



SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

-A Micro Level Study at a Village Level in Khammam District of A.P

Smt.A.Kavita¹

¹Lecturer in Economics, GDCW, Khammam, Andhra Pradesh, India.



ABSTRACT

Agricultural labour families constitute a majority (61percent) of all rural families. More than 85 percent of them are casual workers working for any farmer on a particular day at the daily wage prevailing. Most of them do not possess any land while some of them may have small pieces of land as only 8 percent of the cultivated land is under these 61 percent of the rural Households. They predominantly belong to the SC, ST and other backward castes with more than 60 percent belonging to scheduled castes. Wages paid to them vary depending on the seasonal demand and they have no protection under social security. During the off season, when no agricultural activities take place they are constrained to work as casual labour to eke out their living. On an average they have work for 190-220 days in a year. Of late in India marginal and small farmers have been losing land to join the army of agricultural labour. The fact that Indian agriculture is in distress leading to farmer suicides and crop holidays has its negative effects on this vulnerable section of the rural people. Objectives to explore the livelihood sources of agricultural labour through wage employment and other means. To examine the socio-economic background of agricultural labour. To identify the wage differentials between men and women and also between peak and slack seasons of agriculture.

KEY WORDS: Agricultural labour, casual workers, distress, social security

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural labourers are those workers in the Rural areas with no land but are attached to the specific land lords, landless workers who are independently working exclusively for others, petty farmers with small pieces of land willing to work for others and farmers with economic holdings but one or two family members or dependents working for others.

Agricultural labour families constitute a majority(61percent) of all rural families. More than 85 percent of them are casual workers working for any farmer on a particular day at the daily wage prevailing. Most of them do not possess any land while some of them may have small pieces of land as only 8 percent of the cultivated land is under these 61 percent of the rural Households. They predominantly belong to the SC,ST and other backward castes with more than 60 percent belonging to scheduled castes. Wages paid to them vary depending on the seasonal demand and they have no protection under social security. During the off season, when no agricultural activities take place they are constrained to work as casual labour to eke out their living. On an average they have work for 190-220 days in a year. Of late in India marginal and small farmers have been losing land to join the army of agricultural labour. The fact that Indian agriculture is in distress leading to farmer suicides and crop holidays has its negative effects on this vulnerable section of the rural people.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the livelihood sources of agricultural labour through wage employment and other means.
2. To examine the socio-economic background of agricultural labour.

3. To identify the wage differentials between men and women and also between peak and slack seasons of agriculture.
4. To find out the impact of MGNREGA on wages and employment.
5. To assess the living conditions of the agricultural labour.

METHODOLOGY

60 respondents are selected from Punyapuram village of Wyra mandal in Khammam district. Data is collected through a structured questionnaire and the observations of the researcher are noted separately and as such the data is primary. Of the total Sample, males are 36 and females are 24 accounting for 60 percent and 40 percent respectively. Since the village has no STs only SC (25), BC (20) and OC (15) respondents are taken and thus the sample reflects all social communities. Simple averages and percentages are used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

78 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 20-40 years and even the remaining respondents are below 50 years of age. It implies that all the respondents belong to the active and effective working group. It is also observed from table-1 in the annexure that majority of the respondents (75 percent) belong to SC and BC communities while 25 percent are OC's. Females are 40 percent of the total sample while the remaining 60 percent are males (Table-2). Table -3 shows that 37 percent are illiterate and the SC and BC respondents are more in illiteracy. 20 percent of the respondents have completed secondary education while majority have completed primary education. 93 percent of the respondents as shown in table-4 have less than 4 members in the family which shows that the dependency ratio is manageable.

Table-5 reveals the occupation of the respondents caste-wise and it is noted that 75 percent of the sample respondents depend on agriculture labour only. Some respondents are involved in vegetable vending and milk vending while they too works as agricultural labourers some times. 62 percent of the respondents (table-6) have no land and another 38 percent have 1 to 3 acres or less, and it implies that all the respondents are mostly marginal and small farmers depending on wage employment.

During the peak season of agricultural operations 1/3 rd of the respondents (table-7) get Rs 200/- - 250/- while 53 percent get in the range of Rs 251/- - Rs 350/- as wage. A few skilled workers receive more than Rs 351/- per day during the peak season. However during the slack season wage rates are low and 40 percent of the respondents receive below Rs 200/- per day. While more than 50 percent receive in the range of Rs 201/- Rs 300/- as daily wage (table-8). Males are mostly in ploughing harvesting and laying down bunds where as females take up seedling, cutting of chilies and cotton buds and with weeding (table-9). It implies that males take up hazardous agricultural operations while females work in activities where physical strain is less. As a result of this differentiation wage discrimination is noted between males and females in the study area both in peak and slack seasons.

During the off season 50 percent of the respondents get wages through MGNREGS Employment (table-10) and 38 percent in construction work in the village and in the near by urban centers. A few of the respondents take up vegetable vending and petty business. 88 percent of the respondents get wages under MGNREGS in the range of Rs 50/- -Rs 100/- per day (table-11). Only 12 percent of the sample respondents have been paid above Rs 100/-.

Sample households have more than one able bodied person to take up wage employment and some times a few children may also work for wages. As such average wage income per day of the families of the respondents as shown in the table-12 varies to a considerable extent. 43 percent of the house holds have incomes in the range of Rs.100- Rs 300. Another 43 percent are in the range of Rs 301-600. A few respondent family members get higher incomes of above Rs. 601/-

Most of the children in the sample village attend government schools for education which reveals the importance of government institution to the economically backward sections of the rural society. A few children go to provide institutions accepting higher tuition fees.

Daily consumption of milk, pulses, non-veg items and fruits is very much limited in the sample households. All these items are taken occasionally depending on the income of the day and occasional importance of the day. However soaps and other cosmetics are used by some members of the households to a limited extent.

It is observed that most of the sample respondents have pucca houses and semi pucca houses implying that a few respondents live in thatched houses or huts. It is gratifying to note most of the houses of the sample respondents have electricity facility. Majority of the respondent households have no toilet facilities and the members are constrained to go out side the village even during nights. It is noted during the interaction that majority of households go to movies for entertainment.

It is informed by the respondents that a few families have migrated from the village in search of livelihood to the urban centres and some of the family members of the respondent households also migrate temporarily for a few

months to get wage employment in the urban centres. However most of the respondents have replied in negative as to their desire for permanent migration.

FINDINGS

The major findings based on the above analysis are as follows.

- 1) Agricultural labour force comprises mostly the vulnerable sections like SCs, STs, and BCs. Female participation as agricultural labourers is also to a considerable extent.
- 2) Illiteracy is more than 1/3 rd and the family size is manageable.
- 3) Marginal farmers, small farmers and landless labourers mostly constitute the agricultural labour force in the rural areas.
- 4) Wages are relatively higher during the peak season when compared to slack season and there are differences in the nature of the work of the male and female labourers which ultimately result in wage discrimination.
- 5) MGNREGS employment and wages are significant in the study village along with self employment like milk vending, vegetable vending and petty business.
- 6) Average wage incomes of the households of 43 percent are in the range of just Rs 100- Rs 300. In view of the economic conditions most of the respondents opt government institutions for the education of their children.
- 7) Consumption of nutritious food is very much limited and considerable number of the respondents still live in thatched houses or huts. Toilet facilities are not available to majority of the households.

- 8) A few households have migrated from this village in search of livelihood and most of the respondents are not willing to leave the village and migrate to other places.

CONCLUSION

Wage employment days in rural areas be enhanced by promoting agro-based industries. Basic household amenities like pucca houses, toilet facilities, drinking water be provided by the government. Socio-economic security be provided in some form or other to infuse confidence in them to stay in the villages. Government schools where the children of the weaker sections study be strengthened .MGNREGA employment days be enhanced from the present 100 as mandated. In this context agriculture is to be redefined by including live stock promotion, horticulture and the like to make it commercially viable and capable to improve the living conditions of the labourers working in it. Above all the dream of Mahathma Gandhi "Sampoorna Grameena Vikas" be made a reality to make India more viable.

LIMITATIONS

1. The village under study has irrigation potential to a little extent and agriculture is relatively viable.
2. The village is close to the mandal head quarters and near to the district head quarters.
3. Awareness levels are comparatively higher in the village of study .
4. While considering the analysis of the study the limitations come in the way of generalization.

REFERENCES

1. Praveen, K. Jha (1982), "Agricultural Labour in India" Vikas publishing house, Pvt. Ltd, 376 Maszid Road, New Delhi.

2. *Indian economy-Datt and Sundharam,2013 Edition*
3. *Trends in Rural wage rates : Whether India reached Lewis turning point- A. Amarendar Reddy, The Indian economic journal, December- 2013 issue.*
4. *“Employment and Labour Productivity in Indian economy”- Dhaval Kumar. P.Dave and Reenac. Dave The Indian economic journal, December-2013 issue.*

ANNEXURES

Table-1, Age wise and Caste wise distribution of the Sample Respondents

Age	SC	BC	OC	Total
20-25	05(20.0)	03(15.0)	02(13.33)	10(16.67)
26-30	07(28.0)	05(25.0)	04(26.67)	16(26.67)
31-35	09(36.0)	04(20.0)	02(13.33)	15(25.0)
36-40	02(8.0)	03(15.0)	01(6.67)	06(10.0)
41-45	02(8.0)	03(15.0)	04(26.67)	09(15.0)
46-50	-	02(10.0)	02(13.33)	04(6.67)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-2, Sex Wise distribution of the Sample Respondents - Caste Wise

Sex	SC	BC	OC	Total
Males	15(60.0)	12(60.0)	09(60.0)	36(60.0)
Females	10(40.0)	08(40.0)	06(40.0)	24(40.0)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-3, Literacy Levels of the Sample Respondents Caste-Wise

Literacy Level	SC	BC	OC	Total
Illiteracy	13(52.0)	07(35.0)	02(13.33)	22(36.67)
Primary	08(32.0)	05(25.0)	08(53.33)	21(35.0)
Secondary	03(12.0)	05(25.0)	04(26.67)	12(20.0)
Inter	01(4.0)	03(15.0)	01(6.67)	05(8.33)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-4, Size of the Family of the Sample Respondents Caste

Size of the Family	SC	BC	OC	Total
1-2	12(48.0)	11(55.0)	12(80.0)	35(58.33)
3-4	10(40.0)	08(40.0)	03(20.0)	21(35.0)
4-5	03(12.0)	01(5.0)	-	04(6.67)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-5, Occupation of the Sample Respondents Caste Wise

Occupation	SC	BC	OC	Total
Agricultural Labour	20(80.0)	15(75.0)	10(66.67)	45(75.0)
Vegetable Vending	02(8.0)	0	02(13.33)	04(6.67)
Milkvending	01(4.0)	03(15.0)	02(13.33)	06(10.0)
1 & 2	01(4.0)	01(5.0)	-	02(3.33)
1 & 3	01(4.0)	01(5.0)	1(6.67)	03(5.0)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-6, Land Particulrs of the Sample Respondents Caste Wise

Land in Acres	SC	BC	OC	Total
0 Land	18(72.0)	12(60.0)	07(46.67)	37(61.67)
0-1	03(12.0)	05(25.0)	06(40.0)	14(23.33)
1-2	03(12.0)	02(10.0)	01(6.67)	06(10.0)
2-3	01(4.0)	01(5.0)	01(6.67)	03(5.0)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-7, Wage rate of the respondents at the time of Peak Season – Caste Wise

Wage rate (Rs)	SC	BC	OC	Total
200-250	08(32.0)	07(35.0)	05(33.33)	20(33.33)
251-300	02(8.0)	01(5.0)	01(6.67)	04(6.67)
301-350	10(40.0)	10(50.0)	8(53.33)	28(46.67)
351-400	05(20.0)	02(10.0)	01(6.67)	08(13.33)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-8, Wage rate of the respondent at the time of Slack Season – Caste Wise

Wage rate (Rs)	SC	BC	OC	Total
100-150	08(32.0)	07(35.0)	06(40.0)	21(35.0)
151-200	02(8.0)	01(5.0)	-	03(5.0)
201-250	13(52.0)	12(60.0)	09(60.0)	34(56.67)
251-300	02(8.0)	-	-	02(3.33)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-9, Types of work taken up by the respondents gender-wise			
Type of Work	Males	Females	Total
Ploughing, Harvesting, Laying down buds	33(91.67)	03(8.33)	36(100)
Seedling, Cutting of Chillies	03(11.11)	24(88.89)	27(100)
Cutting of Cotton buds Weeding	03(11.11)	24(88.89)	27(100)

Table-10, Works taken up during the Off Season Caste-Wise				
Works Taken Up	SC	BC	OC	Total
MGNREGS	10(40.0)	12(60.0)	8(53.33)	30(50.0)
Construction Work	10(40.0)	07(35.0)	06(40.0)	23(38.33)
Vegetable Vending	02(8.0)	-	01(6.67)	03(5.0)
Petty Bussiness	03(12.0)	01(5.0)	-	04(6.67)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-11, Wage rate under MGNREGS Caste Wise				
Wage rate (Rs)	SC	BC	OC	Total
50-80	10(40.0)	08(40.0)	07(46.67)	25(41.67)
80-100	12(48.0)	10(50.0)	06(40.0)	28(46.67)
100-120	03(12.0)	02(10.0)	02(13.33)	07(11.67)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

Table-12, Average total Income of the Family on Daily Basis- Caste Wise				
Average Income	SC	BC	OC	Total
100-200	06(24.0)	05(25.0)	03(20.0)	14(23.33)
201-300	05(20.0)	05(25.0)	02(13.33)	12(20.0)
301-400	05(20.0)	03(15.0)	02(13.33)	10(16.67)
401-500	03(12.0)	03(15.0)	04(26.67)	10(16.67)
501-600	02(8.0)	02(10.0)	02(13.33)	10(16.67)
601-700	04(16.0)	02(10.0)	02(13.33)	08(13.33)
Total	25(100)	20(100)	15(100)	60(100)

