



AN ASSESSMENT OF MIGRANT SUGARCANE HARVESTING WORKERS USING KUPPUSWAMY'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS SCALE: A CASE STUDY OF BHIMASHANKAR SUGAR MILL, PUNE DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract

A society can be identified by the number of people residing, but also taking into consideration their socio-economic status. It is a dynamic phenomena which changes with the migration of the people, either temporarily or permanently. In today's era, the sugarcane industry is experiencing a boom as the cash crop (sugar) production is increasing. The present study attempts to study the socio-economic status of the migrants workers, who work in the Bhimashankar sugar mill. During the study, it has been found out that the dominant workers belong to Nomadic tribes. By adopting the Kuppuswamy's socio-economic status scale, it is revealed that a majority of the population belonged to the lower class category.

Keywords: Pune District, sugarcane workers, migration, Bhimashankar sugar mill.

Introduction

Now-a-days, the study of migration is considered to be an important aspect of population growth along with fertility and mortality of the area. It is a complex phenomenon and comprises of two important factors: the push and pull factors. Push factors operate in the residing area and compels people to move to other areas, while the latter operates in the areas of migration and attract people.

In the contemporary period, the development of transportation facilities has increased the rate of migration along with industrialization and urbanization. The rate of migration is influenced by the employment opportunities which provides livelihood to millions of poor, especially socio-economically deprived categories of people. In the destination areas, the migrants work in sectors like cultivation, mining, quarrying, and construction for low wages.

There is seasonal migration observed in many parts of the country and consists of two categories. The first category consists of regular seasonal migrants who travel for work during the non-agricultural season. The second category consists of small and medium farmers who migrate to support their livelihoods as a consequence of agro-ecological crisis in their residing areas. The people living in under-developed area which experiences calamities and lack of employment opportunities prefer migration. Migration often involves longer working hours, poor living and working conditions and poor access to basic facilities like access to education, health etc.

India is currently the second-largest producer of sugarcane and of sugar (accounting for about 7.5% of the gross value of national agricultural production) in the world, after Brazil (FLA Report, 2012). There are currently above 550 sugar mills operating in India, and



most mills are located in the vicinity of sugarcane production areas to reduce transportation costs and to retain quality. There is a growing trend of sugar mills (also of farmers) utilizing third-party contractors who engage migrant workers to harvest the crop to ensure mills receive the sugarcane in a timely manner. Maharashtra is the second largest producer of sugarcane and has largest number of sugar factories in the country (FLA Report, 2012; <http://www.mapsofindia.com/top-ten/india-crops/sugarcane.html>). In Maharashtra, the period of sugarcane cultivation i.e. from sowing to harvesting is carried out for 15-16 month, as compared to 11-12 month in North India. This is the reason for higher yields in the state. Pune, Satara and Sangli are major sugarcane producing regions and these three districts have over 40 sugar mills combined (FLA Report, 2012).

According to FLA Report (2012), three types of farmers grow sugarcane in India. Marginal and small farmers grow sugarcane on less than 2 hectares of land and mostly employ family members for production processes. Medium-size farmers grow sugarcane on about 2-10 hectares of land and employ hired labour for production processes such as tilling, land preparation, weeding, sowing and harvesting. Large farmers grow sugarcane on more than 50 hectares of land. The labour is typically hired through a third party contractor who sources workers from adjoining districts and even neighbouring states.

Socioeconomic status (SES) refers to an individual's position within a hierarchical social structure, which is one of the important determinants of health status (Gururaj and Maheshwaran, 2014). Measuring socio-economic status is really about measuring differences between people (Ramola and Velmurugan, 2016). The measurement of socioeconomic status (SES) in the population provides important information for the analysis of inequality and poverty, based on which economic and public health policies and interventions are planned or implemented (Kattula et.al 2016). The assessment of socio-economic status is an inherent part of various community which seek to study the effect of socioeconomic status on society (Mishra and Singh, 2003). All community based studies focus on socioeconomic stratification as this is the key to understanding affordability of health services, amenities and purchasability. When it is taken as a summation of education, occupation and income it reflects the value system expected for that level of education and occupation (Ravi Kumar et.al, 2013). In the present paper, an attempt has been to comprehend the socio-economic background of the migrant workers and measure their socio-economic status. The measure of socio-economic status aids in understanding the level of inequality between societies.

Study area:

For the present study, Bhimashankar sugar mill has been selected which lies in the Ambegaon Tahsil of Pune District. The location of Ambegaon Tahsil is 18⁰51'01" N to 19⁰13'34" N latitudes & 73⁰31'15" E to 74⁰10'31" E longitudes. Ambegaon tahsil is one of the eight western hilly tahsils of the Pune district. The western boundary of tahsil is marked by the steep escarpment of the Deccan plateau. This tahsil lies at the foothill zone of the Sahayadri mountain ranges. The study area experiences the annual maximum temperature of 31.8°C and minimum temperature of 17.7°C. It receives rainfall from south-west monsoon during June to September with rainfall of about 807.7 mm. There are two rivers in the vicinity of the factory, namely, Ghod river and Meena river.

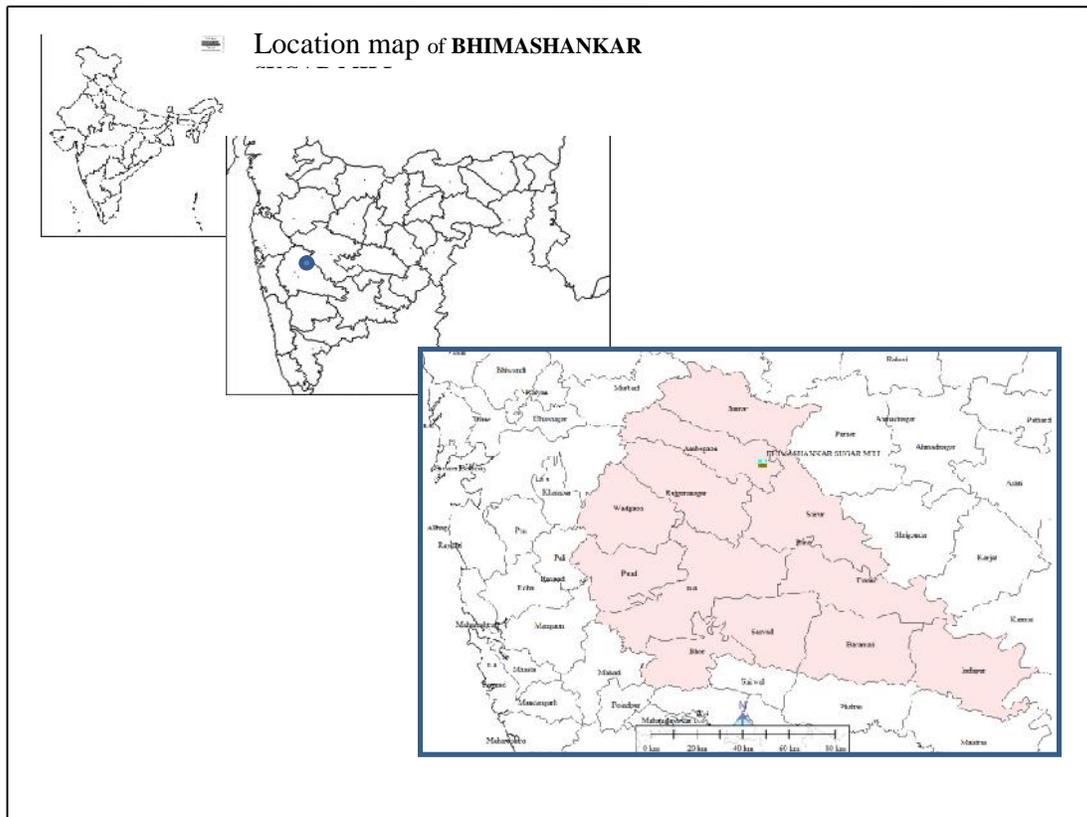


Fig.1: Location map of the study area.

Methodology

The data for the present study have been collected at various levels. Various measures like household and village level questionnaires and group discussions were held during field visits and personal interviews were also taken into consideration for the collection of primary data. A total of 250 people were interviewed during the field work.

For the present study, questionnaires for sugarcane factory, contractors, farmers and sugarcane labourers were designed. The information was collected about the factory on the basis of information about total production, provided facilities to sugarcane labourers, etc. The data acquired from the farmers comprised of production of sugarcane per tonne, facilities provided by the factory, relation with sugarcane labourers, etc. The information from contractors was obtained by inquiring about the process of selecting labourers, wages of labourers, etc. Detailed information was collected from the sugarcane labourers about their socio-economic background, causes of migration, facilities provided by factory, problems in migrant village, etc.

The secondary data was collected from the Gram Panchayat office, Tahsil office, and the sugarcane factory. Other information was collected from different journals, books, and various websites.

Socio-economic description of population**Table-1: Religious and Caste profile of the migrants.**

Caste/Religion	Category	Percentage
Bhilla	Schedule Tribes	31.6%
Vanjari	Nomadic Tribes	33.6%
Lamhani	Nomadic Tribes	2.4%
Dhanagar	Nomadic Tribes	6%
Paradhi	Nomadic Tribes	4.4%
Chambhar	Schedule Caste	8%
Mahar	Schedule Caste	7.2%
Mali	Other Backward Classes	3.2%
Maratha	Open	2.8%
Muslim		0.8%

From the table, it is evident that a majority of migrants belongs to Vanjari, followed by Bhilla and so on, signifies that 46.4% of the migrant labours belong to Nomadic Tribes while 15.2 % of the migrant belongs to Scheduled castes. A majority of migrants belongs to the deprived groups, who have always been wanderers.

Results and discussion

The Kuppuswamy scale proposed in 1976, measures the SES of an individual based on three variables, namely, education and occupation of the head of the household and income of the family (Gururaj and Maheshwaran, 2014). Kuppuswami scale (1981) is widely used to measure the socio-economic status of an individual in urban community based on three variables namely education, occupation and income. The modification of Kuppuswami scale meant to determine the socioeconomic status of family based on education and occupation of the head of the family and per capita income (Ramola and Velmurugan, 2016). The following parameters like education, occupation and family income are taken into consideration for calculating the overall score.

Table 2: Education

Sr. No.	Education of the head	Score
1.	Profession or Honours	7
2.	Graduate or Post Graduate	6
3.	Intermediate or Post high school dip	5
4.	High school certificate	4
5.	Middle school certificate	3
6.	Primary school certificate	2
7.	Illiterate	1

Table 3: Occupation

Sr. No.	Occupation of the Head	Score
1.	Profession	10
2.	Semi-Profession	6
3.	Clerical, Shop-owner	5
4.	Skilled worker	4
5.	Semi-skilled worker	3
6.	Unskilled worker	2
7.	Unemployed	1

Table 4: Family Income

Sr. No	Income of the head	Score
1	= 30375	12
2	15188-30374	10
3	11362-15187	6
4	7594-11361	4
5	4556-7593	3
6	1521-4555	2
7	=1520	1

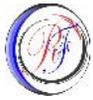
Table 5: Total Score

Sr. No	Socio-Economic Class	Total Scale
1	Upper (I)	26-29
2	Upper Middle (II)	16-25
3	Lower Middle (III)	11-15
4	Upper Lower (IV)	5-10
5	Lower (V)	< 5

From the calculation of the above mentioned parameters, the overall socio-economic index for the migrants is represented in Table 6:

Table 6: Overall socio-economic index of the migrants.

Score	Socio-economic class	Frequency	Percentage
26-29	Upper (I)	0	0
16-25	Upper Middle (II)	29	11.6 %
11-15	Lower Middle (III)	66	26.4 %



5-10	Upper Lower (IV)	155	62 %
< 5	Lower (V)	0	0

After computing the Kuppuswamy's socio-economic index, it was found that almost two third of the migrant labour belong from the lower class. The upper lower class consists of more than half the interviewed population. The remaining population can be categorized as middle class. Migrant labourers, who work as a farm labour, other marginal workers, practicing sheep farming, goat farming, dairy farming, gardeners & other non-agricultural occupation belonged to lower class. Migrant labour who work as farmers, shopkeepers, skilled & semi-skilled worker, i.e. kirana shop and other services belonged to middle class.

Conclusion:

Sugarcane is one of the most important agricultural commodities in India and supports millions of farmers and their families. The study shows that Indian sugarcane farms experience a similar lack of labour standards implementation and humane working environments as many other agricultural sectors in the nation, such as cotton, hybrid seeds, etc. (FLA Report, 2012). Migrant workers and their families are widely used, mostly in the harvesting of sugarcane. Improving labour conditions and enhancing productivity should be the future perspectives of the industries. The socio-economic status of a society can be measured using such composite scales, which has a combination of social and economic variables. Evaluating the socio-economic status of households/individuals requires good quality survey data and needs a conceptually coherent and empirically robust scale to capture the economic conditions of households in the context of resource availability and access in their environment (Kattula et.al 2016). The present technique for calculating the socio-economic status assists in obtaining an intensive data and avoids a sampling bias. The socio-economic study helps to interpret changes in the structure of a society because societies are dynamic bodies and related to health and life outcomes as long as social groups existed.

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