

Perceptive on Women Workforce Participation

Priyanka Tiwari*

Research Scholar, CSRD, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Abstract – Market demand efficient and skilled person for any kind of job. That efficiency is lacking for women due to inadequate trainings and expertise hence they account to lesser numbers. Further, heterogeneous society in terms of religions, castes and ethnicity exhibits variations in education and work force participation among women. Though women constitute half of India's population, their literacy rate and workforce participation is not in convergence with their numbers. Dissimilar job opportunities or lesser prevalence of job in the market, low wages for women as compared to men's, for the same job done by both, in addition they are subject to sexual harassment are some of the causes for low female workforce participation.

Key Words: Women, Workforce Participation, Discrimination, Low Participation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first impression that comes for woman in Indian society is performing reproductive roles, discharging responsibility towards the family, helping in upbringing of the child and thus indirect role in society, (Laura den, 2011). In the era of globalization, the concept of gender equality has emerged at a rapid rate all over the world especially in developing regions. With this, a huge transformation is seen in the outlook of society towards the woman, from performing traditional family responsibility to discharging efficiently as an active participant in the work force (Farzana, 2012). One of the most important reasons that attributes to the upward trend of woman entering into work force is impartment of higher education amongst girl/women. The entry of woman in the labour market after getting higher education is construed as positive signals. It finally leads to gender equality in workforce and sharing the financial load with other members of the family. It has been reported that with financial load being shared by female members of family, the economic status of family rise positively (Indrani, 2009). In this way, it may be stated that the issues pertaining to gender equality, and all the means to achieve this, so that more woman from the families joins active work force should be the focus of any family (Katrin, 2013). Focusing on the sordid state it has also been seen that despite getting higher education and possessing requisite qualification women are not getting into job market and if at all, not at par with male counterparts (Ahmad, 2002). In this context. It is important to note that even after getting higher education, various factors at different levels, from individual to society, are dragging any woman entering into labor market. Contrary to popular speculation, the ratio of participation of woman in labor market is less compared to other metropolitan cities of India. The

2030 sustainable development agenda is to deal with constant gender inequalities, which exist, at work.

2. VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES OF WOMEN WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

(Verma, 1998) argued that four significant factors that can be attributed for low women work participation. These are as follows:

- i) Buffer factor,
- ii) Segregation factor,
- iii) Substitution factor, and
- iv) Income factor.

The buffer hypothesis assumes an appreciable percentage of women as an ad-hoc workforce who is needed only at the time of labor crunch situation and once the demand settle down, they are expelled. Therefore, in a way they act as a buffer stock of labour who finds their utility only for ephemeral period.

As per job segregation hypothesis, few occupations are assumed mainly to be feminist in character and thus these sectors are women dominated. (e.g. Receptionist, Air hostess)

According to substitution hypothesis, as the recession intensifies the search is for cost-saving technique of means of production, which enables to induce substitution towards cheaper form of labor primarily women as they are considered cheap form of labour, because women can be given less salary for the same job performed by male counterparts in

organization. This discrimination in salary exists today also although after enactment of the equal remuneration act of 1976.

Lastly, according to income hypothesis women enters into the labor market to raise their individual and family earnings due to lack of sufficient income sources or to enhance their socio-economic status.

Various factors act as deterrent or hindrances for any educated woman who wants to enter into labor market after completion of their studies. International labor organization (ILO) economists Steven (Kapsos, 2014) are of the opinion after their analysis that there are primarily four significant reasons attributed as retarding force in female participation in labor market.

- i) Growing female enrolment in higher education seems to have a receding effect. This manifest in keeping women out of labour market at entry level.
- ii) Household withdrawing women from the workforce (labour market) with rise in family income. This is very important factor.
- iii) congregation of women in those areas of economy where there is a little prospect of job growth or job segregation according to gender, (glass ceiling effect)
- iv) Problem with data

Women are living in a huge paradox situation which are as follows, they contribute around 50 percent to the world's population, 33 percent of the labour force, performing about 70 per cent of all working hours of the work, and garnering 10 percent of world's income, while possessing even less than 1 per cent of shares in world's property. Due to these odd statistical facts, mentioned above the relevance of women-based study is important. Though women constitute half of India's population and our Indian constitution envisages via articles 14, 15, 16 etc. equality in terms of opportunity and prohibition of discrimination based on gender, still they are subjected to discrimination, deprivation and prejudices regarding education and workforce participation. The inherent contradiction that exists between traditional mindset and what our constitution envisages puts status of women in a critically vulnerable position in the society. Unfortunately, Indian women suffer discriminations and prejudices at all the stages right from the foetus in mother's womb, which manifests in the form of the declining child sex ratio in various states. This continues even at later stages and events of life. Government through various policy measures and initiatives has tried to address these issues. Acts such as PNMT has made female feticide a criminal offence. Beti Bachao Beti padhao, Ladali sukanya yojana etc. are trying to address the issues of low female literacy. Nutritional deprivation, reduced access to health care services, and very little or no say in

matters of decision making of the family other important issues related to women. Studies have shown that women's contribution in family, society and nation have always been undervalued and overlooked and not considered at par with men and this can be attributed to lack of education and low workforce participation eventually leading to unawareness. They are at large been the unsung characters of any family.

The history especially the Indian national movement has been a witness and corroborates the fact that equal participation of men and women were being able to rout mighty British rule from India. However, the debates on women's status is very old and persists, the studies allude to the fact that through enhancing education and participation in labor market the questions pertaining to socioeconomic status of women in society can be addressed up to certain extent. There exists an inter-relationship and interdependence between education, work force participation, and empowerment. Education plays a fundamental role in improving physical and psychological well-being of women and thus enhances her ability to work and contributing to the economy. However, the very fact that women were living within the closed surrounding of their families and family members and household work, prevented them from acquiring higher education especially in backward states where infrastructure is not very conducive. This was also the reason why women could not participate freely in labor market as per their wish and compelled to concentrate on the traditional women's household work. Education is a significant correlate of economic growth as it leads to transformation from agrarian economy to an industrialized economy and from there to tertiary or service sector and finally to quaternary sector of economy. Investment in education is largely considered as one of the most important means to achieve stable economic growth via creation of human capital resource. In context of India where more than 60% of population comprised of youth, generation of human capital resource will ultimately pay rich dividend provided .it be equitable in terms of gender, caste, religion etc.

Investment in girl's education is expected to have an affirmative impact on crude participation rate since it up thrust the earning aspirations among individuals, and enable to overcome or at least resist the restrictive barriers of traditional customary in restraining the participation of women in productive economy.

Female workforce participation is a driving factor of socio-economic development as it supplements income and therefore leads to reduction in poverty. Female participation in labor market is also vital for awareness and understanding the reproductive and productive roles of the educated woman population

Dissimilar job opportunities, low wages for women as compared to men's, subject to sexual harassment at

work places acts as hindrances for women participating in labor market. At several occasions these incidents goes unreported fearing risks of losing job, back lash from society, humiliation etc. ultimately leads to withdrawal from active workforce participation. The Supreme Court of India taking the suo-motto of various cases recognized the need for law while laying down the Vishakha guidelines against sexual harassment at work place. Women employed in the unorganized sector, single women are economically more vulnerable, and many of them are unaware of the law. The recent media reports of sexual harassment at various places is also a reason behind women's less participation in the labor market as the belief which persists in the society is that man earn his livelihood whereas women does so to supplement the family income.

Women's participation in the work force is considered the encouraging signal of empowerment of women enabling them with the power to resist and overcome discrimination at work place (Sanhita, 2013). Work participation is generally prominent amongst illiterates further it follows a downward trend, dips at the lowest level at secondary/higher secondary educational level, and again seem to rise for graduates and above (Chakrakorty, 2009). Higher female work force participation can boost growth by mitigating the impact of a shrinking workforce (Elborgh, 2013).

It has been seen where female's workforce participation was at higher scale, women seems to have greater mobility, better communication with spouses and control over their household's resources compared with the women residing in villages where women's work force participation was minimal (Sundaram, 2008). Women work leads to multigenerational impact, it leads to large multiplier effect on the household, and it improves the bargaining power of women (Economic survey, GOI, 2016-17).

There is interplay of various complex factors determining the employment of women and sometimes it becomes very difficult to examine them. It varies both at individual level and at aggregate level. At the individual level, it greatly depends upon women's decision to work which is further plagued by various complexities like the job availability, and their education level and requisite skills which make them applicable for the job they are looking for. At the aggregate level, Female Work force Participation rate is greatly determined by factors that are largely influenced by economic, social and demographic circumstances.

Neoclassical economist subscribes education as one of the key determinants of women entering into the labor market. The higher the educational level, greater is their chance of participation in productive economy. However, there exist many factors besides education

which determine women's entering into labor market, (e.g. household income). Demographic factors like age, family size and household responsibilities have considerable impact on women entering labor market (Ahmad, 2002). Approximately fifty percent of the population constituted by females, the study dealing with the women's participation in work force is important in determining the level of development. As they are deprived of education, they do not get suitable job in the market. At the workplace, their occupational choices are limited and they have very less option left before them compared to male counterpart, sometimes they are less paid for the same job compared to men.

According to Labor Bureau report, 1974-75, (Verma, 1998), there are four factors, which determine female employment in economy. These are as follows:

- i) Inadequate income of male breadwinner to suffice the needs of family.
- ii) Fall in family's income due to accident.
- iii) Death of bread winner or head of household
- iv) Desire of women for achieving economic self-dependence and higher standards of living

Therefore, this trend in higher education and work participation needs proper evaluation. it must be said whether it is the need of hour or a sheer compulsion, society need to change its perception from considering a girl/women being exception in some roles to being exceptional in almost all roles because in the words of famous luminaries it is a well-established fact that "if we educate a girl we ultimately empower a nation". We only need policies that don't create obstacles but let the women realize the power from within that will be in actual sense bring the meaningful outcome of women participation. Remember both facts are equally true "No nation can prosper and realize its full potential if it held back its one half of population".

3. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

- The major challenge for the policy makers working in the domain of higher education should be to address the regional imbalances in quality higher education. Imparting quality education in case of backward states is an imperative to check the migration from such states. This may well converge in increase in percentage of women entering in job market especially in terms of psychological reasons i.e. being well versed with the native ambience.
- The orientation of higher education should be more towards professional courses at least in

near future to generate a cadre of well skilled women workforce. This may drastically improve the grim picture of women workforce participation in backward states and lessen the burdens of migrants on capital city.

- From a long-term perspective, it is necessary to effuse the motivation amongst women at graduate level to pursue for higher education like PhD and even higher degree. The effect may percolate from top-to-bottom strata of society and helps in molding the traditional mindset of society towards girl's education.
- Regional imbalances should be worked upon concomitantly with imbalance in the religion towards attainment of higher education of girls. Regional and education equality amongst religion should be the focus in order to strengthen secular fabric of India.
- New education policy being drafted should work upon tuning the system so that a girl can earn while she learn i.e. "Earning while learning" approach if adopted may have a profound effect on the girls education especially girls belonging from socially and financially marginalized sections of the society.
- Opening skill centers in colleges and imparting vocational training amongst girls may bring more meaningful outcomes from new initiative like Skill India Mission.
- New education policy should focus more attention towards multidisciplinary studies for reaping the optimum benefits from the education to the society.
- Success story of Women in Indian society in terms of their contribution towards Economics, History, and Science as well as from other domains should be included in course curriculum at graduation level.
- Government, NGOs should strive to change the traditional mindset of society towards women from reproductive role to more meaningful role in productive economy.
- It should be made mandatory to constitute grievance redressal body in all institutions employing women as a workforce. The safety and security of women workforce should not be compromised.
- Both the education system and economy should adopt a gender neutral approach which if needed have a feminist tilt for the convenience of women work force.
- Effusing the entrepreneurship amongst women possessing higher education may bring radical changes in economy and society. Policies like "Mudra Yojana" has seen a great participation from women section, working on similar lines policies need to be drafted for motivating young woman entrepreneur.
- Broadening the horizon of education system by calibrating with market based approach may effuse entrepreneurship spirit and skill in women.
- Strengthening the transport system especially the Public transport in Delhi from female perspective may ease the burden of commutation for getting education and workforce. Initiatives like running buses wholly reserved for females during peak working hours and recruiting women safety personnel in buses may provide flexibility for choosing mode of transport.
- It is necessary to strengthen the management board of private company from female perspective by including more women members in decision-making body.
- Political awareness amongst women may play a big role in drafting policies related to women. It is therefore necessary to have proper representation of women at grassroots level of democracy i.e. at panchayat and municipalities up to the highest level of Lok Sabha and Rajyasabha. Political awareness may percolate to societal level up to family level.
- Working hours and Facilities need to be more flexible for women in any enterprises.
- Initiative like Digital literacy should also focus upon women since it will create new vistas for accessing the information related to job opportunities as well as a medium to empowering the women.
- Lastly to sum up it must be said whether it is the need of hour or a sheer compulsion, society need to change its perception from considering a girl/women being exception in some roles to being exceptional in almost all roles because in the words of famous luminaries it is a well-established fact that "if we educate a girl we ultimately empower a nation". We only need policies that don't create obstacles but let the women realize the power from within that will be in actual sense bring the meaningful outcome of women participation. Remember both facts are equally true "No nation can prosper and realize its full potential if it holds back its one half of population".

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Corresponding Author

Priyanka Tiwari*

Research Scholar, CSRD, Jawaharlal Nehru
University, New Delhi

tiwaripriyan@gmail.com