



Role of Women in Development: Challenges in Work Participation

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ABSTRACT

Women's work participation and access to decent work are important for inclusive and sustainable development process. Considerable research has shown that investing in women's full economic potential is crucial to economic growth. Women continue to face many barriers in entering the labour market and accessing decent work including care responsibilities, lack of skills, restricted mobility and safety issues among others. Reducing these gender barriers is fundamental in promoting women's economic empowerment. An analysis of factors associated with employment reveals that higher education is critical if women are to access regular wage and salaried jobs. Moving beyond standard work participation rates, policy-makers should be more concerned about whether women are able to access better jobs or start a business taking advantage of new labour market opportunities as a country grows. In order to include women in growth, policy interventions should be made for improving the relevance of education and training programmes, promoting childcare and other institutional/legal measures to ease the burden of domestic duties. This paper broadly aims to take a fresh look at the current situation of women's work in India and Kerala, primarily on the basis of data provided in the Census of India 2001 and 2011 and also the various rounds of the National Sample Survey (NSS).

KEY WORDS: Women, Higher Education, Barriers to work-entry, Work participation, Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Various aspects of women employment have attracted the attention of economists all over the world. Any debate regarding women's work and their contribution to the household income bring out a lot of questions. In the last few decades it gained importance and the governments, some international financial agencies or forums like UN, researchers

and policy makers address this issue in a comprehensive way. Women experience a range of multiple challenges relating to access to employment, choice of work, working conditions, employment security, wage parity, discrimination and balancing the burdens of work and family responsibilities. Since much of the work that women undertake is unpaid, occurring inside the home, it is often "invisible" and uncounted. Moreover, by virtue of being outside the monetized economy, the economic contribution of woman's activities failing to recognize "gendered" pattern of labour allocation within household, can result in policies that generate a greater demand for female labour may not get proper response because its design regarding time and facilities for childcare are not adequate or address woman situation of that particular place.

Women's lives are from the very beginning relegated to the private sphere within which the principles of economic equality and independence have no place. Usually women's work/domestic work is included in the non-productive categories in the earlier census showing that other categories are supposed to be reproductive. Greater control of resources within the household by women leads to expenditure patterns and outcomes that strengthen women and children's wellbeing and their status within the household. Women's income is always considered as a supplementary income within the family. Relatively lower involvement of women in formal productive activities may bring about a greater gender bias and vice versa.

It is generally recognized by majority of women that the ultimate responsibility of running the households particularly among the poorer households rest with the women. Women's contribution to the total household income and the relative freedom to spend money for their personal choices and the influences which affect their spending choices looks into the mechanics of running the household by women even without a regular income. A support net of community transaction and mutual support established and



maintained mainly by women has now been formalized in the form of Self Help Groups (SHG), which is a form of grass root level women's organization.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the trends in the female work participation
2. To examine the pattern of sectoral composition of women workers
3. To examine the issues and challenges in the work participation of women

Peculiarities Women's Work

Models of women's labour supply specify that there are two key ingredients for woman's labour supply decision. The first ingredient is the opportunity cost of her time, with which competitive labour markets will equal the prevailing wage for women with her education level, experience and skill level. A higher wage has a substitution effect that makes working and working longer hours, more attractive, but also has an offsetting income that depresses work hours. The second ingredient is income that is "unearned," which is not earned by the women. This includes the earning of her husband if she is married and other profits transfer income of her family. Increases in women's unearned income exert only income effects on women's labour supply, in reduced work hours and possibly with exclusion from the labour force.

If women's wage rises along with men's wage, or perhaps even faster, the resulting levels of women work participation will depend on the relative strength of income and substitution effects. Increases in the female wage can exert only substitution effects on women who are initially not in the labour force, causing labour force participation to increase. Improvements in men's opportunities without corresponding improvements in women's wages may reduce labour force participation. Subsequent rises in women's wages may draw them back into the labour force. The type and amount of work that a woman does will be constrained by her family's production opportunities and characteristics. Extent of land and other productive assets her family owns and the number and skills of family members who are available to work on a family enterprise will affect her own labour supply decisions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Women in low-income countries are largely confined to work in the family enterprises. The economic development in the form of a new manufacturing sector may improve economic

opportunities for men relative to women. This point is made by Gold in (1995)ⁱ who argues that development will bring about initial declines in women's labour force participation. Men move into new blue-collar jobs that increase family income exerting income effects that reduce women's participation. Furthermore, as men move out of agriculture and into paid employment, and the pace of urbanization increases, there may be fewer family farms or family enterprises in which women can work, opportunities for women could conceivably decline in absolute terms.

If industrialization initially results in the withdrawal of women from the labour force, what explains the striking increases in women's labour force participation in more developed economics? As economic development progresses, nature of jobs available to women may change. Gold (1995) presents evidence that the rise in female labour force participation that characterized the United States in the twentieth century was due to the growth of "white-collar" jobs, largely in the clerical sector that were acceptable forms of employment for women. Further, gains in female education, both in absolute terms and relative to male education level, made these white collar jobs attainable for women and increased the incentives of women to work away from home.

The U-shape hypothesis discussed and documented by Sinha (1967)ⁱⁱ, Durand (1975)ⁱⁱⁱ and Horton (1996)^{iv} indicates the relationship between women's labour force participation and economic development. For very poor countries female labour force participation is high and women work mainly in farm or non-farm family enterprises. Development initially moves women out of the labour force, partly because of the rise in men's market opportunities and partly because of social barriers against woman entering the paid labour force. However as countries continue to develop, women's education levels rises, and women move back into the labour force as paid employees holding mainly while-collar jobs.

According to Seguino and Lovinski (2009)^v employment and education are crucial factors which improve women's bargaining power in the home. Kofi D Benefo (2003)^{vi} opines that education emerges as the most important determinant of non-family work. Altonji and Blank (1999)^{vii} opines that women's labour force status relative to that of men is an important benchmark of their states is a society. In developed economics, researches seek to measure women's wellbeing by examining factors influencing women labour force participation and by measuring and understanding the gender gap in



wages to determine why women's wages are less than those of men, even after controlling for education and labour market experience.

According to Mammen and Paxon (2008)^{viii} decline in women's economic activity is a case of concern to those who are interested in women's wellbeing as well as those who believe that women are valuable resources and must be utilized efficiently. Women's employment is a critical factor in their progression toward economic independence and is also considered as indicator of their overall status in society.

According to Rangarajan and Kaul (2011)^{ix}, working women could signal economic hardship issues for the household and thus, with improving household income, there is a tendency for women to move out of labour market. This would particularly play out when men's economic opportunities are expanding and there is a rise in their wage rate thus making it feasible for women to concentrate her energies in the reproductive sphere. Neff, Sen and Kling (2012)^x conducted a bivariate analysis for rural women over the same time period. They consider Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) as a proxy for employment opportunities and find that while all states have witnessed economic growth during 2004 to 2009-10, most of them have experienced decline in female labour force participation, They interpret this as of evidence of decreasing employment opportunities leading to declining labour force participation for women.

Lakshmi Devi (2005)^{xi} argues that age, marital status, place of residence, economic status and husband's employment turned out to be significant in determining women's entry into the labour force. Alice Sebastain and K Navaneetham (2003)^{xii} opine that availability of jobs according to

educational qualification is an important determinant of female labour force participation. Highly educated women in Kerala find it difficult to find suitable jobs for them. The odds ratio shows that compared to women with higher secondary and below education, women with diploma and professional education have six and eighteen times more probability respectively, to be employed. Women in the age group of 40-59 have thirteen times more probability to work than women in the age group of 15-24. This is an interesting result which shows the important role life cycle plays in the employment decision of women. Marital status is also a crucial factor in determining female labour force participation. Single women have two times more probability than married women to have employment while controlling other characteristics. Women from poor family are more likely to work than women from rich family. Married women from poor family are six times more likely to work. It shows that family obligations forces married women to opt for market work. Husband's employment turned out to be a significant variable in determining women's work participation.

Gender inequality is accentuated because of the issues associated with women kept aloof from fruitful employment and income to make them economically empowered. As per the table 1 below, the female work participation rate was high in rural areas compared to urban areas. The major employment sector in rural areas is agriculture. This means women find employment still in primary sector in India. Increase in work participation rates of male and female more in urban areas over the years 1972-73 to 2011-12 when compared with rural areas where much decline is observed in female work participation.

Table 1 Usual Status Work Participation Rates in India by Sex

NSS Rounds	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
27 th (1972-73)	54.5	31.8	50.1	13.4
32 th (1977-78)	55.2	33.1	50.8	15.6
38 th (1983)	54.7	34.0	51.2	15.1
43 rd (1987-88)	53.9	32.3	50.6	15.2
50 th (1993-94)	55.3	32.8	52.1	15.5
55 th (1999-00)	53.1	29.9	51.8	13.9
61 st (2004-05)	54.6	32.7	54.9	16.6
68 th (2011-12)	54.3	24.8	54.6	14.7

Source: NSS (Various rounds), Government of India

Table 2 shows the broad sector of employment in India around 75 per cent of the female workers and about 60 per cent of male

workers in rural areas is in primary sector. In urban area tertiary sector is the major employment provider for both male and female workers. The



gradual decline in employment in primary sector and steady increase in secondary and tertiary sectors

is clearly visible for male as well as for female irrespective of the region.

Table 2 Percentage of worker by -broad sectors, All India.

Period	Male			Female		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Rural						
1977-78	80.6	8.8	10.6	88.1	6.7	5.1
1983	77.5	10.3	12.2	87.5	7.4	4.8
1987-88	74.5	12.1	13.4	84.7	10.0	5.3
1993-94	74.1	11.2	14.7	86.2	8.3	5.6
1999-00	71.4	12.5	16.1	85.4	9.0	5.8
2004-05	66.5	15.5	18.0	83.3	10.2	6.6
2011-12	59.4	22.0	18.7	74.9	16.7	8.3
Urban						
1977-78	10.6	33.8	55.5	31.9	32.4	35.7
1983	10.3	34.2	55.4	31.8	30.6	37.6
1987-88	9.1	34.0	56.9	29.4	31.7	38.9
1993-94	9.0	33.0	57.9	24.7	29.7	46.3
1999-00	6.6	32.8	60.8	17.7	29.4	52.9
2004-05	6.1	34.4	59.5	18.1	32.4	49.5
2011-12	5.6	35.3	59.1	10.9	34.0	55.1

Source: NSS (various rounds), Government of India

However as far as the rural areas of India is concerned, more than three quarters of women employment is still in agriculture while only more than half of men employees are in that sector. Hence it is seen from the above the above tables that

women work participation is shifted from the primary sector towards the tertiary sector due to the urbanisation and increase in education of women in India which is in tune with the findings of the past studies mentioned in the literature review.

Table 3 Work participation Rates in India in 2001 and 2011

	Year	Persons		Males		Females	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Total	Population	1025.2	1210.2	530.4	623.7	494.8	586.4
	No. of Workers	402.5	481.7	275.5	331.8	127.0	149.8
	% of workers	39.26	39.80	51.94	53.20	25.67	25.54
Rural	Population	740.2	833.1	380.4	427.9	359.8	405.1
	No. of Workers	310.6	348.6	199.2	226.7	111.5	121.8
	% of workers	41.96	41.84	52.37	52.98	30.99	30.07
Urban	Population	285.0	377.1	150.0	195.8	135.0	181.3
	No. of Workers	91.9	133.15	76.3	105.1	15.6	28.04
	% of workers	32.24	35.31	50.87	53.68	11.56	15.47

Source: Census of India 2001 and 2011 Note: Population and workers in million

Table 3 depicts the work participation rates in India in 2001 and 2011 respectively with urban-rural divisions. Male work participation has increased and female work participation declined during the decade. Overall work participation in the urban areas show an increase, while the same rural areas slightly decline. Female work participation shows a declining trend in rural areas, while it increases in urban areas. At the same time male work participation is increasing in rural as well as

urban regions. The overall female work participation declines as loss of the workers in primary sector is not compensated by the hike in the workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The decrease in female employment during the economic development may be due to the income effect, wage discrimination and also due to the unavailability of suitable jobs for women according to their educational qualification.



Work Participation in Kerala

Kerala experience presents an interesting paradox of social advancement and economic stagnation. Over time, women in Kerala could break the shackles of conservatism and effectively participated in the education system of Kerala. Structural changes in the Indian economy, initiated under the new economic reforms in 1991, have brought in a new wave of change in the occupational scenario of the state. In fact statistics (from different human development reports) indicate that women have contributed more than men in the development of education programs and health activities of the state. This fact is overlooked by those who analyze and praise the so-called Kerala model. Without the contributions of women in the development of Kerala, the Kerala model would be non-existent.

However the work participation of women in Kerala is not found to be in tune with their higher education status.

Work participation among women in Kerala 21.3 per cent (NSS 68th round 2011-12) which is the lower than the corresponding rate for all India. But the male work participation rate is found to be higher in Kerala than that of the all India figures as per the 68th round. While the male work participation rates improved in the last two decades even at a higher rate than the all India pattern, female work participation rates declined during the same period. This is paradoxical to the fact that, women in Kerala are believed to enjoy higher states in terms of educational and health achievement compared to their counterparts at the all India level.

Table 4 Work Participation Rates Kerala and all India (Usual status)

Year	India		Kerala	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1987-1988	53.1	28.1	51.2	26.5
1993-1994	54.4	28.3	54.3	22.9
1999-2000	52.7	25.4	55.4	22.9
2004-2005	54.7	28.7	55.9	25.6
2011-2012	54.4	21.9	56.2	21.3

Source- NSS on Employment and Unemployment

Table 5 shown below gives the worker population ratio of female aged 15 years and above according to usual principal and subsidiary status approach during 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. These employment estimate were obtained through Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment who conducts Employment-Unemployment survey annually. However, the data

shows a slight increasing in the work participation rates of women in Kerala and India. This may be attributed to the various steps taken by the government in encouraging private sector economy and fast tracking various projects involving substantial investment and increasing public expenditure.

Table 5 Worker population ratio of female aged 15 years and above

Year	India	Kerala
2013-2014	25.0	20.3
2014-2015	29.6	27.8
2015-2016	25.8	23.7

Source: E & U Surveys of Labour Bureau

Sectoral Composition of Workforce in Kerala and India

Theoretically the economic activity among women follows a U-shaped curve along the course of development. In the initial stages of development when society is primarily agrarian, increased demand of female labour leads to higher workforce participation among women. Industrialization gives rise to greater demand for skilled labour and as a consequence involves displacement of women

labour and its substitution by male labour. It is only in the latest stages of development, as a consequence of the emergence and expansion of tertiary sector, demand for women labour is renewed (Boserup: 1970).

The most significant aspect of female employment in Kerala is the lesser proportion of women employed in the primary sector. As depicted in table 5 below, in 1999-00, primary sector accounted for only 46.3 per cent of female



employment in rural area in Kerala against 84.5 per cent at the all India level. The proportion of women employed in the secondary sector in Kerala is much higher than the corresponding all India figures for women. Further, in 1999-2000, the tertiary sector accounted for about 25 per cent and 56 per cent of

total women employment in rural and urban sector in Kerala respectively, while at all India level the corresponding figures are 6 per cent and 56 per cent. Thus all India figure show wide spatial difference in the tertiary sector employment of rural women compared to Kerala and India.

Table 6 Sectoral Composition of Workforce in Kerala and India

	55 th round (1999-2000)				68 th round (2011-2012)			
	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban Male	Urban Female
Primary Sector	43.4 (71.8)	46.3 (84.5)	7.4 (7.4)	7.9 (15.0)	28.2 (59.3)	38.7 (74.9)	8.2 (5.6)	10.1 (10.9)
Secondary Sector	22.9 (12.6)	28.9 (8.9)	33.3 (32.1)	36.0 (28.9)	32.2 (22.0)	31.3 (16.7)	32.9 (35.2)	27.7 (28.9)
Tertiary Sector	33.6 (16.1)	24.9 (6.7)	59.3 (60.6)	56.1 (56.2)	39.6 (18.7)	29.1 (8.4)	58.9 (59.2)	62.2 (60.2)

Source- NSS 55th and 68th round.

Note: Figures in brackets represent India

The sectoral composition of Kerala and India is examined after elapsing a decade with the data from 68th round of NSS. It is seen that the workforce in the primary sector is drastically declined in rural areas in Kerala and at the all India level, while the workforce in the secondary and tertiary sectors are increased. In the rural area in Kerala the sector composition of female employment is entirely different from the all India pattern where three quarters of women employees are still in agricultural activities. The rural employment of women in Kerala is almost equal in all the three sectors economy which may be due to the higher educational status of women in the state. Women far exceed men in graduate and post graduate education in the arts and science courses in Kerala, where girl students constitute around two-thirds of total student enrollment.

The growing importance of income earned by women raises many interesting issues. First is the share of women's income in the total income of household, second is their control over the expenditure on the total household income and the third is influences affect their choices in spending the money. The most significant aspect of female employment in Kerala is the low proportion of women employed in the primary sector. The structural transformation of women's economic activity has indeed taken place in the state with primary sector losing its importance and tertiary sector taking up its place.

III. CONCLUSION

Women in our state can proudly assert their unique identities because without their contribution the socio-economic development in Kerala would

still be a dream of Keralites. In order to elevate the status of women in Kerala the girls should be encouraged to join technical, managerial, professional institutions of higher learning so that they can compete with boys in the job market. Women outnumber men in the teaching profession, indicating their paramount role in knowledge generation and shaping the destiny of next generation. It is suggested that Government should initiate various supportive services like day care facilities, extension of maternity leave to ensure the effective participation of highly educated and enlightened Kerala women in order to catalyze the socio-economic development of the state.

Education helped the women in Kerala to get rid of superstitions as well as to increase the age of marriage. The women's education was the most important fundamental factor for reshaping and modernizing the life of women and society in Kerala. Higher age at marriage and increase in female education has enabled women to take on new roles and responsibilities within the family. It is true that there exists a mismatch between women's capabilities gained in terms of education and the opportunities that they have in terms of employment or social involvement and the aspirations they have in Kerala. This again is a paradox with regard to women development in Kerala. Women are the critical agents of change. They need to be viewed not as beneficiaries but as active participants in the process of development and change. However it is quite unfortunate that the agenda of inclusion of women in economic development of India still remains unfinished.



NOTES

- ⁱ Gold in (1995)- The relationship between economic development and female labor force participation within the framework of U-shaped hypothesis
- ⁱⁱ Sinha (1967)- “Dynamics of female Participation in Economic Activity in Developing Economy”
- ⁱⁱⁱ Durand (1975)- The labor Force in Economic Development.
- ^{iv} Horton (1996)- Women and Industrialization in Asia.
- ^v Seguino & Iovinski (2009) - Evidence on Global trends in Gender Norms stereo types”
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