



Social Identities and Female Labour Force Participation in India

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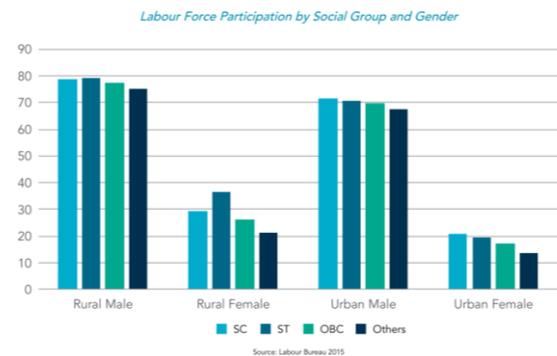
Abstract:

*In 2017 the Asian Dalit Rights Foundation (ADRF) stated that 20 to 25 per cent of the world population, especially in South Asia, are subject to discrimination on the basis of 'caste' which is 'a fundamental determinant [of] social exclusion and development'. Caste is an inherited identity. In economic terms, castes were formed because of different groups specializing in certain occupations but with time society has associated lower castes with long borne ideas of purity and impurity. Caste in modern society falls under the contemporary class system, with corresponding hierarchical social standings. The long history of caste-based discrimination in access to social and physical infrastructure has trapped several social groups, especially those burdened with the lowest forms of human labor like manual scavenging, disposing of human waste and burning corpses, without the chance of any upward social mobility. The 'grammar' of caste is complex, contributing to persisting socio-economic and human capital disparities in addition to subjective well-being, through difficulties in attainment of education, hiring bias and even violence (Deshpande, 2017). The female work force suffers not only from much discussed gender inequalities but also from an unrecognized caste bias that still exists in the Labouré market. But research on caste-based discrimination in the Labouré market, especially on the intersectionality's of caste and gender has been rare in case of India (Shah et al., 2018). The post-independence Indian government was opposed to using caste as a parameter for measuring poverty and inequality, since 'both Gandhian utopianism and socialist universalism expected archaic caste to disappear with modernization' (Mosse, 2018). Therefore, caste categorization never became a part of national census (Dirks, 2001; Jaffrelot, 2006). Untouchability was recognized to be just a practice in the Hindu community, and was made illegal, but the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities who comprise 17 percent of the population (including Dalit or 'ex-untouchable'), still experience untouchability (Mosse, 2012). Caste remains a discounted parameter even with research and qualitative surveys pointing to it as an important determinant of social and economic status, poverty and discrimination in contemporary India. These brief aims to collate evidence and compile data to affirm whether caste-based discrimination in India exemplify the already disadvantageous status of women in the Labouré force. We investigate trends of women's Labouré force participation, based on caste. The brief uses the administrative definitions of Scheduled Caste (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, provided by the major official datasets. Mosse, David. "Caste and development: Contemporary perspectives on a structure of discrimination and advantage." *World Development* 110 (2018): 422-436.)*

Introduction:

The divide in work force participation Even though officially unacknowledged, caste remains a primary source and the most pervasive parameter of social stratification in India (Deshpande, 2011). Ironically in the face of veiled socioeconomic disaggregation of marginalized groups, their overall participation rates in the workforce are higher. However, this does not necessarily signify decent work. The workforce participation rate also shows a significant divide between the rural and urban female workforce in addition to that between men and women from the same social groups. caste prejudice and believed ‘polluting status’ of the untouchables. Approximately 71 per cent of the SC farm wage workers reported a loss of an average of 43 workdays due to discrimination in hiring. Among 389 non-farm wage laborers 52 per cent reported denial of work due to caste bias. In a similar urban labor market study, of the 314 regular salaried workers, 18 per cent SCs reported discrimination in selection, 22 per cent reported high caste employers preferring employees from their own caste and 23 per cent stated that high caste candidates with lesser qualification were selected. The immorality of the labor market demands has trapped entire sections of society. (Amrita Datta & Tanuka Endow & Balwant Singh Mehta, 2020. “Education,

Caste and Women’s Work in India,” The Indian Journal of Labour Economics, Springer; The Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE), vol. 63(2), pages 387 406, June.)



Materials and Methods:

Dalits, people coming from the lowest castes in India and once considered ‘untouchable’, now come under the ‘Scheduled Castes’. However, they still are subject to worse stigmatisation in hiring and access to human capital, and at workplaces. A survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS), 1992 households in 80 villages across the states of Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh in 2013, showed that amongst 441 farm wage laborer’s 41 percent were denied work by the high caste employers due to Others Urban Female like the SCs into demeaning and dirty work for generations, associated with funerary work, f laying, leatherwork, and removers of the material residues of daily life. They themselves are treated as impure in a

permanent way by society and excluded through residential segregation, from ownership of land, common water sources, even public spaces like classrooms or markets thereby pushing SCs away from caste conscious rural systems to autonomous, contract and daily wage jobs in urban areas (Mines, 2005; Mosse, 2012). (Agrawal, T. Gender and caste-based wage discrimination in India: some recent evidence. *J Labour Market Res* 47, 329–340 (2014). Quality and terms of employment the families that migrate or reside in urban areas also have not escaped the limited growth in occupational hierarchy. SCs have had the highest unemployment rates in the post-liberalization periods compared to other marginalized groups and upper castes along with young workers belonging to the SCs with similar levels of education which point to caste-based discrimination being a systemic problem. SCs have reportedly faced caste-based discrimination in hiring, leading to greater unemployment, 1.7 per cent more than the country average. In the urban areas, 26.9 per cent, 19.5 per cent and 37.8 per cent for SC, ST and OBC households, respectively were self-employed while 20.5 per cent, 18 per cent and 14.3 per cent reported casual labour as main source of their income. Deshpande

(2017) aggregated disparities in occupation, education and assets to construct the Caste Development Index, which showed that the degree of caste inequality remains unimproved or has worsened with the greater wealth or faster growth of different Indian states. Per-capita income and access to high-status occupations decrease as we go down the caste and class ladder and so do the return on education or capital assets, the proportion of people in poverty increasing through 'graded inequality' (Thorat, 2017). It comes as no surprise that now most of the the country's capital wealth in form of land, buildings, finance etc. is largely in the hands of the 'upper' castes while the 'lowest' are still primarily casual and daily wage laborers in the informal and unorganized sectors with meagre earnings and lack of access to financial capital or assets. Therefore, a vicious circle subsists, obstructing access to physical and human capital amongst this social group which in turn is cited. (Eswaran, Mukesh, Bharat Ramaswami, and Wilima Wadhwa. "Status, Caste, and the Time Allocation of Women in Rural India." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 61, no. 2 (2013): 311-33. Accessed January 12, 2021. doi: 10.1086/668282.)

Discussion:

Per Thousand Distribution of Households of Different Social Groups (Household Type)

	Regular Wage/Salaried	Self-Employed	Casual Labour	Others
Scheduled Caste (SC)	440	268	205	86
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	465	195	180	160
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	376	378	143	104
Others	445	369	59	126

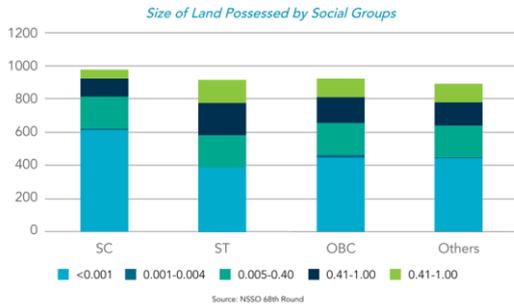
The National Sample Survey (2011-12) showed that even among wage laborers, SCs had a much greater share of casual wage workers, which implies worse job security and lower earning. Amongst the overall casual labor population in the country 32 per cent were from the SCs, which was double their population share of 16 per cent. SCs are also employed for lesser number of days compared to upper castes which was attributed to differences in human capital endowment for one-third of the employment rate and two-thirds of it due to discrimination against SCs in the hiring process. as a reason to avail of any upward socio-economic mobility and vice versa. The labor market inequalities are exacerbated by unequal access to resources by this cohort of the population. Some of these inequalities are evident in other parameters of the Labouré market. The other forms of inequalities in education and asset-holding have a direct bearing upon their Labouré market status. Their low asset ownership, in form of land etcetera, and low education rates stemming from

ingrained social discrimination weigh against them in the Labouré market, making them almost completely dependent on wage Labouré.

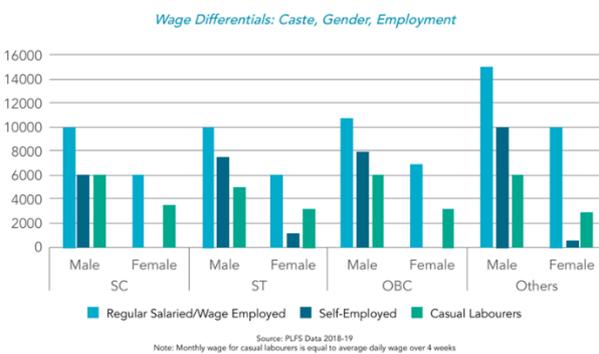
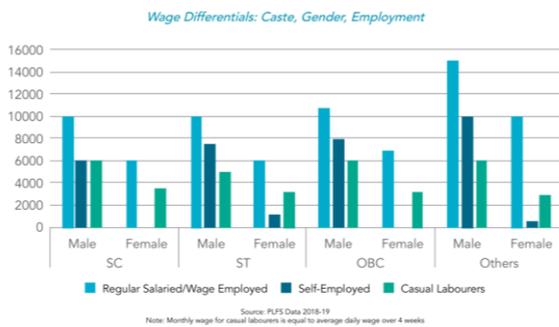
Unequal asset holding Social Identities and Female Labouré Force Participation in India The employment and unemployment Schedule of the 68th round of the NSS (Agricultural Year (AY) 2010-11)) showed that amongst the 47.4 per cent of the rural households who cultivated land less than 0.001 hectare in size, the SC, ST, OBC and others categories comprised of 61.2 per cent, 38.6 per cent, 44.8 per cent and 44.3 per cent respectively. The share of SC, ST and OBC households cultivating land greater than 4 hectares were very low at 0.6 per cent, 1.7 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively. Most households are either landless or own very small plots of land. This is evident from the chart above. The absence of land for large section of this population renders them as wage lab our, working in others' fields. (Singh P, Pattanaik F. Unequal Reward for Equal Work? Understanding Women's Work and Wage Discrimination in India through the

Meniscus of Social Hierarchy. Contemporary Voice of SC. 2020; 12(1):19-36. doi:10.1177/2455328X19898448)

Materials And Methods:



Educational disparities Both the SC and Scheduled tribe (ST) communities in India show low and highly unequal educational attainment (Agrawal 2013). Caste and gender: women’s dual burden Women belonging to such marginalized and minority groups face the duality of gender and caste based discrimination.



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