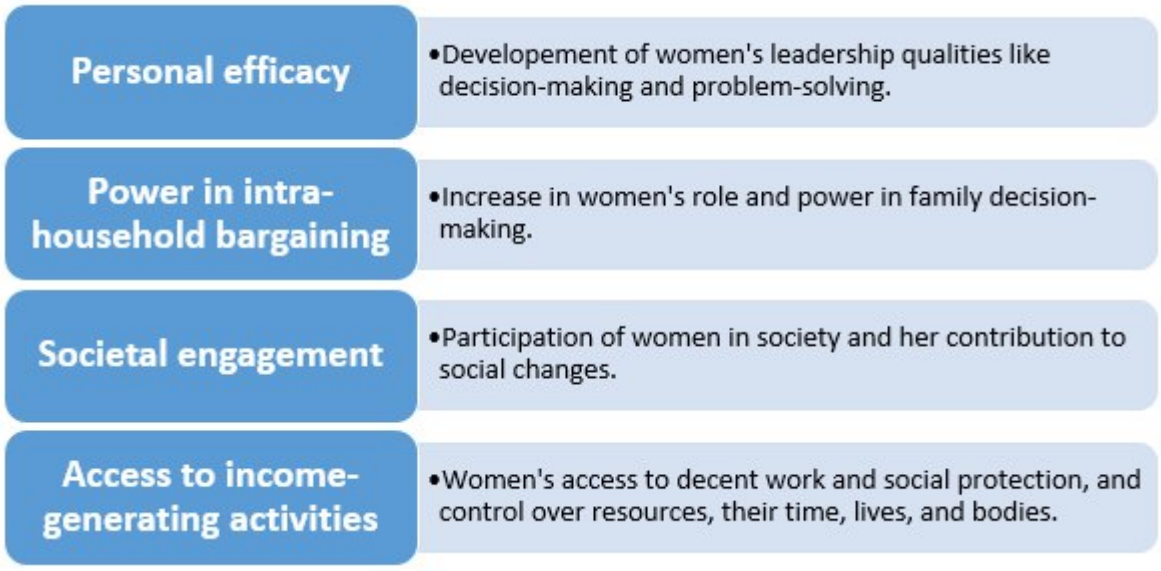
Concerns in labour employment of women

Why in news?

A recent report of The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) shows that despite advancements in education and societal engagement, women's wage labour participation has stagnated.

What is women empowerment?

- **Women's empowerment** – It is the process of women gaining the power and control to make their own choices, and to influence social change. It includes four areas of development,
    1. Personal efficacy
    2. Power in intra-household bargaining
    3. Societal engagement
    4. Access to income-generating activities



India ranks 129th out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index.

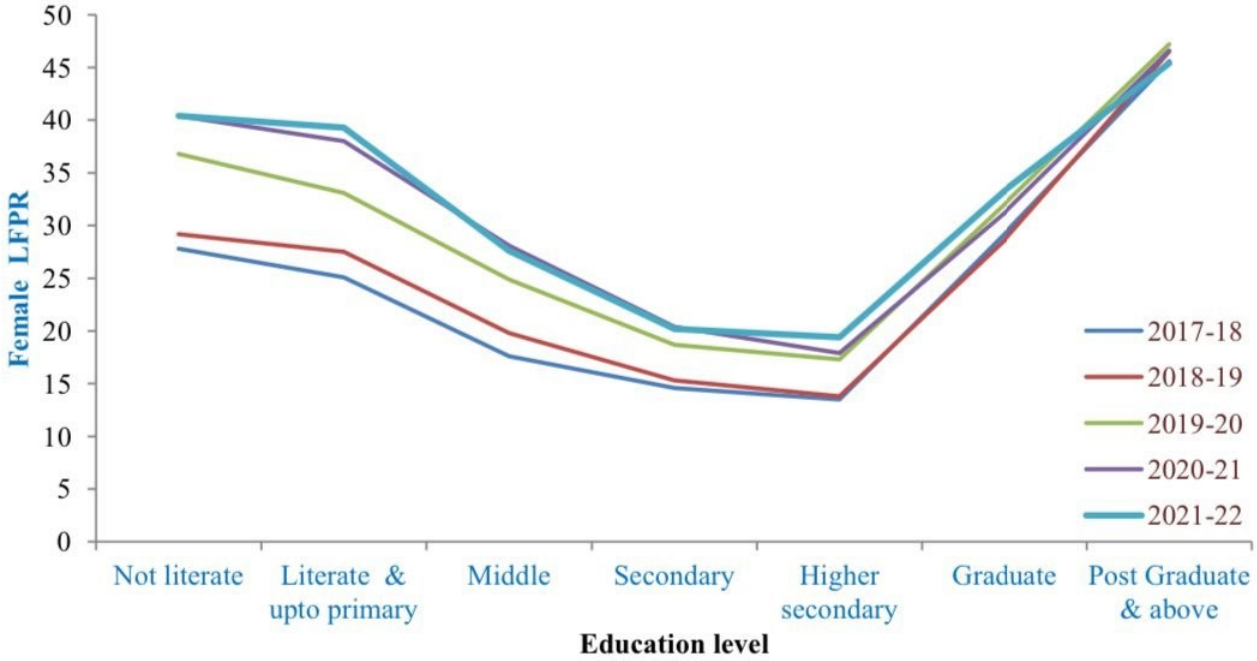
Findings of the IHDS survey

• **Advancements in education** – The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) highlights a dramatic rise in women's educational attainment.
- College degree attainment among women has more than doubled, from 12% to 26%, achieving parity with men.
• **Delayed marriages** – The delay in marriage aligns with increased educational opportunities and changing aspirations.
- In 2011-12, 76% of the women in their 20s were married, by 2022-24 the proportion had dropped to 66%.
• **Expanding horizons** – Women's autonomy and societal engagement are gradually improving.
- Comfort with solo travel rose from 42% to 54%.
- Membership in Self Help Groups doubled from 10% to 18%.
- Participation in gram Sabha meetings also showed modest growth.
• **Increased self-employment** – The share of self-employed women in the labor force increased from 51.9% in 2017–18 to 67.4% in 2023–24.

What are the concerns in women employment?

- **Stagnated waged employment** – Among the four key areas there is an improvements in the first three domains and the fourth, access to waged employment has stagnated.
  - The IHDS recorded a drop from 18% in 2012 to 14% in 2022 among women aged 20-29.
  - For women in their 30s, participation levels have also plateaued.
- **Unpaid contribution** – Women continue to contribute to the economy by working on family farms, and it reflects the increase in women's participation in work as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey.
- **Skewed employment growth** – U-shaped relationship between education and FLFP rate where the *FLFP rate is generally higher among women with little or no education.*
  - As the level of education increases, the FLFP rate declines, before eventually rising for highly educated women.

Figure 12: Relationship between female LFPR and education level



Source: PLFS, MoSPI

According to the World Bank data, the employment to population ratio is 72.2% for males and 25 % for females. It is a paradox where India have more female graduates but less working women and researchers.

What are the underlying factors?

- **Lack of suitable opportunities** – Surveys reveal that most women and families are open to wage work, provided suitable opportunities exist.
- **Job scarcity** – Due to growing unemployment the roles for women with higher qualifications got reduced.
- **Conservative social norms –** It emphasis the duty, traditional values, and social institutions.
    - Preservation of *traditional family structures and gender roles*.
- **Patriarchal mindset** – Which causes intolerance towards women in society has created the largest obstacle for women to succeed.
- **Socio-cultural misconceptions –** Women empowerment is often seen as opposing Indian culture, especially when women challenge traditional norms.
- **Work place hurdles** – Women in the workplace face other challenges such as sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, imposter syndrome.
- Infrastructure limitations, such as inadequate childcare and work commutes, exacerbate the issue.
- **Unhealthy practices** – Unequal opportunities and distribution of work in private sector.
- Issues related to privacy such as asking personal questions to female candidates discourage women from entering the workspace.
- Lack in proper execution of ***gender-friendly policies*** fuel the increasing gender gap

in employment.

- **Unequal wages** – For the same work and designation in demand driven jobs is discouraging women's from participating in waged employment.
- **Sectoral dynamics** – While women continue to contribute significantly to family farms and government schemes like MGNREGA, these avenues do not translate into formal wage employment.

> *India's GDP growth rate can climb above 9% if women were given an equitable share of jobs according to a World Bank.*

What lies ahead?

- Access to income-generating activities lags behind.
- Expand skill development programs tailored to emerging industries.
- Enhance support systems like transportation and childcare.
- Promote equitable hiring practices in the private sector.
- Gender-inclusive employment guarantee scheme to help women come forward and avail job opportunities on a greater level.

Reference

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2. ORF |Gap between Women's Education and Employment Widen

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