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Perceived Skills possessed by the women agricultural labourers

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Abstract

The present investigation was done to study the perceived skills possessed by the women agricultural labourers of Andhra Pradesh. Three districts from the three Regions of Andhra Pradesh, Srikakulam district from North Coastal Region, Guntur district from Coastal South Region and Kurnool district from Rayalaseema Region of the Andhra Pradesh state were purposively selected based on the highest number of agricultural labourers in the Region. *Case study* research design was followed for the study and a sample of 180 respondents was drawn.

Keywords: Case study, labourers, skills, wage rates

Introduction

Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy, a way of life for millions of farm families. Land is a primary source of livelihood and a critical factor that shapes the livelihood strategies and resultant outcomes. Women as agricultural labourers are discriminated in wage payment on gender basis. The wage differences exist in all major agriculture operations including transplanting and weed in which women intensive operations and better are performed by women labourers. Women as agricultural labourers are discriminated in wage payment on gender basis. The wage differences exist in all major agriculture operations including transplanting and weed in which women intensive operations and better are performed by women labourers. There is a need for effective implementation of minimum wage. Women Agricultural Labourers are from social and economically backward sections that inherited their vocation from their forefathers. Being hard work in nature agricultural labourers are literally sweating their body out on and off the field on and off the field in all seasons. The reward for their works both in monetary and in kinds are matter of concern for their very survival. Constrained by the monsoon factor and coupled with the relatively lower wages in agriculture, which is their mainstay, the members of the family of agricultural workers their women and children are forced to work that will help in supplementing the income of the breadwinner of the family. Most of the agriculture – based countries are at an early stage of development, where a majority of women were employed in agriculture. Even in most of the South East Asian Countries where convention prevents women from working outside the home, the care of livestock, processing of the harvested crops, pursuit of crafts and other work still provide them with the status of contribution materially to family income. In India women play a vital role in agriculture in moist parts of the country. The jobs done traditionally by women are general those of

transplanting, weeding, harvesting and threshing. Women as agricultural labourers are discriminated in wage payment on sex basis. The wage differences exist in all major agriculture operations including transplanting and weeding in which women intensive operations and better are performed by women labourers. There is a need for effective implementation of minimum wage.

Rural women play a predominant role in agriculture as they get involved in the entire process like ploughing, sowing, weeding, applying fertilizers, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, packing, loading and related occupations like live-stock management. Women does the work in the agricultural fields and also does all the domestic chores at home like cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children and elders etc., In spite of enormous contribution women face innumerable issues and struggles both in the work place and in the house. Women are generally treated as secondary citizens in our nation and their work is not properly recognized.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh. *Case study research* design was followed for the study. From each of the selected districts three mandals were selected by using simple random sampling thus comes to a total of nine mandals. They were Gara, Amudalavalasa and Etcherla from Srikakulam district, Narsaraopeta, Ponnur and Amaravathi from Guntur district, Nandyal, Peapully and Dhone from Kurnool district were selected by using simple random method from which 180 women labourers were selected as sample. Pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect the primary data and statistical techniques like garrett ranking was used.

Results and Discussion

A perceived skill was operationalized as perception of skills

possessed by an individual to complete a particular skill in an effective manner.

Planting/sowing techniques

Table 1 clearly indicated that transplanting/ sowing the nursery seedlings/seeds at correct depth in the main field were found to be the major skill possessed by the women

agricultural labourers and ranked first followed by identifying the weeds from the main field, identifying the type of weeds i.e., shallow/ deep rooted, removing weeds in main crop along with roots and removing the stubbles from the main field were ranked as second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

Table 1: Distribution of agricultural labourers according to their Planting/ sowing techniques (n=180)

Planting/sowing techniques	Ranks given by the respondents for the corresponding statement					Total	%	R
	1	2	3	4	5			
Transplant/ sow the nursery seedlings/seeds at correct depth in the main field	3600	1080	800	600	528	6608	66.08	1
Identify the weeds from the main crop	1425	2820	750	720	480	6195	61.95	2
Identify the type of weeds i.e., shallow/ deep rooted	1575	1380	1450	1080	456	5941	59.41	4
Removing weeds in main crop along with roots	1500	1440	1080	1520	504	6044	60.44	3
Removing the stubbles from the main field	1125	420	456	760	1056	3817	38.17	5

% = Percent, R= Rank

Transplanting/sowing is a basic work for the women agricultural labourers since ages irrespective of age and education. Transplanting/ sowing don't require much skill when compared to other skilled works. The women agricultural labourers argued that the transplantation of crops was too arduous tasks for men to perform. Others such as landowners claimed that women were able to stay bent for longer periods of time might be the reason for above trend.

Identification of weeds and removing the weeds manually was one of the most participated works of women agricultural labourers which is undoubtedly oldest method as old as agriculture itself. Hand weeding is not a pleasant task it is tedious, dirty and involves long hot days in the field. Persistence and patience were required to identify the weeds and removing the weeds along with roots. They play an important role in plucking the annual weeds to secure the growth of the plants.

Removing of stubbles and collecting them as a source of fuel for firewood, fodder and as part of feed-mixture preparations for animals might be the major reason. It could be used in different ways like compact manure, roofing in rural areas and also packing material.

Intercultural operations

A cursory look at the Table 2. clearly depicted that stalking / erecting pendal system pertaining to crops found to be the major skill possessed by the women agricultural labourers and ranked first followed by technique of mixing and application of fertilizers i.e., broadcast/ band placement/ pocket placement in relation to crop, skill on irrigation i.e., amount, type and time of irrigation based on crop, preparation and application of biofertilizers and skill in operating sprayers ranked as second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of agricultural labourers according to their Intercultural operations (n=180)

Intercultural operations	Ranks given by the respondents for the corresponding statement					Total	%	R
	1	2	3	4	5			
Technique of mixing and application of fertilizers i.e., broadcast/band placement/ pocket placement in relation to crop	2775	1740	800	800	432	6547	65.47	1
Skill on irrigation i.e., amount, type and time of irrigation based on crop	2400	1860	750	640	624	6274	62.74	2
Stalking / erecting pendal system pertaining to crops	1425	1260	1350	1160	576	5771	57.71	3
Preparation and application of biofertilizers	1575	960	1000	1600	552	5687	56.87	4
Skill in operating sprayers	675	1380	2050	600	768	5473	54.73	5

% = Percent, R= Rank

The above results from the Table 2 indicated that after the advancement of green revolution more fertilizers were used for high yielding varieties which increased the application of fertilizers in rural areas. Application of fertilizers doesn't involve much drudgery and operational skills might be the reason for involvement of more women agricultural labourer.

Women are less likely to practice irrigation than men. Women agricultural labourer expressed that heavy work load in the irrigated crop is also a major constraint to not participate in irrigation related activities. Gender roles have been reinforced by neglecting women's access to educate

and to train in particular task might be the reason for above trend. Illiteracy, lack of support, encouragement and inferiority plays an important role.

Spraying is hazardous task. Protection from hazardous is not known. Illiteracy, lack of training, protecting themselves from unnecessary hazards was unaware. Women could not be able to run by carrying heavy load. Low wage rate also might be the reason for not doing works which involves more drudgery.

Harvesting and post-harvesting operation

An analytical look at Table 3 clearly depicted that

knowledge on planned harvesting considering ripeness of crops found to be the major skill possessed by the women agricultural labourers and ranked first followed by technique of grading the produce according to weight/ quality,

stacking of produce and efficient in post-harvest techniques i.e., winnowing/ threshing ranked as second, third and fourth fifth respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of agricultural labourers according to their Harvesting and post-harvesting operations (n=180)

Harvesting and post-harvesting operations	Ranks given by the respondents for corresponding statement				Total	%	R
	1	2	3	4			
Technique of grading the produce according to weight/ quality	3942	1736	616	567	6861	68.61	1
Knowledge on planned harvesting considering ripeness of crops	2190	2016	968	864	6038	60.38	2
Stacking of produce	1825	1344	1584	945	5698	56.98	3
Efficient in post-harvest techniques i.e., winnowing/ threshing	730	1176	2376	999	5281	52.81	4

% = Percent, R=Rank

Women were playing crucial role in maintaining the quality of food crops by proper post-harvest management. Probable reason for the above results could be after harvest it is important to handle the crop with utmost care so that it does not get damaged. These operations includes cleaning, grading, threshing, winnowing and packing of produce to keep away from getting moisture, other reactions or from further deterioration like cutting, crushing or bruising. This post-harvest treatment largely determines the quality of food crops. After cleaning and sorting the crops it is very important to store them properly in adequate place so that it does not get damaged. This work is mostly done by women agricultural Labourers.

Conclusion

The study conducted in Andhra Pradesh highlighted key skills among women agricultural laborers. Notably, transplanting/sowing at the correct depth emerged as a crucial skill, followed by weed identification and removal, stubble collection for various uses, and intercultural operations like erecting pendal systems and fertilizer application techniques. These findings underscore the essential roles these women play in agricultural activities, despite facing challenges such as tediousness and physical demands. Their expertise in these tasks, passed down through generations, contributes significantly to crop productivity and sustainability. Recognizing and enhancing these skills can lead to improved agricultural practices and better livelihoods for women laborers in the region.

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