

Term of Reference

Research study

Exploring Linkages Between Women's Empowerment, Workforce Participation, And Population Dynamics in the Indian Context – A Comprehensive Macro-Micro Analysis

1. ABOUT POPULATION FOUNDATION OF INDIA

Founded in 1970 by the late JRD Tata, Population Foundation of India is a leading NGO in the fields of population dynamics, gender equity, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). It addresses population issues within the context of empowering women, men, and young people, enabling them to make informed decisions about their fertility, health, and well-being. The organization's approaches include strategic engagement with policymakers, media, and other key stakeholders; knowledge generation and dissemination; leveraging technology; scaling up pilot projects; and social and behaviour change communication. Population Foundation of India also collaborates closely with and provides technical support to both national and state governments, as well as other NGOs.

2. BACKGROUND

The Population Foundation of India (PFI) proposes a study to explore the linkages between women's empowerment, female workforce participation, and population dynamics in the Indian context. By gathering evidence through a comprehensive macro-micro analysis, the study aims to provide evidence of the interrelation between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics, which collectively influence broader socio-economic development.

Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices not only augments their lives but also drives larger economic growth and human development. A recent [World Bank Group report](#) estimated a potential \$172 trillion 'gender dividend'¹ by narrowing gender disparities in labour earnings. However, many socio-economic and cultural factors significantly influence women's economic potential and productive participation in the workforce. The [2023 Global Gender Gap Report](#) reveals that the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity is closing at the slowest rate. The current rate of progress indicates that it will take 169 years to close this gender gap. While gender equality and women's empowerment are explicitly recognised as standalone goals within the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5: Gender Equality), they are instrumental to the achievement of practically all other SDGs, such as health, education, poverty eradication, economic empowerment, peace, and justice, among others. Closing this gap is essential not only for achieving SDGs but also for tackling the global economy's many challenges, such as geopolitical conflicts, an aging world population, large-scale climate events, and the disruptive impact of emerging technologies like AI. [UNFPA SWOP report 2021](#) specifically mentions that '*A woman who has control over her body is more likely to be empowered in other spheres of her life. A woman—or adolescent girl—with little bodily autonomy is less likely to have control over her home life, her health, and her future, and less likely to enjoy her rights*'. [World survey on the role of women in development report 2019](#) categorically mentioned that addressing the double bind of women's income and time poverty requires the expansion of decent work opportunities for women alongside investments in social protection, public services and infrastructure that recognise, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work.

¹ A gender dividend is the increased economic growth that could be realised with investments in women and girls. While the demographic dividend comes from shifting age structures toward more productive ages, gender dividends come from taking steps that increase the volume of market (paid) work and the level of productivity of the female population.

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In pursuit of building a persuasive evidence-based narrative for greater investments in women and girls, the Population Foundation of India (PFI) endeavours, through this study, to highlight the complex interlinkages between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics, thereby elevating these insights to inform the policy and programmatic discourse.

3. PURPOSE OF STUDY

Research objectives

The key research objectives of the study are as follows:-

- i. To examine the relationship between the levels of women's empowerment, workforce participation, and indicators related to population dynamics e.g., fertility rate, child sex ratio, mortality, life expectancy etc. and human development and gender equality indicators, at the national and state levels
- ii. To analyse the relationship between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and fertility at the individual level, as well as through a social and cultural lens
- iii. To provide evidence-based recommendations aimed at investing in women and girls, especially enhancing women's empowerment, increasing workforce participation, and addressing family planning and reproductive health needs to influence population dynamics and larger socioeconomic development

Research questions and hypotheses

Based on the above research objectives, key research questions and hypotheses are outlined below:-

1. To examine research objectives (i), we propose one research questions:-

- 1.1. How do state-level variations in human development and gender equality indicators correlate with levels of women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics in India?

2. To explore research objective (ii), three research hypotheses and one research question are proposed:-

- 2.1. Higher women's empowerment is associated with low fertility and high workforce participation
- 2.2. Higher workforce participation is associated with low fertility and high women's empowerment
- 2.3. Low fertility is associated with high women's empowerment and workforce participation
- 2.4. What role do social and cultural aspects play in influencing the interrelation between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics?

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3. Research objectives (iii) will guide the directions for building argument for the following research question

- 3.1. What evidence-based actionable recommendations can be proposed to advocate for increased investment in women and girls, aiming to realise the true potential of the ‘demographic dividend’ and ‘gender dividend’?

4. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed study involves two main facets: a macro level analysis at the state level, and a micro level investigation at the individual level. Both secondary and primary data will be used to address the research questions.

1.1. How do state-level variations in human development and gender equality indicators correlate with levels of women's empowerment, workforce participation rates, and population dynamics in India?

1. Indicator comparative analysis
2. Regional comparison
3. Correlation analysis

- At the macro level, diverse data sources will be used to develop a comprehensive matrix of state-level indicators. The overall development status of all Indian states/UTs will be assessed using the methodology suggested by UNDP for the construction of [the Human Development Index \(HDI\)](#). All states/UTs with complete data will be included in the final analysis. In cases where data for any indicator is unavailable, a close proxy indicator will be identified and incorporated into the construction of the composite index, reflecting the human development aspect of Indian states.
- To assess women’s empowerment at the state level, the study proposes constructing a composite index aligned with the methodology suggested by UN Women and UNDP in the report [“The Paths to Equality: Twin Indices on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality.”](#)
- Other identified sources for developing comprehensive matrix for analysis at the state level are: a) [handbook of statistics of Indian states](#); b) [the state specific reports / fact sheets of the National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\) round – 5 \(2019-21\)](#); c) [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) India index by NITI Aayog](#); d) [Periodic Labour Force Survey – Annual Report](#) by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) or National Sample Survey – Employment and Unemployment round; e) [Women and Men in India 2022](#) report published by MoSPI; and e) [Sample Registration System \(SRS\) bulletins](#) by census of India.

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<p>2.1: Higher women's empowerment is associated with low fertility and high workforce participation</p> <p>2.2: Higher workforce participation is associated with low fertility and high women's empowerment</p> <p>2.3: Low fertility is associated with high women's empowerment and workforce participation</p> <p>2.4: What roles do social and cultural aspects play in influencing the interrelation between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics?</p>	
<p>Unit level analysis based on NFHS-5 (2019-21) data (2.1, 2.2, and 2.3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The NFHS survey included a range of questions related to women's empowerment, family planning, and a limited number of questions on workforce participation. This survey stands as the sole available large-scale, nationally representative, and up-to-date source from which data for all three domains can be extracted. Simultaneous equation model (SEM) approach will be used to establish the linkages between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and fertility at the individual level to test the formulated hypotheses (2.1; 2.2 and 2.3)
<p>Qualitative study (2.4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand the influence of social and cultural factors on the interplay of empowerment and population dynamics, we will conduct a qualitative study in PFI's intervention states – Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (two districts in each state). Adequate number of adolescent girls (18-19 years) and young women (20-29 Years) will be selected. A purposive sample will be drawn considering the following groups –<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Adolescent girls (18-19 Yrs.): Currently studying and dropout and married○ Young women (20-29 Yrs.): Unmarried and working; married and working; married and not working○ Tentatively we aim to conduct 3-5 IDIs in each of abovementioned categories.• We will use Vignettes method to elicit responses from the selected adolescent girls and women. Literature defines vignettes as short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond.• We plan to conduct qualitative interviews with girls and women to assess their skills requirements for workforce participation, aligning with their preferences and aspirations. Focusing on adolescent girls (18-19 years) for in-depth interviews allows for a

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	deep exploration of their future aspirations and outlook. Whereas interviews with young women (20-29 years) adopting retrospective approach will provide insight into past experiences and the societal contexts that have shaped their lives.
3.1. What evidence-based recommendations can be proposed to advocate for increased investment in women and girls, aiming to realise the true potential of the 'demographic dividend' and 'gender dividend'?	
Actionable strategies and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A comprehensive desk review of market-ready skills for women and girls. This also involves an in-depth analysis of NSSO employment and unemployment round data to understand key sectors of women's workforce participation.• Synthesising the outcomes of aforementioned research questions with the findings from the desk review and analysis of NSSO data to develop actionable strategies for leveraging the gender dividend.

Specific Tasks:

- i. Conduct a detailed desk review to identify the gaps in the literature concerning the relationship between women's empowerment, workforce participation in different sectors, and population dynamics.
- ii. Design/finalise the study methodology, sampling design and indicators metric focused on the aforementioned research objectives/hypotheses/questions
- iii. Seek Ethical Review Borad (ERB) approval for qualitative study
- iv. Recruit respondents for qualitative interviews and plan and coordinate the necessary logistics to conduct in-depth interviews aligning with the finalised methodology
- v. Submit the detailed work plan for each component of the study
- vi. Develop tools (interview guides / vignette stories) and techniques in consultation with the PFI staff to carry out the qualitative interviews
- vii. Pilot testing of the tools (interview guides/vignette stories)
- viii. Implement and supervise the data collection and transcribe the interview notes
- ix. Share the analysis plan and report outline
- x. Submit all data collected/used for this study (primary or secondary) to PFI along with the analysis carried out (do files or syntax)
- xi. Submit the data analysis outlining key findings and share with Population Foundation of India for review
- xii. Submit a final report with recommendations and a PowerPoint presentation incorporating feedback from Population Foundation of India.

Limitations and areas that the proposed research will not cover:

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- i. **Generalisability:** The findings may be specific to the Indian context and can't be generalised or directly apply to other countries or regions or states with different socio-economic and cultural characteristics.
- ii. **Quality and availability of data:** Though the study proposes to use a diverse source of data to develop a comprehensive indicator matrix, the unavailability, poor quality, and outdated nature of data on the proposed indicators cannot be ruled out.
- iii. **Causality:** At the macro level, the study only intends to develop an understanding of the correlation between women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics. It will not be possible to establish causality given the nature of observational study.
- iv. **Limited Scope of qualitative study:** While the qualitative study aims to explore social and cultural influences on women's empowerment and population dynamics, the sample size and focus on specific age groups may not capture the full diversity of perspectives and experiences across different demographic groups.

These limitations highlight the need to interpret the research findings with caution and consider the context and scope of the study when proposing actionable recommendations.

5. DELIVERABLES

- i. Inception report with timeline for each research objective of the study
- ii. Tools and techniques used in the study
- iii. Indices metrics template at the national and state level
- iv. NFHS-5 Unit data-based analysis plan
- v. Do files/ syntax of NFHS-5-unit data analysis
- vi. Transcripts of in-depth interviews / responses elicited using vignettes
- vii. Draft report of the study
- viii. Final report incorporating inputs from PFI
- ix. A deck/PowerPoint presentation on key findings from the assessment.

6. DURATION

The study should complete within **135 days** of contract signing with the agency.

Milestones*	Days
Inception report along with indices metrics template and qualitative tools	15
ERB approval for the study	30
Data collection (in-depth interviews)	10
Data analysis and chapterisation plan	25
Draft report	25
Feedback from PFI	15
Final report incorporating feedback	15
Total Days	135

*Terms of payment will be closely tied up with the milestones

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7. GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- i. PFI requires the agency to uphold and demonstrate best practices in Safeguarding and Child protection. Agency will confirm that it will comply with PFI's Safeguarding and Child protection policy requirements.
- ii. The evaluations will follow the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation (<http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>) as well as the ethical guidelines (<http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/2866>) and UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation (<http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>).
- iii. The Agency will coordinate with PFI's authorised personnel for this project for all related activities under this assignment.
- iv. The end-deliverables should be approved by authorised personnel of PFI for release of payments.
- v. All work/ reports developed/prepared under this assignment are the intellectual property of the office of PFI and cannot be used, published, copied, or otherwise disseminated without written approval from PFI. The agency would never share and use the data for any other purpose.

8. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- i. The agency should have experience in conducting research studies on gender-specific aspects, including but not limited to women's empowerment, workforce participation, and population dynamics.
- ii. The agency should have demonstrated requisite expertise in handling large amounts of secondary data and should be well-versed in different sources of secondary data in the Indian context.
- iii. The agency should have prior experience conducting qualitative studies with adolescent girls and women in the areas of empowerment, workforce participation, and/or population issues.
- iv. The agency should have experience in gathering and systematising large amounts of data.
- v. The proposed team should be gender-balanced and culturally diverse.

The contract will be awarded to the successful bidder following completion of all evaluation including negotiation, if necessary. The successful bidder will have to sign a contract with the PFI to undertake the assignment.

Requirement to Apply:

Detailed technical and financial proposal separately, along with company profile and team biodata, should be submitted by April 24, 2024 to M A Jose at ma.jose@populationfoundation.in

In case you have any queries before submitting the proposal, you may write to Alok Vajpeyi, Lead, Knowledge Management and Core Grants at avajpeyi@populationfoundation.in before April 12, 2024.