

Understanding Feminization of Indian Agriculture and the Dynamics of Intra-household Bargaining Power at a Household Level

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Abstract : This paper tries to understand the nuances of feminisation of agriculture in the Indian context and how that is associated with better intrahousehold bargaining power for women. The economic survey of India indicates a constant increase in the share of the female workforce in Indian agriculture in the past few decades. This can be accounted for by many factors like the migration of male workers to urban areas and, therefore, the complete burden of agriculture shifting on the female counterparts. Therefore this study is an attempt to study that how this increase in the female workforce corresponds to a better decision-making ability for women in rural farm households. This paper is an attempt to carefully evaluate this aspect of the feminisation of Indian agriculture. The paper tries to study how various factors that improve the status of women in agriculture change with things like resource ownership. This paper uses both the macro-level and micro-level data to study the dynamics of the proportion of the workforce in agriculture across different states in India and how that has translated into better indicators for women in rural areas. The fall in India's rank in the global gender wage gap index is alarming in such a context, and this creates a puzzle with increasing female workforce participation. The paper will consider if the condition of women improved over time with the increased share of employment or not? Using field survey data, this paper tries to understand if there exists any digression for some of the indicators both at the macro and micro level. The paper also tries to integrate the economic understanding of gender aspects of the workforce and the sociological stance prevailing in the existing literature. Therefore, this paper takes a mixed-method approach to better understand the role that social structure plays in the improved status of women within and across various households. Therefore, this paper will finally help us understanding if at all there is a feminisation of Indian agriculture or it's just exploitation of a different kind. This study intends to create a distinction between the gendered labour force in Indian agriculture and the complete democratization of Indian agriculture. The study is primarily focused on areas where the exodus of male migrants pushes women to work on agricultural farms. The question posits is whether it is the willingness of women to work in agriculture or is it urbanisation and development-induced conditions that make women work in agriculture as farm labourers? The motive is to understand if factors like resource ownership and the ability to autonomous decision-making are interlinked with an increased proportion of the female workforce or not? Based on this framework, we finally provide a brief comment on policy implications of government intervention in improving Indian agriculture and the gender aspects associated with it.

Keywords : feminisation, intrahousehold bargaining, farm households, migration, agriculture, decision-making

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