

DECLINING FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN THE EMERGING YOUNGEST NATION – A STUDY OF RURAL WOMEN IN THE STATE OF TELANGANA

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ABSTRACT

India, by 2020 is set to become the world's youngest nation with its population's average age at 29 years. The demographic dividend that our country gains cannot deliver positive results unless and until the human resources are harnessed effectively and efficiently. The present study endeavors to explore the reasons for declining female labor force participation in the rural areas of Telangana state. Random sampling technique was used to collect data from 200 respondents. The survey reveals the fact that education by itself do not facilitate women empowerment in rural areas. There is a dire necessity to focus on providing alternative employment sources to agriculture to the qualified women.

Keywords: *Harnessed, human resources, empowerment, facilitate, employment.*

INTRODUCTION

India is the biggest democracy in the world with a population of 1.2 billion. India is set to experience a dynamic transformation as the population burden of the past turns into a demographic dividend. In three years, India will become the world's youngest country. By the year 2020, India's average age will come to rest at 29 years. The findings of the 'State of the Urban Youth, India 2012: Employment, Livelihoods, Skills,' a report published by IRIS Knowledge Foundation in collaboration with UN-HABITAT trace that the population in the age-group of 15-34 increased from 353 million in 2001 to 430 million in 2011. Current predictions suggest a steady increase in the youth population to 464 million by 2021 and finally a decline to 458 million by 2026. By 2020, India is set to become the world's youngest country with 64 per cent of its population in the working age group. With the West, Japan and even China aging, this demographic potential offers India and its growing economy an unprecedented edge that economists believe could add a significant 2 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate¹.

The demographic dividend that our country gains cannot produce positive results unless and until the human resources are harnessed effectively and efficiently. As stated by Aristotle "good citizens make a good state" it is a dire necessity to chisel the emerging young citizens and equip them with proper education, knowledge and skills to arrive at a good state. Demographic

dividend if goes hand in hand with poverty, illiteracy, gender bias, social and economic inequality, terrorism and social unrest will ultimately lead to peril.

ORIGIN OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

A survey conducted by Young Lives India - the Indian Chapter of Young Lives, a study of childhood poverty in 2016, funded by the University of Oxford, UK – in undivided Andhra Pradesh since 2002 revealed that ‘half of the women stay home or were married by age 22 and do not prefer to work’².

The logical link that education should lead to jobs is broken in India. In rural India, 67% of girls who are graduates do not work. In towns and cities, 68.3% of women who graduate don’t have paid jobs, says a 2015 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Women’s Voices, Employment and Entrepreneurship in India³.

These data lend weight to other studies that show Indian women are at a significant and possibly widening disadvantage. Gap between men and women has widened on political empowerment, healthy life expectancy and basic literacy, resulting in India slipping 21 places to 108 in 2017 from 87 in 2016 on the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, FactChecker reported on November 3, 2017⁴.

The present study is to identify the reasons for the women confining themselves to homes though they are adequately qualified to take up employment. This study also identified the measures to be taken to bring women into the active workforce thereby providing them economic justice and economic development for the nation.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

The Indian constitution has provided many provisions to facilitate women’s right to economic justice and proper working conditions for women. The Directive Principles enshrined in Part IV of the constitution is an instrument of instructions to both union and state governments in ushering a classless and socialistic society.

- a) **Article 23(a)** - the state to secure for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
- b) **Article 39(b)** - the state to secure equal pay for equal work for both Indian men and women.
- c) **Article 39(e)** - the state is required to ensure that the health and strength of women workers are not abused and that they are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their strength.
- d) **Article 42** – the state shall make provision for securing just and humane condition of work and maternity relief.

INTER-DISCIPLINARY RELEVANCE

The present study carries interdisciplinary relevance at large. To one degree or another, solutions to social, political, intellectual, and economic problems do not lie in a single focus. The

present study provides a background for approaching issues holistically through an understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of gender bias as a stigma in economic development. This study draws the fiber from Political Science, Economics and Sociology to weave a fabric to derive the reasons for gender inequality and the reasons for the educated women not joining into the workforce.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Women empowerment, gender equality and contribution of women to the economic development of the country carry a lot of significance when India is about to become the youngest nation in the world. The demographic advantage that the country is going to get shall be full-fledged only when there is inclusive development catering to the needs of all the sections of population.

But, unfortunately even after seven decades of independence, the governments and civil society were complacent towards women empowerment. Social and cultural norms too, at large stood as barriers for women to explore new opportunities. The recent statistics throw light on the fact that nearly 50 per cent of women in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states are confining to homes after the age of 22 in spite being educated. India has one of the lowest female participation rates in the world, ranking 120th among the 131 countries for which data are available. Even among countries with similar income levels, India is at the bottom, together with Yemen, Pakistan and Egypt. Worse still, the rate has been declining since 2005.

This is a matter of concern as women's paid employment is known to increase their ability to influence decision-making within the household, and empower them more broadly in society as a whole.

In this context this study tries to elucidate the reasons for low female labor participation in the state of Telangana and thereby attempts to derive at measures to address this lacuna.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is confined to understanding the reasons for low women labor participation in rural areas of Telangana state. This leaves a larger gaps like urban scenario, political participation of women, and cultural factors to be studied in future research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is imperative to have a thorough review of the previous studies on this topic to understand what the other research scholars have already explored through their research studies, books and articles. Prominent among them are:

1. Policy Research Working Paper titled "Precarious Drop - Reassessing Patterns of Female Labor Force Participation in India" written by Luis A. Andres, Basab Dasgupta, George Joseph, Vinoj Abraham and Maria Correia, Published by World Bank Group - South Asia Region Social Development Unit, April 2017. This research paper provides

- a description of nearly two decades of patterns and trends in female labor force participation in India from 1993–94 to 2011–12.
2. Research Paper on "Empowerment of Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institution in Gulbarga District in Karnataka" authored by Dr.K.N.Doddamani and published by Quest Journals Journal of Research in Agriculture and Animal Science Volume 2 ~ Issue 3 (2014) pp:09-14. This paper tries to explore women empowerment by providing political rights at grass root level.
 3. 'Half a Billion Rising: The Emergence of the Indian Women' book written by Anirudha Dutta and published by Rupa Publications Private Limited. This book analyzes the change drivers and the repercussions of present-day gender revolution. It also surveys how society at large and men in particular are reacting to the rise of women power.

OBJECTIVES

1. To estimate the extent of the recent decline in female labor force participation in the target area.
2. To assess the reasons for women not joining into work force.
3. To examines and assesses the contribution of various demographic and socioeconomic factors in explaining the female labor force participation decision and the recent drop.
4. To analyze weather education is the sole factor enough to help women to attain economic liberty by gaining employment.
5. To identify solutions to bring more women to embark on the journey for achieving economic liberty by attaining employment opportunities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the completion of the study empirical and descriptive methods are adopted, specifically the methodology adopted is **Exploratory**, to inquire the extent of women participation as labor force in target area; **Descriptive**, to making careful observations and detailed documentation of reasons for women confining to homes and; **Explanatory**, in the sense, to analyze the observed phenomenon.

The conclusions derived in this study are based on primary data through questionnaires and secondary data through books, journals, magazines, news papers and internet. The selection of respondents was through random sampling. This survey aimed at eliciting information on the respondent's marital status, educational qualifications, skills acquired and their participation into labor force. The research design adopted for the study is the preparation of questionnaires to collect the opinion of 200 respondents from different sections of women in rural areas of Telangana, with special focus on women belonging to Scheduled Tribes. Survey was conducted in villages like Janakinagar, Sithal thanda Gudibanda, Chilukuru, Narayanapuram, Dondapadu, Balajinagar, Ramalaxmipuram of Suryapet district of Telangana state.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Jawaharlal Nehru once remarked, “**I have long been convinced that a nation’s progress is intimately connected with the status of its women**”. In the wake of waves of economic liberalization, the condition of India – when thought of in terms of economic and human development- has improved dramatically.

Yet, while the status of women has arguably improved in both the public and private spheres, their ability to access opportunities in this newly liberalized economy remains precarious.

India’s Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP) rate has remained visibly low; the ILO (2013) ranks India’s FLFP rate as 121 out of 131 countries, one of the lowest in the world. In 2013, India had the lowest FLFP rate in South Asia, with the exception of Pakistan. Globally, only parts of the Arab world held a lower FLFP rates than India in the same year⁵.

Moreover, the FLFP rate dropped from 49.0 percent to 37.8 percent in rural areas between 2004-05 and 2009-10 (NSSO, 2011), despite an impressive annual GDP growth rate of around 8.6 percent, and an annual population growth rate of 1.74 percent. The same pattern continued into the most recent round of the National Sample Survey (NSSO) in 2011-12. Among the Asian economies, only China experienced a marginally higher drop in FLFP rate from 1990 to 2013. However, in comparison to India, China’s FLFP rate remained considerably higher at 64 percent. Pakistan, which had lower FLFP than India in 2013, experienced a sharp rise in women’s participation in the labor force during 1990-2013. Further, for the first time in recent history, estimates suggest that between 2004-05 and 2009-10, not only was there a decline in India’s FLFP rate, but also a shrinking of the total female labor force.

If the number of women who quit jobs in India between 2004-05 and 2011-12 (the last year for which census data is available), was a city, it would, at 19.6 million, be the third-most populated in the world, after Shanghai and Beijing.

Only 27% Indian women are currently in the labor force. Among G-20 countries, only Saudi Arabia is worse, IndiaSpend reported on April 9, 2016. Within South Asia in 2013, India had the lowest rate of female employment after Pakistan. In over two decades preceding 2013, female labor force participation in India fell from 34.8% to 27%, according to an April 2017 World Bank report⁶.

India’s female labor force participation rate, at 24%, was below the world average of 39% in 2016, according to World Bank data. India was ranked 172 among 185 nations for which data were available.

Not only were fewer women training themselves for the labor market, far more women were married by age 22 in 2016 than men, according to research by Young Lives India – the India chapter of Young Lives, a study of childhood poverty funded by the University of Oxford, UK – in undivided Andhra Pradesh since 2002.

These data lend weight to other studies that show Indian women are at a significant and possibly widening disadvantage. Gap between men and women has widened on political empowerment, healthy life expectancy and basic literacy, resulting in India slipping 21 places to

108 in 2017 from 87 in 2016 on the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, FactChecker reported on November 3, 2017.

“India remains the fastest growing economy in the world and it will get a big boost from its approach to GST which will - reduce the cost of doing business for firms, reduce logistics costs of moving goods across states, while ensuring no loss in equity,” said Junaid Ahmad, World Bank Country Director in India. “Low female labor force participation, however, remains a serious concern. Higher level of women participation in the economy can help propel India closer to double digit growth”⁷.

This paper attempts to conduct an empirical examination to better understand the socioeconomic milieu and demographic dynamics of this downslide in FLFP during the current decade. This study, through the data collected, endeavors to track insights into finding the reasons for the decline in FLFP and to explore the drivers to steer the women population into the productive activity there by ushering a gender equitable and socialist society.

1. Table 1 reflect that out of 200 respondents of the target area 76% belong to ST, 20% belong to SC and 04% belong to BC.

Community wise categorisation of respondents

Sl. No	Caste	Respondents
1	SC	40
2	ST	152
3	BC	8
4	OC	0

2. Table 2 highlights the educational qualifications of the respondents. Out of the respondents 15% are Post Graduates, 32% are Graduates, 33% completed Intermediate, 17% SSC and 3% are illiterates.

Educational Qualifications of Respondents

Sl. No	Qualification	Respondents
1	Illiterates	6
2	SSC	34
3	Intermediate	66
4	Graduation	64
5	Post Graduation	30

3. Table 3 details about the Employment Oriented Courses done by the respondents. This data reflects that 9% undertook Nursing training, 16% done TTC/B.Ed and 1% underwent Lab Technician training. This survey reveals that nearly 74% of the respondents are not seriously inclined to pursue any certified employment oriented course

for practical employment. Though majority of the respondents have regular academic qualifications, they are least equipped with employability skills.

Sl. No	Course	Respondents
1	Nursing	18
2	TTC/B. Ed	32
3	Lab Technician	2
4	Mushroom Culture	0
5	Librarian	0

4. Table 4 highlights about the Skill Enhancement Training undertaken by the respondents. This data reflects that 32% undertook Basic Computer Course, 29% tailoring, 10% Beautician, and 29% failed to undertake any kind of skill enhancement training.

Sl. No	Course	Respondents
1	Basic Computers	64
2	Tailoring	58
3	Beautician	20
4	Mobile Repair	0
5	Untrained	58

5. Table 5 explores the present daily grind of the respondents. The survey shows that 58% are either house wives or confined to homes, 16% are pursuing agriculture, 15% are engaged in private jobs, 1% are in Government Service, 2% are running business and 8% are continuing their caste based occupation.

Sl. No	Present Occupation	Respondents
1	House Wife	116
2	Agriculture	32
3	Private Job	30
4	Government Job	2
5	Business	4
6	Traditional Occupation	8

6. Table 6 examines the participation of women in Self-help groups. The study projects that 19% are members of DWACRA group, 4% are members of Sthrinidhi and 78% are inactive in any of the self-help groups.

Membership in Self-help groups

Sl. No	SHG	Respondents
1	DWACRA	38
2	STHRINIDHI	8
3	OTHERS	0

OBSERVATIONS

1. The logical link that education should lead to jobs do not hold ground among women in India in rural areas. India's first chief statistician and country Head for the International Growth Centre's India Central Programme Mr. Pronab Sen observed that, "More girls are being educated than boys, but do not know where they are going,"⁸.

The survey sheds light on the fact that, though 97% of the respondents are educated (15% are Post Graduates, 32% are Graduates, 33% completed Intermediate, 17% passed SSC) only 18% of the women joined into work force.

2. Out of 97% of educated women, 58% are confining to homes without pursuing any active employment. Either they are married or are disinterested in pursuing any employment.
3. The survey reveals that the rural society is in favor of educating the girls, but stands far behind in giving equal opportunity with men to pursue employment and attain economic independence. The data extol that 71% of the women have undertaken Skill Enhancement Training (32% Basic Computer Course, 29% Tailoring, 10% Beautician). But, of these girls, only 18% have taken up employment which needs to be addressed.
4. 24% of the educated women are under employed and still pursuing traditional occupations like agriculture and caste based occupations (16% agriculture & 8% caste based occupations).
5. Fewer jobs in agriculture have not been replaced by alternative jobs considered suitable for women.
6. 78% of the women are not active participants of any self – help groups which are initiated to give a credit base to women at rural areas.
7. Cultural and societal prejudices still play a pivot role in deciding the status of women in the society. Social norms about appropriate behavior for women and the enforcement of these norms by parents, in-laws and husbands dictates their ability to seek employment. The 2011 Indian Human Development Survey finds that a sizeable number of women need to take permission from a family member to even go to the market or health centre, said Rohini Pande of Harvard Kennedy School⁹.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Women in rural areas, because of their social and cultural milieu, family obligations and for security reasons are unable to travel to cities for pursuing employment. Ergo, it is dire necessity to provide more employment opportunities for women in the rural areas.

2. Obvious solution to bring more women into workforce is skilling. It is important to skill young women to meet what industry demands. Department of Women Development & Child Welfare, Government of Telangana has in the recent past has launched number of projects for women like – Arogya Lakshmi, Balamrutham, Early Childhood Care and Education, Supplementary Nutrition Programme, Care and Nutrition Counselling Service and Child Protection¹⁰. Though the above projects are playing an instrumental role in taking care of health and hygiene of women, there is an immediate need to formulate policies that provide employment opportunities to women in the rural areas.
3. Telangana is one of the few states where a separate Department is functioning for development and welfare of women and children. Simultaneously the programmes like Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, TG SERP (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty) ect, need to be enhanced to cover majority of women population in the state.
4. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme For Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (**RGSEAG**) **Sabla** is a centrally sponsored programme initiated in 2011. As a pilot project this programme is launched in 03 districts of Telangana i.e, Adilabadh, Mahaboobnagar and Hyderabad¹¹. Analyzing the pros and cons of this programme, there is a need to initiative such kind of programmes in all the districts of the state.
5. Woman-friendly workplaces need to be brought about. There's a dire necessity of infrastructure that would enable women's participation in the workplace.
6. Education on gender sensitization is of primary necessity. The societal norms that limit women to four walls need to be shattered.
7. Hostels for working women and crèches for their children.
8. The role of companies in nurturing gender diversity by providing equal number of jobs to women, and also to pay equal pay for equal work.
9. To bring a change in the attitude of women. They themselves seem inclined to choose trades that are traditionally considered women oriented: beauty and healthcare for instance. "Social norms and a lack of information often limit women's opportunities to so-called traditional jobs, closely linked to typical ideas of what women can and cannot do.

CONCLUSION

The present survey display a startling fact that nearly 58% of the women in the target area of study are confined to domestic boundaries, though 97% of them are educated and are qualified to take up positive employment. Many reasons like lack of alternative to agriculture to provide employment opportunities to women in rural areas, patriarchic social base, cultural prejudices, family burden, poor transport facilities to work place etc are playing an important role in confining the women to their homes. This gender bias needs to be addressed to bring about social and economic justice. If women participated in the economy on a par with men, India could increase GDP by up to 60%, or \$2.9 trillion, by 2025, according to a 2015 study by the McKinsey

Global Institute, a think tank. At present, women contribute a mere 17% to the country's GDP, well below the global average of 37%.

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GRAPHS

Table 1: Community wise categorisation of respondents.

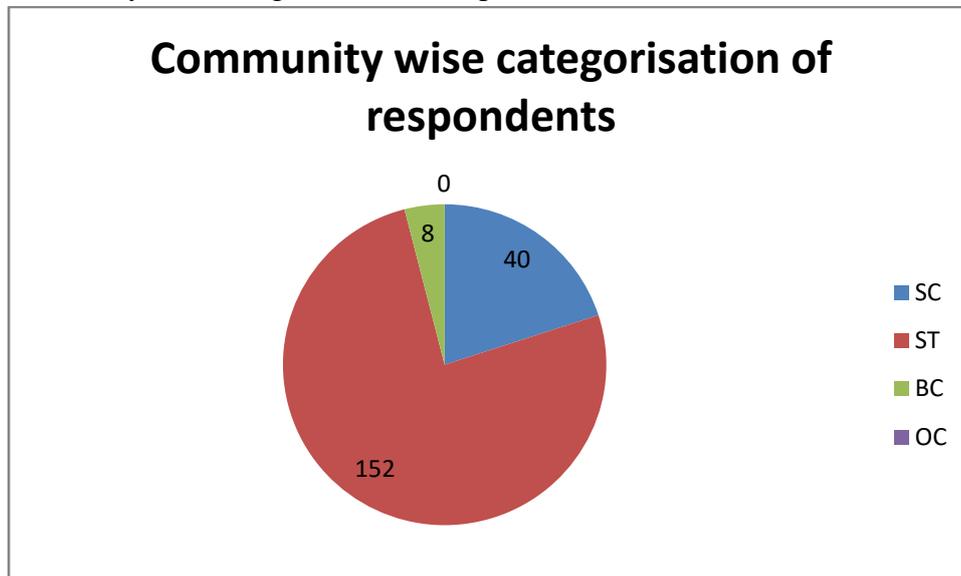


Table 2: Educational Qualifications of respondents.

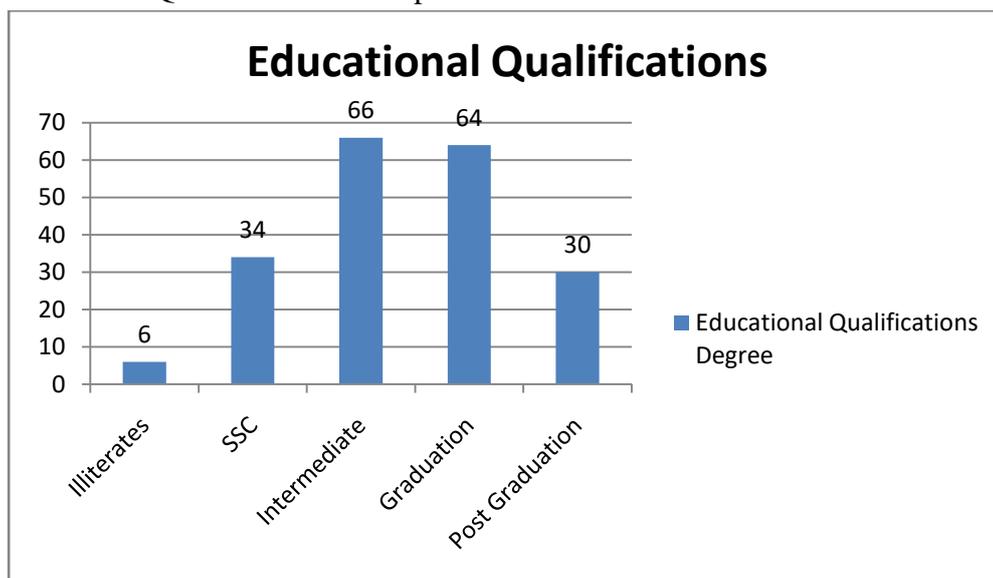


Table 3: Employment Oriented Courses undertaken by respondents,

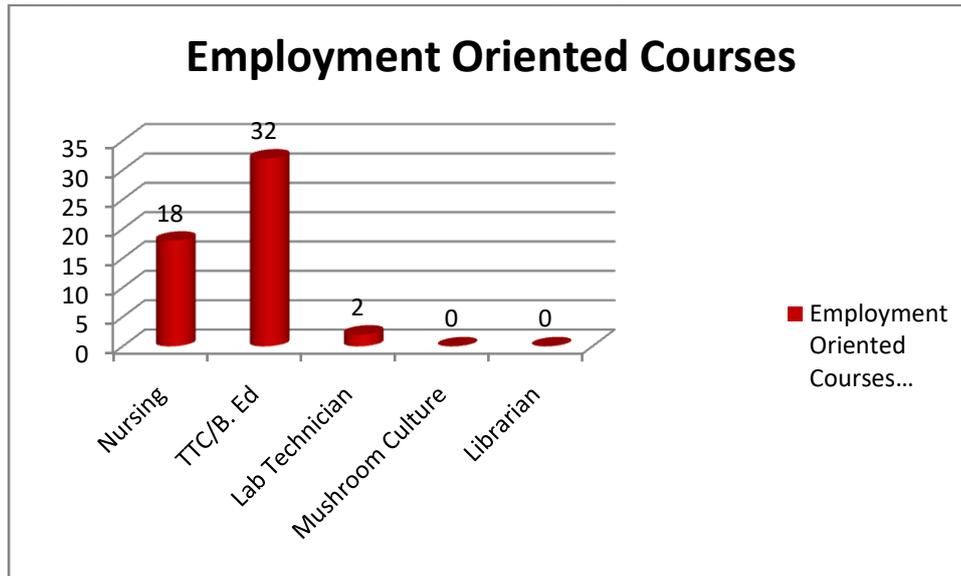


Table 4 – Skill Enhancement Training.

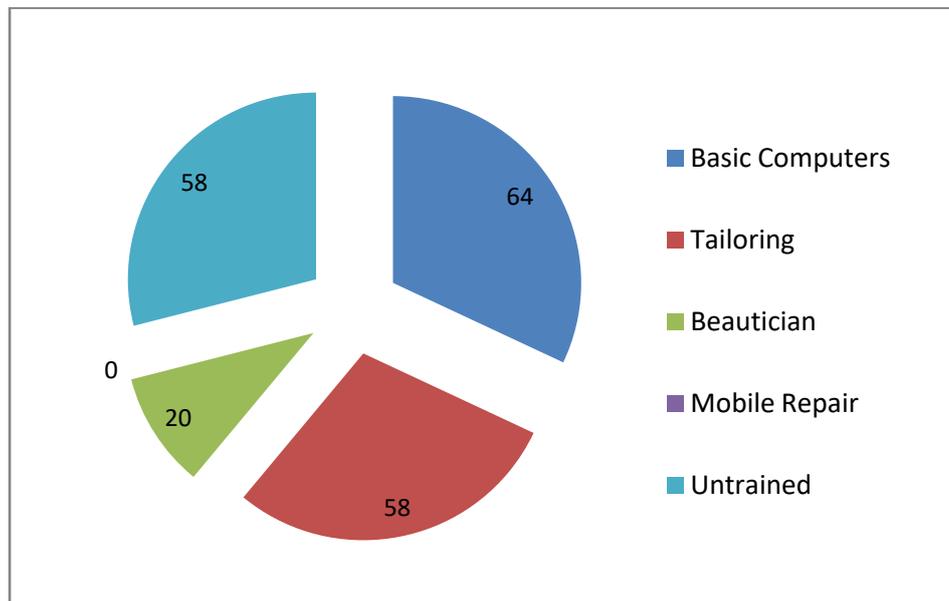


Table 5: Present Occupation of the respondents.

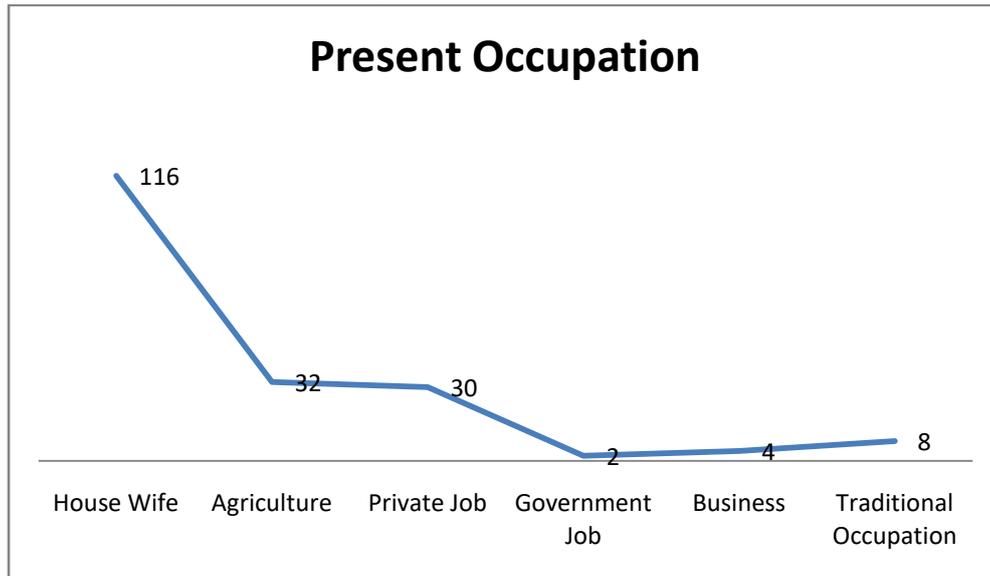


Table 6 – Participation in Self-help groups.

