

Economic perspective of women empowerment: A study on working class & gender disparity in Western Himalayan States of India

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Abstract

Background: The Western Himalayas in India constitutes hilly terrains where agriculture is the main occupation of society. In this part of country, women empowerment can play a vital role in the overall growth and development of society. In this paper, the researcher examined the working class of Western Himalayan states of North India on the basis of gender, background and caste.

Method: Data was collected from the Census of India (2011) and Odds ratio was calculated for males in all work categories.

Findings: The Findings of present study revealed a huge gender disparity in all work categories. Irrespective of the caste and background, the women are far behind men in economic aspect. The urban women have less workable ratio than the rural women in all western Himalayan states. The problem of seasonal unemployment occurs in rural areas and women are the center of this problem. The Numbers of female non-workers are more than male non-workers. These outcomes are questioning the credibility of women empowerment schemes running at different levels. The state of Jammu & Kashmir is far behind in women empowerment status than the other two states.

Applications: This paper will provide evidence to the future researchers for exploring the root causes of problem deeply embedded in the social web.

Keywords: Western Himalayas, Working Class, Caste, Women Empowerment, Odds Ratio Seasonal employment.

1. Introduction

In the western Himalayan region of North-India, the states of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Himachal Pradesh (HP) and Uttarakhand occupy between the ridges of lower Himalayas and snow bound upper Himalayas. Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry are providing employment to majority of the population in this part of the country. The community living in this part of India has close social system and local economic system, with their values and beliefs carried through generations. Jammu & Kashmir merged with Indian Territory in 1947 after independence. Jammu and Kashmir lies at the extreme north end of Indian Territory; presently J&K has 22 districts. According to the census of India (2011), the total population of J&K is 1,25,41,302. Out of which 66,40,662 are male and 59,00,640 are females[1]. The above information means 7,40,022 females are less in numbers than males in the state, clearly highlighting the huge disparity in sex ratio. The valley of Kashmir is different from plains of India; the living population is nomads named as Bakarwal. Aldered differentiated the people on unique lines of artistic craftsmanship, the Craftsman products of this region are pashmina and Kashmiri shawls [2]. The increasing women participation in politics is necessary for development of region [3]. Skill building programs would be given to uneducated widows and their children for economic sustainability. Research conducted in the past focused on the role of self-help groups in the mobilization of health, educational resources and women empowerment in the state of J&K [4].

To the south of J&K, the state of Himachal Pradesh lies. It was constituted as chief commissioner province in 1948 by merging princely hill states of old Himachal. In 1956, it was converted into Union Territory status. In 1971 Himachal Pradesh provided with full statehood. The population of Himachal Pradesh growing by more than three lakhs every year; during 2001-2011 this region is likely to add several class 1 towns [5]. Agriculture Production and Animal Husbandry are the main farm activities of the region. Family techniques in hill agriculture are simple and primitive, thus require much manual labour. Dividing agricultural work on the basis of gender in crop production reveals that tending of animals and other farm works have high involvement of females in total farm works in small farms of Himachal Pradesh. Shukla in her research work attempted to explore women's position in the context of

political, socio-religious and economical life in Himachal Pradesh. The research found the gender bias as part of local social value system, which has its roots in the family system. In her work she focused on the requirement of inter-disciplinary approach with appropriate technology, financial and infrastructural support for economic development of women in Himachal Pradesh [6]. Researchers examined the trends of agricultural wages in India. Research highlighted a significant difference between the average wages of male and female agricultural labourers, and this difference in the average wages has widened over the years. The minimum wages of males increase in most of the states while those of women were below than minimum level in most of the states [7]. Kishore & Gupta investigated women's empowerment as a whole, and found that the average woman in India disempowered with respect to men. There has been little change in women empowerment over time [8].

After separation from Uttar Pradesh in 2000 the Uttarakhand became the 27th state of India Union. Uttarakhand consists of 13 districts with geographically diverse area of Trans-Himalayans in the North and plains in the South. According to the study conducted by Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver Canada on Women's Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL) - a study undertaken in the state of Uttarakhand (2008). Report highlighted the state demographic imbalance created by out-migration of men in search of employment due to introduction of money based economy. When men migrate to cities, the workload of women increased to the manifold. As per the report, women were excluded from the decision-making process. As a result, the development has failed to bring about significant changes in quality of life of women in the most of the remote areas of hill region. The findings of the report revealed the role of NAREGA in providing employment to women, but only for few months in a year. Lack of awareness in women about government schemes and important legislation resulted in their exploitation. Inadequate focus and insufficient budget for women specific programs were findings of the study. Suggestions about institutional training and orientation course for women, awareness programs about important legislations, generation of agro-based activities and home based product units were provided in the report [9]. Kaul in his review work highlighted the Joshi's point of difference of perception in center and region regarding development and growth. Joshi in his work highlight the role of civil society in modern state building and appreciate participation approach to development [10]. Most of the researches in this area explored the women facing social and economic stigma. Women in society are still striving for natural rights of justice and equality.

2. Objectives of Study

- To explore the economic side of women empowerment in western Himalayan states.
- To study the working class of Western Himalayan states on the basis of gender.
- To study the working class of Western Himalayan states on the basis of caste

3. Methodology

The secondary source of information regarding work status of people in western Himalayan states between the age group of 15 to 59 was used. Data collected from the Census of India website (<http://www.censusindia.gov.in/>). Collected data compiled into the different group of caste and gender by using Microsoft Excel. Odds ratio for male calculated manually for different caste and population in different work categories.

4. Results & Data Analysis

Table 1 presents the working and non- working population as per their backgrounds and different working and non-working sub-categories. In Jammu and Kashmir, the total main workers between age group 15-59 are 24,23,939[1].

There are 398637 marginal workers work for less than three months in a year. In the state of J&K, the number of the marginal workers who work for 3 to 6 month in a year are 10,51,361[1]. In the non-worker Category, 10,12,872 individuals are seeking for the job and describe the unemployment status in the state of J&K. In the state of Himachal Pradesh, 18,69,124 people are in the main workers category between the age group of 15-59[1].

Table 1. Gender and Background wise detail of Working and Non-working Categories in Western Himalayans States (Age group 15 -59 years)

	Male (Rural)	Female (Rural)	Male (Urban)	Female (Urban)	Total
Jammu & Kashmir					
Main Workers	13,18,638	1,96,162	7,94,673	1,14,466	24,23,939
Marginal Workers (less than 3 months)	1,52,709	2,04,492	18,014	23,422	3,98,637
Marginal Workers(3-6 months)	4,90,739	3,99,158	92,944	68,520	10,51,361
Marginal Workers (job seekers)	4,25,894	2,23,942	68,843	47,272	7,65,951
Non-workers	7,01,647	16,60,122	3,23,797	8,03,314	34,88,880
Non-workers(job seekers)	2,52,982	3,96,874	1,38,367	2,24,649	10,12,872
Himachal Pradesh					
Main Workers	11,27,446	5,13,947	1,80,705	47,026	18,69,124
Marginal Workers (less than 3 months)	1,20,665	2,08,825	2,409	2,794	3,34,693
Marginal Workers(3-6 months)	3,32,872	5,19,255	11,513	9,424	8,73,064
Marginal Workers (job seekers)	2,91,496	2,66,231	7,782	4,268	5,69,777
Non-workers	3,61,348	7,14,259	63,979	1,59,578	12,99,164
Non-workers(job seekers)	92,438	1,43,179	20,020	33,288	2,88,925
Uttrakhand					
Main Workers	11,61,094	5,91,669	6,95,050	1,16,177	25,63,990
Marginal Workers (less than 3 months)	70,087	98,212	9,005	4,610	1,81,914
Marginal Workers(3-6 months)	2,57,835	3,04,184	58,162	26,292	6,46,473
Marginal Workers (job seekers)	2,15,576	1,41,956	37,352	12,479	4,07,363
Non-workers	5,02,907	10,81,187	2,79,983	7,83,413	26,47,490
Non-workers(job seekers)	1,20,604	1,25,034	71,332	84,061	4,01,031
Source: (http://www.censusindia.gov.in/)					

In Himachal Pradesh, 3,34,693 are marginal workers works for less than three months. In Himachal, the numbers of non-workers are less than the main worker, and 2,88,925 nonworkers seeking for the job under the age group of 15-59[1]. Above information is revealing an employability difference in J&K and Himachal Pradesh. Moreover in the state of Uttrakhand the total population of age group 15-59 in the main workforce is 25,63,990[1]. While in the Uttrakhand non-workers in the same age group are higher, i.e. 26,47,490 and out of these non-workers 4,01,031 are job-seekers. Marginal workers who work for 3 to 6 months period are higher in number than the marginal workers working for less than three months. Marginal workers who work for 3 to 6 months period are also higher than marginal workers seeking for the job in the state of Uttrakhand. Above information clearly mention the state of Himachal Pradesh is providing better employment prospects in different work categories as compared to the state of J&K and Uttrakhand.

Table 2 presents the working and non-working categories of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttrakhand. In Jammu & Kashmir 2,14,142 are Scheduled Tribe main workers within the age group of 15-59 years, and 1,88,791 Scheduled Caste main workers. In Himachal Pradesh, there are 98,795 ST and 4,53,439 SC main workers within the age group of 15-59 years. Subsequently, in the state of Uttrakhand the total numbers of Scheduled Tribe main workers are 77,853 and 4,51,957 Scheduled Caste workers. While in non-worker Scheduled Tribe J&K top with 3,15,074 followed by Himachal Pradesh with 66,417 and Uttrakhand with the non-workers population of 65,912. In Scheduled Caste, non-worker category Uttrakhand is at the top with 4,42,477 followed by Himachal Pradesh with the total population of 3,01,542 and at last in this work category is Jammu & Kashmir with the total population of 2,81,118. Marginal workers job seekers in Scheduled Caste are 47,000 in J&K, 1,65,476 in HP and 1,05,231 in Uttrakhand within age group considered under study.

Table 2. Working and Non-working Categories: Caste and Background Basis (Age Group 15 -59 Years)

State	Category	Gender & Background	Main Worker	Marginal Workers (less than 3 months)	Marginal Worker 3-6 months	Marginal Worker (job seekers)	Non-worker	Non-worker(job seekers)
J & K	ST	Male (R)	1,59,104	32,395	92,000	82,174	84,185	25,911
		Female (R)	35,378	36,779	75,777	37,386	2,03,333	45,515
		Male (U)	15,451	720	3,241	2,367	9,198	3,372
		Female (U)	4,209	567	1,803	1,107	18,358	4,855
	SC	Male (R)	1,26,134	10,966	40,277	29,560	57,378	18,730
		Female (R)	18,333	9,917	29,205	12,760	1,60,681	29,339
		Male (U)	39,153	1,098	5,821	3,557	16,666	5,978
		Female (U)	5,171	409	1,974	1,123	46,393	9,596
Himachal Pradesh	ST	Male (R)	63,292	9,735	21,592	19,853	19,757	5,343
		Female (R)	30,381	15,811	30,826	16,419	40,081	8,182
		Male (U)	3,892	70	338	240	2,089	602
		Female (U)	1,230	113	275	148	4,490	895
	SC	Male (R)	2,85,045	31,996	97,017	87,085	85,892	22,408
		Female (R)	1,31,913	54,111	1,36,708	75,226	1,73,983	36,332
		Male (U)	29,035	586	3,070	2,166	11,498	3,861
		Female (U)	7,446	643	2,071	999	30,169	6,833
Uttarakhand	ST	Male (R)	48,595	3,093	10,691	8,819	18,715	4,834
		Female (R)	22,262	5,351	14,512	5,841	37,684	4,939
		Male (U)	5,378	66	524	332	2,968	836
		Female (U)	1,618	116	540	182	6,545	1,061
	SC	Male (R)	2,30,634	18,573	69,451	61,256	1,00,358	23,538
		Female (R)	1,21,212	22,272	66,394	33,819	2,06,103	24,919
		Male (U)	83,128	1,725	10,535	7,885	37,054	10,873
		Female (U)	16,983	766	4,478	2,271	98,962	12,467

Source: (<http://www.censusindia.gov.in/>)

Note: R= Rural; U= Urban.

4.1. Scheduled Tribes (ST)

From the Table 3 it is evident that the employment for main male workers of Scheduled Tribe in J&K is 4.52 times than the ST female workers in rural areas. In HP odd ratio for ST male main worker is 2.08 times than ST female worker in rural areas. In Uttarakhand, odds of working are 2.12 times for ST male workers than ST female workers in rural areas. While in the urban areas for the same parameters the odds ratio are 3.67, 3.16 and 3.35 respectively. Marginal male ST workers in rural areas of Jammu & Kashmir have 13 percent less probability as compared to ST female rural worker for working less than three months in a year. While in the urban areas of J&K the probability is 1.27 times higher than female ST workers. But the marginal ST male workers (Job seekers) in the rural J&K have higher odds ratio (Exp. β = 2.19) than the urban (Exp. β = 2.12). The odds of ST Male non- workers are 60 percent less than women in rural J&K. Odds of ST Male non –workers are 51 percent less than women in urban J&K. The probability of ST male non-workers (job seekers) in urban Jammu & Kashmir is 44 percent less than female ST workers, while in urban 33 percent less probability of male job seekers than female workers.

Table 3. Odds Ratio: Caste-wise (scheduled tribes) Work categories in Western Himalayan States (Age group 15-59)

S. No.	Work categories/gender male	Scheduled Tribe (ST)		
		J &K (Exp. β)	H. P (Exp. β)	Uttarakhand (Exp. β)
1	Main Workers Rural (Male)	4.52	2.08	2.12
2	Main Workers Urban (Male)	3.67	3.16	3.35
3	Marginal workers- < 3 months (Male- Rural)	0.87	0.61	0.57
4	Marginal workers- < 3 months (Male- Urban)	1.27	0.62	0.56
5	Marginal Workers - 3 to 6 months. (Male- Rural)	1.22	0.70	0.72
6	Marginal Workers - 3 to 6 months. (Male- Urban)	1.88	1.2	0.96
7	Marginal Workers -job seekers. (Male- Rural)	2.19	1.2	1.5
8	Marginal Workers -job seekers. (Male- Urban)	2.12	1.62	1.77
9	Non-workers (Male- Rural)	0.40	0.49	0.49
10	Non-workers (Male- Urban)	0.49	0.46	0.44
11	Non-workers-job seekers (Male-Rural)	0.56	0.65	0.97
12	Non-workers-job seekers (Male-Urban)	0.67	0.67	0.78

Note: Results compiled by using data from Table 2

In Himachal Pradesh Marginal male Schedule tribe workers worked in urban areas for 3 to 6 months ratio is high (Exp. $\beta = 1.2$) as compare to rural areas (Exp. $\beta = 0.70$) with respect to women workers in the same category of work. Marginal scheduled tribe male job seekers of Himachal Pradesh have 1.62 times more probability than female workers in urban areas. In the state of Uttrakhand the ST main workers in rural arrears are 2.12 times more than female workers. In urban areas the male main workers are 3.35 times more than female main workers. This clearly shows that even the urban areas where education and employment opportunities are more. But they have high gender disparity in term of work. Marginal male ST workers in rural and urban areas who work for less than 3 months have 43 percent and 44 percent less chances than female workers in both areas. In case of marginal worker who work for 3 to six months the male worker position in rural areas are more strong (Exp. $\beta = 0.72$) than urban areas workers (Exp. $\beta = 0.96$) with respect to female workers in rural and urban Uttrakhand. Marginal male Schedule caste workers in rural areas (Exp. $\beta = 1.5$) and in urban areas (Exp. $\beta = 1.77$) are more unemployed than female workers. There are 51 percent less non-workers than female non- workers in rural areas of Uttrakhand, same situation with urban areas where 56 percent less male non-workers than female non-workers.

4.2. Schedule Caste (SC)

Table 4 clearly highlights the gender disparity in J&K; the schedule caste male main workers in rural areas of J & K are 6.88 times than the SC female workers. While in urban the gap is high with β value of 7.57, moreover marginal male workers of schedule caste work for less than 3 months in a year in urban areas of J&K are 2.68 times higher than female SC marginal workers in urban areas. Male marginal workers (3 to 6 months) in rural and urban areas of Jammu & Kashmir have high odd ratios of 1.37 and 2.94 than female workers, it means in rural areas 1.37 times more male workers have probability for work 3 to 6 months than female workers, and in urban areas the probability is 2.94 times than female workers. Marginal job seeker male workers in urban areas of J&K are 3.16 times higher than female workers, while in rural area the Exp. β is 2.31. All odds ratio of male non- worker and non- workers seeking jobs in J&K are less than female workers.

Table 4. Odds Ratio: Caste-wise (scheduled caste) Work categories in Western Himalayan States. (Age group 15-59)

S. No.	Work categories/gender male	Scheduled Caste (SC)		
		J &K (Exp. β)	H. P (Exp. β)	Uttrakhand (Exp. β)
1	Main Workers Rural (Male)	6.88	2.16	1.90
2	Main Workers Urban (Male)	7.57	3.84	4.84
3	Marginal workers- < 3 months (Male- Rural)	1.1	0.59	0.83
4	Marginal workers- < 3 months (Male- Urban)	2.68	0.91	2.25
5	Marginal Workers - 3 to 6 months. (Male- Rural)	1.37	0.70	1.04
6	Marginal Workers - 3 to 6 months. (Male- Urban)	2.94	1.48	2.35
7	Marginal Worker -job seekers. (Male- Rural)	2.31	1.15	1.81
8	Marginal Worker -job seekers. (Male- Urban)	3.16	2.16	3.47
9	Non-workers (Male- Rural)	0.35	0.49	0.48
10	Non-workers (Male- Urban)	0.36	0.38	0.37
11	Non-workers-job seekers (Male-Rural)	0.63	0.61	0.94
12	Non-workers-job seekers (Male-Urban)	0.62	0.56	0.87

Note: Results compiled by using data from table no.2

In urban areas of state of Himachal Pradesh the males in the main workforce are more than females (Exp. $\beta = 3.84$), and in rural areas Exp. β is 2.16. In urban areas of HP 62 percent less male non-workers while in rural areas 51 percent less male non-workers than female workers of Schedule Caste. As marginal job seekers, male workers in urban areas 2.16 times high than female workers in Himachal Pradesh. In Himachal Pradesh marginal male workers work for less than 3 months and 3 to 6 months are less than female workers except marginal male worker in urban areas (Exp. $\beta = 1.48$). In the state of Uttrakhand male main workers in urban areas are more (Exp. $\beta = 4.84$) than female main workers, while in rural areas (Exp. $\beta = 1.90$). Male marginal workers work for less than 3 months in Uttrakhand have high population in urban areas (Exp. $\beta = 2.25$), while in rural areas they have low population (Exp. $\beta = 0.83$) as compared to female population. Marginal worker male (job seekers) in urban Uttrakhand are 3.47 times

higher than female workers. Male non-workers are 52 percent and 63 percent less than female non-workers in rural and urban areas of Uttrakhand. Male non-workers (job seekers) are also less than female non-workers (job seekers).

Table 5. Odds Ratio: - Caste-wise Work categories in Western Himalayan States. (Age group 15-59)

S. No.	Work categories/gender male	All Castes (SC+ST+ Others)		
		J &K (Exp. β)	H. P (Exp. β)	Uttrakhand (Exp. β)
1	Main Workers Rural (Male)	6.692	2.225	1.958
2	Main Workers Urban (Male)	6.692	3.85	6.142
3	Marginal workers- < 3 months (Male- Rural)	0.75	0.58	0.724
4	Marginal workers- < 3 months (Male- Urban)	0.76	0.85	1.941
5	Marginal Workers - 3 to 6 months. (Male- Rural)	1.2	0.63	0.85
6	Marginal Workers - 3 to 6 months. (Male- Urban)	1.35	1.22	2.22
7	Marginal Workers -job seekers. (Male- Rural)	1.85	1.096	1.5
8	Marginal Workers -job seekers. (Male- Urban)	1.45	1.85	3
9	Non-workers (Male- Rural)	0.422	0.51	0.47
10	Non-workers (Male- Urban)	0.40	0.41	0.35
11	Non-workers-job seekers (Male-Rural)	0.63	0.644	0.96
12	Non-workers-job seekers (Male-Urban)	0.615	0.612	0.85

Note: Results compiled by using data from table no.1

Table 5 describes the total population state-wise under different work categories within the age group of 15 -59 years. In the Jammu and Kashmir male main workers in rural and urban areas are 6.692 times than female main workers. Male marginal workers (work for less than 3 months) in rural and urban areas of J&K are 25 percent and 24 percent less than female marginal workers. Male marginal workers (work for 3 to 6 months) in rural J &K are 1.2 times higher than female marginal workers. Male non-workers in the state of Jammu & Kashmir are 60 percent less than female workers. In Himachal Pradesh male main workers in rural areas are higher (Exp. β = 2.225) than female workers, and in urban areas Exp. β is 3.85. Less male marginal workers than female workers doing marginal work of less than 3 months and 3 to 6 months, except urban male marginal workers (work for 3 to 6 months) where Exp. β is 1.22. Male non-workers are less in all non-workers categories than female non- workers in the state of Himachal. In Uttrakhand odds ratio of male main workers to female workers in rural area is 1.958, and in urban areas this odds ratio is 6.142. Male marginal workers in rural Uttrakhand are less than female, while all other marginal work categories males have high odds than females. Rural Uttrakhand has 53 percent less males in non-worker category than female and in urban 65 percent less males than female non-workers. There is high population of non-worker (job seekers) females in urban areas of Uttrakhand.

5. Limitations & Future Scope of Study

This study will provide insight into the various govt. and non-government agencies work, and to use information for introspection and better implementation of policies and programs in northern part of country. Future researchers can compare the result at country level and find more insight into the problem of women empowerment in economic terms. Very few studies which deal with economic empowerment of women in this part of country available. Past picture of problem is only in the form of reports prepared by government and non- government agencies. In study only those report used which were available on internet.

6. Discussion

This paper highlights the gender disparity in all work categories. Even caste wise information exhibits huge disparity in employability of females. Gender bias term used by Archana Shukla in social context also becoming part of the economic context. For main work category, state of Jammu and Kashmir shows huge gender disparity compared to other two states. The employment opportunities are seasonal, and people are working for few to 6 months in a year. More women than men are facing deficit employment opportunities in all three states. In urban areas where the education, health and employment opportunities are high, portraying low economic empowerment of women. In Uttrakhand and J&K 6 times more males than females in urban areas are part of the main workforce. Now the question is why better infrastructure and economic opportunities failed to ensure women empowerment in

urban areas? The answer lies somewhere in the social web, in which the Orthodox rules tied in a way that the chances of equality and women empowerment are like a dream. Kishore & Gupta in their work stated the same as a little change over a long period of time [8]. Female non-workers (job seekers) in all states are higher than males by a large gap. Now we have to think about different efforts of government and non-government organization. If women are available for work either they do not know where? How? When?

7. Conclusion

Gender disparity in work is more severe in the urban areas of these states. In rural areas, more women are working than their urban counterparts, but the employment in rural areas is seasonal. This will give a ground to rethink on the plans, budget allocations to provide awareness at urban and better policies at rural level. As all these western Himalayan states have agriculture as main occupation, so agriculture oriented industries and training at village level help to generate more work for women nearby their homes. The role of government and its agencies are important to uplift the status of the women by creating equality at self-worth level, this will help to build a positive and respectful society [11]. The state of Jammu and Kashmir where condition is worse needs policies at grass-root level to uplift the women status. Overall the women in western Himalayan states of India are far behind than their counterparts in term of economic opportunities after 68 years of independence.

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