Research Paper
Pattern of Female Employment among Social Groups in Rural Uttar Pradesh (UP)

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Corresponding Author: Arvind **Key words:** Female Labour Force Participation Rate, Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe	Women are essential to society, greatly enhancing the progress of a thriving and resilient nation; yet, patriarchal customs undermine their societal worth. Employment is a crucial factor in societal prosperity, capable of reducing differences among socioeconomic groups and genders, hence promoting equality within society. Uttar Pradesh (UP) occupies a preeminent position among all Indian states. Approximately 19 percent of the national population inhabits Uttar Pradesh, representing a significant fraction compared to other states. A thorough examination is necessary to improve comprehension of employment status and trends by gender and social group within the state. So the present study target the objective to identify employment status and trend by gender and social group in Uttar Pradesh with help of Periodic Labour Force Survey unit level data set and conclude that over the period of time women participation in regular nature of employment has declined among all social categories.

1. Introduction

Females play a crucial role in society, significantly contributing to the development of a prosperous and robust nation; however, patriarchal traditions diminish their societal value. Employment is a vital determinant of societal prosperity, capable of diminishing the disparities between socioeconomic groups and genders and, hence, fostering equality within society. Generating a surplus of employment could satisfy the essential standards of a thriving community. Employment is an essential component of a high standard of living. Uttar Pradesh (UP) holds the most significant place among all Indian states. Nearly 19 percent of the national population resides in Uttar Pradesh, constituting a substantial portion relative to all other states. A comprehensive investigation is warranted to enhance understanding of the status and pattern of employment based on gender and social group in the state. Uttar Pradesh (UP) possesses the largest population among all states in India. In Uttar Pradesh, the total population consists of approximately 52.3% male and 47.3% female (Census 2011), indicating that the female population is over half of the entire population of Uttar Pradesh.

The structure of Indian society is highly intricate and characterized by numerous stereotypes. Society is stratified by the caste system, which is founded on hierarchical principles; each caste adopts distinct attitudes towards women, with the patriarchal structure being a significant factor in the discrimination against females. Caste, class, and gender are intricately intertwined (Srinivas 1989; Dube 1996). Socio-cultural issues hold distinct significances for women across various castes. The socio-cultural phenomena of dalit women is less firmly defined compared to that of upper castes; yet, female subjection has afforded males greater freedom and enhanced their opportunities for higher-status wage employment (Ishita 2012). Uttar Pradesh mirrored India's complexity regarding caste and patriarchal society, adhering to the national framework of caste with an exception to the all-India trend (Ranjan 2009). Female employment exhibits considerable variation among socioeconomic groups, shaped by race, education, religion, and cultural standards. The worker population ratio (WPR) of Uttar Pradesh

reveals that males have a WPR of 53.4% and females have a WPR of 24.6%, both of which are lower than the national averages of 56.4% for males and 30.7% for females (PLFS 2023-24). Research indicates that female labor force involvement consistently diminishes as familial income and the attainment of higher education rise. The inverse correlation between schooling and the labor force participation is more pronounced among upper-caste women compared to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) due to their origins in higher socioeconomic families (Das & Desai 2003). The female Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) is correlated with caste, particularly among Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) Hindu women. Their employment quality is significantly poor, with a large concentration in the informal sector due to diminished family income, serving mostly as a supplementary source to inadequate household earnings (Singh & Mishra 2018; Mishra 2013). n the rural sector of Uttar Pradesh, the predominant occupation for women is agriculture, with 85% of female laborers employed in this sector (Mehrotra & Sinha 2017) but, In the non-farm sector, women from other castes (Non-SCs, STs, and OBCs) dominate (Rajan 2009). Women belongs to Scheduled Tribes mainly participate in subsistence agriculture, forest product collection, and labor-intensive employment (Xaxa 2004). Women belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes predominantly participate in the primary sector as agricultural laborers due to restricted access to education and land ownership (Desai & Jain 2009; Khera 2011)**.**

Typically, women from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are employed in industries that are already low-paying and less advantageous. The odds ratio results conducted by Awasthi and Shrivastav (2017) from the decomposition analysis validate the hypothesis that the likelihood of obtaining services (employment) or lucrative positions is greater among the upper castes compared to the lower castes. Analysis of the quinquennial and PLFS surveys reveals that women predominantly participate in the agricultural sector. This trend is particularly evident in Uttar Pradesh, where females are predominantly concentrated in the agriculture sector. A study by Mehrotra and Parida (2017) indicated that the recent impetus in structural transformation has displaced many women from agriculture in general. This development may serve as a positive indication for women, signifying a transition from low-paying agricultural employment to higher-paying non-agricultural sectors; nevertheless, comprehensive analysis utilizing PLFS datasets is necessary. So the present study aims to investigate the trend of female employment among social categories in rural Uttar Pradesh.

2. Material and Methods

The present study is mainly based on Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) unit level dataset provided by National Sample Survey Organization, Government of India, an annual survey on employment and unemployment in India. Cross tabulation has been used for data analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

The observation from various rounds of employment and unemployment survey and PLFS datasets can indicate that the labour force participation disparity between women and men in Uttar Pradesh remains significant in both rural and urban areas, although the gap from 2017-18 to 2023-24 has narrowed in both sectors. Now a day's among policy makers it has taken significant concerning debate over female labour force and employment participation rate. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has been notably low and continues to decline despite increasing income levels among their counterparts, attributable to patriarchal traditions (Abraham 2013). In the rural region, there is a clear indication of increase in the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), representing a significant improvement; however, the statistics for female LFPR remain exceedingly low. Overall Female Labour Force Participation Rate in rural area has increased significantly from 2017-18 (9.7) to 2023-24 (28.1). Statistics (Table 1) also indicates that females from vulnerable group's exhibit substantially higher Labour Force Participation Rate. Since 2017-18 to 2023-24 Female Labour Force Participation Rate has increased significantly in each social category in rural areas but LFPR of Scheduled Caste (SC) categories has increased significantly up to mark from 9.1 percent to 31 percent.

Table 1: Labour force Participation Rate of Male and Female in Uttar Pradesh by Social Categories

LFPR	Rural				Urban			
	2017-18		**2023-24**		**2017-18**		**2023-24**	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
ST Hindu	43.5	18.0	51.7	32.5	41.7	5.4	43.5	13.6
SC Hindu	50.6	9.1	53.1	31.0	53.8	11.8	53.9	17.5
OBC Hindu	50.3	11.0	56.2	32.1	56.0	8.0	58.1	15.1
Others Hindu	52.1	7.6	56.9	18.5	51.5	10.2	55.4	12.7
Muslims	48.4	8.7	51.4	18.1	53.8	5.1	58.8	9.6
All UP	50.3	9.7	54.7	28.1	53.7	8.2	56.9	13.5

Source: Author's Computation from Unit Level PLFS Dataset, 2017-18 and 2023-24

The comparison between rural and urban areas of Uttar Pradesh indicates still Female Labour Force Participation Rate is lower in urban areas but significant improvement can observe from 2017-18(8.2) to 2023-24(13.5). The highest participation rate can observe among Schedule Caste Category in urban Uttar Pradesh also.

Table 2: Work Participation Rate of Male and Female in Uttar Pradesh by Social Category

WPR	Rural				Urban			
	2017-18		2023-24		2017-18		2023-24	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
ST Hindu	39.4	18.0	51.7	32.5	40.5	4.8	43.5	13.6
SC Hindu	47.6	9.1	51.8	30.7	47.4	10.9	51.3	15.7
OBC Hindu	47.6	11.0	54.7	31.7	49.4	7.0	54.7	13.0
Others Hindu	48.6	7.1	55.4	17.4	46.8	8.6	51.4	11.0
Muslims	44.4	8.3	49.7	17.9	50.4	4.9	56.0	9.3
All UP	47.1	9.6	53.3	27.7	48.5	7.3	53.7	12.1

Source: Author's Computation from Unit Level PLFS Dataset, 2017-18 and 2023-24

In respect of Work Participation Rate there is also a substantial evidence of higher WPR for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste Categories in rural Uttar Pradesh (Table 2). But there is an excessive need to explore the nature of employment for these categories. These categories are mostly belongs to low income group due to poor asset allocation, lack of equal opportunity in the labour market, poor accessibility of education and health facilities, etc. Such types of discrimination originated through the caste system in India historically. STs and SCs had been socially excluded for a long time, even still. So it became more important to trace the nature of employment status among social categories. Is female belonging to these categories are more in regular nature of employment or casual employment.

Table 3: Distribution of Female Belonging to Different Social Category in Uttar Pradesh by Employment Status

	2017-18						2023-24					
	SE		RE		CL		SE		RE		CL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Rural												
ST Hindu	52.9	61.8	2.9	21.1	44.2	17.2	36.3	76.8	6.9	18.1	56.8	5.2
SC Hindu	48.0	64.1	7.3	8.6	44.7	27.4	56.8	83.9	7.3	2.8	35.9	13.3
OBC Hindu	72.2	89.8	9.4	5.0	18.4	5.2	77.7	92.3	8.1	2.2	14.2	5.5
Others Hindu	81.9	73.2	11.4	21.7	6.7	5.1	80.5	92.1	15.9	7.3	3.6	0.6
Muslims	59.6	73.6	10.9	1.8	29.5	24.7	66.5	95.8	10.2	1.8	23.3	2.4
All UP	65.2	78.5	9.3	7.6	25.5	13.9	70.9	90.0	9.2	2.9	19.9	7.1
Urban												
ST Hindu	16.8	9.1	59.4	71.0	23.7	19.9	45.0	75.3	49.5	24.7	5.6	NA
SC Hindu	43.2	39.2	36.0	42.4	20.8	18.4	34.4	49.1	42.3	43.2	23.3	7.8
OBC Hindu	51.8	52.1	38.5	42.7	9.8	5.2	51.6	60.6	37.0	37.0	11.4	2.4
Others Hindu	48.3	33.7	48.4	66.0	3.4	0.3	51.1	38.5	47.5	61.3	1.5	0.3
Muslims	54.1	64.9	26.5	27.1	19.4	8.0	57.5	73.6	22.2	19.3	20.4	7.2
All UP	49.8	46.2	37.3	46.2	13.0	7.6	50.2	56.2	36.3	39.8	13.5	4.0

Source: Author's Computation from Unit Level PLFS Dataset, 2017-18 and 2023-24
Note- SE- Self employed, RE- Regular employed, CL- Casual Labour

Some studies have exposed the story behind the casualisation of work for excluded categories (STs and SCs) in India. From the perspective of employment status, statistics states that Other Hindu female have always been higher in regular employment but the scenario of Uttar Pradesh is different from India (Table 3). According to PLFS 2017-18, the percentage of regularly employed is highest (21.7) for other Hindu women in the rural sector of Uttar Pradesh; but according to PLFS 2023-24, except for STs (18.1), all other social groups (SCs Hindu, OBCs Hindu, other Hindus and Muslims) female have declined very sharply by 2023-2024, and the scenario has changed (Table 3).

Women from Scheduled Castes are more frequently engaged in informal employment compared to other socioeconomic groups, attributable to pervasive poverty and various other factors. It is noteworthy that Other Hindu women have consistently exhibited minimal participation in informal employment, as evidenced by Tables 3. An examination of employment status reveals a notable decline in participation among both regular and casual workers across all social groups. However, it is significant to note that, following the decrease in casual labour, the participation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) surpasses that of other social groups, which may not serve as a favourable indicator for these communities. There has been a significant decline in casual employment among Other Hindus and Muslims. This analysis indicates that supply chains remain entrenched in the most precarious sector despite extensive governmental efforts over an extended period.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that over time, women's participation in regular employment has diminished across all social categories. Scheduled Castes are predominantly situated in the informal labour market within both rural and urban sectors, with push forces largely responsible for their entry into this market, compelling these groups to engage in precarious employment conditions. Muslim women are markedly under-represented in regular paying positions relative to all other social categories. Other Hindu women are predominantly employed in regular positions compared to others.

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