

**Livelihood Securites and its Status Implications Among Women Agricultural Labourers In  
Erode District**

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*Abstract*

*Livelyhood means securing the necessities of life. Livelihood is also defined as a set of activities performed to live for a given life span, involving securing water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing and the capacity to acquire the mentioned necessities working either individually or as a group. About livelihood concept agro based women face challenges in access to resources, knowledge and services because of inequalities in Gender issues. This study aims at analyzing the awareness on livelihood securites of women agricultural labourers in Erode district. The present study is confined to a sample of 600 women agricultural labour respondents selected from 24 revenue villages selected from 6 blocks of Erode, Gobichettipalayam and Sathyamangalam taluks of Erode district in Tamil Nadu. The study finds that the explanatory variables viz., number of household members, age difference with spouse, number of children and dependency ratio have registered with negative signs and significant at 1% levels; while family type, respondents age, education, educational difference with spouse, access to ownership of assets, access to media and communication, access to political participation and log percapita income have registered with the expected positive signs and significant between 1% levels. The study recommends that in the short run, it is important to assess the actual impact of policies and programmes that can match the intended impact. Second, in the medium to long run, policies need to improve the status of women by acknowledging the crucial role they play as harbinger of household food security and nutritional status and as major contributors to the overall household economy. The study concludes with the fact that the level of livelihood security of women agricultural labourers in the rural areas of Erode district is far from satisfactory.*

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**Key Words: Livelyhood, Nutritional status, Household food security and Household economy**

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### **1.1. Introduction**

A person's livelihood refers to his "means of securing the basic necessities -food, water, shelter and clothing-of life". Livelihood is defined as a set of activities, involving securing water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing and the capacity to acquire above necessities working

either individually or as a group by using endowments (both human and material) for meeting the requirements of the self and his/her household on a sustainable basis with dignity. The activities are usually carried out repeatedly. **Household Livelihood Security (Hls)** Household Livelihood Security is defined as adequate and sustainable access to income and resources to meet basic needs (including adequate access to food, potable water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing, and time for community participation and social integration).

**Food Security** Food security is better defined as sufficient food consumption by all people at all times for a healthy and productive life. **Economic Security** Economic security is the capacity to generate sufficient income to satisfy the basic needs and to maintain or increase the goods necessary for the stability of the family economy. The recommended indicators that can provide insight on vulnerability of women are women's income earnings, savings, land holdings and the level of productive and unproductive assets. **Health Security** The capacity of individuals to identify, prevent, and manage significant risks to their health is the operational definition of health security used in the present study. A large number of indicators are available to measure health security of women depending on the nature of the intervention in the health sector. However, for the present purpose, the selected indicators, as per CARE recommendation, were the level of pre-natal and post-natal services, access to health services and quality of sanitation facility. There is a widespread belief that adequate care during pregnancy, delivery and the post natal period can improve the health of the mother. **Education Security** The present investigation refers educational security as the capacity of individuals to obtain / receive and benefit from a basic education. The indicators used in the present study were women's literacy level, availability and accessibility to schools. Literacy level of the women is associated with higher income, lower fertility rates, lower infant mortality and improved nutrition. **Habitat Security Of Women** It is defined as the access of individuals to adequate shelter and related resources to ensure that they have a healthy and sanitary environment, protection from harm and detrimental elements to enable safe and secure livelihoods. The quality of housing and access to safe drinking water were the parameters used for the assessment of habitat security of women. **Livelihood Security Index** The Livelihood Security Index according to the presented study is a composite index measuring the security components viz., Economic security index (ECOSI), Food security index (FOOSI), Health security index (HEASI), Education security index (EDUSI) and Empowerment index (EMPOI).

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

The heavy workload of women in rural areas has more recently been aggravated by considerable male migration to the urban areas and beyond in search for better income opportunities. Other common problems of rural women are their limited access to social services, credit and agricultural extension, literacy rates are low and they have minimum or no control over resources. Moreover, there has been very slow progress in amelioration of socio-economic status and livelihood security of women, especially in rural areas because of their uniqueness inherited a lot of myths and taboos. There is an urgent need for a focused understanding of the status of women and participation of working on the sources of livelihood security for the women themselves and for the family as a whole. Keeping the crux of the above problems of women in view, the present study entitled “**LIVELIHOOD SECURITY OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN ERODE DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU**” is an attempt in this direction.

## 1.3. Objectives of the Study

- ✓ To identify the factors associated with economic, food, health, education and empowerment as different domains of livelihood security of women in Erode District.
- ✓ To quantitative estimates of the determinants of livelihood security of women in the study area.
- ✓ To identify the structural variables that impedes livelihood security of women in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, and

## 1.4. Research Methodology

The present study is confined to a sample of 600 women agricultural labour respondents selected from 24 revenue villages selected from 6 blocks of Erode, Gobichettipalayam and Sathyamangalam taluks of Erode district in Tamil Nadu. A conventional statistical analysis viz., Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Maximum and Minimum values of the variables were performed to identify the mean statistics of the variables are that included in the study. The duration of the primary data collection period was from April 2013 to March 2014. The major

limitations of the study are the results confined only to the Erode district regions and may not be generalized to other regions and a survey method normally involves recall bias.

### 1.5. Analysis and Discussion

**Table.1.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis on the Women Livelihood Security Variable**

Variables	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Economic Security Index	0.435	0.333	0.212	0.000	0.833
Food Security Index	0.358	0.333	0.172	0.167	0.833
Health Security Index	0.516	0.500	0.253	0.200	1.000
Education Security Index	0.517	0.500	0.264	0.167	1.000
Empowerment Index	0.540	0.500	0.252	0.000	1.000
CLSI	0.473	0.470	0.123	0.180	0.810
FAMILY	1.260	1.000	0.439	1	2
NOHM	3.965	4.000	1.488	1	14
AGER	40.513	39.000	10.564	22	70
ADBS	4.713	5.000	2.839	0	17
NOCF	1.925	2.000	1.355	1	7
REDL	4.375	4.500	4.382	0	17
EDWS	1.215	0.000	4.029	-10	19
DEPR	0.556	0.600	0.255	0.00	1.00
ASSET	0.245	0.000	0.430	0	1
MEDIA	0.588	1.000	0.493	0	1
POLT	0.215	0.000	0.493	0	1
LOG-PINH	9.768	9.721	2.049	2.01	12.54

*Source - Primary Data*

It is seen from the analysis that the total sample women agricultural labourer households (600) selected for the study, on an average only 16 per cent of the households were joint families; while 84 per cent were nuclear types. The average size of the family relating to the composite data was worked out to 4 and varies between the minimum of 1 to the maximum of 14. The average age of the respondent households for the data was 40.51 years and the average number of children below the age 7 years in a family of the selected households in the district was 2; lies between 22 and 70 years; while the mean age for their spouses was 45.22 years and ranges between 22 and 87 years. The mean age difference between the respondents and spouse was about 5 years. The average years of schooling by the women agricultural labour households was 4.37 years while it was 5.58 years for their spouses; one mean year of schooling by the

women sample respondents for the district level data was 4.37 years; it was 5.58 years for their spouses. The average educational difference between the respondents and their spouse was less than 1.22 years. In other words, on an average there is significant difference between the respondent women and her husband in the context of educational attainment. The dependency ratio of the households selected for the study was worked out to be little more than 55 per cent in the district indicating the fact that vast majority of the family members in a household selected for the study were deemed to be the dependents, either in the form of children and or aged. On an average, 25 per cent of the women respondents selected for the study have ownership access to household immovable assets. The poor record of ownership title to the women respondents in this district showed that inspite of the statutory rights granted to women in family properties, majority of the women in these areas remained voiceless in their claim of ownership right to assets. The percentage of women respondents who have/had political access to decision making was worked out to 21 per cent indicating the fact that political awareness to the households in rural areas in Erode district are generally dissimal. It is also seen from the estimates that the mean logarithmic value of the per capita income worked out for the women households selected for the study was 9.76 per cent and ranges between the minimum of 2.01 to the maximum of 12.54.

**Table.1.2. Estimated Results of the Explanatory Variables in the Multiple Regression Analysis**

<b>Explanatory variables</b>	<b>Economic Security Index (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Food Security Index (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Health Security Index (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Education Security Index (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Empowerment Index (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>Cumulative Livelihood Security Index (<math>\beta</math>)</b>
Constant	0.327	0.326	0.577	0.406	0.565	0.440
	(4.671)	(5.821)	(6.952)	(4.721)	(6.807)	(11.000)
FAMILY	0.111*	0.048*	-0.002	0.007	0.116*	0.029**
	(5.045)	(2.667)	(-0.077)	(0.259)	(4.462)	(2.231)
NOHM	-0.002	-0.118*	-0.025*	-0.037	-0.016*	-0.013*
	(-0.286)	(-7.867)	(-3.125)	(-4.625)	(-2.000)	(-3.250)
AGER	0.038**	0.024*	-0.001	0.021*	0.011*	0.027*
	(1.810)	(2.182)	(-1.000)	(1.909)	(3.667)	(2.427)
ADBS	0.002	0.019	-0.016*	-0.005**	0.001	0.003
	(0.667)	(2.361)	(-4.000)	(-1.250)	(0.250)	(1.500)
<i>*Significant at 1 % level, **Significant at 5 % level, ***Significant at 10 % level</i>						

**Table 1.2. Estimated Results of the Explanatory Variables in the Multiple Regression Analysis (Contd....)**

Explanatory variables	Economic Security Index ( $\beta$ )	Food Security Index ( $\beta$ )	Health Security Index ( $\beta$ )	Education Security Index ( $\beta$ )	Empowerment Index ( $\beta$ )	Cumulative Livelihood Security Index ( $\beta$ )
NOCF	-0.024*	-0.027*	0.017	0.011	-0.023*	-0.009**
	(-3.429)	(-4.500)	(1.889)	(1.222)	(-2.556)	(-2.250)
REDL	0.031*	0.011*	0.013*	0.011*	0.012*	0.039**
	(2.583)	(5.500)	(4.333)	(3.667)	(4.000)	(1.857)
EDWS	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.013*	0.027*	0.011**
	(0.500)	(0.500)	(0.667)	(4.333)	(2.077)	(1.833)
DEPR	0.049	-0.065*	0.031	0.036	-0.093*	-0.045**
	(1.361)	(-2.241)	(0.721)	(0.800)	(-2.163)	(-2.143)
ASSET	0.145*	0.054*	-0.040	0.079*	0.046*	0.030**
	(6.905)	(3.176)	(-1.600)	(3.160)	(1.917)	(2.500)
MEDIA	-0.007	0.019	0.092*	-0.006	0.006	0.002
	(-0.389)	(1.267)	(4.381)	(-0.273)	(0.286)	(0.200)
POLT	-0.010	-0.004	0.043*	0.044**	0.016	0.001
	(-0.556)	(-0.267)	(1.955)	(1.913)	(0.727)	(0.091)
LOG-PINH	0.018*	0.012*	0.034*	0.016*	0.029*	0.007**
	(3.600)	(3.000)	(5.667)	(2.667)	(4.783)	(2.333)
R	0.610	0.647	0.557	0.566	0.696	0.531
R <sup>2</sup>	0.581	0.621	0.514	0.544	0.649	0.513
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.573	0.614	0.505	0.535	0.642	0.504
F	2.869	4.716	2.299	2.882	3.214	2.940
N	600	600	600	600	600	600

*\*Significant at 1 % level, \*\*Significant at 5 % level, \*\*\*Significant at 10 % level*

In order to explore the determinants of livelihood security of women, the quantitatively (Multiple Regression) variable were taking to account the Economic Security Index, Food Security Index, Health Security Index, Education Security Index, Empowerment Index and Cumulative Livelihood Security Index (CLSI) as the dependent variable. The multiple regression analysis was performed. Moreover, the advantage of the quantitative regression analysis is estimate the relationship between livelihood security of women with an explanatory variable keeping all at explanatory variables constant. The estimated results of the regression coefficients of the explanatory variables viz., family type [FAMILY], number of household members [NOHM], age of the respondent [AGER], age difference of the respondent with spouse [ADBS], number of children's in a family [NOCF], respondent educational level [REDL], educational difference with spouse [EDWS], dependency ratio [DEPR], ownership access to assets [ASSET],

access to media and communication [MEDIA], access to political participation [POLT] and log per capita income [LOG-PINH] pertaining to the quantitative analysis reveals the following observations; Of these variables included in the model, the explanatory variables viz., number of household members, age difference with spouse, number of children and dependency ratio have registered with negative signs and significant at 1 per cent levels; while family type, respondents age, education, educational difference with spouse, access to ownership of assets, access to media and communication, access to political participation and log per capita income have registered with the expected positive signs and significant between 1 per cent levels. The regression estimates of the quantitative model pertaining to the data showed somewhat different observations for certain explanatory variables and their relationship with women empowerment. For example, contrary to our expectation and hypotheses that respondents educational differences with spouse, access to ownership access, media and political participation negative signs were recorded for these estimates which might be due to the fact that the qualitative perception on women livelihood security might have its own limitations in the study or these contradictions may be attributed to the prevailing customs, cultural bias and tendencies witnessed across the society, which would have their own limitations in empowering women in the area.

Moreover, the estimated regression coefficients pertaining to the composite data presented in Table No-2 indicated the fact that the fitted regression equation is statistically significant according to the livelihood security perception made in the study and explained 53 per cent variation respectively in livelihood security which is due to the explanatory variables and depicts a moderate goodness of fit. The R<sup>2</sup> values of multiple regression models. The F values of the models are highly found significant and indicate that systematic variation in the livelihood security variables are considerably larger. The positive signs registered for the explanatory variables namely family type, age, education, educational difference between spouse, access to ownership of assets, access to media and communication, access to political participation and log per capita income are those factors whose impact might make guidance's and direct the policy makers and the institutions involved in the livelihood security process, would enhance the women livelihood security programmes across the country.

The negative signs registered for the explanatory variables viz., number of household members, number of children in a family and dependency ratio have indicated for negative relationship with livelihood security of women. In other words, according to the livelihood security perception, respondent families are as joint family less would be the livelihood security; more is the family size less is the livelihood security of women as could not spare adequate time to know things. Greater is the age difference with spouse less is the scope for women livelihood security. Similarly, more is the number of children's in a family less is the livelihood security of women. Greater is the educational difference with spouse more is the livelihood security of women. Larger the dependency ratio more is the amount spends for the household therefore less would be the livelihood security of women. The positive signs of the estimated regression coefficient pertaining to the composite data are the indicative of the positive relationship of the explanatory variables with composite livelihood security index of agriculture labourer women. In other words, more is the respondents age greater is the livelihood security of women, higher the educational status of the respondents more would be the livelihood security. When the respondent of the households is nuclear more is the scope for livelihood security of women. Similarly, greater is the respondent access to asset ownership and log per capita income of the household, higher is the livelihood security of women. The results obtained from the study therefore clearly depict the fact that women livelihood security in rural areas of the one selected for the study has some distinct requirements viz., age maturity, increasing the level of education, ownership access to assets and higher the log per capita income.

## **1.6. Findings of the Study**

### **1.6.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis**

The results of the descriptive statistics performed in the study showed that the total sample women agricultural labourer households (600) selected for the study, on an average only 16 per cent of the households were joint families; while 84 per cent were nuclear types. The average size of the family relating to the composite data was worked out to 4 and varies between the minimum of 1 to the maximum of 14. The average age of the respondent households for the data was 40.51 years and the average number of children below the age 7 years in a family of the selected households in the district was 2; lies between 22 and 70 years; while the mean age for



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### **1.6.2. Determinants of Livelihood Security of Women Agricultural Labourers and their Implications on the Status of Women**

The estimated results of the regression co-efficients of the explanatory variables viz., family type [FAMILY], number of household members [NOHM], age of the respondent [AGER], age difference of the respondent with spouse [ADBS], number of children's in a family [NOCF], respondent educational level [REDL], educational difference with spouse [EDWS], dependency ratio [DEPR], ownership access to assets [ASSET], access to media and communication [MEDIA], access to political participation [POLT] and log per capita income [LOG-PINH] pertaining to the quantitative analysis reveals the following observations; Of these variables included in the model, the explanatory variables viz., number of household members, age

difference with spouse, number of children and dependency ratio have registered with negative signs and significant at 1% levels; while family type, respondents age, education, educational difference with spouse, access to ownership of assets, access to media and communication, access to political participation and log percapita income have registered with the expected positive signs and significant between 1% levels.

The regression estimates of the quantitative model pertaining to the data showed somewhat different observations for certain explanatory variables and their relationship with women empowerment. For example, contrary to our expectation and hypotheses that respondents educational differences with spouse, access to ownership access, media and political participation negative signs were recorded for these estimates which might be due to the fact that the qualitative perception on women livelihood security might have its own limitations in the study or these contradictions may be attributed to the prevailing customs, cultural bias and tendencies witnessed across the society, which would have their own limitations in empowering women in the area.

### **1.7. Recommendations**

The study recommends that since education being an effective mode of transforming women's livelihood security from the fold of the secondary citizen in a male dominated society to the equal participants of a developed society, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women and Children Welfare and Ministry of Social Justices and Empowerment shall initiate appropriate Educational Training Programmes at village level more effectively. The Department of Agricultural Extension and Directorate of Employment and Training in collaboration with the existing banking institutions in the areas may be entrusted to organise income generation programmes suitable to the village women needs and advance their skills aiming for self reliance. Lack of training programmes on management of various household / agricultural activities, new livelihood avenues, etc., have been pinpointed by the majority of female respondents from both the study areas. For this, the concerned institutions should come forward to impart training on the said aspects and revise their training courses as per the need of the females from time to time. Understanding existing patterns of intra-household allocation is a key step to formulating effective development policies. While policies may affect the intra-household

allocation of resources and the existing intrahousehold allocation may lead to policy failures. Moreover, reallocation within the household may offset the effects of targeted interventions. What is needed is a two-prolonged strategy. First, in the short run, it is important to assess the actual impact of policies and programmes that can match the intended impact. Second, in the medium to long run, policies need to improve the status of women by acknowledging the crucial role they play as harbinger of household food security and nutritional status and as major contributors to the overall household economy.

### **1.8. Conclusion**

To conclude based on the empirical results and discussions thereon the study concluded with the fact that the level of livelihood security of women agricultural labourers in the rural areas of Erode district is far from satisfactory. In spite of many Development Programmes initiated by the Government over years, the socio economic institutions that impede livelihood security of women in the district still has considerable role in the slow progress of livelihood security of women in the areas. The rural women's access to income earning, access asset ownership, political participation, educational access, attending healthcare needs and exposure to family level decision making etc., are yet to be reached to the stake holders. The status of rural women in these areas even today is treated secondary and no importance has been attached to them. Domestic violence, dowry harassments, female infanticide, wife beating, divorce and mental torture still continues which have a serious cumulative negative consequence on women's health and quality of life. Therefore, to move forward with the objectives of the Women Empowerment and Programme initiatives which are operational in the country, the study recommends some concrete steps which are to be attended by all implementing agencies viz., Government Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Women Developmental Organisations and all other stake holders and civil society to stimulate the process of livelihood security of women effectively. Government intervention through legislation, planning and implementation must be stepped up to provide greater opportunity for the sustainable development of women livelihood security at all levels, so that the discriminatory practices of women and the gender related issues against women would be addressed.

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