



GENDER GAP IN EMPLOYMENT - GS I AND III MAINS

Q. Female employment in India has an intrinsic relationship with female empowerment. Examine the factors responsible for their low participation in the economic roles and suggest measures to improve the same. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *NHRC seeks reports from Centre, TN over Foxconn's jobs bar on married women*

What's in the news?

- Taking into account media reports that Foxconn India, a major manufacturer of Apple products, is excluding married women from jobs at its iPhone assembly plant in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notices to the Centre and the state government.

Key takeaways:

- The National Human Rights Commission says that besides the Constitution, several international covenants and treaties mandate non-discrimination on the basis of gender in all forms of employment.

Gender Gap in Employment:

- Female employment in India has an intrinsic relationship with female empowerment.
- As per the latest PLFS report, around 32.8% females of working age (15 years and above) were in the labour force in 2021-22 which was just 23.3% in 2017-18, registering a surge of 9.5% points during these years.

Factors Responsible for Low Female Participation in Labour Force:

1. Social Norms of Patriarchal Society:

- Social norms about gender can be considered as a key obstacle towards gender equality.
- This section highlights the major reasons that forced women to be outside the labour force.

2. Lack of Access to Education:

- Women constitute a major pie in school dropouts in rural areas especially after attaining puberty.
- Lack of access to far away schools with limited or no amenities like rest rooms.

3. Double Burden:

- Women play the multidimensional role in the family and are, therefore, burdened with housework or house commitments, a situation that is influenced by gender norms.
- Such sort of work is overlooked, undervalued and under-reported. Hence the measurement is another key issue in the arena of low female LFP.



4. Unsafe Work Environment:

- Sexual harassment at workplaces and women's obligation to travel more distance for employment hinders their labour force participation rate.

5. Motherly Penalty:

- Attainment of motherhood and subsequent health aspects make women as a non-competitive labour in the labour market.
- They are the last to be hired and first to be sacked.

6. Lack of Desired Skills and Skill Level:

- Due to poor access to resources, women are not on par with the skill level of their male counterparts.

Government Initiatives to Improve Women Female Labour Force Participation in India:

1. Codification of the Labour Laws:

- The Government has notified four Labour Codes namely, the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

a. The Code on Social Security, 2020:

- It has provisions for enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, provision for mandatory crèche facilities in establishments having 50 or more employees, permitting women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures, etc.

b. The Code on Wages 2019:

- It has provisions that there shall be no discrimination among employees on the ground of gender in matters relating to wages in respect of work of similar nature done by any employee.

2. For Safe and Convenient Accommodation:

a. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013:

- It was enacted to ensure safe working spaces for women, provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment.

b. Working Women Hostel Scheme:

- It is grant-in-aid for construction of new/ expansion of existing buildings for providing hostel facilities to working women in cities, smaller towns and also in rural areas.



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3. Skill India Mission:

- In order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes.

4. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA):

- MGNREGA mandates that at least one third of the jobs generated under the scheme should be given to women.

5. Maternity Benefits:

- The enactment of the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 which provides for enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks and provisions for mandatory crèche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees.

Now women are poised to take part in a rapidly expanding economy. The government's strategy to address the time burden barrier to female participation will certainly be a proactive stance.

