



Gender Gap in Indian Labour Market

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Abstract

Gender inequality constitute a shared practice wherein parity between men and women is not upheld. This study endeavours to gauge the extent of gender inequality in the Indian Labour market. Utilizing secondary data sourced from Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFs) 2022-23. The finding reveals a substantial disparity in labour force participation, work involvement, and unemployment rates between females and males.

Keywords: Inequality, Parity, PLF, Unemployment rate.

1. Introduction

Gender inequality is a worldwide phenomenon, evident in disparities related to labour market access and working conditions. As of 2019, gender inequality still prevails in existing labour markets, as reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO). On the other hand, the active participation of women in the labour force plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth, indicating a country potential for expansion (Veric, 2014). Women's involvement of an inclusive and sustainable development process. The extent of women participation in the labour market varies significantly among developing and emerging economies [1]. This variation can be attributed to a range of economic and social factors, including economic growth, increased educational attainment, declining fertility rates, societal norms, and gender disparities within the labour market (Verick, 2014). In the context of India, there are primarily four explanations for the low level of female workforce participation, as proposed by Mazumdar and Neetha (2011).

1. Rising educational attainment.
2. Limited employment opportunities.
3. Impact of household income on participation.
4. Measurement related factors.

In India, the surge in educational attainment has paradoxically resulted in a decline in the number of women in the labour force, despite robust economic growth and increasing wages and incomes. In 2023

report, India secured an overall ranking of 127 among the 146 countries assessed. The country has successfully closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap. However, India has attained a level of only 36.7% gender parity in economic participation and opportunity. The most gender equal country in the world is Iceland having been in the first rank for 14 consecutive. In the inaugural Global Gender Gap report of 2006, India held the 98th position. In the 2021 Global Gender Gap report, India ranking in various categories are as follows:

- Economic participation & opportunity: 151
- Education Attainment: 114
- Health and survival: 155
- Political empowerment: 51

As of 2023, the Global Gender Gap score is 68.4% reflecting a slight advancement of 0.3% from the preceding year. With the present pace of development, attaining complete gender equality is projected to require 131 years, signalling a notable deceleration in the overall rate of transformation. According to statistics from International Labour Organization, India continues to grapple with a significant gender employability gap, where merely 19.2% of women participate in the workforce, compared to 70.1 % of men [2]. Women have faced an obstacles stemming from deeply ingrained biases within the structure (Kabir 2000; Rani 2009). These biases have, overtime translated into



disparities within the labour market. The factors underlying such discrimination encompass sex ratio at birth, life expectations at birth, infant mortality rates, under five mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, nutritional deprivation, disparities in literacy rates, and gender gap in top-tier political decision-making positions [3-6]. These inequalities exert direct influence on women's participation in economic activities and their labour market outcomes. Consequently, even when possessing equivalent educational qualification and skill sets as their male counterparts, women continue to encounter significant barriers that deny them opportunities [9]. The Indian constitution upholds the principle of gender equality and the country has implemented various policies and programs over the years to empower women. Significant structural changes in the population, such as an enhanced sex ratio, lower birth rates, increased average age at marriage, improved longevity, and progressive persist in various realms of human activity particularly in employment status

2. Methodology

The ongoing gender disparities prevalent in both developed and developing countries are garnering heightening scrutiny from economist, policymakers and the public at large. The main objectives of these study is to discern the factors contributing to gender inequality and to suggest recommendations for alleviating gender inequality. Secondary data has been utilized for this study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

Gandhiji described discrimination against women as an anachronism, he said: "I fail to see any reason for jubilation over the birth of a son and for mourning over the birth of a daughter [11]. Both are God's gifts. They have an equal right to live and are equally necessary to keep the world going." Gender disparities in India encompass in health, education, economics and politics between men and women [13-15]. These inequalities influenced by social factors affect the sex ratio, women's health, education and economic status in India. When scrutinizing the total population of India, women

faced many difficulties. Gender inequality impedes individual growth, national development and societal evolution [10].

3.2 Causes of gender gap in Labour market

- 1. Employment participation:** Agriculture employs 50% Indian population directly or indirectly. Approximately 70% of rural Indian women engaged in agriculture related activities. Indian women contribute 70% of agricultural work in India.
- 2. Low level of literacy:** There is a low level of literacy rate among women in India. The quality of education is poor due to discrimination on the basis of sex. Most of the Indian families gives preference to the male child and ignored female child. Due to this reason they spent a lot on male child's education compared to female child [12].
- 3. Poverty:** In India, out of total population below the poverty line, women constitute 70% of this demographic. The financial challenges faced by women in India tied to limited opportunities. Additionally, women's minimal involvement in decision making exacerbate their economic growth. This economic disparity reinforces gender discrimination in our society. Where dependency on male counterpart remains significant factor perpetuating gender imbalance.
- 4. Social disparity:** due to the widespread existence of gender discrimination and social norms, girls are vulnerable to potential risks such as child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child domestic labour, inadequate education and healthcare, sexual abuse, exploitation and violence. Addressing these issues requires a shift in perception to value and prioritize the well-being of girls [7 & 8].
- 5. Lack of professionalism:** Numerous stereotypes and predefined notions persist regarding the appearance and behaviour expected of a leader, often diverging from the traditional roles imposed on women. Consequently, women might perceive a mismatch between their qualities and the conventional image of a leader, leading to a lack of confidence in pursuing leadership roles.



Conclusion and Suggestions

The Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) of women and men in India are influenced by several key factors, including age, marital status, and the presence of small children, socio-religious status, and area of residence, level of education and relative affluence of households. Women workers are mostly engaged in agriculture & agricultural activities, manufacturing and services. But their numbers have declined due to various reasons. In the manufacturing sector, the proportion of women workers has now exceeded that of men. In service sector women dominates in the field of education in comparison to men. Their representation in senior and middle management positions is smaller than men. Increasing inequality in the job market is a stark reality, with the gap between male and female populations widening. While there has been improvement in presence of women in regular or high skilled, well-paying jobs over the years, a significant number still find themselves in low paid and unskilled positions. Recent years have witnessed a rise in the enrolment of young women in secondary and tertiary level education, resulting in a more skilled female workforce increased presence in decent employment. The shift is particularly noticeable in the services sector, notably in financial services and information technology. Therefore, in addition to fostering a gender-friendly environment, it is imperative to ensure universal and free education up to the secondary level.

According to these study, there are several recommendations outlined as follows:

- Flexible work policies
- Providing parental leave for child care
- Combat bias and discrimination
- Ensure a balanced representation of male and female workers.

Achieving this is likely when we successfully diminish social bias based on gender.

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