

Women's Workforce Participation and Hours of Labour Supplied: Social, Economic and Regional Aspects

Abstract

Women voluntarily withdraw from participating in the workforce because of structural and cultural factors. The influence of these barriers will affect the decision of the women to participate in the workforce and it will influence the number of hours worked by the woman. The structural barriers reflect the opportunity cost of women's work incurred by the household and the cultural barriers reflect perceptions and norms preventing women from working long hours and working at all. The sway of these barriers varies across religions, regions, castes and classes. The characteristic nature of female labour supply across types of employment, cultural groups, according to educational attainment and at different intensities of social and intra-household hegemonic pressures, given the presence of assets, social infrastructure, and freedom is the focus of this paper. Interesting variations are seen across levels of prosperity - showing a strong class influence, educational attainment and across cultural cohorts but its influence on hours worked and participation are not significant for lower levels of educational attainment and among cultural groups. Perhaps an anticipated result though less documented is that cultural impact seems to play a major role in deciding participation while structural factors seem to have a larger impact on the hours worked by the woman. Thus to improve female labour supply which addresses both equity and efficiency, the economic policies of this country have to be devised bearing in mind the social construct.