



A STUDY ON LANDLESS AGRICULTURE LABOURERS OF VALANGAIMAN TALUK IN THIRUVARUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

India is a predominantly agrarian economy with the majority of its population depending on agriculture for livelihood. Sector supports more than half a billion people providing employment to 52.8 per cent of the workforce. The supply of agricultural labour is in excess of demand and therefore the enforcement of the minimum wage may be difficult in India as a whole, where valangaiman taluk is not exceptional. Thus, study enquired into socio-economic background of the agricultural labourers and income sources and expenditure pattern of the agricultural labourers in valangaiman taluk as the study area. The study found that the major item of the expenditure of the respondents is non food. Labourers do not get regular income due to the inconsistencies in the agricultural activities through out of the year and do not develop any other skill to diversity their labour.

Keywords: Agriculture Labourers, Socio-economic, Valangaiman taluk

INTRODUCTION

India continues to be a predominantly agrarian economy with the majority of its population depending on agriculture for livelihood. According to 2001 census, there are 5,559 Taluks in India having more than 68.8 per cent of total population depending upon agriculture for their livelihood. This sector continues to support more than half a billion people providing employment to 52.8 per cent of the workforce. As agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy, its income plays a predominant role in the national income. India has attained self-sufficiently in food production after 67 years of independence, the credit for this, no doubt goes to agricultural workers who spend most of their time in slush and muck but with unappeasable hunger.

As per the census of India 2011, 263 million people are engaged in the agriculture sector and over half of them are now agricultural labourers. Agricultural labourers are known for taking up agricultural activities as well as agricultural related activities such as livestock, forestry, fishing etc. Thus, agriculture has been the major source of livelihood for majority of the labour force in India.

The agriculture operations are generally seasonal in nature and as such demand for agriculture labour is also seasonal. During the sowing and harvesting seasons, almost all the labourers, including child labourers are fully employed. In many areas where cultivation is primarily dependent on rains, employment of landless agriculture labour confined only to a short period and most of them stay unemployed

for the remaining period. Their position is better in irrigated tracts as compared to those in the dry areas. In view of these different factors, the bargaining power of the agricultural labourers is very weak hence the wage level is low.

Agriculture operations are carried out by both women and men. Men undertake major works such as trimming, ploughing, preparing the land etc whereas women perform tasks like transplantation, plugging seedling, weeding, fertilizer application, plant production, harvesting and threshing, winnowing and other miscellaneous works. They also do sowing, irrigating, maturing, growing vegetables planting, fruit planting and collect fuel etc.

After the minimum wage act of 1948 was passed, pressure was brought upon the government to extend the act to cover agricultural labour. The act was subsequently extended to them too. But, there are still some states which have not brought large section of agricultural about or within the ambit of the act. Even where the act is implemented, the machinery for the fixation and enforcement of minimum wage is not uniform.

There is strong opinion in favour of suspending the operation of the minimum wage act in rural areas. The basis of argument is that at the peak of the agriculture season, labour can dictate its own terms and naturally actual wage will tend to be much higher than the minimum wage under this condition. The enforcement of minimum wage has no meaning on the other hand during the slack season. The supply of agricultural labour is excess of demand and therefore the enforcement of the minimum wage may be difficult.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Thiruvavarur is one of the districts in Tamilnadu. The major source of employment generation is agriculture. The

people of the district carry out agriculture and allied activities. Agriculture income is a source of livelihood for many farmers and agriculture labourers.

Whenever monsoon fails and lack of water in the tank, there come the problem to the agriculture and agricultural Labourers. Farmers who have bore well facility carry out agricultural practices smoothly. The ground water level has also gone down due to overall fall of water table in the region. Now the agrarian community find difficult to cultivate crops through the year. So, the agriculture labourers are in need to find an alternative employment for their lively hood. As they have not acquired any other skill to leave the farm and find some other suitable job, their survival becomes a problem.

The only difference is that the Valangaiman Taluk depends on ground water for their agricultural activities. They have been practicing agriculture in such a way to suit the available irrigation facilities. The labourers in this area are forced to find out an alternative source of income along with disorder line agricultural activities.

Based on the above issues, there is need to study the Socio-Economic conditions of landless agricultural labourers of Valangaiman Taluk in Thiruvavarur District.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to analyse the socio economic condition of landless agricultural labourers. The specific objectives are:

1. To study the socio-economic background of the agricultural labourers in valangaiman taluk.
2. To explore the income sources and expenditure pattern of the agricultural labourers in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The present study on “Socio-Economic Condition of Landless Agricultural Laborers in Valangaiman Taluk of Thiruvarur District” is based on primary data. In valangaiman taluk, there are 71 villages. All the 71 villages form the research universe for this study. The people who were fully earning for their livelihood as agricultural labourers were listed and using simple random sampling, 60 agricultural Labourers were selected for the present study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others based on income, education, and occupation. Analyzing a family's SES, the household

income, earners' education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, versus with an individual, when their own attributes are assessed. Disparities in SES are a great cause concerning today as they are increasing throughout the world. Although socio-economic status has been clearly associated with the well-being of adults and young children, its impact on adolescents has been controversial. Some studies find that young people with higher SES have better health and other studies show no effect of SES on health in adolescence. This section will present data on measures related to socioeconomic status. These include measures of income (median family and median household income, and poverty levels), and measures associated with income status (educational level and employment levels) of the agricultural labourers of valangaiman taluk of Tiruvarur district.

Table-1

Distribution of respondents by their Scio-economic background

Age-Wise distribution of the respondents		
Age	Number of persons	Percentage (%)
Below 30	7	11.7
30-40	21	35.0
40-50	17	28.3
50-60	11	18.3
60-70	4	6.7
Total	60	100
Educational Status of the respondents		
Educational status	Number of persons	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	13	21.7
Primary	19	31.7
S.S.L.C	17	28.3
Higher Secondary	8	13.3
Degree holder	3	5
Total	60	100
Community Wise distribution of the respondents		
Community	Number of persons	Percentage (%)
SC	30	50
MBC	18	30
BC	12	20

Total	60	100
Type of the Family		
Type of Family	Numbers	Percentage (%)
Nuclear Family	45	75
Joint Family	15	25
Total	60	100
Size of the Family		
Family Size	Number of Household	Percentage (%)
2-3	12	20.00
4-5	28	46.67
6-7	14	23.33
8-9	6	10.00
Total	60	100
Annual Income of the Landless Agricultural Labourers		
Income Group	No. of Family	Percentage (%)
Below 11000	24	40
11001-12000	15	25
12001-13000	9	15
13001-14000	9	15
Above 14001	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Computed from primary data

From the above table No-1, it is very evident that the agricultural labourers mainly fall under 30 to 40 years and accounted 35 per cent of the total sample. Of the remaining, 11.7 per cent of the agricultural labourers belong to below 30 years of age group, 28% belong to the age group of 40-50 age groups and 25% is in the age group of above 50.

The study also finds that there is still illiteracy among agricultural labourers which accounts to 21.7 per cent of the total respondents. Of the literate, 31.7 per cent received primary level education. Others obtained education up to secondary, higher secondary and higher level education.

It is understood from the above table that majority of the agriculture labourers belong to scheduled caste, which is accounted 50 percentage of our sample. Remaining 50 percent of the respondents are belongs to (30 percent) Most Backward Caste and (20 percent) Backward Caste.

It is obvious from the present study that 75 percent are from nuclear families and the remaining 25 percent are from joint families. Anent family size is concerned, majority of the respondents have family size of 4-5 followed by 6-7 and the majority of the respondents' families have 1 to 2 children which is 63.33 percent. This is followed by size group of 3-4 which is 25 percent.

It is evident that more than one third of the respondents (40 percent) are getting the lowest income ranging below 11000 per year. Very small percentage (5 percent) of the respondents is getting higher income ranging above 14001 per year. The average annual expenditure of the below 11000 income group which consists of 24 families Rs.6,355. The average annual expenditure of the above 14001 income group which consists of 3 families Rs.10,110.

Table -2
Distribution of respondents by expenditure pattern

Expenditure on food Items				
Income Per annum	No. of Family	Average Annual Expenditure	Total Expenditure	Percentage of Expenditure
Below 11000	24	6355	152520	32.37
11001-12000	15	7450	111750	23.45
12001-13000	9	9310	83790	17.53
13001-14000	9	9658	86922	15.75
Above 14001	3	10110	30330	10.90
Total	60	7755.20	465312	100.00
Expenditure on Non-Food Items				
Income per annum	No. of Family	Average Annual Expenditure	Total Expenditure	Percentage of Expenditure
Below 11000	24	2312	55488	35.52
11001-12000	15	2455	36825	23.57
12001-13000	9	2714	24426	15.64
13001-14000	9	3210	28890	18.49
Above 14001	3	3518	10554	6.78
Total	60	2603	156183	100
Per-Capita Expenditure				
Income per annum	No.of.Family	No.of Member	Per-Capita Expenditure	
Below 11000	24	128	1625	
11001-12000	15	92	1615	
12001-13000	9	53	2041	
13001-14000	9	48	2413	
Above 14001	3	15	2726	
Total	60	336	1850	

The above table reveals that a major portion of the income of the household in the study area has been spend on consumption purpose only. For the purpose of convenience the expenditure has been classified in to expenditure on food items and expenditure on non food items.

The food items consist of rice, wheat, cereals, pulses, vegetables, oil etc. The total expenditure calculates by Average annual expenditure x No.of family. The average annual expenditure for food item of the entire sample is rupees 7755. It's ranged from 6355 rupees to 10110 rupees.

The non food items include expenditure on education, clothing,

transport, medicine, conventional necessities, social function etc. The average annual expenditure on non food item for the entire sample is rupees 2603 and it's ranged from 2312 to 3518. The average annual expenditure on non food item of the first income category amounts RS. 2312 consists of 24 families. The second income category which spends Rs. 2455 consists of 15 families. The third income group which spends Rs 2714 consists of 9 families. The fourth income group which spends Rs.3210 consists of 9 families. The last income groups which consist of 3 families spend Rs.3518.

Table -3

Distribution of respondents by their loan details

Loan of the Sample Households			
Income per annum	No. of Family	Total Loan Amount	Average Loan Amount
Below 11000	24	67500	2813
11001-12000	15	40000	2667
12001-13000	9	32000	3556
13001-14000	9	19500	2167
Above 14001	3	11700	3900
Total	60	170700	2845
Purpose of Loan			
Purposes	No. of Households	Percentage	
Household expenses and purchasing of assets	24	40	
Repaying the old debt	20	33	
Celebrating function	16	27	
Sources of Loan			
Sources	No. of families	Percentage	
Bank	18	30	
Relatives	12	20	
Money lenders	9	15	
SHG	21	35	
Total	60	100	

Source: Primary Data

A study on per-capita expenditure also plays an important role in determining the economic conditions of the agricultural labourers and therefore per-capita expenditure is estimated. The per-capita expenditure for the entire sample is rupee 1850 and which is ranged from 1615 to 2726.

The income and expenditure of the sample household reveals that the fact that the income is hardly adequate to maintain the standard of living. The earnings are not only meager but also irregular. As a result the sample households have no alternatives but to earn to meet the excess expenditure. They borrow money for the purchase of cattle and to meet emergency household expenses and celebrating functions etc. Average loan of the household is ranged from rupees 2167 to 3900. The average loan amount for the entire sample is rupees 2845.

The higher average loan amount 3900 is registered by higher income group.

Higher proportion of the sample respondent household are borrow money for compensate their household expenditure. There are 40 percent of the respondents' loan for household expenses and purchase of assets and 33 percent respondents for repaying the old debt. Rest of the 27 percent respondents for celebrating functions.

Data outstanding debts from different per-capita expenditure sources have been collected under find specialized heads namely bank, relatives, moneylender and SHG. The SHG is the major debt source for the sample households. The SHG are accounted 35 percent in total. Bank is the next important source is accounted 30 percent of households borrowed from this source. Relatives and moneylenders are the

other two sources which is accounted 20 percent and 15 percent respectively.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the source of income of the agricultural labourers and finds the major sources of income from agricultural labour work. This is followed by income received from labour in the other allied activities. The analyses on the annual expenditure pattern of the agricultural labourers, the study concluded that the major item of the expenditure of the respondents is non food.

The study on as a whole come to the conclusion that the respondents the agricultural labourers at the Valangaiman Taluk, do not get regular income due to the inconsistencies in the agricultural activities through out of the year. They also do not develop any other skill to diversity their labour. But it's found that the labourers now have realized the importance of education and they force their children to attend school which is welcoming feature.

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