



A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN KUNNAM VILLAGE OF VEPPUR BLOCK, PERAMBALUR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is backbone of the nation's economy. Both male and female workers carry out farm work. Farm workers may also be either field workers such as reapers, ploughmen or ordinary workers such as well-diggers and strange-job workers or professional workers such as masons and carpenters. They go to various locations in conjunction with the season and whatever job is available at the same time. They also work as wages in the agricultural sector or those who work as wage workers for the greater part of the year, whose earnings are primarily derived from wage labour in agriculture. Only by ensuring equal wages and working conditions will be saved and secured the agricultural workers. This paper focuses on the socio-economic status of agricultural workers in the Veppur Block village of Kunnam, Perambalur district'.

Key words: Agriculture, Farm Labourers, Socio-economic, Wages, Education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is backbone of the nation's economy. Both male and female workers carry out farm work. It provides jobs for so many individuals. It is every individual's livelihood as well. It is a foundation for small scale and cottage industries. The various types of research are carried in the area of Perambalur district (Gopinath, R., and R. Kalpana, 2019 & Gopinath, R., and I. Irismargaret, 2019).

2. DEFINITION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

An agricultural worker, according to the National Labour Commission, is one who is practically unskilled and unorganized and has no land other than personal labour for their livelihood.

Farm workers may also be either field workers such as reapers, ploughmen or ordinary workers such as well-diggers and strange-job workers or professional workers such as masons and carpenters. They go to various locations in conjunction with the season and whatever job is available at the same time.

Agricultural workers are those who work as wages in the agricultural sector or those who work as wage workers for the greater part of the year, i.e. those whose earnings are primarily derived from wage labour in agriculture. This paper focuses on the socio-economic status of agricultural workers in the Veppur Block village of Kunnam, Perambalur district.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the general characteristics of the agricultural labourers in the study area.
- To investigate the socio-economic conditions of workers in agriculture.
- To figure out the worker's occupational pattern.
- To investigate the pattern of income and expenditure of farm labourers.
- To be familiar with the educational status of farm workers.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the method of investigation for random sampling was adapted. 100 samples were chosen for analysis in the selected village. The sample was chosen regardless of race, creed, and social status. This research was carried out with the aid of a detailed questionnaire, so the primary data is the basis of the study.

5. LIMITATIONS

This research was only performed over a short period. Therefore, the data for making substantial assumptions could be negligible.

6. ABOUT THE STUDY AREA

In Kunnam village, the total population was 3853, according to the 2011 census data. It is situated in Tamilnadu, India, in Kunnam Taluk of Perambalur district. It is located 18 km away from the headquarters of the district. Kunnam village was also a Grama Panchayat, as per 2009 statistics records.

Kunnam village has a total geographical area of 1281.47 hectares. The village has approximately 891 houses. The main source of revenue for people is agricultural work. It has a population of 3853 individuals in total. The overall male population is 1950, and 1903 is the female population. The female population is 49.4 percent of the total population, the total literacy rate is 28.1 percent, the scheduled caste population is 41.1 percent, and the working population is 52.70. The nearest town to Kunnam is Ariyalur.

In Kunnam Taluk, 40 percent of Kallakkudi soil is cultivated. Maximum rain fed crops such as rice, chillies, millets and groundnut are grown in this region. Seven percent of the rain-fed crops are grown only here in the Perambalur district.



Figure 1

7. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS:

- They are more unorganized.
- The source of Income is mostly wages.
- They found either land less (or) made up of very small farmers.
- Economically poverty ridden.
- Socially, they are conservative traditional and non-motivated.
- Normally they are non-migrants and suppressed by the elite sections of the village.

8. THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

- There is a lack of sustained employment, they frequently suffer from social handicaps and are a source of serious weakness and even of instability in the present agrarian systems.
- They are the weakest section in the economy of the country and have all along suffered great hard ships and deprivations.
- They are the first victim of high prices and scarcity.
- Ploughmen work either at a stretch with rest interval or work in two shifts one in the morning and one in the evening with a break of 4 to 6 hours.
- Labourers employed in lift irrigation work in shifts of one or two hours at a time.
- Labourers themselves do not mind working longer hours if they are paid piece wages.
- They are prone to over work themselves in the harvest season when they are so paid.
- Labourers on daily wages generally work for about 8 hours a day with break of two hours during mid-day.
- The workers during certain days in the year have to work for very long-hour while during other days they are practically idle.
- The labourer is only given some sort of protection against over work.

8.1 Nature of work in Agriculture

Agricultural employees may be permanently working on a part-time or seasonal basis, or casually, in accordance with the requirements of the job. Agricultural workers are of two kinds in general: i. *The Attached Worker*, ii. *Casual Worker*.

8.1.1 Attached Labourer

Attached workers are those working at a time for one month or more. They are more or less in continuous jobs and are in touch with employers of the same kind.

8.1.2 Casual Labourer

Casual workers are employed from time to time according to the exigencies of work.

Just about 10 percent to 15 percent of the total numbers of agricultural workers have the number of attached works

8.2 Categories of Agricultural Labourers

The National Commission on labour has divided agricultural workers into two main groups.

- Landless Labourers
- Very Small farmers

The first group has been divided into two main categories.

- Permanent labourers who are attached to agricultural house hold.
- Temporary or Casual labourers.

The Second group is divided into three main Categories

- Small farmers who own very little land and therefore have to spend much of their time employed as workers on the land of others.
- Share the croppers who share the land provided for their labour.
- Tenants who, in addition to living on leased land, often work as employees.

8.3 Types of Rural Labour

8.3.1 Family Labour

The predominant form of agricultural labour in most Asian and African nations is family farm work. There are no fixed working hours or days or fixed payments.

8.3.2 Hired Labour

This labour is usually rewarded with cash or kind or both on piece-rate basis that is on the basis of specific work done.

For the convenience village level activities have been divided into 5 categories.

1). Hired attached Labourers

They are paid on a daily basis.

2). Casual agricultural labourers

They are paid for a particular work like, ploughing or harvesting.

3). Non-Agricultural work

At the village level, non-agricultural work is not studied much, comprising a substantial part of rural workers' time. This consists primarily of dairy farming, laundering, milling rice, processing tobacco, making coir, etc. Some of the employees work as blacksmiths, milkmen, tailoring, sweepers, cobblers, cart-drivers, and similar tasks.

4). *Work Outside the village*

This refers to jobs provided by migration and may be a secondary occupation for one or more rural family members. This would be important in villages where land scarcity, land distribution inequality, proximity to cities and high levels of education exist.

5). *Non-work and Leisure*

It relates to rest and leisure, social, educational and religious events or to paying a visit to relatives. This is achieved mainly during the off seasons of agriculture. The neglect of cooking during the peak season often impacts agricultural production.

9. FINDINGS

- Female respondents have formed 83 % of the total sample population.
- In the study out of 100 people, 97 are Hindus and the remaining 3 % are Christians and there are no Muslims at all.
- Nearly 59 % of the respondents belong to Backward Class, 22 % of the respondents belong to SC and 15 % of the respondents belong to MBC.
- The agricultural labourers are drawn from BC.
- The Scheduled Caste people are living in a remote place, which is situated in the boundary of village and called colony.
- Agriculture is the main occupation of this village.
- One third of respondents are in the age group of 31-40 years and 30 % of the people are in the age group of 21-30 years. Child labourer is not found alarmingly only (2%).
- The size of the family is not uniform and it varies from 1 to 10 members.
- As per the norm provided by the government of India, average family consists of 5 members. In the sample survey it is seen that 59 % of the respondents have average family size only.
- Out of 100 respondents, 56% of the respondents are not educated because many are socially backward and economically poor.
- The property owned by the agricultural labourers, reveals that each of the respondent has at least one property with them.
- Out of the total 100 respondents 96 persons are involved in agricultural works and the remaining 4 person are involved in non-agricultural works like basket making or pot making.
- The Income earned by the labourer is very meager. They do not see regular monthly wage also as most of the labourers are only casual labourers.
- Nearly 79 % of the respondents spend rupees 0-1000 on food. Only 21 % of the respondents spend rupees 1000-1500 on food. This is the major reason only the women agricultural labourers are not healthy and susceptible for diseases.
- 93 % of the respondents do not have savings because of their low income and family circumstances.
- Out of 100 respondents, 66 persons borrow money because of their low income and to meet out the household expenses and their basic needs.
- All people take treatment in the government hospital only.
- In spite of the toilet facilities the environment of this village is polluted because most of the village people do not use properly.

- 97 percentage of total sample population feel that they do not have enough income to run their family.
- All have accepted the family planning programme.
- The drainage system in this village is very poor.
- All are accepting the fact that education is very important but they feel that primary education is enough for girls, because of their low income and necessity for earning.

10. SUGGESTIONS

- Minimum wage should be given.
- MNREGS should support employment opportunity throughout the year.
- Due to the failure of the monsoon situation, these workers should engage in some other work in the remaining season, once again their economic condition becomes weak, since the government should start cottage industries and provide their agricultural workers with employment opportunities.
- The government should not approve agricultural land for other purposes, such as building homes, factories, etc., since farm workers would again become unemployed.

11. CONCLUSION

Only by ensuring equal wages and working conditions will agricultural workers be saved and secured. By keeping the air clean and not producing emissions during operations, agricultural land can be preserved to get the seasonal rainfall regularly. In order to promote sustainable agricultural production and to promote the quality of living of agricultural workers, the younger generations in the villages are required to help and contribute to agricultural work.

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