

Female Labour Force Participation in Kerala: Facts, Problems and Prospects.

Prof. N. Manimekalai

Director & Head, Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University

Linshi.P

Ph.D Scholar, Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University

ABSTRACT

Women's Labour force participation rising in most of the developing countries is in recent years. In India also this trend can be witnessed the work participation rates are less compared to all other countries. Education is identified as a factor contributing to WPR. But in Kerala, female work participation rate appears to be lower and showing a declining trend despite its achievement in the field of developments. Hence, in this paper attempts to made an investigation through the trends in female work participation rates which appears in the census data, NSSO and similar sources. The study found that the work participation of females are declining and unemployment in the state is increasing. Migration, backwardness of traditional industries etc are some of the factors identified leading to low work participation of women.

KEY WORDS: Labour Force Participation, Unemployment,

Date of Submission: 06-08-2021

Date of Acceptance: 19-08-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Work has been defined by Census of India: 2001, it 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. Female labour has been an important segment of the workforce of India. With the changing Socio-economic scenario, women's productive roles have assumed new dimensions. Women in general are disadvantaged in the labour market. In addition to their low share in overall employment, greater proportions of them are engaged in low-productivity, low-income, insecure jobs in farms, and in the unorganized and informal sectors as compared to men. The most important employment challenge is the large number of 'working poor' and under-employed engaged in low-productivity activities in the unorganized sectors. (India Labour and Employment Report, 2014),

Female labour force participation in India at about 32% of working age population in 2012 is low compared to emerging market peers. Female participation is much higher in the South and West of India than in the North. Participation is also higher in rural than urban areas. After rising slightly until 2005, female participation has declined thereafter in most income categories, but most strikingly among the lower income groups in rural areas. Most women continue to work in marginal jobs. More than half of women work as self-employed, of which most are unpaid helpers. The large rise in female participation until 2005 and the drop thereafter was among the unpaid self-employed group. Among the Indian states, Kerala has female outnumber higher than men. (Sorsa et.al, 2015). In 1997, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) listed Kerala as having both the highest position on the Human Development Index (HDI), and the highest position on the Gender-related Development Index (GDI), among Indian states. Basic demographic indicators in the state, such as life expectancy, are almost on par with those of the developed world. (Chacko, 2003)

The objectives of the present study are to

- (1) Make an attempt to study female work participation at the state using occupational data from NFHS and Census of India
- (2) Compare the data of NFHS with Census data and other similar sources.
- (3) Analyse the determining factors of women's low work participation in Kerala

Female work participation in Kerala 1991-2011

Gender statistics (2017-18) reveals, Out of the total population in Kerala, during 2011-12, about 57 percent men were economically active or part of labour force whereas the percent of economically active women population was only 25 percent. And around 75 percent of the women population is considered as economically in-active. The gender gap in LFPR, both in rural and urban areas is showing a continuous increasing trend, not only in Kerala but also throughout the country. It rose from 304 percent in 1993-94 to 325 percent in 2011-12 in rural Kerala, while the gender gap for urban Kerala increased from 309 per cent to 345 per cent over the same period. Previous NSSO surveys on employment and unemployment shows Kerala has the highest female unemployment rates in the country. The latest NSSO data for 2011-12 indicates that the overall unemployment rate in Kerala is 6.7, with a wide gender gap of 14.1 percent for women and 2.9 percent for men. Out of the total population in Kerala, during 2011-12, about 57 percent men were economically active or part of labour force whereas the percent of economically active women population was only 25 percent. And around 75 percent of the women population is considered as economically in-active. The gender gap in LFPR, both in rural and urban areas is showing a continuous increasing trend, not only in Kerala but also throughout the country. It rose from 304 percent in 1993-94 to 325 percent in 2011-12 in rural Kerala, while the gender gap for urban Kerala increased from 309 per cent to 345 per cent over the same period.

A wide variation in female work participation rates (WPR) has been seen between census data and NSS data. For example, female WPR according to census data was 28 per cent in 1961, as low as 14 per cent in 1971, increased to 20 per cent in 1981 and 22 per cent in 1991. (Dev,2004). Work Participation Rate (2001 Census) reveals that, Substantial increase in Female Work Participation Rate, which is defined as the percentage of total workers to the total population, is 39.3 per cent as per the 2001 Census. The WPR in 1991 Census was 37.5 percent in India. While the WPR for males marginally increased from 51.6 percent to 51.9 percent during 1991-2001, for females it improved significantly from 22.7 to 25.7 during the corresponding period. Interestingly, this increase is mainly due to increase in proportion of marginal workers which registered significant increase from 3.4 percent to 8.7 percent. The most significant improvement is seen in case of rural marginal workers which improved from 0.7 percent in 1991 of males and from 8.1 percent to 14.2 percent in case of females during the corresponding period. In fact, there is the perceptible decline in the proportion of main workers between 1991 and 2001 from 34.1 percent in 1991 to 30.5 percent in 2001. The sharp fall in percentage of main workers comes from rural areas especially rural males.

Workforce participation rate, a useful measure of economic activity is computed as the ratio of total workers to the total population, expressed as a percentage. Census 2001 reveals that Kerala has the lowest workforce participation rate among females among all the major states in India. The total workforce in Kerala, according to the 2001 Census estimates is around 10.3 millions out of which 7.8 millions are males and only 2.5 millions are females. While in 2011 census in india, the workforce participation rate for females is 25.51% against 53.26% for males. Rural sector has a better female workforce participation rate of 30.02% compared with 53.03% for males whereas for urban sector. In Rural, Himachal Pradesh has max female workforce participation rate 47.4% in the case of work force participation of Kerala, it has 54.3% in rural areas and 19.1% in urban areas.

Economic review (2016) points out that, the gender gap in levels of employment is also brought out by the female work participation rates (Table 1) and while the male WPRs show a mild upward trend or constancy, there is a declining trend in female WPRs; that Kerala women have a higher participation rate in urban areas vis-a-vis all India is also seen.

Table-1 .Work Participation Rates of Males and Females in Kerala, in per cent

| Year | Rural | | | | Urban | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| | India | | Kerala | | India | | Kerala | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 1987-88 | 53.9 | 32.3 | 56.7 | 31.6 | 50.6 | 15.2 | 59.2 | 21.8 |
| 1993-94 | 55.3 | 32.8 | 53.7 | 23.8 | 52 | 15.4 | 56 | 20.3 |
| 1999-2000 | 53.1 | 29.9 | 55.3 | 23.8 | 51.8 | 13.9 | 55.8 | 20.3 |
| 2004-05 | 54.6 | 32.7 | 55.9 | 25.6 | 54.9 | 16.6 | 54.7 | 20 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2009-10 | 54.7 | 26.1 | 56.4 | 21.8 | 54.3 | 13.8 | 54.7 | 19.4 |
| 2011-12 | 54.3 | 24.8 | 56.5 | 22.1 | 54.6 | 14.7 | 55.2 | 19.1 |

Source: Economic review, 2017 State Planning Board Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Various Reports of NSSO

Table 1 furnishes details about Work Participation Rates of Males and Females in Kerala. In rural Kerala women's work participation rate is 22.1 while men's work participation is 56.5. At the same time in urban areas it appears only 19.1 for women and 55.2 percentages for men. When compare with the whole India statistics, female work participation rate lesser than that. Along with declining female work force participation rates in Kerala, the inferior economic position of women influence the high rates of unemployment, especially in the case of educated women (Table 2).

Table 2
Unemployment Rates (PS+SS) of Males and Females in Kerala and India, in per cent

| Year | Rural | | | | Urban | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| | India | | Kerala | | India | | Kerala | |
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| 1987-88 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 5.2 | 6.00 | 5.2 | 6.2 | 6.0 | 6.3 |
| 1993-94 | 1.4 | 0.8 | 5.5 | 6.6 | 4.0 | 6.2 | 6.6 | 18.7 |
| 1999-2000 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 4.5 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 20.0 |
| 2004-05 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 5.1 | 6.2 | 3.6 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 33.4 |
| 2009-10 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 5.7 | 2.9 | 16.8 |
| 2011-12 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 3.1 | 14.2 | 3.0 | 5.2 | 2.7 | 13.9 |

Source: Economic review, 2017 State Planning Board Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Various Reports of NSSO

Table 2 gives the Unemployment Rates of Males and Females in Kerala. Unemployment among the educated is also a serious matter of concern. The percentage of unemployment among women in Kerala is also higher than at all – India. If we analyze the unemployment situation in Kerala we could find that it increased from 1981 to 2011. In Kerala, female unemployment in urban areas is 13.9 per cent as compared to 14.2 per cent in rural areas in 2011-12. As opposed to this the female educated unemployment in the rural and urban areas of India is 5.2 per cent and 1.7 per cent respectively during the same period.

Determinants of females lower work participation in Kerala.

The root cause of the women's low work participation can be seen in the gender discrimination which has been in still continuing in our society and leads to women's subordination and secondary social status. Women from all social groups are facing this discrimination. The Kerala women are not an exception from this. Even though Kerala portray of high human development indices, women empowerment etc, and work participation of women continuing as low. Along with this, Women dominate in casual wage work. in rural migration, Female rural to urban migrants continue to be vulnerable to gender based discrimination in wages and labour market segmentation which reserve the most repetitive, unskilled, monotonous jobs for women. They mostly work in the informal sector and experience long working hours, un-healthy or dangerous working conditions, and psychological, physical and sexual aggression. While men normally work in groups women go for individualized work environments (Shanthi -2006)

New economic reforms were introduced in 1991 and had a major impact on the farm, small-scale and household sectors, leading to unfair competition from bigger players, lack of demand for goods, etc., and either closed down or were mostly sick, laying off thousands of workers. The primary sector is the largest provider of employment for both men and women in India, but in Kerala the case is different. A number of

factors have contributed to the decline in the work participation rates differently. The demand for labour, especially female labour is comparatively less in the cultivation of coconut and rubber where as it is much higher in paddy as women are engaged in transplanting, weeding and harvesting activities. This has reduced female labour absorption considerably and generated more employment for men. The shifting of female agricultural labourers towards self-employment, the backwardness of the traditional industries like coir, cashew, handicrafts and handloom which are female labour intensive also have paved the way for the decline in the female work participation rate.

Agriculture is no longer the surest channel of employment among the Kerallite women. Only four per cent and 18 percent of female main workers are employed as cultivators and agricultural labourers in Kerala. While for cultivators there is a decline of about two per cent points from 1991, in case of the latter category there is a major reduction of around 19 per cent points. It is apparent that there has been a large-scale replacement of female labour, particularly wage labour in agriculture, by hired male workers. By all accounts, long-term employment in agriculture among women is gradually withering away (Mazumdar and guruswamy 2006) . As per 2011 census, only four per cent and 18 percent of female main workers are employed as cultivators and agricultural labourers respectively.

With this, youngest population far away from the primary sector of Kerala. Prakash (2017) argue that the excess supply of young labour force, the low growth for labour demand arising out of the declining economic growth of States' economy, and the restrictive labour practices distorting the smooth operation of the labour market as major causes of unemployment. The basic cause of the growing unemployment is the excess supply of young labour force both educated and non-educated, arising out of the rapid population growth. But the economic growth of the State's economy was not sufficient to increase the demand for educated and non educated labour commensurate with the labour supply. This resulted in massive unemployment among the young labour force in the age group 15 and 34. Kerala is experiencing an unhealthy geographic mobility of workers in which the outmigration of workers from Kerala to other parts of India has been diminishing and immigration from other States have been increasing. Currently, Kerala is facing the repatriation of migrant workers from the Middle East Countries which will have far reaching economic consequences

II. CONCLUSION

The paper analysed three important aspects, i.e., female work participation in Kerala which the data based on NFHS and Census of India and , Compare the data of NFHS with Census data and other similar sources. The study has drawn on secondary data for explaining these aspects. It reached the conclusion that work participation of females are declining from 1991 to 2011. Migration, gender discrimination, influences of new economic policy ,backwardness of the traditional sector etc. are some of the factors identified leading to low work participation of women of women in Kerala.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Agriculture Census 2015-16, Agriculture Census Division Department of Agriculture, Co-Operation & Farmers Welfare Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Government Of India
- [2]. Census, NPR Vital Statistics,2011,Data Highlights
- [3]. Chacko, Elizabeth (2003) Marriage, Development, and the Status of Women in Kerala, India Gender and Development, Vol. 11, No. 2, Marriage , pp. 52-59 Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.
- [4]. Dev Mahendra (2004), Female Work Participation and Child Labour: Occupational Data from NFHS, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 39, No. 7, pp. 736-744, Economic and Political Weekly
- [5]. Economic review, (2017) .state planning board ,Thiruvananthapuram, government of Kerala.
- [6]. Gender Statistics 2017-18, Department of Economics and Statistics Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
- [7]. Gendering Human Development Indices: Recasting the Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure for India, (2009)Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India
- [8]. India - Employment and Unemployment : NSS 68th round :July 2011- June 2012, National Sample Survey Office - NSSO Report generated on: August 5, 2016.
- [9]. India labour and employment report: highlights- workers in the era of globalisation,(2014). Institute for human development, New delhi
- [10]. K.Shanthi ,(2006) Female Labour Migration in India : Insights From NSSO Data, working paper 4/2006, madras school of economics,Chennai
- [11]. Mazumdar Sumit Guruswamy M(2006),Female Labour Force Participation in Kerala: Problems and Prospects , International Institute for Population Sciences Mumbai, India , www.iipsindia.org
- [12]. Prakash, B.A.(2017) Unemployment in Kerala: An Analysis of Economic Causes, (Reprint of the Working Paper No.231 of Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum – 695 011, July 1989) Republished By Thiruvananthapuram Economic Studies Society August 2017

- [13]. Report on Employment and Unemployment in Kerala, (2016), Based on NSS 68th Round (July 2011 – June 2012) Central and State Sample Pooled Data Central and State Sample Pooled Data Central and State Sample Pooled Data Central and State Sample Pooled Data ,NSS Division Department of Economics and Statistics, government of Kerala.
- [14]. Sorsa Piritta, et.al(2015), Determinants of the low female labour force participation in India economics department working papers no. 1207 By, publication by Robert Ford, OECD Economics Department, 2 rue André Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France, ECO/WKP(2015)25.
- [15]. Vijayanunni.M, (1996), 1991 Census Handbook.

Prof. N M Manimekalai, et. al. "Female Labour Force Participation in Kerala: Facts, Problems and Prospects." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(08), 2021, pp. 26-30.