

Challenges to Female Labour Force Participation: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a thematic analysis of the various challenges that women face in entering the workforce based on a systematic literature review and thematic analysis of the various dimensions associated with factors influencing the participation of women in the labour force. The objective is to understand these challenges, examine the nature of the gender gap in the labour market, and draw key inferences as to why women remain underrepresented in the traditional economic growth statistics. The literature identifies various challenges associated with women's participation in the workforce like, access to resources, vulnerabilities of informal employment, barriers to entry, safety issues, uncertainty of work, social structure, gender inequality, gender gap, hurdles to entrepreneurship, self-perception, structural issues, and technology. It also highlights the role of unpaid work rendered by women in the household and care economy as factors that keep women away from the labour force or makes them invisible in the national statistics. There is thus a need to undergo an in-depth analysis of the various aspects related to women left outside traditional labour force participation calculations so that their contribution can be included to augment economic growth.

KEYWORDS

FLFPR, Unpaid Work, Invisible Labour, Carework

1. Introduction

The world share of women in the workforce is around 50 percent, while for men it is about 80 percent (World Bank, 2022). Apart from equal opportunity in the labour market, women face hurdles like access to opportunities, wage gaps, and irregularity or uncertainty of work. Examining challenges related to female labour force participation is relevant in the context of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) which is dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Economists are already working on women-centric economic models, especially in Western countries. Some studies have attempted to combine labour market issues with that of households by analyzing various constraints like allocation of tasks and division of labour in the household. With changing work models

owing to technology-related interventions, economists are increasingly undertaking surveys to collect time-use data from the developing world. Various studies have pointed out that there is significant participation of women in certain jobs like home-based jobs that pay a certain wage but get missed out in labour force survey data. Bergmann's 'crowding' hypothesis in 1974 delved into how women and coloured people were historically confined to a narrow range of occupations. Over the years assessing the role of women in the economic system has taken center stage in new economic theories, especially those by female economists. Feminist economics is now a full-fledged field of theoretical study that focuses on gender-aware economy and policy inquiry. They argue that traditional economic models miss out on the broader conception of what makes an "economy". Various studies in this field are seen focusing on unpaid domestic work also referred to as "social provisioning". Economists like Figart (2005) have written about ideas that suggest gender to be more than just a dummy variable. Some of the methodological legacies of studies in this field include the disaggregation of macroeconomic data by sex, the recognition and incorporation of gender roles (including productive and reproductive activities) resulting in gender-aware policy and planning and gender budgeting, and the formulation of indices such as the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI). (FII, 2018). ILO considers a "jobs gap" to measure women's unemployment which includes all those actively seeking work but are currently unemployed and those unable to join the workforce on short notice. Based on this it calculates that women's job gap rate is significantly higher at 15 percent as compared to 10.5 percent of men (WEF, 2023). These gaps persist due to a lack of suitable job opportunities, challenges related to access to opportunities, and care responsibilities. Examining women's relationship with the labour market thus becomes important.

2. Research Methodology

The paper synthesizes the existing literature in the field of Female Labour Force Participation and undertakes a thematic analysis of the various reasons associated with low share of women in the workforce. A systematic literature review was undertaken where four inclusion criteria were set before conducting the literature search. These were, challenges faced by women in the workforce, factors that act as barriers to entry of women in the workforce, aspects associated with the care economy, and unpaid work of women in the household. The timeline for the literature review was kept open to all research done chronologically, but the focus remained on finding new research done in the last 10 years keeping in mind the challenges that exist today. Qualitative data analysis was then done by identifying certain keywords to be coded into themes.

3. Literature Review

Table 1 Systematic Literature Review

S.N o.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
1.	2024	Mapping Structural Break and Sectoral Movement on Female Employment in India Since 1991	Surbhi Mishra, Dukhabandhu Sahoo & Souryabrata Mohapatra	The Indian Journal of Labour Economics	Females engaged in the agriculture sector in India witnessed the highest structural breaks compared to other sectors; sectoral contribution to GDP and female education are determinants of	Irregular Work, Lack of Education

S.No.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
					FLFP	
2.	2021	Barriers and Enablers to Women's Participation in the Workforce: A Case Study from India	Soma Wadhwa, Devutty Retnakaran	Review of Market Integration	Curtailed mobility; mismatch in aspirations, education, training and work; first-generation-employee disadvantage; and traditionally gendered work division keep women from the workforce	Multiplicity of Barriers
3.	2021	Female Labour Supply in Tamil Nadu: Some Questions	Sundari S.	Indian Journal of Gender Studies	Structural changes in the economy have not resulted in change in quality and quantity of women's employment.	Economic Structure
4.	2021	Social capital as a partial explanation for gender wage gaps	Collischon & Eberl	The British Journal of Sociology	Systematic differences in the network composition between males and females explain ~ 15% of overall gender wage gap; male contacts are important for labour market outcomes; old boys' clubs in key positions are gatekeepers in labour market	Gender Inequality
5.	2021	The asymmetric role of crime in women's and men's labour force participation: Evidence from India	Ankita Mishra, Vinod Mishra, Jaai Parasnis	Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization	Crime exacerbates gender gaps; Increase in crime increases men's labour force participation and decreases women's labour force participation	Crime
6.	2021	Women's Liberation and the Agrarian Question:	Archana Prasad	Agrarian South: Journal of Political	Women workers have acquired a greater voice in demanding	Trade Unionism

S.No.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
		Insights from Peasant Movements in India		Economy	equality measurement of work in collective labouring units and their share of wages are questions that have acquired greater urgency in the trade union movement	
7.	2020	Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work: Theorizing the Community as a Site of Production	Nina Banks	The Review of Black Political Economy	Invisibility of women's unpaid work within household; nonmarket work that women perform for community needs that arise out of racial and ethnic group disparities subject to invisibility	Invisibility of Work
8.	2020	Unequal Reward for Equal Work? Understanding Women's Work and Wage Discrimination in India Through the Meniscus of Social Hierarchy	Singh P. & Pattanaik	Contemporary Voice of Dalit	Vulnerability is intense among Dalit/tribal women; social hierarchy (caste) is a decisive factor for the remuneration (wage) in the labour market	Marginalized Community
9.	2020	Women and Work in India: State-level Analysis	Deb S.	Social Change	Adoption of new technologies may transform the working lives of women by displacing some from their existing jobs and making others move to high-skill jobs	Technological Change
10.	2020	Women Workers on the Move in South Asia: Shifting Identities in Segmented	Chakraborty A.	Journal of Migration Affairs	Migrant women have to navigate through a triple-layered segmentation emerging from	Migration

S.N o.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
		Labour Markets			their identities as migrants and women, and due to contestations about their national identity	
11.	2019	The Invisible Workers: Capturing Home-based Work in India	Samantroy M.	Antyajaa: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change	Home-based workers increasingly concentrated in urban areas within informal working arrangements; mostly self-employed and engaged in precarious employment that remains mostly unregulated and least protected; share of own-account enterprises among women increased but vulnerability owing to operating without fixed structure and without hired workers.	Social Security
12.	2019	Women and unpaid work in India: A macroeconomic overview	Mitra	IWWAGE	Factors like nature of economic growth, education, access to amenities, annual plans, govt policy, lead to 'non-recognition' of women's contribution to the economy; sexual division of labour acts as barrier for women to freely access labour markets, reduce income-earning potential; forms the core of 'double burden' of work	Double Burden of Work
13.	2019	Using social reproduction	Gore E. & LeBaron G.	Capital & Class	Cocoa industry relies on women	Labour Exploitation

S.N o.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
		theory to understand unfree labour			and migrant workers' labour in the productive and reproductive spheres, which often spatially and temporally overlap in the context of a woman's working day; women within our study tended to be more exploited than their male counterparts	
14.	2019	Testing the Future: Gender and Technocapitalism in Start-up India	Gupta H.	Feminist Review	Women from low-income families who are the first professionals in their households form a class of precarious workers who are replaced by technological change.	Technological Change
15.	2018	From 'Plantation Workers' to Naukrānī: The Changing Labour Discourses of Migrant Domestic Workers	Supurna Banerjee	Journal of South Asian Development	Women's perception of their jobs as paid domestic workers brings out multiple contradictions and problematize labour	Self-perception
16.	2018	Agricultural Development and Gender Inequality in Rural Labour Market in Odisha	Swain M., Das L. & Hembram B.R.	Agricultural Economics Research Review	Even with agricultural development and technological change, gender-based wage differential persists and there is a need to reduce the wage disparity between male and female by enforcing the laws and regulations on equal pay for equal work	Wage Gap

S.No.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
17.	2018	Women Entrepreneurs hip in India: Evidence from Economic Censuses	Ellina Samantroy, J. S. Tomar	Social Change	Women face difficulties in securing loans due to lack of collateral as property is a male centric aspect in many developing countries; engagement in low-productivity activities	Entrepreneurs hip Issues
18.	2017	The motherhood penalty and female employment in urban India	Das, M. B. & Žumbyte, I. (2017).	In Policy Research Working Paper	Having a young child in the home depresses mothers' employment, an inverse relationship that has intensified over time.	Childcare
19.	2016	Resisting labour control and optimizing social ties: experiences of women construction workers in Delhi	Sakshi Khurana	Work Employment and Society	In the absence of formal or legal contracts between workers and contractors, women are led to mobilize on their social capital or their valued relations with contractors and co-workers	Social Security
20.	2016	Social Reproduction and the Agrarian Question of Women's Labour in India	Naidu S.C. & Ossome L.	Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy	Market, state and household – has imposed the burden of reproduction on women; women's work is dependent on private and common lands; constitutes failure of the Indian economy to provide decent livelihoods.	Household Responsibilities
21.	2015	Gender Differentiation in Paid and Unpaid Work during the Transition to	Medora W. Barnes	Sociology Compass	Cultural beliefs that emphasize mothers as the primary parent and fathers as secondary	Childcare, Household Responsibilities

S.N o.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
		Parenthood			reinforce unequal patterns in housework and childcare	
22.	2015	Unpaid Work and Missing Women in the Indian Labour Market	Mukherjee N. & Majumder R.	Indian Journal of Human Development	Much of women's work in India goes unreported and unaccounted due to methodological issues and discrimination in work share; results in low official accounting of women's work participation in paid work	Invisibility of Work
23.	2014	Engendering Labour Statistics: A Cross-country Comparison of Gender Differentiated Statistics	Samantroy E.	Social Change	Invisibility is reflected in the surveys conducted by Statistical organisations in India; questions on cultural constraints, institutional barriers, family practices, community practices, more questions on care work with subsequent regional variation needed	Invisibility of Work
24.	2013	The Impact of Social Policy on the Gendered Division of Housework	Noonan	Journal of Family Theory & Review	There are a variety of reasons women may use work-family policies more than men. Women may feel more responsibility for doing housework and child care and experience greater work-family conflict than men, thus leading them to use the policies at a higher rate.	Household Responsibilities
25.	2013	Changing Trends in	Mahapatro S.R.	Indian Journal of	Age and period changes can	Age

S.No.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
		Female Labour Force Participation in India: An Age-Period-Cohort Analysis		Human Development	account for a substantial decline in labour force participation; provision of higher education and creation of employment opportunities for younger cohorts important	
26.	2011	The Gender-Equality Paradox: Class and Incongruity Between Work-Family Attitudes and Behaviors	Margaret L. Usdansky	Journal of Family Theory & Review	Less educated couples with less skilled occupations and less money tend to voice more enthusiasm for specialized gender roles.	Gender Inequality
27.	2010	Race, Gender, and the Invisible Hand of Social Capital	Steve McDonald, Jacob C. Day	Sociology Compass	Access to social capital resources tends to be greater for white men than for minorities and women and perpetuates race and gender inequality	Access to Resources
28.	2009	Dusty Trails and Unsettled Lives: Women's Labour Migration in Rural India	Indu Agnihotri, Indrani Mazumdar	Indian Journal of Gender Studies	Women constantly or periodically on the experience volatility and vulnerability, especially for marginalized groups	Migration, Marginalized Community
29.	2008	Gender and Public Policy in India: Invisibilizing Socially Reproductive Labour	Sadhna Arya	Indian Historical Review	Public policies and development discourses on women have not looked at the issue of the 'care economy' while absorbing women as economic agents who will provide a buffer between family, business/capital and state	Carework
30.	2008	Women's Unpaid labour	Mazumdar I.	The Indian Historical	In rural agriculture, an	Unpaid Work

S.No.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
		in Neo-Liberal India		Review	increase in the numbers and proportions of women performing unpaid labour on family farms while losing out on independent own account income and individual wage employment	
31.	2007	Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganized Sector	National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS), Government of India	Indian Journal of Human Development	Women's work is marked by invisibility in terms of lack of "designated business place of work"; double burden of production and reproduction exists, gender discrimination at the workplace is subtle and is reflected in the nature of work performed; homeworkers faced peak and lean seasons where both hours of work and earnings varied substantially	Double Burden of Work, Invisibility of Work, Irregularity of Work
32.	2007	Gender, Work and Household Food Security	Choudhary & Parthasarathy	Economic and Political Weekly	Domestic work burden shouldered by women alone; daily household activity takes up most of women's total time spent on food-related activities; domestic work consists of farm-related activities, grain cleaning and drying, threshing, seed selection and preservation etc.	Unpaid Work

S.N o.	Year	Paper	Author	Journal	Key Findings	Key Word
33.	2006	Gender, social capital and location: understanding the interactions	Healy, Haynes, Hampshir (2006)	International Journal of Social Welfare	Inadequate attention to gender in debates about social capital; reliance of social capital initiatives on the informal network-building activities undertaken by women	Gender Inequality
34.	2001	Women's Contribution to The Economy Through Their Unpaid Household Work,	R.N. Pandey	CSO, GOI	Value of unpaid work in the economy mostly performed by women, found to be about 30 percent of GDP; mechanism can be evolved to cover unpaid work; SDP of Haryana and Gujarat can increase by about 30 % and women will be the main contributory to this increase	Invisible Labour
35.	1996	Children and Gender – Wage Differentials	Tanda & Bottone	LABOUR	Considerable wages gap exists mostly explained either by heterogeneous productivity of men and women or by the effect of having children on female human capital formation.	Wage Gap
36.	1993	Gender, Entitlement, and the Distribution of Family Labor	Major	Journal of Social Issues	Wives contribute a disproportionate share of the unpaid labor of the family (e.g., housework and childcare) compared to their husbands; they report relative contentment with this unequal distribution	Self-perception

4. Data Analysis

The key words identified in the systematic literature review have been coded and themes are identified for the thematic analysis as shown in [Figure 1](#).

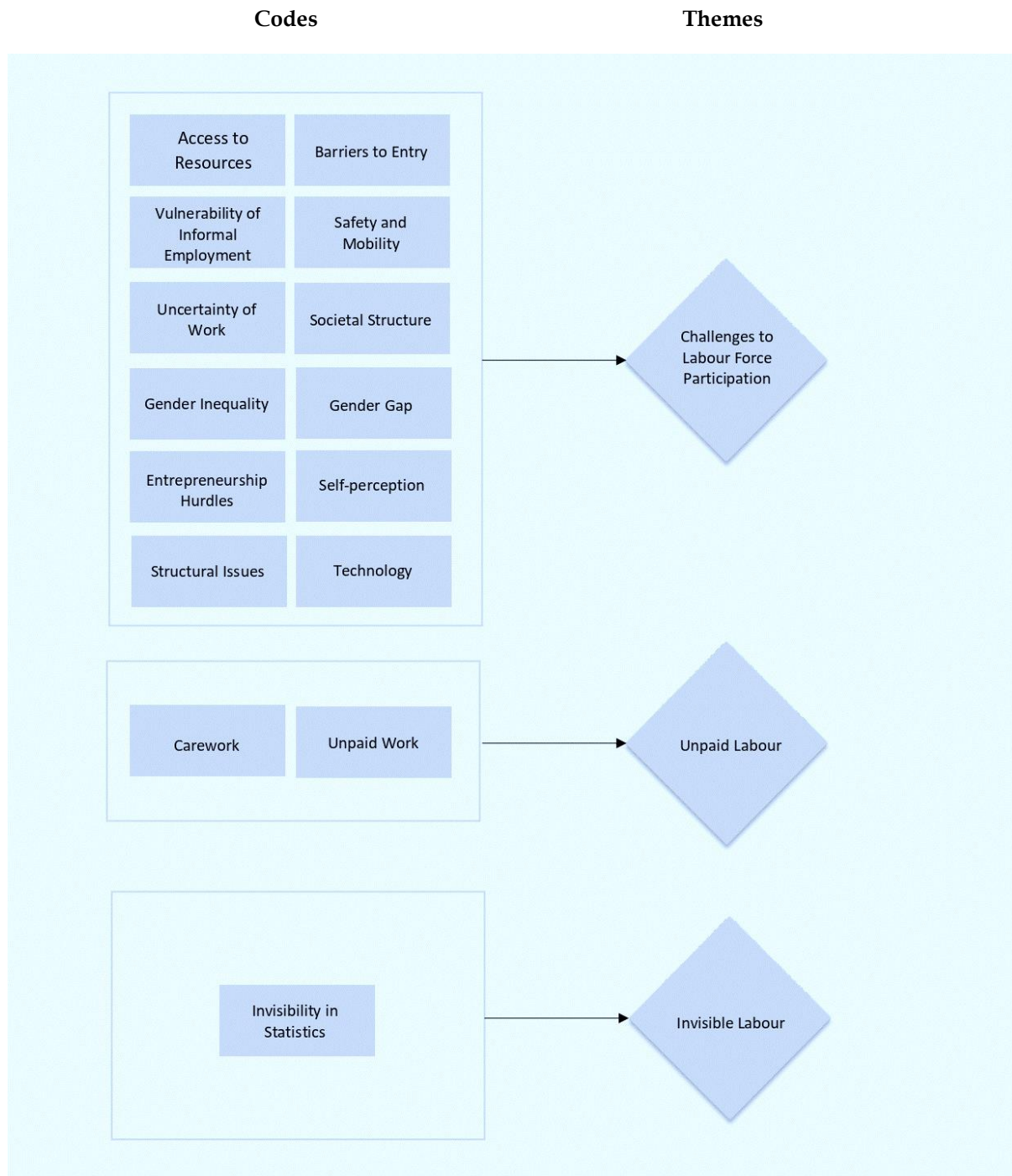


Figure 1 Thematic Analysis of Challenges to Female Labour Force Participation

4.1 Challenges Associated with Female Labour Force Participation

4.1.1 Barriers to Entry

Less than one-fourth of women in the working-age group are in India's workforce (Wadhwa & Retnakaran, 2021). This is because women face various barriers that come in the way of their participation in the labour force. A study that draws insights from a 5-year-long programme that was an intervention to connect a million underprivileged women to employment opportunities across five Indian states, found that these barriers include- curtailed mobility; mismatch in aspirations, education, training, and work; the disadvantage of being a first-generation employee and the gendered nature of work. There is also seen to be gender division in the workforce owing to male preference in the new urban economy's emerging jobs.

Firstly, concerns around mobility curb possibilities and paths to higher education for females. And these eventually bring their work lives to an end. It was also found that connecting with income opportunities remains impossible for the bulk of Indian women. The provision of, counseling, information, and mentorship could help women surmount these barriers. Secondly, most young women from underprivileged backgrounds are first-generation employees and so, lack the right role models in their family setups. There is also a lack of individuals who could act as references to help working women cope with the world. White-collar jobs that are desired are hard to find and young women therefore get pushed into the informal sector. With poor levels of education, most women get absorbed into agriculture, traditional services, construction, or unorganized manufacturing sectors that have no social insurance (Mehrotra, 2019). Much of the female employment in India is either self-employment or unpaid in family-owned enterprises (Sharma, 2012). Thirdly, individual and societal conditioning are deemed as Internal Barriers in the form of lack of confidence in working women. Two separate studies have found that women are restricted in their careers because they are expected to prioritize family over career and so they have double the burden of work wherein they also have to contribute towards caregiving roles and community expectations (Akhilwala & Havenga, 2012, Sharma, 2018). Many studies have also pointed out that Indian women lack family and societal support for entrepreneurial growth (Goyal and Parkash 2011). Finally, structural and institutional hierarchies constitute external barriers. These constitute Gender bias and stereotyping at workplaces, lack of social acceptance for women's entrepreneurial ventures, lack of access to capital to run establishments, and limited access to banks, credit, and investors.

Women have limited access to entrepreneurial networks and, in turn, to learning business skills informally (Jayachandran 2020). Therefore, not finding desirable jobs and inability to set up independent businesses or generate income from self-employment, many women withdraw entirely from the workforce. Additionally, due to a lack of necessary technical and soft skills, women are further disadvantaged as competitors in a job-squeezed market.

4.1.2 Vulnerabilities of Informal Employment

The women who are unable to find gainful employment in the formal sector, join the informal sector. However, two major challenges associated with this kind of employment are the lack of social security and the absence of formal contracts. The process of formalization of the workforce has seen a massive expansion in the late 1980s owing to liberalized policies adopted by the Government of India. A 2007 report of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector used NSSO of the 61st round to find that 47 per cent of women wage workers were engaged as casual workers, largely in the construction and manufacturing sectors their employment in the sector is impermanent and insecure, leading them to move back and forth between other alternatives such as employment in agriculture or in domestic work in the cities.

Due to the absence of formal contracts between workers and contractors, women are led to mobilize on their social capital or their valued relations with contractors and co-workers which makes them vulnerable (Khurana 2016). More than men, women are increasingly concentrated in jobs that are casual, temporary, and low-paid, thus adding to their vulnerabilities. It is also seen that women are, usually unaware of their legal rights and this allows the employers to evade legislation and increase their gains. Therefore, the nature of work relations in the informal sector denies women well-paid and skilled job opportunities to enable their upward mobility in the socio-economic hierarchies.

4.1.3 Differential Allocation of Work and Pay to Men and Women

Several studies across the world have noted the differential allocation of work and pay to men and women in the construction industry. A study done on construction workers in Delhi while reviewing the works of Chauvet-Urquidi (1997) and Heron (1997) found that women, involved in tasks like hammered concrete finishing, painting, and final cleaning processes, were usually paid less than their male counterparts (Khurana, 2016). In Jamaica as well, women were seen to be entering construction entering the construction sector without any training, and were paid significantly low wages compared to men who were skilled workers. Social perceptions regarding the fitness of women for certain works played a major role in this aspect. It was also observed that while women were rarely able to get a week off, the men took unpaid leave often and also caught a break after work hours for leisure. The study also highlighted the difference in wage rates for women which was below the minimum fixed by the Delhi Government. On the other hand, the remuneration given to male construction workers matched the legally stipulated minimum wage. An interesting outtake of the study was that while men had the opportunity to earn more by working longer hours, women were often not given any overtime payment for working beyond their work shifts. Add this, 8-14 hours of remunerated work with the unpaid housework and other productive work and this differential turns into massive inequality of work.

4.1.4 Dependence on Contractor/Employer or Husband

The study done on construction workers in Delhi (Khurana 2016), led to an insight into the unequal nature of dependency in work for men and women. Reviewing the works of Dalmia (2012) and Palriwala (1994), showed that most women were rendered unemployed in the construction industry after the age of 40, leaving them with few options in the long run and the emphasis placed on the presence of socially approved male 'protection' in most patrilineal South Asian cultures exacerbated the problem of dependency for female workers. As a result, many female workers took up long-term assignments with contractors known to them who assisted them in migration and residence making the women morally obligated to them. Safety of workplaces in the informal sector is also an issue, thus adding to their dependence on employers and male counterparts.

4.1.5 Uncertainty of Work

In an in-depth analysis of 20 women construction workers out of a focus group of 50 it was observed that many of them often switched to paid domestic work, when work at construction sites was not available or if they needed greater flexibility in employment to look after their households and children (Khurana 2016). This highlights the uncertain nature of employment for women if they were to remain in the informal sector.

4.1.6 Invisibility of Work

A study that could have significant implications for the marginalized communities in India was done in 2020 where the research pointed out how racialized women's unpaid and nonmarket work remained invisible and there was a need to assign value to the nonmarket work that women perform within the

household (Banks 2020). Extending this logic to communities that were racialized and marginalized, it was found that there was an unjust work burden of both gender, race-ethnicity, and social class/caste. In the Indian context, this could be seen as the additional burden of work that the women of SC and ST communities carry owing to their allegiance to higher class/ caste communities.

4.1.7 Limited Avenues in Rural Areas

There are limited opportunities in rural India because of which women don't find jobs matching their preference (Sanghi, Srijia, and Vijay 2015). Low skill levels and non-farm jobs have also been found to be limited, leading to the withdrawal of women from the labour force. Structural changes in the economy have led to the quality and quantity of women's employment (Sundari 2021). FLPR is found to be higher in poorer districts than the developed ones. Agriculture is seen to be becoming increasingly unprofitable, especially for small and marginal farmers due to high input costs, monsoon failure, and drought. There has also been intensified competition between agricultural and non-agricultural uses of land, thus reducing the area under cultivation. This has serious implications for employment viability for women. Job deficits among women educated up to the secondary level, on the one hand, the burden of domestic duties, negative income effect, and women voluntarily choosing unpaid domestic to paid work have contributed to lower FLFPR in the rural labour market.

4.1.8 Gender Inequality in Rural Labour Market

A study comparing gender inequality in the rural labour market in Odisha with the agriculturally advanced state of Punjab and all of India using reports on Employment and Unemployment in India published by the NSSO from 1972-73 to 2011-12, finds that despite agricultural development and technological change, gender-based wage differential persists (Swain, Das & Hembram 2018). There is also gender disparity in the worker population ratio, such that Male WPRs are consistently higher than female WPRs. Women labourers lack skill and mobility and so tend to stay in the village, doing household chores and engaging in agricultural activities. Women were also paid lower wages than men for the same agricultural activity.

4.1.9 Finding Voice in Trade Unionism

A study on the role of women in trade unions highlights that at a time when women workers have acquired a greater voice in demanding equality measurement of work in collective labouring units and their share of wages are questions that have acquired greater urgency in the trade union movement more so because as economies develop, capital-intensive segments have been showing shrinking capacities to absorb labour (Agnihotri & Mazumdar, 2009). In a similar context, another study discusses the role of women in communist-led peasant movements in India and its implications on women's emancipation and it observes that there was an increase in women's participation in peasant movements, both as leaders and as activists throughout the Indian peasant movement (Prasad 2021). However, the changing nature of agrarian capitalism also impacted the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. There was a recognition that peasant movements needed to foster an anti-patriarchal consciousness. However, social reproduction put constraints on women. Nevertheless, there has been the formation of women's platforms and mass organizations which have taken up the issues of land and livelihood, indicating that women's participation in peasant struggles has taken place, even if motivated by the needs of social reproduction, for which they bear responsibility, whether within or outside the movement.

4.1.10 Segmented Labour Market

Globally, the incomes and working conditions of migrant women are different from those of local male workers. A study examining the segmented nature of the labour market for migrant women in the

informal sector in South Asia by comparing the labour market experiences of forty-five migrant women across four Indian states finds that migrant women from India, Bangladesh, and Nepal face discrimination based on their regional, linguistic, geographical, ethnic and religious identities as they seek to enter the informal labour market in India. They have to go through a triple-layered segmentation emerging from their identities as migrants, women, and nationality (Chakraborty 2020).

4.1.11 Women's Own Perception of the Value of their Work

Self-perceptions of women regarding their own value of work also play a key role in their participation in the workforce. The economic crisis faced by the tea plantations led to the migration of many women to Delhi and Gurgaon to earn a living as domestic workers and care workers. Women's own perceptions add to the monolithic understandings of domestic labour where paid domestic and care work is seen not only as women's natural labour but as low-skilled and low-status work that is particularly suitable for migrant women. Where plucking in the plantations is seen as an acquired skill by these migrant women, the domestic work done by them suffers invisibilization because it is viewed as a natural extension of their feminine tendencies (Banerjee, 2018).

4.1.12 Women Entrepreneurship Hurdles

Women's access to entrepreneurship remains a complex issue. The challenges include difficulties in securing loans due to lack of collateral as property is a male-centric aspect in many developing countries, engagement in low-productivity activities, disadvantaged position in the societal environment leading to under-performance in entrepreneurship, the gap in the skill sets required to run successful businesses (Samantroy & Tomar, 2018).

4.1.13 Crime as a Hindrance

Crime against women is one of the major hindrances to their productive contribution to the economy. The issues are majorly concerned with the commute to work and the resulting cost of traveling that deters women from working far from home, male-dominated work environments, and security in the informal sector (Parasnis, Mishra & Mishra Parasnis, 2021).

4.2 Unpaid Work

4.2.1 Care Responsibilities

Recognition for individuals involved in child-care, care for the elderly or disabled and volunteering can provide incentives to create a less competition-based more cooperative, and altruistic society (Nierling, 2011). The need for this was evident after the oil crisis era in 1975 when standard employment relationships began to get fragile, and lifelong full-time employment became precarious. The relevance of work performed, especially by women that was hitherto not considered as work received attention to compensate for the lack of paid work. The need to revalue work activity that was traditionally counted as "informal" like family work or voluntary work, came to light. The narrow definition of work as "paid" was thus widened for the first time. The importance of unpaid work for the well-being and development of society as a whole came to light. In this direction, suggestions ranged from a reorganization of the current employment system supported by the introduction of basic income to innovative scheduling of working time. Additionally, doing unpaid work can make people feel recognized and confident because they are then valued for their actual talent and expertise. An implication of this would be that such a society would be based on personal fulfilment and well-being while being community-led. Focusing on unpaid work can therefore be of significance in its potential for emancipation, community building, and sustainable consumption.

4.2.2 Unpaid Labour and Public Policy Discourse

An attempt to assess the centrality of the unpaid labour of women in the household tracing how women have been defined in the post-independence policies has found that public policy and the development discourse in the country have not looked at the 'care economy' when absorbing women as economic agents who will provide a buffer between family, business/capital and state (Arya 2008). Reproduction as a whole has remained out of the debate while the focus has been on the integration of women in the economy. There has been a lag in addressing the important issues of housework and equality in access to resources and opportunities.

4.3 Invisible Labour

4.3.1 Invisible Labour and the Economic Statistics

Research studies on the unpaid labour of women often about the invisibility of women in the national statistics of most countries. The reason for this is cited to be undervaluing the contribution of women by not including every aspect of the nature of their employment- the double burden of work being a major factor. A great challenge with respect to home-based work is the non-availability of statistics (Lamba 2017). In 1990, after reviewing 70 countries, the ILO found that only seven countries had collected data on home-based workers. These countries include the Federal Republic of Germany, Hong Kong SAR, Italy, Japan, Morocco, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland (Hiralal, 2010).

4.3.2 Double Burden of Work

One aspect of invisible workers mainly includes home-based workers who are generally low-wage workers and lack job security. Education, technical knowledge, and vocational training often restrict mobility creating challenges that keep their contribution undervalued. The expansion of the informal economy has led to a blurring of the lines between paid and unpaid work. Globalization the increasing pressure to cut costs, the digital revolution that has enabled work-from-home models, and the inability of the formal sector to absorb surplus labor are some of the major factors that have accentuated challenges related to the double burden of work for women.

4.3.3 Gender Differentiated Statistics

Another important issue as far as the participation of women in the workforce is the underestimation of women's work in the national statistical system has been discussed (Samantroy 2014). Comparing gender-differentiated statistics in India with Sweden and Bangladesh shows that structures that exist due to patriarchal setups act as barriers and undermine women's potential. More so, because these have been institutionalized in everyday activities and thus remain unquestioned. Such invisibility is reflected in statistical surveys in India. It has been suggested that questions on cultural constraints, institutional barriers, family and community practices, care work, and regional variation need to be included in the surveys. In comparison, Sweden has endeavored to reflect on gender-sensitive data and the Gender Statistics Reports of Bangladesh have been compiled with inclusivity. Various aspects explored include reasons for the withdrawal of women from the workforce, questions on cultural constraints, and institutional barriers. There is a relook at statistical surveys in India in this direction.

5. Conclusion

The literature review assessed the various challenges associated with Female Labour Force Participation as a whole and found that there are certain barriers to entry, vulnerabilities associated with informal employment, differential allocation of work and pay to men and women, dependence on contractor/employer or husband, uncertainty of work, invisibility of work due to belonging to marginalized community and challenges that are specific to rural employment. To understand the

extent of the untapped potential that exists, we took an overview of how women outside the labour force are contributing to the Economy and what sectors they tend to cluster towards. It was found that carework is a massive portion of this untapped segment and we thus discussed the unpaid labour of women and their invisibility in the various statistics. The double burden of work and gender-differentiated statistics turned out to be a challenge in this aspect. There is a need for an in-depth analysis of various dimensions related to women outside the workforce to assess how they can be included in the economy even if they aren't able to enter it or sustain it. It is essential to assess how many of the challenges that women face in labour force participation are workable and solutions need to be identified in a time-based manner. The challenges that require a long time to counter, need to be thoroughly addressed to figure out how these could be worked around to strengthen economic growth. The review therefore points towards a significant scope for new research in gender and labour economics.

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