

Problems of Non-Agricultural Labourers - A Study in Radhapuram Taluk, Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: *As economy grows, the labour force shifts from agriculture to non- agriculture sector, diversifying the employment structure by increasing rural non-agricultural activities, which is often suggested and adopted as a policy measure to speed up the development process in these countries. The present study is based on primary data collected from 80 sample non-agricultural labourers in Radhapuram Taluk of Tirunelveli District with the help of an interview schedule. The respondents are involved in variety of work, Major problem faed by them are : lack of old age benefit, poor social security measures, no job security and low wage rate, discriminatory wages, injuries while working, lack of pure drinking water, lack of toilet facilities, have to work at a long distance away from home, health problems, harsh behaviour of employer, has to work hard under the sun, long hours of working, bad behaviour of co-workers, and lack of organised labour Union. Specific social security and labour welfare policies may be enacted and implemented for the betterment of unorganised non-agricultural labourers. The provisions of minimum wages and social security to workers must be made obligatory for the employer. . Improvement of their skill of using appropriate technology will enable them to uplift their way of life.*

Keywords: Non-Farm Sector, Non-Agricultural Employment, Non-Agricultural Workers

I. INTRODUCTION

Importance of non-farm sector (non-agriculture sector) as a source of employment is well recognised in the process of development. With the increasing number of workers in the rural areas, agriculture alone will not solve the problem of unemployment in the rural areas. The rural non-farm sector, therefore, have become an important source of employment. For most rural people in developing economies, rural nonfarm activities are part of a diversified livelihood portfolio. The development of rural non-agricultural employment has been considered an important strategy to solve the problems of poverty and regional disparity in most of the labour surplus and poverty stricken countries.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Elumalai and Sharma (2014) observe that the percentage of rural male workers engaged in non-farm activities increased from 25.5 per cent in 1993-94 to 28.6 per cent during 1999-2000. The percentage of female workers employment in manufacturing activities increased from 45.1 per cent during 1987-88 to 51.7 per cent during 1999-2000. The study concludes that the development of small scale industries in villages would absorb the growing labour force from agriculture.

Sankar, et al., (2015), examined the incidence and growth of rural non-farm employment in India during the period 1983-84 to 2004-05 and found that incidence of rural non-farm employment in absolute numbers expanded rapidly in all India since the early 1990s. While non-farm employment for males increased by 3.43 million per year between 1999-2000 and 2004-05, the corresponding figure for the female is only 1.09 million per year.

Shard Rajan, (2009) highlights that the total number of workers expanded more in the non-farm sector than the farm sector. The proportion of non-farm employment in total rural employment has risen from 16.6 per cent in 1977-78 to 23.7 per cent in 1999-2000 and to 27.6 per cent in 2004-2005.

Saumya Chakarbarti, et al., (2014), points out that where agriculture is unable to provide sufficient employment, rural non-farm employment picks up a part of the slack. Thus, an inverse relationship between farm and non-farm employment is proposed. A policy of boosting rural non-farm employment through export promotion may apparently seem beneficial.

III. METHODOLOGY

To undertake the present research, primary data were used. Random sampling method was adopted for the present study with Radhapuram Taluk as the Universe, villages as the primary units and the non-agricultural labourers as the ultimate units.

Multi stage random sampling technique was used to select the samples. In the first stage, out of 35 villages in Radhapuram Taluk, 20 villages were selected at random. In the second stage, from each of these villages, four households whose head is doing non-agricultural work were selected. Thus 80 households were selected. The head of these households were chosen as samples for the present study and were interviewed.

IV. DISCUSSION

A) Employment Status and Working Condition

a) Type of Work Done

The type of work the sample non-agricultural labourers are doing is analysed in Table No.1

Table No. 1: Distribution of Respondents on the basis of Type of Work Done

Type of Work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Construction	13	16.25
Painting	2	2.5
Plumbing / electrical work	4	5
Weaving / handloom	6	7.5
Beedi rolling	6	7.5
Loading and unloading	5	6.25
Basket making	2	2.5
Pottery making	1	1.25
Woodwork / carpentry	4	5
Blacksmith / metal work	2	2.5
Flour mill / rice mill	3	3.75
Brick making	6.	7.5
Shops / hotels / tea stalls	12	15
Tailoring	2	2.5
Driving	4	5
TV, radio repairing / Motor Mechanic	3	3.75
Fishnet / plastic / cashew nut factory	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Source: Primary Data

Analysis regarding the type of work done by the respondents (Table No.1) reveals that 16.25 per cent of the respondents are involved in construction work, 15 per cent are working in shops / hotels / tea stalls, 7.5 per cent each are doing beedi rolling, weaving / handloom and brick making, 6.25 percent each are involved in loading and unloading work, working in fishnet / plastic / cashew nut factory 5 per cent each are involved in woodwork/ carpentry, driving

and plumbing / electrical work, 3.75 per cent each are working in flour mill / rice mill and as TV, radio mechanic / motor mechanic, 2.5 per cent each are involved in basket making, tailoring , metal work and painting, and 1.25 per cent of the sample workers are involved in pottery making.

b) Average Number of Working Days in a Month

Number of days the respondents get employment in a month is explained in Table No. 2

Table No. 2: Average Number of Working Days in a Month

No. of Days	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to 10 days	8	10
11 to 20 days	45	56.25
Above 20 days	27	33.75
Total	80	100

Source: Primary Data

Table No. 2 reveals that 56.25 percent of the respondents get work for about 11 to 20 days, 33.75 percent work about 20 days and 10 per cent of the respondents get work below 10 days on average in a month.

c) Duration of Working Hours

Daily working hours of the sample non-agricultural workers is explained in Table No. 3

Table No. 3: Duration of Working Hours

Working Hours	No. of Respondents	Percentage
6 to 8	50	62.5
6-10	18	22.5
More than 10	12	15
Total	80	100

Source: Primary Data

Table No. 3 shows that 62.5 per cent of the respondents work for 6 to 8 hours a day, 22.5 per cent work for 8 to 10 hours and 15 per cent of the respondents work more than 10 hours daily.

d) Payment of Remuneration

Payment of remuneration for the non-agricultural work done by the respondents is explained in Table No. 4

Table No. 4: Payment of Remuneration

Mode of payment of Remuneration		No. of Respondents	
1. Wage basis		(100)	49 (61.25)
	a) Piece wage.	19 (38.78)	
	b) Time wage	30 (61.22)	
2. Term contract			8 (10.00)
3. Monthly salary			23 (28.75)
Total Respondents			80 (100)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in brackets denotes percentage to respective total

Regarding the payment of remuneration, it is observed that (Table No. 4), 61.25 per cent are paid on wage basis, 28.75 per cent are paid monthly salary and 10 per cent are paid on contract basis.

Of those who are paid on wage basis, 61.22 per cent are given remuneration on time basis and 38.78 per cent are paid on the basis of piece of work done.

e) Average Earnings in a Month from Non-Farm Activities

The amount the sample agricultural workers earn from agricultural activities in a month is analysed in Table No. 5

Table No. 5: Average Earnings per Month by the Respondents from Non-Farm Activities

Average Monthly Earnings (in Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to 5000	19	23.75
5001 to 7500	49	61.25
7501 to 10000	12	15
Above 10000	0	0
Total	80	100

Source: Primary Data

Analysis regarding average earnings in a month (Table No. 5) by the respondents reveals that, 61.25 per cent earn between Rs. 5000 and 7500, 23.75 per cent earn up to Rs. 5000 and 15 per cent earn Rs. 7501 to 10000.

B) Problems faced by the Non-Agricultural Labourers

a) Problems related to Work

Problems faced by the non-agricultural labourers related to their work is analysed in Table No. 6

Table No. 6: Problems faced by the Non-Agricultural Labourers related to Work

Problems	No. of Respondents (n = 80)
Have to work at a long distance away from home	21 (26.25)
Hard work under the sun	17 (21.25)
Lack of pure drinking water	23 (28.75)
Lack of toilet facilities	21 (26.25)
Bad behaviour of co workers	11 (13.75)
Harsh behaviour of employer	17 (21.25)
Injuries while working	23 (28.75)
Long working hours	13 (16.25)
Low wage rate	39 (48.75)
Discriminatory wages	27 (33.75)
Poor social security measures	41 (51.25)
No job security	39 (48.75)
Lack of old age benefit	51 (63.75)
Health problems	18 (22.5)
Lack of organised labour Union	7 (8.75)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in brackets denotes percentage

Analysis about the problems related to work faced by the respondents (Table No. 6) reveals that lack of old age benefit is the main problem faced by the respondents as it is said by 63.75 per cent of the respondents and the following reasons are: poor social security measures (51.25 per cent), no job security and low wage rate (48.75 per cent), discriminatory wages (33.75 per cent), injuries while working and lack of pure drinking water (28.75 per cent), lack of toilet facilities, have to work at a long distance away from home (26.25 per cent), health problems (22.5 per cent), harsh behaviour of employer, has to work hard under the sun (21.25 per cent), long hours of working (16.25 per cent), bad behaviour of co-workers (13.75 per cent), and lack of organised labour Union (8.75 per cent).

b) Economic Problems

Economic problems the sample non-agricultural labourers face are explained in Table No. 7

Table No.7: Economic Problems faced by the Non-Agricultural Labourers

Problems	No. of Respondents (n = 80)
Indebtedness	38 (47.50)
Only earner in the family	27 (33.75)
No continuous work	35 (43.75)
Low wages	39 (48.75)
Difficult to take adequate food	35 (43.75)
No employment due to cheap migratory labourers	41 (51.25)
Inadequate income to meet the household needs	59 (73.75)
Difficult to educate children	35 (43.75)
Increase in the price of essential commodities	51 (63.75)
Inadequate supply of essential commodities through fair price shops	29 (36.25)
Liquor consumption habit reduces household expenditure	21 (26.25)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in brackets denotes percentage

Economic problems faced by the respondents (Table No. 7) on the basis of relative importance as said by the respondents are: inadequate income to meet the household needs (73.75 per cent), increase in the price of essential commodities (63.75 per cent), no employment due to cheap migratory labourers (51.25 per cent), low wages (48.75 per cent), indebtedness (47.5 per cent), no continuous work, difficult to educate children and take adequate food (43.75 per cent), inadequate supply of essential commodities through fair price shops (36.25 per cent), only earner in the family (33.75 per cent), and liquor consumption habit that reduces household expenditure on essential things (26.25 per cent).

c) Problems related to Living Condition

Problems faced by the sample non-agricultural labourers related to living condition is explained in Table No. 8

Table No. 8: Problems related to Living Condition

Problems	No. of Respondents (n = 80)
Lack of medical facilities	31 (38.75)
Non availability of pure drinking water	20 (25.00)
Do not have own house	15 (18.75)
Unhygienic surroundings	20 (25.00)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in brackets denotes percentage

Analysis about the problems related to living condition (Table No. 8) reveals that lack of medical facilities is the major problem as it is said by 38.75 per cent of the respondents. The Other problems are non availability of pure drinking water and unhygienic surroundings (25 per cent), and not having an own house (18.75 per cent).

V. CONCLUSION

To promote the well being of the non-agricultural labourers proper emphasis has to be made. Non-agricultural labourers should be given adequate knowledge and training regarding their works. Modern training methods should be designed for empowering the non-agricultural labourers technically, socially and economically. Improvement of their skill about the usage of appropriate technology will enable them to increase their productivity and thereby uplift their economic condition.

Bringing about rural industrialisation will create a link between farm and off-farm activities. This provides new opportunities for non-farm employment. The existing infrastructural facilities should be developed. Expeditious

transport, road and power facilities should be provided to expand business in the rural area so that more employment opportunities are created in this sector.

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