

**EFFORT OR OPPORTUNITY: A STUDY OF THE
DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN'S LABOUR MARKET
PARTICIPATION IN INDIA**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "Effort or Opportunity: A Study of the Determinants of Women's Labour Market Participation in India" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

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Abstract

India has witnessed significant economic growth in the last three decades, accompanied by improvements in educational attainment for both men and women, reduction in fertility rates as well as improvements in infrastructural facilities. Despite economic progress, the situation of women's labour market participation in India has been an area of concern. Characterised by a consistent and steady decline since the mid-2000s, women's labour market participation in India is one of the lowest in the world. Despite policy attention and focused interventions to address this issue, the situation continues to be concerning and raises several questions on the inclusiveness of India's growth story. A falling rate of women's labour market participation is a manifestation of women's unequal access to labour market opportunities. The study positions this based on the framework of equality of opportunity that says that access to opportunities is influenced by factors that are both within and beyond individual control. The study uses secondary data from PLFS and IHDS-II to show how women's labour market participation is influenced by demographic and socio-economic factors that are decided at the household and societal level and are further manifested by social and cultural norms. This provides an overall understanding of how unequal access to opportunities for women are decided by factors that are beyond their individual control.

The study shows that the understanding of access to opportunities is incomplete without examining factors that are within individual control and this directs the study towards the role of individual effort. This is an area that has received limited attention. Effort as a concept is difficult to measure and quantify and there is limited evidence to understand its role in the context of women's labour market participation. The study addresses this gap by conducting an analysis of the theoretical discourse on effort to identify individual attributes that can be considered as effort. To apply this understanding in the context of women's labour market participation, a primary survey covering a sample of women graduates from Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) who are in the labour market was conducted. The findings bring forward the individual attributes of women that can be considered as effort based on its theoretical and conceptual understanding and how it played a role in their labour market participation. The findings also show the interlinkages of effort with socio-economic circumstances and its applicability in women's pursuit for employment despite institutional barriers in labour market opportunities. The study reinforces the need to encourage women's effort that can transform the discourse on women's access to opportunities with far reaching implications for policy implementation as well.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The global economy has seen an impressive growth since the 20th century with integration of economies around the world, primarily through expansion of trade, technological progress and increased financial flows (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2007). While this has been considered to be the key to economic growth and development, it has also been found to increase inequalities within and between countries, adversely affecting employment, living standards and social progress. In 2021, the global economy grew by 5.5 percent, which has been the highest growth rate since the mid-1970s (United Nations [UN], 2022). Despite this progress, the implications of a globalized economy on the economic well-being of citizens and inequalities have been an area of debate and policy discussion. One of the central aspects in this debate concerns the gendered dimension (Spilerman, 2009). Despite women playing an important role in the evolution of economies for years (Freeman, 2000), prevailing gender inequalities have raised important questions for social scientists as economies grow.

Inequalities based on gender can take many forms. Gender inequality, as defined by Sen (2001), is not a homogenous phenomenon, rather a combination of interlinked problems. These, according to him, could be related to inequalities in mortality and natality rates; inequalities in access to schooling, higher education, or professional trainings; or inequalities in ownership of assets, division of labour within the household or professional inequality in certain occupations. A substantial body of work documents gender inequality in access to opportunities creating disparities between men and women in outcomes related to education, health, employment as well as earnings (Bertay et al., 2022). The intersection between these areas is rather complex and are often overlapping, which has generated considerable attention especially on women's labour market participation. Women comprise half of the global population, and yet, form less than one third of the world's labour force (Lagarde, 2013). According to the UN, 700 million fewer women were working in the labour force in 2016 as compared to men; and for those who were paid, had been found to be working in jobs that have lower earnings with poor working conditions and

limited prospects of progression (UN, 2016). UNICEF (2022) reported one in four women who are 15 – 19 years old to be neither employed nor in any education or training, as compared to one in ten boys. The current global rate for women’s labour market participation is under 47 percent, as against 72 percent for men and the gap is even higher in some regions (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2022).

The discussion above is extremely relevant in the context of India. With economic liberalization that began from the start of the 1990s, the Indian economy has witnessed increasing economic growth. The evidence also indicates that while growth was accompanied by a rise in per capita GDP, it also led to an increase in inequalities (World Bank, 2011). Pointing towards the state of this inequality, Dreze and Sen (2011) claimed that though liberalization in India have been successful in promoting economic growth, it has failed in improving living conditions and social indicators. According to the *World Inequality Report* (2022), income inequality in India is at a historical high with the top 1 percent largely benefiting from economic reforms by holding 22 percent share of the total national income and very less growth for low and middle income groups. The report reiterates that liberalization and deregulation policies introduced since the mid 1980s have led to high rates of income and wealth inequality in India with 57 percent of India’s national income owned by only 10 percent of the population. In addition to overall inequalities in wealth and income, gender inequalities in India are very high as well (Chancel et al., 2022). The report highlights that the rise in the number of women working in the labour force that was seen with the advent of liberalization since the 1990s could not lift their share of national income. The report quotes that the share of income accruing to women through labour market participation in India is only 18 percent in 2020 as compared to 21 percent in Asia (excluding China where the share is 33%).

There are many studies that have contributed to the understanding of widening socio-economic and gender based inequalities within countries. The most notable argument that comes forward is whether inequalities are a result of individual behaviour or an outcome of inequality of access to opportunities owing to differential access to education, resources, political power and so on (Emran and Shilpi, 2015). The question whether individuals’ outcomes should depend only on their individual level factors or do predetermined circumstances also play a role has been a matter

of attention for scholars and policymakers. This debate gained prominence as early as the 1960s and 1970s when studies showed that despite similar effort, returns to individuals from diverse backgrounds were not the same. For example, in different studies conducted by Hanoch (1967) and Bowles (1972), individual achievements in school were found to be lower for students from African American background than Whites, which led to the conclusion that family backgrounds can influence individual outcomes. One of the most notable contributions in this field is by John Roemer who raised an engaging debate in his book *Equality of Opportunity* (1998). He propounded that the determinants of any outcome are dependent upon two factors – “effort”, which is under an individual’s control (e.g., how hard one works or the number of hours studied) and “circumstances” which are beyond an individual’s own control (e.g., those determining race, gender, or family background). While the former usually promote merit and incentivises individuals to work harder; the latter may hinder just outcomes and thereby prove to be an existing manifestation of inequality of opportunity. Based on this, Roemer (1998) defines “equality of opportunity” as a condition in which individual’s life outcomes are independent of their circumstances. In this context, life outcomes, also called “advantages”, are those related to education, livelihood, health, and so on. Since then, a substantial body of work across countries has sought to address the extent of inequality of opportunity in income distribution, health, educational achievement and other areas of public policy (Ferreira and Peragine, 2015).

Research often advocates the importance of human capital in reducing inequalities in society.¹ It is said that human capital, meaning the stock of knowledge and skills possessed by an individual that enhances one’s productivity and ability to perform certain tasks is a primary determinant of growth and prosperity of nations (see Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). Becker (1995) shows empirically that human capital has been the primary cause of sustainable growth in countries like Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea despite the fact that these countries do not have adequate natural resources. In India, a developing country, schemes based on Khadria (1995, 1996) proposing an innovative fiscal instrument to reduce child labour and increase participation in

¹ Over the last thirty years, research based on cross-country data have provided new evidence on the role of human capital in development. Also known as ‘new’ or ‘endogenous’ growth theory, seminal work in in this area include Romer (1986) and Lucas (1988) who show that economic growth is decided by accumulation of human capital and that difference in living standards among nations is a result of differences in human capital.

education have enhanced human capital. The *World Development Report* (2019) notes how the boundaries of human skills and knowledge are shifting rapidly with changes in the labour market (World Bank, 2019). It also states that without strengthening human capital, countries cannot have a workforce that is prepared for a highly skilled economy and may lose its global competitiveness. The distribution of human capital, on the other hand, is a key factor of income inequality, the high wage premium attached to skills being a major contributor (Burgess, 2016). Unequal investment in human capital of males and females impacts the demand unequally for female labour, which has been identified by many scholars (Chafetz, 1990; Dunn, Almquist, and Chafetz, 1993) as a primary determinant of inequalities based on gender in society.

As defined by ILO (2022), the labour force participation rate is “a measure of the proportion of a country’s working-age population that is either working or looking for work”. It is an indicator of the size of the labour force available for economic activities as a share of the working age population (ILOSTAT, 2022). A low and unequal participation rate of women in the labour force is a lost opportunity for economies. Studies have shown how women empowerment, in addition to promoting gender equality, has significant impacts on the growth of an economy (World Bank 2012). The ‘Global Gender Gap Report’ published by the World Economic Forum (2014) has also cited positive relationship between gender equality with a country’s GDP and with indicators of human development. Having more women work expands the available pool of skills in the labour force and ensures its better utilization. It also helps economies to tackle challenges associated with aging population (Norberto, 2016). Improvements in female labour force participation bring in positive effects in household and individual behaviour in financial decisions (Luke and Munshi 2011) as well as decisions related to marriage (van der Klaauw, 1996) and fertility (Goldin and Katz, 2002).

A high rate of women’s participation in the labour market increases their bargaining power in the household and in society that leads to their own well-being and that of their children (Majlesi 2016). In other words, women’s engagement in paid work has multiple “spillover effects” that translate into well-being of the individual as well as the household. At the household level, with increased female earnings, investment in education and health of children increases. At the individual level, it leads to positive outcomes in women’s higher education, increase in age at

marriage and lower fertility rates (Heath and Mobarak, 2015). Being engaged in paid work, enables women to have greater “voice” within the household as well as in society (Najeeb et al., 2020). Reducing barriers that prevent women from participating in the labour market can therefore have wider implications, which would be particularly important for developing countries.

Klasen (2019) notes, with growing economic prosperity, increased educational qualifications of women and shared responsibility on the onus of childbearing is expected to improve women’s participation in the labour market in developing countries. He provides a summary of the patterns seen in developing countries in the last twenty-five years to support this. First, education among females increased rapidly, including in secondary and tertiary education, that made more women qualify for employment. Second, this was accompanied by a decline in fertility rates (barring Sub-Saharan Africa where decline in fertility rate was not as rapid) that reduced time required for childcare responsibilities. Third, there was an increase in per capita income in many developing countries, particularly around mid-1990s and more than in richer countries, that usually increases demand for labour and should bring women to the labour market. Despite these patterns, female labour participation in developing countries has not increased as it should have, with wide regional variations. While female labour force participation increased to some extent in the Caribbean and countries in Latin America, the situation in South Asia has been the reverse, with variations within the region. According to regional estimates obtained from the ILO, between 1998 to 2018, female labour force participation ranged from below 30% in India and Pakistan to almost as high as 80% in Nepal (Verick, 2018). Bangladesh has experienced a fast increase from 26.1% in 2006 to 36% in 2010, much of which is credited to a thriving garment industry and rearing livestock (Rahman and Islam, 2013). Sri Lanka, on the other hand has experienced a considerably stable rate of women’s labour market participation (between 30 – 35 % during the period from 2000-2014) despite high levels of human development (Gunatilaka, 2013).

Scholars have used historical and contemporary data from across continents to uphold the functional relationship between increase in skills leading to higher wages for women, which has resulted in their greater participation in the labour market (see Goldin, 1990). This has been seen particularly in developed countries, where with increase in education, the participation rate of women in the labour force has increased (England et al., 2012). The story is however quite different

in middle and low income countries. South Asia has seen a decrease in women's labour market participation despite increase in their education levels (Das and Desai, 2003). Studies exploring this trend have attributed this to the influence of social norms and bargaining position of a woman within the household (Jayachandran, 2021). Researchers including Borrowman and Klasen (2017) and Klasen et al. (2019) have shown that the unavailability of 'appropriate' jobs confines women with secondary and above education levels from working. They have shown that women are found to be over-represented in white-collar jobs (such as those in the public sector services like nursing, teaching, etc.) as they are considered to be socially acceptable for women with secondary and tertiary education qualifications. When such 'appropriate' jobs are limited, it becomes an important factor that decides women's transition from education and jobs to marriage and care responsibilities. In the context of some countries, particularly in South Asia, a lower proportion of women in paid work may not imply that they are involved in reproductive or care work alone. They are found to be engaged in other unpaid activities of the informal labour market such as agriculture, livestock and so on (Klasen, 2018).

The Indian economy has experienced major shifts in the last three decades. Gupta and Blum (2018) study shows a steady acceleration of economic growth during the 1990s from 5.5 per cent to 7.1 per cent. Part of this, they note, has been due to the transition of the Indian economy towards the services sector that saw the fastest rise in growth. With this, there have been other improvements too, with the narrowing of gaps in education levels between men and women, reduction in fertility and other structural and institutional improvements in the economy (Desai and Joshi, 2019). These trends should have reduced the time that women spend on household work and increased employment opportunities for them, thereby improving their labour participation rates. In contrast to this, India has seen a continuous decline in female labour force participation since 2004 whereas other South Asian countries have either seen an increasing or a stable rate (Das and Žumbyté, 2017). According to a three-year survey conducted between 2009 and 2012, women in China participated in the labour market in far greater numbers as compared to Indian women; overall 70% of women in China were either working in some capacity or were seeking work, whereas it was only 25% in the case for India (Crabtree and Pugliese, 2012). The survey shows that while rising growth is supposed to lead to growing opportunities, women in India on the other hand have been left behind. As per World Bank estimates, India's female labour force participation was as

low as 19 percent in 2021, which is much lower than the global rate of 46 percent (World Bank, 2022). This is a much lower rate even in comparison with other countries in South Asia such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where female labour force participation stood at 79 percent, 35 percent and 31 percent respectively in 2021 (World Bank, 2022).²

Empirical investigations on the declining trend of women's labour market participation have revealed results that emphasize on both demand and supply side factors. Factors like reduced farm jobs and lack of women-friendly non-farm jobs reduce demand for women labour (Chand and Srivastava, 2014). On the other hand, supply side factors like more number of women enrolling in higher education (Kannan and Raveendran, 2012), rising income of spouses (Mehrotra and Parida, 2017), inadequate infrastructure like lack of roads, banking facilities etc. (Sorsa et al., 2015) among others, have been found to be the primary reasons for a declining trend in their labour market participation. India posits an interesting case, where cultural and social factors have an equally important role in women's employment outcomes. Indian women, historically, have been subject to negative perceptions associated with working outside of home. Their role related to household responsibilities, care giving, childbearing (particularly sons) is considered as 'high-status', especially for women from upper caste households (Eswaran et al., 2013). For women to not having to work is associated with an upward mobility in India and a sign of status. This phenomenon has also been observed to be true for women belonging to lower-caste households with women leaving the labour force with increase in income of the spouse (Rao, 2014). These restrictions apply more in a joint-family set up where the senior generations (men and women) exercise more authority to impose these restrictions on married women (Deshmukh-Ranadive, 2005). Talking about how families decide whether women should work or not, related literature shows that the perception of families about crimes against women play a role as well (Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009). (Chakraborty et al., 2018) show that the negative influence of crime against women on their labour market participation, is significantly stronger for women from relatively more conservative families that place a high value on women's chastity.

² The situation of female labour force participation in India is discussed in detail in chapter 2.

The factors discussed above are not within an individual's own control and are passed on through generations, thereby causing high degree of inequalities in opportunities. Inequality for women in India has been estimated to be very high by different studies. Choudhary et al. (2019), for example, used circumstances of women like religion, caste, region of birth, parental education etc. to show that about one fourth of inequality among women (of fifteen years and above) in India is a result of unequal circumstances. Adding to this, recent empirical evidence has shown that norms, values and beliefs across generations, have impacted women's participation in the labour market (Fernández et al., 2004; Johnston et al., 2014). Attitude towards gender roles in families have also been found to influence female labour force participation across time. Parents who believe that role of women is limited to the household alone are more likely to invest less in their human capital, which in turn impact their adult economic opportunities (Vella, 1994; Levine, 1993; Fortin, 2005). In all these studies, the idea of equality of opportunity has guided the theoretical and empirical understanding of how resources and characteristics of individual families impact life chances of the present generation. The premise of this understanding is built on the fact that factors like gender and family background are circumstances that are not within individual responsibility and create inequality of opportunity in society (Ferreira and Peragine, 2015).

The position of female labour force participation in India despite economic progress, has caught wide attention of both scholars and policymakers. The discussion above shows that this is attributed to countervailing social and economic factors decided at the household and societal level. When seen from the framework of Roemer (1998), socio-economic factors comprise circumstances as they are shaped by factors beyond women's individual control. On the other hand, given that equality of opportunity is also decided by individual level factor, more specifically individual effort as propounded by Roemer (1998), an understanding of women's labour market participation from the framework of equality of opportunity is incomplete without it. This is the background on which the study is based, and the next sections explains the statement of the problem that it aims to address.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Roemer's framework proposes that inequalities caused by circumstances reflect social exclusion and policies should be directed towards eliminating such inequalities. Inequality due to efforts, on the other hand is considered to be caused by individual level factors for which they are responsible, and hence compensation may not be necessary (Roemer, 1998). But sometimes both efforts and circumstances are found to be intertwined as there may be various ways in which circumstances can influence efforts and choices that people make.³ According to Roemer (2005), equality of opportunity implies "level(ling) the playing field so that all have the potential to achieve the same outcomes; whether or not, in the event, they do, depends upon individual choice". Friedman (2005) in *The World is Flat* have spoken about how growing competition between developed and emerging economies is flattening the gap between them as individuals seek to take control over their economic destiny. He talks about how this has been made possible with a large number of individual entrepreneurs and companies operating beyond borders in the 21st century. To this argument, it has also been said that when individuals perceive their life chances to be limited by unfair processes, they are more likely to challenge the status quo (Brock, 2016). Brock (2016) further pointed out that when individuals do not expect to be rewarded for their hard work and abilities, they may have less incentives to 'buy into the system', such as by investing in their skills or building a business. The implications of these findings on how they can influence individual effort in different contexts have not been studied in depth. More specifically, this has rather remained as an unexplored area in the context of women's labour market participation.

A primary determinant of labour market participation in developed as well as developing countries is levels of education attainment (Cazes and Verick, 2013). According to World Bank (2018a), an additional year in school can increase earnings of individuals by up to ten per cent, with larger increase seen for women than men. In recent decades, several developing countries have achieved

³ In an experimental study conducted in rural India, performance of children seemed to vary in simple tasks when they are made aware about their caste identities (Hoff and Pandey, 2006). Similar effects on performances were found by Steele (1997) and Steele and Aronson (1995) who showed that stereotypes based on race and ethnicity among African Americans and whites influence how they perform in different activities.

better education outcomes of women, which in turn, should have improved their labour market participation (Chaudhary and Verick, 2014). As Klasen (2017) notes, evidence from India demonstrates a U-shaped (or non-linear) relationship between the two. It shows that women with no education are found to be engaged in informal or subsistence level of employment; while those with high school level education can manage to be away from the labour force (and pursue higher education); and those with secondary levels of education and above are pulled towards the labour market by higher wages with the availability of appropriate jobs (Klasen, 2017).

It is important to note that women enrolling in vocational or job-oriented skills training have an improved chance of being employed. This has been found to be true in the context of India as well. Vocational training can be defined as those “education and training courses that are designed towards achieving a particular job and/or type of job in the labour market” (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2010). Fletcher et al. (2017) have shown that women in India, who have acquired vocational training have higher chances of being employed as compared to those who have not, and this has been found to be true across all education levels. Evidence also shows that benefits from skills training are higher for women than those for men (Attanasio et al., 2008; Ibararán and Rosas, 2007; Alzúa and Brassiolo, 2006; Bergemann and Berg, 2008). They reveal that the chances of women being employed after such training are more and that women are found to be working for longer periods, compared to men. Also, the global literature shows that women who undergo such training earn higher wages than women who were not offered any training. Notwithstanding numerous challenges, in various programmes, women continue to be in their jobs almost for as long as men do and show lesser chances of dropping out of the labour force (Prillaman et al 2017). Considering such evidence, it is important to understand whether individual effort of women can play a role in their labour market participation.

Inequalities caused by unequal circumstances affect overall economic growth and traps a country in different forms of wealth and income inequalities (see Marrero and Rodríguez, 2013;).⁴ As

⁴ It is worth noting here the influential work by Okun (1975) in his book titled *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff* in which he argued that pursuing equality through equal distribution of income (through taxation, minimum wages and so on) not only reduces people’s incentives to work but is costly as well and hence inefficient. Recent studies however negate this. Work by Berg, Ostry, and Zettelmeyer (2012) show

supported by the literature, a low and falling female labour force participation in India is a sign of inequality of opportunity. While its determinants are attributed to various circumstances that women are subject to, there has not been enough focus to study women's own individual level factors. This becomes particularly relevant in the case of India, where despite economic progress, women's decision to work continues to be governed by household and societal level factors. Studies also show that the impact of effort is strongly intertwined with circumstances (Jusot et al., 2010), which necessitates the need to pay deeper focus on women as individuals to highlight the role of effort. There is however limited evidence around what can be considered as effort and its role in women's labour market participation. As a result, policies that are aimed at improving women's labour market participation are focused towards addressing barriers posed by circumstances. While addressing circumstantial barriers is important, it is not sufficient to understand how women's participation in the labour market can be determined by individual effort. It is important to address this aspect to understand the emerging complexities of women's employment in India that are interlinked with social and economic factors.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

Following the discussion above, this study examines women's participation in the labour market in India from the perspective of equality of opportunity with a focus on individual effort.⁵ It includes an analysis of the situation of women's work in India and the influence of pre-determined circumstances. It also presents an analysis of individual effort as a concept and provides an assessment of how it can be applied to understand the situation of women's labour market participation in India. The specific objectives and the research questions of the study are:

that the tradeoff between equality and efficiency in achieving growth does not exist in the long run. In fact, equality has been found to be an important contributor of promoting and sustaining growth.

⁵ In the existing literature, the terms female labour force participation and female or women's labour market participation have been used interchangeably. The present study will consider women's participation in paid employment only and will distinctly refer to it as women's labour market participation, as mentioned in the research title. The term 'women's labour market' has therefore been carefully chosen to refer to paid employment (which does not include child labour).

1. To understand the role of socio-economic circumstances in women's labour market participation in India: This provides an analysis of the situation of women's labour market participation in India, the kind of opportunities that women have been able to access, and the barriers associated with their entry and exit in the labour market. It also includes an analysis of the various socio-economic and cultural factors that determine the situation of women's employment in India. These aspects are important to understand the inter-linkages between circumstances and effort in women's participation in the labour market. The specific research questions to address this objective are:

- What is the situation of women's labour market participation in India and what can we learn from it about women's access to opportunities in the labour market?
- How do different socio-economic and cultural factors determine the chances of women participating in the labour market?

2. To build an understanding of individual effort in the context of women's labour market participation in India: There lacks a coherent and clear definition of effort when it comes to women's access to labour market opportunities. Addressing this objective is important to understand how effort can be seen from the perspective of women's unequal access to employment opportunities and whether the existing discourse on effort can help us in doing so. The specific research questions are:

- What is to be considered as effort and how should it be measured?
- How can effort be understood in the context of women's employment?

3. To understand the role of effort in women's labour market participation: The study tries to establish how effort can play a role for women to overcome inequality of opportunity in the labour market. It also takes due consideration of various factors that are shaped not only at the individual level but also at the societal and institutional levels and their interlinkages with effort. The specific research questions to address this objective are:

- How can effort be understood as an individual attribute in the context of women's labour market participation?
- How can effort help women overcome inequality of opportunities in the labour market?

To address the first objective, the study has used data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for the year 2017-18 and household level data from the India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II) for the year 2011-12.⁶ Data from PLFS has been used to present an analysis of the various trends and patterns related to women's employment in India. IHDS-II includes information on important socio-economic variables at the household level, which are key in understanding how circumstances can play a role in deciding women's labour market outcomes in India. To address the second objective, an analysis of the theoretical and conceptual discourse on effort was carried out and the evidence was synthesized to identify how effort has been measured in different contexts. To address the third objective, a primary survey was carried out on a sample of women graduates from Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) who are in the labour market. ITIs provide vocational training on various trades and the study assumes that the similarity in socio-economic profiles of women who enroll in ITIs and the exposure to job opportunities that these institutes provide can help understand effort without being much influenced by other varying factors.⁷ The findings from the survey were analysed in context of the existing theoretical and conceptual understanding on effort and the linkages between effort and women's labour market participation have been presented in the form of propositions.⁸

1.4 Outline of the Study

The present chapter (chapter 1) has introduced the study by providing a background on which it is based and the statement of the problem that it seeks to address. It has also briefly outlined the rationale, scope and objective of the study.

⁶ Details about secondary data used in the study have been discussed in chapter 3.

⁷ Details of the sample and the rationale are discussed in chapter 3.

⁸ A detailed discussion on the methodology adopted for each of the objectives is presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on women's labour market participation, including its importance, status and responsible factors. It includes evidence on the role of circumstances, such as family background and gender role attitude, and how they determine women's labour market outcomes. The chapter also presents the literature to show why it is important to understand effort in the context of women's employment. Based on the literature reviewed, the chapter identifies the gaps in the literature and the objectives that it aims to address.

Chapter 3 includes details of the nature of data collected, sampling techniques and the methodology of the study. It provides a detailed explanation of the secondary and primary data and the choice of variables used in the study and their suitability in addressing the research objectives. The study conducts a quantitative analysis of the secondary data, and a qualitative method was used to analyse the primary data. The chapter includes details of the methodology for both the approaches.

Chapter 4 presents an overall understanding of the kinds of opportunities that women have been able to access in the labour market and the various patterns associated with it by using PLFS data. Using data from IHDS-II, it then provides an analysis of how various factors like household characteristics and different socio-economic factors impact women's labour market participation. The findings presented in the chapter also outline the need for exploring the role of individual effort in women's labour market participation.

Chapter 5 presents the theoretical background of the study and attempts to address the second research objective. It demonstrates how existing theoretical knowledge has informed the research study in the choice of concepts and variables and the interaction of the two in understanding women's labour market participation. The chapter also includes an analysis of effort based on its theoretical construct that capture the key measurement parameters applied in various studies on effort. This has contributed significantly in approaching the concept of effort for the purpose of this study. Based on this, the chapter makes an attempt to position the concept of effort in the context of gender and the labour market and forms the basis for chapter 6.

Chapter 6 addresses the third objective of the study. It presents an understanding of effort based on a primary sample survey of women who are part of the labour market. The analysis is built on the theoretical and conceptual understanding of effort presented in the previous chapter. The findings are presented in the form of propositions to link the concepts on effort with the observations derived from the primary survey. It also includes a discussion on how the understanding can be contextualised for women's access to labour market opportunity given the interconnectedness of effort with social and institutional factors.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of the study and provides a summary of the study through its various stages and the key findings. The chapter benefits from the lessons drawn from the study and outlines its possible limitations as well. As the final chapter, it also leads the way to indicate the scope for future research.

Chapter 2

WOMEN'S LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Why Women's Participation in the Labour Market is important?

The form of economic prosperity in most countries has been characterized by the shift in labour force from agriculture to manufacturing and later on to services (Gaddis and Klasen, 2014). These shifts were, sooner or later, associated with a variety of phenomena that included improved education levels, and reduction in fertility rates, shifts in the labour market and most significantly, change in the role of women. It is said that women participating in the labour force has been a contributor as well as an outcome of economic development (Verick, 2018). When more women work, it increases the available labour input, which in turn help economies grow faster. On the other side, this also helps increase household income, which help families increase their consumption of services and goods and escape poverty (p. 3). However, labour force participation is not determined by supply side factors alone and depends on the demand for labour as well. This often translates into large gaps between men and women.⁹ For example, in 2017, female labour force participation in India was 28.5 percent while it was 82 percent for male (World Economic Forum, 2017). This comparison itself however is not sufficient as women's access to job opportunities and whether or not they can work is decided by the nature of economic growth (for example, whether the jobs being created have suitable working conditions) as well as social norms (Dasgupta and Verick, 2016). While economic progress and stability are important to increase the number of jobs for women; women being part of the labour market also drives economies towards growth and stability at the same time (Elborgh-Woytek et al, 2013; Kochhar et al, 2017). Aguirre et al (2012) find that having women and men participate equally in the labour market has the

⁹ As mentioned in chapter 1, the terms female labour force participation, women's labour force participation and women's labour market participation have been used interchangeably. Given that the focus of the study is women's paid employment, the term women's labour market participation is used in the context of the present study; however, wherever the existing literature has used the terms female labour force participation or female labour market participation, those have been referred as they appear in the relevant studies.

potential to improve a country's GDP (9 percent in Japan and 5 percent in the US), with more pronounced effects in developing countries (34 percent in Egypt and 12 percent in the United Arab Emirates). In the case of India, Esteve-Volart (2004) had estimated that this can increase India's growth by 8 percent.

The importance of women's labour market participation goes beyond human capital returns, as there are many avenues through which it positively affects families and societies. This is because, not only does it impact their own quality of life positively, the entire household benefits from better living conditions (Drèze and Sen 1989). In developing countries, women are found to leave school early and have children early that reduce economic opportunities for them. In such a situation, the incentives for investing in human capital or participating in the labour market is low as well (see Becker, 1960; Mincer, 1963). Expanding women's economic opportunities in the labour market can therefore reverse these outcomes. Participation in paid work also raises women's opportunity cost of time, which in turn lowers fertility (Jensen, 2012).

Improving opportunities of paid employment for women enables them to have more control on their income and financial assets, which is important to promote growth developing economies (Stotsky, 2006). Paid employment can promote women's empowerment and improve their social and economic freedom, which in turn can help achieve UN's sustainable development goal (Goal 5) related to achievement of "gender equality and empowerment of all girls and women" (United Nations, 2015). A number of studies have shown an association between formal employment of women with an improvement in their roles in the household and society and perception of males towards them (Lopez-Acevedo and Robertson 2012). It has been found that women invest a greater share of their family income in educating their children's, as compared to men. Improved labour market participation rate and higher income among women can therefore lead to higher investments in education of children, including girls, which can bring about a "virtuous cycle" with more educated women influencing younger girls (Miller 2008). Mothers who earn higher wages have more bargaining power in household matters (Duflo, 2005). In such a situation, as Schultz (1990) notes, when women treat daughters equally as sons, the higher bargaining power enables them to invest higher in their daughters. Also, if investing in daughters is a normal or luxury good for a household, then households can afford to make that investment with increased

household income when women work. It has also been found that children of mothers who participate in the labour force have higher probability of being enrolled in school and have higher chance of studying till the ideal grade for their age (Afridi et al., 2018). Based on an experiment in India, Sivasankaran (2014) find that when women stay engaged longer in the labour market, positive outcomes spill among their younger siblings as well; younger sisters are found to marry late and school dropout rates are found to decrease for younger brothers as they delay entry into work. With more women participating in the labour market would also translate into an overall more skilled workforce; especially since completion rates of secondary education in many countries is higher for girls than boys (Steinberg and Nakane, 2012).

Countries with lower number of women in the labour force cannot reap the benefits of a demographic dividend (Mehrotra and Sinha, 2019).¹⁰ A demographic dividend has been the reason behind the economic success of many East Asian countries in the 1970s (Bloom and Williamson 1998). But, if the share of working women remains small, dependency rate would remain high despite the rise in the share of working age population. This results in reduced savings rates, leading to lesser investments and lower economic growth (Mehrotra and Sinha, 2017). Many of the countries in the developing world, including in South Asia, are in a position to take advantage of a demographic dividend. The ability of these countries to benefit from it will depend how well it can integrate its women workforce in the labour market (Klasen, 2019). Latest studies have already started to focus on this aspect. While the positive effects of gender equality on economic growth is well established, a recent study in South Africa has revealed an interesting result on the need for prioritizing development to have greater female labour force participation (Ruiters and Charteris, 2020). It would therefore be important for countries to keep female labour force participation as an area of focus in all policy dialogues related to development.

The discussions above shows why it is important to have more women participate in the labour market, both from macroeconomic as well as individual perspective. Despite these evidence, the situation is far from ideal (as discussed in subsequent sections), particularly in developing and

¹⁰ Demographic dividends are characterized by a phase of a falling dependency rate in the population caused by a rise in the proportion of working age population with a small dependent population comprising of young and elderly (Bloom and Williamson 1998).

emerging countries. This necessitates the need to relook at the existing knowledge to build a coherent understanding of women's access to equal opportunities based on how these can be contextualized for women as individuals. The present study contributes to this area by looking at it from the perspective of equality of opportunity and takes a closer look at how it is influenced by socio-economic as well as individual attributes.

2.2 Determinants of Women's Labour Market Participation: Global Picture

A number of studies (OECD, 1989; Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos, 1991; Tansel, 1996) have established educational attainment as a consistent and strong determinant of female labour market participation, both in developing and developed countries. As Schultz (1994) notes, this is particularly important for the case of women as higher level of education can lead to higher wages, which in turn can increase their labour market participation. Numerous studies have shown a positive association between education and female labour market participation in a number (although not all) of developing countries. Empirical studies have confirmed a causal relationship between the two in countries like Zimbabwe (Grépin and Bharadwaj, 2015); Turkey (Erten and Keskin, 2018) and Uganda (Keats, 2018).

Global evidence from countries as diverse as Czech Republic and Slovakia (Chase, 1997), Taiwan (Gindling et al., 1995) and India (Malathy and Duraisamy, 1993; Duraisamy, 2002) have shown that investment in females lead to higher rate of returns than men. The explanation for this is attached to the fact that the higher returns capture difference in earning between educated and less educated women. It measures investments (costs) as well as benefits (earnings) of education and therefore includes forgone earnings that are less for women as compared to men (Woodhall, 1973). The difference in rates of returns between males and females can be largely explained by women being concentrated in low-income occupations and needs to be addressed.

Recent studies that have tried to collect evidence on gender representation in income distribution and have found that in many countries (Norway, New Zealand, Italy, Denmark, Canada, Spain,

Australia and the UK)¹¹, the percentage of women in employment earning higher income has seen an increase between 2000 and 2013 (Atkinson et al., 2018). Exploring this in detail, a study focusing on the rising share of women in the top one percent of income group between 1999 and 2015 in the United Kingdom (U.K.) has found that increase in the number of years spent in full time education has resulted in higher returns for women (as compared to men) (Burkhauser et al., 2020). The return being considered here is the chance to be in the top 1 per cent of the income group and is much larger for men as compared to women in both years. But there was hardly any change in return for men between the two years, whereas for women, there a was noticeable increase during 1999 to 2015. There is related literature that show that returns vary across wage distribution. The rationale for this is explained by Harmon et al. (2003) based on a study in the U.K. who show that this could be due to ‘complementarity’ between education and ability i.e., if individuals with higher ability earn more, then returns to those in the top of the income distribution would be higher. While there are considerable studies that promote women’s participation in leadership positions, research has shown how it can be a possible indicator of gender stereotyping, a phenomenon termed as “glass cliff”. First proposed by Ryan and Haslam (2005), the term is based on a study that analyses the experience of women versus men once they break the glass ceiling to bag leadership roles. Based on the performance of hundred companies listed in the London Stock Exchange, the study finds that it is far more likely for women to be appointed in leadership roles in companies that are not doing well, as compared to men. This phenomenon exposes how appointing women in leadership roles further aggravates stereotypical notion that consider women as incompetent leaders. A recent study by Morgenroth et al. (2020) show that it is more likely for firms to appoint women as leaders when in crisis, and this was more prevalent in countries with more persistent gender inequalities.

The literature discussed above shows that education investment decisions and the associated returns cannot be the only explanatory factor sufficient to explain characteristics of women’s labour force participation. Perhaps that is the reason why increased education has not universally translated into a more women participating in the labour market. Theoretically, this can be linked to Becker’s time allocation model (Becker, 1965). According to him, women’s decision to

¹¹ In all these countries, they have systems of taxation where the income unit is the individual and hence women’s income can be separated from men’s income.

participate in employment depends not only on the tradeoff between leisure and work, but also on the tradeoff between household work (that includes child-care) and the labour market. Women choose to work for wage only when the wages are sufficiently higher to compensate for the costs associated with household work. In a recent study based on a wide-ranging database on fertility and women's work, Aaronson et al (2020) found that with economic progress, the tradeoff between women's decision to work and fertility (i.e. having additional children) increases. They show that when a country is in the early stages of development, there is no strong relationship between fertility and women working. This is because, in such stages, women are mostly engaged in agriculture/home production that are often well suited for childcare. On the other hand, as economies develop, the type of employment shifts to more formal and wage work that are not conducive to childcare, and therefore, a declining fertility results in more women participating in employment

The past century has seen a rise in females participating in the labour market (Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2016). Most of it has been attributed to technological change (Goldin, 2006) such as availability of household appliances that reduces time required to do household work (Greenwood et al., 2005). On the other hand, transitions in the economy that have led to the creation of service sector jobs where women have been found to be more suited for (Ngai and Petrongolo, 2017) have also improved their labour market participation.

There have been historical events too that have played a role in women's participation in the labour market. Distinct events in history that have had an impact on adult sex ratio have been found to bring changes in labour market conditions and thereby impacting gender equality over the years (Angrist, 2002; Teso, 2019; Grosjean and Khattar, 2019). There is a renewed interest in exploring such events and their role in women's labour force participation across countries. Boehnke and Gay (2020) explored the case of changes in adult sex ratio in France during World War I and showed that with men being away due to the war stimulated many women to join the labour market after the war. There have been instances of similar historical shocks that have influenced women's economic role around the world. In Africa, slave trade across the Atlantic created a shortage of

men (Manning, 1990)¹², which has positively influenced female labour force participation today (Teso, 2019).¹³ Although the ‘shock’ to the sex ratio was corrected after the end of the slave trade, it continues to have long run effect on female labour force participation through cultural attitude and norms that came with women’s role outside of domestic duties. On the contrary, a study by Grosjean and Khattar (2019) show that influx of British (male) convicts in Australia during the nineteenth century increased the male to female sex ratio as a result of which the chances of women getting married were higher than working outside the household. As a result of these historical trends, both women and men in those areas that had more males than females continue to be influenced by conservative ideas about women’s work where women work for less hours and are unlikely to be in higher ranking occupations.

More recent studies have included a host of different determinants while studying female labour force participation. A recent study by Hérault and Kalb (2020) in Australia has, for the first time, studied the influence of tax and transfer policy reforms on female labour force participation. Despite the growing emphasis on policy changes to incentivize women’s work, the study found that incentives in the form of reforms in tax and transfer policy have not made much of a contribution to improve female participation rate in the labour force in Australia.¹⁴ The study however reaffirms the importance of other factors like wages and population composition in terms of its age and education attainment in improving female labour force participation. An implication of this study is that policies that seek to incentivize women’s work are not consistent to suit the needs of everyone. For example, policies that discourage part-time work by making it less attractive financially may discourage a lot of women to participate in employment at all as these policies are not well-suited with other responsibilities like childcare.

¹² Approximately 12 million slaves were transported from Africa between the 15th – 19th century at the time of trans-Atlantic slave trade.

¹³ The study is based on data from 20 African countries from the period 1992-2010.

¹⁴ These reforms primarily entailed measures that reduced various allowances and benefits that may have made paid employment a more attractive option over leisure or home production.

External factors like violence, conflict and terrorism can also determine female participation rates.¹⁵ Hudson and Leidl (2015) put forward the argument that societies that inhibit female labour force participation tend to be more violent as preventing women from exercising their rights is conducive to conflict. In the context of South Asia, a study by Robertson et al. (2020), using data from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, find that terrorist attacks negatively affect female labour market participation in these countries. They also find that the effect is less in the case of men participating in the labour force, which further widens the gender gap in employment between males and females in South Asia. An implication of this is that violence increases the cost of working for female workforce, either directly because of the risk of violence itself, or indirectly by reducing opportunities of employment. Such costs are higher for those women who are on the margin in terms of their decision to work.

The next section includes a review of some of the most prominent literature on the determinants of women's labour force participation and its declining trend in India.

2.3 Explaining a Declining Women's Labour Market Participation Rate in India

In the case of developing countries, Bhalotra and Umana-Aponte (2010), used data from 63 developing countries to show that employment among women who are 20-49 years old, between 1986 and 2006, was 64 percent in Africa, 50 percent in Latin America and 43 percent in Asia. Despite being a prominent emerging economy of the world, women's labour force participation in India continues to be low. As per data by the World Bank, the percentage labour force participation of females (15 years and above) stood at 32 per cent in 2005 after which there has been a dramatic and consistent decline to 22 per cent in 2015. This further declined to 19 per cent in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). As against India, the female labour force participation of other lower middle-income countries during the same period stands at 34 per cent; and that in South Asia stands at 22 per cent (World Bank, 2022). By contrast to this, female labour force participation in 2020 was 80 per cent

¹⁵ There is a growing recognition of occurrences of violence against women at the global level. Based on a systematic review, the World Health Organization reported that 35 percent of women, globally, have faced some form of violence either by an intimate partner or by a non-partner (WHO, 2013).

in Sweden, 75.8 per cent in Germany, 75 per cent in the United Kingdom and 68 per cent in the United States (OECD, 2022).

There are studies that have also indicated measurement issues when it comes to women's work (Sudarshan and Bhattacharya 2009; IAMR and ILO, 2013; Kapsos et al., 2014). Hirway (2012) argues that a significant share of the female workforce is not missing nor withdrawing from employment but is engaged in activities that are difficult to measure (like unpaid family work). While there is an ongoing debate to include imputed value of household work in calculating GDP, the present study will consider women's participation in paid employment only. Hence the word 'labour market' has been used in the title to keep this distinction. As Mehrotra and Sinha (2017) notes, with a consistently falling rate of female labour market participation, India will not be able to harness the full potential of its demographic dividend. They say that with women not being in the labour force, the share of people actually employed per retiree will continue to fall, which can then negatively affect the economy.

In most developed countries, a higher rate of education among women is found to increase their participation in the labour market (Tienda et al, 1992; England et al, 2012). The story is however not the same for poor and emerging economies. In India, studies have shown a negative relation between increase in education levels of women and their labour market participation; and that, women who are illiterate have higher chances of being employed than those who are educated (Das and Desai 2003). There is an argument that more working age women pursuing education (secondary level) is a reason for a declining labour force participation in India (Rangaranjan et al, 2011; Thomas, 2012; and Abraham, 2013). However, recent evidence has shown that this may not necessarily be the case. Andres et al (2017) looked at the combined rates of female labour force and education participation for the period 1993-94 and 2011-2012 with the argument that the combined participation rate should be either rising or remaining same over this time period. They show that combined participation rate had actually declined in the period studied, which indicates that women enrolling in education is not the reason for a declining female labour force participation. The reasons for these trends become clearer as the literature is explored deeper.

In a developing country context like India, the human capital model is more ambiguous due to social and cultural norms (Jensen, 2010). Studies have shown that due to practices like “patrilocal exogamy” (i.e. when women leave the household they were born in to live with the family of the husband), parents do not accrue the returns to investing in girls’ human capital which acts as a disincentive to them (Foster and Rosenzweig, 2009; Dyson and Moore, 1983). Women are also guided by social restrictions that prohibit them from working outside the household (Boserup 1970; Field et al. 2010; Mammen and Paxson 2000) that increase the social cost of having women work and outweigh the potential income gain. In such situations, the social costs imposed by norms are higher than any income gains from women working outside the house that negatively impacts the returns from human capital investment in girls (Jensen, 2010).

Studies have also shown that women’s returns to education in the “marriage market” results in a negative link between educational attainment of women and their labour market outcome. Klasen and Pieters (2015) have shown that the requirement of education level of women to attract an educated and high earning husband has increased in the past thirty years. Decision to invest in women’s education has also been found to be influenced by ‘non-market returns’ such as the role of women in supporting the family in health and education of children (Afridi et al., 2018). Women’s education has been found to be contributing directly to husband’s social status (Eswaran et al. 2013) and indirectly to improving their children’s human capital (Lam and Duryea 1999).

The education level of the spouse is also found to result in a negative effect on the female’s labour force participation. A study by Bhalla and Kaur (2011) find that each extra year of education of the male is accompanied by a decrease in female employment, thereby indicating a negative influence of the education level of the on female labour force participation. This effect is found to be over and above factors like household income, which points towards the social stigma attached against working wives. In urban areas, this has been found to be one of the most important factors behind a declining female labour force participation (Klasen and Pieters 2015). For India as a whole, Afridi et al. (2018) show that it is the strongest deciding factor by far . In 2010, the same effect was seen in Bangladesh but it was substantially smaller as compared to India (Rahman and Islam, 2013). In other countries, it is less visible. For example, in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Jordan, education of the husband does not have any influence on female labour force

participation irrespective of any other factor (Seneviratne, 2017). In Vietnam and Brazil, the negative impact of education of the spouse with female labour force participation is not significant and has seen a decline from 2002 to 2013 (Klasen et al., 2019).

Studies also attribute rising income of the Indian household to be responsible for a reduction in its female labour force participation (Klasen and Pieters, 2015). These findings are often in sync with the U-shaped hypothesis characterising the nature of female labour participation in many cross country studies, including India (Chaudhary and Verick, 2014). The U-shaped hypothesis explains the relationship between female labor force participation rate and economic development. According to it, as countries are into an upward trajectory of growth, there is an initial decline in female labour force participation, which then becomes flat and goes up again (Goldin, 1994). When countries have low per capita income, it is an economic necessity for women to work; as per capita income increases and with improved technology to support household work, lower fertility and better education, women's participation in the labour force increases again (Duflo 2012).

A large percentage of women leave the labour market because of household duties, thereby indicating the greater pressure on women towards domestic and care responsibilities (Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009). In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the association between household constraints and women's labour force participation is weaker as compared to India. The booming textile industry in Bangladesh, which also exists in Sri Lanka has increased employment options for women that are not restricted to blue-collar jobs. In contrary to this, falling opportunities in the agriculture sector along with a small export-oriented manufacturing sector has reduced the share of female labour force participation in India (Klasen 2017). Using primary data, Deshpande and Kabeer (2021) show that women being primarily responsible for household responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, childcare as well as care for the elderly lowers their probability of working. The study is done on a primary survey of purposively selected sample of women in seven districts in West Bengal in 2017. The findings show that the 'real culprit' is the cultural norm that places the burden of household responsibilities almost exclusively on women that constrains them from working. They further go on to show that women from families that have a history of women from

older generations (mothers or mothers-in-law) working, have higher chances of being engaged in wage employment.

Cultural norms that promote gender stratification by limiting mobility and status of women within a household reduce their prospects of paid work. These constraints push women into unpaid or informal work or out of the labour force completely (Ghosh, 1996). A recent study by Dhanaraj and Mahambare (2019) estimated that for married women living in joint families, chances of them being employed in non-farm jobs is lowered by about 12 percentage points. This negative association is greater for women who are younger and in household having higher status in society, particularly in Northern India. The study presented evidence to suggest that increased education attainment lowers the constraints of traditional and cultural norms for women in joint family set-up as it increases their power to take decisions on their own. It also shows that higher education attainment increases the capacity of women to earn more that helps reduce the family pressure against working outside.

There are studies that indicate that labour market regulations can also have a deep impact in labour force participation of women. Hyland et al. (2021) show that equality in legal rights between male and female leads to reduction of gender based inequalities in employment, greater political representation for women and lesser women in vulnerable employment. In many countries, lack of basic legal rights and gender based legal restrictions are principal barriers that dissuade women from participating in formal jobs or in entrepreneurship ventures. Heath and Tan (2019) exploited the Hindu Succession Act, that legally empowers women with inheritance rights equal to that of men to show that women with such rights were more likely to be working outside of home. Restrictions imposed on women from heading a household or leading economic activities negatively influence female labour force participation (World Bank, 2015). The literature shows that restrictive social norms make legal reforms ineffective (Ashraf et al., 2020). Ahmad et al., (2016) and Holden and Chaudhary (2013) show that due to practices such as forced marriage and lack of education, women in Pakistan could not claim their inheritance rights. Similar results were seen in Ghana as well where women were not able to benefit from legal reforms because of social norms (Gedzi, 2012).

In a survey called *Women, Business and the Law*, out of 173 countries surveyed, 104 countries (India being one of them) have legal barriers, such as restrictions on night work or restrictions related to hazardous sectors, that restrict women from taking up the same types of employment as men, (World Bank, 2018b). The latest round of the survey (called *Women, Business and the Law 2020*) included 190 countries. Among the countries that have shown highest improvements, Nepal featured to be the only country from South Asia (World Bank, 2020). The survey also noted the reforms undertaken by the state of Maharashtra in India in eliminating all restrictions on women's access to jobs that are considered hazardous as a positive development to promote their labour market participation. Recent studies have established the support for cash transfer programmes in India as they have been found to improve employment outcomes of women. A study by Unnikrishnan and Sen (2020) examines the effect of a national pension scheme on the labour-supply decision of prime age women (20-50 years) in India. The study finds that having a pension-eligible member in the household exerts a positive effect on prime age women to work, particularly in urban areas. The effect is stronger if the eligible member is female. The study provides evidence to suggest that this is due the income effect generated by the scheme that allows the elderly to be involved in childcare support and thereby improving the labour market participation of prime age women.

As discussed above, there have been a number of studies on the determinants of female labour force participation that explain its situation in India. These explanations and evidence help understand female participation in the labour market in the context of inequality of opportunity as many of these conditions are outside of an individual's control. When it comes to economic opportunities across generations, there is a large body of work that recognizes the role such conditions that are not within an individual control and passed on through generations, mainly through parental links. Economists have studied how these conditions play a crucial role in shaping inequalities across societies (Becker and Tomes, 1979; 1986). Often termed as circumstances, they play an important role in deciding women's labour market outcomes. The literature discussed so far signify the role of circumstances as particularly important in the context of women's participation in the labour force. The reason being that many of these determinants are a culmination of economic and social factors that women inherit from their parents and the society at large. It therefore becomes particularly important to understand how circumstances can be

understood in the context of inequality of opportunity, the various channels through which it impacts future life chances of individuals and finally the role that effort can play. The literature on this is discussed in the next section.

2.4 Exploring the Role of Circumstances and Effort

The demographic and economic environment of a household, most popularly captured by parent's education, caste, social class, religion and household income and so on, are found to be significantly associated with their educational and labour market attainments (Mazumder, 2005; Black and Devereux, 2011). Empirical works have investigated the role of intergenerational transmission (i.e., linking outcomes of present generation with the previous generation) in explaining future opportunities of the present generation. This section summarizes the literature that establishes that family backgrounds and gender attitudes of parents form circumstances that play an important part in their children's (male as well as female) future economic opportunities. This is consistent with the evidence on the correlation of labour market outcome between generations. This can be linked to the human capital model by Becker and Tomes (1979), which explains how investment decisions made by parents can influence the future of their children. According to this model, families maximise a utility function spanning several generations, which determines the amount of resources they will invest in their children, which then influences the child's future earnings. This section includes a review of studies around both males and females to understand how the role of circumstances has been studied at a broader level in the context of inequalities in opportunities. The literature is then further explored to include more specific references to women to show how circumstantial factors influence norms and attitudes having deeper implications for their market participation across generations.

In the United Kingdom, it was seen that patterns of unemployment between father and son were found to be correlated (O'Neill and Sweetman, 1998). In the United States, similar results were found, which showed that such a correlation existed between mother and daughter as well (Altonji and Dunn, 1991). This study also showed that hourly wages of parents and their children were correlated as well. In Australia, Cobb-Clark and Ribar (2012) showed how children of parents with higher household income (with parents working) resulted in better employment outcomes for the

children. Talking specifically about female labour force participation, Farré and Vella (2013) showed a positive correlation in labor force participation between mothers and their daughters in the United States.

The literature on how resources and characteristics of individual families impact life chances of the present generation in India provides interesting evidence. Given the considerable research on education and labour market outcomes, education is the most ‘obvious transmission mechanism’ that is related to both family incomes and the labour market (Blanden et al, 2007). Jalan and Murgai (2008) conducted a study in this area whereby they focused on inequality of opportunities in acquisition of human capital. They particularly looked at the impact of parent’s education on a child’s education across different groups (by location, caste, gender, and class) to understand how inequality in human capital in one generation is influenced by unequal opportunities inherited from parents. Similar approach on studying inter-generational education mobility as a means to understand inequality in opportunities have been conducted in Latin America (e.g., Behrman et. al, 2001) and in Brazil in particular (Bourguignon et. al., 2003). While Jalan and Murgai (2008) looked at the education level of both mother and father, other scholars like Kambhampati and Pal (2001) and Chudgar (2009, 2011) have specifically looked at maternal education and found a positive relationship between maternal education and education of children (especially female children). Similar evidence on maternal education having a positive influence on daughter’s education has been found in African countries like Ghana (Tansel, 1997) and Guinea (Glick and Sahn, 2000). Singh (2010) explored how family characteristics can explain inequalities in India by looking as father’s education and individual wages to assess wage inequalities in India. The study also concluded by saying that to reduce wage inequality, it is important for policies to focus on boys and girls from families where parents are uneducated so that they get a chance to complete their education from schools that are comparable with schools where children of educated parents go.

Azam (2013) studied whether children stayed in the same occupation as their parents by studying mobility patters based on the following categories – “white collar, skilled/semi-skilled, unskilled (include agriculture labourers), and farmers” - spanning birth cohorts 1945-54 and 1975-84 and among social groups. The study suggested that children from the latter birth cohort had higher

level of mobility as compared with the earlier cohort and those from SC/ST families had higher levels of mobility than upper castes in the cohort of 1975-84 as compared to the earlier cohort.¹⁶ Another study by Motiram and Singh (2012) showed that a large percentage of sons belonging to families that are engaged in low-paid and low-skilled work were in the same kinds of occupations like their fathers. This was found to be true across the country and in both rural and urban areas.

There is a substantial body of literature on sibling correlation in developed countries that show correlation in education outcomes among siblings (Bjorklund and Salvanes, 2011). In the case of India, Emran and Shilpi (2015) studied sibling correlation and found that women have achieved educational mobility when compared with their siblings, which was more prominent in urban than rural areas. They also found caste-wise variations that showed that educational mobility experienced by women from lower castes was higher than upper caste families.

In India, outcomes related to education and employment have been influenced by caste-based disparities in society (Majumder, 2013).¹⁷ A study by Munshi and Rosezweig (2006) showed how mobility in Indian families differed between boys and girls. Conducted in Mumbai, the study showed that sons had limited mobility than daughters as the expectation that they were made to enrol in local language schools with established parental network so that they could enter into traditional parental occupations (semi-skilled work like electrician, welding, tailoring etc.); while the daughters were allowed to enter into English medium schools so that they could enter into non-traditional jobs (like clerical, blue-collar professional etc.) requiring English proficiency. Their study provided an insightful analysis on how women from lower caste were better placed to adapt to different kinds of occupations since there is no expectation that they should follow their fathers. These findings on intergenerational transmission provide interesting insights and show that family characteristics influence an individual's life outcomes.

Empirical studies have tried to explore how norms and attitudes based on gender can influence

¹⁶ The study only documented the improvement in mobility and did not discuss if the improved mobility in families from SC/ST groups was because of affirmative actions.

¹⁷ Notable works in this area include Kumar et al (2002), Vaid (2012), Deshpande and Palshikar (2008), Hnatkowska et al. (2013), among others.

human capital formation and employment outcomes of women. These norms also result in occupational segregation, which is a common feature in countries around the world. In OECD countries, for example, more women are seen to be working in the service sector, while men dominate employment in industries (World Bank, 2011). Scholars categorize segregation as horizontal and vertical. Horizontal segregation occurs on the basis of tasks and results in women being disproportionately represented in sectors that require non-manual skills (example clerical jobs, childcare) and men being overrepresented in jobs that require manual skills (example, manufacturing jobs). Vertical segregation on the other hand occurs on the basis of some ‘ordered criterion’ such as wages and result in women being underrepresented in jobs with higher pays, higher authority and having greater scope for promotion (a phenomenon characterized by “Glass ceilings”) (Weeden et al, 2018).

Gender role attitudes refer to the perceptions or beliefs that individuals have on women’s role in society, and it impacts the extent of gender inequality within societies. When parents believe that the role of women should be confined within the house, it is unlikely that they will invest in the education of their daughters as compared to parents who do not hold such views. This affects their daughter’s economic opportunities as well as other choices in their adult lives related to marriage and fertility and employment outcomes (Johnston et al, 2014;). The extent to which socio-economic factors are passed along generations is key to understanding the extent of inequality across societies and over time. Studies have also found that attitudes of women towards their own participation in employment is formed early in life¹⁸ and is influenced by parental education and societal attitudes (Thornton et al., 1983; Vella, 1994).

Studies from India show that societal expectations from women as “caregivers and caretakers of the household” (Sudarshan, 2014; Sudarshan and Bhattacharya, 2009) often leads to opposition from peers and families when women seek for work opportunities. Women are also found to deeply internalize these expectations, which suppress them from joining the labour market even in the absence of such immediate opposition. Evidence also reveals that these norms are stronger among wealthier, upper caste households, suggesting that changes in financial conditions alone does not

¹⁸ The type of family structure and working mothers that women spend with during their adolescent years shape their gender-role attitudes during adult years (Burt and Scott, 2002).

necessarily eliminate such restrictions for women. The low figures of female labour participation in urban areas are consistent with this observation (Fletcher et al, 2017).

It is clear from the available literature that societal expectations, beliefs and norms that define gender role attitudes have a substantial influence on female labour market participation in India. These social norms around women affect both the supply and demand for women in the labour force. The “World Values Survey (WVS)” provides interesting insights on how norms prevalent in India limit women’s participation in employment and show that such norms can only provide partial explanation to India’s declining labour market participation among females. WVS, 2010-2014 data shows that gender norms against women continue to persist in classrooms and labour market, and they exist even among women at some level (Fletcher et al., 2017). An interesting finding is that while India’s labour market participation of females is similar to Pakistan, the responses on gender norms in the survey were more similar to countries that have very high female labour force participation.¹⁹ This suggests that differences in how individuals views women’s work is not adequate to provide complete explanation of a falling labour market participation of women in India. There is therefore a need to reexamine the existing knowledge on women’s economic opportunities that goes beyond circumstances and explore the other dimension associated with it, that of individual effort. This is discussed in the next section.

While there is considerable literature surrounding the influence of circumstances (measured by family characteristics and other factors as explained in the previous sections), the literature on the role of effort on life outcomes is rather limited. It is particularly difficult to observe and measure ‘effort’ in measuring inequalities. The exact classification of the efforts that are rewarded and of the deficiencies in circumstances that are compensated for is a topic of debate in the literature, more so, because they are not independent of each other (Jusot et al, 2010). Talking about how

¹⁹ The responses included women’s views on aspects such as relations of working women with children versus stay-at-home mother, men getting more preference for jobs; and men making better business executives.

beliefs and perceptions about inequality of opportunity²⁰ can lead to under-investment (such as in skills) and discontent among individuals, Brock (2016) has shown how, in countries with higher inequalities of opportunity, people tend to attribute individual failures to injustice and ‘bad luck’. This dissuades people with disadvantaged backgrounds from putting forth their hard work, which further increases inequalities. The study is built on the belief that this may not be true in the context of women. This is because, women’s role as individuals and subsequently their access to labour market opportunities, is interlinked with social and cultural aspects that go beyond individual responsibility. Understanding the role of effort therefore cannot be as straightforward and the literature around this topic is very limited.

In the labour market context and as discussed in chapter 1, women have been able to show successful outcomes when enrolled in skills or vocational training.²¹ A study on vocational courses by Marjorie et al (2018) from a range of low and middle income countries, including India along with countries like Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Nepal, Jordan and Turkey, have found that vocational courses improve the likelihood of employment and shows positive earning effects. These effects are found to be stronger for Africa and Asia with positive economic outcomes for women in middle and low income countries. Similar outcomes have been observed by other studies as well. Attanasio et al. (2008) find that the effects of training offered by Jóvenes en Acción in Colombia were more widespread for women, but less pronounced for men. The chances of women being employed after training are higher and they are found to be working for longer periods, compared to men. Also, women who undergo training earn higher wages than women who were not offered any training.

²⁰ Beliefs and perceptions about inequality of opportunity can have different views from individuals. For example, it can have an effect on preferences for redistribution of wealth (Alesina and Ferrara, 2005; Eisenkopf et al., 2013). At the same time, preference for redistribution changes when individuals believe that that they can benefit from their own hard work (Balafoutas et al., 2013).

²¹ Different studies have shown that women have been able to perform better in various development an early stage onwards. An experiment conducted on three early childhood interventions (Abecedarian Project, Early Training Project and Perry Preschool Program) targeting disadvantaged African-Americans in the US demonstrated substantial short and long term effects on girls significantly improving later life outcomes (including academic achievement) but showing no effect on boys (Anderson, 2008).

Similar results have been found in Panama, where the largest positive impact on job finding rates is higher for women (Ibarrarán and Rosas, 2009). In Argentina, participation in skill training is found to increase the overall formal employment for females (Alzúa and Brassiolo, 2006). In Europe, Bergemann and Berg (2008), by summarizing different studies, find positive effects on labour market outcomes for women. Earning impacts from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in the US have also been estimated to be more among disadvantaged female than male (Orr et al., 1996).

The effect of participation in skill development programmes in India for women is found to be consistent with these results. According to a study done by the World Bank (2015)²², the participation in skill programmes can increase the overall employment rate, with the effect being stronger for women when compared to men. Despite numerous challenges, female trainees have been found to continue in employment for almost the same duration as men and the chances of them dropping out is less as compared to men (Prillaman et al., 2017).²³

While the evidence on the role of circumstances help explain the constraints face by women in participating in the labour force, the evidence discussed above show that women have been able to overcome various challenges to show positive outcomes. We have tried to interpret the scope of effort indirectly from this evidence.²⁴ An explanation given to justify this higher positive effect on women is that women often begin from a greater disadvantaged situation than men (World Bank, 2015). The study however asserts that this does not take away the fact despite various circumstantial barriers, women's own performance in these programmes requires an analysis at the individual level that go beyond differentials between women and men in the labour force. This

²² The study was conducted in 2014 in five large states in India including Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (World Bank, 2015).

²³ The study by Prillaman et al., (2017) was based on a survey conducted by Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD) that worked in collaboration with a national level public skilling programme in the year 2016.

²⁴ This has particular relevance to the present study from a methodological perspective as well and has been discussed in detail in chapter 3.

premise is used to suggest that individual effort may have a role to play in deciding their labour market participation. The present study will contribute to this literature by trying to directly identify individual attributes that can be considered as effort among women who have been successful in finding employment. To do this, we have focused on women who have been part of vocational programmes given the evidence that these programmes have resulted in positive outcomes. These programmes are also particularly relevant in the context of women who receive lesser opportunities for learning as compared to males due to various institutional, structural and societal barriers. The focus of the study and the rationale is explained in the next section.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature and the Rationale for the Study

A low and declining pattern of women's labour force participation in India has received significant focus. With the literature studied in this area, we have made an attempt to understand women's participation in the labour market from the theoretical understanding of equality of opportunity. The evidence so far on the various determinants of women's participation in the labour market and the explanations around its status relate to factors that are based on circumstances and are beyond individual control. These circumstances are pre-determined and decided at the household level, and they further influence economic and social structures around women's employment. The understanding on opportunities is incomplete without considering the role of effort, which unlike circumstances, can be considered to be within individual control as propounded by the model of equality of opportunity by Roemer (1998). We have found that this has remained rather unexplored and received limited attention. Based on the available literature on women demonstrating positive employment outcomes in various skill and vocational programmes, we have made an attempt to interpret the scope of effort. There is however a gap in the literature as there is no direct interpretation of effort and understanding of its role in the context of women's and their labour force participation. The study is built on the premise that it is important to understand effort to better address inequalities in opportunities and needs attention. With rapid changes in economic conditions, understanding opportunities for women calls for a renewed approach to examine how far their engagements in the labour market are driven by factors that are both within and beyond their control. This has so far remained unexplored in the literature, and more so in the Indian context.

There is consensus among economists and social policy theorists that public policies should seek to reduce inequality in opportunity. As Peragine (2004) notes, “economic inequalities due to factors beyond the individual’s responsibility are inequitable and should be compensated by society”. It is the practical application of this, which is accompanied by implementation challenges that might have undesired consequences. Given how important it is for women to participate in the labour force and the underlying power of human capital investment in reducing inequalities in society, it is important to study how effort as an individual attribute can play a role in overcoming inequalities. The study is built on this rationale and lays the foundation for our work.

The present study makes an attempt to fill this gap by examining women’s participation in the labour market from the perspective of equality of opportunity with a focus on understanding the role of effort. It takes into consideration factors that are a consequence of socio-economic characteristics that determine women’s access to opportunities of employment and makes an attempt to differentiate the role of effort as an individual attribute. In doing so, the study has focused on specific sample of women who are employed in the labour market. It includes women who graduated from Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) that are vocational training institutes. Based on existing evidence, we assumed that as enrolees of vocational training programmes, these women are likely to belong to similar socio-economic backgrounds. This in a way implies that the circumstances that facilitate their job opportunities are unlikely to be widely different from each other.²⁵ On the other hand, being enroled in labour market relevant courses, these women can be considered to have received exposure to employment opportunities provided through these institutes ²⁶ These two conditions enabled the study to understand effort without being influenced by wide variations in circumstances or access to opportunities. The next chapter provides details on data and methodology of the study.

²⁵ This is an important assumption to isolate effort, as according to Roemer (1998), effort of an individual should be free from any contamination that may arise from circumstances or past variables.

²⁶ This is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 on Data and Methodology.

Chapter 3

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study has used secondary as well as primary data with a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to address the objectives and research questions. The first part of the analysis examines secondary data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) and the India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II) to understand the role of pre-determined circumstances on women's participation in the labour market. The second part of the analysis has used data collected from a primary survey of a sample of employed women. This chapter discusses the data and methodology for both these parts in detail.

3.1 Secondary Data and Methodology

The study has used dataset from PLFS to have an overall understanding about women's participation in the labour force in India, including its trends as well as patterns. The PLFS is conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and is a pan India survey, excluding Andaman & Nicobar Islands. PLFS data for the study uses data from the year 2017 (June) to 2018 (July) that covered more than one lakh households in 5759 urban blocks and 7014 villages (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2019). The data was used to analyse the situation of women's employment status disaggregated by sector and type of employment, social characteristics, education levels as well as characteristics of women's work based on paid and unpaid activities. This data helped the study understand the kind of employment opportunities that women have been able to access and provided useful background to understand the factors that determine the status of women's labour market participation in India.

To understand the role of pre-determined circumstances on women's participation in the labour market, the study has used secondary data sources available at the household level using IHDS-II. IHDS-II is a panel survey that is nationally representative and covers 42,152 households in 384 districts in urban and rural neighbourhoods across the country for the year 2011-12. This survey is the second round of IHDS and is based on re-interviewing households that were already

surveyed in the first round of IHDS in 2004-05. The survey includes all states and Union Territories (excluding Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands) (Desai et al, 2015).

Data from IHDS-II is publicly available and it collects information on various socio-economic variables at the household level.²⁷ This is the latest round available at the time of the study. Although there have been other national level surveys since 2011-12, IHDS-II includes variables that can help explain women's socio-economic circumstances. These variables have been captured through data related to demographic characteristics (caste, religion, education level) and household level factors (such as household assets, source of household earnings/income, and last education level completed by the household head). Besides these factors, the study has included an analysis of how factors that go beyond the household but manifest through social practices and incidences that define gender relations impact their labour force participation. In addition, the study has included data on women's access to channels like groups or organizations within the community (such as *Mahila Mandals*/Self Help groups) and variables that indicate financial autonomy. These factors are important, particularly in the context of the present study, as they are linked to facilitating women's access to opportunities or influencing their role in society. For those who are not employed, it also includes information on their willingness to work. All these data have been captured in the questionnaire on 'Health and Education' that has a section meant exclusively for 'ever married' women (married, widowed, divorcee) called the 'Women's Questionnaire'. Unlike the other questionnaires in the survey that have been administered to the household heads, who happen to be males in most cases, this questionnaire has been administered to the women respondents in the family.

²⁷ IHDS data has been widely used in various studies linked to women's labour market participation as well as studies related to intergenerational transmission of outcomes. According to Chatterjee et al. (2018), IHDS has been found to be advantageous over other national level survey to measure women's labour market participation, primarily because it reviews economic activities of every household (whether it is farm/ non farm/ businesses/wage or salaried labor) and gives details of socioeconomic characteristics of each member participating in these activities. As per IHDS, an individual is considered to be employed if the/she has worked for at least or more than 240 hours in a given year.

The likelihood of women's participation in the labour market has been estimated using logistic regression model²⁸ as shown below:

$$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta X_i + e_i$$

where, the dependent variable (Y) took the value 1 if a woman is participating in the labour market and 0 if not; α is the intercept term; X_i are the independent variables; β is the regression coefficient of X (all independent variables) that measures the influence of the explanatory variables on Y; and e_i is the error term.

The independent variables included education level of women; social group status by religion and caste; household assets; household income; education level of household head; access to groups/networks; social practices that define gender relations (such as 'ghungat'/'purdah'/'pallu') and prevalence of sexual harassment in society; and financial empowerment such as availability of cash and home ownership. The choice of these variables and the rationale for using them have been guided by the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and an explanation of these variables is presented in chapter 4. These variables are considered important, as they are both a consequence as well as a determinant of social norms and gender role attitudes, which play an equally significant role in women's employment outcomes. In addition to the logit model, the study has also used IHDS-II data to understand women's own willingness to work. This has been done by looking at data from women who are not employed but were asked whether they are willing to work if they find suitable job. Data from IHDS-II has helped the study in forming an overall understanding of how different socio-economic characteristics impact women's access to labour market opportunities. The findings showed that the existing variables from the secondary datasets cannot be directly applied to understand individual effort of women in their labour force participation. This substantiated the need for a primary survey and details are discussed in the next section.

²⁸ The logistic regression model (or logit model) is a "generalized linear model that assumes that the outcome variable is a categorical variable". Usually, the outcome variable (mostly represented as 'Y') is a dichotomous variable that has either a success or failure as outcome/result (Maxwell, 2009).

3.2 Primary Data and Methodology

As discussed above, the available data sets from PLFS and IHDS-II do not provide adequate information that can be used to examine effort, an important aspect of the present study.²⁹ The study therefore used a primary survey to address this. Data collected from the primary survey was analysed through descriptive statistics and qualitative method.³⁰ The sample in the study included women who graduated from Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and were employed. The rationale for considering this for the primary survey is discussed in detail in this section.

According to the theory of equality of opportunity, effort is an individual attribute that is considered to be within the control of individual responsibility. To be able to identify effort, it becomes important to have a population that would ideally have equal access to opportunities. This becomes particularly challenging for women as the opportunities available to them are intertwined with their circumstances. The study is built on the assumption that women graduates from ITIs have this advantage where both circumstances and opportunities appear to be somewhat uniform. This may be a very strong assumption and may have limitations as circumstances and opportunities between no two individuals can be the same. For the purpose of the study, this assumption has been considered to be the best alternative available.³¹ This is further explained below.

The choice of course of students is often related to their social and economic background (Psacharopoulos and Zabalza, 1984; Khadria 1989). It has been observed that the students selecting

²⁹ The study looked at other sources of secondary data such as data from the NSSO surveys and Census (2011), to identify if any of the variables used in these surveys could be used to understand effort. The study however found it difficult to identify such variables that are suitable to address the research objective. This strengthened the need for a primary survey.

³⁰ Qualitative research gives the researcher scope to discover phenomena, like thought processes or feelings, which are difficult to understand through other research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and hence was found to be more appropriate to understand the role of effort.

³¹ To control for variations in circumstances and opportunities to isolate effort, an experimental study can be conducted (such as a randomised control trial). It was not possible to conduct such an experiment as it is costly and time consuming.

vocational courses are from lower socioeconomic background compared to their counterparts in other academic programmes (Freeman, 1974). This is true for the case of India as well. Studies have shown that ITI trainees are often found to come from poor socio-economic background with almost similar household characteristics and are unable to afford the cost of higher education. For example, a study conducted by the Directorate General of Training [DGT], (2012) found that two-thirds of ITI trainees were from households with only one earning member; and about forty-six percent trainees belonged to households that are Below Poverty Line (BPL). Majority of ITI trainees (more than eighty percent) enrolled themselves in ITIs with the aim of securing a job instead of going for higher studies. Data from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) show that most ITI graduates (77%) fall within the age group of 20- 25 years (MSDE, 2018).

Majority of ITI trainees come from similar academic backgrounds, with most completing either Class 10 or 12, as the minimum qualification of most ITI courses is Class 10. Once enrolled, ITI students are provided with opportunities that give them exposure to job opportunities. This is enabled primarily by the nature of standardised curricula adopted by the ITIs as well as linkage to industries that help connect these students with available job opportunities. This is being operationalized by the government at the policy level under the aegis of the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015 (MSDE, 2015). As guided by the policy, the ITI courses are aligned with standards that meet the occupational demands of the labour market. There is also enhanced collaboration of ITIs with industries to improve the relevance of training and employability of trainees. To leverage industry connections, placement/drives (or job fairs) are also organized in these institutes that give students a chance to interact with potential employers and get introduced to the labour market needs (DGT, 2020). All ITI trainees therefore can be considered to have similar information and access about jobs and employment opportunities. Given that effort is considered to be within individual's control, Roemer (1998) explains that for holding individuals accountable for their effort, it is important to compare his or her behaviour only with those who have similar circumstances.³² The rationale discussed above enables the study

³² This is further discussed in chapter 5.

to analyse the sample without being much influenced by differences in circumstances or access to opportunities.³³

The sample for the primary survey was done using a non-random sampling method, through ‘purposive sampling’ technique.³⁴ The primary sample was drawn from the state of Uttarakhand, and Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) and comprised 102 women from government ITIs. The reason for selecting these two states is because of their proximity to each other and the presence of a large industry base that provides a wide range of economic opportunities. Uttarakhand has seen a rising economic growth, partly owing to its favourable location that is closer to the NCR and has made efforts to create an environment that is investor friendly. Because of this, the demand for skilled labour has been rising with an expanding labour market (National Skill Development Corporation [NSDC], 2013)). In the manufacturing sector alone, there are about 230 large scale industries and more than 42,000 micro, small and medium enterprises that have been employing a large number of workers and the demand for labour is expected to rise to about 700,000 workers by 2022 (NSDC, 2013). Similarly, the NCR region has become an important part of the Indian economy and accounts for 6.7% of India’s GDP, as per a report by the National Capital Region Planning Board [NCRPB], (2015). While NCR region consists of Delhi and select districts from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan, the study has included ITIs from Delhi and Haryana that together comprise the largest share of the total NCR population. The industrial sector in Haryana has some of the largest industrial units from the manufacturing sector and contributes to a

³³ The study made a deliberate attempt to have a sample that would enjoy uniform characteristics. Having women from different fields (medical, law, science and technology, sports, art and craft etc.) would have made it difficult to isolate effort from other factors like ability and access (among others). Given that ITIs provide more or less similar exposure and opportunities in the labour market, it takes away any such variations for the purpose of the study.

³⁴ Also known as ‘judgemental sampling’, the primary aspect to consider in this type of sampling is the judgement of the researcher regarding the participant/respondent who can be considered to offer information in the best way possible so that it meets the study objectives. The participants can therefore be selected based on his/her opinion on who are most likely to have the desired information and are willing to share that as well. Purposive sampling is considered to be extremely useful when there is a need to build a historical reality, explain a phenomenon or develop an understanding on something that is less known (Kumar, 2011).

significant share of the region’s GDP. Delhi, on the other hand, is also driven by a large service sector and provides a strong linkage to the manufacturing units through its growing tertiary activities (NCRPB, 2015).

There is no publicly available repository of contact details of ITI trainees who get employment after completing the ITI course. Records are maintained at the institute level and the availability of information vary by institute. It was therefore challenging to get contact details of candidates for the sample. The respondents were drawn using a variety of techniques, including personal contacts of ITI officials and word-of-mouth referrals.³⁵ We were able to get contact details of 150 women out of which 102 women could be contacted. A breakup of this is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Responses received for the Primary Survey

	No of ITIs	Candidates contacted	Candidates who responded
Delhi-NCR	15	75	54
Uttarakhand	12	75	48
<i>Total</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>150</i>	<i>102</i>

Source: Compiled by the research scholar

The women from the sample graduated from their respective academic years in 2018 (August-September) and 2019 (September) from government ITIs and had found placement within three months after completing the course in different trades.³⁶ The details of the trade studied by the

³⁵ Given that there is no available database, the selection of states also depended, to some extent, on the responses received through personal contacts and the time and resources available for the study. Including Delhi-NCR and Uttarakhand was found to be advantageous for the study due to its economic characteristics discussed in this section. Few private ITIs were contacted as well but there were no responses. The study therefore included respondents from government ITIs.

³⁶ Academic year for ITIs generally begins from August each year and ends in July-August in the subsequent year(s) depending on the course duration (one or two year). In the sample for the study, the courses on Basic Cosmetology, Computer Hardware and Network Maintenance, Construction and Woodworking, Human Resource Executive, Sewing Technology and Stenography were of one year duration; and the courses on Draughtsman Civil, Instrument Mechanic, Turner and Welder were of two years.

women are shown in Table 3.2. The sector of employment varied depending on the trade studied by these women at the ITI.³⁷ A detailed description of the socio-economic profile of the sample is presented in chapter 6.

Table 3.2: Details of Trade (courses) studied by the Sampled Women

Trade	Delhi NCR	Uttarakhand
Basic Cosmetology	6	4
Computer Hardware and Network Maintenance	7	5
Construction and Wood Working	5	6
Draughtsman Civil	7	9
Human Resource Executive	0	1
Instrument Mechanic	4	6
Sewing Technology	5	4
Stenography	7	7
Turner	6	2
Welding	7	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>48</i>

Source: Compiled by the research scholar using primary survey data

The method of data collection included face-to-face interviews; telephonic interviews were also done in some cases due to travel restrictions.³⁸ Majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. The interviews were conducted from November 2019 and continued through December 2020.

³⁷ Majority of the respondents were in wage employment and details are mentioned in chapter 6.

³⁸ The candidate had to conduct a few interviews (including follow-up interviews with participants who were interviewed face-to-face) in telephonic mode post the national level lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 outbreak. The suitability of telephonic interviews is also well established in the literature. According to a study conducted by Ward et al (2015), participants interviewed telephonically supported the claim that it is a user-friendly interview tool and with the phone gaining global popularity as a medium of communication, conducting interviews using this medium in present day society is a practical approach.

The participants were given an understanding about the purpose of the interview and were given the freedom to pause or leave the interview at any time and were assured confidentiality of their identity. Respondents were also given the liberty to ask any questions about the interview or the study. The interviews were documented mostly using handwritten notes, that were transcribed for analysis.³⁹ The interviews followed a semi-structured process with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions have several advantages as they encourage respondents to answer freely and without any constraints. Whenever necessary, follow-up questions were also used to encourage respondents to clarify or elaborate on any point.

Figure 3.1 presents a diagrammatic representation of the process of data analysis from the primary survey. Given the limitation in the literature on effort being studied in the context of women's participation in the labour force, the study has first tried to build an understanding of effort. It was done through an analysis of the discourse on effort as a concept as well as its associated measures and parameters. The process involved extracts from existing papers, citation tracking and cross-referencing of relevant studies to understand how effort has been studied from a conceptual perspective, theories associated with it and how it has been measured across different fields.⁴⁰ The findings from this review helped in finalizing the interview schedule for the primary survey as well, and subsequently in data analysis. Through the interviews, the study tried to understand individual level factors of women in their pursuit for paid employment. This included questions related to their desire to work as individuals, including their own self-assessment of their strengths, constraints they faced and how they perceive themselves as employed individuals. There were also questions to position some of these individual level aspects within their socio-economic backgrounds as well as institutional parameters related to opportunities in the job market. The complete interview schedule is included in Appendix I.

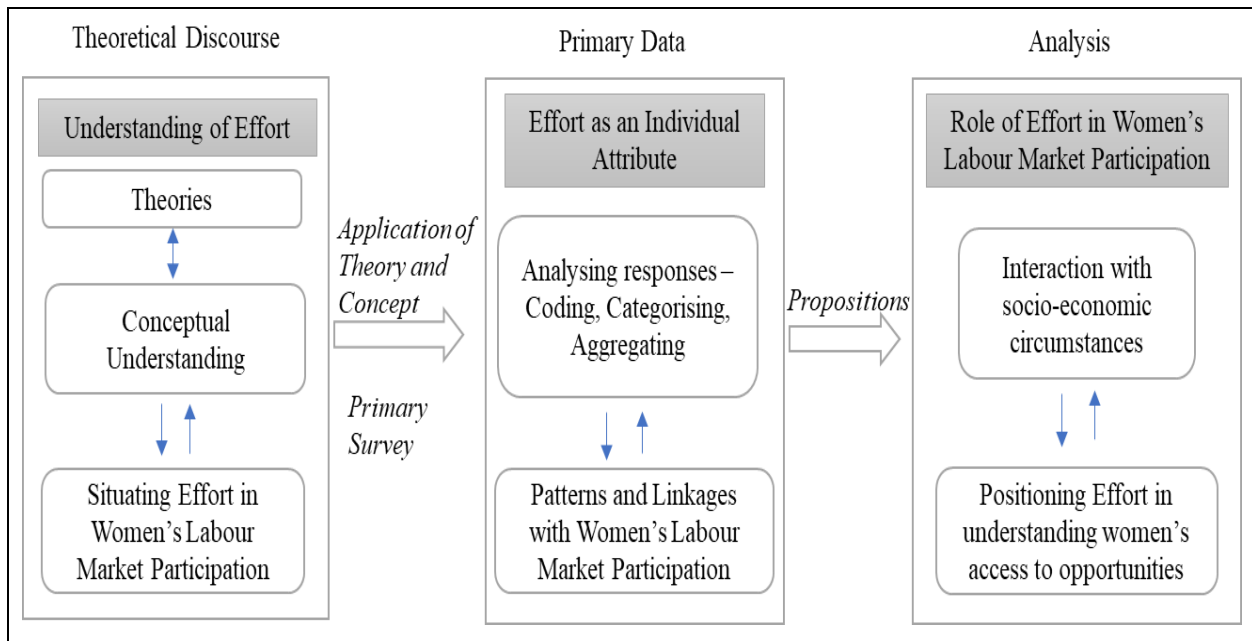
As mentioned above, the data collected from the primary survey have been analysed based on the

³⁹ In some interviews, audio recordings of interviews were conducted with prior permission from the respondents. However, it was felt that this made the women conscious of their responses. Audio recordings were therefore not part of the interviews.

⁴⁰ For a detailed discussion, see chapter 6.

theoretical and conceptual parameters on effort. For the purpose of analysis, the responses were aggregated and categorised based on the parameters that have been common and recurring across the sample to identify those individual attributes that can be considered as effort. Based on this, the study has framed propositions to explain the linkages between effort and labour force participation of women.⁴¹ The validity of the propositions has been discussed by linking the observed evidence with theoretical understandings on effort and how they can be understood in the context of women and employment. The study therefore benefits from a combined analysis of the available works on effort as well as reflections from actual observations, and propositions have been an ideal mechanism to bring out the findings of the study.

Figure 3.1: Analysis of Effort using Primary Data



Source: Interpretation of the research scholar.

⁴¹ The idea and the framing of propositions in this study are based on Khadria (1999, chapter 4: The Stereotypes: Folklores of the Welfare Society) who applied the methodology of testing through dialectic logic of reasoning, primarily to establish or refute a linkage between two variables, through arguments and counter-arguments. A proposition can borrow its logic from the arguments and counter-arguments available in prior research, existing correlative evidence or reasonable assumptions (see Clay, 2018).

Chapter 4

WOMEN'S LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION IN INDIA: EVIDENCE FROM SECONDARY DATA

This chapter aims to examine how various socio-economic factors determine the situation of labour force participation of women in India. The study is based on the theoretical underpinning of equality of opportunity, within which socio-economic factors play an important role in the form of circumstances. These circumstances, according to the theory, are beyond individual control but are responsible in determining individuals' access to opportunities. As discussed in chapter 2, such factors are found to play a significant role for women and their access to labour market opportunities as well. At the same time, just having more women enter the labour force is not sufficient to ensure economic well-being; the quality and nature of work is equally important. This is because improving women's access to labour opportunities is also dependent upon the kind of opportunities that are available for them. The chapter addresses the first objective of the study and provides an understanding of the situation of women's employment in India at a more disaggregated level and the role played by pre-determined circumstances. In doing so, it provides an analysis of how socio-economic characteristics at the household level and those that go beyond the household but manifest in society in the form of norms and gender role attitudes towards women can influence their labour force participation. It is important to consider these factors to understand how inequalities of opportunities for women are shaped by predetermined factors that are beyond individual control. The chapter has benefited from the availability of secondary data from PLFS and IHDS-II that are publicly accessible, which help build on the existing evidence in this area.

4.1 Situation of Women's Labour Market Participation in India – Evidence from PLFS

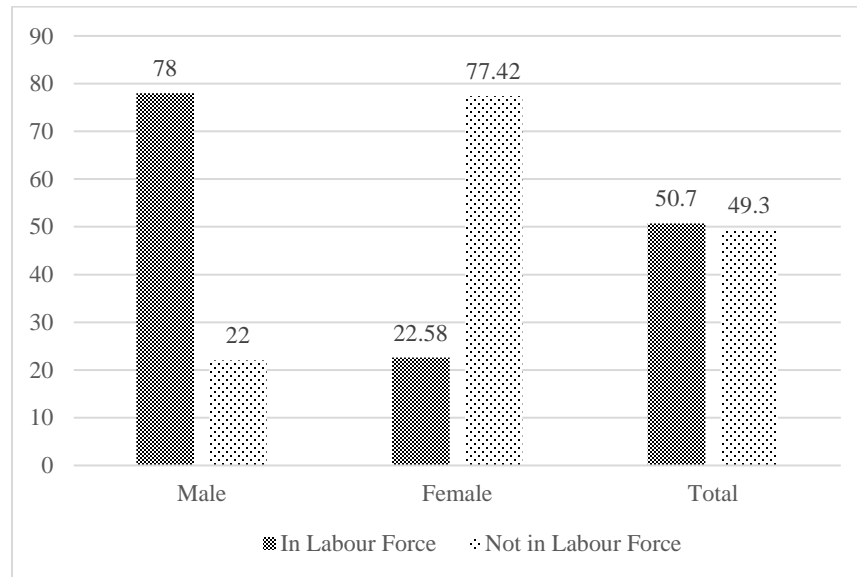
This section presents an analysis of women's labour market participation in India at the disaggregated level using data from PLFS (2017–2018) for working age individuals in the age

group 15-59 years.⁴² To discuss labour force participation, data on Usual Status for Principal and Subsidiary activities have been used as it helps capture employment status for a considerably longer duration in a year by including principal and subsidiary work status. Usual principal activity status is used to refer to those activities on which the individual has spent most amount of time during the last 365 days from the survey date, called the reference period. In addition, it is possible for some of these individuals to undertake other economic engagement, in addition to the principal activity for some period. Subsidiary economic activity considers such activities where an individual spends 30 days or above within the reference period. The study has used PLFS data to disaggregate employment based on different categories to include workers in regular wage/salaried employment, casual labour as well as those who are self-employed or working on their own or in any household enterprise. A detailed description of the various categories of employment is included in Appendix A (Table A.1) at the end of the chapter.

According to PLFS, individuals are considered to be in the labour force if they have undertaken any form of economic activity (workers or employed) in various forms of employment as mentioned above. It also includes those who were available for work but had to abstain from it such as those attaining education institutions, attending to domestic duties (including collection of vegetables, firewood; stitching; weaving for domestic use, etc.), unable to work owing to sickness or disability and so on. Individuals who are involved in farm or non-farm economic activities within the household in either paid or unpaid capacity are also considered as workers. Individuals who are neither working/employed nor available for work/seeking work are not considered to be in the labour force. Figure 4.1 gives the position of labour force participation rate in India for both male and female. It is seen that the rate of female labour force participation is much lower at about 23 per cent than those of males that stands at 78 per cent. This follows the evidence that have been discussed in the study so far and validates the need for focused attention on the low number of women who are part of the labour force in India.

⁴² Working age group or population is generally defined as persons who are 15 years and over; and the most commonly considered age-group to define working age population is 15-59 years (ILOSTAT, 2022; UNFPA, 2022).

Figure 4.1: Labour Force Participation (%) for Male and Female



Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

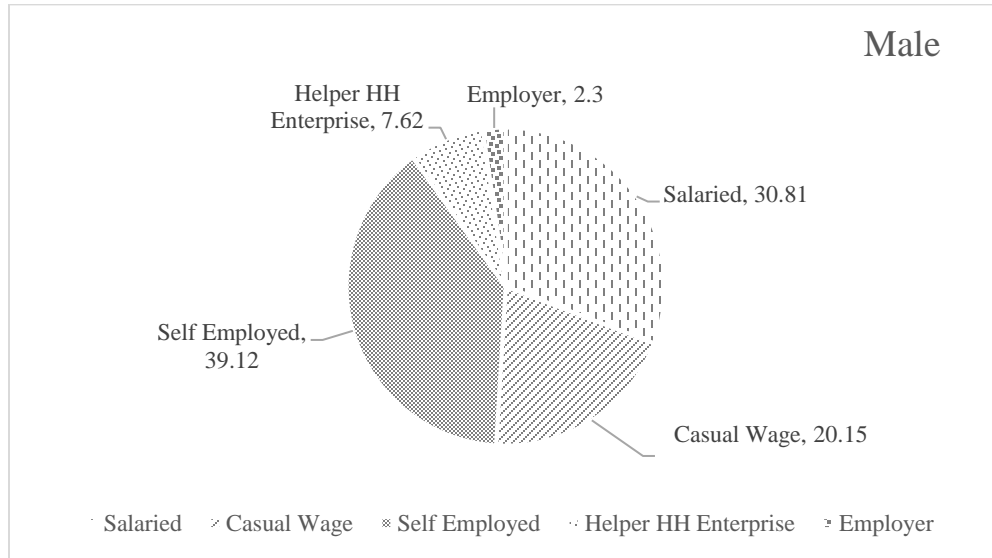
Figures 4.2 and 4.3 bring out some interesting variations between the types of employment for male and female. Of those who are in the labour force, the percentage of men and women employed as casual labour is almost comparable. A striking feature is that although the overall percentage of women in the labour force is lower than men, the percentage of women in salaried jobs is slightly higher than men. As shown, more than 32 per cent of women are employed as salaried employees, whereas for men, it is about 31 per cent. This could be because of the growth in service sector jobs, mostly in retail trade, financial and health services (Nath and Menon, 2020) that are considered to be more suitable for women.⁴³ In reference to the present study this is an important finding given its emphasis on paid employment.⁴⁴ On the face of this, this is encouraging, however the prospects

⁴³ Using PLFS data, Nath and Menon (2020) showed that 6.3 lakh new jobs were created in the retail sector, 4.3 lakh new jobs in the financial sector and 4.1 lakh new jobs were created in health services during the period 2017-18 and 2018-19.

⁴⁴ This has been discussed in the literature as well as while discussing the rationale for sample selection in chapter 3. As we will see in chapter 7 and 8, paid employment has been the end outcome in relation to which inferences on effort have been drawn.

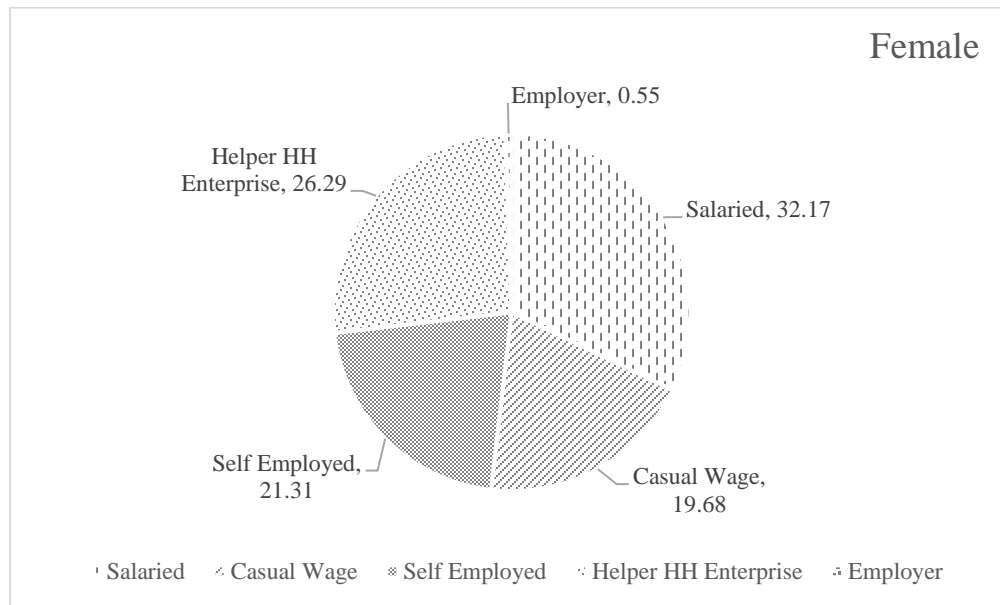
and characteristics of paid employment may have many nuances which need to be explored and will be discussed further in the chapter.

Figure 4.2: Employment Type for Male (%)



Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

Figure 4.3: Employment Type for Female (%)



Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

While calculating the proportion of labour employed in self-employment, a number of studies (see Bairagya et al, 2021) have used PLFS data that include helpers in household enterprise and employers under the common category of self-employed. The study has made a distinction between these types of employment to understand how employment status vary for men and women in these categories. This gives an interesting variation. Overall, the percentage of women who are self-employed by their own enterprise is considerably lower (21.31 per cent) as compared to men (39.12 per cent). However, the share of women who are working within household enterprises without any regular salaries or payment is much more as compared to men. While 26.29 per cent of the women were employed in this category, that of men is only 7.62 per cent. On the other side, the share of women who are operating their own enterprise by hiring other labour is quite negligible as compared to men (0.55 per cent for women compared to 2.3 per cent for men). These findings reassert that a considerable share of women continue to be engaged in activities without any payment or remuneration. This also shows that despite economic growth that India has witnessed, the same has not translated into better opportunities for women. The next section provides more information on how the situation varies among women disaggregated by rural-urban, social categories and education levels.

As discussed in chapter 2, labour force participation of female in India is determined by a host of economic and societal aspects. Cultural and social norms that define women's role within the household as well as in the society restrict them from taking part in the labour force in India (Jayachandran, 2021; Deshpande and Kabeer, 2021). These norms are also manifested through social practices governed by caste and religion and vary by rural or urban locations. This section presents a disaggregated analysis of females participating in the labour in India on the basis of various socio-economic categories. As shown in Table 4.1, female labour force participation is somewhat higher for rural areas in comparison with urban areas. As Mehrotra and Sinha (2019) notes, although participation rate is more in rural places, the kind of job opportunities are limited mostly to agriculture, small scale manufacturing, or work that requires home based helpers. Among religions categories, women from Muslim communities form the lowest share (around 12 per cent), and those from other Minority religions forming the highest share (28.37 per cent). When seen from social group wise data, of those women who are employed, majority of them belong to

Scheduled Tribe (29.83 per cent), followed by those from Scheduled Caste (24.05 per cent) and Other Backward Class (22.16 per cent).

Table 4.1: Status of Female Labour Force Participation (%) by Social Group

	Category	In Labour Force	Not in labor	Total
Region	Rural	23.99	76.01	100
	Urban	20.78	79.21	100
Religion	Hindu	23.67	76.33	100
	Muslims	11.95	88.05	100
	OMR	28.37	71.63	100
Social Category	Scheduled Tribe	29.83	70.17	100
	Scheduled Caste	24.05	75.95	100
	Other Backward Class	22.16	77.83	100
	Others	18.98	81.02	100
	Total	22.58	77.42	100

Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

The study has used data from PLFS on household consumption expenditure to understand the distribution of the proportion of women who are in the labour force based on economic conditions of the household.⁴⁵ Household Consumption Expenditure (HCE) is derived as a sum of monetary values of services and goods that are purchased or procured by a household during the reference period.⁴⁶ In the figure below, the households are divided into quintiles based on the distribution of household expenditures. Quintile 1 indicates the poorest (or the bottom 20 per cent of households) while quintile 5 indicates the richest households (or the top 20 per cent of households) in terms of

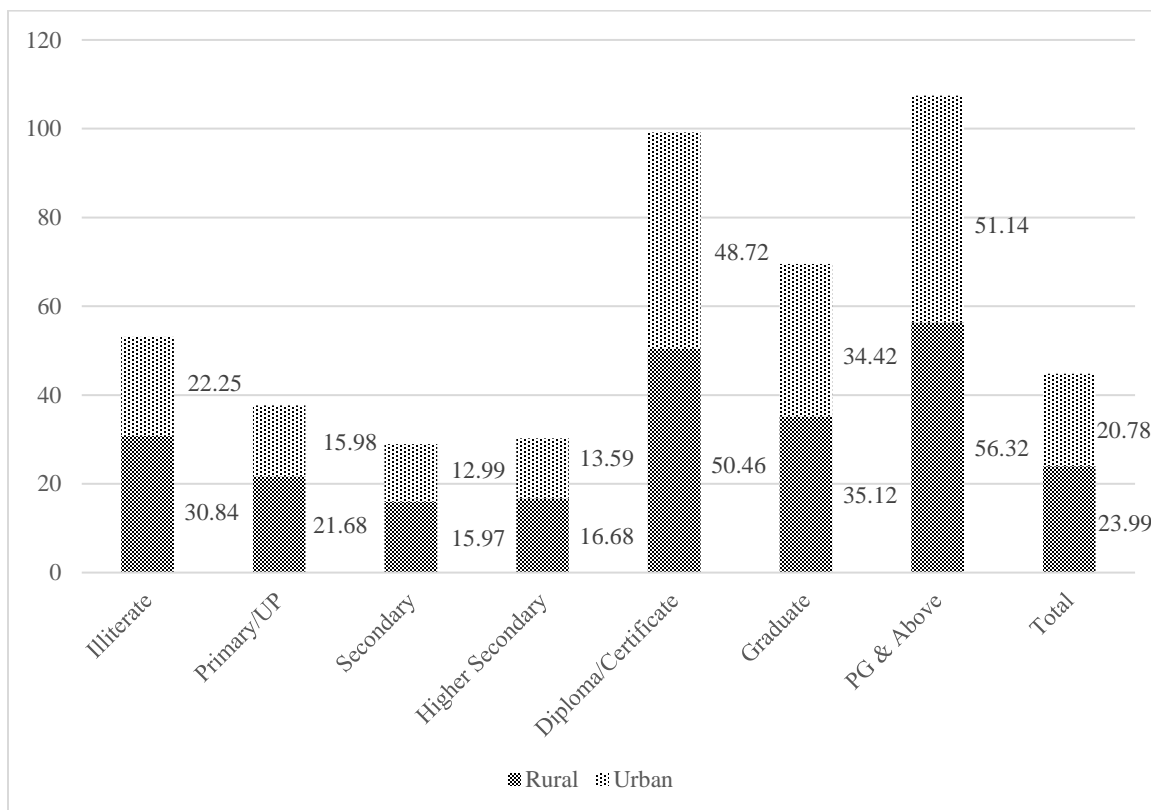
⁴⁵ Kapsos et al., (2014) find that participation rates of women were highest among those who came from the poorest households as shown by per capita household expenditure, and the lowest participation rate came from households that had higher monthly per capita expenditures.

⁴⁶ Expenditures that are non-recurring in nature, such as those related to ceremonies, capitation fee, expenses incurred in hospital admissions, and so on are not counted while calculating usual monthly consumer expenditure of households.

household expenditure. The data shows that the proportion of women taking part in the labour market is highest among poorest households and subsequently falls for households with higher consumption expenditure. The share is marginally higher for the richest households.

Education is considered to be a deciding factor in women's participation in the labour force. Our findings show a U-shape pattern when we plot the share of females employed in the labour market based on education level excepting Diploma/Certificate courses (Figure 4.4). As shown in Figure 4.4, the share of women in the labour force who are illiterate constitute 30.84 per cent in rural areas and 22.25 per cent in urban areas. As compared to that, the share is much lower for women with primary, secondary and higher secondary levels of education. The participation rate is higher for those who have completed graduation (35.12 per cent and 34.42 per cent in rural and urban areas respectively) and highest for those who have completed post-graduation and above (56.32 per cent for rural and 51.14 per cent for urban). Studies by Das (2006) and Das and Desai (2003) have demonstrated that norms based on socio-cultural practices, coupled with factors like lack of appropriate jobs for women with education levels of secondary and above, and decreased incentive for women to engage in wage employment as household income rises, have collectively resulted in a U-shaped relationship between women's education and their labour market participation. Studies have validated the shortage of 'appropriate' jobs in the labour market as a restricting factor for women to participate in the workforce, particularly for those with secondary education level and above (Borrowman and Klasen, 2017; Klasen et al., 2019). This explains why the percentage of women who are without any education or those who complete primary/upper primary is higher in the labour force as compared to those with secondary and higher secondary levels of education.

Figure 4.4: Female Labour Force Participation (%) by Education Level



Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

A further disaggregation of women's labour force participation based on education level as per different socio-economic characteristics is presented in Table 4.2. It can be seen that the pattern discussed in Figure 4.4 largely follows for all caste and religion categories as well. The share of women who are illiterate is higher in the labour force across all caste groups and starts to increase from higher secondary level (with the exception of OBC category, for which the increase is seen for qualifications above the higher secondary level). For all levels of education, women from ST communities form the highest share when compared with other caste groups. A notable observation is that women from ST communities form the highest share for those completing higher levels of education (graduates/postgraduates and above). Almost 62 per cent and 73 per cent women in the labour force who have completed graduation and postgraduation (and above) respectively, are from ST communities, which is much higher than other social groups. This can be greatly attributed to higher poverty levels among these households (Gaiha et al., 2017), lesser

restrictions on women’s mobility, especially for occupations that involve manual labour (Rao et al., 2010; Chaudhary and Verick, 2014). Against this, women from upper caste group form the lowest share of employed women across all education levels, with those completing graduation and postgraduation (and above) comprising only around 30 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. This is consistent with the evidence that social and cultural norms are stronger in upper caste households as compared to other caste groups (Eswaran et al., 2013) and this applies even when women have achieved higher levels of education. Among religious categories, women from other Minority religions (OMR) are in much larger share in the labour force, with the exception of those who are illiterate, in which case, Hindu women form a larger share. Muslim women form the lowest share in the labour market across all education levels, but those who are postgraduate and above are more in proportion in the labour force as compared to Hindu women. As discussed in chapter 2, social and cultural factors associated with caste and religion have a role to play in female labour force participation. The variation between social groups in the share of females participating in the labour force presented in this section reaffirm this.

Table 4.2: Female Labour Force Participation (%) by Education Level disaggregated by Social Categories

Education Level	Upper Caste	OBC	SC	ST	Hindu	Muslim	OMR
Illiterate	19.54	28.24	31.1	37.75	31.83	10.73	29.62
literate/Primary/UP	15.29	19.62	21.07	25.27	20.59	8.95	24.9
Secondary	12.97	14.24	14.81	18.82	15.02	8.77	18.67
Higher Secondary	13.05	13.62	15.1	24.26	14.23	10.59	23.48
Diploma/Certificate	46.7	47.12	55.67	63.38	49.66	48.89	48.28
Graduate	29.98	33.03	35.21	61.77	31.83	30.46	53.2
PG & Above	50.94	51.68	46.23	72.8	49.58	57.78	64.21
Total	19	22.16	24.05	29.83	23.67	11.95	28.37

Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

As shown in Figure 4.4, a large percentage of female labour force (50.46 per cent and 48.72 per cent in rural and urban areas respectively) are those who have completed any diploma or certificate course for any technical or vocational education, and this is consistent almost across all socio-

economic categories. This is an interesting finding as these courses have the potential to provide better linkage with job opportunities and is discussed in the next section.

Vocational Education and Women's labour market participation

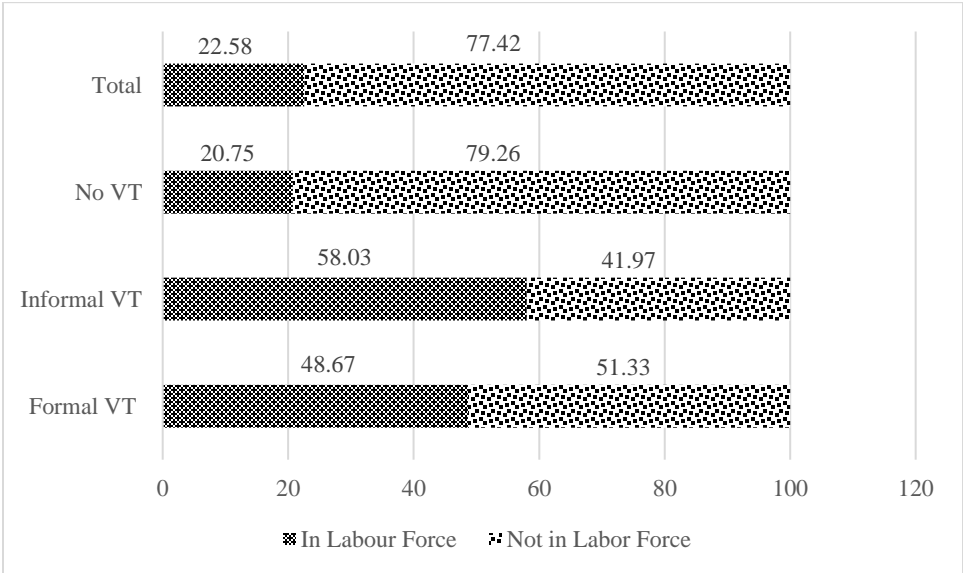
India has identified skill development as a priority area and concerted efforts are being made to harness its demographic dividend. According to the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015, India is one of the youngest nations in the world with a growing demand for skilled labour (of more than 100 million) in different sectors that needs to be met by the year 2022 (MSDE, 2015). In order to meet the objective of a 'Skilled India', the government has prioritized skilling to be implemented in a mission mode under the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) driven by MSDE. There are 15,697 ITIs in India (of which, 3,055 are government and the remaining 12,642 are private) across the country with a seating capacity of more than 34 lakhs. These ITIs provide 1-2 year long diploma programmes in about 137 trades (DGT, 2020). Apart from the ITIs, skill development training is also being implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in collaboration with industry led Sector Skill Councils representing major sectors of the economy (MSDE, 2015).

Providing women with vocational education has been found to be an effective way to improve their participation in employment. Pastore and Bhaduri (2017) have shown that vocational education has a positive effect on women's paid employment. It has been recommended that policy measures should be taken to improve women's access to vocational training programmes that are industry relevant (Chaudhary and Verick, 2014). According to a report by MSDE (2020), in 2019, about 50 per cent candidates in different skill development courses were women, and about 12 per cent were those from ITIs or other vocational training institutes. There have been a number of initiatives to encourage more women to join the ITIs, which includes ITIs meant only for women as well as earmarking seats exclusively for women in government ITIs. In the past five years, enrolment of female students in ITIs have improved by 62 per cent (MSDE, 2020).

The study used PLFS data to understand the participation rate of women in the labour force who attended vocational training. This also includes participation rate on the basis of the type of

vocational training, i.e., either formal or informal. In the PLFS dataset, formal vocational education includes those acquired from institutions that are recognized by national certifying bodies and offer certificates or diplomas; informal training on the other hand, are those that are acquired throughout the course of day-to-day lives, either within the family or communities or on the job, or through self-learning. As shown in Figure 4.5, women with both formal and non-formal vocational training comprise a higher share in the labour force when compared to women who have not received any such training. Of the women who are in the labour force, more than half (58.03 per cent) are those who have been through some form of informal vocational training and 48.67 per cent have received formal vocational education.

Figure 4.5: Employment Status of Women (%) by Vocational Education

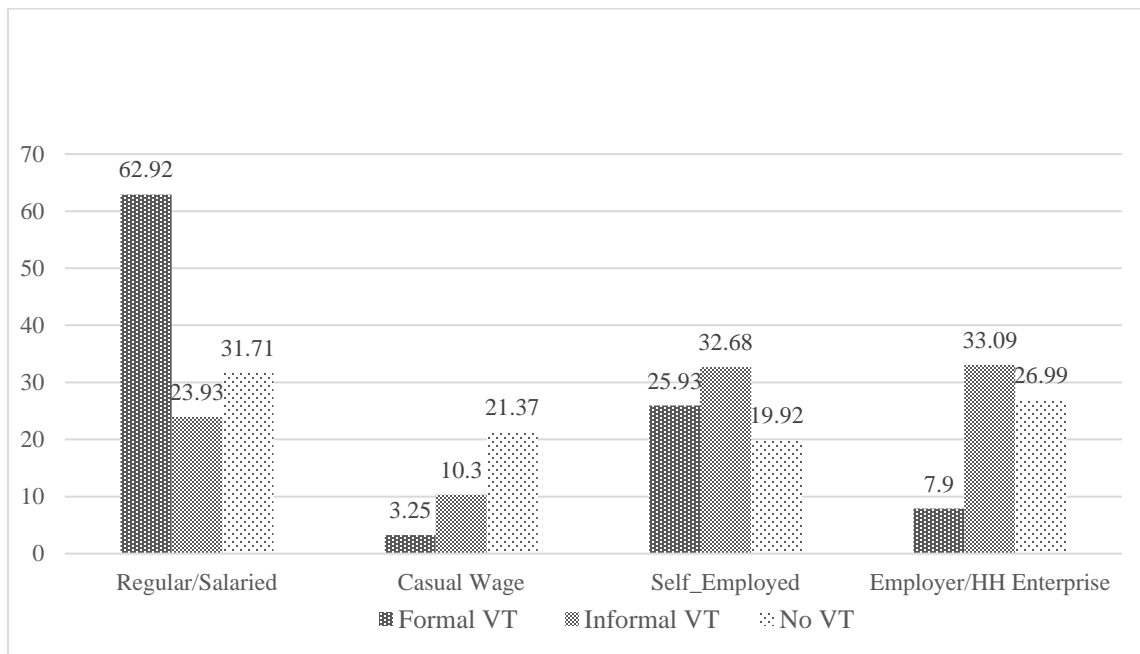


Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

As noted by Mehrotra and Parida (2017), individuals with a technical degree or diploma have significantly higher chances of being employed as compared to those without such qualifications. While the results support this for both men and women, the chances are stronger for women as compared to men. Using PLFS data, the study provides further disaggregation to show the kind of employment that women with vocational education have been able to attain. Of those who have undergone vocational training, it is interesting to see that a large percentage (62.92 per cent) of women who went through formal vocational training are in regular or salaried employment and a

small proportion (3.25 per cent) are in casual employment (see Figure 4.6). On the other hand, women who have undergone vocational training in an informal way are largely found to be self-employed with 32.68 per cent followed by 25.93 per cent with formal training. It is also clear from the analysis that women with either informal or no vocational training tend to be employed as employers or in household enterprises. As Bairagya et al (2021) notes, studies that show the impact of vocational training on female employment often consider women’s enrolment in such training as an exogenous variable. It is true that women’s decision related to education and training, and subsequently employment, are influenced by factors that are beyond their individual control as discussed in chapter 2. It is also equally important to acknowledge that factors like individual choice, motivation and other such attributes that may not be directly observable, can also influence their participation in vocational training as well as in the labour force. This aspect has been considered while designing the primary survey for the study to bring out the role of effort, details of which have been discussed in chapter 3 and further elaborated in chapters 5 and 6.

Figure 4.6: Women's Employment (%) in Different Employment Types by Vocational Training Status



Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

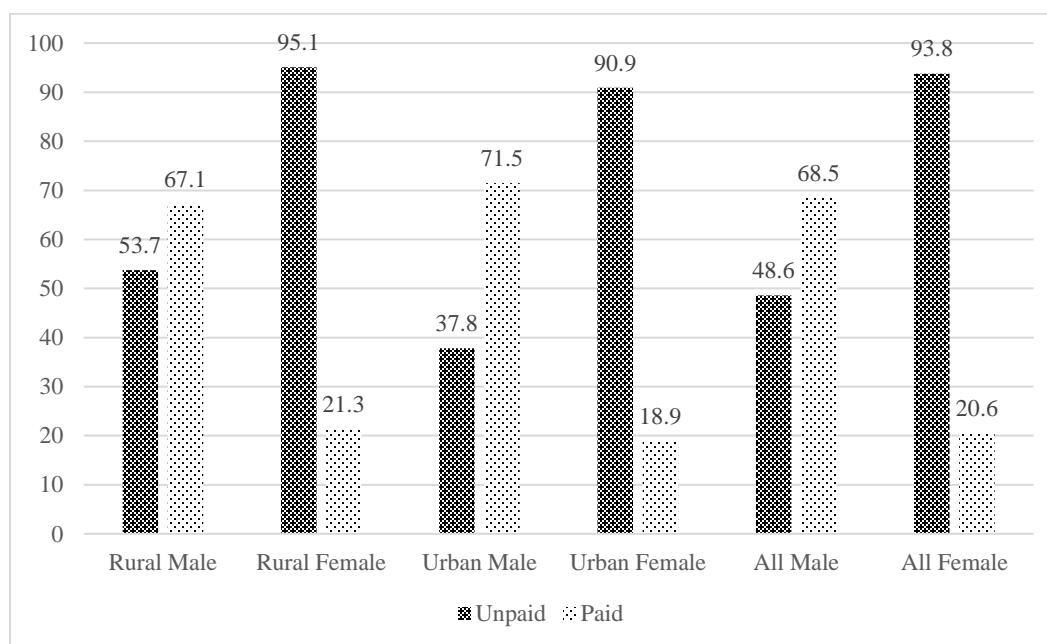
The discussion above provides useful background on the various trends and characteristics of female labour market participation in India. Since the 1990s, the economic shifts seen by the Indian economy has been significant. At the start of the 21st century, India was among the top ten developing economies in the world with a growth rate (average) of 8 per cent between 2001 – 2006 (Krueger, 2013). However, this was not successful in improving the participation rate of women in employment, nor did it improve the quality of jobs for them. These aspects however have not gone unnoticed and there have been ongoing debates on how to account for women’s work in a more inclusive manner.

As Ghosh (2009) notes, women have been working since as early as the start of capitalism, despite the fact that this has not been acknowledged widely. All women are usually workers, whether or not they are defined or recognised as such. In most societies, and especially in developing countries, essential activities that are crucial to the functioning of the society, such as domestic chores, including cooking and cleaning, childcare and care of elderly/sick and other community-based activities, have always been performed by women. She adds that the pattern of unpaid work exists even when women are engaged in as paid employees (either as wage or self-employed) in the labour market. For poor families in particular, unpaid activities associated with household and care responsibilities continue to be with the women as they cannot hire additional help to perform such tasks, thereby causing a ‘double burden’ of work for such women. As seen in this chapter, for women who are self-employed, a large part of them have been contributing to the economy without any payment or income.

Despite the growing discussion on a low participation rate of women in the labour force, an area that requires attention is women’s engagement in unpaid domestic and household responsibilities that prevent them from active involvement in paid work (Chandrasekhar and Ghosh, 2020). A globally acceptable method of measuring unpaid activities includes the use of Time Use Surveys (TUS). OECD (2016) defines them as surveys that record information on how people allocate their time across different day-to-day activities during a particular period. These surveys provide information on how an individual spends the hours in a day on activities that range from paid/unpaid work to personal work and leisure. In India, a TUS was rolled out in January-December in 2019 by the NSO. The survey collected data on time spent by the members of a household on

different activities that included (among others) paid work, production activities for own consumption, unpaid domestic and caregiving activities, socialising, media and sports and so on.⁴⁷ Based on the above definition, Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of work between male and female in paid and unpaid work.

Figure 4.7: Participation of Male and Female in Paid and Unpaid Activities (%) (15-59 years)



Source: Time Use Survey in India, 2019, NSO

It is very clear that women in India spend a large majority of their time in unpaid activities as described above. It is striking that almost 94 per cent women are spend their time unpaid activities

⁴⁷ Unpaid activities include: (a) care for children, sick, elderly, differently-abled persons in own households; (b) production of other services for own consumption; (c) production of goods for own consumption; (d) voluntary work for production of goods in households; (e) voluntary work for production of services in households; (f) voluntary work for production of goods in market/non-market units; (g) voluntary work for production of services in market/non-market units; (h) unpaid trainee work for production of goods; (i) unpaid trainee work for production of services; (j) other unpaid work for production of goods; and (k) other unpaid work for production of services.

Paid activities include (a) self-employment for production of goods; (b) self-employment for production of services; (c) regular wage/ salary for production of goods; (d) regular wage/ salary for production of services; (e) casual labour for production of goods; and (f) casual labour: for production of services.

that are largely characterised by household chores, childcare, care for the elderly and so on, while only about 21 per cent of men do the same. The situation is similar in both urban and rural areas as evident in the figure above. This can have a direct bearing on women's ability to participate in productive employment and creates inequality of opportunity for them. The underlying reasons for such a skewed allocation of responsibilities for unpaid work between male and female can be largely attributed to gender role attitude and social norm that stem from circumstantial barriers that women face. This can also have significant implications on how effort can be understood in the context of female labour force participation. The parameters that are most commonly used to understand effort, such as how hard one works or time spent on task, may not be able to fully explain the role of effort in women's ability to participate in employment as those are bound by social norms rather than women's individual decision.⁴⁸ The above analysis is to put in perspective the kind of opportunities that women have been able to access in the labour market. The study now proceeds to understand in detail the determinants of female labour force participation in the next section.

4.2 Pre-determined circumstances and women's labour market participation – Evidence from IHDS-II

To understand the role of pre-determined circumstances, the study has used secondary data from IHDS-II⁴⁹ for the year 2011-12. IHDS-II provides useful information at the household level, including demographic characteristics as well as other socio-economic variables that are helpful in understanding circumstances. This chapter has used data collected through the 'Women's Questionnaire' that was given to women respondents in the family who are either married,

⁴⁸ This is discussed in chapter 5 while discussing measurement of effort and further explored in chapter 6 while discussing findings from primary data.

⁴⁹ See chapter 3 on Data and Methodology for more details.

divorced or widowed.⁵⁰ This questionnaire was found to be of particular relevance for the purpose of the study as besides factors at the household level, it provides information on societal aspects that relate to norms and practices, gender relations in the household and in the community. The use of secondary data has also guided the study in identifying what additional information is needed to understand the role of effort in women's labour market participation through primary data, thereby making the data collection more focused and specific. The probability of a woman participating in the labour force is modelled as a function of a host of explanatory variables. These include household variables such as household assets, education completed by the household head, household income; socio-cultural variables like religion and caste; education level of women, their marital status and number of children; and other societal factors that will be discussed subsequently. Descriptions of the explanatory variables are presented in Appendix A (Table A 2). The regression results are presented in Table 4.3. The discussions follow as under.

Overall, the chances of women taking part in the labour force are lower (5.47 percent lower) for urban women as compared to rural women and the results are significant. Economic conditions of a household can influence women's participation in the labour force. This is based on the hypothesis that women participate in paid work when there is a need to increase household income; as households become wealthier, they withdraw from the labour market (Sarkar et al., 2017). The study confirms the negative association of women's household assets with their labour force participation. The study also looks at education level of the household head and finds a significant negative association between increase in education level of the household head with women's participation rate in the labour force. It is worth noting here that women from households with income from agricultural labour have higher chances of being in employment than those from households with other sources of income. This could be purely due to economic necessity and is consistent with the findings discussed above and the prevalence of a large majority women working as agricultural labour. This also indicates that as economic status of households improves

⁵⁰ All the other questionnaires in the survey were administered to a representative of the household, in most cases the household head, who would often be a male. The Women's questionnaire had the advantage that the responses were collected directly from women.

as they move from agriculture to other sources of salaried employment, the necessity for women to work decreases.

The study finds that the level of education completed by women has a negative association with their labour market participation, till the secondary/higher secondary level as compared to women who are illiterate. The likelihood of employment increases only from the secondary/higher secondary and graduate level. This indicates that a large portion of the women's labour force comprises those who are illiterate or without any education. This is found to be true across many South Asian countries as shown by Das and Desai (2003) and is consistent with the discussions based on PLFS data. Despite the fact that women's own education is expected to increase their employment possibilities, the chances of them being employed go beyond their individual control and are influenced by other factors. One of the reasons is that the returns to education for women are also linked to the 'marriage market' as more education increases their prospects to find better husbands (Klasen and Pieters, 2015) and not necessarily leading to participation in labour force. Incidentally, the study also finds that women who are not married have a higher likelihood to be employed when compared with married women. The number of sons and daughters, however, shows a positive and significant effect on women's labour market participation. Though counter intuitive, this could be for two reasons; first, having more children increases the economic necessity to work and secondly, the older children can look after the younger siblings thereby freeing up the mother's time to go to work (as shown by Chakraborty et al., 2018). Also, given that a large proportion of women are employed in casual and contractual work, the lack of childcare support and other benefits in these jobs would make it necessary for older siblings to look after the younger ones in the family.

The results are also aligned with the strong influence that societal features have on women's work. Overall, the impact of religion is stronger in urban areas as against rural areas. Women from Muslim communities have lower chance of being employed, results being significantly lower for women from urban locations. On the other hand, women from other minority communities have a positive chance of being employed; the positive influence is stronger in urban areas and negative but insignificant in rural areas. The reasons for religion to be a significant factor in urban areas indicates that norms associated with religion is stronger in urban households as compared to rural

households and can be seen for other variables as well. Along with religion, caste is also found to play a determining part in deciding women's participation in employment. The results show that being from upper caste reduces women's chances of employment as compared to women from lower castes. The chances of being employed are highest for women from ST communities, followed by women from SC and OBC categories. In each of these cases, women from these communities in rural areas have more chances of being employed than their urban counterparts. This supports the phenomenon of stigma associated with women stepping outside of the confines of home among upper caste families (Agarwal, 1994). While women from lower castes are found to be disadvantaged in the social structure in general for historical reasons, restriction imposed on lower caste women are less distinct than those from upper castes (Beteille, 1991). The study goes on to show that such norms are even stronger in urban areas, thereby underlying their predominance especially in urban societies (Klasen and Pieters, 2015).

Cultural and social factors as determined by various circumstances also manifest in society in the form of social norms that bind women in various restrictions. This is because norms associated with women's work are influenced by historical roots that are strongly associated with religion. Societies that associate women's value with their "purity" or less interaction with males outside the household discourage their labour market participation. The low share of women working in India, in Middle Eastern and North African countries confirms this (Chen, 1995). Such societies are found to endorse social practices that limit women's access to opportunities by limiting their personal freedom or ability to interact with men in the society. The study finds a significant negative effect of women following practices like 'ghunghat'/'burqua'/'purdah' in their labour market participation as compared to women who do not. In a lot of developing countries, instances of sexual harassment on way to work prevent many families from sending their women to work. A study by Borker (2021) shows that women are willing to choose a college that ranks low in quality if the travel route to college is perceived to be safer. Using data from IHDS-I, Chakraborty et al. (2018) show that in urban neighbourhoods where incidence of self-reported sexual harassment is higher, women are less likely to go for outside employment. The present study confirms such evidence by showing that higher the occurrences of sexual harassments, lesser the chances of women working in the labour force, with similar impacts in rural and urban locations. It is often observed that concerns around women's safety are found to be partly real and at the

same time partly driven by patriarchal norms (Jayachandran, 2021) that often result in their seclusion from the labour market. Based on these findings, the study reaffirms that women's ability to participate in paid work is limited by a gamut of factors that are interlinked with household characteristics and societal norms.

While the above factors keep a large share of women away from the labour force, empowering women financially can positively influence gender norms around women's employment and their labour market participation. Using IHDS-II data, the study confirms this by showing that women who have cash in hand for household expenditure have a higher likelihood of being employed. As Field et al. (2021) shows, entrusting women with the responsibility of making household expenditure is indicative of them having more say in the household, which can include their decision regarding employment as well. Similar effect is also seen for women who have home ownerships in their names. The effects in both cases are stronger for rural women. This is reflective of the fact that financial empowerment measured by these variables gives greater autonomy to women which results in a greater percentage of women working in the labour force. On the basis of the data available from the IHDS-II survey, the study shows that the chances of female labor market participation are significantly higher for those who have membership in *Mahila Mandal* and Self Help Groups (SHGs) as compared to those with no affiliation to these groups. This supports the evidence that establishes the importance of such groups as pathways of empowerment. These groups enable women to avail resources related to credit linkages, training opportunities and enhance their social capital, all of which have long term impact in their economic and social empowerment (Brody et al., 2017).⁵¹

⁵¹ It was also discovered during the primary survey that networks have an important role to play in driving women's individual effort in their labour market participation. This is discussed in chapter 6.

Table 4.3: Logit Model Estimates (Average Marginal Effects): Predictors of Women's Labour Market Participation

Explanatory Variables	Full Sample	Rural Sample	Urban Sample
Urban (Ref. – Rural)	-0.0547*** (0.00566)	---	---
Household Assets Index	-0.0120*** (0.000511)	-0.0143*** (0.000654)	-0.00764*** (0.000832)
Soc Group (Ref.- Upper castes)			
OBC_Hindus	0.0431*** (0.00618)	0.0660*** (0.00807)	0.0105 (0.00914)
SC	0.0944*** (0.00707)	0.126*** (0.00921)	0.0492*** (0.0106)
ST	0.108*** (0.00964)	0.138*** (0.0117)	0.0409** (0.0202)
Muslims	-0.0497*** (0.00821)	-0.0301** (0.0118)	-0.0618*** (0.0101)
OMR	0.0344** (0.0158)	-0.0106 (0.0225)	0.0698*** (0.0199)
Income Source HH (Ref.- Salaried)			
Agr_allied	-0.0700*** (0.00717)	-0.0837*** (0.0104)	-0.0518*** (0.0166)
Agr_lab	0.113*** (0.0100)	0.105*** (0.0128)	0.0829*** (0.0255)
Non-Agriculture labor	0.0393*** (0.00757)	0.0374*** (0.0113)	0.0406*** (0.00986)
Others	-0.0954*** (0.00733)	-0.100*** (0.0122)	-0.0810*** (0.00727)
Hours of fuel consumption by the HH	-0.0110*** (0.00176)	-0.0123*** (0.00220)	-0.00686** (0.00280)
HH head education level completion	-0.0324*** (0.00214)	-0.0295*** (0.00273)	-0.0350*** (0.00350)
Women's Education Level (Ref.- Illiterate)			

Literate or below primary	-0.0575*** (0.00494)	-0.0622*** (0.00641)	-0.0483*** (0.00742)
Primary or Upper primary	-0.0590*** (0.00864)	-0.0736*** (0.0124)	-0.0328*** (0.0109)
Secondary/higher secondary	0.0250** (0.0121)	0.00573 (0.0177)	0.0490*** (0.0158)
Graduate/above	0.263*** (0.0136)	0.213*** (0.0234)	0.259*** (0.0198)
Marriage Status (Ref.- Currently married)			
Widowed/Divorced	0.160*** (0.00918)	0.129*** (0.0114)	0.215*** (0.0153)
Age at marriage	-0.00225*** (0.000658)	-0.00364*** (0.000847)	3.98e-05 (0.000993)
Member in Mahila Mandal (Ref. – No)	0.0478*** (0.00949)	0.0623*** (0.0125)	0.0105 (0.0137)
Member in self-help group (Ref. – No)	0.0902*** (0.00659)	0.0919*** (0.00802)	0.0829*** (0.0120)
Ghunghat/pallu (Ref. – No)	-0.0322*** (0.00554)	-0.0292*** (0.00736)	-0.0223*** (0.00793)
Cash in hand for expenditure (Ref. – No)	0.0922*** (0.00669)	0.107*** (0.00846)	0.0577*** (0.0111)
Home ownership by women (Ref. – No)	0.0242*** (0.00581)	0.0328*** (0.00771)	0.00838 (0.00811)
Sexual Harassment (Ref. – Rarely)			
Sometimes (Sexual Harassment)	-0.00736 (0.00521)	-0.00975 (0.00672)	0.000388 (0.00784)
Often (Sexual Harassment)	-0.0101 (0.00824)	-0.0107 (0.0108)	-0.00997 (0.0119)
Total no. of Son	0.0121*** (0.00222)	0.0162*** (0.00281)	0.00330 (0.00359)
Total no. of Daughter	0.0196*** (0.00205)	0.0231*** (0.00258)	0.0123*** (0.00331)
State Control	Yes	Yes	Yes

Prob. > (Chi) ²	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pseudo-R ²	0.2436	0.248	0.1933
Observations	36,818	24,331	12,487

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Research scholar's calculation using IHDS-II data

While revisiting the situation of women and work from the perspective of equality of opportunity, the study intends to shift the focus towards women as individuals and whether their effort can play a role in overcoming some of the barriers. Given that the choice of women to work is strongly governed by societal norms and gender role attitudes, it became important to understand whether women are willing to work at the first place, if they find suitable opportunity. The study has used IHDS-II data to understand this based on responses from women who are not part of the workforce. Given the importance of social norms in women's labour supply, the data has been disaggregated on the basis of caste and religion as well as education levels to observe the variations across these categories.

It is worth noting that more than sixty percent of the women across socio-economic categories and education levels, who are away from the labour force, are willing to work. Majority of them tend to be more educated and from Dalit and Adivasi communities. More specifically, 70 per cent of women who are graduates are willing to work. This is understandable, as women with more education would have aspirations to work but are unable to find suitable options that meet their educational qualifications. Less women with primary and secondary education levels are willing to work compared to women who are illiterate, and it can be linked to their choice of studying further. Women from Muslim communities show least willingness as compared to other religions. Among Hindu women, the willingness to work is highest among Dalit women (71 per cent), followed by Adivasi women (66 per cent). Willingness to work has been observed to be lowest among women from other forward castes (54 per cent). Within caste variations point to the fact that norms imposed on women's flexibility and autonomy as discussed earlier are reflected in their own willingness to take up work. In a way, it can be said that women internalize the restrictions imposed on them, which in turn impact their own individual characteristics. From a broader

perspective, despite various barriers to women's labour market participation, a major portion of them would be willing to work if they find a suitable job. The data however does not help build an understanding beyond this. More specifically, it does not help address an underlying question of whether such characteristics can lead to women's successful labour market participation and hence does not reveal anything about women's effort.

4.3 Conclusion

The analysis based on PLFS data highlights various trends and characteristics of women's employment patterns in India and helps provide an overall understanding in this area. The study finds that disaggregated trends can only partially explain the situation. It is seen that while women in India are present in the labour force in lesser proportion, share of those who have salaried jobs is slightly more when compared to men. Women who undergo vocational training are present in higher proportion in the labour force; and those with formal training have a larger share of salaried employment.⁵² This is not sufficient to understand the dimension of effort, especially in a dynamic context, where circumstances could change with time and so can opportunities. Also, studies have noted that factors determining women's labour force participation are not adequately explained by individual led factors or wages, rather their decision to work is driven by household level factors (Tinker ed., 1990; Agarwal, 1993).

The findings from IHDS-II data show how pre-determined circumstances based on socio-economic characteristics of women's household influence their participation in the labour force. The analysis shows that the necessity for women to work decreases as economic condition of households improve. This is seen through a negative association between female labour force participation with household assets, household head's education and sources of household income. The chances also vary based on social categories with women from Muslim and upper caste household having the least chance of being employed. Women's own education start to show a positive association with their labour market participation only from secondary/higher secondary and graduate level onwards. Until then, women who are illiterate or have no education have higher

⁵² This is further discussed in chapter 5.

probability of working than those with moderate levels of education. Factors like marriage and number of children also have a role to play with chances of being employed. The analysis of these factors ascertains the fact that the returns to human capital investment for women is not straightforward and is interlinked with socio-cultural norms. These norms perceive women's role to be associated with caregiving and reproductive responsibilities and are influenced by conservative perceptions around women stepping outside of home for employment. Consistent with this, the study finds that social practices that limit women's freedom and mobility and incidence of sexual harassment decreases their likelihood of being employed.

The study also shows that increasing women's means of exposure and autonomy positively influences their labour force participation even in presence of restrictions imposed by socio-cultural factors. This is seen from the positive association of women's labour market participation with factors like financial empowerment of women such as availability of cash in hand and home ownership in their names or affiliation with women's groups and networks. One way to interpret this is that despite the circumstances that exert a restricting role for women to work, there are factors that exist within those circumstances that help them in their participation. At the individual level, the study shows that a large majority of women who are not working are willing to work. Many of these factors are interlinked with the kind of opportunities in the labour market that women are engaged in.

While secondary data has been extremely helpful to understand the situation of women's participation in the labour force from an overall perspective, it does not shed light on the aspects of women's own effort in deciding these outcomes. Variables that have been used to understand effort in the context of equality of opportunity (which will be discussed in chapter 5), such as time spent on work or education level, cannot therefore be directly applied for women's labour market participation as such aspects are influenced by circumstances. The implication of this is further discussed in chapter 5 while situating effort in the context of gender. The study has therefore taken up a primary survey to address this limitation. The next two chapters discuss exclusively the role of effort in women's participation in paid work by first looking at attributes that can be considered as effort and then linking those attributes to their labour force participation.

Appendix to Chapter 4
(Appendix A)

Table A 1. Categories of Employment from PLFS Data

Category	Description
Regular wage/salaried employee	This is based on persons who worked in others' farm or nonfarm enterprises (both household and non-household) and, in return, received salary or wages on a regular basis (i.e. not on the basis of daily or periodic renewal of work contract). This category includes not only persons getting time wage but also persons receiving piece wage or salary and paid apprentices, both full time and part-time.
Casual labour	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 considered as a casual labour.
Self-employed workers	This category includes persons who operated their own farm or non-farm enterprises or were engaged independently in a profession or trade on own-account.
Own-account workers	Own-account workers are those self-employed persons who operated their enterprises on their own account or with one or a few partners and who, during the reference period, by and large, ran their enterprise without hiring any labour. They could,

however, have had unpaid helpers to assist them in the activity of the enterprise.

Helpers in household enterprise

Self-employed persons who were engaged in their household enterprises, working full or part time and did not receive any regular salary or wages in return for the work performed have been considered as helpers in household enterprise. They did not run the household enterprise on their own but assisted the concerned person living in the same household in running the household enterprise.

Employers

Self-employed persons who worked on their own account or with one or a few partners and, who, by and large, ran their enterprise by hiring labour are considered as employers.

Table A 2. Notations and Description of Explanatory Variables

Notation of Variable	Name of Variable	Definition
<i>Household Characteristics</i>		
Location	Location of the household	= 1, if household living in an urban area = 0, if household living in a rural area
HH Assets	Household Asset	Total Value of Household Asset comprising of a list of items (such as vehicles, refrigerators, telephone, computer, access to electricity, LPG, piped indoor water, pucca floors etc.) that measured the possessions of a household and the quality of housing.
Income Source of HH	Source of Household Income	= 1, if the source of Household Income is Salaried employment (Reference Group) = 2, if the source of Household Income is Agriculture and Allied Activities = 3, if the source of Household Income is Agricultural Labour = 4, if the source of Household Income is Non-Agricultural Labour = 5, if the source of Household Income is from any other activity (remittances, welfare benefits)
Hours of fuel consumption by the HH	Hours of fuel consumption by the Household	Hours of fuel consumed by the Household
HH head education level	Household Head Education Level	Education level completed by the Household Head (literate or below primary, primary or upper primary and secondary/higher secondary)
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>		
Soc Group	Caste and Religion of the Female	= 1, if the female belongs to Upper Caste (Reference Group) = 2, if the female belongs to OBC from Hindu religion

		= 3, if the female belongs to Scheduled Caste (SC) = 4, if the female belongs to Scheduled Tribe (ST) = 5, if the female belongs to Muslims = 6, if the female belongs to other Minority religions
Women's Education Level	Education level of the Female	= 1, if the female is illiterate (Reference Group) = 2, if the female has studied below primary = 3, if the female has studied upto secondary/higher secondary level = 4, if the female has studied upto graduation level
Marriage Status	Marital Status of the female	= 0, the female is married = 1, if the female is a widow or divorced
Total no. of Son	Number of sons of the female	Number of son that the female has
Total no. of Daughter	Number of daughters of the female	Number of daughter that the female has
<i>Gender Relations</i>		
Member in Mahila Mandal	Membership of the female in Mahila Mandal (Women's group)	= 0, if the female is not a member of a Mahila Mandal (Reference Group) = 1, if the female is a member of a Mahila Mandal
Member in self-help group	Membership of the female in Self-Help-Group	= 0, if the female is not a member of a Self-Help-Group (Reference Group) = 1, if the female is a member of a Self-Help-Group
Ghunghat/pallu	Female Practicing Ghughat/pallu	= 0, if the female does not follow the practice of ghughat/pallu (Reference Group) = 1, if the female follows the practice of ghunghat/pallu

Cash in hand for expenditure	Cash in hand available with the female	= 0, if the female does not have cash in hand for spending (Reference Group) = 1, if the female has cash in hand for spending
Home ownership by women	Home ownership by the female	= 0, if the female does not have home ownership in her name (Reference Group) = 1, if the female has home ownership in her name
Sexual Harassment	Occurrence of sexual/gender based harassment in society	= 1, if the female has rarely faced sexual harassment (Reference Group) = 2, if the female has sometimes faced sexual harassment = 3, if the female often faces sexual harassment

Chapter 5

OPPORTUNITY AND EFFORT IN WOMEN'S LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION: SETTING THEORY TO CONTEXT

Chapter 4 provided a detailed analysis of the socio-economic and cultural factors that influence the situation of women participating in the labour force. These are factors that are not necessarily within an individual's control and are shaped by socio-economic and cultural circumstances. The current chapter and chapter 6 present a comprehensive analysis of how effort can be understood in the context of women who are in employment. In doing so, first, it becomes crucial to build an understanding of what can be considered as effort, how it can be applied, and whether the existing parameters of capturing effort is applicable for women. This is an area that has so far received limited attention. This chapter focuses to address this gap and brings forth the concept of effort through an analysis of the theoretical models as well as empirical studies.⁵³ The findings from this chapter formed the foundation for analysing the information collected from the primary survey. It bridged the gap between the theoretical construct around effort and its application to understand its role in women's participation in the labour market. The chapter proceeds as follows: first it presents an understanding of opportunities and effort within the theoretical premise of equality of opportunity; it then presents an analysis of various concepts and theories associated with effort to understand it as an individual attribute; and finally, it makes an attempt to situate effort in the context of women's labour market participation and the importance of it in developing country context.

5.1 Opportunities and Effort: Theoretical Background

Historically, the concept of opportunity has presumed a desirable goal, which, as emphasized by Westen (1997) could be attaining a job, or an education, or medical care, and so on. A central idea to the concept of opportunity was that achieving any of these goals was not considered to be dependent on an individual's social status or family background. Opportunity existed for those

⁵³ That said, this is different from the literature review as it involved a careful identification of studies to address a research objective.

who could take advantage of it (Blum, 1988). Westen (1985) defines opportunity as an individual's chance to choose to achieve a goal without any obstacles or hindrances. Goldman (1987) presented a similar definition saying that opportunity is the lack of any obstacle in the attainment of a goal. The traditional understanding of "equality of opportunity" was considered to have been achieved if there were no legal barriers that prevented individuals from benefiting from education or means of livelihood. This definition evolved over time to include more radical views by scholars who suggested that removing legal barriers is not adequate to ensure equality of opportunity (Moreno-Ternaro, 2007). Following the work of Rawls (1971) and Nozick (1974), it was for the first time that the fairness of processes in achieving equal opportunities began to be considered and how individual outcomes are shaped both by the opportunities that individuals enjoy and what they make of those opportunities. Rawls (1971) emphasized on two principles – first, "the most extensive liberty for each, consistent with similar liberty for others"; and second, all members of society should obtain the same bundle of "primary goods", such as basic rights and liberty enjoyed by individuals, wealth and earnings as well as well ability to participate in political activities.

Amartya Sen, in 1979, during his famous Tanner Lectures delivered at Stanford University questioned "Equality of What?" and introduced the concept of equality in capabilities as a 'morally relevant dimension taking us beyond utility and primary goods'.⁵⁴ Sen (1987) defined a person's "capabilities" as the combination of possible "functionings" that she or he likes and that it is important to focus on how capabilities are distributed among individuals. Sen defined functionings as observable "doings and beings" of persons, that individuals consider as valuable and important. It is related to various aspects of life that are important for an individual's well-being, such as education, employment, nourishment, recognition in society, empowerment and means of self and cultural expression. He argued that societies should not try to make equal the achievement of such functioning, but the freedom that a person should enjoy in order to achieve them. The central argument of the capability approach is that societies should enable individuals to expand their capabilities so that they are free to achieve what they value most in life (Sen, 1985; 1987). In this context, Sen (1985, 1999) has also used the term freedom almost interchangeably with capability.

⁵⁴ Sen (1980, 1985, 1992) argues that primary goods are not the end objectives but rather a means to achieve them.

The central idea behind this is the idea that development is an ongoing mechanism that should expand freedom that individuals can actually enjoy. According to Sen (1999), while economic growth or individual income are potential means to expanding freedom of individuals, economic and social structures (such as education or healthcare) and civil and political rights (such as being able to take part in public debate) are equally important.

Prior to the work of Rawls (1971), other scholars, including Jensen (1969) and Herrnstein (1971), suggested that the reasons for inequality stems from differences in factors like intelligence (such as IQ) and that creating equality in income distribution through equalizing opportunities such as by compensating education for children from under privileged families is unrealistic. Many economists disagreed with this. Bowles (1973) for example, proposed that inequalities in income is caused mostly by unequal opportunities rather than due to factors like IQ. Later, Nozick (1973) argued that justice should not be seen from the perspective of the final outcome alone; it is also important to know the process through which those outcomes have been achieved. His view is based on the moral legitimacy of final outcomes built on the rationale that the justness of final outcomes such as private property can be evaluated by knowing whether its acquisition involved any unjust acts like robbery, extortion, slavery etc. Scholarly works of Dworkin (1981), Arneson (1989), Sen (1985) have been strong proponents of the fact that inequalities in outcomes such as individual income or earnings alone should not be a measurement of whether a society is fair or not.

A landmark contribution that translates these ideas into an economic framework is by John Roemer (e.g., Roemer, 1993, 1998, 2002). Roemer (1998) enhanced the conceptual understanding of inequality by classifying the underlying factors as those that are either within or beyond individual control. Factors like individual effort, that can be assessed by the amount of time one devotes to a task or activity are considered to be within one's own control. On the other hand, factors like one's gender, family background or race, cannot reasonably be within one's individual control as they are pre-decided and are termed as circumstances. Based on these two dimensions, "equality of opportunity" has been defined by Roemer (1998) as a condition in which one's life outcomes, also called 'advantages' are not dependent on circumstances. 'Advantages' refer to outcomes, such as those related to education attainment, health facilities, earnings and livelihood, or basic services

related to essential amenities such as piped water, electricity and so on (Brunori et al., 2013; Barros et al. 2009, 2011).⁵⁵ Related work by Fleurbaey (1995) introduced the principle of compensation whereby individual's should be compensated by society for disparities in life outcomes that are caused by factors that are not within their own control. One of the most common ways in this regard has been the implementation of measures such as positive discrimination or affirmative actions (Kodelja, Z., 2016).⁵⁶ The underlying justification of this being that society should be able to remove the barriers that individuals face owing to their circumstances to ensure equal opportunities for everyone. The second is the 'principle of reward' whereby individuals should be rewarded by societies when their life outcomes are driven by individual effort (Fleurbaey, 1995). This is based on the principle that differences in outcomes as a result of differences in effort is acceptable, as long as there are no differences in their circumstances (Ferreira and Peragine, 2015).

It is worth noting here what Blum (1988) said - opportunity should not be thought from the perspective of competition with others, rather it should be looked from the perspective of development of an individual's capacity. The idea behind it is that a job or occupation provides an individual the opportunity to develop personal abilities and talents. Opportunity viewed in this sense would then be seen not so much as a 'vertical' concept (i.e., going ahead of others) but as a 'horizontal' concept that helps individuals to develop their abilities and skills within their choice of work, not necessarily leaving the others behind but getting the best out of their individual potential. Starting with Rawls (1971), many scholars began to address the ideas of equality of opportunity by progressively renewing and reinvigorating the "demand for equality" from a condition of achievement of outcomes to one that of opportunities. From the 1990s onwards, reflections on opportunities and personal responsibilities began to be discussed in various economic theories. A substantial body of literature now aims to measure inequalities of opportunities in various countries and estimate the effects of economic and social policies on equalizing opportunities (Ferreira and Peragine, 2015).

⁵⁵ Human Opportunity Index (HOI) used by Barros et al. (2009, 2011) uses access by individuals to some of the basic amenities, such as electricity, sanitation or clean water to measure set of advantages.

⁵⁶ The interventions on positive discrimination in the context of gender has been discussed later in the chapter.

Roemer (1998) adds to these concepts by saying that for achieving equality of opportunity, it is important to level the playing field before individuals start competing for outcomes. With a level playing field, what individuals achieve reflects individual effort and any differences in outcomes can be considered to be a result of individual responsibility. In order to define the type of effort, it is expected that the society in question will be able to partition between circumstances and actions that are solely within individual responsibility to equalise opportunities. According to the approach of Roemer (1993, 1998), this means that, society needs to find policies that can nullify, to the maximum extent possible, the role of circumstances and at the same time, be sensitive to effort. A number of considerations come into play. The measurement of effort itself would depend on how responsibility is being viewed (Roemer and Trannoy, 2013). One view is that effort depends upon the set of actions that a person can take. Access in this case would be decided by physical constraints as well as psychological constraints, which may be dependent upon one's circumstances.

The method suggested by Roemer (1998) that measures the degree of an individual's effort by ranking or comparing it among individual who come from similar type represents this view.⁵⁷ 'Type' here can be any socio-economic characteristic, such as a group of individuals with parents of similar education levels or income. With this, he defined equality of opportunity as a policy to allocate resources across types of individuals who share similar circumstances as a function of their effort.⁵⁸ Another view is that effort could depend on an individual's own preferences and she or he can be held responsible for those actions that are based on his or her preferences. Works by Dworkin (1981) and Fleurbaey (2008) represent this view, in which an individual is considered to be responsible for individual choices if they are based on personal preferences. It therefore

⁵⁷ Studies have also criticised this approach. For example, Ramos and Van de gaer (2012) have called this the Roemer Identification Assumption (RIA) and said that individuals should not be held responsible for the distribution of effort in their type because the distribution itself is a circumstance.

⁵⁸ This factor has been considered while selecting the sample for the primary survey as discussed in chapter 3 and 6.

becomes very important for any study to explain the manner in which the variables being chosen to understand effort are considered to be within an individual's control.

It is relevant to note here how Roemer (2002) summarises the essence of this theory by saying that life outcomes of individuals are a function of circumstances, effort as well as policies. Circumstances, as discussed extensively in chapter 2, are those that are decided by a person's environment and beyond their own control. Effort on the other hand comprises actions for which a person can be held responsible. As discussed above, categorization of actions that can be considered to be solely within one's own responsibility is not straightforward. This poses particular challenges for policies that are aimed at reducing inequalities. Such policies are aimed to 'level the playing field', so that final outcomes for an individual, to the extent possible, is a function of his or her effort.

Availability of relevant information is often a challenge in translating the theoretical understanding to practice, particularly for an empirical analysis of equality of opportunity. This requires availability of information on variables related to social and family background as well as variables related to effort. It is not possible to capture each and every variable that can provide full description of a person's circumstances. Despite this, considerable progress seems to have been made when it comes to understanding how circumstances can impact access to opportunities.⁵⁹ The difficulty in capturing effort is an even bigger challenge as effort is private information and using proxies to best describe effort is problematic. Roemer and Trannoy (2013) substantiate this with examples of two variables that have been used frequently in understanding inequalities in opportunities – years of education and number of hours worked. This is explained below.

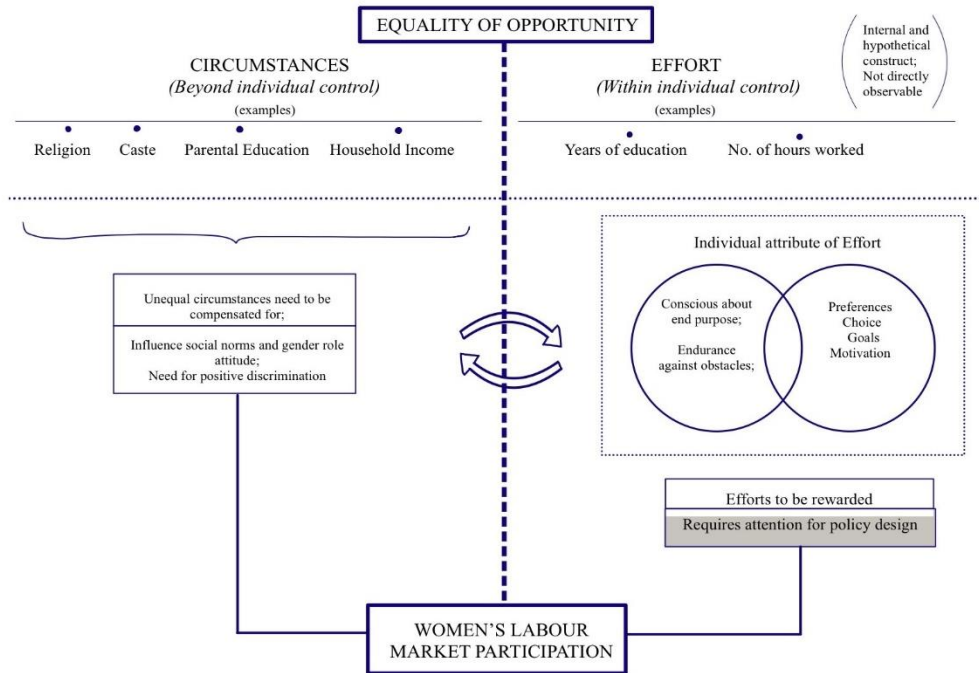
Empirical studies have used years of education as a variable to measure effort. However, whether years of education is under individual control or not is debatable. It can be said that the decision related to primary and secondary education is linked to parental factors, while tertiary and other means of lifelong learning can be linked to individual decisions. At the same time, admission to tertiary education is dependent on completion of secondary education, which in turn is linked to

⁵⁹ The literature on circumstances has been discussed extensively in chapter 2.

achievements of a student in primary school. Hence, there would still be a path of dependency of tertiary education with secondary as well as primary education. The same case applies in using hours worked as a measure of effort as it is not completely independent of circumstances and can depend on the type/nature of work. For those who are self-employed, this can be considered to be a good indicator of effort. But it may not be the case for other type of employment. For instance, when part-time employment is involuntary, the need to work overtime may simply be based on the firm's discretion; or not being employed can be due to circumstances not within one's control that leaves no scope to measure effort. This is especially applicable in the case of women. As shown in chapter 4, a large proportion of the female labour force engage in unpaid household and care responsibilities, which can be largely attributed to societal expectations shaped by gender-based norms that are not within individual control. Using hours spent on work may, therefore, not be the best measure to capture women's effort in understanding their labour market participation.

The present study is based on the theoretical understanding of opportunity and effort discussed above and has made an attempt to apply it to re-examine labour market participation of women with a focus on effort. A diagrammatic representation of the discussions above is presented in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Diagrammatic Representation of Equality of Opportunity in the context of Women's Labour Market Participation



Source: Research scholar's own description

The study has benefited from the available literature in understanding the role of circumstances, which in turn informed the analysis presented in chapter 4. There is however limited understanding on the role that can be played by women's individual effort. One of the objectives of the study is therefore to understand how effort can be understood as an individual attribute so that it can be applied to understand what role it can play. The next section discusses in detail an analysis of this based on existing theories and measurement parameters on effort; and subsequently explores how it can be located within the context of gender and labour market opportunities.

5.2 Understanding Effort as an Individual Attribute

There is a lack of a conceptual definition of effort, which has led to a mix of definitions, meanings, and applications. This is attributed to the fact that it is difficult to measure and define effort (Ambrose and Kulik, 1999; Kanfer, 1990). The reason for this difficulty is that effort is an internal and hypothetical construct that is invisible and not directly observable (Macey and Schneider, 2008). There are however studies that have been able to identify important dimensions that characterize effort. Based on a seminal study in the field of education, Dewey and Wheeler (2009) present a noteworthy explanation of what can be considered as effort. They begin by saying that there are many aspects that are valued under the term effort. What is most sought after are ‘persistence’ and ‘consecutiveness’ of activity; and ‘endurance against obstacles’. What is considered as effort is when the individual is conscious about the end and purpose of his/her actions that enable him/her to convert energy from mere struggle to reflective judgement.

Effort has commonly been defined in the context of three important sub-dimensions, namely, “amplitude, duration and direction” of the action performed (Campbell and Pritchard, 1976; Lock et al., 1981). Actions here could refer to activities, behaviour or tasks for which individuals choose to direct energy. The level of effort to perform actions is decided by the intensity of the task (amplitude); the time devoted to performing the task (duration) as well as the level of attention (direction). Lock et al. (1981) show that effort by individuals is proportional to how hard the goals are – tasks that are harder need more effort than tasks that are comparatively easier. Kanfer (1990) took forward these dimensions to understand effort in the perspective of motivation and explained them as direction (i.e., what a person does); intensity (i.e., whether the person has worked hard); and persistence (i.e., time put in by the person for the work or task).

In many theoretical studies, effort has often been considered equivalent or corresponding to an individual’s motivation. Several studies have also made a distinction between motivation and effort. Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen (1980) and Ilgen and Klein (1989) presented motivation as a psychological stage related to choices of behaviour, and that effort is energy or strength applied in performing an act. Bandura and Cervone (1986) and Patchen (1970) used the amount of effort to explain motivation of an individual to do a task, while Parsons (1968) defined effort as a medium of translating motivation into accomplished work. Closely related to motivation, Vroom’s

‘expectancy theory’ predicts that having strong incentives for putting effort strengthens the association of effort with performance (Vroom, 1964). The expectancy theory is a psychological theory of motivation developed by Vroom (1964) who stated that when individuals have to choose between alternatives that consist of uncertain outcomes, their behavior gets determined not only by their preference among the outcomes but also the extent to which they believe that the outcomes are probable. Effort has also been associated with theories related to how human attributes affect their behaviour. The ‘attribution theory’ by Heider (1958) has argued that human beings are ‘naïve psychologists’ having inherent desires to understand the causes of their behaviours and outcomes (i.e., attribute is a cause of behaviour). It is a theory that centered on causes to explain outcomes such as success or failure. More specifically, the theory suggests that individuals analyse the causes of certain events or outcomes (e.g., promotion in a job) to see if they are related to performance or other factors, like chance or luck. Whether or not individuals exert effort, is determined by whether such outcomes are decided by performance or not. Weiner (1972) was the first scholar who attributed effort as one of the causal factors for success and failure, other factors being aptitude, ability or a learned skill, ease or difficulty of the task, and intrinsic motivation, among others.

Effort has also been found to be very often linked to goals. ‘Goal setting theory’ by Locke and Latham (1984, 1990) is founded on a fundamental introspection that a conscious individual is driven by purpose and regulated by individual goals. According to this theory, effort is linked to the intensity or difficulty of the goal in the sense that individuals adjust the amount of effort based on the level of difficulty of their goals. With this premise, researchers have shown how goals have a psychological value assigned by people (e.g., Kasser and Ryan, 1996), how it shapes expectations of individuals about achieving those goals (Rotter, 1966), and finally how people are persistent towards achieving those goals (Carver and Scheier, 1998). These theories were found to be particularly relevant for the purpose of the study as they help distinguish between different concepts that are most commonly associated with effort.

Over the years, the dimensions discussed above, have been included in various studies that link effort in different contexts, particularly in the field of academic achievement. In a study conducted by Terborg (1976), it was found that students who have specific goals spend more time on text materials for learning as compared to those with no goals. Terborg understood this trait as effort.

A decade later, Natriello and McDill in 1986 analysed the factors of student effort on homework and how this effort contributes to student achievement. The study showed that higher standards set by parents, teachers and peers lead to higher student effort on homework. This holds true even after controlling for various factors like aspiration of parents, expectation of students, social background, and curriculum. Brookhart (1998) expanded this study by including a variable that captured student perception as a determinant of effort and achievement. The study found that perception of students towards their ability to meet performance standards of their parents, teachers and peers is an important determinant of effort, which in turn motivates them towards expected direction. It is worthwhile to mention here that ability should be considered as a control variable in determining the role of effort and achievement; at the same time, ability is an important variable in its own right as it indicates that schools should provide opportunities to all students for them to succeed (National Educational Goals Panel, 1994).

Speaking about the linkage between ability and effort, a study by Blumenfeld, Pintrich and Hamilton (1986) stated that effort is a conceptual as well as an empirical 'bridge' that links ability and conduct. The study showed that students' perceptions of their ability can assess their effort, conduct and achievements. This interrelationship between effort, ability and conduct did not vary substantially by gender or grade. De Fraja, Oliveira and Zanchi (2010) based a study on an intuitive and simple idea that educational achievement of students depends upon the effort of all those who are part of the education process, parents, schools and students themselves. The study confirms the fact that when students, parents and teachers exert more effort, it leads to higher academic performance of students. It also adds the fact that stimulating effort in households from lower socio-economic backgrounds is easier and more efficient rather than wishing for an improvement in their economic conditions. There is a clear implication for policy from this study that show that interventions that affect effort can bring about positive impact on student achievement.

There are several studies that have attempted to operationalize the concept of effort in the context of labour market. Most of them draw a relationship between higher effort with harder tasks and measure the level of involvement of workers on the job (direction) and the level of their hard work (intensity) (Mohr and Bitner, 1995). Studies have also tried to understand effort of employees with respect to their psychological aspirations. In such cases, effort is measured in relation with the

demands and obligations expected from employees and society at large in return for money, esteem, or job security (Siegrist, 1996; Siegrist et al., 2004). Most of these studies are primarily concentrated around ‘employees work effort’ and have been used to assess employee performance in a work environment. The measurement of effort in these cases involves objective or subjective ratings by supervisors or other third parties and self-rating by employees.⁶⁰ The limitation discussed by Roemer and Trannoy (2013) about using hours of work as an effort variable would apply here as well. Also, effort in these studies have been looked at in the context of management and organizational research related to business operations.⁶¹ To conclude whether the parameters of effort used in such a context are solely under individual control is therefore difficult.

The above discussions bring forward some of the most commonly used parameters that can be applied to build an understanding on effort. In addition, it also puts forward certain implications that effort can have when it interacts with other socio-economic parameters. It shows that factors like individual and parental aspiration and expectations, and perception of one’s own ability have a part to play in determining the role of effort. The potential of channelizing effort for enhancing academic performance in households from lower socio-economic backgrounds can also have far reaching implications. These implications can be of relevance when applied in the context of women and their participation in the labour market as well. This becomes clearer in the next section.

⁶⁰ Objective measurement refers to measures to know how well an individual can perform a task, irrespective of their experience while performing. Subjective measurement refers to measures that help understand an individual’s experience while performing a task. Such measures can include a survey that uses open ended questions or ranking experiences (using Likert Scale) based on individual feelings and so on.

⁶¹ Most of these studies have measured effort using subjective ratings by work supervisors or customers or self-rating scales by employees. The variables being used are those related to workplace performance such as number of hours worked, amount of physical energy exerted (strength or endurance) and so on. Examples include studies by Brown and Peterson (1994); Cappelli and Chauvin (1991); Mengüç (1996); Mughal, Walsh, Wilding (1996); Mohr and Bitner (1995).

5.3 Situating Effort in the Context of Gender and Labour Market

The underrepresentation of groups in society in access to opportunities is an indication that ‘something is blocking the way’, according to Phillips (2004). In the case of discrimination based on gender in the labour market, barriers can take the form of social norms that attach women with specific job categories or discriminatory practices. Such division of labour based on social norms not only leads to marginalization of women in the workforce but also leads to their unequal status in society (Hochschild, 1989). The impact of social norms in women’s position in the labour force has become a part of recent discussions in economic literature. It has however been a part of sociological and anthropological research since a very long time. In a seminal paper on position of Indian women, renowned anthropologist M. N. Srinivas, in 1977 noted that there is a complex relationship between women participating in paid work and their social status as women stepping out for work exposes them to potential abuse, which in turn, is insulting to their dignity and reduces the status of their family. If financial conditions permit, households therefore prefer if the women withdraw from wage labour. This is consistent with the literature that shows that rising household incomes is often associated with declining female labour force participation.⁶² This also influences gender role attitude towards women within the household.⁶³

According to the human capital theory, individuals invest in human capital and receive returns in the form of higher wages. For women however, and as discussed in the literature, since they have been historically found to be bearing greater household responsibilities, they invest less in their human capital and earn lower wages than men. Despite the fact that the share of women in salaried jobs is slightly higher than men, as shown in chapter 4, what’s striking is that women’s earnings are far less than that of men in rural as well as urban locations. An analysis of gender pay gap by Sindwani (2019) shows that, between 2018 and 2019, women in salaried jobs earn more than those in self-employment, but the gender gap between men and women in earnings prevailed in all categories of employment, including self-employment and casual labour. A brief snapshot of the

⁶² The findings of the study from secondary data discussed in chapter 4 also support this.

⁶³ Gender role attitude towards women is discussed in detail in Chapter 2 as part of literature reviewed.

differentials between wages earned by male and female is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Average Wages/Salaries (INR) of Male and Female

Period	Rural				Urban			
	Male	Female	Person	Female Earning as % Male	Male	Female	Person	Female Earning as % Male
Jul-Sept 2017	12659	8777	11878	69%	17314	13895	16538	80%
Oct-Dec 2017	13005	8534	12133	66%	18014	15078	17359	84%
Jan-Mar 2018	14445	8549	13351	59%	18277	14779	17483	81%
Apr-Jun 2018	14024	9895	13207	71%	18353	14487	17473	79%

Source: Compiled by the research scholar using PLFS data

One of the reasons for women earning lower wages for men is attributed to the fact that employers often lack information on productivity of women, and therefore use other observable characteristics to determine their productivity. As statistical discrimination theory states, decision makers (like employers, health care providers, law enforcement officers, college admission officers etc.) function as standard utility or profit maximisers; and are generally imperfectly informed about important individual characteristics like their productivity, qualifications, etc. (Fang and Moro, 2010). This motivates them to use other group characteristics as proxies of these unobserved characteristics. Knowing that women own greater household responsibilities on average than men, employers are not always willing to select women for jobs that have more responsibilities and are higher paying. Alternatively, women are also made to work in certain low-paying jobs, particularly in sectors like care, hospitality etc., many of which use skills that can be acquired within households. Most of these models or theories are founded on the presumption that women have larger non-market responsibilities (Stratton, 2001), which in turn, influences employers' assessment of their productivity in the labour market.

To understand this in the context of effort, Becker's theory on allocation of effort says that

devoting more effort to household work would mean less effort on the job and hence lower wages (Becker, 1977). This is based on the assumption that amount of effort from an individual is limited and is positively related with productivity and wages. Stratton (2001) studied the relationship between household work and women's wages and found that more time on household work does influence women's wages negatively, but it is not due to less effort on the job or choosing a job that has more flexibility. These findings clearly indicate that women, with otherwise comparable education levels, experience and skills, but owing to spending more time on household work than men, receive lower wages. Lower wages in turn lower the share of women participating in paid work. As Bhalla and Kaur (2011) notes, in India, one of the assumed causes of a much lower rate of female labour force participation is the perception that women earn lower wages than men for similar jobs and requiring similar ability. The place of women in the labour force, be it wages or the rate of their participation, is therefore influenced by their role in undertaking household responsibilities rather than actual measurement of their productivity. The issues around recognizing women's work discussed in chapter 4 using PLFS data is relevant in this context. Based on this evidence, it can be said that role of individual effort as an important dimension to access opportunities is either completely neglected or not understood in the right context.

Right to equal opportunities is crucial to women's empowerment.⁶⁴ A low share of women working in the labour force is also a manifestation of inequality of opportunity as it denies them opportunities of empowerment. The study has shown how various socio-economic circumstances that are not within an individual's control influence women's labour market participation in India. Supporting women to overcome those barriers have been introduced in the form of measures/policies that compensate them for the disadvantages associated with gender as a circumstance. Khadria (2000) cites Sumner (1987) to provide a classification of such policies in the following manner: i) 'special drive', where target groups (women, in this case) are informed of the available positions/openings and encouraged to apply for them; ii) 'tie-breaking', where

⁶⁴ Women's empowerment, as defined by UN (2001) has five components: "women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally".

target groups are equally preferred to equally qualified non-target group applicants; iii) ‘handicapping’, where target groups are given preference over better qualified non-target group applicants; iv) ‘lexical assessment’, which ignores non-target altogether unless there is no one who is suitably qualified from the target group; v) ‘numerical goals or quotas’, in which stipulated numbers or proportions are inducted from the target group in educational and work places.

Khadria (2000) then presented a compelling argument on the legitimacy of positive discrimination to favour women through any of the above policies. He traces back the roots of gender discrimination to say that it does not originate *in* the labour market but *within* the family/household where women and men are not treated equally. This, according to him, is different from discrimination on the basis of other aspects, such as ethnicity or race, that originates in the community or society. Measures to support women to overcome barriers therefore can benefit the entire household because of the presence of women in every family (as mothers, sisters, daughters and so on), he argues, unlike when positive discrimination is based on racial or ethnic characteristics, only a section of the society benefits. This distinction is however not noted in any of the discourse on designing compensatory measures to help women overcome barriers in labour market participation. Rather, historically speaking, compensatory measures for women have originated from mechanism that have the primary aim to safeguard the responsibilities that women have towards their families and to ensure their physical security. Over time, they have evolved to include provisions related to equalities in work and pay for women and men but whether they can change the perception of women’s role in the labour market is yet to be seen.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The statutory enactments designed exclusively for women workers in India include the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (amended in 2017), the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976. In addition, for safeguarding the interests of working women, protective provisions are included in (i) The Factories Act, 1948; (ii) The Mines Act, 1952; (iii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951; (iv) The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966; (v) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970; (vi) The Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979; (vii) Building and Other Construction Workers’ (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996; (viii) Minimum Wages Act, 1948; (ix) Payment of Wages Act, 1936; (x) The Employees’ State Insurance Act, 1948; (xi) The Workmen Compensation Act, 1923; (xii) The Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952; and (xiii) Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972. These special provisions are provided in the form of regulations relating to health and safety measures, prohibition of night work,

When seen in the context of equality of opportunity, Fleurbaey (1995) spoke about the principle of compensation whereby individuals should be compensated by society for disparities that are a result of factors that are pre-decided and beyond their own control. However, it is also seen that ‘compensation’ as such in the discourse on establishing equality of opportunity has often constructed women as ‘gendered subjects’ who are always in need for protection (Sathe, 1996). This is reflected in the form of legal mandates and policies when it comes to protecting the interests of women in the labour market. When regulations are enacted to protect women and promote workplace equality, they have impacts on women’s labour market outcomes (Rodgers, 1999). While these policies are necessary and have many positive effects, they have also been found to exert a negative influence in bringing more women in the workforce. The literature on the evidence of this has been discussed in chapter 2. Such restrictions are primarily guided by disadvantages that women face due to their perceived role in household responsibilities and are meant to safeguard or compensate them for the disadvantages they face. However, they often result in negatively influencing women’s labour market participation as they make employers less inclined towards hiring a woman over a man who may be equally qualified. This is because, while safeguards measure on hours of work and benefits related to maternity protect women’s safety and help them deliver their household responsibilities, there are costs that need to be borne by employers for implementing these regulations.

The negative effects of protective legislation can be more severe in developing countries, as they can lead to crowding or segregating women more into the unorganised and informal sector and more discrimination by firms in hiring women. Gupta (2014) showed that despite the reduction in trade barriers in India in the 1990s, women’s participation in manufacturing related jobs fell primarily due to restrictions imposed on working hours of women as per the factory laws. Studies from East Asia in Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam provide similar evidence (see Rodgers, 1999). In Taiwan, labour laws that restricted women to work overtime and in night shifts led to a decline in their employment. Ending discriminatory practices in labour market based on sex is becoming prevalent in developing countries; however, enforcement of these practices remains a challenge. This has been observed in Korea, where, despite equal opportunity legislations and improvement

prohibition of sub-terrain work, separate latrines and urinals, separate washing facilities, crèche facilities and so on (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2015).

in education outcomes, female workers in Korea continue to be concentrated in low wage occupations. In Vietnam, maternity leave provisions for women are significantly wider as compared to many other countries. Despite achieving a remarkable transition from a centralized to a more decentralised and competitive economy, the Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VNLSS) reveals that a much larger proportion of female transitioned either to unpaid or low paid work or withdrew from employment completely.

As Becker (1971) argued, gender-based prejudices make employers blindly perceive the cost of hiring women to be higher than the true cost. As long as norms exist in society that limit women from taking part in employment, discrimination in hiring practices and in payment of wages would persist (Fletcher et al. 2017). Adding to that, with popularisation of occupational safety and health measures and the increasing use of technology leading to mechanization of most jobs (World Bank, 2018b), regulation for women's work that only focus on gender related circumstantial barriers may no longer be valid. It is important that the discourse on equal opportunities adopt approaches that reconstruct women's roles as individuals capable of demonstrating success through individual effort. The discussions in this chapter have shown how this can be done by building an understanding on effort and its parameters, which can then be applied to understand its role in women's work.

Despite the presence of circumstantial barriers, women have been able to demonstrate successful outcomes through various skills and vocational programmes, either in the form of better labour market outcomes, better wages or lower attrition rates.⁶⁶ As mentioned in earlier chapters, the study has used this as a premise to suggest that individual effort of women may have a role to play in deciding these positive outcomes. This is also aligned with Roemer's approach to understanding effort discussed earlier. Going back to the argument on how years of education of an individual is influenced by family circumstances, Roemer and Trannoy (2013) give an example that can help identify effort. They say that a young adult may not be able to get admission in college either due to low scores in secondary education or if his or her parents do not value tertiary education (both of which could be due to circumstances). Faced with these two circumstances, if a young boy or

⁶⁶ Examples of such programs have been discussed as part of literature review in chapter 2.

girl, despite scoring low in secondary education and with little support from parents, succeeds in getting admission in a college through remedial or compensatory courses, then that can definitely be ascribed to individual effort, keeping other things unchanged. This premise can be applied to the present study as well. As seen from the available evidence, women enrolled in ITIs are generally from socio-economically weaker sections and may not have a fair chance of enrolling themselves in other streams of higher education. On the other hand, being part of a vocational training course gives them more or less similar levels of exposure to job opportunities. Here, borrowing from the categorization of Roemer (1998), women enrolled in ITIs can be considered to comprise a ‘type’ as they share similar circumstances and have access to almost similar opportunity sets. Thus, women who enrol in ITIs and get employed can help us identify the role of effort.⁶⁷ The study has used this premise in conducting a primary survey among women graduates from ITIs to understand the role of effort. The observations and findings from this exercise are presented in the next chapter.

⁶⁷ The assumptions used for including women trainees from vocational education institutions from a methodological perspective have been discussed in detail in chapter 3.

Chapter 6

EFFORT AND WOMEN'S LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION: FINDINGS FROM PRIMARY SURVEY

This chapter addresses the third objective of the study and attempts to understand the role of effort in the context of women and labour. Given the limited evidence in this area, the chapter is closely linked to chapter 5 that aimed to fill this gap. The key concepts and parameters on effort presented in chapter 5 have been applied in this chapter to operationalize the conceptual understanding of effort based on a primary survey. The survey included women who graduated from ITIs, that are vocational training institutes, and were employed after completing their courses. As discussed in chapter 3, considering women graduates from vocational training institutions is based on the assumption that they come from similar socio-economic backgrounds and have more or less similar level of exposure to labour market opportunities. The rationale supporting this is discussed in chapter 3. This, in turn, helped the analysis to focus on their individual effort without wide variations in their circumstances or differences in access to opportunities. It also provided useful background for the final analysis in identifying attributes among these women that can be specifically linked to individual effort and understand how it has played a role in their labour market outcome.⁶⁸

6.1 Socio-economic profile of women ITI graduates

This section presents an overview of the socio-economic characteristics of the sample, and the academic and employment related activities of the respondents based on information collected during the interviews. While there were direct questions related to social and household characteristics, the details on academic and employment related activities have also been derived based on the responses that emerged during the interviews. Majority of the women in the sample

⁶⁸ As mentioned earlier in chapter 3, the study does not try to imply that women ITI trainees who were not employed after their course completion was because of lack of individual effort. That is neither the objective nor within the scope of the study. However, this is an interesting issue to explore and may be considered for a separate study to understand how effort varies for women who are not employed.

were Hindus and from General category. They were in the age group of 17-24 years; with most (94 out of 102) being single/unmarried. Table (6.1) presents details of the respondents disaggregated by social categories. The purpose of this section is to strengthen our understanding of the sample for the qualitative analysis.

Table 6.1: Respondent details disaggregated by Religion and Caste

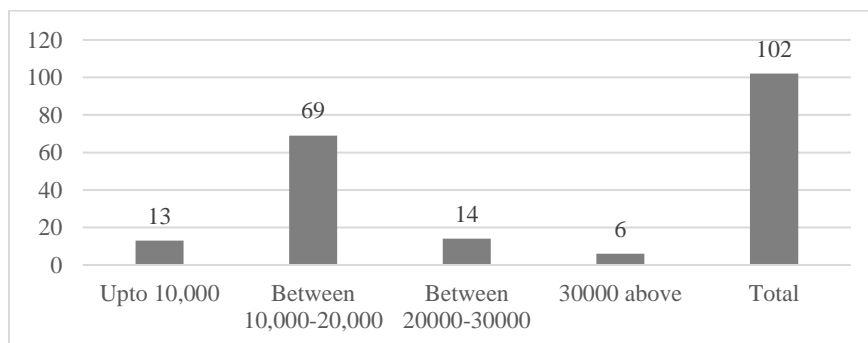
Religion	Number	Caste	Number
Hindu	89	General	73
Muslim	4	SC	10
Christian	1	ST	5
Sikh	8	OBC	14
<i>Total</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>102</i>

Source: Compiled by the research scholar using primary survey data⁶⁹

Based on the theoretical understanding of equality of opportunity (discussed in chapter 5), it can be said that the individual choice to study in an ITI could also be driven by circumstances such as household characteristics. Studies have shown that household income can influence educational enrolment decisions (Duraismy, 2002), including enrolment in higher education (Duraismy and Duraismy, 2016). However, the causal effects of household income on student enrolment in vocational education, in particular, has been found to be hard to isolate (Perna and Titus, 2005). A study by Sandefur et al. (2006) examined how family resources, especially household income and parental education, influence the enrolment of students in four-year education courses and two-year certificate courses in the United States. Their results indicate that students from families with higher incomes are more likely to join a four-year course and less likely to join a two-year vocational course. As discussed in chapter 3, this also indicates that most students in vocational courses come from families that cannot afford the cost of higher education. This was found to be true for the sample of the study as well with most of the women belonged to households with monthly income that ranged between INR 10,000-20,000. A break-up is presented in Figure 6.1).

⁶⁹ All tables/figures in this chapter are based on data/information collected by the research scholar from the primary survey, unless specified otherwise.

Figure 6.1: Household Income of the respondents (in INR)



Majority of the women (96 out of 102) in the sample came from families where fathers were the household heads, with a few exceptions where the mother or another female member headed the household. Education of parents (or the household head in most cases) have been found to be a strong predictor of students' education enrolment (Behrman et. al, 2001; Tansel, 2001). While evidence on the influence of parents' education specially with respect to enrolment in vocational education is limited, studies show that parental education has an important role to play in students' education post school, with higher level of parental education indicating less likelihood for students to enrol in vocational education (Fullarton, 2001). For most women in the sample, the household head studied up to secondary level of education or class 10 and above, but only a small number completed graduation. Very few women had mothers who were working in wage employment; in majority of the cases mothers of these students were homemakers. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 provide details of the sample based on educational qualification and employment details of the household heads.

Figure 6.2: Educational qualification of the Household Heads of the respondents

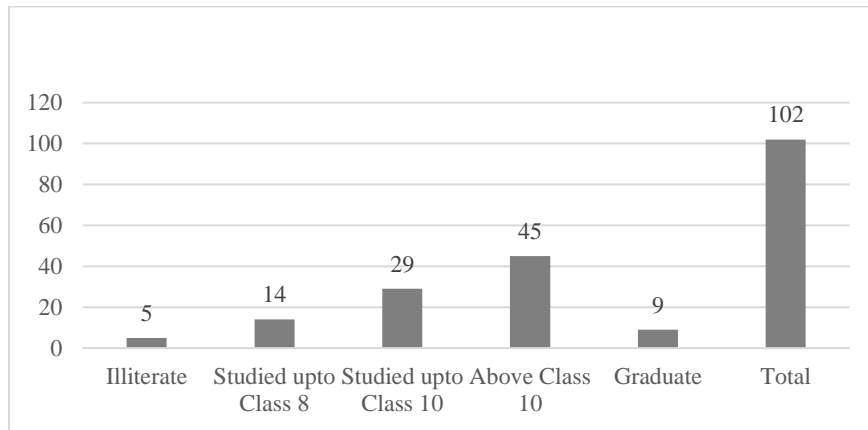
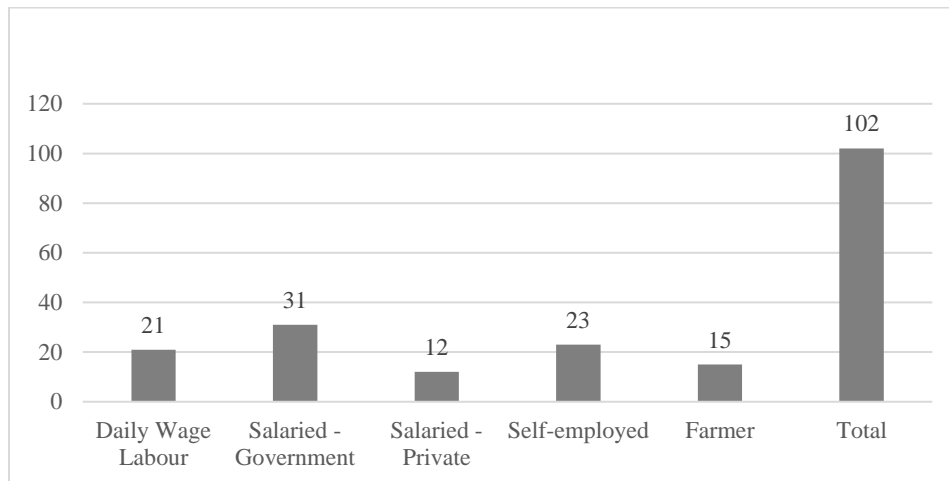


Figure 6.3: Employment categories of the Household Heads of the respondents

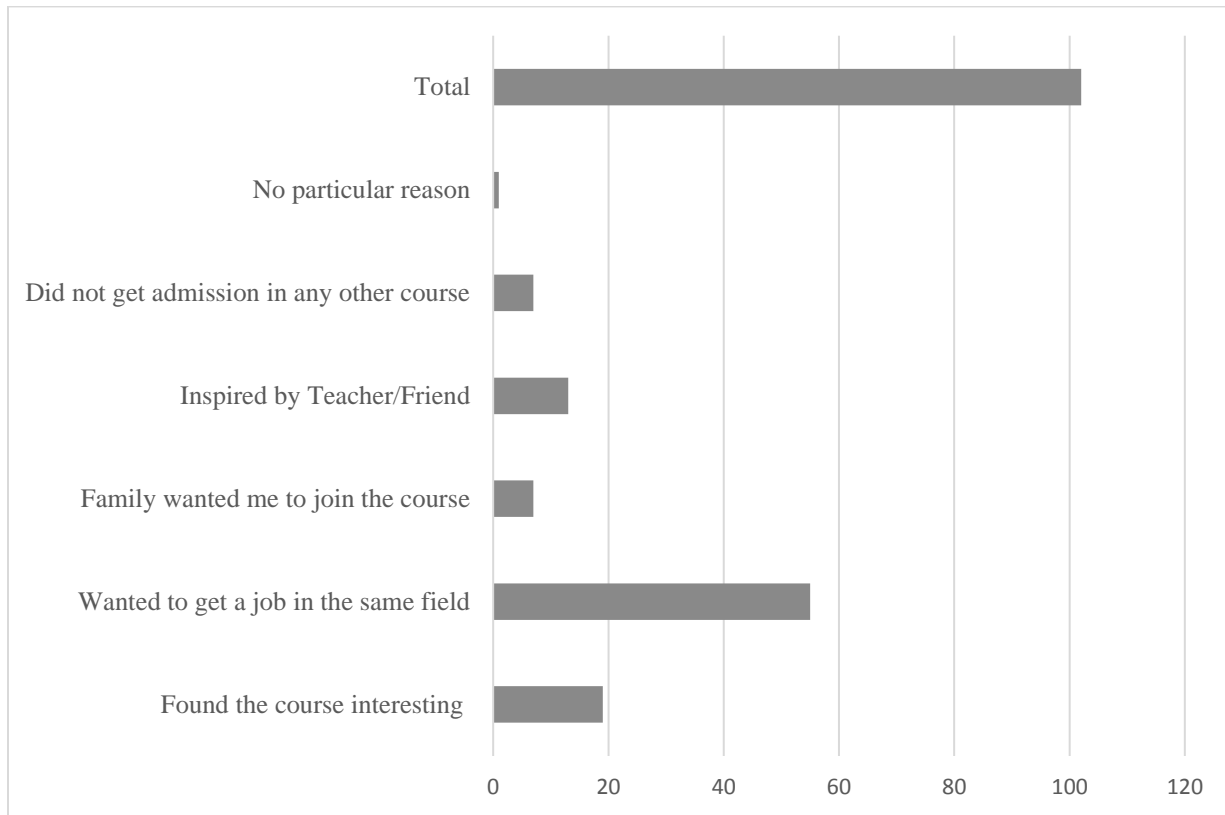


Majority of the respondents had secondary and above education level, with 13 women completing secondary (Class 10) and 77 women completing senior secondary (Class 12) before joining the ITI. 12 women had completed graduation before enrolling in the ITI course. The percentage of marks scored by the respondents in their previous qualification ranged between 50-60 per cent for most, with some students scoring between 60-70 per cent. Fluency in English is also considered to be an important employability skill that complements core domain skills (including for vocational courses) in almost all sectors (British Council, 2015). Almost all the women in the sample had scored between 50-70% in English in their previous qualification, showing that they had almost similar level of proficiency in English. On being asked about their English-speaking skills, they rated it either as ‘Moderate’ or ‘Not Fluent’ during the interviews. None of them however

mentioned this as a disadvantage in understanding the ITI course materials. There are studies that mention that students who enrol in vocational courses tend to have lower academic achievements (often measured by literacy and numeracy skills), in both developed and developing countries (Agodini et al., 2004; Rothman, 2008). However, such findings are inferences based on the lower eligibility criteria and status given to vocational education. There is limited empirical validity of findings that state that participation in vocational education is determined by ability or academic achievement as shown by works of Moenjak and Worswick (2003) and Aypay (2003).

Understanding women's choice to participate in the labour market is therefore more complex and should be examined in context to various social and economic factors. This is particularly true for India where socio-cultural norms around women and employment have a significant influence in their enrolment in education (Kingdon, 2007). For the respondents of the study, wanting to get a job in a field related to their training course and personal interest came across as the most common reasons for joining the ITI. Some joined the course on the advice of their teachers and parents; while a very few (particularly graduates) also indicated that they joined the ITI course because they could not find admission in any other course or institution. A summary is shown in Figure 6.4. What stood out across all responses is their priority to have a job, more than influence from family or friends, that drove their decision to join the ITI. The interviews showed that the women were very clear and forward-looking in admitting that to be able to get a job is important to them, not only to support their families but also for their own financial independence.

Figure 6.4: Reasons for joining ITI course for the respondents



Once enrolled, the study assumes that all the women have more or less similar access to get exposure to employment opportunities as the ITIs work in close collaboration with industries to provide job-oriented training.⁷⁰ It can be argued that the facilities available at the ITIs could vary, thereby influencing the scope of industry exposure available to students. As discussed in chapter 3, given the geographical location of the sample, the ITIs included under the study were in close proximity to industrial units and this aspect was therefore not considered to be a limiting factor.⁷¹ Also, the curriculum taught in ITIs are standardized based on occupational standards to suit the needs of industries, thereby ensuring that students get acquainted with the job market.

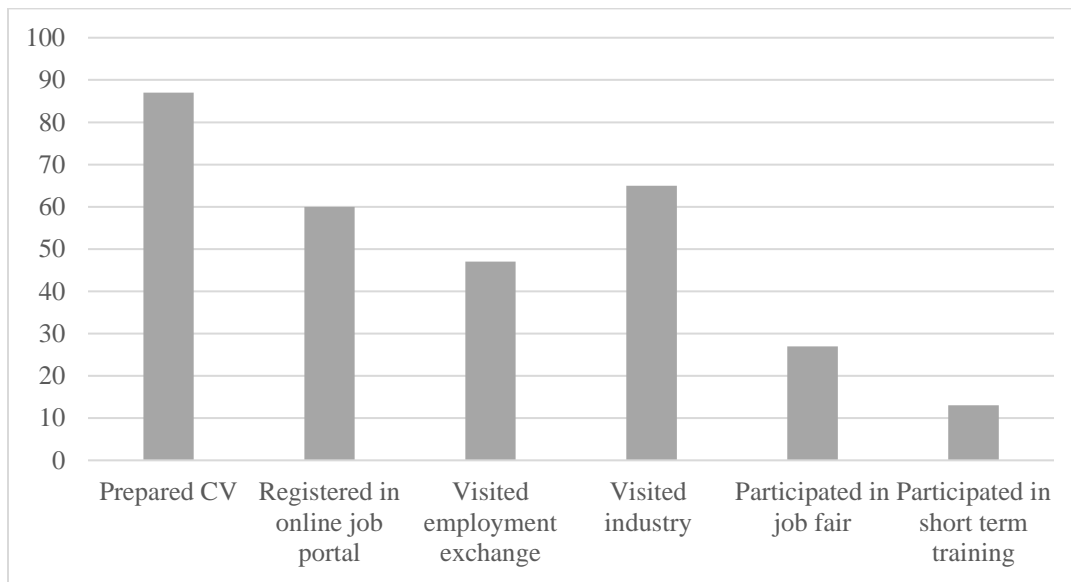
⁷⁰ Rationale for this has been discussed in chapter 3 while discussing methodology.

⁷¹ This however is an important area to consider for further analysis and can be a scope for future research.

While exposure to opportunities was assumed to be more or less uniform, ability to access those opportunities would also depend upon individual level factors while the women were at the ITIs, either in their academic activities or in seeking jobs. When it came to academic activities, the women were of the opinion that the ITI course was designed systematically with adequate time for both theory and practical lessons. Almost all the women mentioned that they were regular in attending classes and submitted their assignments on time. Besides learning in class, most girls spent about 2-4 hours every day and more when needed during exam time. It was clear from the responses that the course materials as prescribed by the syllabus and classroom teaching was sufficient for their learning. They did not have to take extra classes or tuitions and learning materials were readily available in the market at affordable prices.

When it came to involvement in job application activities, the common responses included preparation of Curriculum Vitae (CV) for circulation with employers, registration in job portals, enrolment in a short-term skilling course, visit to employment exchange, participation in job fair and so on. Details are presented in Figure 6.5. This shows that women enrolled in vocational training courses are considerably well involved when it came to applying for jobs.

Figure 6.5: Type of activities of respondents to find employment⁷²



Many of the factors discussed above are important determinants of female labour force participation as discussed during the review of existing literature (chapter 2) and analysis of the secondary data (chapter 4). Given the objective of the study and the sample profile, the observations discussed above do not lead to direct linkages between effort and women’s labour market participation. They however help in strengthening our understanding of the sample in light of the assumptions being used. Based on this understanding, the study now proceeds to identify the individual attributes that constitute effort and the role they can play in women’s employment outcome. This is discussed in the next section.

6.2 Understanding Effort as an individual attribute in Women’s Labour Market Participation

The previous chapter (chapter 5) showed how effort can be identified based on its conceptual understanding. In this chapter, the conceptual understanding of effort has been applied to identify the individual attributes of women that can be considered as effort and how they have played a

⁷² The responses of the respondents were not restricted to one activity alone. Some of the respondents selected multiple activities in their response.

role in their labour market participation. In doing so, it is important to not only identify key concepts and characteristics on effort, but also to understand the patterns and relationship of effort with women's employment. The findings have therefore been presented in the form of propositions as they help bring out the relationship between effort as a conceptual construct and women's labour market participation.⁷³

These propositions help us understand effort as an individual attribute as well as how it can be linked to socio-economic circumstances. This has been done by connecting how the attributes of effort that helped women at the individual level, have interacted with the circumstances around them. The importance and relevance of these propositions are discussed with respect to how women have been able to overcome some of the barriers that they face in accessing labour market opportunities with their individual effort. The discussions on the propositions are also supported by quotations from respondents to emphasize on certain points. These quotations have been added to improve readability and add voice to the findings. The analysis however is derived by aggregating information collected from all the respondents and are not just limited to these quotations. The discussions follow as under.

Proposition I:

Awareness about end outcome and self-belief are important individual attributes to consider in understanding the role of effort in women's labour market participation.

The foundation of this proposition stands on a key conceptual definition of effort that talks about an individual's consciousness about the end and purpose of his/her actions as a distinguishing characteristic of effort. It is this consciousness about the end outcome that enables an individual to transform his/her struggles to thoughtful decisions or actions. The end outcome here is the kind of opportunities available to an individual from the training course, or more specifically,

⁷³ See footnote 41 (at the end of chapter 3) on the use of propositions in this study. Because of the lack of empirical evidence in this area, propositions can also guide the way for further research to validate their applicability in different contexts. This is elaborated in chapter 7 while discussing the implications for future research.

opportunities for paid employment. Testimonies of respondents made apparent that women who are successfully employed had a strong sense of awareness and understanding about the kind of jobs that they would have access to after completing training. This awareness about the job as an outcome also motivated their decision to join and complete a vocational training course. There was clearly a strong desire among these women to work as most of them were heard saying, *I've always wanted to work*. They would also talk about being “passionate” and “interested” in their area of study, which motivated them to pursue a career in the same area. What truly stands out is that all the surveyed women, across different trades, knew about what doors are open for them after completing the course and believed in themselves that they would be able to achieve what they wanted to.

A woman from a small town near Gurugram, who works in a hair salon after graduating from a course in Basic Cosmetology, recalls clearly why she joined the course. She said she has always been interested in this sector and had the confidence that she could do well if given the chance. From her own personal experience of visiting a ‘beauty parlour’ in a marketplace near her house, which she would visit with her sister-in-law and friends, she feels that a profession in this area is not just about grooming or appearance. It gives women a chance to stand on their own feet with confidence and an ability to inspire other women. She wanted to get formally trained in this sector so that she could learn the right skills and gain recognition of her skills through a formal qualification. Her long-term aim is to start her own beauty salon in her own neighborhood. Her family was supportive of her joining the course, but they said that they’ll not be able to help beyond paying for her course fee. She has an elder brother who works in a logistics firm and a younger brother who is still in school. Her father has a grocery store and she usually helps him manage his accounts. She says:

I knew that I could get a job in a big parlour after completing the ITI course... and later, when I have enough money, I can open my own parlour in my neighborhood. I will get business as not all women get time to go to parlour in the big market... I will be able to manage the business as I've got some practice seeing my father run his shop. (Respondent 25)

While the awareness about the kind of jobs as an end outcome was influenced by a number of factors like individual interest and passion, inspiration from a family member, or thrust from teachers,⁷⁴ this proposition highlights the importance of the surety or conviction with which these women pursued their jobs. This stood out as a distinguishing characteristic of effort as propounded by the discussions in chapter 5.

A woman employed as a Site Engineer in an architecture firm in Dehradun mentions that it is important to know about the opportunities available, and at the same time, be focused in pursuing those opportunities. She remembers her strong liking for drawing and architectural designs from her school days. Her father being a contractual worker in a government department and the sole earning member of the family, she wanted to pursue her passion in the best way she could. She says,

I knew from start the kind of job I would get into after completing my course [Draughtsman Civil] and I was determined to achieve it. There is construction going on everywhere [of houses, offices, other buildings] and there will always be need for people like me to make drawings, take measurements, ensure that all the electrical points are at the right place and so on...I saw an opportunity there to convert my passion into profession. (Respondent 70)

To give another example, a graduate in Draughtsman Civil from Delhi mentions that not many women in her class knew what the ITI training was about. Some of them had taken admission because of reasons like the ITI being close to their homes or because they could not get admission in a college. While she recognises the fact that those are unavoidable as women do not prioritise their career because of societal and other expectations, but she feels that they should at least be aware of the career prospects available to them. She says:

Many of my fellow trainees did not know what they could do after training and kept exploring jobs in various other fields [different from their own area of training] like Banking, Teaching, etc. If this is what they wanted to do, there are

⁷⁴ The importance of such factors is discussed later in the while talking about on ‘societal network’.

so many other courses. Now they have spent two years already in a course that will not help them in the jobs they are trying to pursue. In my opinion it is a waste of time and resources to shift focus. None of them are employed today and they have now moved on to some other course after completing ITI training.
(Respondent 35)

The linkage of awareness about possible opportunities with effort is strengthened by an observation made during the study that this was also accompanied by a strong sense of self-belief. This is because the conceptual understanding of effort shows that individuals' perception about their ability to meet performance standards has a strong linkage with effort, which in turn drives their motivation. Also, studies also show that individuals who have high self-assurance put more effort to achieve difficult goals; on the other hand, individual who have low self-assurance do not work as hard when goals become harder (Carroll and Tosi, 1970). It was seen that these women not only knew about what jobs they would like to do but also believed in themselves that they will be able to achieve them. In many cases, this also helped them win their family's support. For example, a graduate in Stenography from Delhi, who is working as data entry operator in a private company, says:

My parents are confident when I'm confident... when they see that I believe in myself about what I want to do, they never stop me... My elder brother works in a government office as a peon and my parents had certain inhibitions about me working in a private company like job security...but they know I like the job and that I have worked very hard and now they are proud of me...I come from a Muslim neighborhood and it is not very common to see girls going out to work in companies; but seeing my confidence, my family is very happy that I go out to work. (Respondent 17)

The sense of self-belief and assurance was not only about getting a job, it also resulted in them being more confident about themselves after getting the job. Being employed entailed improved status in society as well, which further reinforced their motivation towards being employed. A woman working as a skills instructor explains how her journey from being an ITI graduate to a tailoring instructor has helped her regain her self-confidence as well as her position in the household and society.

I have always liked fashion and design and I knew I wanted to work in this sector. This was my motivation to join the ITI course. I was a topper in my class and my designs were presented in a campus exhibition as well. While I knew I would be successful in a profession in this area, my parents and relatives thought I should do a course in typing or computers so that I can get a job. But I did not want to change my field of study and focused on my coursework. There were times when I thought if I was doing the right thing or not but once I got the job in a training institute, it increased my self-confidence. I enjoy teaching designs to my students, and I would like to open my own institute someday. I feel I have more status in society now and my family is also proud of me. (Respondent 40)

While many of the women expressed their desire to financially support their families, being employed reinforced their sense of self-belief as it also made them financially independent. A woman working as an assistant in a beauty salon explains how rewarding it is for her to be financially independent. With her parents based in a rural area near Hisar in Haryana, she knew she had to find her own means if she wanted to be financially independent.

My family was supportive of my decision to join the ITI course, but I knew that it will be difficult for them to support my expenses if I moved away from home. I have always wanted to work in a city, both for professional growth and to fulfil my own personal aspirations. For me, being able to support myself financially in an urban area on my own is extremely rewarding. I want to work hard and save money, which I can send to my parents. (Respondent 32)

Securing a job also gives women the confidence to overcome societal constraints, such as those related to marriage. A woman working as a shop floor assistant in a furniture unit, who got married after finding a job, talks about how she plans to continue in her job even after getting married. She says,

If I am earning, it will only help my husband to run the household. It is important for families to adjust to the job requirements of a working woman, which is often not seen. Sometimes this dissuades women from proactively looking for jobs.

There are times when a woman might decide to leave her job post marriage, for example, if she needs to change her city or town. However, having the work experience should help us in getting a job in a new place as well. (Respondent 92)

The proposition is also validated by the ‘Goal Setting’ theory that stands on a fundamental introspection of the fact that a conscious human behavior is driven by purpose and geared by individual goals. According to this theory (as discussed in chapter 5), effort is associated with the intensity or difficulty of the goal and individuals adjust the amount of effort towards achieving those goals. It was observed during the study that awareness about the end outcome also enabled women to realize not just their strengths but also their weaknesses or shortcomings that they thought would be an impediment in achieving a desired job. This encouraged them to enhance their skills to improve their suitability for a job. The case of a woman working as a Field Surveyor in Dehradun can be cited as an example to elaborate on this. As a graduate in Draughtsman Civil, her main motivation to join the ITI course was to get a job in a large public sector organization. Her father works as a daily wage labourer and it is his dream to see her to work in a government job. She has seen some of her ITI seniors working as engineers and electricians in civil work agencies and looking at the kind of work they do, she admits that she is not ready to handle responsibilities independently. At the same time, given the financial conditions of her family, it is important for her to secure a job. She says:

I am doing this job [Drawing Associate] to gain work experience. It is a very small office and I mostly assist my supervisor. I would like to work in a big organization later...The professional environment in a large public sector organization is very different...requires a lot of practical experience and just ITI training is not enough. I am learning how to apply my theoretical knowledge in a practical field in my current job, which will later help me in my future career. (Respondent 55)

A testimony of a self-employed woman from Haridwar is another example that can help explain this. Having started her own tailoring store after graduating from a course in Sewing Technology, she informed the study about how her self-belief helped her enhance her skills to work in an area

that she is passionate about. Her mother is working as an Anganwadi worker and her sister is working too (as a nurse). She started her store soon after getting married and her husband is supportive of her profession. Growing up in a rural area, she did not get enough exposure to stay up to date with the skills needed to succeed in a competitive business and she was aware about its limitations. In terms of starting her own venture, she said it was her own initiative and hard work that has made her successful. She says:

I have limited computer skills, which in today's job market, could be a barrier in having a successful career... I had therefore enrolled myself in a short-term basic computer course on weekends. I was confident that with my confidence and passion, I can overcome that limitation. Now I have learnt how to download useful materials related to fabric and designing from the Internet. This has helped me in my profession today. (Respondent 101)

The discussion above shows that while considering effort in women's labour market participation, awareness about end outcome and self-belief are important individual attributes. The study has shown that there is a psychological value attached to being gainfully employed that makes women more persistent in achieving their goals. What stood out at the individual level is not just the awareness about wanting to work, but also having a clear sense of direction on how to channelize one's activities towards being employed. This is found to be true irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances that posed various challenges, either financially or socially. As discussed in chapter 2 and 4, constraints shaped by social norms can have far reaching impacts on women's access to opportunities that may be difficult to overcome through awareness and self-belief alone. The next proposition explores this further to identify another important attribute of effort that helped women overcome constraints manifested through social norms and is discussed below.

Proposition II:

Core knowledge in professions that women want to pursue is an important attribute of individual effort that can help them in their labour market participation.

The first proposition discussed above shows how awareness about the end outcome and women's self-belief in achieving those outcomes are some of the key distinguishing attributes of individual effort that play a role in their labour market participation. While analyzing the responses, it became quite evident that gender norms shaped by societal expectations or perceptions did not seem to play a particularly important role in shaping their preference for the ITI course or the job. At the intersection between awareness and self-belief and their ability to be employed, what became clear is that women's individual effort in strengthening core knowledge⁷⁵ needed for professions they want to pursue has played a positive role in their labour market participation. While core knowledge is important in its own right in all spheres of economic activity, for women in particular, this aspect is overshadowed by challenges that are not limited to individual capacity. For a lot of women, particularly in engineering trades⁷⁶, social norms around women's work pose various constraints. This is because the kind of opportunities that are available for women from these courses are not considered to be conducive to societal expectations. This in turn leads to various biases that manifest in different forms. This becomes clearer as we proceed.

⁷⁵ According to the National Skills Qualifications Framework, notified by the Government of India, knowledge is defined as the body of theories, facts, principles and practices related to the field of work or study (NSDA, 2013). Core knowledge for the purpose of the study relates to the curriculum, learning materials and other learning resources that are part of the ITI trades.

⁷⁶ Engineering trades include trades such as fitter, electrician, welder, Draughtsman Civil, Carpentry and so; while non-engineering trades are those related to beauty and wellness, stenography, retail, housekeeping, data entry operator and so on (DGT, 2022)

Internationally benchmarked assessments on student learning⁷⁷ shows that girl students perform better than boys in reading and writing, but boy students do better in science and mathematics. It is worth noting that boys and girls do equally well in both reading and mathematics in the early years (upto grade 2); while from grade 3, boys show somewhat improved performance in mathematics. This gender gap in performance continues to expand through secondary school (Fryer and Levitt, 2010; Singh, 2016).⁷⁸ Various studies have tried to explore the reasons for this pattern, including biological, psychological as well as socio-cultural reasons related to family and society. While there are no known biological reasons, psychological reasons stemming from stereotyping of courses related to “science, technology, engineering, and mathematics” (STEM) courses as ‘male domain’ and that boys outperform girls in these courses negatively affect women’s choices and performance in these courses. Family expectations and beliefs resulting from this stereotyping also shape girls’ choices towards these courses. A prominent phenomenon worth mentioning here is what psychologists term as ‘stereotype threat’. This was made evident through an experiment conducted by Spencer, Steel and Quinn (1999) to show how such biases can affect performance of female students. They show that when male and female students who are found to be good in mathematics in college are given a difficult mathematics test, female students do worse than male students. On another instance when they are given the same test and the female students are specifically told that the fact that girls are not as good as boys in mathematics is not true for this test, then they are found to do just as good as the male students. The explanation for this is that girls tend to internalize and accept the bias that they are not as good as boys in mathematics.

⁷⁷ International assessments include Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), UNESCO’s Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Programme d’Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la Confemen (PASEC) and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) (UNESCO, 2016).

⁷⁸ Evidence from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessment in 2015 indicates that this gap in performance between boys and girls may be decreasing. It shows mixed results as compared to previous years and found no statistically significant differences in performances between boys and girls in Science and Mathematics (Mullis, Martin, and Loveless, 2016).

Das and Singhal (2021) examine the issue of gender disparity in mathematics score in India among rural children to show that female children do worse than male students in mathematics. They use evidence to attribute this stereotyping and “systematic devaluation” of girls in classroom and household that affect their performance in mathematics. Such difference is not observed in reading skills and exists only in a smaller extent in writing skills. Using panel data from Andhra Pradesh, Muralidharan and Seth (2016) have also shown that while girls perform as good as boys in the first grade, their performance become worse as they move to the fifth grade largely as a consequence of gender stereotyping. Studies further indicate that this has possible implications for women in their occupational choices and earnings in the long run as girls self-select to be away from choosing degrees in hard sciences (Bertocchi and Bozzano, 2019). Such biases therefore pose constraints to women’s ability to access jobs in this sector and limit their chances of employment. Through this proposition, the study has tried to show that women’s own effort in acquiring the knowledge and expertise in these trades, have helped them in overcoming these constraints.

The case of a graduate in Welding from Sonipat in Haryana, who now works as a Laboratory Assistant in a training institute can be shown as an example. She gives an account of her desire to break norms and how she became successful in doing so. She says:

I wanted to do something different. I was very sure about that.. in the sense that I did not want to do what everyone was doing. I was more inclined to study something that would require more hands-on skills. When I enrolled in a Welding course in the ITI, my neighbours told me that melting metal is not a woman’s job.. I did not let that break my confidence. There weren’t many girls in my class but I didn’t feel awkward because of that. Even the boys in my class participated with me for group assignments without making me feel awkward...They even came to me for help if they did not understand any chapter...They said it was always strange to see a girl in a welding lab; but now we are good friends.
(Respondent 50)

The above testimony shows how norms influence the environment around women, but conviction about one’s own ambition and ability to master core knowledge can help women overcome the constraints imposed by such norms. A testimony from another graduate in Welding shows how such cases can encourage other women to opt for courses that they would otherwise not choose

due to social norms and perceptions.⁷⁹ She got married soon after completing class 12 but her husband supported her in pursuing training in an ITI. She works as a trainer in a private institution and she plans to continue in this profession as it ensures a regular income flow. She wants to encourage more women to join similar courses as the job prospects available are immense. She says:

I feel very happy when I see female students in my institute enrolling in engineering trades. It opens up doors to so many opportunities. After I completed my course and found a job, I've heard that two more women from my neighbourhood have enrolled in an engineering trade to train as a 'fitter'...I hope I can continue to motivate more students like them. (Respondent 27)

The conceptual underpinning of this proposition can be based upon Terborg's contextualization of effort as discussed in chapter 5. In a study done in 1976 on participants of a course on principles of electricity, Terborg (1976) presented measurement of effort as a percentage of time spent by the participants on programmed instruction materials. He found that participants who had specific goals spent more time on the learning materials as compared to participants who did not have any specific goals. Based on this, Eysenck (1983) explained that Terborg's finding is an implication that effort is a mediator between goals and performance of individuals. The observations leading to this proposition demonstrates the fact that it is possible for women to secure jobs that overcome instances of gender segregation, if they make it their goal and perform. There is also a clear association here with the first proposition as these women were extremely sure about the opportunities available, which gave further impetus to their effort in acquiring mastery over what they were being trained in.

⁷⁹ Relevant evidence relates to peer influence that has a highly positive influence for encouraging confidence, motivation and interest among girls. The factors that promote such peer influence can be at the school level, such as presence of female instructors or teachers, which in turn makes curricula in these fields attractive to girl students (UNESCO, 2017).

The observations from the study showed that the surveyed women were found spending considerable amount of time “studying” and “revising” their course materials throughout the course of their training. All of them seemed to have a close rapport with their teachers and would spend extra time with them when needed to understand key concepts or lessons. They said this helped them tremendously in their interviews as employers specifically asked them questions to test them on their core knowledge related to the trades. Here, the number of hours may not be the only distinguishing factor (as propounded by existing studies on effort discussed in chapter 6), rather the attribute of strengthening core knowledge itself that has come across as an important factor.

A woman working as a sales executive in a broadband network company in Faridabad recalls her interview experience and says:

I was excited to be shortlisted for a job interview. I was however very nervous at start but gained confidence as the interview progressed...I could answer almost all questions, which were mostly related to technical concepts and their application. I studied all those things very seriously as part of my course [Computer Hardware and Networking]... I revised my classroom notes extensively to prepare for the interview and that helped me a lot in performing well at the interview.” (Respondent 42)

A woman working in an architectural firm in Delhi recalled a similar experience. Having graduated from a course in Construction and Woodworking, she says,

My Sir [supervisor] wanted to know whether I knew important concepts related to drawing and measurements. He was impressed with my answers...I was very good at drawing and practiced a lot during my ITI training days. That has paid off ... I can perform my job responsibilities well. Sometimes my Sir also lets me oversee the work of new recruits because he thinks I am capable. (Respondent 5)

An interesting aspect worth noting is that many of the women enrolled in engineering trades had taken ‘Humanities’ courses after completing Class 10. The biases and norms discussed earlier played a role in their choice for choosing ‘Humanities’ over a ‘Science’ stream in class 11-12. They felt that it was not ‘meant for them’. The economic conditions of their families also played a role as pursuing studies in a science-based courses is considered expensive as it requires additional learning support (such as coaching) and they could not have afforded coaching/tuitions, extra books and so on.⁸⁰ That however did not deter them from pursuing the kind of profession they wanted to pursue. The attributes of individual effort helped them overcome such constraints. The experience of a woman from Haridwar employed as a field assistant with a construction company explains this.

After completing Class 10, I took Humanities like all other girls from my class. I never thought I could ever pursue a science related course... but ITI gave me that opportunity after Class 12 through the course of Draughtsman Civil...It didn't seem to matter as what the employer wanted to know was whether I could do the job that I had applied for. For example, I learned AUTOCAD very well during ITI training and I could recall all important 'commands' during the interview. (Respondent 82)

Talking about how ITIs have helped women pursue a career in an engineering related field, another woman working in the telecommunications sector says,

Both my elder brother and I have graduated from ITI. My brother graduated from the course of an electrician and is now working in the public works department in a contractual job. For my father, the expectation was that I will do B.Ed. [Bachelor of Education] and take up a teaching profession as it is more suitable for women. I however wanted to join an engineering field that requires practical work. ITIs provide the right kind of courses, which students from my

⁸⁰ Based on a student survey in Odisha, a study by Choudhury and Kumar (2021) shows that households, on an average, spend 30 per cent of its annual income on engineering degree for every child. The study further examines the relationship between household expenditure and socio-economic factors to show that when it comes to household expenditure on engineering education, a pro-male bias exists and is found to be stronger in poor households.

background can access. The course is divided into theory and practical that help in grasping concepts. The knowledge I gained in my ITI course helped me in clearing the written test for the job I am currently employed in. (Respondent 11)

Also, the study shows that women are not discouraged to study engineering based trades at the individual level, the constraints are more at the societal level. According to data from MSDE (2020), when disaggregated by sectors, women occupy more than 50 per cent of seats in non-engineering and only 5 percent are enrolled in engineering trades. The fact that they can be successful employed in such trades through their individual effort can set important inferences for reducing gender based occupational segregation. In fact, this aspect should be given due attention from a much earlier stage, starting from secondary education. It also opens up wider opportunities for women who would otherwise be away from engineering (or STEM) based fields due to social norms having a negative impact on their choices and their perceived performance in these field.⁸¹ This can have far reaching outcomes as it brings out the importance of individual effort in overcoming barriers imposed by circumstantial factors related to social norms and gender role attitudes.

Blumenfeld, Pintrich and Hamilton (1986) showed that students' perceptions of their ability can assess their effort, conduct and achievements. Effort, according to them can be considered to be a conceptual as well as an empirical 'bridge' that links ability and conduct. The discussion here shows how ability can be restricted by socio-cultural and institutional constraints, and despite this, how women can overcome such constraints. For most women, their motivation to join the ITI course was driven by their awareness about not only the jobs that they wanted to pursue but also an interest about what the jobs entailed. This guided their perception about whether they could do the job and the attribute of strengthening core knowledge helped them translate this perception into action. The importance of this attribute was seen for non-engineering trades as well.

⁸¹ As shown by the study, the vocational training sector in particular can facilitate the advantage of allowing lateral entry for those women whose choices in the secondary education level were limited by such norms. This is an implication for further research.

A graduate in Stenography from Kashipur in Uttarakhand, working as an Office Secretary in a private firm, explains why she joined a Stenography course and how it is helping her in her career. She says,

In my class, many women joined the course because it is considered to be women friendly. My motivation to join the Steno course was because I think there will always be a demand for this skill. It is not just about typing, but also about typing at a certain speed and knowing about the functions of the keyboard. It also teaches other skills related to office management, which are applicable in all sectors. I was good in literature in school, and I was able to do very well in the course. I paid attention in class and practiced well during the practical classes, which has made my current job very easy. While Stenography is a popular trade, many say it is soon going to be obsolete with advanced computer technologies. I don't agree with it completely. After this job, I will try to move to a government job where stenographers are high on demand. (Respondent 90)

Another graduate in Basic Cosmetology, who is now working in a hospitality unit near Dehradun, talks about her experience in the ITI that helped her expand her knowledge about the wellness sector. Having worked in a beauty salon before, she learnt skills on the job. According to her, the ITI course gave her the opportunity to grow further in her career. She says,

Before joining the ITI, I used to work in a salon located in the neighborhood. There were three other women with me, and the owner had trained us. We learnt mostly on the job, and I liked the work environment. I wanted to learn more and carry a professional certificate and for that, I joined the ITI course. While I was familiar with many of the things being taught, the coursework helped me learn things in a systematic manner and widened my awareness about the sector. I used to take all my assignments seriously and enjoyed doing them too. (Respondent 48)

It was also seen during the analysis that effort as an individual attribute cannot be looked at in complete isolation from social and economic circumstances. This is particularly so because when it comes to decisions related to workforce participation, women may not have complete

information required to make informed choices and decisions. For most of them, information about jobs would reach through informal sources through family, friends, or relatives, which in turn is decided by their socio-economic background. The study finds that such contacts within the society play an enabling role between women's effort and their employment outcome. This relationship is discussed in the proposition below.

Proposition III:

Societal contacts play a positive role between women's individual effort and their labour market participation.

In understanding women's experience in *knowing* and *finding* about available jobs, the women were often found to quote "*friend from the same village*", "*friend from ITP*", "*school friend*", "*relative*", "*neighbour*" as important stakeholders⁸² in various respects. These stakeholders are referred as 'societal contacts' in this study that are determined by women's socio-economic circumstances. This is an interesting observation and conforms to the existing literature that supports the importance of contacts and networks in labour market.⁸³ The importance of these networks is predominantly decided by the fact that they 'transmit' information about existing job vacancies; reduce uncertainty about productivity of workers by highlighting characteristics that are otherwise hard to observe; and are found to improve worker performance through 'peer effects'. These networks are found to be of particular importance in developing countries where they reduce costs of job search (Matsuda and Nomura, 2017). Studies have shown that 'community-based' connections play a more significant role for women than men. Women search for jobs more locally than men do and rely more on their personal contacts that strengthens this

⁸² The respondents did not specify whether these contacts were male or female. On being asked specifically, there were mixed responses pointing to both male and female contacts. The study therefore does not make any inferences on whether female contacts are more effective than male contacts, or vice versa, while this may be an important idea to explore further.

⁸³ For example, see Larsen et al. (2011), Beaman and Magruder (2012) and Heath (2018) for developing country context; and Ioannides and Loury (2004) and Topa (2011) for developed country context.

characteristic (Hanson and Pratt, 1991). Data from IHDS II (chapter 4) also shows that women who have access to group networks, such as self-help groups and *Mahila Mandals*, have a higher chance of being employed as compared to women who do not. The observations from the primary survey have added a new dimension to the study by showing that ‘societal contacts’ within women’s circumstances are an enabler of individual effort. This is because these networks played a role in shaping their orientation towards the labour market by helping them know about the nature of the jobs they are eligible for and what it actually looks like to be working in those positions.

A woman working in a power corporation in Tehri in Uttarakhand, after graduating from a course in Instrument Mechanic talks about how her network of friends from school has helped her in being employed today. Coming from a hilly area, where employment opportunities are limited, she considers herself fortunate to have found a job in large public sector organization. She says,

After completing my Class 12, I wanted to pursue a course in an ITI because I wanted to be employed in an engineering related sector. My father works in a farm and he has always been supportive of my education. However, he is financially constrained too and could not have afforded to send me for higher education. Some of my seniors from school had told me about this course and two of them are working in a public sector organisation as Mechanics. I was so inspired by their confidence, and I wanted to work in a similar environment where I would be given important responsibilities like them. Had it not been for them, I would have never known that such opportunities existed in a place where I live where most people are into agriculture. (Respondent 86)

Another testimony from a graduate in Stenography, who now works as a data entry operator in Delhi, provides interesting insight on how she was able to overcome family traditions to pursue a career of her choice. Coming from a family of three siblings from the Sikh community, her father and elder brother are into a family business of running a textile store. After completing Class 12, her father expected her to join a course related to the textile sector to continue with the family profession, but her aspiration was to work in an office. With support from her friends, she applied for the Stenography course and is now employed in a private sector firm.

In my family, almost everyone is in the textile sector. I wanted to break away from the family profession although it would have been somewhat easier to find a job in the same sector. My aspiration however was to work in a desk-based job in an office environment. I know a senior from school who works in an office, has a desk and a computer to work on and gets to meet different people. Her younger sister was in my class, and it was she who told me about the Stenography course. She helped me in the application process as well. I have always been good in language and writing and I knew I could do well in this course. My parents allowed me as well because they knew I was not going to be alone in the course. (Respondent 39)

The societal contacts being referred in this study are not large or institutional networks in all cases and could be based on social and individual connections. In many cases, these would be contacts from their families or schools or training institutes who have been instrumental in helping them know about job vacancies as well as in applying for these jobs. As discussed earlier in the chapter, women at the ITIs are familiar with different means of applying for jobs, but many of them mentioned that submitting CVs to employers or visiting employment exchanges alone did not help them in getting a job.⁸⁴ Usually it would be someone from their societal contacts who helped them know about employers who were actively hiring and the kind of skills they were looking for.

A woman working in a manufacturing company in Manesar recounts how she found a job with help from her relative. Coming from a family where both her parents are into a small stationery business, she says,

Not all employers advertise widely. I work in an enterprise that supplies equipment to a large manufacturing company located nearby. My uncle introduced me to my employer as he knew that my skills are a good fit for my current position. While studying at the ITI, I applied for jobs advertised by big companies, but I never got any interview call. As I started interacting with my seniors and teachers about job opportunities, I got to know about many

⁸⁴ This points out a larger issue related to the labour market, particularly with respect to jobs related to vocational courses. There is a need to strengthen the linkage between employers and vocational education, which is also an important area for future research.

companies that may not be as large as the renowned companies but provide equally interesting job opportunities. These companies are also a great stepping stone to start a career as big companies are sometimes reluctant to hire freshers.

(Respondent 22)

It was because of the support the women received from societal contacts that they knew exactly how and what to prepare for to get jobs. An example of a turner working in a production unit in Haridwar explains this. Being the eldest in the family, it was important for her to financially support her father and her younger brothers in their education. She did very well in her Class 10 with a high score in Mathematics. While at the ITI, she had been applying for government jobs advertised in the newspapers. It was one of her ITI seniors who told her about a job opportunity that required her to attend a written test. She says,

All we need is the chance. If we are good at what we can do, doing well in a job is not difficult. But sometimes some people have an advantage over others when they come from families that can connect them to employers. My parents are supportive of my decision to work but my father is a contractual labour and does not know the job sector well enough. It was a senior from my ITI course who graduated from the same trade a year ago who told me about this job opportunity where I am currently working. The most helpful part was that he told me that there will be a written test and I could prepare myself for it.

(Respondent 75)

During the interviews, the women accounted their experiences of how they got a chance to have direct conversations with potential employers or make visits to the workplaces through someone from these networks. These experiences gave them an idea about not just the physical environment of working, but also an understanding about feelings like ‘respect’, ‘prestige’, and ‘confidence’ that being employed entails. The experience of a graduate in Construction and Woodworking, who works as a site surveyor in a small town near Gurugram gives an interesting insight on this. Her father works as a clerical staff in a public sector organisation, and he would have liked her to work in a similar profession. However, she was always interested in hands on work from her school days and wanted to work in a profession that required similar skills. One of her aunts, who lives in the same neighborhood and is an ITI instructor, had taken her to visit an industrial area. This turned

out to be a turning point in her life as she saw an actual work environment and was inspired by it. She says,

I was enjoying my ITI course and was working hard from the start. The visit to the construction industry gave me exposure to an actual work environment and I was determined that I wanted to work in a similar set up. I began to prepare for job interviews from my last semester and my teacher really helped me throughout the process. Now I have inspired my younger brother as well. He has recently completed his class 12 and has enrolled in an electrician trade in an ITI and he would like to pursue a similar profession. (Respondent 15)

Societal contacts, therefore, played an enabling role between effort and their labour market participation. This is consistent with the first proposition of the study that discussed how individual effort of women is driven by their orientation and awareness about the end outcome. In many ways, these networks helped them in overcoming the barrier of information asymmetry that women face due to lack of exposure to opportunities available to them. It made them more certain about their goals and strengthened their determination to overcome constraints imposed by their socio-cultural environment.

One such socio-cultural constraint, for example, is safety concerns associated with women stepping outside of home. Data from IHDS II (chapter 4) shows how occurrence of sexual harassments in society reduces the chances of women working outside their homes. Often these concerns originate in society and there is a perceived threat of crime against women that families may not be able to overcome. In many cases, such fears also originate from the fact that families do not have enough exposure to having women within the household who are working in different job settings.⁸⁵ It directly impacts women's ability to access job opportunities as they do not even get a chance to appear for interviews. There have been instances where this has affected some of the women who had to let go of interview calls because of concerns that families have about

⁸⁵ As we have seen in the sample characteristics discussed earlier in the chapter, 96 women came from families where fathers are the household heads and mothers are homemakers. For the remaining 6 women, the household was headed by the mother or another female head.

women's safety. On the other hand, having the support from societal contacts can help alleviate such concerns as seen in the primary survey. To give an example, a woman working as a shop floor executive says,

Twice, I was not allowed by my family to appear for an interview as it was happening at a faraway location [Gurgaon]... My parents worry about my security... When I was called for an interview for my present job, I convinced my 'neighbor didi' who also works in a retail store in Gurgaon to accompany me to the interview. This time my family was okay... knowing someone from the same neighbourhood who is working in the city reassured them...I prepared very hard for the interview as I knew I may not get this opportunity again. (Respondent 44)

In another example, a woman from Yamunanagar in Haryana, working as an Office Assistant mentions that while her parents have been supportive of her studying in an ITI and her decision to work, travelling to work was a concern. She got married soon after her course completion. Her husband and in laws are extremely supportive of her career, but she had to refuse an earlier job offer because her in laws worried about her travelling alone for the job. In her current job, she found a group of women with whom she could travel to work and her parents. She says,

Finding a job has been a priority for me always. I did very well in my ITI course [Computer Hardware and Network Maintenance] and had cleared a written test for a job offer just after completing the course. However, the place of work was far from my home and I had to refuse the job as my in laws were concerned about me traveling alone. I did not lose hope and kept applying for jobs. In my present job, there are two other women who take the same route as I do and we coordinate and manage our travel to work together. This is also very convenient as I do not have to rely on my husband or anyone else from the family to drop me to work. (Respondent 62)

The study has highlighted how networks can help women overcome constraints to access job opportunities. Having access to networks can also help women do better in their professions. One such testimony, where a woman who now works as an entrepreneur in Dehradun, explains how

networks with professional organizations has helped her in being financially secure. She had always harbored a passion for stitching and embroidery and enrolled herself in a Sewing Technology course so that she could enhance her skills to meet professional standards. She lives with her mother and is responsible for financially supporting the household. Even during her training days, she would take stitching orders from women in her neighbourhood to earn a bit of money. She got married after completing her class 12, but her marriage broke off just few months before she graduated from the ITI course. After completing her course, it became all the more necessary for her to be financially stable and she was able to find a job through her own network that she built with potential employers by participating in job fairs and exhibitions from her training days. She says,

I think women need strong 'group-network' to find jobs...I stay in touch with big enterprises, including boutique owners, retailers etc. to learn about what is latest in the market and how to expand my business... With the local network I have established with them, I managed to find a job as a trainer in a reputed tailoring store. This has ensured a more secure income flow and I feel much more confident today. (Respondent 95)

Societal contacts are an advantage from the perspective of equality of opportunity that links the opportunities available in the labour market to individuals. They hold particular importance for women who have traditionally been at a disadvantage in labour market participation owing to factors that are beyond their control. As mentioned before, the advantages of networks/community contacts among females in getting jobs is supported by the literature. The primary survey has shown that these networks are also an enabler between women's individual effort and their labour market participation. They play a key role in shaping women's orientation towards seeking employment and play a supporting role through the process. This is a new dimension that the study has identified that can provide important insights in expanding our understanding of the relationship between circumstances and individual effort in the context of gender and employment.

6.3 Understanding Effort and Opportunity in the context of Women’s Labour Market Participation

The discussion so far helps in building the understanding on effort as an individual attribute and its interlinkages with socio-economic circumstances. During the interviews, it was also evident that effort as an attribute manifest in different forms as opportunities in the labour market can vary based on institutional factors as well. Such variations can be found either in the type of jobs that are available, the sectors they are in, the salaries they offer and other institutional arrangements. This section presents an analysis of how effort can be understood in such contexts.

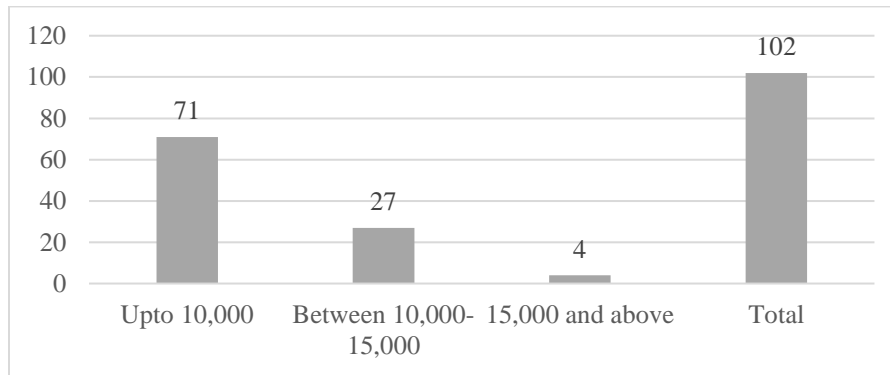
To proceed with the discussion on the relationship between effort and women’s employment, a summary of the type of employment among the sampled women is shown in Table 6.2 and Figure 6.6. As shown in Table 6.2, majority of the women were in salaried employment in the private sector, and some were self-employed. Those few who were engaged in the government sector were employed as contractual staff.⁸⁶

Table 6.2: Details of Employment Type of respondents after graduating from ITIs

Employment Type	Number
Wage Employment	95
<i>Government Sector</i>	5
<i>Private Sector</i>	90
Self Employment	7
Total	102

⁸⁶ The kind of employers included automobile companies, electronics workshops, manufacturing units, service providers dealing with electrical equipment, data service providers, training institutions, beauty and wellness firms, construction/real estate companies, Public Sector Undertaking (PSUs) in the telecommunications, power, transport and other related sectors and so on.

Figure 6.6: Monthly Salaries of the respondents (in INR)



Among those in wage employment, many of them mentioned about their desire to work in the government sector.⁸⁷ The reason for prioritizing government job is because they have longer tenure and offer social security benefits like adequate leave, maternity and childcare provisions, access to pension schemes and so on. At the same time, they were also aware that government jobs are limited and jobs that provide similar social security are hard to find. Such constraints are manifested in the form of institutional barriers that is beyond individual control. Some of the women are planning to later enrol in further professional/technical education so that they can apply for more permanent jobs. While they are satisfied with the salary they are earning today (details shown in Figure 6.6), they are confident that they will be able to earn more with the experience they have accrued from their present job. In all these cases, while the propositions discussed above have shown how women's effort has played a role in their labour market participation, it cannot explain the variations in job opportunities available to women. For example, it cannot be argued that more effort would have led to a job in the government sector or a job with higher salary. Such factors are beyond individual choice or control, and it is important to contextualise effort keeping such factors into consideration. The study also finds that the constraints that are related to the workplace or institutional arrangements are equally important in understanding the role of effort. This becomes clearer as we proceed.

⁸⁷ According to a study by the MSDE (2018), majority of ITI students in India (51%) were found to join ITIs mainly to secure government jobs. Among those interviewed for the study, 85 out of the 95 women employed in wage employment expressed their desire to work in a government job.

While most women who were interviewed were in their first job, there were some for whom this wasn't the case. Out of 102 women, while majority (73) were in their first job, 29 of them had changed jobs. The study tried to understand further the reasons why women had to change jobs. For a lot of women, the types of facilities available at the workplace or the lack of it made it difficult for them to continue in jobs despite being successful in getting the job. For example, women accounted how the lack of facilities such as transportation or sanitation facilities like separate toilets for women is one of the biggest hurdles that they faced at their workplaces. A woman working in an automobile company talks about how transportation to work was a reason for her to change her job. She says,

Most of the industrial units are located far away from the main towns and means of public transportation is limited in such areas. My first office was in an industrial unit in the outskirts of Delhi NCR, and I had to use three different modes of public transport to reach work. It is also quite costly to hire private vehicles and a large part of my salary used to be spent on transportation alone. I know some other women had left the job as well because of similar issues but I don't know what they are doing now. While I was in that job, I had applied for another job in a smaller company, but in a preferable location and got selected for it. Although this is a smaller company, I get time after work to prepare for competitive exams and help my family in household chores. (Respondent 64)

Availability of suitable facilities is important in many other aspects as well. To give an example, a woman who worked in a Computer Hardware company narrates instances of how difficult it was for her to work in a place that did not have separate toilets for women. She says,

I was quite excited to have a full-time job after graduating from the ITI. I used to do quality check of all inventories that the company was receiving and keep a record of all data. I was the only woman in my office. I was treated well by my employer, and I liked the job. However, I faced a lot of difficulty as there was no separate washroom facility for women. At first, I thought it was a temporary problem and I used the facilities in a nearby shopping mall. But this continued and it became very inconvenient for me. What I found to be most shocking is that nobody thought this to be a problem. I therefore left the job and found another job as skills trainer in an institute. (Respondent 28)

The findings discussed above show that lack of sanitation and transportation infrastructure limit women's ability to access opportunities, even if they qualify for jobs. This supports the evidence from studies that show that many of the workplaces in urban India have unhygienic infrastructure that are not suitable for working women (Ratho, 2018). This dissuades women from working in sectors where jobs exist, but they are unable to join. Lack of such facilities also magnify the stigma and inhibitions that families have towards women working outside (Gulati, 2020). It is important to improve workplace infrastructure to remove entry barriers and attrition rate of women in the labour market (Krishnapriya, 2016).

Another interesting revelation was that several women had to change jobs as their employment contract had come to an end. This is because, many entry level jobs in industrial units as well as in public sector firms are contractual in nature with a limited tenure (of usually one year). Given a chance, they would have liked to continue in the same job. A graduate in Instrument Mechanic says,

I really liked my first job in the car manufacturing company as a trainee where I had to check the quality of smaller car parts. I picked up the skills quite fast as it was related to what I studied in the ITI. I had to leave as my contract was only for one year. I knew it was a contractual job when I joined but given a chance I would have liked to continue in the same job. (Respondent 19)

Now she works in a call center for a government helpline number in Dehradun. The salary is enough to sustain her family and she has made a number of friends from different fields in her current job. She plans to continue in this job for another year and then pursue higher education in a college, which she believes will help her in getting a permanent job.

Citing a similar case, a graduate in Turner from Manesar who worked in an automobile industry had to leave her job when the contract ended. Based on the network she built from her ITI days, she now works as an instructor in a coaching institute. She is satisfied with the current job, but she also misses the work environment of her first job that gave her more hands on experience. She says,

That's how all jobs are in this sector. We are hired at the entry level. The salary is good and we like the job. But there is no scope to continue or get promotion after our tenure ends. It is a challenge to be out of a job and find another job immediately. The good thing is that the practical experience of working in an industry shop floor sharpens our knowledge. I became very confident after the job and my students are inspired with my experience too. I think more women should be given such opportunities to work in industries for longer tenure.
(Respondent 89)

While these women have been able to transition from one job to another, it was clear from the responses that they would have liked to continue in the job for longer duration. This also made some women change their career path even if it didn't match their aspirations. Testimony of a woman from Rishikesh in Uttarakhand, who is now working in a clerical job after graduating from a course in Draughtsman Civil can be quoted here. Her father works as tour operator and her elder sister works in a tailoring store. Talking about her experience from joining an ITI to her first job, she says,

I was always great at drawing, and I was good in Maths too. Based on my sister's advice I joined a Fashion Design course in a private training center (because of my fondness for drawing), but soon realized that stitching was not meant for me. It was one of my relatives who guided me to join a course in Draughtsman Civil in an ITI as I was good in Maths too. I really liked my course and did very well in a campus interview to get a job in a power sector company where I was able put my ITI course knowledge to use. I had joined with the expectation that my contract would be extended beyond a year, but it did not happen. In my current job, I mostly have to draft letters and I miss my old job. I will soon join a polytechnic course in Civil Engineering for better career opportunities. (Respondent 46)

While some women managed to get a job after graduating from the ITI, it was not in the same trade that they studied. The reasons for this could be institutional barriers, such as the unavailability suitable jobs during that period, as cited by the women when asked about it. Being employed would still be important and the women would continue to search for jobs or higher education

opportunities while being in employment. For example, a graduate in Computer Hardware and Networking, working in a customer support unit of a company says,

I want to work in a field-based job that is more related to my area of study. Since I graduated, I only saw one such position in a telecom company advertised. I have applied for it but I did not want to keep waiting as I may not be selected. There have been times when I saw that vacancies in government offices were advertised in newspapers but were eventually cancelled after a period. It is risky to keep waiting for such jobs. It is important to grab an opportunity at hand. What is somewhat upsetting is that the job that I am doing now does not require some of the technical skills that I learnt at the ITI. I want to work for some time and then join the training instructor course to be an ITI instructor. (Respondent 8)

The study finds that institutional barriers can also be influenced by gender based social and cultural norms. The experience of an ITI graduate who is self-employed as a CCTV repair operator after graduating from a course in Computer Hardware and Network Maintenance in Faridabad can help explain this. With both her parents working as daily wage labourers, she was always clear that she wanted to work. As an addition to her ITI course, she had enrolled in a short-term skilling programme on CCTV installation and repair as she wanted to broaden her prospects of finding a job. With the skills that she acquired, she provides services to small enterprises like cybercafés and shops in her locality, to install and repair CCTV cameras. On being asked why she does not take this up as a regular salaried profession, she says,

I am the only girl in my locality with this skill; but people don't want to hire me as it is usually considered to be a man's job...They definitely require the services as I have developed a regular customer base. Many of them have office assistants but they do not have the specialized skill that I have. Despite this, employers are not willing to hire me as they are not comfortable to have a woman in their office full time. I have therefore taken it up on my own.. I like my profession but the payment I get is not sufficient for a long-term career. (Respondent 37)

She says she would want to work in a reputed hardware company in a city like Bangalore someday. According to her, knowledge and core skills in a particular area are the most important aspects to progress in life and she wants to apply and sharpen her skills with practical experience. This also has strong resonance with the second proposition on effort discussed earlier. This is an important finding as a lot has been said about gender norms translating into societal barriers. The study has shown that while women have been able to overcome some of those barriers through individual effort, institutional barriers pose another set of challenge. It goes on to show that inequalities in the labour market have deep rooted connotations in terms of shaping institutional arrangements that exist for women. The concept of effort still holds true for women as they change jobs, but this requires focused attention to promote equality of opportunity for women.

One of the measures often promoted to help women overcome labour market constraints is by allowing special provisions or reservations for them. This has been discussed in chapter 5 while discussing the implications of positive discrimination based on gender. The primary survey has provided some interesting insights on this. While trying to understand constraints faced by women in their labour market participation, the study has tried to understand if any of the respondents faced any discrimination as that severely restricts women's access to opportunities.⁸⁸ Interestingly, none of the women were found to recollect any instances where they felt discriminated by their employers or male counterparts, either at the time of interview or at the workplace. But as mentioned in the section above, lack of facilities at the workplace would make them change jobs.

It was found that none of the women benefitted from reservation or any special provision in getting employment. Only those from SC/ST communities benefited from special provisions like reservation of seats and scholarship to support them during the ITI training.⁸⁹ The study tried to explore this further to understand their opinion on the need for special provisions for women while seeking employment. It is worth noting here that the study did not find a strong support among

⁸⁸ Discrimination here refers to unequal pay, unfair selection procedure at the time of interview, or unfair treatment at the workplace.

⁸⁹ As shown earlier in the chapter, 29 women (out of 102) in the sample belonged to SC/ST and OBC categories.

these women for any special or preferential treatment in being considered for jobs; their responses were rather linked to the need for such provisions to widen women's access to education. To give an example, a woman working in an automobile unit says,

Provisions like reservation is not going to help us. What we need is the right support from employers and from society. Reservation can only give us a place, but at the end, if we cannot do our job well, then we cannot progress much. We need more support in education so that we can learn new things and expand our experiences. Being the youngest among three sisters, I have seen my elder sisters work very hard. My eldest sister works as a healthcare attendant in a private hospital and the second one is a teacher in a pre-primary school. They inspire me and I hope I can inspire other women of my age too. (Respondent 91)

Most of the respondents were found saying that women in general need encouragement to study harder rather than any special treatment in the labour market, as they believe that with education, they are capable of getting jobs through their own ability. This in itself has a strong resonance with effort as an individual attribute. Following the discussion from chapter 5, the perception of a person about her/his ability to meet the expected standards is an important determinant of effort that decides his or her performance. The study has clearly shown that women's own perceptions about their ability to show positive outcomes in labour market participation indicate the important role that individual effort can play. This goes beyond restrictions imposed by social norms and gender role attitudes and goes on to show that societal perceptions do not necessarily hold true for women at the individual level.

As propounded by the framework of equality of opportunity, while providing opportunities, disadvantages associated with circumstances should be compensated while effort should be rewarded by society. Drawing a clear distinction between circumstances and individual effort to identify what needs to be compensated versus what needs to be rewarded may not be the only approach in providing opportunities to women.⁹⁰ A compensatory approach influenced by circumstances alone may also impact the decision of employers in providing opportunities to

⁹⁰ This has been discussed in chapter 2 and 5 as well.

women. A common response from ITI principals (who were contacted to get details of potential respondents) was that very few women ITI trainees get employed in large organizations. Employers do not recruit women due to various restrictions, such as restrictions on working hours as stipulated by labour laws and having to put in place other measures (like arranging transportation or constituting special committees) to protect the safety of women. They find it to be a liability to hire women. This supports the existing evidence that show the negative relationship between protectionist labour laws and women's employment as discussed in chapter 5.

As seen from the responses, many of the job opportunities are contractual in nature with limited tenure that pull women out of the labour force. While this could apply for both men and women workers, given the preference in society for women to undertake household responsibilities, this can affect women more than men.⁹¹ A sizable portion of the literature has focused on supply side constraints that women face owing to gender norms and cultural factors. However, these explanations do not address the issues that women face in the labour market owing to institutional limitations that may impact the demand for women labour force. The role of effort in understanding equality of opportunity must therefore take into consideration such limitations as well.

6.4 Conclusion

The study is based on a central idea that individual effort of women has a role to play in their labour market participation. Given that effort as a concept is hard to specify and difficult to measure and observe in absolute terms, the role of effort in women and employment is difficult to quantify. Unlike socio-economic circumstances that have been widely studied as determinants of women's labour force participation, there is limited empirical evidence on individual effort in this context. This calls for a reexamination of women and employment from the perspective of equality of opportunity. The study has done this by positioning effort not within the existing variables like years of schooling or time on task⁹² but from the perspective of individual attributes that can be

⁹¹ Using IHDS data from 2004-05 and 2011-12, Sahoo and Sarkar (2021) show that women not only have a lower participation rate in the labour market, but they also have a much higher exit rate than men.

⁹² See chapter 5 for some of the limitations in using these variables.

considered as effort. The study brings forward individual attributes that can be considered as effort and presents propositions that show the linkages between the conceptual understanding of effort with women's labour market participation. Through these propositions, awareness about end outcome and self-belief and strengthening of core knowledge, were identified as attributes of individual effort that are important to consider. The study also shows how effort as an individual attribute interacts with socio-economic circumstances and discovers the role of societal contacts as a connecting factor. This reinforces the existing body of evidence that talks about the importance of networks, and at the same time adds a new dimension to it by showing that it can be an enabler of individual effort among women.

The study also tried to understand the barriers that the women had to face once they are employed. There were women in the sample who had to leave their first job for another job. The reasons included institutional factors that are beyond their control. For example, lack of proper sanitation facilities like separate toilets for women is one of the biggest hurdles that some women faced at their workplaces. For others, contractual jobs with fixed tenure made them change jobs although they would have liked to continue if they had a choice. Challenges like these are beyond individual control and have been a reason for these women to leave their job for another. The understanding on effort presented in the propositions were still found to hold true for these women in their process to change jobs in search for better opportunities. Effort is therefore a continuous process that helps women overcome various constraints and not a linear concept when it comes to women's labour market participation. It is, therefore, not as straightforward a case to say that more effort leads to more success as effort is driven by individual consciousness and is manifested through various forms, whether it's persistence in pursuing a job or acquiring core knowledge in professions of choice. At the same time, while it is very much at the individual level, it is influenced by factors that exist at the societal and institutional level as well. To address the issue of a low women's labour market participation, effort therefore becomes an important phenomenon from the point of view of equality of opportunity. This can have significant implications for the labour market, which are discussed while concluding the study in chapter 7.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Narrating the Scope of the Study

Inequalities in the labour market based on gender has been an area of academic and policy concern across disciplines. While in developed countries, this largely takes the form of inequality in wages; in developing countries however, it takes the form of inequality in access to employment opportunities (Collier, 1994). A declining share of women who are working in India has been a case of empirical investigation as well as a policy concern. Studies based on human capital model would suggest that lower human capital returns lead to lower human capital investment for girls, which causes this disparity (Boserup 1970; Rosenzweig and Schultz 1982). In developing countries, however, this linkage is not so straightforward as it is guided by an interplay of social norms and practices as well as a host of various socio-economic factors (Foster and Rosenzweig, 2009). The manifestation of these factors limits women's access to opportunities and has been responsible for the declining trend in their labour market participation in India.

With this premise, the present study has made an attempt to study the determinants of women's participation in the labour market within the theoretical understanding of equality of opportunity. This allows us to understand the situation from the perspective of how access to opportunities is shaped by factors that are both within and outside of individual control. The existing body of evidence in this area includes how various socio-economic factors like family background, social norms, gender role attitude and so on play a role. These factors, that often determine 'circumstances', are not within the individual control of women but have been playing a dominant role in deciding their labour market outcomes. Individual effort, which is another dimension in gaining access to opportunities, is considered to be within an individual's own responsibility. This dimension has so far received limited attention. The present study has re-evaluated the existing knowledge around inequality of opportunity for women in the labour market by examining the role of individual effort and its linkages with socio-economic circumstances.

7.2 Rationale, Objective and Procedure of the Study

Women's employment situation, when observed through the lens of equality of opportunity, shows that the evidence around its declining rate is attributed to the dimension concerning circumstances. Effort, which forms the other dimension has received limited attention. It has been said that policies to address inequalities must be based on an understanding of how individuals react to inequalities at the first place. In this regard, inequalities in some respect reflect differences in individual effort (Fallucchi and Ramalingam, 2017). While views on how much effort matters as compared to advantageous circumstances vary widely, the study finds that there is still considerable support towards its role. However, there is limited literature on addressing this in a systematic manner as a result of which there is no explicit linkage between its theoretical construct with practical implications. One of the main contributions of the present study is that it has tried to bridge this gap. The research objectives of the study included the following:

1. The first objective of the study is to understand the situation of women's labour market participation in India based on, firstly, the kind of employment opportunities that women have been able to access; and secondly, the role of socio-economic factors in influencing this situation. This was done using secondary data and provided the background to explore the role of individual effort.
2. The second objective of the study is to build an understanding of individual effort based on its conceptual and theoretical parameters and how it can be situated within the context of gender and labour market participation. This provided the foundation to identify individual attributes that can be considered as effort and how it can be applied in the context of gender and employment.
3. Exploring the role of effort to understand how it can help women in overcoming inequality of opportunity in the labour market forms the third objective of the study. In doing so, the study tried to identify those individual attributes that can be considered as effort and the interlinkages of effort with socio-economic circumstances as well as institutional factors using primary survey data.

It becomes difficult to analyse equality of opportunity, as circumstances and effort are not independent of each other. To address the first objective, using PLFS data, the study began with an analysis of the kinds of opportunities that women are engaged in. To analyse the role of pre-determined circumstances, the study uses data from IHDS-II to understand how factors at the household level as well as factors that go beyond the household but manifest in society through norms and attitudes impact women's labour market status. The analysis based on secondary data provides an overall understanding of the factors behind a low female labour force participation in India. When seen from the perspective of equality of opportunity, this demonstrates the role of predetermined circumstances as many of these factors are beyond individual control. The data however do not help in understanding the role of effort.

Given the difficulties in measuring effort, the study tried to build on the existing knowledge on effort based on an analysis of its theoretical and conceptual discourse to address the second objective. To address the third objective and identify attributes of individual effort, a primary survey was carried out on a sample of employed women graduates from ITIs. Women graduates from ITIs were found to be ideal for the study from a methodological perspective. This is primarily due to two reasons; firstly, women enrolled in ITIs have more or less similar socio-economic backgrounds and secondly, ITIs provide exposure to candidates on job related knowledge as well as acquaints them with methods of connecting with the labour market. This enabled the study to identify effort among the respondents without being influenced by any biases or subjectivity owing to differing circumstances. The information collected through the primary survey was analysed to identify individual attributes that can be considered as effort. In doing so, the study links the conceptual understanding of effort with the observations from the survey and presents the findings in the form of propositions based on the methodological framework of Khadria (1999, chapter 4; see footnote 41 in chapter 3 of this study). A summary of findings that form the key contributions of the study is presented in the next section.

7.3 Major Findings of the Study

The theoretical understanding of equality of opportunity posit access to opportunities to be determined by both circumstances as well as individual effort. The study helps situate women's

participation in the labour force from the overall perspective of how inequalities in opportunities are shaped by circumstances and brings to the fore the importance of considering women's effort. Using secondary data, the study reaffirms that women's employment in India is determined by economic, social and cultural factors at the household level as well as societal practices and norms. Women's own education has been seen to play a positive role but only from the higher secondary/secondary and graduate level. On the other hand, women who are illiterate have greater chances of working than those with primary and secondary levels of education, which implies that the returns to education for women are not as straightforward as the standard human capital model. Women's employment outcome seems to be dependent on institutional factors like availability of jobs that are considered suitable for them as well as the expectation that their education is better suited for marriage prospects rather than employment. The study confirms the existing literature that women's labour force participation decreases with improvement in economic condition of the household. An interpretation of this is that the role of women within the household as caregivers and as symbols of status take over as the economic necessity for women's work decreases. They reassert some of the larger implications of social norms and gender role attitudes that confine women from stepping out for employment.

The study finds that the probability of women being in the labour force is negative for upper caste and Muslim households and validates the evidence that social and cultural norms associated with women's work are stronger in these households. Practices prevalent in society that are a consequence of socio-cultural norms and perception such as 'ghunghat'/'burqua'/'pallu' and occurrences of sexual harassment lowers the chances of women to participate in paid employment. All these findings show whether a woman is employed or not depends on a host of factors that exist in the form of different socio-economic characteristics that are pre-determined and beyond individual control.

Despite various barriers that women face owing to household characteristics and socio-cultural norms, empowering women with mechanisms that give them more exposure and autonomy can improve their chances of employment. This is indicated through factors such as financial empowerment and membership in *mahila mandals* and self-help groups that improve a woman's chances of being employed. The study therefore redirects us towards the need to look at factors

that are not just decided by circumstances but can be shaped at the individual level as well. Using data available from IHDS-II, the study has made an attempt to understand this based on women's willingness to work. Majority of women, across socio-economic categories and education levels, who are out of the labour force are willing to work. It could be argued that women's willingness to work need not necessarily translate into successful labour market outcome. At the same time, there is merit in acknowledging the need to delve deeper into factors that can be considered to be more within an individual's control and can support women in their labour market participation. From the perspective of equality of opportunity, this directs us towards the dimension of individual effort.

The study indicates that women comprise a somewhat higher share in salaried employment than men and, among those employed, women with vocational/technical education seem to occupy a major proportion. However, such findings may not provide an adequate understanding of whether it is an improvement in women's ability to access opportunities. This is because women continue to be segregated in low paying jobs and earn far less than their male counterpart across all employment categories, including salaried employment. This, coupled with the fact that women spend far more time than men on unpaid work related to domestic and care responsibilities, further validates the argument that gender role attitude towards women largely confine their role to household responsibilities. The perception around women's work by employers owing to such gender role attitudes influence their hiring decisions. Given this, it is difficult to derive any inference on how women can overcome some of these challenges with their individual effort.

The fact that circumstances and individual effort are often interlinked, the study confirms the need to pay deeper attention on how individual effort of women can help them in their labour market participation. There are however limitations in the secondary data to capture attributes of women that can be considered as effort. The study draws on the theoretical and conceptual understanding of effort and how it is linked to individual performance or end outcomes. The study finds that a distinguishing aspect of effort is linked to the choice of individuals to undertake and continue with any action to the extent to which they believe that such actions can lead to successful outcomes. The study finds that the understanding of effort in the theoretical and empirical discourse has mostly been applied in the area of academic achievements or workplace performance – the most

common variables being used include years spent in education and time spent on task as they are considered to be within an individual's control. Based on the findings from secondary data, the study posits that such variables alone may not be the most appropriate measures to understand women's effort. This is because women's education outcomes and subsequent entry into the labour market are not driven by their individual choice alone and are highly influenced by socio-economic factors and gender norms. The study further explores this to build an understanding of effort based on individual attributes through a primary survey of employed women.

The individual attributes of effort and their linkages with women's labour market participation have been presented in the form of propositions. The first proposition of the study shows that women's awareness about job opportunities and their self-belief are distinguishing attributes of effort in their pursuit for employment. What also stood out is the importance of core knowledge in their areas of training, and this forms the second proposition of the study. The discussions supporting these propositions show that these attributes can help women overcome gender norms that prevent them from pursuing courses and job opportunities that may not conform to societal expectations around women's work. Given the interconnectedness of individual effort with socio-economic circumstances, the study also presents a third proposition to show how societal contacts play an enabling role in supporting women's effort in labour market participation. These contacts widen women's access to information about the labour market, be it regarding availability of jobs or the kind of responsibilities expected from those jobs, that drive their effort.

The study also finds that the constraints faced by women are not limited to socio-economics factors alone but get further manifested in the labour market in the form of institutional barriers. There are constraints that women face not only in finding employment of their choice but also after they are employed due to various factors that are beyond their individual choice and control. When seen in the context of equality of opportunity, the discourse has often been on societies requiring compensating for those constraints. For women, this has translated into policies that compensate women for the disadvantages they face through special provisions such as reservations or quotas. The study did not find a strong support among the respondents for such special provisions that directly give them entry to the labour market, the underlying reason being the belief that they are capable of participating in the labour market with their own effort. This further validates the

importance of effort and shows that widening women's access to opportunities by encouraging effort is equally important.

Based on the evidence collected, the study emphasizes effort to be a process and not a linear concept as far as women's labour market participation is concerned. It is driven by individual attributes and is manifested in different forms based on social and institutional arrangements. It is clear from the study that there is a psychological value that women ascribe to a job and this in turn has influenced how persistently they have been able to pursue it. For some, while this meant the need to enhance their skills through additional training; for others this also meant doing jobs that would enhance their career prospects to increase their suitability for a job that they aspire for in future. In such cases, being employed would still be their priority, whether public or private, and they continue to pursue their objective by staying in the labour market instead of being out of it. It showed how the women are aware about the different career pathways available even if they did not find an appropriate job right away. The attributes of effort are applicable even when women transition from one job to another and shows that effort is a continuous process that help women overcome various constraints in the labour market. The study therefore provides a renewed approach towards understanding effort and shows that effort is driven by attributes that reflect individual consciousness and is applicable throughout the course of women's pursuit for employment.

7.4 Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The study strengthens the existing knowledge on equality of opportunity by focusing on effort. One of the challenges for the study was to identify effort as an individual attribute without being influenced by any subjectivity in the presence of socio-economic circumstances. Women's successful absorption in the labour market also depends on the availability of opportunity, which related to many other factors, including institutional and structural factors. The study made a careful attempt to overcome any biases arising from such factors by strategically selecting a sample that can possibly control for such variations as discussed in chapter 3. Despite this, a limitation faced by the study is that there are still factors that are interlinked with effort, which could not be isolated through the current methodology. Also, it may not be ideal to make generalisations for

samples that are not similar to the ones studied. Given that the study has tried to operationalize the conceptual understanding of effort through the primary survey, the type of analysis has been exploratory in nature. A limitation of such an approach is that it cannot present findings that are directly quantifiable or measurable. While data from IHDS-II and PLFS were found to be most suitable to capture pre-determined circumstances as it considers a range of variables at the household and societal level, the study did not find suitable variables in the dataset that can measure effort in women's labour force participation. It was extremely difficult to address these limitations within the current scope of the study. They however make a promising area for future research to explore the topic further and the next section puts forward some implication for future research.

It should be noted that many of the parameters included in the study can be used for an empirical analysis to establish measurable linkages between effort and labour market participation of women. However, the purpose of this study is not to use an empirical approach to measure such linkages, rather to establish wider relationships between them to have a broader understanding of effort. It should also be noted here that the study does not overlook nor deny the role that circumstances play in women's labour market participation; rather it lays a special emphasis on how, within those circumstances, women find employment through their individual effort. The study also does not imply that women who are not employed lack individual effort. This is beyond the scope and not the intention of the study. The approach of the study has rather been to understand how effort can be identified among employed women and ascertain its role in their labour market outcome.

The sample considered for the study comprise of women who have graduated from ITIs, which are vocational training institutes and is based on a strong methodological rationale; however, it would be interesting to replicate the study in other sectors as well. An implication for future research would therefore be to analyse effort among women across different fields and disciplines as well as for different levels of professions. Expanding the geographic reach of the study would also throw new light on the observations. While doing so, the interaction of effort with various socio-economic circumstances should also be considered given the dominant role they play in their labour market participation. An empirical investigation to conduct such an analysis would

definitely enhance further understanding on effort. It would also help in establishing more quantifiable linkages between effort and women's employment outcomes, while controlling for various socio-economic factors.

The share of women in paid employment in India being far lower than expected has been a topic of discussion across disciplines. To address this, the government has taken several prominent measures, including extending the period of paid maternity leave, provision of childcare facilities at workplaces, advising states to reduce restrictions on working hours in factories and so on (Ministry of Labour & Employment, 2015). To make women more employable, a number of skilling initiatives are being undertaken through various central and state government schemes and vocational training institutes (MSDE, 2015). All these initiatives give due recognition to the disadvantages faced by women that keep them away from labour market. The study discusses that the interventions aimed at addressing circumstantial barriers alone, may not translate into a higher labour market participation for women. An important policy implication from the study is the need to acknowledge the role of effort to address inequalities faced by women, be it in education, employment, promotion, progression in occupational mobility and so on.

With a focus to improve women's participation in the labour market, the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015, puts due emphasis on the need to mainstream gender role by increasing the number of skilled women in non-traditional sectors and promoting gender sensitivity in workplaces to have a transformational impact on the economy (MSDE, 2015). Laying due emphasis on effort, as highlighted by the study, can help realize such policy objectives. The study has presented a broad picture of how factors that are shaped at the household and societal level determine whether women can join the workforce or not. These factors manifest in the form of norms and attitudes that limit women's access to employment, thereby creating inequalities of opportunities in the labour market.

Compensating for what lies beyond one's control is an important aspect in establishing social justice and it has been part of the literature for a long time. The present study does not deny its role in any way. What it tries to add to the existing knowledge is that encouraging effort through policy actions has the potential to help women over inequalities in the labour market. The study

shows that there is a psychological value that women associate with being employed and their own awareness and self-belief in being employed are important attributes of effort. The study also finds that women are not discouraged to study male-dominated trades and can be successfully employed in any sector with their individual effort. While social perceptions towards women's role in society have resulted in women being underrepresented in sciences and related fields (including engineering trades in vocational courses), the study shows that women are not discouraged to study and pursue professions in these fields at the individual level. Mechanisms that empower women to channelize their own effort can therefore help women overcome various restrictions and change how women are perceived in the labour force.

In light of the findings of the study, there is a need for policy makers to adopt a comprehensive approach to improve access as well as relevance of education and training programmes that provide due attention towards recognizing and nurturing women's effort to improve their labour market participation. The constraints as well as pathways to empower women is context specific, hence the role of effort as an enabler can rarely be linear. It interacts through a process that involves the individual consciousness, societal structures as well as institutional factors. Encouraging women's effort has the potential to further unlock new approaches that can transform the way women's access to opportunities is perceived, both at individual as well as societal levels. Understanding the constraints that women face through a focus on individual effort can therefore be mutually reinforcing in eliminating inequalities of opportunity. Policy discussion in this area can complement the available body of knowledge and has the potential to provide promising results in overturning the declining trend of women's labour market participation in India.

APPENDIX I- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI

Schedule for Interview with female ITI graduates

This interview is conducted for my PhD research titled “Effort or Opportunity: A study of the determinants of women’s labour market participation in India”. The purpose of the study is to understand women’s participation in the labour market from the perspective of equality of opportunity with a particular focus on individual effort. The information that respondents provide through this schedule will be used in an aggregate form for making general inferences. Participants will not be quoted without their permission.

Meghna Sharma
Research Scholar
Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies

CANDIDATE DETAILS

1	Basic Details of Candidate	
1.1	Name:	
1.2	Current Address: <i>Town/Village Name</i>	Permanent Address: <i>Town/Village Name</i>
1.3	Age (in years):	Religion:
1.4	Category: 1.SC; 2. ST; 3. OBC; 4 Others:	Marital Status: 1. Married; 2. Single; 3. Widow/Divorced

2	Last Education Details	
2.1	Last education level before joining ITI:	1. Class 8 2. Class 10 3. Class 12 4. Above Class 12
2.2	What percentage marks did you obtain in this exam?	1. Below 60% 2. 50 -60% 3. 60%-70% 4. Above 70%
2.3	How much did you score in English in this exam?	1. Below 60% 2. 60 -70% 3. 70%-80% 4. Above 80%
3	How would you rate your English-speaking skills?	1. Fluent; 2. Moderate; 3. Not fluent
4	ITI Course Details	
4.1	Name of Trade	
4.2	Course Duration (One year/Two year):	
4.3	Reason for joining the course:	1. I found the course interesting 2. I did not qualify for any other course 3. I wanted to get a job in this field 4. My family asked me to join this course 5. My teacher/friend/relative asked me to join this course 6. I do not know/ No particular reason

5	Have you benefited from any reservation/quota system?	1. Yes – in employment
		2. Yes – in education
		3. Yes – in both
		4. I don't know
		5. No

6	Household Details	
6.1	Head of the household	1. Father 2. Mother 3. Other Family Member

		4. Self
6.2	Occupation of head of the household (if not self)	1. Daily Wage Labourer 2. Salaried – government 3. Salaried – private 4. Self-employed 5. Farmer 6. Others
6.3	Education level completed by the household head	1. Illiterate 2. Studied upto Class 8 3. Studied upto Class 10 4. Above Class 10 5. Graduate 6. Postgraduate
6.4	Household monthly earnings [excluding own earnings]	1. Upto Rs. 10,000; 2. Rs 10000-20000; 3. Rs 20000-30000; 4. Rs 30000 and above

7	What does your mother do?	
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8	How many days in a week did you attend class?	1. Everyday 2. 3-4 days a week 3. 1-2 days a week 4. Can't say (irregular attendance)
9	How many hours did you study at home?	1. No 2. Less than 1 hour 3. 1-2 hours 4. 2-4 hours 5. More than 4 hours
10	Did you take tuitions/extra classes?	1. Yes - in more than one subject; 2. Yes - in one subject; 3. No – did not need it; 4. No – could not afford
11	Did you buy additional study materials from market?	1. Yes - for more than one subject; 2. No - did not know about any additional study materials; 4. No - could not afford to buy additional study materials; 5. No - course material was sufficient
12	What activities did you do to prepare for jobs	1. Prepared a CV/ Bio Data for employers 2. Created profile in a job portal 3. Took short term skill course 4. Visited an employment exchange 5. Participated in job fair 6. Visited industry

13	What is the type of employment you are engaged in?	1. Wage Employment – government/PSU 2. Wage Employment – private sector
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		3. Self-employment
14	What is your monthly salary/earning (in INR)?	1. Upto 10,000 2. Between 10,000 – 15,000 3. 15,000 and above

Descriptive Questions

- a. There are many options for a student after completing secondary and senior secondary education. Can you explain why you decided to join an ITI course and your motivation behind it. What were your expectations while enrolling for the course?
- b. Was employment a priority for you? What has been your biggest motivation or necessity to work? Was it driven by your own expectations or was there any pressure from family or others?
- c. One of the biggest challenges in the labour market is finding information about available jobs. How did you end up in your current job? Did you get any support from anyone in getting this job? Did you face any difficulties, or did you think you had any disadvantage to get a job?
- d. There is a lot of competition in the labour market for jobs and the same is true for the ITI sector. Now that you are employed, would you explain how you prepared yourself for it? Was the ITI course helpful in getting this job? Did you join any additional course to enhance your skills?
- e. Have you been rejected for any job before finding your current job? If yes, when was it and do you know the reasons for it? Did you decline or leave any job after completing the ITI course? If yes, what did you do after being rejected/ after declining/leaving the job?
- f. How would you express the role of your family/relatives/friends/or others in your society in you being employed today? Did they play a supportive role? If yes, how? If not, can you explain any restrictions or problems that you had to face because of them?
- g. There might have been many women in your course who are not working or did not get a job. Now when you look back, why do you think you are successfully employed today? Could you share the most important qualities in you that you think have made you get a job?

- h. You must have had some expectations about what job you would like to do at the time of joining the ITI. Have your expectations been met? Are you looking for another job or other opportunities, such as further education? Can you elaborate why?
- i. There are many socio-cultural barriers that women have to face in the labour market. Have you faced any such barriers? How did you overcome those? Do you think women have to work harder than men to be able to break those barriers?
- j. Have you faced any discrimination while looking for a job or at your workplace? Do you think women need special provisions (reservation/quota/special treatment) to get jobs? What support do you think women need to help them in their labour market participation?

--- Thank you ---

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