

Unemployment Problem of the Agricultural Labourers in Nagaon District of Assam

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ABSTRACT

The term employment refers to involuntary joblessness or seeking for work. In other words, this may be treated as the proportion or percentages of man-days which were idle and available for work. This is the most important criterion for examining the magnitude of employment among different categories of population and in the different geographical area. According to this process, the employment of persons has been categories into three broad groups on the basis of their status of employment viz., Self-employment, regular employment and casual employment.

1. Introduction

The employment and wage is the important factors which influence the livelihood and the socio-economic life of agricultural labourer's community (Venkatesh, 2013). The term employment refers to involuntary joblessness or seeking for work. In other words, this may be treated as the proportion or percentages of man-days which were idle and available for work. This is the most important criterion for examining the magnitude of employment among different categories of population and in the different geographical area. According to this process, the employment of persons has been categories into three broad groups on the basis of their status of employment viz., Self-employment, regular employment and casual employment (Pandey, 1974). On the other hand, the term unemployment comprises "all persons above a specified age who were in categories of workers but without a job and was seeking work for pay or profit" (ibid; p, 222).

According to the International standard, the term employment means "all persons above a specified age, who are at work for pay and profit or on own account during a specified period". It includes those; who are with a job but not at work due to illness, injury, dispute or bad weather. But, it variation depends upon on, duration of contact, the basis of payment, the frequency of payment, mode of payment and also the degree to which work obligation in the particular situation (Pramanik, 2008).

As like the term employment, the self-employment means those labourers; who work on their own land. They are generally independent of the others. During the production time they were employed and in the offseason they become unemployed. The regularly employed labour is generally employed on a permanent basis. They are working under some owners and they are not free from their master in any time. On the other hand, casual labourers are those whose opportunities for employment mostly determine the seasonal need for hired labourers and also depend on the monsoon (Naryana, 1990).

2. Methods and Materials

The study is based on six villages of the district of Nagaon. The villages were selected with the help of multi-stage

sampling. On the basis of pilot study and in interaction with the village headman and panchayat members of the respective villages total 240 numbers of agricultural labourer's households were selected for the present study.

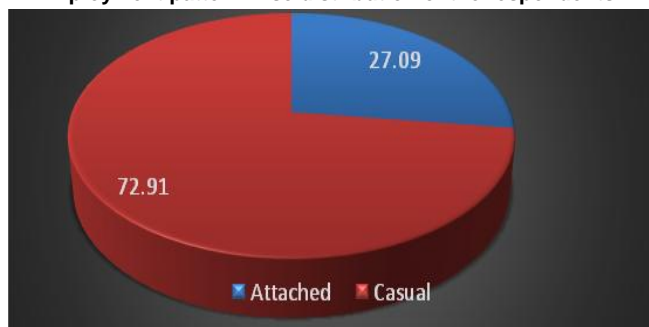
3. Discussion

Employment structure of the agricultural labourers:

Agriculture in India is a seasonal occupation. Because of Indian agriculture deeply depends on the monsoon rains. The employment and wage are the important factors which influence the livelihood and the socio-economic life of agricultural labourers (Venkatesh, 2013). In India, the four-month-long affair from June to till Septembers the season for employment in kharip crops. After that, a couple of months the farmers became unemployed and they again busy in rabi crops season which is stated from October to march. Therefore they are employed also changes throughout the crops season.

The extent of employment generally depends on the extent of age, sex of labour, the periodicity of demand for labour and employment status of the labourer. The permanent labourers are generally employed for one year on contract basis. Therefore, their employment period is longer compared with the casual labourers whose opportunities for employment are determined by the seasonal needs for hired labour which itself depends on the vagaries of monsoons. tly seasonal and sporadic in character. The duration of employment varies with the character of the crops and the system of cultivation which is adopted. The agricultural labourers were employed broadly in two types, permanent and casual. Attached are those who are work for one or more at a time. They are most or less in continuous employment and are under some sort of contact with employers. The casual workers were employed from time to time according to the demands of work. According to the survey, there is only 27.08 percent (%) of the total number of agricultural labourers on a permanent basis. The following diagram present about the employment pattern of the respondents in Nagaon district.

Diagram No.1
Employment pattern wise distribution of the respondents:



Source: Primary data

The diagram no. 1 present that, the majority of the agricultural labourer engaged through casual basis i.e. 72.91 percent (%) and other 27.09 percent (%) employment pattern is the permanent basis. The labourers were mostly preferred to working as casual labourers instated of permanent basis, because of working as casual labourers. The advantages like casual labourers get the freedom to change the employment time to time, but permanent workers cannot change their employment contract. The casual labourers get more wage

than the permanent workers. This is because the casual labourers should be completed a certain work in a particular time but in permanent work; there is no this kind time bounding. Therefore the demand for casual workers is more than permanent workers. Because of this reason the agricultural labourers were interested in working on a casual basis.

As such agriculture does not provide employment to either type of labour throughout the year. So their employment generally depends on the extent of age, sex of labour the periodicity of demand for labour and employment status of the labourers.

Age Wise Employment Pattern of Agricultural Labourers

The following table no. 1 present about the age wise employment pattern of the respondents. The table reveals that there is employment variation on the basis of age. The result reveals that majority i.e. 66 numbers of the agricultural labourers belongs to the age category of 35-43. Out of the 240 respondents, there are 27.09 percent (%) agricultural labourer were engaged on a permanent basis, on the other hand, 72.91percent (%) on a casual basis. The labourers were not interested to work on a permanent basis in the study area.

Table No.1
Age wise employment pattern of agricultural labourers:

Sl. No	Age distribution	Employment pattern of the respondents		Total
		Permanent	Casual	
1	18-25	-	42(24)	42 (17.6)
2	26-34	5(7.70)	48(27.42)	53 (22.08)
3	35-43	12(18.46)	54(30.86)	66 (27.5)
4	44-52	12(18.46)	13(7.43)	25 (10.41)
5	53-61	25(38.46)	11(6.29)	36 (15)
6	62- above	11(16.92)	7(4)	18 (7.5)
Total		65(27.09 %)	175(72.91%)	240 (100)

Source: Primary data

The table reveals that the highest i.e. 30.86 percent (%) of the agricultural labourer was working as a casual basis under the age group of 35-43 category. The age group of 18-25 and 26-34 years the agricultural labourer were generally preferred to working as casual or temporary, therefore 24 percent (%) of an agricultural labourer working as a casual basis. Because they want freedom which is not possible in permanent working. Those, who are an aged labourer, they were want to social as well as employment security rather than the money or freedom, therefore they wish to work as a permanent basis. For this reason, the data depict that the age between 53-61 categories there is 38.46 percent (%) followed by 16.92 percent (%) under 60 plus category agricultural labourers working as a permanent basis.

Gender Wise Employment Pattern of the Respondents

In the agricultural sector, gender differences play a significant role. Based on the gender the wage payment is also different from society to society (Srivastava et. al, 2016). The following table presents about the gender differences of respondents according to the types of employment. This is because the female agricultural workers were challenged more

problems rather than the male labourers. Because of family responsibilities, responsibilities of the child the majority of female workers engaged as the casual basis.

The study indicates that the gender wise employment pattern of the respondents. The majority of the male agricultural labourers were engaged through casual basis, i.e. 70.44percent (%) and otherwise 72.78percent (%) of female agricultural labourer employed on a casual basis. The female worker, not interest to worked as a permanent/attached basis because of family problems and responsibility. For example, the schooling of their children, the different activity of home environment etc. This findings also reveals that out of the 240 respondents 66.25percent (%) were a male agricultural labourer in the other hand 33.75percent (%) of the female labourer.

Marital Status Wise Employment Pattern of the Respondents

The study data depict that, usually, un-married agricultural labourers were preferred to working as a casual or temporary basis, because there are freedom and freeness. In a single day

they contract two or more than work in agricultural field and also there are possibilities of more wage than the permanent

types of work. The table shows the distribution of marital status wise variation.

Table No.2
Marital status wise employment pattern of the respondents

Sl.no	Marital Status	Employment Pattern		Total (%)
		Attached	Casual	
1	Married	42(64.62)	102(58.28)	144 (60)
2	Un-married	21(32.30)	72(41.14)	93(38.75)
3	Widow	02(3.08)	01(0.58)	3(1.25)
Total		65(27.09 %)	175(72.91%)	240(100%)

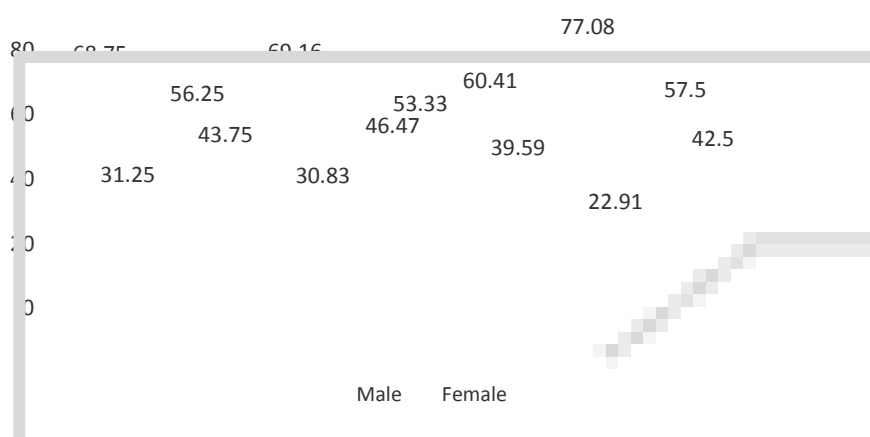
Source: Primary data

Type of work done by the Agricultural Labourers

Male workers generally work of transportation i.e. 77.08 percent (%). Female labourers are also engaged in sowing i.e. 39.59percent (%), threshing i.e. 53.33 percent (%). It was

observed that female workers were not engaged in an operation like preparation of land application of manures and irrigating the fields.

Diagram No: 3
Type of work done by the sampled landless labourers in the



Source: Primary data

The agricultural workers do not get work on a regular basis. To a large extent they remain unemployed or underemployed. Attached labourers who are also Known as contract labourers are attached to particular landowners and get work on .permanent basis and for larger periods compared to casual labourers. But the master of such labourers is comparatively small and they too have their own difficulties and problems. For example, they are severally exploited by land-owners. They have to render bounded labour. Their wages are very low. They are not even free to work under any other land-owner.

The above discussions illustrate that the employment and unemployment problem is related to the cropping pattern of agriculture. In the present study Nagaon district, there is generally fellow two seasons of cropping system. Because of this system, the agricultural labourers and the farmers were faced with the employment problem. Most of the times they engaged or employed for one season and next six months they have become unemployed. In non-agricultural sectors also they merely got the chance of employment.

In terms of employment, an employer-employee relation is different. It mainly deepens on, whether the labourers are attached to the landowning family on a more or less permanent

basis, or whether they are casual labourers. Although, all attached labourers are not so by virtue of traditional jajmani arrangements, their relationship to their employer is much the same with casual types of labourers (Chun, 1957; Kar, 1974). In the study area, the condition of employment depends on the pattern of engagement. Therefore, comparatively higher man-days employment of attached labourers in agricultural employment is due to continuity of their employment for particular agricultural operation or for the whole season of production. The casual labourers are, on the other hand, more floating labourers having the considerable uncertainty of employment compared to that of their attached counterpart and as such, they suffer more from lack of continuity and regularity of employment.

The employment of agricultural labourers in agricultural processes is directed orally only and that's why the personal contract plays an important role in their further employment procedure. The employment or the terms and conditions of work significantly differ between areas and individuals as well as between casual and attached labourers. On the other hand customs and traditions also play an important role in the context of employment.

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