

IMPACT OF FARM EMPLOYMENT ON RURAL WOMEN – A STUDY OF SELECTED VILLAGES IN CUDDALORE DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

This paper has examined three features of the rural economy in the context of impact of employment on rural women: shift in rural employment pattern, trends in rural wage discrimination and agricultural growth. It is observed that although the wages were lower for farm labours, the growth rate of agricultural wages has been higher than of non-farm wages but still the discrimination of wages between men and women exists. Therefore, employment factor of women in the study region is also affected to a great extent. Rural employment and wages are the important factors which influence the livelihood status of rural women. In this paper the research has discussed deeply the need for rural women employment and the impact created by it on the rural economy as well as household income and the problems faced by rural women in empowering themselves by being employed.

Keywords: *discrimination, rural employment, non-farm and farm workers*

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Agriculture is the backbone of our Indian economy. Major part of the rural women earns its livelihood from agriculture. Our country has a wide and very old setting of agriculture of about 10 thousand years. At present in terms of agriculture production the country holds second position across the world. The rural women of our country are mostly dependent on agricultural activity. Despite being a growing agricultural country with a GDP of 5722 billion INR with almost 17.9% of the total GDP contributed from agriculture and allied industries, only 37 % of the women are employed farm sector (accord to 2017 census). In the recent study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (2011) it was mentioned that women consist 43% in total agricultural labour force in the world. The activities of women pertaining to agriculture vary from culture to culture, society to society and from country to country. The paper analyses the determinants of women's employment through regression analysis. The significant predictor variables are social group, age, marital status, landholding, wealth status, and women's autonomy. Further, education may not positively influence a woman's participation in work, but for women who are in the workforce, education is the most important determinant of better quality non-agricultural work. Along with education, women's autonomy measured in terms of access to land, control over its operation and mobility. (Srivastava and Srivastava 2009) the trends and patterns of women's employment in rural India and also examined the determinants of women employment. They have found that rural female

employment in last few decades has increased, but there has not been an improvement in outcomes. Finally, the paper recommends policy initiatives and research to tackle the iniquitous functioning of the labour market in India, particularly with respect to valuing women's work, fixing minimum wages for home based work and looking at the needs of women workers from the most disadvantaged social groups. One can measure the impact caused by women's employment and how it empowers her in various other roles.

The manifold disadvantages and discrimination which continue to plague rural women in many parts of India was an issue voiced by many leaders and women organization. With around 68% of population in India lives in rural areas and it important that rural development was fundamental to the advancement of women in all the aspects. the violence against women was still one of the most persistent human rights violations today. It was distressing that a culture of impunity still existed in many parts of India, especially in rural areas. The main reason behind this violation is the illiteracy rate is still very low among rural women. This leads to unemployment and wage discrimination creating a huge impact on their livelihood and autonomy.

Reviews

Balaraman (1985): discussed the types of sex discrimination practiced in farm wages with particular reference to Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that on an average, the wage paid to a female worker was roughly 60 to 80 per cent of the wages paid to a male worker. The

discrimination against women has been prevailing in all its form. In the agricultural sector this discrimination is largely operated through open wage discrimination.

Padmanabhan (2001): Pointed out that women are engaged in agriculture and allied activities and their role are managers to landless labour. Migration of male labour leaving women in rural areas and they are the income earners in agriculture in rural areas. To empower rural women in agriculture through effective training and extension service and welfare schemes to improve the working conditions of agricultural women.

Sumit Mazumdar and M Guruswamy (2006): In their paper on "Female labour participation in Kerala: problems and prospects" find that in Kerala, women cultivators and agricultural labourers together account for only 22 percent of the female workforce in the main category in 2001, which has fallen dramatically from 42 percent in 1991. Agriculture is no longer the most significant channel of female employment in Kerala, at least from the employment point of view. In Kerala, female labour activity in agriculture is mainly confined to the cultivation of food crops mainly paddy. But area under paddy decline over time which results in decline in the female workforce in agriculture, the hired female member.

Damisa et.al (2007): argued that despite of various social, economic and various other constraints women has high level participation in agriculture and they are very committed in their agricultural activity. Overall the level of involvement of women in farm decision making was found very medium. The extent of involvement and decision making in activities like intercultural operations is 48 percent in harvesting of crops 45.33 percent, storage of farm produce is 42.67 percent; 42 percent in sale of farm produce and subsidiary occupation like animal husbandry and dairy business is 38.67 percent and financial management is 36 percent only (Unati et.al, 2011).

Satyasundaram (2003): in his paper "India's Economy and Rural Women Workers", discussed about the policies introduced by Government of India towards the women in agriculture and allied activities. Even though policies introduced towards women, they are lagging behind in employment opportunities because of lack of education, training and skills but when compared to men, women work load in heavy and they earn low income and there is discrimination towards women particularly in wages.

Nisha Srivastava and Ravi Srivastava (2010): in their study reveal that although most of the women workers are concentrated in agriculture the condition of

works especially for women wage worker are quite dismal. Factors like job typing, low education status etc., compels women wage workers to take lower wage as compared to men.

Chayal et al. (2013): Examined that involvement of farm women in decision-making process in agriculture was very low. It is because the majority of farm women were illiterate, had little knowledge about the latest techniques of farming, faced dominance by males and restricted mobility due to several cultural taboos.

Vetrivel, & Manigandanindia (2013): In their paper "An empirical study of agricultural labour in India" state that almost half of the world's agricultural workforce comprises of women. They are contributing from production to sale as well as preparation of food. Though traditionally role of women worker in agricultural was under-estimated. Women are employed as paid labour or unpaid family member in agriculture in developing countries but they are still facing gender inequalities.

Swamikannan and Jeylakshmi (2015): Pointed out in their study on women labour in India agricultural sector and found that female work participation rate has declined drastically during last few decades, which shows that female workers are moved from agricultural to non-agricultural activities because wage differences between male and female workers for the same type of work discourages female worker.

Focal Theme

The focal theme of the paper is to assess the impact of farm employment on rural women.

Methodology

The study is based on primary data. Primary data are used to collect information from the sample respondents. The study adopts multistage random sampling. In the first stage Cuddalore District is selected Cuddalore District is one of backward district in Tamil Nadu. In the second stage Cuddalore block is selected from Cuddalore district. From the block, rural women have been selected at random. The study selects 170 rural women from Naduvirappattu, Chennapanyakkapalyam, where farm employment takes place.

Table 1: Advantages of employment to the respondents

Categories	Advantages of Employment			Total
	Earning Money	Decision Making	Self Confidence	
Farm Owners	11 (37.9)	05 (17.2)	13 (44.8)	29 (100.0)
Farm Workers	53 (37.6)	35 (24.8)	53 (37.6)	141 (100.0)
Total	64 (37.7)	40 (23.5)	66 (38.8)	170 (100.0)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the row total

Table-1 reflects that more than one-third of the respondents are gaining self-confident from their employment, less than four-tenth of the respondents are earning money from their employment and less than two-seventh of the respondents are gaining decision making capability from their employment. It is clear that less than half of the farm owners are gaining the self-confident. Whereas more than one-third of farm workers gain self-confident and remaining one-third of them are gaining their income from their employment. Exactly. As shown in the table, more than one-fifth of the respondent's ability to make decision is gained from their farm employment.

Table 2: Involvement of the Respondents in Major and Minor Activities

Categories	Involvement			Total
	Minor Activities	Major Activities	Not Involved	
Farm Owners	27 (93.1)	-	02 (6.9)	29 (100.0)
Farm Workers	29 (20.6)	81 (57.4)	31 (22.0)	141 (100.0)
Total	56 (33.0)	81 (47.6)	33 (19.4)	170 (100.0)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the row total

It is seen from the table-2 that less than three-fifth of the respondents stated that they have been involved in major activities. Exactly two-third of the respondents have expressed that they have been involved in minor activities and around one-fifth of the respondents expressed that they have not been part of any activities. Majority of the (93.1%) farm owners have stated that they are involved in minor activities and little more than four-seventh of farm workers have been involved in major activities. Among the rural women more than three-seventh of the respondents are being involved in major activities.

Table 3: Decision Making Process by the respondents

Categories	Decision Making Process			Total
	To Some Extent	To a Greater Extent	Not Allowed	
Farm Owners	23 (79.3)	01 (3.4)	05 (17.2)	29 (100.0)
Farm Workers	-	11 (7.8)	130 (92.2)	141 (100.0)
Total	23 (13.5)	12 (7.1)	135 (79.4)	170 (100.0)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the row total

Table- 3 indicates that less than five-sixth of the respondents are not allowed to make any decision. More than one-eighth of the respondents opined that they have decision making power to some extent and few respondents expressed that they have decision making power to a greater extent. Among the farm owners, half of them feel that they are making power is to some extent. Most of the farm workers (92.2%) are not allowed to make any decision. From the table above, more than three-fourth of the respondents are not allowed to make decision.

Table 4: Empowerment status of the Respondents

Categories	Empowerment status			Total
	To Some Extent	To a Greater Extent	Not Empowered	
Farm Owners	22 (75.9)	06 (20.7)	01 (3.4)	29 (100.0)
Farm Workers	14 (9.9)	-	127 (90.1)	141 (100.0)
Total	36 (21.2)	06 (3.5)	128 (75.3)	170 (100.0)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the row total

Table-4 shows the empowerment status of the respondents. It is observed that, more than two-third of the respondents are not empowered in the farm sectors. More than two-tenth of the respondents are empowered to some extent and the remaining few of the respondents are empowered to a greater extent. Among farm owners, more than two-third of them expressed that they are feeling empowered to some extent, one-fifth feel that they are empowered to a greater extent. In the farm workers, majority (90.1%) feel that they are not empowered in the farm sector, one-tenth of the respondents are empowered to some extent. It is noted that more than five-seventh of the women respondents are not empowered in the study area.

Table 5: Types of Discrimination faced by the Respondents

Categories	Problems Faced			Total
	Wage Discrimination	Work Discrimination	Gender Discrimination	
Farm Owners	12 (41.4)	08 (27.6)	09 (31.0)	29 (100.0)
Farm Workers	50 (35.5)	37 (26.2)	54 (38.3)	141 (100.0)
Total	62 (36.5)	45 (26.5)	63 (37.0)	170 (100.0)

Source: Computed from primary data

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the row total

Table no: -5 shows the problems faced by the respondents. More than one-third of the respondents stated that they are facing problem of gender discrimination and more than one-third of the respondents stated that they are facing wage discrimination. More than two-tenth of the respondents expressed that they are facing work discrimination. It is found that, exactly three-seventh of the farm owners are facing problem of wage discrimination and less than two-fifth of farm workers opined that they are facing problem of gender discrimination. It is found that more than two-sixth of the respondents are facing problem of work discrimination in the study region.

Conclusion

In the decision making ability one can see most farm owners are allowed to make decisions to some extent or to a greater extent while in the working population most of them are denied of the privilege to take their own decision autonomously. According to the data no: of farm owners are very minimal in participating with major activities and most of the major activities are done by farm workers. The advantages of being employed can be understood that most of the farm workers are willing to make money which empowers them to make decisions which ultimately makes them feel more confident. The discrimination among the rural women is still high according to national socio-economic census this leads to lack of self-confidence within the rural women which again leads to a problem with empowering the women to a greater extent.

Suggestions

- As rural women are poor and depend upon others for decision making and could not involve themselves in major activities. This should be changed through awareness on women's rights.
- Government should come with a special policy to create a separate cell for solving problems of rural women in farm sectors.

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