

**ROLE OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC GROWTH OF SRI LANKA AFTER 1997**

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Abstract

This research examined the role of women in economic growth in Sri Lanka utilizing the secondary data covering the period of 1997 to 2018. Ordinary Least Square technique of econometrics analysis has been used to estimate the relationship between the each of the examined variables. This research comprises the following variables gross domestic production, the Labour Force Participation, Literacy Rate, Enrolment in primary education, Enrolment in secondary education, Enrolment in tertiary education, Healthy life expectancy. Analysis made using multiple regression to identify the relationship among the variables. The empirical results indicates that all the variables significant at 99 percent. The education attainment indicators such Enrolment in primary education, enrolment in secondary education are significant at 1% and enrolment in tertiary education is significant at 5% and has a positive relationship between the economic growths of Sri Lanka. Likewise for the health and survival, the Healthy life expectancy is significant to the model at 1%. The finding of this study confirms that, Sri Lanka has to encourage women in economic participation and opportunities which would also pave the way to the political participation as well. Further, this study helps policy makers by the recommendations to restructure women empowerment in productive manner.

Keywords: Economic, Education, Health, Polity, Women,

Introduction

Women are considered as the backbone of the social economy, where they constitute above half of total population. Therefore, their involvement in the development cannot be ignored. The only way of bringing them in to the active participation is possible through women empowerment. The women empowerment comprises the enhancement of education, politics, health and economic strength of women. It develops the confidence and capability among women. According to Sri Lankan context, it held a position as a role model to South Asia in education, literacy and maternal health. However, Sri Lanka has a negative picture regarding the economic engagement of participation in economy and politics. Thus the female participation continue to remain low around 38.5 percent in 2018, compared to 78.9 percent for men (Global Gender Gap Report, 2018). According to the 2017 GGG report, the gender gap has widened in Sri Lanka, Specially the wages paid to similar work, Sri Lanka falling down the ranks behind Bangladesh, the Maldives and India.

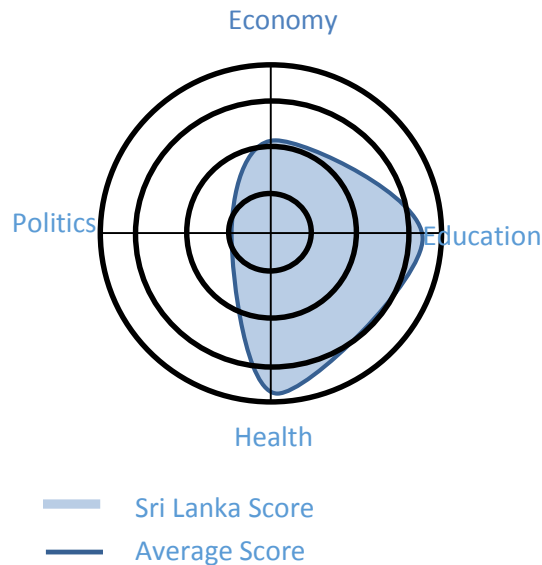


Fig. : Score at Glance

Literature Review

Sharma and Sanchita (2017) in their study *Determinants and Indicators of Women Empowerment: A Walk through Psychological Patterns and Behavioral Implications*, attempt to identify, understand, interpret and analyze various determinants and indicators of women empowerment. This conceptual study analyses psychological patterns and their behavioral implications to women empowerment. And study highlights different aspects that hinder women empowerment and suggests appropriate measures to overcome traditional and stereotype patterns. The study frames three determinants psychological patterns of society, family and women that affects six indicators education, educational freedom, economic contribution, economic freedom, household management and decision making, perceived status within the household and health that directly influence the status of women empowerment. The policy implications of this study suggest that women herself need to take action for their rights and strongly raise their voices about equality in order to separate herself from the traditional paradox that woman is a commodity to be kept at home.

Duflo (2012) mention Women empowerment and economic development are closely related in one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women, in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development. Does this imply that pushing just one of these two levers would set a virtuous circle in motion? This paper reviews the literature on both sides of the empowerment and development nexus, and argues that the interrelationships are probably too weak to be self-sustaining, and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

Kassa & Shimelis (2015) *Challenges and opportunities of women political participation in Ethiopia*. The central objective of this study is to examine challenges and opportunities of women political participation in Ethiopia. To this end qualitative research methodology was employed. Data was collected from secondary sources mainly from published journal article, books and report of government and non-government organization. The finding of the study shows that different casual factors such as economic, religious, social and cultural factors contributed to women's poor political participation in the country. The study further revealed that political participation allow women to address their basic problems and needs in their community and ensures the openness, real fight against rent-seeking, accountability, political commitment, political leadership, and political responsiveness of the existing national, regional, districts, and local levels. It is true that more than half percent of the world's population are women. But, they lack access to political decision making as compared to their counter parts at all levels of



government. So that women's equal participation in decision-making and politics is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy, but a necessary pre-condition for women's interests to be taken into account.

Mammen and Paxson (2000) examined Women's Work and Economic Development using a cross-country dataset and microdata from India and Thailand, have examine how women's work status changes with economic development. Several clear patterns emerge, women's labor force participation first declines and then rises with development, women move from work in family enterprises to work as paid employees, fertility declines, and gender gaps in education narrow. Women's education levels, and those of their spouses, appear to be important determinants of women's labor market activities. Broad welfare indicators, such as mortality rates and education levels, indicate that women's well-being improves on average with development, both in absolute terms and relative to men.

Mehra (1997) Women, Empowerment, and Economic Development, Development policies and programs tend not to view women as integral to the economic development process. This is reflected in the higher investments in women's reproductive rather than their productive roles, mainly in population programs. Yet women throughout the developing world engage in economically productive work and earn incomes. They work primarily in agriculture and in the informal sector and, increasingly, in formal wage employment. Their earnings, however, are generally low. Since the 1950s, development agencies have responded to the need for poor women to earn incomes by making relatively small investments in income-generating projects. Often such projects fail because they are motivated by welfare and not development concerns, offering women temporary and part-time employment in traditionally feminine skills such as knitting and sewing that have limited markets. By contrast, over the past twenty years, some nongovernmental organizations, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India, have been effective in improving women's economic status because they have started with the premise that women are fundamental to the process of economic development.

Boserup (1990) examined Economic change and the roles of women. Women's work, women's fertility, and women's role in the family and in society at large are radically changed by economic development. To understand this it is important to view these changes in women's position not as isolated factors but rather as part of general changes that come about as human societies slowly develop from subsistence economies to high-technology societies. Economic development is a gradual change from family production to specialized production of goods and services. This specialization of production makes it possible to use better technologies, scientific methods, and an increasingly elaborate economic and social infrastructure. As economic development proceeds, family production for its own use diminishes and a larger and larger share of goods for family consumption is produced outside the family in specialized enterprises. Moreover, most of the services that family members in subsistence economies produce for each other including physical protection, health care, and education are taken over by public institutions or specialized private enterprises. During this process, the family gradually is stripped of most of its original functions. This causes radical changes both in the relation of family members to the outside world and in the relations between family members. All contemporary societies are in transition between subsistence economies and fully specialized economies. Even in highly industrialized countries, production of goods and services in the family, mainly by women, accounts for a considerable share of total work hours. In developing countries family production much more important, and in the least developed countries it accounts for the major part of total production of goods and services.

Materials and Methods

The focus of this study is to empirically investigate the role of women in economic growth in Sri Lanka using multiple regression analysis. The study comprises the secondary data which includes general information related to the national levels include an extensive review of published literature, related government report and journal articles. Data analyzed through Minitab software the multiple regression has been run to find the relationship between the women empowerment indicators and economic growth.

The models were specified as follows



$$GDP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LFP + \beta_2 LR + \beta_3 EPE + \beta_4 ESE + \beta_5 ETE + \beta_6 HLE + \beta_7 WP + u \text{ ----- Equation 01}$$

GDP = Gross Domestic Product (Rs Million)

LFP = Labour Force Participation (Female)

LR = Literacy Rate (Female)

EPE = Enrolment in Primary Education (Female)

ESE = Enrolment in Secondary Education (Female)

ETE = Enrolment in Tertiary Education (Female)

HLE = Healthy Life Expectancy (Female)

WP = Women in Parliament

u = Error Term

The model incorporates the Labour Force Participation to capture the economic participation and opportunities and then Literacy Rate, Enrolment in primary, secondary, tertiary education to capture the education attainment, Healthy life expectancy to capture the health and survival and finally Women in parliament to capture the political empowerment.

Results and Discussion

Empirical results of this research has been derived from the model which was specified in the methodology. Where the GDP has been taken as the dependence variable to analyze the role of women on economic growth and the independent variables to examine the relationship between and the economic growth.

Table 1. Estimation Results

Predictor	Coef	T	P	VIF
Constant	14025801	0.79	0.441 ^{ns}	
Labour Force Participation	-350686	-0.80	0.438 ^{ns}	1.6
Literacy Rate	-147945	-1.22	0.243 ^{ns}	9.3
Primary: Enrolment in primary education	194213	4.43	0.001*	6.5
Secondary: Enrolment in secondary education	536666	8.58	0.000*	101.4
Tertiary: Enrolment in tertiary education	287706	2.72	0.017**	65.6
Healthy life expectancy	-911240	-5.99	0.000*	27.9
Women in parliament	263253	0.97	0.349 ^{ns}	5.6
R ² (adj) = 99.6	P = 0.000*			

Source: Computed from Secondary Data, 2018.

* 1% Significant Level

** 5% Significant Level

***10% Significant Level

^{ns} Not Significant

Linear Linear model of this study: $GDP = 14025801 - 350686 LFP - 147945 LR + 194213 EPE + 536666 ESE + 287706 ETE - 911240 HLE + 263253 WP$

The adjusted R² of the model is 0.996, means that 99 percent variation is occurred in GDP during the time period of 1997-2018 due to the Labour Force Participation, Literacy Rate, Enrolment in primary, secondary, tertiary



education, Healthy life expectancy and Women in parliament. P value is the probability value or significant level. It should be less than 5 percent or 0.05. According to the above result, the P value is 0.000 which means that the model is good fit.

According to Table 1 the gross domestic production of Sri Lanka can be analyze during 1987-2017 through Labour Force Participation, Literacy Rate, Enrolment in primary, secondary, tertiary education, Healthy life expectancy and Women in parliament. All the variables significant at 99 percent. The education attainment indicators such Enrolment in primary education, enrolment in secondary education are significant at 1% and enrolment in tertiary education is significant at 5% and has a positive relationship between the economic growths of Sri Lanka. Likewise for the health and survival, the Healthy life expectancy is significant to the model at 1%. Nevertheless, as the economic and political participation of women remains low and considered as a cursory aspect of women empowerment, the result shows an insignificant to the model.

Conclusion

Contribution of women is no doubt is vital for the growth and development of the socio economy. Upon them Sri Lanka has a remarkable women education health attainment among the regional countries. Development without education would exploit the human resource, education and health are interrelated. Education itself considered as a door to the all opportunities and weapon to fight the poverty as well as with the improved health care service, the education also plays a vital role in evasion of child marriage and eradication mortality.

According to the result participation in economics and opportunities and political empowerment seems to be insignificant. Because, women's economic condition is low even though there are some attempts made to empower women. More over economic independence and self-generated income is important for empowerment through that women are pave way to engage in decision making. Generally domestic works done by women are counted as non-economic activities where it doesn't earn income. Consequently there is a huge need in increase women's participation in economic activities thereby we can increase the national income. Political participation is not only the rights to vote, but also sharing power, decision making and policy making at the level of state. Lack of participation causes the women voice unheard their perspectives and viewpoints were excluded in policy making. Even though women involved in male domination professions such as business, medicine, engineering and law, their interest in the field of politics is less. The reasons behind the backwardness is tradition, psychology, lack of mobility and patronage.

Normally Sri Lankan cultural norms make women to hold at household to serve the primary responsibilities such are care giving to children and elders. So that it is recommended to facilitate women by introducing affordable day care centers and offering flexible working hours to attract women to the work force. On the other hand, existing wage gap demotivate the working women as well as the job seekers. Moreover government should promote livelihood rather than encouraging women migration through imposing restriction on leaving country for work overseas. Livelihood programs should be diversified rather than influenced by politics and concentrate for a certain group of people. To make them economically active women should be supported to start their own business by providing technical and financial supports such as easy credit services which would give them an independence of mind and spirit. As it is the political participation also tend to be in low level subjected to socioeconomic, cultural and political environment. So, to increase their participation, women status on the society should be enrich with the improvement in the economic status. With the existing healthy education exposure restraining cultural norms should be reduced. Finally a healthy political environment should be developed with considering women as decision making and policy making bodies in the level of governance of state.

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