



PROBLEMS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

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KEYWORDS :

Rural population of the country according to the 2011 Census is 833.7 million. Total workers in the country are 481.9 million in 2011 Census. The rural population of the country is increased from 298.6 million in 1951 to 833.7 million in 2011. There are 144.3 million agricultural workers in the country as per 2011 Census. The number of agricultural labourers is increased from 27.3 million in 1951 to 144.3 million in 2011. However, the percentage of agricultural workers to the total workers is declined from 69.70 per cent in 1951 to 54.60 per cent in 2011. Of the total working population in the country, 34.96 per cent are female, while the percentage of males is 65.04 per cent according to the 2011 Census. Of the 427781058 male population, 226837013 population are male (53.03 per cent). The percentage of female working population in the total population is 30.03 per cent. The number of female agricultural labourers in the country according to the 2011 Census is 59066086 constituted 43.11 per cent of the total agricultural workers. The percentage of male agricultural workers to the total workers is 56.89 per cent. The percentage of male main workers to the total main workers is found to be 72.44 per cent, while the rest 27.56 per cent are female main workers. Of the total cultivators in the country, 69.42 per cent are male and the rest 30.58 per cent are female.

Female agricultural labourers face certain problems in general like gender discrimination in land ownership, malnutrition, poor health, lack of education, overwork, unskilled, mistreatment and powerlessness. Women participating in agricultural activities face a number of challenges that limit the human potential they have. The challenges are in the form of social barriers, lower asset ownership, technological constraints, and institutional bias. In spite of the real challenges that they come across, the advocacy for the women's cause in agriculture often gets exaggerated. Women in rural India play a dual role as producers of goods and services as well as their domestic chores and wives and mothers yet their contribution to economic development has been neglected. Rural women are the key agents for development. They play a catalytic role towards achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. But limited access to credit, health care and education are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises and climate change. Empowering them is essential, not only for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic productivity, given women's large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide. The falling trend in women's labour market participation has serious implication for the economy because the current demographic structure seems to be favourable to India. India has the largest number of young working population in the age group of 15-34 years and is considered as the youngest country in the world today. The benefits of the demographic dividend are likely to be deterred if women stay out of work.

Review of Literature

Saraswathi Raju Iyer (2004) studied that women in rural areas are depending on agriculture which is the major unorganized sector in India. Rural women in India are classified into four categories namely landless women, near landless women, small peasant women and peasant women. Women are mostly the agricultural labour 50 percent of agricultural operations and allied activities are done by women. Women face a lot of problems in agriculture like women labour displaced by technology, physical strenuous labour, illiteracy etc. Women are the major contributors in agriculture.

Dharam Pal and Gian Singh (2015) attempts to analyse the problems faced by the women labourers at the workplace and on the domestic

front along with their social status and living conditions in the rural areas of Punjab. The study reveals that the social status and living conditions of the sampled women labourers are very miserable in the rural areas of Punjab. Further, almost all the sampled women labourers do not find work in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors for more than 180 days in a year. A large majority of them do not enjoy any facility at their workplace.

Alpana Baruah (2018) conducted a study on women workers in agriculture. Further, the study has identified the problems faced by women workers in agriculture. The study finds that women in the study area are actively involved in agricultural activities. The study reveals that their participation is higher in livestock management activities in comparison to men in terms of man days. In cultivation, their participation is also found to be significant in activities like transplantation, harvesting, weeding and winnowing.

Shahin Razi (2018) opined that rural women are key agents for achieving the transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. The role of rural women outside the home has become an important feature of the social and economic life of the country and in the years to come this will become still more significant. From this point of view, greater attention will have to be paid to the problems of training and development of rural women.

The study conducted by Sharath (2019) reported the problems of agricultural labour in India. According to the study, major problems of agricultural labour are poverty and low standard of living, unemployment and underemployment, low productivity, low wages, low income, unemployment and underemployment, indebtedness, low wages for women in agricultural labour, excess supply, seasonal employment etc. The study reported that female agricultural workers are generally forced to work harder and paid less than their male counterparts.

Raja Meenakshi and Sigamani Panneer (2020) examined the association between health and agriculture, the occupational hazards and health problems faced by agricultural women workers and the related policy provisions in India. The study finds that occupational health hazards have a direct impact on the physical and mental health of women workers.

Objectives of the Study

The present study is aimed at examining the problems of women agricultural labour. Problems examined in the study include lower wages, gender disparity in wages, wage discrimination for locals and non-local migrants, migrated labour, seasonal employment in agriculture, long distance between home and workplace, involving more drudgery and long hours of continuous work.

Methodology

The study is based on primary data. Primary data is collected using structured interview schedule. Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh is selected for the present study. Multi-stage random sampling method is used to select the samples. Total sample size of the study is 640. After collecting the data, the data is entered into SPSS Software. Tables are drawn. Percentage analysis is used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion**Lower wages**

Table 1 shows the respondents' views on the issue of decreased pay. The figure clearly shows that a sizeable portion of respondents

(47.20%) strongly agree that one of their difficulties is decreased wages, while 23% of respondents also concur. Approximately 21% of respondents gave a neutral reaction. On the other hand, just about 9% of the respondents disagree with the notion that one of their difficulties is decreased pay.

Table - 1 PROBLEM OF LOWER WAGES

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	57	8.90
Neutral	134	20.90
Agree	147	23.00
Strongly agree	302	47.20
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Gender disparity in agricultural wages

The opinions of the respondents on the issue of gender inequality in agricultural pay are presented in Table 2. The data shows that roughly 39% of respondents strongly agree with this statement, while about 29% agree, and that one of their issues is the gender gap in agricultural incomes. Approximately 7% of the respondents gave a neutral reaction. On the other hand, approximately 11% of respondents disagree, and approximately 14% of respondents strongly disagree, with the aforementioned issue..

Table - 2 PROBLEM OF GENDER DISPARITY IN WAGES

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	92	14.40
Disagree	70	10.90
Neutral	42	6.60
Agree	187	29.20
Strongly agree	249	38.90
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Wage discrimination for locals and non-local migrants

The perspectives of the respondents on the issue of wage discrimination for locals and non-local migrants are shown in Table -3. Nearly three-fifths of the respondents disagree with the statement in the table that wage discrimination for locals and non-local migrants is one of their difficulties. The field survey revealed that non-local migrants were paid less than their local counterparts. However, roughly 19% of the respondents concur that one of their issues is salary discrimination between locals and non-local migrants. Approximately 21% of the respondents gave a neutral reaction. None of the respondents strongly agreed or disagreed with the aforementioned issue.

Table - 3 PROBLEM OF WAGE DISCRIMINATION FOR LOCALS AND NON-LOCAL MIGRANTS

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	382	59.70
Neutral	134	20.90
Agree	124	19.40
Strongly agree	-	-
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Migrated labour

Table -4 presents the respondents' perspectives on the issue of migrant workers. From the table, it can be inferred that roughly 39% of respondents and 29% of respondents strongly agree that migrating labour is one of the issues facing women who work in agriculture. The results of the field survey show that migrant labour is occasionally blocking the respondents from finding work. Approximately 37% of the respondents gave the statement a neutral response. Only roughly 7% of respondents in the sample strongly disagree with the aforementioned statement, compared to the 8% of respondents overall who disagree with it.

Table-4 PROBLEM OF MIGRATED LABOUR

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	43	6.70
Disagree	54	8.40
Neutral	106	16.60
Agree	251	39.20
Strongly agree	186	29.10
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Seasonal employment in agriculture

Table - 5 shows how the respondents were distributed according to how they felt about the issue of seasonal work in agriculture. The data shows that roughly 39% of respondents and about 27% of respondents strongly agree that seasonal employment in agriculture is one of the issues facing women who work in agriculture. Approximately 28% of the respondents gave the statement a neutral response. However, a very small number of responders disagree with the aforementioned statement. (5.80 per cent). None of the responders objected vehemently with the aforementioned assertion.

Table - 5 PROBLEM OF SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	37	5.80
Neutral	180	28.10
Agree	248	38.80
Strongly agree	175	27.30
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Long distance between home and workplace

The distribution of respondents by how they felt about the issue of travel time between home and work is shown in Table 6. The data shows that just roughly 24% of respondents believed that the distance between home and work is one of the issues facing women who work in agriculture. According to the statistics, 31% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that one of the issues facing women who work in agriculture is their inability to commute from home to work, while 38% of respondents disagreed. Approximately 6% of the respondents gave a neutral response. None of the respondents strongly concurred with the aforementioned assertion.

Table - 6 PROBLEM OF LONG DISTANCE BETWEEN HOME AND WORKPLACE

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	199	31.10
Disagree	246	38.40
Neutral	40	6.30
Agree	155	24.20
Strongly agree	-	-
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Involving more drudgery

Table - 7 shows how the respondents were distributed according to how they felt about the issue of adding more drudgery to agricultural work. From the statistics, it can be inferred that almost 36% of respondents strongly concur with the assertion that adding more drudgery to their agricultural labour is one of their problems, whereas just about 21% of respondents do so. Approximately 37% of the respondents gave a neutral reaction. On the other hand, just about 7% of the respondents disagreed with the aforementioned assertion. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement in a strong way.

Table - 7 PROBLEM OF INVOLVING MORE DRUDGERY

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	42	6.60
Neutral	235	36.70
Agree	133	20.80

Strongly agree	230	35.90
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Long hours of continuous work

Table 6.8 provides a distribution of the respondents based on how they felt about the issue of long, continuous workdays. The findings clearly show that close to 50% of respondents strongly agree and that about 25% of respondents agree that working long hours continuously is one of their concerns. Approximately 22% of respondents gave a neutral reaction. The number of sample respondents who disagree with the aforementioned assertion is extremely small. (3.90 per cent). None of the respondents disagreed with the statement in a strong way.

Table - 8 PROBLEM OF LONG HOURS OF CONTINUOUS WORK

Opinion of the respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	-	-
Disagree	25	3.90
Neutral	140	21.90
Agree	157	24.50
Strongly agree	318	49.70
Total	640	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data.

Conclusion

According to the vast majority of respondents, decreased wages are one of the issues facing farm labor, according to the survey. The majority of respondents believe that one of their issues is the gender pay gap in agriculture. According to the majority of respondents, one of their difficulties is not wage discrimination between locals and non-local migrants. The majority of respondents believe that one of the issues facing women working in agriculture is migratory labour. According to the majority of respondents, one of the issues facing women who work in agriculture is seasonal employment. According to the majority of respondents, the distance between home and the job is not one of the issues facing women who work in agriculture. Only slightly more than half of the respondents believed that one of their concerns was adding more labour to the agriculture task. According to the large majority of responders, one of their issues is working long hours continuously.

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