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Women Workforce Participation: Highlighting Trends & Zonal Comparison

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Abstract

Indian economy has seen several phases of progression during the seven decades post independence. With rising globalization, urbanization and a transition in Indian societies, there has been a significant change in women's employment patterns. The current study highlights the participation of women in factories in various regions across India. A timeframe from 2005 to 2022 has been taken into consideration to observe the trends in such demographic change with respect to factory workers. A region-wise comparison is made to understand the trend of women employed in factories. The Government of India has laid various provisions for women in employment with respect of wage-equality, hygiene facilities, maternity benefits, working conditions and so on. The trend of women workforce participation is broadly seen to be positive across regions while there is still scope to eliminate barriers for women employment specific to factories in India.

Keywords: Occupational Safety & Health, Registered Factories, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

Female labor force participation is crucial for the inclusive and sustainable growth of a nation. Although the rate of female labor force participation is still below the global average, the percentage of Indian women who work is rising steadily over time. However, it is impossible to ignore the different socioeconomic conditions that have an impact on women's engagement in the labor force. There are still many obstacles that women must overcome in order to join the workforce, and they face a disproportionate share of difficulties with regard to choosing a job, getting access to employment, choice of work, working conditions, job security, wage parity, discrimination and balancing work and family obligations.

Challenges for women workforce

There are several “Push and Pull factors” for women participation in employment, primarily indicated by economic advancement, education and literacy, fertility rates, maternity & childcare and evidently the society and its paternalistic nature. However, there has been an increase in women employment given the rapid economic growth, rising levels of literacy and a shift in societal norms. The periodic labour force survey highlighted various reasons for women not being in labour force, which are depicted as below:

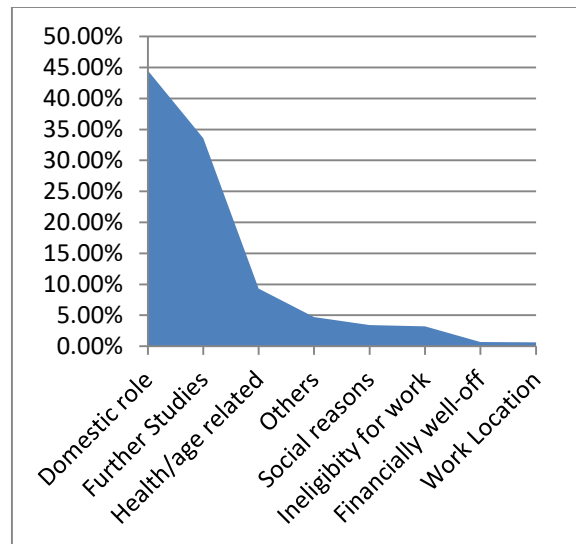


Figure 1: Reasons reported by females (in %) for not being in labour force

The most prominent reason for women not being in workforce is their responsibility towards their home. The domestic chores consume a significant portion of the time and often hinder their opportunity to move outside for work. The other reasons for lesser women in workforce include their intention to take up further studies, health or age related problems, societal barriers, not possessing the required training/qualification/age for work, being financially well off and non-availability of work at a convenient location.

Trends of women participation

In order to observe the trend of women in employment, data has been gathered for a period of 18 years, i.e 2005 to 2022. Table 1 below shows the number of female workforce across factories in the country.

Table 1: Number of female workers in factories in India

Year	Number	Percentage Change
2005	1431482	-
2006	1277753	-11%
2007	1833992	44%
2008	1563708	-15%
2009	1759763	13%
2010	1766863	0%
2011	1807860	2%
2012	2150395	19%
2013	2118443	-1%
2014	2268258	7%

2015	2329565	3%
2016	2534980	9%
2017	2474192	-2%
2018	2544200	3%
2019	2622627	3%
2020	3008867	15%
2021	3057122	2%
2022	*2628702	-

*Does not include data from West Bengal, U.P, Punjab, M.P, H.P, Chandigarh, DD &DNH, Manipur, Mizoram.

As seen from the table above, there has been a considerably steady growth in the number of women employed in factories in India. The percentage change has been shown in the table above, where most of changes are positive. From the year 2005 to 2021, there has been an increase of 114% in women workforce in India.

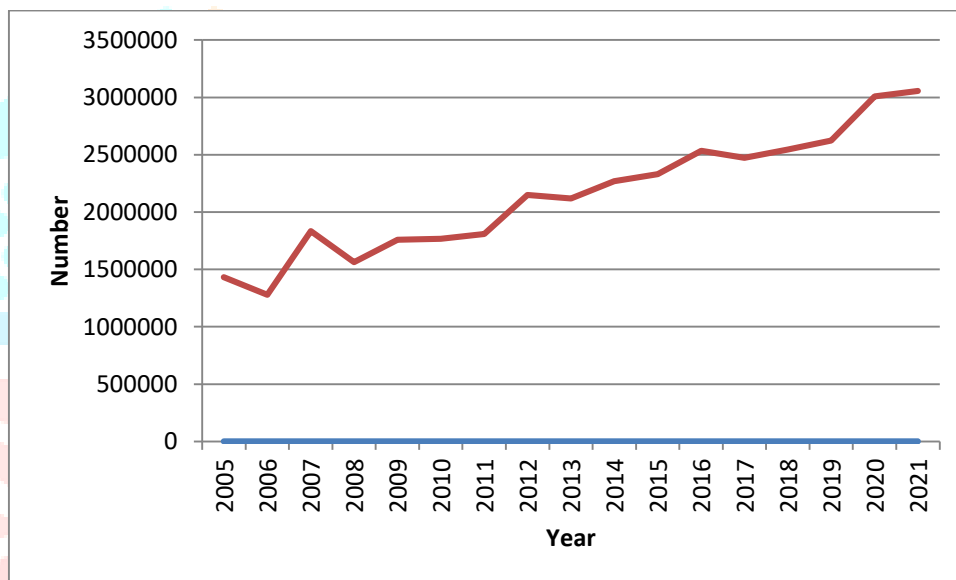


Figure 2: Timeline of Women Employment in Factories in India

Figure 2 above highlights the increasing rate of women employment in factories in India since 2005 to 2021. The positive trend can be attributed to a number of factors including reduced fertility rates, changing societal norms, increased provisions and amenities for women in factories and increase in women literacy among other factors.

State-wise Comparison

As per data received from the Chief Inspectors of Factories of various states and UTs, the number of women employees in factories during the period 2018-2022 is shown below:

Table 2: Women Employment in Factories in India: State-wise

State/UT	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	494	494	494	163	136
Andhra Pradesh	259948	237404	214687	84802	89937
Arunachal Pradesh	50	50	956	1056	1116
Assam	35939	37383	37609	39740	41592
Bihar	142	118	417	154	531
Chandigarh	242	#	#	#	#
Chhattisgarh	12432	12363	20440	19753	12862
Daman and Diu & Dadra and Nagar Haveli	38800	39496	40610	#	#
Delhi	29325	31300	31776	29523	29407
Goa	10771	11057	19423	73716	17129
Gujarat	112038	141783	139654	201640	155516
Haryana	122969	139358	153560	543018	130160
Himachal Pradesh	16680	20730	22749	24249	#
Jammu and Kashmir	7849	7856	7765	7533	7906
Jharkhand	19363	23541	23921	26399	31245
Karnataka	480989	522890	517267	424347	532484
Kerala	237758	167720	209976	220704	187696
Lakshadweep	*	*	*	*	*
Madhya Pradesh	28021	38548	44508	48900	#
Maharashtra	187943	190273	321161	237090	249275
Manipur	5997	6354	6368	6354	#
Meghalaya	405	600	505	421	1102
Mizoram	6	6	1	6	#
Nagaland	2166	2166	2166	2166	1608
Odisha	5968	#	10115	10265	10367
Puducherry	6874	5787	5882	7094	6476
Punjab	3640	38284	39235	#	#
Rajasthan	11305	14266	14854	55456	91390
Sikkim	*	*	*	*	*
Tamil Nadu	747286	753719	802003	811801	852365
Telangana	26255	64988	192357	142150	140605
Tripura	9654	8982	495	8322	7462
Uttar Pradesh	72649	75161	97663	#	#
Uttarakhand	30560	29950	30250	30300	30335
West Bengal	19682	#	#	#	#
Total	2544200	2622627	3008867	3057122	2628702

*: There are no registered factories in this State/UT; #: Data not reported by the CIF.

Zonal Comparison

A zonal comparison has been made showing women employment in factories. India has been divided into 6 zones, as given below:

North Zone: Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, and Rajasthan;

North East Zone: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura;

Central Zone: Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh;

East Zone: Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal;

West Zone: Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Goa, Gujarat, and Maharashtra;

South Zone: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

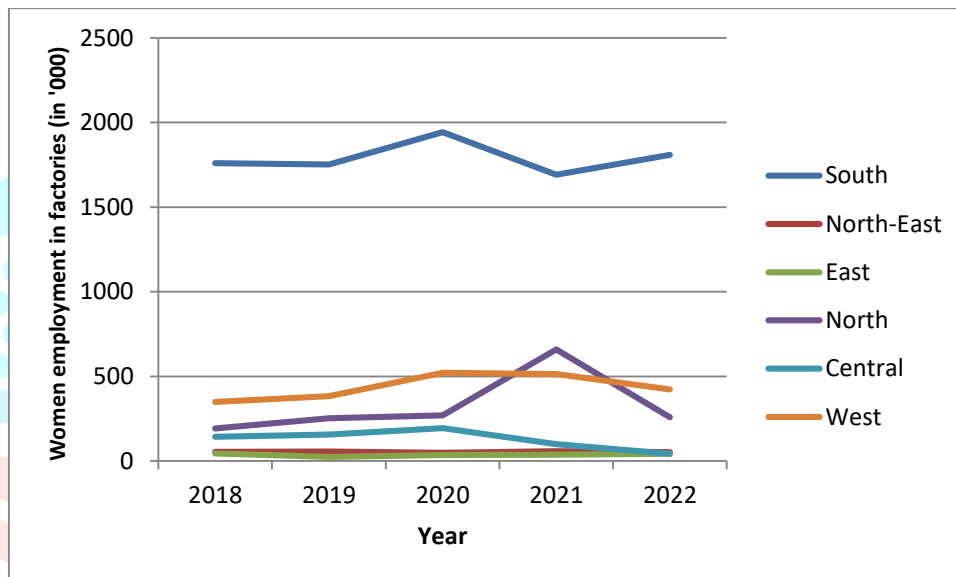


Figure 3: Women employment in factories in India: Zonal Comparison

The graph, as shown in Figure 3 above, depicts the trend in women employment across 6 major zones of India during the last five years, i.e 2018 to 2022.

Observation

The trend in southern zone is fairly stable with an overall rise in women employment by nearly 3 percent. The East and North-east zone also show a fairly stable trend. There is a significant increase in women employment in the North and West zones, as there has been an increase of 35% and 21% respectively, in women employment during the last 5 years. The central zone has shown a huge 34% increase in women employment from the 2018 to 2020, however, there appears a decline for later years due to insufficient data.

Overall, the trend has seen an upward shift, barring the period during 2020-21 when Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the economy at a global scale, leading to shutdown of several productions channels. Also, as complete data is not available for the year 2022 in respect of certain states, hence the trend appears to decline in few zones. Overall, Indian economy has been a reasonable increase in employment of women in factories over years.

Encouraging Women Workforce Participation

The government of India has time and again come up with several provisions to further enhance women workforce participation. Few of the provisions are given as under:

- i. The Factories Act, 1948 (Chapter V) provides for establishment of canteens, restrooms, first aid boxes, facilities for sitting, washing, storing, and drying cloths, and crèches for women workers within the factory premises
- ii. The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, mandates provisions for first aid facilities, clean, accessible, and separate toilets to ensure sanitation, canteens, crèches and restrooms to enhance the overall well-being and working conditions of women workers at construction sites.
- iii. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (amended in 2017) provides for maternity leave benefits to women employees for a period of upto 26 weeks.
- iv. The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020 incorporates provisions aiming at creating a secure and healthy working environment for women including mandatory health checkups. It grants women the right to work at night, subject to their consent, and mandates that employers must establish sufficient measures to ensure the safety and well-being of female workers during at night. Also, the code extends its provisions to transportation, mandating employers to provide a pickup and drop-off service for female employees.

Conclusion

The Government of India has put into place numerous programs and initiatives to enhance employment opportunities for women. Such Government efforts include but are not limited to social security programs, skill development, literacy and education and legal provisions. These efforts have greatly helped in reducing gender disparities and enhancing women's involvement in the workforce, but there are still several obstacles that must be overcome in order to increase women workforce participation. These regulations work together to create safe and conducive working conditions for female employees.

Women workforce participation in India has seen a positive trend, overall as well as across various zones. However, there need to be stricter implementation of laws and stringent monitoring of economic enterprises as a step towards encouraging women to join the workforce for the benefit of not just individual households but the larger economy.

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