

Socio-Economic Conditions of Agricultural Labourers in Thiruvalai Panchayat, Sirkali Taluk, Tamil Nadu: An Investigative Study

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Abstract

Agricultural progress is normally regarded as a prerequisite of economic development. It is true that economic development in the modern times has come to be associated with industrialization; nevertheless, it is generally accepted that industrialization can follow only on the sound wheels of agriculture. In a developing economy, agriculture has to be given priority in order to accelerate the rate of economic progress. The First Agricultural operations are done by the hired labourers. Labour Enquiry Committee (1950-51) defined that the Agricultural Labourers is a person who works for more than half of the total number of days during the year of wages. Agricultural Labourers are on the lowest range of the socio-economic ladder of the Indian society. They formed the most disadvantaged group; their wages are typically low, conditions of work are poor and employment is frequently irregular. The level of living which their earnings permit is very meagre. They generally live from hand to mouth. Hence this paper endeavors to explore study is made to examine the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labour at Thiruvali Panchayat, Sirkali Taluk, Mayiladuthurai District of Tamil Nadu. The study suggested that the wages are very low so step to could be taken so that these workers earn a regular reasonable income. Equal pay for equal work should be followed in both agriculture and non-agriculture work. Further, it is also suggested MGNREGA would help the agricultural labourers in the off season so it necessary to increase the wage and number of days of employment.

Keywords: Agricultural Labourers, Economic Development, Employment, Income.

JEL Classifications: J43, Q12, O13.

1. Preamble

Agricultural progress is normally regarded as a prerequisite of economic development. It is true that economic development in the modern times has come to be associated with industrialization; nevertheless, it is generally accepted that industrialization can follow only on the sound wheels of agriculture. In a developing economy, agriculture has to be given priority in order to accelerate the rate

of economic progress. India is mainly an agricultural country. Majority of the Indian workers are the Agricultural Labourers. Who constitute the major segment of the rural work - force. A large number of women are found among these Agricultural Labourers, contributing significantly to the rural economy. It constitutes a significant part in the work force in India but they lag behind men in terms of level and quality of employment. The majority of women workers are employed in the rural areas. The nearly 87 per cent are employed in agricultural areas as labourers and cultivators. The plight of Agricultural Labourers is becoming increasingly deplorable in most developing countries. However in some countries the state intervened to protect the interest of Agricultural Labourers by adopting both restrictive and promotional measures while other governments have generally been lukewarm to their problems. India has taken long "strides towards" economic progress. India's achievement both in industrial and the agricultural sectors are over shadowed by the continued existence of the condition of extreme poverty. Agricultural Labourers are on the lowest range of the socio-economic ladder of the Indian society. They formed the most disadvantaged group; their wages are typically low, conditions of work are poor and employment is frequently irregular. The level of living which their earnings permit is very meagre. They generally live from hand to mouth.

2. Literatures

Vetrival V. Manegandan R. (2013) in their study point out that according to ILO, about 1, 70,000 agricultural workers were each year run out its means due to the high risk in agricultural sector as compared to the workers in other sectors. Further, they pointed out that agricultural mortality rates have remained consistently high in the last decades as compared with other sectors. Finally, they concluded that in order to confirm sustainable agricultural development in the new minimum, rural workers and their families should have access to adequate health facilities.

Radhakrishnaiah M. and Sankaraiah (2015) in their study discuss about the Agricultural Labourers constitute a considerable proportion of rural work force in India. In the present study males constitute 80.78 per cent, nearly 38.19 per cent of the agricultural labour belongs to Backward Caste, 66.89 per cent of the Agricultural Labourers are illiterates, 78.24 per cent live in nuclear families of Agricultural Labourers, 42.59 per cent of Agricultural Labourers mixed type of houses., But 82.87 per cent have own house around 34 per cent gave 2- 3 acres of land.

Subrata Ghosh (2018) in this study analysed the "Socio-economic status of the Farmers in Islampur Block, Uttar Dinajpur District, West Bengal", the way of life as well as socio-economic condition of the marginal farmers are different in many ways from civilized and technologically advanced society. The present paper is purely based on primary data collected from the study area. It has been observed that most of the peoples of the study area are highly dependent on agricultural activities. It is also noticed that these peoples are socioeconomically backward. There need a number of measures to the overall socio economic development of the farmers.

Yuvaraja. U (2019) in his study elucidated that "Socio-economic Conditions of the Agricultural Labourers: An Analysis", Since long time agriculture is the prime occupation in India as well as Karnataka, even today about 58 per cent of the population relied on it as prime occupation. It plays a dominant role in India's economic development although its share to GDP has been declining continuously from 57 per cent in 1950-51 to 17 per cent in 2016-17 (including allied activities). Despite

declining its relative share in GDP, this sector has registered the reasonable growth in last few decades. However, one of the major bottlenecks that has emerged and can become an insurmountable problem is the issue of shortage of agricultural labour. Due to the low wage rate, wage monopoly, insecurity, seasonal employment in agriculture and other factors have pushed the Agricultural Labourers to migrate from agricultural sector to rest of other sectors. In this regard, this paper is devoted to articulate the socio-economic conditions of the Agricultural Labourers in the study region. Shivakumar.V (2020) in his study examines the socio-economic condition of landless agricultural labour in Tamil Nadu. This study clearly demonstration that their annual income is insufficient to full fill their basic needs. In order to improve the economic conditions of agricultural labour through implementation of minimum wage, strengthen social security measures and to promote livestock, non-farm self-employment.

Hiralal Jana & Debabrata Basu (2024) in this study exhibited Agricultural labourers are socially and economically poorest section of the society, Agricultural Labourers households constitute the historically deprived social groups, displaced and handicraftsmen and dispossessed peasantry. They are the poorest of the poor in rural India.

3. Methodology

This study is based on both Primary and Secondary Data. Keeping the above objectives, a sample of 50 Agricultural Labourers have been conveniently chosen from Thiruvalli Panchayat in Sirkali Taluk and interviewed personally for the study. Statistical tools used like Percentage Analysis and Garrett's Ranking Technique is used for order of problems in the data analysis.

4. Objectives

The present paper tries to analyse the Socio-economic Status of Agricultural Labourers. However, the objectives are to examine the Income and Expenditure pattern of the Agricultural Labourers; to study the issues and challenges of Agricultural Labourers in the Study Area; to suggest the suitable policy measures for strengthening Socio-Economic Status of Agricultural Labourers.

5. Results and Discussions

Socio Economic Status and Conditions of Agricultural Labourers

S. No		Number of Respondent	%	S. No		Number of Respondent	%
1.Age				8.Nature of House			
1.	Below 30	15	30%	1.	Thatched	6	12%
2.	31- 40	18	36%	2.	Tiled	20	40%
3.	41- 50	11	22%	3.	Terraced	7	14%
4.	51 Above	6	12%	4.	Colony	17	34%

	Total	50	100		Total	50	100
2.Marital Status				9.Religion Status			
1.	Married	40	80%	1.	Hindu	42	84%
2.	Un-Married	6	12%	2.	Christian	8	16%
3.	Widow/ Widower	4	8%	3.	Muslim	0	0%
	Total	50	100		Total	50	100
3.Educational Status				10.Users of Livestock Rearing			
1.	Illiterate	18	36%	1.	Cow	21	42%
2.	Below 8 th std	8	16%	2.	Goat/Sheep	6	12%
3.	9 th to 12 th std	13	26%	3.	Bullocks	8	16%
4.	Under Graduate	11	22%	4.	Poultry	15	30%
	Total	50	100		Total	50	100
4. Family Size				11.Mode of Payment			
1.	Below 3	17	34%	1.	Daily	30	60%
2.	3 - 6	19	38%	2.	Weekly	9	18%
3.	Above 6	14	28%	3.	Fort nightly	11	22%
	Total	50	100		Total	50	100
5.Income				12. Opinion about Change of Occupation			
1.	Below Rs. 6,000	16	32%	1.	Non Availability of Work	20	40%
2.	Rs 6,000 – Rs 9,000	21	42%	2.	Not Interested	13	26%
3.	Above Rs. 10,000	13	26%	3.	On Health	17	34%

					Ground		
	Total	50	100		Total	50	100
6.Source of Borrowings				13. Difficulties to repay the loan			
1.	Money Lender	17	34%	1.	High Interest Rate	36	72%
2.	Neighbours	13	26%	2.	Low Wages	8	16%
3.	Loan Received from Some Government Organization	11	22%	3.	Lack of Employment	4	8%
4.	land Owning Community	9	18%	4.	Lack of Savings	2	4%
	Total	50	100		Total	50	100
7.Savings				14.Problems faced by Agricultural Labourers			
1.	Post office	11	22%	1.	Seasonal Employment	I	
2.	Private Finance	10	20%	2.	Lack of Demand	VI	
3.	Commercial Bank	9	18%	3.	Migratory Behaviour	V	
4.	SHG	15	30%	4.	Health Problem	IV	
5.	LIC	5	10%	5.	Lack of Awareness	II	
	Total	50	100	6.	Liquor Addiction	III	

Source: Primary data.

6. Major Observations

- Nearly (36%) of the respondents belong to the age group between 31-40 years followed by (30%) who belonged to the age group between Below 30 years.
- Majority of 80% of the respondents are married and 12% are unmarried respectively.
- Majority of 36% of the respondents are illiterate followed by 26% under 9th std to 12th std.
- It is observed that maximum 37% of the sample respondents have family size 3-6 members.

- It is observed from the respondents that maximum earned 42% earning monthly income Rs. 6,000- 9,000 followed by 32% are earning monthly income below Rs. 6,000.
- Majority 34% borrowed money from moneylenders. 22% borrowed loan from state government organizations.
- It could be known from the study labourers are having savings habit. Most of them saved in the Post office and Nationalized Banks. Influence of SHGS may be the reason for the saving among the Labourers.
- It is clearly understood that 42% of respondents live in tiled houses followed by 34 % live in colony houses.
- Out of 50 sample respondents 84% are Hindu Religion followed by 16% are Christian Religion with no Muslim in the study area. The region is dominated by the Hindu Religion.
- 42% of the Agricultural Labourers are rearing cow followed by 12% are rearing goat/sheep, 8% are having bullocks and 30% are rearing poultry.
- 60% of them received daily wages and 22% received wage fortnight and remaining 18% received wages weekly.
- The sample respondents regarding opinion towards change of occupation responded that 40% per cent shift to some others occupation such as construction work and 34% are not willing to change the occupation because of health issues.
- The difficulties faced by the respondents to repay the borrowed money are collected and 72 % of them pay high rate of interest.
- The Seasonal Employment, Lack of Awareness, Liquor Addiction, Health Problem Migratory Behaviour and Lack of Demand are the important problem faced by Agricultural Labourers respectively.

7. Recommendations

The following suggestions may be offered to improve the Socio Economic conditions of Agricultural Labourers in the study area.

- Agriculture is the major occupation in this block but the wages are very low so step to could be taken so that these workers earn a regular reasonable income.
- MGNREGA would help the agricultural labourers in the off season but wages and number of days of employment provided very low. So it necessary to increase the wage and number of days of employment.
- Most of the respondents pointed out that the rate of wage paid to them is low compared to the rate prevailing in other areas. Hence it is suggested that the government has to take necessary step to maintain uniform rate of wage to landless agricultural labourers throughout the state.
- From the study, the researcher came to know that the agricultural labourers are not paid immediately they finish the work. They are paid after some period. Hence it is suggested that the agricultural labourer must be made aware their rights and claim their wage immediately.
- The study reveals that no incentives are provided to the landless agricultural in this area. More over the researcher come to know that in other areas some facilities are given to the labourers while they are working. Further for any kind of work, incentives are essential to enable the

workers to do more work perfectly. In this light it is suggested that workers be given the incentives like providing tea, giving rest at regular intervals and providing transport facilities.

- Since the landless agricultural labourers are not able to get employment throughout the year, government institutions and social organizations should come forward to establish rural based industries like coir and cottage industries to provide employment to landless agricultural labourers through out the year.
- There is no landless agricultural labourer's organization. The local leaders and government should come forward to organize union in these areas. This will help them to secure fair wage, proper working hours and to avoid exploitations.
- The disparity in agricultural work and non-agricultural work wage and disparity rate between males and females wage rate should be minimized. Equal pay for equal work should be followed in both agriculture and non-agriculture work.

8. Conclusion

The present study is based on the Socio-Economic conditions of the Agricultural Labourers. This study reveals that the Agricultural Labourers are employed largely to perform agricultural operations such as sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, winnowing and threshing. The half of the labourers has not taken sufficient energetic food for their survival due to poor economic conditions. Majority of the farm workers are not being in peace of mind by psychologically due to their work nature, domestic and economic burdens. Further, it is sadly to note that maximum of the workers have done overload work at agricultural field and also the discrimination in the name of gender, caste, and wage at work place has occurred among them seriously. Majority of the respondents have not satisfied about the wage in terms of their smooth survival. During the off season of agriculture, all the female Agricultural Labourers have preferred the alternative employment opportunity of 100 days of work programme through MGNREGA. The study clearly explained that most of the agricultural workers have affected by severe economic burdens and there is no feasibility condition to overcome their poor status, even majority of the respondents are unable to manage their day to day life activities also. Since Independence, the center as well as the State Governments have taken lot of measures to improve the economic condition of agricultural labourers through the situation is pendulating. Finally if all suggestions given in the study are taken care of practice there is a reasonable hope for creating tremendous changes in employment opportunity and an increase in standard of living of agricultural labourers. Our country agriculture will be dynamic and sustainable.

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