



Socioeconomic Conditions of Agricultural Labour in Rayalaseema, Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

India is predominantly an agrarian country where 70 per cent of its population still depends on agriculture for its livelihood. 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 labourer mixed type of houses., But 82.87 per cent have own house around 34 per cent gave 2- 3 acres of land.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

India is predominantly an agrarian country where 70 per cent of its population still depends on agriculture for its livelihood. The agricultural labourers constitute a considerable proportion of rural work force in India. They eke-out their livelihood by working on various farms for wages. The productivity in agriculture depends upon the efficiency of agricultural labourers, which in turn depends upon their socio-economic conditions. Most of the agricultural labourers in the village are landless and so they depend on wage paid employment. In this chapter an attempt is made to examine the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in 8 villages of the 8 mandals in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Krishna S. Vatra (2006) made an assessment of the effectiveness of the employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of the Maharashtra Government in reducing risk and vulnerability to which households are exposed during the lean season or when crops fail due to climatic factors. Further, it is argued that if the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has to become a successful intervention in poverty alleviation and drought mitigation, it needs to follow a well defined strategy for building and maintaining assets, rather than becoming a short-term intervention in relief employment as the EGS turned out to be.

Abhiroop Mukhopadhyay and Indira Rajaraman (2007) analysed that there is an overall rise in rural unemployment, in terms of both total and partial failure to find work during the reference week, between the 55th (1999-2000) and 61st (2004-05) round employment surveys of the national sample survey. This is something of a puzzle given the reported rise in monthly per capita rural expenditure between the two rounds. The decline in unemployment among males with secondary school or higher education, relative to illiterate males, suggests that the rise in rural prosperity closely matches the pattern of acres to rural school facilities of the four disadvantaged groups tested for; scheduled tribes face the highest incremental unemployment, which remains unchanged into the 61st round. This is an important pointer to the required regional configuration of workfare programmes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, and for the spread of rural schools.

Abusalah Shariff (2009) studied NREGA an ambitious mass employment guarantee scheme implemented since the last four year, intends to sustain income and consumption in India rural outback. A large programme, backed by budgetary

allocation promises 100 days of manual work to households who register and apply. Failure to provide employment through the gram sambas creates cash entitlements as a matter of low. This paper analyses official statistics and survey data from seven northern states. The future of NREGA is a strongly linked to the cherished national good to strengthen and broad base decentralization of local governance. But there are wide variations amongst the states not only in the level of decentralisation but also in the capacity to implement such a large scheme and lack of convergence amongst relevant government departments and functionaries. NREGA has the potential to address both sustenance of income and enhance the social welfare of households in rural areas.

Devender Dommati and Krishna Reddy Chittedi (2011) in their paper on Socio-Economic Conditions Of agricultural Women Labour in Andhra Pradesh : A case study of Karimnagar district, expressed that women suffer from a multiple burden on their time due to their home making, child rearing and income earning responsibilities. When they work the whole day in fields and forests, they need appropriate support services like crèches and child care centers. A Gram panchayat mahila fund should be established to enable SHGs and other women's groups to undertake community activities that help to meet essential gender specific needs. The feminization of agriculture, due to male out migration, needs specific attention with reference to gender sensitive farm and credit policies. All research, development and extension programmes in agriculture and all services must be engendered

STUDY AREA

The Rayalaseema region, consisting of the districts of Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur and Kurnool, occupies 27.4 per cent of the State area and lies mostly at an altitude of 1,000 to 2,000 feet (305 to 610 meters) above the mean sea level. The average rainfall of this region is approximately 27 inches (68.5 cm) compared to about 41 inches (104.1 cm) for the Coastal Andhra. Long known as a famine belt, Rayalaseema is the most sparsely populated and economically the most vulnerable part of Andhra Pradesh. The soil is rocky and unyielding and the rainfall is scanty and uncertain. Confronted by frequent famines and draughts, farmers struggle for existence. Majority of the population in Rayalaseema still clings to agriculture due to the lack of opportunities in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. This region has fabulous forest resources and sizeable mineral deposits, but these assets are slow in being exploited. Industrially, the Rayalaseema region is the most backward in the state, although Kurnool district has textile operations and a modest food processing industry.

Rayalaseema comprising of four districts of the Southern part of A.P occupies an area of 75.30 lakh hacters, forming 29.86 per cent area of the state. It has about 17.90 per cent of the state's population. The density of population in Rayalaseema, 226.25 per sq.km is the lowest among the three regions of the state. Poverty encourages only migration. The climate in Rayalaseema is mostly dry. The maximum temperature varies from 37 C to 44 C. The region lies mostly at an altitude of + 250 M to 600 M. The entire Rayalaseema region lies in the rain shadow zone of Western Ghats. Consequently, this area received very low rainfall during the South West and the North East monsoons as well. The rainfall of 368.8 mm of the Kharif period in Rayalaseema is ill distributed and undependable. It is utterly inadequate even to raise the dry crops like groundnut or jowar.

Red soils predominate in this zone. Moisture availability for dry land crops is poor due to low water retention in the red soils. Soil erosion is one of the serious problems in the region as the terrain is undulated and thus the soils are poor in fertility. In respect of ground water potential, Rayalaseema region comprises of hard crystalline rocks with limited ground water potential held in joints and fractured zones. The steep ground slopes, the absence of adequate soil and vegetable cover inhibit infiltration of rain water into the substrata and allows flash surface flows. The limited ground water resource is already over-utilised in Rayalaseema and grey- belt areas are increasing year after year.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Gender

The sex composition of the sample agricultural labour among tenants and cultivators is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sex Composition of Agricultural Labourers in Rayalaseema Region of Andhra Pradesh

Sex	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Male	349	80.78
Female	83	19.21
Total	432	100

Source:- Field Survey Data.

Table 1 shows that the males constitute 80.78 per cent and females 19.21 per cent of the agricultural labour in the study area.

2. Age

Certain agricultural occupations like ploughing, embarking, sowing, watering, application of fertilizers and insecticides require more male labourers while certain other operations require more female labourers such as transplantation, weeding, harvesting etc. Further, some operations require hard manual labour, which can't be undertaken by aged persons. Usually such operations require young and energetic persons. The table gives details relating to age composition of agricultural labourers in Table 2.

Table 2 Age Composition of Agricultural Labourers in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh

Age group	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
25-35	124	28.70
35-45	139	32.17
45-55	93	21.52
55 and above	76	17.59
Total	432	100

Source: Field Data

From Table 2 it is evident that in the agricultural labour, majority of the sample agricultural labour constituting 32.17 per cent, fall in the age group 35-45 years. 28.7 per cent of sample agricultural labour was in the age group 25-35 years, 21.52 per cent in the age group 45-55 years and 17.59 per cent in the age group 55 years and above. Obviously, majority of the sample agricultural labour were found in the age group 25-45 years in the study area.

3. Caste

The caste composition of the sample agricultural labour is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Caste Composition of Agricultural Labourers in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh

CASTE	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
OC	109	25.23
BC	165	38.19
SC	96	22.22
ST	53	12.26
OTHERS	9	2.08
Total	432	100

Source:-Field Survey Data.

Table 3 reveals that in nearly 38.19 per cent of the agricultural labour belongs to Backward Caste and 2.08 per cent were in the other caste. The sample agricultural labour in scheduled caste constitutes 22.22 per cent and scheduled Tribes 12.26 per cent in the study area.

4. Marital Status

Marital status of the sample agricultural labour is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Marital Status

Caste	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Married	367	84.95
Un-Married	35	8.11
Widow	21	4.86
Widower	9	2.08
Total	432	100

Source:- Field Survey Data

Table 4 reveals that 84.95 per cent of the heads of agricultural labour were married and 8.11 per cent unmarried, 4.86 per cent were widows and 2.08 per cent widowers respectively.

5. Size of the Family

Data pertaining to the size of the family of the agricultural labourers are presented Table 5.

Table 5 Distribution of Agricultural Labourers according to Size of the Family in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh

Size of the family	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Small	127	29.39
Medium	236	54.62
Large	69	15.97
Total	432	100

Source: Field Survey Data.

Table 5 reveals that in agricultural labourers, highest percentages of agricultural labourers were found in the Medium, constituting 54.62 per cent, followed by small and large families who formed 29.39 per cent and 15.97 per cent respectively. The highest percentage of agricultural labour in the Medium size family in the study area.

6. Education

It has been found that there is a high degree of correlation between the level of education and productivity among the rural people. The level of literacy plays an important role in the decision-making and active participation in any development programme. A classification of sample agricultural labour according to their educational status is presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Education

Level of Education	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Illiterate	289	66.89
Primary	71	16.43
Secondary	55	12.73
Higher	13	3.01
Technical	4	0.92
Total	432	100

Source:-Field Survey Data

Table 6 shows that the majority of agricultural labourers(66.89 %) are illiterates, 16.43 per cent of agricultural labourers had primary education; 12.73 per cent of agricultural labourers with secondary education, 3.01 per cent agricultural labourers with higher education and 0.92 per cent agricultural labourers with technical education in the study area.

7. Type of Family

The ancient history of India reveals that the joint family system was of paramount significance in traditional Indian society. The data pertaining to the type of family to which the sample agricultural labours belong is presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Type of the Family

Type of the Family	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Nuclear	338	78.24
Joint	94	21.75
Total	432	100

Source: Field Survey Data.

Table-4.7 shows that majority of the sample agricultural labour, i.e., 78.24 per cent live in nuclear families of agricultural labourers and joint families form 21.75 per cent in the respect of agricultural labourers in the study area.

8. Type of House

The details pertaining to type of houses by agricultural labourer are set out in Table 8.

Table .8 Type of Houses

Type of houses	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Hut	37	8.56
Pucca	93	21.52
Kutchha	118	27.31
Mixed	184	42.59
Total	432	100

Source: Field Data

From Table it is found that over 42.59 per cent of agricultural labourer mixed type of houses. The agricultural labourer with kutchha houses formed 27.31 per cent, 21.52 per cent of labourers owned pucca house and 8.56 per cent labourers hut in the agricultural labourer of the study area.

9. Nature of House

The details pertaining to own houses or rented houses by agricultural labourers are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Nature of the Houses

Nature of Houses	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Own	358	82.87
Rented	74	17.12
Total	432	100

Source: Field Data

From table 9 it is observed that in agricultural labourers, highest percentage of agricultural labourers was found in the owned houses, constituting 82.87 per cent and rented houses 17.12 per cent agricultural labourer living houses in the study area.

10.Land Holding

Data pertaining to the size of land holdings of the agricultural labourers is presented in Table 10

Table 10
Size of the land in

Land size (in Hectares)	No. of Agricultural Labourers	Per cent
Land less	53	12.26
Below 1	65	15.04
1-2	97	22.45
2-3	146	33.79
3-4	45	10.41
Above 4	26	6.01
Total	432	100

Source: Field Data

From Table – 4.10 it is found that in among the agricultural labourer 12.26 per cent are landless. 15.04 per cent of owned land below 1 hectare, 22.45 per cent owned land between 1-2 hectares, 33.79 per cent between 2-3 hectares, 10.41 per cent between 3-4 hectares and 6.01 per cent owned above 4 hectares in the study area. It is concluded that around 34 per cent gave 2- 3 acres of land.

CONCLUSION

The agricultural labourers constitute a considerable proportion of rural work force in India. In the present study males constitute 80.78 per cent and 32.17 per cent fall in the age group 35-45 years. Moreover nearly 38.19 per cent of the agricultural labour belongs to Backward Caste and highest percentages of agricultural labourers were found in the Medium family size, 84.95 per cent of the heads of agricultural labour were married, 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 labourer mixed type of houses., But 82.87 per cent have own house around 34 per cent gave 2- 3 acres of land

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