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## MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS: A LITERARY ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

This research was focused on the agricultural labourers' social inclusion and economic wellbeing. The researchers argue that these concepts and their relationships are addressed rarely. Prominent features of the agricultural labourers are that they utterly poor, excluded, exploited and marginalised. Their socio-economic issues seldom looked from the agricultural, rural, human and inclusive development perspective. A qualitative interpretative meta-synthesis showed the related socio-economic aspects of agricultural labourers' social inclusion and economic wellbeing. The review results showed that the agricultural labourers lacked social security, inadequate wages, wage insecurity, extra and unpaid working hours, poor health, low living and working conditions, exploitation, lack of legal rights, low access to public services, financially excluded, limited social life and, so forth. The review results also showed that the agricultural labourers' multiple and multi-layered issues are hardly studied in social inclusion/exclusion contexts. So, there is a need for further research in perspectives of social inclusion and economic wellbeing. The finding would be a significant recommendation to the policymakers, legal rights practitioners, and rural and inclusive development-based researchers.

**Keywords:** : Social Inclusion/ Exclusion, Economic Wellbeing, Agricultural Labourers, Inclusive Development

### INTRODUCTION

World War II and postcolonial period were the main rotary point in economic history when socio-economic development and human rights got a considerable and adequate appreciation (Gupta and Tonen, 2015). Instead of economic growth, economic development was understood as best, because former concentrates only on the industrialisation and accumulation of capital which are creating inequalities together with underestimating inclusiveness and the sustainability aspects of the society (Gent, 2017). Consequently, the aspiration and need for inclusive and sustainable development were understood and gained popularity. The role of inclusiveness means a process in which the marginalised sections' needs can be addressed, and poor people can participate and realise the development (Chatterjee, 2005). Inclusive development is significant because it emphasises the equal distribution of the development across sectors and societies (Gent, 2017; Jhonson and Andreson, 2012). It also emphasises inclusion, utilisation and enhancement of the capabilities of poorest and excluded people (Johnson and Anderson, 2012; Sachs, 2004). Social exclusion/ inclusion has an extensive scope to conduct the study (Sen 2000; Thorat, Mahamallik & Sadana 2010). However, for a developing economy, inclusive development holds very much importance. As the Indian economy is still posing challenges of poverty, hunger, inequality, unemployment, deprivation, and health malady.

Agricultural labourers' social exclusion shows the sectorial group of exclusion (Louis P, n. d.). Based on their occupation, they remain poor and excluded in society. Agricultural labourers are not comprised of the signal identity; it comprises the multiple identities. In India caste is a major considerable factor to determine the employment and other entitlements of the society (Thorat, 2008; Thorat, Mahamalik & Sadana 2010; Das, Mehta & Kapoor, 2012; Dreze, 2017; Mosse, 2018). The agricultural labourers work mostly done by the scheduled castes and other backward castes people in India. The socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers are severe, and they are stranded into the multi-layered forms of exclusion. Caste, class, gender, and sectorial forms of discrimination make the agricultural labourers' life worse. The studies of social exclusion/ inclusion of the agricultural labourers are very few in numbers. The evaluation of the economic wellbeing of agricultural labourers from the perspective of inclusion/ exclusion is critical. Many researchers founded that poverty and social exclusion both are different from each other (Böhnke, 2001; Estvill, 2003; Madanipour, Shucksmith & Talbot, 2015). However, the studies of the wellbeing of the agricultural labourers are mostly pivoted around poverty discourse. In the human, rural, agriculture and inclusive development perspective, this study is very relevant. This study is focused on the single main research question, how the social inclusion and economic wellbeing of the agricultural labourers is?

## Research Context

This present study is mainly focused on the comprehensive understanding of the social inclusion and economic wellbeing of the agricultural labourers. This section presents the concept of social inclusion/exclusion, economic well-being, and the agricultural labourers' meaning, definition, types, and present situational condition in India's government reports.

## Social inclusion/Exclusion

Historically the concept of social exclusion is associated with the ideas of Aristotle (Sen 2000). In the modern context, the main contribution is credited to the Ren Lenoir in his publication of the 'Les Exclus' (1976). The concept of social exclusion thrived under the political turmoil of the 1970s associated with unemployment and salaries in France. Along with the discourse of poverty; the concept of social exclusion flourished across all European countries. Meanwhile, for emphatically understanding of poverty and deprivation, this concept gained the right place (Mathieson *et al.*, 2008) and became the chief centric objective for socio-economic policies in Europe. The main contribution goes to enlighten the usefulness of this concept after establishing the social exclusion unit in Britain in 1998 by the Labour Government for the policy body (Huxley *et al.*, 2006). However, the concept of social inclusion or exclusion has not any precise definition yet. Murard (2002:41) called this concept as the empty box in social sciences. However, various social scientists defined social exclusion as:

Silver (1994: 541) defines:

“people may be excluded from a livelihood; secure, permanent employment; earnings; property, credit or land; housing; the minimal or prevailing consumption level; education, skills and cultural capital; the benefits provided by the welfare state; citizenship and equality before the law; participation in the democratic process; public goods; the nation of the dominant race; the family and the sociability; humane treatment; respect, personal fulfilment, understanding” (Silver 1994).

England's social exclusion unit (SEU's) defines social exclusion as,

“a shorthand for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown” (SEU, 1997). de Haan (1999) advocates the concept of social exclusion as a group phenomenon. He pronounces that: “...process through which individual or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full

participation in the society within which they live- in this sense social exclusion is opposite to social integration”.

World Bank defines social inclusion (2019) as:

“The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, and, the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in society.”

Social exclusion encompasses various kinds of factors. Social Exclusion Unit, London, in their review on the chauffeurs of social exclusion and found its various structural and socio-economic drivers. The key drivers were; low income, unemployment, education, transport, housing, physical and mental health, discrimination and feature of local areas (SEU 2014). Levitas *et al.*, (2007) identified the various social exclusion drivers by advocating the Bristol Social Exclusion Matrix (B-SEM) and included drivers are; resources, participation and quality of life. In resources sub-dimensions are material or economic resources, access to public and private services, social resources; participation includes; economic participation, social participation culture, education, skills political and civic participation and in quality of life included sub drivers are; health and wellbeing, living environment crime, harm and criminalisation. The socio-ecological model developed by Dahlberg and Krug (2002) provides ample literature to understand social exclusion drivers. Although the Dahlberg and Krug's model was in disabled people, it has significant implication for the present study. This model shows that for social exclusion; individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors are responsible. Mutually these factors do an exclusionary practice and negatively influence the disabled people or the affected people. Burchardt, Le Grand and Piachaud (2002) describe the four social exclusion features: consumption, production, involvement in local and national politics and organisations and social interaction and family support. The consumption aspect shows the individual's lower capacity to purchase the goods and services, and the production aspect shows where the individual cannot find employment.

The concept of social exclusion and inclusion both are opposite to each other. Both social inclusion and exclusion are abundantly utilising for the research and policy perspective. Social inclusion shows the participation, accesses to the rights and has the positive aspect while social exclusion shows the denial of rights, discrimination and deprivation. For the current study, both social inclusion and exclusion are used. Huxley *et al.*, (2006) describe social inclusion as a relative, multidimensional, dynamic and multi-layered concept. The E.U. Commission on Social Policy Agenda's main aim of social inclusion decanters the “to prevent and eradicate poverty and exclusion and promote the integration and participation

of all into economic and social life”.

The concept of social inclusion/exclusion has been using abundantly by various global institutions like UNDP, ILO, WHO, World Bank, for various global programs. Sen (2000) emphasises the usefulness of the concept, particularly for Asia and Africa, to understand poverty and deprivation. In a similar disposition, Mathieson *et al.*, (2008) argue on the usefulness and to the understanding of this concept:

‘...the concept of social exclusion is that it may have been considered to provide novel insights into the nature, causes and consequences of poverty, deprivation and discrimination’ (Mathieson *et al.*, 2008).

In 1997 annual meeting of the World Bank the president of the institution, James Wolfensohn remarked in his address that:

“Bringing people into society who have never been part of it before... This- the Challenge of Inclusion- is the key development challenge of our time” (Wolfensohn 1997).

In the context of the current study, various standard indicators of social inclusion are studied. Social relation, safe and free environment, participation, labour market inclusion, financial inclusion and local services inclusion are taken as social inclusion drivers.

### Concept of Economic Wellbeing

The promotion of economic justice remains a core agenda of any government. In this concern, all focus surrounds poverty alleviation and reduces income and wealth inequality or perpetuates economic justice (CSWE, 2017) through various government instruments and schemes. Our constitution’s preamble (The Soul) is also directed towards economic justice at all levels of society. Hence, the study of economic well-being has large fields of practice (CSWE, 2017), whether on the individual, family, community, or policy levels.

The credit of the origin of the wellbeing goes to the Dunn, who devised wellness. Wellness is also named as wellbeing in literature. Dunn defines wellness as,

“...an integrated method of functioning is oriented toward maximising the potential, of which the individual is capable (Dunn, 1961).

Reza *et al.*, (2019) define wellbeing as the ‘state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy’. On the other hand, the root of economic wellbeing is associated with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (United Nation General Assembly, 1948). Article 22 of the Declaration Rights, declares that “right to social security and is entitled to the realisation... of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free

development of his personality.” Council on Social Work Education, Alexandria, Virginia (CSWE, 2017) defined the concept of economic wellbeing as,

“...economic wellbeing is defined as having present and future financial security. Present financial security includes individuals, families, and communities’ ability to consistently meet their basic needs (including food, housing, utilities, health care, transportation, education, child care, clothing, and paid taxes), and have control over their day-to-day finances. It also includes the ability to make economic choices and feel a sense of security, satisfaction, and personal fulfilment with one’s personal finances and employment pursuits. Future financial security includes the ability to absorb financial shocks, meets financial goals, build financial assets, and maintain adequate income throughout the life-span.”

For fairness in the economy, economic justice is *sin-qianon* (CSWE, 2017). To measure the fairness or economic justice, the study of economic wellbeing is essential. Measures can be at the micro-level or macro level. Micro-level is related to the study of an individual unit. The nations use Macro-level to measures their fairness in their nation. Some of them are global, like the Human Development Index, Global Happiness Index, Physical Quality of life index, Net National Product, Gross Domestic Product etc. are the other various economic wellbeing measures. Osberg and Sharpe, (2002) calculate the nation’s economic well-being the four main components, effective per capita consumption flows, net national accumulation of stocks of productive resources, income distribution and economic security. OECD (2013) framework for Statistics on the Distribution of Household Income, consumption and wealth has worked on the household’s economic wellbeing. The OECD emphasises satisfaction with the basic need’s expenditure, housing, present and financial security and employment security of the economic wellbeing concept. To measures, the financial wellbeing at the household level, a financial wellbeing scale developed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau ((CFPB), 2015), uses ten indicators of financial wellbeing. Although wellbeing in the psychological literature is used as the state of happiness, which is more associated with the subjective measure of welfare (Jian Xiao, 2015), in this study, both the aspects of economic wellbeing, subjective and objective were studied. Jian Xiao (2015) used objective indicators of economic wellbeing for consumers were income, debt, expenditure, asset, net worth, consumer right and, subjective measures were income satisfaction, financial satisfaction and consumer satisfaction.

Moreover, Xiao also added the instrumental measures of economic wellbeing. In instrumental measures, objective indicators were financial capability, financial behaviour and financial knowledge and, in subjective indicators were money attitude, and risk tolerance of the consumer was involved. In this study, the studied indicators of

economic wellbeing were related to employment and financial security.

### **Agricultural Labourers**

Census (2011), define agriculture labourer as: “A person who works on another person’s land for wages in money or kind or share is regarded as an agricultural labourer. She or he has no risk in the cultivation but merely works on another person’s land for wages. An agricultural labourer has no right of lease or contract on land on which she/he works” (Census, 2011). According to the census 2011, the total population of India was 1,210,854,977 and, from the total population of our India, 26 per cent were occupied as agriculture labourers excluding cultivators, household industry workers and other workers. From 2001 to 2011 census, the total population of agricultural labourers was increased from 107.4 million to 144.3 million (Venkatanarayana & Suresh Naik, 2013; Gupta, 2016). This is a big concern for India’s development while the situation of agriculture is marginalised.

On the other hand, the uppermost subjugated group among workers is agricultural labourers (Padhi, 2007; Prasad, 2007) at the local labour market. They agonise from the multidisciplinary and multilayers socio-economic problems in society. NCRB publish the data of committed suicides by the agricultural labourers from 2015 onwards yearly. According to NCRB (2018) data, in 2015, 4595; 2016, 5019; 2017, 4700 and in 2018, 4586, committed suicides by the agricultural labourers across India. NCRB also points towards the responsible causes of suicides. The leading responsible causes of suicides were family problems, illness, drug abuse/ alcoholic addiction, poverty, indebtedness and unemployment. So, it can be deduced from the series of suicidal reports of the NCRB that more or less the suicide committed by the agricultural labourers is a big concern for the human and inclusive development perspective. By alienating the agricultural labourers’ development, agriculture’s development is not possible in particular and nation in general.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The foremost objective of the current article is to review the agricultural labourers’ social inclusion and economic well-being. How the social inclusion and economic wellbeing of the agricultural labourers are, the foremost research question in the present article? This current study conveyed the findings through qualitative exploration.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

To enquire the qualitative data, a Qualitative Interpretative Meta-Synthesis (QIMS) was steered. Qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis is a technique that uses the previous qualitative findings as a unit to gain a profound understanding of a particular phenomenon (Aguirre & Bolton, 2013). The interpretive data was collected on the

social inclusion/ exclusion and economic wellbeing of the agricultural labourers. The QIMS approach was used because it enables a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena and focuses on the phenomena’ qualitative aspects (Aguirre & Bolton, 2013). The QIMS technique is also used by Sallis & Birkin (2013). Ruiz and Praetorius (2016), Islam & WA Mungai (2016), Bowers & O’Neill (2019) and, Watkins-Kagebein (2019) to conduct a similar kind of study.

### **Sampling**

This study is based on the purposive sampling method. The relevant research studies related to the social inclusion, economic wellbeing and social inclusion and economic wellbeing of the agricultural labourers were considered for review. The sampled papers were selected using the library database services. Using title search on “social inclusion/exclusion”, “economic wellbeing”, “social inclusion and economic wellbeing”, “agricultural labourers”, “social inclusion of agricultural labourers”, “economic wellbeing of agricultural labourers” and “social inclusion and economic wellbeing of agricultural labourers” articles were searched and selected. Research articles were searched using the Scopus and Web of science under the social science category. Research articles were also searched on Springer, Elsevier, Sage articles and JSTORE. In this study, for the inclusion and economic wellbeing evaluation of the agricultural labourers, post-2010, published research articles were considered for analysis and the conceptual understanding there was no timeline bounding.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Through a Qualitative Interpretative Meta-Synthesis (QIMS), we could apprehend that the literature on social inclusion/ exclusion of the agricultural labourers is not exact and ample. The literature on the agricultural labourers’ economic well-being is somewhat abundant but on social inclusion and the nexus between social inclusion/ exclusion and economic wellbeing is very scarce. The aspects of economic wellbeing are also partially addressed. Only the agricultural labourers’ indebtedness aspect gets much attention, and other economic well-being components are also underestimated. This results section is devoted to the thematic review of the agricultural labourers’ social inclusion/exclusion and economic wellbeing.

### **Social Inclusion/Exclusion**

The specific studies of the social inclusion/exclusion of the agricultural labourers are limited, but few studies focus on the various facets of social exclusion. Minah & Carletti (2019) found that lower households in Zambia’s Farmer Organisations tend to less participate than richer ones in the international context. Mamun *et al.*, (2018) found that the length of the participation in

the development initiatives in the eKasih in Peninsular Malaysia reduces the level of economic vulnerability among low-income households. Chowdhury (2009) pointed out his study towards the growing landlessness among the small and marginal farmers. He explored nexus between landlessness and food security and found that the small and marginal were deprived of their access to the food in rural Bangladesh due to landlessness. Preibisch (2004) explored the relationship between the Caribbean and Mexican migrant agricultural labourers and the settled rural community in Ontario, and he found that the migrant labourers were faced with significant racial and social exclusion in the society. However, in India's context, the studies of social inclusion/exclusion of the agricultural labourers are very scarce. Deshpande, Jyotishi and Narayanamurthy (2001); Singh and Singh (2015) pointed towards the wage discrimination of the scheduled castes and women agricultural labourers. Deshpande, Jyotishi and Narayanamurthy (2001); Singh and Singh (2016); Pandey (2016); Uppal, Kaur and Singh (2018) founded that for debt, non-institutional sources were common among them. Singh and Singh (2015) inferred from his study that agricultural labourers were the most exploited local labour market category. Singh and Singh (2015) also founded that women agricultural labourers were unorganised, and their earnings were unstable and dependent on the monsoon. Mohankumar (2008) pointed towards the exclusion of the agricultural labourers from the relief packages of both the state and central government. He pointed out that debt-ridden and other relief packages were only for the farmers not for the agricultural labourers, which has the lowest economic standing in agriculture, and they remain on margins.

### Economic Wellbeing

Shehua & Sidiquea (2014) identified that participation in non-farm enterprises positively impacts household wellbeing in rural Nigeria. Reza, Subramaniam & Islam (2019) founded in his study that despite some opportunities, the migrant workers had various socio-economic issues, physical and mental coercion towards their economic and social wellbeing. Mat, Jalil & Harun (2012) find in the study that non-farm income sources contributed to reducing the severity of poverty among agricultural households in Rural Kedah. Indebtedness among the agricultural labourers was a big problem, and it can be founded from the series of studies by various researchers, Deshpande, Jyotishi and Narayanamurthy (2001); Mahapatra (2007); Rajni (2007); Bharti (2011); Singh *et al.*, (2017) and; Uppal, Kaur and Singh (2018). Many researchers also point towards the poor and congested shelter, high mortality rate, malnutrition and illness (Rajuldevi, 2001; Singh and Singh, 2015), illiteracy and low level of awareness about the schemes (Jakimow (2012), high poverty (Uppal, Kaur and Singh, 2018) and almost all of the reviewed Indian research articles indicated that most of the scheduled castes were occupied as agricultural labourers.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above studies, this research analysed the various contextual socio-economic factors that characterised the agricultural labourers' social inclusion/exclusion and, economic wellbeing. From the above meta-synthesis, many gaps and limitations identified. First, there is a dearth of research on social inclusion/exclusion of agricultural labourers. Social exclusion-based studies are very scarce in social sciences and particularly in agricultural research. Second, nexus of deprivation, poverty and exclusion of agricultural labourers and their socio-economic life based empirical studies at ground level are rare. Third, many studies concentrate only on the agricultural labourers' indebtedness and poverty but have not considered the social exclusion and various economic well-being aspects. Fourth, the mixed method and qualitative-based studies to understand agricultural labourer households' socio-economic life are limited. Final, agricultural labourers' various characteristics, including indebtedness, landlessness, exclusion, and poverty, have not been studied concurrently together so far.

In social inclusion/exclusion, most agricultural labourers were from the scheduled and other backwards castes, which have the lowest socio-economic situation in the Indian traditional society. The labourers were excluded from various social security schemes. They were landless and utterly exploited category at the local labour market. They have a lower concentration of the socio-economic resources of society. They continue to face the labour market-based exclusion, financial exclusion, social exclusion and political exclusion. The women agricultural labourers' socio-economic situation was also more severe; they were stranded into the poverty and social exclusion trap. The exclusion of the agricultural labourers in agriculture is rarely discussed and quantified in social science and agriculture literature. The lower caste and lower occupation node make their lives worse, so the agricultural labourers' exclusion and poverty relationship should be tackled and investigated through various policy initiatives and research.

In economic well-being, this research finds that agricultural labourers' pull and push factor is the low availability of the working days, indebtedness, low-income high expenditure, unproductive expenditure, high poverty, and illiteracy traditional caste system and poor health. Mostly they were stranded into the indebtedness. They were poor, destitute, undernourished, illiterate, ill health, have resided in the poor shelter condition.

The above findings have indications of the policy implications. We identified that the agricultural labourers' issues were decentred around the exclusion and the poverty discourse. However, the in-depth comprehension of agricultural labourers' problems and issues has not been studied from the social inclusion/exclusion context lens so far. The problems of agricultural labourers are both type in

India, social and economic. Hence, the angle to address their problem should not be only economic; it should be socio-economic. So, on the academic front, social inclusion/exclusion studies should be enhanced and promoted.

Moreover, in India, caste and patriarchy are potent factors, so, the importance of robust exclusion discourse becomes essential and important, which is neglected into the central policy discourse for betterment of agricultural labourers. So, for the betterment of agricultural labourers', social inclusion and the human development-based scheme should be started and accelerated. Labour market and financial inclusion should be promoted. The employment guarantee-based schemes like MGNREGA should be promoted. The multiple and multi-layered socio-economic problems of agricultural labourers' might be tackled through the government's joined efforts. Enhancement of the awareness about the schemes and the protection of legal rights is the foremost requirement. The occupational identity of agricultural labourers should be regarded by the government first and finally by society. In the context of the limitation aspect of the current study, this study methodologically is focused only on the content analysis.

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