

**Female Workforce Participation
and Vulnerability in Employment:
Evidence from Rural Jharkhand**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the level of female workforce participation, and quality of employment in rural Jharkhand based on primary survey conducted in 1300 households spread across 7 districts. The study has used mixed method approach to understand the work status and barriers faced by women in accessing quality of employment. Our main findings are that rather than geographic factors, female labour force participation varies more with social norms, which usually work in tandem with economic position of a household as reflected in land and asset-holdings. In addition, the cultural norms that assign most of the household responsibilities and unpaid work to women, prevent them from accessing paid work opportunities. We also find that there exists gender wage gap both in casual wage as well as in regular salaried job with women workers at a disadvantage. There is a need to design the skilling and employment opportunities for them which will be suitable for the women to balance both paid and domestic work and to close the gender gap in wages and salaries.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Tanuka Endow, Professor, Institute for Human Development has worked in the area of education, including on the issues of out of school children and low-cost private schools. She has worked on Human Development reports for various states including Delhi and Uttarakhand, and engaged in preparation of Vision documents for Uttarakhand and Delhi based on the Sustainable Development Goal framework. Her research areas also include urban development and employment, and she has led studies on rural-urban linkages in Bihar. She has led a study on assessment of Covid-impact on vulnerable population in India. She is currently engaged in a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the education of SC/ST children, and several studies on gender issues. She has worked with reputed national and international bodies and has publications in reputed journals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, gains in employment for women have not kept pace with the gains on the educational front (ILO 2016). In many regions in the world, not only are women more likely to become and remain unemployed compared to men, they also have to accept lower quality jobs. At the all-India level, women's labour force participation is low and has declined from 38.9% to 23.3% between 1999–2000 and 2017–18. By contrast, men's labour force participation rates, though also declining, remained relatively high during this period, averaging 83.6% in 1999–2000 and 75.8% in 2017–2018². The female workforce participation in India has been declining in spite of specific steps taken by the government on incentives, reservations, self-employment and skill training programmes. Between 2011–12 and 2017–18 majority of the states have experienced decline in female labour force participation rate. In Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Odisha, in particular, the average rate of decline of female labour force participation rate was worse than all India average (Thampi, 2020). In Jharkhand state, three-fourth of the women workers are in the agriculture, mining and quarrying in rural areas. Less than 10 per cent of the women workers are in the manufacturing sector (PLFS, 2017–18).

The official statistics on employment can capture only part of the women's work. Women work disproportionately more hours than men on 'unpaid work'. Unpaid work encompasses a gamut of activities usually related to the household, ranging from cleaning and cooking, fetching water, wood, feeding/tending cattle to taking care of children and the elderly/sick, disabled. In developed countries, women spend on an average around twice the time on unpaid care work compared to men. In developing countries, this ratio is roughly three times (ILO 2018). Such

1. Professor, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi.

2. Source: Datta et al (2020). Based on Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status (UPSS) for 15 years and above.

imbalance in the distribution of unpaid care work has serious adverse implications for women's work participation and thereby their economic empowerment.

This paper aims to explore, based on a primary survey, the level of female workforce participation in rural Jharkhand at present, and to examine the quality of their employment. Their work status, wages earned, and other aspects of employment are analysed along with the reasons for women staying out of the labour force. A brief discussion is also presented regarding the empowerment of women in rural Jharkhand. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the literature review. Details of sampling and survey instruments are described in Section 3. Results are discussed in Section 4. Finally, we provide a discussion of findings and conclusions in Section 5.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jharkhand has been described as a rich state inhabited by poor people with starvation, poverty and industrial backwardness amidst nature's unlimited bounties and blessing (Srivastava, 2009). Sharan (2013) found considerable regional differences in terms of poverty and vulnerabilities across various districts in Jharkhand. The poverty alleviation strategy in the State has almost bypassed this aspect. Kuzur (2013) has highlighted the transport accessibility problems in rural Jharkhand and its impact on slowing down development prospects in rural Jharkhand.

For over a hundred years, people from the tribal communities of Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions of Jharkhand, have been steadily migrating out of their homeland in search of livelihood. Because of the development policies of the Government, big dams and industries were established acquiring the lands and forests of the indigenous people, who depend on such resources for their livelihood. This usurpation caused a livelihood crisis for the tribal communities in Jharkhand and the displaced people were compelled to migrate to urban areas for their bread and butter at very low wages (Deogharia, 2012). Many studies found that migration is a significant livelihood strategy for poor households especially in the Eastern, Central and Western India where agriculture has low productivity (PRAXIS, 2002; Mosse et al, 2002; Hirway et al, 1999, Dayal, 2004, Srivastava 2003 and 1998; Connell et al 1976 and Mosse et al., 2002) . Census data from some districts in Jharkhand indicate that one out of every two households had a migrant labourer at the beginning of this century. Dayal and Karan (2001) studied the poverty and livelihood pattern in a tribal region of Jharkhand and found that poor female education, small land holding and displacement are the main drivers of poverty among the tribal households.

3. SAMPLING & STUDY INSTRUMENT

3.1 Sampling and Study Design

The quantitative data for the study was collected from the sample of households of Jharkhand during August- September 2018 by adopting a stratified multi-stage sampling design. The following sample design was adopted.

Selection of Districts: At the first stage, districts were selected based on the concentration of the tribal population in rural areas. Based on census 2011 population data, all districts were classified into three broad groups: (i) districts with more than 50 percent of tribal population, (ii) districts with 30 to 50 percent of tribal population, and (iii) districts with less than 30 percent of tribal population. The present study has selected a total of seven districts based on the share of tribal population, and three out of seven districts are from the first group, one district from the second group, and three districts from the third group. The selected districts are Gumla, Simdega, Dumka, Jamtara, Palamau, Latehar, and Paschim Singhbhum.

Selection of Blocks and Villages: From each district, one block was selected except for Paschim Singhbhum where two blocks were selected based on PPSWR (probability proportional to size with replacement), with the size being the rural population of the block as per census 2011. From each block, three villages with more than 40 percent of tribal population were selected again by PPSWR method. The village-wise total population for 2018 was projected based on 2001 and 2011 census data. Of the total projected households from selected villages, 20 percent of the households were taken as sample households, which were around 1300 households. The 1300 households were distributed among 24 selected villages in proportion to the population size of the villages.

3.2 Study Instruments

The survey consisted of a household questionnaire and questionnaire addressed at individuals such as key informants. It collected detailed information regarding the socio-economic background, demography, income, asset and employment structure at the household level. Detailed information about the gender-wise employment pattern, work conditions and wages were collected. The study also enquired into the reasons why many women in the age group of 15-29 years were not in the labour force. Other than the household survey, in-depth interview with key informants were conducted as well as FGD with the women in the Self Help Groups (SHG)

to understand the role of SHG as a pathway of women empowerment in the tribal areas of Jharkhand.

4. FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

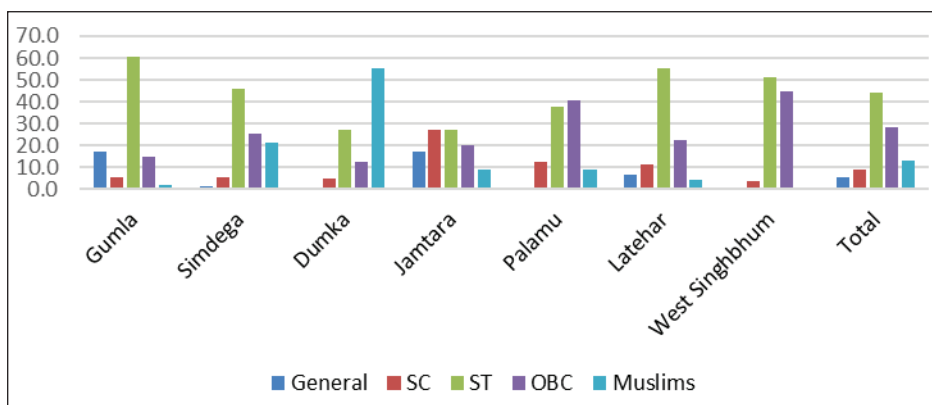
4.1 The Context: Background of Survey Respondents

4.1.1 Demographic Details and characteristics of Sample Households

Nearly half (44 %) the sample population belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities. Other Backward Classes (OBC) has a sizeable share at 28 percent, Muslims have 13 percent share and SCs 9.2 percent share of the sample population. The general category accounts for a meagre 5.4 per cent of the total (Figure 1).

Almost all the districts surveyed are heavily populated by marginalized communities such as SC, ST and OBC (Figure 1). Gumla and Jamtara are the only districts with a significant general category population, while Simdega and Dumka districts are home to a sizeable Muslim population.

Figure 1
Distribution of Population by Social Groups (Percentage)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

4.1.2 Deprivation of sample households in terms of Land and Asset ownership

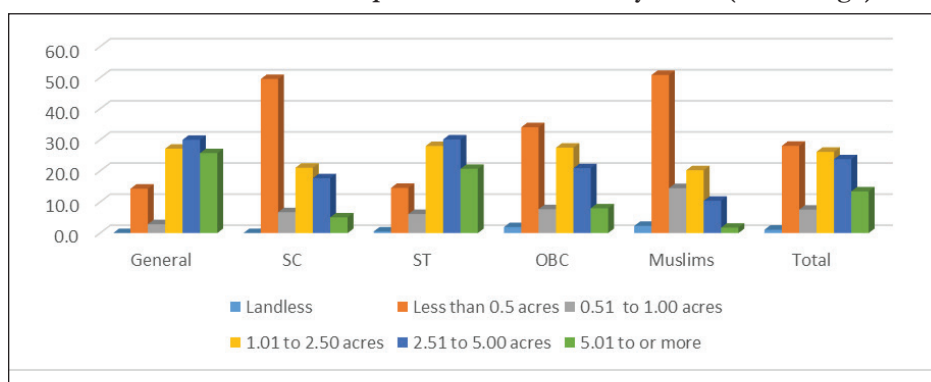
Jharkhand has the second-highest poverty level in the country at 37 per cent and rural poverty in the state is 41 per cent³. In the sample villages, there is a great deal of poverty among the people. The estimated poverty headcount ratio in Jharkhand in 2018 was 51.73 per cent. Scheduled Tribe communities and Muslims

3. Based on Tendulkar poverty line, 2011-12

have experienced the highest poverty⁴.

Land is an important capital resource that has far reaching influence in income, wealth generation and improvement in standard of living. Figure 2 shows the disparity among social and religious groups in terms of ownership of land in rural Jharkhand. In spite of constituting the majority of population, only one-fifth of STs own 5.01 or more acres of land, whereas among the general category, 25.7 percent own more than 5.01 acres of cultivated land.

Figure 2
Distribution of Ownership of Cultivable Land by Caste (Percentage)

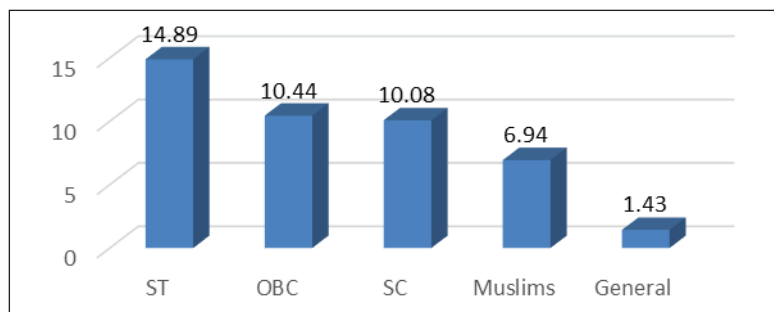


Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The asset holding helps households to generate income and also helps as collateral during emergencies. In case of economic shocks, families can cope if they possess adequate assets. In the absence of assets, however, when income flows are disrupted, the household would have little to fall back on. Thus, whether households slip into poverty in the long-term, depends on their ownership of assets. In order to understand the asset ownership status, sample households have been identified as deprived in ownership of durable assets if the household does not own more than one of these assets: radio, TV, telephone, computer, bicycle, motorbike or refrigerator, computer. The analysis shows that on an average, 11.41 per cent of the households are deprived of durable assets. Deprivation in durable assets is highest among ST households and the lowest among general caste households (Figure 3).

4. Poverty line for 2018 is recalculated by inflating the 2011-12 Tendulkar poverty line.

Figure 3
Deprivation in Durable Assets by Social Group (Percentage)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018.

However, during the last decade there appears to have been an improvement in the economic status of the respondent households. The qualitative information obtained from the FGDs and key informant interviews among the villagers in survey areas indicated clearly that there has been an upturn in their economic status during the last ten years.

The findings from FGD also indicate that there is improvement in the access to food in terms of both quantity and quality compared to the previous decade. According to respondents the Public Distribution System (PDS) has favourably impacted the people's lives. Yet gaps in access to Government schemes shows the relative deprivation of STs and SCs. The major concern is that almost half the households did not possess any card so they are deprived from provision of subsidized ration from PDS.

4.2 Labour force/ work force participation and Gender gap

Notwithstanding better access to food during the last decade, the economic deprivation of the sample households in Jharkhand, especially for those belonging to ST and SC communities, has been evident from the above discussion. This provides an indication of the vulnerability of employment for these families. The information on workforce and labour force participation was collected during the survey on the basis of the Usual Principal Status (UPS). The WPR and LFPR for females aged 15 years and above was estimated to be low at 26.4 percent and 26.5 percent respectively. Compared to male participation rates, there was an approximate gender gap of 30 percentage points, the female participation being much lower than the male participation rates (Table 2). The age group-wise WPR and LFPR for

men and women shows that the ages 25 to 59 years account for the major share of work participation (UPS) for women. It is also seen that barring the youngest and oldest age groups, there is a large gender gap of 45-50 percentage points between women and men. The lowest gap occurs for the 15-19 years group, when some of the youth are still likely to be engaged in education.

Table 2
WPR and LFPR (UPS) in different age-groups 2018 (15 years and above)

Age Group	WPR			LFPR		
	Male	Female	Gender Gap	Male	Female	Gender Gap
	(1)	(2)	(3) = (1)-(2)	(1)	(2)	(3) = (1)-(2)
15 - 19	42.8	15.5	27.3	43.8	15.5	28.3
20 - 24	81.2	31.6	49.6	82.0	31.9	50.1
25 - 29	93.9	43.6	50.3	95.9	44.4	51.5
30 - 49	99.0	51.5	47.5	99.1	51.5	47.6
50 - 59	97.6	53.0	44.6	97.6	53.0	44.6
60 - 64	88.2	39.3	48.9	88.2	39.3	48.9
65+	53.7	13.4	40.3	53.7	13.4	40.3
Total	56.7	26.4	30.3	57.1	26.5	30.6

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Since the WPR and LFPR estimates are based on UPS, these statistics do not capture the secondary activities that women carry out from time to time during the year⁵. There is almost no difference between WPR and LFPR for women except for 25-29 years group, indicating that there is no unmet demand from women for paid work.

Considering the main working years, the age category 15-64 years, the estimated WPR for females is 40 percent and for men it is more than double at 83.6 percent (Table 3). Among the seven districts surveyed, female WPR is the lowest in Latehar (30.9%) and the highest in Simdega (52.2%).

⁵ An earlier survey conducted by IHD in 1999-2000 in three villages of Jharkhand found evidence of a lot of secondary activity for women, and thus high WPR based on UPSS (Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status).

Table 3

Work Participation Rate (UPS) (15-64 years) in selected districts of Jharkhand 2018

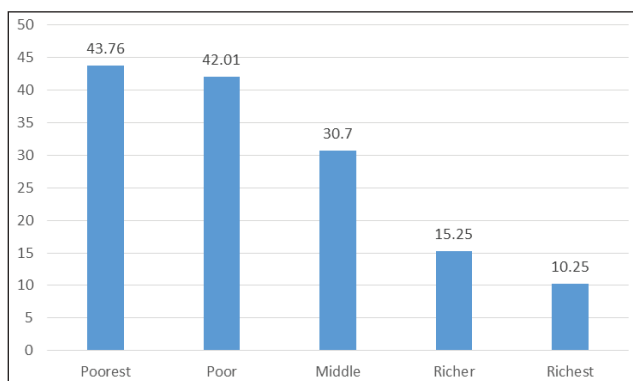
<i>Districts</i>	<i>Main workers 2018</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Gumla	88.0	39.3	66.1
Palamu	77.5	33.5	56.7
Dumka	82.9	37.9	61.2
Simdega	79.1	52.2	65.9
Jamtara	86.6	44.8	68.5
Latehar	78.6	30.9	55.5
West Singhbhum	87.6	43.3	65.2
<i>Socio-religious groups</i>			
General	77.0	16.2	49.8
SC	86.4	39.0	64.1
ST	85.9	50.8	68.9
OBC	80.7	34.5	58.8
Muslims	83.2	27.9	57.3
Total	83.6	40.5	63.0

Note: Primary Survey 2018

There is significant variation in WPR among the social groups. In the sample survey, STs constituted the majority with 44 percent share in total respondents and the other major social group was OBCs with a 28.1 percent share. The ST women have the highest WPR in 2018 at 50.8 percent, women belonging to OBC have a WPR of 34.5 percent and the general category have the lowest WPR at 16.2 percent.

There is some association between household's economic classes (as measured by monthly per capita consumption expenditure quintile) and female work participation. Figure 4 reveals that women work participation is highest in the two poorest class and steadily decline as economic situation of the households improved.

Figure 4

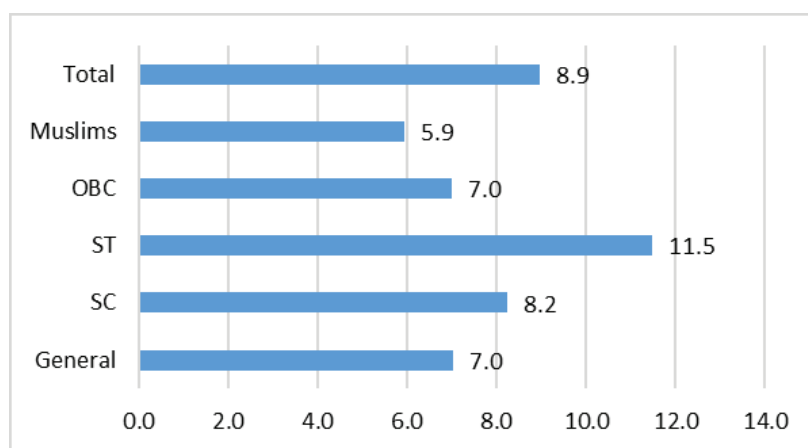
Female Work Participation by Consumption Expenditure Class (%)

4.3 Migration and female work participation

The quantitative as well as the qualitative information obtained from the FGDs and key informant interviews among the villagers in survey areas established clearly that a cornerstone of the improvement in the economic status of the villagers over the last ten years was the sustained migration by the villagers out of Jharkhand. The destinations are varied: Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Karnataka, West Bengal, and many other states. Majority of the migrants are male, although there are some female migrants as well. As migration by males increased in the state, women have played an increasingly important role in managing the household and any land that the family might possess, getting reflected in the relatively high WPR of 40 percent of the main workers (15-64 years) in the survey in 2018⁶.

Migration was observed among all social groups and most among the ST community (Figure 5). As mentioned earlier, STs constituted the majority in the sample with 44 percent share in total respondents. They also exhibit the highest share of migrants at 11.5 percent. The migrant workers' share was found to be lower than the sample average of 8.9 percent for all communities other than STs.

Figure 5
Share (%) of Migrant workers across Social Groups



Source: Primary Survey 2018

6. The earlier 1999-2000 survey indicated a much lower female WPR of 20 percent for women aged 15-59 years (UPS).

4.4 Occupational structure

4.4.1 Work Status for men and women

The work status for Jharkhand sample households shows that for men and women alike, the quality of work is poor as reflected in the extremely low share of regular salaried workers at less than 10 percent (Table 4). For women, the highest share is accounted for by unpaid family labour (33.9%), showing women's relative disempowerment compared to men. For men, this share is very low at 7 percent. The men are relatively more in earning work, though low-paying, such as casual wage labour (44.7%) and self-employment (39.2%), with the latter usually not being remunerative as an occupation. Women, too, have a greater share for casual wage labour (32.4%) than self-employed (26%).

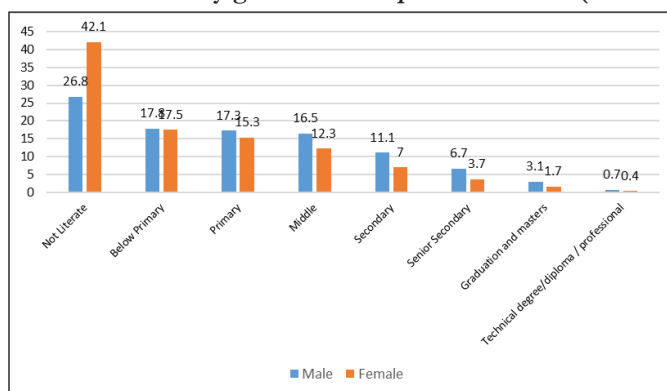
Table 4
Work status for sample men and women workers in Jharkhand

	Male	Female	Total
Self employed	39.2	26.0	35.2
Regular salaried	9.1	7.6	8.7
Casual wage labour	44.7	32.4	40.9
Unpaid family labour	7.0	33.9	15.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Primary Survey 2018

The low share of regular work among the sample workers is expected, given their poor educational status, based on the data is from the primary survey carried out by IHD in 2018 (Figure 6).

Figure 6
Educational status by gender in sample households (% of total)

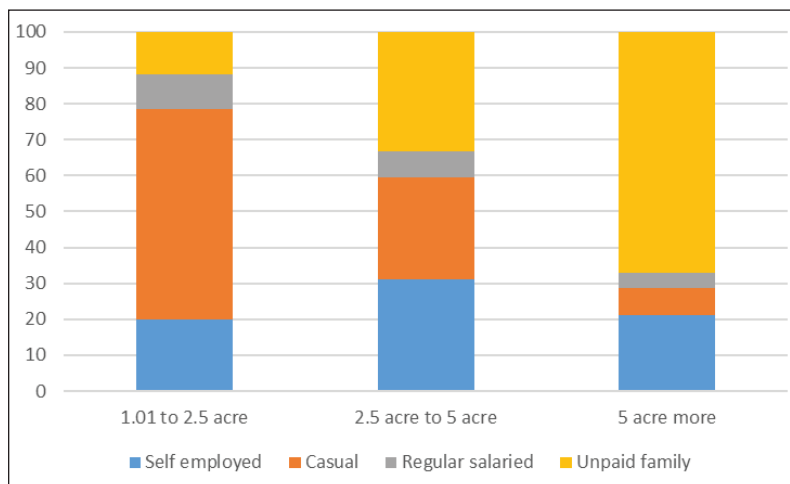


Source: Primary Survey 2018

The education level is very low for men and women alike, but there is still a sizeable gender gap. A massive share of 42.5 percent of the women in the sample are not literate, while for men this share is 26.8 percent. Around 32 percent of the sample women have been educated till the primary level or below, with a slightly higher share for men (35%). Only 12.4 percent of women have studied till secondary level or above, with a higher share of 20 percent for men. Access/uptake to technical education appears negligible.

There is wide variation in terms of nature of women’s work and size of cultivable land of the households. Figure 7 shows that as the land size of the household’s increase the engagement of women as unpaid family labour also increased. The proportion of women as casual labour is higher in households with less than 2.5 acres of land and this share declines as land size increases.

Figure 7
Female Occupation Structure by Cultivable Land Size



4.4.2 *Types of employment accessed by women*

The casual wage labour and self-employment are the major employment categories for the sample women respondents, as has been seen in the previous section (Table 4). The types of casual labour done by women is restricted to mainly agricultural labour and construction labour, both requiring little or no education or skilling (Table 5). The men, on the other hand, are in diverse occupations, although for them-- unlike agricultural labour for women--- it is construction work which is the most important category, accounting for the maximum number of casual workers

in the survey. Further females mostly worked within the villages (73 %) as against males (26 %). In addition, one-fifth of the male workers commute to the urban areas for work against only 3 percent of female workers (Figure 8).

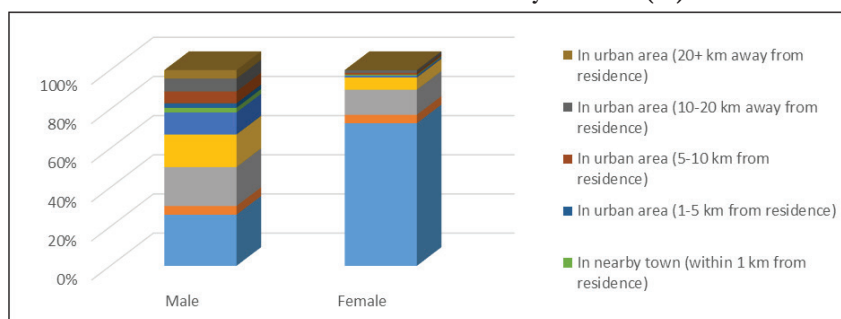
Table 5
Type of casual work (15 years and above) by gender (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Driver	3.51	0.00	2.5
Loading & Unloading Labour	7.80	0.48	5.7
Agriculture Labour	7.02	68.57	24.9
Brick Labour	8.19	2.86	6.6
Construction Labour	42.50	23.81	37.1
Carpenter	2.14	0.00	1.5
Tailor	2.34	0.00	1.7
Salesman	3.51	0.00	2.5
Labour	10.14	3.33	8.2
Mason	6.63	0.00	4.7
Others	6.24	0.95	4.7
Total	100	100	100

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Note: The sample size is Male: 513, Female: 210

Figure 8
Destinations of Casual Work by Gender (%)



Source: Primary Survey 2018

For both males and females, the main form of self-employment is doing agricultural labour (Table 6). For men, there are many other categories of self-employment such as managing various types of shops, driving vans, tailoring etc. For women, three other main alternatives to agricultural labour are managing a general store, tailoring and making/selling bamboo baskets.

Table 6
Type of Self-employment (15 years and above) (%)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Making and selling Bamboo Basket	1.94	2.55	2.1
Blacksmith work	0.80	0.00	0.5
Own Auto van	2.51	0.00	1.7
Farm (Goat and poultry)	0.23	0.46	0.3
Barber	0.46	0.00	0.3
Betel Shop	0.57	0.00	0.4
Tea & Breakfast shop	1.71	0.23	1.2
Clothes shop	0.68	0.23	0.5
Footwear shop	0.34	0.00	0.2
General store	7.29	3.47	6.0
Sale and repairing Mobile and TV	0.46	0.23	0.4
Hotel (Small and medium)	0.57	0.46	0.5
Tailoring work	1.71	3.47	2.3
PDS Shop	0.34	0.46	0.4
Agriculture work	71.41	81.48	74.7
Potter	1.71	0.23	1.2
Tutor	0.23	0.46	0.3
Quack	0.34	0.00	0.2
Cycle Repairing Shop	0.46	0.00	0.3
Rice Mill	0.46	0.00	0.3
Selling Lai and Murhi	0.23	0.69	0.4
Street hawker	0.91	0.00	0.6
Washing Clothes	0.34	0.46	0.4
Selling Vegetable	0.23	0.23	0.2
Milk Selling	0.80	0.69	0.8
Selling Rice Beer (Hadiya)	0.23	1.85	0.8
Others	3.08	2.31	2.8
Total	100	100	100.0

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Note: The sample size for the self-employed is Male: 878, Female: 432

4.4.3 Number of days of work and Wage gap

The study included questions about the average number of days of work available to the worker in a year. The average days refer to the number of days on which the worker found work and is not standardized for an eight-hour day. It also includes

multiple economic activities engaged in by the worker. On an average we observed that 264 days of work were available to the workers. Women workers were more vulnerable and got only 204 days of work whereas male workers were engaged for 312 days of work. Table 7 presents the average number of days of work available in a year to the casual workers across districts, for male and female workers. It is seen that the number of days of job opportunity for female workers is lowest in Dumka and highest is in Simdega. In Latehar the average number of days of work available for female workers was 64 percent of the average number of days of work available for men in a year.

Table 7
Average Number of Days of Work available to Worker by Districts and gender

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Gumla	316	208	268
Palamu	310	203	262
Dumka	318	198	270
Simdega	302	211	254
Jamtara	315	207	267
Latehar	305	195	257
West Singhbhum	314	209	266

Source: Primary Survey 2018

The gender gap observed in work participation and education is also reflected in the wage rates earned by women and men for casual work (Table 8). Casual work and self-employment are the two types of occupation that are the most important for women, apart from unpaid work, which does not provide any earnings. By and large, the male-female wage gap is to the extent of Rs 100 or thereabouts and in a few districts it is less, such as in Jamtara and Latehar.

Table 8
Average Daily Casual work wage across Districts by gender (Rs)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Gap (M-F)</i>
Gumla	210	120	90
Simdega	232	121	111
Dumka	232	133	99
Jamtara	196	130	66
Palamu	221	141	80
Latehar	221	155	66
West Singhbhum	185	80	105

Source: Primary Survey 2018

The FGDs conducted in the survey districts reveal some nuances about wages and earnings. For instance, an FGD among farmers in an economically prosperous village Indrabani in Dumka district revealed that for construction workers, there is no wage differential for males and females and it is daily 100 rupees. In another locality ‘Karmatand’ in Dumka district, the wage for agricultural work is 120 rupees for females and for a male it is 150 rupees, showing a gender differential of 30 rupees only.

The FGDs in Palamu reveal that wages are also sometimes paid in kind. Agricultural labour wages for females are Rs. 120 plus one-time meal, and for males are Rs. 200 plus one-time meal. In Majhigaon, the poorer households say that wages (female) are Rs. 100-120 and meal, while wages (male) are Rs. 150 and meal. In busier seasons, this wage can rise to Rs. 250 and meal. Women working in agriculture fields as labourers get 5 kg of grain and one course meal or they earn Rs. 120 and one-time meal whereas, men earn Rs. 200 and one-time meal.

The IHD (2001) report had shown evidence of ‘*Madait*’ labour or exchange labour⁷. This is a non-monetary labour exchange between households, for example in house building and field sowing. Thus there is no question of wage payment in this kind of voluntary labour contribution and exchange. During FGDs in Simdega district, it was reported that women work in each other’s field, showing an example of labour exchange without wage payment.

Self-employment, the other main source of income for women yield monthly earnings as follows (Table 9). Here we find that in most districts the male earnings are double that for women, but the differential is very high in Palamu and relatively low in Simdega.

Table 9
Monthly Net-Earnings from Self-Employment by Districts and Sex (Rs)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Ratio of Male earnings to Female earnings</i>
Gumla	5928	2750	2.2
Simdega	7367	5227	1.4
Dumka	8000	3785	2.1
Jamtara	4933	1750	2.8
Palamu	8530	1658	5.1
Latehar	7723	4000	1.9
West Singhbhum	6061	3276	1.9

Source: Primary Survey 2018

7. Mutual cooperation and helping out members of the community is the hallmark of indigenous communities. The practice of “Madait” is a system of getting help in exchange for a meal and drink for the helper and his whole family. On some special occasions, the cooperation of the whole village is required, for example during paddy transplantation, weddings, etc. (source: <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2020/03/madait-the-advansi-spirit-of-volunteerism-and-cooperation/>)

The gender gap in the monthly salary in the case of a regular job was also quite high in both government and private jobs. In the government sector monthly salary for males was 3.2 times higher than for females where as in private sector male earns 1.6 times higher than the female. On the whole, taking all regular jobs, the salary of male workers was 2.6 times higher than the female (Table 10).

Not only females earned lower salaries but their share in a regular job was half of that male counterpart (Table 11). In government jobs the share of government job for female was almost half of the male counterpart. In case of private jobs, there is a clear gender gap in the distribution of jobs with female share in the private jobs at a meagre 30 percent vis-à-vis 70 percent share for males. Further, in terms of receiving social protection such as provident fund, only 11.6 percent of the females in regular work have received it as against 55 percent of the males (Table 12). Irrespective of the gender, provision of provident fund is very low in both government and private sector jobs.

Table 10
Average Monthly Income of the salaried Worker by Gender (Rs)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Type of work</i>		
	<i>Government</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	21747	10332	17726
Female	6802	6453	6701
Total	16373	9186	13996
Ratio of Male Salary to Female Salary	3.2	1.6	2.6

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Table 11
Distribution of Government and Private Jobs (%)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Type of work</i>		
	<i>Government</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	64.04	70.45	66.17
Female	35.96	29.55	33.83
Total	100	100	100

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Table 12
Provision of Provident Fund by Government and Private Jobs (%)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Type of work</i>		
	<i>Government</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	69.23	30	54.88
Female	15.38	10	11.63
Total	47.56	25.88	40.00

Source: Primary Survey 2018

4.5 Reasons for staying out of labour force

It has been noted that as per the survey, the average WPR for women in the 15 years and above age group is 26.4 percent, while the WPR for women in 15-64 years age group is 40.5 percent. It was also seen in Table 3 that the ST women have the highest WPR among all social groups at 50.8 percent. On the other hand, the general category women have the lowest WPR at just 16.2 percent.

This differential in WPR based on social groups, and essentially based on accepted social norms, whereby upper caste women working outside their home is unacceptable in society, was supported by the findings from the Focus Group Discussions conducted in the survey districts.

In Baradih in Gumla district, it was learnt that the upper caste women such as Rajputs do only household work and do not engage in agricultural work. In Andradih in Gumla, the Sahus have improved their economic position, and their women also do only household work. This indicates that with improved family social and financial position, women withdraw from paid work. But the relatively poorer ST women of Oraon community and also some Yadav women, do agricultural work in their as well as work in others' land, as FGDs in Mahto tola in Baradih, Gumla revealed. Poorer Women engage in sewing *chattai* (mats) and *ladra* (thin mattress) during summers.

Ample evidence was found from FGDs of proportionately more women among poorer localities to be engaged in earning work. In Palamu district, they work as agricultural labourers, shopkeepers, construction workers, collecting and selling firewood, etc. In Karma, women go till Varanasi to work in brick kilns. Majority of the families migrate to Banaras to work in brick kilns, few others from this *tol* go to the forest to collect wood and sell it. Some women go to construction site to work in local areas. In Udaipura, Latehar, poor women mostly work in households

and fields. A few women go to Latehar to work on construction sites and seasonally some women also go to pluck tobacco leaf. A large number of women from Lohra Tola go to brick kilns.

But overall, compared to women WPR of 26.4 percent (15 years and above) and 40.5 percent (15-64 years), the corresponding WPR for men are more than double at 56.7 and 83.6 percent respectively⁸. Although the WPR for women in Jharkhand has increased over time, there is still a wide gender gap in WPR. We have also seen that the LFPR for women is almost the same as their WPR, showing little unmet demand for work.

In general, the low participation of women in the workforce and labour force has been a matter of debate in India. During the period 1999-2000 to 2017-18, women's labour force participation has been low and the LFPR fell from 38.9 to 23.3% in this period⁹. Several theories have been advanced to explain this. The decline in female WPR has been attributed to the decline in female workforce participation in rural India by several scholars. Women's increased participation in education, stability in family income, have been proffered as explanations. Some studies have highlighted demand-side factors, such as lack of suitable opportunities for women¹⁰.

A recent study by Deshpande and Kabeer (2019) indicates that women being primarily responsible for routine domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning and household maintenance, as well as care responsibilities, lowers their probability of working (in paid work). This explanation is proffered over and above the standard explanations in the literature (age, location, education and so on). Deshpande and Kabeer opine that at the root of women's low participation in paid work are the cultural norms that prevail in our country which make domestic work almost exclusively the responsibility of women. This study has particular bearing on the present study as the 2018 primary survey explores the reasons why women stay out of the labour force (Table 13).

8. All the work participation rates discussed here are based on UPS.

9. Based on UPSS for 15 years and above.

10. See Datta et al (2020) for a detailed overview.

Table 13

Reasons why women stay out of labour force (% of women respondents aged 15-29 years)

<i>Social Group</i>	<i>Family is financially stable</i>	<i>Taking care of children/ household work</i>	<i>Lack of work opportunity near residence</i>	<i>Lack of transportation facility to workplace</i>	<i>Lack of crèche at workplace</i>
General	17.6	88.2	11.8	5.9	0.0
SC	6.7	86.7	26.7	0.0	6.7
ST	13.2	76.3	40.8	1.3	9.2
OBC	32.4	63.5	39.2	0.0	5.4
Muslims	5.7	90.6	22.6	0.0	1.9
Total	17.4	77.0	33.2	0.9	5.5

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Note: The number of respondents are 235. There are multiple responses, so the response percentages do not add up to 100.

It is evident that family responsibilities and domestic chores account primarily for the low female LFPR, accounting for 77 percent share of responses on an average. Although variations are observed across social groups with Muslims showing the maximum response for this reason (90.6%), and OBCs showing the least (63.5%), the responses are in general high for all social groups. We also do not infer a lot from the inter-group variation, since the numbers are small.

The second most important reason expressed by the respondents for staying out of the labour force is that there is lack of work opportunity near residence (33.2%). This indicates that there is a latent demand for work from the women respondents' side for types of work which would impinge least on their daily household responsibilities, since they would not have to travel far from home. These findings are similar to those from Deshpande and Kabeer's study based on seven districts in West Bengal, where women express demand for work that would be compatible with household chores. For the present study, the probe for reasons behind not participating in the labour force brings out the unmet demand for work that exists among women, but this latent demand for work is not apparent from the statistics on WPR and LFPR.

While direct employment in earning activity is a way of empowering women, the sample respondents have a long way to go still in that respect. With male migration, women's farming and other responsibilities have increased and some women, especially among the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste communities, also migrate for work. But such employment fetches them meagre earnings and they cannot access quality employment.

Formation of Self-Help Groups is another route through which women can be empowered. FGDs indicate that in all the districts surveyed, such SHGs have been started, and women are benefitting through these to varying degrees. In some places, these have been running for some time and are fairly active, being involved in running the PDS in the locality, managing poultry farms, etc. In some places, these have been just started and are yet to take off. In some of the SHGs, only a few members are active, while other members are dormant. However, in most cases, one of the benefits cited was getting loans at low-interest rates, whereas the local money-lenders lend at much higher rates of interest. Most participants also mentioned greater decision-making power for women than before.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study found the overall workforce participation of women in the rural districts surveyed in Jharkhand to be fairly low and also the existence of a huge gender gap between men and women's workforce participation with men's participation much higher than women's. It also indicated that compared to earlier times, women's work participation has increased a little, because of high level of male migration from the surveyed districts, whereby women have to work more on the fields and some women also migrate short-term to supplement the family earnings. There was very little gap between women's WPR and LFPR, indicating that according to official statistics, there was not much unmet demand for work among women.

Women's employment was also found to be of poor quality. While men also were in poorly paid jobs, with no social security provisions, women were even more so. A gender gap was found in casual work wages with women workers at a disadvantage. In paid work, they were primarily in casual labour and self-employment, which yield poor income. The persistent gender differential in wages and earnings was discussed in this context. The gender gap in the monthly salary in the case of a regular job was quite high in both government and private jobs. Considering all regular jobs, the salary of male workers was 2.6 times higher than the female. In addition to being in poor quality employment, women were disproportionately more in unpaid work compared to men.

Given the low educational status and low skills of the workers of both sexes, the poor quality of employment was not surprising, although in educational attainment, too, women lagged behind men. Women, with relatively much lower levels of education compared to men, were overwhelmingly in unpaid work.

The variation in female labour force participation across social groups was found to be much higher than variation across districts. This indicates that rather than geographical factors, female labour force participation is influenced more by social or caste-based norms. This also is usually in tandem with economic position of a household. The land and asset-holding is lowest among marginalized social groups such as STs and SCs. It is also the women from these communities who have the highest work participation rates, much higher compared to the participation of upper castes, such as the Rajputs. Economic prosperity also has an 'income effect' whereby women are discouraged from working as was seen in the case of the Sahu community in the survey.

The proportionately higher participation of women in unpaid work is also in keeping with the finding that female labour force participation rate peaked in the age-group 30-49 years whereas the male labour force participation rate peaked in the age group of 25 -29 years. It appears that women in sample districts participate in paid work only after they fulfil certain family responsibilities of child-bearing and household responsibilities which comprise unpaid work.

Thus, on the one hand, women from poor and marginalized communities have higher work participation, while women belonging to social groups with a higher socio-economic status such as Rajputs are discouraged from working. Even economic progress, as in the case of the Sahus, can result in low work participation for women, indicating that social norms prevail against women participating in the labour market. The social and cultural norms of women shouldering most of the unpaid work in the household also prevent women from accessing paid work.

But the survey findings revealed that there is a 'latent demand' among women for paid work, as long as the opportunities are compatible with their domestic responsibilities. The main reason proffered by women for staying out of the labour force was family responsibilities and domestic chores. The second most important reason expressed by the respondents for staying out of the labour force was that they did not have work opportunity near their residence.

These findings, which are corroborated by other primary survey-based research, point at the gaps in the system of data collection for women's labour force and work force participation. Although estimated female WPR and LFPR imply that there is no demand for work among women, the qualitative research indicates otherwise. There is a need, therefore, to nuance the questions for obtaining data for women's participation in the labour force and the work force, to arrive at a more accurate

picture. In the long term, it would be desirable that the domestic responsibilities are more equitably shared between men and women. However, given the fact that social norms are very slow to change, there is a need to design skilling and employment opportunities close to their residence which would be more suited for women, in terms of distance and timing allowing them to balance their paid work and domestic responsibilities. Of course, ability to access better-paid jobs whereby gender gaps can be closed for wages/salary will depend on education, skills, and the work opportunities available.

Finally, over and above access to gainful employment, women can attain some empowerment with the help of Self-Help Groups. The women participants noted that their decision-making power has increased during the last decade. It is encouraging that the improvement has come more for the women belonging to poor households rather than those belonging to upper caste and more prosperous households, as conservative social norms persisted more for the latter group of households.

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