilled and they don't have access to on-the-job training. Their double role as a family protector and bread earner forced them to grab very few chances of employment. Not only Wage gap disparity there are other challenges like sexual harassment and discrimination. As per the 2019 survey conducted by MSI, there is a notion around 46% of women think that they leave their employment after maternity leave. It is generally assumed that women do not perform well in leadership positions due to their family commitments and they are less serious about their jobs once they got married.

Rising Education, Declining Women's Employment

The significance and impacts of education on workforce participation for males and females are acknowledged by economists.³⁰ The data states that as far as education is concerned the population of working-age females has seen big differences between 1993-94 to 2011-12. This was the period when there was a rise in secondary and higher-educated women who were hesitant to participate in the labour force. Highly educated women are not very keen to join the labour force due to their family responsibilities and the female who are less educated face double challenges. Throughout all levels of education, the gender employment gaps are evident but it is clearer with less education. The gender employment gap in respect of OECD countries where there are less education stands at 19.5% which is anytime higher than the gap among highly educated

²⁷ PTI, "Gender Pay Gap Still High, Women in India Earn 19% Less Than Men: Report", Business Today, Mar. 07, 2019.

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²⁹ Shobhita Dhar, "Survey on Gender Finds Only 38% Indian Women Have Say In Defining Their Identity", The Times of India, Oct. 11, 2020.

³⁰ Sanghamitra Kanjilal-Bhaduri Francesco Pastore, "Returns to Education and Female Participation Nexus: Evidence from India" Dec. 2017.

(8.5 percentage points) countries.³¹ It has been well-known that at a very low-slung education level, the participation rate of women is high, at present this level of participation came down with improvements in education and a rise in a higher level of education. The women are also reluctant to work in unskilled jobs.

Gender inequality and discrimination are existing for a long time in our society. The recent Judgement of the Babita Puniya case depicts the discrimination in the military since long women officers were facing gender discrimination and equal admission to an appointment in the Indian Army.

In this case, the division bench of the Apex Court including Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice Ajay Rastogi stated:

“The time has come for a realization that women officers in the Army are not adjuncts to a male-dominated establishment whose presence must be “tolerated” within narrow confines.”³²

The perception of gender equality is protected in the Indian Constitution. The Constitution empowers the state to effectively tackle discrimination against women with suitable methods. India since its fifth five-year plan has made a huge change in the trend of women’s concerns from welfare to development to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women in 1990 the National Commission for Women was set up. For women’s participation in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities through the 73rd and 74th Amendments, reservations have been provided in the Indian Constitution.

II. Government’s Initiatives

The notion of ‘gender equality’ is protected in our Indian Constitution. The Constitution directs the state to prohibit discrimination against women and adopt positive measures in favour of women. It is fact that as per the outline of our democratic structure, the policies, programmes and laws have been designed for women’s advancement in different areas. Since 1974-78 from the fifth-year plan onwards we have witnessed a transformation in policies, programmes and laws there is a shift from women’s welfare to development. To secure the rights the legal power of women in 1990 the government set up the National Commission for Women. The government brought major amendments to the Constitution and brought special reservations for women in the Panchayats and Municipalities for women to ensure their participation in the decision-maker at local levels. India signed many international conventions which confirm equal rights for women. The main among them is the

³¹ Indicator A5 How does Educational Attainment Affect Participation in the Labour Market? Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2016/indicator-a5-how-does-educational-attainment-affect-participation-in-the-> last visited on 30.1.23.

³² Secretary of Defence Vs. Babita Puniya, Civil Appeal No. 1210 Of 2020. (India).

Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),³³ The Mexico Plan of Action, The Nairobi Forward-Looking strategies, the Beijing Declaration as well as the Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome Document adopted by the UNGA Session on Gender Equality and Development & Peace for the 21st century, titled "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action" recognized by India. However, a wide gap still exists between the laws, plans, policies, programmes and reality of the position of women in India. Gender inequality establishes in different forms the most evident is the nonstop decline in female labour force participation in the previous few years. The total population of women is around 48.5%. Only 27.4% of females in India are working in the workforce. It was shocking to notice that in the year 2019-2024, females were holding only 14.39% of seats in the upper house (Lok Sabha) and 8.8% of women in the lower house (Rajya Sabha (2010)).

The percentage of female MLAs in the various legislative Assemblies was around 7.3% during 2011-15. From the data, it is evident that there is an underrepresentation of females in law-making bodies. At present we have only 14.39% of seats in the Lok Sabha. The reservation of 33 per cent seats for women is still pending. For the violation of fundamental rights state can be made responsible, only the State has a duty not to discriminate based on sex. There are fewer policies and laws concerning the prohibition of discrimination against a female by any enterprise or organization. In the Companies Act 2013, there are reservations for independent director there is very less female who is part of leadership positions, especially at the board level many positions are vacant. Many existing customs that spread discrimination against females are not covered under the legislative framework. The stress should be made to dampen biases and eradicate practices and customs that remove discrimination against women with the help of appropriate laws. Despite laws women hardly get equal opportunity in employment, lack of sufficient and quality crèches for children discourages females from joining the workforce. Apart from this, the socio-norms regarding female roles need to be changed. Through different stakeholders like educational institutions, social and political leaders, and religious and civil society organisations, females need to be aware of the equal participation of females in the progress of the nation. In the Apex Court, the sanctioned strength of female judges is 34 but at present only 4 female judges are there. The number of female Judges in the High Courts is 80 against the sanctioned post of 1113 Judges. The percentage of female judges in the high courts is 7.2% and 2.4% senior advocates in the Apex Court. The Election Commission Data depicts that out of the 543 seats, only 66 seats were held by women in the 16th Lok Sabha. During the 2009 elections, out of 8070

³³ Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 2008.

candidates, only 556 were held by women.³⁴ The women reservation Bill, which introduces 33 per cent seats for the female candidate in the Parliament and State Assemblies introduced by the Deve Gowda government in 1996 but the government is failing to pass this bill.³⁵ India is known for its growing number of working women in the world. The United Development Program's human development Index ranks low on gender equality. As per the demographic data of 2017 Till 2050 among South Asian countries India shall have the worst sex ratio.³⁶ India is considered to be the highest level of sex discrimination at birth. As of 2011, the sex ratio is 918 girls for 1000 boys. Empowering girls needed intensive speculation and association. We require an immense awareness program to Educate the girl child. The Indian government had taken initiative in the form of programmes like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' to protect the girl child and provide them access to education. The Beti Bachao program's objectives are to protect the girl child against unnecessary biases and propose assistance to challenge female foeticide. For dropping the Gender Gap, the government has taken several initiatives in all areas Economic, Political, and Social.

As per the World Economic Forum's published report of 2021 concerning the Global Gender Gap India stands at 140 out of 156 countries with a 0.625 (out of 1) score. This Report offers a score after examining the gap between women and men in four areas, viz., the participation of women in and opportunity of women in Economic activity, the involvement in Educational Achievement, the status of survival and health and one of the factors is Political Empowerment. If we compare India's position to last year it has to reduce or come down mainly because of the Political Empowerment dimension.³⁷ The percentage of women participation came down to 13.5 per cent in politics the number of women ministers decreased to 9.1 per cent in 2021 from 23 per cent in 2019. The participation of women in Economic activities declined by 3 per cent as compared to 2019 and overall, the female labour force participation and opportunities came down to 22.3 per cent, "translating to a gender gap of 72 per cent."

In the education sector, India covered 96.2 per cent of the gender gap, despite of this the literacy comparison showcases more women are illiterate (34.2 per

³⁴ Election Results - Full Statistical Reports Available At <https://Eci.Gov.In/Statistical-Report/Statistical-Reports/> Accessed On 26.12.22

³⁵ Revathi Krishnan, "*India Slips Two Spots To 131 On Human Development Index 2020, Ranks Low On Gender Equality*", The Print, Dec. 2020.

³⁶ William Joe, "*Probabilistic Projection of The Sex Ratio At Birth And Missing Female Births By State And Union Territory In India.*" Aug.2022.

³⁷ Government of India, Report: 'Global Gender Gap Report' (Ministry of Women and Child Development Dec. 2021).

cent) than men 17.6 per cent.³⁸ It is from 2006 the Global Gender Gap Index has looked at and measured gender-based gaps because of four key areas Educational Attainment, Economic Participation and Opportunity, Political Empowerment and health and Survival and looking at development towards finishing these gaps over time.

It is fact that for attaining gender equality policymakers have to stress practical and transformative plans from different partners like governments, workers, employers' organisations and civil society organisations. Equal accessibility of resources is vital for achieving gender equality and also for sustainable development. During the Pandemic, we have witnessed high levels of unpaid domestic and care work taken care of by the women population. In India, before the pandemic, various studies recognized the unequal and gendered distribution of unpaid work. It has uncovered social inequality. Not only this even availing health facilities, safety, and security is unequal, and the majority of our people live in hazardous conditions. we see that it is standing on top of prevailing divides.³⁹ One of the major reasons behind entrenched gender inequality is the fact India is a male-dominated society. All areas like religion, society, economics and culture are dominated by males. The patriarchal society controls everything, the women's entry into the labour force is hampered by the patriarchal norms. These norms are passed on to different generations. It's reflected in narrow-minded practices such as violence against girls and women gender-specific abortions, and gender inequalities in education and health.

The government has been implementing various programs and policies to upsurge women's entry into the labour market like quotas based on gender and funding skills and occupational training-based programs. The need of the hour is to find out the reason for declination through research and strategy to bring them into the labour force. The possibility of cultivating skills and vocational training is important but many times these programs have proven to be unproductive.⁴⁰ It is fact that not all but only one-fifth of these trainees are engaged after one year of training in India.⁴¹ The government keep on taking numerous steps to enhance women's participation in the labour force and the standard of their employment. The government defending requirements have been unified in the labour laws for equal opportunity and an affable work environment for women workers. The government enhanced paid maternity

³⁸ Tanvi Akhauri, "*India Slips 28 Places in Global Gender Gap Index: Breaking Down Our Points Of Inequality*", She the people, March 31, 2021.

³⁹ Prabha Kotiswaran, "*Revaluating Unpaid Work the Case of the Orunodoi Scheme in Assam*" available at <https://www.epw.in/journal/2022/26-27> last visited on 3.2.23.

⁴⁰ Mackenzie, "*David How Effective Are Active Labor Market Policies in Developing Countries? A Critical Review of Recent Evidence*", The World Bank Research Observer, Volume 32, Issue 2, Aug.2017.

⁴¹ Soledad Artiz Prillaman, "*Strength in Numbers: How Women's Groups Close India's Political Gender Gap*", American Journal of Political Science, Sept. 2021.

leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks and also incorporated provisions for necessary crèche facilities in institutions having 50 or more employees in the Code on Social Security,2020.

It is argued by analysts that Indian women face legal and economic limitations in working. Many regulations try to help women in the workplace but their effect is contrary for example, to safeguard women's safety, the Factories (Amendment) Act of 1987, Section 66(1)(b) states that "no woman shall be required or allowed to work in any factory except between the hours of 6 a.m. and 7 p.m."⁴² The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 Section 25 specifies that "no woman shall be required or allowed to work in any industrial premise except between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m."⁴³ The Mines Act, 1952 Section 46(1)(b) forbids the employment of women in any mine above ground except between the hours of 6 a.m. and 7 p.m.⁴⁴ Now new Code brought Changes the women workers are now permitted to work in the aboveground mines including opencast. The women can work between 7 pm and 6 am, likewise, below-ground work they can work between 6 am and 7 pm in supervisory, technical and managerial work under the Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH),2020. The provision incorporated in the Code on Wages,2019 that there shall be no discrimination in an institution or any unit thereof among workers on the ground of gender in matters relating to wages by the same employer, in respect of the same work or work of similar nature done by any employee. To enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is offering training to them through a network of Women's Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. It is necessary to adopt a gender-disaggregated approach to skill gap investigation in developing vocational training. Employers need to encourage and accept females in diversified courses. As per the Survey females who got formal training in urban areas a mere 38.6 per cent were in the workforce, those who are unemployed are 10 per cent and around 51 per cent were not in the workforce. Mere training is not sufficient they should be in employment. In 2001 India introduced 'Gender-Budgeting' to keep gender perspective in programme formulations and policy. The purpose of such an initiative is to remove disparities in budgetary allocations.

To understand the cause of India's declining female labour force participation one needed perfect and up-to-date data. We need to conduct more surveys for additional data collection. No doubt every year the ministry conducts an employment survey but these surveys cannot be analysed because of lack of time and resultant not possible to understand the current labour market. One of

⁴² The Factories Act, Section 66(1) (b).

⁴³ The Mines Act, 1952, Section 46(1)(b).

⁴⁴ Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, Section 25.

the suggestions would be more regular and stringent surveys would certainly help policy creators to regulate programs and policies in response to economic surprises. In addition, such data will permit a better understanding of variances in the data. The surveys also help us to identify how India's 200 million women are involved in different household activities and their involvement in the labour market activities. The Centre and State government can take initiative in managing data collection, using the required technological structure as well as suitable motivations to collect good quality data towards a greater understanding of FLFP and how to bring them into Skill India and Make in India. To conclude it is fact that despite the reduction in fertility rates, growth in education, and strong economic growth, India's FLFP has deteriorated over current years, signifying effective action is essential to rise women's labour market participation and attachment.

Conclusion

Despite the many efforts at uplifting the socio-economic status of women in the country, glitches continue – the falling sex ratio and the upsurge in female foeticide and infanticide in certain parts of the country; increasing violence and domination against women as a straight significance of growing religious fundamentalism within the country; the growing helplessness and in formalisation of women workers as a result of liberalisation and globalisation; deteriorating health and education status; and a lack of contact to vital resources. To enhance female labour force participation, we have to work on five major areas - women should educate themselves for this we need to provide access to education. The women shall get opportunities to participate in decision-making for economic success. Sexual assault and violence must stop against women. End child marriages. By emphasizing these areas we will move or achieve parity between women and men in society. The state can implement these actions these are neither tough nor unachievable. The state encourages female participation in the labour force by initiating positive steps like demystifying gender stereotypes and safeguarding a safe and inclusive workable environment.

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