



Gender Discrimination in The Agricultural Sector In Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The present study is focused on the gender inequities perpetuated at home and in farm activities. The paper focuses on the marginalization of women in the economy, the gender disparities in the labour market, the impact of economic structural adjustment on women's participation in development, the invisibility of the informal sector activities. This is then followed by the need for gender budgets and policy implications on gender and macroeconomics are discussed. Lastly, further research areas in the area of gender and macroeconomics are suggested. The main objective of this paper is to know the extent of gender inequities in work participation, labour days available and wage rates in agriculture. The study used Multi-stage stratified random sampling method to select the respondents from among the farm households. The study is based on sample survey of selected farm households in six villages of Krishna districts in Andhra Pradesh. By using simple random sampling method from each village 33 respondents was interviewed in 6 villages of each district, altogether 198 labourers are selected. A detailed structured questionnaire was used to elicit the information from the farm households. Data regarding gender wise hired labour participation, family labour contribution, farm practices, wage rates, household activities, literacy level and some perceptions of the respondents were collected.

Keywords: Agricultural labours, Andhra Pradesh, Guntur, Wage rates, man days, Employment

Introduction

Andhra Pradesh economy is agro-based and a major proportion of women in the labour force work in agriculture and traditional industries like cashew, coir, and handloom. A significant proportion of the labour force in the agricultural sector comprises women. Men were able to opt out from agriculture and seek new employment avenues elsewhere when they encountered low prospects in agriculture. Women have remained, however, in the agricultural sector, accepting the traditional practice of paying wages to women at half the rates for men. Increasing casualization of work, falling incomes, and increasing insecurity of employment are real threats endangering the interests of women in the agricultural sector. These developments have had disturbing implications for their health as health is closely linked to a variety of socio-economic, cultural, political, and ecological dimensions.

The high rate of illiteracy and low economic status of women underline the need for increasing their earning power by providing the income generating assts. In most of the developing countries, greater emphasis is laid on the need for development of women and their active involvement in the main stream of development. In our country, ever since independence a number of innovative schemes have been launched for the upliftment of women in our country. Now the emphasis has shifted from development to empower of women. The issue of empowerment of women became more significant as women constitute half of the population and unfortunately they had been discriminated a lot. Although economists have treated issues of male and female participation in the labour force since the early 1900s, gender was not itself used as a category of analysis. The early treatments of female labour force participation, male/female wage differentials and wage discrimination,

rested on the dynamics of the market operating on men and women, rather than on the role played by gender in the way that markets function fundamentally.

According to 2001 Census, the sex ratio (number of women per 1000 men) is 933. The literacy rate is 39.42 per cent for women and 63.86 per cent for men. Women's participation rate in the labour force has been declining. Both in the organized and in the unorganized sectors of the economy, women have been contributing substantially and yet their contributions go unnoticed by the family as well as the society. Women work remains invisible and underrated.

More than two-thirds of the population of India is dependent on agriculture. Though Green Revolution technologies enhanced agricultural productivity, they also widened economic disparities and deepened gender discrimination in community life. The introduction of capital intensive technologies in the agricultural sector has had differential impact on men and women and women have been adversely affected due to lack of access to technology (Boserup, 1970).

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The introduction of capital intensive technologies in the agricultural sector has had differential impact on men and women and women have been adversely affected due to lack of access to technology (Boserup, 1970). Gender discrimination in the employment sector is enduring, an overwhelming majority of women working within the boundaries of informal sectors. Despite all the developmental efforts, 96 percent of the women workers in the country are reportedly employed in the unorganised sector (Deshpande and Deshpande, 1999) characterized by low wages, high levels of insecurity of employment and appallingly poor conditions of work. Developmental efforts of the post- World War II period have had differential impacts on women and men of the developing economies. Implementation of structural adjustment programmes and restructuring of economies which commenced during the mid-1980s lay emphasis on encouragement of private capital. Retreat of the state especially from the welfare sectors and cutbacks in public sector expenditure accentuated the vulnerability of the poor particularly women, in many of the developing countries. (Gosh, 1994). Several studies have questioned.

The present study is focused on the gender inequities perpetuate at home and in farm activities. The paper focuses on the marginalization of women in the economy, the gender disparities in the labour market, the impact of economic structural adjustment on women's participation in development, the invisibility of the informal sector activities. This is then followed by the need for gender budgets and policy implications on gender and macroeconomics are discussed. Lastly, further research areas in the area of gender and macroeconomics are suggested.

The main objective of this paper is to know the extent of gender inequities in work participation, labour days available and wage rates in agriculture.

Methodology

The study used a multi-stage stratified random sampling method to select the respondents from among the farm households. The study is based on a sample survey of selected from households in six villages of Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh. By using simple random sampling method from each village 33 respondents were interviewed in 6 villages of Kurnool district. A detailed structured questionnaire was used to elicit the information from the farm households. Data regarding gender-wise hired labor participation, family labor contribution, farm practices, wage rates, household activities, literacy level and some perceptions of the respondents were collected.

Results and discussions

The data regarding the percentage distribution of the respondent households by their literacy level and their caste categories were presented in table-1. It is observed from the table that the proportion of male literates is found to be high in males with 61 percent, whereas 36.9 percent of females are literate. It is observed from the table that the male literacy rate is found to be higher in forward caste and backward caste categories, marking 67.05 percent and 62.20 percent respectively, while it is 44 percent in scheduled castes and a mere 10 percent in Scheduled Tribes. Further, it is observed that illiteracy prevails at higher proportions among both genders of males and females of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. As a whole, it is observed that the illiteracy rate of the sample households is reported to be at 40 per cent in males and 63 percent in females.

table -1 gender wise literacy level

(Percentages)

Caste category	Male			Female		
	Illiterate	Literate	Total	Illiterate	Literate	Total
General	32.5	67.5	100.0	47.3	52.7	100.0
SC	55.9	44.1	100.0	79.7	20.3	100.0
ST	83.3	16.7	100.0	83.3	16.7	100.0
BC	37.8	62.2	100.0	73.1	26.9	100.0
Total	39.0	61.0	100.0	63.1	36.9	100.0

Source: Primary data

Gender wise and caste wise work schedule hours in a Week

Although men are believed to be the major actors in agricultural activities, yet female active participation in farming activities is an important characteristic of India's agriculture. Family farming system is predominantly patriarchal in nature in which both males and females contribute their labour input, but males play dominant role in farming because of their access to farm resources, production technologies, output and influence on decision making process (3). However, women's status, responsibility, contribution, involvement, wisdom and knowledge in traditional agricultural activities and other non-commercial activities remain unrecognized and are rarely rewarded for their contribution. In India, women play an important role in almost all agricultural activities directly or indirectly. However, their services have never been reflected in GDP. The data relating to time spent by men and women in different household activities in the present study have been incorporated in Table-2. It is observed that in household activities, pre-cooking, cooking, post-cooking, washing clothes, cleaning house, care of children as well as overall, the mean score of men's involvement was negligible in all caste categories.

table-2 gender wise and caste wise work schedule hours in a week

(In hours)

Activity	Male working hours per week				Total
	General	SC	ST	BC	
Working in field	48.44	52.08	54.00	48.09	49.00
Supervision	13.00	9.17	1.19	10.08	11.06
Cooking	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Milking Cow	1.00	0.14	2.31	0.40	0.45
Draw Water	3.00	3.01	5.00	4.00	3.29
Gather Firewood	1.45	4.13	5.00	4.27	3.15
Grazing	4.27	4.41	3.50	4.57	4.55
Total	71.16	72.94	71	71.64	71.75
Activity	Female working hours per week				Total
	General	SC	ST	BC	
Working in field	45.57	51.03	43.19	48.58	47.6
Supervision	1.4	0	0	1.19	1.05
Cooking	13.42	14	12.41	13.65	13.42
Milking Cow	3.00	1.54	3.5	2.24	2.45
Draw Water	4.46	4.2	5.25	3.44	4.2
Gather Fire wood	2.31	3.08	5.51	2.36	2.59
Grazing	1.26	0.49	3.5	1.42	1.4
Total	71.42	74.34	73.36	72.88	72.71

Source: Primary data

On an average women devote 47 hours per week on the field (Own field and hired labor) in different activities such as, land preparation, farm weeding, harvesting, grading, carrying the head load, threshing, and winnowing were performed jointly but predominantly by women. On the other hand, on average man devotes 49 hours per week to field in different activities such as plowing, sowing, (with machine and bullock), pesticide dusting, spadework during field irrigation, manure and fertilizer application, uprooting of seedlings and marketing of grains were exclusively performed by men.

It observed from the data there is no large variations in working hours on the field in both genders. Along with farm work, man devotes on an average 11 hours per week to supervision, whereas 1 hour per week by women. Supervision is the major component for the variation of labor days between men and women. While, a woman devotes 13 hours per day to cooking (including cleaning, cutting, and preparation) against nil by men.

Apart from this female also dominant in all other household activities which are uncovered. It may be inferred that women exclusively perform all the household tasks. The multiple roles of women in agriculture especially in food storage are generally, underestimated and undervalued.

Total number of labor days in a year

Agriculture used to be the major source of employment for both men and women. But, the proportion of male labour in the agricultural sector has declined over time. Men began to move out for better employment and higher wages. The average work load of men and women of the lower socio-economic stratum (S.C) were higher than those of high (General) and medium socioeconomic strata (BC) respondents in farm operations except in Scheduled tribe categories. However, data show higher involvement of women than men in cultivation. It may, therefore, be inferred that low socio-economic stratum women performed more work in crop cultivation than the women of high and medium socioeconomic strata. The obtained involvement patterns confirm the heavy work load of the women of low socio-economic stratum. The main reason for this phenomenon is that the respondents of low socio-economic stratum are mainly landless and wage earners, who are left with no other alternative for their livelihood, than to work on others fields as agricultural labourers. As these womenfolk are left with no other alternative for their livelihood they are pushed into less skilled, low paying, more time consuming and drudgery prone activities.

table-3 average number of labour days in a year (In labour days)

Caste category	Labour days	
	Male	Female
General	108	131
SC	169	171
ST	125	111
BC	119	131
Total	131	141

Source: Primary data

Average daily wage rate variation

In addition to lack of access to adequate number of working days, gender discrimination in wage rates makes women's position more vulnerable (Table-4). Women get only half the wage rate of men. The data pertaining to gender and caste category wise wage rates. The men earn an income of Rs 500 to 575 per day while women get only Rs 80 to 100 per day. Half-day wages of a woman is Rs 50 per day. The majority of the workers reported that they get their wages daily at the end of the work. The wage rates and modes of payment vary according to operation. Thus, for weeding women get cash (Rs 350 per day) while for harvest they earn wages in kind. Foremost of the men's work they get Rs 525 per day. Among all caste categories S.C s were able to get high wage rate (Rs.575) followed by forward caste (Rs.575) when compared with the other caste categories. The sex-wise division of labour provides the rationale for gender-based wage differentials as men and women perform different tasks. The same is reinforced by the technological development such as use of tractors which ensures high wages for men where socio-cultural constraints limit women's access to the use of mechanical devices.

table-4average daily wage rate variation

(in rupees)

Caste category	Wage rate	
	Men	Women
General	575	350
SC	575	375
ST	500	300
BC	575	350
Total	525	340

Source: Primary data

Conclusion

The results of the study show that illiteracy prevails at higher proportions among both genders of male and female of scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. As a whole, it is observed that the illiteracy rate of the sample households is reported to be at 40 per cent in male and 63 per cent in female. On average women devote 47 hours per week to field and on the other hand, on an average man devotes 49 hours per week to work in field. It is observed from the data that there is no large variation in working hours on field in both gender. Along with farm work, man devotes on an average 11 hours per week to supervision, whereas 1 hour per week by women. While, a woman devotes 13 hours per day to cooking against nil by men. The multiple roles of women in agriculture especially in food storage are generally, underestimated and undervalued. However, data show higher involvement of women than men in cultivation. It may, therefore, be inferred that low socio-economic stratum women performed more work in crop cultivation than the women of high and medium socioeconomic strata. The main reason for this phenomenon is that the respondents of low socio-economic stratum are mainly landless and wage earners, who are left with no other alternative for their livelihood, than to work on others' fields as agricultural labourers. As these womenfolk are left with no other alternative for their livelihood they are pushed into less skilled, low paying, more time consuming and drudgery prone activities. The same is reinforced by the technological development such as use of tractors which ensures high wages for men where socio-cultural constraints limit women's access to the use of mechanical devices.

Suggestions

- State authorities instigate a communication campaign to raise awareness of gender equality and women's rights for female workers, so that they can claim their rights, and enjoy gender equality at work, in the family and in the community.
- Also promote communication to increase awareness of labourers, especially women, about government policies and programs for employment to encourage them to participate actively in these programs and to better understand their rights and responsibilities. Provincial and state authorities develop a mechanism to monitor compliance with the commitments set out in the Priority Investors Scheme relating to promoting gender equality.
- For those who lost land due to land acquisition for other purposes, allocating a proportion of agricultural land so that they can maintain agricultural production. Offering long-term vocational training or priorities for employment for the children of these workers.
- Offering free health insurance to ensure access to health care for the vulnerable groups mentioned above, including rural women working in urban areas with incomes above the rural poverty line but below the urban poverty line, are who would therefore not be eligible for health insurance for poor people in their place of origin.

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