

Incidence of Poverty and Current Living Conditions of Agricultural Labourers in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The study has been designed to investigate the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in Punjab. The primary data was collected from 270 agricultural labourers in three different agro-climatic zones of state. The share of agricultural workforce declined from 55.25 per cent in 1991 to 30 per cent during the period, 2011. The compound annual growth rate showed that there was decline in casual agricultural labour to the tune of 4.06-man days per hectare annually since 1990. The income of agricultural labour household was observed as ₹ 10616 per month and consumption expenditure of farm labourers was recorded as ₹ 11494 per month. On an average the liabilities of agricultural labourers as debt were ₹ 57143 and average value of owned household assets was ₹ 225701. The poverty head count ratio was recorded as 8.89 per cent. The current condition of farm households was very deprived reason being decline in demand which leads to decrease in income. The farm labour employment was declined as 18.17 hours per hectare during 2008-09 to 2015-16. The agriculture labourers household of the state facing the problem of illiteracy, healthcare, debt burden, use of drugs, less availability of farm work, and deprived economic condition.

Keywords: Agricultural labour, Demand, Income, Liabilities, Economics conditions

The foundation of the Indian economy is agriculture. In the middle of the 1960s, the green revolution model was introduced to the nation in an effort to address the agrarian crisis and provide food security. The approach has a remarkable impact on the transformation of Indian agriculture. Together with pro-market government policies, the breakthrough in technology turned subsistence farming into an agricultural industry focused on the market. A number of states had remarkable achievements in the green revolution. Punjab is leading the way in embracing this capitalist agricultural paradigm. It is one of the few states in India that is well developed in agriculture. Early in the green revolution, India lacked the heavy equipment needed to do labor-intensive work at the farms, spread fertilizer and

pesticides, and work with an improved irrigation system. In this place, the Agricultural labourers stood strong with the farmers on every little to the big task at the field (Vetivel and Manigandan, 2013).

Most of the farm labourers worked seasonal, which doesn't lead them to a sustainable life Raju *et al.* (2015). Sometimes they have to wait for months for work. The work assigned to the peasants includes both farm and non-farm chores (Singh *et al.* 2011). The average daily wages are not more than ₹ 395 in Punjab and in India, it is only ₹ 276. This is what they

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get after 8-11 hours of casual work and 9-24 hours in case of permanent work daily. The income of the farm households varies from each other. Agricultural labour households have high variation coefficients, indicating high-income inequality (Singh and Singh, 2015).

Many farm labourers worked as distributors of insecticide/pesticide sprays, and fertilizers operated risky machines and suffered from disease and amputations (Mahindra, 2017 and Dey, 2018). A large sum of their income is spent on health-related expenses, primarily cancer. Because of this problem, they took a loan from their respective Landlords at an interest rate varying from 20-100 per cent. The banks deny peasants loans because they have nothing to offer as security. The interest rate against loans in the banks is only nine per cent. Paying off these high-interest loans consumes most of their income. The Jan Dhan Yojana, designed to benefit peasants, did not work here. Over 95 per cent of the peasants have bank accounts and only half of them have balances, sometimes as low as ₹ 10 only. Year by year their debt grew. Every day in Punjab two farmers and one farm labourer commit suicide. We mostly talked about farmers' suicide, but not about farm labourers (Sharma, 2005).

"Home" accommodation, also means 'housing opportunities made equal'. But the condition of laborers' homes is hard to imagine Ghuman *et al.* (2007). As a result of poor drainage, the paths connecting their homes are submerged by wastewater. Many homes do not have a basic bathroom facility. There are quite several mud-built bathrooms. Many homes do not have kitchens and some have mud kitchens. A very few households have access to drinking water (Chinna, 2007). Some people beg for water from a landlord's tube well daily, while others have a common water pump. These facts raise a basic question of why these people have not been able to build a better lifestyle for themselves and why this particular society has been lagging in availing of these basic amenities (Sirohi *et al.* 2107).

METHODOLOGY

Primary data collection

The present study covered all the pre stated zones as the agro climate affects the economic conditions

of the people living in these zones differently. In the process, three districts from each zone according to census population of agricultural labourer and cropping pattern of the region were taken. Hoshiarpur from zone I, Amritsar from zone II and Ferozepur (Fazilka included as it was part of this district in 2011 census) from Zone III. The selection of blocks has been done at random from the list of 122 blocks as per the ranking by Economic and Statistical Organization (ESO), Punjab. Nine blocks were selected, three from each district. One village from each block was selected at random. To analyze the nature and extent of rural labour, a complete agriculture labour household census survey of the selected nine villages was prepared. The total number of households, in all the 9 villages, comes out to be 1520. All the agricultural labour households were complied with the help of village Sarpanch (Gram Panchayat head) and from the census 2011 village info data. As of total, 270 respondents were randomly selected for the study, 30 from each village.

Analytical technique used

Tabular method was used to estimate the overtime change in labour employment as well as structure of agriculture labour employed on farm households.

Poverty Head Count Ratios: This ratio is calculated by taking the total number of agricultural labourers who fall below a calculated predetermined income level and dividing the figure by total sample respondent. It was designed by according to the Tendulker committee report. The consumer price index from 2001 to 2018 for agricultural labour in Punjab was used to determine the minimum income level required to be out of poverty line.

Co-efficient of variation: co-efficient of variation is derived by the following formula;

$$C.V = \sigma/X \times 100$$

Where C.V = coefficient of variation

σ = Standard deviation, and

X = Mean

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assets were the household items held by the farm labourers at present. Farm labourers do not own

any agricultural land. The following table 1 shows the average household assets of the agricultural labourers. The household assets were divided into two parts as Durable assets and Live Stock assets. The average value of household assets was ₹ 225701. In respect to zones the value of household assets was ₹ 264818, ₹ 183228 and ₹ 229056 in zone I, II and III, respectively. The value of durable assets of farm labourers was higher than that of the livestock. It was ₹ 206496 of durable assets and ₹ 19204 for livestock. In zones also the value of durable assets of farm labourers was higher. It was ₹ 243758, ₹ 165163 and ₹ 210568 in zones I, II and III, respectively. In case of live stocks, it was ₹ 21060, ₹ 18065 and ₹ 18488 in zones I, II and III, respectively.

Among the durable assets the maximum was the value of the dwelling place with plot size. It was ₹ 166381 for the farm labourers in Punjab. The value of dwelling house with plot size was maximum in zone I where it was ₹ 197227 and minimum in zone II where it was ₹ 132368. The second highest value of assets under durable assets was the motorcycle and scooter, which accounts for ₹ 10727, it was highest in zone I (₹ 16598) and lowest in zone III with ₹ 1985 only. The average value of furniture was ₹ 2614. It was ₹ 2358, ₹ 1358 and ₹ 4126 in zone I, II and III, respectively. The average value of ornaments was ₹ 4854. It was ₹ 4895, ₹ 2969 and ₹ 6698 in zone I, II and III, respectively. The average value of hand pump was ₹ 2288. It was ₹ 3564, ₹ 603 and ₹ 2698 in zone I, II and III, respectively.

The average value of electronic gadgets/smart phones was ₹ 2869. It was ₹ 2965, ₹ 1689 and ₹ 3954 in zone I, II and III, respectively. For normal phones it was ₹ 618 in Punjab. This was the new category of assets and taking big toll on the consumption of farm labourers. The value of utensils was also an important item for the farm labourers. It was ₹ 968 in Punjab. There was new kind of assets popular in recent time i.e. bicycle or motorcycle cart. With the passing of time agricultural labourers make local cart replacing donkey cart or bullock cart. It was every convenient and cheap in manufacturing. A reasonable value of this new asset was recorded as ₹ 1287, ₹ 806 and ₹ 801 in zones I, II, and III, respectively.

The bicycles were replaced by the motorcycles so the value of this asset was just ₹ 88 in Punjab now. The value of T.V was recorded as ₹ 1685 for farm

labourers. Further assets items like stove/ gas, torch, cots, sewing machine, quilts/bedding, electric fans, air condition, cooler, wooden cloths, computer refrigerator, cash in hand/bank, wooden and steel box and others valued as ₹ 41, ₹ 13, ₹ 1208, ₹ 634, ₹ 1086, ₹ 786, ₹ 425, ₹ 599, ₹ 1282, ₹ 552, ₹ 1818, ₹ 685, ₹ 357 and ₹ 1811, respectively. Farm labourers were always short of money in their hands, as seen from table 1 in respect of zones it was ₹ 19, ₹ 52 and ₹ 1985 in zone I, II and III, respectively.

Livestock assets were the most important for the agricultural labourers as it provides day to day income for regular consumption. The value of live stock was ₹ 19204 in Punjab. Among this asset the maximum was the value of milch buffaloes, i.e. was ₹ 7657. It was followed by the milch cows (₹ 5818), draft/dry buffaloes (₹ 5818), poultry (₹ 1123), goats (₹ 1067), draft/dry cows (₹ 652), heifers (₹ 347), calves (₹ 322) and sheep (₹ 224). In respect to zones, similar trend was observed in all.

Table 1 also depicts relative share of assets in total assets. The percentage share of durable and livestock assets was given. The percentage of durable assets was 91.49 which was much higher than the livestock assets percentage which was only 8.51 per cent. In respect to zones, it was 92.05 per cent, 90.14 per cent and 91.93 per cent in case of durable assets in zone I, II and III, respectively. In term of livestock assets, the zone-wise percentage trend was recorded as 7.95 per cent, 9.86 per cent and 8.07 in zone I, II and III, respectively. Among the durable assets the maximum share was recorded in case of dwelling house with plot size i.e. 73.72 per cent followed by motorcycle with 4.75 per cent. Under the livestock assets the highest recorded in case of milch buffaloes as of 3.39 per cent of total followed by milch cows with 2.58 per cent.

In the distribution of household assets, it was observed that farm labourers had less variation among assets possession in different zones of Punjab. It was concluded from that despite the less income of farm labourers, they hold reasonable value of assets which yield them relief during any emergency in term of assets loans. The highest share of assets was the house with plot size and in most of the cases it was already pledged for loan. As we conclude from the table 1, farm labourers had very little liquidity assets, i.e. cash in hand. In case of any emergency,

Table 1: Zone wise assets analysis of agriculture labour in Punjab

Regions	Zone I		Zone II		Zone III		Punjab	
	₹	Percentage	₹	Percentage	₹	Percentage	₹	Percentage
Durable assets								
Dwelling place with plot size	197227	74.48	132368	72.24	169548	74.02	166381	73.72
Furniture	2358	0.89	1358	0.74	4126	1.80	2614	1.16
Utensils	894	0.34	756	0.41	1254	0.55	968	0.43
Crockery	33	0.01	95	0.05	189	0.08	106	0.05
Bicycle	55	0.02	103	0.06	106	0.05	88	0.04
Motorcycle/scooter	16598	6.27	13598	7.42	1985	0.87	10727	4.75
Cycle/motorcycle cart, rickshaw	1287	0.49	806	0.44	801	0.35	965	0.43
T. V	1784	0.67	916	0.50	2356	1.03	1685	0.75
Stove/gas	36	0.01	47	0.03	41	0.02	41	0.02
Torch/lantern	8	0.00	13	0.01	18	0.01	13	0.01
Cots	1044	0.39	1326	0.72	1255	0.55	1208	0.54
Sewing machine	679	0.26	347	0.19	875	0.38	634	0.28
Quilts/bedding	1218	0.46	987	0.54	1054	0.46	1086	0.48
Ornaments	4895	1.85	2969	1.62	6698	2.92	4854	2.15
Electric fan	849	0.32	485	0.26	1024	0.45	786	0.35
Air condition	221	0.08	153	0.08	901	0.39	425	0.19
Cooler	489	0.18	648	0.35	659	0.29	599	0.27
Woolen cloths	1248	0.47	1141	0.62	1458	0.64	1282	0.57
Hand pump/electric pump	1607	0.61	265	0.14	1235	0.54	1036	0.46
Smart phone	2965	1.12	1689	0.92	3954	1.73	2869	1.27
Normal phone	614	0.23	585	0.32	654	0.29	618	0.27
Computer	489	0.18	136	0.07	1032	0.45	552	0.24
Refrigerator	1854	0.70	1148	0.63	2451	1.07	1818	0.81
Cash in hand/bank	19	0.01	52	0.03	1985	0.87	685	0.30
Wooden and steel box	159	0.06	547	0.30	365	0.16	357	0.16
Hand pump/electric pump	3564	1.35	603	0.33	2698	1.18	2288	1.01
Others	1564	0.59	2022	1.10	1846	0.81	1811	0.80
Sub total	243758	92.05	165163	90.14	210568	91.93	206496	91.49
Live assets								
Milch buffaloes	8823	3.33	8823	4.82	5326	2.33	7657	3.39
Draft/dry buffaloes	2354	0.89	2384	1.30	1245	0.54	1994	0.88
Milch cows	6598	2.49	3366	1.84	7489	3.27	5818	2.58
Draft/dry cows	549	0.21	452	0.25	956	0.42	652	0.29
Calves	256	0.10	222	0.12	487	0.21	322	0.14
Heifers (young)	375	0.14	0	0.00	666	0.29	347	0.15
Goats	486	0.18	1851	1.01	865	0.38	1067	0.47
Sheep	51	0.02	98	0.05	522	0.23	224	0.10
Poultry	1568	0.59	869	0.47	932	0.41	1123	0.50
Sub total	21060	7.95	18065	9.86	18488	8.07	19204	8.51
Total	264818	100.00	183228	100.00	229056	100	225701	100.00

they took loan on higher interest rate. Most of the farm labourers did not have stock of dry food such as wheat grains. Their lives were dependent on day-to-day income without any future security. The second highest valued asset, i.e. motorcycle was on commodity loan in maximum cases. So, farm labourers were holding the assets which had possession with them but pledged. In most of cases farm labourers were not able to pay back the outstanding which result in the loss of pledged assets. There was a kind of uncertainty over the possession.

Zone wise construction status of agricultural labour

The housing condition of the agricultural labourers household is a big factor for determining the standard of living. It affects the health and efficiency of the individuals. The housing condition of farm labourers was found to be in very deprived situation. They were having small and unventilated houses. In many cases they did not have the procession of separate cattle yard and to many bathroom facilities were not available. Generally, it was observed that the agricultural labourers were running their subsidiary occupation from their homes, where they were keeping the milch animals, poultry, goats, etc. they were making the use of their rooms for storage of fodder, straw and other products.

Through the dwelling houses was the main part of the assets of these sections but being the lower economic class, their houses and their construction has been a huge matter of concern for them. Farm laborers continue to build their houses bit by bit and continue their efforts to make improvements into it. On the one side, it affects their house construction and on the other side it affects efficiency and the power to earn more. Being one of the basic necessities of life, farm labourers spend a part of their income for making the improvement in the housing conditions. In this part, the housing condition in term of nature of construction i.e. kitchens, bath rooms, cattle-yard, drinking water facility, drainage and ventilation were discussed.

Table 2 depicts the above-mentioned areas of housing condition of agricultural labourers in the tree zones of Punjab. The plot size of dwelling place was small for farm labourers. Per household area of the houses

was 7.2 Marlas (1 Marla = 25.29 square meter). In respect to zones I, II and III per household area was 7.77, 6.37 and 7.46 Marlas, respectively. Many of the farm labourers were residing on the encroached government land. The house plot size was big in villages as compare to areas nearby cities. In term of average age of the house, it was highest in zone III that was 18.6 years and lowest in zone II, with 12.35 average years to build. Overall, in Punjab average age of farm house was recorded as 15.65 years. Almost all the corners Punjab have had the facility of electricity, but few agricultural labourers from this economically weaker section did not have the access due to helplessness to pay of electric bills or due to solo houses etc. it was observed that nearly 14 per cent respondent households were without electricity despite the fact that their neighbors have the electric houses.

Maximum number of agricultural labourers owned houses. Very few were living in rented houses. A look at the data clears that 96.3 per cent of the farm labourers have their own houses while only 4 per cent dwelling into rented houses. In term of magnitude, in the zones I, II and III the number of agricultural labourers living in rented houses were 2, 7 and only 1, respectively. There were 76, 40, 62 and 178 numbers of cemented houses in zones I, II, III and overall, respectively. The mud houses were very few in number i.e. only 6 in total in Punjab. There were 86 households having mixed houses. In term of percentage, 65.93 per cent having cemented houses, 31.85 per cent with mixed housed and only 2.22 per cent having mud houses in Punjab.

The position in respect of farm labourers in the first zone was as following. Out of 90 houses the number of cemented, mixed and mud houses were 76, 13 and only 1, respectively. In zone II, there were 40 cemented houses, 47 mixed and only 3 mud houses. In category III, out of 90 houses, 62 houses were cemented, 26 mixed and 2 recorded as mud houses. The ration of *Kaccha* house to *pakka* reduced in recent times. In the previous studies, significant numbers of mud houses were there.

Table 2 shows kitchen status for agricultural labourers as well. There were 174 kitchens with the farm labourers households. In respect to zones the numbers of kitchens for the respondent households were 53, 49 and 72 in zone I, II and III, respectively.

Table 2: Zone wise construction status of agricultural labourers (Numbers)

Particulars/Regions		Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Punjab	
					Number	Percentage
Housing space (Marla)		7.77	6.37	7.46	7.2	—
Average age of house (Years)		17.2	12.35	18.6	15.65	—
Electrified house		73	77	84	234	86.67
Ownership of house	Rented	2	7	1	10	3.70
	Owned	88	83	89	260	96.30
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Housing condition	Mixed houses	13	47	26	86	31.85
	Mud house	1	3	2	6	2.22
	Cemented house	76	40	62	178	65.93
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Kitchen status	Cemented kitchen	40	19	44	103	38.15
	Mixed kitchen	13	27	26	66	24.44
	Mud kitchen	0	3	2	5	1.85
	No kitchen	37	41	18	96	35.56
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Bathroom status	Cemented Bathroom	57	26	45	128	47.41
	Mixed Bathroom	16	31	23	70	25.93
	Mud Bathroom	0	2	1	3	1.11
	No Bathroom	17	31	21	69	25.56
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Cattle yard status	Joint cattle yard	22	28	19	69	25.56
	Separate cattle yard	14	17	19	51	18.89
	No cattle yard	54	45	51	150	55.56
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Ventilation status	Ventililated house	66	61	66	193	71.48
	Unventilated houses	24	29	24	77	28.52
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Drainage status	Bricked drainage	54	67	74	195	72.22
	Kaccha or no drainage	36	23	16	75	27.78
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
Drinking water sources	Water works	13	17	27	57	21.11
	Neigh borer's house	8	16	4	28	10.37
	Personal and Common tube well	27	38	29	94	34.81
	Hand pump	42	19	30	91	33.70
	Total	90	90	90	270	100.00
	Personal R.O. facility	20	13	21	54	20.00

*One Marla = 25.29 Square meter; 237.32 Square Guz; 0.49 Acre.

The numbers of cemented kitchens for the responds were 103 out of 174. The agricultural labourers were having 38.15 per cent of cemented kitchens in the total kitchens. In respect to zones numbers of cemented kitchens were 40, 19 and 44 for zones I, II and III, respectively. Few agricultural laborers' households still have the mud kitchens and the

numbers were zero, III and II in zones I, II and III, respectively. It was observed that 24.44 per cent of the farm laboures households have mixed kitchens and only 1.85 have the mud kitchens in Punjab. There were a good number of mixed kitchens having cemented as well as mud. It can be concluded that the provision like a separate kitchen was not available

with every household and the status of kitchen that include the mixed and mud kitchens was also significant. So, farm labourers are living with poor standard of living and needs a lot of improvements.

The separate bathroom is a necessity for healthy living and for better standard of life. Psychologically, after hard labour a good bath needed to relax the body and mind. But just like the other bathrooms status was also very poor. As can be seen 47.41 per cent having cemented bathrooms, 25.93 per cent having mixed one and only 1.11 per cent having mud bathrooms. Shocking to note, 25.56 per cent were still without bathrooms. Large numbers of bathrooms were attached with the other house rooms or within house rooms. In term of magnitude 69 households out of 270 do not have any bathroom at home. In zone-wise analysis, zone I performs well in term of cemented houses. Zone II, has large number of households without bathrooms. Still mud bathroom were available in Punjab.

Farm agricultural labourers were having dairy as their main subsidiary occupation so they were keeping buffaloes, cows, goats etc. so to sustainable their income. Some of agricultural labourers were having the cattle they were having either their separate cattle yards or joint cattle yards at their place of living. As discussed above farm labourers having very small piece of land for living and when they attach cattle yard in their own houses, their living become more difficult. But at one point they were having their problems of accommodation and on the point they generate substantial income. It was observed that 55.56 per cent of the households have no any cattle yard and only 18.89 per cent has separate cattle yard. A significant percentage i.e. 25.56 agricultural labourers were living with the cattle at their dwelling space. In Punjab there are 120 cattle yards and out of this 69 were joint and 51 were separated. In respect to zones, zone II performs better in this category.

The proper ventilation in the houses is most desirable. It is very much required to healthy family. Agricultural labourers having small houses, most of the time they were not properly planned. The ventilations were not available in such houses. But, due to rural area and larger open places in the surrounding the ventilation problem solved at maximum despite the fact of poor house planning. As

observed, 71.48 per cent of the house were ventilated and only 28.52 per cent were left out of this facility. In term of magnitude, 193 were ventilated in Punjab and 77 were not. In respect of zones, zones I and III have maximum number of ventilated houses i.e. 66 and zone II have 61 ventilated houses.

The proper drainage channels are very essential requirement of every house. The amenities affect family living so the availability of these facilities was analysed in table 2 The table shows 72.22 per cent of the agricultural labourers having bricked drainage, 27.78 per cent having *Kaccha* or no drainage. Most of the time this facility was provided by the gram panchayats out of funding made available by the state or central governments. In term of magnitude 195 households have bricked drainage and 75 having *Kaccha* drainage facility. Zone III has highest percentage of bricked drainage while zone I has the lowest.

Clean drinking water is need and right of everyone on this planet. This drives study to investigate in detail about the water drinking sources for farm labourers. The quality of drinking water was not up to stake. As can be seen from table 2 per cent have water works as drinking water source, 10.37 per cent have to go to neighbor's house for water, 34.81 per cent used common pump as drinking water and shocking to observe still 33.70 per cent used hand pumps to dig out water. Zone-wise analysis found zone I, most prominent in this area. The water quality was so poor in some regions especially in zone II, that government and private agencies establishing R.O drinking water facilities in the locality at ₹ 10-20 per 20 liter. Many agricultural labourers went to tube wells in the agriculture field near by their homes to take water for daily consumption. The personal R.O facility was very common in Punjab but due to less income resource very few farms labourer opted this. As can be seen from table 2, only 20 per cent farm labour households have the personal R.O facility at their homes. It was concluded that the living standard of farm labourers was very poor as compare to other segments of society. It directly affects mental and physical i.e. efficacy of farm labourers.

Determination of Poverty line

Poverty is regarded as a matter of low absolute income. Therefore, some standard of minimum

income is needed to define the poverty level below which family is said to be poor. Such a standard specifies an amount of Rupees, based on some experts estimates needed to meet the minimum cost of living. The table 3 depicted the results of Tendulker committee's report on poverty, the poverty line was ₹ 495.54 for agricultural labour in Punjab during 2001-02. This poverty line is estimated for the year 2018-19 by using consumer prices index (CPI) for agricultural labourers. The consumer prices index for the year 2001-02 (with base year 1964) was ₹ 1035.84 which increased to ₹ 3113.88 during 2018-19. Bases on this index the poverty line for agricultural labourers is estimated as ₹ 1489.65 per capita per month, which comes to be ₹ 17875.8 per capita per annum during 2018-19.

Table 3: Determination of Poverty line According Tendulker Committee

Year	CPI AL (Punjab)-AL BASE		Poverty line
	1964	2012	
2001-02	1035.84	44.28	495.54
2002-03	1054.75	45.09	504.58
2003-04	1073.66	45.90	513.63
2004-05	1124.01	48.05	537.72
2005-06	1168.12	49.93	558.82
2006-07	1284.60	54.91	614.54
2007-08	1404.26	60.03	671.78
2008-09	1564.80	66.89	748.59
2009-10	1791.49	76.58	857.03
2010-11	1945.79	83.18	930.85
2011-12	2118.96	90.58	1013.69
2012-13	2339.36	100.00	1119.13
2013-14	2600.69	111.17	1244.15
2014-15	2748.66	117.50	1314.94
2015-16	2811.63	120.19	1345.06
2016-17	2953.32	126.24	1412.84
2017-18	3044.60	130.15	1456.51
2018-19	3113.88	133.11	1489.65

Incidence of poverty among farm labourers

With the updated figures of ₹ 1489.65 per month, the extent of rural poverty has been worked out by estimating the proportion of farm families living below poverty line i.e. getting less than ₹ 1489.65 per capita per month. The information is given in

table 4. The results of the study showed that head count ratio in Punjab was 8.89 that mean this much percentage farm families living below poverty line in the state. The zone-wise analysis showed that head count ratio for zones I, II and III was 6.67, 10.00 and 8.89, respectively. Least poverty ratio recorded in zone I and highest in zone III. In term of magnitude out of 270 agricultural laborer's households 24 were living below poverty line. Zone-wise this number was 6, 10 and 8 in zones I, II and III, respectively.

Table 4: Poverty head count ratio of agricultural labourers in Punjab (₹/Number)

Region	Poverty line	No. of labourer	Head count ratio
Zone I	1489.64	6	6.67
Zone II	1489.64	10	10.00
Zone III	1489.64	8	8.89
Punjab	1489.64	24	8.89

Eradication of poverty has been the highlighted concern for policy-makers, researchers and planners. Many programs were initiated to ameliorate the under privileged section, agricultural labourers these programs were rural work programme intensive agriculture district programme, community development program, integrated rural development program, minimum need program etc. agriculture labourers are among the weakest section of society. There should be external support for the farm labourers. The farm labourers living below poverty line were less in Punjab as compare to rest of the country, but this criterion of evaluating poverty level is not sufficient to know the actual situation of farm labourers. The conclusion ascribed from this analysis is that despite the less percentage of agricultural labourers living below poverty line many more were on the edge to fall in this situation. Immediate reforms needed to address this situation.

CONCLUSION

The farm sector in the state is facing problems of falling demand for farm work as the potential of this sector for labour absorption has been fully exploited. The advanced technological boost to agriculture sector since last two and half decades resulted in significant decline in demand for labour employment. The study showed that

different factors have a negative effect on the extent of employment in agriculture. The agriculture labourers household of the state facing the problem of illiteracy, healthcare, debt burden, use of drugs, less availability of farm work, and deprived economic condition. The housing conditions of farm labourers were very deprived. The size of the houses was so small that many houses do not have separate kitchen, bathrooms and cattle yards. Institutional help should be provided regarding the architectural planning. There was not such a mechanism which facilitates the farm labourers in availing emergency institutional loans. Easy access to credit facilities should be strengthened to safeguard the interest of farm Labourers. Despite the numerous of social securities, most of the section was not aware of it. The reason being was the lack of awareness to avail these benefits. The farm labourers were unable to bear the economic cost of problem like accidents, illness and other damages. The farm labourers living below poverty line were less in Punjab as compare to rest of the country. Immediate reforms needed to address this situation.

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