

IS LITERACY A CAUSE OF INCREASE IN WOMEN WORK PARTICIPATION IN PUNJAB (INDIA): A REGIONAL ANALYSIS?

SANGEETA NAGAICH¹ & PREETI SHARMA²

¹Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India

²Chandigarh Business School, Chandigarh, India

ABSTRACT

It was well documented that the educational condition of women has improved in the past few decades but their work participation rate is still low. Here, the paper tried to see reasons behind this difference. There are many determinants of work participation rate but we limit this paper to education. The paper is based on the hypothesis of increasing women work participation rate with increase in Literacy rate. The correlation matrix between Work participation and literacy rate improvement does not show significant relation. In addition, it was found that women with primary education are actively engaged in agricultural sector. Finally, the paper Concludes with some general observations and suggestions.

KEYWORDS: Gender Inequality, Economic Participation, Education, Workers, Regional Analysis

INTRODUCTION

One of the unusual features of India's labour market was the labour force participation of women remain stagnant for a long time and Punjab is no exception. The recent census reports shows a disturbing trend of labour force participation rate which dropped to 13.9 percent in 2011 from 18.7 percent in 2001 and the decline is noticed especially among urban female work participation.

These results raised many questions. In the epoch of socio-economic development and demographic changes taking place in the country, the firm believes is female labour force participation will increase rather having a declining trend. The changing demographic dynamics (declining fertility and benefits of demographic dividend) coupled with socio-economic changes expected to contribute to favourable condition for increasing labour force participation of females. However, the failure of the economy to integrate females into labour market becomes quite disturbing and unusual.

The female labour force participation and its contribution to economic development has been addressed in many studies (Esteve-Volart, 2004; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009) hence, drawing women into the labour force can be an important source of future growth of the economy. It has been pointed out that demographic dividend, coupled with high female participation rates, and is alleged to have accounted for about a third of East Asia's high per capita growth rates (Bloom and Williamson, 1998). Beyond economic benefits, women's participation in the labour force can be seen as a signal of declining discrimination and increasing empowerment of women (Mammen & Paxson, 2000).

Given this, the broad objective of the study is to investigate the recent decline in labour force participation of women. There are few studies (Bardhan, 1979; Dasgupta, 2005; Kingdon, 1999) focuses on behaviour of female labour supply in India and the causes of not to opt in labour forces in recent years has been addressed in some studies (Rangrajan, et. al. 2011; Indrani & Neetha, 2011). Nevertheless, these studies explain labour force participation either

through education (age effect) or through changes in employment pattern (period effect). At the same time the studies on labour supply also show that the participation behaviour of a specific age profile also influences the labour force participation trend. Thus, taking in to consideration the importance of these three components, the study applies Age-Period-Cohort analysis to study the labour supply behaviour of female in India. The participation rate of female is decomposed with a view to identify whether the participation rate is influenced by a) the age of the women b) Macroeconomic condition. c) The age specific participation characteristics of the cohort. These effects on observed participation rates are referred to, respectively, as the 'age effect' 'macroeconomic effect', and the 'cohort effect'.

METHODOLOGY

The questions raised above shall be addressed through the analysis of district-wise census data pertaining to women literacy rate and WPR have been derived from the census of Punjab 2011. The data has been computed and compared as required. The paper concludes with some general observations and suggestions. Work participation rate is defined as the percentage of total workers (main and marginal) to total population.

$$\text{Work Participation Rate} = \frac{\text{Total workers (main + marginal)}}{\text{total population}} \times 100$$

Conceptual Framework: Women's Work Participation Rate

Measuring of women's work force participation is complicated for the reasons of both perception and methods. Since the concept of work is inadequate or methodological problem in collection of data because of all women work in agricultural sector or household sector, women work force participation rate is so low in South Asian countries. As an example, the 1971 census defines a 'worker' as a person whose main activity is participation in any economically productive work by his physical or mental activity. The census goes on to explain that a man or woman who is engaged primarily in household duties such as cooking for own household should not be treated as a worker for the main activity. Thus, if a person engages in an economically productive work but only as his secondary activity, he is not considered as a worker. This definition of a worker is much stricter than the 1961 census definition whereby even secondary economic activities are qualified for a person to be considered as a worker. On contrary, 2001 census, defined work as "participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Such participation may be physical and/or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also includes effective supervision and direction of work. It even includes part time help or unpaid work on farm, family enterprise or in any other economic activity. All persons engaged in 'work' as defined above are workers". Methodologically, female work participation rate (FWPR) is calculated as the proportion of total workers (main plus marginal) among female workers above 6 years.

In Punjab, women are relatively invisible in workforce statistics. This is because women's labour, in most cases does not directly produce marketable goods or services. This gendered notion of work has hugely undermined women's contribution to the economy, resulting in the non recognition of women as important economic entities. Although women work for longer hours and contribute substantially to the family income, quite often they are the major earners as the work performed by them is *non-monetized*; they are not perceived as workers by either the women themselves or by the data collecting agencies and the government itself. This is a resultant of the non-recognition of the multi-dimensional functions which women perform both as productive and reproductive labour. The causes of low participation rate of women is repeatedly acknowledged in terms of the invisibility of women's work, domestic chores and other tasks which are viewed as part of a cultural/traditional attitude where man is considered as the primary bread-winner.

Women Work Participation

Census of Punjab shows that there is a variation in the women’s WPR across the districts of state. Among the Districts, in urban area the lowest FWPR are Fatehgarh Sahib (10.17%) and Sangrur (9.69%). And the districts with highest FWPR are Patiala (14.78) and 14.77 (11.77%). In rural areas highest FWPR is in Mansa i.e. 30.46% and lowest is in Hoshiarpur i.e. 10.5%. From table it is clear that Female work participation rate is less in urban areas than the rural areas. One more interesting thing can be inferred from the table that in most of the districts in urban areas work participation of female has increased in 2011 in comparison to 2001, on the other hand there is a deep fall in female work participation in rural areas in 2011 with compare to 2001. Over all work participation has decrease to 13.91% from 18.7 %. This is matter of worry for Punjab.

Table 1: Work Participation Rates in Punjab

Name	2011			
	Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
PUNJAB	55.51	13.18	54.94	14.34
Amritsar	56.61	14.77	54.78	16.50
Bathinda	55.94	13.13	59.57	20.91
Faridkot	55.84	12.18	57.09	12.75
Fatehgarh Sahib	57.64	10.17	56.67	12.02
Firozpur	54.99	11.04	55.91	18.83
Gurdaspur	54.42	11.80	51.82	10.70
Hoshiarpur	53.01	13.79	50.43	10.56
Jalandhar	56.43	14.06	55.15	11.59
Kapurthala	56.01	14.31	54.85	11.57
Ludhiana	56.79	12.68	55.85	16.29
Mansa	54.26	14.64	57.04	30.46
Moga	56.10	16.01	55.44	13.69
Muktsar	55.29	11.04	58.13	16.10
Nawashahar	53.61	10.98	54.54	11.50
Patiala	54.45	14.78	55.08	10.77
Rupnagar	51.56	11.56	52.54	15.25
Sangrur	54.42	9.69	55.63	11.25

Source: Primary Census Abstract (Census of Punjab 2011)

Gender Disparity

India witnessed progress in the economic sphere but still inequalities are existing in the society in terms of gender, caste, religion etc. This section of the paper took the existing gender inequality in Punjab. As an outcome, women are lacking behind in different sectors of employment. In 2011 this gap further widened 40.60 percent from 31.3 percent in 2001 in rural Punjab. In urban Punjab gap has decreased from 43.7 percent in 2001 to 42.32 in 2011. Over all work participation gap has also increased from 35.4 percent to 41.24 in a decade.

Table 2: Gender Disparity

Name	2011	
	Rural	Urban
PUNJAB	40.60	42.32
Amritsar	38.28	41.83
Bathinda	38.66	42.81
Faridkot	44.34	43.67

Table 2: Contd.,

Fatehgarh Sahib	44.66	47.47
Firozpur	37.07	43.95
Gurdaspur	41.12	42.63
Hoshiarpur	39.87	39.22
Jalandhar	43.56	42.37
Kapurthala	43.28	41.70
Ludhiana	39.56	44.10
Mansa	26.58	39.63
Moga	41.76	40.09
Muktsar	42.03	44.25
Nawashahar	43.03	42.63
Patiala	44.32	39.66
Rupnagar	37.29	40.00
Sangrur	44.38	44.73

Source: Primary Census Abstract (Census of Punjab 2011)

Occupational Composition

Division of work force or economically active population into various occupational compositions is a primary aspect of economic development. The regional variation in the work participation under occupational group is quite notable to determine the work participation. And they are classified into four categories that is, cultivators, agricultural workers, household industry workers and other workers. The women's WPR are discussed in four categories of workers as follows.

Table 3: Workers by Industrial Category – Punjab: 2001 and 2011

Industrial Category	Year	Total	Male	Female
Cultivators (C)	2001	22.6	25.3	13.9
	2011	19.5	21.7	9.9
Agricultural Labourers (AL)	2001	16.3	15.9	17.8
	2011	16	15.4	19.1
HHI workers	2001	3.7	2.6	7.2
	2011	3.9	3.1	7.5
Other workers (OW)	2001	57.4	56.2	61.1
	2011	60.5	59.8	63.4
Non-agricultural workers (HHI+OW)	2001	61.1	58.8	68.3
	2011	64.4	62.9	70.9

Literacy and Work Participation Rate

As mentioned earlier, literacy is an important indicator of determining the work participation. But it is always not true for all regions. The liberal capitalism assumes that with higher education, the capability of the individual increases. Women's WPR is low in some districts with higher literacy rate. In some major districts where literacy rate is high like Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Rupnagar have low women's participation in the labour force. Also, the correlation is negatively significant between female literacy and work participation. From the analysis, it is found that it is difficult to establish systematic relationship between literacy and work participation of women. It has also been observed that "while economic factors principally determine a man's participation in employment, the forces that influence a women's participation in work are diverse and include demographic, reproductive, social, religious and cultural factors". Why is this happening? It was found that WPR is higher for illiterate women than for women with higher level of education – a trend which reverses itself only for women with technical/vocational education or graduate or post-graduate. This pattern is manifested

in both rural and urban areas. So, it can be argued that “education may not positively influence a women’s participation in work, but for women who are in work force, education is the most important determinant of better quality non-agricultural work”. District Firozpur have 80.8% literacy rate and has 16.4% literacy rate.

Table 4: Literacy Rates in Punjab and its Districts 2001- 2011

State/ District	Districts	Males		Females	
		2001	2011	2001	2011
	PUNJAB	75.2	81.5	63.4	71.3
1	Gurdaspur	79.8	85.9	67.1	75.7
2	Kapurthala	79	84.6	68.3	75.4
3	Jalandhar	82.7	86.15	71.3	76.3
4	Hoshiarpur	86.4	89.9	75.3	80.8
5	Amritsar	70.9	78.3	58.75	67.85
6	Faridkot	67.17	74.7	54.6	64.07
7	Ludhiana	80.3	86.3	71.9	78.2
8	Firozpur	68.7	76.7	51.7	62.2
9	Sangrur	65.7	73.65	53.75	63.5
10	Patiala	76.8	82.95	65.4	73
11	Bathinda	63.35	71.85	49.45	59.65
12	Rupnagar	83.05	89.05	70.1	78.6

Source: Primary Census Abstract (Census of Punjab 2001 & 2011)

Relationship between Work and Literacy Rate

The present analysis is an attempt to examine the causal relationship between occupational compositions as a cause and literacy rate as an effect. In order to assess the inter relationship among the variables, Karl Pearson’s technique of correlation matrix have been used.

Table 5

State/ District	State/ District Code	Women Work Participation Rate	Women Literacy Rate
	PUNJAB	13.91	71.3
1	AMRITSAR	14.11	75.7
2	BATHINDA	22.61	75.4
3	FARIDKOT	13.82	76.3
4	FIROZPUR	16.74	80.8
5	GURDASPUR	11.01	67.85
6	HOSHIAPUR	11.23	64.07
7	JALANDHAR	12.14	78.2
8	KAPURTHALA	12.5	62.2
9	LUDHIANA	14.18	63.5
10	PATIALA	11.92	73
11	RUPNAGAR	14.95	59.65
12	SANGRUR	10.99	78.6

Source: Primary Census Abstract (Census of Punjab 2001 & 2011)

Table 6: Correlations

		Work Participation	Literacy Rate
Work Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.203
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.505
	N	13	13

Table 6: Contd.,

Literacy Rate	Pearson Correlation	.203	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.505	
	N	13	13

For determination of the inter relation, the female literacy rate and FWPR are used. Table shows that literacy and women work participation have positive relation but they are not significantly related. It implies that with the increase of literacy rate, female participation is not increasing. From the data, it was revealed that the participation women in the economic activities had been ignored. It is observed that “most of the time priority is given to the female person in Maldives while addressing. For example, mother comes before father, woman comes before man and wife comes before husband when they are addressed. The literacy rate and educational level is higher among females than among males”. One of the expectations from the use of education is that it will bring reduction in inequalities in the society assuming that education leads to equalization of status between individuals coming from higher to unequal socioeconomic strata of the society.

The history of the movement for improving women’s status all over the world shows emphasis from the beginning on education as the most powerful instrument for changing women’s subjugated position in society. From the point of view of an individual, education provides essential qualifications to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions, and consequently improves his socio-economic status.

CONCLUSIONS

The participation of women in Punjab was less as compared to their male counterpart and it varied from one region to another. The major finding of the paper is that the WPR of women is not increasing with the rise in level of education. There was no single district with higher WPR of women than the male. This means, in Indian society, male gives less priority to their women. Participation of women in the rural sector is always larger than the male members of the society. This is because of the low mobility of women from the villages, due to religious and social restriction. On the supply side, reproductive work and domestic roles prove to be significant variables in influencing female labour force participation.

If the trend continues for some more time, there will be serious repercussion to the society we left for generations to come. First, it is believed that high level of education and vocational training for women workers is necessary for improving their level of productivity and enabling them to move into non-agricultural sectors. Second, women should be given autonomy and freedom to move, and to join self-help groups, affects their ability to access resources and improve productivity.

Third, it is evident that women are regarded as the peripheral producers and marginal recipients of the benefits of government programmes and from development and credit institutions. So, there is a strong need for a gender sensitive agricultural strategy which strengthens the role of women workers in the agriculture.

In the short run, it is necessary to recognize the productive work done by the women, reduce the discrimination against them by legislations on equal pay and equal job opportunities and create more jobs specially suited to their skills and needs.

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