



TO STUDY THE SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURS IN JHARKHAND: A STUDY OF RANCHI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Women have a key role in agriculture and have many different roles in Indian society. About three-fourths of the labour needed in the field is provided by women. The bulk of rural women make ends meet in various ways by working on the farm. In addition to their typical home chores, women always contribute more to agricultural production than men in all sorts of landholdings. Based on it, the situation of rural women is getting better every day. Despite the fact that the majority of the contributions made by women to the agricultural industry are unrecorded and unpaid, the earnings paid to female agricultural labourers are far less than the recommended rates, and the wide-spread wage discrepancies are to their detriment. Thus, although being an equal partner with men in agriculture in actuality, rural women still face numerous obstacles that prevent them from contributing to development in an efficient manner. As a result, the current study work attempts to ascertain the socioeconomic position and current circumstances of the women agricultural labourers in the chosen Ranchi District.

Keywords: Women, Agricultural Industry, Discrepancies, Socioeconomic

INTRODUCTION

When formulating plans for rural development, the contribution of women to agricultural productivity is significantly greater than that of men, yet this is not taken into account. However, because women are typically seen as socially unproductive, their contribution to agricultural labour frequently goes unnoticed. The idea that women are primarily responsible for providing for their families through domestic labour and other responsibilities is part of a cultural ideological system. It might also be a leftover from a former social group. when obtaining food was mostly the responsibility of women. Therefore, the contribution of women to the material continuation of the family is not regarded as economically significant.

Working in the fields, cultivating crops, caring for animals, gathering water, cooking food, caring for children, household chores, and maintaining the home are among the occupations of women. They also assist with fishing and gardening. Numerous things go unrecognised and without any economic worth, including these acts or contributions. These are disregarded by society. The tasks performed by the lady are classified as unskilled labour because they are not recognised. According to the UN, rural women only make up one-tenth of their total income and one percent of the global revenue.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Since the beginning of civilization, if there has been one industry in which women have played a key role or engaged in great numbers, it is agriculture. Due to the fact that agriculture is primarily a home activity, women played a significant part. According to recent surveys, women in India produce the majority of the food in terms of dollar value, volume, and labour hours. Compared to 78 percent of men, just about 63% of economically active men work in agriculture. A little over 50% of rural women's employees are categorised as agricultural labourers, and 37% as cultivators. Women carried out about 70% of the agriculture work. Thus, it explains why "most Indian farmers are women." We are concerned about the position of women in agriculture because they still make up a higher share of the workforce than men. There has been an increase in casualization, which denotes erratic, uncertain work without a minimum salary guarantee. Because agriculture is losing both its growth and its ability to contribute to our gross domestic product (GDP), there is concern about casualization.

There is no denying that women's status in society differs from men's and that they do not enjoy equal access to positive change. In villages, this is especially true. Numerous studies have demonstrated that, in similar employment circumstances, a woman employee, regardless of the job she occupies, performs and is as effective as a man employee. Some studies even claim that a woman employee is even more effective in some areas. She had been shown to have an advantage over her male counterpart in terms of dependability, promptness, and punctuality (Lalitha Devi, 1982).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Numerous socioeconomic aspects at the home level must be considered in order to fully comprehend the complicated nature of female labour force participation (Chaudhary and Verick, 2014). This covers things like level of education, social standing, income, the presence of children, and the spouse's employment situation. The current imperative is for women to be empowered holistically and critically, and all parties involved should work together to take practical action (Sharma, 2016).

The study advances the case for policy interventions to give women agricultural labourers employment options and higher earnings, and it develops the case for raising the education and skill levels of women agricultural labourers. It places a focus on tactics to advance women's control over assets and raise their level of autonomy, which will empower women who work as farm labourers.

JUSTIFICATION AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Women perform two productive roles: unpaid work in the home and fields, and paid work outside the home. Poor pay is a common problem for wage workers; their pay frequently falls below that of industrial workers and sometimes even falls below the minimum wage. Employment in agriculture is frequently erratic and transient. The living and working conditions of agricultural women labourers are frequently appalling. Agricultural workers are frequently denied basic human rights, such as the freedom to associate, organise, and engage in collective bargaining with employers. Agricultural women's employees are frequently excluded from taking an active part in decision-making in their homes and on their farms. Laborers in agriculture face wage discrimination. Women get paid less than males for doing the same task. Due to seasonal work, they are dispersed, disorganised, and often have weak bargaining power. Many of them are forced by circumstances to borrow money occasionally from private sources, either for consumption or to fulfil social obligations, and some of them wind up working as slaves. More women than government agencies report labour in agricultural activities.

Because of this, the majority of women still experience social and economic inequality. This necessitates the development of new social and economic involvement initiatives for rural women as well as welfare and self-reliance. Since this study aims to spread awareness of the intrinsic role that gender plays in employment, pay, and other workplace issues including discrimination and unaccounted labourers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma (2021) did field research in Himachal Pradesh, a hilly state where male labourers have migrated far and where female agricultural labourers play a larger part. Punjab is an advanced agricultural state where female agricultural labourers play a smaller role. The study's objectives were to investigate the nature of rural India's socioeconomic conditions for female labourers and to evaluate their contribution to India's economic growth.

Duvvury (2021) assessed the trends in Indian women's labour force participation. Since the worrisome drop in female involvement, there has been an increase in research on many areas of women's existence in India. Early studies on the social dimensions of women's status have given way to evaluations of women's positions within the economy. It analysed existing research on women in agriculture, pointing out gaps and suggesting potential directions for future research that might be productive. For women who work in agriculture and marginal peasant households, the effects of technical development and capitalist agriculture have clearly had detrimental effects. They represent the poorest of the poor and have been the focus of numerous government programmes aimed at reducing poverty.

Jha (2020) looked at the socioeconomic circumstances of female employees and agricultural labourers following new economic policy in the 1990s. The indices that relate to the well-being of agricultural labourers, such as per capita food grain consumption, wage rates of farm labourers, per capita income, and basic facilities, etc., showed that the new economic policy has only made things worse for them. Researchers found that between 1991 and 1997, real agricultural labourer salaries fell by 15% to 25% in some Purnea district villages in Bihar. They contend that the "reform-strategy" of the relentless marketers fits in nicely with the current economic reforms' "take the backwards mentality."

In particular, **Kapadia (2020)** looked at the plight of women who work in agriculture in Tamil Nadu's rural areas. It ran the risk of tacitly ignoring the gender aspect of poverty by focusing on access to employment. Poor women may have access to employment in the context of unequal gender dynamics within households, but they will still be severely subordinated, giving them very little influence over their income. Development organisations cannot grant women the authority to govern their finances or their earnings. Such authority over resources is closely related to views of gendered needs and rights as well as gendered power relationships. The author concentrates her discussion on three different contexts, in each of which the organisation of labour and the agency of poor women themselves are differently constructed, to illustrate the ways in which gender, caste, and class participate in constructing the political economy of poverty in rural Tamil Nadu. These contexts are those of poor middle-caste soliya vellalar women who work as bondes, and those of poor Pallar women who are scheduled caste and landless agricultural labourers.

Subrahmanyam (2019) looked at the relative change in female labour demand in Andhra Pradesh, the magnitude of income growth brought on by technological adoption, the variation in labour absorption across agro-climatic zones, and the impact of farm size, cropping intensity, and crop pattern on the demand for labour in agriculture. Two sets of primary Andhra Pradesh-related data served as the foundation for the analysis. The demand for female labour has increased dramatically by 85% as a result of the use of HYV (High Yielding Variety) seed and paddy mechanisation. The demand for female labour is larger in paddy, cotton, and chiles than it is for all labour. The least need for female labour is in sugarcane. The intensity and pattern of cropping may be to blame for this variation in demand.

RESEARCH GAP

There aren't many researches on the quality of rural employment, especially as it relates to the labour force's gender during the process of structural changes in the job environment. Gender dynamics in agriculture are frequently overlooked in agricultural development initiatives, as has been discussed in the literature. Men are clearly leaving the agricultural sector, as is evident from the data. As a result, the role of women in the agricultural industry is expanding. This is increasing the number of women working in agriculture and expanding their involvement within the industry. Under difficult economic conditions, women are primarily responsible for managing the home (cooking, collecting fuel, providing water, etc). It's important to consider how much more women are contributing to agriculture.

In this situation, a thorough, site-specific study that focuses on the socio-economic status and empowerment of rural female agricultural labourers is required. The reason for the current study was the dearth of research on women's agricultural labour in Ranchi in general and Jharkhand in particular.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study the changing pattern of women labourers in agriculture at various levels.
- 2) To assess the socio-economic conditions of the women associated with agriculture.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study's methodology is both analytical and descriptive. The study explores the study's aims using both primary and secondary data.

At the macro level, patterns of changes in women's agricultural labour are analysed using secondary data (state and district level). A main survey of six villages was chosen, representing a range of agricultural situations, with the goal of understanding the socioeconomic status of women who work in agriculture at the home level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

An essential factor for determining the amount of the labour supply is the age distribution of the workforce. Understanding the age group of workers is useful in determining the percentage of the population in each age group who wants to work. The age breakdown of the respondents chosen for the survey is shown in Table. 65 percent of responders, or the women who work as farm labourers, are between the ages of 25 and 45. A little over 10% of the respondents in the sample were above the age of 60.

TABLE-1: AGE GROUP WISE COMPOSITION OF RESPONDENTS

Village	Age Group					Total
	Below 25	25 - 35	36 - 45	46- 60	Above 60	
Lurangi.	4	19	14	7	6	50
Honhe.	3	10	11	4	2	30
Pondri.	2	12	10	5	1	30
Sonrkhap.	8	23	16	20	13	80
Balsokra.	1	16	9	2	2	30
Birra.	6	22	19	6	2	55
Total	24 (8.7)	102 (37.1)	79 (28.7)	44 (16.0)	26 (9.5)	275 (100)

Source: Field Survey.

The sample size statistics for each age group across social categories are displayed in the table as a percentage share. There were no older than 60-year-old agricultural women workers among STs. All of the social groups tested for the study had a sizable percentage of women working as labourers who were between the ages of 25 and 45.

TABLE-2: AGE GROUP WISE SAMPLE COMPOSITION ACROSS SOCIAL GROUP

Social Group	Below 25	25 - 35	36 - 45	46- 60	Above 60	Total
SC	5	39	39	9	9	100
ST	4	35	42	19	0	100
OBC	10	37	25	17	12	100
Others	14	35	22	22	8	100
Total	9	37	29	16	9	100

The success of the MGNREGA programme in offering women farm labourers alternative low-skilled professions is shown in Table. The scheme's main goal is to give any rural household that requests unskilled manual labour 100 days of pay employment. The table below gives information on several metrics for evaluating the MGNREGA programme at the village level. According to the study, just over 75% of all polled respondents said they were aware of the programme and had a work card. Only 57% of the households with knowledge have used the job for at least one day. Taking into account all six communities, the system only requires an average of 50 days of effort every year. None of the respondents, however, utilised the maximum 100 days of employment allowed in the prior year.

TABLE-3: EFFECTIVENESS OF MGNREGA SCHEME

Village	Awareness of the Scheme	Respondents having Job Card	Percentage of households that have worked atleast one day	Average no of days worked in the scheme	Respondents completed 100 days of wage employment
Lurangi.	64.0	82.0	54.0	34.6	0
Honhe.	73.3	90.0	60.0	64.7	0
Pondri.	86.7	80.0	70.0	95.3	0
Sonrkhap.	90.0	83.8	67.5	16.5	0
Balsokra.	93.3	86.7	63.3	71.3	0
Birra.	65.5	43.6	32.7	16.9	0
All Villages	78.5	76.0	57.1	49.8	0

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H₀: Women who work as agricultural labourers have the same level of empowerment regardless of the type of agriculture.

Table presents the empowerment profile for the chosen sample villages. First, the head count and degree of disempowerment are multiplied to determine the disempowerment index. Next, the empowerment index is determined by deducting the disempowerment index value from the unit value, i.e. (1-disempowerment index)

TABLE-4: PROFILE OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INDEX IN SURVEYED VILLAGES

Village	Disempowerment Headcount Ratio	Intensity of Disempowerment	Women Empowerment Index	
			WEI	Rank
Lurangi.	0.21	0.59	0.885	1
Honhe.	0.25	0.61	0.859	3
Pondri.	0.27	0.67	0.830	5
Sonrkhap.	0.51	0.45	0.779	2
Balsokra.	0.67	0.43	0.723	4
Birra.	0.78	0.56	0.577	6

The Women Empowerment Index varies significantly between the six villages that were studied, as seen in Table. (ranging from 0.576 to 0.884). As a result, the hypothesis (H₀) is disproved. According to diverse agricultural conditions, it is implied that the empowerment status of women who work as agricultural labourers varies throughout different communities.

CONCLUSION

Women's empowerment is a multifaceted idea. In order to link the "development monitoring system" and "planning at the village level" with reference to the empowerment of women agricultural labourers, the current village level study may be helpful. To ensure that women are not left behind in the development process, appropriate planning methods must be developed independently for each village's unique circumstances.

The fact that women are rapidly taking over the agricultural industry has significant policy consequences. The majority of agriculture policy has been blind. It is first required to increase the measurement of women's participation and to acknowledge their contribution in order to design policy that is attentive to their roles and requirements in agriculture. Women's empowerment should be understood as a process whereby women learn to organise themselves in order to raise their level of independence and express their independent right to manage resources, both of which will help them to confront and end their own subjugation.

1. Agricultural intensification is required through the use of multiple and double cropping techniques, which would improve employment prospects.
2. In the aforementioned activities, especially in dry locations, we should favour labor-intensive techniques rather than increasing mechanisation.
3. The state government should set a minimum salary for all agricultural workers, and the rates should be evaluated on a regular basis.
4. There is a need to make low-cost finance available to needy agricultural women so they can start their own businesses, which would give our rural women more opportunities to find productive employment.
5. Women working in rural regions need to be intentionally trained in alternative skills.
6. Women would have more employment prospects if cottage and small-scale enterprises, the handicraft industry, and rural welfare services were expanded. As a result, these must be properly developed in rural areas.
7. Education for women in remote places is necessary.
8. Changes in attitudes and institutional structures are required to end prejudices against women and the perception that women are only suitable for domestic and unskilled employment.
9. In addition to the aforementioned, agricultural women workers in rural areas should have access to certain alternative employment programmes and prospects.

FUTURE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

- Further research may benefit from analysing the socioeconomic circumstances of female agricultural labourers in relation to broken-down crops, cropping patterns, and the relationships with female wage rates.
- The family workers, who are frequently unpaid, were not included in the current study; it only looked at the employed women farm labourers. Through more effective analytical techniques, future study

could more thoroughly explore the socio-economic circumstances of women who work as family caregivers in agriculture.

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