
**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN
AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL
OPERATIONS IN HARYANA**

Priyanka,

Research Scholar, Department of Economics,
Indira Gandhi University, Mirpur, Rewari, Haryana.
Email: hppraharsh@gmail.com,

Dr. Satish Kumar,

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics,
Indira Gandhi University, Mirpur, Rewari, Haryana.
Email: drsatishnimbale@gmail.com

Abstract

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy, and women contributing significantly to both household and agriculture. Particularly in the state of Haryana, women are involved in various agricultural activities, yet their socio-economic status remains subjects of concern. This empirical study explores the socio-economic status of women in Haryana's agricultural sector and examines their participation in agricultural operations. This empirical study explores the socio-economic status of women in the agricultural sector in Haryana and their participation in agricultural operations. Using primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from 440 women working in agriculture across four regions of Haryana-Central, Northern, Southern, and Western. The study examines the factors influencing women's socio-economic conditions, their roles in various agricultural operations, and the challenges they face. The study reveals that despite their involvement in agriculture, women face several barriers, including limited land ownership, poor access to financial resources, low educational attainment, and limited decision-making power. This paper concludes with policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the socio-economic status of women in the agricultural sector and how they cope with those challenges.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Haryana, Socio-Economic Status, Agricultural Operations.

Introduction

Agriculture is the primary livelihood source for a large section of India's population, and Haryana is one of the leading agricultural states. Women in rural Haryana are heavily involved in agriculture operations. Where they engage in various farming activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing. However, despite their contributions, the socio-economic status of women in agriculture is lower than their male counterparts, with limited access to resources and decision-making opportunities. Women's participation in agricultural operations is often unrecognized and undervalued in both economic and social terms. The state Haryana, located in northern India, is one of the country's leading agricultural states. With the Green Revolution significantly boosting agricultural productivity, the state has witnessed rapid agricultural development. However, women's participation in this growth story has often been marginalized. Historically, rural

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women in Haryana have faced gender biases, lower literacy rates, and limited ownership of agricultural assets, which has restricted their role in economic decision-making. In the agricultural workforce, they often occupy lower-paid and labour-intensive jobs, with minimal recognition of their contributions.

Importance of the Study

Given the central role of agriculture in Haryana and the significant participation of women, there is a need to examine the socio-economic status of these women to understand the factors affecting their empowerment and involvement in agriculture. The study's primary goal was to ascertain how many women participated in agricultural activities. It comprehends the socioeconomic status, working conditions, and kind of job of women employees. Respondents participated in the survey engaged in agriculture sector. A number of socio-economic factors, including, had an impact on the female participation rate. Age, family status, social category, seducational attainment, availing ration from PDS shop, Ownership of household assets and the least amount of time that women spent applying fertiliser, levelling, and ploughing fields, as well as not participating in marketing activities. This study provides insights into the gender dynamics within the agricultural sector and assesses the impact of socio-economic variables on women's participation and empowerment. The findings of this study will inform policies aimed at improving the conditions of women in agriculture and enhancing their role in the rural economy.

Objectives of the Study

Objective of the study is to analyse the socio-economic status of women empowerment in agricultural sector and their participation in agricultural operations in Haryana. The key objectives of this research study are:

- To assess the socio-economic status of women involved in the agricultural sector in Haryana.
- To analyze women's participation in agricultural operations across different regions of Haryana.
- To provide suggestions for improving the socio-economic conditions of women in agriculture and promoting gender equality.

Review of Literature

Women's participation in agriculture has been a topic of research in various parts of the world. Globally, women play a significant role in agriculture, particularly in developing countries. It was found that numerous numbers of literatures are available on the agriculture sector and its various aspects. For this study few relevant reviews are discussed here as under: **Sadik and Nafis (1997)**, says that eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development depend heavily on women's empowerment as well as the realisation of gender equality and equity. Women's autonomy and empowerment, as well as their socioeconomic situation and health, may be improved via the provision of education, jobs, and health care.

Hanumantha Rao (1998) says that in India, the poor's economic and social empowerment must primarily be attained through human development and productive employment, as

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political viability for land redistribution through further reduction of the legal selling price on landholdings is unlikely, and top-down subsidy-oriented programs to alleviate poverty are unlikely to be implemented successfully.

Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as the process by which individuals gain the ability to make strategic life choices. In agriculture, empowerment involves access to resources, control over income, and participation in decision-making processes.

Rao's (2006) analysis that women labour in a variety of agriculturally related fields, including farming, horticulture, animal production, and fisheries. Women labour in the agriculture industry more than men do, but they are not paid equally.

Morrison, Raju, and Sinha (2007), suggest that women's increased access to the land and credit markets, as well as their increased ability to make decisions inside their homes, are the main drivers of gender equality. This results in a rise in economic growth, a decrease in poverty, and an empowerment of women.

Banik & Bhaumik (2008) says that a typical recipient of a program designed to reduce poverty experiences behavioural changes as a result of external factors. It emphasises that the environment has an impact on the conduct of the beneficiary craftsmen in addition to their personal circumstances.

Butt and Sher Muhammad (2010), finds that rural women play a significant role in the advancement of agriculture. They deal with a variety of issues. They are ignorant of the usage of contemporary agricultural techniques. Low female potential in the agriculture industry is also a result of a society that is dominated by men and low levels of education.

Dommati and Krishna Reddy's (2011) analysis that women make up the majority of workers in the agriculture sector, which is the most significant industry for employment. Women shoulder a lot of duties in the home, on the farm, and in raising children, among other things.

Arora (2012), suggests that by guaranteeing legal rights, raising knowledge of those rights, and offering women's fundamental social services, the state should be assisted in bringing about such transformation.

Sarker and Chakrabarti (2013), finds that increasing the use of empowerment measures such as education, decision-making authority over communal affairs, control over money, etc., is crucial to helping women develop a feeling of self-worth.

Baliyan, K. & Sandeep (2014), says that women contribute significantly to family income, but this contribution is not tracked or recorded. They do not legally own the land. This study demonstrates an inverse link between the size of the farm and the workers' percentage contribution to family income.

Esther and Akande (2015), finds that illiteracy or a poor level of education is the main cause of poverty, and although rural women are heavily involved in agricultural operations like planting, gathering, and marketing, they face numerous obstacles since they do not work properly.

Patel and Sharma (2015) argue that gender inequalities in agriculture are deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms that marginalize women's roles and limit their opportunities for

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empowerment.

Kaur (2017) found that women in Haryana face numerous challenges, including limited access to land, education, and financial resources.

Meena and Prem Chand (2017) emphasised that rural women working in the agriculture sector are the key drivers of socioeconomic change in rural regions and are also the primary source of income in these areas.

Paula Ugwu (2019), finds that women make up the majority of the workforce in the agriculture industry, and many of them are small-holder farmers who supply labour on a regular basis. This research also focusses on several methods to determine the role played by women in farm productivity.

Desai and Jain (2020) argue that while women perform substantial agricultural labour, they lack visibility in policy discussions and decision-making processes. In Haryana, land ownership is predominantly male-driven, with very few women holding rights to agricultural land.

Pattnaik and Dutt (2020) aimed to determine the variables impacting rural women's labour contribution in India's agriculture, both as wage labourers in the agricultural industry and as cultivators or family labourers on family farms.

Aderson et al. (2021), find that there is a connection between women's empowerment and agriculture. When women feel empowered, they can use their abilities and make wise decisions for their own lives, those of their families, and their careers.

The review of literature simply demonstrates that there is paucity of literature and research findings pertaining to participation of women in agriculture in Haryana state. In the context of women in agriculture these studies pointing to their crucial but often undervalued role. After instance review of literature, we find out that Haryana is one of India's most agriculturally productive states, but gender disparities in the agricultural sector persist.

Research Methodology

This study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire survey of 440 women working in agriculture across various districts in Haryana. The data collection process involved face-to-face interviews with the respondents, conducted between February to July 2024. The questionnaire covered various aspects of the respondents' socio-economic status and their participation in agricultural operations. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from all four regions of Haryana: Central, Northern, Southern, and Western. The sample was proportionately distributed across these regions to reflect the diversity of agricultural practices and socio-economic conditions. Focus group discussions and interviews were also conducted with community leaders, local government officials, and agricultural experts to gain deeper insights into the socio-economic challenges faced by women. Data collected through surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics and percentage distribution.

Results and Discussion

Women's participation was found to be highest in labour-intensive tasks such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting. However, their role in decision-making, particularly in high-value

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agricultural activities like selecting crops, using technology, or managing finances, was minimal. The study noted that while women work extensively in agriculture, they are rarely involved in the more mechanized or profitable aspects of farming. We focused on a number of socio economic factors, including, age, family status, social category, educational attainment, availing ration from PDS shop and ownership of household assets.

Socio-Economic Profile of Women in Agriculture

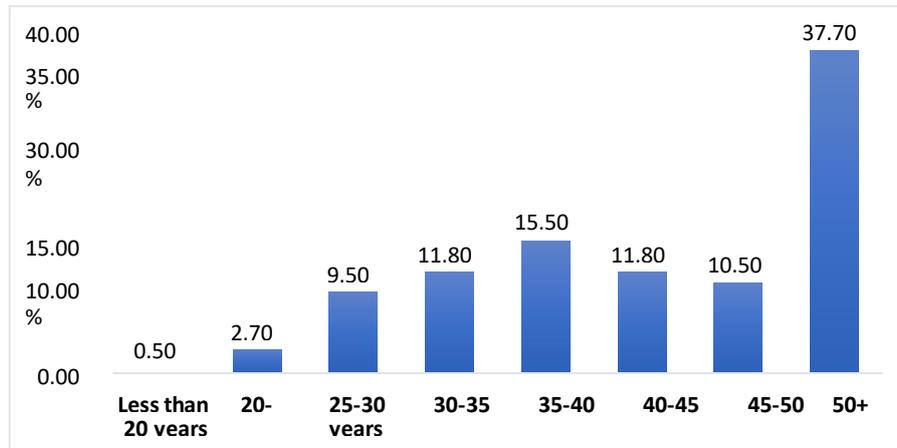
The socio-economic profile in this study a field surveyed of the 440 women has been conducted in districts of Haryana to examine the women empowerment in agricultural sector and their participation in agricultural operations and other related tasks. In this part of the study, an attempt has been made to examine the socio- economic background characteristics of respondents of surveyed women. As socio- economic profile of respondents has direct bearing on the levels of their participation in economic activities and performing household responsibilities. Haryana has recorded low level of women participation in labour force and women engagement in agriculture sector has also reported to be low. A large chunk of migrated population from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has been found engaged in agricultural operations in Haryana. As women significantly contribute as agricultural labour in agriculture sector, hence a large proportion of the surveyed women constituted as agricultural labour. Hence, a major proportion of the respondents has been from lower and lower middle-class families.

The age of respondents

The age of respondents is crucial in the study of the socio-economic status of women in the agricultural sector. Different age groups may experience varying responsibilities and roles. Younger women may be more involved in learning and participating in new agricultural practices, while older women may hold more traditional roles. Age can correlate with experience in agricultural practices. Age can influence socio-economic status, including access to resources, education, and financial independence. Age can also impact women's health, which in turn affects their ability to participate in agricultural work. Overall, analyzing the age of respondents provides a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic landscape and helps in designing effective interventions to support women in agriculture. Age categories of respondents shown in Figure-1.

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Figure-1, Age of Respondents



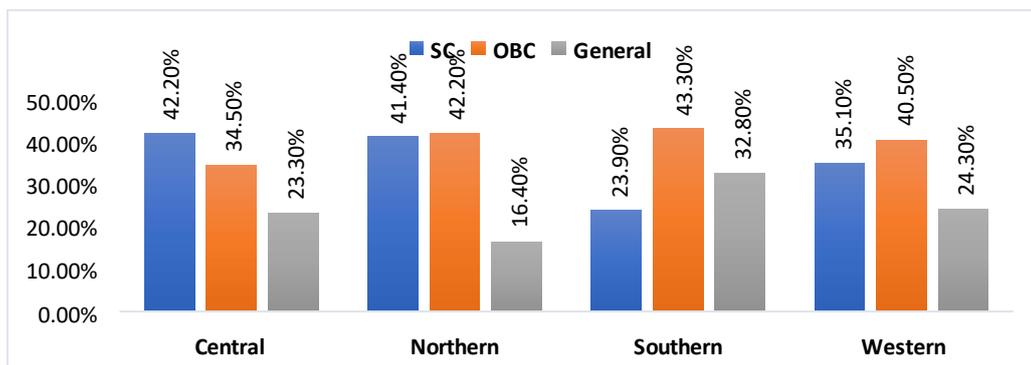
Source: Surveyed Data

Above figure-1, depicts the age of respondents. About 38 percent respondents were from the age group of more than 50 years. It was found more pronouncing in Northern Region (46.6percent). More than 35 percent respondents were from the age group of 35-50 years. Thus, less than one fourth respondents were from the low age group (less than 35 years).

Social Category of Respondents

The social category of respondents is vital for understanding the socio-economic status of women in Haryana's agricultural sector. It reveals how caste, community, and social norms influence participation in agricultural operations, resource access, and decision-making, thereby highlighting disparities and informing targeted interventions for empowerment and support. Social category of respondents shown in Figure-2.

Figure-2, Social Category of Respondents



Source: Surveyed Data

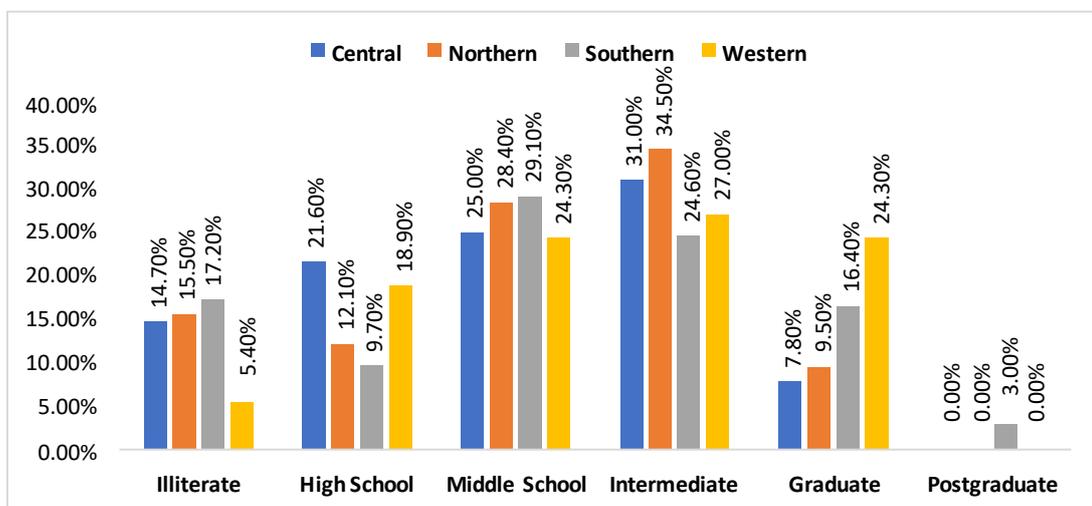
Above figure-2 depicts the social category of respondents. More than one third respondents were found belonging to Scheduled Castes while about two fifth' respondents were from OBCs. The proportion of respondents from Scheduled Caste was recorded high in Central and Northern Region while proportion of respondents from OBCs was reported high in Southern Region. Thus, about one fourth respondents were from general castes.

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Educational Level of Respondents

The educational level of respondents is crucial in examining the socio-economic status of women in Haryana's agricultural sector because it directly influences their access to information, resources, and opportunities. Higher education levels often correlate with better awareness of agricultural techniques, financial literacy, and participation in decision-making processes. Education empowers women to adopt modern farming practices, improve productivity, and engage in leadership roles within their communities. It also affects their ability to advocate for their rights and access government schemes. Understanding the educational background of these women helps identify barriers to participation and inform policies aimed at enhancing their socio-economic status and involvement in agriculture. It's shown in figure-3.

Figure -3, Educational Level of Respondents



Source: Surveyed Data

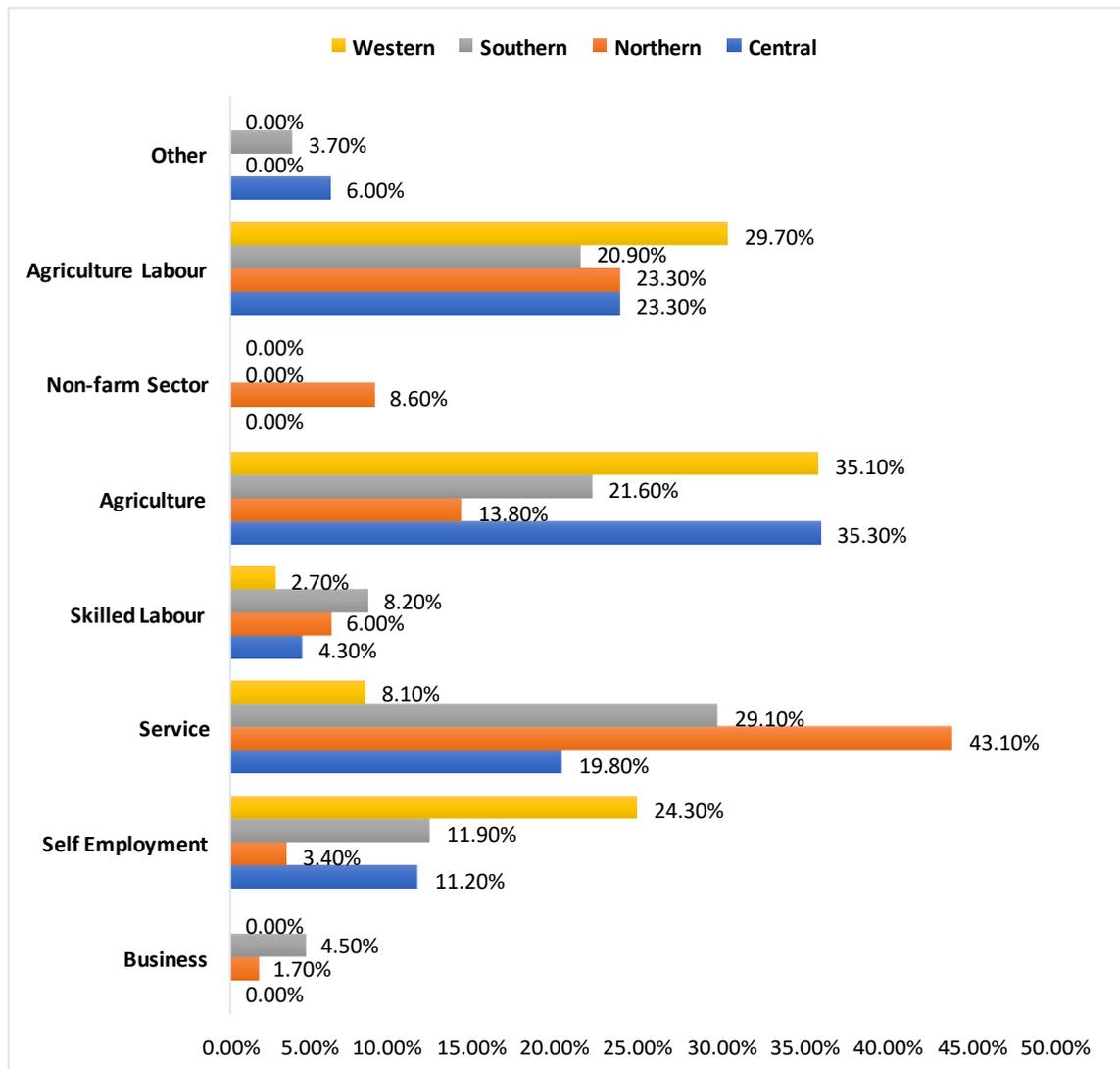
Above figure-3, depicts the educational levels of respondents. About 14 percents respondents were graduates and post graduates. It was found high in Western Region (24 percent) followed by Southern Region (19.4 percent). About 29 percent respondents were intermediates while about 15 percent respondents were high school pass. Thus, educational levels of respondents were recorded poor for majority of the respondents.

Family Occupation of Respondents

Understanding the family occupation of respondents is crucial in studying the socio-economic status of women. This aspect provides insights into the dynamics of labour participation, decision-making roles, and the recognition of women's contributions within family farms. India is known for its family system and strong agricultural values. Family Occupation of Respondents shown in figure-4.

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Figure-4. Family Occupation of Respondents



Source: Surveyed Data

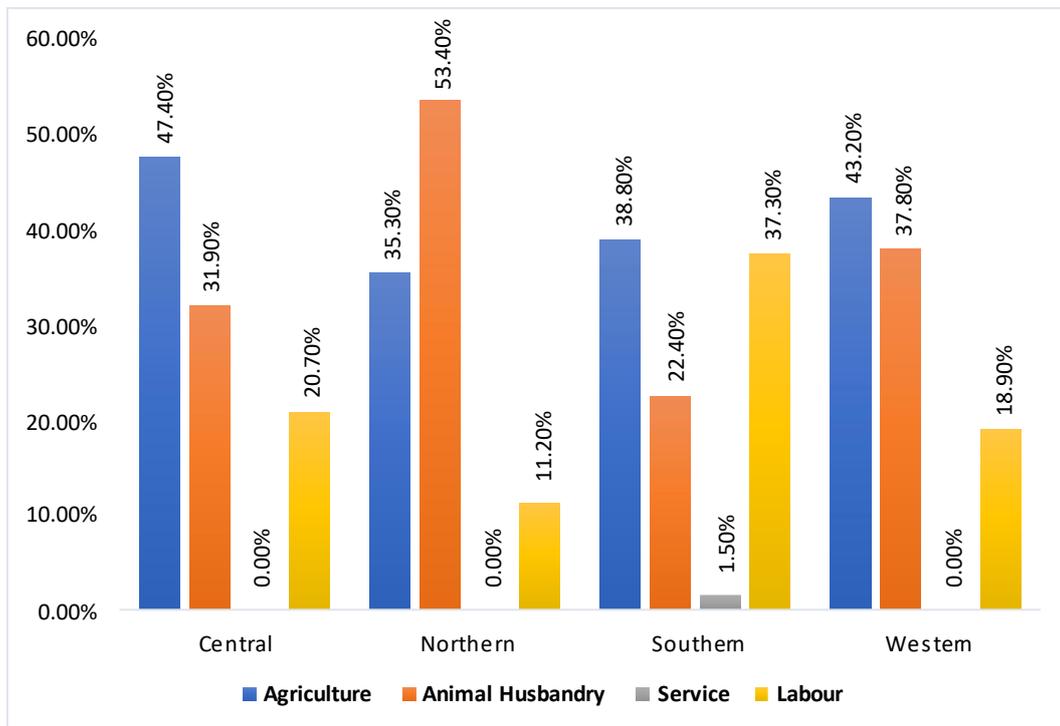
Above figure-4, depicts the family occupation. The main family occupations were reported to be services (26.8 percent), followed by agriculture (25.5 percent), agriculture labour (23.6 percent). Agriculture as main source of sustenance was recorded high in Central and Western Region while services as main source of sustenance was reported high in Northern and Southern Region.

Occupation of Respondents

Understanding the occupation of respondents is crucial in studying the socio-economic status of women in the agricultural sector in Haryana. It provides insights into their roles, challenges, and contributions, which are often overlooked. The occupation influences their decision-making power, access to resources, and overall socio-economic conditions. Women constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce, engaging in agriculture and allied operations in present scenario. Occupation of respondents shows in figure-5.

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Figure-5, Occupation of Respondents



Source: Surveyed Data

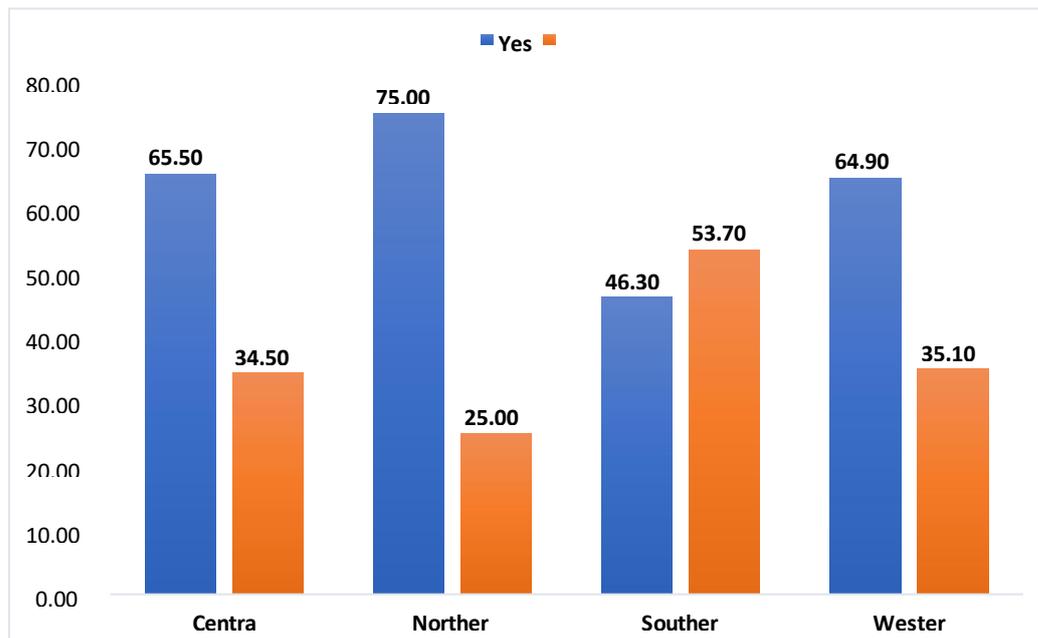
Above figure -5, depicts the occupation of respondents. About two fifth respondents reported that their main occupation is agriculture. However, about 36 percents revealed that their main occupation is animal husbandry. Even, less than one fourth respondents reported that they are labour. Agriculture as main source of o sustenance was reported high in Western Region (43.2 percent) followed by Central Region (47.4 percent). More than half of the respondents in Northern Region were depend on animal husbandry for their sustenance.

Availing Rations from PDS Shop

Availing rations from the Public Distribution System (PDS) is crucial for women in the agricultural sector of Haryana, as it directly impacts their socio-economic status and participation in agricultural operations. The PDS provides subsidized food, which is essential for low-income households, ensuring access to nutritious food that supports health and productivity . Women, particularly in rural areas, often face food insecurity, which can hinder their ability to engage fully in agricultural activities. By securing reliable access to affordable food through the PDS, women can improve their nutritional status, thereby enhancing their empowerment and productivity in agricultural operations. Availing Rations from PDS Shop shown in figure-6.

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Figure-6, Availing Rations from PDS Shop



Source: Surveyed Data

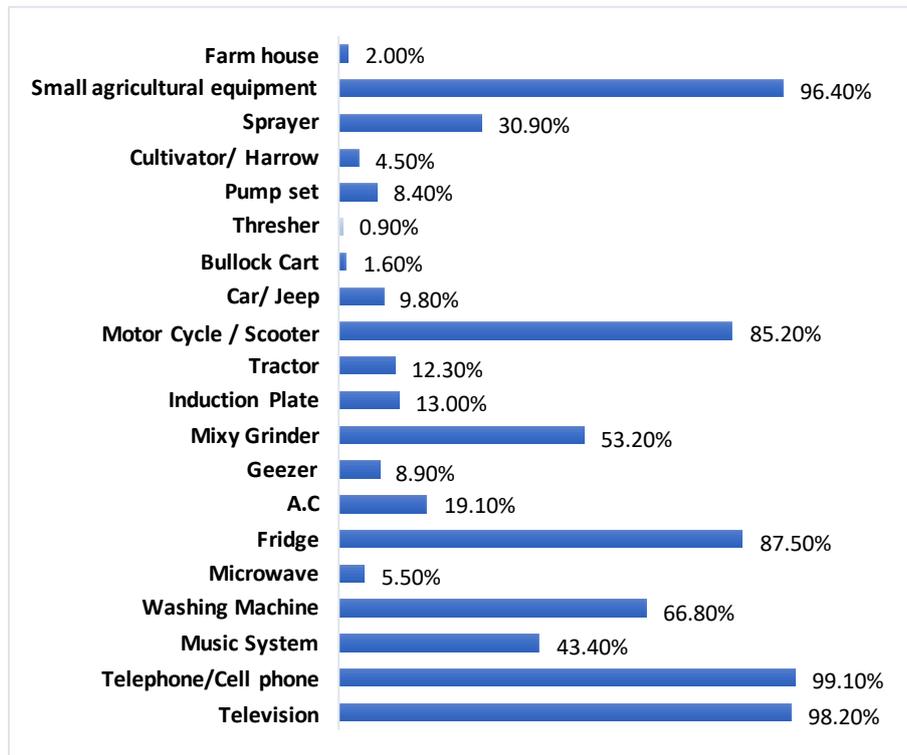
Above figure 6 depicts availing rations from Public Distribution System (PDS) has significant impact on socio-economic status. The majority of respondents reported that they are availing ration from PDS shops. It was reported high in Northern Region followed by Central Region. However, more than half of the respondents in Southern Region revealed that they are not availing ration from PDS shops.

Ownership Household Assets

Ownership of household assets is crucial for understanding the socio-economic status of women in the agricultural sector, particularly in Haryana. Access to and control over productive assets such as land and finance empower women, enabling them to make decisions that enhance their livelihoods and well-being. Furthermore, joint ownership of assets fosters shared decision-making, which can lead to improved agricultural productivity and household welfare. Recognizing gender-specific pathways of asset accumulation is essential to address the unique challenges women face, thereby reducing socio-economic disparities. The gender asset gap highlights the disparities in ownership and control of assets, which directly impacts women's socio-economic status in agriculture. Thus, examining asset ownership is vital for understanding women's participation in agricultural operations and informing effective agricultural development interventions. Ownership of household assets is shown in figure -7.

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Figure-7, Ownership Household Assets



Source: Surveyed Data

Above figure -7, depicts the ownership of Telephone/ Cell, TV, Motor Cycle/ Scooter, Fridge, Washing Machine, Mixy Grinder and Music System was reported significantly high. The ownership of Tractor was reported high in Sothern Region (14.2 percent) followed by Central Region (13.8 percent).

Conclusion

The analysis of profile of surveyed women in Haryana state reveals interesting facts. Majority of respondents were from lower and lower middle class. They were mainly from Scheduled Castes and OBCs. Their educational levels were reported to be poor. The main family occupation of the surveyed women was reported to be service, self-employment, agriculture and labour. However, there has been shifting of occupation from agriculture to service and self-employment/ business. Thema in source of sustenance of respondents was found agriculture, labour, self-employment/ business and services. The income from agriculture sector has been reported quite good and animal husbandry including dairy is significantly contributing in the family income. The housing and living conditions of the respondents were reported good as majority of respondents were found living in decent houses, and availing housing facilities. Even ownership of household assets such as TV, Phone/ Cell, Fridge, Motorcycle/ Scooter, Washing Machine, Mixy Grinder, Tractor, AC etc. was reported significant. A large proportion of respondents further reported that they availed benefits under social development schemes, social security schemes, and other government programmes. This empirical study highlights the significant role that women play in Haryana's agricultural sector, particularly in labour-intensive tasks such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting. Despite their contributions, women remain marginalized in terms of socio-economic status, with limited access to land, resources, and decision-making power. The

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empowerment of women in agriculture is critical for sustainable rural development, but achieving this requires addressing deep-rooted gender biases and structural inequalities.

Recommendations

To improve the socio-economic status of women in agriculture the following recommendations are proposed:

- Policies should focus on improving women's access to land ownership, agricultural inputs, and financial services. Providing women with land titles and credit facilities can enhance their productivity and income levels.
- Agriculture education and vocational training programs tailored to women in agriculture can help improve their technical knowledge and skills, enabling them to participate in more profitable agricultural activities.
- The implementation of government programs aimed at empowering women in agriculture should be improved. This includes increasing awareness of programs ensuring that rural women have access to training and financial support.
- Efforts should be made to challenge traditional gender roles in rural Haryana that restrict women's participation in decision-making and mechanized farming. Community-based programs that promote gender equality and women's rights in agriculture can help shift cultural attitudes and empower women in the sector.
- Programs that promote women's involvement in agricultural decision-making, both at the household and community levels, can significantly improve their empowerment.

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