

Relationship between Female Work Participation and Literacy Rate of Women: A Study of Ajmer District

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Abstract

Women's empowerment is a complex process that allows women to take control over several elements of their lives, including sociological, psychological, economic, political, and other factors. Multiple studies have investigated if there have been any alterations in the social and economic standing of women since the inception of Women in Development Concerns in the early 1970s. These matters garnered the attention of policymakers, scholars, the press, and women globally. Consequently, many women's organizations began pressing for the active involvement of women in development planning. Multiple research initiatives have been conducted in India to highlight the challenges faced by women and bring the attention of the national and state governments to these concerns. The Women Development Programme, sometimes referred to as the Saathin Programme, first instilled optimism among women in Rajasthan. Nevertheless, the program's notable accomplishments, which exerted a substantial influence on both the government and society for about a decade, have been gradually undermined within a short span of a few years. Hence, the initiative currently lives in a disheartened state, devoid of its initial structure and vision. This report investigates the research methodologies utilized for the present investigation. In addition, it offers a description of the study's geographic range and the socio-economic attributes of women, beginning with the wider setting of Rajasthan and subsequently focusing on the specific Ajmer area. This article aims to assess the demographics and economic status of women in Ajmer District, using data from the 2011 census. Additionally, it seeks to examine the level of women's engagement in the workforce in the Ajmer region in 2011, specifically in relation to the literacy rate. The results demonstrate a robust and inverse relationship between the rate of female literacy and the rate of female labor participation, with a correlation value of -0.98. The government must make a concerted effort to ensure that ladies have access to education. To raise awareness about the need to educate females, it is crucial to implement a range

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of literacy initiatives and awareness campaigns that primarily focus on rural communities. Equally crucial is the empowerment of women via the enhancement of financial knowledge. Offering maternity leave also facilitates women's return to the workforce. The government should implement strategies to promote digital literacy, enhance financial inclusivity, establish training centers specifically designed for women, and encourage more female labor force engagement through incentives.

Keywords

Women Empowerment, Female Work Participation, Literacy Rate, Ajmer.

Introduction

Women's empowerment is a multifaceted sociocultural process that enables women to assert control over various aspects of their lives, encompassing sociological, psychological, economic, political, and other dimensions. According to Adams (2008), empowerment is the condition of being capable of assisting oneself and others in maximizing their quality of life. It also refers to the ability of people, organizations, and/or communities to take charge of their situations, exert influence, and accomplish their own objectives. Self-sufficiency includes ideas such as independence, personal autonomy, decision-making, awareness, personal growth, freedom to choose and act, staying updated with new developments, taking responsibility for important aspects of life, and having the ability to organize locally (Chatterjee, 2018). The guidelines of the United Nations Population Fund assert that the empowerment of women encompasses five key elements: women's self-esteem; their entitlement to make and exercise choices; their entitlement to access opportunities and resources; their entitlement to exercise control over their own lives, both within and beyond the household; and their capacity to shape the course of social transformation to establish a fair social and economic structure at both national and international levels. Hence, the objective of women's empowerment is to foster a broad sense of awareness by actively involving women. The primary objective is to ensure equal opportunities for women to engage actively in all aspects and at every level of society. Agency is more than simply self-advancement; it also involves actively facilitating opportunities for other women to do the same. It does not include belittling men; instead, it entails collaborating with them and making progress in your profession. Hence, empowerment creates a framework where many individuals have the necessary assistance to independently contribute to the overall system, leading to a profound transformation of society. The concept involves facilitating women in using their professional, civic, and social networking abilities to address society's most urgent issues on an equal basis with men (Tamarana, 2012).

Over the past fifty years, the concept of women's empowerment has seen a significant transformation, transitioning from a focus on welfare to a focus on achieving equality. It has been perceived as a mechanism via which formerly

marginalized individuals might exert greater control over their own lives. Both material and intellectual power are essential for achieving empowerment. According to Sen and Batliwala (2000), this process assists individuals in cultivating their “intrinsic capabilities,” such as their self-esteem and their ability to perceive and overcome external challenges that are beyond their influence. This approach emphasizes two main elements. Firstly, it is not a power to exert control over others, but rather a power to attain one’s desires. Furthermore, those who are currently facing disadvantages are the ones who stand to gain the most advantage from the notion of empowerment, irrespective of their gender, social standing, or other demographic attributes. Women’s empowerment is not limited to feminist ideology, but it stands out because it goes beyond socioeconomic limitations, both within and beyond the household (Malhotra et al., 2002). Women’s empowerment may be seen as a transformation in a woman’s surroundings that amplifies her capacity to lead a complete and purposeful existence. According to Mathew (2003), Human Development in South Asia (2000) identifies health, mobility, education and awareness, family status, involvement in decision-making, and material security as indicators of human development. Additionally, self-awareness and self-confidence are also seen as evidence of human development.

The Human Development Index (HDI) was initially introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990. Originally intended as a comprehensive evaluation of a country’s socioeconomic achievements, it gradually became widely accepted as a metric for measuring the overall progress in human development for both males and females. Data indicates that women lag behind men in nearly all aspects of life, including India, despite the prevailing notion that development is gender-blind. Since 1995, the focus of efforts to enhance human development has been on highlighting the gender factor and the ongoing inequalities that women experience. The report’s findings indicate that without granting women greater autonomy, human development would continue to be impeded. The statement indicated that the absence of progress puts something at risk. Two indices, namely the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), have been created

to measure the degree of disadvantage faced by women. The GDI, similar to the HDI, evaluates advancements across the same dimensions and determinants, but also includes gender inequalities in achievements (Anand and Sen, 1995). If there is a significant disparity between genders in terms of human development, a country’s GDI will be lower than its HDI. The Gender Development Index (GDI) is derived by accounting for gender inequality in the Human Development Index (HDI).

GEM assesses the extent to which women have equitable access to economic and political opportunities. The index has a theoretical range from zero to infinity, where a value of one represents total gender parity in achievements. Any value larger than one indicates that women surpass males in terms of accomplishments.

Historians, economists, psychologists, political scientists, and sociologists from throughout the world have made efforts to quantify empowerment. The notion encompasses the entirety of the conceptual framework and comprises two key components: external empowerment (which entails a platform for growth, infrastructural and technical advancements, and the creation of more possibilities) and internal empowerment (which refers to the inner consciousness and proactive actions of women). Political empowerment encompasses more than just the right to vote; it also entails the capacity to express one's opinions and actively participate in broader political initiatives (Mensah & Boateng, 2012). Women's political empowerment encompasses various facets, including the right to vote, hold public office, express political opinions, engage in political demonstrations, wield political power and authority, and make and implement decisions in alignment with their own actions, requirements, and priorities (Naz, Ibrahim, & Ahmad, 2012). This signifies the societal importance given to women's political involvement, as well as the degree to which women are granted equality and liberty in influencing and distributing power. Women's economic empowerment involves several elements, such as their capacity to obtain and manage productive resources, income and family assets, skills, a stable work environment, and access to markets and finance. In addition, opportunities for education, equality, freedom, and equitable access to the labor market are encompassed as well. Social empowerment entails enhancing the circumstances of those who are impoverished, oppressed, and marginalized (Jharta, 2017). It involves cultivating a feeling of power and self-assurance to impose control over social interactions, institutions, and discussions at both an individual and collective level. Addressing poverty, inequality, exclusion, injustice, and prejudice may be achieved by implementing effective social strategies and policies that use the environment. Hence, women's empowerment is a broad concept that encompasses not just the social and psychological aspects, but also the economic and political dimensions.

Several studies have examined whether there have been any changes in the social and economic status of women since the emergence of Women in Development issues in the early 1970s. These issues gained attention from policymakers, academics, the media, and women worldwide. As a result, numerous women's groups started advocating for women's inclusion as active participants in development planning. Several research projects have been undertaken in India to emphasize the

obstacles encountered by women and draw the attention of the national and state governments to these issues. In the late 1980s, Indian researchers generated several pioneering publications, such as *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women*, the *National Perspective Plan*, and the *Shram Shakti* report. They acted as the prototype for women's empowerment projects nationwide. The establishment of the National and State Commissions for Women, along with the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India, aimed to enhance the Panchayati Raj system and local urban bodies. These amendments also aimed to ensure that women have a 33% reservation at every level within these institutions. It was anticipated that these measures would facilitate women in achieving their objectives. The Women Development Programme, also known as the Saathin Programme, initially brought hope to women in Rajasthan. However, the program's achievements, which had a significant impact on both the government and society for almost a decade, have been eroded within a few years. As a result, the program now exists in a demoralized state, lacking its original form and vision. This paper examines the research methods employed for the current study. Additionally, it provides an explanation of the study's geographical scope and the socio-economic characteristics of women, starting with the broader context of Rajasthan and then narrowing down to the specific Ajmer district.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the demographics and economic standing of Ajmer District women based on the census of 2011.
2. To analyze women's work participation scenario in the Ajmer region (2011).

Hypothesis of the Study

1. H0: There is a significant correlation between literacy rate and female work participation rate in Ajmer district.
H1: There is no significant correlation between literacy rate and female work participation rate in Ajmer district.

Profile of Ajmer District

Ajayameru, meaning "Invincible Mountain," was a previous appellation for Ajmer. Shakambhari Chahaman, a ruler of the Chauhan dynasty named Ajayaraja II, founded it during the period from 1110 to 1135 CE, which corresponds to the late 7th century A.D. Prithviraj Chauhan, a ruler of the Rajput Chauhan dynasty, had control over both Ajmer and Delhi during the 12th century (1149-1192 CE). In 1193, Muhammad of Ghor, who also founded the Delhi Sultanate, successfully seized control of Ajmer. Ajmer regained its sovereignty under the rule of the Mewar monarch

in the year 135. In 1509, the Maharajas of Mewar and Marwar engaged in a dispute on the rightful governance of Ajmer. By 1532, Marwar successfully achieved the capture of Ajmer. Hemu, who assumed dominion over the kingdom in 1553, was killed in the Second Battle of Panipat in 1556. In 1559, Emperor Akbar captured the city. The Marathas ascended to supremacy during the early 1700s. In 1818, the Marathas were compelled to surrender the city to the British for a sum of 50,000 rupees. Subsequently, the city became a constituent of the Province of Ajmer-Marwar under the British Raj.

Historian Dasharatha Sharma has observed that Palha's Pattavali, copied in 1113 CE (1170 VS) in Dhara, has the earliest recorded mention of the city's name. This suggests that Ajmer was founded before 1113 C.E. As to the Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra prashasti, a eulogistic inscription created by Vigraharaja IV, it is stated that Ajayadeva (or Ajayaraja II) relocated his main residence to Ajmer. King Ajayaraja I of the eighth century is attributed with commissioning the construction of the Ajayameru fort, often referred to as the Taragarh fort of Ajmer, as documented in the later literary work Prabandha-Kosha. Historian R. B. Singh affirms the credibility of this claim based on the unearthing of inscriptions from the ninth century CE at Ajmer. Based on Singh's conjecture, Ajayaraja II increased the urban area, constructed palatial structures, and transferred the Chahamana capital from Shakambhari to Ajmer.

Bhanu Bharti, born in 1947, is an Indian theater director, choreographer, and playwright. He is also the founder and director of the Aaj Rangmandal theatrical group. In 1997, he was honored with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his outstanding achievements in dance, music, and theater. Additionally, he also got the National Award in the field of theatre for his notable accomplishments. He was also honored with the Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi Award. Manohar Shyam Joshi, a writer, journalist, and screenwriter, was born in Ajmer. He wrote in the Hindi language. Joshi's life spanned from 1933 until 2006. He received recognition from the Sahitya Akademi with Kyap.

Ajmer is the sixth most populous city in the state of Rajasthan. The coordinates of the location are 26°45'N, 74°64'E, with an elevation of 486 meters above sea level. The district is positioned as the 90th biggest in India and the 14th largest in the State, having a total area of 8,481 square kilometers. Satellite photography from 2021 indicates that trees accounted for 3.91 percent of the Earth's surface. The eastern portion of the region is fragmented and level. The Aravalli Mountains extend in a north-south direction in the western region. The district is located in the specific area of the Thar Desert. The artificial reservoir is encompassed

by the majestic precipices of the Nagpathar range, alternatively referred to as Serpent Rock. The Banas River, which holds utmost significance in the region, serves as the southeastern boundary of the district. The area is traversed by four minor rivers, including Sagarmati, Saraswati, Khari, and Dai. In the fiscal year 2021-22, the district recorded a precipitation of 596.5 mm.

Table 1: Important Statistics about Ajmer District

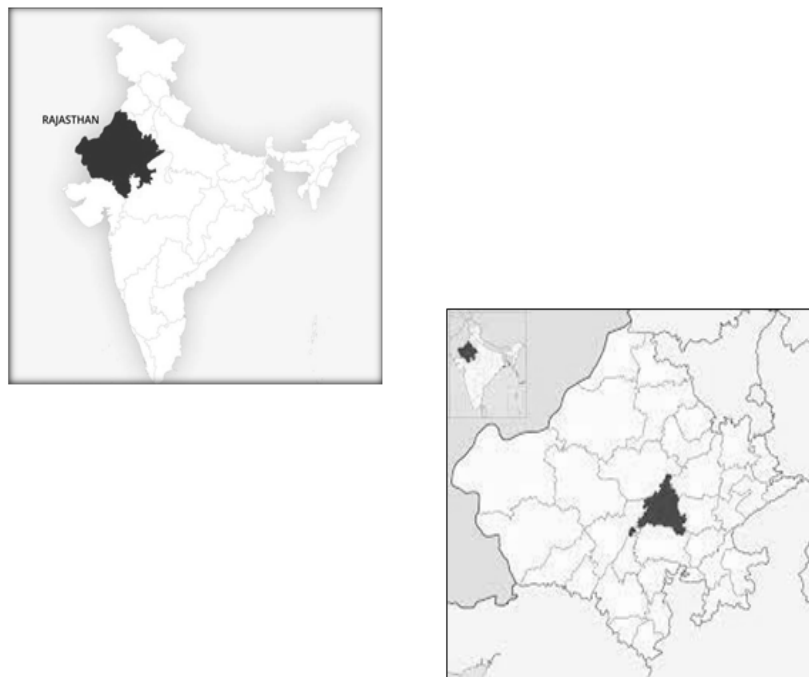
Administrative Setup			
Number of Sub-Districts	9		
Total Number of Towns	11	Total Number of Villages	1,111
Number of Statutory Towns	8	Number of Inhabited Villages	1,099
Number of Census Towns	3	Number of Uninhabited Villages	12
No. of Households		Household size	
Total	4,94,832	Total	5.2
Rural	2,93,744	Rural	5.3
Urban	2,01,088	Urban	5.1
Population		Population (0 - 6 years)	
Persons	25,83,052	Persons	3,81,167
Males	13,24,085	Males	2,00,511
Females	12,58,967	Females	1,80,656
Sex Ratio	951	Proportion of population (0-6) (%)	14.8
Rural population	15,47,642	Rural population (0-6)	2,53,762
Urban population	10,35,410	Urban population (0-6)	1,27,405
Proportion of urban population (%)	40.1	Sex Ratio (0-6)	901
Population of Scheduled Castes		Population of Scheduled Tribes	
Persons	4,78,027	Persons	63,482
Males	2,43,750	Males	32,408
Females	2,34,277	Females	31,074
Proportion of SCs (%)	18.5	Proportion of STs (%)	2.5
Literates		Literacy Rates (age 7+)	
Persons	15,26,673	Persons	69.3
Males	9,26,268	Males	82.4
Females	6,00,405	Females	55.7
Economic Activity		Category of Workers	
Number of workers :		Cultivators	2,98,856
Persons	10,53,722	Agricultural labourers	1,45,523
Males	6,86,149	In household industries	35,602
Females	3,67,573	Other workers	5,73,741
Work participation rate (in %)	40.8	Cultivators (in %)	28.4
Number of main workers	8,27,181	Agricultural labourers (in %)	13.8
Number of marginal workers	2,26,541	In household industries (in %)	3.4
Number of non-workers	15,29,330	Other workers (in %)	54.4

Source: Census of India 2011 - Rajasthan - Series 09 - Part XII A - District Census Handbook, Ajmer

The district's population stands at 2,583,052, with 1,324,085 males and 1,258,967 females residing in a total of 483,931 households. The region has a population density of 305 people per square kilometer. Between 2001 and 2011, the population had a growth of 18.4 percent. Out of this rise, males contributed 17.1 percent and women contributed 19.7 percent. The female-to-male ratio is roughly 951:1000, whereas the girl-to-boy ratio among youngsters is approximately 901:1000. The district has a population of 478,027 individuals who are

classified as belonging to the scheduled caste. Among them, 243,750 are male and 234,277 are female. The Schedule Tribe consisted of a total of 63,482 individuals, comprising 32,408 males and 31,074 females. According to the 2011 census, Hindus constitute 85.23 percent of the population, while Muslims make up 12.16 percent. Hindi is the predominant language in the region, accounting for 96.43 percent of the population, as per the latest census statistics from 2011. In 2020, the district had a total of 74,055 live births, including 38,576 male newborns and 35,472 female infants. The cumulative number of deaths in the region during that year amounted to 24,429. Out of the total, there were 14,558 fatalities among males and 9,869 deaths among females.

Figure 1: Location Map of Study Region





Research Methodology

The present research study is based on secondary data. This study employs a descriptive and exploratory research strategy. Quantitative techniques are used to examine the data. The purpose of exploratory research is to look into an issue that lacks a precise definition. It is undertaken to have a better grasp of the present research topic, but will not produce decisive conclusions. The information presented here comes primarily from secondary sources, such as:

- Reports of NSSO (Employment and Unemployment) of various Rounds.
- Census Reports of India of 2001 and 2011. (The Census of India is the main source of information on population tables provided in the A and B series.)
- Human Development Report of Rajasthan 2008
- Economic Survey of Rajasthan 2022-23
- Some Facts about Rajasthan 2020

Several factual devices and procedures were used to categorize the collected data. Information was translated using the factual criteria that will be converted into relevant research findings by using arithmetic mean, standard deviation and Karl Pearson test.

Discussion

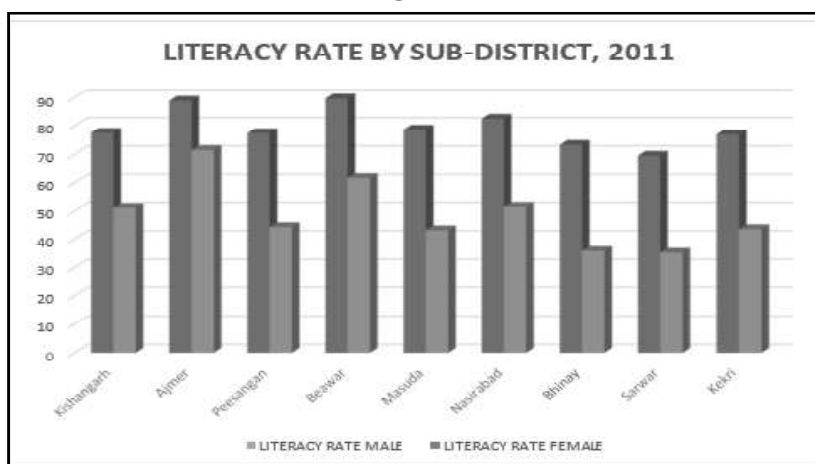
Table 2: Literacy Rate by Sub-District, 2011

Sub-District	Literacy Rate			Gap in Male-Female LR
	Person	Male	Female	
Kishangarh	64.68	77.59	51.11	26.48
Ajmer	80.38	88.83	71.51	17.32
Peesangan	61.03	77.41	44.29	33.12
Beawar	75.78	89.61	61.73	27.88

Masuda	61.29	78.71	43.18	35.53
Nasirabad	67.85	82.59	51.53	31.06
Bhinay	54.84	73.32	35.92	37.40
Sarwar	52.60	69.50	35.31	34.19
Kekri	60.44	76.94	43.60	33.34

Source: Primary data extracted from District census handbook, 2011

Figure 2



According to Table 2 and Figure 2, the literacy rate for the district in 2011 was documented as 69.33 percent. The district's rural areas had a literacy rate of 59.13%, while its urban core had a rating of 83.88%. The gender literacy disparity stands at 26.76 percentage points, with males having a literacy rate of 82.44 percent and females having a literacy rate of 55.68 percent. The literacy rate among males is reasonably high in both rural regions (76.45%) and urban areas (90.85%). The literacy rate for women in the rural areas of the district is 42.9%, whereas in the urban areas, the rate is 76.50%. The literacy percentage ranges from 80.38% in Ajmer tehsil to 52.60% in Sarwar tehsil.

Female Work Participation in Ajmer District

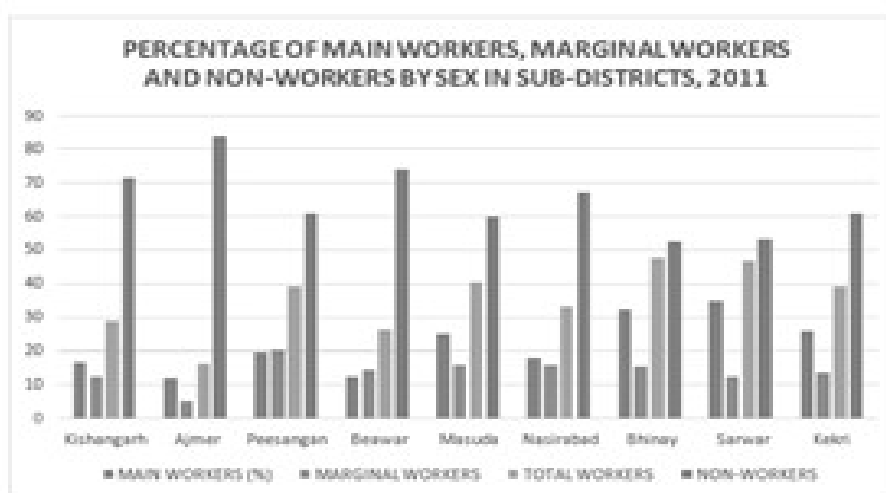
Table 3: Number and Percentage of Main Workers, Marginal Workers and Non-workers by Sex in Sub-Districts, 2011

Sub-District	Total Population N	Main Workers (%)	Marginal Workers	Total Workers	Non-Workers
Kishangarh	203093	16.42	12.06	28.49	71.51
Ajmer	387743	11.5	4.72	16.22	83.78

Peesangan	62728	19.09	20.16	39.25	60.75
Beawar	168853	12.18	13.95	26.14	73.86
Masuda	109394	24.76	15.59	40.35	59.65
Nasirabad	89016	17.51	15.68	33.19	66.81
Bhinay	62312	32.3	15.2	47.5	52.5
Sarwar	76002	34.69	12.09	46.78	53.22
Kekri	99826	26.01	13.3	39.3	60.7

Source: Primary data extracted from District census handbook, 2011

Figure 3



As per the 2011 census, the combined number of major and marginal workers accounts for

40.79 percent of the population, while the remaining 59.21 percent are classified as non-workers. Out of the total workforce, 40.79% are primary workers, while 32.02% are secondary workers. The proportion of workers in the male population is 51.82 percent, however in the female population it is just 29.20 percent. The tehsils of Nasirabad and Bhinay have the most elevated rates of male and female labor force participation, standing at 54.66 and 47.50 percent, respectively. The Beawar tehsil exhibits the most minimal proportion of male laborers, standing at 49.54%, while the Ajmer tehsil showcases the most minimal proportion of female laborers, amounting to 16.22%.

According to Table 3 and Figure 3, Sarwar has the largest number of female major workers, whereas Peesangan has the biggest number of female marginal workers.

Test of Hypothesis Hypothesis 1

1. H0: There is a significant correlation between literacy rate and female work participation rate in Ajmer district.

H1: There is no significant correlation between literacy rate and female work participation rate in Ajmer district.

Table 4: Correlation between Female LR and FWPR

Sub-District	Female LR	FWPR
Kishangarh	51.11	28.49
Ajmer	71.51	16.22
Peesangan	44.29	39.25
Beawar	61.73	26.14
Masuda	43.18	40.35
Nasirabad	51.53	33.19
Bhinay	35.92	47.5
Sarwar	35.31	46.78
Kekri	43.6	39.3
Mean	48.68666667	35.24666667
Standard Dev	11.84504854	10.22551955
Karl Person	-0.982779621	

The data has been analyzed using a Karl Pearson correlational approach. The literacy rate of women and the number of women in the labor force in Ajmer district are two variables utilized in this analysis. It is noticed that there is a high and negative link between female literacy rate and female work participation rate i.e. $r = -0.98$. It demonstrates that a decline in the propensity to work may be seen in parallel with a rise in literacy. Therefore, it can be said that there is no significant correlation between the literacy rate and female work participation rate Ajmer district.

Major Findings

- The literacy rate for the district was recorded as 69.33 percent. The gender literacy gap is at 26.76 percentage points, with males at 82.44 percent and females at 55.68 percent.
- Compared to the national average of 25.51 percent, Rajasthan's FWPR is 35.12 percent.

While India's WPR was 53.3% in the 2011 census, it was just 51.5% in Rajasthan. A higher rural participation rate in Rajasthan may account for the rising FWPR recorded in the 2011 census. Total FWPR in rural Rajasthan is 42.7%, higher than the national average of 30%, whereas FWPR in urban Rajasthan is 12.0%, lower than the national average of 25.51%.

- The disparity between men and women in the labor force has narrowed from 29.84% in 1981 to 21.9 % in 1991 to 16.59 % in 2011. The fact that the gap between the sexes is closing because of rising rates of female engagement is cause for optimism. This is a major shift for the state of Rajasthan.
- In both rural and urban settings, the conclusion is that women's involvement rates are lower than men's. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that women's involvement rates are rising in both rural and urban settings, and that the gender gap in participation rates is narrowing.
- According to the census of 2011 total workers (major + marginal) make up 40.79 percent of the population, while the other 59.21 percent are considered to be non-workers. Of the overall workforce (40.79%), 32.02 are primary workers and 8.77 are secondary workers. Workers makeup 51.82 percent of the male population but just 29.20 percent of the female population.

Conclusion

The literacy rate and female labor force participation rate are two key indicators of a society's level of development. Enhancing literacy and fostering active participation in the workforce contribute to individuals' heightened self-awareness and provide positive impacts on the economy and society at large. The sex ratio in the Ajmer district is much below average. Moreover, women have a lower literacy rate in comparison to males. There exists a disparity between genders in the tertiary sector, where both males and females collaborate in many disciplines such as medicine, academia, administration, and others. The findings indicate a strong and negative correlation between the female literacy rate and the female labor participation rate, with a correlation coefficient of -0.98. The government must exert efforts in guaranteeing females' access to education. To promote awareness of the significance of girls' education, it is imperative to establish various literacy efforts and awareness programs specifically targeted towards rural areas. Equally vital is the empowerment of women via the development of financial literacy. Providing maternity leave also enables women to reenter the employment. The government must take measures to foster digital literacy, expand financial access, provide women-focused training facilities, and incentivize more female workforce participation.

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