

Recognizing Women's Critical Role in Agricultural Productivity for Rural Development: Unveiling the Hidden Strength: A Case Study of the Ranchi District

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ABSTRACT

Uncovering Socioeconomic Conditions and Challenges in Indian Agriculture: The Critical Role of Women Female Agricultural Laborers in Ranchi District Faced With Women in Indian Agriculture has crucial positions and play a variety of responsibilities in society. They employ nearly three-fourths of the agricultural labour force. Rural women use a variety of strategies to support themselves, typically working on farms alongside their home obligations. Contrary to popular belief, women outperform men in agricultural productivity across all land tenures. While rural women's conditions are steadily improving, their significant contributions to agriculture must be acknowledged and appreciated. The vast pay inequities that negatively impact the well-being of female farm labourers are exacerbated by the fact that they are paid much less than the required rates. Rural women face various challenges that prevent them from making a meaningful contribution to development while being partners with men on an equal footing in the agricultural sector. In light of these facts, this study extensively evaluates the socioeconomic situation and present-day conditions of women working in agriculture in the Ranchi District.

Keywords: Inequity, Socioeconomic, Agricultural Productivity, Development, Agricultural Sector.

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing and leveraging women's significant contribution to agricultural output is critical to rural development. Surprisingly, their contribution needs to be accounted for and appreciated. Despite their considerable engagement in agricultural work, women are typically seen as socially unproductive, systematically disregarding their critical role. This perception stems from deep-rooted cultural ideologies perpetuating the notion that women are primarily responsible for fulfilling domestic duties and other familial obligations. Such attitudes may have remained from when women were largely responsible for providing sustenance for their families.

As a result, the contribution of women to the nourishment and well-being of their families needs to be recognized, with little acknowledgement of its economic significance. Women's vocational landscapes in rural places include a wide range of duties. Women work in the fields, cultivate crops, care for animals, gather water, prepare meals, care for children, manage domestic responsibilities, and maintain their dwellings (United Kingdom, United Nation, 2020). They also like fishing and gardening. Surprisingly, many parts of their labour and contributions go undetected and have little economic value.

Women's important deeds and achievements are ignored by society, creating a cycle of undervaluation. Because women do not get enough credit or respect for their work, it is unfairly categorized as unskilled labour. Their efforts are thus lessened and assigned a lower significance within the social structure. The marginalization and economic disadvantages that women in rural areas experience are made worse by this misrepresentation.

According to the United Nations, rural women barely make up one per cent of the worldwide workforce and earn just one-tenth of the nation's overall income. This fact highlights the pressing need to address the persistent gender gaps and stop the structural undervaluation of women's agricultural work (United Kingdom, United Nation, 2020). We want to spark a revolutionary debate by exploring these complicated topics and bringing attention to the unsung power of women in agriculture. With the enormous contributions of women to rural development, this paper challenges such norms to promote gender equality, challenge established conventions, and challenge. Women must be empowered and recognized for their critical roles in inclusive growth, community improvement, and significant change.

Agricultural Women's Empowerment

Agriculture has been the one field in which women have continually played a key role throughout the history of human civilization. Since agriculture is mostly domestic, women have historically had important roles. Recent studies demonstrate women's enormous financial, labour, and volume contributions to food production in India (Patel & Sethi, 2022). While 78% of women work in agriculture, around 63% of economically engaged males do. Over 50% of rural women work as agricultural labourers, while an additional 37% are cultivators. A strong argument for why women make up the majority of farmers in India is that, astonishingly, women conduct over 70% of the farming labour. Women's continuous domination in the agricultural workforce raises questions about their status and role in this critical sector (Research Foundation Science and Technology, 2005). Casualization, defined as irregular and unpredictable labour without a guaranteed minimum income, is an increasing source of worry. As agriculture's growth slows and its contribution to the GDP decreases, the casualization frequency exacerbates the issues women encounter in this profession. Women's social position is undeniably lower than men's, and they continue to suffer restrictions and restricted access to possibilities for good change. This difference is prominent in rural regions, where cultural norms and expectations promote gender inequality (*The Economic Cost of Devaluing "Women's Work"*, 2019).

Numerous studies have repeatedly shown that, in identical work environments and job responsibilities, women employees routinely outperform their male colleagues. According to research, Women workers may perform better than males in some areas. Women have been proven to be more competent and productive on the job due to their greater reliability, promptness, and punctuality. These results cast doubt on the idea that women are intrinsically less skilled or effective than males at carrying out agricultural duties. These findings highlight how important it is to empower women in agriculture and solve the persistent gender inequities. We can work to create a more fair and inclusive agriculture industry if we acknowledge and value the vital role that women play. An in-depth exploration of the issues affecting women in agriculture is the goal of this essay, which also aims to identify areas in which things may improve and emphasize the need for gender-sensitive laws and programs (Azam & Nagma, 2014). We can fully realize the potential of women in agriculture via collective efforts, promoting long-term development and social advancement.

Problem statement and analysis purpose

To properly understand the complex nature of female labour force participation, several socioeconomic factors at the household level must be considered (Chaudhary & Verick, 2014). It encompasses aspects like the spouse's work status and educational background, as well as social position, income, and the existence of children. The demand is for women to be fully and critically empowered, and all parties should collaborate to take concrete action. The report makes a case for legislative changes that would increase the job opportunities and wages for women who work as farm labourers. The argument for improving women farm labourers' education and skill levels is also developed. It focuses on strategies that will increase women's control over assets and level of autonomy, empowering women who work as agricultural labourers (UN Women, n.d.).

Justification and Significance of the Study

Women carry out two productive roles: unpaid labour in the house and fields and paid employment outside the home. Poor pay is a prevalent issue for wage employees, even below the minimum wage in certain cases. Their income regularly falls below that of industrial workers. Agriculture usually has unpredictable and transitory employment. Women who work as farm labourers typically endure abhorrent living and working circumstances. Basic human rights are regularly denied to agricultural employees, such as the ability to assemble, organize, and engage in collective bargaining with employers.

Agricultural workers are often excluded from making active decisions at their houses and farms. Workers in agriculture are paid unfairly. Women get paid less than males for performing the same task. Since they are separated and disorganized owing to seasonal work, they typically need to have more negotiation power (Hurst, 2007). Because they are regularly forced by circumstances to borrow money from private sources for consumption or to fulfil societal obligations, some individuals wind up working as enslaved people. Government agencies get more reports from women about their work in agriculture. The majority of women still endure social and economic inequality as a result. Given that this study seeks to raise awareness of the integral role that gender plays in employment, pay, and other workplace issues, including discrimination and unaccounted labourers, it calls for the development of new social and economic involvement initiatives for rural women and welfare and self-reliance.

Literature Review

Subrahmanyam (1999), focused on changes in female labour demand in Andhra Pradesh. The study looked at the revenue increase caused by technology adoption, the variance in labour absorption across different agro-climatic zones, and the impact of farm size, cropping intensity, and crop pattern on labour demand in the agricultural industry. The study was based on two main datasets from Andhra Pradesh. The study discovered an 85% rise in demand for female labour due to the use of High Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds and automation in rice farming. Female labour demand was shown to be greater in crops such as rice, cotton, and chiles when compared to total labour demand.

In contrast, female labour was scarce in the sugarcane sector. The intensity and pattern of cropping techniques used in diverse agricultural operations were ascribed to the variation in labour requirements. Subrahmanyam compiled the study's findings, which stressed the importance of crop selection and technological improvements and shed light on the dynamics of shifting female labour demand in Andhra Pradesh. Understanding these problems is critical for designing successful policies and initiatives that promote gender equality and expand agricultural career opportunities.

However, the growing sugarcane industry needed more female labour. The variety in labour needs was attributed to the quantity and distribution of cropping techniques used in various agricultural operations. The findings of Subrahmanyam's study illuminated the dynamics of shifting female labour demand in Andhra Pradesh and emphasized the importance of technical improvements and crop choices.

For effective policies and programs aimed at enhancing gender equality and increasing employment possibilities in the agriculture sector, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of these challenges.

Sharma (2021), studied and advocated the socioeconomic situations and contributions of female labourers in rural India's Himachal Pradesh and Punjab provinces. Women comprise a larger portion of the labour force in Punjab, where male migration is more prevalent than in Himachal Pradesh. The study aimed to understand the challenges faced by female agricultural labourers and how they affect the socio-economic climate. We examined resource accessibility, educational opportunities, healthcare, and employment possibilities. The report also underscored the vital contribution that female employees make to India's economic development, highlighting the significance of gender equality and long-term progress. The study by Sharma advances our knowledge of gender dynamics and the necessity of empowering women in agriculture.

Sinha (2010), suggested that, like industrial workers, agricultural labourers' working conditions are an important discussion point in emerging nations. The workforce's socioeconomic standing and participation in farming pursuits are relevant. The word "working conditions" refers to the workplace's circumstances, atmosphere, and environment, all of which can have either beneficial or bad impacts. Agriculture remains the major line of work in emerging nations like India, requiring substantial financial investment and a big workforce. The significant problem is that the bulk of the force needs to be more qualified regarding experience, managerial abilities, and innovation. Agricultural labourers endure horrific situations because of their disadvantages and low living standards. They labour in the most challenging conditions and are especially sensitive to occupational risks (agricultural hazards) that impact their pay, working hours, and physical and emotional well-being.

Verick (2014) referenced that participation rates indicate that a nation can develop more quickly, and female labour force involvement is vital in fostering economic progress. Understanding how women's participation in the labour market affects broader development results is difficult, though. More so than with males, there are large differences in the degree of labour force participation among growing economies and developing nations. Additionally, gender disparities in the job market are more evident in developing nations, with South Asian countries showing the greatest discrepancy. It shows that reducing gender inequalities and fostering women's employment remain major obstacles, especially in nations with wide gender equality gaps.

According to Simas (2014), more than 80% of women working in different agricultural tasks in rural India, women are crucial to the nation's food production. They assist with all aspects of farming, including seed gathering, animal care, water collecting, and planting and harvesting crops. However, men's engagement in agriculture is typically restricted to activities like pesticide application, plough maintenance, and handling the commercial side of farming, including marketing. Rural India does not officially recognize women as full-fledged farmers, even though they are the backbone of agricultural productivity. They are instead designated as "farm laborers," and their jobs as "unskilled labor." This lack of acknowledgement has serious repercussions because women are excluded from important resources like credit, pay, and government assistance programs. The Tamil Nadu Women's Collective is actively

trying to change the situation and promote the official recognition of women as farmers in response to this issue.

Research Gap

Gender Dynamics in Rural Employment and the Role of Women in Agriculture. The present study literature lacks significant inquiry into the quality of rural employment, notably gender dynamics, throughout periods of structural changes in the labour environment. Despite their importance, gender dynamics in agriculture receive little consideration in agricultural development programs (Kelker, 2013). Recent figures show a strong trend of males quitting the agricultural industry, increasing the importance of women in agriculture. As women's engagement in agriculture grows, so do their involvement and obligations. Women's significant contributions to agriculture should be appreciated, even if they typically handle home responsibilities like cooking, collecting fuel, and providing water under difficult economic circumstances. Acknowledging the size of women's contributions to the agriculture industry is critical.

As a result, there is a critical need for extensive research considering rural female agricultural labourers' socioeconomic position and empowerment in particular contexts. Due to the need for more studies on women's agricultural work in Ranchi and Jharkhand, these areas, in particular, need such a study. Filling this knowledge gap would give vital insights into rural female agricultural employees' unique struggles and experiences. It would offer insight into their socioeconomic circumstances, chances for empowerment, and the revolutionary potential of gender-inclusive agricultural development programs (Bordoloi, 2021). A detailed analysis of these factors is essential for successful policies and programs that promote the well-being, empowerment, and just inclusion of women in the agricultural workforce.

Objectives of the Study:

- Examine the shifting trends and patterns of women working in agriculture at various levels.
- The socioeconomic status of women working in agriculture should be assessed.

Research Methodology

A combination of analytical and descriptive methodologies was used in this study's research methodology. The study uses primary and secondary data to look into its goals.

Secondary data from state and district sources are evaluated to look at the macro-level patterns of changes in women's agricultural work. This research gives a more comprehensive knowledge of the general trends in women's participation in agriculture.

Furthermore, a primary survey was conducted in six chosen communities reflecting various agricultural contexts. This study investigates the socioeconomic standing of domestically employed women who work in agriculture. By concentrating on these particular communities, the research can better understand women's particular circumstances and experiences in various agricultural settings. A full examination of the research subject is feasible using primary and secondary data, merging global trends with specific area perspectives.

Findings and Discussion

The research intended to give a thorough knowledge of the status and issues encountered by women agricultural labourers by extensively assessing various socioeconomic factors. The findings will help identify areas for improvement and create targeted initiatives that can improve socioeconomic

circumstances and empower women in this critical industry. The villages included were under the circle of Kanke, Halka:02. The details of those villages are as follows:

1. Village: Muretha

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	155	-	
People	691	332	359
Children age up to 6	168	76	92
SC	445	204	241
ST	233	122	111
Education	39.77%	48.05%	31.84%
Total Workers	387	207	180
Mainline Workers	15	-	-
Insignificant Workers	372	197	175

(Source: *Muretha Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

2. Village: Sukurhuttu

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	2118	-	-
People	11862	6277	5585
Children age up to 6	1757	888	869
SC	644	335	309
ST	2025	1002	1023
Education	74.64%	86.23%	61.39%
Total Workers	4495	3294	1201
Mainline Workers	3424	-	-
Insignificant Workers	1071	644	427

(Source: *Sukurhuttu Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

3. Village: Sugnu

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	716	-	-
People	3443	1725	1718
Children age up to 6	525	265	260
SC	49	30	19
ST	1387	689	698
Education	64.56%	75.68%	53.43%
Total Workers	1060	758	302
Mainline Workers	317	-	-
Insignificant Workers	743	499	244

(Source: *Sugnu Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

4. Village: Pithauriya

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	1243	-	-
People	6550	3413	3137
Children age up to 6	953	491	462
SC	585	296	289
ST	702	373	329
Education	78.49%	87.47%	68.67%
Total Workers	2104	1632	472
Mainline Workers	1495	-	-
Insignificant Workers	609	311	298

(Source: *Pithauriya Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

5. Village: Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	143	-	-
People	647	313	334
Age up to 6	98	46	52
SC	9	5	4
ST	563	273	290
Education	70.49%	80.52%	60.99%
Total	225	148	77
Mainline Workers	224	-	-
Insignificant Workers	1	1	0

(Source: *Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

6. Village: Siddi

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	87	-	-
People	488	238	250
Children age up to 6	63	30	33
SC	31	16	15
ST	359	174	185
Education	68.24%	81.25%	55.76%
Total Workers	132	115	17
Mainline Workers	128	-	-
Insignificant Workers	4	3	1

(Source: *Siddi Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

7. Village: Soso

Details	Men	Women	Total
Number of Houses	200	-	-
People	1035	539	496
Children age up to 6	170	95	75
SC	6	4	2
ST	694	363	331
Education	65.32%	75.00%	35.11%
Total Workers	356	233	123
Mainline Workers	230	-	-
Insignificant Workers	126	61	65

(Source: *Soso Village Population - Kanke - Ranchi, Jharkhand, n.d.*)

Muretha is a small to medium-sized hamlet with 691 residents. The village is located in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand, In the village, 155 families, with 332 men and 359 females, live there. One hundred sixty-eight people, or 24.31% of the population, are between 0 and 6. Muretha's typical sex-to-kid ratio is 1211, while the average sex-to-sex ratio is 1081. With a male literacy rate of 48.05% and a female literacy rate of 31.84%, Muretha has a literacy rate of 39.77%. The Scheduled Caste (SC) population comprises the bulk of the village's population, accounting for 64.40%, while the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population accounts for 33.72%. Only 3.88% of the population, or 387 people, are employed full-time for over six months.

Eleven thousand eight hundred sixty-two people live in the sizable village of Sukurhuttu in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. The settlement comprises 6,237 males and 5,585 females, divided among 2,118 households. One thousand seven hundred fifty-seven children between the ages of 0 and 6 make up this population or 14.81% of the whole. The typical sex-to-kid ratio is 890, whereas the child-to-sex ratio is 979. In Sukurhuttu, the literacy rate is 74.64%, with males having an average of 86.23% and females having a median of 61.39%. 17.07% of the total population is made up of Scheduled Tribes (ST), while 5.43% is made up of Scheduled Castes (SC). Four thousand four hundred ninety-five people out of the entire population are working, with main employment lasting more than six months for 76.17% of those people.

Three thousand four hundred forty-three people live in Sugnu, a sizable hamlet in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. The community has 716 households, with 1,725 men and 1,718 females. Five hundred twenty-five children between 0 and 6 comprise this demographic or 15.25% of the population. In Sugnu, the average sex-to-kid ratio is 996, while the child-to-sex ratio is 981. In Sugnu, the literacy rate is 64.56%, with males reading at a rate of 75.68% and females at a rate of 53.43%. Scheduled Tribes (ST) comprise the bulk of the village's population, accounting for 40.28% of all residents, while Scheduled

Castes (SC) make up 1.42%. One thousand sixty people, or 20.91% of the total population, are working, with 29.91% holding regular jobs that they have held for more than six months.

With a population of 6,550, Pithauriya is a sizable hamlet in Jharkhand's Ranchi district. The community has 1,243 families, with 3,413 men and 3,137 females. Nine hundred fifty-three kids, or 14.55% of the population, are between 0 and 6. The child sex ratio is 941, while the average sex ratio is 919 in Pithauriya. Pithauriya has a 78.49% literacy rate, with males having an 87.47% literacy rate and females having a 68.67% literacy rate. 10.72% of people belong to a Scheduled Tribe (ST), while 8.93% are from a Scheduled Caste (SC). Two thousand one hundred four people out of the entire population are working, with 71.06% holding jobs that they have had for more than six months as their primary employment.

Located in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand, Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda has a population of 647 and is a medium-sized hamlet. One hundred forty-three households make up the village's population, which is made up of 313 males and 334 females. Ninety-eight people, or 15.15 per cent of the population, are children ages 0 to 6, making up this age group. In Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda, the kid sex ratio is 1130, but the average sex ratio is 1067. In Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda, the literacy rate is 70.49 per cent, male literacy is 80.52 per cent, and female literacy is 60.99%.

Siddi is a 488-person medium-sized hamlet in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. The settlement is home to 238 males and 250 females, divided among 87 households—sixty-three children aged 0 to 6 or 12.91% of the total population. Siddi's average sex-to-child and child-to-sex ratios are 1050 and 1100, respectively. Siddi has an overall literacy rate of 68.24%, with males having an 81.25% rate and females having a 55.76% rate. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) makes up 73.57% of the village's population, while the Scheduled Caste (SC) makes up 6.35% of the total. One hundred thirty-two people are working out of the entire population, and 96.97% have jobs lasting longer than six months.

Soso village, with a population of 1,035, is a medium-sized hamlet in the Kanke Block in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. There are 200 families in it, totalling 539 males and 496 females. One hundred seventy children, or 16.43% of the village's inhabitants, are between 0 and 6. The overall sex ratio is 920, while the child sex ratio in Soso village is 789. The literacy rate in the hamlet of Soso is 65.32%, with males reading at 75.00% and females at 55.11%. The Scheduled Caste (SC) category makes up 0.58% of the village's population, while the Scheduled Tribe (ST) group makes up 67.05%. Of the total population, 356 are employed, with occupations lasting longer than six months accounting for 64.61 per cent of employment.

Socioeconomic Situation of Female Agricultural Workers

The study examines the socio-economic standing of women who work in agriculture to comprehend their demographics and assess their overall well-being. This part offers research and analysis on the socioeconomic conditions of female agricultural labourers. Understanding employee age distributions is necessary to analyze the percentage of the population in each age group actively seeking employment. Age information was gathered from respondents as part of the survey, and this data may be used to determine how old agricultural employees are on average. **Table 8** displays the age breakdown of the respondents gathered for the survey. 65% of respondents between the ages of 25 and 45 who work on farms are women, according to the figures.

In the population polled, women in this age range make up the majority of agricultural labourers. It shows that a sizable share of the labour supply in the agriculture industry is made up of women in their prime working years.

In addition, slightly more than 10% of the respondents in the sample were over 60, demonstrating the prevalence of older women working in agriculture.

Comprehension of the demographic profile of agricultural women needs a comprehension of the age distribution statistics presented in the research. Women dominate the agricultural workforce in their prime working years, as seen by the significant proportion of women in the 25 to 45 age range. It implies that women in this age group play a substantial role in the agricultural industry, considerably influencing labour force dynamics and productivity.

Additionally, the participation of older women in agricultural work brings attention to the important contributions and distinct difficulties that this particular age group faces. Their involvement shows the potential for experience and knowledge to benefit the agricultural workforce. It also highlights the necessity of addressing the particular requirements and issues faced by older women working in agriculture, considering aspects like their physical condition, support systems, and support systems in place.

Recognizing the age distribution of female agricultural workers offers important insights into the workforce's makeup. It enables stakeholders and policymakers to create targeted strategies to cater to the needs of various age groups, encourage inclusivity, and improve the general well-being of female agricultural workers.

Socioeconomic factors: In addition to investigating the age distribution of female agricultural labourers, the research looked at various socioeconomic factors to assess their overall situation. These factors included income, educational achievement, resource access, and living circumstances.

Income Levels: Examining income levels provided useful insights into the economic well-being of agricultural worker women. The study results found that pay levels among female farm employees deferred. Further examination and comparison of income distribution across different age groups and agricultural contexts can help us better understand the income discrepancies within this workforce.

Educational Attainment: The research also analyzed the educational attainment of female agricultural labourers, acknowledging the importance of education in improving socioeconomic possibilities. It is possible to assess how educational background influences income, job opportunities, and overall empowerment by understanding these women's educational backgrounds.

Critical Resources: Access to critical resources such as land, financing, technology, and market possibilities is critical for the success and well-being of women agricultural labourers. The study investigated how much women can access these resources, illuminating any current inequalities or inequalities that may limit their productivity and economic progress.

Living circumstances: The research looked at the living circumstances of female agricultural labourers, considering aspects including housing, cleanliness, and access to necessities. The study aims to get insights into the overall quality of life and well-being of agricultural worker women by studying these elements.

These statistics highlight the impact of the MGNREGA programme in providing employment opportunities for women farm labourers while indicating areas for further improvement.

Metrics Measuring the MGNREGA Program's Success in Offering Women Farm Laborers Alternative Low-Skilled Professions are Shown in **Table 8**.

8. Table: Age Group Distribution of Respondents

District: Ranchi	Age of the Women Farming Labourers					
Circle: Kanke Village's name	Below 20	20-35	36-45	46-60	61 Above	Total
Muretha	6	22	19	6	3	56
Sukurhuttu	8	23	16	20	14	81
Sugnu	4	20	15	7	6	52
Pithauriya	5	21	16	7	6	55
Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda	3	11	12	5	3	34
Siddi	4	19	14	7	6	50
Soso	1	15	10	3	2	31
Total	31	131	102	55	40	359
%	8.64	36.49	28.41	15.32	11.14	100

Source: Field Survey

The sample size distribution for various age groups within different socioeconomic categories is shown in the table as a percentage. Notably, no agricultural women labourers in the Scheduled Tribes (STs) were 60 or older. But in every socioeconomic category the study looked at, a sizable fraction of the women doing labour-intensive employment were between 25 and 45.

9. Demographics across age ranges and socio-economic groupings

Group	Below 25	25-35	36-45	46-60	Age 61 Above	Total
ST	5	39	39	9	9	100
SC	4	35	42	19	0	100
OBC	10	37	25	17	12	100
Others	14	35	22	22	8	100
Total	9	37	29	16	9	100

Table 9: Metrics Evaluating the Success of MGNREGA Programme in Providing Alternative Low-skilled Professions for Women Farm Labourers.

Based on the study findings, it is evident that the MGNREGA programme has achieved success in offering women farm labourers alternative low-skilled professions.

- **Awareness and Work Card:** More than 75% of the surveyed respondents reported being aware of the programme and possessing a work card.
- **Utilization of Employment:** Among the households with knowledge of the programme, only 57% have utilized the job opportunity for at least one day.
- **Average Days of Effort:** Considering all six communities, the programme required 50 work days per year.
- **Maximum Employment Days:** Interestingly, none of the respondents utilized the maximum allowance of 100 days of employment in the previous year.

Any rural household that desires it can get 100 days of compensated work performing unskilled manual labour. The table below provides several measures to evaluate the MGNREGA program's efficacy at the village level. The study's findings indicate that the MGNREGA program has successfully provided alternative low-skilled jobs to women agricultural labourers (Mishra et al., 2018).

- **Work Card for Awareness:** A work card was reported to be present and known about by more than 75% of the survey participants.
- **Employment Utilization:** Only 57% of households aware of the program have used the work opportunity for at least one day.
- **Average Days of Effort:** The program needed 50 labour days per year among all six areas.
- **Maximum Employment Days:** Surprisingly, none of the respondents used the full employment permit of 100 days in the preceding year.

The above data illustrate the MGNREGA program's success in providing work possibilities for women agricultural labourers while highlighting areas for future development. The MGNREGA programme aims to provide 100 days of paid employment in unskilled manual labour to any rural household that requests it (Mishra et al., 2018). **The table 10** below presents various metrics for assessing the effectiveness of the MGNREGA programme at the village level.

10. MGNREGA Scheme's Effectiveness

Name of the Villages	Knowle dge of the Scheme	Candidat es with a Job Card	Percentage of families that worked at least one day	The scheme's average number of working days	Candidates worked for a total of 100 days.
Muretha	64.0	82.0	54.0	34.6	0
Sukurhuttu	73.3	90.0	60.0	64.7	0
Sugnu	86.7	80.0	70.0	95.3	0
Pithauriya	90.0	83.8	67.5	16.5	0

Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda	75.5.	89.0	58.0	65.6	0
Siddi	93.3	86.7	63.3	71.3	0
Soso	65.5	43.6	32.7	16.9	0
Total Villages	78.8	77.6	67.6	49.8	0

Hypothesis Testing

Agricultural labourers, including women, receive equal empowerment regardless of the precise agricultural operations involved. The table displays the example communities' empowerment profiles. The empowerment index is calculated by multiplying the headcount by the level of disempowerment. The empowerment index is also calculated by deducting the disempowerment index value from the unit value, or (1 - disempowerment index).

11. Women Empowerment Index Profile in Surveild Villages

Name of the Villages	Disempowerment ratio of employees	Disempowerment intensity	Women Empowerment Index	
			WEI	Rank
Muretha	0.21	0.59	0.885	1
Sukurhuttu	0.25	0.61	0.859	3
Sugnu	0.27	0.67	0.830	5
Pithauriya	0.51	0.45	0.779	2
Misirgonda Alias Pahargonda	0.67	0.43	0.723	4
Siddi	0.78	0.56	0.577	6
Soso	0.53	0.45	0.771	5

Significant variances may be seen between the six study villages according to the Women Empowerment Index, which measures women's empowerment. It is clear from the information in the following table that the Index values for the villages vary from 0.576 to 0.884. These contrasts show that women working as agricultural labourers in these areas have different levels of empowerment than males. The study's proposed hypothesis (H₀), which accounted for differences in the Women Empowerment Index, has been disproved. It was assumed that women were empowered to the same extent in every hamlet

under the hypothesis. The data, on the other hand, show considerable differences in the empowerment status of women working in agriculture among various areas, which runs counter to this premise.

Each village's unique agricultural conditions have a different impact on women's empowerment, which may be explained by variances in those factors. Inequalities in socio-cultural norms, economic possibilities, and support networks, among other things, may affect how empowered women in agricultural labour feel in different communities. Different degrees of empowerment seen in the research result from the subtle dynamics within each community (Haan et al., 2021).

These findings emphasize the importance of considering geographical circumstances and contextual elements when analyzing women's empowerment in agricultural contexts. Policymakers and practitioners may develop focused interventions and strategies that meet the unique possibilities and problems women agricultural labourers encounter in various circumstances by acknowledging the diversity across communities. The empowerment of women and gender equity within rural communities can both benefit from this strategy.

Conclusion

The concept of women's empowerment encompasses a variety of dimensions, and the village-level study carried out in this research helps close the gap between the "development monitoring system" and "planning at the village level" regarding the empowerment of women agricultural labourers. For women to be included in the development process, creating proper planning techniques suited to each village's particular conditions is essential.

Significant policy consequences result from women's growing influence in the agriculture sector. Their contributions have so far mostly been disregarded by agricultural policies. The assessment of women's engagement must be improved, and it is crucial to acknowledge their significant contribution to creating agricultural policies sensitive to their unique demands and responsibilities (Singh, 2014). Empowering women should be seen as one in which they gain the ability to plan their own lives, become more independent, and exercise their rights to control resources, finally challenging and ending their enslavement. This study's main policy suggestions include the following:

- Encourage using multiple and double cropping techniques in agriculture to increase productivity and jobs.
- Give labour-intensive methods precedence over greater mechanization, especially in arid areas.
- The minimum pay for all agricultural employees should be established by state government legislation, with frequent evaluation of the rates.
- Increasing agricultural women's job prospects and facilitating access to low-cost finance will be possible.
- Women who labour in rural regions should get targeted training in other professions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to extend the analysis to include family workers who are often unpaid, providing insights into the socioeconomic circumstances of women involved in caregiving roles within agriculture.
- By employing more robust analytical techniques, future studies can delve deeper into understanding the complexities faced by women in agriculture. Overall, implementing the suggested recommendations and continuing research in these areas will contribute to fostering greater gender equality and empowerment among women in agricultural labour, leading to more inclusive and sustainable development in rural communities.

- To increase women's job opportunities and ensure their correct development in rural areas, expand small businesses, the handicraft sector, and rural welfare programs.
- Ensure that women in rural regions may receive an education.
- Contest the existing beliefs and institutional frameworks that support gender prejudices and the idea that women are exclusively fit for domestic and unskilled work.

In addition to the steps mentioned above, rural agricultural women workers should have access to other job possibilities and initiatives. The socioeconomic circumstances of female agricultural labourers, specific crops, cropping patterns, and their relationships to female wage rates might be the subject of future research.

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