

The Socio-Economic Empowerment of Rural Women Workers

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Abstract

Rural women enormously contribute to the family income through undertaking a number of agricultural activities and thereby achieving their socio-economic empowerment. Hence, the present study mainly aims at analyzing the socio-economic variables of rural women workers in terms of age, marital status, educational qualification, experience, community, religion, family type, family size and family monthly income and contribution of women to family income for empowering in socially and economically.

Keywords: Socio-Economic Factors, Contribution and Empowerment of Rural Women

Introduction

Women play a pivotal role in growth and development of agriculture and allied sectors. Rural women constitute a large proportion of population in rural India. According to 2011 census, there were 54.60 percent of population engaged in agriculture and allied activities. It contributes 17.40 percent to the country's Gross Value Added. Poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural households. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy. Rural women in India are concentrated on agriculture to much larger extent than men. Agriculture sector constitutes bulk women workers of which large number of women are unpaid family workers and many unpaid workers are cultivators themselves.

As per the latest census data, 68.8 percent of the county's total population and 72.4 percent of the work force resides in rural areas. More than 50 percent of population of the country is directly depends on agriculture and allied sectors for their livelihood. The total women work force was 149.877381 million of which 121.834467 million was rural work force. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation, women's contribution to agriculture in India stands over at 32 percent. To strengthen women's participation in agriculture and allied activities, proper structural, functional measures are being promoted by the central government to empower women, to build their abilities and to increase their access to input technology.

Socio-Economic empowerment

The socio-economic factors of rural women are essential inputs which encouraged and motivated them so as to undertake the agricultural activities in rural areas. The rural women play a significant role in the rural economic development. The rural woman may be either an individual or a group of people can be viewed from various angles such as social, economical and cultural. "The socio-economic background of the people determines their place in the society and also indicates the social standing of a person or a group of persons in the social hierarchy which is generally expressed in terms of social status".

Review of Literature

Rathakrishnan and Sellammalle (2001) in their article, “Micro-Women Entrepreneurs and Socio-Economic Empowerment: A Study”, found that the average annual family income of the women is Rs. 22, 850 and they contributed Rs. 18,720 (82 percent) per annum to their family on an average. Further, they had stated that women are contributing more income to their family than their counterpart. They had concluded that the participation of women in socio-economic activities is the uplift for improving the socio-economic status of the family.

Importance of the Study

Rural women workers enormously contribute to the growth and development of agriculture, industrial and service sectors. Further, they undertake agriculture and allied activities and thereby reduce unemployment problems, earn income, alleviate poverty, improve the standard of living of them, contribute industrial production and economic development and achieve their socio-economic empowerment. According to 2011 census, there were total women work force in India consisted in agriculture was 94.20 millions of which 35.10 million were cultivators and 59.10 million were agriculture labourers. “In India, women-workers constitute about one-fifths of the total work force in overall economic activity”. It contributes 16 percent to country’s GDP and 10 percent to the export earnings.

In addition, the sector recruits about 50 percent of the entire manpower. On the whole, it plays a key role in the socio-economic development of our country.

Statement of the Problem

Thanjavur district is popularly known as “Rice Bowl” of Tamil Nadu state where agriculture is the major occupation of the people and most of them depend on agriculture for their livelihood and their socio-economic conditions are very poor. “The socio-economic condition of agriculture workers is generally very poor and most of the workers are living below poverty line” Agriculture is the seasonal as well as irregular occupation. In the off season of agriculture, the people in the district are suffering

from a number of problems like unemployment, lack of income and poverty which restrict the movement of socio-economic standing of the people. Hence an attempt is made in the study to analyse the socio-economic factors of rural women workers for empowering in socially and economically.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are

- To study the socio-economic conditions of rural women workers.
- To assess the contribution of rural women to their family income
- To provide suggestions for achieving the social-economic empowerment of rural women workers

Scope of the Study

Rural women are empowered in socially and economically through undertaking agriculture activities, earning income without support of the counterpart men, creating awareness about the saving habits among women and contributing income to the family are considered as the scope of study.

Collection of Data

The present study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. The primary data was collected from the women workers those who are engaged in different aspects of agriculture through well drafted interview schedules and direct observations. The secondary data was collected from the official records of Agriculture Board, journals, magazines and available websites in the field.

The researcher had directly approached 100 sample rural women workers engaged in agriculture activities especially 5 villages of Orathanadu taluk (Akaraivattam, Thaligaividuthi, Sillathur, Vettikkadu and Thirunallur) of Thanjavur District at non-random (convenience sampling) sample method. Out of 100 sample respondents, 96 respondents were co-operative and responded to collect the necessary information and the remaining 4 respondents were not responded and no information was collected from them. Therefore, the entire sample consisted of 96 in numbers.

Methodology of the Study

The collected data for the present study were grouped, tabulated, analysed, processed and presented in the form of simple frequency tables. The statistical tools like the simple averages and percentages were used in the study so as to analyse and interpret the data and to draw a meaningful conclusion in the form of a research paper.

Sampling Distribution

For the present study, 96 sample agriculture women workers were selected and the necessary information was collected from them. Out of 96 rural women workers selected, 56 workers were engaged in paddy cultivation, 27 workers were engaged in coconut cultivation and 13 workers were engaged in banana cultivation.

Area of the Study

The present study covers only the female workers engaged in agricultural activities in Orathanadu taluk of Thanjavur district (especially 5 villages)

Period of the Study

The period of the study covered only one year i.e 2021-2022. Therefore, the result of the study cannot be extended either to the areas or to the periods.

Table 1 The Socio-Economic Factors of the Sample Respondents

Factors	Scaling	No. of respondents	%
Age Group	Below-25	16	7.81
	25-35	24	10.94
	35-45	27	21.88
	45-55	18	35.94
	Above 55	11	23.43
	Total	96	100.00
Marital status	Unmarried	27	28.12
	Married	46	47.92
	Widows	17	17.71
	Divorcees	6	6.25
	Total	96	100.00

Educational Qualification	Illiterates	37	38.54
	Primary School Education	43	44.79
	High School education	16	16.67
	Total	96	100.00
Experience	Below 5 years	46	47.92
	5-10	22	22.92
	10-15	15	15.63
	Above 15	13	13.54
	Total	96	100.00
Religion	Hindu	78	81.25
	Muslim	6	6.25
	Christian	12	12.5
	Total	96	100.00
Community	BC	11	11.46
	MBC	53	55.21
	SC	32	33.33
	Total	96	100.00
Family type	Nuclear	82	85.42
	Joint	14	14.58
	Total	96	100.00
Family size	Up to 3	47	48.96
	4-7	35	36.46
	Above-7	14	14.58
	Total	96	100.00
Monthly income	Less than 10,000	42	43.75
	10,000-12,500	27	28.13
	12,501-20,000	13	13.54
	20,001-25,000	9	9.37
	Above 20,000	5	5.21
Total	96	100.00	

Source: Primary data

Table 1 indicates that the different socio-economic variable of the sample respondents viz., age, marital status, educational qualification, experience, community, religion, family type, family size and family monthly income.

Table 2 Contribution of Women Monthly Income to their Family Income

Levels of Income (in Rs.)	No. of respondents	Women Family Income (in Rs.)	Income of the Women (in Rs.)	Women contribution to the family Income (in %)
Less than 10,000	42	3,57,000	3,03,000	84.87
10,000 – 12,500	27	3,16,000	2,02,500	64.08
12,501 – 15,000	13	1,82,000	1,01,500	55.77
15,001 – 20,000	9	1,64,000	73,000	44.51
Above 20,000	5	1,10,000	42,000	38.18
Total	96	11,29,000	7,22,000	63.95
Average		11,760.42	7,520.83	

Source: Primary data

From table 2, it is understood that the contribution of the women workers to their family income. The average monthly family income and average monthly income of a sample respondent and the average women workers contribution to the family income.

Findings

- 35.94 percent of the respondents comes under the age group category of 45 -55 years
- 47.92 percent of the respondents was married
- 44.79 percent of the respondents had primary school education
- 47.92 percent of the respondents had below 5 years of experience,
- 81.25 percent of the respondents was Hindus
- 55.21 percent of the respondents were from Most Backward Caste.
- 85.42 percent of the respondents were from nuclear families
- 48.96 percent of the respondents had up to 3 members
- 43.75 percent had less than Rs.10,000 as monthly family income
- The average monthly family income of the respondents was Rs. 11,760.42
- The average monthly income contributed by women to their family was
- 63.95 percent (Rs. 7,520.83).
- The average earnings of a woman was Rs.250.69 per day

Suggestions

- The young age women should undertake agriculture activities for improving their social status

- Rural women workers should earn more income for achieving their economic empowerment
- The contribution of rural women workers should increase for improving the economic empowerment

Conclusion

The socio-economic empowerment of rural women is the well being and quality life of women. The socio- economic conditions of rural women workers are analysed in the study in terms of their age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, community, religion, family type, family size, occupation, experience, monthly income and the contribution of rural women workers to their family income for achieving socio-economic empowerment. Therefore, it concluded that the active participation of rural women in agriculture activities and enormous contribution of them to their family income leads to improve their socio-economic empowerment.

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