

INDIAN WOMEN IN WORKFORCE

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ABSTRACT:

Our country has witnessed enormous economic development with the introduction of new employment generation programs and policies of central and state governments in recent years. Various programs are being introduced to improve the female participation rate thereby encouraging women folk to the core. Of late, women are also feeling the need to come out, participate and contribute towards the overall development of the country. Surprisingly, there is remarkable decline in the female work force participation rate in urban areas than in rural areas despite having educated population. This descriptive study analyses the current status of women's workforce participation in the country and makes an attempt to identify potential causes of declining women's participation on the basis of available secondary data which is sourced from statistical abstracts, government databases, research articles, reviews and suggests measures to improve the same.

Keywords: Economic Development, Empowerment, Employment Generation and Workforce Participation.

INTRODUCTION

The workforce participation rate in India is around 40 percent, but gender-wise, for females it is only 22.5 percent. Women's workforce participation is an economic and social imperative, and is essential to building the workforce required to support economic growth of any country and India is not an exception. Creating the conditions to enable more women to get and keep jobs, to work more hours and to progress in their careers, will enable India to leverage the untapped economic potential of women in the current scenario. Women still face several barriers to enter labour market and to access good work and disproportionately face a variety of multiple challenges regarding access to employment, alternative of labor, operating conditions, employment security, wage parity, discrimination, and leveling the competitive burdens of labor and family responsibilities.

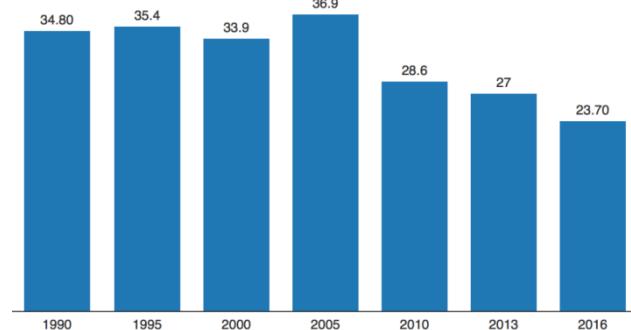
SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE CURRENT SCENARIO

Women's workforce participation and access to decent work are important and necessary elements of an inclusive and sustainable development process. The participation of women in the workforce varies considerably across developing countries and in emerging economies, far more than in the case of men. In the geographic region of Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, less than one-third of women of working-age participate in the work force, while the proportion reaches around two-thirds in other regions like East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. This variation is driven by a good kind of economic and social factors as well as economic process, increasing instructional attainment, falling fertility rates and social norms. Women participation is essential not only in workforce, but also in political, social and cultural environments. This will not only help in achieving social equality objectives, but also strengthen women economic security/independency, thus reducing their vulnerability to poverty, homelessness and domestic violence.

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

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. When it comes to women participation in workforce, the scenario is no different in both rural and urban areas. It is going on decreasing gradually as the years roll by. The women worker participation rate in urban areas of India is low, states a report presented in United Nations. According to a report presented in United Nations, an estimated 120 million Indian women which is about 80% of the total female workers are employed in the rural sector. This is almost 30% of the total workforce in rural areas. In the present year, while jobs for men increased by 0.9 million, 2.4 million women fell off the employment map (CMIE). These figures represent the current scenario of women participation in the country.

Female Labour Force Participation (%)



Source: ILO via World Bank, Government of India Ministry of Labour and Employment

WOMEN WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is explained as "the enhancement of assets and capabilities of numerous people and teams to interact, influence and hold responsible the establishments that have an effect on them. Authorization of women is so necessary to rework a developing country into a developed country. In discussions on women empowerment, an emphasis is often placed on women's decision making roles, their economic independence and right to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination. Our constitution grants equality to women in all fields of life. Yet a large number of women are either ill-equipped or not in a position to push themselves out of their traditionally unsatisfactory and unequal socio-economic

conditions. Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions on their own. It is vital to begin changes in social attitudes and perceptions with relevance the role of women in several spheres of life. The society and governments play an important role in empowering women during this direction.

POTENTIAL CAUSES OF DECLINING WOMEN WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION & IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

Most of the studies undertaken to analyze this trend of low and declining female LFPR (FLFPR) has attributed it to education and income effect (Rangarajan, Kaul, & Seema, 2011; Vinoj, 2013). These factors are allowing women to get out of menial and undesirable employment and get into other better alternatives. Stability in families and changing cultural factors are also attributed to the decreasing level of women's workforce participation. Patriarchal mind set of Indian men forces women to stay at home and take care of children and household chores. Scarcity of suitable jobs for women, changes in labor demand and wage differentials are also the factors which have impact on women's participation.

For improving women's workforce participation rate, the following measures are suggested:

- Awareness among women should be created about their significant role in economic development of the country
- Women should be provided with better access to training and counselling programs
- Child care facilities and other similar facilities will encourage women to get into workforce more in number
- There is need to improve safety for women and create job opportunities 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
- Gender-responsive policies need to be developed so that women are able to access better jobs or start up a business

CONCLUSION

In order to really bring women empowerment in the Indian society, we need to understand and eliminate the main cause of the ill practices against women which are patriarchal in nature. We need to be open minded and change the old mindset against women together with the constitutional and other provisions. 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.

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