

A STUDY OF ROLE OF WOMEN FARM WORKERS IN DIFFERENT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MEWAT DISTRICT OF HARYANA REGION

¹Manoj Rathee*, ²Ashish Barak, ³Ankit

¹⁻³Research Scholar, Department of Commerce

^{1,3}Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana, India

²Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar, Rohtak, Haryana, India

Email ID: ¹mrathee19@gmail.com, ²ashishbarak15998@gmail.com, ³ankitrathee00001@gmail.com

Accepted: 10.12.2022

Published: 01.01.2023

Keywords: Women Farm Workers, Agriculture, Role.

Abstract

In the progression of agriculture and other related industries, women play an important role that is both crucial and vital. Their participation varies depending on the characteristics and peculiarities of the agricultural production system. Women's contributions to societal and economic growth can be broken down into two categories: those made inside and those made outside the house. Women's participation carries with it a distinctive quality that is shared across the nations, and that is the fact that in addition to carrying out all of the tasks considered to be unproductive in the home, women operate as workers, laborers, cultivators, and producers. However, the true picture of the contributions that women make and the effort that they do for their families is seldom recognized. Women who work in agriculture as laborers or cultivators play an essential role in the industry since they are associated with the families of farmers. It is quite regrettable for both women and society as a whole that the role that women play in agriculture has not been brought to light. In this work, an attempt is made to examine the engagement of women in agricultural activities on a more microscale by using a district as a case study. The study also makes it abundantly evident that female farm employees have made significant contributions to farm operations, despite the fact that their influence in decision-making appears to be negligible. The findings of this research article also imply that male and female workers in the community should be accorded the same level of importance as one another.

**Corresponding Author*

Paper Identification



© IJRTS Takshila Foundation, Manoj Rathee, All Rights Reserved.

Introduction

In India, women are considered the backbone of food security. Women play an important and vital role in agricultural development and related fields and they make profitable economic contribution in agriculture and rural economy. Rural women in India are extensively engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Their involvement differs with the nature and variations in agro production system. Participation of women in agriculture varies with status of landowning of farmers. In broader sense, women contribution in socio- economic development has two folds i.e. in home and outside home. Women responsibility as wife, daughter and mother cannot be ignored in home. Women act as caretaker of family members and fulfill their requirement of food. They are involved in seed sowing or plantation of crops, weeding, irrigating, processing of crops, harvesting, threshing work and storage of crops. Women twin role in home as well as outside home shows an important contribution in productive system. But rural women are always underrated in process of development throughout the world. Most of the activities of women that are related to economic productive go unnoticed. It is assumed that more than 70 percent of farm work are performed by women and constitute nearly 60 percent of population of farming. Women role in agriculture has not brought to light and this is very unfortunate for women as well for society. This paper tried to analyze the role of women in different kind of farm activities at micro level by considering district as a case study. Mewat district is one of the socio-economically backward area of Haryana state. In this district the women involvement in farm operations is much higher than the other districts of the state.

Study Area

Mewat district was created on April 4, 2004 from Gurgaon district which lies in southern parts of Haryana state. Mewat is largely comprises of plain and undulating topography. There is little cultivation to rocky areas, poor soil cover and roughness of surface. Mewat is a cultural region rather than an administrative unit and people of Mewat are known as Meo's or Mewati. Mewat has come out with 10,89,263 persons out of which 5,71,162 are males and 5,18,101 females in census 2011 and accounts for only 4.3 percent of the total population of the state. The decadal Growth rate of

population during 2001-2011 was 38.7 which is higher than the state average (19.9 percent). The overall sex ratio of Mewat was only 906 females to 1000 males as against the national average of 927 females per 1000 males but it was higher than state average of 879. It suggests better sex ratio in comparison to the state figure (869), but worse in comparison to the national average of 927. In comparison to the state average of 76.6 percent, the literacy percentages in Mewat are the lowest (56.10 percent) with 69.9 percent literacy recorded for male and 36.6 percent for females. Work participation rate of women is higher in primary (70.78 percent) activities. Out of the total women agriculture working population 41.67 percent were engaged in cultivation and 29.11 percent were working as agricultural labour.

Review of Literature

(Patil & Babu, 2018) demonstrated the arduous tasks performed by women in agricultural operations as well as the role of women in various sectors of agriculture. The gender disparity between male and female agricultural employees is also given in relation to a number of different factors, including money, education, technology, etc.

(Rao, 2006) surveyed a total of 95 randomly chosen household heads from the Jammula Palem hamlet in the Prakasam district. The analysis is mostly based on primary data pertaining to the years 1988 to 1998 about labour employment, pay, operational holding, etc. The study came to the conclusion that although women actively participate in farm work, they make less money than males. According to the survey, women need to band together and organize in order to make their contributions known to others.

(Satyavathi et al., 2010) examined the impact of the Green Revolution and mechanization on Indian farm women. The study emphasized the necessity of a new agenda for agricultural research and extension that incorporates gender analysis into the creation and diffusion of technology. In order to achieve women's empowerment in agriculture, the study also underlined the significance of balancing agricultural research systems, extension education, and policy-making organizations.

(Khan et al., 2012) used an interview schedule to gather information from a random sample of 80 respondents who owned 2-4 acres of land in order to explore the involvement of women in agricultural activities in the district of Peshawar between 2004–2005. According to the study, participants spent more time on post-harvest tasks than on pre-harvest ones. The main issues women involved in agriculture face are a lack of training, a lack of extension services, cultural limitations, and financial issues.

Methodology

The present study has been conducted in Mewat district of Haryana State. In spite of being surrounded by the two most prosperous districts of Gurgaon and Faridabad, Mewat continues to languish in severe backwardness in terms of well-defined socio-economic parameters of development. Mewat district was therefore chosen as the sample area for study to understand this paradox and the focus of the study was the existing socio-economic status of women farm workers. Random sampling method was adopted to select respondents and a total sample size of 200 women agricultural workers were selected for interview.

Social, Economic and Literary Aspects of Women Farm Workers

Women socio-economic profile plays significant role to know the position of women in a society. Therefore, effort has been made to evaluate the general profile of women through the indicators such as personal character, religious, literary, demographic, socio-economic and others aspects of their life. Age of sample respondents varies between 15 to 60 years. The majority of respondents come in the middle age group followed by the young age and an old age group. As per age classification, the sample taken up to the age of 30 to 45 years is of big size i.e. 65 percent because in this age group, women are found more active accordingly their surroundings. Percentage of women in old age group was low to 11 percent and 24 percent respondents belongs to young age group (Below 30 year). Interestingly the main reason for low share of old age women in work is not that they are getting aged, rather it is because their children get married in early age and daughters in law works in fields while elders work at home. This is a common scene in joint families. 90 percent of the respondents were married followed by 10 percent unmarried respondents. According to the sample, education level of the women farm workers was particularly very low. 79 percent of respondents were illiterate, 10 percent acquired education up to primary level while 7 percent were middle school passed; very few 4 percent have passed secondary or senior secondary examination. The proportion of literate/educated respondents is the only 21 percent. Religion and caste category indicate that maximum women respondents have formed a part of Muslim community and the only 20 percent respondents belonged to the Hindu religion. Seventy percent respondents has comprised of Meo community (BC B), ten percent belonged to BC A. Only a small proportion of our respondents (20 percent) were from scheduled caste.

Participation of Women Farm Workers in Different Farm Activities

Women in rural areas play important role in farm activities but their contribution is not recognized. Hence, this study was conducted to evaluate the women role in activities of agricultural. The data presented in table 1 was regarding the consultation with farm women on

their involvement in different farm operation mainly ploughing of field, field leveling, manure application, sowing, transplanting, gap felling, fertilizer application, weeding, irrigation, using

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Sr. No	Farm Activities	Frequency	Percentage
1	Harvesting and Binding of Crops	200	100
2	Shifting of Production to Threshing Floor	200	100
3	Threshing	200	100
4	Drying of Grains	200	100
5	Storage	200	100
6	Weeding	200	90
7	Clearing of Field	200	90
8	Gap felling	142	71
9	Manure Application	100	50
10	Fertilizer Application	96	48
11	Irrigation	96	48
12	Ploughing of Field	42	21
13	Leveling of Field	42	21
14	Using Plant Protection Measure (insecticide and pesticides)	42	21
15	Sowing	42	21
16	Transplanting	24	12
17	Marketing	0	0

plant protection measure (insecticide and pesticides), harvesting and binding of crops, shifting of production to threshing floor, threshing, clearing of field, drying of grains, storage and marketing of crops. The participation of women in agricultural activities varied from 0 to 100 percent which was the highest in harvesting, drying and storage of grains and the lowest in marketing of crops which was nil. Analysis of data indicated that the highest proportion of involvement of women was observed in farm operations mainly in harvesting, shifting crops to threshing floor (100 percent). Their involvement in activities associated with harvesting and threshing was maximum as these operations are labour intensive and has to be finished in a minimum time due to uncertain weather conditions. Storage and cleaning of grain are sole responsibility of women and accounts for 100 percent engagement of all women whether they

were working in their farm or in someone else's farm. Around 90 percent of overall female agricultural personnel were occupied in weeding and field clearing. The process of gap-filling was done with the help of male members where females contribute more than 71 percent.

Women also contribute a lot in watering and fertilizing, whereas in other parts of the state, this work is considered solely male responsibility. Analysis of data revealed that the involvement of women in farm operations like irrigation (48 percent), fertilizer (48 percent) and manure (50 percent) application was moderate and more than one third work was done by them. In manure and fertilizer application work females assist male members in fields. Some time they do it solely if her husband or other male is not available at home. It happens many times because main occupation of males in our study area is driving and they stay out of home for a long time. The extent of participation of women in farm activities like ploughing, sowing and plant protection measure (Insecticide and pesticides) was less than 21 percent. Purchase of inputs and sales of output are exclusively done by male family members only. The role of women in selection of crops and varieties was reported zero. Most of decisions related to farm operation are taken by male members of the families. All above observation of analysis of data reveals that all farm operations which required more labour were done by women. Ploughing and sowing of seeds is done with tractors. They were doing hard job in this region to maintain food security of family.

Factor Influencing Participation Rate of Women Workers in Agricultural Activities

Status of women in a society or family is very much complex issue and difficult to define. Detailed information regarding all aspects of women routine life was collected and analyzed. Our data analyses reveal that factors like literacy rate, size of land holdings, family size, type of family, caste, unavailability of nonfarm employment, traditions of Muslim community and high incidents of poverty were major factors that decided women role in agriculture activities in study area. In fact, Mewat district has lowest literacy in country and issue is further provoked because of inflexible socio-cultural mind-set of the inhabitants. Most of villages in study area have only access to primary school. Insufficient infrastructure for education is united with poor quality of teaching and deficiency of secure living options hollow the status of education in this region. A gender discrimination view point further influences subordinate women status in this area with their severe under representation in the literacy scenario. More than 80 percent farmers fall in the category of marginal land holdings. Average size of landholding in Mewat is 2.87 acre. Women contribution is very much important for income of household and their income is crucial mainly for marginal and landless farm households. Large size of family comes with associated hardship as these families have poor living standard. This is not possible to run livelihood of large family by single

person with limited land resources. Poverty rate is very high. Among all districts of Haryana, Mewat has lowest per capita income. It had 45,934 per capita incomes while that of Gurgaon at Rs. 4.46 lakhs was the highest. It shows poverty and backwardness story. People are still living in period of suffering and deprivation and are trapped in extreme indebtedness. In this area quality of ground water is also not good with high rate of salinity. Agriculture is less mechanized due to poor economic conditions of farmers and small size of land holdings. Most of the work on farm is done manually except ploughing of fields and sowing which is done with help of tractors. According to 2011 census Mewat sex ratio was the highest in entire Haryana state, with availability of 906 females per 1000 males. This also results in greater availability of women for agricultural activities. Male out migration to NCR results in higher degree of female's involvement in agricultural work. This causes more burdens on females to work on the farm left behind by male members of family and also supplement the family income by working on farms. Men from landless families were working in private sector to nearby urban areas and their women were working as labourers on the other farm to collect food grains and fodder for whole year. Hence, participation of women observed in activities of agriculture is quite widespread and women are involved in almost every farm operation except sowing and ploughing.

Conclusion

Agriculture retains its foremost place in the economy of Mewat by engaging 58.9 percent of workers in cultivation and agricultural labour. Only small proportion of our respondents were working on their own farm whose family hold good economic condition and they have no economic compulsion to work as agricultural labourers. Women are involved in various operations of farms such as sowing, winnowing, storage, harvesting of crops etc.. Mostly women are illiterate and had not done any training in agriculture, whereas most of farm activities are perform by them and hence contribute a lot toward enhancement of social and economic status of their families. Majority of our respondents were working as cultivators on their own land as well on land which had been taken on lease by their husband and other were working as agricultural labourers on the farm of others. Mostly women are illiterate and had not done any training in agriculture, whereas most of farm activities are perform by them and hence contribute a lot toward enhancement of social and economic status of their families. They were facing problems like long hours of working, low wages, lack of facilities at work place, poor health condition, lack of training and indebtedness. Main reason of women worst situation in agricultural sector in this region is less opportunities of education due to high occurrence of poverty and men dominated society. They have been oppressed culturally, socially and economically. Women are not able to access financial

resources but add in their heavy burden of animal care and domestic duties. Study suggested that recognition should be given to the hard work of women performed in fields and development of appropriate implements and machines is required that may decrease the burden of work at farm and home. Efforts should be done to improve the women empowerment in this area. Hence there is a need to train the women workers in order to increase their knowledge of agricultural operations. Therefore, these women workers should be organized or given a special training about the new technologies or the agricultural operations.

References

1. Abrol, P., Khar, S., Kumar, P., & Gupta, R. (2015). Assessing the role of farm women in agriculture: A case Study of Jammu district of J & K state. *Agro Economist - An International Journal*, 2 (2) 7-12.
2. Ahmad, S., Khan, F. & Jamshed, M. (2017). Women empowerment through MGNREGA: An empirical study of Mewat (Haryana). *International Journal of Management and Applied Science*, 3 (2), 68-73.
3. DLHS (2013). *District Fact Sheet: District Level Household Survey: Mewat*. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai.
4. Ghosh, M. & Ghosh, A. (2014). Analysis of women participation in Indian agriculture. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19 (5), 1-6.
5. Jain, K.K., & Singh, P. (2000). Trends in tenancy and labour use pattern in Punjab agriculture. *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 55 (3), 356-61.
6. Krishan, G. & Chandna, R.C. (1974). Haryana: Working force and its occupational structure, 1971, *The Manpower Journal*, 10 (2), 56-72.
7. Rao, E. K. (2006). Role of women in agriculture: A micro level study. *Journal of Global Economy*, 2(2), 109-120.
8. Satyavathi, C. T., Bharadwaj, C., & Brahmanand, P. S. (2010). Role of farm women in agriculture: Lessons learned. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 14(3), 441-449.
9. Khan, M., Sajjad, M., Hameed, B., Khan, M. N., & Jan, A. U. (2012). Participation of women in agriculture activities in district Peshawar. *Sarhad Journal of Agriculture*, 28(1), 121-127.
10. Patil, B., & Babus, V. S. (2018). Role of women in agriculture. *Int J Applied Res*, 4(12), 109-114.