

# DISCOVERING THE NEXUS BETWEEN CRIME AGAINST WOMEN AND FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

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## **Abstract**

India is a land of diverse cultural heritage where women have been given the status of goddesses. However, the rich cultural diversity and increasing economic growth rate deal with the conundrum of a very low female labour force participation rate and persistent instances of crime against women. The low female labour force participation is caused by various factors such as social prejudices, gender discrimination, cultural barriers and other economic factors. Despite modernisation and an increase in the gross enrolment ratio of girls in education, women's participation in the labour force remains significantly lower compared to men, with only a fraction of women actively engaged in formal employment. It is pertinent to find the root cause of the lower female labour force participation rate to implement appropriate policy measures for the same. The decisive policy decisions can be crucial steps for gender equality and economic empowerment of women. The crime against women ranges from sexual harassment and assault to domestic violence and gender-based discrimination. Even though legislative measures and awareness campaigns have been widely promoted, instances of violence against women persist, undermining their safety, autonomy, and well-being. The increasing crime against women can hamper the economic growth in the country and resembles structural issues against the enforcement of the law against criminals. The research explores the current literature and secondary data from the National Crime Record Bureau to understand the interplay between the two phenomena. The study found that crime against women is making them socially and economically vulnerable. The literature shows the labour force participation disparity is caused by several factors such as the patriarchal society, limited access to quality education for women, workplace sexual harassment, unavailability of quality employment, institutional framework etc. India being a patriarchal society women enter into the labour force only due to financial necessity. The economically well-to-do families are reluctant to send their girls to work in the absence of decent employment opportunities. The study found that gender-inclusive development requires major policy intervention and quality employment opportunities for women.

**Keywords:** Female LFPR, Crime against Women, Employment, Female Education.

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The complex relationship between violence against women and the low female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) creates a narrative of systemic problems and entrenched gender inequality within the fabric of India's socioeconomic landscape. This paper explores this relationship, revealing its intricate dynamics, underlying reasons, and significant ramifications for the advancement of society and women's emancipation. The phenomenon of low FLFPR, a recurring issue that reflects the institutional constraints and sociocultural norms limiting women's participation in labour, is at the center of this relationship. Women's economic agency and freedom are limited by patriarchal attitudes, ingrained gender stereotypes, and unequal access to education and career possibilities, which confine them to traditional home responsibilities. Even with improvements in economic growth and education, women in India still face significant obstacles. On the other hand, violence against women impedes women's ability to participate in the workforce and jeopardizes their safety, security, and freedom of movement. Gender-based violence, encompassing sexual assault, harassment, and domestic abuse, penetrates all societal levels and sustains a climate of fear and impunity. Many women are forced to put their safety before their jobs due to the fear of violence, insufficient legal protections, and a lack of support services. This results in their exclusion from the labour force and the continuation of cycles of vulnerability and economic dependency. Economic variables exacerbate women's marginalization and vulnerability to exploitation by strengthening the link between low FLFPR and crime against women. Women's reliance on men grows when they have less access to financial resources. This connection has far-reaching effects that go beyond personal happiness and obstruct gender equality and larger socioeconomic advancement. Women's economic marginalization is sustained by low FLFPR, which also compromises their ability to contribute to prosperity and economic growth. On the other hand, violence against women feeds cycles of violence and injustice by creating an environment of fear and insecurity that limits women's agency.

## 1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Agrawal (2020) challenges the conventional understanding of employment indicators, advocating for a more nuanced approach that considers female labor in household decision-making. She highlights the success of group farming initiatives for women in Kerala compared to Telangana, suggesting innovative methods to enhance female participation.
- Banerjee and Duflo's research (2008) highlights the interconnection between women's empowerment and economic development, emphasizing the imperative of addressing gender-based violence to foster entrepreneurship and economic growth. Moreover, Beaman et al. (2012) suggest that empowering women to overcome violence enhances their engagement in economic activities, yielding benefits for individuals and communities alike.
- Chakraborty and Chattopadhyay (2014) found variations in female participation across sectors, with the textile industry experiencing significant increases. Conversely, Chand and Himanshu (2011) linked slow employment growth to declining female labor force participation, particularly in self-employment, suggesting a need for targeted interventions. Goldar and Sadhukhan (2015) highlighted wage disparities in manufacturing, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive policies.
- Mehrotra and Sinha (2019) stressed the importance of inclusive growth and proposed measures like childcare facilities and infrastructure development to enhance female labor force participation. Similarly, Nathan et al. (2016) identified vulnerabilities of women workers in low-skilled industries and called for interventions to address barriers to economic empowerment.
- Srivastava (2014) noted a decline in overall female labor force participation despite rising population and school enrollment, attributing it to delayed workforce entry and improved economic conditions. Tay et al (2005) estimate that intimate partner violence alone incurs a huge cost, predominantly through lost productivity and healthcare expenditures. Studies such as that by Jayachandran (2015) illustrate how violence against women impairs their participation in the labor market, resulting in lower wages and restricted career advancement opportunities. Additionally, Duflo et al. (2012) posit that exposure to violence during childhood diminishes educational attainment, subsequently curbing earning potential in adulthood.

## 1.3 ECONOMIC IMPLICATION OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

In India, there are widespread economic ramifications from crime against women that impact individuals, families, and the community at large. The loss of productivity and human capital is one of the worst economic effects of crime against women. Women who encounter violence, such as sexual assault or domestic abuse, frequently undergo psychological and physical stress, which can make it difficult for them to do their jobs well. Overall productivity is hampered by absenteeism, low productivity, and subpar performance at work, all of which cause financial losses for businesses. In extreme circumstances, victims might have to leave the workforce completely, which would result in a loss of human capital and potential contribution to economic growth. In addition, crime against women places a heavy financial and medical burden on victims and their families. To address physical injuries, mental health concerns, and disorders associated with trauma, victims need medical attention, counseling, and rehabilitation services. Survivors and their families face increased financial strain due to healthcare costs and restricted access to inexpensive treatments, which may cause them to become impoverished or incur debt. Moreover, economic possibilities and educational attainment may suffer as a result of crime against women. Girls who encounter violence or feel unsafe may be forced to leave school, which may limit their opportunities for further education and skill development. Women are less likely to hold leadership positions in the workforce, higher-paying occupations, and entrepreneurial prospects due to lower educational attainment, which further feeds the cycles of poverty and inequality.

## 1.4 LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN INDIA AND CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) of females is a crucial indicator of economic activity and gender equality within a society. Table 1 shows the trends in LFPR in both rural and urban areas over the period from 2017-18 to 2022-23, based on Periodic Labour Force Survey Data. The female labour force participation rate remained significantly lower than the male labour force participation rate in all areas. The LFPR of girls in rural regions increased steadily during the survey, according to the data. As of 2017-18, the LFPR was 24.6%, meaning that around 25% of rural females were employed. This percentage increased steadily during the ensuing years, hitting 41.5% by 2022-2023. This increasing trend points to a substantial change in the way rural women participate in the economy, which may be caused by several variables including increased educational possibilities, shifting social standards, and the availability of jobs in rural areas. However, this

participation rate is half of the rate of male labour force participation rate. Similarly, the LFPR of females in urban areas also experienced a notable increase over the surveyed period. In 2017-18, the LFPR was recorded at 20.4%, indicating that approximately one-fifth of urban females were part of the labor force. This figure steadily rose over the years, reaching 25.4% by 2022-23. Even while the growth rate of female LFPR in urban regions is marginally lower than in rural areas, it still shows a positive trend in the direction of more female participation in economic activities in urban areas.

**Table -1 Labour Force Participation Rate in India**

Survey Period	Rural Male LFPR (%)	Rural Female LFPR (%)	Rural Total LFPR (%)	Urban Male LFPR (%)	Urban Female LFPR (%)	Urban Total LFPR (%)	Total LFPR (%)	Total Female LFPR (%)	Total LFPR (%)
2022-23	80.2	41.5	60.8	74.5	25.4	50.4	78.5	37.0	57.9
2021-22	78.2	36.6	57.5	74.7	23.8	49.7	77.2	32.8	55.2
2020-21	78.1	36.5	57.4	74.6	23.2	49.1	77.0	32.5	54.9
2019-20	77.9	33.0	55.5	74.6	23.3	49.3	76.8	30.0	53.5
2018-19	76.4	26.4	51.5	73.7	20.4	47.5	75.5	24.5	50.2
2017-18	76.4	24.6	50.7	74.5	20.4	47.6	75.8	23.3	49.8

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022-23

**Table 2: Top 5 States based on percentage of total crime against women**

Rank	State/UT	2020	2021	2022
1	Uttar Pradesh	13.29	13.09	15.35
2	Rajasthan	9.30	9.51	10.52
3	Maharashtra	8.60	9.23	10.58
4	West Bengal	9.81	8.38	8.11
5	Madhya Pradesh	6.90	7.16	7.65

Source: Authors Calculation from NCRB data 2022

Table 2 is calculated from the National Crime Record Bureau data for 2022. It shows that the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh are the top five states that registered the highest IPC and SLL crime against women from 2020 to 2022.

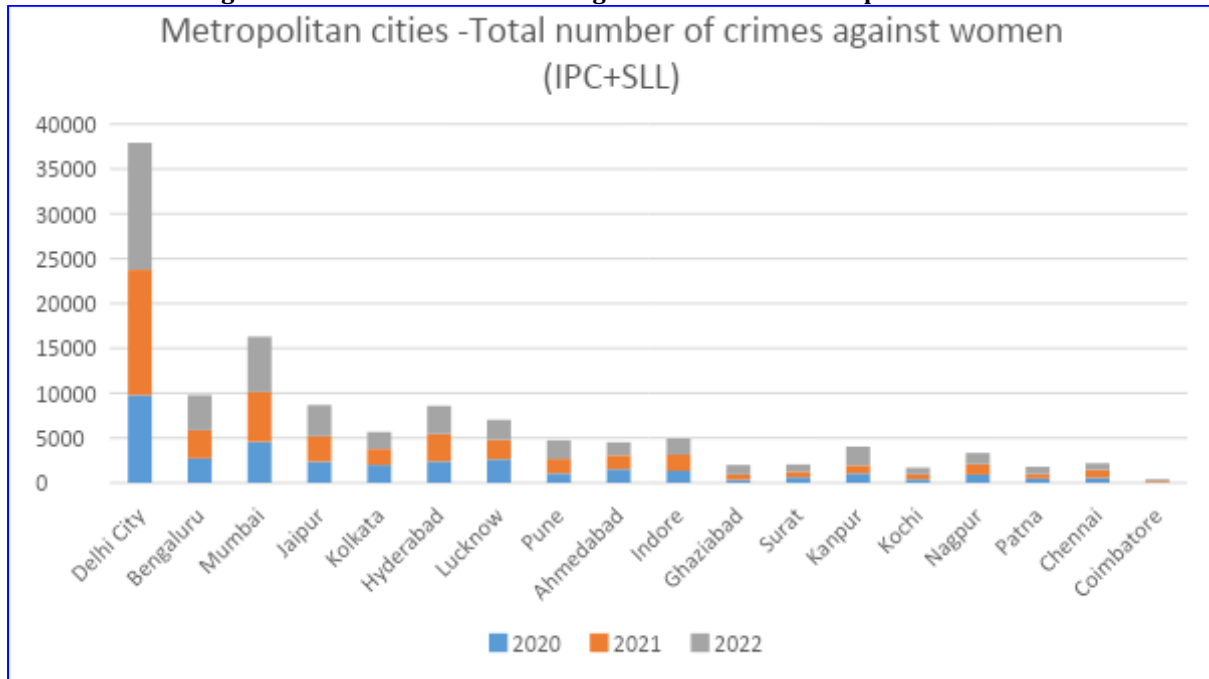
Moreover, 13,000 cases were registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act in 2022. Delhi registered the highest rate (144) of crime against women in the country which is far higher than the national average of 66.4 in 2022.

**Table 3: Metropolitan cities -Total number of crimes against women (IPC+SLL)**

City	2020	2021	2022
Delhi City	9782	13982	14158
Mumbai	4583	5543	6176
Bengaluru	2730	3127	3924
Jaipur	2369	2827	3479
Kolkata	2001	1783	1890
Hyderabad	2390	3050	3145
Lucknow	2636	2161	2231
Pune	1055	1616	2074
Ahmedabad	1524	1554	1452
Indore	1346	1794	1809
Ghaziabad	341	591	1063
Surat	633	622	797
Kanpur	1056	894	2099
Kochi	403	531	754
Nagpur	920	1156	1259
Patna	495	487	812
Chennai	576	874	736
Coimbatore	97	190	138
Kozhikode	394	632	759

Source: Derived by author from NCRB Data

**Figure 1: Total Number of Crime against Women in Metropolitan Cities**



Source: Derived by author from NCRB Data

Figure 1 explains how Indian cities are becoming unsafe for women as the number of crimes has increased at a very fast pace in recent years. Delhi registered the highest number of crimes against women which is 14158 in 2022. It is followed by Mumbai and Bengaluru. The tentative reason for the low female force participation rate lies in the figure as Indian cities are not safe for women.

### 1.5 INDIAN FEMALE WARRIORS AND THEIR LEGACY IN COMBATING CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

Tales of bravery and chivalry abound in Indian history, although they are frequently dominated by the deeds of male soldiers. But among these tales are the inspiring tales of Indian women warriors whose valor, determination, and leadership have irrevocably shaped the cultural legacy of the country. From the battlefield heroics of Rani Lakshmbai to the strategic prowess of Razia Sultana, these women defied societal norms and proved their mettle in the face of adversity. Beyond serving as historical icons, the legacy of Indian female warriors holds profound relevance in the contemporary context of combating crimes against women. The 1857 Mutiny heroine Uda Devi, a lady shooter, gained the nickname "Dalit Veerangana." She conducted one of the bloodiest assaults in Lucknow, known as the Battle of Sikandar Bagh, and took part in the uprising against the British East India Company. Up to 32 British soldiers were slain by her alone before she was killed on the battlefield on November 16, 1857.

### CONCLUSION

The legacy of Indian female warriors serves as a timeless reminder of women's inherent strength, resilience, and leadership potential. Their stories inspire us to confront the scourge of crimes against women with courage, determination, and solidarity. By drawing upon their rich heritage, India can work towards building a more just, equitable, and inclusive society where every woman can live free from fear and oppression. The relationship between low FLFPR and crime against women must be addressed holistically, addressing structural impediments at their root and promoting gender-equitable laws and social norms. To empower women to meaningfully participate in the workforce, policy interventions should prioritize efforts to improve women's access to education, skill training, and economic possibilities. It is equally crucial to guarantee that legal frameworks and services for survivors of gender-based violence are strengthened.

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