

WORKING CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS: A REFLECTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

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Abstract: Working conditions of agricultural workers, like industrial, are one of the burning issues in a developing region. It is related to agricultural activities of the workers and their socio-economic status. Working conditions may be both favourable and unfavourable. Those working conditions which are unfavourable to health may be considered as occupational hazards or as a part of occupational environment. It is generally observed that a large section of the agricultural workers remains engaged in agricultural practices at the time of hunger, thirst, pregnancy (women) and even despite their unpleasant state of health, both mental and physical. They also continue to work for more than the prescribed standard hours and also having half-fed. These are not positive or favourable working conditions to their health as they normally cause general weakness, fatigue, stomach disorder, dizziness, headache, loss of energy and some other similar physical, mental and psychological problems. The major driving forces behind as such adverse working conditions and its consequences are the pressure of work, pressure of land owners and of timely completion of works, shortage of manpower, psychological attitude, ignorance, weather constraints, poverty, illiteracy, lack of work related health awareness, lower social and economic status, etc. Such forces compel the workers to be engaged in their agricultural practices under the above circumstance. Adverse working conditions of agricultural workers vary widely with reference to space, time, activities, demographics, society, economy and consequently affect both the mental and physical, social and psychological conditions of the agricultural workers. Persons in varying number in the age groups from 15-34 and 35-49 to 60 & + year were reported working under different types of undesirable working conditions. The people from the S.C. and S.T. categories are the major sufferers as most of them continue their work during different unpleasant and stressful conditions. The majority of working persons belong to lower income strata and most of them work under tiring situation. Female workers from different social groups, particularly the S.C. and S.T., are the worst sufferers because most of them have to work even during pregnancy, ill health and imbalanced diet.

Key words: Subsistence agriculture, Agricultural workers, Work culture, Scheduled Castes (S.C.), Scheduled Tribes (S.T.). Socio-economic status.

Introduction

Working conditions of agricultural workers, like industrial, are one of the burning issues in a developing region. It is related to agricultural activities of the workers and their socio-economic status. Working condition signifies for situation, circumstances or

environment under which workers have to work. It may be both favourable and unfavourable. Those working conditions which are not favourable to health may be considered as occupational hazards or as a part of occupational environment.

In developing countries like India farming remains the predominant activity and is considered as a big business from the point of view of capital investment and number of workers employed. More than two thirds of

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the labour force gets employment in agriculture but the fundamental dilemma is that the majority of them is unskilled and lack of managerial and innovative skills. The conditions of agricultural workers are simply appalling. They are poor, their level of living is low and they work under the most tiring circumstances. Agricultural workers are the most sufferers of occupational hazards (agricultural hazards) as they snatch away their earnings, labour hours and adversely affect mental and physical capability of them.

It is generally observed that a large section of the agricultural workers remains engaged in agricultural practices at the time of hunger, thirst, pregnancy (women) and even despite their unpleasant state of health, both mental and physical. They also continue to work for more than the prescribed standard hours and also eating inadequate meal. These are not positive or favourable working conditions to their health as they normally cause general weakness, fatigue, stomach disorder, dizziness, headache, loss of energy and some other similar physical, mental and psychological problems.

The major driving forces behind as such adverse working conditions and its consequences are observed in terms of pressure of work, pressure of land owners and of timely completion of works, shortage of manpower, psychological attitude, ignorance, weather constraints, poverty, illiteracy, lack of work related health awareness, lower social and economic status, etc. Such forces compel the workers to be engaged in their agricultural practices under the above circumstance.

Adverse working conditions of agricultural workers vary widely with reference to space, time, activities, demographics, society and economy and consequently affect both the mental and physical, social and psychological conditions of the agricultural workers.

Literature Review

Literature consulted shows that no geographer or any other social scientist has paid attention to such complex issues. In fact, there exists hardly any research on this particular topic.

Information relating to this issue is very scanty and incomplete. However, the following literature may provide some ideas on working conditions of agricultural workers.

Agarwal, A.N. (1982, p. 287) has thrown some lights on working atmosphere and the employment circumstances and its effects to the efficiency, health and life of the agricultural labourers but has not mentioned any thing pertaining to the above theme. Sharma, A.M. (1988, p. 122) also focused on occupational hazards in which he has stressed on physical hazards (such as heat and cold, light, noise and vibration, ultra-violet radiation and ionizing radiation), chemical hazards; biological hazards; mechanical hazards and psychological hazards but no where paid any attention to as such elements of working conditions. Poltev, M. K. (1985, p. 25) noted occupational disease as an unhealthy condition caused to the person on work by exposure to unsafe working condition. He too has not mentioned any thing about working conditions of agricultural workers. Friedmann, Georges (1955, pp. 68-111) considered working environment as one of the important aspect of any occupation. According to him working condition or working environment is related to occupational accidents. His main focus was on the industrial accidents which are caused due to several factors of environmental and human groups. Accidents affect both the mental and physical aspects of workers. He has not mentioned any thing about agricultural accidents or working conditions in agriculture.. However, the role of working environment and occupational skills are important in agriculture also. According to Roy, P.K. (1967, pp. 1-11) moral hazards sometimes affect agriculture. Moral hazards include inadvertence or negligence on farm works. This is very much related to the interest or attitude of workers towards his work. Though, this is related to some extent to the problems of agricultural workers but not to the facts author wants to highlight.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (February 20, 2007) approved the programs of improving protection, safety and working conditions in agriculture in 2007-2009 on the line of ratification of ILO Convention 184 on

safety and health in agriculture and addressed the problems of protecting the life and health of workers in the agricultural sector. The focus has been on various aspects such as the use of outdated and run-down machinery and equipment in agricultural works; the work places sanitary and health requirements; women labour employment at labour intensive, insufficiently mechanized operations as well as at work activities demanding considerable physical strain; frequent employment of pregnant women in tobacco cultivation and processing (a category of hazardous working conditions); poor knowledge of heads of farmer and peasant economic undertakings, small and private processing enterprises about the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic concerning labour safety, and overlooking infringements of standards and norms, etc. It has also been noted that the poor organization of safe working production activities, weak knowledge of legislation, lack of training of personnel, including management raises the level of industrial accidents and injury in the agricultural sector. The major concern of the program was to promote activities for improving protection, safety and working conditions in the agricultural sector, safeguarding life and health of workers in the countryside and in turn raising the quality of their life. For these a package of social, economic, organizational, technical and other measures were also suggested. This work is of course on working conditions in agriculture but does not include all those aspects which are to be explained in this paper

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) along with Food and Agriculture Organization (2000) worked on fostering fair conditions of employment in agriculture and stated that agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors in which to work, along with construction and mining. Fair conditions of employment would provide productive work that delivers a fair income, workplace security and social protection for families, better prospects for social integration and personal development, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and

treatment for all women and men. This attempt is towards the improvements in working conditions in agriculture. This does not reveal those facts of working conditions which author intends to highlight.

ILO (16 September 2006) worked out on 'working conditions in agriculture' and explained that in many countries, the working conditions of agricultural workers, particularly non-permanent ones, remain poor and well below conditions prevailing in other economic sectors. The most vulnerable groups include those working in subsistence agriculture, wage workers in plantations, landless daily paid labourers, temporary and migrant workers and child labourers. Hours of work in agriculture are long. National legislation and collective agreements often stipulate standard working time of more than 45 hours per week. Because of the seasonal nature of agricultural activities, hours tend to be extremely long during planting and harvesting, with shorter hours at off-peak times. During rush periods, field work can go from dawn to dusk, with transport time to and from the fields in addition. The intensity of the work offers little chance for rest breaks; the length of the working day offers insufficient time for recuperation. Because the distance from home to field may be great, many field workers have no opportunity for a proper meal in the course of the day, increasing their fatigue and undermining their productivity. Payment systems can exacerbate this situation. As minimum wages tend to be low or non-existent for agricultural workers in general and many casual, temporary or seasonal workers are paid at least in part on a piece work basis – i.e. per kilo of crop picked, row weeded, or hectare sprayed, there is a strong financial incentive for them to extend their working time to the maximum so as to enhance their earnings.

Much agricultural work is by its nature physically demanding, involving long periods of standing, stooping, bending, and carrying out repetitive movements in awkward body positions. Fatigue and the risk of accidents are enhanced by poorly designed tools, difficult terrain, and exposure to the elements. Even when technological change has brought about a reduction in the physical drudgery of

agricultural work, it has introduced new risks, notably associated with the use of sophisticated machinery and the intensive use of chemicals without appropriate safety measures, information and training. Unsurprisingly, the level of accidents and illness is high. This is in fact a commendable work and reflects some appropriate facts relating to the present study.

From the above studies it is clear that those elements (termed as working conditions) and as involved in the author's study are quite different and very vital and draws attention of the researchers both in geographic and other disciplines. In fact, such issues particularly in the developing regions are generally overlooked. Therefore, such work on working conditions in agriculture now-a-days should be taken into consideration as an important issue of research.

Objectives

Objectives of this paper are to:

- investigate the types and pattern of adverse working conditions of the agricultural workers,
- analyze the pattern of working conditions at age, sex, social group and income levels, and
- trace the adverse impact on agricultural workers caused due to working under certain unfavourable working conditions in agriculture.

Methodology

This study is fully based on the primary data collected at household level from nine sample villages selected from nine Community Development Blocks (C.D. Blocks) of Birbhum District, West Bengal (Eastern India) as shown in the Location Map (Fig. 1). This District comprises nineteen C.D. Blocks and is exclusively dominated by subsistence agriculture in which more than two-third of the total workers of the District remain engaged. These C.D. Blocks were categorised

into three zones (viz. flood prone, drought prone and Transitional zones) on the basis of general hazard characteristics. While doing so nine Blocks (three from drought prone, three from floods prone and another three from transitional area) were chosen. Further, one village from each Block was randomly selected for household sample survey and in this way the total number of villages became nine. In each village 50 - 60 households were randomly selected to conduct the survey. While selecting households it was kept in mind that the households to be surveyed must have maximum number of its working members engaged in agricultural activities. The information relating to general population characteristics and agriculture related working conditions were obtained by selecting at least one respondent from each household. While choosing respondent it was seen that his/her level of education, mental and physical ability, experience in agriculture and its related activities as well as in household affairs are such that they could respond easily and reasonably. Finally, the total number of households surveyed became 475 (151 from

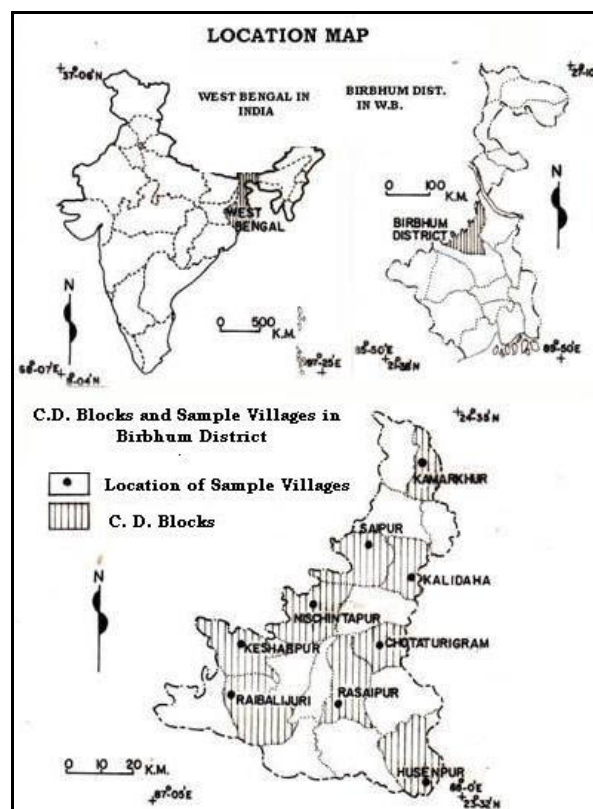


Figure 1. Location of Sample Villages

Drought Prone Zone; 153 from Flood Prone Zone and 171 from Transitional Zone). These households were related to the families of different social groups to obtain better socio-economic reflection. The total number of respondents was 475 who furnished information about 743 male and 271 female agricultural workers

Analysis

This section explains the pattern of the types of working conditions at age, sex, social group and income levels and its impact on agricultural workers. Here, the age and sex, social group and income level have been taken into consideration for showing the composite reflection of socio-economic status of the agricultural workers.

Pattern of Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers and total Agricultural Workers by Age Group and Sex

Table 1 shows that out of the total surveyed male (743) or female (271) agricultural workers, 483 (65.01%) males and 79 (29.15%) females were cultivators; 260 (34.99%) males and 192 (70.85%) females were landless agricultural labourers (who work on the land of cultivators / land holders).

Age group wise pattern shows that out of the total male or female child agricultural workers from 5-14 year age group 11.11% male children were from the cultivator’s family and 88.89% male and all female children were from agricultural labourer’s family respectively. Out of the total 15-34 year age group surveyed male agricultural workers 62.22% were cultivators and 37.78% were agricultural labourers, whereas the percentages of females as cultivators and agricultural labourers were 24.26% and 75.74% respectively. In 35-59 year age group the percentages of both male and female cultivators and agricultural labourers to total surveyed male or female agricultural workers are just like the percentage of 15-34 year age group cultivators and agricultural labourers as the percentage of male cultivators is just double to that of male agricultural labourers whereas, the percentage of female cultivators in comparison to that of female agricultural labourers is fairly low. 60 & + year age group shows the preponderance of cultivators as they have to look after and manage their agriculture even at this age having greater sense of responsibility to their family members.

Over all picture shows that in each age group the percentages of male cultivators in comparison to the corresponding percentages

Table 1. Pattern of Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers and total Agricultural Workers by Age Group and Sex in Birbhum, District, W. B.

Age Group	Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers		Total Agricultural Workers	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
5-14	01 11.11*	--	08 88.89	05 100.00	09 (3.63)+	05 (2.17)
15-34	247 62.22	41 24.26	150 37.78	128 75.74	397 (82.71)	169 (43.33)
35-59	198 66.44	36 38.30	100 33.56	58 61.70	298 [91.97]	94 (34.06)
60 & +	37 94.87	02 66.67	02 5.13	01 33.33	39 (65.00)	03 (6.66)
Grand Total	483 (65.01)	79 (29.15)	260 (34.99)	192 (70.85)	743 (100.00)	271 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, (Birbhum District Sample - 2002)

+ Bracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural Workers.

x Unbracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural workers of respective Age Group

Table 2. Agricultural Workers and their Working Conditions by Age Group and Sex in Birbhum District, W. B.

Age Group	Agricultural Workers who worked at the time of:																				
	Hunger		Thirst		Pregnancy		Ailment		Keeping Infants together		Eating inadequate meal		General Weakness		Unpleasant Mental or Physical State		Worked above standard working period		Total Agricultural Workers		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
5-14	--	--	--	--	07	01	100.00	100.00	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	07	01	(0.71)	(0.20)+
15-34	17	11	--	--	266	97	31.79 x	32.12	43	43	36	13	09	02	04	04	66	450	302	(45.41)	(59.80)
35-59	24	12	02	--	229	47	25.13	23.62	18	9.05	25	39	25	03	05	52	52	487	199	(49.14)	(39.41)
60+	02	4.26	--	--	19	01	--	33.33	--	--	04	02	15	07	--	--	--	47	03	(4.74)	(0.59)
Grand Total	43	23	02	--	521	146	(28.91)	(28.91)	61	(12.08)	106	61	160	54	118	1067	118	991	505	(100.00)	(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, (Birbhum District Sample - 2002)

+ Bracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural Workers.

x Unbracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural workers of respective Age Group

of male agricultural labourers is higher except 5-14 year age group. Similarly the percentages of female cultivators in each age group in comparison to the corresponding percentages of female agricultural labourers is lower except 60 & above year age group in which the percentages of female cultivators corresponding to the percentage of female agricultural labourer of the same age group is fairly higher. This is due to possession of land in the name of females (so called female cultivators) and due to senility in case of female landless labourers. In other words it can be said that the percentages of male and female cultivators increase from lower to higher age group, whereas, the percentages of both male and female agricultural labourers increase from higher to lower age group or vice-versa.

Agricultural Workers and their Working Conditions by Social Group and Sex

Table 2 shows the pattern of agricultural workers who were reported (by respondents) working while feeling hungry, thirsty, general weakness and other mental and physical difficulties, during pregnancy and keeping infants together (females only), eating inadequate meal, at the time of ailment etc. Sometimes they work above prescribed standard working hours. *Persons shown in total column are more than the actual working persons because the same person was reported with more than one undesirable working condition.*

Age group wise variation shows that the child labour and the majority of 15-34 year age group males were reported to remain engaged in agricultural activities during ailment. The next higher percentage of males of this age group was higher in the category of over working period. Majority of females of this age group were reported working during their pregnancy, at the time of ailment, keeping their infants (newborn babies) together and even eating inadequate meal. Almost similar is the pattern in case of both males and females of 35-59 year age group too, however, their percentages in the category of general weakness in comparison to their former age

Table 3. Agricultural Workers and their Working Conditions by Social Group and Sex in Birbhum District, W. B.

Social Group	Agricultural Workers who worked at the time of:																Total Agricultural Workers			
	Hunger		Thirst		Pregnancy		Ailment		Keeping Infants together		Eating inadequate meal		General Weakness		Unpleasant Mental or Physical State		Worked above standard working period		M	F
	M	F	M	F	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
General caste	--	--	--	--	--	128 24.57*	--	--	--	03 2.83	--	39 24.38	--	07 17.07	--	17 14.41	--	194 (19.58)+	--	
O.B.C.	--	--	--	--	--	23 4.42	--	--	--	--	--	09 5.63	--	03 7.32	--	04 3.39	--	39 (3.94)	--	
S. C.	26 60.47	12 52.17	--	--	108 73.97	203 38.96	105 71.92	39 63.93	67 63.21	40 65.57	28 51.85	61 38.12	18 43.90	02 40.00	61 51.69	06 66.67	436 (44.00)	340 (67.33)		
S. T.	15 34.88	11 47.83	02 100.00	--	38 26.03	69 13.24	40 27.40	22 36.07	29 27.36	21 34.43	26 48.15	29 18.12	11 26.83	03 60.00	24 20.34	03 33.33	179 (18.06)	164 (32.47)		
Muslim	02 4.65	--	--	--	--	98 18.91	01 0.68	--	07 6.60	--	--	22 13.75	--	2 4.88	12 10.17	--	143 (14.42)	01 (0.20)		
Gross Total	43 (4.34)	23 (4.56)	02 (0.20)	--	146 (28.91)	521 (52.57)	146 (28.91)	61 (12.08)	106 (10.70)	61 (12.08)	54 (10.69)	160 (16.14)	41 (4.14)	05 (0.99)	118 (11.91)	09 (1.78)	991 (100.00)	505 (100.00)		

Source: Field Survey, (Birbhum District Sample - 2002)

+ Bracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural Workers.

x Unbracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural workers of respective Age Group

group counterparts were higher. Majority of over working (60 & +) age group persons were reported working at the time of ailment, general weakness and unpleasant mental or physical State.

Overall picture shows that the number and percentage of both males and females at all age levels were fairly higher in ailment, inadequate meal, general weakness, above standard working period and in pregnancy and keeping infants together (females only) categories of adverse working conditions. The percentage of such persons in hunger, thirst and in unpleasant mental and physical conditions is less. This indicates that workers generally do not avoid meal and water and do not intend to work during physical and mental problems.

The major reasons of such working conditions are pressure of work, responsibility and objective of completing work within a stipulated period of time on the same day, poor socio-economic status including poverty, over-utilization and exploitation of agricultural labourers. Such reasons forced the agricultural workers to continue their work with the above adverse circumstances.

Agricultural Workers and their Working Conditions by Social Group and Sex

Uncongenial working environment and social status of agricultural workers are normally positively related. However, such environment varies from one social group to another. Social groups are the result of socio-economic background of the people. General observation on social structure indicates that general caste people have better social and economic status in the society. Other backward caste people and Muslims, in general, are socio-economically better than the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes but behind general or higher caste people in terms of social status. Scheduled tribes generally belong to lower socio-economic strata of the society.

Table 3 explains variation in the pattern working conditions of agricultural workers across social groups. After looking into the detailed picture it was found that no person from general caste, other backward caste and

Muslim category was reported working while feeling hungry and thirsty, during pregnancy, and with infants keeping aside negligible percentage in exception. General-cum-other backward caste workers were reported working mostly during minor illness and at the time of feeling weakness and some other physical and mental problems. Some of them also work for more than standard working hours in a day. Almost similar is the pattern in case of Muslim workers.

The most sufferers are the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe workers as indicated by their larger number and higher percentages in almost all categories of unconducive working conditions except in ailment and general weakness.

The very pathetic situation is for the women as almost all scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women workers were reported working at the time of pregnancy, keeping the newborn babies (infants) together, eating less food, general weakness, unpleasant mental and physical state, minor sickness, hunger and thirst. They work for more than the prescribed standard working hours too.

Sample data shows no females from general and other backward castes in any adverse working condition. The percentage of Muslim females was also negligible.

In fact, both scheduled caste and scheduled tribe men and women workers belong to poor socio-economic strata which compel them to remain engaged under the above stressful working conditions for their livelihood.

Agricultural Workers and their Working Conditions by Income Group and Sex

Unfavourable working conditions and economic aspects of agricultural workers in a developing region seem to have positive relation. From the Table 4 it is quite clear that the majority of agricultural workers, reported working under different unpleasant working conditions, were towards lower income groups. Most of them worked at the time of hunger, pregnancy and having newborn babies together (women only), sickness, eating less food, weakness, having some other health problems etc.

Those showing lower income belong to socio-economically lower strata and most of them are the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Persons (basically men) having medium or higher income were reported (by the respondents) working during minor sickness, general weakness and with over working condition. Most from among them were cultivators.

As a whole, it can be said that the majority of working persons were in the lower income bracket (i.e up to Rs. 1500 monthly income) and most of them work under tiring or stressful working conditions.

Female workers (mostly from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with low income strata) are the major sufferers because most of them work during pregnancy, sickness, general weakness, and by eating inadequate meal and having newborn babies together at their work place.

Cultivators having medium and higher income generally over look minor sickness and general weakness and continue to work for more than the prescribed standard working hours. No male workers having medium or higher income were reported to work at the time of feeling hunger, thirst, eating inadequate meal and at the time of unpleasant mental and physical state.

Therefore, appropriate measures should be evolved and adopted to check the above mentioned uncongenial working conditions. This attempt will may help improve the general well-being of the agricultural workers.

Adverse Impact on Agricultural Workers due to working under certain Unfavourable Conditions at work

Uncongenial or stressful working conditions adversely affect both the mental and physical condition of the agricultural workers. The consequence of such conditions are related to general weakness, fatigue, stomach disorder, dizziness, headache, loss of working energy and other physical and mental problems.

Table - 5 explains the pattern of adverse impact of work related harsh condition on those agricultural workers who experienced either one or more than one problems. It was found that those agricultural workers who

Table 4. Agricultural Workers and their Working Conditions by Income Group and Sex in Birbhum District, W. B.

Monthly Income Group	Agricultural Workers who worked at the time of:																		Total Agricultural Workers																		
	Hunger		Thirst		Pregnancy		Ailment		Keeping Infants together		Eating inadequate meal		General Weakness		Unpleasant Mental or Physical State		Worked above standard working period		M	F																	
	M	F	M	F	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M			F																
<500	07	22	01	--	134	50	134	56	53	17	53	24	49	12	05	02	06	113	459	16.28x	95.65	50.00	--	91.78	9.60	91.78	91.80	16.04	86.89	15.00	90.74	29.27	100.00	1.69	66.67	(11.40)	90.89+
500--1000	31	01	01	--	283	54.32	7.53	05	08	78	13.11	79	05	21	--	51	03	544	45	72.09	4.35	50.00	--	8.22	54.32	49.37	9.26	51.22	--	43.22	33.33	43.22	33.33	(54.89)	(8.91)		
1000--1500	05	--	--	--	92	17.66	0.69	--	--	09	--	28	--	02	--	35	--	171	01	11.63	--	--	--	--	17.50	17.50	--	4.88	29.66	29.66	--	--	29.66	--	(17.26)	(0.20)	
1500--2000	--	--	--	--	52	9.98	--	--	--	02	--	13	--	06	--	19	--	92	--	--	--	--	--	8.12	8.12	--	--	14.63	16.10	16.10	--	--	16.10	--	(9.28)	--	
2000--2500	--	--	--	--	20	3.84	--	--	--	--	--	06	--	--	--	09	--	35	--	--	--	--	--	3.75	3.75	--	--	--	7.63	7.63	--	--	7.63	--	(3.53)	--	
2500--3000	--	--	--	--	10	1.92	--	--	--	--	--	05	--	--	--	02	--	17	--	--	--	--	--	1.92	1.92	--	--	--	1.69	1.69	--	--	1.69	--	(1.72)	--	
3000--4000	--	--	--	--	07	1.34	--	--	--	--	--	02	--	--	--	--	--	09	--	--	--	--	--	0.7	0.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.9	--	(0.91)	--
4000--5000	--	--	--	--	04	0.77	--	--	--	--	--	02	--	--	--	--	--	06	--	--	--	--	--	0.4	0.4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.6	--	(0.61)	--
5000--6000	--	--	--	--	01	0.19	--	--	--	--	--	01	--	--	--	--	--	02	--	--	--	--	--	0.1	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.2	--	(0.20)	--
6000--7000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
7000--8000	--	--	--	--	01	0.19	--	--	--	--	--	01	--	--	--	--	--	01	--	--	--	--	--	0.1	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.1	--	(0.10)	--
8000--9000	--	--	--	--	01	0.19	--	--	--	--	--	01	--	--	--	--	--	01	--	--	--	--	--	0.1	0.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.1	--	(0.10)	--
>10000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Grand Total	43	23	02	--	521	28.91	146	61	61	106	12.08	160	54	41	05	118	09	991	505	(4.34)	(4.56)	(0.20)	--	(28.91)	(52.57)	(28.91)	(12.08)	(10.70)	(12.08)	(16.14)	(10.69)	(4.14)	(0.99)	(11.91)	(1.78)	(100.00)	(100.00)

Source: Field Survey, (Birbhum District Sample - 2002)

+ Bracketted lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural Workers.

x Unbracketted lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural workers of respective Age Group

Table 5. Adverse Impact on Agricultural Workers due to working under certain Conditions at work in Birbhum District, W. B.

Adverse Impact	Number and Percentage of Workers Worked:				Total Persons under Adverse Impact
	while feeling Hungry	while feeling Thirsty	during Pregnancy (only female)	eating inadequate Meal	
Weakness	24 36.36 ^x	--	63 43.15	64 38.32	151 (39.60) ⁺
Fatigue	18 27.27	01 50.00	--	47 28.14	66 (17.32)
Stomach Problem	15 22.73	--	--	01 0.60	16 (4.22)
Dizziness	--	--	34 23.29	--	34 (8.92)
Headache	09 13.64	--	--	--	09 (2.36)
Loss of Working Energy	--	01 50.00	--	54 32.34	55 (14.45)
Other Physical Problems	--	--	49 33.56	01 0.60	50 (13.12)
Grand Total	66 (17.32)	02 (0.53)	146 (38.32)	167 (43.83)	381 (100.00)

Source: Field Survey, (Birbhum District Sample - 2002)

+ Bracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural Workers.

x Unbracketed lower figures in the cells are the Percentages to total Male or Female Agricultural workers of respective Age Group

remain engaged in agricultural practices at the time of eating inadequate meal constitute highest percentage.

The adverse impact of such condition generally creates weakness, loss of working energy, fatigue, stomach disorder and some other physical and mental problems in that order of its relative dominance. In such cases the percentage of agricultural labourers was found higher than that of cultivators.

Second highest percentage was found in case of women who continue to work during their pregnancy. Most of the female workers particularly from the families of landless agricultural labourers generally remain engaged in different types of agricultural practices even during their pregnancy. Such women are generally socio-economically poor and poverty stricken. Such condition compels them to work in the land of cultivators even during their pregnancy to get wages either in cash or kind to support their family members.

The major adverse impacts of as such working condition are general weakness, several types of physical and mental problems and dizziness etc. in descending order in terms of severity.

Therefore, such women should not be encouraged to go on work in the field and their socio-economic condition should be improved by making a link with reproductive and child health schemes, family welfare and family planning schemes of the government. In such schemes a logistic criteria should be developed to maintain the general health and to reduce child-women ratio and mortality of women.

Third highest percentage was noticed in case of those agricultural workers (mainly males) who continued their work even at the time of feeling hungry. The major problems, arise due to such working condition, are related to weakness, fatigue, stomach problem, headache etc. in descending order in terms of its relative dominance. Some agricultural workers were reported working at the time of thirst and the consequence of this is noticed relating to fatigue, loss of working energy, etc.

Overall picture shows that the percentage of those agricultural workers (in each adverse working condition except thirst) was highest who experienced general weakness. Other major adverse impact (in each undesirable working condition except

pregnancy) was related to fatigue and other health related problems. Next impacts in terms of relative dominance were related to loss of working energy and other physical and mental difficulties. Others impacts in terms of relative dominance were related to dizziness, stomach disorder and headache, etc. Therefore, there is need for a well framed planning to make the agricultural workers aware towards their congenial work culture so that the agricultural workers should be protected both mentally and physically for their well-being.

Conclusions and suggestions

Agricultural workers in general and child labour, pregnant women workers, old aged workers in particular are the vulnerable sections of population in a society. Such workers belong to different age, sex, social groups and income levels. They are indicative of overall socio-economic status of the workers of an area. Majority of the workers who work under adverse working conditions belong to poor socio-economic strata of the area. Therefore, it can be said that the above working conditions are the *reflection of socio-economic status of the agricultural workers*.

Persons in varying number from different age groups were reported working under different types of undesirable working conditions.

The people from the S.C. and S.T. categories are the major sufferers as most of them continue their work during different unpleasant and stressful working conditions.

The majority of working persons belong to lower income strata and most of them work under tiring situation.

Female workers, particularly from the S.C. and S.T. categories, are the worst sufferers because most of them have to work even during pregnancy, ill health and having imbalanced diet and keeping their newborn babies together.

Overall picture shows that ailment, pregnancy, underfed, general weakness, unpleasant mental and physical state, over working period, work keeping infants together

at work place, hunger and thirst are the major unfavourable working conditions in agriculture of the developing region.

The adverse impact of such conditions generally creates weakness, fatigue, loss of working energy, physical and mental problems, Dizziness, stomach disorder, headache and some other problems in that order of its relative dominance.

The infant babies lying at work place with mothers sometimes come under the contact of exposure of weather and other adverse environmental conditions and untoward accident. In such cases the percentage of agricultural labourers was found higher than that of cultivators.

Therefore, there is need for developing and implementing proper work culture to minimize the above mentioned stressful working conditions and its adverse impacts on the part of health of both male and female agricultural workers.

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