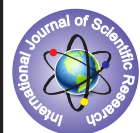


NATURE OF WOMEN'S WORK STATUS AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET- INTER –STATE ANALYSIS



Economics

KEYWORDS: Casualisation, workforce, flexibility, labour market.

Sudip Kumar Ghosh

Assistant professor, Department of Economics, Bidhannagar College, EB-2, Sector I, Salt Lake City, Kolkata 700064, Mob: +91 9674343103.

ABSTRACT

Over time, an important debate on changes in the Indian workforce have revolved around trends towards increasing 'Casualisation' of the workforce and its implications for deterioration in the quality of work. On the other hand, 'regular employment' ensured better quality job contract with higher job security, better pay and working conditions and labour laws imposed on the labour market. This paper wants to establish the effect of flexibility in the labour market and the changing nature of women works in Indian scenario.

INTRODUCTION:

The activity status classification in the traditional censuses and labour force surveys distinguishes between the 'self-employed' and 'employees'. In India, the 'employees are further split into 'regular' and 'casual workers'.

The activity status categories derived and used for the presentation of results are: (i) Regular employees, (ii) casual employees, and (iii) self-employed. Self-employed workers are defined as those who work on or operate their own farm or non-farm enterprises or are engaged independently in a profession / trade on own account or under partnership. The essential feature of the self-employed is that they have autonomy (i.e., what, how, where and whom to produce) and economic independence (i.e., market, scale of operation and money transactions) in carrying out their operation. The self-employed are further sub classified as own account workers, employers, and helpers. The essential feature of the self-employed workers is also that the sale of profits from goods and services produced by them determine their remuneration. Regular employees are defined as those who work on others' farm and non-farm enterprises either of household or non-house types and are paid regular wages or salaries. Regular workers are not bound by daily or periodic 'renewal' of work contracts. The NSS classifies casual workers into two types: workers at public works sponsored by govt. agencies or local bodies are categorized as 'casual workers' in public works, and other workers are termed as casual workers in other types of works (GOI, 2001, p.8). While studies for 1990s focused on higher numerical flexibility in the organized sector (Despande, 2001), recent data on employment in India establishes that the Indian labour market is experiencing greater flexibility in all the respects mentioned by Standing (1999). This challenges the notion that casualisation is the only way in which flexibilisation of labour is occurring. Moreover, it further establishes the lack of decent work (although casual/contract work does encompass the poorest conditions of work).

This paper tries to focus on an analysis of recent macro employment trends and what they reveal. The changing nature of employment contracts in India may firstly reveal the growing trends towards home-based piece-rated jobs on the one hand and the growing flexible type of works at different skill settings on the other hand. These changes may have some gender reflections since women constitute near half of the Indian labour force in one hand and they comprise with socially discriminated and vulnerable workers in other hand.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This paper uses the Employment-Unemployment surveys carried out by the NSSO on a quinquennial basis. The different survey rounds use in this paper are the 43rd (1987-1988), 50th (1993-1994), 55th (1999-2000), 61st (2004-2005) and 66th (2009-2010). The 'Casualisation Index' for rural male and female and urban male and female workers is computed to establish the actual result. The Index of Casualisation is computed by dividing percentage of casual workers by regular workers during the survey rounds under consideration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1. Casualization index for rural male, rural female, urban male and urban female.

State	Rounds	Ratio of casual to rural workers			
		RM	RF	UM	UF
Andhra Pradesh	43rd	3.77	30.50	0.55	2.43
	50th	5.28	27.78	0.54	2.18
	55th	5.78	14.89	0.52	1.13
	61st	4.32	12.18	0.48	0.70
	66th	5.24	15.37	0.35	0.67
Bihar	43rd	3.91	8.21	0.39	0.05
	50th	8.31	27.42	0.40	0.15
	55th	9.97	31.87	0.48	0.12
	61st	12.00	25.83	0.68	0.28
	66th	2.09	19.01	0.73	1.21
Gujarat	43rd	3.23	14.35	0.37	1.09
	50th	4.36	28.73	0.39	1.38
	55th	4.13	23.12	0.46	1.20
	61st	3.94	14.57	0.21	0.88
	66th	4.34	15.08	0.55	0.66
Haryana	43rd	2.10	9.96	0.37	0.53
	50th	1.72	19.55	0.27	1.09
	55th	1.46	8.33	0.29	0.40
	61st	1.10	5.56	0.17	0.28
	66th	1.25	2.46	0.24	0.25
State	Rounds	Ratio of casual to rural workers			
		RM	RF	UM	UF
Himachal Pradesh	43rd	1.96	1.30	0.29	0.07
	50th	1.03	1.00	0.15	0.27
	55th	1.23	0.41	0.23	0.15
	61st	1.12	0.39	0.79	0.62
	66th	1.13	0.72	0.20	0.45
Karnataka	43rd	4.38	19.37	0.58	3.16
	50th	5.48	19.26	0.48	1.12
	55th	5.34	26.57	0.48	0.79
	61st	7.00	16.03	0.49	0.52
	66th	6.49	9.23	0.53	0.56

Kerala	43rd	3.51	3.50	0.89	0.57
	50th	3.81	3.63	1.33	1.03
	55th				
	61st	3.76	3.13	1.23	0.53
	66th	2.90	1.48	1.35	0.51
MP	43rd	2.62	31.33	0.27	1.05
	50th				
	55th	5.37	29.40	0.40	1.29
	61st	7.57	36.00	0.48	1.88
	66th	4.93	11.78	0.40	0.58
Maharashtra	43rd	3.61	18.38	0.24	0.75
	50th				
	55th	3.26	19.76	0.20	0.62
	61st	3.77	36.00	0.24	0.53
	66th	3.01	18.23	0.29	45.00
Orissa	43rd	4.06	16.52	0.29	1.83
	50th				
	55th	6.00	32.69	0.30	1.14
	61st	7.86	38.15	0.46	1.54
	66th	4.81	17.09	0.50	4.76
Punjab	43rd	1.23	2.32	0.27	0.33
	50th				
	55th	2.43	3.68	0.29	0.20
	61st	1.64	2.00`	0.30	0.17
	66th	1.92	1.39	0.30	0.09
Rajasthan	43rd	3.48	6.89	0.36	0.77
	50th				
	55th	3.81	11.89	0.23	0.79
	61st	2.42	7.14	0.33	0.66
	66th	2.52	8.36	0.32	0.46
Tamil Nadu	43rd	3.04	6.83	0.39	0.82
	50th				
	55th	2.69	10.17	0.62	1.00
	61st	2.19	7.98	0.48	0.48
	66th	3.48	7.17	0.36	0.37
UP	43rd	3.62	7.91	0.32	0.54
	50th				
	55th	3.84	21.78	0.35	0.75
	61st	3.11	12.29	0.40	0.32
	66th	2.88	7.70	0.30	0.54
West Bengal	43rd	5.26	7.38	0.56	0.45
	50th				
	55th	3.78	6.08	0.24	0.92
	61st	3.29	4.62	0.31	0.89
	66th	5.77	6.37	0.42	0.46
	43rd	5.83	3.69	0.48	0.46
	50th				
	55th	5.59	4.52	0.42	0.46
	61st				
	66th				

Note: RM—Rural Male, RF---Rural Female, UM---Urban Male, UF---Urban Female From the table we see that the rate of casualisation is high for rural male and female respectively and it is worth mentioning that this casualisation trend is severely high in case of rural female only. This table also shows that the high degree of casualisation prevails in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, M.P., Orissa, Tamil Nadu, U.P. and West Bengal for rural male and the same states including Rajasthan, the degree of

casualisation is so much higher for rural female workers. But very few states out of 15 states under consideration have low degree of casualisation in rural sector. This is true both for rural male and female respectively. Thus mostly for post-reform period, casualisation is discernable for rural workers for the above states. The degree of casualisation is higher for female labour than for male labour. This is perfectly true in case of rural areas in most of the states in India under consideration. This may be explained by the following facts. One of the major debates today is on the casualisation of workforce. Increased the rate of casualisation may ensure employment opportunities for some of the workforce and loss of jobs for others. On the whole casualisation displaces the better- paid more protected workers and increased insecure and low paid employment. The number of employment opportunities created by casualisation certainly by more, but they are also in worse conditions. On the whole, men loss jobs and women gain them. It is found that the largest employment changes were in the industrial subcontracting sector.

Many big companies including MNCs have evolved a vendor system of subcontracting for their production. Depending on the nature of work, some of these vendors either employ women workers in large numbers or give out work to home-based workers mostly through contractors (e.g., Maruti Udyog, BPL, Johnson and Johnson, TELCO, Elin Electronics and Hindustan Lever)

Many times big corporate in heavy industry sector have a very big inventory of plant accessories required in their plants on a regular basis. Some companies have set up cooperatives of women living in the vicinity of their plants for production of such items (example: Steel Authority of India and Bharat Heavy Electricals). Yet other companies have a subcontracting arrangement. Established companies give out work to small units in the organized/ unorganized sector wherein in turn. Outsource some simple operations to home-based workers. The company mediates with these units /workers through contracts who get the production work done and delivers the output to the company (example finishing and quality control, assembling, sorting, packaging and labeling). Many medium and small scale industries in the organized sector and production units in the unorganized sector subcontract work to home-based women workers. Generally the manufactures establish direct contracts with these workers and sometimes even act as contractors for bigger companies.

Subcontracting of work given out to home-based workers has been found to be widespread in the unorganized manufacturing sector and services to have expanded phenomenally over the past decade. However, the types of jobs created in this way are irregular and low –paid. In manufacturing trades (except garments), the work is extremely irregular; the average deployment time was less than four months in a year. In the home-based sector, earnings of the women workers in all trades were abysmally low, far below the minimum wages.

The above table also shows the index of casualisation for urban male and female respectively. These tables analyze the rate of casualisation is low both for urban male and female respectively. While the trend indicates an improvement in job opportunities for the urban women workers, the nature of employment generated needs to be examined. The results indicate that there has been a sharp decrease in the share of casual employment and probably a distinct increase in the share of the regular and self-employed workers. A shift to regular employment in urban India is quite welcome since such employment generally results in better quality job contracts with higher wages than self-employment or casual employment. This shift is especially marked in case of /principal activity. But when subsidiary occupations are concerned, self-employment assumes significance with nearly half of them reporting self –employed.

There has been an increase in the share of regular employment and a decrease in the share of casual employment, which indicates an

improvement in the employment situation. In case of manufacturing sector, such observations confirm the increased regular subsidiary activities among the urban women. This may indicate a regular source of income of the urban women workers from the subsidiary activities in the form of home-based work that are mostly paid on piece-rate basis. In fact, the spurt of export activities specifically in the garments, wearing apparel and textiles sector has provided the women workers with a continuous source of employment in the form of home –based work obviously under conditions. Therefore even if the share of women workers with regular employment has increased in manufacturing, it does not necessarily indicate a better employment pattern for the women workers in the urban areas.

The decreasing rate of casualisation for urban females in all states under consideration is perfectly so because of the marked improvement in the education and training capabilities of these women job seekers, almost in tandem with urban males ; the future cadres of the urban female aspirants are likely to be equipped with education , training and skill accomplishments not much difficult from their male counterparts, and would thus be able to compete effectively in the IT and the management intensive urban labour market.

It is interesting that educated workers usually do not opt to work as casual labour because they do not see any future for themselves. Instead they anticipate full-time or permanent jobs to come their way sooner or later and would therefore prefer to wait. In other words, there is a waiting period for educated job seekers and it may vary with the level of education, depending on the nature and availability of the jobs in the economy. It has also been believed in some quarters that if a choice exists, an employer may not recruit educated workers as they claim higher wages and there is also an apprehension of losing their workers before long possibly because such workers may be in high demand elsewhere. It is for all these reasons that a preponderant majority of female rural and urban workers are casual workers. Hence unemployment rate gradually increases for female. So we may say that the globalization may be negatively cuts the women's labour market participation. This is probably true because the impact of women during periods of liberalization. This question deserves special attention because of the increased demands women face during crisis periods. Women's employment can increase or decrease during the period of structural adjustment depending on several factors. One issue is whether liberalization is leading to 'feminization' of the workforce. The effects are likely to depend on the sectoral distribution of female workers and on the effect of participation rates. Female workers having relatively tenuous attachment to the labour force seem more likely to loss job during periods of labour shedding.

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