

Review Article

A Review on Improving the Socio-Economic Status of Women in Punjab

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Abstract:-

Background: This review paper examines the socio-economic status of women in Punjab, focusing on progress, persistent challenges, and effective interventions across key areas such as education, employment, health, and legal and policy frameworks.

Methods: A comprehensive analysis of existing literature was conducted to synthesize findings related to the socio-economic conditions of women in Punjab. Key themes were identified and evaluated to understand the impact of various interventions and the remaining barriers.

Results: Despite notable advancements, women in Punjab continue to face significant barriers that hinder their full participation in society. The female literacy rate has increased to 70.7%, but high dropout rates remain a concern. Employment opportunities for women are expanding through self-help groups and community-based initiatives; however, the formal employment rate for women is only 16.3%, with workplace gender biases persisting. Health indicators show improvements, with 25.9% of women anemic and a maternal mortality ratio of 122 per 100,000 live births, yet socio-economic factors still limit the effectiveness of health services. Legal and policy frameworks have advanced women's rights, but cultural and social barriers impede their implementation.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the need for multifaceted approaches combining policy interventions, educational reforms, health improvements, and grassroots initiatives to create a supportive environment for women's empowerment in Punjab. Continued efforts are essential to address these challenges and ensure sustainable socio-economic development for women in the region.

Keywords: Community-based initiatives, Education, Employment, Gender equality, Health, Women's empowerment, Socio-economic status.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's position in the socio-economy sphere in the Punjab State of India has been an important subject of concern for policy-makers, analysts, and political activists during the last several decades. This region is often associated with cultural wealth

and agricultural profitability, yet it also represents the economic development intertwined with gender inequalities. Despite the general improvement in living standards from other socio-economic aspects evident in Punjab, women still suffer several challenges that limit them from access to their rights within society. As per the Census of India

2011, the female literacy rate in Punjab state was only 70 per cent. from 47% to 7%, while male literacy was 80. 4% (Censusindia.gov.in, 2024).

For several reasons, it is advisable to enhance the socio-economic status of women. First, the approach to women's economic rights and opportunities can contribute to more effective economic development. Second, women's ECA increases family health, nutrition, and education standards. Third, women's ECA brings greater financial returns to households. Last but not least, empowered women also help the community and society improve and become much stronger and more productive. Nevertheless, there is a positive side to the stories of women in Punjab struggling with these socio-economic issues. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 2018, the female labour force participation rate in Punjab is 16.3%, significantly lower than the national average of 23.7%.

The main contribution of this review paper is to synthesise and analyse existing literature on the socio-economic status of women in Punjab. To

accomplish this goal, the objectives are taken into consideration are given below.

- To assess the current state of girls and women's education in Punjab and identify barriers to educational access and retention.
- To investigate the impact of various employment schemes and identify obstacles to women's participation in the workforce.
- To review maternal and reproductive health indicators and assess the effectiveness of health programs and services targeted at women.
- To analyze existing laws and policies aimed at protecting and promoting women's rights and evaluate their implementation and impact.

The rest of the paper is as follows. Section 2 shows the literature review of socio-economic factors and women's empowerment. Section 3 defines the finding found from the literature review. Finally, discussion and conclusion is drawn in Section 4-5.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE PUNJAB

Table 1 shows the recent literature review on the socio-economic status of women in the Punjab.

Table 1: Literature Review

Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal	Review
Kaur, R., & Kaur, L.	2018	Changing dimensions of women status in Punjab	Indian Journal of Economics and Development	Discusses the evolving status of women in Punjab. Highlights improvements in education and employment but notes persistent social barriers.
Kathuria, B., & Raj, S.	2018	Effects of socio-economic conditions on usage of hygienic method of menstrual protection among young women in EAG states of India	Amity Journal of Healthcare Management	Analyzes how socio-economic conditions affect the use of hygienic menstrual protection. Identifies economic status and education as key influencers.
Degarege, A., Fennie, K., Degarege, D., Chennupati, S., & Madhivanan, P.	2019	Improving socioeconomic status may reduce the burden of malaria in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review and meta-analysis	PloS One	Systematic review showing that improving socio-economic status can significantly reduce the burden of malaria. Suggests similar implications for other health outcomes.

Papageorgiou, K., Singh, P. K., Papageorgiou, E., Chudasama, H., Bochtis, D., & Stamoulis, G.	2019	Fuzzy cognitive map-based sustainable socio-economic development planning for rural communities	Sustainability	Proposes a model for sustainable socio-economic development in rural areas. Highlights the importance of community involvement and education.
Nayak, A. K., & Panigrahi, P. K.	2020	Participation in self-help groups and empowerment of women: A structural model analysis	The Journal of Developing Areas	Examines the role of self-help groups in women's empowerment. Finds that participation leads to significant improvements in economic and social status.
Khalid, M. W., Samargandi, N., Shah, A. H., & Almandeel, S.	2020	Socio-economic factors and women's empowerment: evidence from Punjab, Pakistan	International Economic Journal	Examines the impact of socio-economic factors on women's empowerment in Punjab. Identifies education, employment, and health as crucial determinants.
Muhammad, T., Balachandran, A., & Srivastava, S.	2021	Socio-economic and health determinants of preference for separate living among older adults: a cross-sectional study in India	PLoS One	Investigates factors influencing older adults' preference for separate living. Identifies socio-economic and health determinants as key factors.
Biswas, B., & Banu, N.	2022	Economic empowerment of rural and urban women in India: A comparative analysis	Spatial Information Research	Compares economic empowerment between rural and urban women in India. Finds that urban women have better access to resources and opportunities.

Education has been described as one of the most important tools in the existing literature that can be used to improve the socio-economic status of women. As Khalid et al. (2020) mentioned, the study establishes that education is one of the determinants of women's empowerment in Punjab. In the same way, Kaur and Kaur (2018) examine the changes in the status of women in Punjab and report an increase in achievements in education. ER is another significant factor that determines the socio-economic status of women. Khalid, Khurshid, Ainul & Nargis, N. (2020) believe women's employment plays a major role in their emancipation and sees economic independence as the key to socio-economic mobility. Although Nayak and Panigrahi (2020) analysed the findings on self-help groups, they also elaborate that the women engaged in these groups get better employment opportunities and, thus, a better financial position in economic status. For example, Kaur and Kaur (2018) have found enhancements in the employment rates but still discussed existing problematic issues, including a lack of

opportunities for joining formal employment and gender discrimination in the labour market.

Health is an essential and significant aspect of socio-economic growth, and various research specifies women's health issues. The use of health is highlighted by Khalid et al. (2020) as having the potential to promote women's empowerment. Building on the study, further depth is offered by adding details on socio-economic factors that influence the hygienic use of menstrual protection; the research reflects that improvements in socio-economic status and literacy level positively affect women's health. This aligns with the study by Muhammad et al. (2021), which examines the determinants of living preferences among elderly people and reveals the interdependence of socioeconomic status and health factors.

Examining the specific role of legal and policy measures protecting and advancing women is significant. Other related work, such as that of Kaur and Kaur (2018), provides an insight into the nature of change that Punjab's women have

witnessed in various domains and addresses the role of law and policy.

3. FINDINGS

Theme 1: College Entrance and Employment

As outlined in the literature, advances have been made to increase education among women, particularly in Punjab, but challenges persist. The female literacy level in Punjab is at 70% as of now. 7%, while the male literacy rate was at 80%, reflecting a relatively higher male literacy rate than the female compliance level. 4%. Effects such as girls' access to education, where there has been

noted improved enrollment rates of girls in schools, are some of the impacts of globalisation. Still, high dropout rates, especially in rural areas, have remained a thorn. Although education programs and policies have been modified to help girls get to school, the high dropout rates suggest that social norms and economic challenges persist in influencing education attainment.

Theme 2: Employment Trends and Challenges

This paper agrees with other documents that employment continues to be an important avenue through which women's socio-economic status can be enhanced despite still evident challenges.

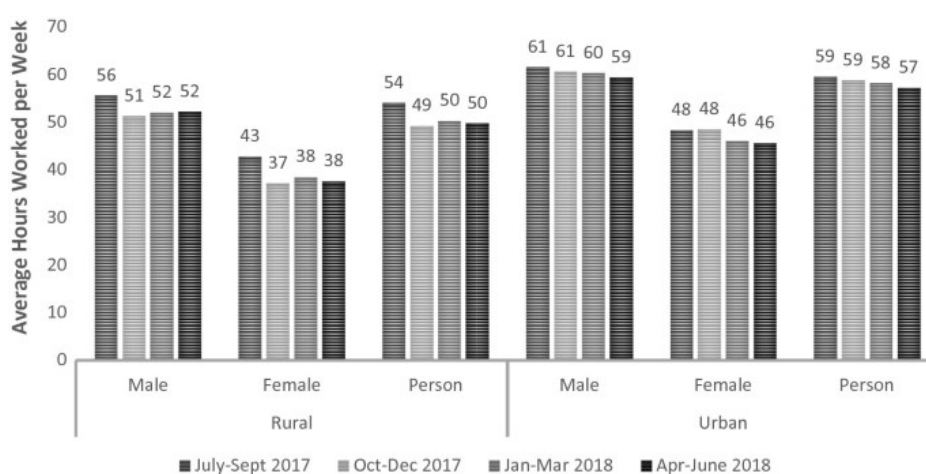


Figure 1: Employment Participation of Rural Women in Punjab
(Source: Ashapura Baruah & Singh, 2021)

Another fact that can be extracted regarding Punjab's female labour force participation rate is that it is 16 per cent. hour for breast cancer treatment; while the national average is 23 per cent, the institution offers only 3 per cent of this time 7%. Employment created under programmes that have linkages at a community level is therefore seen to benefit women by enhancing their economic status through their engagement in self-help groups. As positive as the employment schemes and self-help groups may be in empowering women, there are several structural factors, including low availability and access to formal employment or even discrimination against women in the workplace.

Theme 3: Health and Disease

This paper argues that women's health services have improved, but socio-economic factors still hinder the achievement of the maximum impact, around 25. The percentage of anaemic women is 9% in Punjab, and the maternal mortality ratio is 122 per hundred thousand live births. Education

and economic positions are the key factors credited for empowering women; better health is in sync with better use of health practices like hygienic use of menstrual items.

Theme 4: Legal and Policy Structures

It is evident that legal and policy instruments continue to influence, protect, and give content to women's rights, but the implementation challenges are ever present (Kaltenborn et al., 2020). It has been observed that there are legal developments to empower women, but there is still a high level of social and cultural justice fulfilment gap. This indicates that though the policies exist, there is a need for enhanced compliance and alteration of the existing organisational culture to support these legal frameworks.

4. DISCUSSION

The enhancement of the female literacy rate as well as the school enrolment ratio of Punjab state can be treated as a positive prescription. However, high

dropout rates, especially in rural areas, are early signs of a slowing down process that still persists to date. Nevertheless, there are still social customs and economic crises that prevent girls from attending school, such as early marriage and lack of scholarships. Approaching these challenges calls for approaches that transcend enrolling students, and a concentration on retention and completion. Just as raising awareness of special communal campaigns and offering bonuses for families who keep their daughters in school could help offset this problem.

In fact, employment is one of the key factors for empowering women economically, but unfortunately, the participation of the female labour force in Punjab is still very low (Biswas & Banu, 2022). Based on the findings that self-help groups enabled women to improve their economic status, the possibility of community-based interventions is resumed. However, there is still a need to work on issues like the lack of formal employment opportunities and tabs on women within the workplace (Biswas & Banu, 2022). To further enhance improvement, certain policy measures would call for more and better quality jobs for women in the formal sector, as well as promoting compliance with anti-discrimination laws in places of work. Also, skills-promoting programs for improvement in the market will assist women in getting skills that will enable them to compete for higher positions within organisations.

5. CONCLUSION

The overall condition of women in the socio-economic setup of Punjab has undergone a positive change in aspects like education, employment, health and legal status. Nevertheless, barriers regarding social practices, tried-and-tested policies, economic facilitation, and dispute between options and practices persist. They use educational improvement as an analytical lens to show that improvement trends are accompanied by high dropout rates, especially among female learners. This prompt calls for increased intervention to retain female learners and have them complete their education successfully. Women are still excluded from employment opportunities hence there is a need for policies that provide for employment opportunities within the formal sector and eradicate discrimination at the workplace. Even though the improvement has been realised, some of the socio-economic barriers to health gains are the reason for multiconceptual strategies that encompass health, economics, and education. There are laws and policies that provide for the protection of women's rights, but the implementation of these laws and policies is hampered by cultural beliefs.

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