

Gender Disparity in Work Participation in Punjab Economy

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Abstract: *Disparity in any field is the greatest hurdle in the way of development and when it comes to gender, the matter becomes more serious as it affects all spheres of society. Therefore, equal participation of men and women in socio-economic, political and cultural setup of the society is a pre requisite for the sustainable development of a country specially developing ones like India. Gender desperate starts early in life, with female infants having a lower chance of survival than male infants. This discrimination against women continues from childhood to old age. Gender disparity in work participation is root cause for other discrimination with women which halts not only their economic prosperity but also hinders their adjustment in the changing world. Major portion of workforce of Punjab lives in rural areas. Now when the economy is shifting from agriculture to non agriculture sector, employment opportunities are concerned. Equal participation of women and men in all economic activities becomes very important but in Punjab, high level of development didn't translate into progress of women. Society remain feudal and women's development abysmal, resulting in a low Gender Development Index. This paper focuses on the participation of rural women in the agriculture and non-agricultural activities based on the census 2011. The major finding of the studies are very alarming as the rate of women participation in the working force in Punjab is very less as compare to the women participation rate at National basis and it is also decreasing from 2001 to 2011 In spite of the various developmental programs initiated by the central and State government for the economic empowerment of the women. High mechanization of agriculture and low growth of non agriculture sector makes situation worse for women to get employment. Some recommendation are suggested to tackle this critical and alarming problem at priority basis.*

Key Words: *Disparity, Development, Alarming, Feudal and Mechanisation*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The word Punjab is a compound of two Persian words, Panj (“five”) and ab (“water”), thus signifying the land of five waters, or rivers (the Beas, Chenab, Jhelum, Ravi, and Sutlej). As applied to the present Indian state of Punjab, however, it is a misnomer: since the partition of India in 1947, only two of these rivers, the Sutlej and the Beas, lie within Punjab's territory, while the Ravi flows along part of its western border. Punjab in its present form came into existence on November 1, 1966, when most of its predominantly Hindi-speaking areas were separated to form the new state of Haryana.

Punjab is widely acknowledged as the "Granary of India" because the state experienced extraordinary growth of agricultural production due to use of new agricultural technology in mid-sixties. Due to Green revolution it became the "Food Basket of India". The punjabies are known for their courage, hard work, farming skills and entrepreneurial spirit all over the world. Up to the mid-nineties agriculture was the lifeline of the people but after that agricultural growth remain constant. At present the state of the economy is in crises due to low growth of agriculture and under development of non agricultural activities, most of the work force remains unemployed. Under these circumstances employment structure of rural economy is needed to be focused. Most of the people reside in rural areas in the state and most of them are still dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. High mechanization of agricultural operation adversely affected the labour force in general and women workers in particular. The economic analysis of female work participation attracted considerable attention since the pioneering works of Mincer (1962) and Cain (1966). The female work participation rates increased considerably in the developed countries in recent years. Moreover, in the third world economies, the issue of woman's contribution in economic activities is recent one and this has led to policy and academic research on the subject as well as much social activism through Non-government organizations (NGOs). The female work participation rate plays a significant role in determining socio economic development and growth. The increasing trend toward women's participation in employment in both developed and developing countries has drawn both social and academic interest resulting in many insightful studies on gender aspects of labor market issues (Ackah, Charles, 2009)

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

A detailed and comprehensive study of previous work is a pre requisite for a qualitative research as it acts a platform to support the researcher in the development of research framework.

Seth (2001) examined women development in India. She observed that after years of development efforts, women share in employment has remained low. Most of the women are mainly marginal workers and are concentrated in rural areas and in the private sector. Similarly, the social situation of women is not good. Women infant mortality rates are even now higher than the males. Their development in nutrition, health and education is less from the boys. Social Development is the base to increase the status of women and for that they have to realize their strength and they should make efforts to increase their economic and political empowerment.

Raikhy and Mehra (2003) analyzed work participation rates, work status and occupational structure of women in seventeen states of the country. They observed that Women work participation rate in most of states has been higher in rural areas. The policy of liberalization and opening up new type of employment opportunities has lead to only marginal increase in Women employment in non-agricultural occupations. . This study stresses the need for deliberate efforts to create Women specific employment opportunities

.Bhatia and Dhindsa (2009) examined that the work participation scenario is changing in case of women workers due to changing living standards and growth of consumerism. More and more women are joining the work force and opt for either jobs or self employment. Women are working because of gross economic necessity, to raise standard of living, to make use of their qualification, to pass their idle time or to earn their livelihood. A study by Murugaiah(2012) deals about women work and empowerment, interventions to enhance women income. The study revealed that without economic empowerment, the development of women is an empty promise. The study proposes various tools of empowerment like collectivization i.e. pooling of the resources, skill development and providing other facilities.

A study by Alam, 2008 titled as “Women in labour market an aspect of social justice” revealed that women have always got a lesser share in labour force participation rate (LFPR). Women share in LFPR could provide sound economic base and confidence to be economically independent for the establishment of just society. However study shows that male dominance prevailing in the labour market creates segmentation of women in lowest paying job. Women have got lesser share in LFPR in both rural as well as urban markets.

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3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- To analyze gender disparity in rural employment in Punjab.
- To investigate recent trends in composition of rural employment in the state and position of female workforce to adjust in this new opportunities.
- To come out with some suggestion to tackle the alarming problem.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Secondary data has been used to analyze work participation rates. Data was taken from Census of India 2011 and the 68th round of NSSO to apportion the total rural workers of Punjab as per census2011 into various categories. To measure the disparity gender gap was measured between proportion ranks are given to estimate variation among employment categories in rural areas between male and female workers.

5. FEMALE WORKERS PARTICIPATION:

Female workers constitute a significant portion of total workforce but usually they do not have equal access to the labour market in the developing countries. However, invisibility of women’s work, domestic chore, other tasks, view the man as the primary bread-earner and consider women as non-workers. Various survey by the National Sample Survey Organization(NSSO) of India on “Employment and Unemployment Situation in India” reveal that 90 percent of women did not participate in the workforce due the need for domestic work” This unfairness toward women brings gender disparity in employment opportunities, thus underutilization of the half of the human resources. This Non- utilization and underutilization of the potential of women is also the cause of dependences of women on the man and affecting the development of women.

Female work participation rate, female literacy rate as well as some health indicators like female life expectancy determine women development of any nation. Thus changes in female labor force participation; female literacy and health status determine the women development even in India also. Many studies in this context reveal that participation in economic activities does not necessarily enhance the social status of women. Irrespective of the economic systems or the form of economic production, the social forces, norms and conditions affect the status of women. Employment of women is not always an indicator of economic independence or control over earnings. What exactly determines the male-female differences in the work field is yet to be ascertained and most studies have not helped in understanding the processes and economic explanations are but partial.

Work participation rate is defined as the percentage of workers to total population. This is given in mathematical form as follows:

$$\text{Work Participation} = \frac{\text{Total Worker} * 100}{\text{Total Population}}$$

To explain this, a table is given regarding the female labor force participation (work participation) in India.

Table 1 -Labour Force participation in India for period 1971 to 2010.

Year	Rural/Urban	Male	Female	Total
1971	Total	52.75	14.22	34.17
	Rural	53.78	15.92	35.33
	Urban	48.88	7.18	29.61
1981	Total	52.62	19.67	36.70
	Rural	53.77	23.06	38.79
	Urban	49.06	8.31	29.99
1991	Total	51.61	22.27	37.50
	Rural	52.58	26.79	40.09
	Urban	48.92	9.19	30.16
2001	Total	51.09	21.71	39.31
	Rural	52.41	31.00	42.00
	Urban	50.90	11.60	32.22
2010	Total	52.01	22.51	41.02
	Rural	53.33	32.07	33.02
	Urban	51.96	23.60	33.05

Above table presents the percentage of work force participation during 1971-2010 in India. It shows that the female work force participation rates for total, rural and urban population have increased during this period. For instance, the proportion of female work force participation has increased from 15% in 1971 to 22% in 2010. Similarly, it has increased from 16 % to 31% in the case of rural population and from seven per cent to eleven per cent in the case of urban population during 1971-2001. In contrast, the percentage of male work force participation rate has slightly declined for total as well as rural population and remains same for urban population during this period. It has declined by one per cent i.e. from fifty three per cent in 1971 to fifty two per cent in 2010 in the case of male population and from fifty four per cent in 1971 to fifty three per cent in 2010 in the case of rural population and it has increased by three per cent i.e., forty nine per cent in 1971 to fifty two per cent in 2001-2010. Women participation rate is normally lower than male participation rate because women's participation is contingent upon certain factors like economic needs, institutional factors, and the kinds of employment available especially if the employment can be combined with their primary obligation at home and in the family.

Table 2 Work Participation and Gender gap in Rural Areas (in percentage)

	1991			2001			2011		
	Male	Female	Gender Gap	Male	Female	Gender Gap	Male	Female	Gender Gap
Punjab	55.0	4.4	50.6	54.9	23.4	31.5	54.9	14.3	40.6
India	52.5	26.7	25.8	52.4	31.0	21.4	53.0	30.0	23.0

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 2011

From the above table it is clear that As for as work participation rate in Punjab is concerned, female work participation rate has declined from 23.5 percent in 2001 to 14.3percent in 2011. On the other hand, male work participation consistently persists at above 50 percent since 1991. In rural employment gender gap has increased during 2001 to 2011 after declining during 1991-2001 and but it has increased from 31.5 percent to 40.6 percent in Punjab where as at national level it has also increased from 21.4 percent to 23.0 percent. But If we compare this with the average of India as whole gender gap in Punjab is very high.

Table 3 : State-wise Sectoral Division and Composition of Rural Workforce (in percentage)

	Agriculture Sector			Non Agriculture Sector			Total Male Employment	Total Female Employment	Ranks Total Female employment in rural areas
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Andhra Pradesh	40.8	36.2	70.0	16.0	7.0	23.0	56.8	43.2	04
Assam	40.3	16.0	56.3	29.7	14.0	43.7	70.0	30.0	13
Bihar	56.6	26.6	79.2	14.9	5.9	20.8	71.5	28.5	16
Chhatisgarh	45.7	41.7	87.4	9.2	3.4	12.6	49.9	45.1	01
Gujarat	48.1	27.2	75.4	17.2	7.4	24.6	65.3	34.7	11
Haryana	44.4	19.0	63.4	28.8	7.9	36.6	73.2	26.8	17
Himachal Pradesh	30.4	37.1	67.5	25.4	7.1	32.5	55.8	42.2	02
Jammu & Kashmir	35.5	18.4	53.9	35.5	10.5	46.1	71.1	28.9	14
Jharkhand	42.0	33.1	75.1	18.2	6.7	24.9	60.2	39.8	09
Karnataka	41.1	29.5	70.7	20.0	9.3	29.3	61.1	38.9	10
Kerala	18.4	7.9	26.3	52.6	21.0	73.7	71.1	28.9	15
Madhya Pradesh	49.8	35.8	85.6	9.8	4.5	14.4	59.6	40.4	07
Maharashtra	44.5	36.9	81.4	13.9	4.8	18.6	58.4	41.6	05
Odisha	44.5	26.0	70.5	21.3	8.1	29.5	65.8	34.2	12
Punjab	45.6	8.1	53.6	35.3	11.1	46.4	80.8	19.2	20
Rajasthan	38.4	35.8	74.2	18.1	7.7	25.8	56.5	43.5	03
Tamilnadu	35.2	30.0	65.2	24.3	10.6	34.8	59.5	40.5	06
Uttar Pradesh	53.9	18.1	72.0	20.0	8.0	28.0	73.8	26.2	18
Uttarakhand	34.1	32.9	66.9	25.8	7.3	33.1	59.8	40.2	08
West Bengal	47.9	13.5	61.4	27.7	10.9	38.6	75.6	24.4	19
India	45.3	27.0	72.3	19.8	7.9	27.7	65.1	34.9	

Source: Census of India 2011

From the above table it is clear that position of Punjab is at bottom level with respect to provision of equal employment opportunities to women in rural areas. Proportion of women in total rural workforce in Punjab recorded only 19.2 percent in 2011 which is far below from national level (34.0 percent). Punjab ranks at 20th place in as far the employment of women in rural areas is concerned. No doubt agriculture sector is still a major source of livelihood for rural population as compared to other non-agriculture activities in India. Agriculture sector is highly dominated by male workers in Punjab. At India level 27 percent women were working in agriculture sector which is almost 20 percent more than of Punjab. On contrary, non-agriculture sector is quite fair to women for providing work opportunities in rural areas in Punjab. Division of workforce between agriculture and non-agriculture shows that Punjab is transforming to non-agriculture sector for employment but high gender disparities still persist which is the cause of lower level of women participation in employment, thus affecting the women empowerment.

6. DISTRICT LEVEL TRENDS IN WORK PARTICIPATION IN PUNJAB

Since the post independence period, Punjab has witnessed a high level of economic prosperity, which has resulted in high per capita income. However, the higher level of economic development did not improve economic and social status of women in Punjab. The participation of a person in the labour market is considered to be an indicator of the economic contribution of a person or the group of the persons as well as their own economic well being. It also shows the degree of their integration to the economy. Normally, we assume that the empowerment of a particular group, community or an individual is based upon their respective economic status in the society. Since, the participation in the labour market is an indicator of the economic status, it also defines the level of empowerment of a group or community in question. Thus, the participation of the women in labour market shows their economic position in the society and also gives a reflection of the gender relations in the economy as well as the households. Of course in a sex-segregated society, we cannot imagine equal distribution of work.

Table 4 District-wise composition of Rural workers in Agricultural and Non-agricultural activities (in percentage)

	Agriculture Sector		Non Agriculture Sector		Gender gap	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Agriculture	Non Agriculture
Amritsar	43.5	9.4	35.1	12.0	34.1	23.2
Bathinda	56.1	12.6	20.4	10.9	43.6	9.5
Barnala	58.0	5.3	26.9	9.8	52.6	17.1
Fatehgarh sahib	39.4	2.9	44.8	12.9	36.5	31.9
Faridkot	61.5	8.5	21.8	8.2	53.0	13.6
Ferozpur	48.7	16.8	22.0	6.5	37.9	15.5
Gurdaspur	40.1	4.9	44.0	11.0	35.2	33.0
Hoshiarpur	35.0	5.9	48.0	11.0	29.1	37.0
Jalandhar	33.9	5.6	49.4	11.1	28.3	38.4
Kapurthala	43.6	6.8	40.0	9.6	36.9	30.3
Ludhiana	36.0	4.5	43.2	16.2	31.5	27.0
Mansa	51.1	19.0	16.9	13.0	32.1	3.9
Moga	54.7	6.2	27.2	11.9	48.6	15.3
Muktsar	62.5	13.4	17.6	6.5	49.1	11.0
Mohali	29.8	3.9	51.4	15.0	25.9	36.4
Nawashahar	33.1	4.8	50.0	12.1	28.3	38.0
Patiala	43.3	5.3	40.9	9.5	39.0	31.4
Roopnagar	30.9	6.1	48.1	14.9	24.7	33.1
Sangrur	52.3	5.3	32.6	9.8	46.9	22.7
Tarntaran	51.2	6.2	30.9	11.7	45.0	19.4
Punjab	45.6	8.1	35.3	11.1	37.5	22.2

Source: Census of India 2011

The above table shows that in almost all the district, male workers dominate in composition of employment distribution in agricultural sectors. Not more than 20 percent women engaged in all the districts in agricultural sector. Whereas non- agriculture employment has significant place for women in rural areas. District Mohali and Ludhiana are emerging urban sector in the state, where 15percent and 16.2 percent female workers are working in the non-agricultural sector respectively. Punjab has the lowest female workforce participation rate in the country. The majority of women are included in the category of non-workers, which is evidence of the invisibility of women's workers. High gender disparity in agriculture sector is also a matter of concern because low growth of agriculture in the state led to low level of employment of women in this sector.

7. CONCLUSION:

The participation of women in Punjab is very less as compared to their male counterpart and it varied from one region to another. The major finding of the paper is that proportion of women in non-agriculture sector in the state is increasing which is a healthy sign for diversification of the rural economy. But existence of high gender disparities and largely marginalization of women from rural employment is a serious matter of concern in the state.

There is not a single district with higher women work participation rate than that of male. It shows that in Indian society, male give less priority to their women. The position of women in the society is an index of its development and civilization. The contribution of female workforce in agriculture will improve socio economic status of women. Female work participation is declining, while that of manufacturing, construction and service sector is increasing, it reveals that women has potential to adjust themselves in the emerging sector like service and non-agricultural activities. As the position of women in a society is an index of its development and growth. , if the declining trend continues for some more time, there will be serious repercussion to the society we left for the generation to come.

Following suggestions can be helpful in this perspective:

- It is believed that high level of education and vocational training for women worker is necessary for improving the level of productivity and enabling them to into non agricultural sector.
- Skill development centre should be established in the village where women should be particularly imparted training. As women are insensitive toward agriculture work, they should be oriented towards secondary sector.

- Women should be given autonomy and freedom to move and to join self help groups, affects their ability to access resources and improve productivity.
- Women should be made aware of the schemes of the Governmental programmes for development so that they can be the recipients of the benefits of developmental schemes.
- As women are insensitive toward agriculture work, they should be oriented towards secondary sector.
- Agro food processing industries should be started in rural areas to provide employment to both male and female.
- Agricultural sector is also needed to be strengthened to provide more employment opportunities to females.
- It is also suggested that discrimination of wages should be removed so that the female workers are not discouraged if less wages are given to the female workers to the equal work to men, the female workers would be disappointed.
- Women labor's union should be organized so that the exploitation of female workers is ended. It will also help in improving their working conditions and in reducing the discrimination done with them on the basis of sex.
- Various employment schemes should be encouraged that can increase the participation of women from rural areas.
- Programmes should be started to make them aware about new technologies.

So there is strong need for a gender sensitive development strategy to strengthen the role of women in agriculture as well as non agricultural activities for the development of rural economy. As about seventy percent of population of India resides in rural areas this can be helpful in reducing the gender disparities in rural areas of the state and accelerating the momentum of development of state and country as a whole.

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