Chapter 6

Female Work Participation Rate in Barak Valley: A Prognostication to Determine the Factors
The preceding chapter has classified the patterns and changes in Female Work Participation Rate in Barak Valley comprising the three districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi based on information collected from field survey. Results have been estimated using simple averages, percentages and ratios. For pursuing the objectives of the study, we have used regression models, which have been developed to test relative weightage of the factors determining FWPR. This allows a much more detailed test to study the effect on female work participation rates of the various socio-economic variables. The models have been examined for Barak Valley as a whole as well as for the individual districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj.
An attempt has been made in this study to introduce the variables, identify their importance and examine their effect on the work participation. Consequently the combined effect of the variables has been examined to determine their overall effect and influence on the work participation of females.

These models attempt to examine the relationship between the Work Participation and female literacy, sex ratio, male literacy and three forms of individual behaviour i.e. freedom of decision making of females, attitude of male towards Female Work and Necessity of work, which are assumed to affect the participation rate.

We shall first introduce the model represented by the equation

\[ W_F = a + b_1 \text{Lit}_F \]

Where \( W_F \) represents FWPR and \( \text{Lit}_F \) represents female literacy rate.

Testing the model with the help of the primary data reveals that there exists a positive relationship between female literacy and work participation. Higher the level of literacy, higher is also the rate of participation. This supports the Human Capital theory, which confirms that schooling leads to acquisition of productivity related skills, which increase productivity and therefore wages. In other words, Human Capital and Screening theories both predict significantly higher earnings for the better educated. The degree of literacy among women is an important factor in their appreciation of their legal rights and in widening the range of possibilities for employment (Dixit,
1998). But the radical Marxism theorists confirm that there are significant differences in rates of return to education both for individual and between the sexes and racial groups (King 1990).

The results based on the model 1 are indicated in Appendix 5 (Table 1).

The model is acceptable both on theoretical and statistical accounts. The coefficient of determination between WPR and female literacy rate is 64% for Barak Valley and ranges from 63% to 72% for the other three districts as revealed by $R^2$. The regression coefficients are statistically significant and have the required signs. The ratio of the coefficients is 34% for Barak Valley and the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi reveal more or less a similar pattern. In other words, higher the literacy rate higher is the FWPR in all the districts as well as the valley as a whole. About 31% change of FWPR in all the districts as well as the valley as whole.

The correlation between Lit$_F$ and FWPR emerges to be highest in case of Karimganj district as high as 72%. This relationship is further supported by primary data analysis where Karimganj records the highest percentage of literacy (65.35%). This is possibly due to high growth of literacy in the town and the various blocks in the district. It may be noted that the existence of high literacy standard prevailed prior to the separation of Karimganj district from Sylhet, which always recorded the highest literacy among the plain district of Assam (Gazetteer of India, 1991). Perhaps this attitude towards
education has made the women of Karimganj district more aware and contributed towards increasing literacy, which is pursued to better their chances in the labour market. Though this reflects a positive trend, yet a larger share of women participation remains in the unorganized sector of the labour market. Therefore the increase in participation is mostly concentrated in the rural sector, which presents a slightly gloomy picture of gender discrimination and inequalities. However, taking an overall picture of the valley and its constituent units, it is revealed that all the three districts show almost a similar pattern of relationship between female literacy and their participation rates.

The statistical validity of the model prompts us to conclude that the growth of literacy among females has a strong influence in determining their effective participation in the wage market. With regard to education, women certainly are at a disadvantageous position than men. The low rate of female literacy in India is due to the low rates of female involvement in education and high incidence of retention (Thappar, 1997). It thus emerges that education can be an important factor in promoting individual participation as it may be mentioned further that along with literacy, awareness, aspiration and desire to earn also develop, creating a window to the outside world.

The satisfactory $R^2$ values for all the three districts signifying a high participation rate being determined by literacy rate conform to the ideology of the Human Capital Theory which argues that 'investment
in capital embodied in a person or human capital, increases their chances in favour of women to participate in gainful activities'. Thus, one can hope that Barak Valley with its promising trend of literacy growth among the females, investment in women capital could bring valuable returns to the state economy. Though the differences in the structure of employment among males and females is largely determined by factors that women tend to invest more in human capital that has high non-market return and women are less likely to invest in specific human capital, so as to enhance easy entry in the labour market. This partly explains the reasons why participation though increasing among females, is mostly concentrated in low rung nature of jobs which require less skill and training.

Sex ratio or the number of females per thousand males is an important factor to determine the growth of female population over the years. Various academic discussions have given credence to the fact that in cultures where woman was allowed to work outside home either in own farm or as paid labour, the female neglect and discard was relatively low (Miller, 1981).

Similarly, Neetha (2000) points out that increased female participation apart from creating other positive return in the society, witnesses a changed perception of women towards preference towards male child as working women will be less dependent on sons in their later years of life. As a result the next model we have tested is as follows:
\[ W_F = a + b_2 S_R \]

where \( S_R \) represents sex ratio.

The results as indicated in Appendix 5 (Table 2) reveal that the model is acceptable on statistical grounds. \( R^2 \) is almost zero indicating absolutely no relationship between FWPR and \( S_R \) (sex ratio). The coefficient of \( S_R \) not only possess a small value but all the coefficients of sex ratio for all the districts are also statistically insignificant. The sign of the coefficient is also negative in case of Cachar district. This could be indicative of the fact that in absence of sufficient growth of employment opportunities in the district, a higher growth of female population lowers the chances of additional females being employed; hence participation rate does not increase proportionately. A better sex ratio may be an indicator of higher level of out-migration of males in search of jobs outside the state, and therefore may have nothing to do with higher FWPR. In the rural areas, the lack of diversification of the economy of the district, and over concentration of female population in agriculture are the two basic reasons which could explain a positive correlation between sex ratio and FWPR. In all the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi \( R^2 \) does not indicate any relationship between FWPR and sex ratio. The coefficients of \( S_R \) possess almost negligible value in case of Hailakandi and Karimganj districts and a very distressing trend in the value as a whole. It may also be noted that in the valley as a whole, the percentage of total unemployment is comparatively
high. As per statistics, unemployment has increased by 313% with respect to 1980 as the base year (Mazumdar, Acharjee & Bhattacharjee, 1998). In the situation of growing unemployment, the problem is more acute for female workers. Therefore this suggests that in spite of a favourable sex ratio, this has not been translated into opportunities of work and participation in economic activities.

Increase in sex ratio could be ideally accepted only when the increased female population is gainfully employed or when the economy generates sufficient employment opportunities so as to absorb the growing population. Besides, a favourable sex ratio takes sufficiently long time to improve the status of women. This in turn further takes extra longer period to create a favourable environment of female workers in the labour market so as to improve the FWPR. Besides, improved sex ratio implies more supply of female labour force. In the stiff competition in the labour market and the existence of gender discrimination, it may only mean a higher level of unemployment and relatively lower work participation for the female labour force.

The model therefore does not support the hypothesis that an increase in sex ratio plays a positive factor in the determination of work participation among females.

Combining the two independent variables Lit\(_F\) and S\(_R\) we have tried to examine whether these two variables taken jointly increase
the explanatory power of the independent variables. We therefore test the next model, which is as follows:

\[ W_F = a + b_1 L_{it} + b_2 S_R \]  

The results as revealed in the Appendix 5 (Table 3) indicate that this model too cannot be accepted. \( R^2 \) has not increased in this model with respect to model 1. The coefficient of \( L_{it} \) has also not improved. The co-efficient of \( S_R \) has not shown any marked improvement for all the districts and Barak Valley. On the other hand, the signs have changed from positive to negative indicating the presence of multi co-linearity so that the marginal rise in the value of the coefficient of \( S_R \) in case of Hailakandi being statistically significant becomes quite meaningless. Therefore the model is not accepted. It, therefore, implies that though literacy rates plays a significant role in determining the work force participation of female labourers, yet in combination with the sex ratio the predictive power of the model does not improve at all.

Freedom to take decision in family matters automatically entrusts some degree of authority to the person who takes decision. Some sociologist point out that it is poverty or dire economic necessity, and not the social patriarchal order, which confers power and entrusts women to take decisions to work. In other words it is poverty and economic necessity, which affords freedom to a woman to decide her entry into the wage market. The ability to take independent decision appears to be more common in urban than in the rural areas.
On the other hand Shariff (1987) through his investigation has confirmed that there exists a strong positive relationship, which shows that the earning capability and earning accessibility entrusts considerable autonomy for women working in the rural areas. The greater the autonomy in a woman’s ability to take decision, the greater is her freedom to make a choice in her decision to work. Feminists argue that patriarchal society demands that women are expected to obey rather than discuss. Regardless of the extent to which society tolerates the making or influencing of decision by women, their overt role in community village or other unit is usually minimal. Consequently, the next model we specify is as follows:

\[ W_F = a + b_3D_F \]

where \( D_F \) represents freedom of decision making of female.

In this model (Annexure 5, Table 4) it has been observed that 61% to 31% of the variation of FWPR can be explained by the autonomy of taking decision by women. The coefficients relating to decision making for Barak Valley as well as the districts are all statistically significant, and also possess their required signs. The position seems to be the best in case of Hailakandi district where decision-making of females has influenced 80% of the FWPR. Besides, F test explaining the significance of \( R^2 \) also appears to be satisfactory. Primary data reveals that the female literacy rate in the district is not much behind men literacy and urban literacy among females is higher than all the districts combined together. Perhaps
the higher literacy rate influences the decision making power of the females, thereby supporting the capabilities approach, which argues that with increased urbanization and literacy, women become aware of their basic capabilities, which are otherwise usually denied to them. However, the satisfactory values of a single district does not signal a promising aspect of development. As Nussabaum (2000) points out that women's literacy involves greater costs than men's literacy, which are by societal norms denied to women and this is what endows women with lower level of capabilities or basic capabilities. These capabilities to transform into instruments to gear women to dictate decisions within and outside the family need to be nourished and fed which would then transform them into higher level capabilities. This could perhaps partly explain the reason for the dismal picture in the district of Cachar. Next to Hailakandi, Karimganj appear to emerge as the other two areas, where decision-making ability of female has been able to influence almost 60% of the work participation. All these behaviour could be attributed to the growing literacy and favourable sex ratio, which has perhaps raised the consciousness and awareness of the women in the valley, which has been reflected in their decision exercising capability of the women.

The function is therefore acceptable not only for the entire Barak Valley but also for the constituent districts.

Since both female literacy and freedom of decision making of females seem to have a significant impact on FWPR, and in view of
the acceptably of both the functions, we have included \( \text{Lit}_F \) and \( \text{D}_F \) in the next model, which is as follows:

\[
W_F = a + b_1 \text{Lit}_F + b_3 \text{D}_F
\]

Examining jointly the effect of the variables, in the model we find that \( R^2 \) has improved in all cases so that the explanatory power of \( \text{Lit}_F \) and \( \text{D}_F \) has increased. This is indicated in Appendix 5 (Table 5).

Predictive value of the function now ranges from 73% in case of Karimganj and Hailakandi to 67% in case of Cachar district and Barak Valley as a whole. The F test was also found to be significant. Though the value of the partial regression co-efficient has gone down, in comparison to their individual function, yet they are all statistically significant and possess the necessary signs as well, hence the model can be accepted. In both Karimganj and Hailakandi, the combined effect of the variables literacy and decision of the females to work stand out as a strong explanatory variable in determining the participation of women in the labour market. The high literacy rate in both Karimganj and Hailakandi could be attributed to be a strong casual factor explaining this behaviour. Male literacy in Karimganj is also high, higher than the district average, which indicates that males are likely to be less prejudiced as regards women's work. For the district of Cachar other factors such as family size, stronger influence of the patriarchal forces perhaps play a more stronger role in determining the work participation of females with the underlying supposition that women are materially dependent on men and the
complex interplay of patriarchy, class and production conditions determines the decision that women make in economic activity.

In general for the valley as whole it may be mentioned here that literacy in the valley is significantly high compared to that of Assam and India. High literacy among the females perhaps has contributed to their decision-making ability. As Sheikh (1999) has rightly pointed out that the capability, on the part of the women to take independent decision, in the long run has various economic, social and psychological benefits. For example economic benefits increases worker's efficiency, thereby increasing productivity.

The attitude of males towards women's work play a significant role in deciding a women's entry or exit from the labour market, particularly in a patriarchal society. In most societies, men express their positive attitude towards women's work provided the facade of male dominance is maintained. In recent years, in urban societies, with the necessity of dual earners, men display a positive attitude towards women's work unlike in more rural and/or conservative societies where tradition, social custom, and/or religious beliefs dictate males' expression of resentment towards allowing women to work outside the household.

Thus, in urban societies, with increased literacy, awareness and economic necessity men have been showing a positive attitude towards women's work, and in many cases it has been observed that men prefer working women to non working women because working
women not only provide or are harbingers of improved standard of living but also project an improvement of the status or well-being of the family. However in rural areas, where patriarchal influence is stronger, men tend to relate women with typical household work or what constitutes "women's work".

Taking all these factors into account we have next tried the following model:-

\[ W_F = a + b_1 M_A \]

Where \( M_A \) represents attitude of male towards female work participation.

The results of the model reveals (Appendix 5, Table 6) that since the explanatory power of the variables now ranges from 70% in case of Hailakandi to 57% in case of Cachar district and 60% in case of Karimganj and Barak Valley and the regression coefficient too has got the necessary signs and is also statistically significant, the function is acceptable on all accounts and therefore, we may conclude that male attitude plays a dominant role in determining female work participation rate; a typical behavioural attitude of a patriarchal society. Patriarchy's material base is men's control of women's labour both in the household and in the labour market. The division of labour by gender tends to benefit men. Their control of women's labour power is the lever that allows men to benefit from women's provision of personal and household services (Hartmann, 1981).
In Hailakandi, attitude of males towards women’s work is favourable in almost 70% of the households that have been examined. From our primary data analysis it has been observed that the largest percentage of female workers in the organized sector is in the district of Hailakandi implying that a majority of the workers are concentrated in the urban sector. It is also to be noted that the coverage of the two towns namely Hailakandi and Panchgram has also contributed to the wider existence of the women workers in the organized sector. This implies that majority of the women are literate and hence their male counterparts are also assumed to be educated. Thus men’s attitude being positive is reflective of their understanding and assigning significance to women’s work. In Cachar district male attitude influencing women’s participation is low as compared to the other three districts and also lowest in terms of the valley’s average. One factor could be due to low literacy level of males, which is lower than the other districts. The factor of low literacy could be associated with cultural and social factors, which inhibits men to perceive women as competitors and fears of losing control over women once women venture into economic and productive terrains dominated by men. For example, in our study, Muslim women, in spite of their favourable literacy rate, lags behind work participation as compared to other religious groups. Cultural limitations to women’s activities are more severe and pronounced in case of Muslim women. This creates restrictions in her mobility and render her ignorant of agricultural
matters, prices, bargaining and knowledge of gainful entry into the wage market. With male migration high in the district, women are expected by circumstances to attend and take the responsibility of family needs. The break up of joint family structure in most urban areas could also be the other possible factor explaining the variation in the attitude of men towards women's work.

The next regression model tested by us is follows:

\[ W_F = a + b_1 L_{itF} + b_2 D_{EF} + b_4 M_A \]

In this model we have introduced the three independent variables \( L_{itF}, D_{EF} \) and \( M_A \) jointly into the function to examine their total impact on FWPR.

The results are shown in Appendix 5 (Table 7).

The predictive value of the function has increased, as is evident from the increase in the value of \( R^2 \) in all the cases of Barak Valley as well as the three districts. The explanatory power now ranges from 78% in case of Hailakandi district to 71% in case of other two districts, whereas for the valley as a whole, it now stands at 73%. Though the value of the coefficients of \( L_{itF}, D_{EF} \) and \( M_A \) is reduced, their statistical significance is maintained. However in case of the coefficients of \( D_{EF} \), the statistical significance in case of all the districts as well as Barak Valley is reduced and in case of Karimganj the positive sign is changed into negative sign (-0.323) indicating that the regression coefficient is not statistically significant for the district. Though multi co linearity is not unusual in case of such socio-economic variables yet
the seriousness of the problem in this model induce us to reject this function for the district of Karimganj.

For all the districts the combined effect of all the variables has exhibited a strong positive behaviour in determining the participation of females.

Economic compulsion and hence, the necessity of the women to work outside home often drives women to work and this behaviour is more prominent in the rural households where economic compulsion forces many women to work in order to supplement the family income. With the break up of the traditional system of sex roles under which men were assigned a monopoly of access to money making, women were restricted to home. Urbanization, education and employment have provided women with new avenues to express and assert themselves. Therefore, the necessity has increased the participation of women.

Necessity to work could also arise for varied factors viz.

1. for enjoying economic security
2. for improving one’s standard of living and for self-actualization
3. for rural women, motivation for work arises from economic necessity

Shervani (1984) observes that the biggest motivation for work for a majority of Indian women is the economic necessity.
Personal visit to the sample villages has revealed that in the rural areas, irrespective of the districts covered, majority of the women have expressed that economic necessity has compelled women to work outside. Consequently, this results in increasing the supply of female labour force in the labour market with the inevitable result of weakening their bargaining position. All these factors therefore, lead to the employment of an increasing number of labour forces in the unorganised sector, with extremely low wages. Therefore, though the participation of women under such adverse conditions may improve, yet the structure of this participation speaks for the low status of women labour force. Similarly educated women of the urban areas have also expressed that in order to meet the increased demand of urbanization and to utilize their productive capability women have ventured out in the public sphere to supplement their family income. But according to the Marxist feminist view, the organisation of production both within and outside the family is shaped by patriarchy and capitalization. Therefore women’s necessity to work is also generated by underlying patriarchal relations.

Similarly feminists view that urbanization along with modernization has created an autonomous female subjects - women speaking in her own right. In has been part of the project of Feminisation in general to attempt to transform women from an object of knowledge into a subject capable of appropriating knowledge to
affect a passage from the state of subjection to subject-hood (Kollontai, 1972).

Since economic compulsion particularly of the lower income and middle-income group of families, compel the women to join the labour market, we have therefore tried the next function.

\[ W_F = a + b_5 \text{Nec} \]

Where \( \text{Nec} \) is the necessity of work by female.

The result reveals as in Appendix 5 (Table 8) that the explanatory power of the variables is 43% in case of Barak Valley whereas it is 47%, 46% and 40% in case of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts respectively.

In spite of lower explanatory power of the variable, the regression co-efficient of the independent variable is satisfactory both on statistical as well as theoretical grounds. While it is 0.566 for Barak Valley it varies between 0.521 in Hailakandi to 0.631 in Karimganj and 0.562 in Cachar. The high 't' values of the coefficients in all the districts and the valley leads us to support the hypothesis of a positive association of necessity to work and FWPR. This shows that necessity to work acts as a strong determinant for a woman to participate in economic activities. Necessity to work stems from both, economic and non-economic factors. The prime concern of most of the women interviewed revealed that sharing of the economic concern had been the major objective to join the labour force. Perhaps this could be responsible for 47% of correlation between necessity and
FWP in Karimganj, since this is the most poverty stricken district of Barak Valley. The notions of sharing the family responsibilities operate behind the participation of women and among other factors economic consideration outweigh other factors. Hence the function is acceptable and we may conclude that necessity to work is an important factor leading to a rise in FWPR in this district.

Next model we tried is as follows

\[ W_F = a+b_1\text{Lit}_F + b_3D_F + b_4M_A + b_5\text{Nec} \]

In this model, we have jointly introduced the independent variables of \( \text{Lit}_F \), \( M_A \) and \( \text{Nec} \) in view of the acceptability of their individual functions. The results reported in Appendix 5 (Table 9).

The estimated results reveal that the explanatory power of the model now increases to 74% in case of Barak Valley and to 80% and 78% in case of Karimganj and Hailakandi respectively. The F test too emerges to be satisfactory. Therefore among all the models that have been tried, we find that joint explanatory power of this model is the highest. The theoretical and statistical significance of all the independent variables seem to be satisfactory with ‘t’ values of the variables, literacy, attitude of males and necessity being satisfactory and positive. Only in the care of Hailakandi district the coefficients of decision making and necessity to work not only posses a small value but are also statistically insignificant, indicating the presence of multi-collinearity. Therefore, the function is acceptable for the valley as a whole, as well as for Cachar and Karimganj districts but cannot be
accepted for the district of Hailakandi. It may be argued that since 26.2% of the women in Hailakandi are in the organized sector, a majority of them are engaged in secured job drawing wages. The findings also support an earlier model which reveals that the women folk in the district are not driven to the labour market, due so much by necessity. With their male counterpart being equally engaged in similar government or private occupation, the necessity is not as acute as in the case of the other districts. Personal interview has revealed that in the rural areas, women work so as to provide a supporting hand to the men-folk as well as out of economic compulsion. In the other districts, the absence of sufficient job opportunities and migration of male members to neighbouring areas, and a comparatively higher urbanization have perhaps increased the necessity for women to enter the wage market.

A comparison of model 7 and 9 relating to the joint effect of decision making on the dependent variable work participation of females shows that, while $D_F$ was negative in all the cases of model 7 the 't' values in model 9 have showed positive signs except in the case of Karimganj district where with a 't' value of -2.461, the $R^2$ has been reduced. In the district of Karimganj it could be argued that perhaps the joint effect of all the factors in combination are sufficiently strong casual factors in governing women's participation and therefore individual decision alone may not have a very strong influence in determining the participation of women's work.
As female literacy has a direct influence on the participation of woman in the labour market, male literacy has also assumed to create a positive impact on the participation of women workers. In many societies it has been observed that women can not gain entry into the labour market due to various cultural, religious and social belief practiced by various social units which are controlled and dictated by patriarchal ideology. Such ideology categorizes women's monetary work as unethical, immoral or demeaning. Whereas with education and awareness in literacy men’s view towards the concept of division of labour, defined as division within the sexes which involves men primarily in wage labour beyond the household and women primarily in production within the household changes towards a more liberated outlook and are able to recognize the unfairness of male power.

In a typically patriarchal society, male literacy rate moulds the male attitude and hence this in turn may affect FWPR. We have therefore tried the next model incorporating the literacy of males as an independent variable as follows

\[ W_F = a + b_6 \text{Lit}_M \]

Where \( \text{Lit}_M \) represents the male literacy. The estimated results (Appendix 5, Table 10) reveal that the explanatory power of the variable goes down as \( R^2 \) is now only 0.066 for Barak Valley and extremely low for the individual district as well. Varying between 0.39 in Cachar to 0.345 in Karimganj and 0.027 in the district of Hailakandi. The coefficients of the independent variable not only possess a low
value but also are statistically insignificant. In case of Cachar district the sign has also changed depicting a value of -0.227. and for other districts the ‘t’ values are significantly low. Hence the function is unacceptable for all the individual districts as well as the valley as a whole; indicating that male literacy plays an insignificant role in determining FWPR.

In our analysis it is thus revealed that male literacy do not have a very strong influence in the work participation of female. Sex ratio in the valley is satisfactory as is suggested by the 1991 census as well as from our estimation of primary data. Increased sex ratio speaks of an increasing awareness among the female population and importance assigned to a girl child. Therefore, this is also indicative of a strong willed characteristic of women who is in a position to take decision fearlessly as regards the sex of the child as well as the sharing of decision-making power. This analysis is further supported by our earlier models which reveals that the decision-making power of the females play a significant role in determining FWPR. Hence, the role of male decision-making power emerges to be extremely insignificant. The findings are indication of the fact that though, society is a patriarchal one, yet the status of women in Barak Valley is significantly better. This may perhaps be explained due to higher female literacy rate in the valley. This reflects that the society is not averse to the idea of female getting involved in work participation process. Secondly, since both male and female literacy is
comparatively high in the valley, males are already liberal in their views and open to the ideas of female involvement in work outside the household with the exception of certain religious group especially in the rural areas. Therefore, further improvement in the male literacy has not made any marked changes in the participation rate of women. And thus the effect of improved male literacy on female work participation rate in minimal and hence this model is rejected in our case.

However, to test whether introduction of this independent variable of \( \text{Lit}_M \) along with other independent variables discussed above, increases the explanatory power of the function, we have tried the final model as follows:

\[
W_F = a + b_1 \text{Lit}_F + b_2 D_F + b_4 M_A + b_5 \text{Nec} + b_6 \text{Lit}_M \\
\]

In comparison to model 9, where we had introduced \( \text{Lit}_F, D_F \) and \( \text{Nec} \) jointly; we have now introduced \( \text{Lit}_M \) as another additional variable to assess the explanatory power of the function. The results are provided in Appendix 5 (Table 11).

The explanatory power of the variable has not improved in comparison to previous model. But the coefficient of the new variable (\( \text{Lit}_M \)) now not only becomes statistically insignificant, but changes its sign also. The ‘t’ values of the coefficients for Barak Valley and Cachar are therefore negative and insignificant. Though positive sign exists for Karimganj and Hailakandi, they are not statistically significant. Hence the function is not acceptable for the valley as a
whole as well as for three districts. Although, in the case of Cachar
district, $R^2$ improves marginally to 76% yet the negative sign of the
coefficient compels us to reject the function. In case of Karimganj and
Hailakandi districts $R^2$ also improves marginally to 79% but the
coefficient of $\text{Lit}_M$ here too is insignificant, though the signs do not
change. Hence none of the functions can be accepted, as satisfactory
models of determination of FWPR.

The overall conclusion that may be derived is that the best fit of
the functions is represented by model 9 (involving female literacy,
freedom to work for women, attitude of males towards female work
and necessity to work for women) in case of Cachar and Karimganj
districts as well as Barak Valley as a whole, though the model cannot
explain satisfactorily the FWPR in case of Hailakandi. In case of
Hailakandi district, however among all the models, model 5 (involving
female literacy and freedom to work for women) seems to be the most
acceptable function determining the FWPR in this district. It may be
mentioned that women themselves decide their participation rate in
the labour market in the Hailakandi district implying a relatively higher
status of women in the district.

CONCLUSION

In the overall analysis it could be said that with the exception of
Hailakandi district, the best predictors of female labour force
participation in Cachar and Karimganj districts as well as Barak Valley
as a whole are female literacy, freedom to work for women, attitude of males towards female work and necessity to work for women. Sex ratio and male literacy do not hold any significant role in predicting the behaviour of women participation in the labour market.

In the case of Hailakandi district, the best predictors of female labour force participation are female literacy and freedom to work for women sex ratio, attitude of males towards female work, necessity to work for women and male literacy do not hold any significant role in predicting the behaviour of women participation in the labour market.

Literacy has a strong influence on work participation and this is evident from our primary field data, which shows that in the district of Cachar and Karimganj there exists a high literacy rate, which is followed by a high participation rate. The state of Kerala is a typical example of a literate state, which has been equally successful in bringing about a stupendous increase of work participation among females. This has also been followed with empowerment and creating social awareness between both the sexes. In Barak Valley, Freedom to work has perhaps been motivated through the strong influence of the matriarchal society along the neighbouring states as well as improved literacy within the valley. Feminists however argue that even with growing literacy women's subordinate status is rooted in private property, class divided society and a society smeared with sexist ideology structure. (Desai and Krishnaraj 1987), the growing dominance of which is captured by the attitude of male towards
as a whole are female literacy, freedom to work for women, attitude of males towards female work and necessity to work for women. Sex ratio and male literacy do not hold any significant role in predicting the behaviour of women participation in the labour market.

In the case of Hailakandi district, the best predictors of female labour force participation are female literacy and freedom to work for women, sex ratio, attitude of males towards female work, necessity to work for women and male literacy do not hold any significant role in predicting the behaviour of women participation in the labour market.

Literacy has a strong influence on work participation and this is evident from our primary field data, which shows that in the district of Cachar and Karimganj there exists a high literacy rate, which is followed by a high participation rate. The state of Kerela is a typical example of a literate state, which has been equally successful in bringing about a stupendous increase of work participation among females. This has also been followed with empowerment and creating social awareness between both the sexes. In Barak Valley, Freedom to work has perhaps been motivated through the strong influence of the matriarchal society along the neighbouring states as well as improved literacy within the valley. Feminists however argue that even with growing literacy women’s subordinate status is rooted in private property, class divided society and a society smeared with sexist ideology structure. (Desai and Krishnaraj 1987), the growing dominance of which is captured by the attitude of male towards
female work. Consequently the predominant role of the patriarchal society can still be not ruled out altogether. This is further evident from our primary data, which reveals that in rural areas, when female literacy exhibits a particular trend, participation rate goes down. This is mainly because, the male members of the family think that it is against family's prestige for the females to join the labour market, high literacy not withstanding.

Our investigation relating to FWPR gives us sufficient ground to accept totally the traditional employment theories, which may be considered as gender biased. The factors, which determine the level of employment in the labour market, may explain determination of only the level of male employment. Determination of female employment requires incorporation of some more additional socio-economic factors, which have not been included so far in economic theory relating to employment, and therefore make the Received Theories incomplete and one-sided. Hence our study attempts to fill up the long desired but often ignored gaps in Employment Theory.

It is thus observed that in our analysis sex ratio and male literacy do not influence significantly the determination of the participation of women workers in the labour market. Our primary as well as secondary survey has projected a high sex ratio in the entire valley. This implies that society is not biased towards the girl child, which would also lead one to supposedly conclude that the biasness towards female working shall be minimum.
REFERENCES


