



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA REGION

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### ABSTRACT

*Women in unorganized sector especially women working in agriculture as labour are facing many of the problems and challenges both at their families and at their work places or farm lands. These problems and challenges are derived from their socio-economic conditions. Hence, to explore the socio-economic conditions, the present study was made in Hyderabad-Karnataka region, which constitute total six districts in Karnataka state. As the geographical territory and population of women agricultural workers is large to cover, sample survey of 1400 respondents was made using interview schedule. It is found that, the education of women agricultural workers is lowest, but majority of them are with more than 10 years of work experience in agriculture. Though they have rich experience in agriculture, it is noted that their wages are lower and discriminatory. As such, they are living in poor families. Hence, self-employment training, awareness on legislations to provide legal protection and social security to women agricultural workers is suggested.*

**KEYWORDS:** agriculture , social security , socio-economic conditions.

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the science of producing crops and livestock from the natural resources of the earth. Agriculture provides employment to 65 to 70 percent of Indian workforce. Women in rural areas are playing very important role in agricultural and allied operations. But the participation of the women workers in agricultural and allied operations is indicated as workers in unorganized sector. The status of women in unorganized sector is low, as their work is not identified and recognized and the wages paid by the employers on their work is also lower.

In a study of the conditions of life of agricultural workers in Kerala, Mencher and D'Amico (1986) points out that because of underemployment women either have to borrow or go hungry and the better health indicators in the State are not necessarily indicative of reduction of poverty. Focusing on the impact of mechanization, the authors argue that the increasing use of new technological devices resulted in an inevitable decline in employment opportunities for women. According to Eapen (1994), the accelerated shift towards the cash crops associated with the commercialization process in the agricultural sector resulted in reduced employment opportunities for women. Another study among the agricultural labourers in six villages, two each from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, found that despite the problems of underemployment, women's economic contribution to the household is more than half of the household income and displacement of women without offering adequate other employment opportunities will enhance the pauperization and marginalization of poor working families



(Mencher,1989). Saradamony (1982), in another study on changing agrarian relations and its impact on women in Palakkad district argues that despite the fact that socio-political changes which coincided with the agrarian struggles favoured legislation for the underprivileged sections in the society, the advantages of justice did not reach all, especially women.

As discussed in the above-mentioned studies, women workers are facing many of the problems and challenges both at their work places as well as at their households or families. These problems and challenges are derived from their socio-economic and educational conditions. Hence, the present study is made to explore the socio-economic conditions of women agricultural workers in Hyderabad-Kamataka region.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The present study is aimed to know about the socio-economic conditions and educational status of women agricultural workers. These issues are derived from the different aspects such as age, education, marital status, wages earning, family income, ownership to properties, etc.

**SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY:**

As discussed above, the present study is made in Hyderabad-Kamataka region which constitutes total six districts, namely, Bidar, Kalaburagi (Gulbarga), Raichur, Bellary, Koppal and Yadgir. As the geographical areas of the region is large to survey all women agricultural workers, a sample survey was made covering total 1400 respondents using interview schedule. The collected primary data is analysed, interpreted and discussed as under.

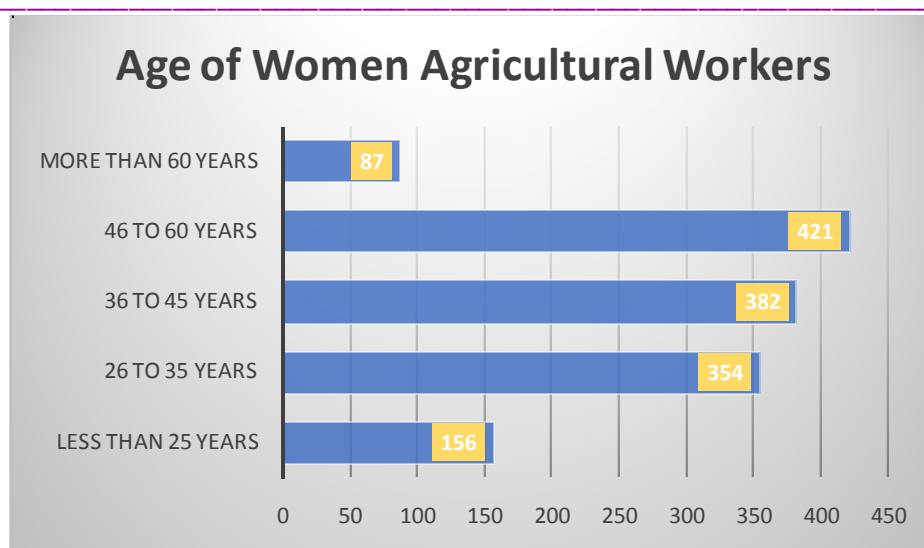
**ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION:**

Agricultural work involves physical work along with conventional practice-based skills. Hence, age is an important factor while deciding the work nature. The collected primary data on the age of the women agricultural workers is disclosed in the following table.

**Table No. 1. Age of Agricultural Workers**

Age (Years)	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Less than 25 Years	156	11.14
26 to 35 Years	354	25.28
36 to 45 Years	382	27.29
46 to 60 Years	421	30.07
More than 60 Years	87	6.21
Total	1400	100

The age of the women agricultural workers surveyed is presented in the following figure:



**Fig. No. 1. Age of Women Agricultural Workers**

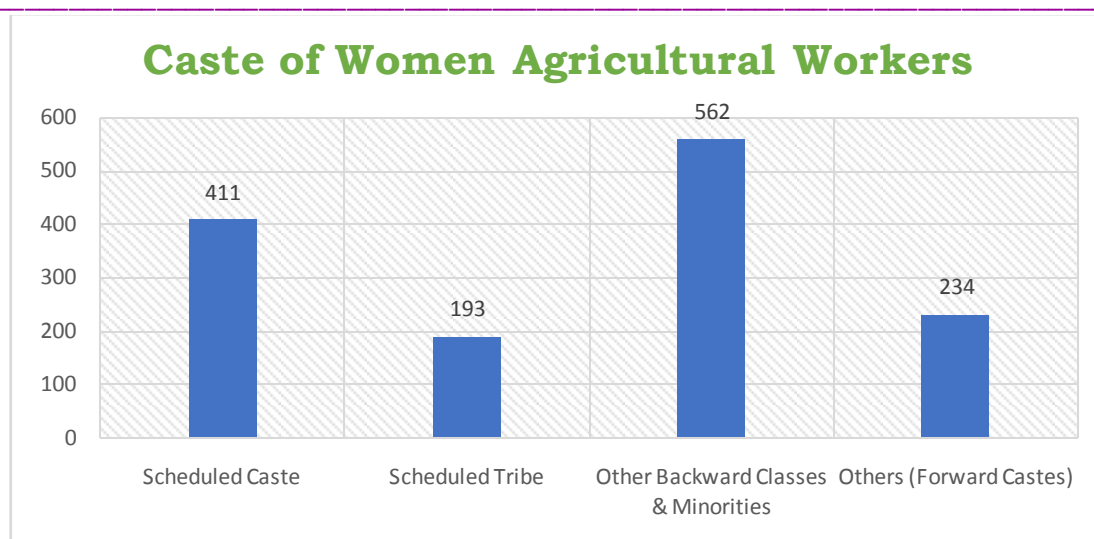
The age of the women agricultural workers revealed that, only 156 (11.14%) are of less than 25 years, 354 (25.28%) belongs to the age group between 26 to 35 years, 382 (27.29%) belongs to 36 to 45 years, 421 (30.07%) belongs to 46 to 60 years and remaining 87 (6.21%) of the women agricultural workers are of more than 60 years. It shows that, majority of the women agricultural workers are of middle aged.

To assess the participation of different castes in agricultural work, the information was collected from the women agricultural workers on their castes and presented in the following table.

**Table No. 2. Caste of Agricultural Workers**

Caste	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	411	29.56
Scheduled Tribe	193	13.78
Other Backward Classes & Minorities	562	40.14
Others (Forward Castes)	234	16.71
Total	1400	100

The caste of women agricultural workers is presented in the following figure:



**Fig. No. 2. Caste of Women Agricultural Workers**

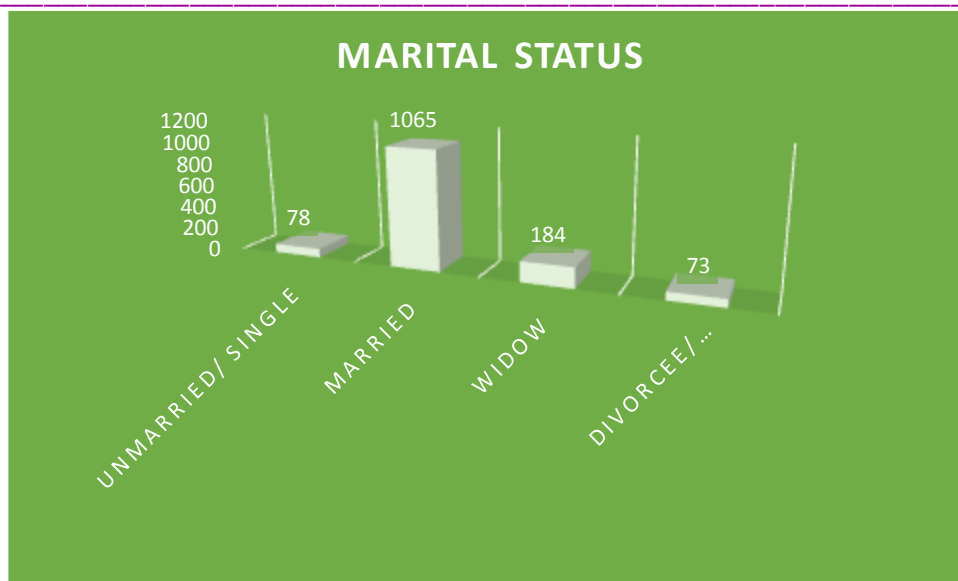
The castes of the women agricultural workers disclosed that, 562 (40.14%) of all the workers are belongs to other backward dasses including minorities followed by, 411 (29.56%) of all the workers are scheduled castes, 234 (16.71%) belongs to others or forward castes and the remaining 193 (13.78%) of these workers belongs to scheduled tribes respectively. It is conduced that, there is all round participation of all caste groups in agricultural work in Hyderabad-Kamataka region.

Apart from their self, women are working for the welfare of their family including husband and children. For this purpose, information was collected from the women agricultural workers on their marital status and tabulated as under.

**Table No. 3. Marital Status**

Marital Status	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Unmarried/ Single	78	5.57
Married	1065	76.07
Widow	184	13.14
Divorcee/ Separated/ Alienated	73	5.21
Total	1400	100

The marital status of women agricultural workers is disclosed in the following figure:



**Fig. No. 3. Marital Status**

Above table revealed that, 1065 (76.07%) of all the women agricultural workers surveyed are married and living with their husbands followed by, 184 (13.14%) are widows, 78 (5.57%) are not married and living single and the remaining 73 (5.21%) are divorcees or separated or alienated from their husbands respectively.

Indian agriculture especially in backward regions like Hyderabad-Karnataka is based on orthodox skills and techniques and doesn't need any education. Still, many of the workers are educated. Hence, the information collected on the education of women agricultural workers is shown in the following table.

**Table No. 4. Educational Qualifications**

Education	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Illiterate	254	18.14
Lower Primary	532	38.00
Higher Primary	358	25.57
Secondary	144	10.29
More than Secondary	112	8.00
Total	1400	100

The educational qualifications of women agricultural workers revealed that, 532 (38.00%) of all agricultural workers have completed lower primary education followed by, 358 (25.57%) have completed higher primary education, 254 (18.14%) of women agricultural workers are illiterates, 144 (10.29%) have completed secondary education and 112 (8.00%) of all the women agricultural workers have completed more than secondary education.

Though education did not much influence on agricultural work, the work experience in agriculture influence the works of women agricultural workers. It is observed that, many of the women agricultural workers are working for even more than 15 or even 20 years. Hence, the information was collected on the work experience of the women agricultural workers and presented in the following table.

**Table No. 5. Work Experience as Agricultural Workers**

Work Experience	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Less than 02 Years	240	17.14
02 to 05 Years	314	22.43
06 to 10 Years	217	15.50
11 to 20 Years	244	17.43
More than 20 Years	385	27.50
Total	1400	100

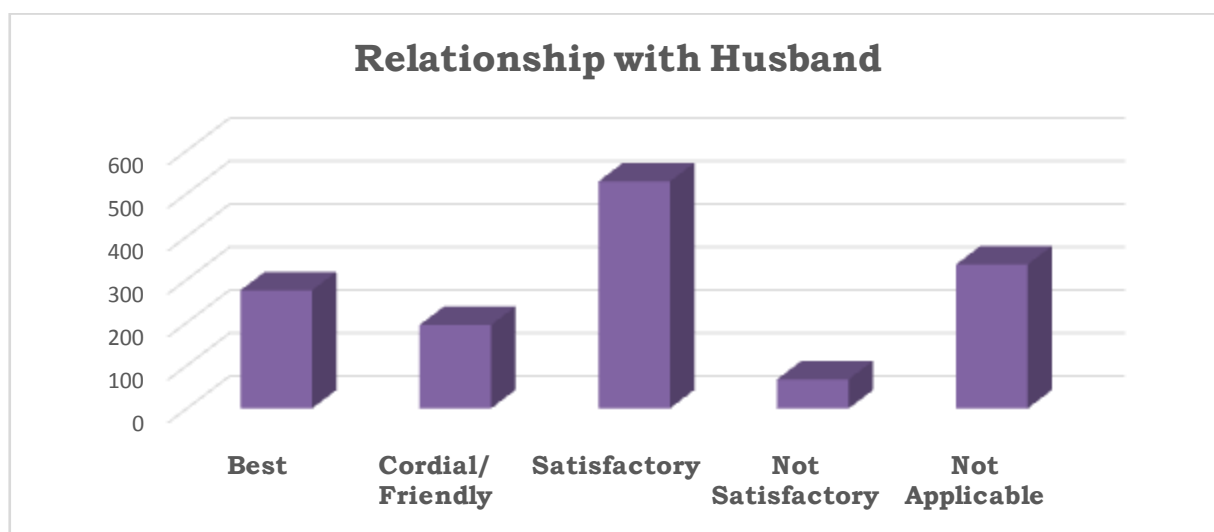
Among all the women agricultural workers, 240 (17.14%) have work experience of less than 02 years, 314 (22.43%) have work experience of 02 to 05 years, 217 (15.50%) have work experience of 06 to 10 years, 244 (17.43%) have work experience of 11 to 20 years and the remaining 385 (27.50%) of these workers have more than 20 years of experience. It shows that, there is more experience for women workers in agriculture.

Relationship with husbands plays significant role in determining social culture. The information collected on the relationship with husbands as stated by women agricultural workers covered under the present study is as under.

**Table No. 6. Relationship with Husband**

Relationship with Husband	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Best	275	19.64
Cordial/ Friendly	194	13.86
Satisfactory	528	37.71
Not Satisfactory	68	4.86
Not Applicable	335	23.93
Total	1400	100

The relationship with Husband as stated by women agricultural workers is presented in the following figure:



**Fig. No. 4. Relationship with Husband**

On the relationship of women agricultural workers with their husbands, 275 (19.64%) have agreed that there is best relationship with their husbands, 194 (13.86%) have remarked that there is cordial or friendly relationship with their husbands, 528 (37.71%) have felt that there is satisfactory relationship with their husbands, 68 (4.86%) have opined that there is dissatisfactory relationship with their husbands and it is not applicable to 335 (23.93%) of the women agricultural workers as they include unmarried, divorcees, separated and widows.

There is need for equal status for women in family decision making. The collected primary data is collected on participation of women agricultural workers in family decision making and presented in the following table.

**Table No. 7. Decision Making in Family**

Decision Making in Family	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Parents/ Parents-in-Law	442	31.56
Husband Alone	405	28.93
Husband & Self (Wife)	354	25.29
Wife (Self) Only	67	4.79
Any Other	132	9.43
Total	1400	100

On the family decision making, 442 (31.56%) of all the women agricultural workers have agreed that their parents or parents-in-law are making family decisions, 405 (28.93%) have stated that their husbands are only decision makers in their families, only 354 (25.29%) have opined that they are making decisions along with their husbands, 67 (4.79%) have expressed that they are making the family decisions and 132 (9.43%) have remarked that others such as their children are making family decisions.

Generally, one should choose occupation or profession or work based on his or her skills, education, experience and even area of interest. Then only, the work will be successful. The reasons for choice of occupations as agricultural workers as stated by the respondents are shown as under.

**Table No. 8. Reasons for Choice of Agricultural Labour Occupation**

Reasons for Agricultural Labour Occupation	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Lower Income/ Poverty	564	40.28
Unskilled Work	396	28.28
Unemployment of Family Members	178	12.71
To Raise Standard of Living	214	15.28
Any Other	48	3.43
Total	1400	100

From the above table it is clear that, 564 (40.28%) of the women agricultural workers have taken up their work due to lower income or poverty, 396 (28.28%) have chosen the work as it is unskilled, 178 (12.71%) have taken up the work due to unemployment of family members, 214 (15.28%) have chosen agricultural work to raise standard of living and 48 (3.43%) have chosen the work for other reasons.

Majority of the women agricultural workers are not getting regular work and wages throughout year and their working days in a year are shown as under.

**Table No. 9. Working Days in a Year**

Annual Working Days	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Less than 100 days	357	25.50
100 to 200 days	486	34.71
200 to 300 days	211	15.07
More than 300 days	346	24.71
Total	1400	100

Above table revealed that, of all the women agricultural workers, 357 (25.50%) are working for less than 100 days, 486 (34.71%) are working for 100 to 200 days, 211 (15.07%) are working for 200 to 300 days and only 346 (24.71%) of these respondents are working for more than 300 days.

There is argument that, wages in agriculture sector are lower and discriminatory. That is wages are depending on seasons and gender. That is, during seasons, wages are more and during off seasons, the wages are meagre. Further, there is lower wages for females compared to male workers. The average annual wages of women agricultural workers surveyed are as under.

**Table No. 10. Average Annual Wages of Women Agricultural Workers**

Average Annual Wages of Worker	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Less than Rs. 24000	732	52.28
Rs. 24001 to Rs. 48000	495	35.36
Rs. 48001 to Rs. 96000	173	12.36
Rs. 96000 to Rs. 1.5 lakhs	--	--
More than Rs. 1.5 lakhs	--	--
Total	1400	100

The information collected on average annual wages of women agricultural workers surveyed revealed that, 732 (52.28%) of the agricultural workers are getting less than Rs. 24000 annually, 495 (35.36%) are getting wages between Rs. 24001 to Rs. 48000 in a year and the remaining only 173 (12.36%) are getting wages between Rs. 48001 to Rs. 96000. It shows that, there is lower wages of majority of women agricultural workers,

All the women agricultural workers and their husbands are working outside. Even it is observed that, few of other family members of the respondents are also working outside. In this respect, to assess the economic status, the information was collected from the respondents on the average annual income of family including the incomes of respondents, their husbands and other family members and presented in the following table.

**Table No. 11. Average Annual Income of Family (From All Sources)**

Average Annual Income of Family	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Less than Rs. 36000	124	8.86
Rs. 36001 to Rs. 60000	315	22.50
Rs. 60001 to Rs. 96000	736	52.57
Rs. 96001 to Rs. 2 lakhs	225	16.07
More than Rs. 2 lakhs	--	--
Total	1400	100



Among all the women agricultural workers covered under the study, 124 (8.86%) have mentioned that their annual family income is less than Rs. 36000, 315 (22.50%) have stated that their annual family income from all sources is between Rs. 36000 to Rs. 60000, 736 (52.57%) have expressed that their annual family income from all sources is between Rs. 60001 to Rs. 96000 and 225 (16.07%) have remarked that their average annual family income from all sources is between Rs. 96001 to Rs. 2 lakhs.

To assess the economic status of women agricultural workers, the information was collected from the respondents on the worth of properties owned personally by them and tabulated as under.

**Table No. 12. Worth of Properties Owned Personally**

Personal Ownership to Properties	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Nil	713	50.93
Less than Rs. 50000	452	32.28
Rs. 50001 to Rs. 1 lakh	201	14.36
Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs	34	2.43
More than Rs.2 lakhs	--	--
Total	1400	100

Among all the women agricultural workers, 713 (50.93%) have not owned any properties in their personal names, 452 (32.28%) have owned properties of less than Rs. 50000 in their names, 201 (14.36%) have owned properties between Rs. 50001 to Rs. 1 lakh in their name and 34 (2.43%) have owned personal properties worth between Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs. The worth of properties owned by few of women agricultural workers is meagre.

As discussed above, majority of the women agricultural workers have not owned any properties in their personal names and the reasons furnished by these respondents for the same are shown as under.

**Table No. 13. Reasons for Not Owning Personal Properties**

Reasons for Not Owning Personal Properties	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Poverty	214	15.28
Gender Inequality	456	32.57
Not Interested	43	3.07
Any Other	--	--
Not Applicable	687	49.07
Total	1400	100

The reasons furnished by the women agricultural workers for not owning personal properties revealed that, 214 (15.28%) have not owned properties due to poverty, 456 (32.57%) have not owned property due to gender inequality, 43 (3.07%) have not owned any property as they are not interested and it is not applicable to 687 (49.07%) of the respondents as they have owned properties in their personal names.

The worth of properties owned by family (all the family members including women agricultural workers) ascertain the economic status. The information collected on the worth of properties owned by family is disclosed as under.

**Table No. 14. Worth of Properties Owned by Family**

Worth of Properties Owned by Family	Number of Women Workers	Percentage
Nil	434	31.00

Less than Rs. 50000	346	24.71
Rs. 50001 to Rs. 1 lakh	181	12.93
Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs	153	10.93
More than Rs. 2 lakhs	286	20.43
Total	1400	100

As stated by all the women agricultural workers, 434 (31.00%) have expressed that their families have not owned any properties, 346 (24.71%) have stated that their families owned properties of less than Rs. 50000, 181 (12.93%) have agreed that their families have owned properties between Rs. 50001 to Rs. 1 lakh, 153 (10.93%) have mentioned that their families have owned properties between Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakhs and 286 (20.43%) have remarked that their families have owned properties worth more than Rs. 2 lakhs.

### SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION:

It is found from the present study that, women agricultural workers are leading life with poverty with wage discrimination and even under-employment. Due to their unskilled work, it is observed that women agricultural workers are also facing many of the problems at their work places as well as in their families. Their work place problems include, exploitation, caste and gender discrimination, wage discrimination, sexual harassment, work overload, etc. They are also suffering from different family problems such as domestic violence, poor status and respect, psychological depression, etc. All these problems are derived from poor educational background of women agricultural workers. Hence, it is essential to develop the educational and socio-economic background of women agricultural workers. For this purpose, the NGOs should provide awareness on legislations passed against the exploitation of employers, working conditions including wages and family violence at their households. As there is under-employment in agriculture, it is suggested to the Government to formulate more welfare schemes to provide self-employment training with financial assistance to women agricultural workers.

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