

A SOCIO LEGAL STUDY ON MINIMUM WAGES FOR AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN TAMILNADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT :

The **introduction** is about the issue of minimum wages for agricultural labourers in Tamil Nadu, with special reference to the Chennai region and its surrounding rural areas. Agricultural workers play a vital role in the economy, yet many of them continue to face unfair wage practices, lack of proper contracts, and exploitation. Despite legal provisions, a large number of workers do not receive the minimum wages guaranteed by law. This research aims to examine the wage conditions of agricultural labourers, assess the role of government authorities, and analyse the implementation of wage-related laws and policies in ensuring justice for workers. The **aim** of this study is to explore the socio-legal aspects of minimum wages for agricultural labourers, especially in the context of Chennai, and to understand the ground realities faced by workers. The **objectives** include determining the main challenges in receiving fair wages, evaluating workers' awareness of their wage rights, analysing the role of government inspections, and identifying wage discrimination based on gender and caste. The **methodology** used here empirical research method, samples have been collected using a convenient sampling method and total of 203 samples have been collected for the study. The sample frame taken here is of public areas in and around Chennai. The **findings** reveal that many workers are unaware of their legal rights, are afraid to demand fair wages, and suffer from caste and gender discrimination. Government monitoring is found to be weak. The **conclusion** highlights the urgent need for stronger legal enforcement, regular inspections, awareness campaigns, and support systems to protect agricultural workers' rights and promote wage justice in Tamil Nadu.

KEYWORDS : Minimum wage regulations, Agricultural labor, Labor rights, Economic impact, Fair wage, unfair wage..

INTRODUCTION :

Minimum wages for agricultural labour are essential to ensure that farmers and land workers earn enough to live a decent life. In Tamil Nadu, agriculture continues to be a major source of employment, especially in rural and semi-urban areas like Chennai's outskirts. However, many agricultural workers are underpaid, unaware of their rights, or face discrimination in wage distribution. This socio-legal study looks into the legal protections,

social challenges, and practical realities faced by these workers.

AIM:

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of minimum wage laws for agricultural labourers in Tamil Nadu, especially in the Chennai region. It seeks to understand how legal provisions are implemented on the ground and whether they ensure fair and just compensation for rural workers. The study also aims to highlight the challenges faced by

labourers, such as lack of awareness, discrimination, and poor enforcement mechanisms. By doing so, it strives to evaluate the socio-legal impact of wage policies and recommend measures to strengthen labour rights and economic justice in the agricultural sector.

EVOLUTION:

The concept of minimum wages in India began with the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, which aimed to protect unskilled and low-paid workers. Over the years, Tamil Nadu has notified different minimum wage rates for agricultural sectors, but enforcement remains weak. Earlier, wages were based on customs and landlord decisions. Now, the law sets wage rates, but implementation is still a challenge, especially in rural belts near Chennai.

FACTORS AFFECTING:

Agricultural wages in Tamil Nadu are affected by several factors, including the lack of awareness about legal wage rights, which leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation. The seasonal nature of agricultural work creates job insecurity, and caste and gender discrimination often result in lower wages for certain groups, especially women and marginalized communities. Weak legal enforcement further exacerbates these issues, as workers fear losing their jobs if they demand fair wages. The use of informal hiring practices and the presence of migrant workers also contribute to unregulated wage systems, where wages are not guaranteed.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES:

The Tamil Nadu government has introduced several initiatives to address wage issues, such as revising minimum wage notifications regularly to keep up with inflation. The Labour Department conducts inspections, though enforcement remains weak in rural areas. Employment schemes like MGNREGA provide income support during off-seasons, while awareness campaigns aim to educate workers about their wage rights. Despite these efforts,

the gap between legal protections and actual wage practices persists due to enforcement challenges.

CURRENT TRENDS:

In recent years, there is a slow shift toward recognizing agricultural labour rights, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic exposed wage insecurity. New digital platforms are being introduced for grievance redressal, and social audits are being promoted under welfare schemes. However, wage disparity between men and women and between urban and rural areas still exists. The increasing use of migrant labour has also led to more wage violations.

COMPARISON:

In Bangladesh, the agricultural labour market faces similar issues, but the government has created "Wage Boards" for different sectors, including agriculture. The minimum wage law is more centralized and revised regularly based on cost of living. NGOs and local unions play a more active role in enforcement compared to India. However, like Tamil Nadu, wage implementation in Bangladesh also struggles with informal hiring, weak enforcement, and social inequality. This comparison shows that both countries need stronger legal and social systems to protect rural workers.

OBJECTIVES :

- To examine the main challenges faced by agricultural workers in getting fair wages, such as lack of legal awareness, job insecurity, or employer pressure.
- To explore the opinion of agricultural workers on whether more government inspections are needed to make sure fair wages are given.
- To find the best ways to stop discrimination in wage distribution, like equal pay rules, local checking groups, or legal punishments.
- To determine public opinions about wage-related issues like fear of asking for fair pay, gender and caste

discrimination, and lack of government checks.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

1. **Dandekar (1971) aimed** to study the extent of rural poverty in India with a focus on agricultural labour. The objective was to understand income disparities and wage patterns in rural sectors. **Methodology** Using statistical data analysis, the study found that agricultural wages were insufficient and often fell below subsistence levels. Minimum wage laws existed but were rarely enforced in practice. His methodology included secondary data from government reports and rural economic surveys. The **findings** of the study laid the foundation for understanding the socio-economic vulnerability of farm workers.
2. **Bardhan (1979) aims** to investigate the agrarian structure and labour relations in India, focusing on the power imbalance between landowners and workers. The objective was to explore how land control affected wage negotiations. He found that large landowners dictated unfair wage rates, and workers lacked bargaining power. The **methodology** was based on field research and economic analysis of rural labour trends. Bardhan highlighted the urgent need for legal reforms and stronger enforcement. **Finding** of the study is directly relevant to wage justice in Tamil Nadu today.
3. **Jose (1981) aimed** to examine labour policies and their effects on rural employment and wages. His objective was to assess the role of government wage legislation in uplifting rural workers. The **findings** showed that agricultural labourers, especially women, were outside the scope of regular legal protections. Jose's **methodology** is a mixed-method approach involving
4. **Bharadwaj (1985). The aim** was to explore structural inequalities in wage distribution. Through detailed case studies and social analysis, she found that Dalit labourers received lower pay than upper-caste workers for the same work. Her **methodology** was qualitative, including in-depth interviews in South Indian villages. This **finding** highlighted the intersection of social and economic justice in wage matters. It supports caste-based wage analysis in the Chennai region.
5. **Vyas and Mathai (1991) aimed** to understand income and employment patterns among agricultural workers in different states. The objective was to compare wage rates across regions. Their findings showed that Tamil Nadu had more structured wage laws but also significant implementation gaps. The **methodology** used survey data and state-level comparisons to arrive at conclusions. It revealed that rural wages were highly dependent on the informal labour market. This study **finds** that in benchmarking Chennai's wage conditions.
6. **Papola (1992) aims** to facilitate the functioning of rural labour markets and legal protection mechanisms for wage earners. The objective was to assess how far existing laws helped agricultural workers. He found that while legal minimum wages were notified, they were rarely enforced on the ground. His **methodology** combined labour law reviews with rural economic data analysis. Papola **found** that the disconnection between legal rights and

real-world conditions harmed wage justice. This adds a legal perspective to current research.

7. **Harriss-White (1999)** focused on informal economies and labour relations in Tamil Nadu's villages. The **aim** was to explore how caste and gender shaped economic opportunities. Using ethnographic studies, she found that agricultural labourers faced regular wage exploitation and social exclusion. Her **methodology** involved long-term rural fieldwork and observation. She **finds** how informal norms overpowered formal wage laws. This has direct relevance to Chennai's semi-urban rural zones.
8. **Jayaraj and Subramanian (2001)** aimed to assess wage trends using household-level data in Tamil Nadu. Their objective was to evaluate if legal minimum wages improved living standards. The study showed that despite legal protections, wages remained stagnant, especially for female workers. The **methodology** used here is NSSO data and economic modelling to support their analysis. The study **finds** the need for targeted gender-sensitive wage enforcement. It informs this research's gender justice dimension.
9. **Srivastava (2005)** aimed to understand labour mobility and wage conditions across regions. The objective was to explore wage exploitation among migrant workers in agriculture. He found that mobile workers in Tamil Nadu were often underpaid and had no access to wage-related legal aid. The **methodology** included interviews with migrants and policy review. This study **finds** that sheds light on the vulnerabilities of informal agricultural labourers in peri-urban areas like Chennai.
10. **Rani and Unni (2009)** aimed to analyse wage inequality with a focus on gender in rural sectors. The objective was to measure how far legal wage policies addressed this gap. They found that women were consistently paid less than men, even with similar skills and hours. The **methodology** used secondary datasets like NSSO and DLHS. Their **findings** underline the structural gender discrimination in agricultural wages. This supports the focus on women's wage rights in this study.
11. **Ramasamy (2010)** aims to conduct research in Tamil Nadu to assess wage law implementation at the village level. His objective was to see whether agricultural workers were aware of their legal wage rights. **Findings** showed low legal awareness and almost no enforcement of notified wage rates. The **methodology** used here field interviews and legal document analysis. The study stressed the need for local-level awareness programs. This insight aligns closely with the Chennai-based labour context.
12. **Mehrotra (2012)** aimed to explore policy efforts in improving rural employment and wages. His objective was to evaluate how employment schemes like MGNREGA influenced wage structures. The **study found** positive wage impacts where MGNREGA was active, but agricultural wages still lagged in non-scheme areas. **Methodology** involved policy evaluation and rural wage trend analysis. This highlights how policy presence affects wage fairness. It is useful for comparing government schemes near Chennai.
13. **Sharma and Srivastava (2013)** aim is to investigate labour vulnerability and access to justice for wage-related disputes. The objective was to study the legal enforcement of wage laws. They

- found that fear of job loss prevented workers from seeking legal help. **Methodology** Using qualitative interviews and legal case analysis, they demonstrated weak implementation. Their study **Finds** the psychological and legal challenges faced by workers. This is relevant for understanding rural Chennai's realities.
14. **NCEUS Report (2014) aimed to** assess the conditions of unorganised labour in India. Its objective was to map wage levels and legal protection across informal sectors. The report **found** that agricultural workers were among the least protected despite existing wage laws. **Methodology** included large-scale secondary data analysis and expert consultations. This authoritative report strengthens the legal and policy base for this research. It gives national context to local findings in Chennai.
 15. **Kannan and Papola (2015) aimed to** review employment trends in the rural economy. Their objective was to determine how job insecurity affected wage levels. **methodology** using macroeconomic data and policy reviews, they found that casual labourers had the weakest wage protection. Their study **finds** the need for stronger labour institutions in rural areas. This supports the institutional reform perspective of this socio-legal study.
 16. **Chand and Srivastava (2016) aim** at rural wage growth and legal compliance with wage policies. The objective was to assess how inflation-adjusted wages performed over time. **Findings** showed that agricultural wages grew slower than other sectors, despite regular revisions of minimum wages. Their **methodology** was a trend analysis using rural labour surveys. This data is useful in understanding long-term wage stagnation in Chennai's outskirts.
 17. **Ghosh (2017) aimed** to compare state-level wage law effectiveness. The objective was to understand if better laws led to better outcomes. He **found** that Tamil Nadu had one of the best wage law frameworks, but implementation was still weak due to lack of inspections. The **methodology** used here is comparative legal analysis across Indian states. This confirms the gap between law and practice in Chennai as well.
 18. **Das (2018)** studied wage enforcement in South Indian states through field interviews. **The aim** was to document worker experiences with wage laws. **The findings** showed that workers rarely used legal mechanisms due to fear and ignorance. His **methodology** combined interviews with case studies from rural blocks. This supports the social and emotional barriers faced by labourers in enforcing wage rights.
 19. **Rajeswari (2019) aim** is to explore wage discrimination based on caste and gender among Tamil Nadu agricultural workers. Her objective was to document real-life inequalities in wage distribution. **Findings** revealed that women from Dalit backgrounds were the most underpaid. The **methodology** used participatory rural appraisal and interviews. This adds depth to understanding intersectional injustice in the Chennai context.
 20. **Karthikeyan and Devi (2021) aim** is to impact the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural wages. Their objective was to study wage insecurity during economic crises. **They found** that wage payments dropped or stopped entirely in several rural areas near Chennai. **Methodology** using a socio-legal method with policy and field study, they concluded that emergency support and wage enforcement mechanisms were insufficient. This aligns with the need for

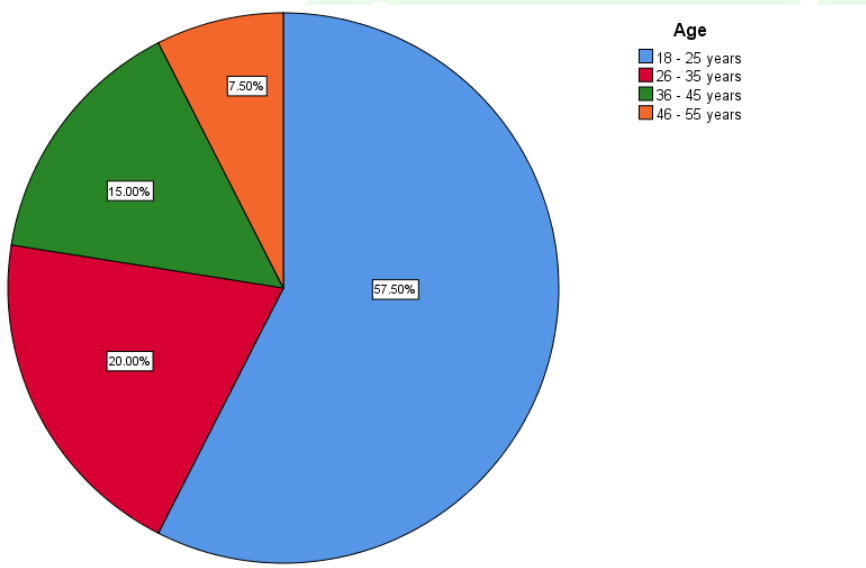
post-pandemic wage security reform in Tamil Nadu.

METHODOLOGY :

The study has been conducted using the **empirical research** method. The samples have been collected using a convenient sampling method. A total of **203 samples** have been

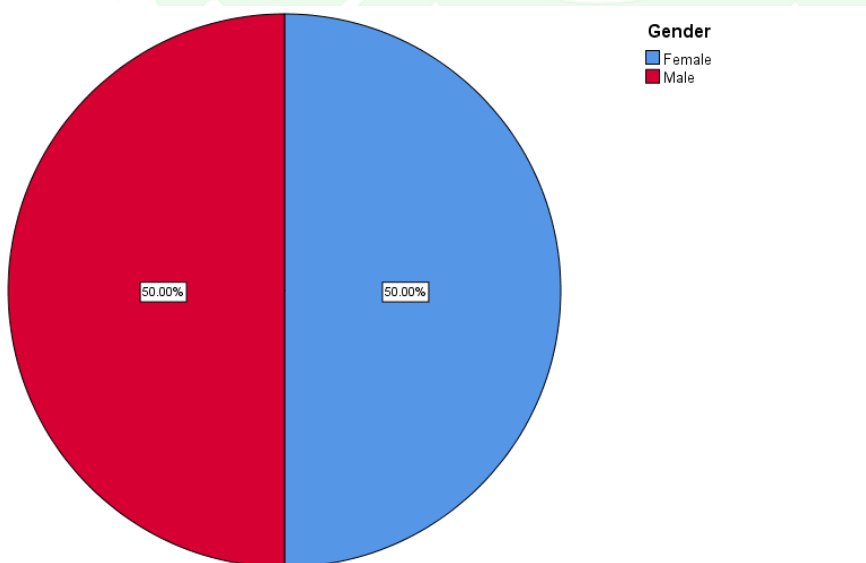
ANALYSIS :

FIGURE 1:



Legend : Shows the age distribution of the respondents.

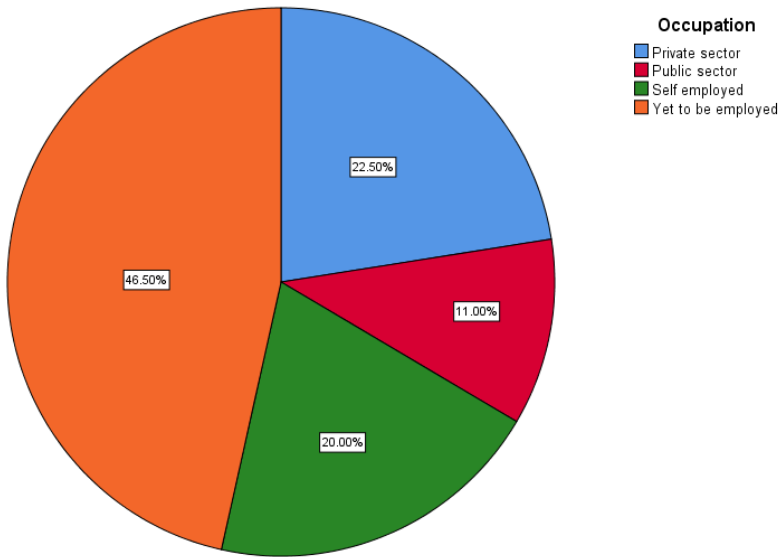
FIGURE 2:



Legend : Shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

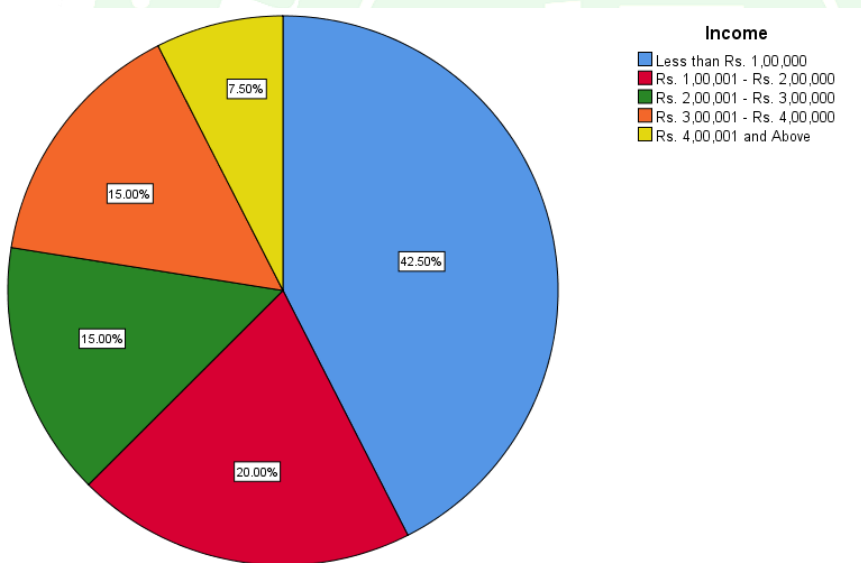
collected for the study. The **sample frame** taken here is of public areas in and around Chennai. The **independent variables** are gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, annual income and marital status. The **dependent variables** are to prevent discrimination in wage distribution:

FIGURE 3:



Legend : Shows the occupation of the respondents.

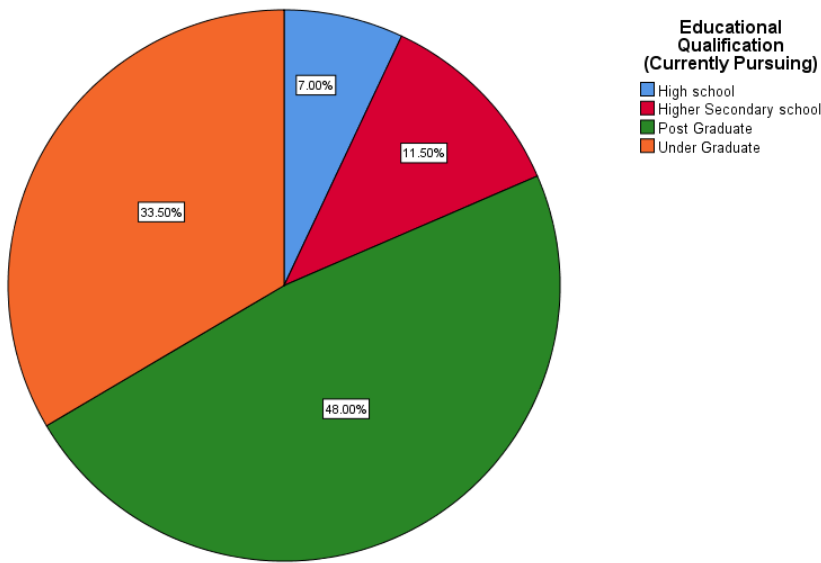
FIGURE 4:



Legend : Shows the income distribution of the respondents.

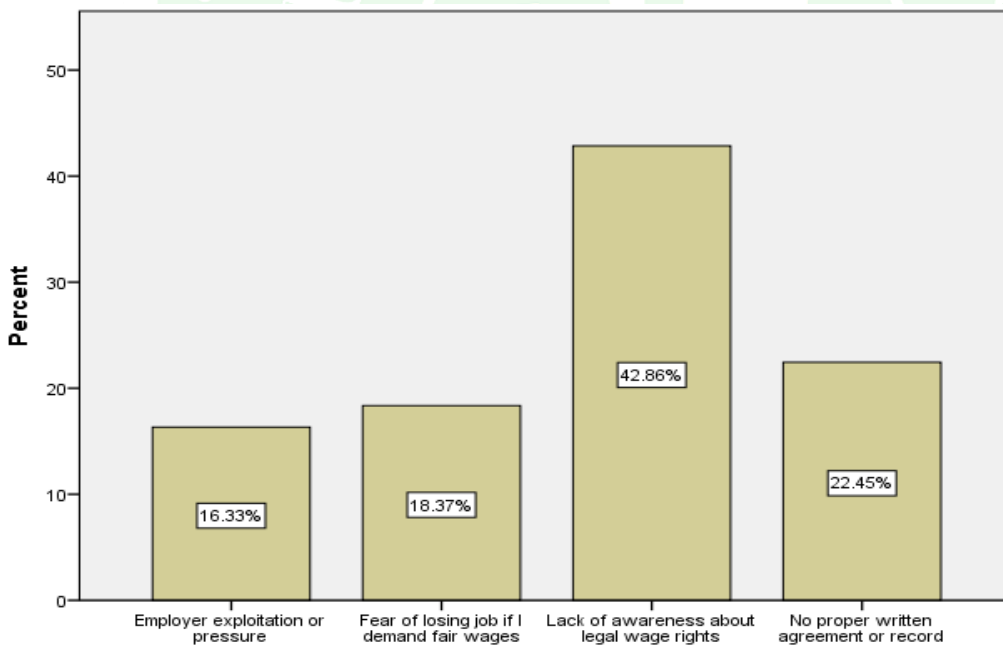


FIGURE 5:



Legend : Shows the educational qualification of the respondents

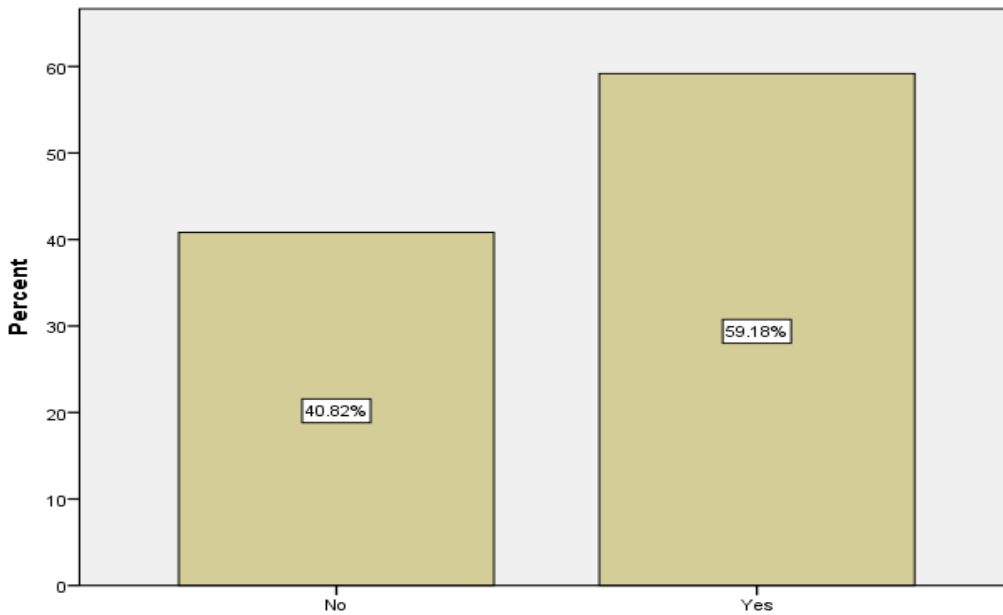
FIGURE 6:



6.The biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work is:

Legend : Shows the biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work.

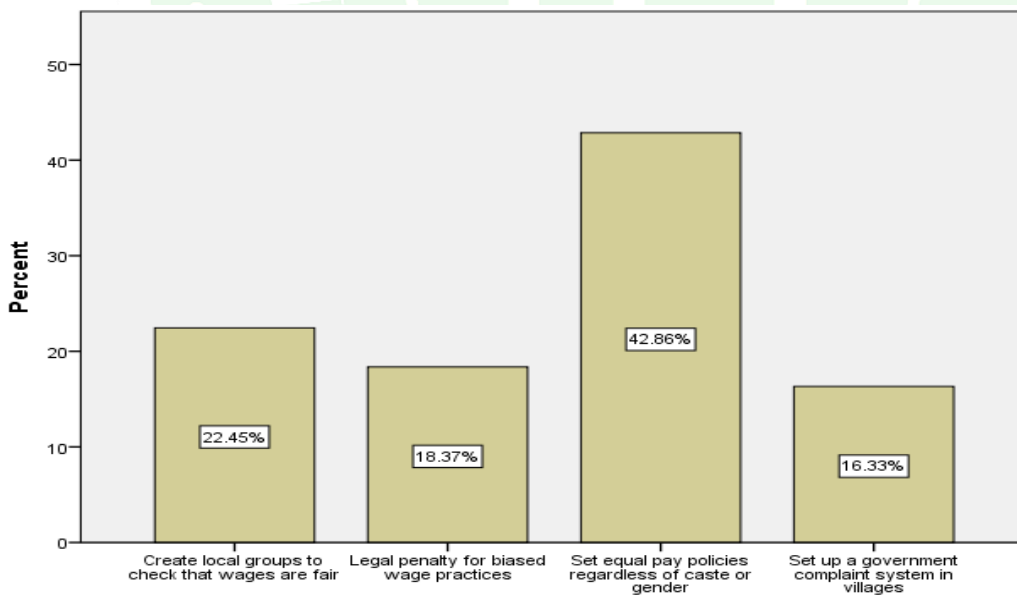
FIGURE 7:



7. Do you believe that more government inspections are needed to ensure fair wages for agricultural workers?

Legend : Shows the belief that more government inspections are needed to ensure fair wages for agricultural workers.

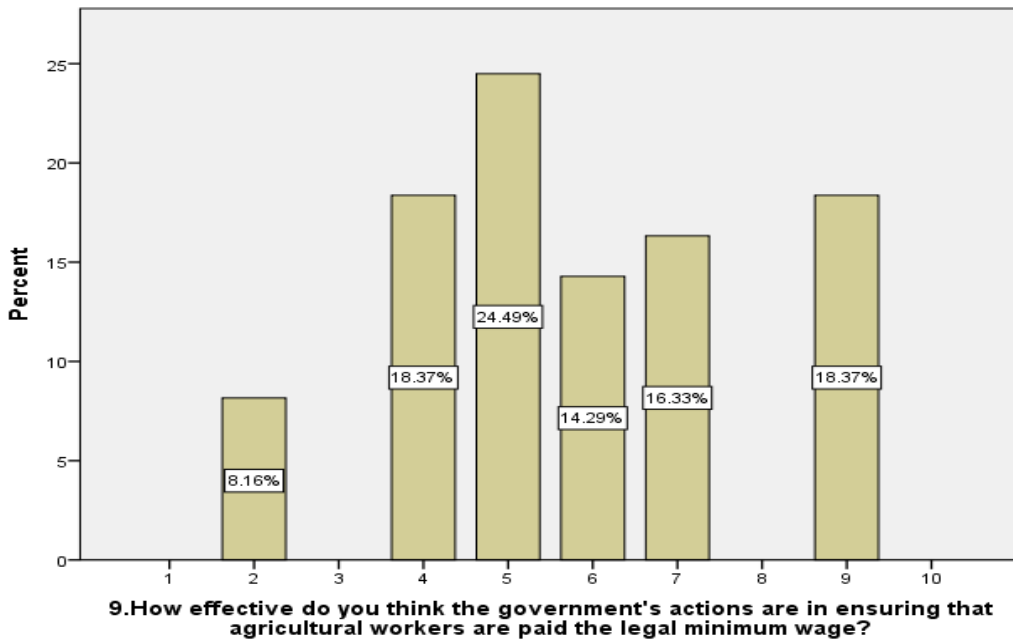
FIGURE 8:



8. To prevent discrimination in wage distribution:

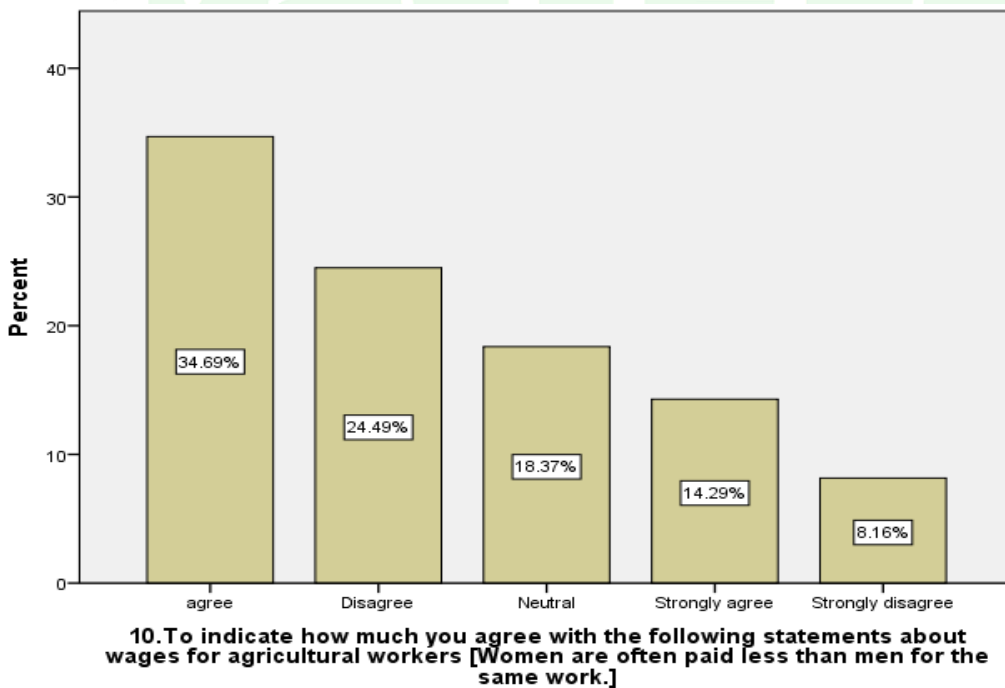
Legend : Shows the method to prevent discrimination in wage distribution:

FIGURE 9:



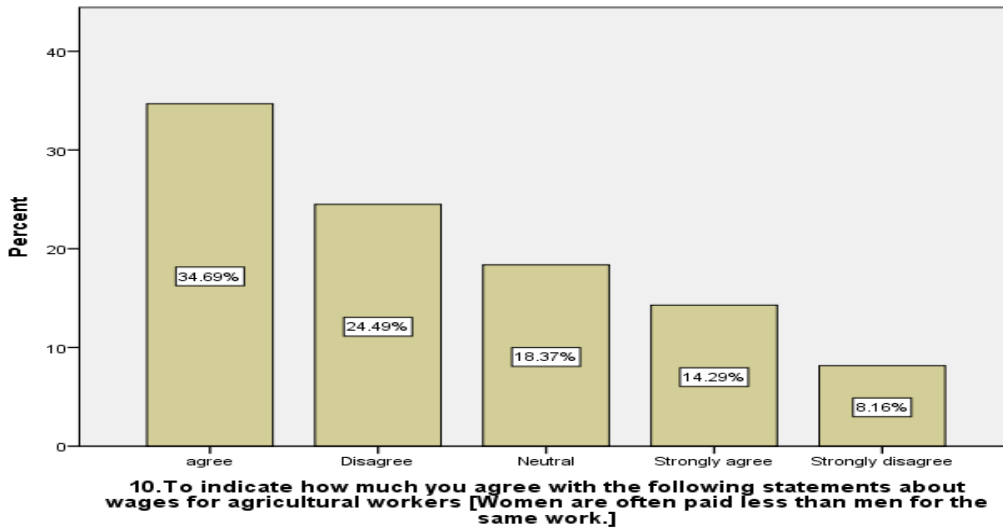
Legend : Shows how effective do you think the government's actions are in ensuring that agricultural workers are paid the legal minimum wage.

FIGURE 10:



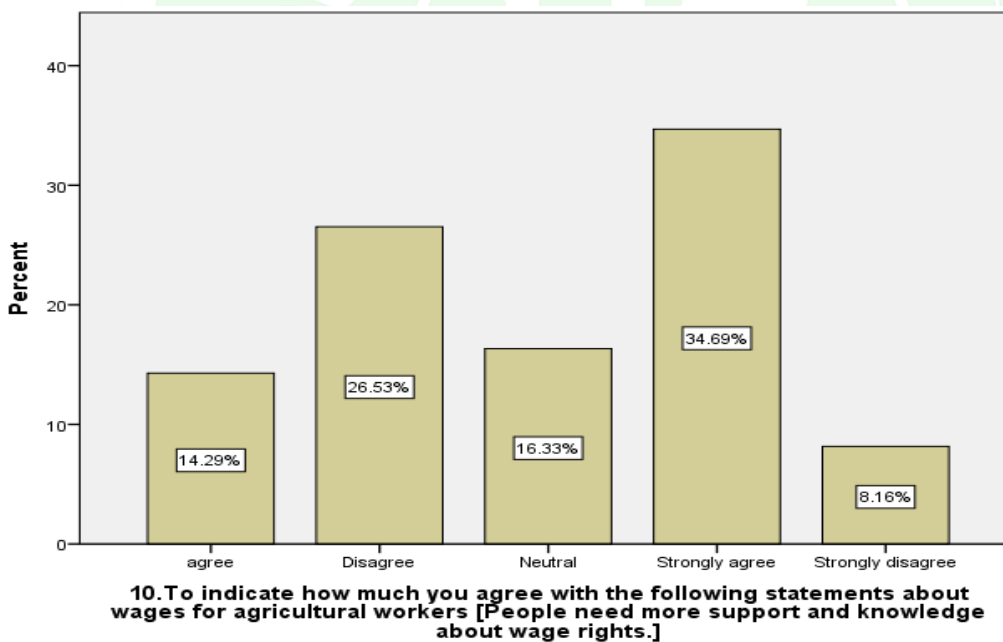
Legend : Shows how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: Women are often paid less than men for the same work.

FIGURE 11:



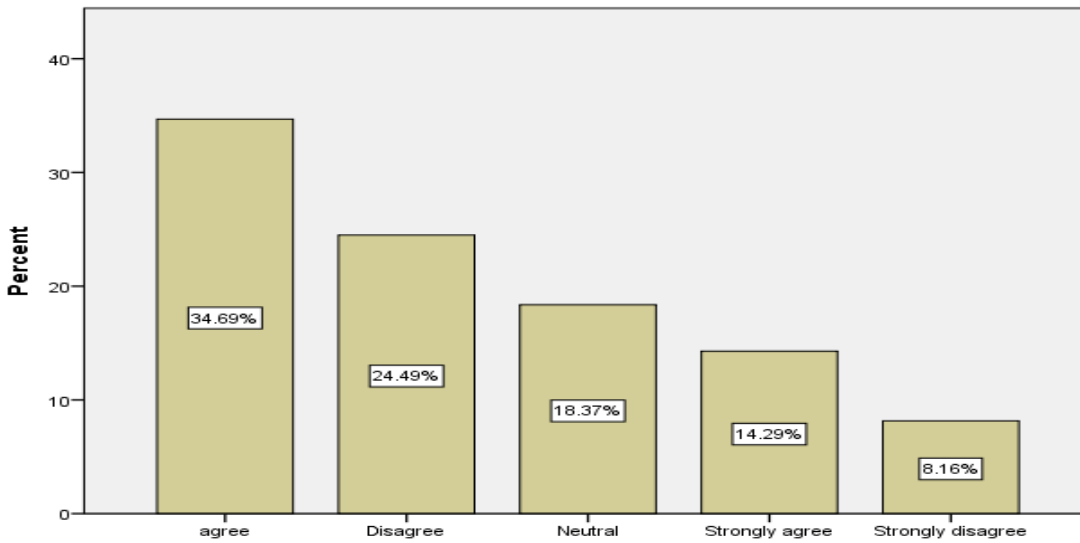
Legend : Shows how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: women are often paid less than men for the same work.

FIGURE 12:



Legend : Shows how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: People need more support and knowledge about wage rights.

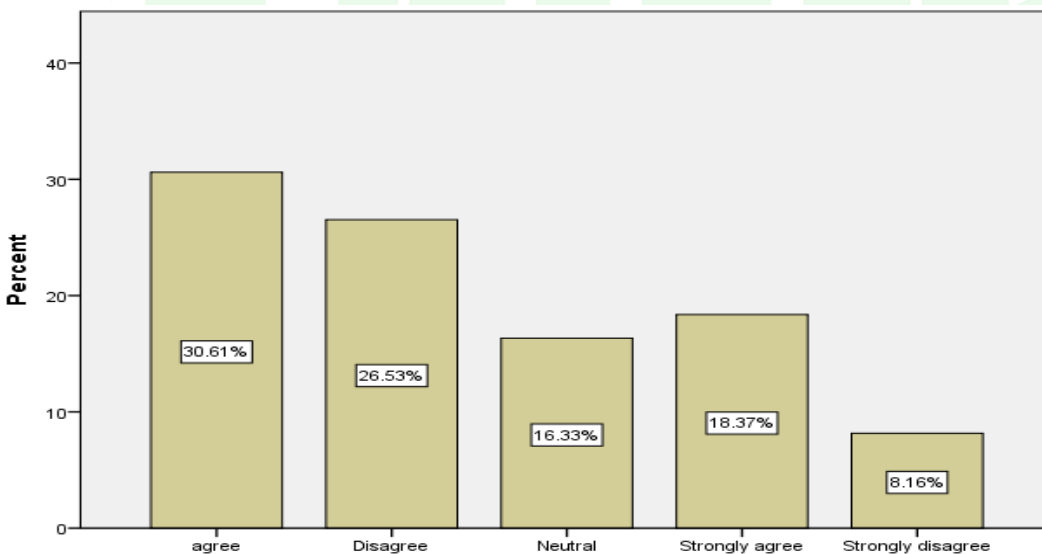
FIGURE 13:



10. To indicate how much you agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers [Some people are paid less because of their caste.]

Legend : Shows how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: Some people are paid less because of their caste.

FIGURE 14:



10. To indicate how much you agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers [Government rarely checks if fair wages are paid to workers.]

Legend : Shows how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: Government rarely checks if fair wages are paid to workers.

TABLE 1:

ALTERNATE HYPOTHESIS: There is a significant relation between the the biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work and educational qualifications.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: There is no significant relation between the biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work and educational qualifications.

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Educational Qualification * The biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work is	49	100.0%	0	0.0%	49	100.0%

Educational Qualification * The biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work is Crosstabulation

Count

		The biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work is				Total
		Employer exploitation or pressure	Fear of losing job if I demand fair wages	Lack of awareness about legal wage rights	No proper written agreement or record	
Educational Qualification	High school	0	0	13	0	13
	Higher Secondary School	0	0	0	11	11
	Post graduate	0	9	0	0	9
	Under graduate	8	0	8	0	16
Total		8	9	21	11	49

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	113.167 ^a	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	105.773	9	.000
N of Valid Cases	49		

a. 14 cells (87.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.47.

Legend : The calculated P value is 0.001. Since the P value is less than 0.05 null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance. So there is an association between the biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work and educational qualifications.

TABLE 2 :

ALTERNATE HYPOTHESIS: There is a significant relation between the to prevent discrimination in wage distributions and educational qualifications.

NULL HYPOTHESIS: There is no significant relation between the to prevent discrimination in wage distributions and educational qualifications.

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Educational Qualification * To prevent discrimination in wage distribution	49	100.0%	0	0.0%	49	100.0%

Educational Qualification * To prevent discrimination in wage distribution Crosstabulation

Count

		To prevent discrimination in wage distribution				Total
		Create local groups to check that wages are fair	Legal penalty for biased wage practices	Set equal pay policies regardless of caste or gender	Set up a government complaint system in villages	
Educational Qualification	High school	0	0	13	0	13
	Higher Secondary School	11	0	0	0	11
	Post graduate	0	9	0	0	9
	Under graduate	0	0	8	8	16
Total		11	9	21	8	49

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	113.167 ^a	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	105.773	9	.000
N of Valid Cases	49		

a. 14 cells (87.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.47.

Legend : The calculated P value is 0.001. Since the P value is less than 0.05 null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance. So there is an association between to prevent discrimination in wage distributions and educational qualifications.

RESULTS :

From **Figure 1.** It is revealed that 57.50% of the respondents are between the age group 18-25; 20% are between the age group 26-35; 15% are between the age group 36-45; 7.50% are between the age group 46-55 and the remaining 12.95% are between the age group 56 and above. From **Figure 2.** It shows that 50% of the respondents are female; 50% of male. From **Figure 3.** It is revealed that 22.50% of the respondents of occupations were in the private sector; 11% of occupations were in the public

sector; 20% of occupations were self employed and the remaining 46.50% of occupations were yet to be employed. From **Figure 4.** It is revealed that 42.50% of the respondents are of less than 1,00,000 INR as income; 20% of the respondents are of 1,00,001 INR – 2,00,000 INR as income; 15% of the respondents are of 2,00,001 INR – 3,00,000 INR as income; 15% of the respondents are of 3,00,001 INR – 4,00,000 INR as income and 7.50% of the respondents are of more than 4,00,001 INR. From **Figure 5.** It is revealed that 7% of the respondents had education qualifications in high school; 11.50% of education qualifications in higher secondary school; 48% of education

qualifications in postgraduate and the remaining 33.50% of education qualifications in undergraduate. From **Figure 6**. It clearly shows the biggest challenge you face in receiving fair wages for agricultural work. 42.86% have stated "Lack of awareness about legal wage rights"; 22.45% have stated "No proper written agreement or record"; 16.33% have stated "Employer exploitation or pressure"; 18.37% have stated "Fear of losing job if I demand fair wages". From **Figure 7**. Shows the belief that more government inspections are needed to ensure fair wages for agricultural workers and that 59.18% of the respondents are "yes" and 40.82% of "no". **Figure 8**. It clearly Shows the method to prevent discrimination in wage distribution and 42.86% have stated "Set equal pay policies regardless of caste or gender"; 22.45% have stated "Create local groups to check that wages are fair"; 16.33% have stated "Set up a government complaint system in villages"; 18.37% have stated "Legal penalty for biased wage practices". From **Figure 9**. Shows how effective do you think the government's actions are in ensuring that agricultural workers are paid the legal minimum wage. and 0% have stated 1; 8.16% have stated 2; 0% have stated 3; 18.37% have stated 4; 24.49% have stated 5; 14.29% have stated 6; 16.33% have stated 7; 0% have stated 8; 18.37% have stated 9 and 0% have stated 10. From **Figure 10**. It clearly Shows how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: Women are often paid less than men for the same work. and the maximum of 34.69% have agreed to the statement; the maximum of 24.49% have disagreed with the statement; the maximum of 18.37% have neutral the statement; the maximum of 14.29% have strongly agreed to the statement and the maximum of 8.16% have strongly disagreed to the statement. From **Figure 11**. It clearly Shows the how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: women are often paid less than men for the same work. and the maximum of 34.69% have agreed to the statement; the maximum of 24.49% have

disagreed with the statement; the maximum of 18.37% have neutral the statement; the maximum of 14.29% have strongly agreed to the statement and the maximum of 8.16% have strongly disagreed to the statement. From **Figure 12**. It clearly Shows the how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: People need more support and knowledge about wage rights. and the maximum of 14.29% have agreed to the statement; the maximum of 26.53% have disagreed with the statement; the maximum of 16.33% have neutral the statement; the maximum of 34.69% have strongly agreed to the statement and the maximum of 8.16% have strongly disagreed to the statement. From **Figure 13**. It clearly Shows the how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: Some people are paid less because of their caste. and the maximum of 34.69% have agreed to the statement; the maximum of 24.49% have disagreed with the statement; the maximum of 18.37% have neutral the statement; the maximum of 14.29% have strongly agreed to the statement and the maximum of 8.16% have strongly disagreed to the statement. From **Figure 14**. It clearly Shows the how much people agree with the following statements about wages for agricultural workers: Government rarely checks if fair wages are paid to workers. and the maximum of 30.69% have agreed to the statement; the maximum of 26.53% have disagreed with the statement; the maximum of 16.33% have neutral the statement; the maximum of 18.37% have strongly agreed to the statement and the maximum of 8.16% have strongly disagreed to the statement.

DISCUSSION :

From **Figure 6**, it clearly shows that the biggest challenge faced in receiving fair wages for agricultural work is the lack of awareness about legal wage rights, as stated by 42.86% of respondents. This is because many workers are not educated about the laws and benefits they are entitled to, so they don't know what the minimum wage is or how to demand it. From

Figure 7, 59.18% of the respondents believe that more government inspections are needed to ensure fair wages. This is because inspections are rare, and without strict checking, employers often take advantage of workers. **Figure 8** shows that to prevent discrimination in wage distribution, 42.86% of people support the idea of setting equal pay policies regardless of caste or gender. This is because such policies can legally stop unfair practices and promote equality. From **Figure 9**, 24.49% of respondents rated the government's actions a 5 out of 10 for ensuring legal minimum wages. This shows people feel the government's work is average not too good, but not the worst because efforts are there but not strongly implemented. **Figure 10** shows that 34.69% of people agreed with the statement that women are often paid less than men for the same work, because gender discrimination is still common in rural areas and women are undervalued. **Figure 11** also shows the same result that 34.69% agreed that women get less pay than men for doing the same work, proving this is a repeating issue that many people notice. In **Figure 12**, the highest number, 34.69%, have strongly agreed that people need more support and knowledge about wage rights, because awareness is low and legal help is hard to reach for poor farmers. **Figure 13** shows that 34.69% agreed that some people are paid less because of their caste, because caste-based bias still exists and affects wage decisions unfairly. **Figure 14** shows that 30.69% agreed with the statement that the government rarely checks if fair wages are paid, because inspection teams do not visit villages regularly and most wage violations go unnoticed.

LIMITATIONS :

The findings of this study are specifically applicable to agricultural labourer respondents within Chennai and do not necessarily reflect the conditions in urban areas of the district. Additionally, the study has focused solely on the blocks within the district due to practical constraints related to time, resources, and logistical considerations. However taking into

consideration the similarity of the Kancheepuram district a comparative analysis has been made on many factors. It's worth noting that the researcher encountered challenges in gathering data and information from both official and non-official sources within the selected village panchayats. This limitation arose because the individuals were often unavailable during the field investigation due to prior commitments.

SUGGESTION:

To improve the condition of agricultural labourers in Tamil Nadu, especially around Chennai, it is essential to strengthen the enforcement of minimum wage laws through regular inspections and strict penalties for non-compliance. Awareness programs should be conducted at the village level to educate workers about their legal rights. Government schemes like MGNREGA should be expanded and effectively monitored to ensure fair wage distribution. Special focus should be given to addressing caste and gender-based wage discrimination. Collaborations between legal authorities, NGOs, and local bodies can help bridge the gap between law and practice, ensuring real wage justice for rural workers.

CONCLUSION :

The study was **aimed** at assessing the legal framework and social realities surrounding minimum wages for agricultural workers. The main **objective** was to explore the effectiveness of existing laws, identify implementation gaps, and understand the socio-economic challenges faced by labourers, particularly women and marginalized communities. Through a detailed review of literature and field-based observations, the **findings** revealed that although minimum wage laws exist in Tamil Nadu, their enforcement remains weak due to lack of awareness, administrative inaction, caste-based discrimination, and informal employment practices. The study observed that agricultural workers in and around Chennai are often underpaid, with little access to legal remedies or support systems.

Looking ahead, **future research** can focus on digital wage-tracking systems, comparative studies with more effective regions or countries, and gender-based wage gap evaluations using real-time data. In **conclusion**, while the legal provisions for minimum wages are in place, their impact remains limited unless supported by strong enforcement, local-level awareness campaigns, and social reforms. A combined socio-legal approach is essential to ensure wage justice and enhance the living conditions of agricultural labourers in Tamil Nadu.

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