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**Working Women are the Future of India**

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**Abstract**

*Women are the steering wheel of the Indian economy and it could be considered that they are the creators and controllers of this universe. They are contributing to the Indian economy from even before independence but in the recent scenario, their participation rate is declining. To highlight the issue, “Female labour force participation rate is showing a downward trend”, the authors of this paper address the factors affecting FLFPR and they believe that, “Working women are the future of India” which is the hypothesis of this paper. This paper contains the problems and challenges faced by the women of our country which limits them from stepping out of their homes. An analysis of every required section has also been discussed by the authors.*

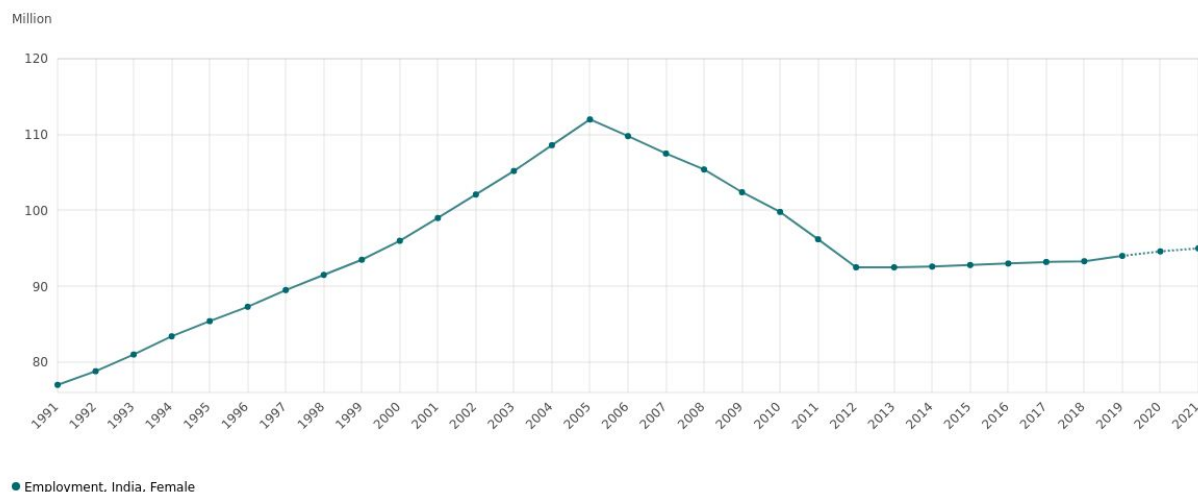
**Key Words:** *Female Labour force participation Rate (FLFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR), Economy, Policies, Workplace*

## **1.0 Introduction**

India has become the fifth-largest economy overtaking the United Kingdom and France in the previous year but its position is at the bottom if we see the figure of “Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR)”. Four out of five women are not employed in India. Despite an increasing GDP, increasing attainment of education, development in core sectors, and participation in every field; the participation rate of female labour is showing a downward trend. Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is defined as the share of working-age women who report either being employed or being available for work.

It is estimated that increasing FLFPR by 10% points could add \$770 billion to India’s GDP by 2025 (Lydon et al., 2018). Indian women can become the driving force or steering wheel of the Indian Economy. They are unable to break the shackles of patriarchy and increase their share in the economy due to many reasons whether it’s about cultural barriers or flawed laws. The Indian government throughout different political regimes has initiated different policies and programs like, “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao”, MUDRA scheme, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY), etc. to increase the participation rate of women in different sectors but it hasn’t reaped its fruit till now but rather has declined over the years. The overall schemes/legislations for employment generation, of which 56% caters to women, 34% have women-specific targets or quotas for women and 10% have gender components. Also, the increasing levels of education have also contributed to a low FLFPR as high-income families saw that if both men and women are educated and men’s income is greater than women, hence women need not work and should engage in domestic household work. It has been found in a study that women are found to be sharper in bargaining, critical thinking, and management than men but in the actual scenario, the case is just the opposite, i.e., women found to be more at home than in the working sector. The declining trend of FLFPR is a bad sign for the growth of the Indian economy. If we look upon the trend of other developed and developing economies, India comes at the fifth position from the last in FLFPR. Indian women perform unpaid work for 6 hours daily. In many states and cities, women come out of the labour force because of some cultural and familiar reasons. Some people believe that women should engage in household activities instead of working outside despite having very good educational qualifications.

FLFPR in India is just 23.3% which is less than three times the participation rate of Indian men, 81.3%. Workplace equality is one of the reasons that women don't want to work in many places as they don't feel safe at the workplace and there are many reasons like this, for instance, lack of education and training, absence of equal remuneration pay, stereotypical thoughts, absence of policies, gender gap, taking care of their siblings, etc. After this huge pandemic, this figure has dropped drastically. COVID-19 has increased the unemployment rate in India of which 18% comprises the female unemployment rate. The Indian government needs to take steps to curb this problem by implementing policies. The authors believe that legal policies and social activities could help to tackle this problem.



This dataset includes both real and imputed data from 1991-2019, as well as projections from 2020-21. Estimates may differ from official national sources.  
Source: International Labour Organization, ILO modelled estimates (ilo.org/wesodata)






**Figure 1: The declining trend of FLFPR**

## **2.0 Hypothesis: Women participation in the workplace can change the future of India**

Ancient history has always shown that women leaders have ruled the world and how their kingdoms have flourished in their regimes. But in recent years, the scenario has been just the opposite, therefore to look upon this serious issue, this paper puts forward the theory that “**Working women are the future of India**” which can eventually become the reality of the Indian economy, if certain reforms in policies, laws, social attitudes, organisations, etc. could be worked upon to improve the female labour force participation rate which has declined significantly in the past years and patriarchy has superseded the Gender equality goals set by our governments.

There are so many examples set by other developing countries with their efforts to improve gender equality and how they have succeeded in bringing women into the mainstream decision-making process in the core as well as non-core sectors. The author believes that this issue needs to be highlighted as women's participation is necessary for the Indian economy to survive as water is necessary for human beings to survive.

This paper aims to put forth a starting point for achieving the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which can guide our path:

SDG	Description
 4 QUALITY EDUCATION	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities
 5 GENDER EQUALITY	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	Reduce inequality within and among countries
 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels

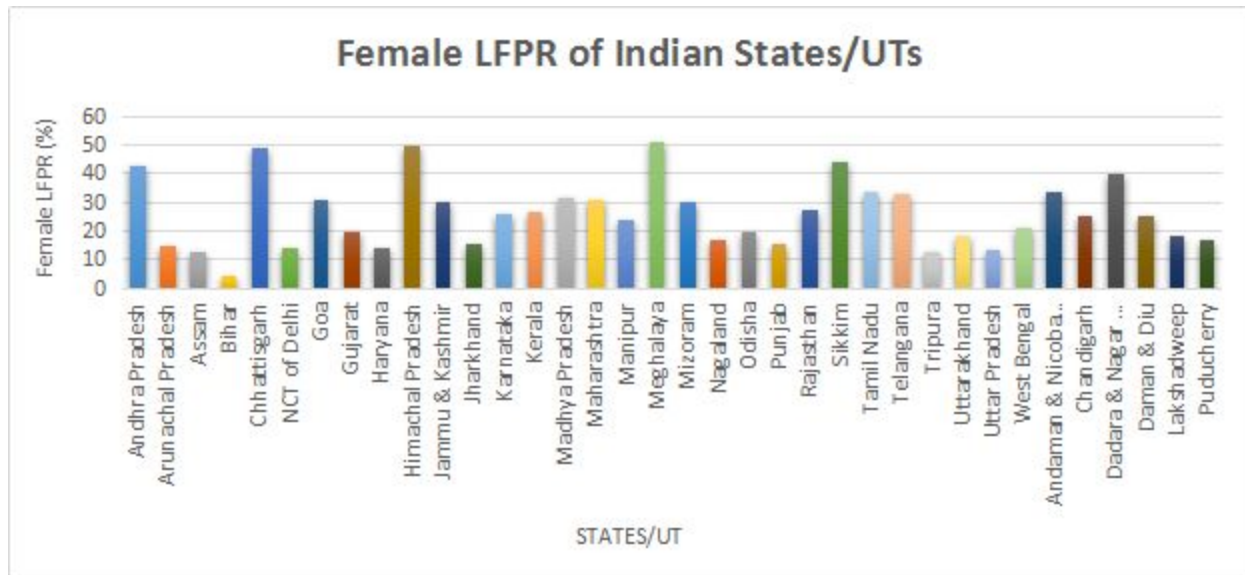
### **3.0 Analyzing the problem through PESTEL analysis**

Since declining FLFPR is a serious issue not only because FLFPR makes women work for themselves but also because FLFPR contributes its part to the GDP and it boosts economic growth. Serious issues need deep analysis and hence authors have analyzed this issue through every aspect.

### **3.1 Political will in recent years and women participation**

Government plays a vital role whenever we talk about the economy or about our country's issues. It is the right hand of any country who performs most of the things and controls it as well. Central Government has taken certain steps where it has enacted Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 which provides paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks then it has issued an advisory to the States under the Factories Act, 1948 to permit women workers to work in the night shifts with safety measures and has provided training to women through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. It has also enacted the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 which provides payment of remuneration to men and women on a uniform basis without discrimination. Government has also implemented a National Career Service (NCS) project which works by providing a digital portal for job-seekers and employers for matchmaking and it is a nation-wide platform.

The policies adopted by the government in their effort to empower women haven't been implemented carefully taking into consideration the stakeholders and beneficiaries of these policies which is evident from the impact figures that these policies have generated hence indicating shortcomings in the Government's implementation strategies.

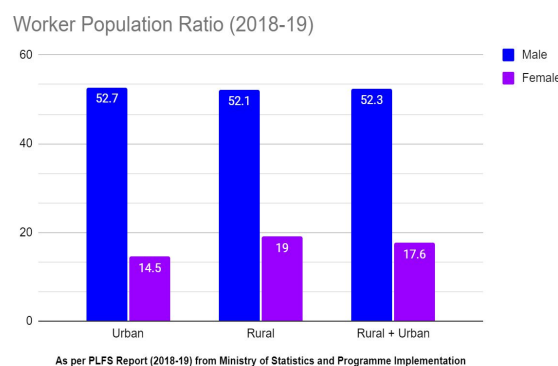


Source: National Sample Survey Organization (2019)

**Figure 2: Female LFPR of Indian States/UTs**

The above graph shows the female labour force participation rate of Indian States and Union Territories which gives a clear picture that some North-Eastern states and South Indian states have done better than some North Indian states. States like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya and Sikkim have participation rates between 32%- 50%. while states like Bihar, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, NCT of Delhi have participation rates of 5%- 15%. Bihar has the lowest participation rate (less than 5%). Government has not taken proper steps for budget allocation and financial assistance to women to increase their participation rate.

### 3.2 Sector-wise contribution of Female Labor Workforce towards the Indian Economy

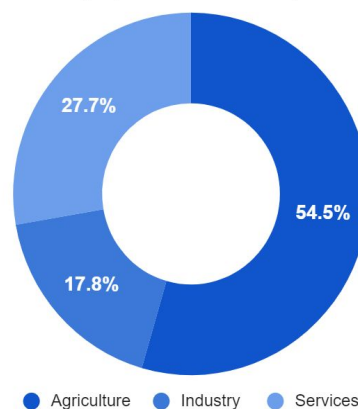


**Figure 3: Region-wise Worker population ratio**

As per the PLFS (2018-19) report dated 4th June 2020, the Worker Population Ratio in the year 2018-19 for female workers stands at 14.5 (urban) and 19 (rural) which is far lesser than the ratio of male workers which was 52.7 (urban) and 52.1 (rural) showing the urban-rural divide of the Indian workforce. In the urban landscape, the most common jobs for women are domestic cleaners, garment workers and chief executives & directors, where 99% of (women workers described as directors and chief executives) were self-employed, of which around one-third worked as unpaid family workers, such women were mainly engaged within the self-help groups and co-operatives as partners and had thus been recorded as directors or working proprietors, even as their activities, for the most part, remained confined to food processing and garment manufacturing. A large proportion of self-employed women workers were also engaged in outsourced manufacturing work, typically characterised by low earnings, long hours of work and lack of any form of social protection. Economists Bidisha Mondal, Jayati Ghosh, Shiney Chakraborty and Sona Mitra found using 2011-12 National Sample Survey Office data, for an Azim Premji University working paper. “The high-skilled, white-collar jobs that young women desire are rare. Instead, domestic work, house cleaning and salespeople dominate the urban sector for women. The only exception is the teaching profession, which makes it to the top 10 most common jobs for women.” (S, 2019)

Female Employment by Sector in India (2019)

(As per ILO data of 2019)



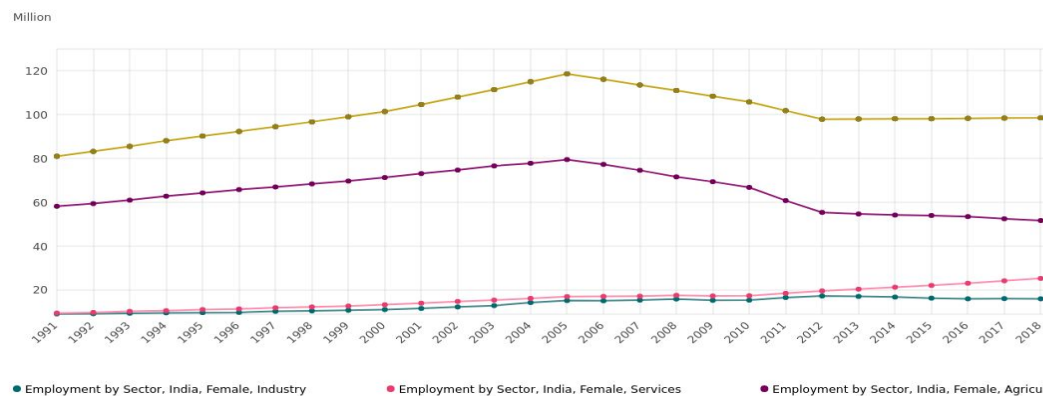
**Figure 4: Female Employment by Sector in India (2019)**



In India, agriculture remained the sector with a 54.5% share followed by 27.7% Industry sector and 17.8% in the service sector in the total employment of women in India as per the ILO estimates. Most rural women are engaged in agriculture-related jobs with 35% working as market gardeners and crop growers; 26% as agricultural, fishery, and related labourers; 6.3% as market-oriented animal producers and related workers and 32.7% as other work. With the rise in education levels in rural areas and the government's efforts in skilling, upskilling, and reskilling the female workforce, the manufacturing and services sector has given them new opportunities for shifting from agriculture to these industries and hence has declined the employment rate in agriculture sharply in recent years especially after 2005. The sector which stood second in the employability of women are the Core sectors like Manufacturing, Electricity generation, steel, Iron, etc. and has attracted women from various income backgrounds and has contributed significantly to the Indian economy. Lastly, the sector which stood last is the service sector where the employment of women has increased with higher levels of education and skill development by government programmes and policies.

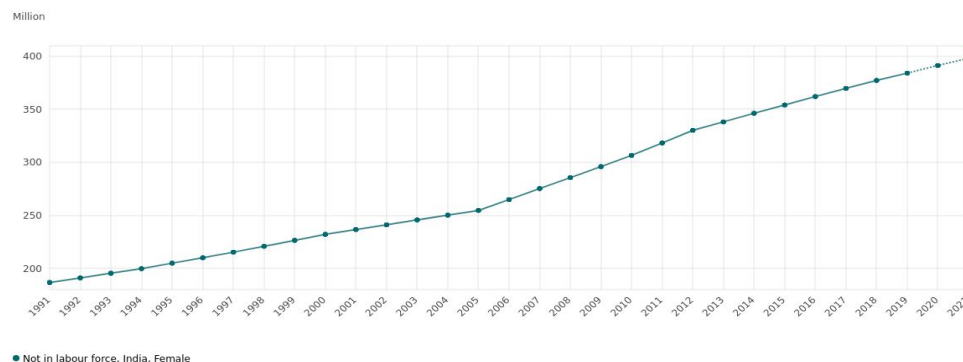
However, with a simultaneous increase in education levels of men, it has increased the family income levels where born another reason which made women withdraw from their current jobs because of a simple reason that family income is adequate enough to sustain the family and she should manage the household chores. With COVID-19, the ILO forecasts suggest that these sectors can see a further downturn in women employment because of work-from-home setup where women have to manage the household even more with their children at home due to online classes especially when their child is in early childhood which particularly targets the women from the age group of 30-45 years old which also remains the age where the productivity of a person remains at its best. We can see from the below figure 1 as to how the female employee's trajectory has remained since 1991 in the Agriculture sector, Industry sector and Services sector and which also shows the overall female labour force which summed up our above analysis which concludes that after 2005, the FLFPR has declined significantly and could further decline if corrective measures are not taken.

Another unconventional sector which has seen a significant change this year was Defense where the Permanent Commission of women officers has been made official which wasn't a reality in the past and the female officers were given a short service commission due to perceived psychological and physical norms. All the sectors have huge potential to contribute towards the economy and India can achieve its target of \$5 trillion economies if the underutilized female workforce could be utilized and it can only happen when all policy frameworks, education reforms, legal reforms and skill development be given high priority and all can work in synergy to gradually increase female employment.



**Figure 5**

The underutilized female workforce could be seen in the below figure 2 which shows the trend of females who are not in the labour force since 1991 showing an upward trend which makes it clearer as to what is India's position and how it can capitalize on this resource to become the greatest economy and only political will and awareness among women can achieve this.



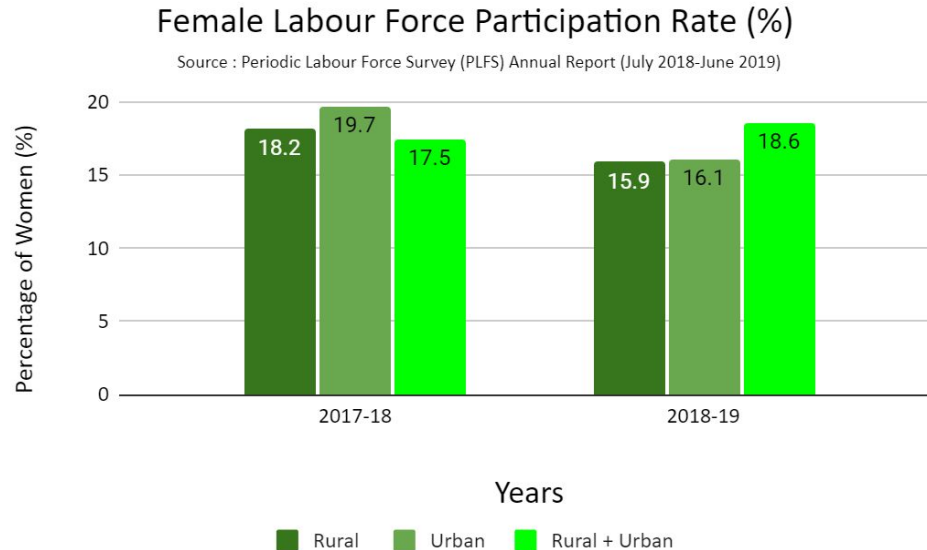
This dataset includes both real and imputed data from 1991-2019, as well as projections from 2020-21. Estimates may differ from official national sources.  
Source: International Labour Organization, ILO modelled estimates (ilo.org/wesodata)

**Figure 6**

### **3.3 Analyzing the Indian work culture keeping in mind the social attitude and women willing to participate**

Culture has a big role in the Indian labour market. People's perspective towards working women covers the huge part of women participation because, in many regions, social thoughts are enough to make women sit at home to perform their household chores. In the 21st century, people have thoughts of the 19th century, i.e, they are against this thought that "women should also work and they can". Many women come out of the labour force after marriage because of child-rearing, increasing family income, household chores and etc. Some people believe that "women are for performing household chores and child-rearing, they shouldn't be involved in the job market because their husbands can". In many cases, Indian society judges women on the basis of the work they perform. Despite taking steps to empower women, there is a dire need to encourage women so that they take steps to enter the labour market.

The below graph shows FLFPR of rural and urban areas of 2017-18 and 2018-19. We can see that the participation rate is not that huge but rural areas comprise a higher percentage than urban areas. In 2018-19, the participation rate has decreased in both areas but overall it has increased.



**Figure 7**

### **3.4 Role of Technology in the recent past in women empowerment and how it has performed in the context of Female Labor Participation**

The NSS Report No.585: Household Social Consumption on Education in India released by Ministry of Statistics and Programmes Implementation, assessed the condition of Access and Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) with the following information was collected:

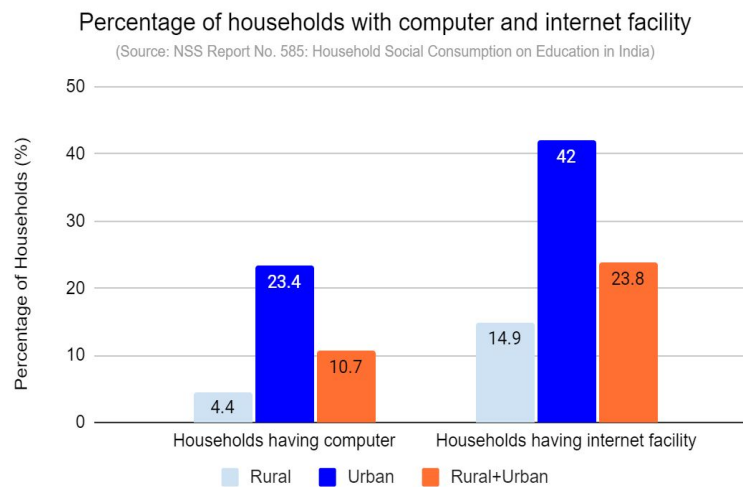
- a) Whether the household had a computer, and;
- b) Internet facility while each person 5 years or above has the ability to:
  - I. Operate Computer
  - II. Use the Internet
  - III. Use of internet during the last 30 days

Here the definition of Computer included devices like a desktop computer, laptop, palmtop, tablet, notebook, netbook or similar devices excluding smartphones but for assessing the use of internet information smartphone has been included other than these devices mentioned above. The key findings of this report were:

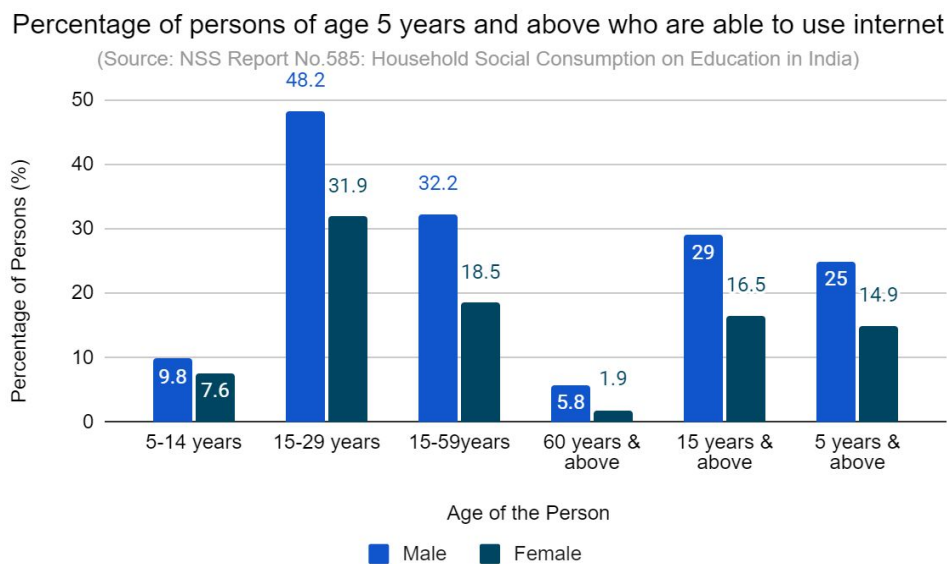
- a) Nearly 4% of rural households and 23% of urban households possessed computers.
- b) Nearly 24% of the households in the country had internet access in the survey year, 2017-18. The proportions were 15% among rural households and 42% among urban households.
- c) Among persons of age 15-29 years, nearly 24% in rural areas and 56% in urban areas were able to operate a computer.
- d) Nearly 35% of persons of age 15-29 years reported use of the internet during the 30 days prior to the date of the survey. The proportions were, nearly 25% in rural areas and 58% in urban areas.

Clearly from the above data, access to the internet has remained a distant dream for 76% of the households in India, showing a huge digital divide and a rural-urban gap which shows that technology and internet have still not penetrated the rural landscape. We can see this clearly in figure 8 below.

Figure 9 shows us the actual fact about the condition of female literacy to operate computers which is very low as compared to men and hence needs a lot of infrastructure development to make it available to them and the need of the hour are easy loans through which households can buy computers for educational purposes. Clearly in the age bracket of 15-59 years females are lagging behind with only 15.5% women know how to operate a computer which is the skill which has become the basic necessity in the COVID era. Clearly, better budget allocations are needed to educate women for their skill development.

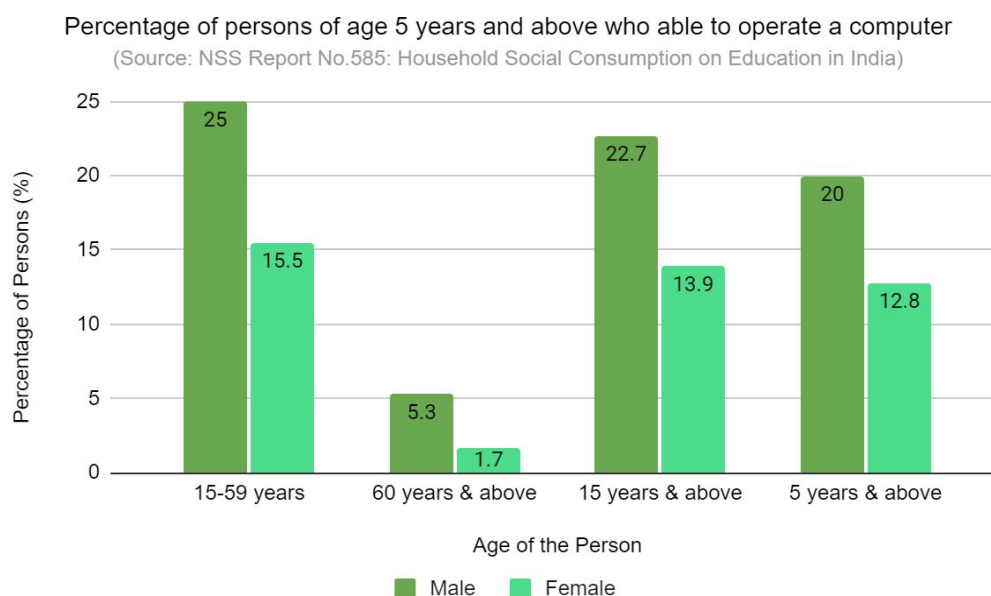


**Figure 8**



**Figure 9**

Figure 10 depicts the percentage of persons of age 5 years or above who are able to use the internet and it also shows the weakness of Indian economy to tackle the issue of the Indian economy which shows that only 7.6% of females have access to the internet which is the early age where a child completes basic education and hence lays the foundation of her future. After completing basic education when a child enters into the age of 15 years where labour force participation starts here also the access to the internet is very low which is 16.5%. The age of 15-29 years where a normal person gets higher education and gets a job and builds his/her career is 31.9% for females as compared to 48.2% for males which slightly a better condition if we talk about access to the internet because colleges and offices do have internet facilities but not all institutions are equipped with internet facility especially in rural areas where infrastructure is not yet developed to even do a phone call without disturbances. Though after this survey, the government has increased its efforts to deploy internet and wifi facilities at the grass-root levels and has shifted their own working to club based platforms and are skilling up their employees to be part of this change. Government has started optic fibre cable projects in various states even in union territories of Lakshadweep Islands and Andaman & Nicobar Islands this will ensure high-speed internet in these areas and will scale up productivity and connectivity.



**Figure 10**

The Internet can play a vital role in increasing the overall impact of government and other organizations to empower women and increase their participation in contributing to working in various industries and sectors. It can help reach the women of rural areas for education and training and can even generate employment through work from anywhere. The pandemic has created even bigger and made the internet more necessary for work, education, and other important things like online payments to dependent relatives, etc.

Budget allocations have paved the way to for technology revolution in India where the Union government in Budget 200-21 has allocated Rs. 3000 crore towards skill development which will see an expenditure on female youth of India to get trained in ICT skills and has also set a target to connect 1,00,000 gram panchayats through fibre optic cable through its Bharat Net Initiative with setting out Rs. 6000 crore till FY21. It will also assist the SHGs to get credit through online modes can increase enterprises run by women SHGs many fold. Union Government has also started Digital India Mission to digitize Indian technology landscape and connectivity and has allocated Rs. 3958 crore in 2020-21. Government has allocated Rs. 400 crore under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan.

### **3.5 Workplace Culture and Security issues faced by women at the workplace**

In a survey targeting senior executives from business functions including internal audit, human resources, finance and the legal and compliance domains (EY 2015), it was observed that almost half of the respondents' organisations had not displayed important guidelines and penal consequences of harassment clearly at prominent places within their premises. Around 31% of the respondents were not compliant with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (POSH), which mandates “Internal Compliance Committees” (ICCs) being constituted to address complaints relating to sexual harassment. While 47% of Indian companies had not given the necessary training to the members of ICCs, the number was 34% for MNCs. A general “nonchalance” was reported on the part of organisations to enforce guidelines of the Act.” (Menon et al., 2019) According to a report titled “Tipping the Balance” by Kool Kanya, a Mumbai Based startup in their research found out the following reasons as to why women are leaving workplaces:

- a) 46% of the women in their survey said that they do not enjoy working in their current companies giving reasons like less trust in the leadership, dissatisfaction in performance management and less teamwork. They also complained about unfair treatment and feeling less valued.
- b) 78% told that the work got boring and uninteresting and there were fewer opportunities as compared to men at their workplace. Only 42% of the women had access to training, can attend conferences and develop professional skills to grow their career.
- c) 51% of them believed that there was no gender balance in their teams and about 62% believed that there was inadequate female representation in the top management. The report also says that “An alarming factor was the lack of female representation, especially at the top levels. A direct result of this was seen in discontentment with the top management of the company who seemed indifferent towards gender equality, pay parity, safety at work, maternity benefits and work-life balance.”
- d) 54% of respondents said that there are "no robust policies to prevent and deal with sexual harassment and ensure women's safety."
- e) 60% of the respondents said that coworkers are not friendly, professional, respectful and unbiased at work.
- f) 40% said that they didn't have an option to work from home which limits them to maintain a work-life balance.
- g) 40% felt that they were not supported when they returned to work from maternity leave and 63% also felt they were underpaid as compared to men despite being equally qualified. They also felt that maternity leave gave managers a reason to pay less to them.

These were some of the findings that indicate that women are not treated equally at the workplace which makes them leave their workplaces. As per the Data Snapshot on SDG National Indicator Progress report 2020 (Version 2.1) the following data are given below makes up the female representation in the government of the country:

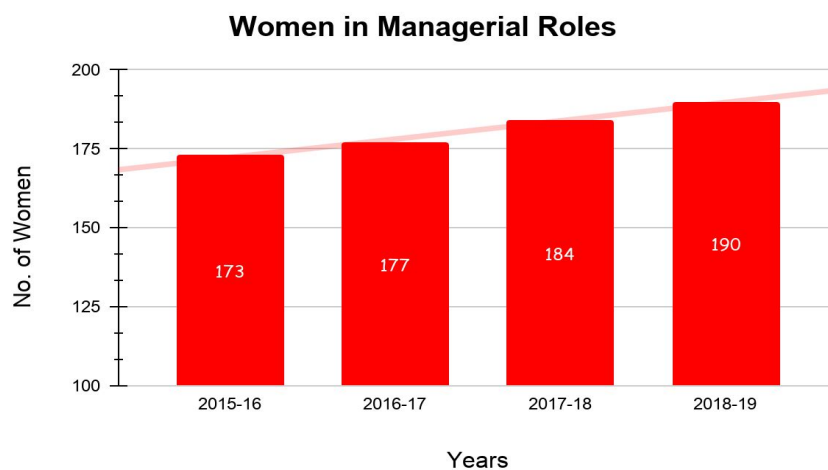


**The proportion of seats held by women in national Parliament, State Legislation and Local Self Government (%)**

Year	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha	Panchayati Raj of India
2014	11.42	12.76	46.14
2016	-	11.07	-
2018	-	11.48	-
2019	14.36	-	44.37
2020	-	10.33	-

These figures are meagre, and hence more participation is needed and efforts are needed at policy levels to increase this participation. As per this report, the number of women candidates out of total candidates contesting elections stood at 8.19% in 2014 and 9.01% in 2019. This clearly tells that patriarchy has its stronghold on Indian society and women are not accepted as leaders yet in a male-dominated society.

**The proportion of women in managerial positions including women in Board of Director, in listed companies (per 1000 persons)**



**Figure 11**

## **4.0 Challenges Ahead**

### **4.1 The Pandemic Effect**

COVID-19 has made new challenges for women who were working before the pandemic. Due to restrictions on transportation facilities has made the situation worse. The already declining women participation has worsened and no one knows whether those women who lost their jobs during this pandemic will be able to return to their jobs or not.

According to ongoing research at the centre for sustainable employment at the Azim Premji University (APU), the work participation rate for women (WPR)—a measure of the proportion of adults who work—fell from an already low 9.15% in December 2019 to just 5.8% in August this year. In comparison, WPR for men declined from 67% to 47% during this period, indicating a higher relative fall for women workers. The study also looked at a panel of individuals who were employed in December 2019 and tracked those same people in April and August 2020. In April, 62% of the men who were working in December continued to be employed. For women, only 32% of those who were employed in December still had a job. So, nearly two-thirds of India's working women were out of work in April. Very few had returned to work by August. (Bera, 2020)

This data proves that the situation for women is worsened and this remains a major before the policymakers and the government to tackle to revive the economy. The gender gap in the workforce has increased and the sectors like education, service, and retail are the worst affected are slowly moving back but the real question is will these women come back or will engage themselves in the unpaid domestic labour. The domestic workers are also facing the brunt of the pandemic and finding it difficult to even support their families and these workers' data hasn't been mapped. The salaried working-class women are also facing problems who are working from home and managing household chores and especially their young children with no domestic help because of fears of contracting Coronavirus they can't employ them.

Between 40-50% of domestic helps to work in Kolkata have lost their jobs and those who have worked are earning a fraction of their usual salary as families are refusing to employ women who work in more than one house (to minimize the risk of infection), said Swapna Tripathi, a member of the Paschim Banga Griha Paricharika Samiti, a state-level workers union. (Bera, 2020)

When migrant workers started their march on foot to return to their homes it is evident that only men may have come back because of limited jobs in the various sectors like manufacturing, textile, etc. Nearly 200,000 more girls are at the risk of child marriage in South Asia in 2020, Save the Children said in its latest Global Girlhood report. (Bera, 2020) This has also raised possibilities of child trafficking in various states.

#### **4.2 Structural Changes in Organizations**

Workplace has always remained challenging for women and as the authors quoted the problems in an earlier section this problem is prevalent in almost every sector. If we talk about agriculture it has seen a sharp downward fall of the women workforce with a little corresponding increase in the other sectors like manufacturing and service. The increase in the rate of a number of women not in the labour force has made it evident that women are withdrawing from the workforce due to many reasons which could be increased in girls getting enrolled in the higher education which is a positive sign, on the other hand, many are withdrawing because of unequal pay at the workplace, work satisfaction, increased security concerns, increase in family income, etc.

Women have complained that they are not given equal status at the workplace as men and they face unfair treatment from the leadership. Another reason in these organizations has also remained the very low female representation at the top-level management which makes the workplace patriarchal and hence there remains no one listening to their interests and work for their equitable treatment. Security concerns at the workplace are also manifold in recent years and lack of check mechanisms or grievance redressal committees also makes it difficult for women to work and eventually they withdraw from their jobs due to fears of more harassment. This is more prevalent in lower-level jobs or where women belong to a low-income family which usually have their own fears and social beliefs and because of the fear of losing respect in the society they force these women to withdraw from their jobs. Late-night shifts are also not allowed to women in various industries and there are certain laws and regulations which validate and govern them and hence this also becomes a challenge for uplifting FLFPR.

### **4.3 Disruption at the Policy level**

The Economic Survey acknowledged this and highlighted that the state should design policies that better involve women in the economy. It quoted the World Bank, noting that no country can develop and achieve its full potential if half of its population is locked in non-remunerative, less productive and non-economic activities. (Pande, 2020) Till now Indian policymakers haven't been able to bring the majority of the women to the major workforce with women equally capable as men still the participation of women is low. A major reason behind this problem has remained the secondary importance given to budget allocations when it comes to expenditure on programmes which helps to improve women participation.

There were so many agricultural programmes and female initiatives which were initiated by the government had remained on the papers and were not implemented. Also, there is a lack of women participation in policymaking as well as mentioned in the earlier section about how many women are there in the leadership roles and representing women in the policy-making body Niti Aayog. The policies already formulated and budgets allocated were not implemented in many states. A key example comes from MGNREGA, a programme whose official policy has long been to pay individual workers in their own bank accounts. When we examined the programme in Madhya Pradesh in 2013, we saw that this policy was typically not implemented and that women's wages were usually being paid into the bank account of the woman's husband (the household head). (Pande, 2020) This is a state where their major revenue comes from the agriculture produce and are lagging behind to improve the status of women in agriculture as well where they work on the fields but there is no security of their livelihood.

A report by McKinsey Global Institute suggests that if women participated in the Indian economy at the level men do, annual GDP could be increased by 60 per cent above its projected GDP by 2025. This striking figure undoubtedly rests on a variety of assumptions. But the underlying conclusion is that women's potential to contribute to GDP is huge. The same analysis also suggested that India's potential GDP gains through achieving economic gender parity were larger than gains in any of the other regions they studied. (Pande, 2020) Hence this clearly suggests that policy-level changes can bring huge changes to the gender gap especially in the rural areas which carry a huge potential for achieving the target of \$5 trillion economy ambition but without women participation, it is a far fetched dream.

#### **4.4 Cultural and Social Attitudes change towards women**

Women and girls in India experience inequalities in access to healthcare, education, nutrition, employment and asset ownership. Decision making at home and in the public sphere is another area where women lag behind. This is reflected in indicators such as the child (0-6 years) sex ratio which 919 females per 1000 males in 2011, declining from 927 in 2001. Women continue to lag behind in education as is reflected in the literacy rate for women being 65%, compared to 82 per cent for males in 2011. (Niti Aayog, 2018). According to the SDG India Index Baseline Report 2018, 1 in every 3 women have experienced spousal violence.

The list goes on and on if we assess the crime against women especially rape cases. This is where it stands right now and we can say that it is still in its initial stages to give women fair treatment. There is a long way to go and for that war footing efforts are needed by the government as well as by women themselves to get what they deserve and is their right. Another reason which makes women withdraw themselves from the workforce and education is early marriages and especially child marriages in rural areas still prevalent despite being a criminal offence. The general attitude among Indian families is that after marriage women need not work in any job and should engage herself in unpaid domestic labour or sit at home doing nothing. There has been an increasing trend that women too are not willing to work after marriage as they tend to give more importance to household chores or family responsibility and tend to withdraw themselves from their long years of jobs. This is much more prevalent when they give birth to a child and hence due to lack of support from the family and even from their husbands, they withdraw themselves from the workforce.

#### **4.5 Development of Education and Skill Training**

The argument that higher numbers of women participating in education, including higher education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) are the reason why India is witnessing falling women LFPR also tells us that most of these women would aspire to get quality jobs. But the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system in India still does not offer many opportunities for women to build demand-led skills.

For example, out of total enrolments in ITIs not more than 13 per cent enrolment are of women and their training completion rate is less than 5 per cent. In addition to the quality and outdated curriculum which affects participants of these programs, women participants face extra challenges of lack of proper hostel infra, toilet facilities, availability of women trainers and lack of women-friendly trades. (Choudhary, 2020), the above statements clear it as to how the skill training initiatives are working and are not capable enough to maintain their effectiveness. Another reason why we are not able to make a difference is the social attitude of people towards women and what they think is that whenever a girl gets completed with their education just marry her.

Around 68.12 lakh women in India have been trained under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2.0. Under the Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme, around 4.08 lakh women have been trained in the 2018-2020 period, while 38.72 lakh women have been trained in Industrial Training Institutes (ITI). At present, there are 18 National Skill Training Institutes across the country to train women. Special batches are being conducted to provide basic, theoretical and advanced training to women. (Pandey, 2020) These are the efforts made by the Modi government and they are going in a great direction but logically, are these numbers actually going to get converted to newer jobs or will it just end up in the reports and numbers.

The National Rural Livelihood Mission has strengthened women's skills and prepared them for employment. Training for self-employed tailors, beauty therapists, customer care executives, hairstylists, yoga trainers, etc. is being carried out in the Prime Minister Skill Centres. Very soon, one will get to see women playing significant roles in central government schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission and Smart City Mission. By joining these missions, women will make a huge contribution to giving a new shape to society. In fact, in the creation of a New India, women's education and skill development are going to be critical. (Pandey, 2020). The pandemic has increased the dropout percentage of girls who have withdrawn from schools to support their families or because they don't have money to study due to classes being taken online. The National Sample Survey Organisation's 2017-18 household survey put the number of out-of-school children in India (6-17 years) at 3.22 crore. This will double in a year's time. With schools shut for nearly six months, we are already seeing children especially in rural areas helping their parents in MGNREGA schemes.

The longer the gap in learning, the more disinterested they get and eventually exit the education system. It's dangerous," said Niranjana Radhaya. (2020a) Due to poor connectivity, lack of Internet facilities in rural areas and lack of devices to study, students have opted to drop out of school and maybe they won't come back or will lag behind their peers. There have been various reports that even some financial assistance which was given as scholarships by the government has also not been disbursed due to the pandemic or delay which made the children's lives miserable. Despite such great efforts by various state governments and the central government in recent years if the pandemic situation is not handled smartly all these efforts could go in vain. According to the New Education Policy, 2020 has called for tracking the students who may have dropped out of schools but experts say that tracking them is a very complex task and the 2.5 lakhs gram panchayats who are tasked with this job do not maintain any record of children who left the school and joined the workforce.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The efforts to uplift the status of women has come a long way with so many milestones achieved by the government in its ambition to make a gender-neutral society since independence but looking at the present scenario there is still a long way to go. India is a country which is rich in human resources and these resources are essentially required to boost the economy. In the current scenario, the FLFPR figure is not that good and decreasing drastically despite increasing other important factors of the economy. This issue cannot be resolved in a week or a month or a year, it will take years to fall into its correct place. It is high time that the concerned stakeholders should take serious steps and hence should involve women representation in its policy formation so that interests of women could be heard.

Women have always remained the pillars of our society. If they can effectively manage the house, they can manage the economy too. Due to Covid-19, Indian economy showed a negative figure which hasn't happened before. So, to get the increment of GDP and economic growth, FLFPR could play a vital role. Existing policies and Acts are not enough to increase the participation rate of women and some of them aren't even effective in their practical application. The goal should be increasing women participation in the workforce by providing better opportunities and supporting each one of them at every step. India may achieve its target of a \$5 trillion economy but would remain at the 10th position from the last if necessary steps are not taken.

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