

An Economic Performance of Women Agricultural Workers: A Study in Erode District

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Abstract

Agriculture is the largest sector of economic activity in India. It provides not only food and raw materials but also provides employment to a large section of the people. The term agriculture is directly related to all types of activity relating to cultivating crops, growing crops, harvesting and main processing of agricultural products, animal and livestock, and agro forestry. The growth rate of the economy was 6.8 percent from 2018 to 2019 and 7.5 percent from 2017 to 2018. There was a decline in the growth rate of agriculture and allied activity due to low wages in the agricultural sector, low food prices, and lack of lending by the Non-banking finance company's (NBCFs) all these factors affect the growth of the agricultural sector in India. According to the 2011 census report, 54.6 percent of the people depend upon the agricultural and allied sectors for their livelihood. It contributes 16 percent of the country's Gross Value Added for the year 2018 to 2019. So, this study aims to find out the socio-economic condition of women workers in agriculture in Erode District. This study focuses on the problems faced by the workers in Erode district and suggests various measures to develop the workers in the selected area.

Keywords: Agriculture, Employment, Socio-Economic, Growth, Workers.

Introduction

Rural Women played a multi-dimensional role, ranging from household activities to farm activities in agricultural and allied operations. They are actively engaged in various kinds of activities. They are working at home and outside and bringing additional income to the family. The National Commission on Labour has classified the labour into three main categories. They are cultivators, Agricultural labour and workers engaged in forestry, fishing and livestock. Women agricultural workers are basically unskilled and working mostly in unorganized sector. The agricultural labourers can be divided into two broad categories. One is landless agricultural labourers, very small cultivators their main source of earning is based on the small and sub-marginal holding of land. Agricultural workers are scattered around the district. Agricultural labourers are socially and economically the poorest section of the society. They are unskilled labour, mostly working in unorganized sector. They have a low standard and faced various problems with agricultural in India.

Statement of the Problem

Women have significant contribution to agricultural in India. In the present Indian, economic political situation, women are not only wanting to be only raises of the children or housewives.

They are engaged in various kinds of economic activity. The activities which are done for the purpose of earning money in their life. The study emphases on the economic condition of women workers in agricultural and non-agricultural sector in Erode District and the problems faced by the women workers in the selected area and suggest various measures for the development of women in this area.

Need for the Study

Usually, studies are done in-depth to cover the problems of the people that they face with the comprehensive outlook. This particular study aims to do an exhaustive work on the economic condition of the people, difficulties they face and the aspiration they have and the hopes they have to ameliorate their conditions and so this particular study fills in the gap of a need for a comprehensive study.

Objectives

- To study the socio-economic conditions of women workers in agricultural sector in Erode District.
- To study the employment and wage structure of women workers in the agricultural sector.
- To examine the employment opportunities of women workers in the agricultural sector.

Limitation of the study

The study is confined to Erode District focusing on the economic study of women workers in agricultural area. The sample size was limited to 75 based on the random sampling method. The researcher found very difficult to get the details related to employment, savings and alternative source of employment for the women workers in this study area.

Review of Literature

This review of literature presents a summary of findings based on the socio-economic study of women workers in unorganized sector, especially on the women workers in the agricultural sector in Erode District.

Menon, J. S., Asna, A., & Smitha, M. (2021) in their study they profile of women in cashew farm and processing sector and their constraints at workplace The study highlighted the challenges of women workers in isolated farm activities with threat of poisonous snakes and wild animals and was to be addressed at government level to get insurance policies and to introduce safety measures at workplace. The women workforce was needed to be empowered for the latest technological advancements including small farm machineries which may bring more employment opportunities even during off-season.

Rathindra Nath Pramanik (2008) undertook a study on “Chyanging terms and conditions of employment of agricultural labours in west Bengal” They have applied percentage analyses and suggested that the inclination is more towards employing group labours on the part of employers.

Manadhan Nair (2011) made an analysis on “The socio economic conditions of labourers”. The study suggested that the labors should be provided with medical facilities, loan facilities adequate educational facilities and additional income.

Nicola Verdon (2009) did a case-study of agriculture to explore the range ditions surrounding women’s work in the interwar period. He concluded that the young rural women, tired of low wages and lack of prospects in the countryside, were rejecting agricultural work, favouring shop and office word which was increasingly opening up in local towns.

Ray, et al., (2009) undertook a study on “Impact of Technological Changes on economic status of female labourers”. The study has taken sample of 150 and linear and log linear functions. The study concluded that new and additional avenues of employment for women in agriculture should be created to increase the potential of women employed in the rural areas particularly in the agricultural sector.

Vithob. B and Madari (2008) in their study concluded that the condition as female agricultural labourers are good in irrigated area. The conditions of female labourers in non-irrigated areas are not good. There was a need for comprehensive policy and minimum wage to promote welfare of the agricultural labourers in the study area.

Vithub et al., (2008) in their suggested that provision of irrigation and adoption of labour intensive cropping patterns can help to improve the conditions of female labourers.

Ramesh. D (2007) in his study explored that the 60 per cent of agricultural labourers move to other places as there was not sufficient work in the local villages. Another 21 per cent go to other places as they are already part as some informal group working in these places. Only 8 per cent go in the expectation of higher wages.

Dhillon et al., (2007) conducted a study in three agro-climatic zones of Punjab on the involvement of farm women in agricultural and allied activities. Most of the respondents were illiterate. Most of the farm women belonged to the families having 1-6 family members. Most of the families in region-III (62.5%) were holding large farm size of more than 10 acres, followed by region -I (37.5%) and region -II (22.50%).

Kumar (2007) has conducted a study on the trends and determinants of female employment in agriculture. It was concluded that economic factors such as presence of male agricultural workers in the area, cropping intensity, agricultural output as indicative of income level and index of modernization all together determine 46.5 per cent of variation in RFWPR as agricultural workers.

Yadav and Kaushik (2006) in their study concluded that as women mostly do jobs that are tedious, monotonous and requiring manual labour white technical activities are taken over by men, women need to be trained in technical aspects as well to handle farming operations independently.

Kanimozh and Meena. M (2006) in their study has shown that majority of labourers was maximum in storage of food grains. Farm women must be considered an important factor in storage of food grains.

Kachroo (2005) in her study has examined the economic contribution of female labour in farm and non-farm sector towards family income in rural Jammu and Kashmir State. The study revealed that the percentage share of rural women in cultivation income was 43.86 per cent in R.S. Pura and 47.93 per cent in Bishnah.

Singh et al., (2005) have conducted a study on labour wage discrimination in agriculture. The results of the study showed that women worked less hours per day compared to men.

Tuteja (2005) did a study on rural non-farm employment in Haryana. The results of the study revealed that at the all India level the female WPR increased from 26.7 per cent in 1991 to 31.0 per cent in 2001.

Thresia (2004) did a study of women agricultural workers in Kodumba village of Palakkad district. The study revealed that due to under-employment problems in agriculture, women had to seek alternative employment opportunities for a major part of the year.

Sindhu and Jayan (2004) in their paper have attempted to study the work participation of women in coffee cultivation in Wayanad district of Kerala. For activities such as planting (48), post – harvest operations (48) land jungle clearing (42), women contribute nearly about half of the labour actually needed to finish the work.

Muniyandi et al., (2003) in his study revealed that the labour force participation rate in rural area (male and female) and in urban areas (female) during post reform period showed a decline, while the urban male labour force participation rate in rural area (male and female) and in urban areas (female) during post reform period showed a decline, while the urban male labour force participation rate showed an increase.

Kumar et al., (2003) in their paper have examined the shifting employment pattern in the rural India. The study revealed a declining trend in rural farm sector employment. With continuing population pressure, small and fragmented agricultural holdings, highly unequal land distribution structure, increasing application of labour saving farm production technologies etc.

Kalamkar (2003) in his paper on agricultural growth and rural non-farm sector in Maharashtra. The study showed that there is a need to divert agricultural labour to the non farm sector activities for employment and value addition in agriculture by developing processing units in the rural area itself.

Elumali and Sharma (2003) in their study on non-farm employment for rural households in India have

identified that the employment of wage labour has been declining in agriculture, while it is increasing in non-agriculture activities.

Bryceson (2002) studied the multiplexity of livelihoods in rural Africa. The income diversification efforts of most rural dwellers over the past decade have been directed at meeting daily needs amidst declining returns to commercial agriculture. Individuals and households have experimented with new forms of livelihood, expanding their non agricultural income source, while retaining their base in subsistence farming.

Ram D. Singh (1996) in his study analysed about female agricultural labour's wages, male-female wage differentials and he also studied about growth of agriculture in developing countries. It is concluded that female agricultural workers' real wage rates experienced significantly raising time trends, which would suggested that there were also other factors, independent of output changes, that tended to increase female wage workers' real wage earnings.

Kerstin Leitner (1976) conducted a study to know the Situation of Agricultural Workers in Kenya. It is concluded from this study that there were remarkable differences in wages and living conditions among agricultural workers in comparison to urban workers indicated different accumulation capacities and profit rates of enterprises. Obviously, an international company like Brooke Bond (Leibig) Ltd., was paying better wages than a small-scale farmer, but it also exploited the workers' labour power more by using it more intensively.

Suresh C. Srivastava (1988) analysed social security of agricultural labour in India. This study has concluded that most of the social security schemes were not implemented properly. Especially labour laws failed to bring about the desired result, workmen compensations did not provide any compensation to the injured workers, maternity benefit act had extremely limited application.

Research Methodology

A systematic gathering of data and information and its analysis for the advancement of knowledge in any subject is called research. This research attempts to find the answers to practical and intellectual questions by application of systematic methods.

Sample Collection and Sample size

For this study 75 sample respondents have been selected from the various place of Erode district by using convenient sampling method. Data has been collected from the respondents through Interview schedule

Area of Study

Area covered by this study is agricultural areas of Erode district.

Period of Study

Period covered by this study is March 2022 to July 2022

Analysis of the Data

Collected data from the 75 respondents has been analysed through various statistical tools like Percentage analysis, Chi-Square test and Ranking analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

| Factor | Description | No. of Respondents | % |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Age Group | Up to 30 | 12 | 16.00 |
| | 31 to 40 | 19 | 25.33 |
| | 41 to 50 | 18 | 24.00 |
| | 51to 60 | 16 | 21.33 |
| | Above 60 | 10 | 13.33 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Marital status | Married | 55 | 73.33 |
| | Unmarried | 13 | 17.33 |
| | Divorce / Separated | 7 | 9.33 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Community | SC / ST | 22 | 29.33 |
| | BC | 38 | 50.67 |
| | MBC | 15 | 20.00 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Religion | Hindu | 49 | 65.33 |
| | Christian | 17 | 22.67 |
| | Muslim | 9 | 12.00 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |

| | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Education level | Illiterate | 33 | 44.00 |
| | Primary level | 22 | 29.33 |
| | High School | 12 | 16.00 |
| | HSC | 8 | 10.67 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Nature of the family | Joint Family | 55 | 73.33 |
| | Nuclear Family | 20 | 26.67 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Nature of the house | Tiled roof house | 43 | 57.33 |
| | Mattress house | 23 | 30.67 |
| | Thatched house | 9 | 12.00 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Status of the house | Own House | 69 | 92.00 |
| | Rented | 6 | 8.00 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |

Interpretation

Above table reveals that majority of the respondents 25.33 percent are from the age group of 31 to 40 years. 24 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 41 to 50 years and 21.33 percent of the respondents in the age group of 51 to 60 years and 16 percent of the respondents are in the age group of up to 30 years. Only a few respondents were in the age group 13.33 percent of above 60. Majority of the respondents 73.33 percentage in this study are married, whereas 17.33 percent of them are unmarried. About 9.33 percentage are divorced and separated from the family. They live alone at home and taking care of themselves. Majority of the respondents 50.67 percent belong to the caste of BC, 20 Percent respondent are from MBC and few respondents 29.33 percent are form SC and ST. Majority of the respondents 65.33 percent are from Hindu religion, 22.67 per cent of them belongs to Christian religion and 12 per cent of them from Muslim religion. Majority of the respondents 44 percent are illiterate and 29.33 percent of the respondent completed their education up to primary level. Few percentages 16 percent are completed their education up to high school and only 10.67 percent

of the respondents are completed the education up to higher secondary level due to poverty people are not study further and few of the respondents are discontinued in their study due to low of income. Majority of the respondents 73.33 percent are lived in joint family system and rest 26.67 percent of the respondents are from nuclear family system in the selected villages. The women lived in joint family can be balanced the family and work easily. The work is shared by the members in the family. In the nuclear family women have to perform all the activities on their own. Majority of the respondents 57.33 percent have the Tiled roof and floor house, 30.67 percent of the respondents have Mattress house and 12 percent of the respondents lived in Thatched house. Most of the respondents do not have the proper facilities like drinking water, sanitation facilities at home. 92 percent of them have the own house and only 8 percent of them have the rented house in the study area. The women lived in rented house have to spend more money for the purpose of rent and this leads to poverty and low standard of living. The women in the selected villages do not have the proper facilities like drinking water and sanitation facilities at home.

Employment and Wage Structure of Women Workers in the Agricultural Sector

| Factor | Description | No. of Respondents | % |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------|
| Starting age of work | Childhood | 61 | 81.33 |
| | Young Age | 11 | 14.67 |
| | Old Age | 3 | 4 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Nature of the job | Temporary | 14 | 18.67 |
| | Regularly | 27 | 36.00 |
| | Seasonal | 34 | 45.33 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Number of days work in a week | 3 days | 10 | 13.33 |
| | 4 days | 12 | 16.00 |
| | 5 days | 20 | 26.67 |
| | 6days | 16 | 21.33 |
| | 7days | 17 | 22.67 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Number of hours of work in a day | 3 Hours | 18 | 24.00 |
| | 4 Hours | 8 | 10.67 |
| | 5 Hours | 7 | 9.33 |
| | 6 Hours | 16 | 21.33 |
| | 7 Hours | 26 | 34.67 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Experience of the respondents | Below 6 | 13 | 17.33 |
| | 6 to 9 years | 21 | 28.00 |
| | Above 9 years | 41 | 54.67 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Job opportunity | Yes | 11 | 14.67 |
| | No | 64 | 85.33 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Reasons for working as labour | To fulfil the basic needs | 32 | 42.67 |
| | Absence of Male earning Members | 11 | 14.67 |
| | Low Family Income | 9 | 12.00 |
| | To meet personal needs | 4 | 5.33 |
| | To meet additional family requirement | 8 | 10.67 |
| | Poverty | 11 | 14.67 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Frequency of payment | Daily Wage | 30 | 40.00 |
| | Weekly Wage | 45 | 60.00 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |
| Wages per month | Below 3000 | 27 | 35 |
| | 3001 to 5000 | 38 | 51 |
| | Above 5000 | 10 | 14 |
| | Total | 75 | 100 |

group due to poverty and low standard of living in the family in the selected villages. Majority of the respondents (45.33 percent) of the respondents are worked as seasonal workers in the agricultural sector and remaining 36 percent of the workers get regular employment opportunities. Some of them are working in own land and few respondents are using the agricultural land for lease purpose. Only a few respondents (18.67 percent) are work temporary in another person land. They are discriminated in terms of low wages, long hours of working and poor working condition in the agricultural sector. 26.67 percent of the respondents are working from 1 to 5 days per week and remaining 44 percent of the respondent get work for 6 to 7 days per week. 16 percent respondents are work for 4 days per week and remaining 13.33 percent work for 3 days per week in the villages. The agricultural workers are seasonally employed and during the off seasons the some of the respondents are unemployed. The women workers in the selected villages do not have the secondary occupations in the villages. The majority of the women depend upon the government programmes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act programme for the employment opportunities in the villages. They get 100 days employment guarantee through this programme in the selected villages. Majority 26.67 percentage of the respondents working 5 hours in a day and 21.33 percentage of the respondents worked for 8 hours in a day and another 22.67 percent of the respondents working for 7 hours in a day. 16 percent of the respondent are work for 4 hours and only few 13 percent respondents work for 3 hours in a day to get the income to satisfy the needs of the family members. Majority of the respondents (54.67 percent) have experience of above 9 years and remaining 28 percent of the respondents have 6 to 9 years and only few respondents (17.33 percent) have experience of below 6 years. The experience women workers are able to contribute more to the agricultural output compared to the less experience women workers in the villages. Majority of the respondents (85.33 percent) are not having any job opportunity in the villages apart from the agriculture sector and 14.67 percent of the respondents have the job opportunities in the villages. The main reasons for the job opportunities in the villages were the

Interpretation

Above table shows that majority of the respondents (81.33 percent) are worked from childhood, 14.67 percent of the respondents are worked from the young age group and a few respondents (4 percent) worked from the old age

involvement of the government to provide 100 days employment guarantee through this National Rural Employment Guarantee Act programme. The SC/ST and BC community are actively participating in the NREGA programme. This programme alleviates poverty and gives 100 days wages to the women workers in the selected villages. Majority of the respondents (42.67 percent) are working in the agricultural sector to fulfil the basic needs of the family like food, water, shelter and remaining 14.67 percent of the respondents are worked to overcome the poverty and another 14.67 percent of the respondents are working in agricultural land due to the absence of male earning members in the family. 12 percent of the respondents are worked to give additional income to the family and 5 percent of the respondents are worked to meet the personal needs of the women workers. The income earned from the agricultural sector is not sufficient to full their personal and family needs due to low wages and no security for the women workers in the job. Majority of the respondents 60 per cent worked as daily wage Labour gets wages on daily basis and 40 per cent of the respondents get wages on a weekly basis. The wages are not sufficient to meet the needs of the family. 51 percent of the respondents earning wages between 3000 to 5000 per month, 35 per cent

of the respondents are earning wages below 3000 and only 14 percent of the respondents are earning wages from above 5000 per month.

Problems Faced by the Women Worker in Agricultural Sector – Rank Analysis

| Problem | Score | Rank |
|--|-------|------|
| Low wages | 335 | I |
| Security issues | 301 | IV |
| Delay in payment of wages | 319 | II |
| Non-availability of refreshment facilities | 302 | III |
| Seasonal in nature | 243 | V |

Interpretation

Above table clearly shows the problems faced by the women agricultural labour. On the basis of the responses from the women labours rank score has been calculated and ranked accordingly. In the above table we can see that low wages is the problem faced by the most of the women agricultural labour and it is ranked I with rank score of 335, followed by delay in payment of wages with rank score of 319. Non-availability of refreshment facilities got III rank with rank score of 302, security issues got IV rank with rank score of 301 and seasonal in nature got last rank with rank score of 243.

Chi-Square Analysis

Chi-Square Table of Marital Status and Nature of the Work

H0 = There is no significant relationship between marital status and Nature of the work

| Marital Status | Nature of the Work | | | Total | Chi-Square Results |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| | Temporary | Regularly | Seasonal | | |
| Married | 8 | 13 | 34 | 55 | $\chi^2 = 23.016$ Sig. Value – $0.000126 < 0.05$ df – 4 Significant |
| Unmarried | 4 | 9 | 0 | 13 | |
| Divorced or Separated | 2 | 5 | 0 | 7 | |
| Total | 14 | 27 | 34 | 75 | |

Interpretation

From the above table it is revealed that Chi-Square value is 23.016 at 5% level of significance. P value (0.000126) is less than 0.05. Hence Null

hypothesis is rejected and we can conclude that there is significant relationship exist between marital status and nature of work.

Chi-square table on marital status and no. of days of work

| Marital Status | No. of Days of Work | | | | | Total | Statistical Inference |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| | 3 days | 4 days | 5 days | 6 days | 7 days | | |
| Married | 9 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 55 | Chi-Square Value – 12.764 Sig. 0.120 > 0.05 df – 8 Not significant |
| Unmarried | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 13 | |
| Divorced or Separated | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 7 | |
| Total | 10 | 12 | 20 | 16 | 17 | 75 | |

Interpretation

From the above table it is revealed that Chi-Square value is 12.764 at 5% level of significance. P value (0.120) is greater than 0.05. Hence Null hypothesis is accepted and we can conclude that there is no significant relationship exist between marital status and no of days of work.

Findings

Percentage Analysis

- Majority of the respondents started to working in agricultural sector from their childhood.
- Majority 45.33% of the respondents work in agricultural sector seasonally.
- Majority 26.67% of the respondents work for 5 days per week.
- Majority 34.67% of the respondents are working for 7 hours per day.
- Majority 54.67% of the respondents are having experience of more than 9 years in agricultural sector.
- Majority 85.33% respondents opined that they are having job opportunity in agricultural sector.
- Majority 42.67% of the respondents are working in the agricultural sector for fulfilling their basic needs.
- Majority 60% of the sample respondents are getting wages on weekly basis.
- Majority 51% of the sample respondents are getting wages between Rs. 3,000/- and Rs.5,000/-
- Low wage is the main problem faced by the women agricultural workers in rural area.

Chi-Square Test

- There is significant relationship exist between marital status and nature of work.
- There is no significant relationship exist between marital status and no of days of work.

Conclusion

Above study revealed that women agricultural workers are paying low wages for their work. Land lords should take necessary steps to pay a reasonable wage to the women workers. This study also revealed that most of the sample respondents are feeling that there is no refreshment facilities available. These facilities should be arranged to get the maximum productivity from the women agricultural workers. Landlords can also provide other social security to the women agricultural labours to protect them and their family, if there is any unexpected event happen.

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