

Women Employment in Informal Sector

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Abstract: *Recently, it is realized that women employment or engagements are also has economic values and now women are equally competent to engage in works at far with men. They are educating, trained and work even in international sphere more productively. Inadequate employment opportunities in agriculture and non-farm sector have reduced the employment opportunities for females in rural areas. Further, socio-economic and cultural factors prevailing in the society made female labourers to work in the nearest places. Informal sector is an important avenue for women employment in backward region. Several programmes are also framed to encourage women empowerment, through entrepreneurial skill development. As a result women employment in informal sector has improved but the problems of them are of different nature. In view of this, the paper attempts to analyze the nature and extent of women employment in Indian economy, to examine nature and extent of women employment in informal sector and to understand the major problems of women workers in informal sector]*

Keywords: Women Labour Force, Informal Sector, Women Empowerment, Women Employment

Introduction

Women workforce is an important component of the human resource and was most neglected traditionally due to various reasons. Recently, it is realized that women employment or engagements are also has economic values and now women are equally competent to engage in works at far with men. They are educating, trained and work even in international sphere more productively. However, in the backward, developing countries their potential can be encouraged by educating, training thereby improving their working skill. Therefore, in the modern economy where human capital is playing significant role encouraging women labour force is crucial which also would result in achieving gender equity. Realizing this, several efforts were done with an aim of women empowerment.

Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the manner in which these relations are changed and developing a sense of self worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life constitute women empowerment. (The United Nations Development Fund for Women)

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employment opportunities in rural and urban areas and improving employability of females is the need of the time. In order to protect the quality of employment in terms of work conditions, women's associations and Self Help Groups should be promoted in rural as well as in urban areas.

The informal sector is regarded as a group of household enterprises or unincorporated enterprises owned by households that include informal own account enterprises, which may employ contributing family workers and employees on an occasional basis and enterprises of informal employers, which employs one or more on a continuous basis. (ICLS, 1993). The informal sector units are labour intensive in character. The Informal economy in India employs about 86.0 per cent of the country's workforce and 91.0 per cent of its women workers.

In the context of above discussion, an attempt has been made in this paper to analyze the nature and extent of women workforce and the women employment in informal sector of India.

Objectives

The main objective of the paper is to analyze the nature and extent of women workforce and the women employment in informal sector. The specific objectives are:

1. To analyse the nature and extent of women employment in Indian economy
2. To examine nature and extent of women employment in informal sector
3. To understand the major problems of women workers in informal sector

Methodology

The paper is developed on the basis of review of literature and secondary data. Analysis of related issue is carried on the basis of secondary data collected from the important sources pertaining to informal sector. Discussions on Work force in India, Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) in Karnataka, Main and marginal workers in Karnataka, Women workers in Informal Sector, Women employed in organized sector in India and Women in informal sector – Karnataka are attempted

Human Development

Human development is a process of widening people's choice as well as raising the level of well being achieved. A well-nourished, healthy, educated, skilled, alert labour force is the most important productive asset. Investment in nutrition, health services and education are justified on grounds of productivity. Human development contributes to a healthy civil society, increased democracy and greater social responsibility. The essential determinants of the quality of life such as health services, water supply, education, housing, nutrition and family welfare facilities requires for the human resource development. There is a need to assist the Indian women to transit as swiftly as possible from being permanently a vehicle of human reproduction, producing biological good alone to a vehicle of social, cultural and economic good. Proper balance between demand and supply of man power is required for the better utilization of human resources. Man power planning can be done through the forecasting of demand for man power in different occupation, collection of information relating to the availability of trained personnel, provision of training programme to the untrained personnel and necessary facilities to the labourers to mobilize between occupations. Man power planning requires the linking between education and training to the job.

Employment in Informal Sector

Informal employment comprises 50.0 per cent to 75.0 per cent of non-agricultural employment in developing countries: especially 48.0 per cent of non-agricultural employment in North Africa: 51.0 per cent in Latin America: 65.0 per cent in Asia: and 72.0 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Informal employment is comprised of both self employment in informal enterprises and wage employment in informal jobs. In all developing regions, self employment comprises a greater share of informal employment (outside agriculture) than wage employment, specifically, self employment represents 70.0 per cent of informal employment in Sub Saharan Africa, 62.0 per cent in North Africa, 60.0 per cent in Latin America, and 59.0 per cent in Asia. Informal wage employment is also significant in the developing world: comprising 30.0 per cent to 40.0 per cent of informal employment (outside agriculture). Informal wage employment is comprised of employees of informal enterprises as well as various types of informal wage workers who work for formal enterprises, households or who have no fixed employer. These include casual day labourers, domestic workers, industrial outworkers, undeclared workers, part time or temporary workers without secure contracts, worker benefits or social protection. Informal employment is generally a larger source of employment for women than for men in the developing world. Other than in North Africa where 43.0 per cent of women workers are in Informal employment, 60.0 per cent or more of women workers in the developing world are in informal employment (outside agriculture). In Asia, the proportion of women and men non-agricultural workers in informal employment is roughly equivalent.

Workforce in India

Workforce denotes the human resource of a country. Investment on human resource is essential to improve the quality of labour force and hence contributes to the growth of the economy. Workers are classified as main workers and marginal workers on the basis of their work. Those workers who had worked for the major part of the year i.e. more than 183 days are termed as main workers. Those who have worked for the less than 183 days are termed as marginal workers. Details on the total work force in India is shown in table-1

Table 1: Total workers in India -2011 Census

Population /workers	Persons		Male	Female
Population	Total	1210569573	623121843	587447730
Workers		481743311	331865930	149877381
Percentage of workers		39.79	53.26	25.51
Population	Rural	833463448	427632643	405830805
Workers		348597535	226763068	121834467
Percentage of workers		41.83	53.03	30.02
Population	Urban	377106125	195489200	181616925
Workers		133145776	105102862	28042914
Percentage of workers		35.31	53.76	15.44

Source: Office of the Registrar General India

Note: workers include both main workers and marginal workers

Of the total population 1210569573 persons, 481743311 persons which is 39.79 per cent of the total population constitute workforce in India. 41.83 per cent of the total rural population and 35.31 per cent of the total urban population constitutes the working population. Of the total female population, 25.51 per cent constitute female workforce in India. 53.26 per cent of the

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total male population constitutes the workers in India. Workforce participation rate is more among the male population. Female work participation rate is much less in urban areas. Only 15.44 per cent female population constitute workforce in urban areas.

Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) in Karnataka

According to Census 2011, the work participation rate (WPR) is defined as the proportion of total workers (i.e. main and marginal workers) to total population. In Karnataka 27872597 persons constituting 45.62 per cent of the total population have enumerated as workers. Of them, 18270116 are males and 9602481 are females. In other words, 59.0 per cent of the total male population and 31.87 per cent of the total female population are workers. In 2001 Census, WPR in the state was 44.53 per cent comprising 56.64 per cent male workers and 31.98 per cent female workers. On the whole WPR in 2011 has increased in general irrespective of gender. Female WPR has marginally declined in rural Karnataka. Workforce participation in Karnataka is shown in table-2

Table 2: Work force participation rate in Karnataka (in percentage)

	Total			Rural			Urban		
	2001	2011	Change	2001	2011	Change	2001	2011	Change
Persons	44.53	45.62	1.09	49.04	49.38	0.34	35.67	39.66	3.99
Male	56.64	59.00	2.36	58.10	59.76	1.66	53.85	57.81	3.96
Female	31.98	31.87	-0.11	39.87	38.79	-1.08	16.37	20.81	4.44

Source: Census 2011

Main and marginal workers in Karnataka

Of the total 27872597 workers in the state, 23397181 persons, constituting 83.94 per cent of the total workers are main workers. The proportion of main workers has marginally increased from 82.28 per cent in 2001 to 83.94 per cent in 2011. On the contrary, the proportion of marginal workers has slightly decreased from 17.72 per cent in 2001 to 16.06 per cent in 2011. The percentage of main workers in Karnataka is shown in table- 3

Table 3: Main workers in Karnataka – 2011 (in percentage)

	Total			Rural			Urban		
	2001	2011	Change	2001	2011	Change	2001	2011	Change
Persons	82.28	83.94	1.66	78.60	81.40	2.8	92.12	88.96	(-)3.16
Male	91.21	89.49	(-)1.72	89.67	84.43	(-)5.24	94.40	91.21	(-)3.19
Female	65.88	73.39	7.51	62.09	70.34	8.25	84.17	82.49	(-)1.68

Source: Census 2011

The percentage of marginal workers in Karnataka has declined from 17.72 per cent in 2001 to 16.06 per cent in 2011. The percentage of marginal workers in Karnataka is shown in table-4

Table 4: Marginal Workers in Karnataka -2011 (in percentage)

	Total			Rural			Urban		
	2001	2011	Change	2001	2011	Change	2001	2011	Change
Persons	17.72	16.06	(-)1.66	21.40	18.60	(-) 2.8	7.88	11.04	3.16
Male	8.79	10.51	1.72	10.33	11.57	1.24	5.6	8.79	3.19
Female	34.12	26.61	(-)7.51	37.91	29.66	(-)8.25	15.83	17.51	1.68

Source: Census 2011

The share marginal male workers has increased from 8.79 per cent in 2001 to 10.51 per cent in 2011. But the share marginal female workers has declined from 34.12 per cent in 2001 to 26.61 per cent in 2011.

Women Employed In Organized Sector in India

A total of 20.5 per cent women were employed in the organized sector in 2011 with 18.1 per cent working in the public sector and 24.3 per cent working in the private sector. The share of women labour in organized sector in India is shown in table-5

Table 5: Women employment in organized sector (figures in thousands)

Year	Public sector			Private sector			Total		
	Women	Total	% of women	Women	Total	% of women	Women	Total	% of women
1995	2600.4	19466.3	13.4	1627.5	8058.5	20.2	4227.9	27524.7	15.4
2000	2857.0	19313.7	14.8	2065.8	8646.0	23.9	4922.8	27959.7	17.6
2005	2921.0	18006.6	16.2	2095.3	8452.3	24.8	5016.2	26458.6	19.0
2010	3196.0	17862.0	17.9	2662.5	10846.0	24.5	5858.6	28708.0	20.4
2011	3171.0	17548.0	18.1	2783.0	11452.0	24.3	5954.0	28999.0	20.5

Source: Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labor and Employment

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In total workforce of 457.5 million, women workers are about 148 million. 107.7 million women workers are in agriculture and 40.3 million in non-agriculture. Only about 6.0 million women workers are in formal sector including 0.8 million in formal agricultural sector. The rest 142 million women workers are in informal sector including 106.9 million in agriculture and 35.1 million in non-agriculture sector. Details on formal informal workers employment is shown in table-6

Table 6: Formal and Informal workers/employment (million)

Category	Combined		
	Male	Female	Total
Total Workers	309.4	148.0	457.5
Agriculture	151.2	107.7	258.9
Non-agriculture	158.2	40.3	198.5
Organized Sector	28.8	6.0	34.9
Agriculture	2.0	0.8	2.9
Non-agriculture	26.8	5.2	32.0
Unorganized Sector	280.6	142.0	422.6
Agriculture	149.2	106.9	256.1
Non-agriculture	131.4	35.1	166.5

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Source: *The Report on Conditions of Work and promotion of Livelihoods in unorganized Sector, National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector, Government of India 2007.*

Major proportion of women workers are engaged in informal sector. Among the women workers engaged in informal sector, about 20.00 per cent work in the urban centres. Majority of women workers who work in the informal sector hails from poor sections of society. They were the sole supporters of their families. These women labourers are not availing the membership of authentic registered trade unions. The bargaining power of these women are very much poor. They were made to work for the long duration at low wages. Discrimination against women is more in urban labour market than the rural labour market. It has reduced the participation of women in economic activities. Women workers in informal sector do not have choice to work or not to work due to necessity of income. Opportunities available to the women laborers are very much less in informal sector. They also paid low wages irrespective of their skill and efficiency. Further, women find difficult in getting employment in the organized sector.

Women in Informal Sector – Karnataka

About 53.0 per cent of women and 42.0 per cent of men were engaged in the Informal sector in the Karnataka State.(2001 Census) Informal sector activities includes agriculture, cattle rearing, forestry, horticulture, mines and stone quarrying, construction, sericulture, Beedi rolling, trade and commerce etc. Women engaged in these activities have larger periods of employment. Informal sector activities are characterized by long hours of work, job insecurity, poverty, credit, bonded labour, migration, low wages and so on. Majority of women in the informal sector are poor and belongs to the backward castes, scheduled castes and tribes. They are economically weak, socially disadvantaged and educationally backward.

Women engaged in different activities

Sericulture, Beedi rolling, Agarabathi production, Embroidery, Metal industry, Flower industry, Bamboo weavers, Consumer industry, Women potters, Dairy industry and Arts and crafts industry and so on are the important Informal sector activities where women are largely employed. Karnataka has the advantage of being pioneer in the field of Sericulture. Most of the activities being done within the house, many women find it convenient to engage in this activity. Beedi rolling is another activity being largely done by the women. Men employed in this activity constitute only five to ten percent of the workforce. Agarabathi production is a household activity which is largely run by women workers. About two lakh women are engaged in this activity in Karnataka. Embroidery is a source of self employment for women. But market linkage is weak for this activity. Therefore, women do not get minimum wages. Metal industry includes the production of decorative pieces, metal designs and so on. Large women are engaged in Metal industry. Middle men play major role in the marketing of this activity. Hence women do not get adequate remuneration for their hard work.

Important initiatives for Informal Sector

Several attempts were made during Five Year Plan to create employment opportunities for the unemployed. Few of them includes in informal sector as well. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA passed in the year 2005). This Act provides a legal guarantee of hundred days wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult member volunteer to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage rate notified for agricultural labour prescribed in the state or else an unemployment allowance. Informal sector in India is without

any social security and surety of work. The NREGA makes it compulsory for the Government bodies to ensure that every household which volunteers for work gets at least hundred days of employment in a year. The Act also has provisions that if the guaranteed work is not given within specified time, an unemployment allowance is guaranteed.

Social Security Bill for Unorganized Sector

Unorganized sector workers social security Bill was passed in December 2008. This bill provides an opportunity to the millions of workers in the informal sector in India to raise their voices to improve their social security.

Skill Development programme

For the purpose of skill development, an autonomous body, National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) was set up in June 2013 by the Government of India. It co-ordinate and harmonize the skill development activities in the country. It helps to develop skills among the marginalized groups as well as women to take up informal sector activities.

National Rural Livelihood Mission

National Rural Livelihood Mission was established by the Government of India in June 2010. The primary objective of NRLM is to reduce poverty by promoting diversified and gainful self employment and wage employment opportunities on a sustainable basis through building strong and sustainable grassroots institutions of the poor.

Problems of Informal Sector

Women in the Informal Sector are facing several problems. Poor socio-economic background of the rural women has hampered the growth of rural Informal Sector. Low level of education prevented rural women to take up risks involved in informal activities. Low level of management skill made them to depend on the family members to run the concern. Credit is one of the basic requirements for the development of rural informal sector. Non- availability of enough source of credit has hampered the growth of this sector for several years. The infrastructural facilities are inadequate to develop informal activities in rural areas. Development of infrastructural facilities like village roadways, power supply would definitely contribute to the development of informal activities in the rural areas. Family related challenges which include marriage, dual commitment, socio-cultural barriers, lack of confidence and fear of success. Family attachment and responsibility have restricted the mobility of women in order to undertake the informal activities.

Globalization of the economy has adversely affected on informal sector. Some of the products which are produced large scale in the foreign country are dumped to the domestic market. It posed new challenge to the domestic informal sector. Inconsistent demand for the products produced under the informal sector is also a threat to the growth of informal sector. Today consumers have got enough alternatives in the market. Hence only competent entrepreneur may remain in the market. Lack of support by the government for the welfare of workers in the informal sector as well as poor encouragement to the development of informal activities became threat to the growth of informal sector

Conclusion

Informal sector largely contributes to the Gross Domestic Product and employment potential of the nation. Women workforce contribute equal share in the total workforce of the country. A

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major proportion of women workforce in the backward region depends on informal sector activities. Informal sector activities may be classified as traditional and modern. Few of the traditional activities are vanishing; few new activities emerge in the process of development. Globalization and changing marketing scenario has brought about new opportunities for the informal sector activities. A large number of modern informal sector activities gained importance and became source of employment for men and women. Women with low socio-economic background largely depend on the informal sector activities for their well-being. Informal sector activities became their self employment venture to generate income to their family, which resulted in women empowerment. Economic empowerment of women can improve the social, educational and political status of women.

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