

‘Double Disadvantage’ of females of Scheduled Tribes in India- A myth or reality?

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at exploring whether the phenomenon of ‘double disadvantage’ hold in reality in the labour market for females belonging in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category. Using secondary data from National Sample Survey reports and International Labour Organization reports, this paper concludes by stating that though employment of ST females is higher than females of Others category (those belonging to neither Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes nor Other Backward Classes) this is solely due to economic distress. When studying the nature of their work, it is found ST females are more likely to be engaged in the casual employment and less likely to be in regular wage work. Wages are higher paid to ST males and Others females compared to ST females. Therefore, females of ST category are much worse off economically compared to their counterparts in Others category, not only due to their gender, but also due to their social category. Targeted policies for training and employment for these women will help to bring them out of poverty trap and improve their social as well as economic condition.

KEYWORDS: Double disadvantage, Scheduled Tribes, Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio, Wage disparity

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of ‘double disadvantage’ refers to a situation where a section of the society faces overlapping discriminatory practices against them by the society. In a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious country like India, the situation of double disadvantage is quite common. There are a large number of backwards sections in the society like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backwards Classes, women, transgender, physically disabled persons, etc. When an individual falls in more than one of the categories, then the person would be worse off than others. This paper aims at exploring the economic condition of females belonging to Scheduled Tribes(ST). Scheduled Tribes are sections of the society who are discriminated against due to their cultural and lingual differences. They constitute around 8.2% of the country’s population. Discrimination on the basis of gender is also very common in India, due to its history of patriarchal society. Majority of the females are socially and economically vulnerable leading to them facing further abuse from the society. Therefore, a detailed study of economic condition of ST females will shed light of the worsening position of these women in the country. An individual’s economic condition is an important indicator of his/her vulnerability. Economic empowerment is seen as a significant means through which an individual’s well-being in the society can be improved. Therefore, this study strives to study the economic condition of ST females by making a

comparative study of them with females from non-discriminatory sections of the society.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Venkatanarayana (2013) explored the structure of workforce in Andhra Pradesh, India. Using National Sample Survey data of 2009-10, it was shown that 92% of ST population lived in rural areas and engaged in agricultural sector. It was found that Work Participation Rate was high among ST population in the state and particularly for females. This was not due to greater job opportunities but economic necessity that forced female STs to join the labour force [1].

Women belonging to underprivileged groups have long been the focus of intense studies. Dunn (1993) used Indian Census data, to document the extreme degrees of gender inequality among the scheduled groups. Findings indicated that relative to men, women in these groups have far more limited access to both educational and employment resources. Therefore, their situation is sensitive and requires targeted efforts like educational scholarships, vocational training, and child care for them [2].

Government of India has actively strived to achieve economic inclusion of the backward sections of the society through various schemes. Jasminedeporal and Arulselvam (2020) investigates the role of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) adopted in 2005 at improving the employability of STs in Tamil

Nadu, India. The study revealed that total number of job issued in the state by MGNREGA for the tribal households have increased around eight times during the study period of nine years from 2006-07 to 2014-15. Share of Tamil Nadu in getting benefit from MGNREG scheme was also increasing over the study period. Therefore, such schemes have proved to be beneficial in achieving rural employment and development through the inclusion of ST population [3]. Another study by Breitzkreuz et al (2017) in Odisha, Kerala and Tamil Nadu used primary data. The study found increase of employment of marginalized sections of the society though it failed to improve economic condition of these groups due to low wages. Gender affected the work conditions and there was wage discrepancy between male and female workers. However, women workers in Kerala also admitted about the flexible work hours offered by MGNREGA that helped them to work and also fulfill household responsibility [4].

Prakash (2020) had studied the effect of employment quotas on the economic condition of minorities in India like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The study used National Sample Survey data set to show that a 1-percentage point increase in the employment quota for Scheduled Castes increased the likelihood of obtaining a salaried job by 0.6-percentage points for male Scheduled Caste members residing in the rural sector. The employment quota policy had no impact for Scheduled Tribes, which is a matter of [5].

Another study by Howard and Prakash (2011) revealed using National Sample Survey data that the benefits of employment quotas are reaped by the Scheduled Castes who tend to get jobs in high-skill occupations. Members of Scheduled Tribes live in geographically isolated areas where high-end skill employment are scarce. So they work in low wage jobs and remain economically impoverished compared to other sections of the society [6].

Jain and Ratnam (1994) had evaluated the effectiveness of employment policies of the Government of India since Independence. The study revealed that the actions programmes were significant even though they fell short of targets and had to be extended beyond their targeted period due to lack of achievement. But this was largely because only a small proportion of the SCs and STs population qualified for better jobs in the Government. The paper concludes by saying that employment programmes should aim at reaching not only the formal sector but also the large informal sector in the country where majority of SC/ST population were engaged. This will be effective in improving their well-being [7].

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a descriptive analysis of the condition of ST females in India. The study is based on secondary research data taken from the following three sources:

- Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-2018). This Report is based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by NSSO from July 2017 to June 2018. Self-employed refers to those who worked in household enterprises (self-employed) as own-account worker, worked in household enterprises (self-employed) as an employer or worked in household enterprises (self-employed) as helper. Regular wage/ salaried employee refers to those who worked as regular wage/salaried employee. Casual labour refers to those who worked as casual labour in public works in MGNREGA, or other than MGNREG public works and worked as casual labour in other types of work. Unemployment Rate (UR) has been defined as the percentage of persons unemployed among the persons in the labour force [8].
- India Wage Report published by International Labour Organization (2018). This report on India was based on the data collected by the Employment and Unemployment Survey (EUS) of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in its 68th round (2011-2012) [9].
- Employment and Unemployment among Social Groups in India(2012): it is published by National Sample Survey which is a quinquennial survey conducted on employment and unemployment level in India. Labour force participation rate (LFPR) and Worker Population Ratio (WPR) values of the two social groups: ST and Others (those belonging to neither Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes not Other Backward Classes) have been considered in this study. LFPR is defined as the number of persons in the labour force per 1000 persons. Worker Population Ratio is a statistic that has been defined as the number of persons employed per 1000 persons [10].

This study will analyze the above data sets to study not only the level of employment amongst ST females but also study the nature of their employment in India. For this, this paper makes a comparative analysis of employment conditions of ST females with that of ST males and also with the females belonging to Others category , i.e. those who do not belong to any of the underprivileged categories. For this, the study uses the following statistical tools such as line charts and column charts to ensure that the comparative study is visually represented due to which it will be easier to be interpreted by everyone.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This paper will first evaluate the nature of employment (casual, regular or self-employment work) of ST female. Then the study will analyze the trend of rural and urban wages of the ST females, ST males and Others category females. Then, it will evaluate the Labour Force Participation Rate and Work Participation Rate of ST females.

Casual employment was higher for males than females by around 10 per cent, as shown in Figure 1. For females, it is 11.7% while for males it is 21.9%. Therefore, females are more prone to be casually employed than males in ST category. However, the difference is not evenly distributed amongst the sectors. The difference was highest in industrial sector (10.8% for males and 1.8% for females) and lowest in agricultural sector (10% and 9.7% for males and females respectively).

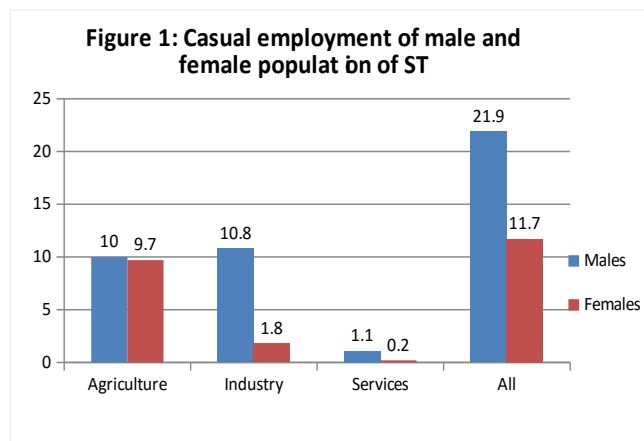
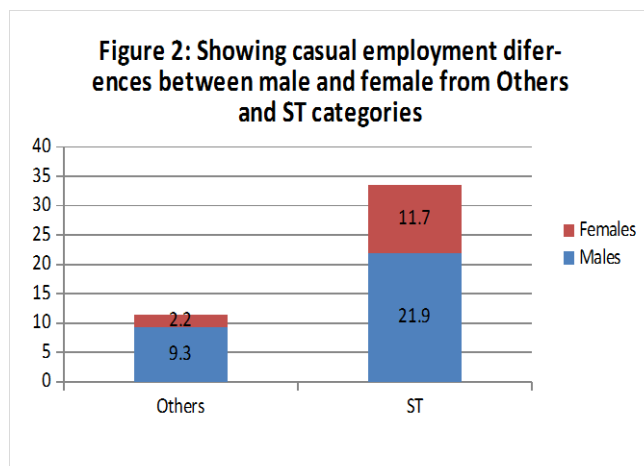
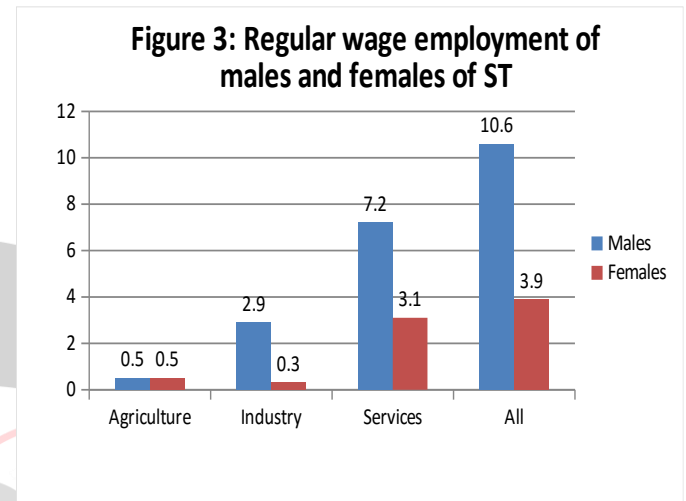


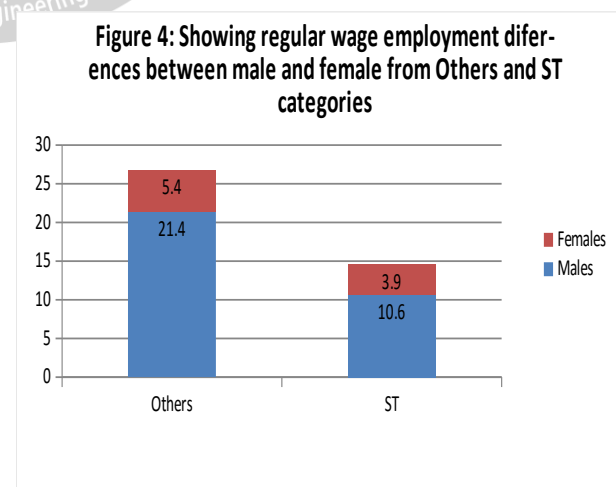
Figure 2 makes a comparison of casual employment between ST and Others category. If we consider the Figure 2, we find that only 2.2% of Others females are casually employed whilst it is 11.7% for ST females. Therefore, Others females are less likely to be in this type of employment compared to ST females. Also, proportionally speaking, the difference between male and female employment in casual labour is lower for ST category as against the Others.



In case of regular wage employment as shown in Figure 3, we find employment is least in agricultural sector and highest in service sector, where majority of formal employment occurs. Regular employment is 10.6% for ST males and 3.9% for ST females. Therefore, the difference between employment of male and females of ST is highest in regular wage work. This shows that discrimination on the basis of gender occurs mostly in case of regular wage jobs. Difference between male and female employment is also highest in service sector because it is 7.2% for males and 3.1% for females. This implies discrimination faced by ST females in labour market.



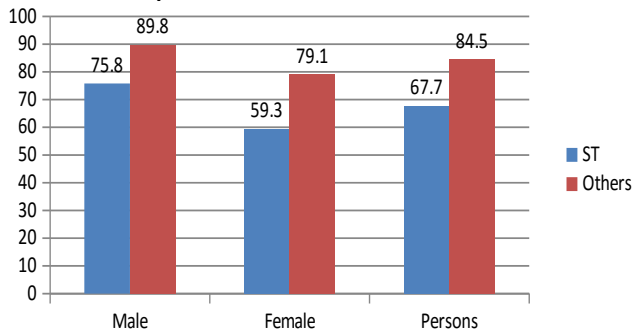
Employment of Others females is higher (5.4%) in regular wage work compared to ST females (3.9%) as shown in Figure 4. This points to double disadvantage problem faced by ST females in case of stable work opportunities. Being an ST female makes the person less able to get a formal sector job than Others females. Another reason for this may be lower skill-training of ST females which puts them in a disadvantageous position compared to other females.



In Figure 5, low percentage of ST females in regular work can also be attributed to the low literacy rates among them. Literacy rate refers to the proportion of the population who can read and write. Access to education is poor for ST category persons, including the males and females. ST

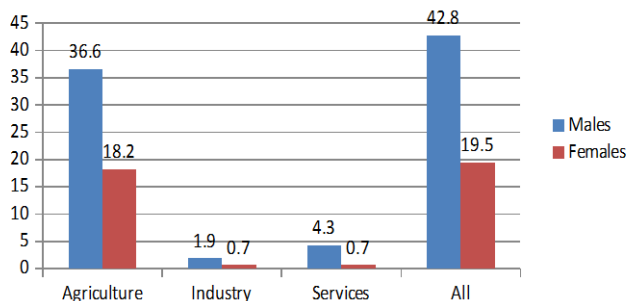
persons have lower literacy (67.7%) than Others persons (84.5%), implying to lower access to education amongst them. However, ST females (59.3%) have even lower literacy rates than ST males (75.8%), hinting at the double disadvantage problem they face in education sector also. This has a direct impact on their job prospects. This explains the reason for low percentage of ST females in the service sector which requires educated and skilled work force.

Figure 5: Literacy rate of males, females and persons from ST and Others



In case of self-employment, a similar trend is witnessed where males dominate as workers (42.8%) compared to females (19.5%). Therefore, we can conclude that females have lesser chance of getting engaged in self-employment compared to males belonging to ST category. Agricultural sector has the highest percentage of male and female ST workers (36.6% and 18.2% respectively). This is because of the nature of this sector which involves farming in own farms and using family labour for cultivation. Other sectors have very low percentage of male and female ST workers as self-employed. This has been illustrated in Figure 6.

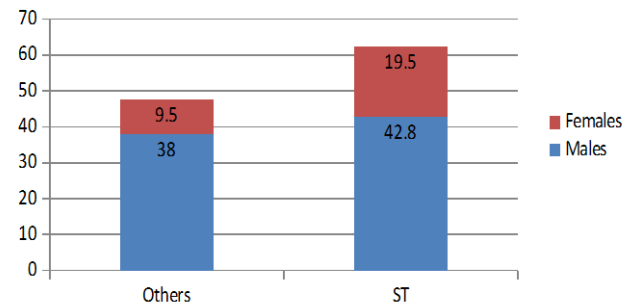
Figure 6: Self-employment of males and females of ST



In Figure 7, self-employment is lower for females of both the categories compared to males. For ST females, it is 19.5% while for Others females it is 9.5%. The difference of self-employment is higher between males and females for Others compared to ST. This is due to economic distress of STs that forces females to engage in self-employment

jobs. Since they are at a disadvantage in formal sector jobs, they seek self-employment in order to survive.

Figure 7: Showing self-employment differences between male and female from Others and ST categories



The following table shows the percentage of workers from ST and Others category who are engaged in different sectors of the economy. One important observation is that ST population, including both males and females, are more likely to be in the agricultural sector (37.8%) and least likely to be in the service sector (8.3%). The agricultural backwardness in our country points to the poor economic condition of the ST population compared to that of Others category people. This has been illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Percentage of workers of Others and ST in each sector

	Others	ST
Agricultural	15.5	37.8
Industry	9.8	9.8
Services	18.1	8.3

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-2018)

If the unemployment data is considered, then in Figure 8, we find that unemployment rate of females of ST is 0.9% while that of ST males it is 3.9%. If we consider this in addition to the earlier findings that ST females are lesser employed than the males, this imply that lesser percentage of females enter the labour force than males from ST category. Females of both the categories have much lesser unemployment rate are much lower than that of males. This is not due to greater employment of females than males in the labour market. Since females are less likely to be in the workforce, their employment rate as well as unemployment rate is lower compared to that of males. An interesting finding from this data is that unemployment rate of females of Others category (1.5%) is higher than ST females (0.9%).

Figure 8: Showing unemployment rate of Others and ST categories

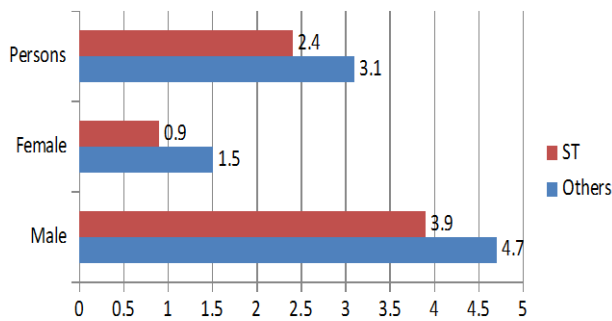


Table 2 shows the level of rural real daily wages for different categories in regular employment and casual employment. If we consider 2011-12 data, we find ST Male receiving on average a real wage of 337 for regular work and 122 for casual labour daily. However, ST females receive only 197 for regular work and 97 for casual work. This is even lower than the wages received by Others females which are 251 for regular work and 100 for casual work daily. So, ST female are poorer, not only compared to their male counterparts, but also suffer from relative economic disadvantage compared to females of Others category.

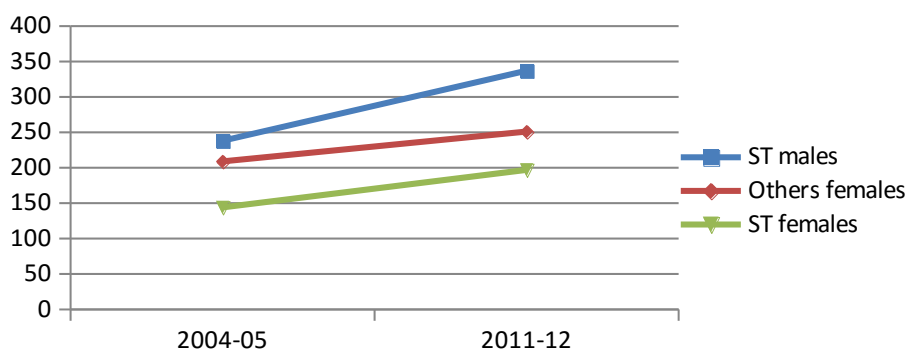
Table 2: Real average daily wages in regular and casual employment in rural areas for ST Male, ST Female and Others Female for the years 2004-05 and 2011-12 in India

	Regular employment wages		Casual employment wages	
	2004-05	2011-12	2004-05	2011-12
ST Male	238	337	83	122
Others Female	209	251	64	100
ST Female	144	197	60	97

Source: India Wage Report, International Labour Organization (2018)

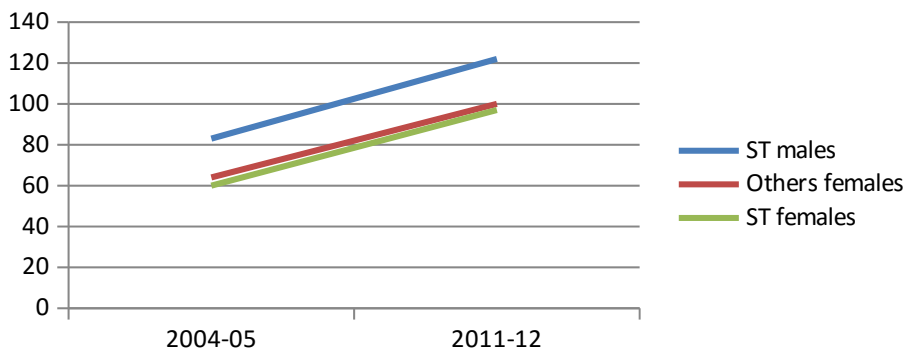
Figure 9 and 10 shows the trend of rural wages of regular employment and casual employment respectively from 2004-05 to 2011-12. Since, STs are more likely to be engaged in agriculture, we feel it important to analyse the trend of wages in rural areas where agriculture is the chief source of income. This will help to indicate the economic condition of the ST population more clearly. If we consider rural wages of regular employment, there has been an upward trend of all the three categories. This implies that wages have increased for all between these two time periods. The primary reasons for this are the rising cost of living in the country and more stringent minimum wage laws. However, ST males are much better paid than females of both the categories. This points to the discriminatory practices in the labour market on the basis of gender. ST females are even more disadvantaged as they are paid even less than Others females. This hints at the problem of double disadvantage present in the labour market for the ST females. This is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Showing trend of rural wages of regular wage employment



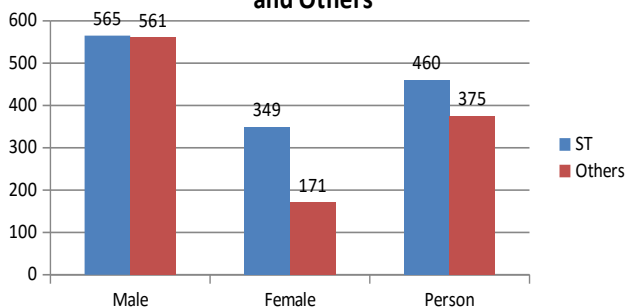
In case of casual employment, females of both the categories were paid more or less the same, in Figure 10. ST males were paid more than females for casual work, irrespective of the categories of the females. This shows that in terms of wages, females, irrespective of their category, are always paid less than males, due to discriminatory practices in the labour market. However, amongst the females, ST females are paid less than Others females due to double disadvantage that they face. But the difference between their wages is very less.

Figure 10: Showing trend of rural wages of casual employment



Labour force participation rate is number of employed and unemployed persons per 1000 working-age persons in the population. While half of the males participate in the labour force (575 for ST males and 561 for Others males), in both the categories, the trend is not similar for females. For females, we find that ST females participate more in the labour force (349 per 1000 females) compared to Others females (171 per 1000 females). Participation is mostly due to economic distress among ST women. Dire poverty forces them to move out of their houses and find work. However as we have seen earlier, their ability to find regular wage jobs are more limited than females of Others category. Most of ST females are stuck in low-paying jobs with poor working conditions. This is shown in Figure 11.

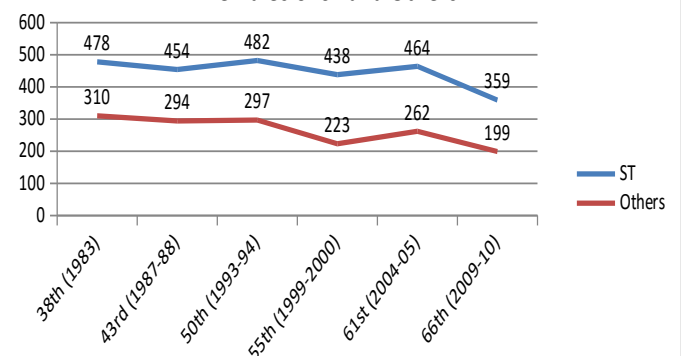
Figure 11: Labour force participation rate of ST and Others



Worker population ratio is also higher for females of ST

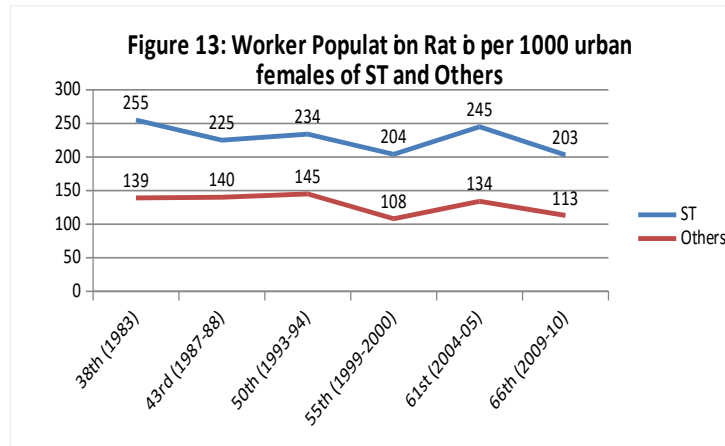
category compared to Others females in the rural areas from 1983 to 2009-10, in Figure 12. This is because Worker Population Ratio curve of ST females lies above that of Others females throughout the years. Another significant finding from this figure is that after a stable trend till 2004-05, there has been a declining trend of worker population ratio for females of both the categories. This is true if even in urban areas (Figure 13). This is a serious issue that needs to be explored to find the reason behind such declining trends.

Figure 12: Worker Population Ratio per 1000 rural females of ST and Others



In Figure 13, declining trends of worker population ratio is also found in case of urban areas for ST and Others females. This is found if we consider the level of Worker

Population Ratio between 2004-05 to 2009-10. ST females are more likely to be in the work force compared to Others females, due to which we find the curve for ST females higher than that of Others females from 1983 to 2009-10.



V. CONCLUSION

This paper has made an in-depth analysis of the situation of ST females and the how they are discriminated against due to not only because of their ethnicity but also because of their gender. This phenomenon of double disadvantage entraps them into deeper levels of poverty and underdevelopment.

The major findings of this paper are that for all the three different types of nature of employment, i.e. casual employment, regular employment and self-employment, we find greater percentage of ST males as workers compared to ST females. The discrepancy is highest in case of regular wage jobs. This points to the underlying discrimination faced by ST females in the labour market on the basis of their gender. If we compare nature of employment between ST females and Others females, we find that in case of casual employment and self-employment, ST females are more likely to be workers than Others females. In case of regular wage jobs, this is reversed; there is greater percentage of Others females compared to ST females in regular employment. This clearly points to the double disadvantage faced by ST females due to which not only are they getting less job opportunities than their male counterparts, but also they face greater disadvantage in case of securing formal sector regular wage jobs than the females belonging to the Others category. The reason behind this may be attributed to the lower access to education of ST females due to which they have lesser literacy percentage amongst them.

From this paper, it is also revealed that though their participation in labour force is higher than Others females, this should not be taken as lack of social constraints faced by them. Rather the severe poverty faced by them forces them into the labour force. This the reason why greater

percentage of ST females enter into casual employment which is characterised by job insecurity and poor working conditions. They are also less likely to get regular wage jobs compared to other females, mainly due to lack of requisite skill training amongst them.

When we consider wage levels, then the poor condition of ST females becomes more evident. They have lower wages than ST males for both regular and casual employment. What is pitiable is that they receive even lesser level of real wages than the Others females. This is true in case of regular wage jobs. As for casual employment, the difference between average real daily wages of ST females and Others females are not significant. The above findings point to the underlying impoverishment suffered by the ST women. They reside in a poverty trap where due to poverty they do not get enough education (households prefer to educate the boys than the girls) and due to this they cannot have access to formal sector jobs with more job security and higher and regular wages.

Looking at this dire situation, it is important that the Government takes up targeted policies for more employment of ST females. The Government should not only ensure improvement of the percentage of workers among these women, but care should be taken to improve their employability as well. This can be ensured by improving the access to education of these ST women. Skill development programmes combined with job placements will help to bring them out of poverty trap and empower them economically. Skill training should help to ensure that these women get more jobs in the regular employment which have better working conditions, more job security and higher wage levels. Apart from this, legislative policies such as anti-discriminatory laws in the education sector as well as in the labour market will ensure that the needs of ST females are adhered to. Stringent enactment of such laws will ensure that the phenomenon of double disadvantage is removed altogether from the lives of ST females.

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