# Understanding Female Labour Participation through the lens of Social Norms

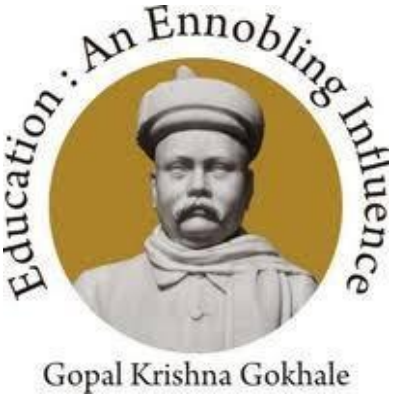

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# DECLARATION

The work presented in this academic term paper entitled "Understanding Female labour force participation through the lens of social norms" has been carried out entirely by me under the guidance of Dr. Suddhasil Siddhanta, Assistant Professor & Member, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune.

I hereby declare that this work is original and has not been submitted in part or full to any university or institute for awarding any Degree or Diploma.

Place: GIPE, Pune — Bhanu Sharma

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# CERTIFICATE

I certify that the above declaration is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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# 1. ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into understanding the impact of time spent on household and caregiving activities by males, as well as time spent by females on media exposure, on female labor force participation (FLFP) in India. Utilizing data from the Time Use Survey (TUS) 2019 conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the study employs Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis to investigate the relationship between various factors and FLFP.

The findings reveal that despite educational gains among women, FLFP in India remains significantly lower because of the traditional gender norms, societal expectations. The impact of time spent by males in household activities onto FLFP remains negative which is why we further wanted to observe whether any normative behaviour such as media exposure would have any impact on improving FLFP and shaping individuals' perceptions of gender roles and employment opportunities.

In Model 1, which examines the impact of male time allocation on household activities, results show a negative relationship between male involvement in household tasks and FLFP. This suggests that even when men contribute to household responsibilities, the onus of domestic work largely falls on women, hindering their participation in the labour force. Regional variations indicate nuanced influences, with the North East region displaying a positive impact on FLFP, possibly due to cultural and socioeconomic factors.

Model 2 focuses on female media exposure and its effect on FLFP. The analysis reveals a negative relationship between time spent on media consumption and FLFP, indicating a trade-off between leisure activities and labour force participation. However, regional differences suggest that media content and cultural influences play a significant role, with regions exposed to modern influences displaying a positive impact on FLFP.

Therefore, this study underscores the complex interplay of social norms, household dynamics, and media influences on FLFP in India. By understanding these factors, policymakers and stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to promote gender equality in the labour force and ensure women to achieve their full economic potential.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The labour force participation rate for women in India remains significantly low compared to men, despite notable advancements in female literacy rates. Despite increasing educational attainment among women, the labour force participation rate for females remains alarmingly low, hovering around 28.5 percent in 2017, as opposed to 82 percent for men. This disparity persists despite evidence suggesting that India's economy would substantially benefit from increased female participation, with estimates suggesting a potential 27 percent increase in national wealth if women were to participate in the labour force at rates equivalent to men.

In India, women's job opportunities and choices are still greatly influenced by societal expectations and traditional gender norms. Women are frequently restricted to careers that are simply continuations of their household duties, such as maids, tailors, teachers, and nurses, and there are still few opportunities for them to challenge gender norms by learning non-traditional 5 skills. In addition, men are supposed to be the main breadwinners in society, and women are expected to take care of the home. This gendered division of labour contributes to the informalization of women's employment, which lowers wages and limits opportunities for advancement. It also maintains occupational segregation.

Furthermore, the division of labour within households is often skewed, with women shouldering a disproportionate share of domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities, even when they are also engaged in paid employment. This unequal distribution of household labor reinforces traditional gender roles and perpetuates the notion that women's primary role is to manage the home and family, while men focus on providing financially. In addition to this, it would be also interesting to note whether unpaid leisure activities such as time spent on media exposure also has any impact on female's choice to participate in the labour force.

Overall, the low labour force participation rate among women in India is influenced by a complex interplay of traditional gender norms, societal expectations, and media influences. Addressing these barriers to women's employment will require comprehensive policy interventions aimed at challenging gender stereotypes, promoting equal opportunities in the workforce, and providing support for women to balance work and family responsibilities effectively. Additionally, efforts to increase media representation of women in diverse roles and occupations could help challenge traditional gender norms and encourage greater female participation in the labour force.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

We have already established the fact that India is experiencing a decline in the FLFP. This persistently low and stagnant rate of FLFP are observed in urban India despite high GDP growth, declining fertility rates, increased female education and rising returns on education. While for the longest time, the decline in FLFP in India was compared to demographic comparison to other South Asian and South East Asian nation but recently, it has been observed to very similar to African countries like Morocco, Tunisia, etc., which can be attributed to similar social structures and norms. Existing literature by several researchers and academicians have studied several factors to understand this decline and recommend policies.

**Klansen and Pieters** (2015) identified the demand and supply side factors to influence this decline. On the supply side, rising male incomes and education levels have reduced FLFP, reflecting the classic income effect. While higher levels of education among women have initially increased FLFP, this effect is moderated by other factors, including stigma associated with working in low-skilled sectors. Demand-side changes, particularly shifts in the sectoral structure of employment towards construction and low-skilled services, have also contributed to reducing

FLFP rates. The paper suggests that unless current trends and preferences change, there is little likelihood of a significant increase in FLFP.

In addition to this, one of the most important paper's in the history of understanding FLFP has been written by **Claudia Goldin** (1994) on explaining the U-shaped hypothesis. The reasons for the initial downward trend in participation likely include a strong income effect and a weak substitution effect, along with shifts in production from home to factory settings. However, as educational opportunities for females improve and they gain access to higher-status occupations, the substitution effect begins to outweigh the income effect, leading to an upward trajectory in women's labor force participation and improvements in their social, political, and legal status.

**Goldin's** (2021) paper on Career and Family also argues about presence of "greedy jobs" as a significant barrier to achieving gender equality in both the labor market and the home. These jobs, characterized by low labor substitutability and exponentially increasing wages with longer hours, lead to couples specializing in different types of work to maximize income while managing family responsibilities. They adopt a division of labour like such where one partner specializes in a "greedy" job while the other focuses on a standard job. While Goldin acknowledges technological advancements as potential solutions to increase job flexibility, such as information-sharing technologies in certain sectors, the book fails to fully engage with the entrenched gender norms and household decision-making dynamics that perpetuate the imbalance between work and family responsibilities.

While there are several researchers that asserted that in order to improve labour force participation, it is utterly important to establish strong social norms which promote couple equity. **Zierahn Ulrich** (2010) distinguished between factors that influence the decision to work and those that affect the volume of work undertaken by women. It pinpoints that parameters such as migration background and partner's gender views are influential in the decision to work, while the variables like religiosity and number of children in the household impact the amount of work being undertaken.

According to **Madhushree Banerjee's** (2019) empirical evidence, women are typically expected to work in occupations that involve domestic duties, such as maids, tailors, teachers, and nurses, due to prevailing social norms in many societies, including India. There are few opportunities for women to pursue training in professions that defy gender norms, like motor mechanics or driving. Furthermore, a sizable percentage of women favour working from home because it makes it easier for them to balance their responsibilities for taking care of the home. When jobs become feminized, such as in garment factories or school teaching, wages tend to decrease, and employment becomes more informalized. Even when women do pursue employment outside the home, they are often encouraged to choose highly gendered professions like teaching or clerical work. There is societal pressure for women to leave their jobs after marriage. Despite women's advancements in the workplace, they are still perceived as the primary family manager and are expected to fulfil domestic duties alongside their professional roles.

**Julie Brines** (1994) tried to understand why housework remains "women's work" by using of different approach of understanding the relationship between economic dependency and housework behaviour. Both the dependency and display perspectives suggest that economic dependency influences housework behavior, with women typically responding in line with the dependency model. However, men's responses differ, particularly among dependent husbands, who tend to do less housework when economically reliant on their wives. This behavior is especially evident among low-income married men and those facing prolonged joblessness, possibly due to societal pressures to conform to traditional masculine roles. These cultural norms may influence men to resist housework as a threat to their masculine identity, while women may feel less pressure to conform to rigid gender roles. The study suggests that these asymmetries limit the possibilities for adaptive compromises within households, potentially leading to strains on relationships or even divorce.

**Luke and Thampi** (2014) in their paper on husbands' participation in Housework and Childcare in India explore the dynamics of domestic labour division among couples in a non-Western context, specifically in tea estates in India. Using a combination qualitative and survey data, the study examines how spouses' relative earnings impact husbands' participation in housework. The findings revealed that the tasks perceived as firmly within the female realm, such as clothes washing, are deemed non-negotiable for male participation due to the stigma whereas tasks like cooking, fuel wood and childcare, perceived as less strictly feminine observed increased male participation as women contribute more to household income. Moreover, men with lower earnings shares are less likely to participate in these gender-neutral tasks, demonstrating gender display as a means of asserting masculinity. The Findings suggest that as more women enter the workforce in India, men may continue to resist full participation in household chores, particularly those traditionally associated with femininity.

According to **Coltrane Scott's** (2004) paper, although there has been some advancement, married men contribute roughly equal to the amount of work that women perform in the home, with women still performing the majority of household labour. Historically, women have continued to be in charge of regular cooking and cleaning duties, while men have rarely taken full charge of a variety of home duties. Research indicates that when men take up more of the household chores, working women feel that their roles are more equally divided, are less depressed, and are happier in their marriages. A number of variables, including living arrangements, gender norms, work hours, and relative incomes, affect how household chores are distributed. Additionally, family demographics like size, age, ethnicity, and the presence of children also play a role in shaping household labour distribution.

The existing literature on understanding the influence of media exposure on FLFP in India remains limited. Yet, it is one of the important social norms as dependency and interaction via media has increased and it is subtle medium to condition people with specific behaviour and mindset. The Study conducted by **Vikash Gautam** (2022) addressed the issue of declining FLFP in India by focusing on the role of digital media. Traditionally, WLFP had been understood through factors such as household income, gender wage gap, and educational attainment but this study wanted to explain how women's active decision making regarding the labour force

participation is necessary and can be positively influenced by digital media. This study also used Time Use Survey dataset along with a primary survey conducted over 4000 women across 10 Indian cities. They used OLS regression to understand the relationship and emphasized that digital penetration is not adequate to boost labour force participation, it required certain level of skills and resources along with quality of online time usage. The finding also suggested that policymakers including the need to reduce school dropout rates create economic opportunities and facilitate childcare and elderly care facilities. The study also estimated that women's online exposure leads to significant gains resulting in USD 103 billion of monetary values or 3.9 percent of the GDP, with productivity gains and additional time allocation for labour force activities.

The study conducted by me is on the similar lines as the existing literature but with takes a deeper dive into the time spent on certain activities by individual which in this case is time spent on household and caregiving activities as well as time spent on media exposure.

## 3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Female labour force participation has exhibited variations across different regions and communities. The recent trends highlight that FLFP in India has been declining even though education attainment has been consistently increasing but it has not brought an effective change in the behaviour of females for them to opt for white collar jobs. In addition to education being an important factor, understanding the factors that influence FLFP is important for policymakers, researchers and practitioners who work towards inclusive economic growth and social development.

One of the important factors that have gained attention in the recent times is the role of social norms in deciding for women's decision regarding labour force participation. The study conducted by me tries to contribute to the existing literature by examining the relationship between FLFP and two aspects of social norms: time spent by males on household activities and influence of time allocated by media exposure. It is also important to understand how these factors influence FLFP across different regions across India.

The need for this study arose due to several factors:

1. **Understanding social norms as a problem and a solution:** Social norms play a key role in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors, particularly regarding gender roles and responsibilities. By exploring how social norms influence FLFP, this study aims to provide insights into the mechanisms through which cultural and societal factors impact women's economic participation. Thus, it becomes important to understand social norms if they are a hindrance because the solution to them lies within.
2. **Impact of Time allocation on FLFP:** The allocation of time within households, particularly regarding household chores and media consumption, can significantly influence individuals' decisions regarding labor force participation. Examining how female media exposure with FLFP and male involvement in household chores relate to

each other can shed light on the dynamics of intra-household decision-making and how it affects women's participation in the economy.

3. **Whether Couple equity is practiced within households:** If husband and wife are spending equal amount of time on household and caregiving activities, then it is easier for both the genders to maintain a work and household balance and also gives autonomy to both.

## 4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does time allocated of males towards household and caregiving activities influence FLFP and what mechanisms mediate this relationship, particularly in different regions of India?
2. How does time allocated by females towards media exposure have an impact on FLFP and how do regional differences play role in influencing this relationship?

## 5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to investigate the multifaceted influences of the household dynamics and media exposure on female labour force participation. Through this in-depth analysis of various factors at both individual as well as regional levels, we try to discern the mechanism through which the time allocation towards household and caregiving activities by males, as well as time spent by female on media exposure, impact changes in FLFP.

By examining these dynamics, we seek to provide insights into the complex interplay between socio-cultural norms, economic factors, and individual choices that shape women's participation in the labor force across different contexts. Additionally, by exploring regional variations, we aim to elucidate the nuanced effects of cultural, economic, and media influences on FLFP, contributing to a deeper understanding of the determinants of female workforce participation and informing policy interventions aimed at fostering greater gender equality in the workforce.

## 6. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

**About Time-Use Survey**

The data for understanding the impact of time spent on several activities on FLFP was synthesized from Time Use Survey (TUS) 2019, conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). This study provides information on the measurement of time spent on different activities in the population. These activities broadly include the main economic sectors such as employment and related activities, production of goods for own final consumption, unpaid domestic services for the household and family members, unpaid care services for the household and family members, unpaid voluntary work, learning, socialization and

communication, community participation and religious activity, culture, leisure, media and sports training, and self-care and maintenance using the International Time Use Survey (ICATUS) 2016 activity classification. It also includes the use of time from various aspects of human activity, whether paid or unpaid or otherwise related to this inquiry.

It was National Statistical Office during January – December 2019 which conducted time use survey in India. The survey covered 1,38,799 household which included 82,898 rural household and 55,902 urban households which had information collected for each member of age 6 years and above of the households. Additionally, data on time utilisation was gathered over a 24-hour period, commencing at 4:00 AM on the day prior to the interview and concluding at 4:00 AM on the actual day of the interview. The survey, which spans a year and gathers data on household and individual time use schedules over four sub-rounds of three months each, covers the entirety of the Indian Union. To evenly distribute the sample FSUs over the course of the survey period, which is one year, equal numbers of sample FSUs are assigned for the survey in each of these sub rounds. Following this, a survey is conducted in each FSU.

Villages, UFS blocks, and sub-units make up the first stage units of the stratified two-stage design used for the time use survey. The households in both sectors are the last stage units. Every inhabited village within each NSS state region is considered a rural stratum as a result of further stratification. According to the 2011 Census, strata have been established in urban areas within each NSS state region based on the size class of towns.

**Main Variables**

The survey generates data at five different levels: person-level data is found in files 2, 3, and 5, while household-level data is only found in files 1 and 3. Individual level demographic data can be found in file 2, preliminary time use survey data can be found in file 4, and actual time spent on each activity during those 24 hours can be found in file 5. File 2 took into account everyone, even younger people. There were 94, 36,777 records and 445, 299 individuals in the combined file at the end. For every observation, an HHID and PID are generated.

Since there are multiple records of each person, to analyze any data by individual we kept the observations of the activity that concerned us and in this case, it was time allocated by males in a household towards unpaid household and caregiving activities as well as time spent by females on media exposure. Furthermore, the time variables are given in the string format i.e. hh:mm which are then converted to a numeric format and the difference for the ending time of pursuing an activity and starting time of an activity is calculated. We have also calculated the time spent on an activity as a proportion of time taking 8 hours as the denominator.

For the purpose of my analysis, I have used two separate models to understand the impact of social norms on to FLFP. The first model considers the main outcomes of interest as highest education, per capita expenditure, whether the household is a nuclear family household and availability of jobs. The key treatment variable in this model is proportion of time spent by males in a household towards household and caregiving activities. Furthermore, a regional level

interactive variable is also generated using region and proportion of time spent by males for North, West, South, North east and East.

The second model considered the outcomes of interest as age, age square to check for non-linearity pattern of age on our dependent variable, highest education, marital status, per capita expenditure and social group. The key treatment variable in this model is the proportion of time allocated by females on media exposure. The variable media exposure includes reading for leisure (841), watching or listening to videos (842), listening to radio and audio devices (843) and other activities related to mass media usage (849).Thereafter, we have also generated a regional level interactive variable using time proportion spent on media exposure and region. The influence of the above variables is evaluated on our dummy variable which is FLFP which refers to female working in white collar jobs in urban areas.

**Methodology and models**

I have employed Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis to estimate the relationship between the explanatory variables and the dependent variable which is a dummy of female labour force participation. The first model is described as:

$$\mathbf{FLFP = X_1 \boldsymbol{\beta} + u}$$ **[Treatment as time spent by males on household activities]**

Wherein FLFP is a dependent variable representing female labour force participation and X is a matrix representing the independent variables including a column of ones for the intercept and columns for each independent variable including per capita expenditure, Highest Education, Dummy for household size if it is a nuclear household, availability of white collar job, proportion of time allocated by males for household and caregiving activities and proportion of time allocated by males for household and caregiving activities based on the region i.e. North, East, West, South, North East. The dataset uses observations of only married individuals and beyond the age of 25.

The second model is described in a similar way:

$$\mathbf{FLFP = X_2 \boldsymbol{\beta} + u}$$ **[Treatment as time spent by females on media exposure]**

Wherein FLFP is a dependent variable representing female labour force participation and X is a matrix representing the independent variables including a column of ones for the intercept and columns for each independent variable including per capita expenditure, Highest Education, age, social group, proportion of time spent by females in media exposure and proportion of time spent by females in media exposure based on the region i.e. North, East, West, South, North East. The data uses observations for all the females in urban areas beyond the age of 25.

# 7. RESULTS

**Model 1: Treatment variable as time spent by males towards household and caregiving activities**

Table 1 shows the regression results for our base model which includes variables like highest education, per capita expenditure, and dummy for household size if it is a nuclear household and availability of white collar jobs. The analysis is done specifically for households with married individuals and salaried households. We observed that the coefficient for education remains negative throughout and significant. This shows that when it comes to married females, education does not remain a strong influencing factor to impact the female labour force participation. The variable for per capita expenditure is although positive but is not significant

| | | BASE MODEL | MODEL |
|---|---|---|---|
| Log per capita expenditure | | 0.01 | 0.0106608* |
| Highest Education (Not Literate) | Literate:below primary | -0.0997676*** | -0.051697* |
| | primary | -0.2818093*** | -0.1935549*** |
| | upper primary/middle | -0.3735346*** | -0.2677394*** |
| | secondary | -0.4375036*** | -0.3132271*** |
| | higher secondary | -0.3882022*** | -0.2763051*** |
| | diploma (upto secondary) | -0.2589801*** | -0.1800512*** |
| | diploma (higher secondary) | -0.2358936*** | -0.1752*** |
| | diploma (graduation & above) | -0.3262332*** | -0.2257244*** |
| | graduate | -0.3855891*** | -0.2641599*** |
| | post graduate and above | -0.2883779*** | -0.1890179*** |
| Social Group (Others) | ST | 0.005367 | .0300633*** |
| | SC | 0.0060935 | .0094539 |
| | OBC | 0.0345898* | 0 .019355** |
| Household Size (Nuclear if 1) | | 0.1438752*** | 0.0809145*** |
| Availability of jobs | | 0.0045161*** | 0.0036043*** |
| Proportion of time spent by males on household activities | | | -2.312729*** |
| Proportion of time spent - North | | | 0.083266 |
| Proportion of time spent - South | | | -0.5711705*** |
| Proportion of time spent - West | | | -0.0021916 |
| Proportion of time spent - East | | | 0 .1331997** |
| Proportion of time spent - North East | | | 0.1345389* |

The coefficient for the dummy variable of whether a household is a nuclear family shows that there is a positive relationship between the presence of nuclear household and female labour force participation. If the members in a household are less than 4, the responsibility of females with respect to household activities and caregiving activities is far less than if there are members more than 4. Smaller family structures and household size support for women to engage in labour force. The effect of social group as a variable shows that all the category groups including SC, ST and OBCs show positive coefficient for the FLFP.

It is also absolutely necessary to understand the how do females respond to availability of white collar jobs to closely ponder upon the demand control variables. This was done by sorting the data according to availability of jobs at the district level. The results showed the coefficient of availability of jobs turned out to be positive and significant highlighting that if white collars jobs are available in the respective districts, there is greater female participation.

**Effect of the Treatment variable:** The provided regression results shows that as the proportion of time allocated by males on household activities increases, the female labour force participation decreases. This negative causality is surprising but also understandable. This is showing that even though men on an average are spending close to an hour on household activities, it is not doing much to offset the time burden spent by women on household activities in order for them to join the labour force and participate in white collar jobs.

In addition to understanding the effect of this variable among the entire population, I also segregated the participants on the basis of region primarily North, West, South, East and North East. It turned out that the coefficient of time allocated by males in North East was positive and significant while for men in Southern region, the coefficient was negative. For the regions of North and East, while the coefficients are positive but insignificant thus we cannot pinpoint on the fact that it is due to this factor i.e. time allocated by males that is actually impacting the FLFP. We shall delve into the understanding of such causal effects into the forthcoming section.

**Model 2: Treatment variable as time spent by females towards media exposure**

Table 2 explains the regression results for our base model which includes age, highest education attained by an individual, marital status, social group and per capita expenditure as a measure of economic well-being. This analysis is done for the subset of population including females in urban areas above the age of 25. When we ran our base model, we observed that age is positively related to females working in white collar jobs. For each additional year of age, the predicted value of the outcome variable increases by 0.016. In addition to that, Age squared has also been included which represents the curvature of the relationship between age and the dependent variable to indicate that the effect of age on the dependent variables weakens as age keeps increasing. This has also been observed in our regression result that age has a nonlinear relationship with the likelihood of women working in white collar jobs, with the effect decreasing as the age increases.

The coefficient for log of per capita expenditure also turned out to be positive showing that one unit increase in the per capita expenditure leads to 0.011 units change in the females working. Higher per capita here has been associated with higher likelihood of working and higher autonomy. Furthermore, the variable of Marital Status has been separately assumed to understand whether this choice variable is impacting female's decision to participate in labour force and as it turned out that the effect of females who were married or widowed was negative as compared to our reference category of females who were never married. In addition to this, the coefficient for divorced women is also positive. This highlights that being single and not in matrimony has supposedly provided women with more autonomy to choose whether they want to be part of the labour force. Being married or widowed has been associated with lower likelihood of working, while being divorced is associated with slightly higher likelihood of working. Similarly, another variable that responds positively to the participation of women in labour force is social group and shows a significant impact across groups.

| | | BASE MODEL | MODEL |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | | 0.0161319** | 0.0159221*** |
| Age square | | -.0001952*** | -0.0001927*** |
| Log per capita expenditure | | .0171792*** | 0.0132231*** |
| Highest Education (Not Literate) | Literate:below primary | -0.0217857** | -0.0267018*** |
| | primary | -.0277214*** | -0.0334856*** |
| | upper primary/middle | -0.0464463*** | -0.0541043*** |
| | secondary | -0.0650089*** | -.0725495*** |
| | higher secondary | -0.0659793*** | -0.0730516*** |
| | diploma (upto secondary) | -0.0209623* | -0.0323893*** |
| | diploma (higher secondary) | 0.0178538* | 0.0049249 |
| | diploma (graduation & above) | 0.0973944*** | 0.0893064*** |
| | graduate | 0.0218248*** | 0.0161619*** |
| | post graduate and above | 0.1305678*** | 0.1297093*** |
| Social Group (Others) | ST | 0.0751642*** | 0.0555481*** |
| | SC | 0.05181*** | 0.0450102*** |
| | OBC | 0.0439232*** | 0.0297834*** |
| Marital Status (Never Married) | Married | -0.2311212*** | -0.2287496*** |
| | Widowed | -0.1251343*** | -0.1264204*** |
| | Divorced/Seperated | 0.0370927*** | 0.0370526*** |
| Time spent on media exposure | | | -0.4775795*** |
| Time spent on media exposure - North | | | -0.011513 |
| Time spent on media exposure - South | | | 0.3352707*** |
| Time spent on media exposure - East | | | 0.0620909*** |
| Time spent on media exposure - West | | | 0.1076654*** |
| Time spent on media exposure - North East | | | 0.4984814*** |

**Effect of the Treatment variable:** This model shows that as the time spent by females on media exposure decrease the outcome variable i.e. females participating in white collar jobs by

0.134 units. On an average, a female in urban area is spending 74 minutes towards media exposure with maximum time moving to 660 minutes. The negative coefficient can be attributed to the strong substitution effect of leisure activities among females with respect to labour. We shall look into this aspect in more detail in the next section.

A more in depth look at the effect of media exposure on regional level showed that for the regions of South, East, West and North east, the coefficient were positive and significant whereas for the region of North, the coefficient turned out to be negative. This is interesting to note as time spent on media is also linked to media consumption habits and patterns to several states which then may impact FLFP if there is a positive influence.

# 8. DISCUSSION

## 8.1 Mechanism through which time spent by males towards household and caregiving activities influence changes in FLFP

We already observed that FLFP responds positively to availability of white collar jobs but on the other hand, married females at any education level weren't moving along with the FLFP. This shows that as women are acquiring more education, they are still prioritizing household activities rather than participating in the labour force. Education by providing basic skills at primary and secondary level makes women more efficient in managing household activities and tasks related to childcare and nutrition. In addition, married women only prefer to participate in labour force if the wages they receive are way beyond their reservation wage since they consider giving up household and caregiving activities as huge opportunity costs to bear.

This further helps us understand why when men spend their time in household activities does not make much of difference in FLFP. Since husbands assume the responsibility of being the breadwinners as a default condition according to the patriarchal set up, even when they contribute bare minimum time towards contribution in household activity, the household efficiency and time allocated isn't sufficient enough to change the dynamics of the households and indulge women to reduce their time allocated in households and participate in the labour force. Furthermore, both productivity and time allocated towards household activities by males must be higher in proportion even if not at par with females in order to bring the change in the household dynamics which does require long term reconditioning of males over the generations to stop the further decline in female labour force participation.

**Regional Level:** At a more regional level, we observed that the variable was had inconsistent impact and held significant for southern and north eastern regions. The north eastern region of India is characterized by diverse culture and ethnic groups with varying socioeconomic conditions. Poverty rates in some of the north eastern states are relatively high as compared to other region which makes it necessary for both the males and females to contribute in household tasks and income generation activities. It is also observed women in north eastern region enjoyed less disparity in terms of longevity, educational attainment and therefore control over resources.

There are tribes and societies in certain north eastern regions which have matriarchal system. Thus, all these factors together contribute to ensure a positive coefficient of male participation in household activities and its impact onto FLFP to be positive.

Southern states are more economically developed yet have a strong patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles. The women primarily handle domestic activities while men are the primary breadwinners. In addition to this, another contributing factor is widening spousal age gap. This indicates that there are younger brides marrying older husbands, which could be linked to economic factors such as dowry practices or desire for financial stability. Thus, in such as a household, husbands have greater control over household decisions thus time spent by males in household activities might be associated with decreased female labour force participation reflecting patriarchal norms and income dynamics.

### 8.2 Mechanism through which time spent by females towards media exposure influence changes in FLFP

For the purpose to study this time use we used female population beyond the age 25 in urban areas and it was observed that as education attainment for graduate and post graduate is positively linked to higher FLFP. In addition to this marital variable as variable also highlights that since married and widowed women have lesser autonomy as compared to divorced females and unmarried females which is also our reference category.

The coefficient of proportion of time spent on media exposure is also negative which shows that the as the proportion of time females spend on media exposure increases, female labour force participation tends to decrease. This can be understood by Labour and Leisure trade-off. According to the theory, individuals make decisions about how to allocate their time between work and non-work activities i.e. media interaction and exposure. An increase in the time spent on leisure activities typically comes at the expense of the time that could be spent on labour leading to a decrease in labour force participation. This effect can further be broken down into substitution effect, income effect and endowment effect. The substitution effect refers to the tendency of individuals to substitute one activity for another in response to changes in the relative prices or opportunities associated with those activities. In this scenario, the "price" of media exposure is the opportunity cost of not working. Endowment effect can be explained as how individuals place a higher value on what they already possess compared to similar alternatives that they do not possess. Individuals may become accustomed to their current level of leisure and choose to not participate. In addition to this, income effect describes how changes in income influence individuals' decision regarding the allocation of their time between work and leisure i.e. if leisure is a normal good, an increase in income among individuals may motivate them to work less and enjoy more leisure.

Now, in context of our coefficient of time spent by females on media exposure, there might be a case that females are substituting time towards media exposure rather than labour because of the

social norms or out of choice. In addition to this, the case could also be such that the wage rate of these white collar jobs for females might not be high enough to motivate them to allocate less time towards media exposure and participate in the labour force.

**Regional Level:** The scenario at regional level is different from the overall coefficient. We observe that the coefficients for South, East, West and North East are all positive. This shows that time spent on media exposure is not doing all bad to the situation of improving labour force participation. It depends on the kind of media consumption and content at regional level which largely differs across regions. Eastern states like West Bengal, Odisha and Assam have a preference for regional language media like Bengali along with English. These regions may also have exposure to modern influences through media. This also holds true for South Indian states which also have a strong modern influence and have moved past beyond traditional and conservative content. On the other hand, regions of North and Central India have robust viewership of traditional films and Hindi soap operas which might influence the mind set of people wherein women primarily handle household activities and not participate in the labour force. All these factors cumulatively help to understand how media exposure can have a strong influence on labour force over the period of time depending on the type of content one is watching especially females and children.

## 9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since time use survey specifically deals with time spent on activities, we did not have much information on cultural aspects of those regions. Use of an interactive variable involving culture along with the time use variable might have given us better reasoning. While time use can only understand how much time allocation individuals do for activities and habits and the study above has based its results on those. It is only in long run when we can analyse whether any significant change in behaviour has been observed to impact labour force participation.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Our analysis reveals two distinct mechanisms through which time allocated by males towards household activities and media exposure by females become important social norms to influence changes in FLFP. We observed that despite the positive correlation between availability of white-collar jobs and FLFP, married females, particularly those with higher levels of education, are still prioritizing household activities over labor force participation. Male participation in household activities, although beneficial in theory, does not significantly alter the dynamics of FLFP due to deep rooted patriarchal norms, where husbands are expected to be the primary breadwinners. It turns out that couple equity in India is still a distant dream.

Secondly, our analysis of the impact of female media exposure on FLFP suggests a negative correlation. As females spend more time on media exposure, their labor force participation tends to decrease, reflecting the labor-leisure trade-off. This effect can be attributed to various factors such as social norms, the perceived value of leisure time, and the income effect. Regionally, the influence of media exposure on FLFP varies, with regions consuming modern and progressive

content showing a positive impact on labour force participation, while regions with traditional and conservative media consumption exhibit a negative influence. It is important to understand that variables

In light of these findings, policy interventions aimed at increasing FLFP should address societal norms and individual preferences. Here are some of the policy recommendations:

1. **Embedding skill based programs on media channels**: Since, dependency of individuals on media channels has increased manifolds; government can design and promote skill based programs, so that easy accessibility via phones, laptops or other media platforms can help females' gains specialized trainings and skills.
2. **Family Friendly workplace policies**: Encourage the adoption of flexible working arrangements and policies that support work-life balance, such as paid parental leave and childcare assistance. This can help alleviate the burden of household responsibilities on women and enable their participation in the labor force.
3. **Promotion of Co-Parenting Programs:** This should specifically target the married couples in order to encourage joint responsibility for household and caregiving tasks. This can include workshops, counseling sessions and incentives for couples to actively participate in shared parenting practices.
4. **Regulation of Media Content:** Since there exists large disparities in the kind of content of people are consuming across regions, it is important to regulate or censor the regressive content which perpetuates harmful stereotypes in the form of movies, books, daily soaps etc. This could be done by setting up standards for gender representation in television programs, films and advertising as well as sanctions for media outlets which do not align with such standards.
5. **Economic empowerment initiatives:** Provide financial incentives and support for women to enter and remain in the labor force, including access to affordable childcare, microfinance programs, and entrepreneurship training. Ensure that wages in traditionally female-dominated sectors are competitive and reflective of the value of women's work.

## EXPERTS' COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

One of the experts asked to modify certain policy recommendations and changes were incorporated by including specific recommendations for couple equity.

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