

An appraisal of Women Empowerment: A Case study in Jetia Gram Panchayat of Barrackpore Block-I, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

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Abstract:

Background:

In rural areas of India, women have engaged themselves in different jobs to maintain their families and raise their standard of living (Motkuri & Naik, Growth and structure of workforce in India: an analysis of census data, 2016). But they face many problems in their work place that acts as an obstacle and prevent the women to exhibit their working skill in spite of having the same potential as that of men and thus obstacles rise in the path of achieving women empowerment. An attempt has been made in this paper to analyze the present scenario of working women in five villages in Barrackpore Block-I of North 24 Parganas, to highlight the obstacles that are hindering the women empowerment and to suggest suitable recommendations. This paper will help the policy makers to undertake policies regarding rural women empowerment to remove the problems and lead to move involvement of women in working sector.

Materials and Methods:

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the completion of the study. Primary data were collected by household survey by visiting and interviewing the respondents of the five villages. Secondary data were collected from the District Census Hand Book, Primary census abstract of 1991-2011, Gram Panchayat office, BDO office, Journals, Articles and the details on various schemes were collected from Government websites for data analysis and literature review. All the collected data are computerized and tabulated through MS Office and prepared charts and diagrams. Maps are prepared by GIS software (Q-GIS-open source, Arc GIS) and finally they were interpreted to arrive at the final conclusion.

Results:

In rural areas, the women work participation is played a vital role in the society. It is necessary for the self development and economic development too. But this study reveals that the women work participation is very low in village areas due to some serious problems. The study identifies the associate problems and analyzes the causes of problems through different data and calculations. Some recommendations are taken to overcome these problems.

Conclusion:

It can be noticed that there is enough scope for women empowerment in the village. Not only the Government policies, but also high degree of participation of self-help groups and their involvements will help in achieving the goal and thus bring about overall advancement of women and societal development of rural India in the future.

Key Words: Women workforce, Unemployment, Income, Women empowerment, working sector.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women in workforce are part of a modern phenomenon, one that developed at the same time as the growth of paid employment for men, but women have been challenged by inequality in the workforce. Until modern times, legal and cultural practices, combined with the inertia of longstanding religious and educational conventions, restricted women's entry and participation in the workforce. Economic dependency upon men, and consequently the poor socio-economic status of women, had the same impact, particularly as occupations have become professionalized over the 19th and 20th centuries. Women's lack of access to higher education had effectively excluded them from the practice of well-paid and high status occupations. Women were largely limited to low-paid and poor status occupations for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, or earned less pay than men for doing the same work. Five villages from a Gram Panchayat Jetia of Barrackpore Block-I are selected,

where the rapid effects of urbanization and population growth and shutting down of manufacturing industries have been identified. The major findings are to identify whether these phenomenon had any effect on the participation of women in labour force and to analyse the obstacles faced by the women labours that are standing in the way of achieving women empowerment.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Design:

The study was based on the five villages of Jetia Gram Panchayat through Primary questionnaire survey and interview method. The secondary sources supported to prepare all cartograms and Maps for interpretations by which the associate problems of women work participation in rural society are identified. By random sampling method 30 households were chosen from each of five villages, which is a total of 150 samples.

Study Location:

The selected five villages like Bijna, Bishweswar Bati, Malancha, Jadunath Bati and Rampur are under Jetia Gram Panchayat. The gram panchayat is an administrative body situated in Barrckpore Block-I of Barrackpore Subdivision, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. The coordinates of Jetia Gram Panchayet is 22 °54'36''N and 88°26'46''E. The study area is located on the north western edge of north 24 parganas and is situated almost 40 km from Kolkata. The study area is bounded by the surrounding panchayat and municipality boundary e.g. Halisahar Municipality on the north, Mamudpur gram panchayat on the south, Shibdaspur Gram Pnachayat on the east, and Naihati Municipality on the west. By the road transportation the study area is connected to surrounding towns through the Barrckpore-Kalyani expressway.

Study Duration: 6months (January 2019 to July 2019)

Sample size: 30 houtholds were chosen from each of five villages, which is a total of 150 samples.

Sample size calculation:

Random Sample techniques are applied for data collection and interpretation. All the collected data of 150 samples are considered the whole population (6349 in 2011) of Jetia Gram Panchayet.

Subjects & selection method:

The women working scenario reveals to find out the women working population trend from 1991 to recent days, their willingness to work, female unemployment, their economic contribution for their family and the obstacles that they face while working. The study was completed through sample survey of women population in all age group.

Procedure methodology

For the collection of primary data, a scheduled survey was conducted for the five selected villages of Jetia Gram Panchayat. By random sampling method 30 households were chosen from each of five villages, which is a total of 150 samples. The relevant data for the study were collected by personally visiting and interviewing all the responders on the structured schedule. Information gathered were further enriched by observations and verified by cross questioning. All possible care was taken regarding appropriate, reliable and valid information being noted down in the schedule. Personal observations were recorded, additional and specific information if any, was noted down. Master tables were prepared from the data collected in the schedule from the respondents. Aggregates and percentages were calculated and different charts like bar, pie, line graph were created from the data. The base map for the consecutive study area were collected from the Panchayat office which was further digitized using GIS software such as Q-GIS (open source), ARC GIS, and the maps for the location and study area were created. Land use land cover maps were also created by the software. Photographs of the study area were all collected personally by the respondent.

Statistical analysis

All the primary data are tabulated and calculated through mean and sum through statistical methods. The weighted score estimating equation is applied to identify the various problems of women work participation in rural areas of our modern society.

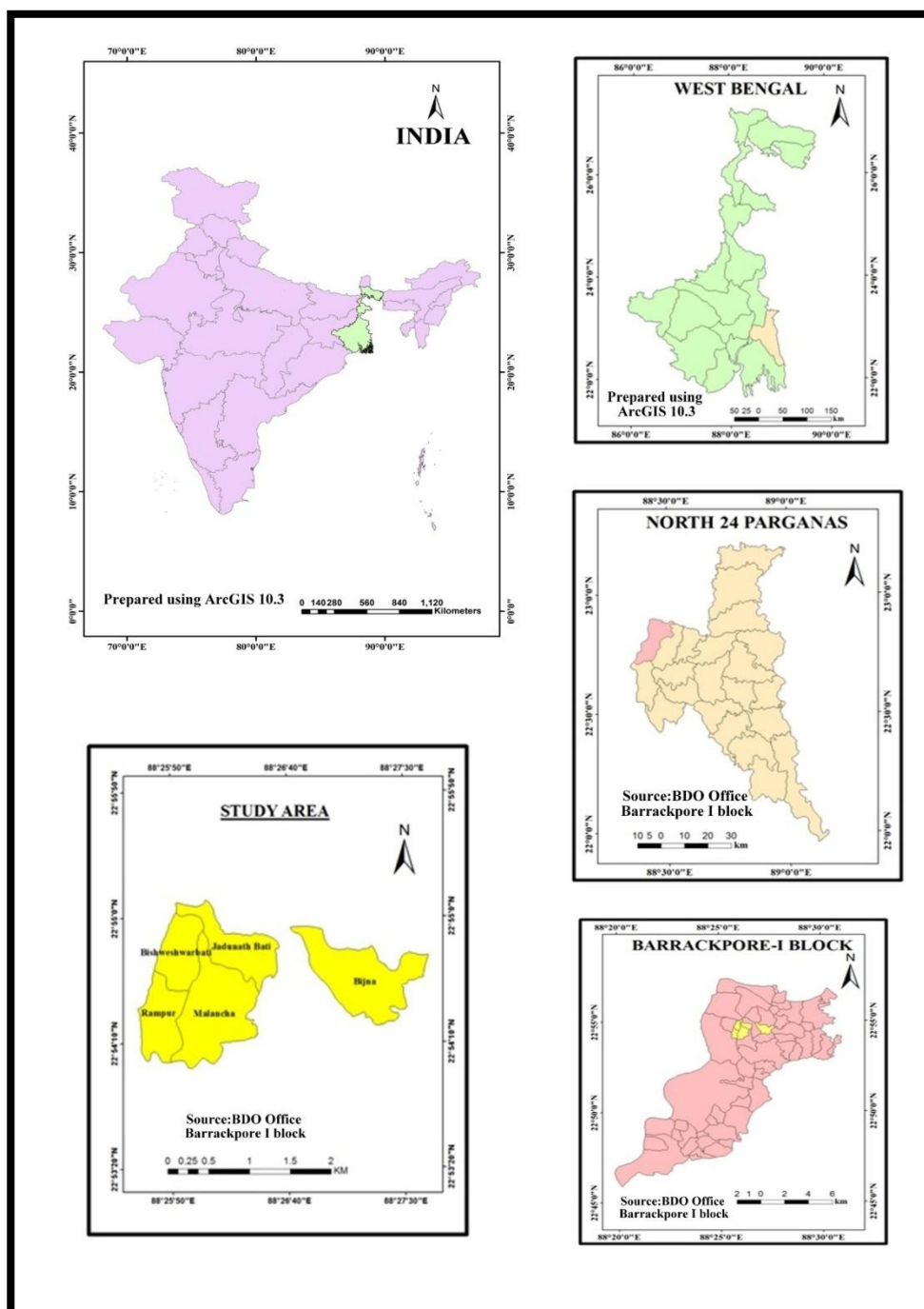


Figure 1: Location of the Study Area

III. Result

Demographic aspects of Female Working Population:

Age wise female working population- The age structure of women workers in the five villages has been shown. It is seen that highest percentage of the female workers in all the villages was between 25-44 years of age (40% in Rampur, 55% in Malancha, 40% in Bisheshwar Bati and 40% in Bijna) except Jadunath Bati village where the workers between ages 45-65 were found in highest number (45%). Female workers of age group 15-19 years were found in Rampur (15%), Bisheshwar Bati (10%) and Bijna (5%) village in moderate number. This indicates that women in these three villages tend to work from a very young age. The reason basically is the lack of economic stability in the family that leads the families to fall in the grasp of poverty. It is clearly shown in Fig no 2.1

Religion wise classification of Female workforce- These five villages are occupied by two religious communities namely Hindu and Muslim. In all the villages the percentage of Hindu female workers surveyed (65% in Rampur, 85% in Malancha, 80% in Bisheshawar Bati, 90% in Jadunath Bati and 75% in Bijna) were found to be higher than the Muslims . Considerable percentages of Muslim female workers are also found in all the villages with the lowest percentage of 10% in Jadunath Bati. It is clearly shown in Fig no 2.2.

Marital status of female workforce- Most of the female workers surveyed in these villages are married. The highest percentage is found in Bijna (85%) while the lowest percentage of 50% is found in Rampur and Jadunath Bati. In Jadunath Bati percentage of unmarried workers are also high (45%) while the lowest number of unmarried workforce is seen in Bijna (10%). In Rampur, highest numbers of widows are found (25%) while the lowest numbers of widows are found in Jadunath Bati and Bijna (5% in each). It is clearly shown in Fig no 2.3.

Educational status of female workforce-In Rampur village, highest percentage of female workers (30%) had education up to the level of IX-X. Lowest numbers of graduated workers (5%) were found in this village. The percentage of the workers having education of V-VIII and XI-XII are 25%. It can be seen that in this village the education basis of workers in this village is not very good. While Malancha, Bishweswar Bati village have the highest percentage of workers having education of V-VIII (30% in each). The highest percentage of graduates and workers having education of XI-XII is seen in Jadunath Bati village (35% in each). In Bijna village percentage of workers having education of V-VIII, IX-X and XI-XII were found to be the same (30%). Except Jadunath Bati village, the percentage of female workers who have pursued higher education is very low. However, there were no illiterate workers found in all the five villages. This is clearly shown in Fig no 2.4

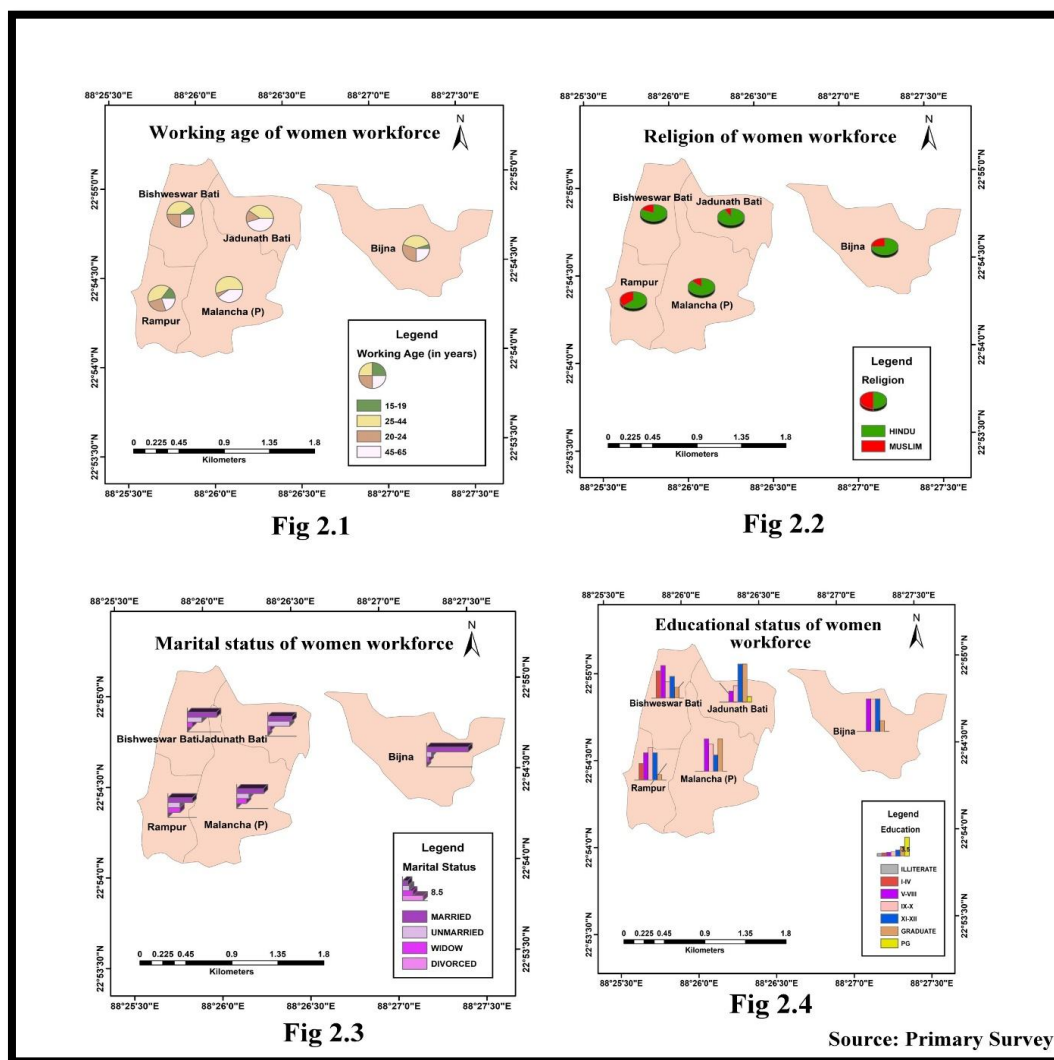


Figure 2: Socio-demographic condition of the female workforce in the study area

Status of Female working population of the Study Areas:

Training status of female workforce- Under normal circumstances, it is seen that lack of proper skill of rural workforce is a major problem. Since most of the labours in rural areas are unskilled or semi-skilled, low production is the consequence. The same picture is more or less exhibited here. In all the villages, percentage of female workers with training is less than those who are not trained. However, a paradoxical situation is seen in Jadunath Bati village where out of 20 workers surveyed, 65% of women workforces are skilled while the rest 35% are unskilled. This is clearly shown in Fig no 3

Safety of women workforce- In work place, women labour forces are highly vulnerable to different types of exploitation. Keeping this fact in mind, the issue of women safety has been taken into consideration. Out of all five villages, maximum number of women who feel totally safe is found in Jadunath Bati village (60%). Total safety issue is the least in Rampur (40%). Out of all five villages, maximum number of women who feel moderately safe is found in Bijna village (75%). Moderately safety issue is the least in Jadunath Bati (20%). Out of all five villages, maximum number of women who are not at all safe is found in Jadunath Bati village (20%). No safety issue is the least in Rampur and Malancha (10%). This is shown in Fig no 4.

Income and Unemployment- In all the villages, most of the women labours have their income ranging from Rs 1000-5000 except Jadunath Bati. Only 6 women in Bisheshwar Bati (30%) and 4 women in Bijna (20%) have income less than Rs 1000. Considerable number of female workers has monthly income between Rs 5000-10000 and Rs 10000-20000. Out of all the five villages, only 10% women in Jadunathbati Village (10%) have the income of more than Rs 20000. This is shown in fig no 5.

A large proportion of women have faced unemployment in some point of their life. Out of all the five villages, women of all the villages have experienced the incidence of unemployment. Maximum number of incidence of unemployment is seen in Malancha and Bijna (40% in each). The number of women who faced unemployment is the lowest in Bisheshwar Bati (60%). Number and percentage of women who did not face the risk of unemployment is the highest in Bisheshwar Bati with a value of 8 accounting for 40% of the total surveyed in the village and the lowest is in Malancha and Bijna with the value of 2 from each accounting for about 10% of the total surveyed. This has been shown in fig no 6.

Provision of Job Cards- From the survey conducted, it can be seen that in all the five villages, the number of women having no job card is greater than those who have a job card. In Bisheshwar bati, out of 20 women surveyed, only 8 (40%) have job cards and it is the highest in all the five villages. On the other hand, number of women having job card is the lowest in Bijna where out of 20 women surveyed, only 3 (15%) have job cards. It is in Bijna that the number of women having no job card is the highest where out of 20 women surveyed, 17 women (85%) are without job cards. Lowest number of women who do not have job cards is in Bisheshwar Bati village where out of 20 women surveyed, 12 are without job cards accounting to 60% of total women surveyed in the village. It is shown in fig 7.

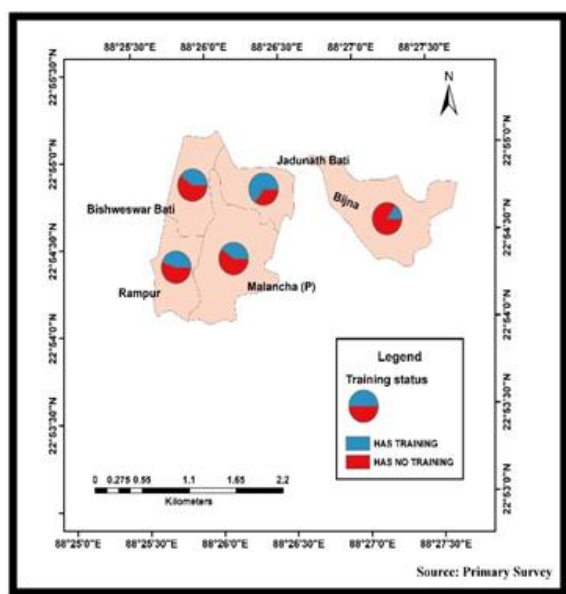


Figure 3: Training status of female workforce

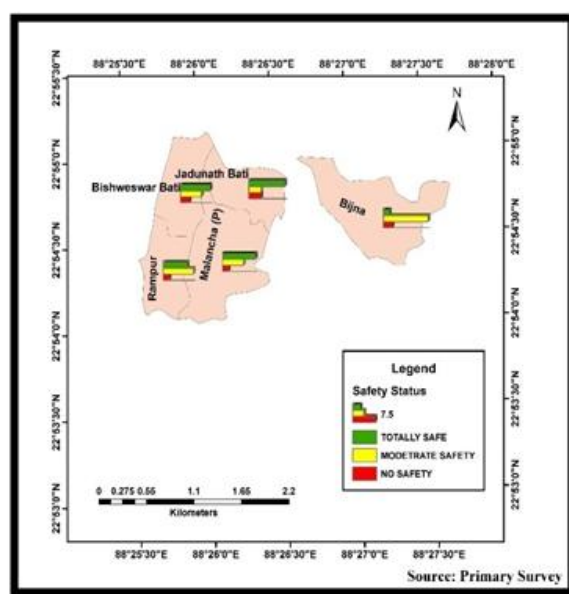


Figure 4: Safety status of the female workforce

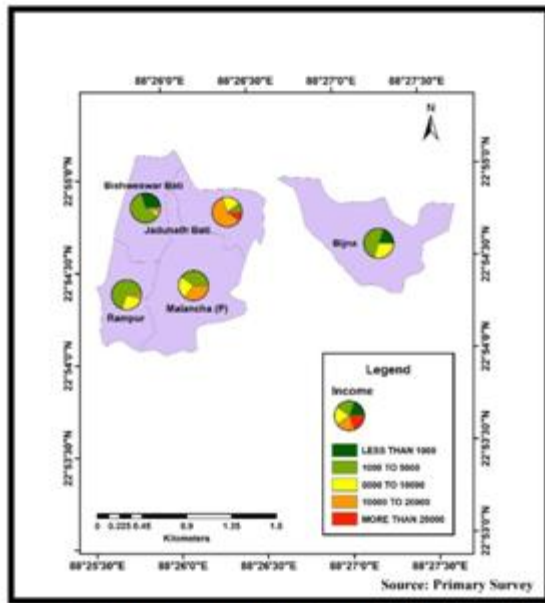


Figure 5: Income status of female workforce

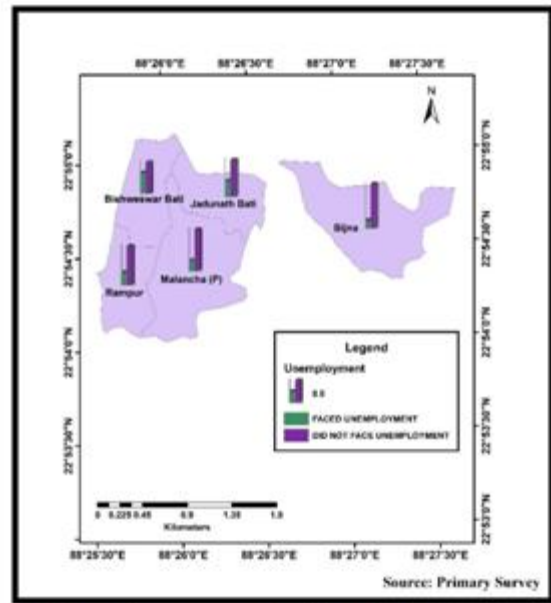


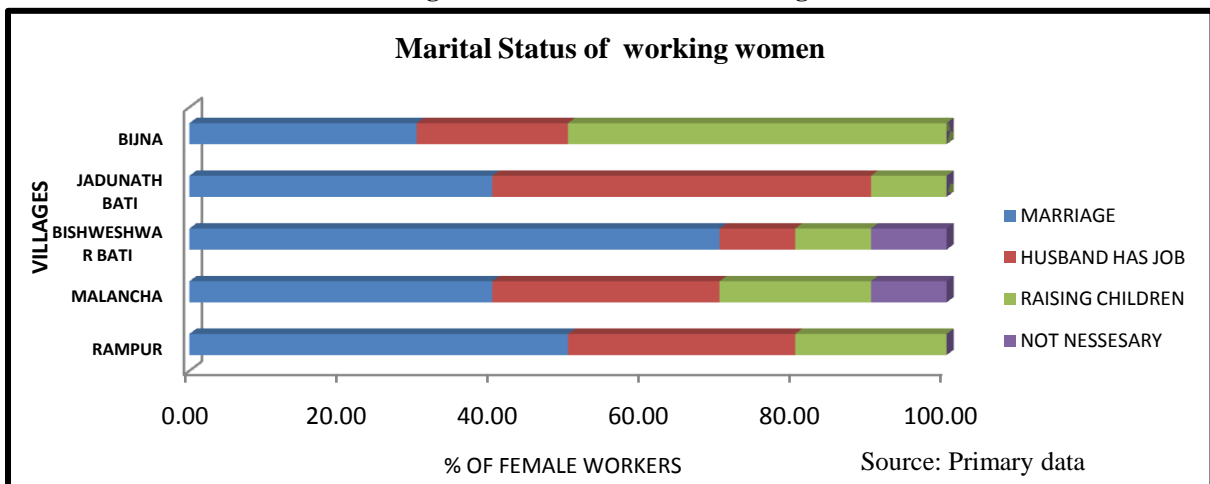
Figure 6: Unemployment scenario of female workforce

Figure 7: Provision of Job card for the female workforce

Factors for the Non participating in the work force:

Among another factors marriage is one of the most important for women work participation in these rural areas. In Bishweswar Bati (70%) and Rampur (50%) village it is one of the most important reason for non working women, while other factors includes husbands having jobs and raising children. In Bijna village the domination factor for non working women is marriage (50%). While in Jadunath Bati village the dominating factor remained husband’s job (50%).

Figure 8: Marital Status of working women



Population growth rate and female working population growth rate:

This line diagram expresses the relation between female population growth rate and the growth rate of female working population in the selected five villages between two points of time that is 1991-2001 and 2001-2011. It is significant that while there was a steady increase (from 1.39 to 2.7) in growth of female population in these villages, the growth of working female population has decreased (from 12.54 to 4.46). The decrease in overall work participation of women is not a very good sign for the development of women in these five villages.

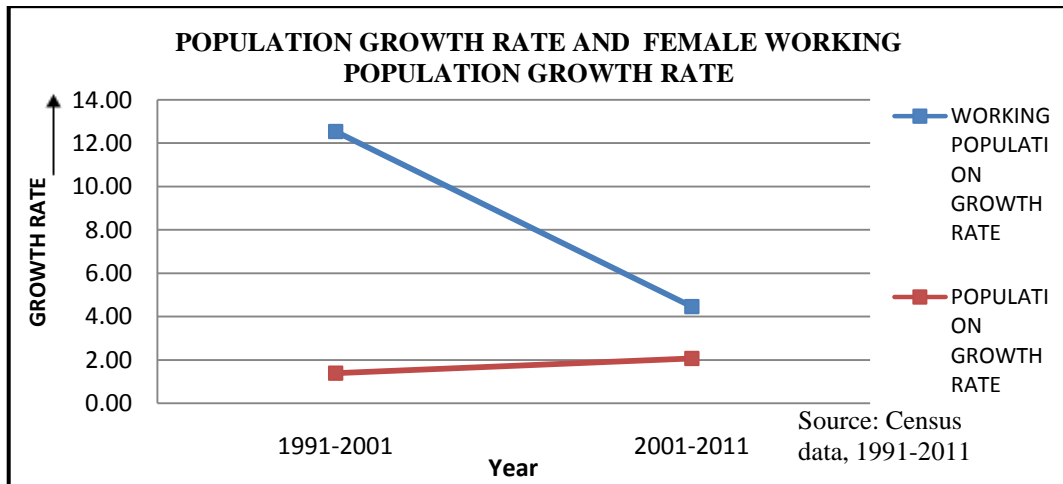


Figure 9: Population growth rate and Female working population growth rate

IV. DISCUSSION

Obstacles in the path of Women Empowerment:

- a) **Low income level of women workers:** The amount of money which a worker earns is very important for the economic contribution she makes. The income or wage a women worker earns is relatively low in villages except Jadunath Bati village.
- b) **Unemployment:** Almost every other women worker has stated that they have experienced unemployment or lack of jobs in some point of their life.
- c) **Unskilled women workers:** The high proportion of unskilled female worker is one of the severe problems in these villages which in turn affect their pay structure.
- d) **Declining work participation since 2001:** According to the census data these five villages has seen a gradual decrease in women work participation while the population growth was positive. This creates an imbalance in the women population and the problem of unemployment becomes severe.
- e) **Social factors:** in primary survey it is found that in these villages large numbers of women do not get engaged in workforce because of some social factors like marriage, raising children, etc.
- f) **Poverty and safety:** Due to poverty many female workers are working out of necessity and not because of their own empowerment. A large proportion of women still do not feel safe at their workplace which sometimes limits them from participating into workforce.
- g) **Less active self-help group:** The self help group in these five villages are not enough active. Self help group act as a torch bearer for providing support for the women who need economic support for work or family purpose. Total Female person-days employment generated under Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment generation act in Jetia gram panchayat in 2017-18 and in 2018-19. Person-day is a unit of measurement based on an ideal amount of work done by one person in one working day. In 2017-18 the total person days employment generated was 15410 for women the number was 8461 which is more that 50% of the total. In 2018-19 the total person days employment generated under the scheme decreased but employment provided to women increased. (Figure 10)

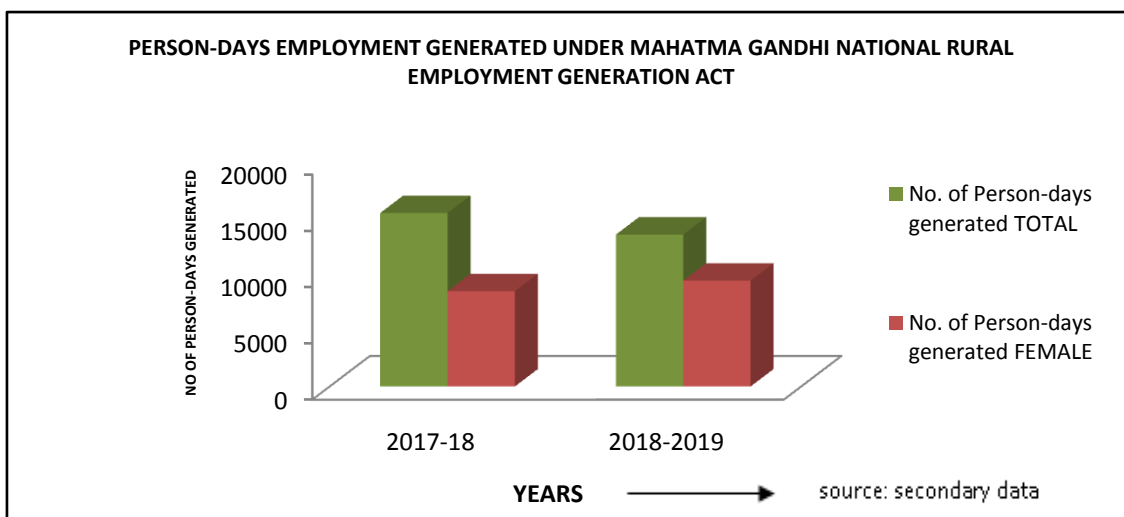


Figure 10: Person-days employment generated under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Act , District Statistical Hand book, 2019

Obstacles in the path of Women Empowerment: Analysis through Weighted Score

<u>Parameters</u>	<u>Weightage</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>Weighted Score</u>
Less work participation of women than men	0.85	85	72.25
Lack of education and unskilled workforce	0.73	60	43.8
Less active self-help group	0.572	42	24.024
Social factors and safety	0.695	54	37.53

Table 1: Weighted Score analysis of obstacles in achieving Women Empowerment (after Aristidis K. Nikoloulopoulos)

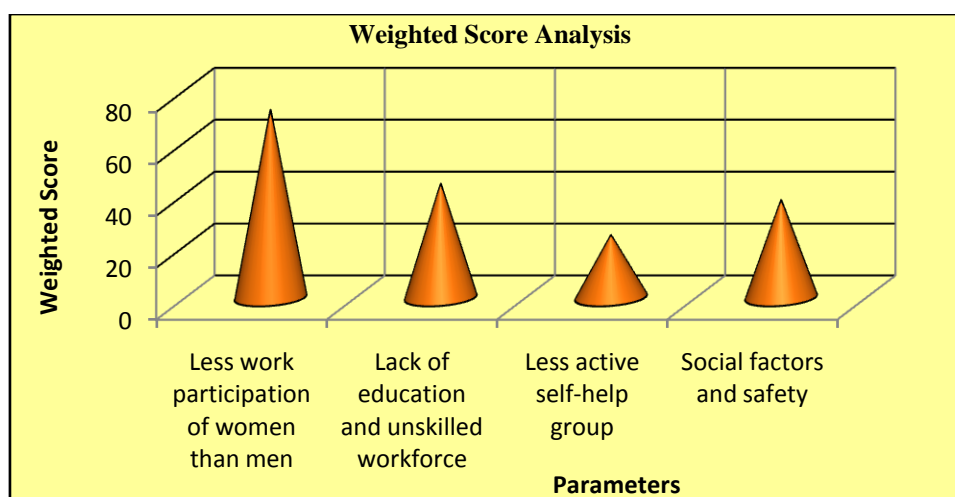


Figure 11: Weighted Score Analysis after Aristidis K. Nikoloulopoulos, Source: Primary data

a) **Less work participation by women compared to men:** The involvement of men in different sectors is much better than women which indicates a condition of social inequality and it can be concluded that most of the women still have not overcome the constraints of social barrier (Mathur, 2017). In spite of possessing the same capability, these social constraints are prohibiting them from getting involved in different sectors and thus standing in the way of achieving empowerment. It is the most important reason and hence enjoys the highest weighted score of 72.25 (Table 1).

b) **Low educational status and unskilled workforce:** Education is the means by which a person can nourish his or her capabilities. There is a lack of proper education among the women workforce due to which they cannot make proper utilisation of their capabilities and this ultimately degrades the quality of their work. It is seen that except Jadunath Bati and Malancha village the education level in the other villages are low. Lack of

education gives rise to higher proportion of unskilled female worker in these villages which in turn affect their pay structure and thus give rise to low income. It is the second most important reason and hence enjoys the second highest weighted score of 43.8 (Table 1).

c) **Less active self-help group:** The self help group in these five villages is not active enough to provide assistance of women workforce. Self help group act as a torch bearer for providing support for the women who need economic support for work or family purpose (Verick & Chowdhury, 2014). It enjoys the least weightage of 24.02 (Table 1).

d) **Social factors and safety:** Different social factors like marriage, rising of children are prohibiting women to go outside their homes and get engaged in different sectors. Families of both married and unmarried girls take into account the safety issues of the workers at their workplace and guided by this attitude, they prefer women of their houses to stay at home rather than getting out to work. Women are also suffering from the fear of getting trafficked and thus prefer to be engaged in domestic work (Goswami & Sen, 2020). It has a high weightage of 37.53 (Table 1).

V. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The below suggestion were prepared on the basis of the problems that were found in the study area:

- A. There is an urgent need to create more employment opportunities for the women in the village. Reservation of women in job sectors have to be increased at different sectors especially at the grass-root level i.e. the villages.
- B. Women needs to be trained to perform better and earn better and thus raise their income to improve their standard of living. This can be achieved by providing vocational training to women and self-help groups in this case have to play a leading role.
- C. Awareness should be increased in women to encourage more work participation. More awareness has to be spread among the families of women (among in laws in case of married women and parents in case of unmarried girls) regarding the vital role that female workforce can play in different sector. It will help their families to extend their cooperation and encourage women of their families to go out for work. Husbands of married women must also play a key role in this aspect and must come out of the traditional thought that women are meant for domestic work only.
- D. Equal wage rates should be guaranteed for equal work for both men and women. The self help groups employing women in various sectors as well as the Government should take steps and precautionary measures to ensure safety of women at their workplaces.

VI. CONCLUSION

The analysis of trend in growth of workforce and the change in its structure in these five villages during the last three decades using census data show that there was a fast decelerating rate of growth in female workforce, between 2001 and 2011. Female workers are gradually getting leveled up to the main status workers. Still, one-third of the female workforce was working as marginal workers. Occupational distribution of workforce indicates that labour absorption in self-cultivation was saturated and declining. The decelerating but high rate of growth in female workers engaged in non-agriculture compared to that of agriculture could not bring any drastic change in the structure of the workforce—a small change in workforce shifting towards non-agriculture. Women working participation in these five villages still remained lower than men. There was also seen the lack of skilled female workers. No of Female workers with job card is also very low. However the participation of women in employment generating scheme like MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment generation act) is also seen increasing in recent years and is seen more than men. Also the unemployment problem is also present in the five villages.

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