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Perception of Drudgery among Farm Women in Agricultural Activities

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ABSTRACT

Rural women in India have significant responsibilities and carry out a diverse range of tasks in various farm and family-related activities, in addition to their primary role in household chores. As a result, they are widely regarded as the backbone of the Indian economy as farm women have significant role in agriculture. The study was carried out in the district of Mayurbhanj in the state of Odisha. A random sampling method was employed and respondents were selected randomly from three blocks. A total of 50 respondents were interviewed personally to gather data using a structured interview schedule. The study findings indicated that the majority (30%) of the respondents belonged to the young age group and 66%of them belonged to nuclear families. 58% of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their working conditions. Most of the participants experienced a high degree of drudgery while carrying out agricultural tasks.

Keywords : Farm women, Agricultural activity, Perception, Drudgery

INTRODUCTION

Indian agriculture heavily relies on the contribution of women, who make up 60% of the farming population and perform 70% of major farm work (NSWF, 2014). In rural areas, where 20 million of the 30 million female workforces reside, Women are crucial contributors to agriculture and other agro-based tasks. Their daily routine is strenuous, as they dedicate up to 8-9 hours to agricultural work and 4 hours to household chores during peak seasons. Despite the challenging conditions, women undertake vital responsibilities like weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing, and grain storage, in addition to ensuring the availability of fuel and water. Women in India play a crucial role in the agricultural sector, accounting for 60% of the farming population and undertaking 70% of the major farm work (NSWF, 2014). Particularly in rural areas, where 20 million out of the 30 million female workforces reside, women contribute significantly to agriculture and other agro-based activities. However, their daily routine is demanding and strenuous, as they dedicate up to 8-9 hours to agricultural tasks and 4 hours to household activities during peak periods. Despite the challenging nature of their work, women perform essential duties such as weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing, and grain storage, in addition to providing fuel and water (Anitha *et al*., 2019).

Women in rural areas of India play a vital role in the country's economy by taking charge of the majority of agricultural tasks. They are responsible for a wide range of activities, including planting, harvesting, weeding, fertilizing, and protecting crops. Their hard work and dedication are indispensable in the agricultural sector, making them the backbone of the workforce (Tiwari *et al*., 2021). A considerable proportion of rural women participate in agricultural and related activities, including crop production, irrigation, post-harvest operations, livestock activities, and fisheries. However, the extent of

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women's involvement and the specific tasks they undertake in agriculture and related fields vary significantly from state to state, and even within a state. Farm women face challenging lives and engage in strenuous work both on the farm and in their households. This often leads to physical and mental exhaustion, as well as various health issues. The primary causes of these problems include lack of awareness, outdated techniques, technological incompatibility, and attitudinal constraints such as resistance to change. Women are falling behind in adopting improved technology and equipment for farming. Many agricultural projects were designed with men in mind, assuming that women would automatically benefit from them. However, men have different physiological and ergonomic characteristics compared to women. As a result, tools and equipment designed based on men's parameters can increase the workload and lead to occupational disorders for women. Inappropriate design and excessive use of hand tools have been linked to a higher incidence of hand, wrist, and forearm injuries. Therefore, it is crucial to develop and standardize customized tools and equipment specifically for women in order to reduce physical fatigue associated with farm work. The objective of the current investigation is to provide technological support to farm women, alleviating their burden and enhancing their productivity (Surabhi *et al*., 2016).

Drudgery is commonly understood as the physical and mental exhaustion, weariness, repetition, and difficulties encountered while performing a job. It is undeniable that if appropriate tools and equipment designed to alleviate drudgery were made accessible to rural women, these would contribute to a decrease in drudgery, an enhancement in their capabilities, productivity, and subsequently, a greater workload leading to improved efficiency. Numerous agricultural tasks and household chores carried out by women involve significant physical strain, which can result in severe health issues in the long term. Due to the excessive workload they bear both on the farm and at home, there is a risk of neglecting their own well-being (Wankhade *et al*., 2015).

Orissa boasts the second largest tribal population in India, following Madhya Pradesh, and holds the highest concentration of tribal communities in terms of percentage. As per the 2011 Census, the tribal population in Orissa stands at 22.86%, with variations ranging from 58.7% in Mayurbhanj to 0.4% in Puri at the district level. The state exhibits notable socio-economic gaps among its districts. This study seeks to explore the present socio-economic status and spatial inequalities at the block level in Mayurbhanj district, taking into account factors like caste and gender, given that this district ranks second in tribal population (Jana and Ghosh, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out by purposively selecting three Blocks Shymakhunta, Khuntaand Bodsahiin Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.The sample were selected randomly. 50 respondents were selected and an interviewschedule was used to collect data. The sample women were interviewed to access their perceived drudgery.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age:

The largest proportion of women working as labourers on farms were from the young age group, making up 30 per cent. This was then followed by 26 per cent who were categorized under the Adulthood age group and 24 per cent Middle Adults age groups, while the remaining 20 per cent of respondents were classified under the middle adulthood age group.

Family type:

Majority of the respondents (66%) were from nuclear families, while 34% of them belonged to joint family households. Therefore, it can be concluded that most respondents were from nuclear families.

Education:

The illiterate respondents constituted the majority with 44%. This was followed by 16% of respondents with primary education level, 12% with secondary education level, and 28% with graduate level education.

Occupation:

The datarepresents that 56% of respondent's occupation were agricultural labourers followed by 44 % of respondents occupation was agriculture. Majority of the respondent main occupation is agricultural labourers.

In a similar study conducted by Tiwari *et al.* (2021) majority (58.33%) of farm women were in category of middle age group, (45.83%) farm women were illiterate and (51.67%) of farm women were from joint family.

Table 1: Socio economic profile of the respondents
Frequency and percentage of the respondent's demographic characteristics (N = 50)

Sr. No.	Demographic characteristics		No.	%
1.	Age	20-25	13	26
		26-30	15	30
		31-35	12	24
		Above 36	10	20
2.	Family type	Joint family	17	34
		Nuclear family	33	66
3.	Education	Illiterate	22	44
		Primary	8	16
		Secondary school	6	12
		Graduate	14	28
		Rs.41000-50000	18	36
		Rs.51000 above	24	48
		ST	45	90
4.	Occupation	Agriculture	22	44
		Agricultural labour	28	56
5.	Working condition	Poor	29	58
		Average	21	42
		Good	0	0
6.	Land size	No land	4	8
		Up to 2 acre	14	28
		Above 2acre	17	34
		1 acre	7	14
		2 acre	8	16
7.	Nature of land	Dry land	26	52
		Irrigation	6	12
		Both	8	16
8.	Wages received	Less Rs.100/-	5	10
		Rs.100-200	45	90
		Above Rs. 200/-	0	0
9.	Duration of the work	Up to 60 days	3	6
		60-90 days	7	14
		91-120 days	10	20
		Above 120 days	30	60
10.	Distance of work place	Above one kilometres	40	80
		Up to one kilometres	10	20

Working condition:

The majority of the respondents (58%) expressed poor level of satisfaction about working conditions, followed by 42% respondents expressed as Average level of satisfaction about working conditions. Nobody was perceived good level of working conditions**.**

Land size:

8% of farm women were not having Land of their own for farming activity, whereas 28% of the respondents were having up to 2 acre, 34% of them were having above 2 acre, 14% were having one acre, 16% were having two acres. Majority of the farm Women possessed large and marginal land holding.

Nature of land:

It is clear from the data above that majority of the farm women (52%) were possessing dry land, followed by 12% possessed irrigation landand 16% of them were having both dry and irrigation land.

Wages received:

The majority of the participants (90%) earned average wages, specifically in the range of Rs. 100-200/-. On the

other hand, 10% of the respondents earned wages below Rs. 100/-.

Duration of the work:

A significant majority of the respondents (60%) had been employed for more than 120 days. A smaller percentage of respondents (20%) had been employed for a duration of 91 to 120 days, followed by 14% who had been employed for 61 to 90 days. Only 6% of the respondents had been employed for up to 60 days.

Distance of work place:

The majority of the respondents (80%) live more than one kilometre away from their workplace, while only a small percentage reside nearby, within one kilometre.

Table 2 illustrates the perspective of farm women on the workload involved in agricultural tasks. Certain activities were deemed challenging, while others were

Table 2 : Level of perceived drudgery

Activity	Easy	Moderate	Difficult	Most Difficult
Land Preparation	0 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	2(4)	48(96)
Seed Selection	5(10)	7(14)	8(16)	30(60)
Seed Treatment	0 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	34(68)	16(32)
Uprooting	0 (0.00)	10(20)	30(60)	10(20)
Transplanting	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	10(20)	40(80)
Weeding	0 (0.00)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.00)	50(100)
Hoeing	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	4(8)	46(92)
Manuring	0 (0.00)	3(6)	37(74)	10(20)
Cutting	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7(14)	43(86)
Preparation of Bundlrs	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	12(24)	38(16)
Threshing	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	8(16)	42(84)
Drying	16(32)	18(36)	16(32)	0 (0.00)
Cleaning	26(52)	16(32)	8(16)	0 (0.00)
Storage	9(18)	36(72)	5(10)	0 (0.00)

The values inside parenthesis indicates percentage

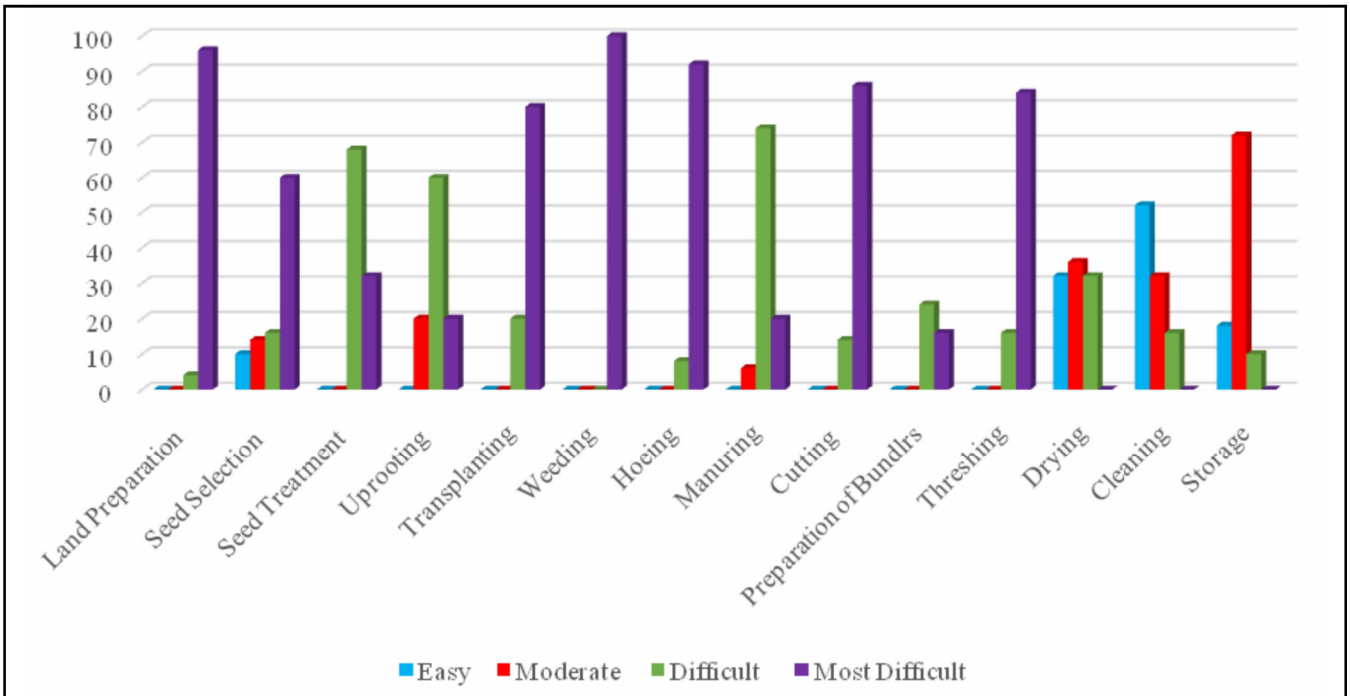

Fig. 1 : Level of perceived drudgery

considered to be of most difficulty by the women working on the farm.

The results showed that manuring activities (74%), seed treatment (68%), uprooting (60 %) and drying (32%) were perceived as difficult to perform activities by majority of the farm women. Land preparation (96%), weeding (100%), hoeing (92%), cutting (86%), threshing (84%) were perceived as most difficult to perform by majority of the farm women while, storage (72 %), cleaning (32%)and drying (36%) were perceived as moderate activities by majority of the farm women. According to Jahan and Khan (2015), women identified harvesting, weeding inter-cultivation, and threshing as the most difficult tasks in order of importance. They also highlighted that the stress levels were higher during threshing and winnowing activities in post-harvest operations due to the prolonged duration of carrying heavy loads. Biradar (2021) stated that women ranked land preparation, sowing, transplanting as the most drudgery prone tasks as per priority. Further, pointed out that work stress was higher in threshing and winnowing activities amongst postharvest operations due to load carrying for much longer duration.

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