

SEX DISCRIMINATION IN FARM WAGES IN
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IN
TAMIL NADU
1977

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
MADRAS

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P R E F A C E

Sex discrimination in wages is prevalent in most part of the World and Tamil Nadu, is not an exception. In this report an attempt has been made on the analysis of forms of discrimination in wages obtaining in Tamil Nadu over a period of 12 years from 1964-65 to 1975-76, restricting the scope of the study to agricultural labour only, which is the single largest avenue of employment open to women workers in rural areas.

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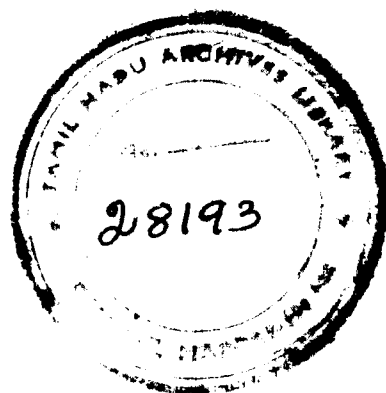
Suggestions, if any, for improvement are welcome.

MADELS, -6
DATED: 3-9-77

R. PADMAVALLI,
DIRECTOR OF STATISTICS

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1. Ploughing Operation
2. Sowing and transplantation
3. Weeding and Inter cultivation
4. Reaping/Harvesting and
5. Other minor operations.

Ploughing operations are being attended to only by men workers while in other categories, men and women alike take part. Ploughing has, therefore, been dominated as a male-task by virtue of the strenuous nature and it carried higher wage rate as compared to other operations. In actual practice various types of agricultural operations carried its own wage and female farm wage was lower than male wage throughout the twelve year period 1964-65 to 1975-76 as seen from appendix table 2.

3. Open Wage discrimination

Table 2 indicates that there had been open wage discrimination throughout the 12 years period from 1964-65 to 1975-76 in Tamil Nadu. On an average, the wages paid to female worker was roughly 2/3 to 3/4 of the wages paid to male worker. However, the female wage did not fall below 50% of the male farm wage in any year and at the same time, it was not higher than 95% of the male wage prevailing at any one point of time under any type of farm operation. This could be better observed from the appendix Table 3.

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The relative disparities between the male and female wages in the districts have not been much wider throughout the 12 years period. When the districts are classified into two groups - those with female farm wages of less than 66 2/3% of the male wage and those exceeding that cut-off point ($> 66\frac{2}{3}\%$). With reference to the table 5* we have in the first group the districts of Salem (61.86%), The Nilgiris (53.91%), Madurai (51.74%) Tiruchirapalli (55.52%) and Ramanathapuram (47.41%)

In the Second group fall the districts of Chengalpattu (81.10%), South Arcot (66.95%), North Arcot (67.11%), Dharmapuri (69.37%), Thanjavur (76.59%), Tirunelveli (68.87%) and Kanniyakumari (68.73%). (The percentages given in parenthesis are of female wages in relation to corresponding male wages in 1970-71)

In order to explain the inter-district disparities in the relative female farm wage differential as proportion of the corresponding male wage, two hypothesis may be offered: The first one is "the greater the female labour supply in a district, the lower in the relative wage of women in that district". (i.e.) an abundant supply of female farm labour should depress the female relative wage. The other hypothesis seeks to explain the disparities in relative female wage in terms of absolute level of male wage. That is "if the male wage in a district is high, the female wage taken as a proportion of the male wage would tend to be lower".

* Grouping of district is done with reference to the period 1970-71 since it happened to be the Central point among the periods considered for the study (viz) 1964-65 to 1975-76. Further 1971 was a Census year.

To test the hypothesis that "the female relative wage is lower, the higher is the participation of women in agricultural labour, an attempt was made to correlate the sex composition of the Agricultural labour in different districts (which reflected the female participation under Agricultural labour) with relative female farm wages. The results obtained did not support this proposition since the rank correlation between the two worked out to be negative; but not significant (r being 0.18).

Again when the districts were ranked in ascending order of female farm wages in absolute (money) terms and correlated with sex composition (of agricultural labour), the districts being ranked in descending order, the results obtained are positive and not significant (r being +0.29). This indicated that in the districts with large supply of female agricultural workers, the tendency is for the female wage to be lower than that in the district with less supply of female farm workers. But it did not show that the abundant supply of female farm labour lowered female farm wage considered as a proportion of male farm wages.

Coming to the second hypothesis about the possible relationship between the male money wage and the relative female wage in agriculture, it is relevant to recall the earlier classification of districts into two categories, those with female farm wages of less than $2/3$ of male wage and those with female farm wage above $2/3$ of male wage. In

the first group of districts, Salem alone ranked among the top half with regard to money farm wage paid to female workers in 1970-71 (Table 4). In the second group of districts we have Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli, Salem, North Arcot and Coimbatore ranking high with respect to male farm wage in money terms. When the over all rank correlation between Inter-district male farm wage in money value and the relative female wage is worked out we find it to be positively correlated but not significant ($r = +.33$). However the rank correlation between male farm wage and female farm wage both in money terms is highly significant (r being +0.84). Thus it appears that there is a strong tendency atleast for the absolute difference in money wages between males and females to be high in the district where male money wage is high.

The wage pattern in the districts during the subsequent years have undergone some changes but still the second hypothesis that 'if the male wage in a district is high, the absolute difference in money wages between males and females is also high' holds good. Thus our results show that inter-district disparities in female farm wage are correlated not to the supply of female labour but to the level of male wage. However, it was noted that in the districts where supply of female labour was high, the female money wages tended to be lower than those districts where supply of female labour force was less.

4. Female Tasks: Farm wages are decided in actual practice on the types of major agricultural operations. Earlier it was pointed out that ploughing operation is exclusively a man-oriented

task and it is generally believed that women are best suited for certain specific agricultural operations such as transplantation and inter-cultivation. This means that there are specific agricultural operations for which women might be, by virtue of their special aptitude or biological reasons, better suited, but yet these agricultural operations are low paid operations and they could not command better wage price than men and it goes to imply that some farm operations open to women are not relatively productive and there is hardly an operation where women could command higher wage rate than men.

There may be a few jobs which are strenuous and women cannot cope-up with such jobs; but there are other jobs which women can do equally well if not better, but they do not seem to be adequately paid, let alone equally. Thus when farm operations like ploughing is regarded as male oriented job, operations like transplantation, weeding, reaping and harvesting are open to females workers. Female wages for these operations are lower than the corresponding wages for males. Information on operation-wise farm wages for men and women for the years from 1964-65 to 1975-76 for Tamil Nadu given in Table 2 shows that female wages for the three operations (viz., Sowing and transplanting; weeding and inter-cultivation and reaping and harvesting) are uniformly lower than the corresponding male wages. On an average the deficiency in female wage varied from 10 to 30% of male wage for different operations.

The discrimination in farm wages has existed against women in the form of denial of access to better paid

operations. Practically for any farm job that a women is employed for, her wage is lower than that of a male doing the same job. As such in spite of this fact that farm operations are classified according to wage rates, discrimination against women openly existed and this will exist till such time when a distinction is drawn between different farm operations for the purpose of fixing wages and better paid farm operations are thrown open equally to men and women.

5. Quantum of employment:

Discrimination in the quantum of work can create disparities in earnings when the same wage rate is payable and paid for men and women workers. Female agricultural labourers in India (as well as in Tamil Nadu) have an added responsibility as they have to attend to household chores besides looking after their children and the time at their disposal for farm work is limited to 60 to 70% of the number of days that men are employed. /a Thus with 66 percent of male wage on average and only 70 per cent of the quantum of work, the average yearly female earning from farm labour would work out to less than 50 per cent of the male earnings. Reliable information on the quantum of work which male and female agricultural workers got in Tamil Nadu in any of

/a Indian Labour year book 1969, Labour Bureau, Simla gives that female wage-employment in agriculture is limited to 63.4% in 1950-51, 71.2% in 1956-57 and 68.7% in 1964-65 of the quantum of employment of male agricultural labour in India.

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the years is not forthcoming and there is no evidence to show that relative employment position on the farm have distinctly improved for women in Tamil Nadu.

6. Conclusion:

Thus it is difficult to resist the conclusion that discrimination against women has been prevailing in all its form in agricultural sector and this discrimination is largely operated through open wage discrimination. Denial of access to disadvantaged class (females) to the better paid jobs without any differentiation between male and female wage rate does not appear to be the characteristic of the agricultural labour. The reduction in quantum of work in respect of female farm workers too prevails in addition to the open-wage discrimination. Summing up, we have that an average female farm worker's earnings are much less than what an average male farm worker earns which derives an over-all picture that discrimination against female farm worker is substantial and it persists.

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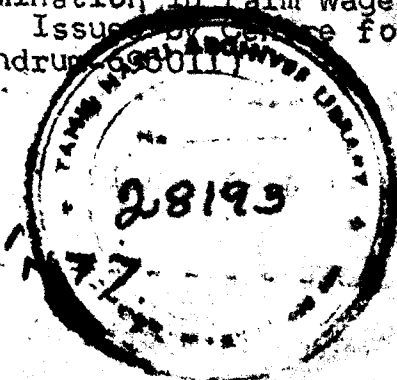
APPENDIX TABLE I

AVERAGE DAILY MONEY WAGES OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

(In Rs.)

States	Daily money wages							
	1950-51		1956-57		1964-65		1970-71	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
All India	1.09	0.68	0.96	0.59	1.43	0.95	2.23	1.42
Assam	1.90	1.48	1.54	1.15	2.21	1.70	3.77	2.92
Bihar	1.26	1.11	0.91	1.74	1.39	1.20	2.25	1.90
Uttar Pradesh	1.18	1.05	1.92	0.65	1.10	0.93	2.42	1.59
West Bengal	1.66	1.04	1.43	0.98	1.81	1.36	2.46	1.88
Orissa	0.72	0.49	0.80	0.55	1.33	0.89	1.83	1.34
Andhra Pradesh	0.97	0.63	0.87	0.55	1.21	0.85	2.10	1.49
Tamil Nadu	0.97	0.59	0.84	0.48	1.39	0.84	2.38	1.50
Kerala	1.26	0.79	1.28	0.70	2.18	1.23	4.10	2.24
Karnataka	0.90	0.57	0.84	0.55	1.21	0.79	1.89	1.64
Maharashtra	1.01	0.66	0.87	0.55	1.47	0.77	2.20	1.31
Rajasthan	1.23	0.94	0.98	0.61	1.76	1.09	2.97	1.88
Punjab	1.84	1.32	1.98	1.22	2.13	1.45	4.91	3.48

Source : Leela Gulati - 'Sex discrimination in farm wages' - working Paper No.44 (P.2). Issued by Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1966.



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APPENDIX TABLE 2

Average Agricultural wages in Tamil Nadu from 1964-65 to 1975-76 by type of farm work and by sex.

(in Rs.)

Year	Plough- men (men only)	Sowers and transplanters		Weeders		Reapers and harvesters.		Other miscella- neous agri- cultural operations.	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-	-5-	-6-	-7-	-8-	-9-	-10-
1964-65	1.84	1.57	1.08	1.30	0.99	1.77	1.46	1.59	1.09
1965-66	1.97	1.76	1.15	1.52	1.03	2.17	1.67	1.88	1.33
1966-67	2.21	2.08	1.31	1.58	1.22	2.49	2.07	2.01	1.53
1967-68	2.38	2.22	1.49	1.80	1.47	2.52	2.27	2.10	1.47
1968-69	2.56	2.33	1.47	2.05	1.41	2.92	2.03	2.45	1.40
1969-70	2.62	2.51	1.60	2.11	1.50	3.17	2.30	2.53	1.52
1970-71	2.75	2.53	1.61	1.86	1.49	3.09	2.26	2.23	1.72
1971-72	2.76	2.74	1.60	2.09	1.57	3.26	2.34	2.54	1.51
1972-73	2.99	2.85	1.71	2.36	1.93	2.58	2.40	2.73	1.64
1973-74	3.32	3.19	1.86	2.46	1.75	4.06	2.83	3.10	1.89
1974-75	4.77	4.10	2.67	3.56	2.35	6.32	4.24	4.31	2.68
1975-76	4.79	4.69	3.10	2.94	2.73	5.34	4.30	4.37	2.95

Source : Department of Statistics, Madras-6.

APPENDIX TABLE 3

FEMALE WAGE AS A PROPORTION OF MALE WAGES

Year	Percentage of woman's wage to man's wage			
	Sowers and transplanters	Weeders	Reapers and harvesters	Other miscella- neous oper- ations
-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-	-5-
1964-65	68.8	76.2	82.5	68.6
1965-66	65.3	71.1	77.0	70.7
1966-67	63.0	77.2	83.1	76.1
1967-68	67.1	81.2	90.1	70.0
1968-69	63.1	68.8	69.5	57.1
1969-70	63.7	71.1	72.6	60.1
1970-71	63.6	80.1	73.1	75.4
1971-72	58.4	75.1	71.8	59.4
1972-73	60.0	81.8	93.0	60.1
1973-74	58.3	71.1	69.7	61.0
1974-75	65.1	65.1	67.1	62.2
1975-76	66.1	92.9	80.5	67.5

Source : Department of Statistics, Madras-6.
(Computed from Table 2)

APPENDIX TABLE 4.

AVERAGE WAGES PAID TO AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS BY SEX AND BY DISTRICT.

District	1964-65		1965-66		1966-67		1967-68		1968-69		1969-70	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Chengalpattu	1.58	1.23	2.11	1.86	1.98	1.75	2.12	1.71	2.29	1.31	2.46	1.92
South Arcot	1.35	0.99	1.43	1.14	1.70	1.38	1.72	1.51	1.83	1.49	2.17	1.66
North Arcot	1.79	1.23	1.96	1.29	1.94	1.38	1.72	1.42	2.49	1.62	2.84	2.00
Dharmapuri	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.78	1.84
Salem	2.15	1.37	2.31	1.29	2.73	1.83	2.82	2.33	2.84	2.03	2.50	2.00
Coimbatore	1.31	0.87	1.31	0.86	1.83	1.07	2.10	1.24	2.56	1.63	2.60	1.61
The Nilgiris	2.28	1.35	2.37	1.62	2.79	1.83	3.04	1.85	3.44	1.95	3.80	2.37
Madurai	1.34	0.95	1.68	1.07	1.87	1.43	2.37	1.96	2.17	1.44	2.06	1.29
Tiruchirappalli	1.91	1.11	2.03	1.24	2.25	1.37	2.27	1.64	2.66	1.46	2.47	1.45
Thanjavur	2.27	1.57	1.71	1.22	2.04	1.14	2.73	1.51	2.67	1.49	2.60	1.40
Ramanathapuram	1.97	1.49	2.09	1.24	2.06	1.41	1.69	1.40	2.00	1.40	2.00	1.31
Tirunelveli	1.30	0.98	1.54	1.13	1.80	1.39	2.32	1.53	2.25	1.40	1.97	1.20
Kanniyakumari	2.39	1.36	2.24	1.52	3.01	1.98	3.39	2.18	3.60	2.60	3.43	2.18

(TABLE 4 - CONTINUATION)

District	1970-71		1971-72		1972-73		1973-74		1974-75		1975-76	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1.Chengalpattu	2.54	2.06	2.49	2.08	2.62	2.12	3.09	2.38	4.61	3.55	4.96	3.72
2.South Arcot	2.15	1.44	2.27	1.56	2.90	2.38	2.70	1.75	4.47	3.32	4.12	2.68
3.North Arcot	2.98	2.00	3.13	1.99	3.34	2.38	3.38	2.24	4.93	3.01	4.04	2.18
4.Dharmapuri	3.33	2.31	2.47	1.53	2.48	1.47	3.09	1.85	4.22	2.80	4.29	3.14
5.Salem	3.33	2.06	2.66	1.75	2.50	1.69	3.13	2.19	4.91	2.90	5.18	3.05
6.Coimbatore	2.92	2.00	2.93	1.92	3.18	1.98	3.81	2.34	4.69	2.83	5.10	2.81
7.The Nilgiris	2.30	1.24	3.75	2.32	3.74	2.24	3.49	2.33	4.91	3.23	4.87	3.18
8.Madurai	2.30	1.19	2.19	2.08	2.25	1.32	3.20	2.16	3.78	2.94	4.84	3.18
9.Tiruchirappalli	2.81	1.56	2.77	1.61	3.04	1.84	3.21	1.89	5.73	3.18	4.86	3.18
10.Thanjavur	2.43	1.86	3.03	2.08	3.12	2.08	3.51	2.44	5.46	3.25	5.41	3.84
11.Ramanathapuram	2.70	1.28	2.55	1.40	3.88	1.61	3.25	1.99	4.76	3.30	4.41	2.9
12.Tirunelveli	3.18	2.19	2.25	1.24	2.52	1.42	2.90	1.89	5.89	3.30	5.62	3.3
13.Kanniyakumari	3.55	2.44	4.06	2.59	4.59	3.01	5.55	3.73	5.12	3.22	6.27	3.1

Source : Department of Statistics, Madras-6.

APPENDIX TABLE 5

Average Female wages, as proportion of average Male wages in the districts of Tamil Nadu (1964-65 to 1975-76).

...

District	Percentage of Female wages to male wages												
	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	
1.Chengalpattu	77.85	88.15	88.38	80.66	57.21	78.05	81.10	83.53	80.92	77.02	77.00	75.00	
2.South Arcot	73.33	79.72	81.18	87.79	81.42	76.50	66.93	68.72	82.07	64.81	74.27	65.05	
3.North Arcot	68.12	65.82	71.13	82.56	65.06	70.42	67.11	63.58	71.26	66.27	76.59	53.96	
4.Salem	63.71	55.84	67.03	82.62	71.48	80.00	61.86	65.79	67.60	69.97	59.06	75.50	
5.Dharmapuri	..	..	..	..	..	69.78	69.37	61.94	59.27	59.87	66.35	73.19	
6.Coimbatore	65.41	65.65	58.47	59.05	63.67	61.92	68.49	58.70	62.26	61.42	60.34	55.09	
7.The Nilgiris	59.21	68.35	67.38	60.86	56.69	62.38	53.91	61.87	59.89	66.76	65.78	65.30	
8.Tiruchirapalli	58.12	61.08	60.89	72.25	54.89	58.70	55.52	58.12	60.53	58.88	55.49	65.37	
9.Thanjavur	69.16	71.35	55.88	55.31	55.81	53.85	76.54	68.65	66.67	69.52	59.52	70.98	
10.Madurai	70.90	63.69	76.47	82.70	66.36	62.62	51.74	94.98	58.67	67.50	77.17	65.70	
11.Ramanathapuram	75.63	59.33	68.45	82.84	70.00	65.50	47.41	54.90	41.49	61.23	69.33	67.35	
12.Tirunelveli	75.38	73.38	77.22	65.95	62.22	60.91	68.87	55.11	56.35	65.17	56.02	58.89	
13.Kanniyakumari	56.90	67.86	65.78	64.31	72.22	63.56	68.73	63.79	65.58	67.21	62.89	50.72	

Co-efficient variation

0.10 0.13 0.13 0.15 0.11 0.11 0.15 0.17 0.19 0.07 0.12 0.12

Source : (Computed from Table 4)

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