



Participation and Decision Making Pattern of Rural Women in Agricultural Activities in Mansa District of Punjab

Rajinder Kaur Sidhu¹ and Jasjinder Kaur²

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab, India

E-mail: ¹<rajindersidhu@pau.edu>, ²<jasjinder90brar@gmail.com>

KEYWORDS Agriculture. Constraints. Decision-making. Extent of Participation. Work

ABSTRACT The study on extent of participation, decision making pattern and constraints faced by rural women in agricultural activities was conducted in Mansa district of Punjab. A sample of 100 women involved in agriculture was selected. The study revealed that more number of rural women have high level of participation in agricultural activities (48%) followed by medium participation (27%) and low participation (25%). Also, higher number of rural women (58.33%) were observed in low category of decision making which was followed by 22.8 percent and 21.2 percent respectively in case of medium and high decision making pattern. About 72 percent of them reported major constraint faced by them was no rest throughout the day and that work hinders proper care of their children. Exertion due to over work (69%) and no fixed working hours (52%) were the other constraints faced by them at work.

INTRODUCTION

Women living in rural areas are the key providers of farm labor especially in the developing countries like India. Although rural women play a dominant and important role in various agricultural activities but their views are accepted only in minimal cases. The data collected by FAO (2011) shows that 43 percent of the agricultural labor force comprises rural women; both globally and in developing countries. As per the data recorded by World Bank (2013), rural women constitute 50 percent of global labor force. Ahmed and Hussain (2004) reported that rural women have a dominant role in agricultural production right from soil preparation till postharvest activities. Even then they are less likely to realize their capacity to make a better life (Akinsanmi 2005). Afolabi (2008) observed that it is men who make the key decisions in farm management and agricultural operations. Sadly, female farmers in the country are voiceless but they work inspite of varying constraints faced by them in fields and at home. Therefore, a study was conducted to know the extent of participation and decision making pattern of rural women in agricultural activities in south western region of Punjab. Also, the major constraints faced by them were evaluated.

Objectives

1. To study the activities performed by rural women in agriculture
2. To study the role of women in decision making pattern in agricultural activities
3. To study the constraints faced by them during operation of agricultural activities

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted during 2017-18 in five blocks of Mansa district. A sample of 100 women, 20 from each block in the age group of 25-40 years who were involved in agricultural activities were selected. The average annual income of this group range between Rs. 50,000-70,000. The data was collected personally through a structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The farm women were interviewed and their responses were recorded in the interview schedule. The study was analyzed using the methodology explained by Hedges (1963).

The scale consists of 16 different agricultural activities as well as statements of decision making pattern. The responses of respondents were obtained in 3 points continuum namely low, medium and high. The scoring was assigned in the order of 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Data was ana-

lyzed through statistical test that is percentages and means were used for analyzing and interpretation of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participation of Rural Women in Agricultural Activities

Data presented in Table 1 reveals that more number of rural women were found to have overall high level of participation in agricultural activities (48%) followed by medium participation (27%) and low participation (25%) respectively. These results are in conformity with those of Badiger and Huilgal (2004) and Yadav et al. (2005).

Among the various agricultural activities a high level of participation of rural women was recorded in picking of cotton (80 women; mean score 2.75) followed by grading of vegetables (69 women; mean score 2.58), plucking of vegetables (65 women; mean score 2.55), transplanting operation (65 women; mean score 2.50), drying and cleaning of grains (61 women; mean score 2.48), winnowing (59 women; mean score 2.43), thinning (58 women; mean score 2.41), nursery raising (54 women; mean score 2.40), weeding (53 women, mean score 2.36) and gap filling (54 women, mean score 2.34). A very low

level of participation was recorded in irrigation management (68 women, mean score 1.39) followed by marketing (60 women, mean score=1.52) and land preparation (59 women, mean score 1.58).

The South Western region of Punjab is the main cotton growing region and picking of cotton is an easy operation. So, maximum farm women are involved in picking of cotton. Also, maximum women participate in plucking and grading of vegetables as almost every rural household of the district has a kitchen garden which makes women participation necessary. The more laborious operations of irrigation management, marketing and land preparation showed a low level of participation by rural women. Otherwise, rural women participation in various agricultural operations showed an active involvement.

In a study conducted in rural areas of Pakistan by Ranjha et al. (2009), they reported that women are actively involved in performing field activities like seed bed preparation, tillage, sowing, fertilizer application, cutting fodder, weeding, inter-cultural operations, transplanting, husking, threshing, drying, storing cereals, harvesting and selling of agricultural produce. They even concluded that compared to rural men, women of rural areas are more dedicated in performing various agricultural tasks. According to Chayal et al. (2010) rural women perform many agricultural activities viz. sowing, weeding, picking, cleaning of grains, drying of grains, win-

Table 1: Participation of rural women in agricultural activities

S. No.	Area of activities	Participation extent			Mean score
		Low	Medium	High	
1	Nursery raising	14	32	54	2.40
2	Transplanting	15	20	65	2.50
3	Thinning	17	25	58	2.41
4	Gap filling	20	26	54	2.34
5	Weeding	17	30	53	2.36
6	Preparation of land	59	24	17	1.58
7	Irrigation management	68	25	07	1.39
8	Seed treatment	34	60	06	1.72
9	Picking of cotton	05	15	80	2.75
10	Plucking of vegetables	10	25	65	2.55
11	Grading of vegetables	11	20	69	2.58
12	Threshing	20	24	56	2.36
13	Winnowing	16	25	59	2.43
14	Drying and cleaning of grains	13	26	61	2.48
15	Storing of produce	20	27	53	1.82
16	Marketing	60	28	12	1.52
	Overall average	25	27	48	2.20

nowing, harvesting, and cutting. They play a noticeable role in agriculture in developing countries. This is also supported by research studies conducted by Reddy (2003) and Sidhu (2011) in India.

Decision Making Pattern of Rural Women in Agricultural Activities

Data presented in Table 2 reveals that each agricultural activity involved decision making by rural women but their extent of participation was low. Overall, higher number of rural women (55.7%) were found to be in low category of decision making pattern followed by medium category of decision making (22.8%). Very few women (21.2%) were in category of high level of decision making.

Perusal of data in Table 2 shows that maximum rural women had a higher level of decision making with highest score in picking of vegetables (59 women; mean score 2.38) followed by picking of cotton (54 women; mean score 2.36), seed treatment (22 women; mean score 1.78), and storing of produce (22 women; mean score=1.74). A very low level of participation in decision making was recorded in marketing (79 women; mean score 1.31) followed by irrigation management (73 women; mean score 1.37), preparation of land

(70 women; mean score 1.43) and grading of vegetables (70 women; mean score 1.44). The results of the present study are in conformity with those of Sharma et al. (2014) who reported that about 58.33 percent of rural women were in the low category of decision making followed by medium decision making (22.50%) and high decision making (19.17%), respectively.

Similar to this study, they reported a highest score of 1.98 at low level of participation in marketing. However, in contrast to this study, they found that farm women had highest score at high level of participation in weeding (mean score 2.43) followed by selection of seed variety (mean score 2.17) and harvesting (mean score 2.51). Although women are the key providers of labor in major agricultural activities but there is male dominance in decision making for various agricultural activities. This is due to the fact that rural women are financially weak and dependent on men. Moreover, the south-western region of Punjab has a higher women illiteracy rate which makes it a male dominant region. Thus, the need of hour is to let rural women express their decision for various agricultural activities and give them the opportunity to express their views.

The results regarding constraints faced by rural women during operation of various agri-

Table 2: Distribution of rural women according to their decision making pattern in agricultural activities

S. No.	Area of activities	Participation extent			Mean score
		Low	Medium	High	
1	Raising nursery	56	28	16	1.60
2	Transplanting	61	20	19	1.56
3	Thinning	60	25	15	1.55
4	Gap filling	54	30	16	1.62
5	Weeding	57	27	16	1.59
6	Preparation of land	70	17	13	1.43
7	Irrigation management	73	17	10	1.37
8	Seed treatment	44	34	22	1.78
9	Picking of cotton	20	26	54	2.36
10	Picking of vegetables	21	20	59	2.38
11	Grading of vegetables	70	16	14	1.44
12	Threshing of wheat	56	26	18	1.62
13	Winnowing	62	19	19	1.57
14	Drying and cleaning of grains	63	20	17	1.54
15	Storing of produce	48	30	22	1.74
16	Marketing	79	11	10	1.31
	Overall average	55.7	22.8	21.2	1.64

cultural activities are presented in Table 3. An equal percentage (72%) of rural women felt that lack of proper rest and lack of proper care of their children was the major constraint faced by them when they go for work. About 69 percent women faced exertion due to unrest and over-work. The agricultural operations are not time bound. Some of the days in the year are very hectic and some days are quite free. So, 52 percent of rural women reported that no fixed working hours hampers their overall capacity to conduct various agricultural and household works. Least number of women (23%) found that the working conditions in fields are not favourable. Some of them reported the harsh weather conditions and some reported the attitude of employer as unfavourable to them to work. Plaisier et al. (2007) asserted the importance of better working conditions for women and stressed that for the improvement of working conditions for females, social protection is important. Good working conditions are required for decent work. Poor working conditions increase stress among women and reduce productivity.

Table 3: Constraints faced by rural women during operation of agricultural activities

S. No.	Constraints	Rural women (%)*
1	No fixed hours of working	52
2	Unfavourable working condition	23
3	Exertion	69
4	Lack of rest throughout the day	72
5	Shortage of time for care of children	72

*Multiple responses

CONCLUSION

Although, rural women participate in agricultural activities with a high degree of independence but they are not actively associated in decision making for the conductance of various agricultural operations. This may be attributed to the fact that south-western region of Punjab especially the districts of Mansa, Bathinda and Muktsar have a male dominant society. Although the rural women perform their duties in agricultural production but their relative degree of freedom to decide in agriculture is hindered by male dominant society and the number of decisions

appear fewer than those of male members. The major decisions are left to men. Also, the constraints faced by the rural women are a major bottleneck in their efficiency to work and decide for various agricultural operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural women contribute sufficiently and equally in farm work. They indulge in various agricultural activities from sowing to harvesting and picking of the produce. So, it becomes the duty of rural masses to involve them in decision making for carrying various farm operations. Although farm women work consistently at farm and home but unequal share of their income deprive them to take major decisions in farm operations. Also, the constraints faced by them at work are a major challenge to them which not only create social problems for them but also spoil their health. Efforts should be made to encourage and accept their decisions in farm activities and there is a need to make working conditions at farm more conducive for them to work.

REFERENCES

- Afolabi MM 2008. Women as Pillars of National Economy in Nigeria: A Study of Economic Activities of Rural Women in Six Local Government Areas of Ondo State. *IAFFE Summer Conference, International Association for Feminist Economics*, Toronto, Italy, 19 June- 21 July.
- Ahmed N, Hussain A 2004. *Women's Role in Forestry: Pakistan Agriculture*. Islamabad: Agriculture foundation of Pakistan.
- Akinsanmi A 2005. Working under constraint: Women, poverty and productivity. *Women and Environments International*, 66/67: 17-18.
- Badiger PL, Huilgal HP 2004. Participation of farm women in agriculture and animal husbandry. *Indian Res J Extn Edn*, 4: 124.
- Chayal K, Dkaka BL, Suwika RL 2010. Analysis of role performed by women in agriculture. *J Hum Soc Sci*, 5: 68-72.
- FAO 2011. *The State of Food and Agriculture. Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*. FAO, Rome, Italy.
- Hedges TR 1963. *Farm Management Decision*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Plaisier I, de Bruijn JGM, de-Graaf R, Have MT, Beekman TF, Penninx WJH 2007. The contribution of working conditions and social support to the onset of depressive and anxiety disorders among male and female employees. *Soc Sci Med*, 64: 401-10.
- Ranjha HM, Ali S, Luqman M 2009. Role of women in agricultural development. In: A Shoukat, R Rafique

- (Eds.): *Pak Agri Outlook*. Multan Pakistan: Multan Kitab Ghar, pp. 198-200.
- Reddy G 2003. *Farming Performance of Farm Women*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Sharma A, Singh D, Solanki GS 2014. Role of farm women in agricultural operations and decision making pattern. *Indian Res J Ext Edu*, 14(2)60: 63.
- Sidhu K 2011. Agro-climatic zone-wise analysis of women in farming in Punjab. *J Hum Ecol*, 33: 47-52.
- World Bank 2013. *World Development Indicators*. Washington: World Bank.
- Yadav JP, Sharma K, Saini H 2005. Role Performance of Farmwomen in Animal Husbandry Practices. *Abstract in 3rd National Extension Education Congress*, organized by Society of Ext. Edu, Agra and NDRI Karnal, 27-29 April, pp.111-112.

Paper received for publicaiton in April, 2019
Paper accepted for publication in May, 2019