

**WOMEN WORKERS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT :
A STUDY OF FEMALE WORK
PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE
OF UTTAR PRADESH**

(ABSTRACT)

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In this research work (**Women Workers and Economic Development : A study of Female Work Participation in the state of Uttar Pradesh**) we have endeavoured to study that segment of human capital often termed as the female labour force. Our area of study in particular refers to the women workers in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh based on analysis of the census reports during the period 1961-1981.

There has been a proliferation of research work / studies concerning various aspects of the female population the world over and in India. This points to the burgeoning awareness of the importance of women in the economic life of a country. However a review of the literature on this subject shows that though some work has been done regarding women of U.P., yet no comprehensive study has been conducted in the state. We have therefore made a modest attempt to fill this gap in economic literature related to women workers. Though our contribution is bound to be marginal, yet it could help in high-lighting the peculiar features related to women workers in this large and highly populous state.

Women, as is a known fact have always been assigned the status of second class citizens. However in spite of this women continue to contribute largely in respect of economic participation, though much of their activity goes unrecognized and discounted. Our study is based mainly on secondary data collected from the census reports and various other government studies / surveys. The main aim of this research work is to study and analyse the participation of women in the economy of U.P., examine the variations in participation rates of women within the state, determine factors which affect their contribution and hence discover the means of improving their lot. The main objectives of our study can be stated as follows :

To study the trends of female participation rates in the state of Uttar Pradesh over time;

To find out the reasons for inter-and intra-regional disparities among the rates of female participation in the state;

To analyse the reasons for and the results of female labour being concentrated only in few occupations;

To diagnose and analyse the reasons for low participation of females in the labour force;

To find out if socio-cultural and religious factors affect female participation and hence the economic position of the female population;

To trace out possible measures that could raise the female contribution to the economy of the state and thereby bring about an improvement in their status.

The techniques we have adopted for our analysis are statistical tools such as correlation, regression, coefficient of variation and standard deviation. The reference period of our study extends from 1961 to 1981, although data from 1991 Census have been incorporated wherever it is available.

The hypotheses this research study has endeavoured to test are as under :

1. The male participation rates affect the female participation rates.
2. Low female literacy rates leads to low female work participation.
3. Greater the percentage of female scheduled population in an area, greater is the female participation rate (FPR)..

4. The migration of the male population from the hills to the plains leads to higher female work participation in the Hill region of the state.
5. In order to find a nexus between FPRs and the economic development of the state, the following were tested.
 - (a) Development of agriculture leads to an increase in the FPRs.
 - (b) Industrialisation leads to an increase in the FPRs.
 - (c) Urbanization / modernization tends to push women out of active participation in work.
6. Socio-cultural and religious factors also influence female participation rates in the state.

Our study indicates that development, whether it be in the developed or the developing world, has resulted in relegating women from the mainstream of the economy. Further in different countries, as observed by Ester Boserup, development's effect on women has also been influenced by the social structure prevailing in such countries.

The Neo-classical theory, which is basically positive in its approach refrains from passing any value judgements. According to this approach women's activity adjusts to the forces of the market. The theory does not question the system that places women in a disadvantageous position, but provides an explanation based on the basic principle of maximization which justifies division of labour between the sexes. According to the theory the smaller investments in human capital, voluntarily made by women goes to justify their lower earnings.

In the case of the Institutional approach sex discrimination is in the form of job discrimination and not wage discrimination, as women are seen to opt for only certain kinds of occupations. The

market decides which jobs they should go in for and women have no choice whatsoever in this matter. This then leads to job segmentation and compartmentalisation of women in only certain job-types, due to which they are paid less.

The Marxist approach traces the history of the means of production from the stage of savagery and barbarism. This approach talks about the overthrow of the matriarchal society by the patriarchal society and states that as wealth increased it improved the status of men as against women within the family.

The Radical approach, similar to the Marxist, points out to capitalism as the cause of the deterioration of women's status in general. Further the theory proclaims that sex prejudices within the home is reflected as sex biases in the market. According to these theorists, women in the developed West too, are not liberated, they are only subject to exploitation by patriarchal capitalistic forces.

Our study has revealed that though women have ventured into unfamiliar occupations, majority of them, even in the developed world tend to get tied down to low-paid, dead-end jobs. They are still, primarily employed only in certain kinds of jobs such as nursing, textiles, primary school teaching and clerical office work. Such features in the labour market have led to the wage remuneration discrimination against women. Hence the status of women in the developed world too does not present a very encouraging picture as long standing biases continue to grip the very life and being of women.

The study showed that economic development in the Third World has not resulted in total blessings for women. In many instances their position has worsened. They often work for longer hours, travel long distances to collect water, fire-wood etc. and are thoroughly exploited at work and at home. In many Muslim countries the observance of 'purdah' posed a serious obstacle on the economic, social and educational liberation of women.

India being the second largest country in population, after China, bears a rather large significance especially in the Third World. Being one of the oldest civilizations in the world, the country is distinctly characterised by large variations in culture, tradition and religion. It is seen that women in India, like in other Third World countries have remained confined by various patriarchal norms in the form of tradition and culture. Their status has generally remained low, though contradictions are seen to prevail as women from higher class families participate actively in public life. Middle class women are expected to work to add to the incoming flow of funds in the family, whereas the lower caste women who suffer the most, are expected to perform exhausting, backbreaking, manual work and are exploited almost always by the men folk within the home and by their employers outside. In Christian societies, as compared to others in the country, the status of women was observed to be slightly better.

Educationally women are way behind men. Further there is great variation in the country as regards to female literacy. Illiteracy, especially among women has led to evils such as child-marriage, dowry and sati, this in turn reinforces sex biases and seals the fate of women to a lower overall status.

Female participation rates were observed to be high in the North - Eastern and Southern states of the country. This however, did not have any positive influence on the status of women. In the Northern states the participation of women in economic activity was extremely marginal. Another feature that stood out was that women were mostly employed in the primary sector of the economy. In all sectors however it was observed that women are segregated into certain job-types which inevitably has an influence on their earning capacities and future prospects in their respective jobs. Women are seen to be usually illiterate, unskilled or less skilled as compared to men. They also lack the necessary training and technical knowledge and have therefore remained confined to traditional occupations.

The position of women is not very different in the state of Uttar Pradesh which has the largest population in the country. It remains a relatively backward state inspite of planned development efforts that have been made over the years. It is seen that sizeable amounts of financial resources are being channelled into the planning process of the state. However, though the total plan outlay has increased 285. 29 times in the proposed Eighth plan over the First plan, the per capita development expenditure has remained low and inadequate. Sectoral allocations in the various plans indicate that in all the plans highest priority has been assigned to the energy / power sector - an important infra-structural input. This has been followed by the agriculture and allied sector. U.P. being a largely agrarian state this is quite understandable. However the figures also indicate that the relative importance of this sector has started to show a declining trend as the industrial and tertiary sectors are gaining importance. Regarding the growth of the economy of the state it was seen that though the state income increased over the years, its share in that of the country's has steadily fallen. Even though the per capita state income rose, the gap between this income and the per capita national income expanded over the years. Due to slow agricultural growth the overall growth of the state has mostly fallen short of the targeted rates.

The share of the agricultural sector in the total income of the state however has been the highest, though it has steadily declined, high-lighting the fact that the other two sectors viz., manufacturing and 'rest of the sectors' are gradually gaining importance.

The employment situation in the state is quite dismal with the unemployment rates showing a rising trend. Further there is also considerable under-employment in the economy. Agriculture is seen to be the largest employer of labour in the state. The percentage share of workers in agriculture however, is gradually declining and that in the other sectors have registered an increase. Employment

in the organised sector was much less than in the unorganised sector and within the organised sector the employment in the private sector was way behind that in the public sector. Another serious problem faced by the state, is poverty. Only by increasing employment can this problem be successfully treated. The incidence of poverty in rural areas of U.P. was much greater than in urban areas of the state. Further the gap between the two has also widened in recent years.

To add to all this there are large regional imbalances within the state as a whole. The Western region is the most developed region of the state where as the Eastern, Hill and Bundelkhand regions are largely backward.

The status of women too, in the state, is far from satisfactory. The female literacy rates in 1981 in U.P. was only 14.04% nearly 1.77 times less than the all India rate of 24.82%. In rural areas the female literacy rate was only 9.49% during this period. In 1981 only 3.39% of the female population was recorded as main workers in the state. This rate was way behind the 14% rate at the all-India level. Further there was great variation in the FPRs of main workers, varying from 45.69% in Uttarkashi to only 0.63% in Mainpuri, in 1981. The Western region registered the lowest participation rate among women, where as the Hill region the highest in most work categories.

The economic development of the state has not been very rapid and the status of women has remained low. The state which greatly depends on agriculture has marginalised women over the years. Even development which has set in within the state in the form of industrialisation and expansion of the tertiary and secondary sectors have not in any great way favoured the women of the state.

Looking at the demography of the state, it is seen that U.P. ranks first in the country population - wise. Further the population registered an increase in the period 1961 to 1981. The density of

population, though not the highest in the country was quite high at 300 persons per square km. in 1971 and 377 per square km. in 1981 for the state as a whole. In 1981, 82.05% of the total population of U.P. lived in rural areas and only 17.95% in urban areas. According to the 1991 Census the respective shares of rural and urban population are 80.11% and 19.89%. It is also seen that the percentage of total population living in rural areas fell from 87.2% in 1961 to 85.98% in 1971 to 82.05% in 1981 and again to 80.11% in 1991. The sex ratio i.e., number of females per 1000 males has been extremely low for U.P. with only Haryana and Punjab trailing behind in 1971 and 1981. In 1991 Haryana alone of all the major states, had a sex ratio (874) less than that registered in U.P. (882). In addition to the low sex ratio in the state the life expectancy at birth for females, for the period 1976-80, in rural areas (42.6 years) and urban areas (54.3 years) was lowest in the case of U.P. as compared to other major states of the country. The expectancy of life at birth for males (48.5 years) in U.P., is much higher than for females (43.8 years), ~~for female period~~ showing the poorer conditions of health for women in the state. Another feature observed is that U.P. registered one of the lowest mean ages at marriage among women (18.3 years) in 1981, lowest rate in the use of contraceptives (11.6%) in 1980, and highest total fertility rate (5.8%) in 1981. U.P. also registered the highest female infant mortality rate at 182 deaths per 1000 persons in 1981. This further exemplifies the lower socio-economic status of women in the state.

In order to study the extent of work participation of women in the state it is imperative to first look at the definitions of workers adopted in the various censuses. According to the 1961 Census a worker was defined as "a person who is working, may be working as a cultivator, as an agricultural labourer, at a household industry or may be doing any other work. He may be engaged in only one of the above four categories or in more than one Work includes not only actual work but effective supervision and direction of the work". In the 1971 Census the

worker was defined as "a person whose main activity is participation in any economically productive work by his physical or mental activity. Work involves not only actual but effective supervision and direction of work". In the 1981 census the total population was divided into main, marginal and non-workers and a worker in these categories was defined on the basis of a time criterion. Hence a main worker was one who was engaged in work for at least 6 months or 183 days and one who worked for less than these many days was classed as a marginal worker.

We have defined the female participation rate (FPR) as the percentage of total female workers to the total female population in the state. The same method was adopted to calculate the male participation rate (MPR).

The state of U.P. has been divided into five economic regions viz., (1) The Hill, (2) The Central, (3) The Eastern, (4) The Bundelkhand and (5) The Western. In the 1961 and 1971 censuses the state comprised of 54 districts. In the 1981 census the number of districts increased to 56.

What strikes us first is that the FPRs of total workers in the state as a whole is extremely low (18.14% in 1961, 6.71% in 1971 and 8.06% in 1981). There was thus noticed a drastic fall in the rate between 1961 and 1971 and a marginal increase in 1981. Our study has also revealed that large inter-regional and inter-district variations existed in FPRs in the state. In 1961 the FPRs of total workers ranged from a high of 53.01% in the Hill region to a low of 4.39% in the Western region. The corresponding rates in 1971 were 31.22% and 1.32% for the same regions respectively. In the 1981 census the participation rates of female total workers ranged from 32.69% in the Hill region to only 1.85% in the Western region.

The FPRs were also highest in the primary sector with low female participation rates in the secondary and tertiary sectors

of the economy. Women in the state therefore tend to get compartmentalised into primary / agriculture related activities.

Looking at the sex disparities in participation rates in the state as a whole the study showed that FPRs are much lower than the MPRs. In 1961 the FPR was only 18.14% as compared to the MPR of 58.19%. In 1971 the FPR (6.17%) was 8.47 times less than the MPR (52.24%). In 1981 MPR (50.76%) was 6.30 times greater than the FPR (8.06%). This revealed that the females tend to lag far behind the males as regards to participation in economic activities. Our analysis has however revealed that the male-female work participation disparities were more pronounced in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy.

The district-wise study of FPRs brought to light the large inter-district variations in FPRs within the state, for example, in 1961 the FPR of total workers in Chamoli (69.18%) was 31 times the FPR in Bareilly (2.23%). In 1971 the FPRs ranged from a high of 61.53% in Uttarkashi to a low of only 0.81% in Mainpuri. In 1981 too, large disparities existed as seen by the fact that Tehri Garhwal had an FPR (53.03%) 69.78 times greater than the FPR of Mainpuri (0.76%).

The rural-urban disparities in FPRs of total workers exhibited a falling trend over the years. When total workers were considered, the inter-district variation in the state was observed to be larger in rural than in urban areas. However, when we took into consideration the FPRs sector-wise our study revealed that in the primary and secondary sectors, the inter-district variations in FPRs were greater in urban than in rural areas. The reverse was the position in the tertiary sector. Another feature observed was that though the FPRs have declined over the years the inter-district variations in FPRs have on an average risen.

By looking at the employment aspect in the country at large our study has shown that the primary sector is the main employer

of labour - male and female. The industrial sector is not of prime importance. In the primary sector, in most of the major states the percentage of female agricultural labourers was greater than male agricultural labourers, the reverse was observed in the case of cultivators. By looking at the percentage distribution of main workers of each sex into the broad industrial categories it was seen that for U.P. the percentages of male (59.53%) and female (47.83%) cultivators were greater than the percentages of male (14.16%) and female (35.23%) Agricultural labourers.

Another feature that was noted is that on the whole female employment in the country registered a falling trend between 1961 and 1981.

In 1981 the percentages of female main workers were less than the percentages of male main workers in all the states of India. In U.P. the FPR of main workers was only 5.39%. The trend also showed that in most states the rural areas registered a higher percentage of female main workers than the urban areas. The Northern states such as Punjab, U.P., Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and the Eastern states of West Bengal and Bihar have extremely low percentages of female main workers. In the North-Eastern states and Union Territories however, the FPRs of female main workers were much higher. Further, the inter-state variations were greater among female main workers than male main workers.

The percentage of women working in mines has been rather low in the country. In addition this share has registered a decreasing trend over the years. In the case of the plantation industry the percentage share of women workers was nearly half the total employment, and it was also noticed that between 1967 and 1981 the percentage share of women to total employment in all plantations, more than doubled.

Only as late as the seventies were women absorbed in the public sector of the Indian economy. This increase of women

in the organised sector received an impetus due to the increase of education for women. Further in the public sector women were largely employed in the category of 'services'. The percentage of women in the private sector has always been lower than in the public sector. In U.P. the percentage of women working in the organised sector has been extremely marginal. The Southern Zones registered the maximum percentage of women working in the organised sector.

In the case of Agricultural Labour Households (ALHs) and Rural Labour Households (RLHs) it was noted that in 1977-78, the average number of male wage earners were greater than the average number of female wage earners in all the states and for the country as a whole. In addition it was also observed that this average number of male-female differential in wage earners was greater in the northern and eastern states as compared to the states of south and central India.

In both ALHs and RLHs in 1977-78 the average daily earnings of women in agricultural and non-agricultural (plantations) occupations were lower than the average daily earnings of men. At the all-India level in both kinds of households the male-female average daily earnings differential was larger in the case of non-agricultural occupations than in the case of agricultural occupation.

Coming to rural activities it was noted that most rural women are primary workers and are mainly engaged in manual work in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations. In the agricultural sector women perform all activities with the exception of ploughing. Very few women in rural India enter into employment in the tertiary / services sectors, or are seen in administrative, executive or managerial activities.

Taking a look at the unorganised sector it is seen that 90% of women are employed in the informal sector in the country. Most of such women are unskilled workers who are extremely poor and are forced to find employment and earn a living due to economic necessity. Further they are in most cases illiterate and exploited.

In addition they are discriminated against specially with regards to wages earned. Women in this sector usually perform strenuous jobs and are often found working during illness and even in advanced stages of pregnancy. Since they are illiterate, unskilled, helpless and desperate they remain vulnerable to open and subtle exploitation and hence tend to remain subservient and non-assertive.

In order to high-light the characteristic features of women's participation rates in the state, and also give plausible explanations for the features observed we have made use of statistical techniques such as standard deviation, coefficient of variation, correlation and regression. We calculated the individual correlations between the FPRs and variables, such as female literacy rates, male participation rates and percentage of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population. These calculations were done for all the districts of U.P. and also for all the districts excluding the Hill districts. This procedure was adopted since the Hill districts stand out in comparison with the other districts of the state by possessing characteristically high FPRs.

In addition we have also tested the hypothesis of a possible nexus between male out-migration from the Hill districts and the FPRs in the same. We have also calculated rank correlations between FPRs and different district-wise indicators of development. Further the effect of non-economic factors such as percentage of minority population in the total population and percentage of Muslim population in the total population on the FPRs have also been analysed.

From the above mentioned analysis we then selected the explanatory variables that were to be included in the multiple regression model. The five explanatory variables selected were as follows:

Female Literacy Rates (FLRs) 1981; Percentage of member of female scheduled caste and female scheduled tribe to total female population 1981 (FSC + FST); Gross Value of agricultural produce (1980-81) per capita (rural) (at current prices) (in Rs.);

Number of persons in registered industrial establishment per lakh of population (1980-81); Percentage of urban population to total population 1981.

The dependent variable viz., female participation rate (FPR) was defined as the percentage of female total (main plus marginal) workers to total female population 1981.

The results obtained by using various statistical techniques including the correlation-regression analysis can be listed as follows:

As compared to the major states of India the FPRs in U.P. were markedly low;

Inter-district variations in FPRs were greater than the inter-regional variations.

Over the years (1961-1981) the inter-district variations in the FPRs of total workers have registered an increase. Though the coefficient of variations in all 3 areas viz., total, rural and urban, in 1981 were less than in 1971, they were however, greater than the corresponding coefficient in 1961;

The Western region of the state registered the lowest FPR where as the Hill region stood far above the rest;

The participation of male workers did not seem to influence FPRs in any significant manner;

In urban areas female literacy rates and FPRs were directly related, however when the Hill region was excluded from the analysis the relationship became inverse;

Caste seemed to have considerable influence on FPRs in the state. Greater the percentage of female scheduled population greater was the FPR;

In the Hill districts the male out-migration had a positive influence on FPRs, though the influence was only marginal. The

Hill region as compared to the rest of U.P. has higher FPRs. Due to the Hilly terrain it is not possible for much mechanization and hence results in high demand for manual labour. This leads to women getting drawn into farm labour. Further due to their low economic status women work to earn additional income irrespective of caste strictures;

As agriculture gets modernized women tend to get displaced due to their lack of technical training and know-how. In U.P. it was noted that development of agriculture reduces the participation of women in work;

Urbanization had a negative influence on FPRs in the state. This showed that women in U.P. were unable to keep pace with the growing economy;

However, industrialization seemed to positively influence FPRs in the state;

Further our analysis also revealed that the FPRs in U.P. were also largely influenced by social, cultural and religious factors. Traditional patriarchal norms tend to lower the FPRs in the state.

Finally we have suggested policy measures that could be implemented to improve the work participation of women in the state and hence uplift their status and well being. We have also briefly discussed and given an account of the measures that the Government of Uttar Pradesh has proposed to undertake, together with the progress made to alleviate problems faced by women at their work place in particular, and society in general.

The following is a résumé of the policy measures :

Women's work contribution normally goes unaccounted since most of their activity is invisible. Concerted effort must therefore be made to convert such invisibility into properly accounted participation. This could be done by changing the concept of a 'worker'

and by improving the deplorable work conditions of women in the unorganised sector.

Quality education and literacy programmes which should impart education that specifically high-light equality of sexes right from the primary school level should be adopted. This would have a positive effect of decreasing, if not removing the long established biases against the fairer sex. Further, in order to improve the status of women other measures that could be adopted in the literacy programmes at the primary, secondary and higher levels, have been listed. Special reference has been made regarding the vocational courses available for girl students.

To restrain the displacement of women from agriculture, as modernisation grips this sector women should be taught the various new skills and techniques, and encouraged to use machines and modern methods.

Since our analysis revealed that industrialization gave an impetus to FPRs in the state, hence industry should be expanded so that the resultant is an increase in FPRs. This would go a far way in improving the economic and social status of women.

Further to 'diminish, if not halt the negative influence of urbanization on women, women should be taught to cope with the pressures of commercialization and urbanization. In order to encourage women to take up the so called male dominated jobs, a supportive system of creches, hostels, canteen etc. should be provided for them. Programmes for self-employment of women and encouragement of women entrepreneurship should be taken up in right earnest.

In order to improve the health of women in general and hence their longevity, we have suggested some measures to improve the existing conditions. The aversion for the girl-child which is the main cause of falling sex ratios should be strongly opposed.

Finally we have also listed the programmes adopted by the State Government to improve the status of women. This includes opening of more higher secondary schools for girls, free secondary education and the proposed establishment of four women polytechnics. The Government of U.P. has also set up a separate department for women's welfare so that the socio-economic status of women could be improved. The state government has also under its 21-point - programme launched a massive programme for the construction of 2 lakh individual latrines in rural areas with an initial outlay of Rs.26.39 Crores. This would go a long way in improving the living conditions of women in rural areas.

It is noted that all the problems are inter-connected and are set against a back-ground of an archaic structure rife with cultural, social, religious and attitudinal biases usually directed against women. What is required therefore is a multi-pronged strategy to improve the status of women.

In conclusion we can state that though the position of women in U.P. is low, yet a 'ray of hope' exists in the fact that one can look forward to a better future for women, since the realization of women's none-too-happy conditions have crept into the mind of the Government as reflected in most of their policy measures and programmes. At the same time it is necessary for women to rise to the occasion and support such measures by being more assertive and active in their outlook and reaction to any sort of discrimination overt or covert. The challenge for policy makers is to usher in a pattern of development that is equitable towards women and harnesses the latent energy of the women folk for the common good.