

Bridging the Gender Gap: An Analysis of Female Workforce Dynamics in Punjab

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Abstract:

The participation of females in the workforce in Punjab, India, is influenced by a myriad of interconnected factors spanning socio-cultural, economic, and policy dimensions. This study employs a multifaceted approach to analyse the various factors shaping female workforce participation in Punjab. Drawing insights from relevant literature and data, this research delves into the socio-cultural norms and expectations that impact women's decisions regarding employment. Additionally, it examines the role of economic conditions and educational attainment, in influencing female workforce participation. Through a comprehensive examination of these factors, this study aims to provide policymakers and stakeholders with insights to develop targeted interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and enhancing female workforce participation in Punjab.

Keywords: Women, Workforce, Punjab

Introduction

The participation of women in the workforce is a crucial indicator of a nation's workforce market dynamics. The Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1982 defined the workforce force participation rate as the proportion of employed and unemployed individuals relative to the working-age population. Effective utilization of human capital, including the workforce, is vital for a nation's economic and social development. However, many developing countries, including India, face challenges in obtaining reliable and accurate workforce market data, which complicates workforce employment planning. Empowering women through employment is essential for reducing inequality and enhancing their status. This requires providing opportunities for women to enhance their skills through literacy and employment. Despite efforts to gather data from national surveys, issues persist in fully capturing both paid and unpaid female workforce due to administrative constraints. Women's share in the workforce increased between 1970 and 2000. The new economy offers a plethora of opportunities for women. The participation of women in the workforce is increasing in almost all the fields. Nagaich, Sangeeta &, Preeti. (2017).

In India, workplaces have traditionally been male-dominated, with women constituting a significant portion of the population but representing a smaller share of the workforce. India ranks low in female workforce participation compared to other nations, primarily due to social norms that dictate women's roles in domestic responsibilities rather than in the workforce. (Table No. 1.3) Additionally, inadequate education and vocational training for women hinder their participation in the workforce force. Women's contributions to agriculture and allied activities often go unrecognized as individual income, further perpetuating gender disparities. Increasing female workforce participation can enhance overall quality of

life, education levels, household income, and per capita income. Culturally and socially fostering an environment conducive to women's empowerment is crucial, including improving literacy rates and offering employment-focused training. Ensuring equal opportunities and pay for women, along with providing safe workplaces, will encourage greater female participation in all dimensions of society. Government initiatives aimed at enhancing female participation across social, economic, and political spheres are essential for achieving gender equality and inclusive development.

Review of Literature

Naina Bhardvaj (2022) talks about how things are tough for women in the workplace in India. She mentions problems like glass ceilings means it's hard for women to reach top positions, unfair employment numbers mean fewer women get hired and pay gaps. She makes comparison among the various states of India in this respect and also explains why this discrimination against women isn't good for India's economy in the long run, both for individual businesses and the country as a whole. Lastly, she analyses the laws in India that are supposed to protect women's rights at work.

Indrani Mazumdar & Neetha (2011) noticed a big drop in the number of women working in India between 2004-05 and 2009-10, according to a survey by the National Sample Survey Office. It looked at trends in women's work from 1993-94 to 2009-10 and argues that there's a problem with women's jobs during India's growth under liberalization. This study also mentioned how looking at unpaid work in the survey data can change our understanding of women's jobs and is important for discussions about job growth in India.

Ghosh and Mukhopadhyay (1984) reported a drastic reduction in number of female workers and their work participation rates. They explained this situation mainly in terms of the dominant position of the male in the workforce, the low level of overall employment, and the adverse sex ratio of females in the population. They also examined the issue of inter-state variations in female employment. They found that northern States like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Punjab are characterized by low participation rates and southern states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala show higher participation rates.

Objective and Methodology

This paper is an attempt to understand the various trends in the role of women in workforce in Punjab state of India. It also analyses the social, economic and cultural issues regarding the low participation of female in the workforce. This study is based on the secondary data. The main sources of data are the Statistical Profile of Women Labour, Reports of the Ministry of Labour and census.

Participation of Female in Workforce in Punjab

Female participation in the workforce in Punjab, like in many parts of India, is influenced by a combination of social, cultural, economic, and policy factors. Punjab, like other regions in India, has deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms that influence women's roles and participation in the workforce. Traditional gender roles often prioritize women's responsibilities within the household over their engagement in paid employment.

Table 1.1

		Female Population per 1000 Males in Punjab					
		Sex Ratio			Child Sex Ratio		
SN	Districts	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
1	Gurdaspur	903	890	895	878	789	821

2	Amritsar	873	871	889	861	792	826
3	Tarn Taran	-	887	900	-	784	820
4	Kapurthala	896	888	912	879	785	871
5	Jalandhar	897	887	915	886	806	871
6	S.B.S. Nagar	900	914	954	900	808	865
7	Hoshiarpur	924	935	961	884	812	865
8	Rupnagar	870	889	915	884	799	863
9	S.A.S. Nagar	-	840	879	-	785	841
10	Ludhiana	844	824	873	877	717	860
11	Ferozpur	895	885	893	887	822	847
12	Faridkot	883	883	890	865	812	851
13	Muktsar Sahib	880	891	896	857	811	831
14	Moga	884	887	893	867	818	836
15	Bathinda	884	870	868	860	785	854
16	Mansa	873	879	883	873	782	836
17	Sangrur	870	870	885	874	782	843
18	Barnala	-	907	876	-	792	801
19	Patiala	881	875	891	871	776	837
20	Fatehgarh Sahib	871	854	871	874	766	842
	Punjab	882	876	895	875	798	846
	India	927	933	943	945	927	914

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Issues.

The data presented illustrates the female population per 1000 males in Punjab, alongside district-wise sex ratios and child sex ratios for the years 1991, 2001, and 2011. Upon analysis, several key observations emerge. Firstly, the overall average sex ratio in Punjab is noted to be lower than the national average across all three years, with Punjab exhibiting sex ratios of 882, 876, and 895 in 1991, 2001, and 2011 respectively, compared to India's averages of 927, 933, and 943 for the corresponding years. Notably, districts like Hoshiarpur and S.B.S Nagar consistently demonstrate higher sex ratios than other districts throughout this period. However, it's observed that Punjab's child sex ratios are also lower than the national average across the years, with a declining trend noted from 1991 to 2001, followed by a slight increase in 2011. Ferozpur and S.B.S Nagar are highlighted as districts with relatively higher child sex ratios compared to others. Despite the fluctuating trends, it's evident that Punjab's sex ratios, both overall and in terms of child sex ratios, remain below the national average, suggesting ongoing challenges in achieving gender balance and equitable demographic indicators compared to the rest of India.

Table No. 1.2 Gender Wise Literacy Rate in Punjab

Year	Total Population	Literates			Literacy Rate		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1971	13551060	2934281	1627842	4562123	42.23	24.65	34.12
1981	16788915	4214878	2645471	6860349	51.23	34.35	43.37
1991	20281969	5919225	4012891	9932116	65.66	50.41	58.51

2001	24358999	8442493	6314677	14757170	75.63	63.55	69.95
2011	27743338	10436056	8271081	18707137	80.4	70.7	75.8

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Issues.

Educational attainment plays a significant role in determining women's workforce participation. Punjab has made significant strides in improving female literacy rates over the years. The literacy rates have shown significant improvement over the years. In 1971, the overall literacy rate was 34.12%, which increased to 75.8% by 2011. This indicates a considerable advancement in educational attainment nationwide. Historically, there has been a notable gender gap in literacy rates, with males typically having higher literacy rates than females. However, this gap has been gradually narrowing. In 1971, the literacy rate for males was 42.23%, compared to 24.65% for females. By 2011, these rates had increased to 80.4% for males and 70.7% for females, indicating significant progress in reducing gender disparities in literacy. Overall, the data highlights the positive trend of increasing literacy rates and narrowing gender gaps in education, signifying progress in India's educational landscape over the past few decades.

Table 1.3 Participation of Women Workforce in Punjab

Year	Total Population %			Total Workers %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1971	53.62	46.38	100	52.83	1.18	28.87
1981	53.23	46.77	100	75.52	2.27	41.26
1991	53.14	46.86	100	54.12	2.79	30.07
2001	53.31	46.69	100	49.49	12.39	32.17
2011	52.77	47.23	100	55.15	13.91	35.67
INDIA (2011)	51.47	48.5	100	53.25	25.52	39.79

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Issues.

Across all census years the population has consistently had more males than females, although the gap has been gradually decreasing. In 1971, the male population constituted 53.62%, which decreased slightly to 52.77% in 2011. Conversely, the female population has been steadily increasing its share, from 46.38% in 1971 to 47.23% in 2011. India's demographic statistics as of 2011 show a male population of 51.47% and a female population of 48.5%. The percentage of total workers in the population has increased over the years, indicating economic growth and possibly changing social dynamics. In 1971, only 28.87% of the population were workers, while in 2011, this figure rose to 35.67%. There's a significant gender gap in workforce participation, with males consistently having a higher percentage of workers compared to females. In 2011, 55.15% of males were workers, while only 13.91% of females were part of the workforce. (Table 1.3)

Between 1971 and 2011, there's a noticeable increase in the percentage of female workers, indicating a shift in societal norms and possibly increased opportunities for women in the workforce. The workforce participation rate for females almost tripled from 4.07% in 1971 to 13.91% in 2011. However, this is still significantly lower than the male workforce participation rate. The overall population distribution and workforce participation rates in 2011 are quite similar to the national average for India in the same year, with minor differences. Notably, the male population percentage is slightly higher in the national average compared to the data provided in the table, while the female population percentage is slightly lower. Similarly, the percentage of male workers is slightly higher, and the percentage of female workers is slightly lower in the national average compared to the table data. However, there is changing demographic

patterns and increasing participation of both genders in the workforce, albeit with persistent gender disparities in workforce participation. (Table 1.3)

Table No. 1.4 District Wise Female Workforce in Punjab

Work Participation Rate							
S.N.	State/Districts	Male			Female		
		1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
1	Amritsar	55	53.2	55.76	2.7	16.3	15.58
2	Barnala	-	-	56.11	-	-	11.21
3	Bathinda	55.5	55.4	58.26	7.1	27	18.13
4	Faridkot	55.7	59.5	56.65	6.8	23	12.55
5	Fatehgarh Sahib	54.7	55.1	56.98	2.1	18.3	11.46
6	Firozpur	54.5	53.6	55.65	7.4	18.5	16.74
7	Gurdaspur	51.3	51.9	52.58	2.4	12.7	11.01
8	Hoshiarpur	50.6	51	50.99	4.7	17.3	11.23
9	Jalandhar	53	54.1	55.84	4.6	12.3	12.88
10	Kapurthala	54	53.4	55.26	5.8	14.1	12.5
11	Ludhiana	55.5	55.9	56.41	2.6	15.7	14.18
12	Mansa	57.6	54.4	56.45	7.5	25.1	27.08
13	Moga	55.1	54.3	55.59	4.5	24.2	14.22
14	Shri Muktsar Sahib	56.8	55.2	57.34	7.1	22.3	14.69
15	Patiala	53.2	54.1	54.83	4.1	17.6	12.38
16	Rupnagar	52.2	52.8	52.28	4.6	23.8	14.3
17	SBS Nagar	53	55.6	54.34	4	33	11.4
18	Sangrur	56.3	54.9	55.25	4.7	24.1	10.76
19	Taran Taran	-	-	53.22	-	-	12.65
	Punjab	54.2	54.1	55.2	4.4	18.7	13.9

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Issues.

Analysing the trends, it's observed that overall, there's a slight increase in work participation trends (WPR) from 1991 to 2011, suggesting a gradual improvement in workforce engagement. However, there are noticeable gender disparities, with males consistently exhibiting higher participation rates compared to females across all years and regions. This gender gap, though reducing over time, remains significant, indicating persistent challenges in female workforce inclusion.

There are fluctuations in WPRs among districts. For instance, districts like Barnala, Sangrur, and Rupnagar show relatively lower WPRs compared to others, while Mansa and Faridkot demonstrate higher rates. These variations could be attributed to factors such as economic activities predominant in each region, availability of job opportunities, and socio-cultural norms influencing workforce participation, among others. This disparity highlights systemic barriers faced by women in accessing and participating in the workforce, including limited educational opportunities, gender-based discrimination, and societal expectations regarding women's roles in family and society. (Table No. 1.4)

Table 1.5 Female Workforce in Marginal and Main Work

Year	Main Workers			Marginal Workers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	99.82	63.42	97.39	0.18	36.58	2.61
2001	92.33	65.05	85.85	7.67	34.95	14.15
2011	89.97	65.07	85.39	10.03	34.93	14.61
INDIA (2011)	82.31	59.56	75.23	17.69	40.42	24.76

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Issues.

In the context of workforce statistics, "main workers" refer to individuals who are engaged in gainful employment for the major part of the year, typically constituting the primary workforce. On the other hand, "marginal workers" are those who are employed for a smaller portion of the year, often engaging in irregular or seasonal work. In 1991, the vast majority of workers were categorized as main workers, with marginal workers constituting only a small percentage of the workforce. However, over the years, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of marginal workers, particularly among females and 2011, while the majority of workers still fell under the category of main workers, the percentage of marginal workers had increased significantly, indicating a shift in employment patterns. Throughout the years, there's a consistent gender disparity in both main and marginal workers, with a higher percentage of males engaged in both categories compared to females. However, the gender gap appears to be narrower among marginal workers compared to main workers, especially in 2011, where the percentage of female marginal workers is notably higher compared to main workers. Overall, there are shifts in employment dynamics over the years in Punjab, with an increasing proportion of marginal workers, especially among females. The persistent gender disparity underscores the need for targeted interventions to promote equitable access to employment opportunities for both men and women. (Table No. 1.5)

Table No. 1.6 Female Workforce in the Different Categories of Workers

Category of workers	Male		Female		Total	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Main Cultivators	25.33	23.29	13.94	9.45	22.62	21.35
Main Agricultural Labourers	15.86	13.96	17.8	12.99	16.32	13.82
Main Household Industry Workers	2.57	2.97	7.15	7.14	3.66	3.56
Main Other Workers	56.24	59.78	61.11	70.43	57.4	61.28
Total Main Workers	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab, Various Issues.

The data provided categorizes workers into different groups based on their main occupations, comparing male and female participation in 2001 and 2011 in India. Main cultivators, main agricultural laborers,

main household industry workers, and main other workers are the categories considered. Across all categories, there's a notable shift in the composition of workers between 2001 and 2011. Main cultivators witnessed a decline in both male and female participation, indicating a decrease in agricultural reliance. Main agricultural laborers also saw a decrease in participation, with females experiencing a more significant drop. Main household industry workers remained relatively stable, while main other workers observed an increase in both male and female participation. Overall, there's a trend towards diversification away from agriculture and towards other sectors, with varying impacts on male and female participation, suggesting shifts in the occupational landscape over the decade.

Table No. 1.7 Difference between Wages and Salaries (Daily Basis)

Year	Men	Women
2005-06	166.72	128.63
2006-07	176.59	137.49
2007-08	186.4	152.12
2008-09	196.21	159.11
2009-10	215.6	173.38
2010-11	247.29	211.67
2011-12	274.09	214.61
2012-13	317.36	269.25
2013-14	366.18	317.63

Source: Statistical Profile of Women Labour, labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour & Employment

Both male and female wages show an upward trend over the years, indicating general economic growth and possibly inflationary pressures. The average monthly wages for both genders have increased significantly from 2005-2014. Despite the overall increase in wages, a persistent gender wage gap is evident throughout the period. On average, men consistently earn higher wages compared to women across all years. The difference in wages between men and women varies across the years but generally remains substantial. For example, in 2005-06, men earned an average of 166.72 units compared to 128.63 units for women, indicating a significant gap. This gap continues to persist and even widens in some years. Both genders experience wage growth over the years, but the rate of increase is not uniform. In some years, such as 2009-10 and 2010-11, the wage growth for men appears to outpace that of women, widening the gender wage gap further.

Factors of Lower Participation of Women in Workforce

Gender Wage Gap

While both male and female wages have increased over the years, there remains a persistent and significant gender wage gap. Various factors could contribute to the gender wage gap, including occupational segregation, discrimination, differences in education and experience levels, and societal norms regarding gender roles in the workforce. Addressing this gap requires comprehensive efforts aimed at promoting gender equality in the workforce, ensuring fair wages for all, and addressing underlying systemic barriers that contribute to wage disparities between men and women.

Female Literacy and Work Participation Rate

The comparison between literacy rates and female workforce participation reveals some interesting trends

and correlations. Firstly, there has been a significant improvement in literacy rates in India over the years, with both males and females experiencing increases in educational attainment. This indicates progress in the overall educational landscape of the country. However, despite improvements in literacy rates, there remains a notable gender gap in workforce participation. While the literacy rates for females have been increasing steadily, female participation in the workforce still lags behind that of males. This suggests that although more women are becoming literate, there are still barriers preventing them from fully participating in the labor force.

Structural Barrier

One possible explanation for this disparity could be related to societal norms and cultural expectations regarding the roles of women in Punjabi society. Despite gains in education, traditional gender roles may still influence women's decisions to join the workforce, with factors such as family responsibilities and social expectations playing a significant role. Societal barriers such as traditional gender roles, family responsibilities, social stigma, and lack of support contribute to the gender disparity in workforce participation in Punjab. Additionally, there may be structural barriers such as limited access to job opportunities, unequal pay, and lack of support for working mothers that hinder female workforce participation. These factors highlight the complex interplay between education, cultural norms, and economic factors in shaping gender disparities in the workforce. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive efforts to challenge traditional gender norms, promote gender equality, and create supportive environments that enable women to fully participate in the workforce.

Policy Interventions

There is a lack on the behalf of Government policy interventions. Government policies and initiatives can also impact female workforce participation. For example, initiatives aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship, providing skill development training, and creating supportive work environments can help enhance female workforce participation rates. Therefore, it could be very effective if there are the government policy interventions in addressing barriers to female workforce participation in Punjab.

Conclusion

While Punjab shows an overall upward trend in work participation rates over the years, there remain significant gender disparities and regional variations that necessitate targeted policy interventions aimed at enhancing female workforce participation, addressing socio-cultural barriers, and promoting inclusive economic growth across all districts in the region. Overall, understanding female workforce participation in Punjab requires a multifaceted approach that considers socio-cultural, economic, and policy factors. By examining these factors through the lens of relevant studies, policymakers and stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to promote gender equality and enhance female workforce participation in the state.

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