Temporal shifts in employment pattern of rural landless in Punjab

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ABSTRACT: With the advent of the green revolution after mid sixties, the share of agriculture in Punjab shifted upwards up to 1994-95 and declined thereafter. The decline in employment elasticity of agriculture resulted in fall in demand of human labour over time. The increasing dependence of rural people on agriculture and its inability to absorb any further labour gainfully helped to move labour from agriculture to the non-farm sources of employment. The present study is an attempt at studying the pattern of shift in employment of rural landless labour from that of their ancestral or past occupation. A sample of 120 rural landless workers was selected from the central zone of Punjab using multi-stage random sampling technique to obtain information on occupation, nature and extent of employment and sources of income of the rural landless for the year 2006-07. It was found that rural landless workers shifted their employment from their paternal occupation in the industry of Agriculture to the industries of CSP services, Trade, Construction, and TSC services. Over time, there was negative employment in Agriculture in the casual and regular worker status. In the casual worker status, however, there was a preference for the industry of Construction and Trade. In the regular worker status, there was a preference for the industry of Manufacturing, CSP services, Trade and TSC services. And, in the own account worker category, there was a preference for the industry of Trade, CSP services and TSC services. The main reason for leaving the past employment can be attributed to lower wage and higher drudgery in agriculture. This may be attributed to the low educational base of these people. The provision of appropriate vocational training, creation of non-farm employment opportunities and providing sufficient credit facilities in the rural area may help encourage individual enterprise and self-help groups to raise small scale units in the field of manufacturing, trade and construction.

KEY WORDS: Temporal shifts, labour, Elasticity


INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development in the agrarian state of Punjab has been most spectacular, particularly after mid sixties, with the advent of the green revolution in the country. The share of agriculture in the Punjab economy shifted upward up to 46.28 per cent in 1994-95 and declined thereafter (Central Statistical Organisation 2004). The average size of holding increased from 3.6 hectares in 1990-91 to 4 hectares in 2000-01 (Govt. of Punjab) and the number of landless households in Punjab increased by 29.37 per cent from 1991 to 2001 (Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 2007). The slow gain in labour productivity in agriculture was a reflection of the inability of the agriculture sector to absorb any further labour gainfully and the slow transfer of labour from agriculture reflected the inability of the non-agriculture sector to create employment rapidly enough (Bhaduri, 1996).

Decline in employment elasticity of agriculture has resulted in fall in demand of human labour from 479.32 million mandays in 1983-84 to 421.93 million mandays in 2000-01 (Sidhu and Singh, 2004). The section of the people that is most likely to hit hard by this crisis is rural landless households. Sinha (2007) observed that people come to work in the non-farm sector because they get better income than the farm sector and income was one of the pull factors responsible for shift of the households from farm to non-farm sector. The developmental factors like modernization of agriculture and its commercialization, increased demand for non-agricultural
goods and services, growing literacy, urbanization, etc. have tried to pull the labour force away from farm sector to more lucrative non-farm activities. At the same time, distress factors like poverty, unemployment, underemployment and natural calamities like drought have tried to push the rural workforce away from the farm sector to various non-farm activities to supplement their income.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study attempts at studying the overtime scenario of employment of the rural landless labour by comparing the present employment pattern of rural landless with the employment of their ancestral occupation or the one being handled by them at least 5 years ago. For this purpose, a sample of 120 rural landless workers was selected from the two districts, namely, Amritsar and Ludhiana using multi-stage random sampling technique. Four blocks were selected randomly from each of the two districts as the first stage sampling unit, one village from the each selected block was selected randomly as the second stage sampling unit. Keeping in view the National Industrial Classification 2004 (NIC-2004), all the rural landless households in each selected village were classified into nine groups, and, fifteen rural landless households were selected randomly from each of the selected eight villages taking into consideration the percent households falling in each industry by occupation. Information on the important parameters including age, education, caste, occupation, employment status, nature and extent of employment and sources of income, etc in the selected sample was obtained for the year 2006-07. Simple tabular analysis was done to analyze the information thus collected and arrive at the conclusions of the study.

**RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The results obtained from the present investigation have been discussed under following heads:

**Overtime scenario of employment :**

To study overtime scenario of employment of rural landless labour, it was considered that people do stick to their ancestral occupation; and, that they do not shift to another employment in the light of risk and uncertainties. Therefore, an effort was made to find out how many shifts, on an average, were made in employment during the past by landless labourers in rural area. Also, the present industry of employment along with nature of work handled by rural landless was compared to the one held in past considering both whether one’s occupation was ancestral or otherwise. Further, reasons were also ascertained for leaving the previous job before shifting to another employment.

**Tempor al shifts in employment :**

There were many rural landless workers who had changed not only the industry where they were employed with but nature of work also while making shift from one industry to another during their past. The average number of shifts in employment made by them during their life time has been given in Table 1.

The results given in Table 1 indicate 47.50 per cent of the respondents continued with their present employment in the light of the fact that there were not many options available with the rural landless. Out of those who shifted their employment, there was, on an average, only one shift made by 0.83 per cent of the rural landless workers during the past one year while 7.50 per cent made 1.44 shifts in employment between one to 5 years, and 44.17 per cent shifted their employment approximately 2.42 times during their past but not within last 5 years. The average number of shifts made in employment by all the sample respondents worked out to 1.18 only.

**Shift from paternal occupation :**

It was really interesting to know how many rural landless workers have been continuing with their paternal occupation and how many have departed away from their parent’s occupation. To answer this query, information pertaining to employment of the sample respondents and that of their parent occupation was ascertained and the same has been depicted in the Table 2.

**Shift in industry of employment :**

Table 2 gives the shift from paternal occupation for 120 rural landless workers. It was revealed from the table that during the year of investigation, the industry of CSP services gave maximum employment, i.e. 24.17 per cent to the rural landless. The per cent workers employed in the industries of agriculture,
Construction, Trade, Manufacturing, TSC and Utilities, during the same period was 20.83, 16.67, 15.83, 13.33, 8.33 and 0.83, respectively. Industry wise paternal employment of these respondents revealed that agriculture was the most important industry for them as 55.00 per cent of them found employment in this industry whereas 15.83, 9.17, 9.17, 7.50 and 3.33 per cent were employed with the industries of CSP services, Manufacturing, Construction, Trade and TSC, respectively. Thus, the results showed that 34.17 per cent respondents shifted from their paternal industry of employment, namely Agriculture alone to other industries. The per cent of respondents shifting employment to other industries, viz., CSP services, Trade, Construction, TSC, Manufacturing and Utilities was found to be 8.34, 8.33, 7.5, 5, 4.16 and 0.83 per cent, respectively. It may be concluded from the results, that finding low avenues with Agriculture, respondents shifted to the other industries. CSP services and Trade were the most sought after industries followed by construction, TSC and manufacturing while Utilities was least preferred in Punjab to seek employment with.

**Shift in nature of employment:**

The information on shift in nature of employment revealed that overall the industries, the respondents shifted from casual worker status to own account worker and regular worker status. At present, there were 28 respondent landless persons working on own account while 49 were employed as regular worker and 43 in the category of the casual worker. The results showed that there was a positive shift in favour of own account worker status by 9.16 per cent respondents whereas in the regular worker category, only 0.83 per cent respondents shifted from their paternal employment and, 10 per cent respondents shifted from their paternal employment of casual worker status to other nature of employment. This showed that status of casual worker did not find much favour with the respondents as they preferred to shift to own account workers status of employment.

As far as the status of own account worker was concerned, there was a positive shift from paternal employment in Agriculture to the fields of Trade, TSC and CSP services by 6.67, 3.33 and 2.5 per cent, respectively and a negative shift from paternal employment in the field of Manufacturing, Agriculture and Construction by 1.67, 0.84 and 0.83 per cent, respectively. In the category of regular status, there was negative shift from paternal employment in the field of Agriculture by 18.33 per cent but there was positive shift in Manufacturing, CSP services, TSC, Construction and Utilities by 6.67, 5, 3.34, 3.33 and 0.83 per cent. The results showed that these industries found favour with the respondents for finding work as a regular worker.

In the category of casual worker status, there was a negative shift from paternal employment of respondents in the industries of Agriculture, TSC and Manufacturing by 15, 1.67 and 0.83 per cent, the percentage was higher in case of
agriculture because people shifted to other industries perhaps due to the fact that wages in Agriculture were relatively low. A positive shift in the industries of paternal employment, i.e. Construction, Trade and CSP services by 5, 1.67 and 0.84 per cent showed that these industries were preferred to other industries so far work as casual worker was concerned.

From these results, it may be concluded that there was a negative shift by 34.17 per cent in paternal employment in the industry of Agriculture as the persons mostly shifted from this industry to other industries. The industries of CSP services, Trade and Construction were most preferred by the respondents over the other industries. And, the respondents preferred to seek employment in the status of own account worker compared to regular and casual worker status in Punjab.

Shift from past employment:

Many rural landless workers in Punjab had shifted employment from one industry to another during their past and changed the nature of employment as well from that of their past employment. The nature of employment of these respondents in the past in comparison to the present and shift from one industry to another over time has been displayed out in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the results regarding industry and nature of employment of the rural landless workers in Punjab in the past and at present along with shift in employment over time.

In Punjab, there were, in all, 63 persons who had shifted employment from one industry to another due to one or the other reasons. It will be observed from the table that, at present, a maximum of 28.57 per cent of the rural landless workers in Punjab were employed with the industry of CSP services followed by 20.63 per cent in Construction, 15.87 per cent in Trade, 14.29 per cent in Manufacturing, 12.70 per cent in TSC, 6.35 per cent in Agriculture and only 1.59 per cent in Utilities. In past, the percentage of respondents employed with industries of Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction, CSP services, TSC, Trade and Utilities was found to be 20.63, 20.63, 20.63, 17.46, 11.11, 7.94 and 1.59, respectively. The results thus showed that there was a positive shift in the industry of CSP services, Trade and TSC by 11.11, 7.93 and 1.59 per cent and a negative shift in the field of Agriculture and Manufacturing by 14.28 and 6.34 per cent.

As far as the nature of employment was concerned, there was no shift in employment in regular worker status. However, there was a positive shift in own account worker status by 4.77 per cent and a negative shift in casual worker status by 4.77 per cent. These results showed that, overtime, 4.77 per cent persons working as casual worker shifted to own account worker status.

Again, it was observed from the Table 3 in case of the own account worker category that there was a positive shift in favour of the industries of CSP services, Trade and TSC services by 4.76, 4.76 and 1.59 per cent and there was a negative shift in
the industries of Agriculture and Manufacturing by 3.17 per cent each. In case of regular worker category, there was a positive shift in employment in the TSC, Construction and Agriculture by 3.17, 3.17 and 1.59 per cent and there was a negative shift in Manufacturing and CSP services by 6.35 and 1.59 per cent, respectively. In case of casual worker status, there was a negative shift to Agriculture, Construction and TSC by 12.7, 3.17 and 3.17 per cent and there was a positive shift in the employment in the field of CSP services, Manufacturing and Trade by 7.94, 3.18 and 3.17 per cent, respectively.

From these results, it may be concluded that, there was a negative shift in employment in the industries of Agriculture and Manufacturing and a positive shift in the industries of Trade, TSC and CSP services. According to the nature of employment, there was a negative shift in the casual status of employment and a positive shift in the own account worker and no shift in the regular worker status of employment.

**Reasons for leaving job:**

It has already been discussed that some of the rural landless workers shifted their employment in the past from one industry to another and changed nature of job handled by them. The respondents had sufficient reasons for leaving their previous employment before switching over to the present one. The reasons assigned by them have been displayed out in Table 4.

There were four major reasons for leaving the job. These were lower wages, poor health, change in work and retirement from job. Lower wage was the main reason for leaving the previous job as mentioned by 47.62 per cent of the respondents. Desire to change work, poor health and retirement were the other reasons given by 26.98, 15.87 and 9.53 per cent of the respondents for leaving the job, respectively.

It was further observed from Table 4 that, the maximum number of persons left the job from the industries of agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction followed by the industry of CSP services and the minimum left the job from the industries of Trade and Utilities. The percentage of respondents leaving job due to lower wages were found to be 11.11 per cent each in Agriculture and Manufacturing, 9.52 per cent in Construction, 6.35 per cent in TSC and 4.76 per cent each from Trade and CSP services.

The number of landless workers leaving job due to poor health were found to be 6.35 per cent in the industry of Construction followed by 4.76 per cent from agriculture, 3.17 per cent from TSC and 1.59 per cent from that of Manufacturing. Due to Desire to change work, 7.94 per cent of the respondents left the job in the industry of Manufacturing, 4.76 per cent each from Agriculture, Construction and CSP services, 3.17 per cent from Trade, and 1.59 per cent from TSC, respectively. And, on account of retirement, 7.94 per cent of the rural landless workers left the job from the industry of CSP services and 1.59 per cent from that of Utilities.

From these results, thus, it may be concluded that lower wages and poor health were the main reasons assigned by the rural landless workers to leave the job from the industries of Agriculture and Construction while desire to change work was the main reason for leaving job from the industries of Manufacturing and CSP services.

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**Table 4: Reasons for leaving job by rural landless workers (Punjab, 2006-2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Lower wages</th>
<th>Poor health</th>
<th>Desire to change work</th>
<th>Retired</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7 (11.11)</td>
<td>3 (4.76)</td>
<td>3 (4.76)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>13 (20.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>7 (11.11)</td>
<td>1 (1.59)</td>
<td>5 (7.94)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>13 (20.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>1 (1.59)</td>
<td>1 (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>6 (9.52)</td>
<td>4 (6.35)</td>
<td>3 (4.76)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>13 (20.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>3 (4.76)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>2 (3.17)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>5 (7.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transports, storage and comm.</td>
<td>4 (6.35)</td>
<td>2 (3.17)</td>
<td>1 (1.59)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>7 (11.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community, social and personal services</td>
<td>3 (4.76)</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
<td>3 (4.76)</td>
<td>5 (7.94)</td>
<td>11 (17.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30 (47.62)</td>
<td>10 (15.87)</td>
<td>17 (26.98)</td>
<td>6 (9.52)</td>
<td>63 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total.
Conclusions:

It may be safely concluded from the results that rural landless workers shifted their employment from their paternal occupation in the industry of Agriculture to the industries of CSP services, Trade, Construction, and TSC services. Over time, there was negative employment in Agriculture in the casual and regular worker status. In the casual worker status, however, there was a preference for the industry of Construction and Trade. In the regular worker status, there was a preference for the industry of Manufacturing, CSP services, Trade and TSC services. And, in the own account worker category, there was a preference for the industry of Trade, CSP services and TSC services. The main reason for leaving the past employment can be attributed to lower wage and higher drudgery in agriculture. This may be attributed to the low educational base of these people. The provision of appropriate vocational training, creation of non-farm employment opportunities and providing sufficient credit facilities in the rural area may help encourage individual enterprise and self help groups to raise small scale units in the field of manufacturing, trade and construction.

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LITERATURE CITED


