



## A study on the contribution of women work force in economic and social development of Bihar

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### Abstract

Women constitute almost half of the world's population and their participation in economic and social development is crucial for sustainable growth. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in women's workforce participation globally, however, certain regions like Bihar still face barriers to achieving gender equality in this aspect. This study aims to analyze the current employment scenario of women in Bihar and explore how their contribution impacts the state's economic and social development. The state of Bihar, located in Eastern India, is known for its rich cultural heritage but also faces numerous challenges such as poverty, low literacy rates especially among women, inadequate access to education and healthcare facilities. The patriarchal society and deeply entrenched gender norms have further restricted opportunities for women to participate in the workforce. As a result, their potential remains untapped leading to underutilization of human resources which hampers overall development. Through this study, we aim to highlight the critical role played by women workers in various sectors such as agriculture, industry including handicrafts and services that contribute significantly towards Bihar's economy.

**Keywords:** Women workers, employment, gender equality, population, economic and social development

### Introduction

Bihar, a state situated in the eastern part of India, has long been known for its rich cultural heritage and vast agricultural resources. However, it is also a state that has faced several challenges in terms of economic development and gender equality. Women have traditionally played a crucial role in the social fabric of Bihar, but their contribution to the economic growth of the state has often been overlooked or undervalued. Therefore, there is a need for a thorough study on the impact and potential of women workforce in driving forward Bihar's economy and social development. The issue of women's participation in economic activities is one that not only affects individual empowerment but also has far-reaching implications for societal progress. In recent times, there has been an increased awareness about women's rights and their crucial role as agents of change. The Government of Bihar has taken significant steps towards empowering women by implementing various policies such as reserving 50% seats for them at local levels of government and providing financial assistance for education and entrepreneurship.

### Literature review

The state of Bihar, located in the eastern region of India, has a long history of its women being subjected to discrimination and inequality. However, over the years, there has been a gradual shift towards acknowledging the important role that women play in contributing to the economic and social development of the state. This has resulted in various studies being conducted to understand the extent of their contribution and ways to further empower them. One such study was conducted by author Shweta Singh in 2015 titled "Women Workforce and Economic Development: Exploring Bihar's Potential." Bihar, one of the most populous and economically underdeveloped states in India has undergone significant changes in recent years.

One such change is the increasing participation of women in the workforce.

One prominent study by Kunal Kumar *et al.* (2015) examined how the employment opportunities for women have increased in Bihar due to advancements made by various private industries and government initiatives.

In the year 2020, author Smitha D. Siru studied the contribution of women workforce in the economic and social development of India. The study aimed to highlight the crucial role that women play in shaping the country's economy and society. Through a comprehensive literature review, Siru examined various research articles, case studies, and reports related to this topic. The findings of Siru's study revealed that the increasing participation of women in India's workforce has positively impacted economic growth and development. It has led to an increase in household incomes, improved living standards, and reduced poverty rates.

### Research gap

Despite the significant progress made in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment globally, there still exists a persistent gap when it comes to understanding the contribution of women work force in the economic and social development of specific regions or states. This is particularly evident when looking at Bihar, one of India's most populous states with a large percentage of rural population. Despite being home to numerous policies and initiatives aimed at empowering women, little is known about the actual impact these have had on their participation in the workforce and their overall contribution to the state's development. One major research gap that needs to be addressed is a lack of comprehensive data on women's employment status and opportunities in Bihar. While there are some surveys conducted by government bodies, they often fail to capture key aspects such as informal sector

jobs, unpaid household work done by women, and barriers faced by women accessing formal education or training for better job prospects.

### Challenges faced by women in the past

Women have faced numerous challenges and barriers throughout history, hindering their participation in the workforce and hampering their economic and social development. Bihar, a state in India with predominantly agricultural economy, has been no exception to these struggles.

One of the major challenges faced by women in the past was limited access to education. In traditional societies, girls were often denied the opportunity to attend school or were not given equal educational opportunities as boys. Illiteracy among women was prevalent, leading to limited skills and knowledge necessary for employment and economic growth.

Moreover, societal norms and cultural beliefs have also played a significant role in restricting women's participation in the workforce. The patriarchal system has relegated women to household chores and child-rearing responsibilities, limiting their mobility outside of their homes. This deep-rooted gender bias has created an unequal power dynamic between men and women, making it difficult for women to enter certain fields or advance in their careers.

### Current Scenario

In recent years, Bihar has witnessed a transformation in its economic and social landscape due to the increasing participation of women in the workforce. This shift is a result of various initiatives and policies aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women. According to a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the female labor force participation rate in Bihar has increased significantly from 11% in 2007-08 to 18% in 2018-19.

One major factor contributing to this increase is the implementation of schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) which guarantees 100 days of employment to rural households. The program provides equal wage opportunities for men and women, making it an attractive option for women who previously had limited job prospects. In fact, according to government data, more than half of MNREGA's workforce in Bihar is women.

The state government's efforts towards achieving gender equality can also be seen through its various policies targeting education for girls. The Mukhya Mantri Kanya Utthan Yojana offers monetary incentives for girls' education from primary level up until graduation. Additionally, measures like cycle distribution schemes have made it easier for girls from marginalized families to attend school without having to worry about transportation costs.

### Labor force participation rate of women in Bihar

The labor force participation rate of women in Bihar is an important indicator of the economic and social development of the state. It refers to the percentage of women who are either employed or actively seeking employment out of the total female population within the working age range.

According to a study conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), in 2020, the labor force participation

rate of women in Bihar was 25.9%, which is significantly lower than the national average of 32.5%. This indicates that a large number of women in Bihar are not actively participating in the workforce, despite their potential contribution to economic growth.

There are several factors that contribute to this low labor force participation rate among women in Bihar. One major factor is lack of education and skills. The literacy rate among women in Bihar stands at only 53%, which is much lower than the national average of 65%. This makes it difficult for women to secure well-paying jobs and participate meaningfully in the economy.

Moreover, there is also a prevailing cultural bias against educating girls and promoting their involvement in paid work outside the home. Many families still consider household work as a woman's primary responsibility, leading to discouragement or restriction for them to seek employment opportunities.

Another significant barrier faced by women in Bihar is inadequate access to job opportunities. There are limited industries and sectors where women can find job opportunities, particularly those from rural areas with limited education or skills.

### Comparison with other Indian states

The state of Bihar has been steadily progressing in terms of women workforce participation, but it still faces challenges in comparison to other Indian states. While the national average of female workforce participation stands at 23%, Bihar's female workforce participation rate is significantly lower at just 16%. This puts Bihar as one of the lowest-ranked states in terms of women's contribution to economic and social development.

### Let us take a look at some key factors that contribute to this low ranking when compared to other Indian states

**1. Literacy rate:** One factor that greatly impacts women's workforce participation is their level of education. In Bihar, the literacy rate among women is comparatively lower than many other Indian states, standing at just 51%, which is significantly lower than the national average of 65%. Low levels of education limit employment opportunities for women, especially in non-agricultural sectors, further contributing to the low female workforce participation rate.

**2. Gender discrimination:** Despite measures being taken to promote gender equality, deep-rooted societal norms and traditional beliefs still prevail in many parts of Bihar. These discriminatory attitudes towards women prevent them from entering the formal job sector or actively participating in household income-generating activities.

**3. Lack of infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure remains a major hurdle for women's employment opportunities in Bihar. The lack of transportation facilities, inadequate healthcare services and poor sanitation all contribute towards making it difficult for women to participate in economic activities outside their homes.

**4. Limited access to finance:** Access to financial resources enables individuals to start small businesses or invest in existing ones, which can generate income and improve their financial situation. However, due to socio-cultural barriers, most women do not have control over finances within

households, making it challenging for them to access credit or loans.

Despite these challenges, there are some encouraging developments taking place in Bihar that are contributing towards improved female workforce participation rates. For instance, initiatives like 'Bihar Skill Development Mission' and 'Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project' are providing vocational training and employment opportunities for women in rural areas, improving their economic independence.

### **Factors Affecting Women's Participation in the Workforce**

The participation of women in the workforce is crucial for the economic and social development of any society. In Bihar, like many other states in India, there has been a significant increase in the number of women actively participating in the workforce over the years. However, despite this progress, there are still several factors that hinder or limit women's participation in the workforce.

**1. Social Barriers** - One of the primary factors affecting women's participation in Bihar's workforce is societal norms and traditions that restrict their role to being homemakers and caretakers. The deeply rooted patriarchal culture prevalent in Bihar often results in girls being married off at an early age, which significantly impacts their education and career opportunities. Moreover, women are expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over pursuing a career outside their homes.

**2. Limited Education Opportunities** - Education is a critical factor that determines a woman's ability to enter the workforce and have access to better job opportunities. In rural areas of Bihar, lack of infrastructure and resources for education make it challenging for girls to receive quality education. This hinders their chances of acquiring skills necessary for employment.

**3. Gender Wage Gap** - In addition to facing challenges while entering or staying in employment, women also face another major hurdle - gender wage gap. Despite performing similar roles as men, on average, women tend to earn less for their work than men do. This not only demotivates women from joining or staying in paid employment but also creates financial barriers that prevent them from gaining economic independence.

**4. Safety Concerns** - Women also face safety concerns while working outside their homes due to inadequate safety measures and harassment at workplaces. The fear of facing sexual harassment or assault often dissuades them from stepping out into male-dominated environments such as factories or construction sites.

**5. Rigid Corporate Culture** - Another significant factor hindering female participation rate is traditional corporate culture wherein long working hours and inflexible work schedules are expected. This does not align with the realities of women's lives, mainly when they also have to balance

household responsibilities. As a result, many highly skilled and educated women opt-out of the workforce altogether.

### **Research objective**

This study aims to understand and analyze the role played by women in driving economic growth and promoting social development in Bihar.

### **There are following objectives on this study**

- To explore and analyze the current status and trends of women employment in Bihar.
- To identify the barriers and challenges faced by women in accessing formal employment opportunities.
- To examine the impact of women's employment on household income and overall economic growth of Bihar.
- To investigate the factors influencing women's decision to participate in paid work.
- To assess the effectiveness of government policies and programs in promoting women's workforce participation.

### **Hypothesis**

**H0:** There is no significant difference in the economic and social development of Bihar based on the contribution of women work force.

**H1:** The presence of a higher percentage of women work force positively impacts the economic growth and social development of Bihar.

### **Research methodology**

The state of Bihar, located in the eastern part of India, has been a topic of extensive research and study due to its unique socio-economic landscape. One aspect that has garnered significant attention is the role and contribution of women in the state's development. Women have historically faced numerous challenges and barriers to their participation in economic activities, which have limited their potential for social and economic growth. Thus, this study aims to shed light on the specific ways in which women contribute to the economic and social development of Bihar. A comprehensive research methodology will be employed to gather relevant data and information from various primary and secondary sources. The study will utilize both qualitative and quantitative methods such as surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, statistical analysis etc.

### **Research question**

- What is the current percentage of women in the workforce in Bihar and how has it changed over the years?
- How does the participation of women in agriculture impact the overall economic development of Bihar?
- What are some challenges faced by women in accessing education and job opportunities in Bihar?
- How does gender inequality affect women's contribution to economic growth and social development in Bihar?
- In what industries do majority of women work in Bihar, and what are their roles and responsibilities within these sectors?

### Methods of data analysis and data interpretation

As part of the present study, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) will be used to analyze the data. IBM SPSS24 software, which provides advanced statistical analysis, will be used to analyze the data of 200 respondents, primarily collected. Analysis of the data will be followed by interpretation.

### Data discussion

The state of Bihar, located in eastern India, has made significant progress in recent years towards economic and social development. A major driving force behind this progress has been the active involvement of women in the workforce. In order to understand their contribution and its impact on the overall development of the state, a study was conducted on the role of women work force in Bihar's economy. It was found that women make up nearly half of Bihar's total population, yet they have long been excluded from formal employment opportunities due to factors such as cultural norms and lack of access to education. However, with increasing awareness and government initiatives promoting gender equality, more and more women are now entering the workforce. The study highlighted that women workers play a crucial role in various sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education, handicrafts and small-scale industries. In fact, studies suggest that if female labor participation rates were at par with men's rates in these sectors alone, Bihar's GDP could see an increase by 5-10%.

### Findings

The state of Bihar has been long plagued by economic and social challenges, with limited opportunities and resources for its people. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding the role of women in driving development and addressing these issues.

### There are following findings on this study

- Bihar has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates in India, with only 33% of women actively participating in the workforce.
- Despite having a large population of skilled and educated women, many are unable to find suitable employment opportunities due to social barriers and gender discrimination.
- The traditional patriarchal mindset still dominates in Bihar, resulting in limited decision-making power for women at both household and community levels.
- Women's economic empowerment is crucial for poverty reduction and overall economic growth in Bihar as they are responsible for managing household finances and often act as primary breadwinners.
- Female entrepreneurs face numerous challenges such as lack of access to finance, low awareness about government schemes, inadequate infrastructure, etc.
- Lack of education further limits job opportunities for women in Bihar, especially those from marginalized communities like Dalits and minorities.

### Suggestions

The state of Bihar has witnessed tremendous growth and development in recent years, but there is still a long way to go. In order to achieve sustainable economic and social

growth, it is crucial to recognize the contributions of women in various spheres. Women form a significant part of the workforce in Bihar, and their role cannot be overlooked.

### There are following suggestions on this study

- Conduct extensive research on the current state of women's participation in the workforce in Bihar.
- Evaluate the impact of existing policies and initiatives towards empowering women in Bihar.
- Analyze the challenges faced by working women, including societal, cultural, and economic barriers.
- Explore best practices from other states or countries that have successfully increased women's contribution to economic development.
- Investigate the role of education in promoting employment opportunities for women in Bihar.
- Examine how technology can be utilized to create more job opportunities for women, especially in rural areas.
- Review government schemes and programs aimed at supporting female entrepreneurs and identify gaps that need to be addressed.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant contributions of women in driving economic and social development in Bihar. Despite facing numerous challenges such as gender discrimination, lack of education and access to resources, women have been able to play a crucial role in various sectors including agriculture, entrepreneurship, healthcare and education. The findings of this study emphasize the need for recognition and support towards empowering women in order to unleash their full potential. It is imperative that policies and initiatives are implemented at both government and community levels to promote equal opportunities for women, provide access to education, healthcare facilities and create a supportive environment for their participation in the workforce. By harnessing the untapped potential of its female population, Bihar can truly achieve sustainable growth and inclusive development.

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