

Gender Related Employment Trends in Labour Market in India under the New Policy Regime

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, data from multiple rounds of the NSSO is used in this study. Individual studies and surveys from the literature are complemented with this data to provide a more accurate picture of the nature, pattern, and implications of labour market segmentation along gender lines. The study employs a tabular analysis technique as well as basic statistical techniques. The paper is broken into two sections to reflect the study's broad objectives. The first portion delves into the nature of gender-based labour market segmentation.

Keywords— NSSO, Labour Market, Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the initiation of economic reforms in Indian economy in 1991, its effect on various activities, especially on employment has remained the centre of discussion among economists, researchers and policy makers. Economists were worried about lower income groups who have virtually no cushion against adverse changes in economic conditions, even in the short run (Bhaduri and Nayyar, 1996). Any change that leads to adverse consequences for poorer households has been seen to affect women more adversely (Ghosh, S. Mukhopadhyay, 1994, 1999). So any policy change in good probability will have a gender differentiated effect through its impact on labour market and through changes in economics and social environment (Swapna Mukhopadhyay, 2003). Historically, Labour intensive export growth has been associated in many instances with a disproportionate increase in employment of women or the feminization of work force. (Mathew McCartney, 2004 and Wood, 1991). Some studies on India have analyzed the temporal and spatial dimensions of the feminisation of employment (Amitabh Kundu, 1997; A.N. Sharma, 1997; Reza, 1996; Lakshman, 1996). National Sample Survey Report 2004-05 shown very encouraging trends in female employment. But the latest published data by National Sample Survey on Key

Indicators of Employment and Unemployment in India 2009-10 (NSSO, 2011) has however shown a reversal of this trend. In this context, the paper is an attempt to analyse the gender related employment trends in India under the new policy regime.

II. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study uses the secondary data obtained from various rounds of NSSO. This data is supplemented by individual studies and surveys available in literature to get a more realistic picture of the nature, pattern and consequences of market segmentation of labour market on gender lines. Study uses tabular technique of analysis along with simple statistical tools. Keeping in view the broad objectives of the study, the paper is divided in two sections. First section discusses the nature of labour market segmentation on gender lines. Second section analyzes in detail the industrial distribution of workforce in India since 1993-94 and the last section sums up conclusions and policy implications.

III. LABOUR MARKET SEGMENTATION ON GENDER LINES

The analysis in this section is based on the information from different rounds of NSSO. This statistical information is indicative of the fact that despite trade liberalization and de-regularization of the domestic sector, gender differences in the industrial and occupational distribution of labour are not only persisting but rather increasing in the recent past to the disadvantage for women. Declining female employment rates and Female Work Participation Rates (FWPR) along with increased casualization of female workforce and rising gender gaps in wage earnings are alarm bells for the future.

A study of the distribution of male and female workers by broad industry groups over the last two decades of NSS rounds (Table-1).

Table-1: Changes in the Distribution of Male and Female Workers between Broad Industry Groups between 1983 and 2009-10

Year	NSS Round	Rural (Male)			Rural (Female)		
		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1983	38 th	77.5	10	12.2	87.5	7.4	4.8
1993-94	50 th	74.1	11.2	14.7	86.2	8.3	5.5
1999-2000	55 th	71.0	12.6	16.0	85.4	8.9	5.7
2005-06	62 nd	65.0	17.0	18.0	81.0	12.0	7.0
2009-10	66 th	63.0	19.0	18.0	79.0	13.0	8.0
Year	NSS Round	Urban (Male)			Urban (Female)		
		Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1983	38 th	10.3	34.2	55.0	31.0	30.6	37.6
1993-94	50 th	9.0	32.9	58.1	24.7	29.1	46.2
1999-2000	55 th	6.6	32.8	60.6	17.7	29.3	52.9
2005-06	62 nd	6.0	34.0	59.0	14.7	33.0	52.2
2009-10	66 th	6.0	35.0	59.0	14.0	33.0	53.0

Source: NSSO, Different Rounds.

It shows a slow decline in agricultural employment in rural but a sharp decline in urban areas for women workforce. Male-female employment differences have almost diminished in secondary sector in urban areas. There is a sharp increase for all categories in the service sector workforce in both rural and urban areas especially so for women. On the whole gender differences in urban areas have decreased but in rural areas they are still persisting.

Despite the positive change discussed above, recent NSSO report has captured a very negative trend showing a decline in total women workforce and Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR). The total workforce has remained the same in the country because an increase in the male workforce by 22.3 million between 2004-05 and 2009-10 was almost balanced by a decline in female workforce by more than 21 million. This is a very alarming trend. The FWPR which is shown in Table-2 was an all time low in 1999-2000 in rural areas.

Table 2: Declining Female Work Participation Rates (UPS and UPSS in percentage)

Year	NSS Round	Rural		Urban	
		UPSS	UPS	UPSS	UPS
1983	38 th	34.0	24.8	15.1	12.0
1993-94	50 th	32.8	23.4	15.5	12.1
1999-2000	55 th	29.9	23.1	13.9	11.7
2004-05	61 st	32.7	24.2	16.6	13.5
2009-10	64 th	28.9	21.6	13.8	11.8
2009-10	66 th	26.1	20.2	13.8	11.9

Source: Employment and Unemployment Reports, Various Rounds, NSSO.

It picked up in 2004-05, but again began to fall and was at its lowest ever figure of 20 percent in both principal status work/employment (UPS) and 26 percent in usual (principal + subsidiary) status work (UPPS) in 2009-10. Alike is the situation in urban areas. Similar trends were noticed between 1993-94 and 2004-05. NSS report (61st round), 2004-05 shown encouraging trends and gender

empowerment and feminisation of workforce became the buzzword. This trend reversed in 2007-08 and a trend of fall in employment rate and FWPR which started in 2007-08 is still continuing in 2009-10 according to the latest NSS report. Table-3 shows the unemployment rate for males & females in different years in urban and rural areas.

Table-3: Unemployment Rates in India

Year	NSS Round	Rural (Male)			Rural (Female)		
		US	CWS	CDS	US	CWS	CDS
1983	38 th	1.4	3.7	7.5	0.7	4.3	9.0
1999-2000	55 th	1.7	3.9	7.2	1.01	3.7	7.0
2005-06	62 nd	2.0	4.3	8.3	1.2	4.3	7.5
2009-10	66 th	2.0	3.0	6.0	2.0	4.0	8.0
Year	NSS Round	Urban (Male)			Urban (Female)		
		US	CWS	CDS	US	CWS	CDS
1983	38 th	5.1	6.7	9.2	4.9	7.5	9.4
1999-2000	55 th	4.5	5.6	7.3	5.7	7.3	11.0
2005-06	62 nd	4.5	5.8	7.9	6.3	7.7	10.1
2009-10	66 th	3.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	9.0

Source: NSSO, Different Rounds.

Increasing unemployment rates in Usual Status (US) and Current Daily Status (CDS), especially in rural areas are going to hit those females very badly who are in large number in society and belong to lower strata of the economy and society with little access to economic resources.

The above picture gets more worrisome when we notice the negative changes that are taking place in the distribution of labour status categories of male and

female workers over the last two decades. Table-4 clearly shows a continuous decline in self employment figures both for males and females. Along with this casualisation of female workforce has increased over time. Female casual labour figures in rural areas increased during 1993-94 and 1999-2000, decreased during 1999-2000 and 2005-06 but shown a sharp increase after this. Same is the case in urban areas also.

Table 4: Changes in the Distribution of Labour Status Categories Over Time

Year	NSS Round	Rural (Male)			Rural (Female)		
		Self	Regular	Casual	Self	Regular	Casual
1983	38 th	60.5	10.3	29.2	61.9	2.8	35.3
1993-94	50 th	6.7	8.5	33.8	58.6	2.7	38.7
1999-2000	55 th	55.0	8.8	36.2	57.3	3.1	39.6
2005-06	62 nd	56.7	10.0	33.3	62.2	3.9	33.9
2009-10	66 th	54.0	9.0	39.0	55.0	4.4	40.0
Year	NSS Round	Urban (Male)			Urban (Female)		
		Self	Regular	Casual	Self	Regular	Casual
1983	38 th	40.9	43.7	15.4	45.8	25.8	28.4
1993-94	50 th	41.7	42.0	16.3	45.8	28.4	25.8
1999-2000	55 th	41.5	41.7	16.8	45.3	33.3	21.4
2005-06	62 nd	42.4	42.0	15.7	43.8	39.7	16.5
2009-10	66 th	41.0	42.0	17.0	41.0	39.0	20.0

Source: NSSO, Different Rounds.

Decreasing self employment and regular employment figures and increasing casualisation of female workforce are alarming developments for female workers. These changes are far more sharper than their male counterparts, thereby indicating a widening gender gap in labour status category.

Another grim picture can be seen in the situation of women workers in the unorganized sector. Women constitute only 20 percent of the organized sector employment in 2009-10. From Table-5 we observe that in unorganized service sector enterprises in 2006, 17 percent of workers were females. Among working owners

Table-5: Per Thousand Distribution of Workers by Type of Worker and Sex (2006)

Type of worker		Rural			Urban			All		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
(1)		(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Working owner		315	31	346	211	25	236	525	56	581
Hired worker	Skilled	59	17	76	82	37	119	141	54	194
	Unskilled	28	4	32	48	12	60	76	16	91
Other worker/ helper		43	34	77	40	16	56	83	50	133
All		444	86	530	381	89	470	824	176	1000

Source: Sarvekshana, 90th issue, Vol: XXVI, Dec. 2006.

(58.13 percent), 90.36 percent were male and 9.64 percent were female. Among male workers (63.73 percent), 58.13 percent were working owners, whereas among female workers 31.86 were working owners. Among hired workers (28.5 percent), 72.39 percent were male and 27.61 percent were females. In the ‘other worker’ category, which constitutes 13.35 percent of the workers, 62 percent were male and 37.9 percent were female.

The higher percentage of female in ‘other worker’ category in comparison to other categories is

probably because the ‘other workers’ are generally the household members who help in running the enterprise without any remuneration. Unpaid workers have a high share among self employed women. NSSO data shows that in the post reform period between 1993-94 and 2007-08, unpaid workers have remained as high as 75 percent of the total rural self employed women. These figures in urban areas have remained as high as 43.5 to 48.7 percent during 1993-94 and 2007-08.

Table-6: Changes in Percentage of Self Employed unpaid women workers

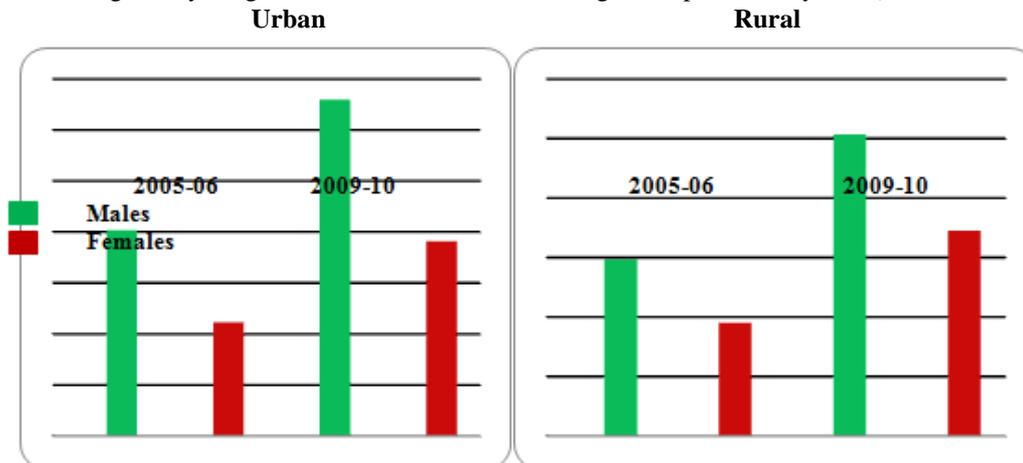
Year	Rural	Urban
1993-94	73.3	46.4
1999-2000	73.8	46.0
2004-05	76.0	48.7
2007-08	74.6	43.5

Source: NSSO, Different Rounds

A look at the distribution of male and female workers between broad industry groups (Table-1) leads to the conclusion that this unpaid female workforce is mainly concentrated in agriculture, while in urban areas they are distributed among industries, manufacturing and community and personal services (including domestic workers, teachers, launderers, beauticians etc.). This high percentage of unpaid female labourers shows the pathetic condition of the female workforce.

Persistently low wages for women as compared to those of men to the tune of anywhere between 50 percent to 80 percent makes the picture for female labourers even more grim. Wage earnings of females were only 64.7 percent of the corresponding male earnings in rural and urban areas and even lower at 60.5 percent in urban areas in 2004-05. These figures were 66.39 percent and 56.3 percent respectively in 1993-94. This shows a little reduction in male female wage differentials.

Figure-1: Average Daily Wages for Casual Labourer in the Age Group of 15-59 years. (2005-06 and 2009-10)



Source: NSSO, Different Rounds.

A high percentage of females are working as casual labourers especially in rural areas (38 percent). So it will be interesting to note the wage rates, at all India level, for casual workers. Figure-1 indicates that in case of casual wage/salaried employees, the male/female and rural/urban disparities in wage rates were found to be quite prominent.

In the rural sector, on an average Rs. 59.29 were earned in a day by male casual labourer whereas female casual labourer earned Rs.20 only. In urban areas one can see far more sharper wage differentials of the order of Rs.35. Male casual labourer earned Rs.80.70 and a female earned Rs. 44.57 only in a day. This suggests systematic job as well as wage discrimination in labour market on gender lines [Swapna Mukhopadhyay, 2003]. So it is clear that by and large, for the vast majority of Indian women in labour force, gender discrimination in Indian labour market is quite alive.

IV. INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF WORK FORCE IN INDIA

This section intends to examine gender related employment trends across broad industrial categories in rural and urban areas separately. Trade practices affect men and women differently. Trade liberalisation leads to an increase in employment opportunities for females. This hypothesis was proved internationally and it has been proved in India also, especially in export oriented sectors like cotton textiles, garments, jewellery, I-T enabled services etc. and in some domestic market oriented sectors, e.g., bidi industry where female workers were more than 70 percent of the total employed. This trend was particularly seen between 1999-2000 and 2004-05. This trend reversed with the initiation of global crisis. The ensuing discussion analyses these employment trends in three phases. First, between 1993-94 and 1999-2000; second 1993-94 and 2005-06 and the third phase 2005-06 to 2009-10. Table No. 7 and 8 present the industrial distribution of usually employed working population along gender lines.

Table-7: Percentage Distribution of 'Usually Employed' persons by their Industry of Work and Sex (Rural Area)

Sectors	1993-94		1999-00		2005-06		2009-10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	74.1	86.2	71.0	85.2	65.2	81.3	62.3	79.2
Manufacturing	7.0	7.0	7.3	7.6	8.4	10.1	7.0	7.5
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	0.3	0.1	0.2	0	0.3	0	0.2	0
Construction	3.2	0.9	4.5	1.1	6.9	1.5	11.3	5.2
Retail Trade	5.5	2.1	6.1	1.6	7.0	2.1	7.2	2.3
Hotel and Restaurants	0.5*		0.7	0.4	1.0	0.5	1.0	0.5
Transport and Storage	2.2	0.1	3.2	0.1	4.3	0.2	4.1	0.2
Financial Intermediation	0.3*		0.2	00	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1
Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	0.3*		0.3	0	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.1
Public Ad. & Defence	1.2*		1.7	0.4	1.2	0.3	1.2	0.5
Education	1.1*		1.5	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.5	2.0
Health	0.3*		0.4	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.5
Extra Territorial Organizations	0.2*		1.8	1.6	1.5	1.0	1.5	0.9
Private Household with Employment	1.8*		0.1	0.2	-	-	0.3	0.5

Source: Calculated from NSSO, Different Rounds.

- **Combined male + female employment figures are taken due to paucity of segregated data for these industrial categories in NSS Report 1993-94.**

Tables are indicative of the fact that between 1993-94 and 2009-2000 percentage of female workforce in different industrial categories like electricity, gas and water supply, retail trade, financial intermediation has

actually declined in rural areas. Employment in 'retail' increased substantially from 10 percent to 14 percent in urban areas. Same trends were seen in manufacturing, hotel and restaurants, transport and storage and financial

intermediation in urban areas. So, clearly the trends were negative for females workforce in the first phase of

reforms.

Table-8: Percentage Distribution of 'Usually Employed' persons by their Industry of Work and Sex (Urban Area)

Sectors	1993-94		1999-00		2005-06		2009-10	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	9.0	24.7	6.1	17.5	6.3	14.8	5.7	13.9
Manufacturing	23.5	24.1	22.4	24.0	29.0	28.3	21.8	23.9
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	1.7	0.3	0.8	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.7	0.4
Construction	6.9	4.1	8.7	4.8	9.8	4.0	11.4	4.7
Retail Trade	21.9	10.0	26.3	14.7	24.6	9.6	23.9	9.9
Hotel and Restaurants	0.9*		3.1	2.2	3.5	2.6	3.1	2.2
Transport and Storage	8.5	1.5	10.4	1.8	10.9	1.4	10.4	1.4
Financial Intermediation	1.0*		2.0	1.4	2.6	1.5	2.7	2.1
Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities			2.5	1.1	3.6	2.4	4.5	2.6
Public Ad. & Defence	2.8*		7.9	3.9	5.6	3.5	5.7	3.9
Education	1.7*		3.0	11.3	3.4	13.8	3.6	13.0
Health	0.5*		1.5	3.7	1.4	3.6	1.5	4.2
Extra Territorial Organizations	0.3*		3.4	7.6	3.1	5.0	3.0	6.4
Private Household with Employment	2.8*		0.7	5.2	0.8	9.7	0.9	7.1

Source: Calculated from NSSO, Different Rounds.

- Combined data for male + female in rural + urban areas are taken due to paucity of segregated data for these industrial categories in NSS Report 1993-94.

During 1999-2000 and 2005-06 female employment figures shown substantial increase in many industrial categories. During this time females and males were in neck to neck situation in manufacturing activity with 28.3 percent participation against 29 percent of male employment in urban areas. In rural areas too, this industrial category had encouraging figures at 10.1 percent and 8.4 percent for females and males. Electricity, gas and water supply had nil and marginal female employment figures in rural and urban areas respectively. 'Construction' shown marginal increase. In rural areas, construction activity employed only 1.5 percent women in comparison to 6.9 percent of male employment. In urban areas also, females were just half (4.8 percent) of the male employment (8.8 percent). It is manufacturing, where females registered a very good presence and female employment increased by four percentage points (from 24 to 28.3 percent) against just marginal increase in male employment during 1999-2000 and 2005-06. It was encouraging to note that females dominated and increasingly outnumbered males in education (13.8 percent), health (3.6 percent), entertainment and private household employment (9.7

percent) in urban areas. There was also marginal decline in certain categories like transport and storage, public administration and defence and health. There was a situation of de-feminisation in 'retail' and female employment in this category gone down from 14.7 percent to 9.8 percent in urban areas during 1999-2000 and 2004-05. One aspect of female employment in the service sector is that highly qualified and well paid female employment is seen in this sector but these women are low in number and there are large scale wage differentials among female workers.

An analysis of the employment trends between 2005-06 and 2009-10 shows a drop in female employment in many categories. There were already cautions that if trade liberalisation had encouraged feminization of workforce, then any drop in demand of exports could initiate the process of defeminisation also (Reena Singh, 2008). The mid quinquennial survey of 2007-08 (64th round) by NSSO has captured this negative trend. The slow down in economy between 2007-08 and 2009-10 due to global crisis has actually initiated this trend in Indian labour market. The data available for the year 2009-10 in NSSO survey (66th

round) substantiated the trends shown in 2007-08 report. The salient features of the employment trends during 2005-06 and 2009-10 can be summarised as follows:-

1. Manufacturing still seems to have held ground as the second largest employment for females after agriculture whose share in the male workforce equalled that of manufacturing in 2009-10. But female employment in manufacturing has gone down from 29 percent to 23.8 percent in urban areas. This sector in earlier phase has seen large scale substitution of male unionised labour by low paid, casualised and unformalised female labour due to rising sub contracting activities.
2. Apart from manufacturing, the industrial categories where female employment figures have gone down are agriculture, manufacturing, hotel and restaurant, education and private household with employment. Most surprising is the drop in female employment in the categories of education and private household with employment. The male employment, on the other hand, rates have increased in the later category.
3. There was masculinisation of 'construction' between 1993-94 and 2004-05. But liberalisation led growth reversed this trend probably due to MGNREGS. Female employment increased in construction especially in rural areas. In urban areas rising demand of labour has increased female employment figures in this category.
4. A deeper analysis of employment trends in construction leads to some worrisome conclusions. There is a reduction in female workforce by 21 million between 2004-05 and 2009-10 in agriculture, manufacturing and private household with employment. At the same time female employment is increasing in 'construction' in both rural and urban areas. Discussion in Part-I has already indicated a drop in self employment and regular employment figures and an increase in casualisation of female workforce. This leads to the conclusion that some of these displaced women from agriculture and some other sectors are being absorbed in construction as casual labourers especially in rural areas. This trend is a very negative for female workforce.

However, there is a limit to absorption of females in construction and soon it will become more and more difficult for these displaced women to find alternative employment. This will lead to increased female unemployment rates, a further drop in wage rates, a further drop in FWPR and further casualisation of female workforce.

V. CONCLUSION

The whole discussion pinpoints to the following conclusions:-

1. There is wide spread labour market segmentation on gender lines and gender discrimination in labour market is on the rise.
2. It was only during 1999-2000 and 2005-06 that feminization of workforce happened and that too in some specific industrial categories.
3. Usual status (US) and Current Daily Status (CDS) unemployment rates for female workers are on the rise, especially in rural areas.
4. Declining female work participation rates (FWPR) and a decline in aggregate female workforce since 2004-05 concludes that any increase in employment of female in some industrial categories is actually meaningless.
5. There is a drop in female self employment and regular employment figures with a rise in figures of female casual labourers both in urban and rural areas indicating hardships for females in coming future.

According to an estimate in 2007-08, only 15 percent of female population in the country received wage/income for their labour. In other words, 85 percent of female population is completely economically and financially dependent. Such dismal trends in female employment amidst the hype regarding expanding employment opportunities for women employment and high GDP growth rates needs immediate attention and policy intervention from policy makers.

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