



Socio-Economic Status Profile of Women in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

The present study is empirical information into the realistic pertaining to the socio economic status profile of women in rural areas. The aim of the study is to investigate the social and economic status profile of the respondents and this further seeks to ascertain the socio-economic problems and so forth. The investigation also extends to study the opinions and attitudes of the respondents, awareness about social and economic development. The data was collected by personal interview method. The total number of ten villages was selected at randomly in five Taluqs of Raichur District of Karnataka. The total respondents were 200, which were selected by random method. In each village, about 20 respondents were selected by random method. The study tries to understand the socio-economic problems faced by the rural women. The paper stress for policy interventions to provide work opportunities and better wages to rural women workers and builds the case for improving the education, information and skill level. Finally the paper recommends policy initiatives and research to improve the socio economic status of women in rural areas.

KEYWORDS : Awareness, Employment, Gender, Income and Policy.

INTRODUCTION:

Women constitute the backbone of any nation. Prosperity of the nation depends upon the prosperity of its women. However, the role played by rural women in economic development has not been assigned sufficient importance. Women face gender-specific barriers in access to education, health and employment. Again, women have little control over the assets. Women are often under-paid or unpaid for their work. Their contribution to society and the economy are often ignored. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. However, women in India continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing, dowry killings, and the forced prostitution of young girls. According to a global poll conducted by Thomson Reuters, India is the "fourth most dangerous country" in the world for women and the worst country for women among the G20 countries.

The main problems of rural women can be divided into four main categories economic, social, family level and individual. For many rural women the economic problem is dependence on their husband's income. Social problems are connected with economic problems; unemployment and a lack of income are usually connected with malnutrition, illness and alcoholism. Inequality between the sexes in decision-making can also be seen as a social problem. At the family level, the main problems are in the division of labour inside the household. Often women have a heavy workload and less free time than men. The level of household technology is low and it increases the work burden on women. Lack of knowledge in nutrition and home economics as well as lack of income often mean malnutrition at the family level. Individual problems are usually economic and social, and there is a lack of self-esteem and self-reliance. Women are still largely concentrated in agriculture as self employed or casual labour. Women workers face various forms of discrimination. Rural women seldom have positive rural role models, and young girls prefer to move to towns and cities. Lack of interest in politics and public issues is also a problem at the individual level.

The greatest problems of rural women are: unemployment, declining or low incomes; economic problems caused by social and political changes; low level of education; lack of extension and knowledge in home economics, home management and entrepreneurship; heavy workload both in paid employment and at home; lack of free time and inequality in free time compared to men; social problems such as the increasing consumption of alcohol (especially by men); inadequate and distant or diminishing health care and social services; lack of household services and equipment; unhealthy nutrition and poor health; deficiencies in the rural infrastructure; social isolation; lack of

social and cultural activities in villages; the low social status of rural women and the tradition that women are outsiders in public life; the traditional division of labour inside families and women's economic dependence on men; women's lack of self-confidence in their potential and depopulation of the rural areas, especially the migration of young rural women.

Traditionally women's role in agriculture is staggering with nearly half of the population involved in agriculture and its related activities. Most of the agricultural activities are women specific but tragically worldwide women mostly end up as hired agricultural labourers with substantial gender disparity in wages earning far less than men in the same job. To add to her economic woes, inadequate education, less than satisfactory dissemination of technology, globalization, economic liberalization, commercialization, urbanization, political instability, natural disasters, mechanization of agriculture, decreased agriculture, migration of men to urban areas, and occupational health hazards such as prolonged hours of physical labour resulting in muscular-skeletal injuries, pesticide poisoning also make the life of rural women miserable. True, there are policies and programmes of central and state government to alleviate their problems but they are proportionately insufficient and their execution far from satisfactory. Much needs to be done in disseminating gender segregated data and gender bias in all aspects of agriculture, access to resources including land and natural resources, drudgery reduction, assuring nutritional security, diversification of activities of Self Health Groups and Street Shakti groups with emphasis on productivity including post harvest technology, creation of marketing facilities, ownership to land and other allied resources rural electrification, outreach from the media, collectives of women and inter linking of SHGs, adult literacy, health awareness, gender sensitization of extension functionaries and financial institutions, awareness about pesticide hazard etc. Tragically rural women are not vociferous on issues like foetal killing of female unborn, high rate of female mortality, creation of Special Economic Zones replacing productive lands, farmer's suicide and the plight of their widows, fate of pavement vendors and petty shop keepers replaced by retail outlets of big business houses, etc. Empowerment of women involves many things-economic opportunity, social equality, and personal rights. Women are deprived of these human rights, often as a matter of tradition. In rural areas, women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity, and hence, they are neglected mainly to household duties and cheap labour. Without the power to work and earn good income, their voices are silenced. Even in matters of sex and child bearing, women often do not have the ability to oppose the wishes of their men. These issues need to be addressed in rural areas. Along with education, women's autonomy measured in terms of access to land, control over its operation, mobility, and willingness to join SHGs enables them to move into strengthen direction. Encouraging women, particularly in rural areas, to set up small enterprises is an effective method to promote their welfare, development and empowerment. This needs

scientifically collected information on their problems and relief measures available. So, there is dire need to understand the situation of rural women who constitute a major proportion in the population.

Need for the study:

Rural women play a key role in supporting their households and communities in achieving food and nutrition security, generating income, and improving rural livelihoods and overall well-being. They contribute to agriculture and rural enterprises and fuel local and global economies. Yet, every day, around the world, rural women and girls face persistent structural constraints that prevent them from fully enjoying their human rights and hamper their efforts to improve their lives as well as those of others around them. In this sense, the realities of rural life in India are difficult to comprehend. Hence, the researcher tries to focus on those issues which are essential to empower them in rural India.

Objectives of the study:

The following are the objectives of the study and are as follows:

1. To know the demographic profile of rural areas.
2. To know the standard of living of rural women.
3. To understand their level of awareness about the women development programmes.
4. To know their level of awareness regarding family planning practices.
5. To examine the economic status of the rural women.

Universe of the study:

Raichur District is an administrative district in the Indian state of Karnataka. Raichur district lies between 15 deg. 09 min. and 16 deg. 34 min. N latitude and 75 deg. 46 min. and 77 deg. 35 min E longitude and in between two major rivers, namely, the Krishna and the Tungabhadra. The general slope of the district is from the north-west towards the south-east, its average height above the Mean Sea-Level being just 1,311 feet. It is located in the northeast part of the state and is bounded by Yadgir district in the north, Bijapur and Bagalkot district in the northwest, Koppal district in the west, Bellary district in the south, Mahabubnagar and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh in the east. According to the 2011 census, Raichur district has a population of 1,924,773. The district has a population density of 228 inhabitants per square kilometre (590 /sq mi). Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 15.27%. Raichur has a sex ratio of 992 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 60.46%. Raichur District has five taluks: Raichur, Devadurga, Sindhanur, Manvi and Lingsugur.

Material and Methods:

The present study was conducted in Raichur District of Karnataka. The researcher has used both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The Primary data collection involved personal interviews and participation observation. The secondary source of data collection includes reference of books, journal, magazines, internet etc. The sampling design is formulated for the purposes of collection of data. The investigator has used the systematic sampling method where about 200 respondents were interviewed personally. The total villages taken for the study was 10. It was selected at randomly in five Taluqs of Raichur District covering two villages in each taluq. About 20 respondents were selected in each village by random method.

Research Design:

The Research is exploratory in nature. Various possibilities to knowing the subject in depth will be explored at various levels. The tools of observation and interview were used to collect the data. The Researcher has noted to understand the subject clearly. The Researcher made a drastic effort to bring out and understand the status profile of women in rural areas.

Results and Findings:

The findings of the study are as follows. Majority of respondents are between the age group of 30-45 years with 43%, 38% of the respondents were between the age of 45-55 years, and only 19% were age of above 56 years. Majority of respondents are illiterate with 70% and literates comprised of 30%. Most of them are engaged in agriculture for their livelihood constituting of about 64% and remaining 30% are wage labours, 5% are working in private jobs and 1% are engaged in

government jobs. Majority of the respondents belong to Hindu religion which constitute about 76 % and 19% are Muslims, Christian with 2% and other with 3%. Majority of the respondents belong to SC with 32%, OBC with 30% and GM comprised of about 26%, ST constitute about 10% and others are only 2%. The women resides mostly in nuclear family with 67% and joint family is about 23% only. The family annual income of the women lies more of Rs 11000 to 15000 with 64% followed by Rs 5000 to 10000 of about 26 % and Rs 15000 to 25000 constitute about 8% and Rs 25000 & above constitutes only 2%. The main sources of income of the respondents are largely depend on agriculture comprising of about 69%, and labour wage earner with 17% and job constitute about 8% while other sources constitute only 6%. The per capita income of the respondent lies more between Rs.2000 to 3000 with 58% followed by Rs.1000-2000 with 25% and Rs.3000-5000 constitute about 13% and Rs 5000 & above is about 4%.

The respondents who were living in their own house comprised of about 79%, other with only 15%, while rented house constitutes only 6%. The type of house in which the majority of the respondents are residing is semi puccha house with 61%, kaccha house with 30% and puccha houses are about 9%. The kitchens are almost inside the house constituting about 68% and outside the house are about 32%. The sources of drinking water is mainly from public tap with 71% and open well with 10%, while own bore wells constitutes about 9% and other source with 10%. The toilet facilities used by the respondent are more in outside i.e 83%, attached constitutes about 10% and use of Public toilet comprised of about 7% only. Majority of the respondents are aware of family planning practices with 79% and 21% are not aware of the family planning practices. Majority of the respondents are not aware about the availability of women development programmes which comprises 78% and about 22% of the respondent are aware of the women development programmes.

Recommendations:

- A policy intervention is needed to provide work opportunities and better wages to rural women workers.
- Women empowerment programmes should be implemented effectively in rural areas.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted regarding health, hygiene, SHGs and programmes available to them.
- Education must be given high priority in order to improve the status of the women living in rural areas.
- There is dire need to generate employment in the rural areas. The income generation activities should be taken up for the achievement of self employment.
- Public-private partnership must be brought into force to provide basic facilities to the women in the rural areas.
- Participation of community people in achieving these goals is necessary. So they must be actively involved in the process of implementation.

Conclusion:

Although, it is evident that socio-economic improvement has taken place in villages in India but the benefits of growth have not reached equally to all section of rural population. Women in rural areas are silently suffering lot of problems due to lack of viable and effective rural development programmes, which could speak to them. Local rural development projects, which start by building self-reliance, personal abilities, entrepreneurship, social responsibility and interest in local development, are the priority needs in rural areas. Unemployed women ought to be seen as a resource and not as a problem. The priority needs to be paid on employment and economic independence; education and training in entrepreneurship, home economics, home management and the mother's role; revival of social and cultural services and activities; better infrastructure and social security systems; increased participation of women in public life; development and training programmes for rural women and families; training in adaptation to the changing social circumstances; better cooperation inside the family; and women's involvement in rural development projects at the local level. Therefore, there is great need for the improvement of socio-economic status of the rural women who constitute major proportion in the population.

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