



Work force structure in India: a comparative study of scheduled caste and non-scheduled population work domain

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Abstract

Differential distribution of roles has always been an essential feature of each and every society and these differences when translated within the caste based society generates its unique spatial manifestation of inequality in society, and the scheduled caste being at the bottom of caste hierarchy becomes the worst victim in every sphere of life. This paper tries to see how the world of Scheduled caste's work is differing from Non-Scheduled Population's work in the labour market.

Keywords: Work Participation Rates, Social Group, Employment Status, Disparity Index, NSSO Unit Level Data.

Introduction

Differential distribution of roles has always been an essential feature of each and every society. Caste is one human mode of social differentiation. The caste system creates a unique kind of inequality of values and ideas developed upon purity-pollution, which is the essence of the creating hierarchy in every walk of the life. Scheduled castes are worst effected due to this inequality. There is close relation between caste and occupation in conventional socio-economic order, though there is gradual erosion of this traditional link but effects of caste on occupation still exists, however, jobs of low wages, and jobs which are considered to be inferior are still performed by the scheduled caste population. Despite discriminations of various sorts against them, Scheduled castes have been the very important and integral component of Indian society. No one can deny the temporal, spatial and functional significance of the Scheduled castes in larger Indian society. Though placed at the bottom rung of the society, so it is important to study SCs which are deprived from the past.

It must be recognised that work is not only a way to livelihood; it defines the conditions of existence¹. If analysis of economic composition of any population is done then it will unfold the vast and diverse economic, cultural and demographic factors are operating on the space, which defines and give base for social and economic development of any region. The economically active population is the part of the manpower, which is actually engaged in the production of goods and services. The size of working force depends upon a variety of demographic, social and economic factors².

NSS defined workers as "persons who were engaged in any economic activity (any activity resulting in production of goods and services that add value to national product was considered as an economic activity) or who, despite their attachment to economic activity, abstained from work for reason of illness,

injury or other physical disability, bad weather, festivals, social or religious functions or other contingencies necessitating temporary absence from work, constituted workers. Unpaid helpers who assisted in the operation of an economic activity in the household, farm or non-farm activities were also considered as workers." (Report of NSS, (July, 2009 - June, 2010), "Key Indicator of Employment and Unemployment in India", page A-4.) Workers are further categorised as self-employed, regular salaried/wage employee and casual wage labour. Work participation rate (WPR), is the ratio of the working population (in particular age group) with that of the total population (in the same age group). The labour force participation rate gives the supply side; work participation rate is the result of an interaction between the supply of and demand for labour. Work participation gives the picture of the labour distribution.

Economically active population and their regularity and quality of work decide the socio-economic development of any region. The workforce structure of a social group is a very important indicator to understand the economic development level of a group to confirm its position in society.

The present exercise aims to see how the world of Scheduled caste's work is differing from Non-scheduled population's work in the labour market with the following attributes: sector wise, age specific, education level and Work Status wise. This paper tries to show the distribution pattern, nature and inequality in the workforce structure of Scheduled Castes and Non-Scheduled population across the sector and gender dimensions. The paper is based on the analysis of the unit level data of 66TH Round: schedule 10: Employment and Unemployment (July 2009- June 2010).

In the present study, the Social groups of Scheduled Caste and Non-Scheduled, are taken for the analysis. Non-Scheduled Population is referred to Total population minus both Scheduled

Caste and Scheduled Tribe population, and referred as the General population in the paper.

The present study attempts an analysis of workforce structure based on the 'usual status' by taking also into consideration the subsidiary economic status of persons categorised 'not working' or the Usual Status (PS+SS) categorization for short (from NSSO) for the age group 15-59 years (working age group).

Workforce Participation Rate = ((total no. of workers in the age group)/(total population in the age group))*100. To show the disparity among Scheduled Caste and General Population (mentioned as 'Others' in NSSO), Sopher's Index of Disparity, modified by A. Kundu is used:

$$Ds = \log \left(\frac{X_2}{X_1} \right) + \log \left[\frac{(Q - X_1)}{(Q - X_2)} \right]$$

Where: $X_2 > X_1$ and $Q > 200$

Here, Non-Scheduled population or General population is taken as X_2 , as they are considered as the forward group, and X_1 is Scheduled caste

This entire study primarily focuses around: *How the world of Scheduled caste's work differs from Non-Scheduled Population's work in the labour market.*

Status of workforce participation rate

The analysis part is limited to the working age population 15-59 years, as the changes in workforce structure of 0-15 and 60 plus population does not require for analysis in this study. India is characterised by the low work participation rate. The Table-1 shows that the Workforce Participation Rate of usual status (ps+ss), which is more for Scheduled Caste (SCs), i.e., 62.9%, in comparison to Non-Scheduled population or the General population (Gen), i.e. 53.6%, in all the segments whether it's gender or sector (rural and urban), but here again the question arises that in what type of work they are engage, in which sector they are located, in multifaceted dimensions of the working world where they locate themselves, whether it is the scenario of the particular space, or has the geographical spread been fairly distributive or geographical spread has been fairly distributed.

The Table-1, shows the composition of the workforce by sex and residence, gives a picture that among the sectors, i.e. rural and urban, the workforce participation rate is more for the rural sector, all across the gender and social group dimension. This may be attributed to the nature of the economy in the urban sector, as there the type of work requires much of the education and skills, and its acquisition delayed the entry in the world of work and also restrict the populace easy entry, like that of in rural sector. Many scholars have emphasised on the importance of women economic role in shaping and determining their status and position in the society and family to maintain the gender equality³. Females are all far behind males in terms of their

representation in workforce, as the earning of the bread was primarily a male responsibility, and the urban females are at worse in their workforce participation. There are several factors influencing the extent of female workforce like the status and freedom of female in society, the economic pressures imposing their participation in work, the accessibility of appropriate jobs for females, and the desire on the part of the family. Some women prioritizing paid employment, whereas majority of women prioritize family over career resulting in their low participation rate in work. Some women prioritising paid employment, whereas the majority of women prioritise family over career resulting in their low participation rate in work and also they are expected to take primary responsibility for care giving in families, and anticipate that this responsibility will constrain their involvement in paid work⁴.

Table-1: Workforce participation rate of age group 15 to 59 among Scheduled Caste and General population in 2009-10 (66th NSSO round).

Work participation rate, 2009-10 (15 to 59 Age Group)			
	Scheduled Caste	General Population	Disparity in WPR
Total	62.92	53.68	-0.10
Male	86.12	82.20	-0.03
Female	38.89	23.80	-0.25
Rural	65.00	56.94	-0.08
Rural male	87.39	84.03	-0.03
Rural female	42.21	29.07	-0.20
Urban	55.32	49.13	-0.07
Urban male	81.68	79.69	-0.02
Urban female	26.26	23.80	-0.05

Source: Computed using NSS unit level data on employment and unemployment, 66th Round, Schedule 10, 2009-10.

Age-specific workforce participation

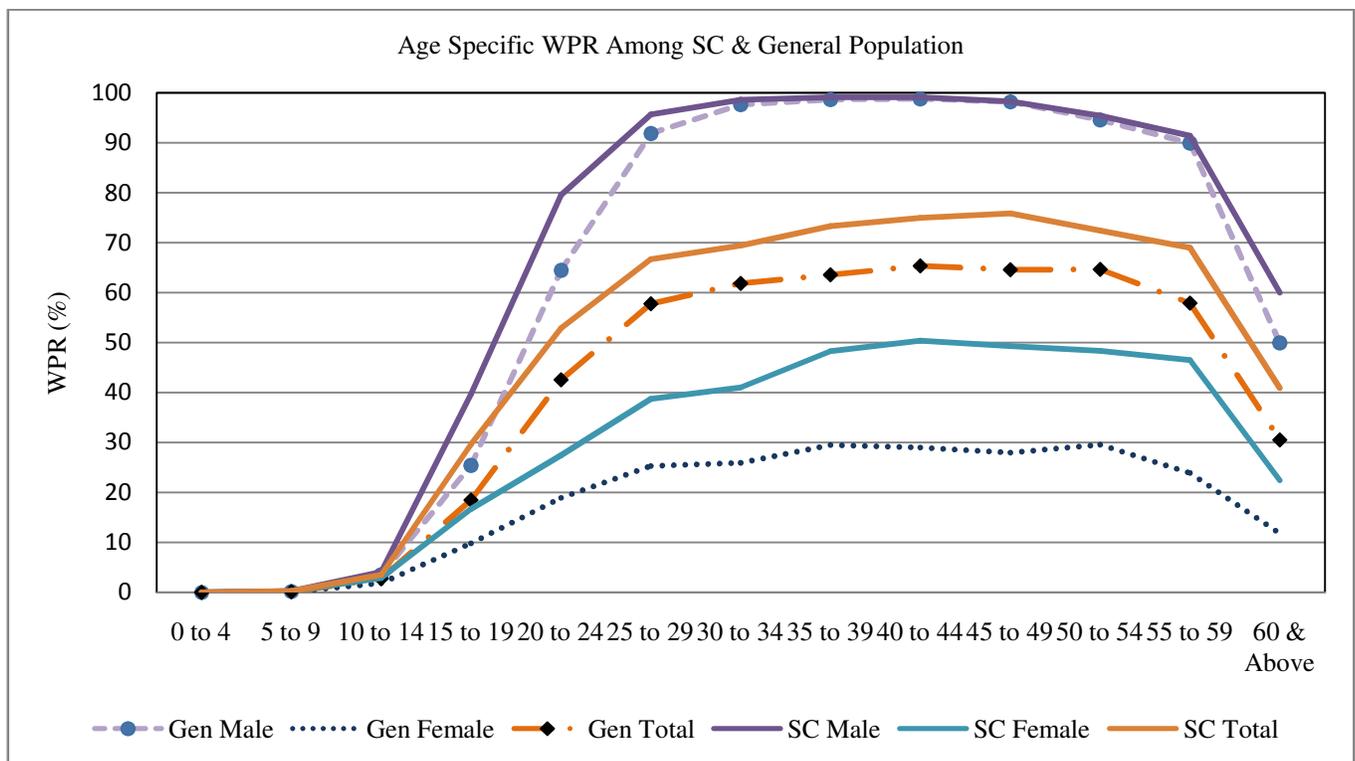
Age of a person governed the potentiality to work and so the different age groups display varying participation rates. The age-specific workforce participation rate for all India for both the social groups viz. Scheduled Castes and Generals is shown below in the Figure-1. Below 15 ages, the share of the population in workforce participation rate shows the child labour practice in both the social groups across the gender dimension. As there is an increase in the age, the workforce participation rate also increases. In the age group 25 to 29 the workforce participation rate for males among scheduled castes

is 96.4% and for Generals is 93.9%, shows that practically all population is participating in the economic activity. The general pattern of age-specific workforce participation for both the social group indicates that males enter the world of work at an early age and continue in it up to an advanced age. The male-female workforce participation rates are quite striking as the female rate is considerably lower than the male rate of work participation in all the groups across the residential settings, reason here lies in the patriarchal system of the Indian society.

Male workforce participation, after the age group 25 to 29, is almost equal in both the social groups and overlapping across the residential settings. But the striking difference is there in education attainment age group, as below 25 to 29 age group the workforce participation rate for the general male is low than the Scheduled Caste males, emphasising the early entry of Scheduled caste male in workforce impedes their education. From 10 to 14 age-groups to 25 to 29 age-groups, workforce participation rate of General population is lowest among both the social groups shows their less need to enter into the work market and they are available more for the possession of higher level education. The Scheduled caste's more rate of participation in workforce in age groups below 25 age shows the compelling economic forces in their society that make it necessary for every member of the family to participate in economic struggle with a view to augmenting the family income.

The Female workforce participation rate is far less than the male workforce participation rate as female's work participation in economic activities is more guided by the economic and socio-cultural aspects prevalent in the wider society. Female workforce participation rate shows that females of general population are less in work in comparison to scheduled caste females across the residential settings and urban females of general population have lowest workforce participation rate in all age cohorts, as in the Indian context, a traditional norm prevails in upper caste which exclude women for any labour engagement outside the family acts as a hindrance to women for their entry in the labour force, so the influence of economic differentiation, caste structure and the nature of family interact with one another in the formation of female workforce⁵.

Various scholars have said that women's mobility and choice of work are influenced by the cultural values and norms which have different level of influence on castes and region, high castes family discourage their women to do any kind of paid job outside of the family, and leaving a job of women family member is perceived as a improved status of the family in the society. Further in the absence of any proper well established institution which can care and rear the child the female member of the family has to make a choice in between the child rearing and work participation, and generally in the most of the case women has to compromise for this purpose³. Also, the high skill demand with limited job opportunities in urban sector jobs further curtails their participation.



Source: Computed by author by using NSS unit level data on employment and unemployment, 66th Round, Schedule 10, 2009-10.

Figure-1: Age-specific workforce participation among scheduled caste and general population in India, 2009-10.

Education specific work participation rates: status of scheduled caste and general population

Education plays a very important role in shaping and defining various aspects of human life as it is a instrument through which an individual can achieve the status in social structure, not mere by ascription but individual merit and achievement. This also gives equal opportunity to the downtrodden and underprivileged to improve their status. Education is the utmost institution, which affects every walk of the life in larger society, and directly and indirectly affect the social institutions like polity, economy and society and specially social stratification. Caste has been an inherent institution in traditional Indian social system since past. Education does not stand in isolation from the other social institution of the society. It constantly interacts with the other institution and performs its action in context of its relation with them. Sometimes it affects other institution and sometimes it gets affected by the other social institution. Though every society faces the problem of inequality in access and achievement in education, thus the outcome of education remains unequal most of the time⁶.

The education-specific workforce participation rate which describes that, 40.5% SC workers are illiterate in comparison to 16.8% general workers. SC workers are of less technical and higher educational levels. The workers of the general population are more in secondary levels of education. The technical graduates and nontechnical graduates worker here are more for the general population, this shows the type of work in which the two social groups are employed, most of the working population of scheduled castes are illiterate as they can only be a share of low occupational activities. The condition of females among both the groups is very deprived, as more than 60% of scheduled caste female workers are illiterate while this is of 32% for general female workers. Rural scheduled caste females are the most deprived section of the society, with the 65% working population in the illiterate category, and same is also true for the general rural female with 40% workers share in illiterate.

Disparity in workforce participation rate among scheduled caste and general population

Social inequality is a keynote of the caste system; it is the theme of the social etiquette of the Hindus⁷. Table-2 shows the disparity in workforce participation rate across the sector and gender dimensions, which shows the prevalence of negative

rates of disparity clearly stating the conditions that scheduled caste population have to work for survival, while non-scheduled population can afford not to work. The disparity is highest among females; Scheduled caste females are more in work in comparison to general females. The disparity among the males is low in comparison to females. Females work participation experience shows more disparity than men’s, which implies that societal traditions, norms, and country’s institutions of governance etc. play a important role for women than for men. In rural India, the disparity is more for both the genders, though very less among males.

This difference among the females is starker in the rural sector, as the work for women is socially more offensive there and only not well to do family women work outside, so scheduled caste females are more in the workforce there. The disparity is very low for the males, as they are in the workforce by cutting across the social structure and sectoral dimensions. The disparity is lowest among the urban Scheduled Caste male population and urban General male population.

Employment status

According to the status of employment, employed persons are categorised into three groups. These are i. self-employed ii. regular wage/salaried employees iii. casual labour. Regular salaried defined by NSS as these were persons who worked in others’ farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and, in return, received salary or wages on a regular basis (i.e. not on the basis of the daily or periodic renewal of work contract). Self Employed defined as persons who operated their own farm or non-farm enterprises or were engaged independently in a profession or trade on own-account or with one or a few partners were deemed to be self-employed in household enterprises. The essential feature of the self-employed is that they have autonomy (i.e., how, where and when to produce) and economic independence (i.e., market, scale of operation and money) for carrying out their operation. Categories of self-employed persons: own-account workers, employers and helpers in the household enterprise. Casual labour defined as a person who was casually engaged in others’ farm or non-farm enterprises (both household and non-household) and, in return, received wages according to the terms of the daily or periodic work contract, was a casual wage labour (Report of NSS, (July, 2009 - June, 2010), “Key Indicator of Employment and Unemployment in India”, page A-3-4).

Table-2: Disparity in Workforce Participation Rate among Scheduled Caste and General Population.

Disparity in WPR among SC and General Population (15 to 60 Age group)									
WPR Disparity 2009-10	Total	Male	Female	Rural	Rural Male	Rural Female	Urban	Urban Male	Urban Female
	-0.1	-0.03	-0.25	-0.08	-0.03	-0.2	-0.07	-0.02	-0.05

Source: Computed by the author using NSS unit level data on employment and unemployment of 66th Round, Schedule 10, 2009-10 and of 55th Round, Scheduled 10.1, 1999-00.

Table-3: Employment status of scheduled caste workers and general population workers in 2009-10.

Work Status 2009-10	Scheduled caste			General population		
	Regular Salaried	Self Employed	Casual Labour	Regular Salaried	Self Employed	Casual Labour
T	13.5	33.4	53.1	25.4	56.4	18.2
M	15.3	31.6	53.1	26.8	54.9	18.3
F	9.6	37.4	53.1	20.2	61.7	18.2
R	7.1	34.5	58.3	10.7	64.9	24.4
RM	8.1	32.8	59.1	11.9	62.9	25.2
RF	5.1	38.2	56.6	7.2	70.6	22.2
U	41	28.4	30.6	49.1	42.6	8.3
UM	42.3	27.2	30.5	48.3	43.4	8.3
UF	36.5	32.4	31.1	20.2	61.7	18.2

Source: Computed using NSS unit level data on employment and unemployment, 66th Round, Schedule 10, 2009-10.

The Table-3 shows, that the share of scheduled caste population is more in casual labour across gender and sector. Casual labour for both the social groups is high in the rural sector. The share of the general population is more in self-employed. But it is clear that the proportion of regular salaried is relatively less for both the social groups and in comparison low for scheduled castes. Rural females experience the lowest share of regular salaried for scheduled castes as well as general females. The highest share of self-employed is with the general females of the rural sector.

Females have more share in self-employed in comparison to males and general females are more in this in comparison to scheduled caste females. Male workers share in self employment is substantially higher but the matter of concern is share of female in wage employment is quite low, but they outnumber their counterpart due to their unpaid family labour who are actually workers in terms of statistics but they don't have any control either the means of production or returns to the work¹. Though women numbers in jobs have risen, but still they are employed mostly in low paying jobs due to several reasons like family constraints, gender discrimination which usually produced different results for similar qualified men and women and also as men and women choose different jobs because of the gender division of labour in the family⁴.

Being oriented to work in caste specific occupations may at times make women pull out or be pushed out of the labour market. Wherever women do manage to pull themselves out of these social restrictions, lack of education and skill formation relegates them to the lower rungs of the job market as unskilled casual workers⁵.

Disparity in work status

Table-4, shows the work status disparity among scheduled caste and the general population in 2009-10. The disparity for regular salaried and self-employed is more where the share of the general population is more in these two types of activity status all across the gender and sector. For regular salaried, the disparity is more for females and rural sector has more disparity than urban. While for self-employed, the disparity is high in the rural sector across the gender.

In casual labour, the share of scheduled caste workers is high so values are in the negative, which shows high disparity with more scheduled caste employed for casual activity status.

Among the self-employed, the disparity is declining for urban females. The regular salaried work status shows more decline in the disparity in the rural sector, as the previous analysis already explains more growth of scheduled caste rural workers as regular salaried. But for urban females, the disparity in regular salaried is increasing, as the social complexities for working females in society still persist.

Conclusion

Scheduled castes are more in low jobs than general population and in gender division females of both the groups are more deprived than males though, in comparison of scheduled castes and general females, scheduled caste females are more deprived, further in sectoral divisions, situations are unfavourable for rural sector and within that, much unfair to scheduled castes and worst for scheduled castes females.

So, if we look the work status scenario of India, where the complexities are there at every level, the very glance of society through this multidimensionality of social stratification brings the picture of scheduled castes deprivation and most worst conditions for rural scheduled castes females which are at the bottom.

Table-4: Disparity (2009-10) and change in disparity (1999-00 to 2009-10) in Employment status among scheduled caste workers and general workers.

Disparity Index	Disparity (2009-10)		
	Regular Salaried	Self Employed	Casual Labour
Total	0.3	0.3	-0.6
Male	0.3	0.3	-0.6
Female	0.3	0.3	-0.6
Rural	0.2	0.4	-0.5
Rural male	0.2	0.4	-0.5
Rural female	0.2	0.4	-0.5
Urban	0.1	0.2	-0.6
Urban male	0.1	0.2	-0.6
Urban female	0.2	0.1	-0.6

Source: Computed by Author using NSS unit level data on Employment and Unemployment of 66th round, 10 schedule 2009-10 and 55th round, 10.1 schedule, 1999-00.

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