



A STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF FARMERS IN AMRITSAR DISTRICT OF PUNJAB: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Background: This paper attempts to investigate the socio-economic conditions of farmers prevalent in the Amritsar district of Punjab.

Methods: Two villages Manawala and Panj garain wala out of two blocks, Jandiala and Ajnala respectively were selected randomly. Total of 84 farmers' households was examined with the aid of interview schedule.

Results: The study indicates that majority of farmers were of middle age category. 44.1 % of farmers were illiterate and 36.9 % of farmers were educated till primary level. 75 % of farmers were acquiring medium scale farm size. 82.1 % of farmers found to be in the clutches of debt.

Key words: Socio-economic conditions, Farmers', Amritsar, Punjab.

Introduction

Agriculture act as bulwark to the Indian economy. It is pivotal to the integrated development of our nation. Punjab has been the grain basket of our country since the inception of the green revolution. With the advent of time agricultural economy of Punjab has been transitioning from mass production, monotony in selection of crops, stagnant productivity, increased cost of production to plummeted income and chances of employment.

The present research aims to determine the socio-economic conditions of the farmers as the socio-economic conditions are material in determining the extent of development of not only the farmers but the agricultural process. Socio-economic conditions determine potential and capability of the individual to carry out any developmental activity. Against this backdrop following objectives of study was framed.

Research Objectives

- To describe the socio-economic conditions of the farmers
- To determine the cropping pattern followed by the farmers
- To estimate the indebtedness among the farmers

Review of Literature

Singh et al (2014) conducted study based on the primary data from the sample households which was collected on specially structured schedule through personal interview method. Ludhiana, Amritsar and Patiala, Bathinda and Mansa were selected for the study. The debt burden of the marginal farmers on per hectare basis was found to be six times more than the large farmers. A majority of 57.4 % total debt was taken for productive purposes like purchase of farm machinery, inputs and agricultural land. However, non-productive purposes like maintenance and repair of house, consumption, health and social ceremonies comprised 43 per cent of the total debt. Around 20 percent of the total debt was taken from non-institutional sources and among these *arhtiyas* were the most popular source as they provide easy availability of credit at all times and for all purposes. Low prices of farm produce, low profit margins due to stagnant productivity, high expenditure on healthcare and house construction were some of the most common reasons for indebtedness.

Okpachu et al (2013) undertake study to ascertain the impact of adult education on the agricultural productivity of small scale female maize farmers in Potiskum Local Government Area of Yobe State, Nigeria. The farmers for this study were selected using a multi stage sampling method. The study shows that adult education scheme has a significant impact on the agricultural productivity of female maize farmers in the study area. Regression analysis showed that age, level of education, experience and extension contacts were significantly related to level of participation at 10% and 5% level of significance. The study concluded that education positively impacted on the agricultural productivity of small scale female maize farmers in the study area.

Guo et al (2015) attempts to investigate these factors to more fully understand the impact of an aging agricultural labor population on agricultural production. The survey involved total of seven municipal cities in Jiangsu, china. These results show that in the context of an aging agricultural labor force, changes in the working-age households have a significant impact on agricultural output. Concern is needed for such adverse effects. Composition of the working-age households suggest that 58.53 percent of the agricultural producers will likely exit agricultural production. This represents a potential threat to the future development of agriculture.



Gowda et al (2015) executed study using telephone survey to determine the influence of farmers' education on the level of utilization of mobile-based advisories in the wake of extension systems. Farmers with higher education level had better comprehension of advisories; they acted upon the advisories at faster pace and further shared the information with their fellow farmers more often as compared to those with lower education level. Study concludes that there was a significant association between comprehending, sharing and acting upon advisories. This association leads to ramifications of achieving enhanced extension with higher efficiency in terms of cost and time.

Methodology

- **Sampling Method:** This study was executed in Amritsar district of Punjab aiming to understand socio-economic aspect of the farmers' household keeping in mind the agricultural backdrop of Amritsar district. Two blocks were selected purposively namely Jandiala and Ajnala block with highest and lowest production of rice and wheat respectively. Further one village was selected randomly from each block namely Manawala from Jandiala block and Panj garain wala from Ajnala block. Sample of 50 households from Manawala and 34 households from Panj garain wala was selected randomly on the basis of proportion of population.
- **Respondents:** Respondents for the study are the households which accredit the income predominately from agriculture. Head of the households were interviewed using interview schedule.
- **Method of Data Collection:** The present study is an empirical research based on survey method. Data was collected from primary sources using interview technique and with the aid of interview schedule tool. Interview schedule was constructed with reference to the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers and extent of indebtedness among the farmers' household.
- **Data Analysis:** Data was classified into frequency tables and interpreted accordingly.

Results

Table 1. Age wise classification of farmers

AGE	JANDIALA	AJNALA	TOTAL
	Manawala	Panj garain wala	
Below 35 years	4 (8%)	3 (8.8%)	7 (8.3%)
35-55 years	42 (84%)	29 (85.3%)	71 (84.5%)
55years and above	4 (8%)	2 (5.9%)	6 (7.2%)
Total	50 (59.5%)	34 (40.5%)	84 (100%)

Table depicts the age of the farmers. It was observed from the table that majority of 84.5% farmers fall into the age category of 35-55 years, followed by 8.3% farmers who were of the below 35 years' age. Very few farmers were of aged category of age 55 years and above.

Table 2. Educational qualification of farmers

Educational qualification	JANDIALA	AJNALA	TOTAL
	Manawala	Panj garain wala	
Illiterate	19 (38%)	18 (52.9%)	37 (44.1%)
Primary	18 (36%)	13 (38.3%)	31 (36.9%)
Secondary	8 (16%)	2 (5.9%)	10(11.9%)
Graduation/other courses*	5 (10%)	1 (2.9%)	6 (7.1%)
TOTAL	50 (59.5%)	34 (40.5%)	84 (100%)

Other category included diploma or any other professional courses.

Table presents the educational qualification of the farmers. Table reflects that 44.1 % of farmers were illiterate that is they can't read or write, 36.9% of farmers were educated till primary class, 11.9 % of farmers were educated till secondary level and 7.1 % of farmers were graduated. Among the villages 10 % of farmers from Manawala village were graduated as compared to only 2.9% of Panj garain wala village. Whereas 52.9 % of farmers from Panj garain wala were illiterate in comparison to 38% of farmers who were found to be illiterate in Manawala village.



Table 3. Classification of farmers on the basis of farm size

Farm size	JANDIALA	AJNALA	TOTAL
	Manawala	Panj garain wala	
Small (up to 1-2 hectare)	7 (14%)	3 (8.8%)	10 (11.9%)
Medium (2-10 hectare)	36 (72%)	27 (79.4%)	63 (75%)
Large (above 10 hectare)	7 (14%)	4 (11.8%)	11 (13.1%)
TOTAL	50 (59.5%)	34 (40.5%)	84 (100%)

It is inferred from the table that majority of 75 % the farmers were medium scale farmers having 2-10 hectare land. 14 % of farmers from Manawala village were large scale farmers in comparison to 11.8 % farmers from Panj garain wala.

Table 4. Income wise classification of farmers

Income (Annual)	JANDIALA	AJNALA	TOTAL
	Manawala	Panj garain wala	
Up to 2 lakhs	10 (20%)	5 (14.7%)	15 (17.8%)
2-4 lakhs	12 (24%)	12 (35.3%)	24 (28.6%)
4-5 lakhs and above	28 (56%)	17 (50%)	45 (53.6%)
TOTAL	50 (59.5%)	34 (40.5%)	84 (100%)

Table presents that majority of farmers were having 5 lakhs and above annual income from the field, followed by 28.6 % of farmers who were having 2-4 lakhs annual income. Among the villages 56 % of farmers from Manawala annual income was above 5 lakhs whereas 50 % of farmers from Panj garain wala were having annual income more than 5 lakhs. Within more than 5 lakhs category 20 % of farmers from Manawala were having 4-5 lakhs annual income and 36 % of farmers were having more than 5 lakhs income annually. Whereas in Panj garain wala 35.3 % of farmers were earning 4-5 lakhs income annually and only 14.7 % of farmers' income was more than 5 lakhs.

Table 5. Enumerating the farmers who were indebted

Indebted	JANDIALA	AJNALA	TOTAL
	Manawala	Panj garain wala	
Yes	36(72%)	33(97.1%)	69(82.1%)
No	14(28%)	1(2.9%)	15(17.9%)
TOTAL	50 (59.5%)	34 (40.5%)	84 (100%)

Table indicates that 82.1 % of farmers were indebted with some amount of loan and very few proportion of farmers were not indebted. Farmers who were indebted were further inquired about the amount of loan indebted with. 97.1 % of farmers from Panj grain wala were indebted as compared to 72 % farmers from Manawala village.

Table 6. Classification of farmers on the basis of amount of loan

Amount of debt	JANDIALA	AJNALA	TOTAL
	Manawala	Panj garain wala	
Up to 2 lakhs	13 (36.1%)	12 (36.4%)	25 (36.2%)
2-4 lakhs	14 (38.9%)	11 (33.3%)	25 (36.2%)
4-5 lakhs and above	9 (25%)	10 (30.3%)	19 (27.6%)
Total	36 (52.2%)	33 (47.8%)	69 (100%)

Table presents the amount of loan farmers indebted with. Table shows that 36.2 % of farmers were indebted with up to 2 lakhs loan. Within up to 2 lakh categories, 11.9 % of farmers were indebted with up to 1 lakh loan and 17.9% of farmers were indebted with 1-2 lakhs. 36.2 % of farmers were found to be indebted with 2-4 lakhs loan within which, 16.7% farmers were indebted with 2-3 lakhs, 11.9% farmers were having 4-5 lakhs loan. Among the villages 30.3 % farmers from Panj garain wala were indebted with more than 5 lakhs as compared to 25 % of Manawala village.



Discussions

It was inferred from the results that majority of farmers were of middle age category that is within 35 to 55 years' age bracket. Respondents were varied in terms of educational qualification as 44.1% were illiterate, 36.9 % were educated till primary level and 7.1% of farmers were educated till graduation level. It was found that more proportion of farmers from Manawala village were graduated in comparison to Panj garain wala village. The reason attributed to better earnings and due to the proximity of educational institutions to Manawala village in comparison to Panj garain wala village.

With respect to income distribution, Manawala village leads with the higher proportion of farmers having income more than 5 lakhs as compared to Panj garain wala village. The probable reason could be more production of crops and farmers growing diversity of crops as compared to Panj garain wala village.

Distribution of farmers on the basis of size of the farm reflects that majority of 75 % farmers belongs to medium scale category of farmers with 2-10 hectares of land for agricultural purpose. Whereas there was higher proportion of large scale farmers that is having more than 10 hectares of agricultural land in Manawala village as compared to Panj garain wala village. The large farm size might be the cause of more production of crops and more income in Manawala village. When it comes to indebtedness, 97.1 % of farmers from Panj garain wala village were indebted as compared to 72 % of farmers from Manawala village. On further investigation about the amount of loan, more proportion of farmers from Panj garain wala village were found to be indebted with more than 5 lakhs loan compared to Manawala village. The probable reason of higher indebtedness could be the lower earnings of farmers in Panj garain wala due to which they could not meet the consumption expenditure of households and had to take the loan for personal and agricultural purposes.

Conclusions

It was concluded from the above analysis that most of the farmers were middle aged. Farmers were found to be inadequately educated, majority of the farmers were either illiterate or educated till primary level. There was preponderance of middle scale farmers. Further, around half of the farmers were earning 4-5 lakhs and above annually. Findings indicate that 82.1% of farmers were trapped in clutches of indebtedness with 27.6 % of farmers under 4-5 lakhs and above loan, which is cause of concern and warrants appropriate action from the politicians and policy makers.

Effective measures should be adopted to optimize the income from the farm and farmers' households. Emphasis should be laid on strengthening and promoting cooperative societies to facilitate the rejuvenation of the agricultural sector such as financing the farmers, helping in marketing of agricultural products, providing heavy machinery on rent to the farmers who cannot afford to purchase such heavy-duty machinery etc. Efforts should also be made on establishing agro-based industries so that farmers can diversify their income and sources.

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