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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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EMPLOYER RATING SURVEY

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "EMPLOYER RATING SURVEY". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "INDIAN ECONOMY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

In a progressive move towards promoting gender equality and enhancing women's workforce participation in India, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) have collaboratively launched the **Employer Rating Survey**. This initiative aims to assess and encourage employers' commitment and support for fostering a more inclusive work environment for women.

UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT FUND ORGANISATION (EPFO):

The EPFO is a governmental organization entrusted with managing provident fund and pension accounts for the organized sector workforce in India. Administered by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India, it operates under the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. Boasting one of the world's largest clientele, the EPFO plays a crucial role in overseeing the financial transactions related to social security on an extensive scale.

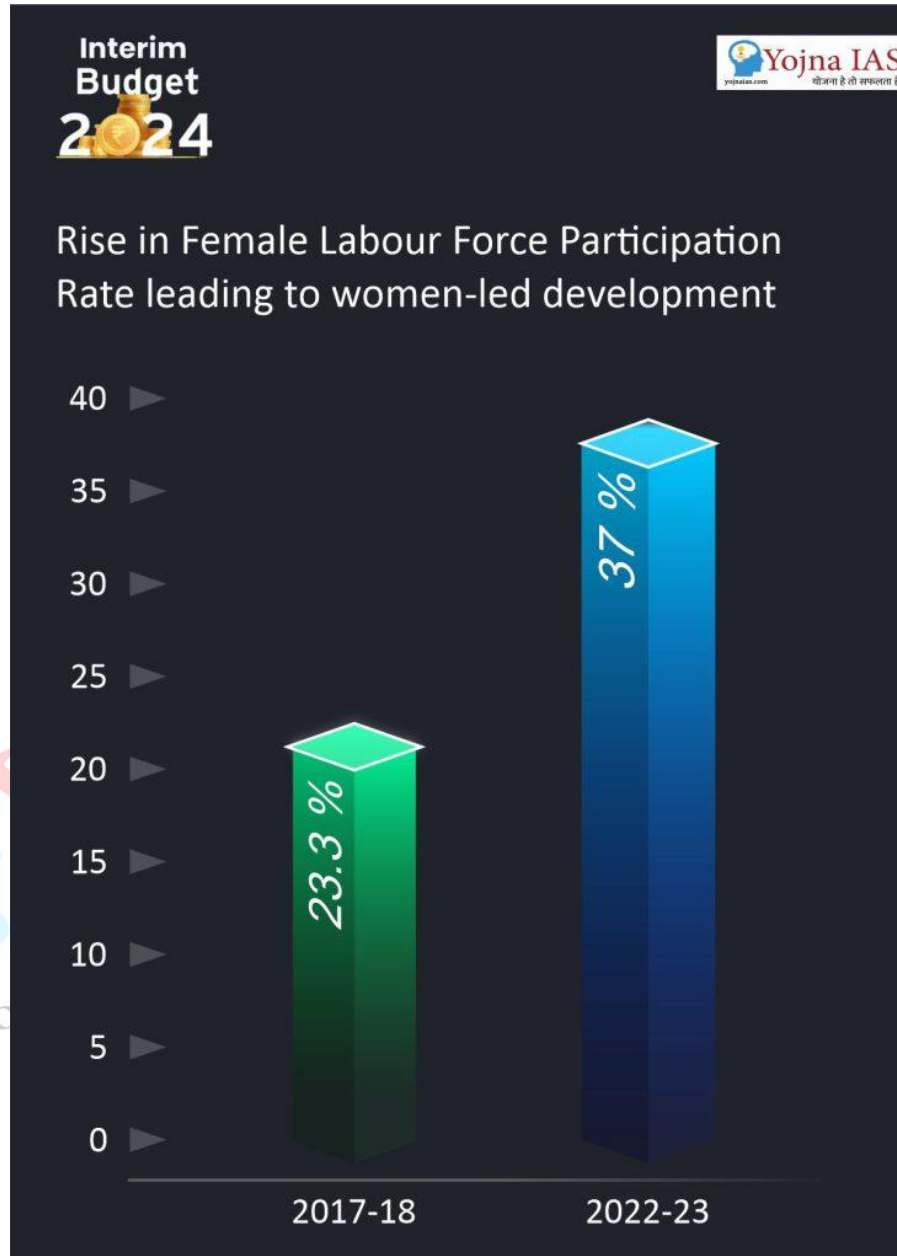
KEY ASPECTS OF THE EMPLOYER RATING SURVEY:

- Launched at the event "**Women in the Workforce for Viksit Bharat**," the survey seeks to evaluate and rate employers based on their commitment and support for increasing women's participation in the workforce.
- It serves as a comprehensive tool to gauge progress and efforts made by employers in creating an environment conducive to women's employment.
- The survey comprises a detailed questionnaire distributed to approximately 300 million customers nationwide, covering aspects such as the existence of internal committees for addressing sexual harassment, provision of crèche facilities, transportation during late hours, and adherence to equal pay principles.

STATE OF WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA:

- While the **Women's Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** has seen improvement in recent years, a considerable portion of this increase pertains to unpaid work.

- According to the **Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS)**, the female participation rate rose to **27.8%** in **2022-23** from **17.5%** in **2017-18**. However, the majority of this increase is attributed to women categorized as “helpers in household enterprises” who do not receive regular salaries. In contrast, the **LFPR for males** increased from 75.8% in 2017-18 to 78.5% in 2022-23.



CAUSES OF LOWER WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOR FORCE:

- **Patriarchal Social Norms:** Deep-rooted norms and gender roles limit women's access to education and employment. Societal expectations often prioritize women as caregivers, discouraging their active involvement in the workforce.

- **Gender Wage Gap:** Women in India face significant wage disparities compared to men. The 2022 World Inequality Report highlights that men capture 82% of labor income, acting as a deterrent for women in seeking formal employment.
- **Unpaid Care Work:** Women shoulder a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and household duties in India, restricting their time and energy for paid work. This unequal division poses a significant obstacle to women's participation in the labor force.
- **Social and Cultural Stigma:** Some communities associate social and cultural stigma with women working outside the home. Prevailing norms questioning women's roles in the workforce contribute to lower labor force participation rates.
- **Lack of Flexible Work Options:** The absence of flexible or remote work options, particularly for women with familial responsibilities, hinders their ability to balance work and family commitments. Employer reluctance to adopt flexible policies contributes to women's underrepresentation.
- **Limited Access to Education:** Unequal access to education impedes women's entry into the labor force. Girls in some regions face barriers in accessing quality education, limiting their skill development and employment opportunities.
- **Inadequate Support Systems:** The absence of support systems, such as crèche facilities, hinders working mothers. Without childcare support, women may struggle to balance work and family responsibilities, leading to a decline in workforce participation.
- **Occupational Segregation:** Women are often concentrated in specific industries, contributing to occupational segregation. Limited representation in certain sectors restricts women's choices and opportunities for career advancement, perpetuating gender inequalities in the workforce.

IMPACT OF HIGHER WOMEN'S LABOR PARTICIPATION ON SOCIETY:

Higher women's labor participation positively impacts society in various ways:

- **Economic Growth:** Increased involvement of women in the workforce directly contributes to economic growth by enhancing productivity and overall economic output.
- **Poverty Reduction:** Access to income-generating opportunities for women helps lift households out of poverty, leading to improved living standards, better education, and healthcare access.
- **Human Capital Development:** Educated and economically active women positively influence the education and health outcomes of their children, contributing to improved human capital development and societal progress.
- **Gender Equality and Empowerment:** Higher women's workforce participation challenges traditional gender norms, fostering gender equality, and enabling women to have greater control over their lives.
- **Reduced Gender-Based Violence:** Economic empowerment through employment reduces women's vulnerability to gender-based violence, providing financial independence and the ability to make choices aligned with well-being.
- **Fertility and Population Growth:** Studies show that as women participate more in the workforce, fertility rates tend to decline, contributing to more sustainable population growth.
- **Labor Market and Talent Pool:** Increasing women's participation addresses skill shortages, leading to a more efficient allocation of talent and resources in diverse and inclusive workplaces.

- **Innovative Solutions and Perspectives:** A diverse workforce, including women, brings a range of perspectives, fostering innovation and creativity within organizations for effective solutions to societal challenges.

INITIATIVES TO SAFEGUARD WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT:

Various initiatives and labor codes have been implemented to safeguard women's employment in India. The Code of Wages, 2019, Industrial Relations Code, 2020, Social Security Code, 2020, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, are instrumental in ensuring fair labor practices. Additionally, **schemes** such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, One Stop Centre, SWADHAR Greh, NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR, Mahila Police Volunteers, Mahila Shakti Kendras, and the NIRBHAYA Fund are aimed at addressing gender-related challenges.

WAY FORWARD:

- To truly enhance women's workforce participation, discussions on gender equality must transcend compartmentalizing women's lives into work and personal spheres.
- Policy solutions should be derived from women's negotiations within their cultural context, emphasizing increased autonomy and flexible work options.
- The promotion and support of higher women's labor force participation are not just matters of gender equality but are crucial drivers of societal progress and development.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q1) Consider the following statements:

- 1) The objective of the "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" scheme in India is to ensure women's safety in workplaces
- 2) "Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)" function as a comprehensive support system for women at the district level.
- 3) "SWADHAR Greh" primarily focuses on providing assistance to Victims of human trafficking and domestic violence

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) None

ANSWER: B

Q2) Which scheme aims to provide temporary accommodation, rehabilitation, and support for women in distress, including those without family support?

- a) Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
- b) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
- c) SWADHAR Greh
- d) NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR

ANSWER: C

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION:

- Q1) Discuss the impact of deep-rooted patriarchal norms on women's access to education and employment opportunities in the context of women's development in India. Suggest measures to address these challenges.
- Q2) Examine the significance of education in breaking gender disparities. Discuss how limited access to quality education can perpetuate inequalities and hinder women's participation in the labor force. Propose policy measures to address this educational gap.

Himanshu Mishra

