



A Study On Participation Of Women In The Workforce With The Advent Of Becoming A Self-Reliant Woman For Self-Reliant India

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Abstract

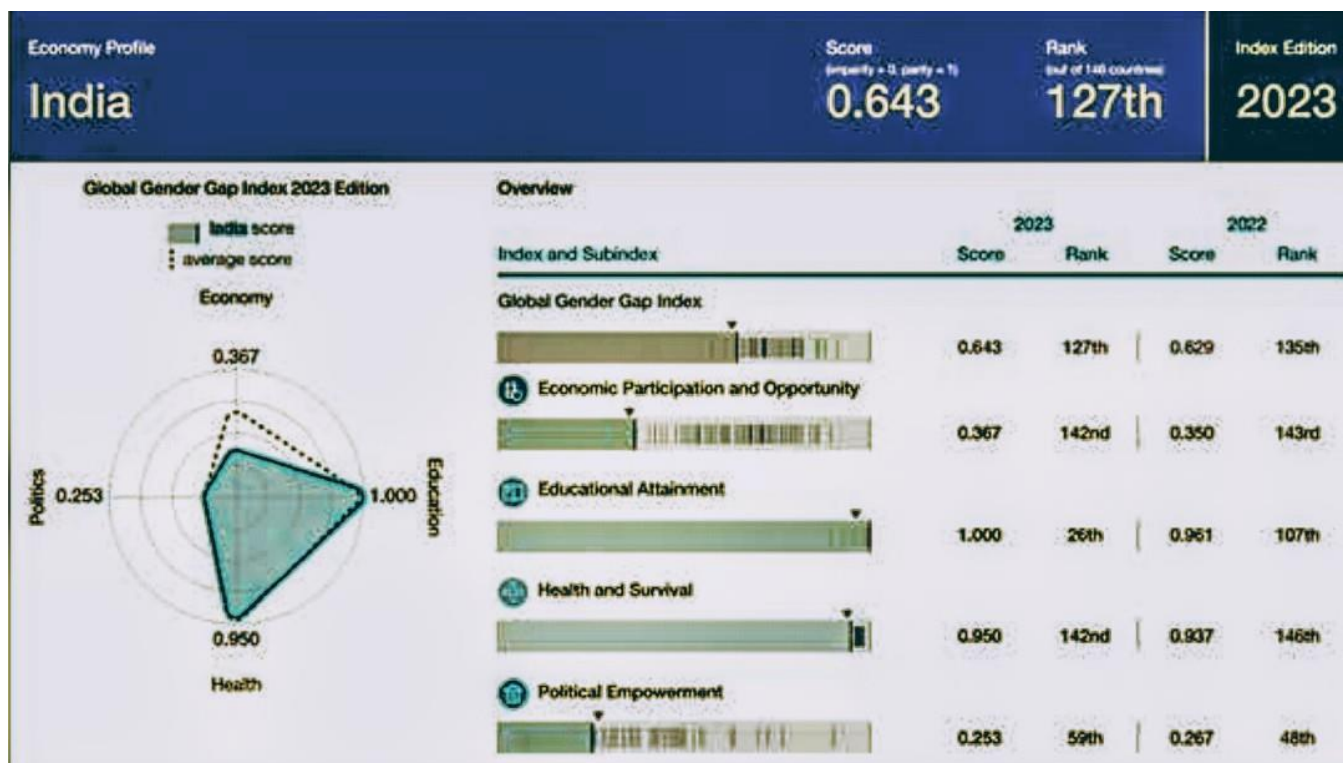
Though India has not demonstrated globally-laudable achievements in the aspects of gender parity, as the current landscape shows lack of concern for women entrepreneurs and employees compared to their male counterparts. Nevertheless, as a developing country is making positive strides to empower our women in India. The present research paper seeks to study the participation of women workforce in India, comparing the performances at global level and over a period of time. At cite,the MSME sector plays an important role in the Indian economy. There have been various schemes which are offered to the MSME sector and related to women entrepreneurs as vide their challenges but there are opportunities also, which can help the women entrepreneurs to overcome them. The paper studies the participation of women in manufacturing sector, with emphasis on the risk, obstacles and progress and identifying noteworthy achievements in the industry.

Keywords: Women workforce, Women Entrepreneurs, Self-Reliant India, MSME

Introduction

Covering the period of a year, The World Economic Forum publishes the Gender Gap Report that ranks countries based on their gender parity performance in four categories viz., health, education, economic and political participation of women. Encompassing data collected from 146 countries ,The Global Gender Gap Report 2023 provided, that globally, gender gaps in health and education have narrowed, political empowerment is at a standstill and women's

economic participation has shown regression rather than recovery. Iceland have closed the gender gap by more than 90 percent and has been topping the list for the past fourteen consecutive years. India has been ranked 127th among 146 countries, improving from 135th rank in 2022 as depicted in Figure 1.1



(Source: The Global Gender Gap Report, 2023)

Figure 1.1 Extract Of The Findings Pertaining To India

India has made considerable progress on the educational index, as rising from 107th rank in 2022 to 26th rank in 2023. A similar trend is not visible in the economic participation of women, where the ranking has marginally grown from 143rd to 142nd. However, we can hope that improvement in education will reflect upon employment and economic participation parameters in the following years. India has also fallen back on the political participation index, marching from 48th to 59th rank. We can hope the recently announced Women’s Reservation Bill will bring about some positive changes in the political scenario of our country in the coming years.

In 2018, there was an Economist report that stated that if India were to rebalance its workforce, the country would be richer by 27 percent. India is a consumer-based economy, where the economic growth is driven largely by consumption of goods and services within the economy. Hence, having more women in the workforce will increase consumption due to increased spending capability of households, with a resultant increase in production and job-creation, also creating additional jobs in the household economy such as cleaning, child-care, cooking etc.

Objectives Of The Study

The fundamental objectives of the present study are to understand:

1. The participation of women workforce in India, with emphasis on the challenges and progress and identifying noteworthy achievements in the industry. Also comparative analysis of the performance with competitive world.
2. Functioning of the present policies of India to empower women and evolving system to risk and challenges.
3. To understand the challenges faced by the women entrepreneurs related to the MSME sector.
4. To study the opportunities for the women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector.

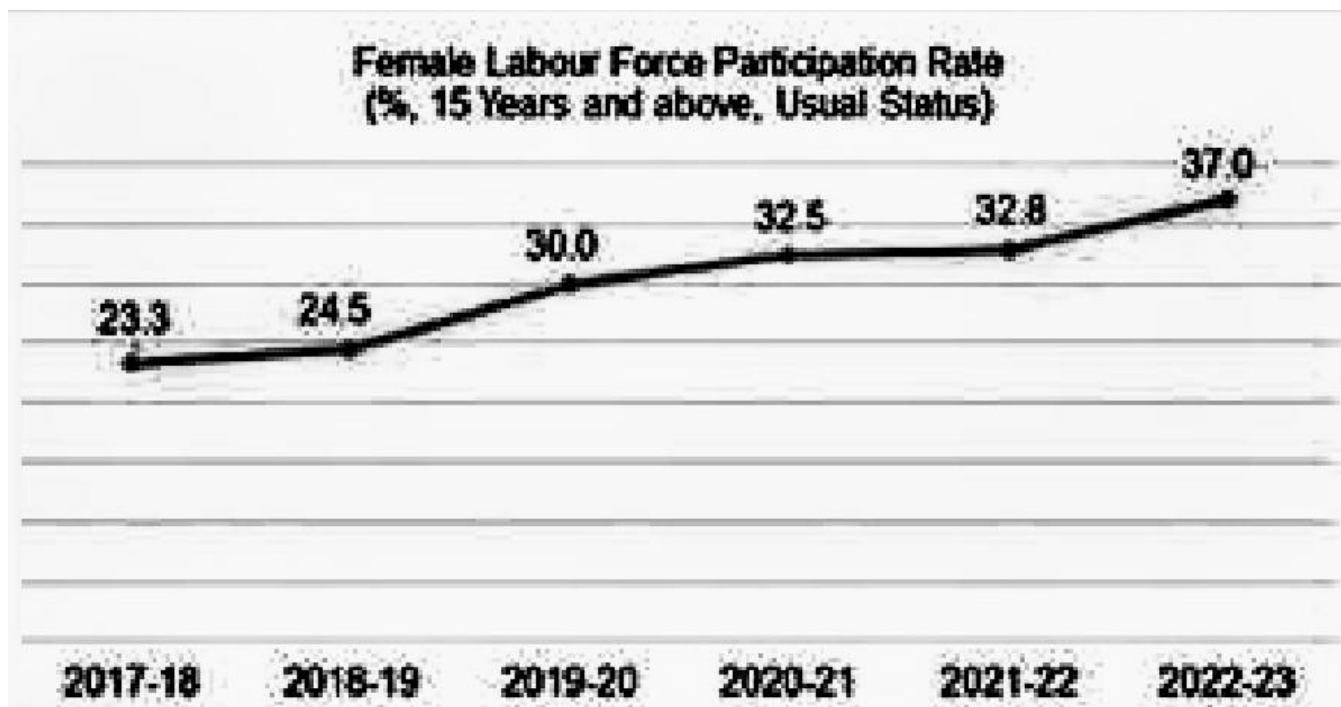
Research Methodology

The writing is quite descriptive in nature and It discusses the statistics to check the present scenario of India women labour workforce. The data used in the study is secondary database taken from The Global Gender Gap Report 2023, Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022-23 (Ministry of Statistics), GoI published MSME reports, Parliament Bills and Budget proposal discussions. The particular study highlights new initiative of Government of India, launched and so the data and information are limited and showcased every aspects in relation to MSME and women entrepreneurship, and tries to invoke and resolve the challenges, and conceptually analyzed to conclude on what roles women workforce play in promoting growth and generate a better prospect for Self-Reliant India. The descriptive analysis of available literature are collected from various reports, parliament bills, research works, news reports, Economist reports and published information from various websites to fulfill the above desired objectives.

Discussion

Women's Labour-Force Participation In India

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey Report 2022-23 published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in October 2023, the female labour force participation rate in India was at 37 percent in 2022-23, representing a 4.2 percent increase from the previous year. Overall, there has been an increase by about 5 per cent over the past five years as shown in figure 1.2.



(Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey Report 2022-23)

Figure 1.2: Female Labour force participation rate

The above graph depicts slow but steady growth pattern, with a slightly flat growth during the years 2020-2022, which could be attributable to pandemic-related setbacks. There seems to be increased impetus in the year 2022-23. This could be an outcome of the Government's agenda of ensuring women empowerment through policy reforms and a myriad of initiatives in the education, employment, skill development and entrepreneurial and political fronts. Though India has no laudable achievements on a global scale, lot of commendable groundwork is taking place within the country in a focused and phased manner. During the past decade, we have witnessed a transformation in approach from development of women to women-led development. The Women's Reservation Bill proposed since the nineties was finally passed in 2023, reserving one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies. Further, the Interim Budget of 2024 was proposed to be an inclusive and innovative budget to empower the pillars of developed India, namely the youth, women, farmers and the poor. The success of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) and the numerous facilities being extended to women entrepreneurs is transforming the socio-economic landscape of rural India, empowering and creating a new league of self-reliant women.

Participation Of Women In MSME

MSME sector comprises micro, small and medium enterprises, and divided into manufacturing and services. As part of relief efforts from pandemic, the Government revised the definition of MSMEs in 2024 as provided through table 1.1 to benefit these businesses.

Table 1.1: Updated MSME Definition And Criteria In 2024

Enterprise	Investment	Turnover
Micro units	Rs.1 crore	Rs. 5 Crore
Small units	Rs.10 Crore	Rs. 50 Crore
Medium units	Rs. 50 Crore	Rs. 250 Crore

(Source: Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises)

There are two angles through which the women participation in MSME can be viewed

1. Ownership of MSMEs: As per the annual report of MSMEs22-23, the female or women's participation in MSMEs as owners is 22.24 per cent in the rural areas and 18.42 per cent in the urban areas. Further, female entrepreneurs own 20.44 per cent of the micro-enterprises, 5.26 per cent of the small and 2.67 per cent of the medium enterprises. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana top the list with 23.4, 10 and 7 percent respectively.

2. Female Employees in MSME: In the MSME sector women employees constituted 24 per cent, and male employees 76 percent.

Shortcomings And Opportunities

A. Limitations:

Lack of education, knowledge concerning entrepreneurship, gender discrimination, access to funding and capital, lack of networking, and managerial skills are some of the important challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, (Bakshi et al, 2023).

Work-life balance and maintaining it is also a challenge for women entrepreneurs. (Kajtazi, 2021). Non-recognition of their professional ability by society is one of the challenges. (Shastri et al., 2019)).

However it can be observed that still there are women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector in India, To overcome some challenges, women entrepreneurs must not let go of the opportunities they are getting. The opportunities can be in the form of schemes, subsidies, welfare activities and training programs, which can prepare the women entrepreneurs for the challenges they face.

B. Opportunities :

The Indian Government actively supports women entrepreneurs through various schemes and subsidies. One such example is the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), which has benefitted over 259,000 women entrepreneurs as of December 31st, 2022. Furthermore, the program offers additional subsidies to encourage women's participation in entrepreneurship, with rates of 35% in rural areas and 25% in urban areas.

Under the credit guarantee scheme, the guarantee cover is 80 per cent for women entrepreneurs

Training programs are organized for women entrepreneurs under the entrepreneurship and skill development program.

Further, schemes such as Mahila Coir Yojana provide training to create self-employment.

Schemes such as Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana, and Raising and Accelerating MSME program (RAMP) give special emphasis on the development of women entrepreneurs.

Thus by providing financial assistance through subsidies, concessions, and training programs, the Government is providing opportunities for women entrepreneurs to prosper.

There are other schemes for the MSME sector for all the entrepreneurs. The following table 2 mentioned schemes and programmes that are exclusively for the women entrepreneurs for MSME sector.

Table 1.2: Programmes For Women Entrepreneurs Under MSME Sector

YEAR	SCHEMES	DETAILS
1986	STEP (Support to Training & Employment Programme for Women)	Central Sector Scheme to have significant impact on women by upgrading skills for self and wage employment
1993	Mahila Samridhi Yojana	Financial aid Up to Rs.140,000
1995	Mahila Coir Yojana(& Skill Upgradation)	Through this programme, skill upgradation and development of women craftsmen in the coir industry are given the opportunity to work for themselves. The programme also offers financial support to establish coir units, with a focus on crafts women.
1997	TREAD (Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development)	The Government provides financial support through a grant, covering up to 30 percent of the total cost of the project.
2012	Nai Roshni- Scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women	Central sector scheme for leadership development among women of minority communities aged 18 to 65 years.
2015	Mudra Yojana for Women/ Mahila Udyami Yojana	Specifically for women entrepreneurs, loans up to Rs 10 lakh are available, requiring no collateral, offering low interest rates, and providing flexible repayment schedules
2018	WEP (Women Entrepreneurship Platform)	The Niti Aayog initiative to support and encourage Indian women business owners. The portal offers female entrepreneurs a variety of support options.

(Source: Compiled by Author)

The MSME sector has always been plagued by challenges such as the non-availability of funding, manpower and manpower-related issues. There is infusion of equity of Rs. 50,000 crore through a specific fund called MSME SRIF.

To simplify and streamline procedures for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs);

Initiatives By The Government:

- The Government is helping small businesses by offering programs like PMEGP, MSE-CDP, SFURTI, CGTMSE, and ASPIRE.
- Another key initiative benefiting the sector is the provision of collateral-free automatic loans worth ₹5 lakh crore, accessible to both businesses and MSMEs.
- The Government procurement of tenders below Rs. 200 crores will be exempted from the global bidding process.
- The Udyam registration portal has been launched to facilitate ease of doing business.
- The online Champions portal, established in June 2020, provides e-governance, grievance redressal, and handholding services to MSMEs.
- In response to the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the “Vivad se Vishwas” program was launched to offer relief to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Notably, this initiative coincided with the inclusion of retail and wholesale trades within the MSME category on July 2nd, 2021.

Participation Of Women In Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector accounts for nearly 17 percent of our GDP and plays a major role in boosting agricultural produce through use of machines and technology and in generating jobs and income. The Make in India movement has effectively contributed to India reaching the position of fifth largest economy in the world, by boosting industrial growth and exports, attracting FDI, creating employment and reducing dependence on imports.

According to an analysis of Government data by the Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA) at Ashoka University, women account for less than 20 percent of the workers employed in organised manufacturing as of 2019-20. The distribution is largely skewed, with 72 percent of women employed hailing from four southern states namely Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Men are employed in all industries, whereas women’s employment tends to be in a handful of industries such as tobacco and textiles, further aggravated by a wide gender-wage gap.

It is clear that women are particularly under-represented in the manufacturing sector and more so in leadership roles on the shop floor. According to a report by Avtar Consultancy, proportion of women in engineering jobs is 3 to 12 percent compared to 27 to 40 percent in services. However, a larger proportion of manufacturing sector is unorganized;

and women are more likely to be engaged in such unorganized sector and similar areas like handloom and agriculture, therefore not forming part of much of the statistics collated and analyzed.

Shortfalls And Benefits

A. Limitations:

Women particularly in rural areas suffer from challenges such as inability to exercise choice regarding one's career, occupational segregation, disproportionate share of unpaid domestic work and various other socio-economic hindrances that prevent them from entering the workforce.

Though in urban areas, women have access to education but not necessarily employment, resulting in a wide gap between educated women and employed women.

B. Advantages:

A number of manufacturing companies have identified the benefits of engaging women on the shop floor; such as detail-orientation, multi-tasking, improved quality and higher output capability.

According to a BCG Report published in 2018, businesses with above-average number of women in management report 19 percent higher revenue generated through innovative products and services. In countries like Germany known for their manufacturing prowess women dominate the shop floor. As skilled talent is becoming scarce, companies have to look beyond the traditional methods of hiring.

Despite several challenges in hiring and employing women, companies have stepped up their actions to promote gender diversity and announced innovative methodologies to attract and retain women talents.

The industry are encouraging women to take up positions in manufacturing and operational roles.

Apart from the physical amenities, creating an inclusive work culture by overcoming bias, fostering growth prospects and drawing up career paths for women, ensuring physical and mental wellness are keys to retaining skilled and talented women.

Initiatives By The Government:

- The modern India witnessing a paradigm shift in the approach towards inclusion of women under the visionary consultants of government. There have been calls for concerted action and renewed vigour from all fronts to accelerate efforts towards achieving gender equality.
- Companies like Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland, Ola Electric and Elgi Equipments, Bosch India have opened all-women factory lines to exploit the potentials of having women in their production lines.
- The largest industry stances, Tata Steel, MG Motors and Welspun India have impressive gender ratios through well-planned and executed strategies from entry to leadership levels.

- Corporate in a wide range of industries have set targets to improve their gender ratios, including at the Board and leadership levels.
- The amendment of Factories Act 1948 to allow women to work in night shifts was a game changer.
- Companies have also walked the extra mile of including the women's families in this journey to ensure safety and security.
- Improvements in physical infrastructure, use of robotics and advanced technology and building ergonomically inclusive workplaces are other factors being incorporated to facilitate inclusion of women.
- This January 30th, the Ministry of Labour released an advisory to employers seeking to promote gender equality and pay parity.

Suggestions

- reviewing procurement practices to promote women-led enterprises
- Periodic audit of pay structures
- Providing full maternity benefits to highway and construction workers
- Developing working women hubs with dormitories and hostels
- Rolling out gender-neutral recruitment Advertisements

Conclusion

Today, a lot more discussions and deliberations taking place on the importance of overcoming unconscious bias, sensitizing and eliminating discrimination in recruitment and training staff and other members of the organization, ,engagement of management support in rolling out diversity strategies in corporate in the manufacturing sector to include women in their workforce, transformation and upholding the provisions of good corporate governance. At G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment held in Gujarat in August 2023, the words of PM Modi clearly proclaimed that “When Women prosper, the world prospers. Their economic empowerment fuels growth, their access to education drives global progress, their leadership fosters inclusivity and their voices inspire positive change”

It is possible that, Self-motivation, developing themselves and creating an organizational culture like a family can help the women entrepreneurs overcome the challenges. (Cho et al., 2021) .Customized training programs can be offered to women entrepreneurs to overcome technical and financial challenges(Rudhumbuet al., 2020). Associations of women entrepreneurs can help create a support system for women entrepreneurs. (Langevang et al., 2018). Women entrepreneurs can create a network for managing crisis.(Mohapatra & Roy, 2023).

India is embarking on a glorious journey of becoming the third largest economy and to achieve our vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, it is imperative that the second half or better half of the population joins this journey towards self-reliance.

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