

# **Masculinisation of Indian Labour Force: A Survey of the Disparity between Male and Female Employment Situation in India**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the position of male and female in the labour market and makes a comparative study between them. This paper also seeks to contemplate the possible reasons behind such differences. Not only there is low labour force participation of females than males, but female workers also tend to get lower average wages than males in spite of having nearly same education qualifications in regular salaried jobs. Also, females are more likely to work in the primary sector due to lack of skill development amongst them. Though the percentage of females working as self-employed is same as males, the former has greater percentage of workers as casual labourer than males. The primary reasons for poor employment condition of females are lack of education and vocational and technical training among them. Also, various social constraints determine the employment of females. This paper provides some policy interventions which shall help in improving women employment in India.

**KEYWORDS:** Female Employment in India, Low Female Labour Force Participation Rate, Wage Inequality in Indian Labour Market

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Analysis of the labour market is an important tool used by economists to not only determine the employment and unemployment situation, but also infer the level of growth and development in a country. This is because other existing sectors like education and health have a direct repercussion on the labour market. Labour market in turn directly helps to accelerate economic growth in the country. Existing gender inequality in labour market has attracted much literature which highlights the need to bring about a more equalizing situation, which is required for a healthy economy. Improving female employment situation helps to improve their economic condition and reduce gender inequality, thereby empowering women and contributing to their capacity to exert choice and decision-making power. However, the relationship between women's employment and broader development outcomes is complex.

Globally, women's participation in the labour force has relatively stable in the two decades from 1990 to 2010, at approximately 52 per cent (ILO, 2014). At a more disaggregated level, economic condition of women varies considerably across developing countries and emerging economies, more than in the case of men.

India's economic growth has rapidly increased over the past two decades. However, it has failed to bring about improvement in condition of females in the labour market. In this context, the present study endeavours to study female labour market in detail.

This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 gives major findings of some papers related to this topic. Section 3 provides details of the methodology used in the paper. Section 4 makes a comparative study between male and female in terms of their labour force participation rate, status of employment, informal employment and sector of employment.

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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

Section 5 explores the various reasons for disparity in labour market between male and female. Section 6 proceeds to suggest various policy implications to remove such disparities. Finally, the concluding sections summarise the results and findings of the paper.

## II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Mohanty, S., Bisht, M. and Mohapatra, P. (2014) showed on the basis of principal component analysis on the reported State level aggregates of various gender specific information, that the policies for removal of gaps in skills and other demand influencing variables may be necessary, but not sufficient conditions for ensuring gender equality in wages. Rather, variables explaining the level of participation of women in decision making in different walks of their social and economic life and other supply side factors may explain the gender gap in wages among salaried class workers.

Das, S. et al (2015) examined the determinants of female labour participation. They used extensive Indian household survey data to prove that policy initiatives can help to boost female economic participation, including labour market flexibility, investment in infrastructure and increased social spending.

Fletcher, E., Pande, R. And Moore, C. (2017) showed that in spite of improvement of education and health of females, there is a decline in female labour market participation due to the presence of social and economic constraints. The women face greater discrimination in the labour market and they are also seen opting out of labour market due to marriage. They also tend to work in sectors where gender wage gap is high. Hence, they lose high potential for early career earnings than males.

Ghai, S. (2018) conducted bivariate and multivariate analysis on state-level cross-section data to show that ensuring education is not sufficient to spur the growth of female participation in labour force. Government schemes must target the fundamental social and cultural forces that shape patriarchy. These coupled with policies that simultaneously address demand and supply constraints will help to accelerate female employment participation.

Rukmini, S. (2019) asserted that India's workforce is 'masculinising rapidly'. The falling female labour participation is more in case of rural areas than urban areas. Among women, Muslim women have the lowest LFPR while among Hindu women, forward caste women have the lowest LFPR, implying that social norms and religious conservatism might play a role in women being "allowed" to work. Regional disparity is present where we find southern states have more females willing to work. Rural women are mostly engaged in primary sector and urban women mostly work as domestic cleaners and garment workers.

## III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSION

This paper uses secondary datasets from various Government reports. It primarily uses Periodic Labour Force Survey of 2019. Data from Periodic Labour Force Survey of 2019 have been used for comparing average wage received by regular salaried male and female workers, how unemployment level varies with educational degree and the distribution of workers among the three broad sectors of economy. PLFS 2019 also provided information on percentage of population receiving technical and vocational education. Periodic Labour Force Survey of 2019 used rotational panel sampling design in urban areas. In this rotational panel scheme each selected household in urban areas is visited four times – in the beginning with first visit schedule and thrice periodically later with revisit schedule. In urban area, samples for a panel within each stratum were drawn in the form of two independent sub-samples. For rural areas, samples for a stratum/sub-stratum were drawn randomly in the form of two independent sub-samples. A stratified multi-stage design was adopted for PLFS. Surveys with large, nationally representative sample sizes have been conducted every five years all over the country. The survey period spans over a year and the sample covers more than 100,000 representative households in each of the five surveys. According to definitions, individuals are classified into various activity categories on the basis of activities that they pursue during specific reference periods. Three reference periods are used in surveys: (i) one year; (ii) one week; and (iii) each day of the reference week. The activity status

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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

determined on the basis of the reference period of one year is known as the usual activity status (US) of a person; that determined on the basis of a reference period of one week is known as the current weekly status (CWS) of the person; and the activity status determined on the basis of the engagement on each day during the reference week is known as the current daily status (CDS) of the person. Under the usual activity status a person is classified as belonging to the labour force if he or she had been either working or looking for work during the longer part of the reference year.

Another dataset used was the National Family Health Survey 2017 provided data on median years of schooling in India for both male and female population in 2015-16. The primary objective of the National Family Health Survey 2015-16 was to provide essential data on health and family welfare, as well as data on emerging issues in these areas. Decisions about the overall sample size required for NFHS-4 were guided by several considerations, paramount among which was the need to produce indicators at the district, state/union territory (UT), and national levels, as well as separate estimates for urban and rural areas in the 157 districts that have 30-70 percent of the population living in urban areas as per the 2011 census, with a reasonable level of precision. The NFHS-4 sample is a stratified two-stage sample. It used separate questionnaires for female and male in samples.

Human Development Report of the years 2010, 2013, 2015 and 2019 were used for analysing the labour force participation rate of male and female.. It describes about force participation rate is the proportion of the working-age population (ages 15 and older) that engages in the labour market, either by working or actively looking for work, expressed as a percentage of the working-age population. HDR 2019 also provided data on the mean and expected years of schooling for the year 2018. United Nations Development Report consider expected years of schooling as the number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life. Mean years of schooling is defined as the average number of years of education received by people ages 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level.

Data was also used from Joint Monitoring Programme Report (2018). It was used for analysing the sanitation facilities in schools in India.

JMP estimates are calculated from data produced by national authorities. The primary sources of national data are routine Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and periodic (non-EMIS) censuses and school facility surveys. Other sources of national data include secondary information compiled by UNESCO Institute of Statistics and regional monitoring initiatives such as the European Protocol on Water and Health. The JMP WASH in schools country files contain a complete list of data sources available for each year since 2000 and show how national data correspond to the international standard classification used for global monitoring. The JMP uses a simple linear regression to generate estimates for the availability of sanitation facilities. To meet the criteria for a basic sanitation service, schools must have at least one usable improved toilet for girls and one for boys, according to JMP report.

## IV. RESULTS WITH TABLES AND FIGURES

The labour force participation is highly different between male and female population in India. In the table 4.1 we find that huge difference between male and female labour force participation rate from 2010 to 2018. Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the working-age population (ages 15 and older) that engages in the labour market, either by working or actively looking for work, expressed as a percentage of the working-age population.

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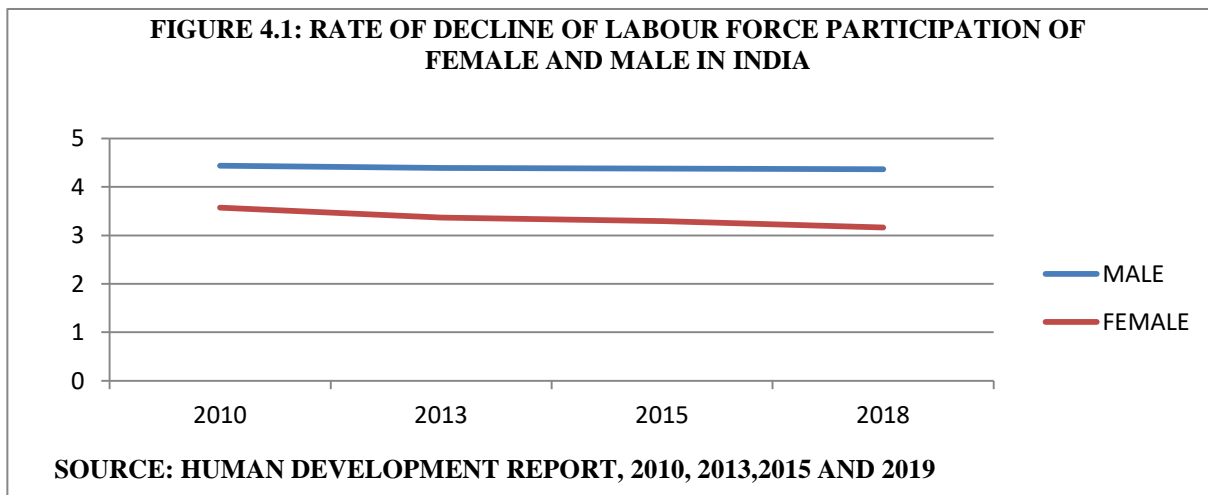
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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

<b>TABLE 4.1: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN INDIA</b>				
	2010	2013	2015	2018
MALE	84.5	80.7	79.9	78.6
FEMALE	35.7	29	27	23.6

**SOURCE: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 2010, 2013, 2015 AND 2019**

Also, both the rates are declining but rate of decline is more in case of female LFPR than male LFPR. The reason is attributed to social constraints and lack of suitable job opportunities for them, as seen in figure 4.1.



In table 4.2 we find that before secondary level of education, unemployment rate is more for males than females. However, for secondary education level and above, unemployment rate of females is more than males. This is because at low levels of education, females need to work due to poverty. However, after attaining secondary and higher education level, they marry into richer families which reduce their incentive to work. Also, after marriage, women face more constraints which force them to remain unemployed.

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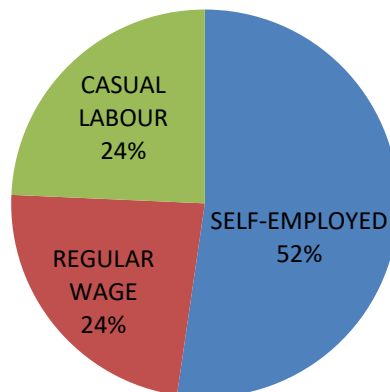
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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

TABLE 4.2: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE WITH RESPECT TO EDUCATION LEVEL IN 2017-18				
	MALE		FEMALE	
	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN
NOT LITERATE	1.7	2.1	0.1	0.8
UP TO PRIMARY	3.1	3.6	0.6	1.3
MIDDLE	5.7	6.0	3.7	5.1
SECONDARY AND ABOVE	10.5	9.2	17.3	19.8

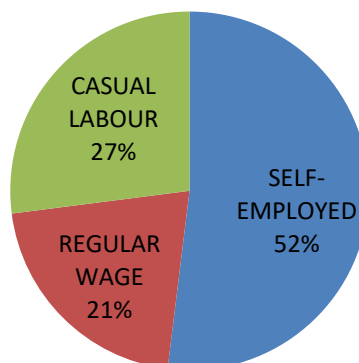
SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, 2019

**FIGURE 4.2: STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT OF MALE IN 2017-18**



SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, 2019

**FIGURE 4.3: STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT OF FEMALE IN 2017-18**



SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, 2019

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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

The figures above show the status of employment of workers in India. Comparing figures 4.2 and 4.3, we find that percentage of workers engaged in self-employment is same for males and females. However, female worker is more likely to work as a casual labourer than a male worker. This shows the lack of security and stability of employment of the female workers, since casual labourer work in contractual jobs which are not regular in nature.

**TABLE 4.3: AVERAGE WAGE(IN RUPEES) OF REGULAR SALARIED EMPLOYEES IN 2017-18**

	RURAL			FEMALE		
	MALE	FEMALE	PERSONS	MALE	FEMALE	PERSONS
<b>JULY- SEPTEMBER 2017</b>	<b>12659</b>	<b>8777</b>	<b>11878</b>	<b>17314</b>	<b>13895</b>	<b>16538</b>
<b>OCTOBER- DECEMBER 2017</b>	<b>13005</b>	<b>8534</b>	<b>12133</b>	<b>18014</b>	<b>15078</b>	<b>17359</b>
<b>JANUARY- MARCH 2018</b>	<b>14445</b>	<b>8549</b>	<b>13351</b>	<b>18277</b>	<b>14779</b>	<b>17483</b>
<b>APRIL-JUNE 2018</b>	<b>14024</b>	<b>9895</b>	<b>13207</b>	<b>18353</b>	<b>14487</b>	<b>17473</b>
<b>SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, 2019</b>						

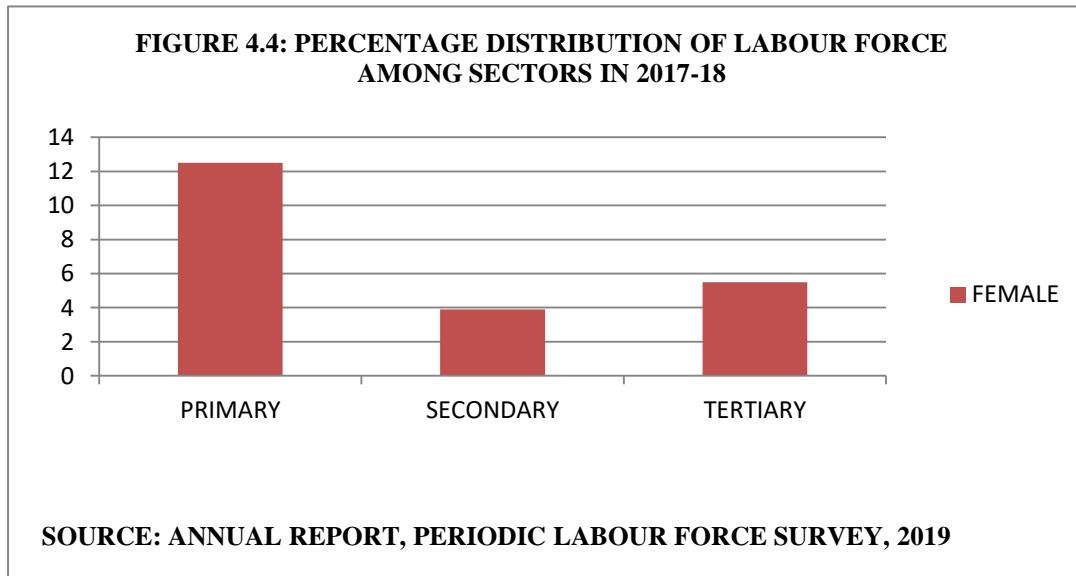
Table 4.3 shows the average wage of regular salaried workers in India. Among the regular salaried employees, males get more average wage than females. This is true for both rural and urban areas. However, the difference in average wages is more in rural areas than urban areas. Due to low wages and insecure working conditions, women are economically vulnerable. One primary indicator of wealth situation is ownership of assets. NFHS-4 showed that while 65 percent of men own a house, only 37 percent of women own a house of their own. Also, 49 percent of men own land either alone or jointly with someone else, which is just 28 percent of women. This shows the huge discrepancy in economic condition of male and female population in India.

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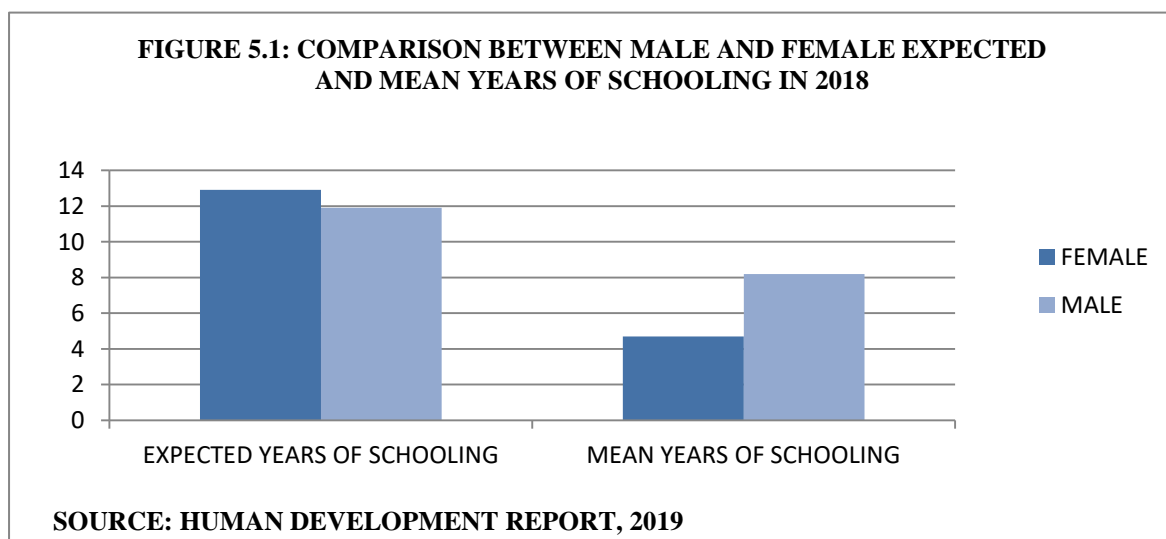
Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020



Another characteristic of female employment is that major portion of female workers is engaged in the primary sector. Figure 4.4 shows the percentage of labour force among sectors in 2017-18. In rural areas where primary sector is more prevalent, women are forced to enter the labour market to escape poverty. However, we find lesser percentage of females in secondary or tertiary sectors which require more technical skills and training. India Skills Report 2018 showed a decline in female employability due to lack of skill training amongst them.

## V. CAUSES OF DISPARITY EDUCATION

The primary reason for the low labour force participation is low education level of women population in India.



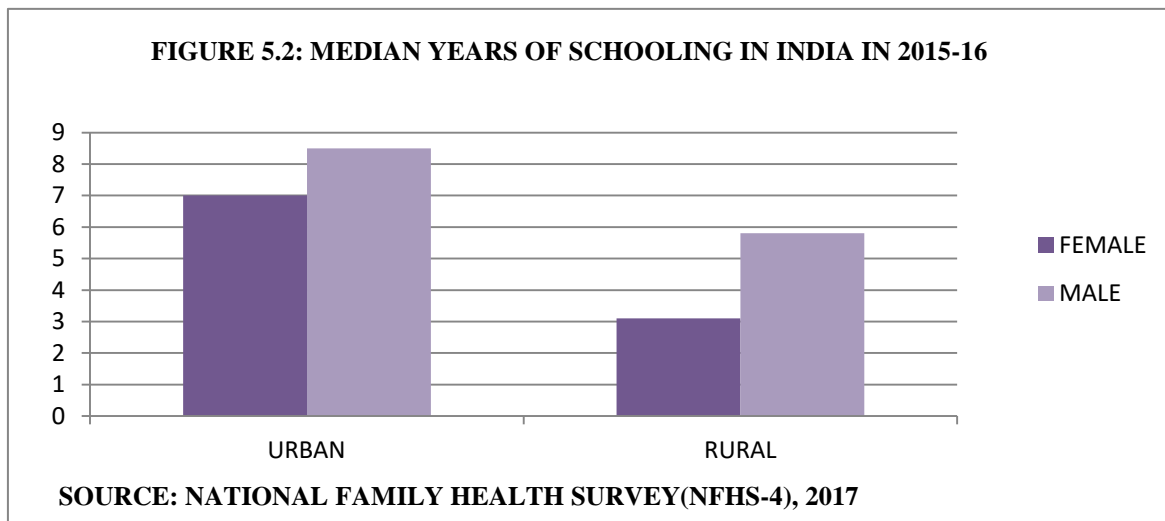
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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

United Nations Development report consider expected years of schooling as the number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child’s life. In India, the expected years of schooling are nearly the same for both male and females. However, the mean years of schooling is defined as the average number of years of education received by people ages 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level. There is a huge difference in the mean years of education between male and female population in India. This is because expected years of schooling consider only the enrolment rates whereas mean years of schooling considers the continuance of education by the population. The females leave their education earlier than males after enrolment and so they have lower average years of education. This has been shown in figure 5.1.



Average years of schooling vary across place of residence. The word ‘median’ refers to the middle-most value of a variable. From the figure 5.2, we learn that the rural population has lesser median years of schooling than urban population. However, irrespective of the place of residence, males are likely to continue with education for greater number of years than females. One primary reason for the low female education in India is poverty. Since a major portion of the population lives below poverty line, children are viewed by parents as means of income. The low social status of girls forces them to stay at home, perform household chores and care for their siblings. Parents are of the belief that girls remain unproductive during education. Hence, they are unwilling to educate them further.

<b>TABLE 5.1: SANITATION FACILITIES IN SCHOOLS IN INDIA</b>					
<b>RURAL</b>			<b>URBAN</b>		
<b>BASIC SANITATION FACILITIES</b>	<b>LIMITED SANITATION FACILITIES</b>	<b>NO SANITATION FACILITIES</b>	<b>BASIC SANITATION FACILITIES</b>	<b>LIMITED SANITATION FACILITIES</b>	<b>NO SANITATION FACILITIES</b>
<b>72</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>

**SOURCE: JOINT MONITORING PROGRAMME REPORT (2018)**



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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

Lack of proper facilities in school also makes the parents of girl child apprehensive in sending them to schools. According to Joint Monitoring Programme report of 2018, around 24 per cent of schools in India do not have sanitation facilities. Limited sanitation refers to ill-equipped, not usable or not single-sex sanitation facilities. As shown in the table 5.1, around 28 per cent of schools in rural areas and 16 per cent schools in urban areas lack sanitation. However, urban schools provide better sanitation facilities than rural schools. Hence, the problem of sanitation in schools acts as a major deterrent for female education in rural India.

Early marriage of girls also contributes to the huge inequality of education among male and female population. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006 makes marriage of girls who are less than 18 years of age illegal. However, according to a study by UNICEF in 2019 shows that the phenomenon of child marriage has reduced but is yet to be altogether obliterated. Around 27 per cent of females between age group 15-54 years had their first marriage before attaining the legal age of 18 years.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Lack of skill development among the female is also another reason. Due to this, women cannot find appropriate jobs in spite of having educational qualifications. Employability refers to the capability of an individual to be suitable for getting employment in a paid job. A study conducted by India Skills Report 2018 shows a decline in female employability due to lack of skill training amongst them. Imparting vocational education and training is an effective way of development of skills. This helps to improve the employability of female population. Technical education refers to a degree in engineering, medicine, agriculture or a diploma/certificate in agriculture, engineering/technology, medicine, crafts, etc. Table 5.2 shows the percentage of population above 15 years who have got either technical or vocational education. We see that the percentage of the population with technical education is less (1.7 per cent) for females than males (3.6 per cent). Percentage of population receiving formal vocational education is 2.3 per cent for males and 1.7 per cent for females. Non-formal vocational education includes education from family members, self-learning learning and on the job. This is also very less for females (3.1 per cent) than males (9.1 per cent).

## OTHER FACTORS

A lot of constraints also discourage women from participating in labour force. Firstly, the participation of women in labour force largely goes under-reported due to unpaid work. The term “unpaid work” includes unremunerated market and other subsistence activities (such as unremunerated work carried out by family helpers in the family farm or enterprise). It also includes activities involving production for own-consumption and services meant for the maintenance and care of household. WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2017 showed that on an average 66 per cent of women's work in India is unpaid, compared to 12 per cent of men's. Secondly, women's marital status also determines

**TABLE 5.2: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS OF AGE 15 YEARS AND ABOVE BY TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN 2017-18**

	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION		TECHNICAL EDUCATION
	FORMAL	NON-FORMAL	
<b>MALE</b>	2.3	9.1	3.6
<b>FEMALE</b>	1.7	3.1	1.7

**SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, 2019**

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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

women's labour force participation. Single women are found to participate more in labour force than married women. Social constraints that restrict the mobility of female labour are also responsible for poor participation of women in workforce. These constraints may arise from the still existing conservative mindset of the society and concern for safety and security of females in the country.

## VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A number of policies will help to encourage the female population to participate more in the labour market.

Firstly, programmes that encourage education among the women should be introduced. The "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" introduced in India in 2015 is a campaign programmes to reduce female infant mortality rate and increase their education. Apart from these, the existing education programmes like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan(SSA) and Rastriaya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan(RMSA) should increase their focus on the female welfare. Education councils should also introduce curriculum that are flexible and cater to the needs and interest of female population. Providing incentives like mid-day meals and subsidies will help to bring more girl child to schools. The female stipend programme was first implemented in Bangladesh in 1990 to increase school enrolment and completion of girls in secondary school level and increase female age of marriage. A similar programme has been adopted in West Bengal named Kanyashree Prakalpa, introduced in 2013 to improve economic conditions of girls and reduce early marriage.

Secondly, more vocational education programmes should be launched that will help in skill development of female population. There are few existing skill development programmes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana(PMKVY) and Skill India Programme launched in 2015. However, these have not been enough to train the huge number of unskilled labour force present in India. Also, these programmes should help in training of skills for jobs that are suitable for women and provide them with employment opportunities.

Thirdly, improving infrastructure and resources in schools will also help to increase female education. More female teachers should be recruited and single-sex sanitation facilities should be provided in schools, especially in rural areas of India.

Fourthly, steps should be taken to reduce female exploitation in workplaces. Exploitation of female employees often goes unreported due to economic vulnerability of women and social stigma. However, the Government has introduced legislative measures to protect working women. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013 is a legal act that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work. Internal Complaint Committee in an organisation also helps provide speedy justice to the female employees in matters of harassment.

Lastly, campaigns aiming at female empowerment will help to reduce vulnerability of women in the society. Programmes that help to provide credit to women at low interest rates for starting new business ventures should be introduced.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Women employment and economic empowerment are important and necessary elements of an inclusive and sustainable development. Research has shown increase of women education, vocational and technical education and increasing women's safety will help to increase their participation in work force and bring them at par with their male counterparts.

Gender inequalities are a persistent phenomenon, albeit varying degrees depending on regional or local contexts. Women continue to face numerous barriers in entering the labour market and accessing decent work. Labour market gender gaps are more evident in developing countries like India. Women are economically weaker than men since their

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Vol. 9, Issue 2, February 2020

average wage is lower, which increases their vulnerability and chances of exploitation in the society. Poor education and skill training among women causes such disparities between male and female workers.

Policy makers should aim at encouraging education among women providing suitable infrastructural facilities in schools and provide them with more vocational and technical education. They should also try to increase employment opportunities for unskilled women in India and bring about more stringent laws against exploitation of women in their workplaces.

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