



Effect of Alternative Sources of Employment on Availability of Agriculture Labour in Paddy Growing Areas of Coastal Andhra Pradesh - A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

It is observed that there has been a drastic change in labour availability pattern in low lying paddy growing areas. The present study is made to explore the pattern of availability of labour for paddy cultivation and reasons for the change. Farmers are facing shortage of agriculture labour availability for transplanting, weeding, pesticide and fertilizer application, harvesting, threshing and winnowing activities. Lack of willingness to work as agriculture labour, migration of agriculture labour to nearby urban areas and other government employment generation schemes are perceived as top three reasons for non availability of agriculture labour. Non agriculture unskilled labour are comparatively better educated than agriculture labour. The demand for the agriculture labour during peak season is resulting in migration of agriculture labour from other areas. Due to limited income it is observed that few tenant farmers, marginal and small farmers are also working as agriculture labour on other farms, similarly few small and marginal farmers are leasing out their land and are attending to other alternative source of employment. Non agriculture unskilled labour are more satisfied with working environment and wages, than agriculture labour.

Key words : Agriculture employment, Agriculture labour, Paddy cultivation, Rural Employment .

Agriculture labour is a major input in low lying paddy cultivation area as mechanization for paddy cultivation is restricted mostly to upland areas. Mechanization is confined to only land preparation through tractors which could replace only animal power. Even today most of the activities like nursery preparation, transplanting, weeding, pesticides and fertilizer application, harvesting, threshing, winnowing are labour oriented. Though agriculture is considered as a major source of employment in rural areas, but in the recent times it has been observed that there is a severe dearth of labour availability due to demographic, socio-economic and policy changes and also availability of new alternate sources of employment in these areas. The present study is an attempt to explore the pattern of availability of labour for different activities in paddy cultivation and the extent of short fall along with the factors responsible for changes in labour availability.

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To study the present pattern of labour availability in paddy cultivation in low lying paddy belt.

2. To analyze the shift in the labour availability pattern
3. To bring out the reasons for the changes in the labour availability.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The canal irrigated low lying paddy cultivation areas of West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh was purposively selected for study as this is one of the most affected areas suffering from agriculture labour shortage. Similarly, four mandals viz. Bhimavaram, Undi, Tadepalligudem, and Palakoderu, were selected purposively for the study as these areas are suitable for two paddy crops per year and is also subjected to drastic socio-economic changes, due to setting up of several sea food processing units, rice bran oil extraction units, fish feed manufacturing units, fish packing units, pisciculture, aquaculture, and large poultry units which are labour intensive. A total of four villages with one village from each selected mandal has been randomly selected for the study. Both farmers and unskilled work force were selected for the study. A total of 60 farmers representing Marginal, small and large from each selected village were randomly selected. Similarly, 60 labours representing

agriculture and non agriculture activities i.e 15 from each selected village were randomly selected. Three separate interview schedules were prepared for farmers, agriculture labour, and other non agriculture workers. A score of two and one were given to the positive and negative statements respectively. Ranking was followed to access the reasons for the changes in the labour availability pattern. The questions were close ended type with options given under each question. The results were expressed in the form of frequencies and percentages for each response category for the purpose of discussion. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The secondary source of information was the statistical data from the records of the local mandal office.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pattern of labour availability for paddy cultivation (activity wise)

The farmers responses were classified under three categories viz. high, medium, and low. The Table 1 reveals that the majority of the farmer (63.3%) perceive that agriculture labour is moderately available for nursery preparation whereas majority felt availability is low for transplanting (91.7%), weeding(60%), pesticide and fertilizer application(63.3%), harvesting threshing and winnowing activities(95 %). Overall the farmers revealed that (62.7 %) the availability of labour for most of the activities in paddy cultivation is low.

The farmers responses were recorded and based on the majority of the responses of the farmers the results are presented in the Table 2. The results indicate that the farmers have rated unwillingness to work as agriculture labour as major reason followed by migration of agriculture labour to nearby urban areas as unskilled labour, government employment generation schemes, shifting to self employment activities and migration to urban areas for house hold work, reasons for poor availability of availability of agriculture labour for paddy cultivation.

Characteristics of agriculture labour Vs other unskilled labour in the low lying paddy cultivation area

The general characteristics of unskilled work force (Table 4) available in the villages when compared by segregating into agriculture labour and other unskilled work force revealed that 80.8% of agriculture labour are illiterates and 19.2% studied upto primary class level whereas 52.9% of other unskilled non agriculture workers were educated upto 10th standard. Nearly 17.6% were graduates and only

11.8% were illiterates. This reveals that comparatively better educated work forces are into alternate employment areas rather than agriculture.

The data collected on gender characteristics revealed that 61.5% woman and 38.5% men are working as agriculture labour whereas 35.3 % woman and 64.7% of men are working as other unskilled work force. Similar findings were reported by Rao (1995).

The data collected on age revealed that 57.7 % of agriculture labour is in the age group of 30-40 years and 30.8 % are above 40 year age group. Whereas 70.6% of other unskilled work force is in the age group of 18-30 years and 23.5 % are in the age group of 30-40 years. Altogether 88.5% agriculture labour are in the middle age group and 70.6 % of other unskilled work force are relatively younger. Thus it can be inferred that most of the youth are interested in non agriculture activities.

The data collected on marital status revealed that 96.2% of agriculture labour are married and 58.8% of other unskilled labour are married.

The data on nativity revealed that 53.8 % of agriculture labour are native of their villages and 46.2 % are seasonal migrants who attend agriculture works, whereas 100% of other unskilled workers in the villages are locals. This implies that the demand for the agriculture labour is leading to seasonal migration of labour from nearby areas.

The land holding particulars of the agriculture labour revealed that 46.2% are land less, 30.8 % are tenant farmers, 19.2% are marginal farmers, 3.8% are small farmers. The land holding of the other unskilled workers reveal that 23.4% are land less, 5.9% have leased in land for additional income from agriculture, 47.1 % are marginal farmers, 23.5 % are small farmers. This data implies that majority of the agriculture labour are either landless or tenant farmers who also work on others land to meet their livelihoods, similarly majority of the marginal farmers are seeking out their livelihood by working for non-agriculture activities. Some of the landless and small farmers are also engaged in non-agriculture operations in the villages. Similar findings are reported by Elumalai and Sharma (2003). Small and marginal farmers are leasing out their land to other farmers and preferring to work in non- agricultural activities and supplement their income.

Perceptions of agriculture labour and other unskilled labour on their present employment conditions.

The data regarding the perceptions of the agriculture labour in Table.5 shows that 76.9 % are

Table 1. Farmers responses on availability of agriculture labour (activity wise) in paddy cultivation.

S.no	Activity	High		Medium		Low	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Nursery preparation	20	33.3	38	63.3	2	3.3
2	Transplanting	1	1.7	4	6.7	55	91.7
3	Weeding	10	16.7	14	23.3	36	60.0
4	Pesticide and fertilizer application	8	13.3	14	23.3	38	63.3
5	Harvesting threshing and winnowing	0	0.0	3	5.0	57	95.0
Average		7.8	13.0	14.6	24.3	37.6	62.7

Table 2. Farmers responses for non availability of agriculture labour.

S.no	Reasons	Ranking
1	Due to government employment generation schemes	3
2	Migration to Urban areas for house hold work	5
3	Migration of agriculture labour to near by urban areas as unskilled labour	2
4	Shifting to Self employment activities	4
5	unwillingness to work as agriculture labour	1

Employment pattern of current work force in the low lying paddy cultivation area

Table 3. Distribution of unskilled work force in selected in the villages.

S.no	Type of unskilled work force	Village I	Village II	Village III	Village IV	Mean
		%	%	%	%	%
1	Agriculture labour	46.7	40.0	33.3	53.3	43.33
2	Daily wage workers	13.3	6.7	13.3	6.7	10.0
3	Vendors	6.7	13.3	13.3	6.7	10.0
4	House hold worker	13.3	13.3	6.7	6.7	10.0
5	Salaried unskilled workers	6.7	13.3	6.7	13.3	10.0
6	Construction workers	6.7	6.7	13.3	6.7	8.33
7	Causal labour	6.7	6.7	13.3	6.7	8.33
Total		100	100	100	100	100

not satisfied with working environment, whereas 53.8% are satisfied with wages, around 65 % labour are willing to move to other activities if they have better opportunities, and 61.5 % of agriculture labour have other sources of income. Similar findings were also reported by Elumalai and Sharma (2003). A large no of (76.9%) labour expressed that they do not have better opportunities to work, at the same time 73.1

% perceive that they do not have stable income and employment, Majority (80.8%) of agriculture labour expressed that they are not financially secure.

The data regarding perceptions of other unskilled labour (Table:6) reveal that 82.4% are satisfied with working environment, 88.2 % satisfied with wages, 41.2% were previously working as agriculture labour, 76.5 % have other source of

Table 4. General Profile of agriculture labour Vs other unskilled labour.

S.no	Characteristics		Agriculture Labour		Other Unskilled Work Force	
	Class	Sub-Class	Numbers (N=26)	%	Numbers (N=34)	%
1	Education	Illiterates	21	80.8	4	11.8
		Primary education	5	19.2	4	11.8
		SSC	0	0.0	18	52.9
		Polytechnic	0	0.0	2	5.9
		Graduate	0	0.0	6	17.6
2	Gender	Male	10	38.5	22	64.7
		Female	16	61.5	12	35.3
3	Age	18-30	3	11.5	25	73.5
		31-40	15	57.7	8	23.5
		>40	8	30.8	1	2.9
4	Marital Status	Married	25	96.2	20	58.8
		Unmarried	1	3.8	14	41.2
5	Nativity	Native	14	53.8	34	100.0
		Seasonal Migration	12	46.2	0	0.0
6	Land ownership	Land Less	12	46.2	8	23.5
		Tenant Farmers	8	30.8	2	5.9
		Marginal Farmers	5	19.2	16	47.1
		Small Farmers	1	3.8	8	23.5

income, only 20.6% are willing to work as agriculture labour for better wages. Further, majority of them (85.3%) perceived that they have stability in income and employment all round the year therefore, 70.6% perceive that they financially stable.

Thus the Comparison reveals that unskilled labour non agriculture unskilled labour are more satisfied with working environment and wages, and have more stable income than agriculture labour. Agriculture labour perceive that they do not have better opportunities to work and are willing to migrate to other sources of employment if provided a better opportunity. Most of the non agricultural unskilled workers have shifted from agriculture to other alternate sources of employment, and are not unwilling to work as agriculture labour even if provided with higher wages. Most of the agriculture labours depend on alternative source of income due to insufficient funds.

The study implies that agriculture labour availability is low for operations like transplanting, weeding, pesticide and fertilizer application, harvesting threshing and winnowing in paddy cultivation. The lack of interest to work as agriculture labour, migration of agriculture labour to nearby urban areas, government employment generation schemes are considered major reasons for non availability of agriculture labour for paddy cultivation. Since, the non agriculture unskilled labour are better educated, they are getting alternate employment opportunities than others who are mostly confining to agriculture. Further, most of the agriculture labour fall under middle age group whereas majority of the other unskilled workers are young. The huge demand for the agriculture labour is leading to temporary migration of agriculture labour from near by areas. Other non agriculture unskilled labour perceive that they are more satisfied with working environment

Table 5. Perceptions of agriculture labour about about working conditions.

S.no.	Parameter	Responses	Number (n=26)	%
1	Satisfied with working environment	Yes	6	23.1
		No	20	76.9
2	Satisfied with wages	Yes	14	53.8
		No	12	46.2
3	Willingness to shift to work if have better opportunities	Yes	17	65.4
		No	7	26.9
4	Alternative sources of income	Yes	16	61.5
		No	10	38.5
5	Availabiltiy of other better opportunities to work	Yes	6	23.1
		No	20	76.9
6	Stable income and employment throughout the year	Yes	7	26.9
		No	19	73.1
7	Finanacial security	Yes	5	19.2
		No	21	80.8

Table 6. Perceptions of other unskilled labour about working conditions.

S.no.	Parameter	Responses	Number (n=26)	%
1	Satisfied with working environment	Yes	28	82.4
		No	6	17.6
2	Satisfied with wages	Yes	30	88.2
		No	4	11.8
3	Willingness to shift to work if have better opportunities	Yes	20	58.8
		No	14	41.2
4	Alternative sources of income	Yes	8	23.5
		No	26	76.5
5	Availabiltiy of other better opportunities to work	Yes	7	20.6
		No	27	79.4
6	Stable income and employment throughout the year	Yes	29	85.3
		No	5	14.7
7	Finanacial security	Yes	24	70.6
		No	10	29.4

and wages and have more stable income and and employment than agriculture labour. Most of the other unskilled workers have migrated from agriculture to other alternate sources employment, and are not unwilling to work as agriculture labour even though provided with higher wages which may lead to a huge supply demand gap.

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