

Original Research Article

Magnitude and Pattern of Non Farm employment among Scheduled caste in Western plain zone of Punjab

Abstract

The present study examines the magnitude and pattern of non farm employment among scheduled caste respondents in western plain zone of Punjab. The study was based on multi stage random sampling technique. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used for the study. For analysis of the data simple percentages, averages and regression analysis was used. The study found that 63 percent of scheduled caste respondents adopted both farm and non farm activities for their livelihood. The average operated area came out to be one acre among selected scheduled caste respondents. Among non-farm activities in the study area, 41 percent scheduled caste respondents were engaged as casual labourers. Due to lack of skill they are left with no other option but to work for daily wages in unskilled jobs. Pattern of income from farm and non-farm activities shows that the income of respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities was double than the income of respondents engaged in farm activities only. The average per monthly income from farm activities for SC respondents was Rs. 7764/month only whereas average income of SC respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities was Rs. 13382/month. The study suggested that skill development centres specific for the need of the SC respondents should be opened in their areas. The average operated area was marginally low in the study area so the only hope to increase the income of SC respondents is non-farm activities in the rural areas. The priority should be attached to the removal of barriers of any kind for the people to enter into the non-farm activities besides improving infrastructure facilities like banking, roads, market and communication facilities in the rural areas, facilitating more poor agricultural labourers and jobless people to take up some kind of non-farm activities for their livelihood.

Keywords-Non farm, employment, scheduled caste

INTRODUCTION

Punjab is one of the most agriculturally as well as industrially developed states in India. Rural poverty declined substantially in the early 1990s in Punjab largely due to the advent of Green Revolution, while in case of India as a whole reduction in poverty became noticeable only after 2004 (Thorat and Dubey 2012; Shukla and Mishra 2014).

In the rural agricultural belt, Jatts control majority of the agricultural land, an outcome of the 1901 Land Alienation Act, which reserved land ownership rights only to the agriculturist's castes of the state. Some of the communities like Mazhabis, Valmiki's, Ravidasians and Chamars have historically denied of land ownership (Puri, 2003). In the aftermath of Green-revolution, mechanisation in agriculture led to many changes in traditional labour relations. It increased the demand for agricultural labourers. Wages also increased, thus augmenting the income of the agricultural labourers in the state. Consequently, the Scheduled castes (SCs) who were otherwise practising their caste-based occupations, joined in large numbers to meet the increasing demand of agricultural labourers. Even with agrarian change taking place in Punjab Dalits in the state remained un-free and attached with the landowners on a long-term basis. Jatts remained at the privileged position of being the landowners while Dalits, despite having numerical strength in the rural areas, only has control of three percent of agricultural land. Therefore small landowners in Punjab shifted from their erstwhile occupations like agriculture to other activities, and other agricultural labourers, who were mostly Dalits, in rural Punjab diversified into non-farm activities like vegetable vending, rickshaw pulling, brick moulding and other forms of casual labour, which was also a consequence of the social boycott of the Dalits by the landowning Jatts (Singh 2012). However, the Jatt Sikhs, the landed caste of Punjab, continued to monopolise public spaces. The dominant caste status of the Jatt Sikhs is a function of a composite set of conditions, including their numerical strength (one-third of the state's total population), ownership of land (more than 80% of the available agricultural land is owned by them), dominant stakes in agriculture, and status as historically material race, among others. In contrast, however, the Dalits of Punjab, despite their substantial numerical clout, are grossly marginalised in terms of their share in landownership. This rendered a large proportion of them as agricultural labourers working on the lands of the Jatt Sikhs. (Singh 2007).

The incomes of the SC workers in the rural areas are determined by the access to sources of income such as agricultural land, capital, and employment. In the late 1990s, less than three-fourths of the SC rural households/persons were engaged in agriculture (as self-employed

cultivators and agricultural wage labourers) and about one-fourths of the rural households/persons in non-farm activities in the form of self-employment or wage employment. Although, the alleviation in the economic condition of the SCs is critically incumbent upon their diversification into the rural nonfarm sector; their participation in the rural non-farm sector has been marginal in comparison to the other social groups in the rural society. Given the inadequate access of the SCs to agricultural land and capital in the rural areas, the improvements in their employment levels are closely dependent on their access to rural non-farm employment. The rural non-farm employment, in turn, is determined by the educational levels of the social groups. (Thorat and Sabharwal,2006). Keeping in view the relevance of non-farm employment in alleviating the standards of living of SC population in Punjab present study was conducted in south western region of Punjab to find out the magnitude and nature of rural non farm employment ;to find out the factor affecting the rural non-farm employment among Scheduled caste respondents.

Methodology

Punjab state has been divided into five agro-climatic zones on the basis of homogeneity, rainfall pattern, cropping pattern etc. Out of these zones south western plain zone was selected randomly. Multistage random sampling technique were used for the study. At first stage two districts ,Fazilkanad Ferozepur were selected. Two blocks , KhuianSarwar and Mamdot were randomly selected from each district at second stage of sampling .One village from each block. i.e Ramkot village from KhuianSarwar block and MamdotHithar village from Mamdot block was randomly selected at third stage and at fourth stage 60 scheduled caste respondents were selected randomly from each selected village. Overall, 120 scheduled caste respondents were randomly selected from Westren plain Zone of Punjab.(Table 1)

Table 1: Detail of study sample in Western Plain Zone of Punjab (2020-21)

Name of the districts	Name of the blocks	Name of the village selected	Number of selected household
Fazilka	Khuiansarwar	Ramkot	60
Firozpur	Mamdot	MamdotHither	60

The primary data was collected from the selected respondents through pre tested schedules. The primary data collected from various respondents pertained to year 2020-2021

The information was collected from the selected respondents regarding the structure of family, education level, age, marital status, employment in different non farm activities ,income from farm and non-farm activities. The data was collected through schedules by personal interview method.

The secondary data about employment and income was taken from various rounds of NSSO. The NSSO survey 38th round (1983), 50th round (1993-94), 61th round (2004-05) and 66th round (2009-10) and 70th round (2012-13) was used for study purpose. Relevant data about area, and population, and distribution of holding were taken from Statistical Abstract of Punjab,

Analysis of Data

The data collected from the respondents was analysed to achieve the objective of the study. Tabular method using frequency distribution and percentage were used to achieve the first and second objective of the study. However, to meet the third objective of the study i.e., to identify the factors affecting non-farm employment regression analysis was used.

$$Y = f(X_1 X_2 X_3 X_4 - X_n)$$

Y = income from rural non-farm employment (Dependent variable)

X₁ = Age of the sampled respondents

X₂ = family size of sampled respondents

X₃ = Family type of sampled respondents

X₄ = Family size of sampled respondents

X_5 = Indebtedness of sampled respondents

X_6 = Operated area of sampled respondents

R^2 = Percentage of the dependent variable variation that a linear model explains.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Cropping pattern of Scheduled caste Respondents in Western Plain Zone of Punjab

Crop	Fazilka	Firozpur
	Average area (acre)	Average area (acre)
Paddy	0.72 (75.8)	0.8 (74)
Maize	0.05 (5.3)	0.083 (7.7)
Jawar	0.07 (7.4)	0.15 (13.6)
Cotton	0.03 (3.1)	0.05 (4.6)
Kinnow	0.08 (8.4)	0
Total cropped area (Kharif)	0.95 (100)	1.083 (100)
Wheat	0.75 (78.9)	0.83 (76.6)
Kinnow	0.08 (8.4)	0
Oats	0.12 (12.7)	0.24 (22.1)
Vegetables	0	0.013 (1.3)
Total cropped area (Rabi)	0.95 (100)	1.08 (100)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage of total.

The average operated area was 0.95 acre in Fazilka district and 1.08 acre in Firozpur district. Paddy was the main kharif crop which occupied 75.8 percent area in Fazilka district and 74 percent area in Firozpur district (Table 2). Kinnow occupied (8.4 percent) area, jawar crop occupied (7.4 percent) area, followed by maize (7.4 percent) and cotton crop (3.1 percent) in Fazilka district. Whereas jawar occupied (13.6 percent) area, followed by maize (7.7 percent) and cotton (4.6 percent) in Firozpur district during kharif season.

Wheat was the main Rabi crop which occupied 78.9 percent in Fazilka district and 76.6 percent in Firozpur district. Oat crop occupied 12.7 percent area, followed by kinnow in Fazilka district during Rabi season. Whereas oats crop occupied (22.1 percent) area followed by vegetables in Firozpur district during Rabi season. The main difference in cropping pattern in both districts was that kinnow was grown in Fazilka district area as it occupied 8.4 percent area during Kharif and Rabi season among selected respondents. On the other hand, after wheat and paddy, jawar and oats occupied significant area in cropping pattern of selected respondents in Firozpur district.

Table 3: Magnitude of non-farm Employment among scheduled caste in Western Plain Zone of Punjab

	Fazilka	Firozpur	Overall
Number of households surveyed	60 (100)	60 (100)	120 (100)
Households engaged in farm activities	24 (40)	21 (35)	45 (37.5)
Households engaged in non farm activities only	36 (60)	39 (65)	75 (62.5)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

The above table clearly shows the magnitude of non-farm employment in western plain zone of Punjab. In village Ramkot out of randomly selected 60 households', 40 percent were engaged in farm related activities like growing crops, casual labourer or permanent labour with farmers and 60 percent were engaged in both farm and non-farm activities (Table 3). In village Mamdot out of random selected 60 households' 35 percent were engaged in farm related activities like growing

crops, casual labourer or permanent labour with farmers and 65 percent were engaged in both farm and non-farm activities.

Overall, in western plain zone of Punjab (37.5) percent selected respondents were engaged in farm activities and (62.5) percent respondents were engaged in both farm and non-farm activities. Seasonal nature of agriculture and marginal land holding of scheduled caste respondents was the main cause of employment in non-farm activities in the study area.

Table 4: Employment Pattern of Respondents in Non-farm Activities in Western Plain Zone of Punjab

	Type	Fazilka	Firozpur	Overall
	Total Respondents	60	60	120
	Respondents engaged in non farm activities	36 (60)	39 (65)	75 (63)
1	Regular salaried	9 (25)	9 (23)	18 (24)
2	Casual labour	16 (44.5)	15 (38.5)	31 (41.4)
3	Self employed	11 (30.5)	15 (38.5)	26 (34.6)
A	Barber	0	4 (26.6)	4 (15.4)
B	Tailor	2 (18.3)	0	2 (7.8)
C	Contractor	1 (9)	0	1 (3.8)
D	House constructor	3 (27.4)	2 (13.3)	5 (19.3)
E	Painter	2	0	2

	Type	Fazilka	Firozpur	Overall
		(18.3)		(7.8)
F	Grocery shop	1 (9)	4 (26.6)	5 (19.3)
G	Internet café	1 (9)	0	1 (3.8)
H	Service station	1 (9)	0	1 (3.8)
I	Fast food	0	1 (6.7)	1 (3.8)
J	Electrician	0	1 (6.7)	1 (3.8)
K	Medical	0	1 (6.7)	1 (3.8)
L	Transportation	0	1 (6.7)	1 (3.8)
M	Atta chakki	0	1 (6.7)	1 (3.8)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage of total.

Out of total random selected scheduled caste respondents ,60 percent respondents in Fazilka and 65 percent respondents in Firozpur district were employed in non-farm activities (Table 4). They were employed in non-farm activities out of compulsion as the average operated area was less than one acre. Scheduled caste respondents were engaged in jobs like sweeper, peon, army, work shop etc where they got regular salaries. Only 25 percent of selected respondents in Fazilka and 23 percent in Firozpur district were engaged in regular jobs. In Fazilka district and Firozpur district around 44 percent and 38 percent respondents were engaged as casual labourer in non-farm activities. Around 30 percent SC respondents were self-employed in non-farm activities in Fazilka district and 38 percent in Firozpur district. They were employed as barber, tailor, contractor, house constructor, painter, electrician, grocery shop, internet café, service station, fast

food stall, medical, transportation, attachakki etc. Study conducted by (Singh 2012) also revealed that Dalits in rural Punjab were diversified into non-farm activities like vegetable vendor, rickshaw pulling, brick moulding and other forms of casual labour, which was also a consequence of the social boycott of the Dalits by the landownership Jatts.

Overall, in Western Plain Zone of Punjab 62.5 percent of selected respondents were engaged in non-farm activities. Around 24 percent were employed in regular jobs, 41 percent worked as casual labourers in non-farm activities in the rural areas and 35 percent were self employed in non-farm activities in rural areas.

Table 5: Employment Pattern of Respondent in Farm Activities in Western Plain Zone of Punjab

Farm Activities	Fazilka	Firozpur	Overall
Total Respondents	60	60	60
Respondents engaged in farm activities	60 (100)	60 (100)	120 (100)
1. Farming + Casual labour + Dairy	48 (80)	50 (83.33)	98 (81.67)
2. Permanent Labour	9 (15)	9 (15)	18 (15)
3. Self employed	3 (5)	1 (1.67)	4 (3.33)
a. Animal Merchant	3 (100)	0	3 (75)
b. Vegetable vendor	0	1 (100)	1 (25)
Total	60 (100)	60 (100)	120 (100)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage of total.

Table 5 shows that all the selected scheduled caste respondents were engaged in farm related activities. Due to marginal operational holding area scheduled caste respondents also worked as farm labourer with the large or medium farmers in the villages. They worked as casual or permanent agricultural labour. They also adopted dairy. Around 80 percent of selected respondents who were engaged in farming as also worked labour (both casual and permanent) and adopted dairy in Fazilka district and Firozpur district. The percentage of SC respondents engaged as permanent labourer with large farmers was 15 percent in both Fazilka and Firozpur districts. Only 5 percent of selected respondents in Fazilka district and 2 percent in Firozpur district were self-employed in agriculture related activities. In Fazilka district the selected 5 percent were employed as animal merchant who assist the large farmers in sale and purchase of animals and in Firozpur district only one respondent was self-employed who work as vegetable vendor. The above table reveals the fact that there is no difference in pattern of employment among respondents in both districts.

Overall, in Western plain Zone of Punjab around 82 percent of selected respondents were engaged in farming, casual labourer in agriculture and Dairy. Around 15 percent were employed permanent labour in agriculture and only 3 percent were self-employed in agriculture related activities in western plain zone of Punjab.

Table 6: Average Income of SC respondents from all sources in south western region of Punjab

Type of activity	Income of respondents engaged in farm activities only (Rs/annum)	Income of respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities (Rs/annum)
	N=45 (37.5)	N=75 (62.5)
Farm activities		
Farming	49083.3 (52.7)	49083.3 (30.6)
Dairy	2433.3 (2.6)	2433.3 (1.5)

Type of activity	Income of respondents engaged in farm activities only (Rs/annum)	Income of respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities (Rs/annum)
Casual labour	25350 (27.2)	25350 (15.8)
Permanent labour	16308.4 (17.5)	16308.4 (10.1)
Total income from farm activities	93175 (100)	93175 (58)
Non-farm activities		
Salaried	-	38166.7 (23.8)
Self employed	-	17900 (11.2)
Casual labour	-	7250 (4.5)
Other sources	-	4103.3 (2.5)
Total income from non-farm activities	-	67420 (42)
Total income	93175 (100)	160595 (100)

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage of total.

Overall, in western plain zone of Punjab 38 percent respondents were engaged in farm activities, whereas 63 percent selected respondents were engaged in both farm and non-farm activities (Table 6). The results from the table clearly shows that average income from farm activities was Rs 93175/annum for selected SC respondents. The share of income from farming in total income received from farm activities was (52.7) percent. The average per monthly income of

respondents engaged in farm activities for SC respondents came out to be only Rs 7764/month only whereas average income of SC respondents engaged in farm and non-farm activities came out to be Rs 13382/month. Average monthly income of selected SC respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities was double in comparison to the average income of SC respondents engaged in farm only. The result clearly reveals the fact that, the alleviation in the economic condition of SC's is dependent on the rural non-farm employment. The result of the study was in line with the study of Thorat and sabarwal 2006, were they revealed that the alleviation in the economic condition of the SC's is critically incumbent upon there diversification into rural non-farm sector.

Table 7: Factors affecting income from rural non-farm employment among Secheduled caste respondents in western Plain Zone of Punjab

Variables	Fazilka	Firozpur	Overall
Age	0.1263 (0.234984)	0.15559 (0.206933)	0.13451 (0.079721) .
Family type	0.5030 (0.121503)	-0.19052 (0.515301)	0.18867 (0.377213)
Family size	-0.2865 (0.234970)	-0.13090 (0.572617)	-0.23282 (0.156182)
Operated area	-0.3745 (0.017486) *	-0.38748 (0.026980) *	-0.35037 (0.000537) ***
Education	0.1010 (0.324210)	0.32175 (0.000433) ***	0.19616 (0.002597) **
Indebtedness	0.1464 (0.490940)	0.07019 (0.636181)	0.08411 (0.449243)
R ²	0.222	0.329	0.293

Significant codes: 0 '*' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1**

The income of Schedule caste respondents was very meager as the average operational holding was less than one acre. The factors affecting the income from rural Non-farm Employment

among scheduled caste respondents was age, education, family type, family size, and Indebtedness, and Operated area. Regression analysis was carried out for determining factors affect the RNFE. In Fazilka district operated area was negatively significant at 0.01 percent of significance. This negative significance implies lower the operated area more the enrolment of respondents in non-farm activities and higher the income from non farm activites. The R^2 was 0.222 in Fazilka district. In Firozpur district operational holding and education were significant in regression analysis. Operational area was negatively significant and education was positively significant. The value of R^2 was 0.329 in Firozpur district. Overall, in western plain zone of Punjab R^2 was 0.293 and significant factors affecting the rural non-farm employment were operated area and education

Summary and conclusion

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Employment pattern of SC respondents in farm and non-farm activities clearly shows that 63 percent of respondents were engaged in both farm and non-farm activities due to the marginal size of land holdings. Among non farm activites, 41 percent scheduled caste respondents were engaged as casual labourers. Due to lack of skill, they are left with no other option but to work for daily wages in unskilled jobs. This needs the importance of skill development centres in rural areas. Skill development centres specific for the need of the SC respondents should be opened in their areas. Only 34 percent of selected scheduled caste respondents were self-employed in rural non-farm sector. This was due to the reason that the government schemes for SC population for opening new businesses. Banks also hesitate to lend money to SC respondents because of lack of collateral security. Government should introduce new schemes specific for SC population to start new business in rural areas where government provide collateral free loans to scheduled caste in rural area.

Pattern of income from farm and non-farm activities shows that the income of respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities is double than the income of respondents engaged in farm activities only. The average per monthly income from farm activities for SC respondents was Rs 7764/month only whereas average income of SC respondents engaged in both farm and non-farm activities was Rs 13382/month. So, the only hope to increase the income of SC respondents is non-farm activities in the rural areas. The priority should be attached to the

removal of barriers of any kind for the people to enter into the non-farm activities besides improving infrastructure facilities like banking, roads, market and communication facilities in the rural areas, facilitating more poor agricultural labourers and jobless people to take up some kind of non-farm activities for their livelihood.

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