

**CONSISTENT DECLINE IN FEMALE LABOR FORCE
PARTICIPATION IN INDIA:
ANALYSIS OF NSSO DATA 61ST ROUND (2004-05) AND 68TH ROUND (2011-12)**

Shanti Rai*

ABSTRACT

The decline in the female labor force participation rate and female employment in India in recent decades despite robust economic growth has surprised academics and policymakers alike. Increasing educational enrolment, rising household incomes and insufficient creation of job opportunities both in agriculture and manufacturing have been offered as possible explanations for this decline in women's participation in work. In Indian patriarchal society upward social mobility in the wake of rising incomes and educational standards resulted in women's withdrawal from paid menial, low quality jobs and their increasing participation in unpaid domestic activities. Those who do enter and remain in the labor market are women from the most vulnerable households both in urban and rural areas. In this backdrop present paper aims to analyze analytical background consisting of review of famous U- hypothesis, important aspects of the data from the National sample Survey Office (NSSO 61st and 68th round) on declining female labor force participation rate & their declining share in labor market and underlying causes behind this decline in female participation in the labor force. Last section offers broad conclusions of the study and suggests some policy interventions for inclusive development process.

KEYWORDS: *De-Feminization, U-Hypothesis, Household Incomes, Economic Growth, Educational Standards.*

Introduction

Generally economic growth goes hand in hand with economic empowerment of women but ground realities are different in India where the economy grew at a healthy average of about 7% between 2004 -2011 along with "De-Feminization" of the labor force i.e. declining female participation in the countries labor force from over 35% to 25%. Similar trend has been observed globally over recent decade although within south Asia different countries display varied trends in the participation rates of women. In contrast to the trends in India female labor force participation rate (LFPR) in Bangladesh have increased over the last decade which is due to the growth rate of readymade garment industry and a push to rural female employment. The rates have also increased in Pakistan though to a lesser extent, while participation has remained static in Sri Lanka despite robust economic growth and high levels of human development.

The decline in the female LFPR in India since 1987-88, barring 2004-05, as revealed by National Sample Survey (NSS) has been the cause of much concern and debate among economists and policy makers. For some this decline has been the result of rising educational attainment (see for example Ranga Rajan et al 2011) others claimed that this was due to increasing household incomes which gave working women the choice of withdrawing from the labor force (for example in Abraham 2009, Himanshu 2011). Some identified lack of appropriate job opportunities behind this decline in female LFPR (see for example Kapsos et al 2014).

* Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Avadh Girls' Degree College, University of Lucknow, Lucknow, U.P.