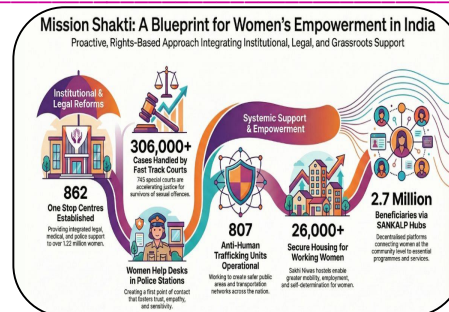




WOMEN EMPLOYABILITY IN INDIA: A WAY TO ACHIEVE 'MISSION VIKSIT BHARAT 2047'

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ABSTRACT:

Women's employability refers to the set of skills, knowledge, and attributes that empower women to secure, retain, and advance in meaningful employment, ultimately leading to financial independence and reduced gender gaps. It involves addressing systemic barriers like the "triple burden" of paid work, housework, and care responsibilities. One of the key pillars for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 is ensuring 70 percent women workforce participation in the country. Women are no longer just participants but the backbone of India's economic growth. Today, women are leading the march toward development, and Government is committed to creating an inclusive ecosystem that empowers Nari Shakti through education, skill development, entrepreneurship, and equal workforce opportunities. Women empowerment is a key driver for national progress, and today India stands to witness a transformative shift under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Now women are no longer confined to traditional roles, they are breaking barriers and taking charge in shaping the country's economic future. From rural entrepreneurs to corporate leaders, women are leading India's march towards Viksit Bharat.

Women represent about 48 percent of the total population in India. However, in the employment market, women's participation is much lower. National statistics show that out of the 459 million employed population, women constitute only about 148 million. Even of this, only about 50.16 Lakhs or 5 million women are in organized sectors and 120 million are in unorganized sectors.

Keywords:- Women employability, female work participation rate, women empowerment, occupational structure.

1. INTRODUCTION:-

Women's employability refers to the set of skills, knowledge, and attributes that empower women to secure, retain, and advance in meaningful employment, ultimately leading to financial independence and reduced gender gaps. It involves addressing systemic barriers like the "triple burden" of paid work, housework, and care responsibilities. One of the key pillars for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047 is ensuring 70 percent women workforce participation in the country. Women are no longer just participants but the backbone of India's economic growth. Today, women are leading the march toward development, and Government is committed to creating an inclusive ecosystem that empowers Nari Shakti through education, skill development, entrepreneurship, and equal workforce opportunities. Women empowerment is a key driver for national progress, and today India stands to witness a transformative shift. Now women are no longer confined to traditional roles,

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2. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:-

The following are main objectives set for research paper.

- To study the concept of women employability.
- To evaluate the status of women employability in India.
- To review female workforce participation rate in India.
- To find out the major obstacles in women employability in India.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:-

The entire research paper is based on secondary data which is collected from reference books, journals, government reports, internet websites etc. The basic statistical tools are used like frequency, percentage to analyze and interpret the data.

4. TRENDS IN FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA:-

According to the recent Annual report 2021-22 of the Ministry of labour and employment. It shows that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) is defined as the percentage of people in the labour force either working or seeking work in the population. LFPR of the female working force has increased from 17.5% in 2017-2018 to 25.1% in 2020-21. Work population ratio (WPR) is defined as the percentage of the employed person in the population which has a slow increase from 16.5% in 2017-18 to 24.2% in 2020-21. And the Unemployment Rate (UR) has significant deterioration from 2017-18 to 2020-21 from 5.7% to 3.5% respectively.

Table1: LFPR, WPR and UR of the female workforce in India (in percentage)

Year	LFPR	WPR	UR
2017-18	17.5	16.5	5.7
2018-19	18.6	17.6	5.2
2019-20	22.8	21.8	4.2
2020-21	25.1	24.2	3.5

Source: Annual report 2021-22 of Ministry of Labour and Employment

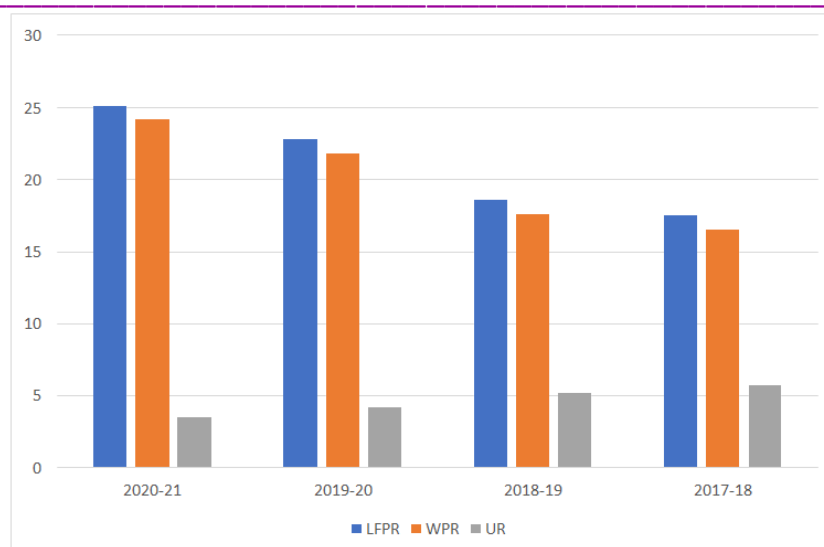


Figure 1 shows the LFPR, WPR and UR of the female working force in India, where the X axis represents the financial year and the Y axis represents the trend in LFPR, WPR and UR. It can be seen that the LFPR has increased from 2017-18 to 2020-21 significantly. Similarly, there is a minor increase for WPR i.e the women who are working in the country among the population. The UR of the female working force has declined within the span of 2017-18 to 2020-21 from 5.7% to 3.5% which is a milestone achievement for the economy having a vast population.

5. ANNUAL LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

According to the periodic labour force survey Annual Report 2020-2021, the female labour force participation in India is lower than that of the male labour force participation in India. In 2017- 18 the male labour force participation was 55.5% whereas the female labour force participation was 17.5%. in 2018-19 and 2019-20, the female labour force participation rate increased significantly but was always much lower than the male workforce participation rate. In 2020-21, out of 41.6% of total labour force participation in the country; the female participation rate is 25.1% whereas the male labour force participation rate has been higher than that of the female at 57.5% shown in table 2.

Table2: Workforce distribution in India (In percentage)

Year	Men	Women	All
2017-18	55.5	17.5	36.9
2018-19	55.6	18.6	37.5
2019-20	56.8	22.2	40.1
2020-21	57.5	25.1	41.6

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey-Annual report June 2020-June 2021)

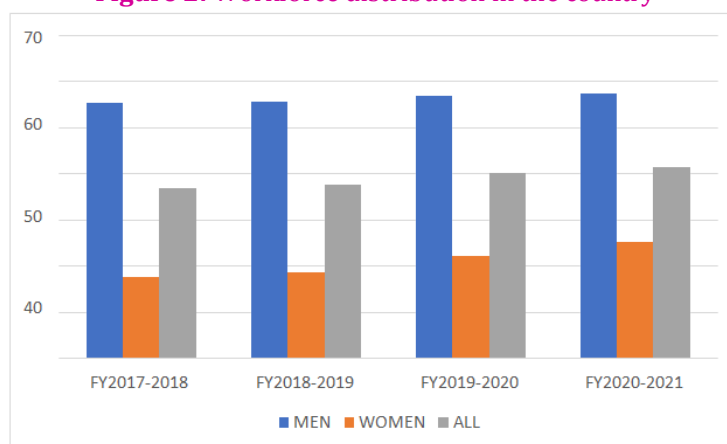
Figure 2: Workforce distribution in the country

Figure 2 explains the labour force participation rate in India among men and women from FY 2017-2021 where the horizontal axis represents the financial year and the vertical axis represents the number participation from the population. It is seen that even though there are some minor changes in the overall labour force participation, male labour force participation and female labour force participation; male labour force participation dominates over female labour force participation in India.

Table4: Sectoral Distribution of female workforces

Sector	Rural Women	Urban Women
Trade, Hotel and Hospitality	3.7%	22.3%
Construction	5.6%	4.9%
Manufacture	7.3%	22.4%
Agriculture	75.7%	-
Transport storage and communication	-	3.6%

Sources: Analysis of Female Work Participation Rate in India by N. P. Abdul Azeez, S. M. Jawed Akhtar

Another interesting trend to note is that in rural areas, female workforce participation is the maximum in agriculture, followed by manufacturing, construction, trade, and the hospitality industry. Whereas in urban areas, female work force participation is the maximum in manufacturing, followed by hospitality, construction and transport, storage and communications. Within the self-employed category, where the employment share of females is highest at 63 per cent in rural areas, these figures are misleading as most women are employed as unpaid family workers in family farms and family businesses, engaging in activities like taking care of livestock etc.

6. GOVERNMENT POLICY ABOUT WOMEN EMPLOYMENT:-

It is said that India is shifting from Women Development to Women – Led Development. In order to achieve this goal, the Government has taken several steps.

1. Efforts by the Government of India are contributing to growth in women entrepreneurs. At the National level, 70 central schemes across 15 Ministries and more than 400 State-level schemes focus on supporting female entrepreneurship. PLFS data shows that female self-employment grew by 30% - from 51.9% in 2017-18 to 67.4% in 2023-24, making women truly Atmanirbhar.
2. Gender budgets have increased by 429% in the last decade, rising from ₹ 0.85 lakh crore in FY 2013-14 (RE) to Rs. 4.49 lakh crore in FY 2025-26. This reflects a paradigm shift from women's

development to women-led development, with a strong focus on employment, employability, entrepreneurship, and welfare.

3. Another important driver of the rise in women's self-employment is PM Mudra Yojana, which is playing a crucial role in financial inclusion, with women receiving 68% of the total MUDRA loans - (over 35.38 crore loans worth 14.72 lakh crore). Similarly, under PM SVANidhi has empowered street vendors, around 44% beneficiaries are women under the scheme. These initiatives are driving a new wave of economic self-reliance among women across India.
4. Additionally, women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have also emerged as key drivers of economic expansion, generating over 89 lakh additional jobs for women from FY 21 to FY 23. The share of women-owned proprietary establishments has surged from 17.4% in 2010-11 to 26.2% in 2023-24, and the number of women-led MSMEs has also nearly doubled, growing from 1 crore in 2010-11 to 1.92 crore in 2023-24, highlighting the increasing role of women in shaping India's economic future.

7. CONCLUSIONS:-

The present research paper has tried to find out the following conclusions and obstacles in the path of women employability in India.

1) Discrimination at Work:

At every stage of their working sphere women are subjected to discrimination like deprivation from promotions and growth opportunities. Major discrimination can be witnessed under the equal pay agenda and are underpaid in comparison to their male counterpart which is a common scenario in agriculture, factories and labour-oriented industries.

2) Challenges to Safety and Dignity:

The orthodox mindset of certain communities or families in India makes it difficult for the women to work beyond particular time limit. If any women work beyond office hour the society will put a question mark on her dignity and moral. Moreover, sometimes they hesitate to work late night due to insecure social environment. Working woman needs to balance her domestic environment with the professional life, if not they are forced to leave the job.

3) Balancing between Home and Work:

Working women provide a financial support to the male counterpart as well as the family, but in spite of her contribution her image of woman being a home-maker has not much changed. If women are working outside the home, they are expected to cook food, take care of kids and all other household duties. This busy schedule deprives her of peace, rest, sleep, independent thinking and luxury life.

4) Unequal Opportunities in Job:

Women are subjected to continue same with unequal opportunities despite having required qualifications, skills, talent, hard work and performance as she is overlooked in comparison to her male colleagues. These unequal opportunities make most of the women to settle down at less challenging jobs than their capabilities. No Ownership on Her Own Earning: In most of the cases though women have independence of earning money by her own self, but she has no control over it. In most of the families, especially middle class, upper middle class and lower middle class, it seems that the income of the woman either goes in the hands of her father or husband, rather than in her own hands, or she is supposed to ask them to purchase anything for herself.

5) Sexual Harassment:

A major problem faced by the working women is sexual harassment at the work place. As a working woman steps out, she is subjected to sexual abuses and harassment directly or indirectly while travelling, within office, on field, in canteen, in outdoor meetings etc. She is abused verbally, physically as well as symbolically by her colleagues, higher authority, subordinates etc. Women employees working in night shift are more vulnerable to such incidents. Due to these sexual harassments' women are faced with psychological pressure and sometimes forces a woman resign from her job.

6) Lack of Family Support:

Family support for a working woman is the most important key factor to encourage her for moving out and live independently. Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffers from. At times, the family doesn't support women to leave the household work and go to office. They also resist for women working till late in office which also hampers the performance of the women and this also affects their promotion. Insufficient maternity leaves are another major issue that is faced by a working mother. This not only affects the performance of women employees at work, but is also detrimental to their personal lives. Health Problems: It is true fact that a healthy woman builds a healthy community. Multiple roles played by women affect not only her own health and well-being but also affect the overall health and well-being of the family. The stress and strain they face while combining the outside work and domestic work, child care, care for elderly make her more tiresome and she gain less leisure. A women total hour of work increases at the expense of her leisure time.

8. SUGGESTIONS:-

In order to improving employment and job opportunities for women in India requires coordinated action across policy, education, workplace practices, infrastructure, finance, technology and social norms. Below are practical, evidence-based levers with concrete actions.

1. Policy and regulations
 - Enforce and extend gender-sensitive labour laws: strengthen implementation of maternity benefits, sexual harassment (POSH) enforcement in informal and gig sectors, equal pay provisions, and anti-discrimination measures.
 - Flexible social protection: portable benefits for informal and gig workers (pension, health insurance, paid leave) to reduce the employment penalty for care giving interruptions.
2. Education, skills and career pathways
 - Align curriculum to labour-market demand: scale vocational courses in high-growth sectors (IT, healthcare, clean energy, advanced manufacturing) with industry partnerships and guaranteed internships/apprenticeships.
 - Targeted skilling for returners: short, modular reskilling/upskilling programs for women re-entering workforce after care giving gaps, combined with placement support.
3. Workplace design and practices
 - Normalize flexible work: hybrid models, compressed hours, job-sharing and part-time roles designed with parity in pay, promotion path and benefits.
 - Childcare and care giving support: workplace crèches, on-site or subsidized childcare networks, and care giving leave policies for both genders to redistribute care responsibilities.
4. Infrastructure and mobility
 - Safe, affordable transport: subsidized commuter services, gender-sensitive last-mile solutions, and dedicated safe travel hours to expand job catchment areas.
 - Digital access and connectivity: community digital hubs, affordable smart phones and data packages, and digital literacy programs so women can access remote work and platform opportunities.
5. Formalization of informal work
 - Simplified registration: low-friction mechanisms to register micro-enterprises and home-based workers to access benefits, credit and formal supply chains.
 - Standardized contracts and social security: extend pension, health and accident coverage to domestic workers, construction helpers, and agricultural laborers via aggregators and sectoral boards.
6. Changing social norms and awareness

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- Male engagement and public campaigns: mass-media and community programs that reframe care work, encourage paternity leave uptake and promote women in non-traditional roles.
 - Community-level interventions: local women's employment groups, time-banks, cooperative childcare and transport solutions that reduce social barriers and build social capital.

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