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COMPARITIVE STUDY BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES (INDIA, SRILANKA AND BANGLADESH)

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ABSTRACT

The economic analysis of women's participation in the labour force has attracted the interest of a significant number of individuals. Differences in economic development, educational achievement, fertility and mortality, the accessibility of healthcare and other social services, and finally societal standards all have a role in determining the extent to which women participate in the labour sector. As a direct consequence of this, participation rates differ greatly from one region of the world to another, with South Asia having one of the lowest rates. There are a lot of reasons to be concerned about the changing dynamics of women's participation in the labour force in South Asia. The most noticeable tendency, in spite of strong economic growth and growing wages and incomes, is the declining participation of women in the labour force, particularly in rural regions. The participation of women in the labour market is a key growth engine, and rates of participation provide an indication of a country's potential for faster economic expansion. In many developing nations, the engagement of women is a coping strategy that develops in response to economic disruptions that impact the household. This is because of the fact that women are more likely to be educated than males. In order to enhance the outcomes of the labour market in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, policy interventions that intend to do so should take into account both the supply and demand of labour.

INTRODUCTION

Since female involvement in the labour market is a growth engine, participation rates provide an indication of how quickly a country could potentially grow. Nevertheless, there is a multifaceted dynamic at play between women's workforce participation and broader measures of growth. Women's participation in the labour force can vary significantly more than men's, especially in

less developed countries and emerging economies.¹ Women of working age in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia have employment rates that are significantly lower than one-third. On the other hand, about two-thirds of the working-age female population in East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa is currently employed. This disparity is attributable to a wide range of economic and social factors, such as the expansion of the economy, increased levels of education, falling childbearing rates, and higher cultural expectations.² Aside from the field of employment, the discrepancies between men and women are larger in developing countries, with South Asian countries having the highest disparities between the sexes.

Women's participation in public life in Bangladesh appears to be on the rise, according to long-term trends. This is because of the growth of the ready-made clothing sector as well as the increase in female employment in rural areas, which may largely be attributed to the increased availability of microcredit. On the other hand, in Sri Lanka, where there has been virtually little change in women's engagement over the past few years despite the country's solid economic growth and major gains in social measures, the situation is rather different. Even if the economy is prospering and wages and incomes are on the rise, it is most confusing that the number of women who are actively participating in the labour force in India is falling.

Since 1981, the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka have been the site of a deadly continuing civil strife. This has caused a substantial amount of stress and disturbance in social life. The financing allocated to the social sector, which had already been cut back in the middle of the 1980s, was cut an even greater amount as the cost of the conflict continued to rise in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a direct consequence of this, the standard of care in the medical and educational fields, as well as the standard of living for women and their families, has deteriorated. The patriarchal beliefs that were prevalent in traditional, colonial, and post-independence communities in Sri Lanka, as well as the more liberal traditional laws and gender inequalities in the legal system, as well as the regulations that were in place during the British era, have all had an effect on the lives of Sri Lankan women.

¹ Dubey, A, S. Gangopadhyay and W. Wadhwa (2001), "Occupational Structure and Incidence of Poverty in Indian Towns of Different Sizes", *Review of Development Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 49-59.

² Bangladesh, Planning Commission (2012), *Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010–2021: Making Vision 2021 a Reality* (Dhaka).

In the years that immediately followed the end of colonial rule in Sri Lanka, the country's decision-makers introduced a number of new social programmes that had the effect of vastly improving the standard of living for women. These actions included providing free medical treatment and education, in addition to monetary subsidies for food. Women in Sri Lanka have a much higher standard of living than their counterparts in the rest of South Asia. They have a high life expectancy (74 years), almost everybody is able to read and write, and they have access to economic opportunities that are virtually unmatched in any other part of the subcontinent.

I. FEMALE LABOUR (INDIA, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA)

Since the 1990s, the number of women who are working in Bangladesh has increased, which coincides with the country's fast economic expansion. This trend runs counter to what the U-shaped model may suggest will happen. The number of women in Bangladesh who are working in urban industries that are geared toward export and need a lot of labour has substantially expanded as a result of this. According to the findings of the study, there has been a correlation between the quick growth of microfinance in rural areas and the increased employment opportunities for women in those areas. On the other hand, it would appear that the economy as a whole as well as women's work opportunities in urban areas are excessively reliant on a single industry.

In addition, there are still problems with wages, the wage gap that exists between men and women, as well as other areas of complying with labour standards.³ The results of this study's empirical research indicate that additional steps need to be taken to improve women's access to education and skill training, productive assets such as land, and credit beyond microcredit, as well as the services provided by a variety of government agencies. Alterations need also be made to the societal norms and environments that, in many cases, make it more challenging for women to find employment.

The choice of whether or not a woman will work, as well as her capacity to do so, is impacted by a multitude of economic and social issues at both the household and the macrolevel, which

³ Luke, N.; Munshi, K. 2011. "Women as agents of change: Female income and mobility in India", Journal of Development Economics, Vol. 94, No. 1, pp.1-17.

interact with one another in a convoluted manner.⁴ According to information gathered from different parts of the world, some of the most important factors are a population's level of education, fertility rates, the average age at which people get married, economic growth and its impacts, and urbanisation. In addition to these problems, traditional societal conventions concerning the roles that women are expected to play in public life continue to have an effect. Significant progress has been achieved in India over the course of the past decade or two in expanding educational opportunities for young women.

A growing percentage of working-age women are continuing their education past the high school level. On the other hand, because of the way in which the economy of the country has grown, there have not been a great number of occupations created in rural areas that women may readily find employment in. Even if not enough jobs were created, household incomes improved, which may have resulted in a shift in the preferences of women, which led to a reduction in the engagement of women in secondary activities (also known as "income effect"). In conclusion, the vast majority of women in India hold jobs and make contributions to the economy in some form or another; nevertheless, the bulk of these women's contributions are not reflected in the official statistics. As a consequence of this, the work that women do is usually underreported.

The majority of women in India identify their primary career as being one that involves taking care of domestic responsibilities. It is interesting to note that many women who are generally responsible for housework have stated that they would work if they were able to do it from home. In rural areas, around 34% of women and in urban areas, approximately 28% of women who generally perform housework said that they would be willing to work.⁵ Tailoring was the occupation that was sought after the most in both rural and urban areas.

Both India and Bangladesh are impacted by the phenomena that is referred to as "The Patrilineal Trap." The number of working women is still significantly lower than the norm for the world since the compensation they receive is rarely enough to compensate for the dishonour caused by men.

⁴ Bhalla, Surjit S and Tirtharanmoy Das, Pre- and Post-Reform India: A Revised Look at Employment, Wages and Inequality, India Policy Forum, 2005-06, p.183-253.

⁵ ILO. World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018. Geneva: ILO, 2018

This preference for housewives has not changed even as cities have become more modern. Cooking and cleaning for their sons is a common way for stay-at-home women to show their love for their children. Men eventually become accustomed to taking on responsibilities that are traditionally carried out by women. Because of their cultural norms, married South Asian women are expected to do a significant amount of housekeeping, which makes it challenging for them to find employment outside the home.

Families in Bangladesh put up a vigorous fight in order to limit their daughters' sexuality, level of independence, and mobility. Girls are wed at very young ages in order to ensure that they keep their virginity throughout their lives. Women who are employed in the clothing manufacturing industry or who are members of savings clubs are more likely to be victims of domestic violence. Men frequently make an effort to cap the amount of money that women can earn. The vast majority of people are of the opinion that men have a more significant right to work than women do. There is no evidence to support the hypothesis that Bangladesh's progress toward gender parity is responsible for the rise in the number of working women in that country.

When Bangladeshis move to the United Kingdom, where there are greater opportunities for job, they often give up the money that women make in Bangladesh. This is because women in Bangladesh are not allowed to work outside the home. Only 39% of British women of Bangladeshi or Pakistani heritage are employed. Many of these women come from low-income families. In most contexts, employment options for women of Muslim faith are extremely limited.⁶ In point of fact, British Indian women perform a significant amount of labour: (69 percent, almost converging white British women, 74 percent). Therefore, it would appear that Indians are more open to the idea of women holding paid employment.

It is my opinion that as a direct result of Bangladesh's more robust economy, the number of working women in Bangladesh has climbed, whereas the number of working women in India has fallen. The amount of money that women earn can make up for the loss of respect that males experience.

⁶ Karim, N.A. (2001). Jobs, Gender and Small Enterprises in Bangladesh: Factors Affecting Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Cottage Industries in Bangladesh (Dhaka, International Labour Organization).

There has been no discernible change in the scale of India's production. More over three quarters of workers are employed by companies that have ten or fewer people working for them. In addition, India is remarkable in terms of the percentage of occupations that are unofficial. The expansion of India's economy has not resulted in a large drop in the percentage of the country's workforce that is working in agricultural or informal occupations.

When individuals consistently find themselves in a vulnerable position, their level of dependence on their families grows.⁷ It's possible that men won't want to reject marriages that have been arranged for them by their jati. Even though there have been a lot of new official positions established, Bangladesh is still largely dependent on its families. I feel that the authoritarian governments that are in place in Bangladesh are to blame for keeping labour prices down below the level of marginal productivity, which has resulted in increased economic growth.

Keeping labour expenses at a low level has been one strategy employed by a number of governments in an effort to boost export competitiveness. The strategy of understaffing labour inspectorates, allowing companies to self-regulate, crushing independent labour movements with restrictive laws and police brutality, and co-opting trade union leaders who are more inclined to collaborate with the government are all examples of strategies that can be used.

When martial law was in effect in the 1970s, it was against the law for workers to form unions. Even after the legalisation of unions, the support of thirty percent of workers in each company was still necessary for a union to get registered there.⁸ In large factories, this task is notoriously difficult to complete. Unions are not permitted in areas designated for the processing of exports (which are also exempted from national labour legislation). The situation is not significantly improved if one leaves these zones. As a result of inadequate funding and a general lack of interest, ministries of labour only seldom sanction infractions. When a state of emergency was declared in 2007, it was against the law for workers to provide any kind of aid. The police responded to the subsequent rallies by using rubber bullets, tear gas, and water cannons, as well as by arresting and mistreating demonstrators. The use of thugs, intimidation, threats,

⁷ Rustagi, P. 2010. "Continuing gender stereotypes or signs of change: Occupational pattern of women workers", *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 481-500.

⁸ Karim, N.A. (2001). *Jobs, Gender and Small Enterprises in Bangladesh: Factors Affecting Women Entrepreneurs in Small and Cottage Industries in Bangladesh* (Dhaka, International Labour Organization).

blacklisting, termination, and the launching of false criminal claims against workers are all other methods that manufacturers deploy in an effort to foil unionisation efforts.

Workers who are concerned that joining a union may put them in danger may decide against doing so. They have very little experience with successful opposition, and as a result, they do not believe that getting wider support can help them. As a result, they continue to carry out their activities in secret.

By cracking down on organised labour, Bangladeshi governments have managed to keep labour costs at historically low levels, in some cases even falling below the point of marginal production. There has been an increase in the number of men and women hired by companies.

On the other hand, there are a bigger number of roadblocks in the way of corporate expansion in India. There is no legal requirement for businesses with less than ten workers to give paid leave, pensions, or health insurance to its workers. They have the authority to let employees go without giving warning or providing severance pay. The cost of enforcing this legislation is driven up by bribery and corruption among labour inspectors. When a company has more than nine workers on its payroll, the company must pay an additional 35% of the employee's regular compensation for each additional worker. Employers frequently provide work that may be done from home in an effort to reduce these costs.

The growth of the economy in Bangladesh has led to an increase in employment opportunities. However, women's earnings are on the rise to make up for the loss of honour suffered by men. When there are not enough official positions available in India, conditions such as poverty, instability, dependence on family members, jati-endogamy, caste stratification, and patriarchy become worse.⁹ Dalits struggle to make their way to cities in search of employment opportunities because rural areas offer little opportunities.

The second possible reason for this disparity in South Asia is that Indians provide less support for women who want to work outside the home. Having said that, this does not make sense when one considers the fact that there are a far higher number of British Indian women working than

⁹ Rahman, R. I., and R. Islam. Female Labour Force Participation in Bangladesh: Trends, Drivers and Barriers. ILO Asia-Pacific Working Paper, 2013

there are British Indian men. The only way in which culture could possibly shift is if the economy expanded and more jobs were created.

In India, poverty is perpetuated by the use of small-scale production methods. The economy of India is driven mostly by consumer spending within the country. The vast majority of Indians, however, are employed in small shops and farms that do not generate a lot of revenue. Workers with low incomes are unable to purchase items from the contemporary industry because they are too expensive. Because of this, participation in modern business is limited to a select set of extremely rich people, as well as requiring a significant amount of financial resources. This prevents new jobs from being created and maintains employment on a smaller scale.

The vast majority of women in Sri Lanka are either unable or unwilling to engage in economic activity in order to earn money.¹⁰ As of 2019, only 36% of working-age women were either employed or making an effort to find job. An examination of the supply side finds that key supply-side problems include unpaid care and housework, a lack of skills, and prejudice against women. There has been a disproportionately low amount of focus placed on the vast majority of demand-related issues, such as the manner in which the firm is run and the beliefs held by management. This research sought to fill a gap in the existing body of knowledge by analysing primary and secondary data from private, formal businesses operating in the manufacturing, trade, and service sectors. Specifically, the researchers were interested in determining whether or not firm characteristics influence the demand for women workers.

Since the beginning of the last century, the proportion of working women in Sri Lanka has ranged between 30 and 35 percent the entire time. This finding comes as a surprise taking into account the consistently high levels of education and other socioeconomic indicators that are held by women in the country. Fewer things are known about the demand-side causes, despite the fact that most research has been done on the supply-side variables that are responsible for keeping the number of working women at historically low levels. For the purpose of determining these demand-side limits, this study makes use of data provided by significant players.

¹⁰ Abraham, V. 2009. "Employment growth in rural India: Distress driven?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 16, pp. 97–104.

In theory, occupational segregation, wage inequality, workplace discrimination, disparities in the quality of jobs offered to women compared to the number of such jobs, and a lack of entrepreneurial activity among women are all indicators of demand-side limitations on women's participation in the labour force.¹¹ In practise, however, occupational segregation, wage inequality, workplace discrimination, and disparities in the quality of jobs offered to women compared to the number of such jobs do not exist. This is as a result of a number of causes, one of which is the nation's restrictive legislative framework, as well as its employment status and structure. In order to test the validity of this theoretical basis, Sri Lanka was utilised. The results largely corroborate what the theoretical framework predicted with regard to the existence of constraints, and they also demonstrate why these constraints exist. The reasons for the existence of these constraints include a combination of restrictive laws, the role of the public sector in creating alternative and privileged employment, an inability to adapt to changing work environments, a lack of skills and qualifications among women who wish to apply for specific types of jobs, and social and cultural factors.¹²

The salaries of workers in different professions and industries in Sri Lanka are established using a variety of approaches. The Pay Commissions for positions in the public sector, tripartite Pay Boards that establish minimum pay for a variety of specialised employment, and collective bargaining that determines rates for specific businesses or across industries are all examples of organisations that determine wages (such as plantations). In order to gain formal job in the private sector, institutions are required to be attended. There is a disparity between men's and women's real incomes, despite the fact that compensation boards base pay on qualifications and occupations rather than gender when determining salaries.

II. NATURE OF WOMENS WORK

Despite the fact that the labour force participation figures do not reflect the breadth of their employment, particularly in the informal sector and at home, women have always been members of the labour force because of their role as economic producers. Since the 1960s, and particularly in the 1980s, the number of working women has climbed at a rate that is significantly faster than

¹¹ Gunatilaka, R. Women's Participation in Sri Lanka's Labour Force: Trends, Drivers and Constraints. Colombo, Sri Lanka: ILO, 2013.

¹² Klasen, S., and J. Pieters. What Explains the Stagnation of Female Labor Force Participation in Urban India? Courant Research Centre Discussion Paper No. 146, 2013.

the rate at which working men have increased. This is because of the increased educational opportunities available to women as well as the increased pressure placed on families to maintain their current standard of living. At the beginning of the 1990s, for reasons that are not completely understood, the number of working women fell.

At the end of the 1960s, many people lost their jobs as a result of the slow growth of the economy and the related fall in the ability of the labour market to absorb new workers. This was especially true for people who had completed high school or college. As a clear indication that women are more likely to be unemployed, the unemployment rates for women have consistently been at least twice as high as those for males throughout recorded history. Since the end of the 1970s, the quality of the careers that are open to women has also gone downhill.

Women have been coerced into taking jobs that pay less or are less lucrative than those they previously held in the formal economy. Concurrently, the percentage of unpaid family employees has climbed from 6.5% in 1981 to over 20% in the 1980s and 1990s. This increase occurred during the same time period. There has not been a dramatic shift in the way that men and women are assigned to different positions in the labour market. Despite the fact that some women are entering new fields of work, the vast majority of working women are found in the following fields: agriculture (domestic and plantation), traditional local industries, assembly-line industries in the modern sector, traditional local industries, education and health subsectors, and domestic service. In the 1980s, there were less women working as paid employees, but by the 1990s, this trend started to reverse itself.

In the 1980s, there were fewer women working as paid employees. There is no straightforward reason for this to be the case. A growing number of women are taking on unpaid and voluntary roles inside their families in their own time. The vast majority of women, regardless of the level of education they have obtained, are stuck working in low-skilled jobs that require a significant amount of effort, and they are unable to improve their level of expertise. Work for women in Sri Lanka is characterised by long hours, exposure to occupational health hazards, risk of job insecurity, unequal division of work by gender, and subordination on the job market. In addition, women are paid less than men for equivalent work.

It's estimated that women make up roughly half of all professionals, semi-professionals, and middle-level employees. Throughout history, women have held positions in a variety of fields including education and healthcare. However, only a small number of women have been able to break through the so-called "glass barrier" and achieve high-level positions in both the public and commercial sectors, where they are in a position to make critical decisions.¹³

There is now one female Secretary of a Ministry, and only a small number of women have positions of authority within the government or inside financial institutions. The vast majority of women who are employed in the service sector are responsible for menial activities such as housework or manual labour, and they are not afforded any protection by the laws governing the workplace. Despite this, the percentage of women holding management positions has increased, while the percentage of women holding professional positions has declined.

III. ECONOMIC GROWTH OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

In order for a development strategy to be considered sustainable and inclusive, it must ensure that women are able to work and have access to good jobs. There are still a lot of barriers that women have to overcome before they can enter the workforce and find a good job. In addition, women face a greater number of obstacles than men when trying to find work, finding the right job, working conditions, job security, equal pay for equal labour, overcoming prejudice, and juggling the demands of work and home responsibilities. Employment rates of women are frequently cited as an important indicator of economic opportunities and a measure of women's overall contributions to the economy.¹⁴ In addition, a large number of women hold jobs in the unofficial sector of the economy, which places them at a greater risk of being exploited and provides them with the least amount of protection from official institutions.

Although the correlation is not simple nor reliable at the national level, there is a general trend toward an increase in the number of working women in a country as the economy grows stronger. Women in less developed countries are markedly different from men in terms of the employment opportunities available to them. This disparity can be attributed to a number of

¹³ Gunatilaka, R. Women's Participation in Sri Lanka's Labour Force: Trends, Drivers and Constraints. Colombo, Sri Lanka: ILO, 2013.

¹⁴ Government of India (2009), Report on Effect of Economic Slowdown on employment in India (October – December 2008), Ministry of Labour and Employment.

economic and social causes, such as the expansion of the economy, increased levels of education, and established patterns of behaviour in society. If you want to make it easier for women to achieve successful occupations, one of the most important things you can do is aid them in obtaining further education above the level of their high school degree. It has been proved that increasing the number of career opportunities and leadership roles available to women contributes to an organization's overall efficiency and growth. Companies that have at least three women working in top management roles are often regarded as having higher overall performance.

The inclusion of women in economic decision-making not only increases productivity but also diversifies the economy and makes sure that everyone has an equal quantity of money. Education, additional training, and retraining are all things that women and girls need to pursue throughout their lives, especially if they want to keep up with the rapid technological and digital advancements that are having an impact on the labour market. This is absolutely necessary in order for them to maintain their health and well-being, as well as their capacity to earn money and enter the official labour market. It is possible that greater education is responsible for around half of the economic growth that has occurred in OECD countries over the previous fifty years.

Even though the majority of women have higher levels of education, their position in the workforce has not improved as a result. The ability of women to participate equally in existing markets, access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives, and bodies, as well as a greater voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels, from the household to the international level, are all components of women's economic empowerment. The majority of studies indicate that the likelihood of rural and urban Indian women working decreases as their household wealth increases and as their educational attainment levels rise.

IV. EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS

According to large-scale surveys, the majority of rural women who are working continue to be self-employed or to work in agriculture as casual labourers, despite the fact that the number of rural women who are employed has increased over the years. They are subjected to a variety of forms of bias, such as being placed in positions that pay less due to the perceptions others have about their looks. A higher rate of labour participation may not automatically result in improved outcomes if it is not accompanied by an increase in educational attainment and/or asset accumulation.¹⁵ Education may not boost a woman's likelihood of finding work, but it is the single most important factor in improving her employment prospects in non-agricultural fields if she is already in the workforce. Women are able to find employment in industries other than agriculture when they have access to land, the ability to move freely, and the willingness to participate in self-help groups. On the one hand, compared to their urban counterparts, rural women have lower levels of education, less skills, and lower levels of productivity. On the other hand, because to their higher levels of talent and production, women who live in urban areas have a better chance of finding work. This is one of the reasons why.

Women make up around thirty percent of the labour force in rural areas, but just fourteen percent of the labour force in urban areas. This suggests that the number of employed women living in rural areas is significantly higher than the number of working women living in metropolitan areas.

In comparison to their rural counterparts, the proportion of urban women who participate in the labour force makes up a lesser share. The low number of agricultural and associated occupations that need a high level of expertise or specialisation is one of the reasons why urban women do not make up a large share of the overall female labour force. Another explanation is that there are not many of these jobs. Therefore, in order to provide for their families, rural women work on farms.

As a result of the greater prevalence of poverty in rural areas compared to urban areas, women living in rural areas are forced to accept low-paying employment in order to provide for their families. Because the income of an urban family on average is higher than that of a rural family

¹⁵ India, Ministry of Rural Development, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Development Employment Guarantee Act, 2005: Operational Guidelines 2013 (New Delhi)

and because the incidence of poverty is lower in the city than it is in the country, there is less of a need for women living in urban families to hold jobs.

The family should be the one to decide whether or not their female members should be employed. Even though more and more women in India are acquiring the skills to read and write, there is still a significant amount of work to be done before more urban women can obtain employment.

V. EMPLOYMENT IN URBAN AREAS

In general, compared to their rural counterparts, metropolitan women have more access to services and infrastructure, more chances for employment, and are less bound by social and cultural standards. They do not, however, enjoy the same benefits as their male counterparts in urban areas. They have less money, authority, property, and spare time to their name. People in rural areas may be less aware of the various gender roles that exist, less willing to challenge gender conventions, and less likely to trust in the potential of societal change, such as in the division of labour, because of the prevalence of homogeneity and limited exposure.¹⁶ People who live in urban areas are more tolerant of one another's differences and are better able to dispel myths about the ways in which men and women are different, both of which strengthen their support for equality.

The surge in the number of women working in metropolitan areas has been attributed to the informalization of labour; however, jobs in the informal sector are risky, are almost never registered, and pay poorly. Even while obtaining an education is less difficult in urban areas than it is in rural ones, there are still challenges, particularly for women who live in less fortunate urban areas. When living in slums, it can be extremely challenging to study after school due to the lack of available space, quiet, and light, as well as other resources.

If women have access to a wider range of assets and there are policies in place that support them, they will have a greater capacity for power and influence over their own lives.

¹⁶ India, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (2009), National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, (New Delhi).

When assessing the economic empowerment of women, one of the most important aspects to take into consideration is violence against women on the basis of their gender.¹⁷ This is especially important to keep in mind in urban areas where gender norms may be challenged. Changes in gender roles in urban areas will demand the support of a larger community and, in many circumstances, group action in order to advance the interests and rights of the group.

The involvement rates of women in urban regions are far higher than those in rural areas, however this gap is large. Approximately 14 out of every 100 metropolitan women are working in some capacity, which is an extremely low employment rate. Employed rural women make up approximately 26 percent of the total population of rural women who live there. It is common practise for families to prevent their female members from seeking employment when the male member of the family earns a significant salary. Because males who work in cities often earn more money than men who labour in the country, urban households discourage their female members from finding employment.¹⁸ Aside from this, a significant portion of the chores that metropolitan women complete around the house are not regarded as productive in any way. Women who work on farms in rural regions and are paid in cash or food grains are counted as members of the labour force, however in urban areas, women who work on farms are not counted as members of the labour force.

VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account these facts, government authorities in India and the rest of the region should implement an all-encompassing plan to support the advancement of women in their pursuit of greater success in the workplace. This includes fostering a pattern of growth that generates employment opportunities as well as increasing access to education and training programmes, the effectiveness of those programmes, the development of skills, access to child care, protection for mothers who are pregnant, safe and convenient transportation, and so on. Instead of focusing on the total number of people who are participating in the labour force, policymakers in a growing nation should be more concerned with whether or not women are able to obtain better employment, establish their own businesses, and take advantage of new opportunities in the job

¹⁷ Gaddis, I., and J. Pieters. Trade Liberalization and Female Labor Force Participation: Evidence from Bangladesh. IZA Discussion Paper No. 6809, August 2012.

¹⁸ Hirway, I., and S. Jose. "Understanding women's work using time-use statistics: The case of India." *Feminist Economics* 17:4 (2011): 67–92.

market. A legislative framework that encourages and enables women to participate should take into account the "gender-specific" challenges that are experienced by the vast majority of women. Policies that take into account gender should be crafted with an awareness of the context in mind. In the end, the goal is not only to expand the number of women who participate in the labour force; rather, it is to give opportunities for occupations in which they can support themselves financially.

Even though academics and policymakers have only just begun to show interest in issues relating to women's employment, there are still crucial components of the decision-making process behind why women choose to work that we do not fully comprehend. It would appear that the demand for the labour of women is greater than the theoretical constraints.

Occupational segregation can be seen in both the horizontal and the vertical aspects of the labour market. However, the most significant obstacle to eliminating occupational segregation appears to be the social and cultural norms that are imposed on women in the workplace by society, family, and ethnic groups, as well as by women themselves, who are unable to change the unfavourable norms that have been imposed on them. This is because women are unable to alter the norms that have been imposed on them because they have been unable to change the norms that have been imposed on them.

Second, it does not appear that there is a lack of employment opportunities for women in the official sector. Employers have a hard time finding enough women who are eager to work, even when they offer attractive incentives to compensate for disadvantages such as a shortage of housing, transportation, etc.

In the third place, discrimination is against the law. In the workplace, neither males nor women face social nor economic discrimination of any kind. On the other hand, gender stereotypes and a defensive mentality both contribute to the phenomenon of indirect discrimination against women. There is abundant research suggesting that providing women with more flexible work alternatives will both help them join the workforce and attract even more women to do so. However, according to Sri Lankan law, these arrangements are not permitted, and it is possible that some of them even violate the law.

In addition to the typical rates of people participating in the labour force, policymakers need to also take into consideration the following:

They should also consider whether women can obtain better occupations and take advantage of new opportunities in the labour market that arise as a country develops, as this can help the process of development. This is because women's participation in the labour market is correlated with higher incomes. In light of this, policies should take into consideration both supply-side and demand-side factors. These factors include access to better education and training programmes and access to childcare, in addition to other supportive institutions and legal measures to make it easier for women to care for their homes, make them safer, and encourage private sector growth in industries and regions that can provide women in developing countries with more employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

During the course of the last ten years, numerous initiatives have been implemented by governments, employers, employees, and the organisations that represent all of these groups in order to provide assistance to women in resolving issues that arise in the workplace. The areas of family support, the formalisation of major sectors of informal employment performed primarily by women (such as housework), and efforts to combat vertical sex segregation have seen the most significant progress. This is especially true in areas where reform could minimise gender discrimination. This global picture reveals, however, that the key players on the labour market are not doing enough to close the employment gap that exists between men and women. This is the case regardless of where you look.

Differing men and women have different levels of access to occupations that are decent, which presents a significant barrier to the growth of a global labour market that is equitable and inclusive. It is anticipated that this problem would exist in the years to come unless additional steps are taken to eradicate the gender inequities that have been stated previously. Inequalities in the kinds of employment that women are able to get and keep persist in the labour market as a direct result of the considerably different demands that women face in relation to the obligations that they have in the home and with regard to the care of children. In point of fact, informality and working poverty are global problems with organisational and cultural roots in patterns of

sectoral and occupational gender segregation. These patterns may be found all over the world. These tendencies make it more difficult for women to get higher jobs because they limit their access to better sectors, which in turn makes it more difficult for women to obtain higher occupations.

As a result, in order to address the challenges that women face in the workforce, it will not only be necessary for governments, employers, and labour unions to make an effort to narrow the gender gap in employment opportunities, but also for steps to be taken to eliminate the unequal demands that women must meet.

In order to close the gender gap in employment opportunities, we need to take a number of different steps that are directed toward women and that take into account the specific aspects of their lives that are different from those of men. In the long run, this is going to be beneficial to everyone of society. It is still a problem in nations that are developing and growing to persuade individuals to switch from informal to formal employment, particularly among rural women working in the agricultural industry. This is a problem that has not yet been overcome. It will be easier to achieve a higher level of formalisation and cut down on the number of people living in working poverty if economic diversification is encouraged, both in agricultural and non-agricultural industries. In order to aid women in obtaining good jobs, it is vital to continue encouraging women to enrol in formal education, vocational training, and entrepreneurial efforts. This is an essential step. Despite this, there are more things that could be done to expand the reach of family-supporting governmental programmes and increase their level of effectiveness. This might be accomplished by increasing the number of child-related services and promoting a more equitable transfer of family responsibilities among members of households and possibly even local communities.

In general, it is absolutely necessary for all countries and organisations, especially governments, businesses, and labour unions, to work toward the actualization of the Agenda for Sustainable Development (often known as the "Agenda"). This can be accomplished by ensuring that women have decent jobs, reducing gender stereotypes and discrimination in education and the workplace, and recognising, reducing, and redistributing the disproportionate amount of care and housework that women now provide. Specifically, this can be accomplished by ensuring that women have decent jobs.

SUMMARY

Rising female labor force participation has been one of the most remarkable economic developments of the last century. In this entry we present the key facts and drivers behind this important change.

Most of the long-run increase in the participation of women in labor markets throughout the last century is attributable specifically to an increase in the participation of married women. In the majority of countries, across all income levels the participation of women in labor markets is today higher than several decades ago.

The grey diagonal line has a slope one, so countries that have seen positive changes towards women appear on the bottom right. As we can see, most countries lie on the bottom right, and some are very far below the diagonal line.

In some countries participation is higher for younger women, and in some countries, it is higher for older women. However, there is an interesting pattern: In countries where female participation in labor markets is generally low, it tends to be the case that participation is much higher among younger women.

The pattern for services is also interesting because it shows some important regional differences: In many low-income countries where the service sector is small in relative terms (i.e. countries in the bottom left, where both male and female employment in services is low), the pattern is reversed, and men tend to work more often in services than women. India is an important case in point.

As we have already mentioned above, women all over the world tend to spend a substantial amount of time on unpaid care work, which work falls outside of the traditional economic production boundary. In other words, women often work but are not regarded as 'economically active' for the purpose of labor supply statistics.

This type of non-market work can be time consuming. It is therefore not surprising that the factors driving an increase in female labor supply – whether they are improvements in maternal health, reductions in the number of children, childcare provision, or gains in household technology – all affect unpaid care work.

The manufacturing and service sectors in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have grown as a result of the globalization strategies of the two governments. The use of new technologies in work processes has been a function of the countries' participation in global trade, and high levels of foreign direct investment have been the source of much job creation.

In both countries, a large proportion of the new industrial workforce consists of women. However, while creating new employment opportunities and improving pay and conditions for some women, jobs tend to be based on flexible, short-term forms of employment with serious health and safety risks. Furthermore, advances in technology, mainly through automation, are increasing unemployment among 'unskilled' workers. As women generally predominate in this group, they are most adversely affected.

The uncertainties of employment that have been reinforced through globalization of production and financial services have made less developed countries, like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, vulnerable and weak participants in the global marketplace. Therefore, it is vital to increase awareness in order to generate greater understanding of the impact of technology on work and the organization of work. In this, NGOs and trade unions, although widely prohibited in the workplace, have a role to play.



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