

Situating Women’s Education And Employment In Kerala In The Context Of *High On Literacy And Unemployed*

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Abstract

The state of Kerala is well known for its high human development. In Kerala, where economic growth is higher than all India and where women are relatively more educated, experience the lowest female work participation and highest unemployment among the major States in India, especially among the educated. In the light of this contradiction, the study attempts to identify the factors that cause unemployment among the educated women in the State.

The importance and antiquity of education in Kerala is underscored by the state’s ranking as among the most literate in the country. The local dynamic precursors of modern-day Kerala- primarily the Travancore Royal family, the Christian missionaries, the Nair Service society, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) and Muslim Educational Society (MES)- made significant contributions to the progress on education in Kerala. Education in Kerala had been promoted during British rule in India by Christian missionaries who were keen on providing education to all sections of society and on strengthening of women, without any kind of discrimination. The contributions of Catholic priests and nuns had been crucial and had played a major role in the education of women and members of lower strata of society, resulting in the surpassing of many social hurdles. A significant figure in the 19th century was Rev.Fr.Kuryakose Elias Chavara, who started a system called “A school along with every church” to make education available for both poor and rich. That system still continues in the present. His work has resulted in the promotion of education for girls and has become a model for the educational system in Kerala after independence. Kerala’s high literacy rate is attributed

to a high literacy rate among girls; as it is said, “when a women is educated, she will make sure that her children are well-educated.¹”

Present schools and colleges are mostly run by the government, private trusts or individuals. Kerala topped the Education Development Index (EDI) among the states in India in year 2006-2007. In January 2016, Kerala became the 1st Indian state to achieve 100% primary education through its literacy programme *Athulyam**.² Though Kerala has achieved much progress with regards to the spread of education, health services, social welfare measures and infrastructural development, the state has not been able to solve the problem of unemployment. Unemployment in Kerala has been higher and increasing among both men and women. Also the problem of unemployment in Kerala is primarily the problem of educated unemployed among both men and women. The educated unemployment is very serious and menacing problem. The rate of unemployment in Kerala is very high, and also unemployment among female labour force is much above male labour force.

NUMBER OF EDUCATED UNEMPLOYED IN KERALA RISING

The number of most educated unemployed in India’s most literate state Kerala has been rising, according the 2009 economic Review. The incidence of unemployment in Kerala is more than two times the all-India average. The Economic Review Report has pointed out that job creation has been a matter of serious concern in the state. The total number of job seekers in the state as

* **Athulyam programme was meant to provide primary school education to people aged between 15 and 50. It was launched in March 2013.**

in June 2009 stood at 43,56,698 ,which included, 1,65,511 professionals and 41,91,187 generalists. In 2008 their number stood at 41,44,244. Significantly, there are more women job seekers than men. Their number as on March 31, 2009, stood at 25,01, 925. The number of men was 18,54,773. The data given in the review show that 2,351 medical graduates, 8,604 engineers, 34,651 diploma holders, 627 agricultural graduates, 661 veterinary graduates and 54,708 post graduates are jobless. The Thiruvananthapuram district has the highest number of unemployed – 6,35,885, followed by Kollam with 4,53,268. The hilly district of Wayanad has the least with 9,2,317 unemployed.³

In 2010 review shows, the number of unemployed stood at 43.28 lakh, including 1.6 lakh professional and technical job seekers. In the whole of 2009, the total number of unemployed was over 43 lakh, including 165,559 professional and technical job seekers. There were 1,885 medical graduates, 6,965 engineers, 34,653 diploma holders, 361 agricultural graduates and 345 veterinary graduates and 44,976 postgraduates who are jobless as June 2010. As of march 31, 2010, over 24 lakh women were seeking work compared to over 17 lakh men. Thiruvananthapuram district has the highest number of unemployed, followed by Kollam, reveals the review. The hilly district of Wayanad had the least number of unemployed at 88,940.⁴

There has been an all-round increase of unemployment among professionals till June 30 last year, according to the latest economic review released in the Kerala Assembly on Thursday. While 30,719 Engineering graduates were seeking work in 2016, the latest figures released show it has touched 35,541 in 2017. The other professional and technical work seekers include 3,823 medical graduates - which is up from 3,369 the year before, 51,506 diploma holders in engineering 92,478 ITI certificate holders, 1,320 agricultural graduates. Only for the

veterinarians, the number has come down from 609 to 301. The economic review for 2017 was placed in the assembly by State Finance Minister Thomas Issac, who will present the full state budget for the year 2018-19 on Friday. Overall the total number of professional job seekers has gone up from 1.75 lakh in 2016 to 1.84 lakh as on June 2017. Likewise, in the case of general work seekers, the figure stands at 34.62 lakh, of which 21.40 lakh are class 10 educated, while 3.58 lakh had studied below up to class 12, 2.17 lakh are graduates, while there were 16,000 post graduates.⁵

The report has observed that unemployment retards the economic development of the state and has created social unrest. This problem is more serious among the educated that are unable to utilize their skill and knowledge which they have acquired for affecting qualitative changes in the economy and society. The unemployment rate of the youth is 21.7% for rural areas and 18% for urban areas.⁶ Similarly the unemployment rate among the young females is much higher than that of the young males. Interestingly, the review has pointed out is that women in the state are found to be well educated.

UNEMPLOYMENT TODAY IS LARGELY A PROBLEM AMONG WOMEN IN KERALA.

The size of employment in any country depends considerably on the level of development. Work has been defined as *participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit.*⁷ Such participation may be physical or mental in nature work involves not only actual work but also include effective supervision and direction of work. It even includes part-time help or unpaid work on farm, family enterprise or in any other economic activity. Agriculture has been historically the mainstay of Kerala economy and traditionally, the

most significant sector of female employment, especially in the rural areas. That provided the rural rates of employment opportunities are far higher than urban ones. During the present century the shadow of educated unemployment is threatening to swallow the economy of Kerala. The problem of unemployment among the educated is not a recent phenomenon. As early as in the 1920s, 50s, and 60s Government enquire the problem of educated unemployment.

The state that enjoys high female literacy rate, low maternal and infant mortality rate and a healthy sex ratio compared to other Indian states, has been baffling to many. Even though the kind of challenges the women have to face, apart from acute competition with men to a male-dominated workforce. According to the latest NSSO data of 2011-12, female work participation rate (FWPR) in rural areas in Kerala was 22.1 compared to that of men at 56.5.⁸ Women themselves do not consider the economic activity they do at home as ‘work’. In that context, there are attempts to broaden the concept of ‘employment’. One of the strongest reasons preventing women from entering workforce is the household responsibility syndrome. They are not able to go for better jobs because of responsibilities at home. So women automatically look for jobs in the informal sector where wages are low and benefits are meager. It helps them in balancing their household duties as well. The Kerala society faced the ‘stagnant’ work participation rate of women. We are not creating enough opportunities for women, especially for educated one.⁹

The increased casual of the women workforce is a cause of concern. An informal economy is good only when there is a supplementary source of income. Here, the benefits of employment are not going to the women. Unemployment rate is higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas, and feminization of joblessness is evident with females according for a much higher rate of jobless as compared to males. The rate of unemployment among those aged between 15 and

29 is 21.7 per cent in rural areas and 18 per cent in urban areas. The situation is worse in the case of Kerala women, who long an unemployment rate of 47.4 per cent, as compared to 9.7 per cent of men. Ernakulam and Wayanad accounted for highest and lowest employment levels respectively.¹⁰

Even though Kerala has made tremendous strides in improving the educational levels of women, unemployment continues to be high among them, according to economist K.P. Kannan, disclosed that nearly eighteen per cent of the women belonging to the age group of 15 to 40 years had education up to the level of secondary and above in 1983. The figure was 20.4% for the male population then. However, by 2011-12 the percentage of women belonging to this group went up to 63 while that of the male rose to only 58%. The rise in the number of women who have attained education has been remarkable in Kerala. However, as per the findings of the National Sample Survey conducted in 2010, out of the total unemployed 8.64 lakh in the state 5.94 lakh or 6% are women. The unemployment rate among women in Kerala is 14.1 per cent while it is only at a negligible level of 2.9 per cent among males in the state.¹¹

The male and female unemployment rate in Kerala both in rural and urban areas were found to be generally three to four times greater than the all India average. Female unemployment, particularly in rural areas, is a matter of concern. The youth accounted for around 23% of the state population. As per the survey report, the unemployment rate among the youth in the state is much higher as compared to that of the overall population and it reveals the severe unemployment problem among the youth in the state.

CONCLUSION

The empowerment of women in the state through literacy and work participation had a strong impact on fertility rates, demographic change and in the quality of life provided to the next generation. The existence of unemployment among the educated is partly the result of an educational system which is highly located in favour of liberal education and does not encourage vocational or technical education. The government should frame appropriate policies to utilize the skilled manpower which is the most abundant resource in the state and taken several steps to provide employment to unemployment persons including youth in the country. For example JRY(Jawahar Rozgar Yojana), SEEUY (Self- Employment for Educated Unemployed Youth), PMRY(Prime Ministers Rozgar Yojana to Educated Youth) etc. But none of these programmes cannot cope with the growing unemployment of educated women. Moreover all employment packages are not meant for educated unemployed women. So the state and central Government have to take suitable and appropriate measures to curb the problem of educated unemployment, especially focused for educated unemployed women. Any study on women employment could be fully realized only if sufficient funds are allotted for their implementation. Women's and men's needs, concerns and priorities often differ due to their different roles in society. The way a government raises and spends money can have a negative impact on women. Hence the process of conceiving, approving, executing, monitoring, analyzing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way is essential. The concept of gender budgeting should also be propagated so that public-private sectors, institutions, non-governmental organizations etc. adopt such practices. Such budget allocations on the basis of data on gender composition of employment in Kerala would help in addressing the problems like low work participation and wage differentials in women employment scenario of the state.

END NOTES

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