

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN CHITVEL MANDAL OF TIRUPATI DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

*Women agricultural labourers constitute one of the most vulnerable sections of the rural workforce in India. Their contribution to agricultural production is significant, yet they continue to face socio-economic disadvantages such as low wages, irregular employment, poor working conditions, limited access to education, healthcare, and social security. In Andhra Pradesh, where agriculture remains a major source of livelihood, women play a vital role in farming activities including sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and post-harvest processing. Despite their indispensable contribution, they often receive lower wages than men, possess limited ownership of productive assets, and have minimal participation in household and community decision-making. This study focuses on the socio-economic conditions of women agricultural labourers in Chitvel Mandal of Tirupati District, Andhra Pradesh, with the objective of assessing their living standards, employment patterns, income levels, access to welfare schemes and the challenges they encounter in their daily lives. The study examines the demographic and socio-economic profile of women agricultural labourers by considering variables such as age, marital status, family size, caste, and household income. The study reveals that a majority of women agricultural labourers belong to economically weaker households with limited and uncertain sources of income. Most respondents are engaged in seasonal agricultural operations, resulting in irregular employment and income instability throughout the year. Wage discrimination continues to exist despite legal provisions ensuring equal remuneration. The research concludes that sustainable rural development requires greater recognition of the contribution of women agricultural labourers and the formulation of gender-sensitive policies that ensure equitable wages, regular employment opportunities, access to institutional finance, land rights, social security and effective implementation of welfare schemes. Promoting women's participation in decision-making, enhancing skill development, supporting income diversification, and strengthening rural infrastructure will contribute to improving their quality of life and economic independence.*

**KEYWORDS:** Women Agricultural Labourers, Socio-Economic Status, Rural Livelihood, Gender Inequality, Agricultural Employment, Women's Empowerment, Chitvel Mandal, Tirupati District.

## INTRODUCTION

India is the second the largest portion populous country of the world and has changing socio-economic condition and political demographic and morbidity trends that have been illustration global thought in current years. The agricultural labourers comprise the largest part disregarded class in Indian rural structure. Since they hold no expertise or training, they have no alternative career alternatives. The rise in agricultural labourers and cultivators involved in crop production has been one of the most distinctive aspects of India's economy. The observable fact of underemployment, under-development and excess populace are at the same time obvious in the daily lives and living of the agricultural labourers. They typically receive minimal pay, are overworked in their workplace, and have incredibly erratic employment. The nation's vertical backbone is agriculture. Agriculture provides the majority of the nation's inhabitants with a living. Agriculture has been practiced in our nation for around 10,000 years. At present in terms of agriculture production the country retains second position around the world. The agricultural production in India covers field crops, fruit crop, plantation crop, livestock, forestry, fishing etc. Thus, it is a vast industry that employs or recruits 52% of India's total workforce.

The majority of our nation's rural population depends on agriculture. Even though agriculture's share of the nation's GDP has been steadily declining, it is still India's largest industry and a major contributor to the country's socioeconomic development. States like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar and West Bengal are the leading states in terms of agricultural contribution of the country followed by the rest. Therefore, India's primary business is agriculture, which has seen tremendous growth in recent years due to the adoption and initiatives of numerous government policies, NGOs, and commercial organisations. The agricultural landscape has evolved significantly throughout the years, but one aspect has remained constant: the perception of women as essential workers in this sector. With the introduction of science and technology, the agriculture industry has grown and changed significantly. However, the ignorance of women's labour as an essential component of this industry cannot be eliminated by this recent development. Two-thirds of women are still employed in agriculture in underdeveloped nations like India, but their employment is not acknowledged. The repressive status of being primarily responsible for family and household maintenance still affects women in the labour force in developing countries. Additionally, their status as family labourers who labour on farms in addition to their regular domestic tasks suppresses their contribution as agricultural labourers. The hardships of poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, and illiteracy exacerbate these issues for rural women. Despite of the huge productive women labour force in agriculture their demands and challenges are partly disregarded by the rural development programs. Significant improvements for agricultural productivity, rural output, economic vitality, home food security, family health, family economic security, and welfare were made possible by women's multitasking abilities. The patterns of working women's employment in agriculture are identified by numerous systematic researches.

## ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

India's economy relies heavily on agriculture, which is the nation's vertical backbone. Approximately 80% of Indians are either directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. The majority of women labour in a variety of jobs to support themselves, and agriculture is thought to be the largest unorganised industry in which many rural women actively participate. In rural India, women play a vital role in a variety of agricultural activities. They work alongside men in the field, take care of the home and children, and play a dual role as a homemaker and a pattern in the farming activities outside the home. Despite the green revolution and other agricultural technology breakthroughs, Indian agriculture remains a risk in the hands of the monsoon. In India, over half of the national income is obtained from agriculture therefore constituting the basic foundation for the national economy. The success in Indian Agriculture has gained national and worldwide praise. For the majority of people in developing nations, agriculture is their primary source of income and employment. The majority of women work in agriculture in the majority of these developing nations. Even in most of the South-East Asian countries, where convention bans women from working outside the home, care of livestock, processing of the gathered crops, pursuit of craft and other jobs nonetheless provide them with the status of contributing substantially to the family income.

In most parts of the country, the jobs done traditionally by women are generally those of transplanting, sowing, weeding, harvesting, winnowing and threshing. Indian women being approximately half of the total population of the country play a key role both in domestic sphere and agricultural sector. Yet our traditional mindset considers women as second-class citizens in spite of the fact that women have proved their settle in every field of life. Their contribution is not given fair acknowledgement. An estimate from the International Labour

Organization states that between 25 and 39 percent of the GDP is made up of unpaid household labour. According to the 2011 census, 79.40 percent of all economically active women worked in agriculture, compared to 63.30 percent of men. The proportion of agricultural wage labour to all agricultural workers in India has increased over time, which is a noteworthy trend. In actuality, women make up a far larger percentage of wage workers than do men. In 1961, 55.32 percent of rural women in India were employed as agricultural labourers; however, by 2011, that percentage had dropped to 33.03 percent.

## OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives are as follows.

- ❖ To analyse the overall socio-economic status of women agricultural labourers in Chitvel Mandal of Tirupati district.
- ❖ To study the demographic profile of agricultural labourers (age, gender, caste, family size, marital status).
- ❖ To examine the employment pattern (type of work, number of working days, seasonal employment).
- ❖ To identify the major problems and challenges faced by women agricultural labourers.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It focuses on examining and interpreting the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers.

### Sampling Design

Sampling Method: Multi-stage sampling technique  
Selection of chivel Mandal  
Selection of villages within the mandal  
Selection of respondents (agricultural labourers)  
Sample Size. Typically 120 women agricultural labour households (can be adjusted based on your study design).

### Data Collection

Primary data was collected through Structured interview schedules  
Personal observation  
Information was collected on Income, employment and living conditions.  
Secondary data will be collected from, Government reports (Census, NSSO, Economic Survey)  
Books, journals, research articles  
Panchayat and Mandal office records.

**Table-1**  
**Agewise Analysis of the Sample Respondents In the study area**

S.No.	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 25	15	12.50
2	26-35	25	20.83
3	36-45	37	30.83
4	45-60	33	27.50
5	60 Above	10	8.34
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

In the above table -1 the age-wise distribution of respondents in Table-1 shows that the majority of women agricultural labourers fall within the middle-age groups. The highest proportion of respondents (30.83%) belongs to the age group of 36–45 years, indicating that this group forms the core working population in agricultural activities. This is followed by 27.50% in the 45–60 age group, showing that a significant number of older individuals are also actively engaged in labour work. The 26–35 age group constitutes 20.83%, reflecting moderate participation of younger adults. Meanwhile, only 12.50% of respondents are below 25 years, suggesting lower involvement of youth in agricultural labour, possibly due to education or migration towards other sectors. The least representation (8.34%) is observed among those aged above 60 years, which may be due to physical limitations. Overall, the data indicates that women agricultural labour is largely dependent on the middle-aged population.

**Table-2****Marital status of the respondents**

S.No.	Marital status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Unmarried	34	28.34
2	Married	56	46.66
3	Widowed	18	15.00
4	Divorced	12	10.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

The distribution of respondents based on their marital status. The data reveals that a majority of the respondents, 46.66 percent (56 individuals), are married, indicating that most women agricultural labourers have family responsibilities. Unmarried respondents account for 28.34 percent (34 individuals), representing a significant portion of younger or independent workers. Widowed respondents constitute 15.00 percent (18 individuals), which reflects the presence of vulnerable individuals who may face economic and social challenges. Additionally, 10.00 percent (12 individuals) of the respondents are divorced, indicating a smaller yet notable group dealing with separate living conditions. Overall, the table highlights those married individuals dominate the workforce, but there is also a considerable presence of unmarried, widowed, and divorced respondents, reflecting diverse social backgrounds within the study population.

**Table-3****Caste wise analysis of the sample respondents in the study area**

S. No.	Caste category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	SC	28	23.34
2	ST	12	10.00
3	BC	52	43.33
	OC	28	23.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

In the above table-3 caste-wise distribution of respondents. The largest group belongs to the Backward Classes (BC), comprising 43.33 percent (52 individuals), indicating their significant presence in agricultural labour. Scheduled Castes (SC) account for 23.34 percent (28 individuals), while Other Castes (OC) also represent 23.33 percent (28 individuals), showing an equal proportion. Scheduled Tribes (ST) constitute the smallest group, with 10.00 percent (12 individuals). The data highlights that socially and economically backward communities, particularly BC and SC groups, form a major portion of the workforce, reflecting their dependence on agricultural labour for livelihood.

**Table-4****Types of the family**

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Types of family</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Nuclear	29	24.17
2	Joint	80	66.67
3	Extended	11	9.16
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

Family wise distribution of respondents based on the type of family. The majority of respondents, 66.67 percent (80 individuals), belong to joint families, indicating that traditional family structures are still dominant in the study area. Nuclear families account for 24.17 percent (29 individuals), showing a moderate shift towards smaller family units. Extended families constitute only 9.16 percent (11 individuals), representing a smaller proportion of the sample. The data suggests that joint family systems continue to play an important role in providing social and economic support to agricultural labourers.

**Table-5****Family size of the Respondents**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Family size</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	1-3Members	58	48.34
2	4-6 Members	32	26.67
3	7-9 Members	20	16.66
4	Above 9 Members	10	8.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

In the above table-5family size wise distribution of respondents based on family size. Nearly half of the respondents, 48.34 percent (58 individuals), have small families consisting of 1–3 members, indicating a trend towards smaller household sizes. Families with 4–6 members account for 26.67 percent (32 individuals), while those with 7–9 members represent 16.66 percent (20 individuals). Only 8.33 percent (10 individuals) have large families with more than 9 members. The data reveals that although joint families are common, many households maintain a relatively small family size, possibly due to economic constraints and changing social patterns.

**Table-6****Educational Status of the Sample Respondents in the study area**

S. No.	Education Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	41	34.17
2	Primary	50	41.67
3	Secondary	24	20.00
4	Graduate	05	4.16
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

The educational status of the respondents. It is observed that a significant proportion of respondents, 41.67 percent (50 individuals), have completed primary education, making it the largest group. Illiterate respondents account for 34.17 percent (41 individuals), indicating that a considerable section of the population still lacks basic education. Those with secondary education constitute 20.00 percent (24 individuals), showing moderate educational attainment. Only a small percentage, 4.16 percent (5 individuals), are graduates, reflecting very limited access to higher education among the respondents. Overall, the data suggests that low levels of education are prevalent, which may affect employment opportunities and income levels.

**Table-7****Employment status of the sample respondents in the study area**

S. No.	Nature of employment	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Permanent	31	25.84
2	Casual	29	24.17
3	Seasonal	58	48.33
4	Contract	02	1.66
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

The distribution of respondents based on the nature of their employment. It is evident that nearly half of the respondents, 48.33 percent (58 individuals), are engaged in seasonal employment, indicating a high level of job insecurity and dependence on agricultural cycles. Permanent employment is reported by 25.84 percent (31 individuals), providing relatively stable income to a smaller section of workers. Casual labour accounts for 24.17 percent (29 individuals), reflecting irregular work opportunities for many respondents. Only 1.66 percent (2 individuals) are employed on a contract basis, representing a very small segment. Overall, the data highlights that most respondents rely on unstable and seasonal forms of employment, which may lead to income fluctuations and economic vulnerability.

**Table-8****Years of experience in labour work**

S. No.	Years of experience in the labour work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 5	40	33.34
2	6-10	32	26.66
3	11-20	30	25.00
4	Above 20	18	15.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** Primary Data.

In the distribution of respondents based on their years of experience in labour work. A significant proportion, 33.34 percent (40 individuals), have less than 5 years of experience, indicating the presence of relatively new entrants into labour work. Respondents with 6–10 years of experience constitute 26.66 percent (32 individuals), while those with 11–20 years account for 25.00 percent (30 individuals), showing a balanced distribution across mid-level experience groups. Additionally, 15.00 percent (18 individuals) have more than 20 years of experience, reflecting a smaller group of highly experienced workers. The data suggests a mix of both new and experienced labourers, contributing to the workforce with varying skill levels and work exposure.

**Table-9****Average Working Days Per Month in the study Area**

S. No.	Average working days per month	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 10	40	33.34
2	10-20	52	43.33
3	21-25	18	15.00
4	Above 25	10	8.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

The distribution of respondents based on the average number of working days per month. It is observed that the largest proportion of respondents, 43.33 percent (52 individuals), work for 10–20 days per month, indicating moderate employment availability. A significant 33.34 percent (40 individuals) work for less than 10 days, reflecting irregular job opportunities and underemployment among labourers. Meanwhile, 15.00 percent (18 individuals) get work for 21–25 days, suggesting relatively better employment stability. Only 8.33 percent (10 individuals) work for more than 25 days in a month, indicating that very few respondents have access to near full-time employment. Overall, the data highlights that most labourers do not receive continuous work throughout the month, pointing to employment insecurity and income instability.

**Table-4.10**  
**Daily wage Earns in the sample respondents in the study Area**

S. No.	Daily wage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 300	60	50.00
2	300-500	29	24.17
3	500-700	21	17.5
4	Above 700	10	8.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

In the distribution of the respondents based on their daily wage earnings. It is evident that half of the respondents, 50.00 percent (60 individuals), earn below ₹300 per day, indicating that a large proportion of labourers fall under the low-income category. About 24.17 percent (29 individuals) earn between ₹300–₹500, representing a moderate-income group. Meanwhile, 17.5 percent (21 individuals) receive wages in the range of ₹500–₹700, showing comparatively better earnings. Only 8.33 percent (10 individuals) earn above ₹700 per day, reflecting a very small proportion of higher-income labourers. Overall, the data highlights that the majority of respondents receive low wages, which may not be sufficient to meet their basic needs, thereby indicating economic hardship and poor living conditions among labourers.

**Table-11**  
**Monthly family income of the sample respondents in the study Aea**

S. No.	Monthly family income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 10,000	60	50.00
2	10,000-20,000	22	18.34
3	20000-30,000	28	23.33
4	Above 30000	10	8.33
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

In the distribution of respondents based on their monthly family income. It is evident that half of the respondents, 50.00 percent (60 individuals), earn below ₹10,000 per month, indicating a low-income level among a majority of households. About 23.33 percent (28 individuals) fall in the income range of ₹20,000–₹30,000, while 18.34 percent (22 individuals) earn between ₹10,000–₹20,000. Only 8.33 percent (10 individuals) have an income above ₹30,000, representing a small proportion of relatively better-off families. The data clearly shows that most respondents belong to lower-income groups, reflecting economic hardship and limited earning opportunities.

**Table-12****Savings of the sample respondents in the study Area**

S. No.	Do you have savings	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	90	75
2	No	30	25
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data

The distribution of respondents based on whether they have savings. It is evident that a majority of respondents, 75 percent (90 individuals), reported having some form of savings, while 25 percent (30 individuals) do not have any savings. This indicates that despite low income levels, many labourers attempt to save for future needs or emergencies. However, the presence of respondents without savings reflects financial instability and limited capacity to manage unexpected expenses. Overall, the data suggests a mixed financial condition, where a majority try to maintain savings, but a significant minority remain economically insecure.

**Table-13****Major problems faced in labour work**

S. No.	Major problems faced in labour work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Low wages	68	56.67
2	Irregular work	22	18.33
3	Exploitation	25	20.83
4	Health issues	05	4.17
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** primary data.

The distribution of respondents based on the major problems faced in labour work. It is observed that the highest proportion of respondents, 56.67 percent (68 individuals), reported low wages as their main problem, indicating financial insecurity among labourers. Exploitation is reported by 20.83 percent (25 individuals), while 18.33 percent (22 individuals) face irregular work availability. A small proportion, 4.17 percent (5 individuals), reported health issues as a major concern. The data clearly indicates that low wages and irregular employment are the most significant challenges faced by labourers, reflecting poor working conditions and economic hardship.

**CONCLUSION**

The research of women agricultural labourers in India reveals various key facts linked to their socio-economic status. First of all, the bulk of female farm labourers are economically disadvantaged because they lack land and rely only on their daily

pay. Because agricultural labour is seasonal, their income is typically poor and inconsistent, which causes poverty and financial instability. Many labourers either stay unemployed during the off-season or go to cities in quest of other jobs. The predominance of low literacy among agricultural labourers, which restricts their chances for better employment and keeps them stuck in menial tasks, is another important result. Women labourers regularly participate in agricultural tasks, yet they often receive lesser wages compared to men, demonstrating gender inequality. Lack of access to adequate housing, sanitary amenities, clean drinking water, and medical treatment is another prevalent aspect of poor living conditions. According to research, women who work in agriculture in India are among the most economically disadvantaged groups in rural communities. The majority of labourers lack land and rely only on daily wage work, which is quite erratic and seasonal. Poverty and financial instability result from their often low- and inconsistent-income levels. Many workers experience unemployment during non-agricultural seasons or relocate to cities in pursuit of other employment. The results also demonstrate that women who work in agriculture have low literacy rates, which limits their access to higher job prospects. Women labourers actively participate in agricultural tasks but often receive lesser wages than males, showing gender inequity. In addition, poor living conditions, lack of sufficient housing, inadequate sanitation and limited access to healthcare facilities are frequent among them.

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