

FEMALE WORK FORCE PARTICIPATION IN ASSAM

Contributor: Siddika Banu, M.A., M.Phil, Department of Economics, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam (India).

Abstract

Female work force participation is one of the important indicators of female status in the economy. The female work force participation rate is defined as the percentage of female engaged in the total working population of a state or a country. When more women work, the economies grow. An increase in female work force participation or a reduction in the gap between women's and men's work force participation results in faster economic growth. So a clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles to the path of female work force participation both from the government and the females themselves. This paper attempts to study the extent of female work force participation in Assam. A comparison has been made to study the discrepancy between male and female work force participation in the state as well as in the nation.

Key Words: Work force participation, Assam, India, male, female.

Introduction:

The economic status of women is inextricably related to the treatment that they are accorded to in the labour market which is unequal vis-a-vis men. The phenomenon of female economic activity and women's employment in each of these segments are main issues in the economy of all developing nations as well as states. The economic activity may be classified as organized and unorganized, each of which may be in the formal or informal sector. Participation of women in economic activities in formal sectors of industries, services and agricultural sector is measurable, but activities of women in informal sectors such as house works, training and education of children, activities in agricultural sectors and household services are still not measurable. In Assam, in case of the rate of work force participation, there is a significant gap, with the male occupying 71.35 percent and the female 28.64 percent (from 15-49 age group), where the gap is 42.71 percent. Out of the total male workers, 82 percent were main workers and 18 percent were marginal workers, whereas out of the total female workers, 48 percent were main workers and 52 percent were marginal workers (Economic Survey, 2013-14). Most of the employed women work in agriculture; only 7 percent work in professional, technical and managerial occupations (NFHS-III). In this paper attempts have been to study the scenario of female work force participation in relation to their male counterparts.

Literature Review

Sahoo and Mohanty (1978) made an attempt to study the inter -district variation in female participation in Orissa on the basis of data from 1971 census. They worked out the correlation coefficient of female participation rate with various variables such as male population, percentage of Scheduled caste / Tribes, education. They found positive but insignificant correlation with sex ratio. The study also concluded that there is positive relationship between low level of SC and ST population and FLPR. The findings of the study suggest that not only single variable is enough to explain sex ratio and concluded that in those districts where population of SC and ST was less, female participation rate (FPR) was also high. The findings of the study suggest that no single variable satisfactory explains the differences.

Ramotra (1989) examined the spatial variation in female participation in India in general and in Marathwada region of Maharashtra in particular. The findings indicate that per capita income and female participation rate are negatively correlated. The female work participation rate is highly correlated to poverty and landlessness in rural India.

Maglad (1998) used demographic survey of Sudan for the period of 1990-91 and found that education is positively and significantly related with female decision to enter for work in market. Moreover, female labor force participation is positively related with own wage and negatively related with spouse's wage, assets, and having small children.

Naqvi and Shahnaz (2002) have analyzed the effects of various demographic, socioeconomic, and human capital related factors on women participation in economic activities. They applied probit and multinomial logit model to estimate the parameters. The findings indicate that marital status, primary education, number of children and female head of households are inversely related with women's participation in economic activities.

Dev (2004) examined the female work participation rate and child labour rate in India. He identified the determinants of both female work participation and child labour and found that larger the size of the family the lower is the ability of a woman to participate in economic activity. By applying logistic regression analysis he also pointed out that females belonging to the medium and high standard of living categories are less likely to participate in economic activities.

Ahmad (2009) in his study explained the factors for the inter-state variations in women's labour force participation in India by using NSSO 61st round (2004-05) data. The authors applied two separate regression models for rural and urban areas. The findings suggest that personal variables education and wages are significant determinants of urban women's labour force participation but not for rural women's labour force participation. Sex ratio, Muslim population; SC and ST population and unemployment rate are the significant factors which affect the female labor force participation rate.

Faridi et al., (2011) used the data of Bahawalpur district of Punjab, (Pakistan) and found that women's self-employment is positively related with age and experience. Analysis of various education level shows that

women who have low-level education highly tends towards self-employment than women who have high level of education.

Shaheen, Safana (2011) investigated the patterns of female labor force participation in case of Pakistan. The study utilized Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2007-08 data of Punjab. The variables used in the analysis are female labour force participation, age, age square, marital status, area, female monthly income, family monthly income, family size, household head education, different classes of female education and employment status. Results of Logit model depicts that household head education, primary, middle, matric & mudrassa education level is negatively related with the decision of female labor force participation while, decision towards participation is strong if female belonged to urban area, if she is married, if she has higher education, and if she has large family size.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To study the extent and pattern of male and female work force participation in Assam.
2. To study the level of female work force participation of Assam in reference to the national averages.

Methodology:

The paper is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data. In the present study, attempts have been made to analyse the female work participation in Assam on the basis of secondary data and also to examine the structure of the labour market on the basis of gender. This could give us a broad idea of the participation of women of Assam with respect to the country as a whole in the labour market. For this purpose the census data and also reports of various NSS rounds have been used to make this study meaningful.

Discussion and Analysis:

Extent and Pattern of female work force participation:

The work participation rate for females in Assam is only 9 per cent against 54 per cent for males. The overall Work Participation Rate (WPR) for all age groups in the state is 31.9 per cent. The Assam Human Development Report, 2014 has revealed this estimate based on Human Development Survey 2013. The HDR survey also estimates the unemployment rate for female is 33.9 per cent against 8 per cent for males. The total unemployment rate for all age group is estimated at 13.4 per cent. The table 1 shows the male-female work participation rates in Assam with comparison to India.

Table 1: Work Force Participation Rate in Assam and India (%)

| State | Rural | | | Urban | | | Combined | | |
|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|----------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Assam | 53.1 | 23.7 | 38.7 | 56.79 | 14.9 | 36.41 | 53.59 | 22.46 | 38.36 |
| India | 53 | 30 | 41.8 | 53.76 | 15.4 | 35.31 | 53.26 | 25.51 | 39.79 |

Source: Census 2011 data, Office of the Registrar General, India

There exists a massive gender inequality as far as employment status is concerned. Table 1 represents low work force participation rates of women compared to men in both Assam and India. It shows a sharp unequal distribution of employment between men and women, women experiencing low work force participation rate. In comparison to Assam, the female workforce participation of India is slightly better.

The table 2 highlights the size of unemployment as percentage of labour force. It shows unemployment rates of both male and female in rural and urban areas of Assam and India. From the table it can be stated that unemployment rates are higher for female compared to male. This gender inequality in unemployment rates is more pronounced in rural areas of Assam.

Table 2: Female Unemployment Rates of Assam and India

| State/India | Rural | | | Urban | | |
|-------------|--------|------|-------|--------|------|-------|
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Assam | 9.2 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 7.5 | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| India | 2.9 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 6.6 | 3.2 | 3.8 |

Source: National Sample Survey office, 68th Round, July 2011-June 2012

The table 3 highlights the size of unemployment per thousand males and females in rural and urban areas for both Assam and India. From the table it can be stated that unemployment rates are higher for female compared to male. This gender inequality in unemployment rates is more pronounced in urban areas

of both Assam and India. The intensity of unemployment for females is more in Assam in comparison to India.

Table 3: Female Unemployment Rate (per 1000) aged 15 years and above in Assam

| State/ India | Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|--------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Assam | 18 | 53 | 15 | 120 | 18 | 58 |
| India | 27 | 34 | 35 | 108 | 29 | 49 |

Source: National Sample Survey Office, 68th Round, July 2011 - June 2012

Table 4 represents worker population ratio of per thousand males and females in both rural and urban areas of Assam and India. It witnessed very poor worker population ratio of women compare to men. This inequality in worker population ration is more reflective in urban areas as compared to rural areas of both Assam and India.

Table 4: Worker Population Ratio of Males and Females (per 1000)

| State/ India | Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|--------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| Assam | 363 | 833 | 180 | 762 | 339 | 823 |
| India | 351 | 743 | 175 | 714 | 296 | 735 |

Source: National Sample Survey Office, 68th Round, July 2011 - June 2012

Table 5: Average Wage/Salary (in Rs.) received per day by Regular/Salaried Employee

| State/ India | Rural | | Urban | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| Assam | 179.71 | 343.97 | 561.63 | 615.23 |
| India | 201.56 | 322.2 | 366.15 | 469.87 |

Source: National Sample Survey Office, 68th Round, July 2011 - June 2012

Table 5 shows gender differences in per day wage of both rural and urban areas in North-East India. On the basis of the above table it can be stated that wage differences exist between male and female workers of the region. Per day wage of women is much lower than men in rural areas of Assam and India. But in case of urban areas, females are getting higher wage than men in Assam as compared to India.

Suggestions to improve female work force participation in Assam:

1. The first step in empowering women and increasing their opportunities is better education and skill-enhancement at all levels. This includes dissuading drop-outs.
2. Measures should be taken to improve work-place infrastructure in order to remove entry barriers and attrition. This may include the provision of toilets, a safe work environment and adherence to laws pertaining to provision of maternity support facilities.
3. We must break gender stereotypes which perpetuate discrimination through changing of attitudes and perceptions regarding female workers. These measures will help to increase female labor force participation.
4. Steps should be taken to create awareness among people towards this effect for achieving the desired goal of women empowerment.
5. Government must strengthen anti-discrimination laws and promote policies that protect women against workplace discrimination – both in law and in practice.

Conclusion:

Ensuring that women can take part in the workforce on equal terms with men is important for gender equality and poverty reduction. When women can work they are able to provide for themselves and their families. Much needs to be done to make women of Assam an equal partner of men in the process of development. Female workforce participation rate is lower in Assam than that in India. Rural urban gap in respect of employment is seen both in Assam and India. Minor differences are seen in this regard in case of rural female employment in Assam and India; however urban female employment is almost same for both Assam and India. Regarding female non worker, it is higher in Assam than in India. Increase in employment

and access to economic and other productive assets are the building blocks of women's economic empowerment. It is important to learn about participation of Males & Females in Economy, so that corrective decision may be taken for overall economic growth of the state as well as the Nation.

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