WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE - A SOCIO ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Women constitute almost half of the world's population, account for 60 percent of the working hours, contribute up to 30 percent of the official labour force, yet receive only ten percent of the income and own less than one percent of the world's property. The rural farm women have multifarious roles which demand more time and effort. The present study makes an attempt to analyse the demographic factors of farm women. The total sample of the study comprised of 240 farm women drawn purposively by Quota sampling method from 12 different villages of 4 mandals from 2 districts (Guntur & Kurnool) of Andhra Pradesh. The demographic variables (age, education, caste, income, land holding, socio economic status, farming experience, age at marriage, marital status and number of children) were studied through a general information schedule. The profile analysis of farm women with respect to the demographic characteristics revealed that a majority of the farm women were middle aged, illiterates, had low income, belonged to small farmer category, had low material possession with low socio-economic status, medium family size, nuclear families, married earlier, with a high farming experience.

Key words–Farmwomen, Socio-economic Status, Agriculture.

INTRODUCTION :

The rural women participate in a broad range of agricultural activities such as production, processing, preservation, and utilization of food. They play key roles in the entire food system, starting from the selection of seeds through sowing, manuring, weeding, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, drying, stacking to feeding the family from the harvested produce. Most importantly, they play a major role in the decision making process at the farm household level, influencing the desirable features of a particular commodity or crop or animal species. They influence adoption, implementation of new technologies, management or decision making process and related production oriented features. The farm women perform extremely tedious, time and labour intensive work and spend long hours on these operations resulting in fatigue and drudgery as most of the jobs are done manually. Research studies have emphasized that the farm women are exposed to lot of physical, psychological, and occupational health hazards which in turn cause lot of stress.

METHODOLOGY :

Two agro-climatic zones; Krishna Godavari Zone and Scarce Rainfall Zone of Rayalaseema were selected out of a total of seven zones of Andhra Pradesh. Purposive Sampling was adopted in selection of districts for the study. Guntur district from Krishna Godavari Zone and Kurnool district from scarce rainfall zone of Rayalaseema was selected. Two mandals each from two districts were selected purposively. These mandals had recorded the highest percentage of agricultural labourers. Tenali (WetBelt) with canal source of irrigation (Krishna Canal) (Wet crops) and Sattenapalli (Dry belt)-Mostly rainfed-(Dry crops) have been selected for the study. From Kurnool district, two mandals namely Jupadu Banglow(Wetbelt)-Canal source of irrigation (K.C. Canal)-(Wet Crops) and Veldurthi (Dry belt)-Mostly rainfed (Dry crops) were selected as these mandals recorded the highest percentage of agricultural labourers. Three villages from each mandal in which farm women were actively involved in the agricultural activities have been selected for study. Thus a total of 12 villages from 4 mandals and 2 districts were selected.

The sample size for the present study comprised of 240 farm women drawn by Quota sampling from 12 different villages and 4 different mandals and 2 districts of Andhra Pradesh. Equal number of sample from land less, marginal category and small/medium categories were selected from every village, every mandal and every district. Farm women in the age range of 18-45 years with at least two children, one child below the age of 5 years were selected for study.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION :

The profile analysis of farm women with respect to the demographic characteristics revealed that a majority of the farm women were middle aged, illiterates, had low income, low material possession with low socio-economic status, belonged to small farmer category, had medium family size, nuclear families, married earlier, with a high farming experience.

Age–The table depicts that from pooled sample, a large percentage of farm women belong to middle age category (38.33%) followed by young adults (32.50%) and adults (29.17%). The district profile shows more or less similar distribution as that of pooled sample with a large percentage of farm women in the middle age category (39.17% in Guntur and 37.5% in Kurnool) followed by adulthood (28.33% in Guntur and 30% in Kurnool) and finally by young adults category (32.5% in Guntur and 32.5 in Kurnool.

Table 1. Study of demographic factors of farmwomen

S. No.	Characteristics	Guntur District		Kurnool District		Pooled Sample	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	**Age**						
	Young adults (18-25 years)	34	28.33	36	30.00	70	29.17
	Adults (26-35 years)	39	32.50	39	32.50	78	32.50
	Middle age (36-45 years)	47	39.17	45	37.50	92	38.33
2.	**Education**						
	Illiterates	36	30.00	70	58.33	106	44.16
	Literates	35	29.17	20	16.67	55	22.92
	Primary	24	20.22		24.17	23	19.17
52	21.67						
	High (>50,000)	23	19.16	22	18.33	45	18.75
5.	**Land Holding\ Farm Size**						
	Small (5 acres & less)	72	60.00	81	67.50	153	63.75
	Medium (6 to 10 acres)	32	26.67	28	23.33	60	25.00
	Large (Above 10 acres)	16	13.33	11	9.17	27	11.25
6.	**House Type**						
	Kachcha	39	32.50	46	38.34	85	35.42
	Semi pucca	40	33.34	35	29.16	68	31.25
	Pucca	41	34.16	39	32.50	80	33.33
7.	**Material possession**						
	Low	63	52.50	84	61.66	137	57.08
	Medium	31	25.83	11	10.84	44	18.33
	High	26	21.67	25	27.50	59	24.59
8.	**Socio-eco.status**						
	Low	61	50.80	76	63.33	137	57.08
	Medium	36	30.00	31	25.83	67	27.92
	High	23	19.20	13	10.84	36	15.00
9.	**Family Type**						
	Nuclear	83	69.17	63	52.50	145	60.42
	Joint	37	30.83	57	47.50	95	39.58
10.	**Family Size**						
	Small (1-5 members)	57	47.50	40	33.30	97	40.42
	Medium (6-10 members)	61	50.83	69	57.50	130	54.17
	Large (Above 10 members)	2	1.67	11	9.20	13	5.41
11.	**Marital Status**						
	Married	107	89.17	104	86.67	211	87.92
	Divorced	8	6.66	12	9.99	20	8.33
	Widowed	5	4.17	4	3.34	9	3.75
12.	**Age at marriage**						
	Below 18 years	83	69.17	92	76.67	175	72.92
	18 years and above	37	30.83	28	23.33	65	27.08
13.	**Number of children**						
	1-2 children	45	37.50	31	25.83	76	31.66
	3-4 children	68	56.67	77	64.17	145	60.42
	5 and above	7	5.83	12	10.00	19	7.92
14.	**Farming experience**						
	Low (5 years and above)	16	13.33	8	6.67	24	10.00
	Medium (6-10 years)	51	42.50	52	43.33	103	42.92
	High (Above 10 years)	53	44.17	60	50.00	113	47.08

Education–With regard to the education of the sample, a large sample of 44.16 percent were illiterates followed by literates (22.92%), primary level (17.92%), middle school education (7.92%) and secondary education (7.08%) from the pooled sample. Illiteracy is predominant in Kurnool district (58.33%) than in Guntur district (30.00%). The literate population is high in Guntur(29.17%) than in Kurnool district (16.67%) followed by primary level (20% in Guntur and 15.84% in Kurnool), middle school education (7.5% in Guntur and 8.33% in Kurnool) and a small fraction of the sample were educated up to their secondary education (13.33% and 0.83% from Guntur and Kurnool districts respectively). A moderate percent (44.16%) of the farm women were found to be illiterates.

Caste–The table depicts that quite a large number of the sample were from Other Castes (34.58%) followed by Scheduled Castes (34.17%), Backward Castes (25%) and Scheduled Tribes (6.25%) from the pooled sample. The district wise distribution shows a different trend. In Guntur district, a higher proportion of the sample were from other Castes (40%) followed by Scheduled Castes (35%), Backward Castes (23.33%) and finally by Scheduled Tribes (10.83%). In Kurnool district Scheduled Caste population is high (33.37%) followed by Other Castes (29.17%), Backward Castes (26.66%) and scheduled Tribe Population (10.83%).

Annual Income–The table clearly depicts that a maximum of 59.58 percent of the pooled sample were from low-income group followed by average income group (21.67%) and high-income group (18.75%). In Guntur district, 56.67 percent were from low-income group followed by middle income group (24.17%) and high-income group (19.16%). The Kurnool district follows a similar trend with a high percentage (62.50%) of the respondents from low-income group followed by average income group (19.17%) and high-income group (18.33%). The resources like credit facilities, technology and marketing in the rural areas are not accessible to the hapless women. Even though they have allied occupations like animal husbandry and poultry enterprises, the women have little access to the recent technologies and economic productivity. This might be the reason for their low-income level.

Land holding–With regard to the land holding, a large sample was from smallholdings category (63.75%) followed by medium holdings (25%) and large holdings category (11.25%) from the pooled sample. District wise distribution shows similar pattern with 60 percent of farm women in Guntur and 67.5 percent in Kurnool district from small holdings category. Farm women having medium holdings were slightly more in Guntur district (26.67%) than in Kurnool district (23.33%). Farm women with large holdings were slightly more in Guntur district (13.33%) than in Kurnool district. This shows the situation of poverty in rural India.

House type–The table reveals that 35.42 percent of the respondents live in kachcha houses followed by pucca houses (33.33%) and semi pucca houses (31.25%) from the pooled sample. 34.17 percent of the respondents from Guntur district live in pucca houses followed by semi pucca houses (33.34%) and kachcha houses (32.5%). Whereas 38.34 percent of the respondents of Kurnool district live in Kachcha houses followed by pucca houses (32.5%) and semi pucca houses (29.16%).

Material Possession–It is inferred from the table that the material possession of the farm women was low

(57.08%) followed by high (24.59%) and medium possession (18.33%) from the pooled sample. District wise distribution shows a different trend .In Guntur district, 52.5 percent of farm women had low material possession followed by medium possession (25.83%) and high material possession (21.67%). Whereas in Kurnool district, quite a high percentage of the farm women had a low material possession (61.66%) followed by high material possession (27.5%) and medium material owners (10.84%).

Socio-economic status–It is inferred from the table that a high percentage of 57.08 percent of farm women were from low socio-economic category followed by medium (27.92%) and high socio-economic group (15%) from the pooled sample. The district wise distribution shows a similar trend with a large fraction of the sample from low socio-economic group (50.8% and 63.33%) followed by medium (30% and 25.83%) and high socio economic group (19.2% and 10.84%) from Guntur and Kurnool districts respectively.

Family Type–With regard to the family type, quite a large percentage (60.42%) was from nuclear family while a small percentage (39.58%) was from the joint family from the pooled sample. The district wise distribution shows a similar trend with a large fraction of the sample from nuclear family in Guntur and Kurnool districts (69.17% and 52.5%). Where as a small proportion of the sample was from joint family system (30.83% and 47.5%) in Guntur and Kurnool districts, respectively.

Family Size–The profile table shows that more than half of the sample belongs to medium sized family (54.17%) followed by small sized family (40.42%) and large sized family (5.41%) in the pooled sample. The district wise distribution shows that a huge part of the sample was from medium sized family (50.83% and 57.5%) followed by small sized family (1.67% and 9.2%) from Guntur and Kurnool districts respectively.

Marital Status–The table depicts that a majority of the sample was from married category and living with their spouses (87.92%) with a small fraction of divorced (8.33%) and widowed (3.75%) farm women from the pooled sample.The district wise distribution shows a simi-lar trend with a majority of the sample from married category living with their spouses (89.17%and 86.67%) followed by divorced (6.66% & 9.99%) and widowed (4.17% and 3.34%) farm women in Guntur and Kurnool districts respectively.

Age at marriage–The pooled sample shows that a majority of 72.92 percent of farm women got married before attaining their major hood, while a small percentage (27.08%) got married after attaining their major hood.District wise distribution shows that a major part of the sample (69.17% and 76.67%) got married before attaining their major hood. Whereas 30.83 percent from Guntur district and 23.33 percent from Kurnool district got married after attaining their major hood.

Number of children–The pooled sample shows that a majority of 60.42 percent of the farm women had 3-4 children followed by 1-2 children (31.66%) and 5 and more (7.92%).The district wise distribution is similar with a majority of the sample,with a high percentage having 3-4 children (56.67% and 64.17%) followed by 1-2 children (37.5% and 25.83%) and lastly the farm women having 5 and more children (5.83% and 10.0%) in Guntur and Kurnool districts respectively.

Farming experience–With regard to the farming experience, 47.08 percent had high experience followed by medium (42.92%) and low farming experience (10.0%) from the pooled sample.The district wise distribution is similar with a moderate percentage of the sample from high experience group (44.17% and 50.0%) followed by the medium experience (42.5% and 43.33%) and small proportion of farm women had low experience (13.33% and 6.67%) in Guntur and Kurnool districts respectively.

CONCLUSION :

The profile analysis of farm women with respect to the demographic characteristics revealed that a majority of the farm women were middle aged, illiterates, had low income, belonged to small farmer category, had low material possession with low socio-economic status, medium family size, nuclear families, married earlier, with a high farming experience.

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