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**DAILY EDITORIAL  
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**The Determinant in 'More  
Women in the Job Market'**

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## THE DETERMINANT IN 'MORE WOMEN IN THE JOB MARKET'

### Context:

- There is growing demand from social scientists, governments and international organisations that women's participation in the economy/labour market should increase to promote economic growth of India.

### About the Women Workforce in India:

- The participation of women in the workforce is a critical indicator of a nation's economic health and social progress.
- In India, the female labour force has been a subject of extensive research and policy discussions.
- According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** conducted by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, the estimated **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** for women **aged 15 years and above** was 28.7% in 2019-20.
- However, the **latest PLFS report** shows an **increasing trend** in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women, which was **32.8% in 2021-22**.
  - ◆ However, this rate is still lower than the global average of 47% and significantly lower than countries like China, which has a female LFPR of 60%. It remains lower than some of its neighbours in South Asia such as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

### Opportunities For Women in the Job Market:

- The career opportunities for women in India are on the rise.
- India's female labour force participation rate has been on a downtrend, declining from 32.0% in 2005 to 19.2% as of 2021.
  - ◆ However, the potential for women in the job market in India is immense and largely untapped.
  - ◆ **Emerging Opportunities:** The **gig and platform economy** offers flexibility and freelancing jobs. Women form a very large proportion of this segment.
  - ◆ **Sectors with Potential:** According to **United Nations Women** estimates, women make up a significant proportion of all healthcare workers and more than 80% of nurses and midwives.
    - Women also form a significant proportion of the workforce in the education sector in India, especially in primary education and early childhood care.
- **The Role of Education:** As women with higher education and professional qualifications in India tend to participate more in the labour market, it is argued by experts that greater women's education will raise their participation rate in the labour market.

### Challenges For Women in the Job Market:

- Despite the progress made in recent years, women in India continue to face significant challenges in the job market. These challenges range from societal norms and expectations to structural and policy issues.
- **Societal Norms and Expectations:** The root cause of many challenges faced by women in the job market is the **patriarchal society**, where men are considered to be the breadwinners and women are expected to be the homemakers.
  - ◆ Patriarchy: The root cause of low women's participation in the labour market in India is patriarchy, a social system marked by the supremacy of the father/man in the family, community, and society.
  - ◆ This societal construct often discourages women from entering the labour market and confines them to low productivity and inferior kind of work.
- **Lack of Equal Opportunities:** Women often face a lack of equal opportunities in the job market. It includes limited access to higher-paying jobs and leadership roles.
  - ◆ The gender pay gap is another significant issue, with women globally being paid about 20% less than men.

- **Career Gap and Rejoining the Workforce:** Women often find it difficult to overcome career gaps and rejoin the workforce.
  - ◆ This is particularly true for women who take a break from their careers for reasons such as childbirth or caregiving.
- **Barriers in Leadership:** Women face significant barriers in attaining leadership positions.
  - ◆ These barriers can be attributed to unconscious gender stereotypes and biases that often favour men for leadership roles.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Achieving a work-life balance is another major challenge for women.
  - ◆ Women often carry the burden of being a caregiver, which leads to concerns around work-life balance.

### Related Government Initiatives:

- **The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):** It has been a significant initiative in empowering women in India, aimed at providing affordable housing to the urban poor, has had a substantial impact on women's empowerment.
  - ◆ **Ownership:** Of the total number of houses provided under PMAY, the ownership of **80% of them belongs to women**. It is a significant step towards ensuring financial security and independence for women.
  - ◆ **Rural Impact:** Over 70% of the houses under PM Awas Yojana Gramin have been given to women from rural areas. It highlights the government's commitment to uplift the rural women population.
- **PM SVANidhi Scheme:** It was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, is a micro-credit scheme for street vendors.
  - ◆ It aims to facilitate collateral-free working capital loans to street vendors to restart their businesses, which were adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - ◆ **Impact on Women:** The PM SVANidhi scheme has proven to be a **gender equaliser** and has helped promote **'inclusive entrepreneurship'**.
- **The Lakhpati Didi initiative:** It is a significant step towards the economic empowerment of women in India. It encourages each Self Help Group (SHG) household to take up multiple livelihood activities coupled with value chain interventions, resulting in a sustainable income of Rupees One Lakh or more per year.
  - ◆ It has had a transformative impact on the rural socio-economic landscape, with 83 lakh SHGs involving nine crore women.
- **The NaMo Drone Didi initiative:** It is a significant step towards the economic empowerment of women in India. It aims to provide drones to 15,000 women Self Help Groups (SHGs) for rental services to farmers.

### Other Key Steps/Initiatives:

- **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017:** It provides for enhancement in paid maternity leave **from 12 weeks to 26 weeks** and provisions for mandatory crèche facility in establishments having 50 or more employees.
- **Night Shifts for Women:** An advisory has been issued to the States under the **Factories Act, 1948** for permitting women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures.
- **Skill India Mission:** To enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes, and Regional Vocational Training Institutes.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand Up India:** These schemes help women to set up their own enterprise.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY):** This scheme aims to safeguard the health of women by providing them with clean cooking fuel and also reduce burden on them from drudgery of collecting firewood.
- **MGNREGA (2005):** It mandates that **at least one third of the jobs** generated under the scheme should be given to **women**.

- **Safety and Security:** Initiatives like the **One-Stop Centre Scheme** and **Women Helpline** provide integrated support to women affected by violence.
- **Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship:** Schemes like **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana** and **Stand Up India** encourage financial independence and entrepreneurship among women.

#### Conclusion and Way Forward:

- By addressing the root cause of patriarchy, promoting education for women, and reducing the burden of unpaid domestic work, we can hope to see an increase in women's participation in the labour market, leading to economic growth and prosperity.
  - ♦ It is believed that when women's participation rate, which is one of the lowest in Asia, increases, it will bring prosperity to the Indian economy.
- With concerted efforts and targeted strategies along with a change in attitudes, women can take advantage of these new labour market opportunities.

#### Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] What are the key factors that could significantly increase the participation of women in the job market in India? Analyse the impact on the socio-economic landscape of India?

