



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Programme of Study : Ph.D.
Thesis Title: A Study of Changing Female Labour Force Participation in India with a Special Focus on Assam
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Thesis Submitted to the Department/ Center : HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
Date of completion of Thesis Viva- Voce Exam : 15.11.2022
Key words for description of Thesis Work : Labour Force Participation Rate, Female Labour

SHORT ABSTRACT

In India, since the 1970s, there has been a declining trend in the female labour force participation. Given the fast economic growth, declining fertility rate and rising women's educational enrolment in the last few decades, this decline is puzzling. Assam is not an exception to this trend of declining female LFPR (labour force participation rate). This study is an attempt to analyse the patterns and determinants of female LFPR in India as well as in Assam. The thesis reviews various existing theoretical frameworks on female LFPR. Based on the empirical findings from available literatures probable determinants of female LFPR have been identified. Data analysis on 15 Indian states covering the time period from 1987—2012 has been conducted. Secondary data from various large sample rounds of Employment Unemployment Survey of the NSSO have been used along with some other data from different sources. Our Random Effect regression model shows that more the “literate” females, lower will be the FLFPR in a state. High fertility is associated with low FLFPR both in rural and urban areas of a state. It has been found that in a state higher rural male unemployment is associated with women withdrawing themselves from labour markets. It may be the case that, as explained by discouraged worker effect, with lower jobs in the market, females are discouraged to continue their job search. The unemployed women could be withdrawing from the labour market.

For the analysis of Assam specific data, the time period of 2004-2011 has been covered. These analyses are based on NSSO unit level data of three rounds of Employment and Unemployment Surveys. This part of the thesis probes female LFPR across age cohorts, education, economic groups, social groups, status etc. Further, probit regression models have been used on the latest

available data. Our probit regression analysis, which used NSSO Employment and Unemployment Survey Assam specific unit level data concludes that rural women of Assam from households with more land have a greater chance to join the labour force. Mildly educated women have a less probability to join the labour force than illiterates and barely literates – while higher educated women are more likely to join the labour force. This describes a U-shaped curve, often mentioned in the literature of women’s work participation. I devised an indicator capturing the compound effect of class and caste, named as “status”, and examined if status affects women’s labour force participation. This is the significant contribution of the thesis to the growing literature of female labour force participation in India. Although caste alone does not affect female LFPR, caste combined with class (proxied by land owned by the family) does affect women’s labour force participation – in a negative manner. This hints at status concerns of landed upper caste families, which impedes women’s work participation. In urban Assam the results are similar, with some exceptions. My thesis finally offers a theoretical model which contains two propositions, The propositions were inferred from the results of the previous empirical chapters. The mathematical proofs of these two propositions are presented in my thesis. The thesis concludes with a few policy implications.