

ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR OF PUNJAB

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Abstract: Today, women workers play an important role in agriculture based Indian economy. They participate in both farm and non-farm activities. In India women are engaged in various activities such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing and services. They may work from their home in case their work is invisible and may not be considered as work even by the women themselves. Employment outside the home is an important source of social support and self esteem and helps women to avoid social isolation in home. The present study was conducted in the villages of two districts namely Hoshiarpur and Bathinda of the Punjab state. A sample of 160 rural farm women laborers from each of the two districts who were involved in various agriculture operations was selected for this study. A well structured interview schedule was employed to collect the information required to fulfill the objectives of the study. Apart from interviews, field observations were also made to observe the participation of women in the farm activities. The data collected was analyzed by using percentages and graphs. It has been identified that women's participation in farm activities has greater impact on their home environment also. It can be concluded from the results that the highest proportion of female laborers who are involved in agricultural activities are helpful for repayment of debts followed by the reason to improve household income. More than half of female laborers reported the supportive behavior of their family members towards their involvement in agricultural activities. But some of the respondents reported that their family member's behavior was favorable towards their participation in farms before their employment but after employment conflicts have arisen at home and it has an adverse impact on children's growth and education.

Keywords: Female laborers, agriculture sector, women participation.

Introduction

Today, women workers play an important role in the agricultural sector of Indian economy. They participate in both farm and non-farm activities. In India, these days women are engaged in various activities such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing and services. They may work from their home in that case their work is invisible and may not be considered as work even by the women themselves. Employment outside the home is an important source of social support and self esteem and helps women to avoid social isolation in home. Women's participation in home and farm activities is dependent upon social, cultural and economic conditions in the area. It also varies from region to region and even within a region. Their involvement varies widely among different farming systems, castes, classes and socio-economic groups. The Punjab state is divided into three agro-climatic zones, viz. Sub-mountainous Zone (Zone-I) comprises of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Ropar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Patiala and Nawanshahr districts, Central Alluvial Zone (Zone II) comprises of Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, parts of Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Fatehgarh Sahib, Patiala and Sangrur districts and Southern Dry Zone (Zone III) comprises of Bathinda, Mansa, Moga, Muktsar, Faridkot, Ferozpur and Sangrur districts. The study was conducted in two regions i.e. Hoshiarpur district of Central Alluvial Zone (Zone II) and Bathinda district of Southern Dry Zone (Zone III) in the Punjab.

Review of Literature

Swaminathan, (1985) has focused his study on the women from rural areas which are involved in farm operations as cultivators, assistants to male cultivators and agricultural laborers. It has been highlighted in the study that women are actively engaged in pre-sowing, post-sowing, harvesting and post-harvesting operations as well as allied activities. Researcher found that women belonging to low socio-economic strata are actively engaged in agricultural labor. Women's participation in home and farm activities is dependent upon social, cultural and economic conditions of the area. It also varies from region to region and even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different farming systems, castes, classes and socio-economic status. Researcher concluded that the participation of women greatly helps to supplement the family income but the dual role they play as income generator as well as homemaker does have some adverse impact on the family.

Gupta, (1987), noted that there has been a gap between women's actual economic participation and public perception. Researcher pointed out that women constitute about half of the world's population, their labor contributes to 60 percent of the hours worked, contributing up to 30 percent of official hours. Yet women receive only 10 percent of the world's income and own less than one per cent of the world's property. It has been suggested that there should be no gender discrimination in case of payment of wages.

Ackah, Charles, et al (2009), investigated that the labor force participation rate plays a significant role in determining socio-economic development and growth. The increasing trend toward women's participation in the labor market in both developed and developing countries has drawn both social and academic interest resulting in many insightful studies on gender aspects of labor market issues. Researchers examined that women's educational attainment and fertility determine women's participation in agriculture sector. Women with primary school education or above are more economically active than illiterate one. However, this is only found among women participating in wage employment. Researchers also found that high fertility acts as a constraint on female participation in wage employment. The presence of children in the home significantly reduces participation at work.

Singh, et al. (2012) analyzed the operations once performed by female members of the family which are now being carried out by hiring female laborers. The women of lower socio-economic status families work as laborers in farms of the large farmers and perform the activities such as weeding, grass cutting, picking etc. The results depicts that female labor have been involved in agriculture and its allied fields.

Objective of the study

To analyze the impact of women's participation in farm activities on home environment.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in the villages of two districts namely Hoshiarpur and Bathinda of Punjab state. A sample of 160 rural farm women laborers from each district who were involved in various agriculture operations was selected for this study. A well structured interview schedule was used to collect the information required to fulfill the objectives of the study. Apart from interviews, field observations were also made to observe the participation of women in the farm activities. The data collected was analyzed by using percentages and graphs

Results and Discussions

The data shown in Table 1 indicates that only 14.04 percent of females and 85.96 percent of males were working in agriculture and allied activities, the proportion of the male laborers is more as compared to the female laborers of Punjab.

Table 1 Sex-Wise Distribution of Workers according to Category of Workers in Punjab

Category of Workers	Male workers		Female workers		Total
	NO.	%	NO.	%	
Main Cultivators	1691777	93.78	112083	6.22	1803860
Main Agricultural Laborers	1013979	86.82	154042	13.18	1168021
Main Household Industry Workers	215971	71.84	84689	28.16	300660
Other Workers	4342904	83.86	835491	16.14	5178395
Total Workers (Main+Marginal)	7264631	85.96	1186305	14.04	8450936

Source: Gender Statistics, 2012

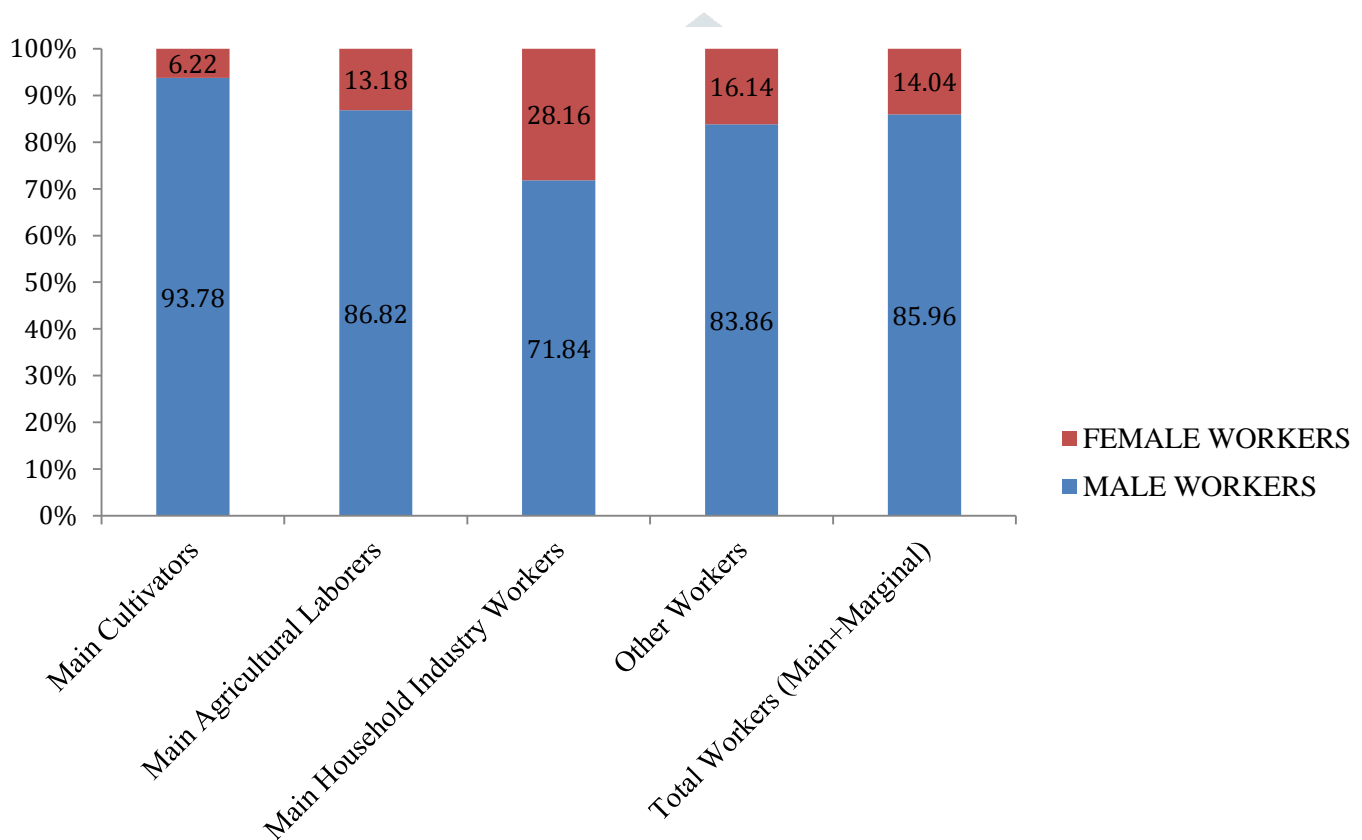


Figure 1 Sex-Wise distribution of Workers according to Category of Workers in Punjab

Table 2 Distribution of Female Laborers according to the Causes of Work Participation in Punjab

Districts	To increase agriculture production		To reduce poverty/hunger		To improve household income		To repay debts	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
HOSHIARPUR	10	6.25	28	17.5	45	28.13	77	48.13
BATHINDA	15	9.38	22	13.75	51	31.88	72	45
PUNJAB	25	7.81	50	15.13	96	30	149	46.56

Source: Field survey 2019

Table 2 reveals that the highest proportion of female laborers in Punjab involved in agricultural activities are for the repayment of debts i.e. 46.56 percent followed by proportion of 30 percent female laborers who are to improve the income of their households. While 15.13 percent of female laborers working on the agricultural fields to mitigate the score of poverty/hunger of their respective families.. Only 7.81 percent of female laborers in Punjab were contributing to increase agriculture production. The table above indicates more or so the similar position of the female laborers in the two districts under study.

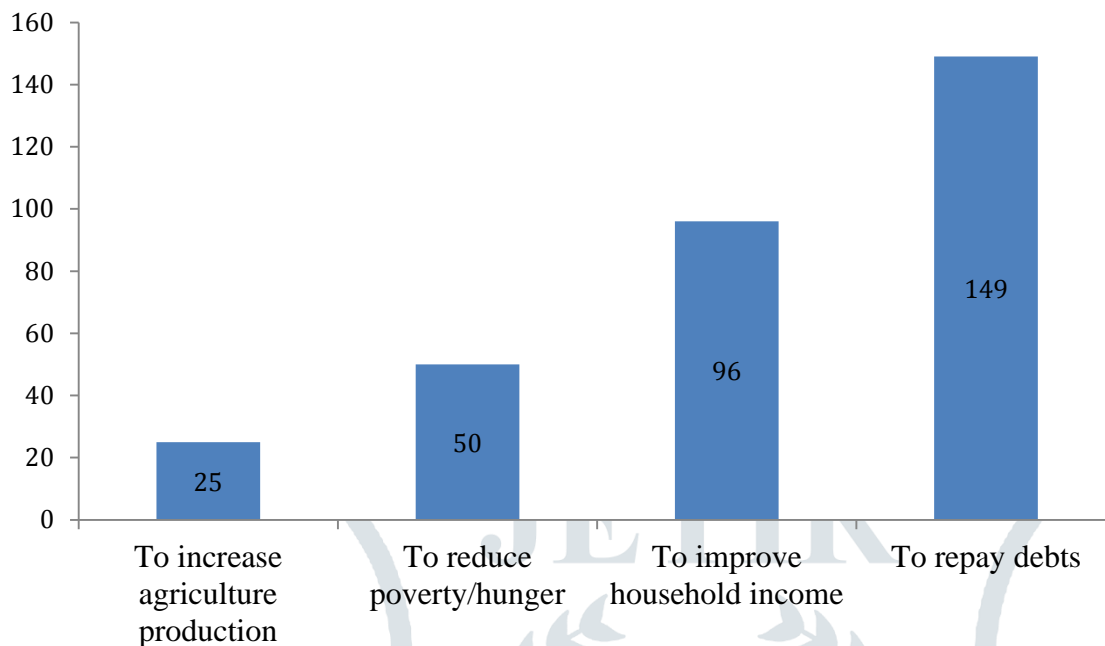


Figure 2 Distribution of Female Laborers according to the Causes of Work Participation in Punjab

Table 3 Behavior of Family Members towards Work of Female Labor before Employment

DISTRICTS	BEHAVIOR OF FAMILY MEMBERS TOWARDS WORK OF FEMALE LABOR			
	SUPPORTIVE		NON.SUPPORTIVE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
HOSHIARPUR	112	70	48	30
BATHINDA	94	58.75	66	41.25
PUNJAB	206	64.38	114	35.62

Source: Field survey 2019

Table 3 reveals that in Hoshiarpur district 70 percent of the family members were supportive towards the employment of female laborers where as this figure of supportive attitude of the family members in Bathinda district is only 58.75 percent. The higher percentage of the supportive Behavior of the family towards female laborers may be due to the higher literacy rate in Hoshiarpur district as compared to Bathinda. As regards the state of Punjab this supportive Behavior of the family turns out to be 64.38 percent which is fairly high. Only 35.62 percent of the families in Punjab are showing non-supportive Behavior towards female employment.

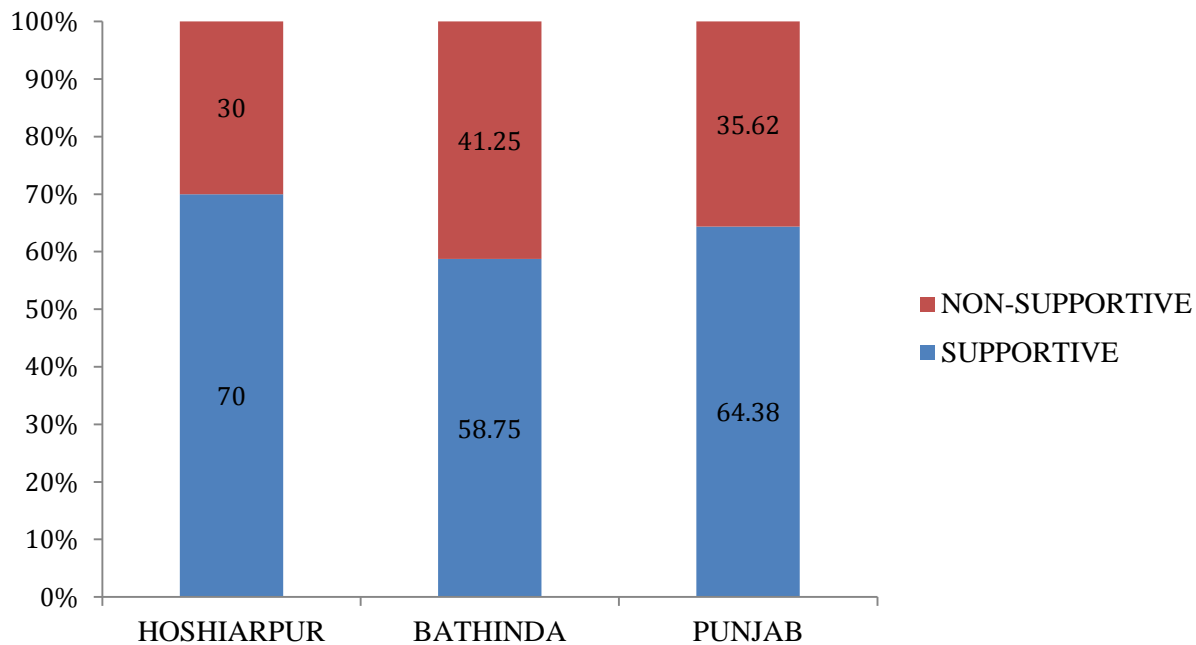


Figure 3 Behaviors of Family Members towards Work of Female Labor before Employment

Table 4 Impact of Women Labor Participation in Agriculture on Home Environment after Employment

DISTRICTS	Impact on Home Environment				Impact on Children’s Education			
	CONFLICTS		PEACEFUL		YES		NO	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
HOSHIARPUR	107	66.875	53	33.125	109	68.125	51	31.875
BATHINDA	89	55.625	71	44.375	117	73.125	43	26.875
PUNJAB	196	61.25	124	38.75	226	70.625	94	29.375

Source: Field survey 2019

The impact of female labor participation in agriculture on home environment has been divided in two parts i.e. impact on home environment and impact on children. The figures indicated in table 4 shows different aspects of the two parts. In Hoshiarpur district 66.875 percent female laborers reported about the conflicts at their homes whereas for 33.125 percent of such laborers the domestic environment was quite peaceful. As regards Bathinda only 55.625 percent of female laborers reported conflicts at their home places where as for the remaining 44.375 percent talked about the congenial atmosphere in their homes. For Punjab as a whole the conflicts in the family after the employment of female laborers turns out to be 61.25 percent, 38.75 percent of the female laborers stated about the peaceful atmosphere in their families.

The impact of female laborers employment on the education of their children is 68.125 and 73.125 percent respectively both in Hoshiarpur and Bathinda district where as for the state as a whole this figure turns out to be 70.625 percent. Only 29.375 percent employed female laborers said about no impact of their employment on the education of the children.

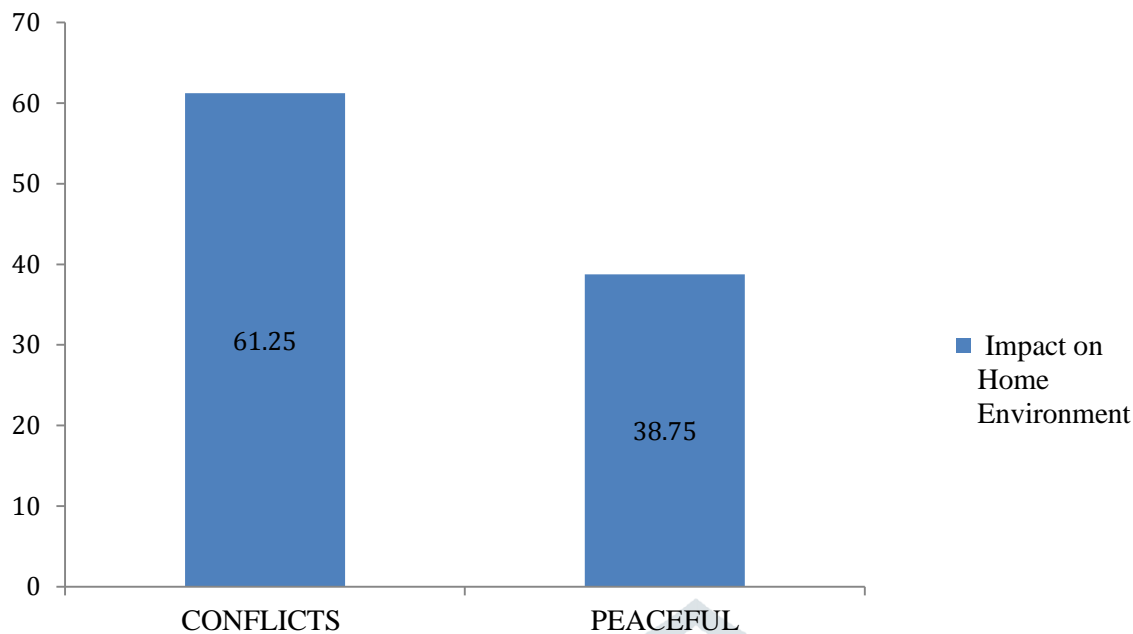


Figure 4 Impact of Women labor Participation in Agriculture on Home Environment after Employment

Conclusion

The paper concludes that in the modern era both male and female members of the family have to join hands to run their family smoothly. In rural areas particularly where the majority of the families have less resources to support the families, the females have to participate in the agricultural activities. The participation of the female laborers have both positive and negative impact on their families. The highlight of the study is that the participation of the female laborers helps to improve the financial conditions of the families which help to repay the debts of agriculture sector followed by reduction of poverty etc. More than half of female laborers reported the supportive behavior of their family members towards their involvement in agricultural activities. But once they are engaged in agricultural activities there arises conflict in families. Moreover it has an adverse impact on the education of their children as they find less time to attend their children.

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