



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2017; 3(11): 545-547
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 02-09-2017
Accepted: 08-10-2017

Dr. Priti Rai
Associate Professor,
Department of Commerce,
Shyama Prasad Mukherji
College for Women, University
of Delhi, New Delhi, India

Status of rural women in India

Dr. Priti Rai

Abstract

Objective: This paper investigates the status of rural women in India, focusing on their labor force participation, the impact of government schemes, and their overall socio-economic condition.

Background: Despite the cultural reverence for women in Indian society, rural women face significant challenges. They play crucial roles in agricultural tasks and domestic responsibilities but often lack recognition, education, and opportunities for employment.

Methods: The study draws on census data, field visits to rural areas, and interviews with rural women to understand their participation in the labor force, educational attainment, and access to government schemes.

Results: Rural women's labor force participation rate is 30%, significantly higher than urban women at 15.4%. However, rural women have lower levels of education, income, and asset ownership. Patriarchal norms restrict their voices both at home and work. Many educated rural women are confined to domestic tasks due to a lack of job opportunities. Migration of rural men to urban areas has increased household income but decreased women's involvement in farming activities. Despite numerous government schemes aimed at empowering women, challenges such as illiteracy, lack of awareness, and patriarchal attitudes persist.

Conclusion: Enhancing the socio-economic status of rural women requires a multifaceted approach. Establishing more educational institutions, healthcare facilities, skill centers, and promoting awareness about government schemes can help. Encouraging entrepreneurship and showcasing success stories can also drive change. Increasing women's participation in the labor force is crucial for accelerating economic growth.

Keywords: Rural women, labour force participation, government schemes, employment

Introduction

In India, Durga Maa is revered as the deity embodying power and bravery. Married women are referred to as Ardhgani, which means "Better Half," and hold esteemed roles as a wife, mother, sister, and mother-in-law. The majority of our sacred pujas require the presence of both a husband and wife, as they cannot be performed by men alone. Throughout the history of India, women have consistently been at the forefront, both in ancient times and in the present day. Razia Sultan, Savitribai Phule, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Indira Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Kiran Majumdar Shaw, Saina Nehwal, and Ekta Kapoor are just a few examples of women who have excelled in various disciplines. Conversely, there have been abhorrent and shocking crimes committed against women, such as the recent cases of Nirbhaya and Jessica Lal, as well as the issue of female foeticide.

While examining the data on female labour market participation rate in India, I had a mixture of sadness and joy. India has a significantly low female labour force participation rate, ranking ninth from the bottom globally. The Labour force participation rate (LFPR) is a metric that quantifies the proportion of individuals within the age range of 16-64 who are either currently employed or actively looking for job in the economy. Individuals who are currently enrolled in educational programmes or are not actively looking for work, as well as individuals who are 64 years of age or older, are not included in the labour force. It is represented as a ratio of the entire population of working age.

Approximately half of the Indian population is female, although only a quarter of them make up the female labour force. According to the World Bank Development Report 2019, the female workforce participation rate in India for the year 2017-18 was 23.3%. Consequently, the majority of women, specifically 75%, are not employed in the country. I am privileged to

Correspondence
Dr. Priti Rai
Associate Professor,
Department of Commerce,
Shyama Prasad Mukherji
College for Women, University
of Delhi, New Delhi, India

have been raised by well-educated and accomplished parents who instilled in us the significance of education and economic self-sufficiency for women. I am content to be part of the workforce, although there is still a considerable distance to cover in our progress.

The United Nations' initiative, 'Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030', has just over a decade remaining to accomplish its goal. The concept of "Planet 50-50" encompasses a global state of equality, which goes beyond mere numerical representation and includes fair compensation, inclusive decision-making processes, and equal access to leadership roles. According to Swami Vivekananda, improving the condition of women is essential for considering the well-being of the world. A bird cannot fly with only one wing. Women has the ability to create, nurture, exhibit compassion, love, and have the power to bring about transformation within both the family unit and society as a whole.

The current condition of women living in rural areas in India. Approximately 66% of the population resides in rural areas of India. Despite women being responsible for 70-80% of farming tasks, they are rarely acknowledged as farmers. The rural women had a labour force participation rate of 30%, while the urban women had a rate of 15.4%, according to the 2011 census. Although rural women make a significant contribution to the labour force, their levels of education, income, and ownership of assets are comparatively low compared to metropolitan women. The challenges faced by rural women in India are further exacerbated by the long-standing patriarchal system. Both at home and in the workplace, their voices are stifled. According to the 2011 census, just 11.5% of households in rural areas and 12.4% of households in urban areas are led by females.

I got the opportunity to visit several villages in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh as part of a project. Our crew encountered numerous female graduates and postgraduates who were confined to their homes and engaged in domestic tasks due to the scarcity of job prospects in their villages. The scenario is analogous in the majority of villages in India. Rural males have migrated to urban areas in pursuit of higher wages, while females remain behind to assume responsibility for childcare, in-laws, and elderly parents. They engage in agricultural labour, specifically sowing and ploughing the ground, as well as performing household chores. Certain individuals do return to rural areas during the period of crop gathering to provide assistance. The involvement of rural women in farming and agricultural activities has decreased in recent years due to the increase in their household income resulting from the migration of men to urban areas. They lack the motivation to engage in labour on land that is held by someone else. There are still many individuals who are employed on land that is held by their own family. The declining labour force participation rate of rural women can be attributed to several factors, including increasing levels of education, the mechanisation of agriculture, and the paucity of non-farm employment alternatives in villages. Over the past decade, the most significant increase in literacy rate was recorded among rural women, with a notable gain of 24%. The adult female literacy rate in rural areas was a mere 50.6%, while in urban areas it stood at approximately 76.9%. During our tour to schools in villages near Mathura and Agra, we discovered inadequate bathroom facilities. A number of female students discontinued their education as a result of the insufficient

lavatory amenities. The absence of adequate skill education causes them to be excluded from the labour market. However, the students exhibited exceptional intelligence and have numerous ambitions.

The majority of families oppose the idea of sending females away from the village to pursue education and employment. The ladies lack awareness of their rights and are subjected to underpayment and exploitation. The majority of the issues arise from the fact that they do not possess land ownership, but instead labour on land owned by others. Malnutrition, illiteracy, limited access to finance, dependent children, and domestic tasks contribute to the perpetuation of poverty.

The Government has implemented numerous programmes to enhance the empowerment of women in rural areas. The specifics of the schemes are not provided in this document, but are merely enumerated here.

MGNREGA provides a guarantee of 100 days of employment. (Mostly women have received the benefits).

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme aims to combat female infanticide and encourage the education of girls.

The One Stop Centre Scheme is designed to address all queries.

Women Helpline Scheme

UJJAWALA aims to combat trafficking and provide rehabilitation for victims.

Women's hostel for employed individuals

SWADHAR Greh is a facility specifically designed to support women who are facing challenging circumstances.

The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP).

Nari Shakti Puraskar.

NIRBHAYA.

State Women's Honour and District Women's Honour.

MAHILA E HAAT.

Female police volunteers.

Women Empowerment Centres

It is admirable that these projects are being frequently monitored. The advantages of these programmes are being extended to the impoverished by direct transfers being deposited into their bank accounts. In rural areas where banking institutions are absent, cash is provided as an alternative. The government favours the method of directly transferring funds into bank accounts in order to eliminate corruption.

The path ahead

In order to promote employment opportunities for women in rural areas, it is imperative for the Government to establish additional schools, colleges equipped with excellent facilities, hospitals, skill centres, food processing industries, handicraft industries, and banks. The commencement of industrialization will serve as an attractive force for males, leading to a decrease in their migration to urban areas. Women should be informed about the diverse government programmes in order to access and benefit from them. It is advisable to foster their inclination towards entrepreneurship in order to enable them to hire additional personnel. It is important to promote and share success stories of microfinance, self-help groups, and cooperatives. Producing and evaluating films such as Padman, Sui Dhaaga, and Super 30 serve as a highly effective method for generating

awareness regarding the problems afflicting rural India. In order to accelerate economic growth, the Government must prioritise increasing female participation in the labour force.

Conclusion

Rural women in India face significant challenges, including low education levels, limited employment opportunities, and entrenched patriarchal norms. Despite their crucial roles in agriculture and domestic spheres, their contributions often go unrecognized. Government schemes have had limited impact due to poor awareness and infrastructural issues. To empower rural women, a comprehensive approach is needed: improving education and healthcare facilities, promoting entrepreneurship, and ensuring effective implementation of government programs. Empowering rural women is essential for social justice and economic growth, unlocking their potential to contribute significantly to India's development.

References

1. Bhingardive MD. Economic empowerment of rural women through self-help groups. *Southern Economist*. 2014 Feb 1;52(19):9-12.
2. Letha Devi G, Khandekar P. An analysis of constraints in empowerment of rural women. *Journal of Extension Systems*. 2010 Dec;26(2):45-50.
3. Maertens A, Ksoll C. Changing one's mind? Updating of beliefs among rural Indian women. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2015 Dec 12;50(50):73-76.
4. Mahadeva M, Keshavamurthy K. How have rural women self-empowered through agricultural trades? Some reflections from Karnataka. *Journal of Rural Development*. 2015 Oct-Dec;34(4):475-491.
5. Mishra S, Prusty R. Empowerment of rural women through self-help groups. *Vision*. 2014 Apr-Sep;24(2-3):21-28.
6. Pramasivan V. Problems of women entrepreneurship in rural India. *Third Concept*. 2016 Sep;30(355):24-29.
7. Rukmini S. India's workforce is masculinizing rapidly. *Live Mint*. 2019 Jun 10.
8. Saurabh S. Economic empowerment of rural women. *Kurukshetra*. 2018 Jan;66(3):12-18.
9. Singh BN. Undervaluation of work and status of rural women: A study. *Southern Economist*. 2006 Mar 1;44(21):23-24.
10. Singh UK, Singh D. Skill and entrepreneurship: Empowering rural women. *Kurukshetra*. 2017 Sep;65(11):37-41.
11. Srivastava R. Empowering rural women: The way forward. *Kurukshetra*. 2018 Jan;66(3):5-11.
12. www.economicstimes.com
13. www.ilo.org
14. www.mospi.gov.in
15. www.sattva.co.in
16. www.theglobaleconomy.com
17. www.thehindu.com
18. www.worldbank.org