CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life.”
Kofi Annan.

2.1 Introduction

The changing pattern of women’s participation in the labour market has drawn social and academic attention resulting in many studies on gender aspects of employment. One of the most important goals of development efforts is the full integration of women into the economy. Drastic changes have been observed in the economic structures of nations all over the world since the commencement of Eighties due to the impact of globalization. The role of women is significant in poverty reduction because of their role in assuring the welfare of households. World Bank publishes regular assessments and a newsletter under the banner “Gender Equality as Smart Economics” to underline the fact that increase in economic opportunities for women is the cornerstone of development.

Kuznets1 (1966) opined that as economic development progresses, more people are shifted first from agriculture to industry and then from industry to services. The transfer of population from agricultural to non-agricultural sector must be accompanied by a rise in productivity in the former sector for providing food and raw materials to the latter sector. Theoretically, it is natural for economic activity among women to follow a U-shaped curve along the course of development. In the initial stages of development, when society is primarily agrarian, increased demand for female labour leads to higher workforce participation among women. Industrialization gives rise to greater demand for skilled labour and as a consequence involves displacement of women labour and its substitution by male labour. It is only in the later stages of development, as a consequence of the emergence and expansion of tertiary sector, demand for women labour is renewed (Boserup2, 1970).


The recent economic recession makes sustainable and socially equitable growth and the aim of decent work for all, difficult to achieve. Gender equality should be a key principle in any policy response, as the effects of the recession go beyond the scope of women in the world of work, but impact on the overall stability of society considering the various roles that women play. Therefore, policy responses should help to offset the unequal social and economic burden on women.

When governments design and implement fiscal stimulus packages, it is important to recognize the labour market disadvantage that women face through the equity challenge and to consider explicit employment growth targets for women. The impact on the unpaid family care work that women are mostly responsible for, which may expand as the economic crisis worsens, is another fundamental dimension to address. It may further limit their access to labour markets if policies to improve sharing of these responsibilities with men are not forthcoming. It is evident that the world is facing a dramatic and unprecedented crisis that calls for creative solutions to address the gender gap. In the world, there remains a huge untapped labour potential of women, and economic growth and development could be much higher if social and economic readjustments are made so as to provide women with the opportunity of decent employment.

In Kerala economy, the sector composition of employment resembles the pattern of developed countries of the world. Kerala model of development refers to the state’s exceptional achievements in material conditions of living, reflected in indicators of social development that are comparable to that of many developed countries, even though the state’s per capita income is low in comparison to them. The advancement in the health and education sectors of the state is the root cause for the low levels of infant mortality and population growth and high levels of literacy and life expectancy. Highly educated women constituting more than half the population of the state with their visible as well as invisible services within and outside the household played a crucial role in addressing the paradox in the so called Kerala model. The economic and social contribution of women in Kerala imparted certain extent of sustainability to the model, even if some economists neglected it as a “palace made of a pack of cards”.

Many theories are available globally to explain the peculiarities of women employment in developed and developing economies. It is worthwhile to mention some of such important theoretical formulations in the women employment scenario, before examining the nature and participation of women in the service sector. The first session of this chapter deals with the
theoretical perspectives regarding the economic activities of women within the context of their households. In the second session, some of the available literature on the various aspects of women employment is extensively reviewed by categorizing the same into three different areas namely international, Indian and Kerala literature.

2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Female Labour Force Participation

In connection with the theoretical background of explaining how levels of economic development influence patterns of female labour force participation in developing countries, Shunghee Nam\(^3\) (1991) classifies the literature into two perspectives namely, the modernization and the world system. According to modernization theorists, economic development is positively associated with female labour force participation through change in the country’s occupational structure (i.e. the increasing availability of service and white-collar jobs) and increased educational opportunities, often accompanied by reduced fertility rates and household responsibilities. The modernization process is associated with increased demand for labour, a general social acceptance of women’s education and employment, as well as lower fertility (Heckman\(^4\), 1980; Standing\(^5\), 1981; Bauer et al\(^6\), 1987). The world system perspective, on the other hand, explains the increasing labour force participation in the context of traditional comparative advantage international trade theory. From the perspective of the Stolper-Samuelson theorem, global trade liberalization would lead to a rise in the demand for unskilled labour in developing countries. In other words, since developing countries are more likely to have a comparative advantage in producing unskilled labour-intensive goods, one would expect international trade in these countries to lead to a rise in the demand for


and relative returns of the abundant factor; unskilled labour in the case of developing countries (Krueger\textsuperscript{7}, 1983; Harrison\textsuperscript{8}, 2005).

Even though economic restructuring is affecting both men and women, its implication is definitely different on the two sexes. For example, economic policies of trade liberalization assume that labour is freely mobile so that resources can be shifted from one sector to another. But the sex-based division of labour makes it more difficult for women relative to men to switch from employment in non-tradable production sectors to sectors of tradable production. It is often argued that increased global competition consequent on economic restructuring will lead to feminization of workforce. But feminization takes place mostly in the informal sector through home working via worsening income distribution and increased openness (Cagatay and Ozler\textsuperscript{9}, 1995). Many economists attributed the increased feminization of labour force since the Eighties to supply-side macro-economic policies and structural adjustment in which the gender gaps in earnings are more pronounced than in the formal sector due to the relative difficulty of organizing members for collective action (Cagatay\textsuperscript{10}, 1997). The theoretical basis for explaining female labour force participation could be collapsed in to four sub-groups namely the neo-classical, feminist, Marxian and preference theory frameworks.

2.2.1 The Neo-classical Framework

The neo-classical paradigm is built largely on the ambitions and perspectives of men employees in the capitalist manufacturing sectors and paid no attention to women labour. Thus, neo-classical model had nothing to deal with the issues of gender in terms of concept or methodology. However, it has extended to analyze women’s problems also since the Seventies in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Krueger, A (1983): “Trade and Employment in Developing Countries”, \textit{vol. 3: Synthesis and Conclusions}, University of Chicago Press.
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Harrison, A (2005): \textit{Globalization and Poverty}, University of California at Berkeley and NBER, mimeo.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Cagatay N (1997): “Macro-Economic Policy and Poverty Reduction: A Perspective Based on UNDP Research”, \textit{paper presented at the UNRSD/UNDP/CDS Workshop on Gender, Poverty and Well-being: Indicators and Strategies}, November 24-27, Thiruvananthapuram.
\end{itemize}
response to the growing importance of women in the labour market. All over the world, women bear most of the responsibility for children and households and thus suffer from time poverty and lack of mobility. The general theory of choice in the neo-classical economics views the decision of a woman to participate in the labour force as a choice between work and leisure which is influenced by changes in wage rate. A change in wage rate produces two effects on labour supply. The ‘substitution effect’, produces more work because it raises the cost of leisure relative to work. The other, called ‘income effect’ produces less work because it increases purchasing power. Generally for men as well as for single women, income effect was supposed to outweigh substitution effect. As work within home does not constitute their major activity, their choice was narrowed down to either market work or leisure. But this theory was criticized mainly for its limited application as it was unable to explain the labour force participation of married women for whom domestic work is an important variable in the choice structure (Sweet\textsuperscript{11}, 1973). Thus, it was emphasized that analysis of female labour force participation should take place within the context of the household.

Applying the concept of income and substitution effect, Mincer\textsuperscript{12} (1962) and Cain\textsuperscript{13} (1966) proposed a theory of labour supply that applies especially to married women. Within the context of the family, a rise in income has different effects on its members. For wives, housework is a major responsibility and thus an important substitute for time. Thus, in their case, substitution effect could be larger than for other adults. On the whole, female labour supply increases when the substitution effect is much greater than the income effect. Becker\textsuperscript{14} (1965), Bowen and Finegan\textsuperscript{15} (1969) and

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Berk and Berk\textsuperscript{16} (1983) later elaborated on this basic theory of choice. All these theories rest upon the assumption that the household is a consuming as well as a decision-making unit. In this household model, known as ‘new household economics’, there are three categories of consumables: market goods (goods and services purchased for a price), home goods (goods and services produced and consumed at home) and leisure (time not spent in market or home work). In a collective decision making process aimed at maximizing the well-being of the household, they face two constraints, time and financial resources. Participation of women in the labour force hence becomes an outcome of decision making of the family regarding income and leisure.

The decision of a female to take up an employment can be explained with the standard participation model based on conventional theoretical household models of time allocation (Mincer\textsuperscript{17}, 1962; Becker\textsuperscript{18}, 1965; Gronau\textsuperscript{19}, 1977; Blundell and MaCurdy\textsuperscript{20}, 1999; Troske and Voicu\textsuperscript{21}, 2009). The standard static, within period labour supply model is based on basic consumer theory. Assuming an individual maximizes a well behaved utility function \(U\) that is defined over her within period consumption of commodities \(C\) and leisure \(L\), the model can be expressed formally as,

\[
U = U(C, L, X)
\]  

(1)

Where, \(X\) indicates individual and household characteristics such as age, marital status, ethnicity, etc. The number of children and any other dependents are included in the vector of individual and

\begin{itemize}
  
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Mincer Jacob (1962): op. cit.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Becker, Garry S (1965): op. cit.
  
  
  
\end{itemize}
household attributes, X. Utility is assumed to be maximized subject to the budget (income and time) constraint

\[ C + WL = Y + WT \quad (2) \]

Where, \( W \) is the wage rate, \( Y \) is non-labour income and \( T \) is the total time available. The individual maximizes a utility function subject to the constraint imposed by the fixed time \( T \) and how to allocate her time to home production, market work and leisure. Thus, the optimal allocation of time to market work will be determined by the personal and household attributes as well as on the labour market characteristics. The labour market conditions determine the costs of a job search and the remunerations of the market work. The solution to the optimization problem results in the familiar first-order conditions

\[ U_C (C, L, X) = \mu, \quad U_L (C, L, X) \geq \mu W \quad (3) \]

Where, \( \mu \) is the marginal utility of income and equation (3) involves, on the one hand, the demand function for the utility-generating commodities, and, on the other hand, the optimal allocation of time among leisure, market work and home production. If the inequality in equation (3) holds strictly, then the individual is not working and \( L = T \). The wage, \( W_r \) such that \( U_L (Y, T, X) = \mu W_r \), is the reservation wage below which the individual will not work; i.e., the individual participates in market work if and only if the expected market wage is greater than the reservation wage.

Neo-classical economists following the Becker’s model of ‘new home economics’ treat households as a unitary entity and thus failed to consider what husband versus wife may control or do within the household. Thus, according to the neo-classical paradigm a single production function is sufficient and it does not matter who works and who brings in the income. The US sociologists had argued that what goes on within the family does matter even from the 1960’s. Thus, the relationship between gender, relative resources and marital power constituted their focus of attention (Blood and Wolfe\textsuperscript{22}, 1960; Blumberg\textsuperscript{23}, 1984). Blumberg and Coleman\textsuperscript{24} (1989) emphasize


the importance of relative male/female control of income and other resources as a major
determinant of decision-making. Blumberg\textsuperscript{25} (1991) in the context of the Third World demonstrates
that men and women have distinct expenditure patterns and further reports that women spend
more for the family's sustenance and upbringing of children.

Whitehead\textsuperscript{26} (1990) attempts to fill the gap between the neo-classical models that treat the
household as a single unit and other models that treat men and women within the household
separately. She challenges the view that economic separation between husbands and wives is total.
The gender-efficiency approach advocated by Kabir\textsuperscript{27} (1991) and Young\textsuperscript{28} (1993) highlights the
importance of directing economic resources to women and the need for action-oriented political
strategies to bring about women's empowerment. Young, who is among the few advocates of
empowerment, also recognizes the importance of more practical NGO initiatives as a means of
politicizing women's issues. Westwood's\textsuperscript{29} (1991) study of SEWA (Self Employed Women's
Association) in India highlights its success in generating and reproducing a collective consciousness
among women workers.

Neo-classical theory views occupational segmentation in the labour market as an extension
of the biological division of labour. Men have greater access to specialized skills due to their early
entry into the labour market. Marginal differences in the initial skill levels get compounded and
would result in the segregation of women and their marginalization towards non-specialized and
unskilled jobs. Using the neo-classical framework a few hypotheses have come up to explain labour
market discrimination. They are overcrowding hypothesis, human capital hypothesis and

\textsuperscript{25} Blumberg Rae Lesser (Ed) (1991): \textit{Gender, Family and Economy: The Triple Overlap}, Sage Publications, USA

\textsuperscript{26} Whitehead A (1990): “Rural Women and Food Production in Sub Saharan Africa”, \textit{in Dreze and Sen (Ed), The

\textsuperscript{27} Kabir N (1991): “Gender, Production and Wellbeing: Rethinking the Household Economy”, \textit{Discussion
Paper No.288, Institute of Development studies}.

\textsuperscript{28} Young K (1993): “Gender and Politics of Production in India,” \textit{in H. Afsher (Ed.) Women Development and

\textsuperscript{29} Westwood S (1991): “Gender and the Politics of Production in India”, \textit{in H. Afsher, (Ed), Women
co-operative conflict hypothesis (Lakshmy Devi⁴⁰, 2002). Millicent Fawcett who was the first advocate of the overcrowding hypothesis argued that women overcrowd in unskilled jobs which leads to low wages and poor working conditions in these jobs. He found that trade unions’ rules, employees’ rules, their attributes and prejudices and social customs deny skilled jobs to women resulting in their overcrowding in unskilled occupations and consequent pulling down of their general wage levels.

The human capital hypothesis argues that difference in wages and segregation in work is largely due to differences in the human capital content of male and female work reflected in differences in productivity. The theory assumes that as women’s prior commitment is to the home and because of long hours of work at home, women are usually seen as less committed to work outside home and hence are less paid than men. Following the neo-classical framework of supply and demand, Millicent Fawcett, F. Y. Edgeworth, and P. Sargent Florence put forth the theory that women earn less than men because their relative needs are less since they have fewer dependents. The ‘new home economics’ assumes that, the historical division of labour, between men and women, has resulted in creating a comparative advantage for men in market activities and women in household activities. Sexual division of labour within the household assumes man to be the ‘bread winner’ and woman’s work is rated as secondary or subsidiary. Thus, though women are burdened with double roles, combining domestic unpaid work with paid work outside home, they are relegated to non-skilled and non-specialized jobs in which experience, skills and efficiency requirements are less and so payments are also low.

In the co-operative conflict model families are visualized as centres of conflicts and cooperation, unlike in the neo-classical models which assume individual units. Even though the model is an extension of the neo-classical model, families are not assumed as individual units. But because of the low deal that women have in the sexual division of labour within the household, they have weak outcomes both within the household and at the workplace. This results in their overcrowding in low payment jobs with poor working conditions. The empirical model that emerged

in the Seventies and the Eighties using neo-classical framework could not explain segregation and wage gap adequately.

2.2.2 The Feminist Framework

The feminist framework strongly rooted in the theory of patriarchy came up in response to the strong wave of feminism in the Sixties in the western world. The central idea behind this approach is that the position of women in the labour market is governed by patriarchy, or rather, male dominance. It was successful not only in exposing the male bias of the existing theories, but in bringing out the primacy of the gender relations as well. Consequently, the feminist framework using the theory of patriarchy became central to the study of women and labour market in sociology, economics and political economy models. By adding a gender dimension to the existing models, this approach resulted in evolving a dual system theory, one dealing with the labour market and the other dealing with the position of women in it. It assumed that patriarchy and the resultant male dominance were the products of capitalism with one conditioning the other. But patriarchy being a social system has its own social, cultural and historical specificities which make theorizing difficult. During the same period domestic labour and sexual division of labour emerged as interrelated categories in a conceptual framework for dealing with women’s oppression in the labour market. This framework stipulates that women are exploited by men in the labour market as an extension of their oppression at home (Lakshmy Devi\textsuperscript{31}, 2002).

2.2.3 Marxian Framework

The classical Marxian paradigm is largely gender-neutral with its emphasis on class relations in the capitalist mode of production. Women’s economic status is seen as a direct result of the capitalist family structure. In the Marxist perspective gender issues form part of class conflicts. The idea of the ‘reserve army of labour’ originally developed by Marx was later adopted by many authors within the socialist-feminist framework (Beechey\textsuperscript{32}, 1987; Anthias\textsuperscript{33}, 1980). According to the Marxian interpretation, the reserve army of labour is the result of capitalist development caused by

\textsuperscript{31} Lakshmy Devi K. R (2002): Ibid.


replacement of labour by machines. The disadvantaged position of women in the labour market identifies them with the reserve army of labour. They are increasingly thrown out of employment as capitalist development proceeds, being the most volatile fraction of the labour market. Marx has distinguished three forms of the reserve army of labour, floating (who are unemployed recently), latent (who are not employed previously) and stagnant (who are unemployed for a long time). But the increased participation of women in the labour market during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries has laid bare inconsistency in the theory. Modified versions of the reserve army model, the substitution hypothesis and the model of compositional change have tried to solve the inconsistency in the theory. The substitution hypothesis postulates an increase in women's employment and subsequent displacement of men in sectors where women's employment is high. The compositional shift theory argues that women's employment can increase only when there is a shift in relative importance of the different sectors. All these theories, however, fail to provide a strong theoretical base for the real labour market situation.

Within the Marxist framework the most important development is the theory of segmented labour market evolved in the Seventies. The theory of patriarchy is central in the theory of segmentation also. Patriarchy is of two types, private and public. Women are oppressed at home either by husband or father; religion and state subordinate women and perpetuate male dominance (Walby34, 1988). Three factors are prominent in the theory of segmentation. They are (i) the male dominance and male strategies leading to the exclusion of women from employment, (ii) the restructuring of jobs with accumulation of capital and change in the organizational forms of production and management control and (iii) the restructuring of sexual division of labour based on the pre-existing notions of feminity and masculinity.

The Labour Process Theory of Braverman35 (1974) is perhaps the most important contribution to the theory of segmented labour market within the Marxist framework. According to this theory skills are socially constructed and hence gendered. As capitalist development proceeds and more labour are displaced by machines, a deskilling process ensues. This leads to the creation


of a hierarchy of jobs. Since women already have a lower position in the social hierarchy they get inferior positions in the labour market also. Moreover, skilled male labour are being reluctant to take up unskilled work, women are forced to take up the unskilled categories of work. Braverman's idea of deskilling has been severely criticized on the fact that capitalist process also has a counterpart in reskilling in which new skills are created. The theory of exclusion argues that in any upgrading of work through reskilling women, tend to be excluded unless and until men abandon these jobs. These theories further point out to the role of trade unions, dominated by men, in excluding women from skilled occupations (Hartmann\textsuperscript{36}, 1979).

The importance of the household in women’s activities has largely remained neglected in these analyses. The recognition that women’s relative economic power is the most important variable that decides her bargaining power within the household in terms of control of key economic resources, is also found missing in the above models. Several U.S. sociologists (Mc Donalt\textsuperscript{37}, 1980; Blumstein and Schwartz\textsuperscript{38}, 1983; Blumberg\textsuperscript{39}, 1984; Kranichfeld\textsuperscript{40}, 1987) who consistently worked on this theme have come out with the conclusion that though economic power of women does have a decisive role in gender stratification, responsibilities within the household have a negative impact on female employment. The inter-linkages between female employment and gender relations within the household are quite significant and they certainly affect social relations.

2.2.4 Preference Theory

The latest research results on women’s position in the labour market are making old theories, especially those focusing on patriarchy and sex discrimination, out of date. New theories

\textsuperscript{36} Hartman H (1979): “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union” Capital and class, No.8.


\textsuperscript{39} Blumberg Rae Lesser (1984): op. cit.

for the 21st century are needed, which take account of and are consistent with the newest research findings. Preference theory is one among the new theories for explaining and predicting women’s choices between market work and family work. This theory is historically-informed, empirically-based, multidisciplinary, prospective rather than retrospective in orientation and applicable in all rich modern societies (Hakim41, 2000). Preference theory predicts a polarization of work-lifestyles, as a result of the diversity in women’s sex-role preferences and the three related models of family roles. It argues that in prosperous modern societies, women’s preferences become a central determinant of life choices -in particular the choice between a thrust on activities related to children and family life or an emphasis on employment and competitive activities in the public sphere. As the status and economic participation of women in Kerala resemble those in the developed nations in the world, this theoretical formulation would be more appropriate to explain the situation of women employees in the state.

Preference theory can be seen as an empirically-based statement of the choices women and men actually make in late modernity. It contrasts with economic theories of the family (Becker42, 1991) that assume that women and men form homogeneous groups, with contrasting goals and preferences, which make some family division of labour optimal and efficient for all couples and produces sex differences in investments in careers. In short, preference theory predicts diversity in lifestyle choices and even a polarization of lifestyles among both men and women. The diversity of family models and lifestyle choices is hidden in variable-centred analysis, which tends to focus on the average outcome, the modal pattern and the central tendency. The diversity of ideal family models and lifestyle preferences only emerges clearly in studies using person-centred analysis (Cairns et al43, 1998; Magnusson44, 1998), which is still uncommon. Reviews of the research


evidence for the last three decades, particularly for the USA and Britain (Hakim\textsuperscript{45}, 2000 & 2004), show that once genuine choices are open to them, women choose between three different lifestyles: home-centred, work-centred or adaptive. These divergent preferences are found at all levels of education and in all social classes. Social class becomes less important than motivation, personal life goals, attitudes and values.

Work-centred women are a minority, despite the massive influx of women into higher education and into professional and managerial occupations in the last three decades. Work-centred people (men and women) are focused on competitive activities in the public sphere—in careers, sports, politics or arts. Family life is fitted around their work and many of these women remain childless, even when married. Qualifications and training are obtained as a career investment rather than as an insurance policy, as in the adaptive group. The majority of men are work-centred, compared to only a minority of women, even women in professional occupations (Hakim\textsuperscript{46}, 1998; Hakim\textsuperscript{47}, 2003). Preference theory predicts that men will retain their dominance in the labour market, politics and other competitive activities, because only a few women are prepared to prioritize their jobs (or other activities in the public sphere) in the same way as men. In the long run, it is work-centred people who are most likely to survive, and become high achievers, in greedy occupations.

Adaptive women prefer to combine employment and family work without giving a fixed priority to either. They want to enjoy the best of both worlds. Adaptive women are generally the largest group among women and are found in substantial numbers in most occupations. Certain occupations, such as school teaching, are attractive to women because they facilitate a more even work-family balance. Great majority of women who transfer to part-time work after they have children are adaptive women, who seek to devote as much time and effort to their family work as to their paid jobs. In some countries part-time jobs are rare, but women can choose from seasonal


jobs, temporary work, school-term-time jobs etc. All offer a better work-family balance than the
typical full-time job, especially if commuting is also involved. When flexible jobs are not available,
adaptive women may take ordinary full-time jobs or else withdraw from paid employment
temporarily. Adaptive people are the group interested in schemes offering work-life balance and
family-friendly employment benefits and will gravitate towards careers, occupations and employers
offering these advantages.

The third group, home-centred or family-centred women, is also a minority, and a relatively
invisible one in the Western world, given the current political and media focus on working women
and high achievers. Home-centred women prefer to give priority to private life and family life after
they marry. They are most inclined to have larger families and these women avoid paid work after
marriage unless the family is experiencing financial problems. They do not necessarily invest less in
qualifications, because the educational system functions as a marriage market as well as a training
institution. Despite the elimination of the sex differential in educational attainment, an increasing
percentage of women in USA and Europe are now marrying men with substantially better
qualifications and the likelihood of marrying a graduate spouse has highly increased if the woman
herself has obtained a degree (Hakim48, 2000; Blossfeld and Timm49, 2003). This could be why
women remain less likely to choose vocational courses with a direct economic value and are more
likely to take courses in arts, humanities or languages, which provide cultural capital but have lower
earnings potential. This group of workers is most likely to drop out of greedy careers relatively early
in adult life.

Preference theory provides a different explanation for the continuing pay gap and
occupational segregation. Men will continue to outnumber women in the top jobs simply because
they try much harder to get them. Majority of working women seek a large degree of work-life


Modern Societies. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic
balance (Hakim\textsuperscript{50}, 2005), certainly more than men do. Women are more likely to ask for shorter work hours than to ask for higher pay or promotion (Babcock and Laschever\textsuperscript{51}, 2003).

2.3 Review of Literature

The various aspects of women employment were studied worldwide by many scholars at different levels of development of economies. The available literature on female work participation rate, determinants of women employment, dimensions of women employment and empowerment of women employees are extensively discussed in the foregoing session of this chapter. The dimensions of employment include economic aspects, effect on family and society and job satisfaction. The available earlier studies are divided in to three areas namely international, Indian and Kerala contexts in order to have a vivid regional interpretation of the various aspects of women employment.

2.3.1 Review with International Focus

At the international level a large number of scholars are engaged in studies on women and their role in development. The upsurge of an active women's liberation movement in the western world during the Sixties produced a number of studies on women and gender. During the early years much of the research conducted in developed and industrialized countries concentrated on discussing prevailing employment characteristics and participation rates. An increase in the level of awareness and understanding about women’s role in labour came with the publication of Boserup's\textsuperscript{52} (1970) pioneering work “Women’s Role in Economic Development”. Collver and Langlois\textsuperscript{53} (1962) had even earlier undertaken a study on female economic participation in 38 countries comprising both developed and developing nations. Their study as well as the studies by


\textsuperscript{52} Boserup E (1970): op. cit.

De Miranda\textsuperscript{54} (1977) and Chinchilla\textsuperscript{55} (1977) suggested that trends in female participation in developed countries were positively related to economic development, but that the same relationship was not universally observed in developing countries. These studies further found that the compatibility between familial and economic roles had a great influence on the extent of female employment.

According to the Global employment report\textsuperscript{56} of women published by the ILO in 2009, 1.2 billion are women (40.4 percent) among 3.0 billion people employed around the world in 2008. It is interesting to examine the sectors in which women are working and the working conditions faced by women. Only a small proportion of employed women are working in industry (18.3 percent in 2008, as compared to 26.6 percent of men); the large majority are in agriculture and, increasingly, in the services sector. The service sector accounted for 46.3 percent of all female employment in 2008, as compared to 41.2 percent of male employment. Within the service sector, women are still concentrated in sectors that are traditionally associated with their gender roles, particularly in community, social and personal services, whereas men dominate the better-paid sector jobs in financial and business services and real estate.

Andrew Morrison\textsuperscript{57} in the meeting of Growth Commission held at Yale University in 2007 presented a simple model shown below in the figure 2.1 depicting the direct and indirect relationship in growth of a nation on gender equity in the households, market and society. He opined that the potential barriers to female labour force participation are education levels, time burden of domestic responsibilities, wage gaps (dynamic disincentive), discrimination in other markets (land, credit) and culture.

\textsuperscript{54} De Miranda Glaura (1977): \textit{Women’s Labour Force Participation in a Developing Society}.


\textsuperscript{57} Andrew Morrison (2007): “Does gender equality matter for shared growth?” \textit{Growth Commission Meeting at Yale University September 26, 2007}
The participation of women in labour force has increased in industrialized countries like Japan and in Latin American countries, whereas in developing nations, participation rates have declined as in India and China. This is according to the data made available by the Commission on Growth and Development Report\textsuperscript{58} (2003). However, the report fails to determine the reasons behind these trends. On the demand side, an increase in female labour participation in industrialized countries are due to a general rise in the demand for labour as a result of expansion of output and a rise in the education of women. An increase in women’s education leading to their acquiring greater skills has led to a hike in female labour participation. At the same time, rising wages for women, changes in family composition and lower male earnings have also contributed to

the rise in female labour force participation on the supply side. Another important factor, especially in western countries, was the increase in the proportion of single women who had no alternative but to join the labour force for sustenance (Lakshmy Devi\textsuperscript{59}, 2002). On the other hand, the decline in the women labour force in developing nations may be explained by the upward trends in school enrollment, to the extent that participation in labour comes from girls who should otherwise be enrolled. Women in the labour force are lesser than men and are not comparable internationally, reflecting the fact that for women, demographic, social, legal and cultural trends and norms determine whether their activities are regarded as economic. In many countries, a large number of women work in farms or in family enterprises without any payment.

One of the dimensions of access to decent and productive employment is the measure of the gender pay gap (or gender wage differential), i.e. the difference between the wages earned by women and those earned by men. Even though the female labour force participation is increasing in developed countries, they everywhere typically receive less pay than men. The elimination of discrimination in remuneration is crucial to achieve gender equality. A review of data available for six diverse occupation groups shows that in most economies, women still earn less than their male co-workers with differences of 10 percent or more. Women’s assumed lower human capital and intermittent career paths are widely believed to be the main reasons for gender differentials in income. Even in typically female occupations such as nursing and teaching, gender wage equality is still lacking. In Singapore for example, male primary school teachers earn approximately 6 percent more than female teachers and male nurses 21 percent more. The factors such as the regulations and practices concerning work and family life, childcare facilities and other social rights play a significant role in the participation of women in the labour force, in their occupational choices and in the employment patterns that affect the gender wage gap. Strong cultural values restrain women from labour force activities when they have small children; re-entry to work is difficult; and often women end up in low-paying jobs.

Agricultural sector is still a predominant source of employment and livelihood in the developing countries like India. Women in agricultural sector in these economies are too often trapped in insecure employment situations with low productivity and low earnings. Also in such

countries, women have taken up most of the newly created jobs, a process which is often referred to as feminization of the labour force. Meulders et al (1997) report that a significant proportion of women in the member states of the European Union participates in typical labour relations such as part-time employment, temporary employment and unusual schedule employment involving inferior and hazardous labour conditions. Thus, the age-old problems of segregation and low pay scales still pre-dominate female employment scenario. European labour markets are characterized by high female labour force participation and a high degree of segregation by gender. Denmark and the United Kingdom with the highest female labour force participation rates display as great a degree of segregation by gender as countries like Greece and Spain with lower female participation rates (Plantega, 1997). Most of the nations in the world have a long way to go in working towards the economic integration of women and therefore a significant potential for economic development remains available to be tapped.

Myrdal and Klein (2006) conducted an international survey on behalf of the International Labour Office about the motivational forces. According to it, women work due to economic needs on the one hand and due to national necessity for increased production on the other hand. They further continue to state that a sense of vocation influences the desire of women to continue their work after marriage and some are inspired by the feeling of social responsibility and so they continue to be in labour force. The study by Morgan et al (1976), which analyzed the determinants of working wives, found that three variables which were overwhelmingly important were husband’s income, wife’s education and wife’s age. Liba Paukert (1982) reported that large-scale entry of

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women into labour force in industrialized countries has been the result of non-economic -
educational, demographic, and social - factors, as also economic factors such as monetization of the
household economy, rise in female wage and rapid development of the service sector. Several
studies conducted in developed countries have identified the strong influence of household
characteristics on the labour force participation of women. Treiman and Terrel\textsuperscript{65} (1975) and Mc
Clendon\textsuperscript{66} (1976) found that the mother’s educational and occupational characteristics were more
powerful determinants of women’s occupational status than the father’s. Smock\textsuperscript{67} (1981) found that
educational attainment increased women’s willingness to work, improved their employment
opportunities and raised their earning potential. Presser and Baldwin\textsuperscript{68} (1980) found that the
presence of young children affected the married women’s labour force participation adversely.
Mason and Palan\textsuperscript{69} (1981) found that household’s economic structure was also a major determinant
of female labour force participation. Lustig and Rendon\textsuperscript{70} (1979) found that high economic status of
the household may promote wife’s employment partly as a result of egalitarian attitude and higher
educational attainment of wives.

The inter-relationship among economics, gender and household variables has only recently
begun to receive the attention of researchers, though the topic of intra-household economic

\textsuperscript{65} Treiman Donald E and Terrell Kermit (1975): “Sex and the Process of Status Attainment: A comparison of

\textsuperscript{66} Mc Clendon C and Mckee J (1976): “The Occupational status Attainment processes of Males and
Females”, \textit{American Sociological Review}, 41 (February).

\textsuperscript{67} Smock Audrey (1981): \textit{Women’s Education in Developing Countries: Opportunities and Outcomes}, New

\textsuperscript{68} Presser Harriet B and Wendy Baldwin (1980): “Child Care as a Constraint on Employment: Prevalence,
Correlates and Fertility Nexus”, \textit{American Journal of Sociology} 85(March).

\textsuperscript{69} Mason Karen. O, and Palan V. T (1981): “Female Employment and Fertility in Peninsular Malaysia: The
Maternal Role Incompatibility Hypothesis Reconsidered”, \textit{Demography} 18 (November).

\textsuperscript{70} Lustig Nora and Teressa Rendon (1979): “Female Employment, Occupational Status and Socioeconomic
relationship had received the attention of sociologists much earlier. Blumstein and Schwartz\textsuperscript{71} (1983), Dwyer and Bruce\textsuperscript{72} (1988) and Blumberg\textsuperscript{73} (1991) have given detailed descriptions of the triangular relationship among family, household and the gender-stratification system in different settings. The main factor seen as affecting intra-household gender stratification is relative income of males and females. Specifically, the studies conclude that with greater relative income, women are seen to have greater voice and leverage in family decisions and somewhat greater say in the overall relationships. Several studies have pointed out that women have in general provider obligations towards their families, especially to their own children (Dwyer and Bruce\textsuperscript{74}, 1988; Blumberg\textsuperscript{75}, 1991).

2.3.2 Review of Indian Studies

In Indian culture women are expected to devote virtually all of their time, energy and earnings to their family. Men, on the other hand, are expected to spend time and at least some of their earnings on activities outside the household. Even if a woman is employed, she may not have control over the money she earns, though this money often plays an important role in the maintenance of the household. Research has shown that women contribute a higher share of their earnings to the family and are less likely to spend it on themselves. However, the extent to which women retain control over their own income varies from household to household and region to region. Many women still seek their husbands' permission when they want to purchase something for themselves. Conditions of working women in India have improved considerably in the recent years. Ironically, despite the improvement in their status, they still find themselves dependent on men. It is because of the fact that man in patriarchal society has always wielded economic independence and power to take decision.

\textsuperscript{71} Blumstein Philip and Schwatrz Pepper (1983): op. cit.


\textsuperscript{73} Blumberg Rae Lesser (Ed) (1991): op. cit.

\textsuperscript{74} Dwyer Daisy and Judith Bruce (1988): op. cit.

\textsuperscript{75} Blumberg Rae Lesser (1991): op. cit.
Most of the studies emerged during the past few decades relating to women and work in India are based on macro-level data drawn either from the Census or NSS. Very few studies have attempted to explain female labour force participation through economic theories of the household. Even though India is a multifaceted society where no generalization could apply to the entire nation's various regional, religious, social and economic groups, certain broad circumstances in which Indian women live affect the ways they participate in the economy. Since the times immemorial, worth of the work done or services rendered by women has not been recognized. Although most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women sell food and gather wood while working in the informal sector and are traditionally responsible for the daily household chores such as cooking, fetching water and looking after children. Although the cultural restrictions women face are changing, women are still not as free as men to participate in the formal economy.

Horton\textsuperscript{76} (1996) points out that while in most Asian countries women move to regular jobs, they move to the less advantageous status of casual employees in the case of India. Moreover, compared to countries like South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, women's work participation in India is marked by relatively low and stagnant rates. Basu\textsuperscript{77} (1996) argues that independent income earning opportunities reduce the economic dependence of women on men. Many Indian writers have argued that economic development had an adverse impact on female work, pushing women to the grades of inferior casual workers. Many others including Banerjee\textsuperscript{78} (1997) and Unni\textsuperscript{79} (1997) have also argued that there has been a continuous and steady


\textsuperscript{78} Banerjee, Nirmala (1997): “How Real is the Bogey of Feminization”, \textit{The Indian Journal of Labour Economics}, 40, No.3.

casualization of female workforce in India. Deshpande et.al ⁸⁰ (1997) pointed out to the declining trend in the number of female workers in the organized sector. Issues relating to conceptual and empirical invisibility of women’s work and other related issues like paid/unpaid work, domestic work, and problems of measurement of women’s work were the main focus in the writings of Mitra⁸¹ (1984), Duvvury and Isaac⁸² (1989) and Mukherjee⁸³ (1996). These studies also criticized the characterization of women’s work as supplementary by the existing data systems.

The possibility of easy dismissal was always one of the main reasons why women found employment in large numbers during boom years of the Eighties and the early Nineties. They are more obedient and subservient to managerial authority, less prone to organize into unions, more willing to accept lower wages, less likely to expect upward mobility and easier to dismiss, using the pretext of life cycle like marriage and child birth. In fact, in the case of women workers, much of their normal work is unrecognized and unpaid. Activities like processing of primary produce for own consumption, services such as cleaning and childcare and so on which are undertaken within the household are not marketed or not treated as work participation and informal labour (Prakasam and Seepana⁸⁴ 2009).

Haggade⁸⁵ (2003) feels that the awareness of social and economic potentiality, initiative to acquire social equality and economic independence are the motivating factors which induce

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⁸¹ Mitra Ashok (1984): “A Note on Proposed Research on Women’s role in the Social Organization of Production”: All India Conference on Women’s Studies, Trivandrum.


⁸⁴ Prakasam and Seepana (2009): “Gender discrimination and inclusive growth in the informal labour market in India”; *51 annual Indian Society of Labour Economics conference, Punjabi University, Patiala*.

educated women to seek career as means and ways of life. Kalarani\textsuperscript{86} (2005) classified motivations behind the decision to work as monetary, social and personal factors. For the first preference she has assigned a score of 3, for the second preference 2 and for the third preference 1. Her analysis shows that among the purposes ‘making use of education’ ranks first followed by ‘job as an engagement for spare time’, ‘supplementing husband’s income’ and ‘to raise economic status’ occupies the third rank. ‘Gross economic necessity’ occupies the fourth rank and ‘to have independent income’ the last rank. She has proved that there is correlation between age and motivation and education and motivation.

Kaur and Punia\textsuperscript{87} (2005) studied about working women of Hissar District of Haryana, it is observed that most of the working women opt for job out of the gross economic necessity (50 percent), followed by the urge to raise economic status (23 percent), to make use of education (11 percent), to have independent income (9 percent) and the remaining due to miscellaneous motives. Wife’s income is essential to raise family’s standard of living. 18 percent were widows, divorcees and separated. Another 24 percent were single. All these women worked to support themselves and their children. In addition to this, women whose husbands’ income was inadequate were compelled to seek gainful employment.

Girija Khanna and Mariamma A. Varghese\textsuperscript{88} (1978) conducted a detailed study on Indian women and their role in the family and society in general. Data were collected from five different zones in India-East, West, North, South and Central. The total number of samples selected was 1000 to 2000 from each zone. The finding was that when women were more educated and employed, they were allowed to play a greater part in decision making in the family. Only 10 percent did not have a say in the family matters. Saving is directly related to socio-economic status. While 90 percent of the urban rich and 78 percent of the middle class put aside a part of their earnings as savings, only 27 percent among the poor are able to save. Recreational habits like reading and playing are rare among women of the lower socio-economic status.

\textsuperscript{86} Kalarani P (2005): \textit{Working Women in India -Their problems}, Weekly Round Table. 21 May.


Beth Anne Shelton\textsuperscript{99} (1980) presented her analysis that paid work and household responsibilities not only impact on each other but may conflict. That is time spent in one sphere means less time spent in the other. If commitments to paid labour and household labour call for full time participation in both, that time must come at the expense of leisure. Otherwise some of the demands of paid labour or household labour must go unaddressed. Singh K.P\textsuperscript{90} (1972) says that among women who were working out of utter economic necessity, majority were dissatisfied with the time they spend with their children and the time they allocate to their home. 57 percent of working women have alternate arrangements for their children, either mother or mother-in-law or maid to look after their children. The age of the children is an important factor because mother’s personal attention is most essential during their initial years. Another cause of dissatisfaction can be the size of family, as women with larger number of family members may feel the conflict to a larger extent than women in smaller families. Another factor associated with this is the amount of time to be spent outside the house as per the demands of the job.

Desai\textsuperscript{91} (1984) conducted a study on “Economic Opportunities in Women”. Managing the dual roles of homemaker and worker, posed serious problems to women in regions other than large cities, where they got no help of supportive services such as day care, community creche, foster day care etc. Their difficulties got further accentuated when they had to commute from long distances. Under these circumstances the traditional pattern of mutual help by in-laws, friends and neighbours were found extremely helpful whenever possible. However, it was not always available.

Vaidyanathan’s\textsuperscript{92} study (1994) gives a picture of the employment situation in the country and points out that there are distinct differences in the job preferences of educated and uneducated


\textsuperscript{91} Desai. A.S (1984): \textit{Women in Modern India}. Bombay: Vora and Co

\textsuperscript{92} Vaidyanathan A (1994): “Employment Situation some Emerging Perspectives” \textit{Economic and political weekly}. Vol XXIX No. 50.
workers. Sinha\textsuperscript{93} (1961) attributed technological change as the reason for declining female employment in some industries and services. Mehra and Saradamoni\textsuperscript{94} (1983) examined how women are involved in the process of rural transformation in India. In the context of the new economic policy in India, Ghosh\textsuperscript{95} (1996) contribute to the view that changes in macro-economic policies have been responsible for the trend towards feminization of work in India.

2.3.3 Review of Kerala Studies

Education of women confers socio-economic security and a steady source of income. The higher educational status of women in Kerala helps them to contribute to family income, empower them to involve in the education and welfare of children. Even though girls in Kerala have made remarkable advances in professional courses such as engineering, medicine, agriculture, dairy development and veterinary science, their ability to convert the educational qualifications to regular employment is still low compared to boys. The reason for the lower and falling levels of female work participation rates in Kerala when compared to the national level is the longer years spent in schooling/higher education. However, in the Kerala context, there is a certain sense in which girls are over educated, being encouraged to study further while waiting to get a suitable job. Although unemployment increases with the level of education, the possibility of securing regular work is also higher. Higher education positively influences the ‘marriageability’ of girls, by enabling them to make better wives and mothers and/or a potential contributor to the economic well-being of the family (Mridul Eapen and Praveena Kodoth\textsuperscript{96} 2002). In relation to men too, the achievements of women have been laudatory: over the decadal periods since 1961, gender based disparity (ratio of


\textsuperscript{94} Mehra Rekha and Saradamani K (1983): Women and Rural Transformation, New Delhi: Concept publishing Company.


male literacy rate to female literacy rate) has narrowed rather sharply from 1.39 to 1.07 by 1991 and remained at 1.07 in 2001. Some of the more notable achievements have been the near universalization of primary education for both girls and boys, and the very low (compared to all India) school drop-out rates for girls which in fact are higher for boys since at least the early Seventies at each level of school education (Ambili97 1996).

Mridul Eapen98 (1994) has observed that most of the increase in employment in Kerala has been of a casual nature and that the process of casualization has been more severe in the case of women than of men because of their limited mobility. Frank and Chasin99 (1996) also observed the lack of mobility of women in Kerala as a major constraint on female employment in the state. Lakshmy Devi100 (1996) has sought to explain the determinants of female labour force participation based on a very limited sample of 117 households from Thrissur municipal area. The rapid expansion of higher education in Kerala and the consequent steady increase in the supply of graduates swell the reservoir of educated unemployed in the state. There are distinct job preferences between educated and uneducated persons. Preference for salaried employment and aversion to self-employment among educated job seekers in Kerala were documented in a few studies (Mathew101 1997). Gulati, Rajan and Ramalingam102 (1997) discussed changes in women’s labour force participation in Kerala by comparing the results of the 1981 and 1991 Census.


In many developing countries, women’s income is an important variable in the survival strategies of poor households. The study of Lakshmy Devi (2002) about women in Kerala shows that their income constitutes a substantial share of family income. In 45 percent of the households, women’s income is more than 50 percent of the total family income and in about 17 percent more than 70 percent. In a small number of households, it constitutes the sole income of the family. The study also found that women contribute proportionately more towards family maintenance than men do from their earnings. Thus, while the average earnings to contribution ratio for women come to 0.86; the corresponding proportion is only 0.68 for men. This finding has serious policy implications- any programme for improving the living standards of poor households should focus on creating income-earning opportunities for women. The study further examines whether economic independence increases the status of women in the household in general and enhances their role in decision-making. About two-thirds of the employed women in the rural sample and three-fourths in the urban sample feel that economic independence has improved their status in the household. Though employment enhances status of a woman, it often results in ‘double burden’ for the working woman. Employed women work, most of the time, double the number of working hours put in by unemployed women. While employed women work, on an average, for more than 11 hours a day, the unemployed women’s work load comes to only five hours a day. In fact most of the employed women work for 11-14 hours a day whereas more than 50 percent of the unemployed women work less than 5 hours a day. Thus, the paid work outside home does not reduce the family responsibilities of women. On the other hand, it only increases their work burden; and for the majority, employment outside home results in ‘double burden’.

Pradeep Kumar Panda (1999) on the basis of his analysis on women in Kerala provides strong evidence for a U-shaped relationship between household economic status and women’s current employment status. In other words, at both ends of the class spectrum more proportion of women are in the paid labour force. In the middle class, less proportion of women is employed for money. The author argues that higher level of employment at the lower end of the class status may

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be need based while higher level of employment at the upper end of the class status may be resource based (the ability to acquire a job through greater access to resources). The curvilinear relationship between socio-economic status and women's employment is also applicable to single as well as married women. Data for this study come from a 1997 survey of 530 women aged 18 to 35 in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala.

In Kerala unemployment is, to a great extent, the result of the preference for white-collar, salaried jobs. For women, there are other factors also which shape the preference pattern: proximity to home, social status, class consciousness and conformity with educational qualifications. Not only the educated but the less educated also are seen to have strong preferences. Nearly three-fourths of the unemployed women in the sample reported that they were unemployed because they did not get jobs of their liking. Even for those who were employed, only about 3 out of 10 reported that the present jobs they held were their most preferred jobs. In other words, the vast majority of the employed were forced to take up jobs which were not high in their preference ranking (Lakshmy Devi105, 2002).

The conventional factors that influence labour supply like wage rate, demand for labourers and education level seems to be inadequate in explaining women’s labour supply. When 70.5 percent of men are able to find employment, 74.4 percent of women remain unemployed. This shows that lack of employment opportunities cannot explain such wide gender differences in employment. Hence rather than labour market conditions, the likely explanation for such high levels of unemployment among educated women, lies in people’s deep-seated beliefs about women’s gender role in society. (Sebastian A and Navaneetham106 K, 2008)

2.4 Conclusion

Even if nearly half the population of a nation is women, the determinants to seek an employment are entirely different from that of the male counterparts due to their gender roles within the household. The quantum of work done by women in producing home goods or services

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within the four walls of the household is not considered as an economic activity even though the same is an important barrier for them in participating in market work. The dual roles of women within the framework of the household might have been the reason for their low work participation rate compared to men in labour markets. However, the increased access of women to higher education indeed resulted in enhancing her abilities in decision making, improving the power to control over resources and in participating in gainful employment. The increased capability of women in control over resources and decision making paved the way for better human development of the members of her household and future generation.

Increased access to labour markets for women has great potential as a contribution to economic development, but only if the work in which women engaged is decent and productive. Women in agricultural sector in developing economies like India are too often trapped in insecure employment situations with low productivity and lesser earnings. The move away from vulnerable employment into wage and salaried work can be a major step towards economic freedom and self-determination for many women. Economic independence or at least co-determination in resource distribution within the family is highest when women earn wages and salaries. Empowering women is one of the most pressing challenges nations have to face and the main route to reaching this successfully is by giving women the chance of a decent job. Heavy investment in women's education, changes in the labour legislation and recognition and sharing of family responsibilities with men set the preconditions for women to equally participate in labour markets.

In a country like India, productive employment is central to poverty reduction strategy and to bring about economic equality in the society. But as the results of unfettered operation of market forces are not always equitable, women are likely to be subjected to disadvantages as a result of globalization. Globalization has indeed raised hopes of women for a better and elevated status arising out of increased chances to work, but it has put them in a highly contradictory situation where they have the label of economically independent paid workers and are not able to enjoy their economic liberty in real sense of the term. After globalization women are able to get more jobs but the work they get is more casual in nature or is the one that men do not prefer to do or is left by them to move to higher or better jobs. India is the first among countries to give women equal franchise and has a highly credible record with regard to the enactment of laws to protect and promote the interests of women, but women continue to be denied economic, social and legal
rights and privileges. The income earning activities increase the workload of a woman unless the man accepts an increased share in domestic work.

The pattern of female employment in Kerala compares well with that of the developed countries, but the level of economic development of the state is lower compared to them. The higher educational status of women in Kerala helps her to contribute to family income, empowers her to involve in the education and welfare of children. The reason for the lower and falling levels of female work participation rates in Kerala when compared to the all India is the longer years spent in schooling/higher education. Higher education positively influences the ‘marriageability’ of girls by enabling them to become a potential contributor to the economic well-being of the family.

An earlier study on women in Kerala reveals that their income constitutes a substantial share of family income and women contribute proportionately more towards family maintenance than men do from their earnings. Even though employment enhances women’s status, it often results in ‘double burden’ for them. The majority of working women seek a large degree of work-life balance by choosing the adaptive life style compared to men as per the preference theory. Such women are more likely to ask for shorter work hours than to ask for higher pay or promotion. According to a study of Lakshmy Devi, policies that ignore the economic role of women may become detrimental to them. Unless policies are framed with sensitivity to the women’s needs, they are unlikely to yield the desired results. The dimensions and determinants of women employment in the service sector in Kerala is explored in the forthcoming chapters of this work by processing primary and secondary data on the basis of the existing theories and literature of earlier studies.