

Tribal Women Workforce Participation: A Study on Deori Tribes of Assam

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Abstract

Workforce participation is a prime indicator of a country's growth. Usually, women workers are underestimated as they are engaged in informal sector. The workforce participation of tribal women is vital towards understanding the socio-economic functioning and the quality of life of the society. Tribal women are more vulnerable to their work. Work participation rate among scheduled tribe women in Assam is 39.23 percent while the total workforce participation of scheduled tribe in Assam is 44 percent (Census, 2011). The study is conducted among Deori women workers. According to 2011 census, 54.09 percent women workers are marginal workers in Assam but among the Deori women workers it is 64.10 percent which indicates more vulnerability Deori women to their work. The present study attempts to understand the nature and pattern of works among Deori women and also to identify the determinants of women workforce participation. Primary data has been collected for the study from 128 households. Binary logistic regression technique was employed to identify the determinants of women workforce participation. The results suggested that marital status; monthly household income and education of women are statistically significant in determining women workforce participation.

Keywords: Women, Workforce Participation, Scheduled Tribe, Deori, Assam, Logistic Regression

JEL Classification: J82

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Introduction

Workforce participation is a prime indicator of a country's growth. The workforce participation rate shows the proportion of a country's working age population that engages actively in the labor market. Women's participation in the workforce assumes more importance in the case of developing countries, because of its positive effects on the level of output and negative effects on population growth (Rao and Naik 2016). Women constitute nearly half of the total population in India while the work participation rate of female in India records 25.63 percent in 2001 which is slightly declined to 25.53 percent in 2011. According to the fifth Annual Report on Employment and Unemployment (2015-16), conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labor Bureau, Government of India, female labor force participation is 23.70 percent which is declining as compared to the 25.80 percent recorded in fourth Annual Report on Employment and Unemployment conducted by the same. India is being placed at 120th position among 131 countries of the world with respect to female workforce participation (ILO, 2013).

Assam is a state situated in the North-East India with 23 tribal communities highly differentiated in terms of their tradition, culture as well as economic status. The tribal population in Assam constitutes 12.82 percent of the total population of the state (Census, 2011) and 3.72 percent of total tribal population of the country. The major tribes of Assam are Chakma, Dimasa Kachari, Garo, Hajong, and kuki, Man, Lakher, Mizo, Naga, Boro Kachari, Sonowal Kachari, Mech, Khamti, and Deori. Women workforce participation rate in Assam is also not satisfactory (22.5 percent in 2011 census). The workforce participation of tribal women is vital towards understanding the socio-economic functioning and the quality of life of the society. According to 2011 Census, the workforce participation rate among ST is 44 percent but the Female Workforce Participation Rate

among ST in Assam is 39.23 percent. According to Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013, workforce participation among Deoris is 49.3 percent.

Majority of the women are engaged in informal job which are not taken into consideration under official statistics. As per the norms of the official definition, they are not actually working women. Though there are many studies regarding women workforce participation but there are not many studies in workforce participation of tribal women. The nature of occupation that the tribal women are engaged in is a neglected area of research. Though female workforce participation rate among tribal women in Assam (39.23%) is higher than the all India female workforce participation rate (25.53%) but it needs proper identification of nature and conditions of work among tribal women. Literature shows that tribal women are more vulnerable to work. According to 2011 census, 54.09 percent women workers are marginal workers in Assam but among the Deori women workers it is 64.10 percent which indicates more vulnerability to work. In view of this issue, the present study is an attempt to understand the nature and pattern of works among Deori women.

The objectives of the study are i) To study the nature and pattern of works among the Deori women and ii) To identify the determinants of workforce participation rate of Deori women.

Database and Methodology

Multistage sampling technique is used in the study. The present study was carried out in the Lakhimpur District of Assam where Deori population (30.21 percent) is highest (Census of India, 2011). Out of a total 9 blocks in the district, Narayanpur Development Block is included in the study based on the highest concentration of Deori population. Out of a total fourteen Gaon Panchayats, two Gaon Panchayats namely Pub- Narayanpur and Panbari are selected for the collection of data on Deori women. Three villages namely Bordeorigaon, Majorchapori and 1 no Kinapathar are selected on the basis of highest number of Deori inhabited households. From the each Deori inhabited selected village, 20 percent households are being selected randomly. A total of 128 households were selected for the study.

To examine the determinants of women workforce participation, binary logistic regression is applied in the study. The model will be as follows:

$$\ln \frac{P_i}{1-P_i} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \dots + \beta_n X_{ni}$$

Where, $n = 1, \dots, 7$ P_i represents the probability that a women participate in workforce. $1-P_i$ represents the probability that the women not participate in workforce. And α is the constant term and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6$ and β_7 are the coefficient of the independent variables $X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6$ and X_7 respectively.

Results and Discussion

Level of workforce participation Rate

The total population of the Deori sample household is 648. Out of which, 335 are male population and 313 are female population. The total female population in the age group 15-59 is 236 of which 118 reported that they are employed.

Crude Workforce Participation Rate

Crude workforce participation rate is the proportion of total worker to the total population. The formula for crude workforce participation rate of female is

$$CWFPR = \frac{\text{Total female worker}}{\text{Total female population}} \times 100$$

By using this formula, CWFPR of Deori women are found 37.69 percent.

But it cannot reflect the actual rate of workforce participation because it includes the total population. But out of total population, there may be economically inactive population. The economically active population is belonging to the age group 15-59 which are also called

working age population.

General Workforce Participation Rate

General workforce participation rate considers the proportion of female workers to the total working age population. The formula for GWFPR is

$$\text{GWFP} = \frac{\text{Female workers in the age group 15-59}}{\text{Total female population in the same age group}} \times 100$$

The GWFPR of Deori women is found 50 percent. The possible reason for it is that Deori women want to be self-dependent and therefore they work. Here it is seen that the WPR of the Deori women in the study area is 50 percent which is higher than that of the WPR of total Deori population in Assam (49.3 percent).

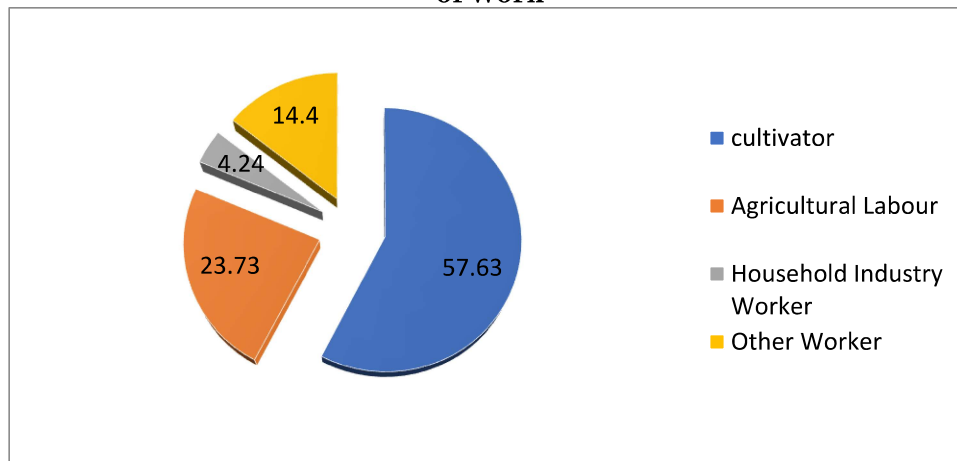
Pattern of Women Workforce Participation

The pattern of workforce is an important aspect of the study on women workforce because it provides the idea about the quality of work participation of the women workers. The economic and social development of a nation/state depends on the number of persons who are economically active, the quality of their work and the regularity of their employment. The pattern of workforce participation is useful for understanding the extent to which women participate in economic activity (Suryawanshi, 2015). The pattern of women workforce participation in the study area is explained below:

Percentage Distribution of Women Workers to Total Workers by Different Categories of Work

It has been mentioned in the earlier chapter that the census of India 2001 categorized the workers into four broad groups namely Cultivators, Agricultural labourer, Household Industry worker and other workers. It can be explained with the help of following figure 1.

Figure 1: Percentage of Deori Women Workers to Total Workers by Categories of Work



Source: Field Survey Data

The above Figure 1 shows that out of the total Deori workers, 57.63 percent is cultivator which is highest among all categories of workers. The lowest percentage is seen in household industry worker and the figure for this category is 4.24 percent. The reason for highest percentage of cultivator is that they have sufficient amount of land to cultivate by themselves. The reason for lowest percentage of worker in the category of household industry worker is that there is no more household industry in the selected sample households and only bamboo and cane work carpentry and weaving was reported as household industry during the survey. The agricultural labour is 23.73 percent. The percentage of workers in other worker category is reported as 14.40 percent for Deori women.

According to the census of India, 2011, the percentage of women workers to total workers by different categories of work such as cultivator, agricultural labourer, household industry worker and other worker are as 8.04 percent, 5.98 percent, 2.39 percent and 12.24 percent respectively. From the above figures, it is observed that the percentage distribution of Deori women workers to total workers by different categories of work are higher as compared to the percentage distribution of women workers to total workers by different categories of work in Assam.

Distribution of Main and Marginal Workers to Total Workers

It has been mentioned in the first chapter that workers can be classified into main and marginal workers. A person who has worked for major part of the reference period (i.e. six months or more during the last one year preceding the date of enumeration) in any economically productive activity is termed as 'Main worker'. A person who worked for 3 months or less but less than six months of the reference period (i.e. in the last one year preceding the date of enumeration) in any economic activity is termed as 'Marginal worker'. The following figure shows the distribution of main and marginal workers of Deori and women. It is calculated by using the following formulas:

$$FWPR (Main Worker) = \frac{\text{Number of Female Main Worker}}{\text{Total Female population in the age group 15 – 59}} \times 100$$

$$FWPR(Marginal Worker) = \frac{\text{Number of Female Marginal Worker}}{\text{Total Female Population in the age group 15 – 59}} \times 100$$

The above figure shows that 26.69 percent of Deori women workers are main worker and 23.30 percent are marginal worker. Here, it is seen that the percentage of main workers to Deori women workers is higher as compared to the percentage of female main worker (19.02 percent) of Assam. But the percentage of marginal women workers to total Deori women workers is lower as compared to the percentage of female marginal worker (54.09 percent) in Assam (Census, 2011).

Distribution of Women Workers to Total Workers by Different Age groups

Women workers may differ by different age groups. At various stages of age women can participate in workforce differently. Therefore, it is necessary to know the extent of women workers by different age group. To determine women workers by different age group, women's age is disaggregated into nine groups and it is explained with the help of following table:

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Deori Women Workers to Total Workers by Different Age Groups

Age Group	Total Female Population	Female Workers	Percentage of Female Workers to Total Female Population
15-19	33	1	3.03
20-24	46	11	23.91
25-29	35	17	48.57
30-34	23	12	52.17
35-39	21	20	95.23
40-44	22	18	81.81
45-49	27	21	77.77
50-54	15	11	73.33
55-59	14	7	50.00
Total	236	118	50.00

Source: Field Survey Data

The above table shows the work participation rate of women varies in the different age groups. Women workforce participation rate in 35-39 age groups is highest, followed by the age group 40-44, 45-49 and 50-54 respectively. But in the earlier stages of age group, the work participation rate is lower as compared the latter stages of age group. The reason for this is that in the earlier age groups majority are students but in the latter age groups, majority are married women and thereby forced them to participate in workforce.

Distribution of Women Workers to Total Workers by Level of Education

The working status of women largely depends on their educational level and it may vary by different level of education. Education is an essential factor to give women skills, confidence to enter into the workforce. Keeping with this view, an attempt has been made to trace the women workforce participation by different level of education. To calculate this, the level of education has been categorized into seven categories.

Table 2: Percentage of Deori Women Workers to Total workers by Level of Education

Level of Education	Number of Female populations	Number of Female Workers	Percentage of Female workers to total female population
Illiterate	29	23	79.31
Primary	20	11	55
Middle	26	18	69.23
High School	67	33	49.25
Higher Secondary	54	18	33.33
Graduate	39	15	38.46
Post Graduate & Above	1	0	0
Total	236	118	50.00

Source: Field Survey Data

The above table shows that women work participation rate is highest among illiterate (79.31 percent) which is followed by middle level of education (69.23 percent). Though, it is recognized that with the higher level of education, women workforce participation rate increases, but the above table shows the opposite of it. Because there are majority of women under these two categories and they have to engage in any type of economic activity to maintain their household needs and responsibilities. But the women who attain higher level of education hesitate to engage themselves in any economic activity as the higher level of education raises their expectation about high quality job.

Determinants of Women Workforce Participation

To examine the determinants of women workforce participation, binary logistic regression is applied in the study. The dependent variable women workforce participation is a dichotomous variable as it takes two values such as 1 if participated and 0 otherwise. On the other hand, women workforce participation is determined by many socio-economic and demographic factors like marital status of women, age of women, age of husband/father, monthly household income, education of women, education of husband/father, earning member in the family and number of children below 6 years. All these variables are considered as independent variable in the model.

Table 3: Description of variables included in the study

Name of variable	Notation	Type	Description
Marital status of Respondent	Marital_Status	Categorical	1 for married and 0 for unmarried
Type of family	Type_Fmly	Categorical	1 for Nuclear and 0 for joint
Age of Respondent	Res_age	Continuous	
Age of husband/father	H_F_age	Continuous	
Monthly household income	Houuse_Income	Continuous	
Education of Respondent	Edu_Res	Categorical	1 for high school and above, 0 for below high school
Education of husband/father	Edu_H_F	Categorical	1 for high school and above, 0 for below high school

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Marital status of respondent	206	1	3	1.26	.640
Type of family	206	1	2	1.10	.297
Age of Respondent	206	18	58	38.80	10.018
Age of husband/father	206	17	70	42.62	11.764
Monthly household income	206	5000	345000	2.71E4	34774.419
Education of Respondent	206	1	7	3.43	1.717
Education of husband/father	206	1	7	4.05	1.540

Source: Author's Compilation

Table 5: Result of Binary Logistic Regression for Deori Women

Variables	B	Wald	Exp. (β)
Marital status of Respondent	-4.745*	12.285	0.009
Type of family (1)	18.495	0.000	107753738.6
Age of Respondent	0.095	1.947	1.099
Age of husband/father	-0.048	1.150	0.953
Monthly household income	-2.151**	4.532	0.116
Education of Respondent (1)	-2.803***	2.912	0.061
Education of husband/father (1)	-0.482	0.123	0.617

*Significant at 1%, **significant at 5%, ***significant at 10%

-2 log likelihood = 32.429, Cox and Snell RSquare =0.227, Nagelkerke R Square =0.564

Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness of fit test statistics =6.362, P=0.607, Iteration number = 20

Source: Author's Compilation

Analysis of the Result of the Binary Logistic Regression

Table shows that marital status; monthly household income and education of women are statistically significant at 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent level of significance respectively. On the other hand, type of family (1) i.e., nuclear family, age of

the women, age of the husband/ father, earning member, education of husband/father shows statistically insignificant results.

Marital status (1) is statistically significant in determining women workforce participation but the negative value of the coefficient ($\beta = -4.745$) indicates that if a woman is married, there is less probability that she will enter the workforce. The reason for this may be increasing burden of household works, childcare and they may have served the other members of the family as a caretaker and therefore less likely to participate in income generating activities. This result is consistent with Naqvi & Shahnaz (2002).

The household income is significant and negatively determined the decision of women workforce participation of both Deori women. With the increase in additional one unit of income women work participation will decrease by 88.4 percent. This result is consistent with Hafeez & Ahmed (2002) and the reason for the negative relationship between household income and women workforce participation is that their household income is sufficient to fulfill their needs and thereby do not participate in workforce.

Education of women is statistically significant but negatively associated with women's workforce participation. Women having more education level of high school and above are less likely to participate by 39 percent for Deori women. The possible reason for this is that with the increase in the level of education, the expectation of women for high quality job increases. The highly educated women have more expectation about a job (Singariya & Shekhawat, 2015). But if they do not get such a job due to lack of employment opportunities, they are discouraged in the formal labour market and thereby they have to stay at home and start to do household work. This is more common in developing countries like India. Afridi & Taryn (2016), found a minimum increase in women's own education explains 22 percent fall in Women LFPR between 1987-1999 year and it is 11 percent fall in LFPR in 1999-2009 year. Sinha (2005), found the inverse association between literacy and FWPRs has often been found in the Indian context, and is to be interpreted with caution and the knowledge that higher FWPRs are often a reflection of greater distress in the country.

Conclusion

The study has investigated the various aspects of workforce participation of Deori women which clearly bring to light the importance of the issue of women workforce participation. The study found that work participation rate of Deori women is 50 percent which is higher than the female work participation rate of tribal women in Assam (39.23 percent). The study also examined various socio-economic and demographic factors that determine the women workforce participation of Deoris and found that different factors influence the workforce participation of Deori women. The result of binary logistic regression shows that marital status, monthly household income and education of women are statistically significant in determining the workforce participation of Deori women. One unexpected result was found regarding the level of education which shows the negative association with workforce participation. It has been mentioned that the reason for this negative result may be due to the lack of employment opportunity especially of education based jobs.

The policy implication regarding the negative results between the level of education and women workforce participation will be the creation of education based jobs among the women which improves the quality of employment as well as the economic status among them. Moreover, majority of the women are found as cultivators for which no educational qualification is required. Therefore, the major recommendations are that in order to promote women workforce participation, education and training should be increased which could help them to engage themselves in education based jobs. As the women are facing different problems in participating workforce, therefore the government should intervene in the conditions of the labour market and carefully planned the policies

on female employment so as to increase employment opportunity for women equally with men.

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