



POVERTY AMONG AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN PUNJAB A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT ROPAR

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Abstract

There has been a distinct slow down in agricultural growth during the past two decades, inspite of substantial acceleration in the growth of the Indian economy. Poverty among agricultural labourers becomes a issue to be addressed. It is in this context, that there are number of studies conducted on poverty among weaker section of societies like marginal and small farmers. There is still paucity of research work in this area. The present work therefore is an attempt to study poverty among agricultural labourer in Punjab of District Ropar. The study provides a bird eye view on poverty, among agricultural labourer. The farmers and labourers contribute to produce the grains, fruits, vegetables and other sources of goods. The labourforce contribute to economic growth in a big way and affect both supply and demand.

The study is confined to only one district out of 20 district of the state of Punjab. It is considered to only two blocks from blocks. The selection of the 40 agricultural household may not be quite representative of the whole district. For the study, I am confined to only two villages from two blocks. The future scope of research is with the help of recommendation given at the end. The prosperity of the agricultural labourer may expand and different problems which are faces by the labourer may reduce.

Introduction

This paper is based on poverty among agricultural labourer which becomes immense issues in these days. Economic conditions of agricultural labourer goes miserable day by day as more and more agricultural labourer becomes unemployed, small farmer sell their land and becomes agricultural labourer. How they manage their living and from where they get loan for survival, how they perform their social ceremony etc. due to unproductive debt agricultural labourer caught in vicious circle of poverty.

Poverty

Poverty is a situation in which a person or household lacks the resources necessary to be able to consume a certain minimum basket of goods. A basket consists either of food, clothing, housing and other essentials (Moderate poverty) or food alone (Extreme poverty). Poverty and unemployment are inter connected. People are poor because they do not have income. That is because they are unemployed. There are also cases where people are employed and poor.

Agriculture Labourer

Classification of Agricultural Labourers may be categories as

1. Landless labourers, who are attached to the land lords.
2. Landless labourers, who are personally independent, but who work exclusively for other.
3. Petty farmers with tiny bits of land who devote most of their time working for other.

Objective of Study

Main objectives of the study are

1. To study the level and pattern of living income and consumption of agricultural labourer.
2. To examine the indebtedness among the agricultural labourer.
3. To analysis the extent of poverty among agriculture labourer.
4. To suggest ways and corrective measures to improver the economic condition of the agricultural labourer.

Research Methodology

Source of data collection

For the study I made use of primary data. However, some of the secondary data has also been used, where needed. Secondary data has been collected from books, journal, Magazines, Newspaper. The analysis in the study is based on Primary data which has been collected personally by filling questionnaires/schedules, interviews.

Sampling Design

The Punjab State has 20 districts from these districts. I have selected one district i.e. Ropar (Roopnagar) District. There are five blocks in Ropar district i.e. Ropar block, Nurpur bedi block, Anandpur Sahib block, Morinda blocks and Chamkaur Sahib Block. Two blocks are chosen at random from these blocks i.e. Ropar block and Nurpurbedi block. Two villages i.e.

village Kheri Salabatpur from Ropar block and village Saini majra from Nurpurbedi block have been selected. I have decided to take sample of 40 agricultural labourer households. I have selected 20 households in each sample villages.

Level of Income

Level of income among agriculture labourer household in sample as whole.

Agriculture Sector	Blocks
	Ist Ropar Vill. Kheri Salabatpur 47754
	IInd Nurpurbedi (Vill. Saini Majra) 52728

Analysis shows that on an average agriculture labourer household earns Rs. 47754 and 52728 Rs. Annual in Vill. Kheri alabatpur of Ropar Block and Vill. Saini Majra, of Nurpurbedi Block in the Ropar, District.

Level of income among agricultural labour household in sample as whole

Blocks	Agriculture Sector Hiring out labour			Total
	Permanently	Casually	Allied Occupation	
Ropar	15720	25348	6686	47754
NurpurBedi	12456	27476	12796	52728
Sample as whole				
	14088	26412	9741	50241

Block wise analysis shows that it is highest for Nurpur Bedi block than Ropar. Analysis further shows that an agricultural labourer household earns on as average Rs. 15720, Rs. 12456 by working as Permanent Labour, Rs. 25348, Rs. 27476 as casual labour in agricultural and Rs. 6686 and Rs. 12796 by engaging it self in allied occupation in Vill. Kheri Salabatpur of Ropar Block and Vill. Saini Majra of Nurpur bedi District, Although there are variations in level of income earned from different sources across the Ropar, Yet, earning through casual labour is most important sources in all the block. Figure reveals that income earned by hiring out labour permanently was highest Rs. 15720 for Vill. Kheri Salabatpur of Ropar Block than vill. Saini Majra, of Nurpurbedi Rs. 12456.

From the above analysis, it can be inferred that main source of income for an agricultural labourer is hiring out labour in agricultural sector in each sample block. Hiring out as casual labour comes at number one in the sample block. Hiring out labour permanently comes at number two in Vill. Kheri Salabatpur of Ropar Block income earned from engaging staff in allied activities comes at number three in Vill. Saini Majra of Nurpurbedi Block.

Pattern of Income

An absolute figure does not give the correct picture, because average income level of agricultural labourer in blocks of the sample districts in different, in such a situation. The income Pattern may be better studied by comparing the relative share of individual components of income in the total income across blocks and two blocks in the sample as a whole.

Level and Pattern of Incoming among agriculture labour household Mean value of Income

Blocks/Villages	Sector wise income		Total
	Agriculture Sector	Allied occupation	
Ropar	41068(85.99)	6686(14.01)	47754(100.00)
NurpurBedi	39932(75.73)	12796(24.27)	52728(100.00)

Levels and Pattern of Income from Agriculture Sector among the Agriculture Labour House hold in a sample as a whole (Distt. Ropar)

Mean Value of Income

Agriculture Sector Income	Blocks		Samples as a whole
Hiring out labour	Ropar	Nurpurbedi	
Permanently	15720(38.27)	12456(31.2)	14088(34.78)
Casually	25348(61.73)	27476(68.8)	26412(65.21)
Total	41068(100.00)	39932(100.00)	40500(100.00)

From above analysis, it may conclude that agricultural labour household income depends mainly can the development of agriculture. For example for the sample as a whole proportion of income earned by hiring out labour in agriculture comes between 76 to 86 percent while other activates the income earned from the agricultural sector, block wise analysis shows that it is highest for Vill. Kheri Salabatpur Ropar Vill. Saini Majra, Nurpurbedi Block in allied occupation do not stand very expanded. From the sample as a whole, analysis shows that agricultural labourer earns 65.21 percent of agricultural income by hiring out as casual labour and rest of income is earned through hiring out permanently in agricultural sector by an agricultural labourer block wise analysis shows that the percentage income earned by hiring out casual labour is highest for Nurpurbedi Block that Ropar Block.

Income Received In Cash and in Kind

Analysis shows that large Proportion of the income is received in cash by an agricultural labours fighter by hiring out labour in agriculture sector or by engaging themselves in allied activities two blocks and for the samples as whole.

In cash In-kind pattern of income among Agriculture labour house hold in sample as a whole Mean value of Income

Blocks	In cash		Total	Total	Grand Total
	Agriculture Sector	Allied Activities	Cash	In-kind	
Ropar	(50.48)	(25.22)	(75.70)	(24.30)	(100.00)
Nurpur Bedi	(48.64)	(23.56)	(72.20)	(27.80)	(100.00)
Sample as a Whole					
	(49.57)	(24.38)	(73.95)	(26.05)	(100.00)

Analysis further shows that between 48.64 to 50.48 percent of income received in-cash by an agricultural labourer through hiring out labour in agriculture sector in different blocks of Ropar district. For allied activities proportion works out between 23.56 to 25.22 percent of total income across the block in Ropar District.

Per Capita Income

Absolute figures and percentage some time conceal the true facts there is also variation in family size across the blocks in sample district and for the samples as a whole. Thus, it becomes essential to look into the per capita income of an agricultural labour across the two blocks and in sample district for determining the levels of income.

Block/ Villages	Source wise per capita Income				Grand Total
	Agriculture Sector			Allied Activities	
	Hiring and labour		Total		
	Permanently	Casually			
Ropar	3023	5067	8090	1286	9386
Nurpurbedi	2166	4778	6944	2225	9169

Level of Consumption

Consumption means utilization on the material benefits created in the process of production. Consumption is equal to the amount spent on consumption expenditure at a given level of income of a community, consumption expenditure of the people is influenced, among others, by the real income of individuals, their past savings and the rate of interest of these, the influence of real income seems to be the strongest of all. For a great majority of people, past savings are very small. These saving are not readily available for expenditure by the individuals. Their influence on current consumption seems to be negligible. The high rate of interest may encourage some people to save more. Similarly it influences the level and composition of production. It is statement of a very common tendency that when income increases, consumption also increases but not to the same extent as increase in income (Keynesian economics given more importance to consumption expenditure in different way. According to Keynesian, the psychology of community is such that when aggregate real income is increased, aggregate consumption is increased, but not by so much as income. Although in under developed countries like India, where per capita income is very low and basic needs of people are not satisfied.

Mean value of consumption expenditure

Mean value of consumption expenditure of an agricultural labour house hold work out Rs. 58465 and 60578 per annum for Vill. Kheri Salabatpur of Ropar block and Vill. Saini Majra of Nurpur Bedi Block.

Levels and consumption among agricultural labour house hold in the sample as a whole

Sr. No.	Item of Consumption	Blocks		Sample as a Whole
		Ropar	Nurpur Bedi	
1	Non Durable	40212 (68.78)	40309 (66.54)	40260.5 (67.64)
2	Durable	5104(8.73)	5725 (9.45)	5414.5 (9.1)
3	Services	3911(6.69)	4434(7.32)	4172.5 (7.01)
4	Marriage and other Social Ceremonies	9238 (15.80)	10110 (16.69)	9674 (16.25)
5	Total	58465 (100.00)	60578 (100.00)	59521.5 (100.00)

Average Propensity to Consume

Average propensity to consume defined as a proportion of income spent on consumption. I have tried to work out average propensity to consume which tells us a relationship between income and consumption, expenditure for different blocks. Propensity to consume works out to 1.42 and 1.52 for agricultural labour house hold in Vill. Kheri Salabatpur of Ropar block and Vill. Saini Majra of Nurpurbedi block respectively. Propensity to consume for agricultural labour household works out to 1.47 for the sample as a whole. Analysis shows that agricultural labour Household when earn Rs. one, then spend Rs. 1.47. It means 45 paise is borrowed for consumption expenditure. Block wise analysis shows that it is 1.52 for Nurpur Bedi block than for Ropar block 1.42. Since the average propensity to consume is greater than one in sample block, agricultural labour household incurred a deficit.

Average propensity to consume among Agricultural labour household in the sample as a whole

Sr. No.	Item of Consumption	Blocks		Sample as a Whole
		Ropar	Nurpur Bedi	
1	Average income (Y) Rs.	41068	39932	40500
2	Average Consumption (C)	58465	60578	59521.5
3	Deficit/Surplus	- 17397	- 20646	- 19021.5
4	C/Y	1.42	1.52	1.47

Source: Data collected through schedule

It may be noted that in the blocks, average propensity to consume, is | "more than one. It means they always spend on consumption more than what they actually earned, it means. Agricultural labourers are not in a position to earn even for bare consumption; they are compelled to borrow to meet with their consumption expenditure this situation always keeps them under debt. Because of deficit, their capacity to consume and earn is further reduced.

From the analysis, it is evident that on an average 39 percent and 52 percent of the block is met out of borrowing by an agricultural labour house hold. It shows that incidence of borrowing is highest for Vill. Saini Majra of Nurpur bedi block a low income block.

Services

An agricultural labour also spent on services, which include education health care, convenience and entertainment etc. Analysis shows that 25.48 percent 36.83 percent, 32.21 percent, and 5.48 percent of total consumption expenditure on services is spent on education, health care, convenience and entertainment respectively in Vill. Kheri Salabatpur of Ropar block.

Consumption pattern among agricultural Labour house hold for service as a whole

(Figure in Rs.)

Sr. No.	Item of Consumption	Blocks		Sample as a Whole
		Ropar	Nurpur Bedi	
1	Education	(25.48)	(24.54)	(25.01)
2	Health Care	(36.83)	(35.76)	(36.29)
3	Convenience	(32.21)	(33.47)	(32.84)
4	Entertainment	(5.48)	(6.23)	(5.85)
	Total	(100 .00)	(100.00)	(100.00)

I) Social Ceremonies

It comprises of many types ceremonies like marriages, death, birth and other ritual etc. Consumption expenditure under this head seems to be quite dominating because such expenditure can not be avoided. Percentage of consumption expenditure for

social ceremony varies from, block to block in sample blocks. It varies between 15.80 to 16.69 percent of the total consumption expenditure in Ropar District; it is highest 16.69 percent for vill. Saini Majra of Nurpurbedi block. One of the most important ceremonies under this head is marriage in economy like India, social ceremonies dominate and beg borrow and steal, one must spend on such ceremonies.

Summary and Conclusion

Agricultural sector is the back bone of Indian economy. Agriculture in India is undergoing a sea change. The wider application of technological innovations has revolutions the traditional method of farming. Punjab is a developing state. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Punjab and that's why its people are enjoying highest per capita income in the country. The Introduction of new agricultural technology with effect from the mid sixties had favourable results in Punjab in food grains production and its market supply. But owing to lack of sufficient industrial development, the avenues of employment have not increased much.

The Punjab State is leading in the product of food grains. The growth of cereals output in the Punjab State has been such that increased major contribution to the central pool of the good grain. Ropar District has been selected as sample. There are five blocks in Ropar district i.e. Morinda block, Nurpurbedi Block, Anandpur Sahib Block, Chamkaur Sahib block. From these two blocks are chosen at random i.e. Nurpurbedi Block and Ropar Block. Two villages i.e. Village Khri Salabatpur from Ropar and Village Saini Majra from Nurpurbedi block have been selected. The agricultural labourer mainly earns income from the two sources

- Hiring out labour in agricultural sector
- Engaging themselves into allied occupations.

Agricultural labourer earns between 76 to 86 percent of Total income by hiring out about in Agricultural sector in the sample as a whole. During the survey work carried out regarding the favour labour has been observed the maximum numbers of household come from the schedule caste and schedule tribe and are below the poverty line.

Recommendations

1. Training should be imparted for basket making, embroidery, sewing and broom making to agricultural labourers both male and female.
2. Working hours for an agricultural labourer should be fixed and strictly enforce, wages for overtime should be given.
3. Surplus land should be given to agricultural labourer along with the agriculture equipment as an aid and free of cost.
4. Government should make essential commodity available like wheat, rice, kerosene, and sugar through public distribution system.
5. There should be an organization of agricultural labourers, so that they can not be exploited by big land lords and money lenders.
6. Institutional loan should be provided even for social functions on the personal surety.
7. There is an urgent need to expand the production base of agriculture with emphasis on small and marginal farmers so as to integrate them with mainstream development.
8. Urgent steps should be taken to set up mobile branches of banks in rural areas to ensure that the farmers are served at the doorstep simultaneously reducing transaction costs on either side.
9. Expenditure on health is an unforeseen burden that leads to heavy borrowing largely from informal sources, by affected families. The implementation of a health scheme for all rural people should be there.

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