



Constraints Faced by the Women Labourers in Agriculture and Suggestions to Overcome Them

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation was done to study the Constraints faced by the women labourers in agriculture and suggestions to overcome them in of Andhra Pradesh. Three districts from the three Regions of Andhra Pradesh, Srikakulam district from North Coastal Region, Guntur district from Coastal South Region and Kurnool district from Rayalaseema Region of the Andhra Pradesh state were purposively selected based on the highest number of agricultural labourers in the Region. Case study research design was followed for the study and a sample of 180 respondents was drawn.

Keywords: Basic facilities; enterprises; labourers; skills; wage rates.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy, a way of life for millions of farm families. Land is a primary source of livelihood and a critical factor that shapes the livelihood strategies and resultant outcomes. Women Agricultural Labourers are from social and economically backward sections that inherited their vocation from their forefathers. Being hard work in nature,

agricultural labourers are literally sweating their body out on and off the field on and off the field in all seasons [1,2]. Constrained by the monsoon factor and coupled with the relatively lower wages in agriculture, which is their mainstay, the members of the family of agricultural workers their women and children are forced to work that will help in supplementing the income of the breadwinner of the family. Women as agricultural labourers are discriminated in wage payment on

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sex basis. The wage differences exist in all major agriculture operations including transplanting and weeding in which women intensive operations and better are performed by women labourers [3-5]. There is a need for effective implementation of minimum wage.

In India, women have a multi-dimensional role. It is widely known to everybody that the agricultural workers are the most neglected class in the Indian masses. a unique feature of female participation throughout India is that they are workers, labourers, cultivators, producers, traders besides performing all house hold duties which are considered as 'unproductive'. Women contribute about three-fourth of the labour required in the field [6-8]. The contribution of female labour is towards agricultural production beside their usual domestic work, always more than the male labour. In cultivation except ploughing, levelling, irrigation all other works are generally shared by both men and women. Women usually get low wages for the work done under the worst conditions put in excessively burdens on hard work [9-11]. The wages paid to the female agricultural labourers are much below the prescribed rates and wide spread of disparities in wages much disadvantages of them. Even though, most of the contributions made by women in the farm sector are unaccounted and they are not directly paid.

Rural women play a predominant role in agriculture as they get involved in the entire process like ploughing, sowing, weeding, applying fertilizers, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, packing, loading and related occupations like live stock management. Women does the work in the agricultural fields and also does all the domestic chores at house like cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children and elders etc., In spite of enormous contribution women face innumerable issues and struggles both in the work place and in the house. Women are generally treated as secondary citizens in our nation and their work is not properly recognized.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh. *Case study research* design was followed for the

study. From each of the selected districts three mandals were selected by using simple random sampling thus comes to a total of nine mandals. They were Gara, Amudalavalasa and Etcherla from Srikakulam district, Narsaraopeta, Ponnur and Amaravathi from Guntur district, Nandyal, Peapully and Dhone from Kurnool district were selected by using simple random method from which 180 women labourers were selected as sample. Pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect the primary data and statistical techniques like Frequencies and Percentage were used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To ascertain different constraints faced by women labourers, they were asked to express their constraints in carrying out different aspects in agriculture. The constraints expressed by the respondents were tabulated along with frequency, percentage and ranks and presented in Table 1 promisingly shown that, the majority of women agricultural labourers felt that 'Wage discrimination' (155), as one of the major constraints and it was ranked first among all the constraints. 'Dual responsibility' (143), followed by 'Involves more drudgery' (131), and 'Lack of year round employment' (124) are major constraints faced by the women labourers in agriculture. The other constraints include 'lack of basic facilities at work place '(119), 'Lack of training on skilled work performance' (114), 'over exploitation of money lenders by charging higher rates of interest' (111), 'Non co-operation among different groups' (107), 'Delayed payment of wages from owners' (101), 'Lack of small scale labour intensive enterprises to save from unemployment during lean crop period' (95) and 'Advances in mechanization leading to decreased demand for labourer' (88).

Women farm labour are generally forced to work harder and are paid less than their male counterparts. Such bias against female workers exists in most of the dry land areas. At many places, wages paid to female workers are even less than the minimum wages. Though there are so many technological changes in labour force where women also involve in all activities along with men, there are disparities in payment of wages to female agricultural labour in many parts of the country.

Table 1. Constraints faced by the women labourers (n=180)

S. No.	Constraint	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Wage discrimination	155	86.11	I
2.	Dual responsibility	143	79.44	II
3.	Involves more drudgery	131	72.77	III
4.	Poor social relationship with other sections of society	124	68.88	IV
5.	Lack of basic facilities at work place	119	66.12	V
6.	Lack of training on skilled work performance	114	63.34	VI
7.	Over exploitation of money lenders by charging higher rates of interest	111	61.67	VII
8.	Delayed payment of wages from owners	101	56.12	VIII
9.	Lack of small scale labour intensive enterprises to save from unemployment during lean crop period	95	52.77	IX
10.	Advances in mechanization leading to decreased demand for labourer	88	48.88	X

Women share abundant responsibilities to perform wide spectrum of duties both in the home and outside. Their activities typically include collecting fuel and water, processing and preparing food, caring for family members, maintaining their home, tending animals and working for wages in agriculture or other rural enterprises.

Agriculture is considered to be a highly physical-demanding occupation in which workers exert continuously in awkward and stressful postures and consequently suffer from pain and discomfort in different parts of their body which lead to drudgery. Some physical agricultural operations like harvesting, threshing, weeding and lifting of heavy loads may cause the pain and injuries. Prolonged work activity, high repetitiveness and remaining constantly in similar posture for a prolonged time of work were the major factors for drudgery.

Due to the caste stigma existing in society, limited relationships between upper caste and lower caste, majority of agricultural labourers belonged to scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and backward classes and were financially poor. Low level of education and unequal economic status are important factors for poor social interaction among different section of society.

Majority of agricultural labourers are in smaller villages away from towns and cities, are generally unskilled workers carrying agricultural operations in age old traditional methods. They

are not aware of modernization of agriculture. Most of them are generally conservative, tradition bound, totalistic and resigned to the insufferable lot to which according to them fate has condemned them.

Agricultural labourers had no land so it is difficult to get loan from banks and other financial institutions and they depend on money lenders with high interest rates. In the absence of banking system in the rural areas and trail process of sanction by the commercial banks, farmers prefers to take loans from uninstitutional sources like money lenders, landlords at the very high rate. This exorbitant rate traps in the vicious circle of debt.

Irregular and delayed payment of wages by the owners leads to the mental stress of agricultural labourers.

The agricultural labourers have to face the unemployment and underemployment. For a substantial part of the year, they have to remain unemployed because there is no work on the farms and alternative sources of employment do not exist. During lean period, majority of the agricultural labourers have affected by severe economic burdens and there is no feasibility condition to overcome their day to day livelihood activities.

At current scenario, due to inadequate labour, the scope for mechanization has been increased. In view of this, the demand for women labour was decreased.

Table 2. Suggestions given by the women labourers (n=180)

S. no.	Suggestions given by the women labourers	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Wage rates must be increased	131	72.77
2.	Establishment of small scale labour intensive enterprises	126	70.00
3.	Assured supply of basic living amenities like water, fuel etc.,	121	67.22
4.	Implement more government schemes to increase the employment opportunities	112	62.22
5.	Coverage of life insurance and health schemes for women agricultural labourers	109	60.56
6.	Provision of nutritive food through PDS	107	59.45
7.	Simple procedure for loans	102	56.66
8.	Timely cash payment by owners	93	51.66

3.1 Suggestions Given by the Women Labourers

At the end of the interview, the women labourers were requested to offer their suggestions to overcome the problems encountered by them agriculture. Their suggestions are presented in Table 2. with frequencies and percentage. The results revealed that, 'Wage rates must be increased' (131), was the major suggestion and ranked first. Followed by Establishment of small scale labour intensive enterprises' (126), 'Assured supply of basic living amenities like water' (121), 'Implement more government schemes to increase the employment opportunities' (112), 'Coverage of insurance and health programmes for women agricultural labourers' (109), 'Provision of nutritive food through PDS' (107), 'Simple procedure for loans' (102), and 'Timely cash payment by owners' (93) were the major suggestions given by women labourers.

Wage rates should be increased with time to meet the increased cost of inputs to meet the family requirements.

Establishment of small scale labour intensive enterprises for eradicating the unemployment and underemployment. During off season of agriculture, all the female agricultural labourers have preferred the alternative employments opportunity of 100 days of work programme through MGNREGA.

Majority of the respondents suggested that the implementation of government schemes are very much helpful and support them because the programmes would raise standard of living at considerable level. It is heartening that the

majority of the respondents are not having proper infrastructural facilities in their houses except electricity.

Coverage of life insurance and health schemes for women agricultural labourers.

Most of the respondents have not taken sufficient energetic food for their survival due to poor economic condition. Hence, it is necessary to ensure food and nutritional requirements of people below poverty line.

Bringing financial institutions close to agricultural labourers and simplify different financial related procedures to get loans for establishing subsidiary occupation. Owners should make sure that timely payment of wages to the labourers so that they meet their daily requirements.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that the majority of women agricultural labourers felt that 'Wage discrimination' as one of the major constraints and it was ranked first among all the constraints. 'Dual responsibility', followed by 'Involves more drudgery', and 'Lack of year round employment' are major constraints faced by the women labourers in agriculture. The other constraints include 'lack of basic facilities at work place, 'Lack of training on skilled work performance', 'over exploitation of money lenders by charging higher rates of interest', 'Non co-operation among different groups', 'Delayed payment of wages from owners', 'Lack of small scale labour intensive enterprises to save from unemployment during lean crop period' and 'Advances in mechanization leading to decreased demand for labourer'.

'Wage rates must be increased', was the major suggestion and ranked first. Followed by Establishment of small scale labour intensive enterprises', 'Assured supply of basic living amenities like water', 'Implement more government schemes to increase the employment opportunities', 'Coverage of insurance and health programmes for women agricultural labourers', 'Provision of nutritive food through PDS', 'Simple procedure for loans', and 'Timely cash payment by owners' were the major suggestions given by women labourers.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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