

Women Participation in Agriculture Sector



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Abstract

In today's society, the role of women extends way beyond the four walls of home and the bringing-up of children. Now a woman has to perform the dual role of a house wife and that of a bread earner of the family. Both roles of modern era women require a lot of time and energy. The study for the present paper was conducted in the villages of two districts namely Hoshiarpur and Bathinda of the Punjab state. A sample of 160 rural farm women laborers who were involved in various agriculture operations was of the selected districts was taken. A well structured interview schedule was used to collect the information required. Apart from interviews, field observations were also made to observe the participation of women in the farm activities. The data collected was analysed by employing simple mean, frequencies, percentages and tests of analysis. It is identified that there are number of determinants of female labor force participation in agriculture sector of Punjab. The results revealed that the younger female laborers attract the labor market more than the other age groups due to level of productivity. Moreover the highest proportion of female laborers belonged to the schedule castes and mostly the married women are involved in agriculture activities as compared to the other groups. The majority of the female laborers are having 3 to 4 children and are illiterate due to which they chose to work on farms to financially support their family. The highest percentage of female laborers owned semi pucca house and as regards the nature of work they work on yearly seasonal contracts. So they work during the sowing and harvesting seasons which are considered as peak periods in agriculture sector. Approximately 50 percent of female laborers had to work extra without any extra payment due to family circumstances. Presence of a vast majority of male laborers in the agriculture sector has an adverse impact on the employment opportunities and wage rates of female laborers.

Keywords: Female Laborers, Agriculture Sector, Women Participation.

Introduction

Punjab is the bread basket of India. It is the home of the green revolution. The northwestern state of Punjab, India was the epicenter of the Green Revolution in the subcontinent, as western foundations sponsored a new package of high-yield seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, and farm machinery in mid-1960s to increase agricultural production in developing countries. Since the post independence period, Punjab has witnessed a high level of economic prosperity, which has resulted in high per capita income. However, the higher level of economic development has not improved economic and social status of women in Punjab. In today's society, the role of women extends way beyond the home and the bringing-up of children. Women have to perform the dual role of housewife and bread earner of the family. Both roles of modern era woman require a lot of energy and time.

Women from rural areas are engaged in farm activities as cultivators, assistants to male cultivators and agricultural laborers. Women are actively involved in pre-sowing, post-sowing, harvesting and post-harvesting operations as well as allied activities. 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. 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. (Swaminathan,1985). Punjab is one of the most developed states in the agriculture sector. Agriculture being a family activity, women

had contributed significantly to the agricultural development of the state. But today with agricultural production having reached its peak, the scenario in rural Punjab is different from what it was in the past as few years back. (Sidhu et.al, 2005).

Objective of the Study

To examine the determinants of female labor force participation in agriculture sector of Punjab.

Review of Literature

Ram et al. (2011) has focused their study on the sustainable development through women participation in SMEs business growth in Sindh. Researcher found that participation of women in formal workforce and in the range of other activities there are equal opportunities for employment for both men and women workers in Pakistan. But women in rural areas are less confident as their husbands and other family members have always given them hard time once they are exposing themselves to outside the boundaries of the house. The biggest challenges which they were facing are lack of marketing facilities, Karo Kari criminal activities and they are deprived from the basic rights. There should be need to examine the rural women challenges in SMEs business and to overcome the problems like Karo Kari and other various social growth issues.

Shaheen et al. (2011) investigated the patterns of female labor force participation in case of Pakistan. The variables used in the analysis are female labour force participation, age, marital status, area, female monthly income, family monthly income, family size, household head education, different classes of female education and employment status. Results of this model depicts that household head education, primary, middle, matric & mudrassa education level is negatively related with the decision of female labor force participation while, decision towards participation is strong if female belonged to urban area, if she is married, if she has higher education, and if she has large family size.

Kaur and Kaur (2012) analysed about the factors affecting female labor force participation in Punjab. They examined the trends and patterns of female workforce participation across Punjab, during 1991 and 2001. The higher level of economic development did not improve economic and social status of women in Punjab. The poor status of women in Punjab was reflected through the Gender Development Index (GDI), which estimate the unequal achievements of women and men using the same dimensions that were captured in HDI (Human Development Index). The gender disparities exist in the state if GDI score was less than the HDI scores. The findings concluded that the basic level of education can be considered as the minimum criterion for female labor market participation. It was suggested that government should provide higher education to females especially in the rural areas. Education plays an important role in women's decisions of economic participation.

Minimol and Makesh (2012) stated in their study about women Self Help Groups (SHG's), formed exclusively for rural women, being an effective medium for community involvement in developmental

activities. They explained that it can be powerful tool for the empowerment of women, by freeing themselves from the clutches of usurious money lenders. Their study attempted to assess the role of SHG's in improving the socio- economic status of the rural women in Kerala. They found that major problems faced were absenteeism and conflict among the members. They also found personal problems faced by members i.e. lack of family support and low motivation. They suggested that meetings of SHG's should be regularly conducted to widen the scope; meetings should have pre-prescribed agenda, aimed at achieving. For the employability of rural women it was suggested that measures can be employed to impart technical/professional training to members to enhance their skills.

Parrey and Bhasin (2013) noted that the characteristics of gender discrimination in workforce and the impact of discrimination on growth. Researchers observed that the work participation of Indian male is nearly double than that of female participation. Having a workplace free from gender bias is becoming a business imperative as all compete for employees and customers. Researcher pointed out that there is a need of new kinds of institutions, incorporating new norms and rules that support equal and just relations between women and men.

Methodology

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 district who were involved in various agriculture operations was collected for this study. In the study 80 respondents belonging to farm families and 80 to non-farm families were selected randomly from each district. 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 analysed by using simple mean, frequencies, percentages and tests of analysis.

Results and Discussion

The information given in Table 1 indicate that the higher percentage i.e. 32.5 percent of female laborers in Hoshiarpur district as well as 34.37 percent in Bathinda district were from the age group of 25-35 years, followed by 27.5 and 28.75 percent of them from Hoshiarpur and Bathinda districts respectively belong to the age group of 36-45 years. The lowest percentage i.e. 5 percent of female laborers in Hoshiarpur district fall in age group 15-25 years and 10.63 percent of female laborers in Bathinda district fall in age the group 46-55 years. The average age of female laborers came to be 39.16 in Punjab. It has been observed that average age of women in Hoshiarpur district is 41.19 years and average age of women in Bathinda district is 37.13 years. The average age of women in Hoshiarpur district was significantly higher than that of the average age of women laborers in Bathinda district as indicated by the t-value of 2.77.

Table 1
Distribution of Female Laborers according to their Age

DISTRICT	15-25		26-35		36-45		46-55		>55		AVERAGE
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	
HOSHIARPUR	8	5	52	32.5	44	27.5	25	15.62	31	19.38	41.19
BATHINDA	23	14.4	55	34.37	46	28.75	17	10.63	19	11.87	37.13
PUNJAB	31	9.69	107	33.44	90	28.12	42	13.13	50	15.62	39.16
t-value	2.77										

Source: Field survey 2019

A perusal of Table 2 shows that the highest proportion i.e. 61.25 and 60 percent of female laborers from Hoshiarpur and Bathinda districts respectively belonged to the schedule castes, followed by 29.38 percent in Hoshiarpur and 30 percent in Bathinda belonged to the backward castes. The remaining proportion of 9.37 percent of female laborers in Hoshiarpur and 10 percent in

Bathinda were from the general caste. For the state of Punjab as a whole the majority of female laborers i.e.60.62 percent belonged to the scheduled castes, followed by 29.69 percent who belonged to backward castes and remaining 9.69 percent from the general castes. The pattern of caste was quite similar in both the areas as indicated by the chi-square value of 0.0634.

Table 2
Distribution of Female Laborers according to Their Caste

DISTRICT	SC		BC		GENERAL	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
HOSHIARPUR	98	61.25	47	29.38	15	9.37
BATHINDA	96	60	48	30	16	10
PUNJAB	194	60.62	95	29.69	31	9.69
chi square	0.0634					

Source: Field survey 2019

The data presented in the Table 3 reveals that the highest proportion i.e. 90 and 86.25 percent of female laborers from Hoshiarpur and Bathinda districts respectively were married. Only 5.62 percent of female laborers from Hoshiarpur and 7.5 percent from Bathinda were single, while 1.25 percent of female laborers in Hoshiarpur and 1.88 percent in

Bathinda were divorce. There were 3.13 percent of them in Hoshiarpur and 4.37 percent in Bathinda were widow laborers. As for the state of Punjab the highest percentage of female laborers were married, i.e. 88.13 and lowest percentage of female laborers were divorcee, i.e. 1.56.

Table 3
Distribution of Women Laborers According to their Marital Status

DISTRICT	MARRIED		UNMARRIED		DIVORCEE		WIDOW	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
HOSHIARPUR	144	90	9	5.62	2	1.25	5	3.13
BATHINDA	138	86.25	12	7.5	3	1.88	7	4.37
PUNJAB	282	88.13	19	6.56	5	1.56	12	3.75

Source: Field survey 2019

Table 4 shows that the majority of the female laborers i.e.56.25 percent from Hoshiarpur district and 48.75 percent from Bathinda district are having 3 to 4 children followed by 23.75 percent from Hoshiarpur district and 33.13 percent from Bathinda district are having up to 2 children. The lowest percentage 20 percent from Hoshiarpur district and 18.12 percent

from Bathinda district are having 5 and more children. For the state of Punjab the majority i.e.52.5 percent of the female laborers were having 3 to 4 children. As regards the no. of children in both the districts under study it was quite similar as indicated by the chi-square value of 3.4772.

Table 4
Distribution of Female Laborers According to Number of Children

DISTRICT	0-2		3-4		>5		AVERAGE
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	
HOSHIARPUR	38	23.75	90	56.25	32	20	3.43
BATHINDA	53	33.13	78	48.75	29	18.12	3.2
PUNJAB	91	28.44	168	52.5	61	19.06	3.32
Chi-square	3.4772						

Source: Field survey 2019

The information contained in the Table 5 shows that the highest proportion i.e. 71.25 and 70 percent of female laborers from Bathinda and Hoshiarpur districts respectively were illiterate,

followed by 21.25 and 18.75 percent having education up to primary school from Bathinda and Hoshiarpur districts respectively. The lowest proportion i.e. 6 and 8 percent of them were matric pass from Bathinda

and Hoshiarpur districts respectively, followed by 6 percent of female laborers from Bathinda and 10 percent of female laborers from Hoshiarpur were

middle pass. The highest proportion of female laborers was illiterate in Punjab.

Table 5
Distribution of the Female Laboures According to their Education Level

DISTRICT	ILLITRATE		PRIMARY		MIDDLE		MATRIC	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
HOSHIARPUR	112	70	30	18.75	10	6.25	8	5
BATHINDA	114	71.25	34	21.25	6	3.75	6	3.75
PUNJAB	226	70.63	64	20	16	5	14	4.37
CHI-SQUARE	1.5534							

Source: Field survey 2019

Table 6 reveals that 3.75 percent of female laborers in Punjab did not have a house of their own while 6.25 percent of them were having only katcha house. The highest percentage of female laborers 61.87 percent owned semi pucca house, followed by

28.13 percent of female laborers in Punjab who were having own pucca house. The average score of quality of owning a house works out to be 2.15 out of 3 and districts under study also dispcit the similar pattern of quality of owning a house.

Table 6
Distribution of Female Laborers according to Quality of House

DISTRICT	QUALITY OF HOUSE								AVERAGE
	NOT OWNED 0		OWNED KATCHA 1		OWNED SEMI PUCCA 2		OWNED PUCCA 3		
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	
HOSHIARPUR	5	3.13	9	5.62	98	61.25	48	30	2.18
BATHINDA	7	4.38	11	6.87	100	62.5	42	26.25	2.11
PUNJAB	12	3.75	20	6.25	198	61.87	90	28.13	2.15

Source: Field survey 2019

The persual of table 7 highlights that the highest proportion, i.e. 50.94 percent of female laborers work on farms on yearly seasonal contract

basis followed by 30.94 percent of female laborers work on farms on part time contract basis and only 18.12 percent of them work on daily wages basis.

Table 7
Distribution of Female Laborers according to Nature of Work

NATURE OF WORK	HOSHIARPUR		BATHINDA		PUNJAB	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
PART TIME CONTRACT	48	30	51	31.87	99	30.94
DAILY WAGES BASIS	32	20	26	16.25	58	18.12
YEARLY SEASONAL CONTRACT	80	50	83	51.88	163	50.94

Source: Field survey 2019

Table 8 reveals that 50.63 percent of female laborers work for 10 hours a day. Only 7.81 percent of them work for 12 hours a day while 41.56 percent of

them work for 8 hours a day. District-wise analysis also depicts a similar pattern in case of both districts Hoshiarpur as well as Bathinda.

Table 8
Distribution of Female Laborers according to Length of Working Day

WORKING HOURS PER DAY	HOSHIARPUR		BATHINDA		PUNJAB	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
8 HOURS	64	40	69	43.13	133	41.56
10 HOURS	90	56.25	72	45	162	50.63
12 HOURS	6	3.75	19	11.87	25	7.81
F-ratio	2.0864					

Source: Field survey 2019

The data shown in the table 9 indicates that the majority of female laborers have to face discrimination at the work place as they have to work for longer duration. The proportion of female laborers

who reported discrimination in working hours comes out to be 65 percent in Hoshiarpur district and 61.87 percent in Bathinda district. For the state as a whole the female laborers who have to face dicrimination as

regards the working hours is 63.44 percent. Only 33.75 percent of female laborers are given wages equal to male laborers, whereas the remaining 66.25 percent are discriminated in this regard. The situation is much more similar in both the districts under study. In Hoshiarpur district only 31.25 of the female

laborers and in Bathinda District 38.13 percent female laborers are treated at par with the male laborers as regards their wages. The proportion of the female workers who are discriminated in wages in Hoshiarpur and Bathinda district turns out to be 68.75 and 63.75 percent respectively.

Table 9

Distribution of the Female Laborers according to Discrimination regarding Working Hours and Wages

DISTRICT	Discrimination in Working Hours		Wages equal to Male labourers	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
HOSHIARPUR	104 (65)	56 (35)	50 (31.25)	110 (68.75)
BATHINDA	99 (61.87)	61 (38.13)	58 (36.25)	102 (63.75)
PUNJAB	203 (63.44)	117 (36.56)	108 (33.75)	212 (66.25)

Source: Field survey 2019

Note: the figures given in parentheses represent percentages.

Conclusion

It is identified that the determinants of female labor force participation in agriculture sector of Punjab are their age group, caste, no. of children, marital status, housing structure, nature of work, extra working hours and wage rates. It can be concluded from the results that the younger female laborers attract the laborers market more than the other age groups due to level of productivity as the majority of female laborers belong to the age group of 25-35 years of age. It is also found that the highest proportion of female laborers belonged to the schedule castes and mostly married women are involved in agricultural activities as compared to the other groups. The highlight of the present study is that the majority of the female laborers are having 3 to 4 children and are illiterate due to which they chose to work in farms to support their families. As per the quality of house highest percentage of female laborers and their families owned semi pucca house. It also works out that a large percent of female laborers were involved in yearly seasonal contracts in case of nature of work, so they prefer to work during the sowing and harvesting season which are considered as peak periods in agriculture sector. Approximately 50 percent of female laborers had to work extra; it means the female laborers had to work extra beyond the specified length of 8 hours a day without any extra payment due to family circumstances. As the employers prefer to employ the male laborers in their fields so the employ ability of large section of male workers adversely affect the employment opportunities for the female laborers which in turn affects the wage rate of these female laborers.

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