



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURAL LABORERS IN MALNAD REGION

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Abstract:

Agricultural laborers are individuals who work in the agricultural sector, performing tasks related to crop cultivation, harvesting, processing, and transportation. They are an essential part of the agricultural workforce and play a crucial role in ensuring the availability of food and other agricultural commodities in the market. The main objectives of this study are to address the issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region of Shivamogga district and also to study the living conditions and well-being of agricultural laborers in the Malnad region. In this background, the present study is based on descriptive analysis to explain the issues and challenges of agricultural labor in the Malnad regions. In order to show the relationship between issues and challenges primary data have been collected. In this process, 50 respondents were selected from Thirthahalli, Sagar, and Shivamogga taluks of the Shivamogga district of Karnataka by using a multistage sampling method. However, this study gives some suggestions for improving the socio-economic conditions of agricultural laborers in the Malnad region.

Keywords: Agricultural Labors, Socio-Economic Conditions, Issues and Challenges.

I. Introduction:

Agricultural laborers are individuals who work in the agricultural sector, performing tasks related to crop cultivation, harvesting, processing, and transportation. They are an essential part of the agricultural workforce and play a crucial role in ensuring the availability of food and other agricultural commodities in the market. They can be involved in various aspects of agricultural production, such as planting, weeding, irrigating, pruning, harvesting, sorting, grading, packing, and transporting crops. They can work on farms, plantations, or agricultural processing units, and may be employed by individual farmers or agricultural companies. Agricultural laborers can be either skilled or unskilled, depending on the nature of the work they perform. They may work on a permanent or seasonal basis, depending on the crop cycle and demand for labor. Agricultural labor is a physically demanding job that requires a lot of manual labor and often takes place in harsh conditions. Agricultural laborers are often exposed to various health and safety risks, such as exposure to pesticides, heavy machinery, and extreme weather conditions.

Malnad Region in Karnataka

The Malnad region, located in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, is known for its diverse agriculture, including coffee, tea, cardamom, pepper, and other crops. The region is home to a large number of agricultural laborers who work in various aspects of agricultural production, from planting and harvesting to processing and transportation. Agricultural laborers in the Malnad region are often marginalized and face various challenges and issues, such as low wages, poor working conditions, and limited access to education and training. These challenges are compounded by the seasonal nature of agriculture, which often leads to a loss of income during the off-season. Despite these challenges, agricultural laborers in the Malnad region play a crucial role in sustaining the region's economy and providing essential commodities to the market. In recent years, there have been efforts to improve the livelihoods of agricultural laborers in the region by providing access to education and training, social security schemes, and other benefits. Overall, agricultural laborers in the Malnad region are an integral part of the region's agricultural system and require greater attention and support to improve their living conditions and ensure their well-being.

Karnataka is a major agricultural area known for growing crops like coffee, tea, spices, and fruits. However, agricultural laborers in the region face a number of issues and challenges that impact their livelihoods and well-being. One of the primary challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region is low wages. Many laborers are paid very low wages for their work, which makes it difficult for them to support themselves and their families. Additionally, most agricultural work in the region is seasonal, which means that laborers only have work during certain times of the year. Another issue faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region is limited access to social security schemes. Many laborers do not have access to health insurance, pension, or other benefits, which makes it difficult for them to cope with unexpected expenses or emergencies. Poor working conditions and exploitation by middlemen are also major issues faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region. Laborers often work in difficult and hazardous conditions, with limited access to basic amenities like clean water and sanitation facilities. Additionally, many laborers are exploited by middlemen who pay them very low wages for their work. Finally, agricultural laborers in the Malnad region are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including unpredictable weather patterns and crop failures. These factors can have a major impact on their livelihoods and can make it difficult for them to support themselves and their families. Generally addressing the issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region is an important priority for ensuring sustainable development in the region and supporting the well-being of those who work in agriculture.

Malnadu Region in Shivamogga District

The Malnad region is a hilly area in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, India. It is known for its lush green forests, waterfalls, and coffee plantations. The region is located in the Shivamogga district of Karnataka and covers an area of approximately 20,000 square kilometers. This region is characterized by its fertile soil and high rainfall, which makes it an important agricultural region. Major crops grown in the region include coffee, tea, areca nut, spices, and fruits. The region is also known for its rich biodiversity and is home to several endemic species of plants and animals. The Malnad region is culturally rich and has a unique cuisine and tradition. The region is known for its delicious food, especially its non-vegetarian dishes. The Malnad region also has a rich tradition of folk art and music, including Yakshagana, a traditional dance-drama form. Also, it is a popular tourist destination and attracts visitors from all over the world. Visitors come to the region to enjoy its natural beauty, explore its forests and waterfalls, and experience its unique culture and cuisine. Overall, the Malnad region is a unique and important part of Karnataka's rich cultural and natural heritage.

II. Review of Literature

Siddhanath et.al (2019): were discussed the problems of agricultural laborers in India. However, agricultural laborers are facing several challenges and issues that impact their livelihoods and well-being. It identified that low wages and seasonal unemployment is the main problem of agricultural laborers in India. This is due to the lack of bargaining power and organization among the agricultural laborers. As a result, this study, most of the agricultural laborers struggle to meet their basic needs and are vulnerable to financial shocks also agricultural laborers have to seek employment in other sectors during the off-season, which often leads to a loss of income.

Kusuma and Basavaraju (2017): analyzed that agricultural laborer's scenario in Karnataka. This study has observed that percentage of agricultural laborers have increased from 16.65 percent to 28.74 percent during the period 1961 to 1991. However, it has slightly decreased to 25.4 percent in 2011 and Annual Growth Rate (AGR) of agricultural laborers has drastically decreased from 60.30 percent to -3.78 percent during the period. It is clear that share of agricultural laborers has recorded negative growth. This paper identified the problems of agricultural laborers, government policy measures and suggestions to improve the socio-economic conditions of agricultural laborers in Karnataka. Finally, the study concluded that agricultural laborer's condition is not satisfactory in India as well as Karnataka, and government should take some proper policy measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of agricultural laborers.

Vishwanath et.al (2022): conducted study in four selected districts viz., Bangalore, Chikmagalur, Hassan, and Madikeri districts of Karnataka state. In total 120 farmers were interviewed personally with an objective to understand the challenges the farmers face in promotion of ATC and also sought their suggestions to overcome the challenges. The study revealed that, high cost of labor (83.33%) was the major financial challenge it is due to fact that the most of the laborers were from outside their locality that comes in the search of job and demand more than the localities. Lack of mindset for commercial approach (83.33%) and weak communication skills of the farmers (75.00%) were human resource challenges this is due to the reason that organized efforts are seems to be lacking in this.

III. Statement of the Research Problem

The various studies have been conducted on issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region at the macro level. However, no significant study has been made to find out the issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in at the micro level in general. There is a significant research gap in the area of issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region. It includes What are the major challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the study area and how do these challenges impact their livelihoods? How do the social and economic factors such as caste, gender, and landownership impact the working conditions and wages of agricultural laborers in the region? What are the policy interventions that can be implemented to address the issues faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region? In this background, the present study has undertaken to examine “*Issues and Challenges of Agricultural Labours in Malnad Region in Shivamogga District*”.

IV. Objective of the Study

- To addressing the issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region of Shivamogga district.
- To study the living conditions and well-being of agricultural laborers in the Malaad region.
- To find out some suggestions to improve socio-economic conditions.

V. Methodology of the study

The present study is based on descriptive analysis to explain the issues and challenges of agricultural labor's in Malnad regions. In order to shows the relationship between issues and challenges primary data have been collected through interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions. In this process, 50 respondents were selected from Thirthahalli, Sagar and Shivamogga taluks of Shivamogga district of Karnataka by using multistage sampling method. To address these research questions, researchers can use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to the policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders working towards improving the livelihoods and working conditions of agricultural laborers in the Malnaad region.

VI. Results and Discussion

6.1: Issues and Challenges of Agricultural Labors in Malnad Region

- **Low wages:** Agricultural laborers in Malnad region often earn low wages, which are inadequate to meet their basic needs. This is due to the lack of bargaining power and organization among the laborers.
- **Seasonal employment:** Agriculture in the region is largely dependent on the monsoon, making it a seasonal activity. As a result, agricultural laborers have to seek employment in other sectors during the off-season, which often leads to a loss of income.
- **Lack of social security:** Agricultural laborers in the Malnad region do not have access to social security schemes such as health insurance, pension, and other benefits, leaving them vulnerable to financial shocks.
- **Poor working conditions:** Agricultural laborers in the region often work under harsh conditions, with little access to basic amenities such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and shelter.
- **Exploitation by middlemen:** Agricultural laborers in the region often have to deal with middlemen who exploit them by paying low wages and charging high interest rates on loans.
- **Limited access to education and training:** Many agricultural laborers in the Malnad region lack access to education and training, which limits their ability to acquire new skills and move to better-paying jobs.
- **Climate change:** The Malnad region is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as droughts and floods, which can adversely affect agricultural production and livelihoods of agricultural laborers.
- **Limited access to social security schemes:** such as health insurance and pension, is also a significant challenge for agricultural laborers in the Malnad region. This leaves them vulnerable to financial shocks and limits their ability to save for the future.
- **Working conditions of agricultural laborers** in the Malnad region are often poor, with limited access to basic amenities such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and shelter. This can have adverse effects on their health and well-being.

- **Exploitation by middlemen** is another issue faced by agricultural laborers in the region. Middlemen often pay low wages and charge high interest rates on loans, leaving agricultural laborers in a cycle of debt.
- **Vulnerability of the Malnad region** to the effects of climate change, such as droughts and floods, can have significant impacts on agricultural production and the livelihoods of agricultural laborers.

Overall, addressing the issues and challenges faced by agricultural laborers in the Malnad region requires a multi-pronged approach that includes improving wages and working conditions, providing access to education and training, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

6.2: Suggestions for Improving Socio - Economic Condition of Agricultural Labourers in Malnadu region

- **Increasing the bargaining power of agricultural laborers:** This can be achieved by organizing labor unions, creating farmer cooperatives, and providing education and training on negotiating skills and collective bargaining.
- **Providing access to social security schemes:** Agricultural laborers in the Malnad region should have access to social security schemes such as health insurance, pension, and other benefits. This could be achieved through government-sponsored schemes or through the formation of farmer cooperatives.
- **Increasing access to credit:** Agricultural laborers should have access to affordable credit to invest in their farms and improve their livelihoods. This could be achieved through government-sponsored credit schemes or by partnering with financial institutions.
- **Improving working conditions:** Agricultural laborers should have access to basic amenities such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and shelter. Safety equipment and training should also be provided to minimize health and safety risks associated with agricultural work.
- **Promoting sustainable agricultural practices:** Sustainable agriculture practices such as organic farming and crop diversification can help improve soil health, increase crop yield, and promote long-term livelihoods for agricultural laborers.
- **Encouraging alternative livelihoods:** To provide a stable source of income during the off-season, agricultural laborers should be encouraged to pursue alternative livelihoods such as small businesses or non-farm work.
- **Strengthening market linkages:** Access to markets and fair prices for agricultural produce can help increase the income of agricultural laborers. This could be achieved through the formation of farmer cooperatives or by partnering with market intermediaries and it support sustainable agricultural development in the region.

Table 1.1: Agricultural Labour Scenario in Karnataka 1961- 2021

Year	Karnataka Total Population		Total Cultivators		Total Agricultural Labourers		Total Agricultural Workers	
	In Millions	% AGR	(In %)	% AGR	(In %)	%AGR	(In %)	%AGR
1961	23.6	-	53.7	-	16.65	-	70.36	-
1971	29.3	24.15	40	-25.51	26.69	60.30	66.69	-5.21
1981	37.1	26.62	38.25	-4.37	26.78	0.33	65.03	-2.48
1991	44.8	20.75	34.63	-9.46	28.74	7.31	63.1	-2.96
2001	52.7	17.63	29.48	-14.87	26.4	-8.14	55.88	-11.44
2011	61.1	15.93	29.4	-0.27	25.4	-3.78	54.8	-1.93
2021	67.42	15.60	51.09	-0.37	224.03	-1.56	51.4	-1.32

Source: Census of India 2011 Annual Growth Rate (AGR)

VII. Conclusion

Agricultural laborers in the Malnad region of Karnataka face a number of challenges and issues that impact their livelihoods and well-being. These include low wages, seasonal employment, limited access to social security schemes, poor working conditions, exploitation by middlemen, and vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Addressing these challenges and issues requires a multi-pronged approach that includes improving wages and working conditions, providing access to education and training, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and encouraging alternative livelihoods. It is important for the government, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to work together to support agricultural laborers in the Malnad region and ensure that they have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Investing in the well-being of agricultural laborers is not only important for the individuals and families directly affected, but also for the sustainable development of the region as a whole. By addressing the challenges and issues faced by agricultural laborers, we can help create a more just, equitable, and sustainable society.

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