



Role of Rural Women in Decision Making Process Regarding Livestock Management

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ABSTRACT

Livestock is generally considered a key asset for rural livelihoods. Rural women play critical, diverse roles in livestock production in the rural economies of developing countries as unpaid workers. They embark on various activities of livestock management like watering and feeding of animals, cleaning activities and milking. However, their involvement as decision makers regarding various livestock activities is still dubious. Hence the present study was conducted to determine the contribution of rural women in decision-making in livestock management. A sample of 100 female respondents was selected randomly from five villages of Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir through multistage random sampling technique. Scrutiny of the data shows that rural women's participation was relatively high in activities like care of new born calf, care of sick animals, cleaning activities, produce and feeding of animals. However, their participation was relatively low in activities like sale of animals, breeding of animals, fodder harvesting, cultivation and maintenance of animals' sheds. Male dominance and traditional belief system were the main factors which had affected the involvement of rural women in decision making process.

Keywords: Rural women, livestock management, decision-making, Male dominance.

Livestock management has always been considered to be the sole responsibility of women. Women's participation in livestock development is significant and varies from region to region according to socioeconomic, agroecological, ethnic, and religious factors (Tipilda and Panhwar, 2008). Generally, it depends on the type of animals they raise. Contribution of rural women in conventional livestock activities has been substantial but it has always been underestimated and undervalued. Women's contribution in agricultural labour force in developed countries is 36.7% while, it is about 43.6% in developing countries. In rural areas women's participation rate in agricultural and livestock management activities is high as compared to men (UNDP, 1997). The work of women is seldom recognised and they are kept out of all important decision making processes, although the responsibilities ultimately impinge on them. They have no or very little power to take decisions due to many reasons like lack of education, lack of mobility, lack of control over resources, low level

of awareness of their civic/ human rights, lack of credit facilities from the Government etc. (FAO, 2003 and Habib, 2000). To begin to truly understand the problems of rearing livestock in rural India, it is critical to begin to work with women. Despite their incredible role in livestock sector, their involvement in decision-making regarding livestock management is still seems questionable. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made to analyze the role performed by rural women in decision making process regarding livestock management and to identify the factors which affect the rural women participation in decision-making process related to livestock management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kathua district in Jammu region of J&K state, where dairy farming is one of the major sources of wage earning. Five villages were selected through multistage random method from the study area.

**Table 1.** Participation of women in feeding livestock

Decision making area	Extent of participation				Total Respondents (N=100)
	No	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Actively involved in final decision	
Feed of animals	-	08 (08.00)	17 (17.00)	75 (75.00)	100
Feeding of pregnant animals	-	-	25 (25.00)	75 (75.00)	100
Harvesting of fodder crops	78 (78.00)	07 (07.00)	05 (05.00)	10 (10.00)	100
Soaking & Offering of concentrates	08 (08.0)	-	13 (13.00)	79 (79.00)	100
Fortification of dry fodder	85 (85.00)	15 (15.00)	-	-	100
Watering & Grazing the livestock	-	08 (08.00)	25 (25.00)	67 (67.00)	100

Twenty respondents having minimum of two milch animals were randomly selected from each village. Thus the sample consisted of 100 dairy farm women. Qualitative research methods including in-depth semi structured conversational interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation of activities were used to gather information from rural women. In the present study involvement in decision making process refers to association of rural women in decision making process in relation to different livestock activities. The extent of participation of women in decision making regarding various livestock management activities were measured on four point continuum as No participation, Only consulted, Opinion considered and actively involved in final decision and scored 0,1, 2 and 3 respectively by rural women while five point Likert scale (1= to some extent, 2 = below average extent, 3 = an average extent, 4 = above average extent, 5 = too much extent) was prepared to collect the quantitative data regarding factors that inhibit their participation in livestock management activities. The data were collected personally with the help of semi structured pre tested interview schedule. Data so collected were then tabulated and statistically analyzed with the help of statistical tests like arithmetic mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. The ranking of different activities performed by rural women and factors that inhibit their participation

was calculated on the basis of mean value. The sum of participation score was worked out to be the extent of participation in decision making. This was measured with the help of following formula.

Participation in Decision Making Index= Actually obtained participation score/Maximum obtainable participation score x 100

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data about the extent of participation of women in decision making regarding various livestock management activities were scrutinized. (Table 1 to 5)

Involvement of women in feeding of livestock was analyzed and presented in Table 1, which signify that most of the respondents were involved in watering the livestock (88 per cent), soaking and offering the concentrate mixture (79 per cent). The table reveals that majority of the women involved in feeding of animals (75 per cent) and grazing the livestock (67 per cent). It was also found that only 10 percent women were actively involved in harvesting of fodder crops. It is also observed that only no respondent was actively involved in fortification of dry fodder.

Table 2. Participation of women in breeding the livestock

Decision making area	Extent of participation				Total Respondents (N=100)
	No	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Actively involved in final decision	
A.I. in animals	89 (89.00)	11 (11.00)	-	-	100
Participation during parturition	20 (20.00)	10 (10.00)	18 (18.00)	52 (52.00)	100
Care during pregnancy	-	-	15 (15.00)	85 (85.00)	100
Castration of male calves	15 (15.00)	20 (20.00)	35 (35.00)	30 (30.00)	100

Perusal of data presented in Table 2 reveals that majority (89 per cent) of the women have no involvement in carrying animal for A.I. and majority (85 per cent)

Table 3. Participation of women in health care and management of the livestock

Decision making area	Extent of participation				Total Respondents (N= 100)
	No	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Actively involved in final decision	
Care of new born calf	-	-	-	100 (100.00)	100
Weaning and management of Calf	12 (12.00)	-	63 (63.00)	25 (25.00)	100
Milking of Animals	-	-	10 (10.00)	90 (90.00)	100
Cleaning of Utensils & Animal sheds	-	-	-	100 (100.00)	
Care of sick animal	-	-	05 (05.00)	95 (95.00)	100
Maintenance of Animal sheds	63 (63.00)	15 (15.00)	18 (18.00)	04 (04.00)	100
Grooming & cleaning of Cow/Buffalo	-	-	03 (03.00)	97 (97.00)	100
Disposal of carcass	52 (52.00)	07 (07.00)	01 (01.00)	40 (40.00)	100

respondent women actively involved in caring of animals during pregnancy however they were less involved in activities like parturition (52 per cent), castration of male calves (30 per cent).

Data presented in table 3 shows that involvement of rural women in care of new born calf and cleaning of utensils and animal shed was 100 per cent. Majority of the rural women were involved in milking of animals (90 per cent) and for weaning and management of calf their opinion

was considered (63 per cent). Rural women of the study area were actively involved in care of sick animals (95 per cent), grooming and cleaning of buffalos/cows (97 per cent) whereas low participation in disposal of carcass (40 per cent) was noticed.

Table 4. Participation of women in processing and marketing

Decision making area	Extent of participation				Total Respondents (N=100)
	No	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Actively involved in final decision	
Purchase of feeds & concentrates	65 (65.00)	27 (27.00)	08 (08.00)	-	100
Selling of milk and milk products	70 (70.00)	21 (21.00)	07 (07.00)	-	100
Maintenance of account and financial record	92 (92.00)	05 (05.00)	03 (03.00)	-	100
Processing and preparation of milk Products	-	-	-	100 (100.00)	100
Involvement in Dairy Co-operative	86 (86.00)	09 (09.00)	05 (05.00)	-	100

Table 5. Participation of women in utilization of dairy investments



Decision making area	Extent of participation				Total Respondents (N=100)
	No	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Actively involved in final decision	
Health	41 (41.00)	19 (19.00)	25 (25.00)	15 (15.00)	100
Education	45 (45.00)	22 (22.00)	12 (12.00)	21 (21.00)	100
Clothing	07 (07.00)	12 (12.00)	24 (24.00)	57 (57.00)	100
Family/Religious functions	-	-	07 (07.00)	93 (93.00)	100

Data presented in table 4 indicate that majority (100 per cent) of the respondents were actively involved in the processing and preparation of milk products. On the other hand, involvement of farm women in various marketing activities like purchase of feeds and concentrates, marketing of milk and milk products, involvement in dairy co-operatives and maintenance of accounts and financial records were found to be extremely low.

Involvement of women in utilization of dairy investments is presented in Table 5. There is very low consideration of women in decision regarding health (15 per cent) and education (21 per cent) of family members. Majority (93 per cent) of the rural women were actively involved in family/ religious functions.

The results (Table 6) showed that in study area rural women were actively participating in different livestock management and care activities but still they face many difficulties and constraints which hinder their maximum participation. The data revealed that among different factors, male dominance was on the top with highest mean value (4.90) followed by low payment for women labour (4.71), conventional belief system (3.29), lack of self confidence (1.79), and cultural norms information (1.50) hindering the women participation in livestock production and management activities. The lack of self-confidence is due to low literacy rate of rural females in study area. On the other hand lack of awareness (0.05) and social conflicts (0.03) are the factor which inhibits the participation of rural women in different livestock production and management activities with lowest mean value. The present findings with regard to most of the tasks performed by rural women are more or less similar to those of Ali (2007); Chayal *et al.* (2009); Shafaq *et al.* (2010); Lahoti *et al.* (2012); Tekale (2012) and Munawar *et al.* (2013)

Table 6. Ranking of different factors affecting the rural women participation in decision-making process related to livestock management

Factors	Mean	Rank
Male dominance	4.90	1
Low payment for women labour	4.71	2
Conventional belief system	3.29	3
Lack of self confidence	1.79	4
Cultural norms	1.50	5
Poor control over resources	0.25	6
Lack of social interaction	0.23	7
Low education/knowledge	0.14	8
Lack of awareness	0.05	9
Social conflicts	0.03	10

Scale: (1= to some extent, 2 = to below average extent, 3 = to an average extent, 4 = to above average extent, 5 = too much extent)

Rural women play a significant role in livestock health care and management activities. They are responsible for 60 to 80% of the feeding and milking of cattle. Rural women's participation was relatively high in activities like care of new born calf, care of sick animals, cleaning activities, produce and feeding of animals. However, their participation was relatively low in activities like sale of animals, breeding of animals, fodder cultivation and construction and maintenance of animals' sheds. It is also observed that the participation of women was less in enrichment of dry fodder, money transaction like involvement in banking process, purchasing and sell of animals, maintenance of

account financial records, maintenance of farm records, involvement in dairy co-operatives and purchasing of equipments. They are actively involved in various aspects of dairy farming activities like livestock management, feeding and breeding the livestock and health care. The areas of improved feeding, management, vaccination and processing of dairy products need to be addressed more effectively. Livestock and dairy development department should launch more development schemes focusing on the socio-economic development of women folk. The women trained in livestock production activities will help increase milk and meat production at national level and raise household incomes.

Though much of work of livestock farming is carried out by women but extension and training programmes are not generally designed for greater involvement of women and extending benefits to them. As women in developing countries move into the work force, their domestic responsibilities are not alleviated. Taking into consideration, the dual responsibilities of rural women within and outside the home, more and more training programmes should be organized in villages for rural women to suit their convenience. The training programme will help in exchanging information, problems and solutions and in other ways expressing their creativity. It will lead to breaking of traditional barriers of caste, class and gender, which are otherwise so predominant in rural India. Rural women should be accessed to new technology and knowledge so that they may be able to work shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts for social and economic activities not only at household level but at national level. Extension system should be strengthened and more female extension workers should be appointed for persuasion of rural women to engage them in development course of action.

CONCLUSION

Livestock management has always been considered to be the sole responsibility of women. Rural women play a critical role in the rural economies of both developed and developing countries. It is the need of the hour to develop and implement laws and policies that promote equal rights, opportunities for women so that rural women can make a strong contribution to inclusive economic growth. Capacity building programmes should be implemented for rural women to strengthen the capabilities and self-

confidence required for increased participation in decision making.

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