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EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND REASONS FOR ABSENTEEISM OF RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS: A STUDY IN CHITTOOR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

This article made an attempt to review the status of employment and unemployment of rural labourers and factors influencing reasons for absenteeism rural employment. Our policymakers are usually focused on short-run economic management issues. But the short run has to be a bridge to the long run. The central long-run question facing India is where will good jobs come from? Productive jobs are vital for growth. And a good job is the best form of inclusion. More than half of our population depends on agriculture, but the experience of other countries suggests that the number of people dependent on agriculture will have to shrink if per capita incomes in agriculture are to go up substantially. While industry is creating jobs, too many such jobs are low productivity non-contractual jobs in the unorganized sector, offering low incomes, little protection, and no benefits. Service jobs are relatively high productivity, but employment growth in services has been slow in recent years. India's challenge is to create the conditions for faster growth of productive jobs outside of agriculture, especially in organized manufacturing and in services, even while improving productivity in agriculture. The benefit of rising to the challenge is decades of strong inclusive growth.

KEYWORDS

Main workers, Marginal workers, Non-workers, Unemployment and Absenteeism.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the largest sector of economic activity in India accommodating majority of its population and hence the economic growth of the country depends on the performance of its agriculture. There is interdependence between agricultural and industrial sectors. The industrial growth in turn increases the demand for wage goods and raw materials, which helps expansion of agricultural employment and income. Increased agricultural incomes create market demand for industrial consumption goods thereby providing a stimulus to industrialisation and market development. As Commerce develops, the tertiary sector also expands. As development proceeds along these lines, opportunities for diversified employment are opened up to reduce excessive pressure of population in the rural sector.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The design of the study, the concepts and definitions and the schedules have all hinged to this basic objective. The living conditions of the rural labourers vary from region to region depending upon the stage of agricultural development, irrigation and agro-climatic conditions. Chittoor district is one of the districts of chronic drought prone Rayalaseema region. The agriculture in the district mainly depends on well irrigation and rainfed crops. Against this backdrop, the present region specific micro level study on "Employment, Unemployment and Reasons for Absenteeism of Rural Labour Households: A Study in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh." has been taken up.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study the pattern of employment and unemployment of rural labourers and factors influencing reasons for absenteeism rural employment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING DESIGN

The sample households for the study have been selected using three stage random sampling method. The study is confined to Chittoor district. All the mandals in the district have been considered for the selection of first stage units of sampling. Based on the levels of irrigation, i.e., percentage of net irrigated area to net area sown, all the revenue mandals have been classified into three groups: group A, group B and group C. The mandals in group A have more than 60 per cent of net irrigated area to net sown area. The mandals in group B are moderately irrigated with the percentage of net irrigated area to net sown area ranging between 30 and 60 per cent. The mandals classified under group C category are less irrigated with less than 30 per cent of net sown area under irrigation. From each group, 2 mandals were selected. The study, on the whole, covered 6 revenue mandals representing 3 groups. From each mandal, three villages were selected using random sampling procedure as second stage units of sampling. Rural labour household is the last stage unit of sampling. From each sample village, 17 rural labour households have been selected randomly. Above all, the study covers three hundred and six sample rural labour households which spread over eighteen revenue villages from six revenue mandals in the district.

Rural labour household has been defined for the study on the basis of income criteria. The rural labour household is one which derives more than fifty per cent of the annual family income in the form of wages earned through hiring out labour of the members of the family in the preceding year of enquiry. Rural labourer is defined as one who does manual work in rural areas in agricultural and / or non-agricultural occupations in return for wages in cash or kind or both.

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The study has 2011-12 agricultural year (July-June) as the reference year. The required data on various aspects of the study were collected with the help of a pre-tested schedule specifically designed keeping in view the objectives of the study. Interview method was used as a tool to explore the required information through personal discussions held with the head of the sample household. Sufficient cross checks have been made to ensure reliability and accuracy of data. All the filled in schedules were passed for tabulation after proper scrutiny of data.

PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

In this a brief socio-economic profile of the sample rural labour households has been presented which facilitates proper understanding of the economic conditions of rural labourers.

SIZE OF THE FAMILY

The sample rural labour households can also be categorised into four categories according to size of the family. Table 1 shows the distribution of sample rural labour households according to size of the family.

TABLE-1: DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE OF THE FAMILY

| Sl. No. | Size of the Family (in persons) | Number of Households | Percentage to Total |
|---------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 1 and 2 | 13 | 4.2 |
| 2 | 3 and 4 | 132 | 43.2 |
| 3 | 5 and 6 | 142 | 46.4 |
| 4 | Above 7 | 19 | 6.2 |
| Total | | 306 | 100.0 |

The table reveals that 46.4 per cent of the households possess an average family size of 5 and 6 members, whereas 43.2 percent of the households have an average family size of 3 and 4 persons per household, 6.2 per cent of the households possess an average family size of above 7 persons and lastly 4.2 per cent of households possess an average family size of 1 and 2 members.

CASTE COMPOSITION

Table -2 shows the distribution of sample households according to caste.

TABLE- 2: CASTE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

| Sl. No. | Castes | Number of Households | Percentage to Total |
|---------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Scheduled Castes | 192 | 62.7 |
| 2 | Scheduled Tribes | 19 | 6.2 |
| 3 | Backward Castes | 73 | 23.9 |
| 4 | Other Castes | 22 | 7.2 |
| Total | | 306 | 100.0 |

The table shows that 62.7 per cent of the sample households belong to schedule castes whereas 23.9 per cent to backward castes, 7.2 per cent to other castes and 6.2 per cent to scheduled tribes. The table reveals that majority of the sample rural labour households belong to scheduled castes.

AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION

Table 3 presents the age and sex composition of the population in the sample households.

TABLE-3: AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION IN THE SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

| Sl. No | Age Group (Years) | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | | Number of Persons | % | Number of Persons | % | Number of Persons | % |
| 1 | 0-14 | 251 | 34.7 | 213 | 31.0 | 464 | 32.9 |
| 2 | 14-30 | 220 | 30.5 | 245 | 35.7 | 465 | 33.0 |
| 3 | 30-45 | 173 | 24.0 | 148 | 21.1 | 321 | 22.7 |
| 4 | 45-60 | 68 | 9.4 | 61 | 8.9 | 129 | 9.1 |
| 5 | Above 60 | 10 | 1.4 | 22 | 3.3 | 32 | 2.3 |
| Total | | 722 | 100.0 | 689 | 100.0 | 1411 | 100.0 |

The total population of the sample households is 1411 persons, of which, males account 51.17 per cent (722 persons) and females for 48.83 per cent (689 persons). The age composition pattern of the sample population reveals that 33.0 per cent are in the age group of 14-30 years, 32.9 per cent in the age group of 0-14 years and 22.7 per cent in the age group of 30-45 years. The persons in the age group of 45-60 years and above 60 years account for 9.1 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively. The table reveals that about 65 per cent of majority of the sample population is in the age of active economic participation, i.e., 14-60 years.

WORKING STATUS

According to 1981 census, main workers are those who have worked or engaged in any economically productive activity for a major part of the year or more than six months during the reference year. Marginal workers are those who have worked less than six months during the reference year. Non-workers are those who have not worked in any productive activity at any time during the reference year. According to the above definitions, the population in the sample households has been classified into main workers, marginal workers and non-workers. Table 3.8 shows the working status of the population in the sample households.

TABLE-4: WORKING STATUS OF THE POPULATION IN THE SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS

| Sl. No | Category | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|--------|------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | | Number of Persons | % | Number of Persons | % | Number of Persons | % |
| 1 | Main Worker | 357 | 49.4 | 224 | 32.5 | 581 | 41.2 |
| 2 | Marginal workers | 46 | 6.4 | 126 | 18.3 | 172 | 12.2 |
| 3 | Non worker | 319 | 44.2 | 339 | 49.2 | 658 | 46.6 |
| Total | | 722 | 100.0 | 689 | 100.0 | 1411 | 100.0 |

It is observed from the table that out of 1411 persons in the sample households, main workers constitute 41.2 per cent and marginal workers 12.2 per cent. Non-workers account for 46.6 per cent of the population. Among the 722 males in the sample households, 49.4 per cent are main workers, 6.4 per cent are marginal workers and 44.2 per cent are nonworkers. Out of the 689 females, 32.5 per cent are main workers, 18.3 per cent are marginal workers and 49.2 per cent are non-workers. The percentage of main workers among males is more than females and in respect of marginal workers, females account for higher percentage than males. The non-working population among females is more than that of males in the sample households.

EMPLOYMENT

The details of person days employed by the labourers in the sample households are provided in Table 5.

TABLE-5: EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL LABOURERS OF THE SAMPLE RURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

| Sl. No. | Category | Employment (in Person Days) | | | |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | | Total | Average Per Household | Average Per capita | Percentage |
| 1 | Agricultural labour | 61945 | 202.44 | 82.26 | 48.84 |
| 2 | Non-agri. labour | 33559 | 109.67 | 44.56 | 26.46 |
| 3 | Self-employment | 31322 | 102.36 | 41.64 | 24.70 |
| Total | | 126826 | 414.47 | 168.46 | 100.00 |

From the above table, it can be observed that the labourers in the sample households have reported to have worked for 1, 26,826 person days during the reference year, of which agricultural employment accounts for 48.84 per cent and non-agricultural employment for 26.46 per cent. The number of days engaged in self-employment is worked out to 31,322 person days accounting for 24.70 per cent of the total days employed. The average employment per household is worked out to 414.47 person days, of which agricultural labour accounts for 202.44 person days, non-agricultural labour for 109.67 person days and self-employment for 102.36 person days. The average days engaged per person during the reference year work out to 168.46 person days, of which, for 82.26 person days, labourers are employed in agricultural activities, for 44.56 person days they are employed in non-agricultural activities and for 41.64 person days, they are engaged in own activities.

From the table, it is observed that the average number of days employed per person is very low at 168.46 person days and for nearly 197.54 person days the rural labourer remains unemployed on an average. This large number of days unemployed may be due to lack of irrigation and seasonal nature of agricultural operations.

REASONS FOR ABSENTEEISM

Table 6 presents the particulars of days unemployed and the reasons for absenteeism.

TABLE-6: UNEMPLOYMENT AND REASONS FOR ABSENTEEISM OF SAMPLE RURAL LABOURERS

| Sl. No. | Reasons for Absenteeism | Total No. of Person Days unemployed | Percentage to Total | Average Per Household | Average Per Capita |
|---------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | For want of work | 68311 | 46.15 | 223.24 | 90.72 |
| 2 | Festivals | 26517 | 17.92 | 86.66 | 35.22 |
| 3 | Sickness | 17703 | 11.96 | 57.85 | 23.51 |
| 4 | Bad weather | 16318 | 11.03 | 53.33 | 21.67 |
| 5 | Social ceremonies | 19142 | 12.94 | 62.56 | 25.42 |
| Total | | 148019 | 100.0 | 483.64 | 196.54 |

It can be seen from the table that all the labourers in the sample households remain unemployed for 1, 48,019 person days, of which for 46.15 per cent of days, they are unemployed for want of work. Festivals account for 17.92 per cent, sickness for 11.96 per cent, bad weather for 11.03 per cent and social ceremonies like marriages, deaths etc. for 12.94 per cent of the days unemployed. The average number of days unemployed per household works out to 483.64 of which, for as many as 223.24 person days they are unemployed for want of work. The average number of days unemployed per capita is worked out to 196.54 person days, of which for 90.72 person days, lack of work is the main reason for unemployment. A review of the reasons of unemployment leads to the perception that for want of work and bad weather for which labourers have no control, account for 112.39 person days per capita constituting 59.09 per cent of the days unemployed.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions emerge from the results of the study.

- The rural labourers remain unemployed for a significant part of the year for want of work. The employment of these labourers depends on the availability of irrigation facilities which in turn determines the cropping pattern and cropping intensity.
- Implementation of suitable employment generation schemes in the lean periods, the schemes which can provide non-farm and off farm employment opportunities and the programmes which can supplement the wage income shall push these unfortunate rural labourers to come out of the employment problem.
- It is important to note that the income of these labourers depends on the rainfall and agricultural production conditions of the regions in which they are living. Successive failure of monsoons often creates disaster in the levels of living of the rural labour households. It underlines the need of expansion of economic activities and educational facilities along with their equitable distribution.

Thus, it can be concluded that to raise the level of Employment development concrete efforts at grass root level, not only towards raising economic resources and developmental opportunities but also to ensure their equal distribution, should be made.

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