



A Study on livelihood pattern and problem faced by women agricultural labours in thrissur district

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Abstract

Agricultural labour is one of the most important segments of rural population in India. Agriculture in India is the backbone of the country and is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. It is the major sector of the state economy, in which the majority of people earn their livelihood. Though the share of agriculture in the aggregate economy has declined rapidly during the planned development of the country, it assumes a pivotal role in the rural economy. Women contribute about three-fourth of the labour required for agricultural operations. Their involvement in agricultural operations is beside their usual domestic work. Most of the contributions made by women to the farm sector also go unaccounted as they are not directly paid. The contribution of female labour is towards agricultural production is always more than the male labour in all types of land holding size. This research paper deals with the livelihood pattern and problems faced by the women agricultural labours.

Keywords: women agricultural labours, livelihood patterns, problems, rural, family

1. Introduction

Women have always played the key role of conserving the basic life support system such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and prompted crop security through the maintenance of diversity and inherent struggle. They lagged behind in technological innovations and worked with indigenous technology for food security like cleaning and winnowing of food grains (Shiva, FAO, 1991). Therefore, without intellectual and physical participation of women, it will not be possible to popularize alternative systems of land management to shifting cultivation, arrest soil erosion and health of economic plants and farm animals. Thus, it is important to study the level and extent of participation of women in agricultural sector.

That women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/social forestry, fisheries, etc. is a fact long taken for granted but also long ignored. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region. Even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming systems, castes and classes. But, regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production, except ploughing in which women are not actively involved. In some of the farm activities like processing and storage, women predominate so strongly that man workers are numerically insignificant (Agarwal 2003).

The women agricultural labourers are swelling in large number over the years. An analysis of this growth rate over the years indicates how women had lost other opportunities and forced to rely more on agriculture to meet the minimum needs of life for their basic activities. Even though, low social status, unorganized nature of job, seasonal employment, paucity of non-agricultural jobs, rural

indebtedness and increase in population are the major sources for prevailing poor socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers especially among women.

Review of Literature

Scourge (1975) stated that women's role in agriculture is more compared to men, the intensive and long duration activities are performed by women only in the field, with all this women labourers are paid low wages when compared with men also.

Employment, poverty and other related problems of rural women were studied by Martha Fetherolf (1979) ^[4] and she presented her findings in the World Employment Conference held at Geneva in 1976. The study focussed on limited avenues of employment for women, overburdened in their routine life. According to the study, fetching water, firewood collection, sweeping, cooking, child-rearing, production of certain commodities like carpets, beedi, lace or beer at home for market and all other agricultural and non-agricultural operations were the low-paid or unpaid indispensable items of work of these underprivileged groups suffering from hazards of unemployment and migration for employment to city or town and even to foreign countries she advocated policy measures for protecting the interests of such women by providing regular employment without much exploitation.

Sisodia (1985) ^[7] in "Role of Farm Women in Agriculture: A Study of Chambal Command Area of Madhya Pradesh in India" revealed the indispensability of participation of women in pre-harvest and post-harvest operations of farm business. After studying their commendable services in these activities in a bench mark socio-economic survey of Chambal Command Area during 1983-1985, he advocated implementation of more employment generation programmes in addition to the ongoing rural development programmes for the benefit of rural women

Chawhan and Oberoi (1990) ^[2] stated in their study

conducted on ‘Gaddi’ tribal women of Chama district found that the role of tribal women workers in the farm operations is of immense importance. The proportion of women participation in almost all farm activities is more than 70 per cent. The major crop production activities, participation of farm women have ensured so as to achieve successful results in the agricultural field. Even though, majority of the women have faced the problem of low wages and lack of training.

The study conducted by Gian Kuar, (1994) [3] examined the participation of female agricultural labourers in the blocks of Gurdaspur District of Punjab State. The female agricultural labourers received only 75 per cent of the rate of remuneration for men doing the same work. The female respondents complained of exploitation by their employers in terms of lower wages and hard nature of work.

Objectives

1. To analyse the socio-economic status of women agricultural labours
2. To find out the problems faced by women agricultural labours

Research Methodology

A descriptive research study has been conducted at a selected panchayat in Thrissur District with the following objectives, (i) To know the socio-economic status of the respondents and (ii) To identify the problems faced by the women agricultural labourers at family and work place. Questionnaire is used for collecting primary data from the respondents. Percentage analysis and regression coefficient method are used for this study. convenience sampling method is adopted for this study.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a type of structural equation modelling (SEM), which deals specifically with measurement models, that is relationship between observed measures or indicators (eg. Test items, test scores etc) and the latent variables or factors. A fundamental feature of CFA is its hypothesis –driven nature. In CFA, the researcher specifies the number of factors and the pattern of indicator factor loading in advance, thus the researcher must have a firm prior sense, based on past evidence and theory of the factors that exist in the data. CFA is used for four major purposes 1) psychometric evaluation of measures (questionnaires) 2) construct validation 3) testing method effects

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical technique that takes a confirmatory approach to the analysis of a structural theory bearing on some phenomenon. SEM conveys two important aspects of the procedures: a) causal process under study is represented by a series of structural (regression) equations, and b) these structural relationships can be modelled to facilitate a clearer conceptualization of the theory under study. The hypothesized model is statistically tested simultaneously to examine its consistency with the data through goodness of fit measures

AMOS 18.0 technique is chosen for its ability to examine a series of dependence relationships simultaneously, especially where there are direct and indirect effects among the constructs within the model. In this study, AMOS 18.0

was used and the SEM estimation procedure is maximum likelihood estimation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Objective 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Women Agricultural Labour

Age: The distribution of women agricultural labourers in different age groups is shown in the table below.

Table 1

Age	Number	Percentage
18-28	23	11.36
29-39	77	38.63
40 years and above	100	50
Total	200	100

Source: primary data

From the 200 respondents, it is found that 100 female agricultural labourers belong to the age group of 40 and above and they constitute 50% of total respondents of the study. 77 women are in the age group of 29-39 years, which is 38.63% of total respondents. Only 23 people belong to the age group of 18-28, which is 11.36%.

Education level: The distribution of women agricultural labourers in different education level groups is shown in the table below

Table 2

Literate		Illiterate	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
57	28.41%	143	71.59%

Source: primary data)

From the data collected, it has been found that a few of women agricultural labourers are literate. Only 57 i.e. 28.41 % respondents out of 200 respondents, are literate and that too very low rate of education level. The table shows that there is high level of illiteracy among the women agricultural labourers in our study. About 71.59% of respondents do not have any education at all.

Family size: The distribution of women agricultural labourers in different family size groups is shown in the table below

Table 3

Size	Number	Percentage
Small (up to 2)	16	7.95
Medium (3-5)	68	34.09
Large (above 5)	116	57.95
Total	200	100

Source: primary data

If we look at the family size of the respondents, majority of them i.e. 57.95 % are having large families (6 and above family members) i.e., 34.09% have medium families and 7.95 % have small families.

Land Holding: The distribution of women agricultural labourers in different land holding groups is shown in the table below

Table 4

Area	Number	Percentage
Up to 1 Acre	66	33
1-2 Acre	14	7
No land	120	60
Total	200	100

Source: primary data

From the above table it is evident that most of the women agricultural labourers are land less. About 60% of women agricultural labourers do not have their own land. 33% of the agricultural workers are having land up to one acre. Only 7% of workers have land holding between 1-2 acres. *Annual family income:* The distribution of women agricultural labourers in different annual family income groups is shown in the table below

Annual income	Number	Percentage
10000-20000	60	30
20001-30000	90	45
30001-40000	44	22
Above 40000	6	3
Total	200	100

Source: primary data)

The annual family income from all sources is very low in case of women agricultural labours. From the data obtained, it is found that only 3% of them have annual family income above Rs.40000. About 45.45% have family income that ranges between Rs.20001 and Rs.30000. 30% respondents have family income between Rs.10001 and Rs.20000. 22% respondents have family income between Rs.30001-40000. All these socio economic characteristics explain the condition of women agricultural labourers in the study area. The features are reflected in their work participation. They are mostly involved in unskilled work having no or very less access to time saving technologies. In order to study the extent of participation of women agricultural labourers in various agricultural activities data have been collected from 200 respondents. *Mode of saving:* The distribution of women agricultural labourers in different saving modes are shown in the table

Table 4.40: Regression coefficient

Path	Estimate	CR	P	Variance explained
Discrimination of wage ->Problem	0.259	2.867	0.005	6.7
Family pressure ->Problem	0.246	2.717	0.008	6.0
Sexual harassment ->Problem	0.344	3.879	0.000	8.6
Work overload ->Problem	0.293	3.265	0.001	11.8

Source: survey data

The results exhibited in Table 4.40 revealed that the standardised direct effect of the all construct on Problem was less than 0.4. So we accept the hypothesis H₁ to H₄ and conclude that discrimination of wage, family pressures, sexual harassment and work overload are not at all major problem faced by women agricultural labourers.

Findings

50% of women agricultural labours are belongs to above 40 years age group. Majority respondents are illiterate. The women who are in large size family induced to engage in agricultural sector. 60% of respondents haven't own land.

below

Table 1

Mode of saving	Number	Percentage
Bank	16	8
Cooperative societies	32	16
Unorganised savings	42	21
Insurance	8	4
No savings	102	51
Total	200	100

Source: primary data

From the above table, majority (51%) women agricultural labours haven't no savings. 21% of respondents adopt unorganised saving mode. 16% of them are depend cooperative society and only 8% and 4% of people adopt bank and insurance mode respectively.

Objective 2: To find out the problem faced by women agricultural labours.

Using SEM to identify the problem faced by women agricultural labours.

H₁: Discrimination of wage is a problem faced by women agricultural labours.

H₂: Family pressure is a problem faced by women agricultural labours.

H₃: Sexual harassment is major problem faced by women agricultural labours.

H₄: Work overload is a problem faced by women agricultural labours.

Table 4.39: Model fit Indices for CFA Problems faced by women agricultural labours.

	χ^2	D F	P	Normed χ^2	GF I	AGF I	NFI I	TL I	CF I	RM R	RMSEA
Problems	4.210	2	.122	2.105	.989	.947	.746	.372	.791	.108	.075

Source: survey data

All the attributes loaded significantly on the latent constructs. The value of the fit indices indicates a reasonable fit of the measurement model with data. In short the measurement model confirms to the factor structure of the constructs.

majority have no savings. Discrimination of wage, family pressures, sexual harassment and work overload are not at all major problem faced by women agricultural labours.

Conclusion

It becomes evident from the results that are mentioned in this research the women agricultural labourers played a significant role in crop production and economic activities of family through the wage earnings. This study revealed that the productive age groups of above 40 years women have engaged in the agricultural activities. The major problems faced by the female agricultural labourers are

unorganized nature of work, seasonal employment, low wages, poverty, lack of housing and related facilities, lack of ownership of land and productive assets, domestic responsibilities, lack of control over economic resources and decision making and the gross maltreatment to which they are subjected. Since poverty is one of the important causes of backwardness, the socio-economic factors such as health, education and employment are generally deemed to be very crucial for women's over all development.

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