Labour Force Participation in India: An Analysis in Terms of GGGI and SDG India Index

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Abstract

Purpose: *The main purpose of this article is to find the gender gap in labour force participation among countries, especially India, and to compare India's position with that of neighbouring countries. Gender gap in LFPR is also compared with GGGI ranking of countries. For this, two indices were used, one at the global level and the other at national level, GGGR 2025 and SDG India Index 2023-24.*

Methodology: *This is a narrative review article based on GGGR 2025 and SDG India Index 23-24. The GGGI ranking of South Asian countries and its indices and sub-indices of were analysed. The gender gap in the labour market at the global level has been analysed by taking the percentage difference in LFPR among males and females in each country. For this, a score of 10 was scaled up to a score out of 100 by multiplying the score by10.The country that reduced the difference to lowest possibly came as the number one country in LFPR ranking. The same method has been applied to find out the LFPR among males and females in south Asian countries. Performance of Indian states and UTs have been on the basis of data available in SDG India Index 2023-24.*

Results: *Both the indices pinpoint that India is far behind in closing overall gender gap and gender gap in LFPR. India's position in terms of GGGI is 131 and in terms of gender gap in LFPR is 136 among 148 countries. Countries in first ten positions in closing gender gap in LFPR are from Sub-Saharan Africa. Study reveals that countries having high rank in GGGI is not at all good in reducing gender gap in LFPR. The same pattern was observed among the states and UTs in India. The states who are good in achieving overall gender equality are much behind the other states in terms of the closing gap in LFPR.*

Conclusions: *To conclude overall gender equality will not ensure gender equality in LFPR.This relation could be seen among the countries in the world and among the states in India. Countries with high female to male LFPR are not in the group of countries having high gender equality and findings of this study corroborate the findings of Claudia Goldin that countries which are poor exhibit high female labour force participation.*

Keyword: LFPR, Gender Gap, Gender Equality, GGGI, SDG India Index, South Asian Countries.

Introduction

Recently gender gaps in labour force participation got attention when Claudia Goldin awarded Nobel Prize in economics. Her research uncovered the reasons for the gender gaps in the workforce. Dr. Goldin has long been a trailblazer in the field of gender gaps. Her wide-ranging work has delved into the causes of the gender wage gap, the evolution of women's participation in the job market over the past 200 years, and the implications for the future of the labor force. Dr. Claudia awarded Nobel Prize in economics "for having advanced our understanding of women's labour market outcomes" (KVA 2023). As Goldin pointed out women have increased their involvement in the labour market and that was the most significant change in labour markets during the past century. Despite some progress, gender inequality remains a global concern. It varies across countries, but women's participation in the labour market falls short of that of men everywhere in the world. To analyse

the gender gap, many indices have been formulated at the national and international levels. An important index that reveals the gender gap at the global level is the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). GGGI was designed to measure the gender gap in four key areas: health,education, economics, and politics. The other index that reveals the gender gap at the national level is SDG India Index. This article is examining the position of countries in terms of gender equality and female to male labour force participation rate in terms of above said two indices.

Literature Review

The GGGI is an index created to quantify gender disparities in access to opportunities and resources across nations. The 2025 index covers 148 nations and offers a tool for cross-country comparisons and a ranking of the best strategies for closing gender inequalities. The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum aimed to monitor progress toward gender parity and examine gender differences across the four categories. The GGGI evaluates disparities between genders in four pivotal domains: economic prospects and involvement, educational achievement, well-being and longevity, and governmental authorization. Like all indices, it does not include everything that matters for gender equality, but focuses only on a few key measures. It should not be seen as a comprehensive treatise on gender equality, but as a useful pointer or a highlighter of key summary statistics that can be reliably measured and tracked (Deshpande, 2023, August 11). It also monitors the degree to which these gaps close over time in each of the four categories. While GGGI does not claim to measure the root cause of gender inequality, this study aimed to highlight the impact of GGGI on closing the gender gap. (Rana Haq, et al. 2025). This study promotes comparisons between regions and countries by providing national rankings and educates readers about the reasons behind gender discrepancies. Many studies have been conducted on GGGI.

Beyond being the right thing to do, reducing gender inequity makes financial sense. The fifth sustainable development objective is to empower all women and girls and achieve gender equality, which is a high priority for governments (Wodon, &

De La Briere, 2018). The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI); the Gender Inequality Index (GII); and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) has been giving good picture of the labour force participation. Economic empowerment is a relative latecomer to the discussion of gender equality and the global development agenda. Comparative study of selected global gender inequality indices: The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI); the Gender Inequality Index (GII); and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)has been conducted. while economic participation and empowerment are significant factors of gender equality, they are not yet fully considered by gender equality indices which mainly focus on labour force participation (Barnat et al. 2019). Gender inequality has negative consequences for the economy, social sphere, and often the environment at the level of individual countries and the world. In this way, inequality creates a gender gap. The issue of reducing the gender gap was highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals and drew scientists' attention from various fields and international organisations to a multifaceted study of the gender gap phenomenon at different levels (Krasnikova, et al., 2024). Consistent tests of stochastic dominance efficiency are used to assess the Global Gender Gap Index which is a composite gender gap measure comprising four equally weighted dimensions - economic participation & opportunity, educational attainment, health & survival, and political empowerment. Country rankings and index scores vary considerably, depending on the choice of dimensional weight (Mehdi, 2020). Cautioning social scientists against context-independent claims to objectivity by analysing the recent proposal of a new Basic Index of Gender Inequality (BIGI) by Gijsbert Stoet and David Geary. Despite the many internal problems with BIGI, Stoet and Geary have had some success in positioning the index as an important corrective to the way in which gender inequality is measured in mainstream metrics like the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). This success is facilitated at least in part by the failure of GGGI's proponents to adequately justify the methodological choices underpinning the index in relation to the context in which the index's findings are intended to be used. In so doing, the authors of GGGI oversell

the objectivity of the metric's assessment of the state of global gender inequality—and it is this overselling that allows Stoet and Geary to present BIGI as a metric that corrects what they claim are systematic biases within GGGI (Worsdale, & Wright, 2021). The results provide evidence about the existence of a U-shaped relationship between development and FLFP. The least and most developed countries have the highest levels of FLFP and, conversely, countries with intermediate levels of development have the lowest levels. We observed that MENA and South Asian countries present a lower FLFP in relation to what is expected for their level of development. Our estimates suggest that FLFP is affected by social, cultural, and legal norms. Thus, greater freedom to travel or work, as well as the existence of laws that criminalise workplace harassment, promote FLFP. This suggests that differences in FLFP are explained by economics and non-economic factors and policy makers should explicitly consider this multidimensionality (González, & Virdis, 2021). New measure of economic gender inequality (EGI) based on the ratio of women's share of national labour income to men's captures only the principles of equal pay for equal work and non-discrimination. Importantly, it can be calculated from existing data and is comparable between countries and over time. However, once weight countries by population, average EGI has been increasing. Much of the higher EGI in poorer, more populous, countries are explained by the lower rates of female employment in those countries (Tewodros M Gebrewolde et al. 2025).

Statement of the Problem

As India is stepping toward the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision of 70% female workforce participation, policymakers, industry leaders, global organisations, and skilling institutions must address many challenges and barriers. At present India's Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is only 41.7% (PLFS 2023-24). Thus, it is difficult to achieve this target. Deliberations are necessary for shaping policy reforms and industry-driven solutions that will unleash India's full workforce potential, ensuring safe, inclusive, and equitable workplaces that promotes sustained economic growth. For policy formulations, it is necessaryto find out the gap in female labour force participation at the national level and also among the countries in the world.

Research Questions

- Where is India in terms of Female Labour Force Participation?
- Where is India among South-Asian countries?
- Where is India among World countries in terms of overall gender equality and gender gap in LFPR?
- Could we expect high gender parity in LFPR along with high overall gender equality?

Research Gap

No studies have taken place to identify the contradictory existence of high GGGI ranking and larger gaps in LFPR among countries worldwide. A few studies have been conducted to identify the reason for the above among the world countries as well as among Indian states.

Methodology

The main objective of this article is to analyse the gender gap and gender gap in LFPR in India and across the neighbouring countries of India. This is a narrative review article based on GGGR 2025 and SDG India Index 2023-24. Only the secondary data were collected. Source of data is the reports itself. In this article, the gender gap at the global and regional levels the and, gender gap in LFPR at the global and national levels have been analysed. GGGI ranking of South Asian countries and its indices and sub-indices of GGGI has been analysed. Gender gap in labour market at the global level has been analysed by taking the percentage difference of LFPR among males and females in each country. For this, a score of 10 is scaled up to a score out of 100 by multiplying the score by10.The country that reduced the difference to lowest possibly came as the number one country in LFPR ranking. The same method has been applied to find out the LFPR among males and females in south Asian countries. The performance of Indian states and UTs has been analysed on the basis of data available in the SDG India Index 2023-24. Except for the two above-mentioned reports, no other reports have been used for data as a source.

Therefore, if data are not available in the above reports, the same is also reflected in the article.

GGGI and Gender Gap at the Global Level

In 2025,the global gender gap score for all 148 countries was 68.8%, indicating that it will take approximately 123 years to achieve full parity. No economy has attained complete gender parity as of yet, according to the 2025 Global Gender Gap Index. As the only economy that has reduced more than 90% of its gender gap since 2022, Iceland (92.6%) has maintained its top position on the Global Gender Gap Index for 16 years. The top 10 economies in this edition are the only ones that have closed at least 80% of their gender gaps. Eight of the top 10 slots are occupied by European economies. Since 2006, Iceland (92.6%, first place), Finland (87.9%, second place), Norway (86.3%, third place), and Sweden (81.7%, sixth place) have all been in the top 10 countries.

The Republic of Moldova (81.3%, 7th) and the United Kingdom (83.8%, 4th) rose in ranking from the previous year to join the top 10. This year, Ireland (80.1%, 10th) and Germany (80.3%, 9th) were in the top 10respectively. Since 2021, Namibia has occupied the two remaining positions in the top 10 (81.1%, eighth) and New Zealand (82.7%, fifth).

Overall, high-income economies reduced the gender gap by 74.3%, which is marginally greater than the averages for lower-income groups: 66.0% for lower-middle-income economies, 69.6% for upper-middle-income economies, and 66.4% for low-income economies. Nonetheless, the top-performing economies in the lower-income group reduced their gender gaps by more than half of the high-income economies. Each of the four sub-indices has a different path to complete gender parity.

Among the 148 economies covered in the 2025 index, the gender gap in Health and Survival has closed by 96.2%, the Educational Attainment gap by 95.1%, the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap by 61.0%, and the Political Empowerment gap by 22.9%.– The areas of political empowerment and economic participation and opportunity have seen the most advancements in gender parity thus far. However, there are still the largest gaps to be filled in these two dimensions. Among the 100 economies consistently covered in each edition, Political Empowerment has improved the most throughout the course of the index's 19 editions, with the gap closing by 9.0 percentage points, from 14.3% in 2006 to 23.4% in 2025. However, it will take 162 years to close this gap at the current rate. Comparably, the gap between economic participation and opportunity will closed by +5.6 percentage points between 2006 and 2025, from 55.1% to 60.7%. If the current trends continue, it will likely take 135 years to reach full parity.

The top 10 economies maintain a remarkable degree of consistency in their arrangements over editions, despite all these rating swings. Most of these positions are still held by the European economies. Iceland, which has topped the Global Gender Difference Index for 16 editions and is the only economy to have closed the difference by more than 90% to date, is ranked first (92.6%). Since the first edition in 2006, Finland (87.9%, 2nd), Norway (86.3%, 3rd), and Sweden (81.7%, 6th) have all continuously placed in the top ten.

GGGI and Gender Gap at the Regional level

The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 categorises nations into eight distinct regions: Central Asia; Eastern Asia and the Pacific; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; the Middle East and Northern Africa; Northern America; Southern Asia; and Sub-Saharan Africa. The regional scores were organised into three classifications along the gender-parity continuum. The initial category comprises three regions in which gender parity disparity has diminished to approximately 75%. Europe exhibited the highest gender parity score (75 %). Following Europe, North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean each attained a score of 75.8%. The Eastern Asia and Pacific region (69.4 percent), Central Asia (69.8 percent), and sub-Saharan Africa (68.0 percent) constituted the second cluster, with scores marginally below 70 percent. The final cluster encompasses two residual areas that have successfully narrowed approximately two-thirds of their gender disparity: Southern Asia, with a score of 64.6%, and the Middle East and Northern Africa, with a score of 61.7%.

The Middle East and Northern Africa remained the worst performing regions, and South Asia attained the second lowest score among the eight regions, according to an examination of the gender gap by region. Bangladesh ranked first among South Asian nations. India barely achieved the fifth place among South Asian nations; according to GGGI 2025, Bhutan's position was 119th, while Bangladesh secured a 24h place. Nepal, on the other hand, attained the 125th spot, closely followed by Sri Lanka secured 130thand Pakistan at 148th position.

Notably, India's ranking stood at the 131st position among the 148 nations evaluated. Bangladesh and India have reduced their total gender gaps by 77.5% and 64.4%, respectively, and are ranked 24th and 131st globally. The factors that led to India's ranking of 131 were investigated. Political empowerment is the reason behind the better performance of Bangladesh in this season; Bangladesh is ranked third internationally on this metric because the gender gap has been close to 72.1%.

Table 1 GGGI Ranking of South Asian Countries and Components of GGG

Country/Items	Bangladesh	Nepal	Maldives	Bhutan	India	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
GGGI Ranking	24	125	138	119	131	148	130
Economic participation and opportunity	141	140	136	76	144	147	128
Educational attainment	115	129	1	118	110	137	48
Health and survival	123	91	127	126	143	131	32
Political Empowerment	3	63	144	140	69	118	137

Source: GGGR 2025

India's poor performance in the sub-index measuring political empowerment is the primary cause of its positional slope; the sub-index of educational attainment also experienced a decrease. There are hardly many women in managerial and senior roles, and the gender disparity in terms of health survival and economic participation and opportunity has remained constant. On a global scale, the gender gap in educational success has been closed by 95.1% of countries. In India, 95.4% of the gap is filled in areas of health and survival. Bangladesh is ranked first globally for birth sex ratio in terms of health, whereas India is ranked 139th. Bangladesh has a far higher rate of female literacy than India and India has performed much better in terms of tertiary enrolment.

It is necessary to look into the reasons why India fell to position 131st when four of our neighbours are placed higher. The nations ranked below India were Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The parameters according to the GGGI and GGGI rank are listed in Table 1. The widest gender disparity in political empowerment remains. Iran, India, Pakistan, Algeria, and Afghanistan are the countries with the largest disparities between genders in terms of economic involvement. South Asia will close the gender gap in 138 years. Bangladesh was ranked number 24 in the report. India is currently ranked 131st worldwide and has reduced the gender gap by 64.4%. India needed to close a gap of 35.6% to finish first. The rankings of all South Asian nations, except Bangladesh, are above 100.

Table 2 Ranking of South Asian Countries in Terms of Sub-indices of GGGI

Country/Items	Bangladesh	Nepal	Maldives	Sri Lanka	Bhutan	India	Pakistan
GGGI Ranking	24	125	138	130	119	131	148
GGGI Score	0.775	0.648	0.626	0.645	0.663	0.644	0.567
Sex ratio at birth	1	1	1	1	1	139	1
Life Expectancy	134	105	137	40	136	121	139
Literacy rate	96	126	1	76	125	114	129
Labor force participation	129	131	117	137	76	136	142

Wage equality	87	108	n/a	62	n/a	117	106
Estimated earned income	113	134	135	131	85	140	141
Women in parliament	n/a	50	139	130	137	124	113
Women as head of the state	1	27	81	71	81	11	39
Senior position Jobs	133	129	123	114	15	131	134
Technical and professional workers	133	109	89	73	128	119	130
Enrolment in Primary level education	1	n/a	1	1	1	91	129
Enrolment in Secondary level education	1	1	1	1	1	1	139
Enrolment in tertiary level education	125	1	1	1	1	1	113
Women in ministerial position	88	127	127	130	117	138	144

Source: GGGR 2025

Understanding Bangladesh's progress in closing the gender gap will be made easier by studying the sub-indices and indicators of the Gender Gap Index. By contrasting its data with that of India, it was possible to determine the factors that led to this success. India is typically seen as a more developed nation than its South Asian neighbours. The causes of India's failure to close the gender gap can be derived from the GGGI Index. Out of the four sub-indices, in terms of the first two indices (i.e. economic participation and opportunity and educational attainment), the performance of India is well above that of Bangladesh in terms of health, survival, and political empowerment. India's decline in ranking is due to a fall in political empowerment and the health and survival sub-index. Similarly, the proportion of women in managerial and senior roles remained low. Statistics on the sub-indices for health and survival also show discrimination against women.

Performance of Bangladeshi Women: A Backdrop

Analysis of the historical context for the positive developments reveals that improvements in the sex ratio, literacy rates, labour force participation, and wage equality have the potential to spur more improvements in a variety of other areas. When examining Bangladesh's achievements, it is important to consider the sociopolitical and cultural makeup of society. Many scholars have depicted Bangladeshi society through their writings. The social, political, and cultural conditions of Bangladesh are not conducive to closing the gender gap. To address this issue, the government of Bangladesh has emphasisedly emphasized gender equality as a key component of its development triumphs in export production and human development, as well as a standalone objective (Wazed, 2010). The government of Bangladesh has achieved or made quick progress toward important targets with regard to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, despite the fact that Bangladesh faced significant challenges in achieving its SDG commitments, which appear to be exacerbated by an apparent rise in the influence of political Islam (Nazneen, 2018). In Bangladesh, women and girls experience a wide range of gender-based prejudice and disadvantages, which connect with poverty and minority status and Bangladesh is not all a conducive place for gender equality (Hossain, 2018). Early marriage and violence against women continue to be major issues, and political, civic, and economic rights are often violated by women and girls. However, Bangladesh stands out for making great progress from a poor starting position in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality, something that could not have been predicted based on the nation's social and gender relations at the time of independence in 1971 (Hossain, 2021). The relatively rapid improvements in the lives of Bangladeshi women showed that a development strategy that included various elite

sections, government non-government stakeholders, religious bodies, and aid donors has helped Bangladesh to promote women–centric development programs. The primary justification for the rapid advancement of Bangladeshi women's prospects and quality of life is largely the relatively strong elite commitment and growing state capacity to reach and engage women in the development process. The commitment of the elite emerged as a consequence of a sequence of emergencies that emphasised the insufficient safeguards provided by patriarchal gender dynamics for numerous women. This commitment resulted in the integration of women into political agreements as individuals possessing entitlements and simultaneously serving as crucial components of governmental social strategy through their reproductive functions. Bangladesh's success in improving the conditions of women and achieving gender equality gives some lessons to other countries, especially India. It is the right time to examine why India lagged behind Bangladesh. Bangladesh bagged such remarkable position with all its limiting factors. Compared to Bangladesh, India faces a little challenge in closing gender gap and in meeting SDG commitments.

GGGI and Gender Gap in LFPR at the Global Level

One of the biggest challenges in the labor sector is achieving gender balance. Global data demonstrate a consistently skewed representation of women in leadership roles and the workforce across all industries. Female participation in labour force has remained lower than male participation as women account for most of the unpaid work, and when women are employed in paid work, they are overrepresented in the informal sector and among the poor. They also face significant wage differentials vis-à-vis their male counterparts. It has been observed that LFPR is the lowest for urban female.

Table 3 Gender Gap in Labour Market at the Global Level

Country	Burundi	Moldova	Angola	Benin	Mozambique	Nigeria	Papua New Gunie	Togo	Ghana	Tanzania
GGGI Rank	44	7	117	113	53	124	133	121	88	55
Rank in LFPR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender Gap in LFPR Closed	99.1%	97.7%	96.7%	95.7%	95.7%	95.6%	95.1%	95.0%	94.8%	91.7%
LFPR among Male(%)	78.94	71.66	76.56	78.04	80.66	84.45	53.27	72.71	65.48	86.58
LFPR among Female (%)	78.25	70.05	74.04	74.72	77.21	80.75	50.65	69.06	62.08	79.42
Gap	-0.69	-1.61	-2.52	-3.32	-3.65	-3.70	-2.62	-3.65	-3.38	-7.16

Source: GGGR 2025

No country has achieved cent percent parity in LFPR. The country that acquired first rank in achieving highest parity in LFPR is Burundi, a country in Sub-Saharan Africa. Table 3 shows majority of the countries comes in the ranking are from sub-Saharan Africa. Besides, out of the first ten countries in the list, eight are from sub-Saharan Africa. Other countries in the list are Moldova and Papua New Guinea, from Europe and Oceania respectively. A look on countries' GGGI rank shows their ranks are not related to their rank in Labour Force Participation Rate. First country according to GGGI, Iceland is not in the list. Finland and Sweden comes 11th and 12th in terms of LFPR rank.

Labour force participation rate among South Asian Countries shows Bhutan have closed gender gap upto 78.5% and standing first among south Asian countries. Maldives is next to Bhutan. Pakistan is the worst performing country in terms of LFPR. Among seven countries of South Asian Countries India is at the 5th position. Sri Lanka and Pakistan follows India in LFPR. As India is behind four other south Asian countries the reasons have to be analysed. The answer could be found in SDI India Index. SDI India Index ranks all the 28 states and UTs in terms of SD Goal-wise.

Table 4 Gender Gap in Labour Market at the South Asian Countries

Country/Items	Bangladesh	Nepal	Maldives	Sri Lanka	Bhutan	India	Pakistan
GGGI Ranking	24	125	138	130	119	131	148
GGGI Rank in LFPR	129	131	117	137	76	136	142
GGGI Rank in LPFR among South Asian Countries	3	4	2	6	1	5	7
% of Gender Gap closed in LPFR	53.7%	50.80%	64.4%	45.5%	78.5%	45.9%	30.40%
LPFR among Males	80.79	54.95	78.60	70.46	72.42	76.41	80.67
LPFR among Females	43.35	27.91	50.61	31.98	56.83	35.09	24,53
Gap	37.41	27.04	27.99	38.47	15.59	41.32	56.14

Source: GGGR 2025

SDG India Index and Gender Gap in LFPR at the National Level

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were established in 2015 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, provide a strategic framework for attaining an improved and enduring future for all individuals. Implementation and success will be determined by each country's own sustainable development policies, plans and programmes. In India NITI Ayog is in charge of monitoring the implementation of SDGs. All essential domains of progress, including education, healthcare, sanitation, employment, infrastructure, energy, and the environment, are assigned specific objectives within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The attainment of gender parity is designated as the fifth objective to be accomplished by nations. The elimination of all forms of discrimination against females is an indispensable condition for fostering sustainable advancement. The need for India to achieve these targets remains crucial from a global perspective and in its own cause. NITI Ayog has given necessary encouragement and support to them. NITI Ayog released SDG India Index 2023-24. The SDG India Index is a crucial tool in our SDG monitoring efforts. The Index, created and developed by NITI Ayog, tracks our progress toward achieving the Global Goals and goals at the national and sub-national levels. The index

has evolved into the primary tool for national and subnational monitoring. The index has become the mainframe instrument for monitoring at the national and subnational levels. Goals of no poverty, zero hunger and gender equality are the top priority SDGs in which India's performance is lower. According to NITI Ayog report 2023-24 that evaluated how well each state has done in achieving the SDGs, gender equality was a problem in every state. Nine indicators at the national level have been designated to assess the advancement of India towards achieving gender equality. These specific indicators have been chosen in consideration of the data availability at the sub-national level and to guarantee comparability among the various States and Union Territories. These nine indicators encompass the occurrence of crimes against women, the sex ratio at birth, the disparity in wages among employees, incidents of domestic violence, the presence of women in leadership roles, the participation of women in the labor force, the representation of women in managerial positions, family planning, and operational landholding. India, on top of having a large gender gap in labour force participation, also experienced a significant decline in participation rate of women in the recent years. In order to understand, and to decompose the gender gap and the decline in female labour force participation into demand and supply side factors, present an equilibrium joint search model of couples with gender-specific wage offers and home

productivities (Bishnu, et al. January 26, 2024). Indian women contribute only 18% to GDP despite constituting 48% of the population. Advancing women's equality could lead to a $28 trillion increase in global GDP, with India potentially seeing a $770 billion boost by 2025 (Singh, 2024, March 1). The gender gap in India's labour force, attributed largely to conservative social norms and due to both demand side (work opportunities) and supply side (availability of women for work) factors, remains the most persistent paradox of recent decades. The female workforce in India is changing as younger women with higher levels of education enter the workforce (Observer Research Foundation 2024, March 7).

Performance of States and UTs on Indicators of SDG India Index

According to SDG India Index all the 28 states and 8 UTs were categorized as front runners, performers and aspirants. The SDG Index score for the goal of gender equality varies from 39 to 74 for states and from 41 to 65 for Union Territories (UTs). Table 5 displays the composite scores of the leading states and UTs in terms of gender equality. It also provides a breakdown of the states and UTs based on nine national level specific indicators. Nagaland and Lakshadweep stand out as the top scorers among states and UTs, respectively. In the category of Front Runners, four states managed to enter in this category, while a UT, Lakshadweep, secure a position this category. Twelve states and two UTs lagged behind in the Aspirants category, with index scores below 50. The difference between best scorer and least scorer is of 35 points. Odisha is the last state in the ranking. From this we could conclude that there is very wide gap in gender equality between top front runner and the last aspirant.28 states have different scores that show these states and UTs are different in the achievement of gender equality.

Table 5 Performance of States and UTs on Indicators of Gender Equality

Country/Indicators	Chandigarh	Puducherry	Uttaraghand	Kerala	India	Target
SDG 5 Index Score	64	64	58	66	49	100
Sex ratio at birth(females per 1000 males)	960	959	984	951	920	950
Ratio of female to male average wage / salary earnings received among regular wage/salaried employees(Rate as against 1)	0.64	0.73	0.88	0.8	0.76	1
Percentages of ever married women aged 18-49 years who have ever experienced spousal violence	20.1	30	15.3	9.8	29.2	0
Ratio of female to male labour force participation (Rate as against 1)	.74	.48	.52	.53	.48	1
Board directors	182.93	192.31	155.74	166.67	210.24	245
Married women have their demand for family planning met by modern methods	81.1%	81.3%	72.6%	72.2%	74.1%	100%
Operational landholders are females	13.79%	22.80%	11.93%	22.98%	13.96%	50%
Mobile phones	40.7	82.8	97.9	86.6	53.9	80.53
Participation in 3 Household decisions	92.7%	97.9%	91%	94.1%	83.7%	100

Source: SDG India Index 2023-24

There are nine indicators at the national level that can be used to assess India's progress toward gender equality. The composite scores for the top states and UTs on the objective are shown in Table 5. Additionally, it displays the states' and UTs' performance by indicator. SDG 5 seeks to provide women's equitable access to leadership opportunities and full and effective engagement in all spheres of political, economic, and social decision-making. The goal is to attain equal pay for men and women also. According to PLFS 2022–23, the average wage or salary received by female regular employees in India is approximately three quarters that of male regular employees. Rajasthan has the highest female to male wage rate in the state, at 0.91, followed by Goa at 0.90, and Odisha at 0.59.With a female to male wage ratio of 1, Delhi leads all UTs; Ladak comes in second at 0.87.

Table 6 SDG India Index Ranking and Labour force Participation in India

States/ Indicators	Himachal pradesh	Sikkim	Nagaland	Meghalaya	Arunachal Pradesh	Mizoram	Rajasthan	Telengana	Andra Pradesh	Jharkhand
Female to Male LFP (%)	89%	84%	81%	78%	76%	67%	64%	62%	62%	60%
Female to Male LFP Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SDI India Index Ranking	5	7	26	25	24	13	18	11	10	27
Gender Equality Ranking	5	4	1	7	9	2	13	17	14	26

Source: SDI India Index 23-2024

LFPR and Gender Equality at the Global and National Level

LPFR and gender equality at international level, among South-Asian countries and at national level has been analysed. At the international level Iceland and Finland secured first and second position in GGGI respectively. A look at LFPR among countries shows countries with high GGGI score have not placed anywhere among first seven countries however some sub-Saharan countries came out in the first place for closing gender gap in LPFR. Even though, the countries are able to reduce overall gender gap very significantly, these countries will take long years to close gender gap in LFPR. Among South Asian countries also the same trend could be seen. Bangladesh is having High GGGI score however Bhutan is having high LFPR among South Asian countries. At the national level Uttarakhand and Chandigarh are the top scorers in terms of SDG India Index. According to SDG5, gender equality, Nagaland and Lakshadweep are the top scorers among states and UTs respectively. In terms of LFPR, Himachal Pradesh and Ladak secured top position among states and UTs respectively.

Findings

India falls greatly behind in reducing the gender gap in LFPR and the gender gap overall, according to both indices. Out of 148 nations, India ranks 131 in terms of GGGI and 136 in terms of the gender disparity in LFPR. Sub-Saharan African nations rank in the top 10 for reducing the gender gap in LFPR. According to the study, nations with high GGGI rankings are completely ineffective at closing the gender gap in LFPR. The Indian states and union territories showed the similar trend. The states who are good in achieving the overall gender equality are very much behind the other states in terms of closing gap in LFPR.

Suggestions

The Contradiction of high overall gender equality and high gender gap in LFPR among world countries and among Indian states is opening up a new space for further research. Policies have to be formulated at the Government level to narrow down the contradiction. Government policymakers, industry leaders, global organizations, and skilling institutions have to address key challenges and barriers, including employment barriers, workplace safety, pay parity, and digital job opportunities in reducing the gender gap LFPR. Deliberations must be therefor shaping policy reforms and industry-driven solutions that will unleash India's full workforce potential, ensuring safe, inclusive, and equitable workplaces that drive sustained economic growth.

Conclusion

To conclude among the South Asian countries India at the fifth place in GGG Index. In terms of gender gap in LFPR also India at the fifth place among South Asian countries. Countries in first ten positions in closing gender gap in LFPR are from Sub-Saharan Africa. Perusal of the GGGR shows countries having high score in global gender gap index are not in the list of countries those reduced gender gap in LFPR. First country according to

GGGI, Iceland is not in the list moreover Finland and Sweden comes 11th and 12th in terms of LFPR rank. The same relation could be seen in the case of countries among states in India. Countries and states are having high female to male LFPR are not in the group of countries having high gender equality and findings of this study corroborate with the findings of Claudia Gold in that countries which are poor exhibit high labour force participation of women. The contradictory existence of huge gender disparity in LFPR and the high overall gender equality in both Indian states and among other nations is creating new avenues for research, and government measures must be developed to address the aforementioned discrepancy.

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