Chapter - VI

Findings, Policy Implications and Suggestions
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FINDINGS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this concluding chapter, a brief summary of the findings of the study and an account of policy implications and suggestions are given.

This study has made an attempt to explain the socio-economic characters of women labour households in both the taluks, namely, Thiruvarur and Mannargudi. The study has also brought forth the nature and extent of women labour in agriculture with respect to non-agricultural activities, employment in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, during season and off-season, the wage differentials between male and female labourers in each agricultural operation and wage-discrimination (operation-wise). Comparison is done between minimum wage and actual wage; and actual wage and expected wage. The following factors such as percentage contribution of women to total family income, savings position, total borrowings, total family income, and expenditure are clearly found out in the society of women agricultural labourers. Lastly, problem of women agricultural labourers in general, problem of employment, problem at home, problem of finance and problem of wage have been analysed and presented in this chapter.

In order to fulfill above objectives, a field study was carried out in Thiruvarur district that has different agro-climatic conditions. It is in the central
part of the State and closer to the State rural female workers ratio in agriculture. This district consists of 10 taluks and 32 blocks. Among these, two taluks have been selected for this study with different conditions. They are Thiruvarur and Mannargudi (wet and dry taluks). Five revenue villages from each taluk have been selected, and the total sample size is 200 and ten percent of the households have been randomly from taluk.

6.1. FINDINGS

6.1.1. Socio-economic characteristics of the women agricultural labour households:

a. Size of the family: It is found that the average size of the household in Thiruvarur is 4.7 and 4.6 in Mannargudi. But the overall average size of family is found to be around five members.

b. Type of family: Out of 200 women agricultural labour households, 96.5 percent belong to nuclear type of family, and the remaining 3.5 percent live in joint family system in both the taluks.

c. Caste: Majority of the women agricultural labourers (86.5 percent) belong to scheduled caste and remaining 13.5 percent belong to backward community.

d. Religion: It is found that all the women agricultural labourers belong to Hindu religion and none of them are Christians and Muslims.
e. **Marital status:** Regarding the marital status, all the women agricultural labourers are married and live with their husbands and child/children.

f. **Type of house:** The data revealed that most of the labours (85 percent) live in huts (one-room house), nine percent live in tiled houses and six percent live in houses with concrete roof.

g. **Age:** (Women agricultural labourers). The women agricultural labourers are found in the age group ranging from 30 to 35 years (74 percent) in both the taluks.

h. **Educational status:** In both the taluks, 66 percent of them are illiterates, 23 percent had only primary education while 10.5 percent had secondary education and very few (0.5 percent) studied only up to higher secondary level.

6.1.2. **Economic Aspects:**

Regarding the nature of occupation, in both the taluks only 17 percent of the women agricultural labourers are employed on a permanent basis and majority (83 percent) are casual labourers. The percentage of employed, unemployed and the ratio of earner to dependent among women agricultural labour households in Thiruvarur is worked out to be 40.63 percent, 59.36 percent and 1:1.46 in Mannargudi taluk it is worked out to be 49.13 percent,
50.86 percent and 1:1.03. But, the average requirements of at least two members have to earn per family.

6.1.3. Nature and extent of employment of women agricultural labourers:

Regarding the average number of days employed in agricultural activities, it is found to be 205 days and 179 days in Thiruvarur and Mannargudi taluks respectively, and in the case of non-agricultural activities, the average number of days employed is found to be 34 days and 81 days respectively. But, the total number of days employed by women agricultural labourers in both the taluks is found to be 239 and 260 days respectively.

6.1.4. Wage discrimination:

In the present study, it is found that sex-wise discrimination prevailed in activities such as sowing, harvesting, the wage discrimination is higher, that is, 42 percent and 40 percent in Thiruvarur and Mannargudi taluks respectively. In case of threshing, it is found to be 28 percent and 50 percent and in case of sowing it is found to be five percent and 20 percent respectively. It is proved that when women perform the same activity as men (equal work) in agriculture, women are not paid on par with men.
6.1.5. Comparison of Minimum Wage and Actual Wage:

The minimum wage is fixed by the Government. But the actual wage is the amount received by the labourers when they work. Except in the case of ploughing in the Thiruvarur taluk, in the remaining activities the actual wage is higher than the minimum wage. This is because, at present there is a greater demand for women labourers in agriculture to do certain specific activities such as transplanting, weeding and harvesting. That is to say, the demand for labour is greater than the supply of labour and it leads to rise in wage rate (actual wage).

6.1.6. Comparison of Actual Wage and Expected Wage:

The actual wage is less than the expected wages. The expected wage of both men and women labourers in agricultural activities is higher. But, women labourers expect more than men labourers. This is because to supplement the family income, to spent money on their children’s education, to purchase household articles and grocery items. Because it is a general tendency on the part of human beings to expect more than they receive or get, and it is good also.

6.1.7. Women contribution to family income:

The percentage contribution of women to total family income is higher in Thiruvarur taluk (37 percent) than in Mannargudi taluk (28 percent).
6.1.8. Total income of the family:

The total income of the family from non-agricultural activities is found to be more (59 percent) than in agricultural activities (41 percent) in Mannargudi taluk, whereas in Thiruvarur taluk the income from agricultural activities is found to be higher (57 percent) than in non-agricultural activities (43 percent).

6.1.9. Wage of women agricultural labourers:

It is found that the average wage of women agricultural labourers from agricultural activities is Rs4644 and Rs3996 in both the taluks respectively. Wage from non-agricultural activities is found to be Rs2261 and Rs3492 in both the taluks respectively. But, the total wage of women in Mannargudi taluk is found to be higher (Rs7488) than Thiruvarur taluk (Rs6905). This is because in Mannargudi taluk, the wage earned from non-agricultural activities is higher than the wage earned from agricultural activities.

6.1.10. Savings Position:

The saving habit of people in Mannargudi taluk is far better than Thiruvarur taluk. The total saving in Mannargudi taluk is because, in Mannargudi, there is a problem of unemployment, so whatever they earn, they are saving more to some extent in order to meet the unforeseen
expenditure such as death, festivals, marriages and some ceremonies (birth and death ceremonies).

6.1.11. Dept. position of the family:

The total borrowings (debts.) in Thiruvarur taluk is Rs40,800 and Rs1,078,000 in Mannargudi taluk, The reasons for borrowing is to spend money on marriages, festivals, temple festivals and other ceremonies, to repay the past debt from friends of relatives or to repay the past debt from money lenders.

6.1.12. Problems:

The women labourers have faced many problems at home and also at the work spot. The problems are mainly related to wage, hours of work, number of days employed in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, problem of finance and lack of knowledge about the adoption of technology in agriculture. Problems related to hours of work, wages paid to women agricultural labourers are less than that of men agricultural labourers. The women labourers face numerous problems at their work place and at home. They take “dual” responsibility to support their families to earn money and to lead a better standard of living.
6.1.13. The percentage involvement of men and women agricultural labourers showed that women labourers are involved in more number of agricultural operations, say 70 percent (out of 10 agricultural operations, they participated in 7 operations) than men labourers (60 percent) in both the taluks. This result showed that the women labourers are participating in many activities but wages paid to them are very low or less than men labourers.

6.1.14. **Total hours of work:**

It is found that the total number of days of employment is calculated only on the basis of hours of work per day. It is called man-days of employment. Six hours of work is equal to one-day. But, in the study taluks, it is found that the women agricultural labourers are asked to work for eight hours or more than that, but actual wage is paid only for six hours, and there is no question of overtime or extra amount to be given.

6.1.15. **Correlation Analysis:**

To understand the statistical relationship among economic variables relating to women agricultural labourers, correlation analysis has been worked out. The variables have been chosen on the basis of logical connection among them, which is generally correlated in money related studies. If the variables are strongly and significantly related, the regression results may be considered reliable. The correlation coefficient values for nine variables in both Thiruvarur
and Mannargudi taluks, are found to be very weak and the direction between the variables are not uniform. The association between the variables are identified and studied systematically. In the case of women’s total wage, it has got the positive association with the number of days employed in non-agricultural activities: 0.4680 and wage from agricultural activities 0.3506 but it has got negative association with number of days employed in non-agricultural activities and family size: -0.3037 and -0.3198 (Thiruvarur taluk).

In the case of Mannargudi taluk, it is found that the women’s total wage has got positive association with total number of days employed in non-agricultural activities, that is, 0.7464, husband’s income, 0.0534, wage from agricultural activities, 0.5782 and wage from non-agricultural activities, 0.6500. But, women’s total wage has got negative association with family size, -0.3649 and total number of days employed, -0.6335.

The combined result of correlation coefficient for both the taluks showed that, the variables such as total number of days employed in non-agricultural activities, wage from agriculture and wage from non-agricultural activities have got positive association with women’s total wage, 0.6269, 0.4672 and 0.7229 respectively and the variables such as family size, total number of days employed and husband’s income have got negative with women’s total wage,-0.3427,-0.5445 and -0.0735 respectively.
6.1.16. Regression analysis:

The regression values showed that the total income of the family is statistically influenced by the independent variables considered for the analysis. The education status (X₃) and social status (X₅) are negatively and significantly influencing the total income of the family (Y) in both the study taluks. But, the variables such as husband’s income (X₁), days employed in non-agricultural activities by women agricultural labourers (X₂), wage from agriculture of the women labourers (X₇) and wage from non-agricultural activities of the women agricultural labourers (X₈) are positively and significantly influencing the total income of the family (Y) in both the study taluks. And the adjusted R-square is greater (0.95) in Thiruvarur taluk than in Mannargudi taluk (0.88).

6.1.17. Correlation coefficient matrix:

In order to understand the association between the variables (nine variables), the simple linear correlation coefficients have been worked out for two study taluks. The results show that the direction and strength of the relationship between the variables are not uniform in both the study taluks, indicating the taluk specific differences. When take-age of the women agricultural labour (X₁), it has got negative relationship with husband’s income (X₈) and husband’s income has got negative relationship with age for the women agricultural labour (X₁), educational status (X₂), size of the family (X₃), social status (X₄) and number of days employed by women (X₅). And other
variables such as wage from agricultural activities ($X_6$), wage from non-agricultural activities ($X_7$) and total income of the family ($X_9$) have got positive relationship with age, education, size of the family, social status and number of days employed by women agricultural labourers in Thiruvarur taluk.

In the case of Mannargudi taluk, it is found that the variables such as educational status ($X_2$), size of the family ($X_3$), social status ($X_4$) and number of days employed by women agricultural labourers ($X_5$) have got the negative with the age of the women agricultural labourers ($X_1$) and also the variable ($X_5$), number of days employed by women agricultural labourers has got negative association with the total income of the family ($X_9$). The other variables such as wage from agricultural and non-agricultural activities ($X_6$ and $X_7$), husband’s income ($X_8$) have got positive relationship, strongly and significantly related with positive signs.

### 6.2. Policy Implications and Suggestions

Findings of results and conclusions drawn from them and discussed above have some important implications for policy and future research. Since this study covers only the sample representatives of Thiruvarur district and two sample taluks namely Thiruvarur and Mannargudi, the generalization of results must be done with care. The policy implications of this study are given below.

Women labourers are employed generally in transplanting, weeding, winnowing, pluckers of seedlings, sowing and harvesting. Women’s wages
even in operations such as weeding and transplanting, for which they are particularly suited, are much lower than men’s wage. The rational of Equal Remuneration Act is to provide wage to women labourers on par with male labourers. It is clear that there is definitely social injustice in the study area and it has to be removed without delay. Many alternative ways are available to fight this injustice.

The enforcement of the Equal Remuneration Act strictly is the most important fact. Even though strict enforcement will require a large administrative set up and consequently huge administrative cost, gender injustice has to be removed.

Laws can be passed to punish the erring employers and officials are to be appointed to see that equal wage is given to male and female labourers. Second alternative is to provide equality and creating awareness since village women are not only illiterate but also ignorant of their rights and privileges. Government and voluntary agencies can spread the message of the need for gene equality and creating legal awareness about the Equal Remuneration Act. Public media such as television, radio, magazines and books can be used to remove this social injustice. The third alternative is to shift the excess supply of women labourers by starting women labour intensive agro-based industries in rural areas and this will narrow down the wage differentials between genders. The fourth alternative is to execute effectively the existing women development programmes such as Support to Training and Employment
Programmes (STEP), Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) meeting the credit need of the women, and Mahila Yojana (IMY) (achievement of employment of women and bringing them into the mainstream). The fifth alternative is to organize agricultural trade union movements exclusively for women. This will certainly go a long way in narrowing sown the wage discrimination between male and female agricultural labourers.

Wage rates can also be increased by shifting the excess supply of labour from agriculture to areas where they could get employment. In other words, it is possible only through causing scarcity in the supply of labourers in agriculture. Hence, the government can encourage entrepreneurs by providing subsidies and tax holidays to those who are starting small scale industries in the rural areas. Special employment and anti-poverty programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programmes (IRDP), Training of rural Youth for self-Employment (TRYSEM), Jawahar Rozar Yojana (JRY) can be further strengthened to increase employment and to eradicate poverty of the rural agricultural women labourers of Thiruvarur district.