Determinants of Labor Force Participation of Rural Bangladeshi Women

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Abstract

Studies have found that women participating in the labor force has considerable significance both for themselves and for the overall economy. However, even though close to three quarters of the women in Bangladesh live in the rural areas, the labor force participation rate among these women are very low. Moreover, there exists no recent study at the national level which examines this phenomenon. Thus due to the significance of women's participation in the labor force and the existing gap in the literature, this paper aims to identify the determinants of labor force participation among the rural Bangladeshi women using labor force survey data for the year 2013. The study found that education, especially primary and tertiary levels of education, increases rural women's labor force participation significantly whereas non-labor income, age, being married and belonging to the Muslim religion reduces their participation. Having one or more children was found to enhance labor force participation of rural women, but this finding was statistically insignificant. It was also found that women living in the rural areas in the major regions of Bangladesh such as Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi and Sylhet have higher levels of participation compare to the other three regions which are relatively less developed.