

**PROBLEMS OF SUGAR CANE WORKERS: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF
BIDAR DISTRICT**

Kulkarni Girirao

Research Scholar

Department of Sociology

Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi

Dr Sindhe Jaganath R

Professor & Chairman

Department of Sociology

Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi-585106

Abstract

Sugarcane industry in India is an essential contributor to the national economy through the production of multiple products for national and international consumption. The production and processing of sugarcane is a significant source of employment in the country. The farmers form the backbone of sugarcane cultivation; they still tend to exist as “the hidden farmers” with almost negligible access on land, resources, technologies, financial services, markets and even education. With the growing feminization of agriculture, there is a need to develop specific strategies for women in sugarcane agriculture to develop their skills and strengthen their capacities as it significantly contributes to domestic production and employment. The present paper discussed the Indian sugar productions issues and the problems of sugar cane workers in the study area.

Key Words: Sugarcane, Farm workers, Problems, Empowering skills, Bidar.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Sugarcane and beet have produced in over 130 countries, with sugar cane accounting for 65-70 per cent of global production. Developing countries will account for nearly all future production growth raising their share from 67 per cent in the

period 1998-2000 to 72 per cent by 2020 (Singh *et al.*, 2013). The sugarcane industry in India is an essential contributor to the national economy through the production of multiple products for national and international consumption as well its contribution to new regulatory requirements for bio-ethanol to be included as a constituent of petroleum-based fuels.

The present study discusses the problems of sugarcane worker in the study area. Sugar cane worker form a vital pressure group, so do the industrialists and other manufacturers. The interests of consumers are looked after by the Government through various market control measures.

The sugar industry is often compelled in different, sometimes contradictory, directions with the result that it faced a crisis of either overproduction or under production now and then. In this chaotic situation, the cooperatives attempt a different organizational arrangement to bring all these factors into a harmonious combination. In theory, they constitute an improvement over the present pattern of ownership of industries by private or limited companies. However, they have formidable problems to overcome in order to attain their ultimate goal of providing fair prices to the growers and providing sugar at affordable prices to users.

In this particular study, attempt is made to study socioeconomic conditions of the sugarcane workers, which are important for understanding their living and working conditions. The working conditions are some of the obvious factors through which differential results are ascribed in the literature. Therefore, the researcher attempts to assess the socio-economic conditions of the selected sugarcane worker involved in sugarcane-cutting and transport activities in different sugar factories. Details regarding the socio-economic conditions of the selected worker are based on the information collected through interview schedule. 200 respondents are selected from selected sugar factories in Bidar district as a field.

II. PRODUCTION OF SUGAR IN INDIA:

Sugar production in India has been cyclic in nature. Every 2-3 years of high sugar production are followed by 2-3 years of low sugar production. From the sugar season 2010-11 onwards the country could consistently achieve sugar production more than the domestic requirements and could also generate surpluses for export. Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh contribute over 60 percent of total sugar production while rest

comes from States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh⁴. In the 3rd Advance Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC), released in May 2014, the sugarcane production is estimated at 3,483.8 lakh tons in the current sugar season.

Table-1
Total Sugar Production Quantity in lakh Tons

Sugar season	Production of Sugarcane	Production of Sugar
2001-02	2972.08	185.28
2002-03	2873.83	201.45
2003-04	2338.62	135.46
2004-05	2370.88	126.90
2005-06	2811.72	192.67
2006-07	3555.20	283.67
2007-08	3481.88	263.57
2008-09	2850.29	145.39
2009-10	2923.02	189.12
2010-11	3423.82	243.94
2011-12	3610.37	263.43
2012-13	3389.63	251.41
2013-14	3500.21	243.73

Source: National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Limited, Cooperative Sugar, November,2014, p.26

The production of sugar during 2013-14 season was estimated at 243 lakh tons as against the estimated domestic consumption of 240 lakh tons⁵. The Production of sugar from 2001-02 to 2013-14 is as under:

Plight of Sugarcane Farmers: -

Sugarcane growers are facing unprecedented uncertainty because of mounting cane arrears due to sugar mills. The payment to sugarcane farmers by sugar mills though statutorily supported by various statues and enforced by the State Government get affected by the dynamics of domestic market price as well as international

situation related to export possibilities. The position of cane price payments and arrears for the past few sugar seasons on a similar cut-off date is as under: -

Table 2
Season-Wise Cane Price Arrears Position Rs.in crores

Season	Position as on	Total Price Payable	Total Price Paid	Arrears	% of arrears on price payable
2008-09	15/09/2009	19691.57	19587.57	104.01	0.53
2009-10	15/09/2010	38512.84	38164.65	348.19	0.90
2010-11	15/09/2011	44685.87	43985.21	700.67	1.57
2011-12	15/09/2012	51571.31	50503.33	1067.98	2.07
2012-13	15/09/2013	59707.59	56248.50	3459.09	5.79
2013-14	15/09/2014	57868.32	50381.41	7486.91	12.94

Source: Note of Directorate of Sugar, 2014, p.2-3

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study attempts to probe into the socioeconomic characteristics of Sugarcane workers in Karnataka in general and Bidar district in particular.

1. To study the socio-economic background of selected Sugarcane workers in the study area and;
2. To study the problems causes of sugarcane workers working in different sugar factories.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The present research study has based on primary data. The Primary data is first-hand data fresh and authentic for the research study. The collect the required primary data through Selection of Sample, Questionnaires, Field visit, Interviews, Attending the meetings, Data processing and Selection of Sample. The set of questionnaires will prepare to collect detailed information for research work. The questionnaires will have prepared in the English language for the convenience of Sugarcane workers. All these questionnaires will be pre-tested and then finalized of respondents. The analysis of the socio-economic background of the selected workers has helped to explain the situational factors. The specific focus of the paper is on the understanding of the socio-economic background of sugarcane workers and

transporting workers of Bidar district working in the field of six sugar factories in Bidar district during the season of 2019-20.

V. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION:

In order to authentic the data analysis, one need to employ both the qualitative and the quantitative variables. For the present study (SPSS) Statistical Package for Social Sciences has been employed, because it has wide range of statistical techniques for effective classifications are used.

Socio-demographic data are shown in Table 1. The majority of workers (87.50% of male and 12.50% of female) were male and younger than 230 years of age. Most sugarcane workers were migrants from the rural area with a medium level of education.

Table-3

Socio-demographic characteristics of workers involved in the sugar cane worker

Characteristics	No	%
Gender		
Male	175	87.50
Female	25	12.50
Total	200	100.00
Age (years)		
18-25	72	36.00
26-30	44	22.00
31-35	32	16.00
36-40	12	6.00
41-45	14	7.00
46-50	13	6.50
51-55	9	4.50
56-60	4	2.00
Total	200	100.00
Education (years)		
Illiterate	75	37.50
Up to SSLC	97	48.50

PUC and Above	28	14.00
Total	200	100.00
Origin		
Urban	24	12.00
Rural	176	88.00
Total	200	100.00

Source: Field Study

Table-4
Economic status of the respondents

Economic factors	Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Monthly income	Bellow-1000	4	2.00
	1000-3000	48	24.00
	4000-6000	120	60.00
	6000-Above	28	14.00
	Total	200	100.00
Types of ration card	APL	32	16.00
	BPL	168	84.00
	Total	200	100.00
Income sufficient to lead family	Yes	80	40.00
	No	120	60.00
	Total	200	100.00
Habit of saving	Yes	152	76.00
	No	48	24.00
	Total	200	100.00
Membership of self-help groups	Yes	116	58.00
	No	84	42.00
	Total	200	100.00

Source: filed study

The above table indicates that the majority i.e. 60% of respondents has from Rs. 4000-6000 monthly income range and it shows that the domestic workers salary is

very low. The 84% of the respondents were belongs to the BPL ration card because most of the domestic workers are living under the below poverty line. The 60% of the respondents said that their income is not sufficient to lead their family in at present; it indicates that the women domestic workers income level is very low compared to the other work. The 58% of respondents are had membership of self-help groups and know about the importance of saving habit for the future survival

Work Activity: -

The land ownership pattern has close relation with the nature of work at native of the labourers. It is clear that all workers are from agricultural background. Some of them are owners of agricultural land, whereas some of them are landless agricultural labourers who work on wages at native.

Manual cutters start their work shift at 7am after they eat breakfast (bread with butter, milk with coffee, and a drink enriched with mineral salts) supplied by the mill. The typical shift ends at 3:20pm and workers are transported to places close to their houses. A day off is taken every five worked days.

When they arrive to the working place, each worker receives a portion of the plantation to cut as designated by the group leader. To manually cut the cane, workers need to bend, which forms an angle less than 90 degrees between their spinal column and lower limbs. With one hand, they hold a bundle of stalks of sugar cane and with the other hand they use a machete to cut the plant very close to the ground. Then, the worker lifts the cut sugar cane bundle of stalks and carries it for about two meters, laying it on piles.

This set of body movements is repeated continuously during the eight-hour shift. This work is extremely exhausting, heavy and repetitive, leading workers to exhaustion by the end of their shift. At the end of the day, each worker identifies his/er cut area and the amount of sugar cane cut is measured by the group leader and registered in the cutter's monthly production.

Occupational risks in the perception of workers: -

A total of 89.7% of sugarcane workers stated they are exposed to multiple risks, which are classified according to the frequency they were cited: accidents and respiratory problems are the most noted risks. Occupational accidents result from

machete handling and exposure to venomous animals. Respiratory problems are related to constant exposition to soil dust and burned sugar cane soot.

Concerning the occurrence of occupational accidents, 33.3% of the workers stated they had already had several machete accidents while cutting sugar cane, which caused cuts on the upper and lower limbs, mainly on the hands, legs and feet.

Health problems in the perception of workers: -

According to one of the group leaders, workers have numerous health problems, but claim not to have them for fear of not being re-hired by the company for future harvests. One worker reported he was under treatment for recently diagnosed depression and another disclosed having chronic pain in his upper limbs.

Regarding workers' perceptions of physical and psychological fatigue, 74.4% of the manual cutters reported fatigue and body aches at the end of a working day while 17.9% admitted having mental fatigue. Half of the mechanical operators admitted feeling body fatigue at the end of the shift while 31.2% stated they felt mental fatigue, stress or tension due to the 10-hour shift and resting only on the 12th day.

VI. CONCLUSION:

The health and illnesses of the sugar cane workers studied is determined by the interaction of individual, social and environmental factors, which is the main assumption of the Social Ecological Theory. This theory explains the complexities and interdependencies between socio-economic, cultural, political, environmental, organizational, psychological, and biological factors as determinants of health. It also proposes that any individual behavior is based on and influenced by numerous other systems and groups. Hence, the theoretical approach used in this study permitted the identification of multidimensional determinants of the health of sugar cane workers.

Given the complexity of the problem studied, further research aimed at developing health promotion and minimizing occupational risks and health problems to which workers involved in the manual and mechanized sugar cane cutting industry in Brazil are exposed, is needed.

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