

Gender participation and decision making process in farming and household activities: A case of Pali district of Rajasthan, India

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Participation in decision making process especially in economic activities is an indication of empowerment. The present study attempts to investigate the level of women economic empowerment in resource-poor farm families by analyzing their extent of participation in decision making on farm and household related economic activities. The study was conducted in six blocks Pali district of Rajasthan taking a random sample of 180 resource poor farm families. Both husband and wife of the families were personally interviewed by pretested structured interview schedule. Spearman's rank-difference correlation was used to measure the extent of agreement between husband's and wife's responses. The study revealed that wives played a major role to jointly decide purchasing or hiring of land (44.44-48.33%), selling of produce (35.56-37.78 %) and borrowing for agriculture (25.00-30.56%). Decisions for milking and processing of milk, utilization of dung and sale of milk and milk products were dominantly taken by wives 68.33 %, 56.67 % and 39.44 %, respectively, where purchase and sale of animals, type and number of animals to be kept and adoption of new animal husbandry practices were mainly decided jointly 32.78-36.67%, 32.78-35.56% and 24.44-25.00 per cent, respectively. Household economic decisions on building new house, household purchasing, education of children, selection of occupation for children and financial activities were mainly taken jointly 39.44-42.78%, 33.33-36.67 %, 26.31-31.67%, 25.00-31.67 % and 23.22-27.22 per cent, respectively. The findings of the study indicated higher level of women economic empowerment in animal husbandry and household sectors.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Women empowerment, Decision making, Resource-poor farm family, Spearman's rank-difference correlation

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Women play a significant role in agriculture, the world over. Rural women play a key role in agricultural sector production by working with full passion in production of crops right from the soil

preparation till post-harvest and food security activities (Ahmad and Hussain, 2004). It is estimated that women are responsible for 70 per cent of actual farm work and constitute up to 60 per cent of the farming population

(Choudhary and Singh, 2003). Women's active involvement in decision making is considered essential for rapid economic development of the country. Despite women's critical contribution to the family income through productive activities, no recognition is given to them as an important contributor and their contribution is not recorded. They are still remaining invisible workers. In rural areas of India, women play a major role in agricultural production. They are equally efficient in seed bed preparation, tilling, sowing, fertilizer application, fodder cutting, weeding, intercultural operations, transplanting, husking, threshing, drying, storing cereals and fodder, selling agricultural commodities and harvesting of all the crops, fruits and vegetables. Rural women have significant contribution in the labour force for agricultural activities. Yet, the role of women in these activities, so important economically, has remained obscure for long because women seldom played any major roles in political activities or decision making processes. They also face various difficulties on agricultural productivity and they operate agricultural activities under greater constraints than men (Lemlem *et al.*, 2010).

So women empowerment in various domains is very important for progress of the society. It is not an exaggeration that women play an active role in farming, whether it is crop cultivation or animal husbandry. They are the backbone of rural economy. It was reported that of the 310 million rural workforces, 199 million are male and 111 million are female (Tikoo, 2006). The role of women members of resource-poor farm families is a matter of concern as the distribution of farm holdings in India is dominated by resource-poor small and marginal farmers. In India, 63 per cent of total operational holdings were of size less than 1 hectare (*i.e.*, marginal holding and 18.88 per cent were having small holdings between 1-2 hectares (Agricultural Census Report, India 2000-01). These percentages are still increasing. Rajasthan is having the largest holding size followed by Madhya Pradesh. In Rajasthan, 63.55 per cent and 36.45 per cent of total operational holding fell in marginal and small operational holding category, respectively (Agricultural Census Report, Rajasthan 2015-16).

A resource-poor farmer cannot be entirely dependent on outside labourers to work in his farm, instead all the able family members including the females of the family have to be involved themselves in various

farming practices. Though women bear a crucial and potentially benefiting role in all-round growth of resource-poor farm families, they face indirect negligence and economic insecurity rendering their very simple but necessary wants to fulfill. Sometimes the hard and committed works done by the rural women are being overlooked in face of insurmountable gender bias and gender oppression (Sarkar and Pradhan, 2004). Often, they are not asked to take any decision in farm and household matters which are mostly managed by them. Participation in decision making especially in economic matters is a clear indication of empowerment. This study, therefore, is carried out to find out the participation and decision making process of rural women in farming activities.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted in Pali district arid zones of Rajasthan. Six blocks were selected randomly from Pali district. Two villages from each block were selected randomly. Fifteen resource-poor farm families were selected randomly from 12 villages. Thus a total of 180 farm families were selected for the purpose of the study. Husband and wife of each selected farm household were taken as respondents. So 180 husbands and 180 wives of 180 farm families constituted a total sample size of 360 respondents for the present study. A comprehensive list of important economic activities pertaining to farm (crop cultivation and animal husbandry) and household activities was prepared in consultation with the experts, available literature and farmers of non-sampling area. The possible combinations taken for decision making were husband (H), wife (W) along with spouse (HW) and in consultation with others (a/others) including children, family members and relatives, neighbours and fellow progressive farmers and experts. Data were collected with the help of pre tested structured interview schedule by personal interview method. Appropriate statistical tools were used for analysis of data. In order to measure the extent of association or agreement between husband's and wife's responses, Spearman's rank-difference correlation was used.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, participation of wives of the selected farm families in decision making on crop cultivation, animal husbandry and household related

economic activities was delineated by taking into consideration both husband's and wife's responses. The values of Spearman's rank-difference correlation coefficient for husband's responses about decision making pattern in crop cultivation, animal husbandry and household related economic activities were found as 0.914, 0.957 and 0.895, respectively. Similarly, these values for wife's responses were calculated as 0.916, 0.973 and 0.912, respectively. The values were found significant at 1 per cent level. It indicates that there was high degree of agreement in the responses of husbands and wives. For this reason, husband's responses were considered for participation of husband only and wife's responses were considered for participation of wife only in the description of results. An overall picture of decision making pattern reported in the study area regarding crop cultivation, animal husbandry and household related economic activities is described first and then variations observed in zones are pointed out.

Women participation in decision making on crop cultivation related economic activities:

There are many decisions involved in crop cultivation related economic activities starting from selection of cropping pattern and cultivars to adoption of innovation. The data presented in Table 1 and 2 reveal an overall picture of decision making pattern observed in farm households. Decision regarding selection of cropping pattern and cultivars was found mostly taken by husband (52.78%). Capital allocation to different crops was reported mainly decided by husband (49.44%) followed by both husband and wife (28.89-31.11%). Decision regarding procurement of inputs (type of inputs to be procured and the source of procurement of input) was found mainly taken by husband (43.33%). Decisions related to selling of produce like place of sale and

quantities of sales were mainly taken jointly (35.56-37.78%) followed by husband alone (26.67%).

The individual husband decision was observed lower in this case, because it was reported as the most important decision taken by the resource-poor farm families as profit is involved in this decision and collective decision used to be beneficial in this case. Purchasing or hiring of land was mostly decided jointly (36.67-44.44%) followed by husband alone (28.33%). Decisions pertaining to borrowing for agriculture (source, quantity, mode of repayment involved etc.) were predominantly taken jointly (25.00-30.56%) followed by husband alone (26.11%). Adoption of innovations regarding improved farming practices was mainly decided in consultation with others (58.89-65.56%). The major finding coming out from the above results is the higher degree of collectivity in decision making pattern (as the percentages of individual decisions rarely gets clear majority *i.e.* above 52.22%) and this will increase the degree of rationality in decisions which is most important for the resource-poor farm families.

Some deviations were found in zones regarding decision making pattern of farm households in crop cultivation related economic activities. Husband and wife joint participation in taking decision regarding selection of cropping pattern and cultivars was mostly found in arid zone. It is justified by relatively higher involvement of wives in crop cultivation activities in arid zone. In arid zone, decision regarding capital allocation to different crops was found mostly taken jointly. Husbands in arid zone and saline soil zone mainly took decisions regarding borrowing for agriculture and adoption of innovation. In sandy and sandy loam soil zone, husband-wife joint decisions were found predominant in case of procurement of inputs. The overall findings of the study regarding decision making pattern in crop cultivation related

Activities	[Husband's response, (n=180)]							
	H		W		HW		a/others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Selection of cropping pattern and cultivars	95	52.78	0	0.00	12	06.67	73	40.56
Capital allocation to different crops	89	49.44	10	05.56	52	28.89	29	16.11
Procurement of inputs	78	43.33	05	02.78	18	10.00	87	48.33
Selling of produce	48	26.67	08	04.44	68	37.78	56	31.11
Purchasing or hiring of land	47	26.11	06	03.33	87	48.33	40	22.22
Borrowing for agriculture	46	25.56	03	01.67	45	25.00	86	47.78
Adoption of innovation	37	20.56	0	0.00	25	13.89	118	65.56

r= 0.914 **indicates significance of value at P=0.01

economic activities finds some correspondence with the previous joint decision making in case of hiring of land. Dhaka *et al.* (1994) and Devi *et al.* (2002) found negligible participation of women alone in decision making process of various crop production activities. Ozkaan *et al.* (2000) revealed relatively less role of farm women in the decision making process regarding buying inputs, planting crops or planning the budget. Findings confirm with the findings of Hasan *et al.* (2009).

Women participation in decision making on animal husbandry related economic activities:

Data presented in Table 3 and 4 give an idea about decision making pattern in animal husbandry related economic activities. It can be concluded that wives

relatively dominated their spouses in decision making on this part. They mainly took decisions regarding milking and processing of milk by deciding type and quantity of milk processing (73.89%) followed by utilization of dung in terms of quantity and type (53.33%) and place of sale of milk and milk products (42.22%). Majority of the wives reported that milk is the major nutritional source in their family and milk products like ghee is mainly prepared for family consumption. Feeding of children and other family members was entirely taken care of by wives. As a consequence, the wives mainly used to decide how much quantities of milk and ghee should be retained for family consumption and how much quantities of these should be given for sale. The greater involvement of wives in animal husbandry activities increased their

Table 2 : Decision making pattern in crop cultivation related economic activities [Wife's response, (n=180)]

Activities	H		W		HW		a/others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Selection of cropping pattern and cultivars	78	43.33	12	06.67	22	12.22	68	37.78
Capital allocation to different crops	81	45.00	14	07.78	56	31.11	29	16.11
Procurement of inputs	66	36.67	09	05.00	34	18.89	71	39.44
Selling of produce	44	24.44	15	08.33	64	35.56	57	31.67
Purchasing or hiring of land	51	28.33	08	04.44	80	44.44	41	22.78
Borrowing for agriculture	47	26.11	03	01.67	55	30.56	75	41.67
Adoption of innovation	31	17.22	06	03.33	37	20.56	106	58.89

r= 0.916 **indicates significance of value at P=0.01

Table 3 : Decision making pattern in animal husbandry related to economic activities [Husband's response (n=180)]

Activities	H		W		HW		a/others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Type and number of animal to be kept	52	28.89	35	19.44	59	32.78	34	18.89
Milking and processing of milk	24	13.33	123	68.33	23	12.78	10	05.56
Purchase of food, dairy utensils, concentrate etc.	56	31.11	50	27.78	47	26.11	27	15.00
Purchase and sale of animals	46	25.56	56	31.11	66	36.67	12	06.67
Sale of milk and milk products	57	31.67	71	39.44	45	25.00	07	03.89
Utilization of dung	26	14.44	102	56.67	46	25.56	06	03.33
Adoption of new animal husbandry practices	28	15.56	26	14.44	44	24.44	98	54.44

r= 0.957 **indicates significance of value at P=0.01

Table 4 : Decision making pattern in animal husbandry related to economic activities [Wife's response, (n=180)]

Activities	H		W		HW		a/others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Type and number of animal to be kept	48	26.67	38	21.11	64	35.56	30	16.67
Milking and processing of milk	19	10.56	133	73.89	23	12.78	05	02.78
Purchase of food, dairy utensils, concentrate etc.	55	30.56	44	24.44	52	28.89	29	16.11
Purchase and sale of animals	46	25.56	57	31.67	59	32.78	18	10.00
Sale of milk and milk products	50	27.78	76	42.22	47	26.11	07	03.89
Utilization of dung	33	18.33	96	53.33	57	31.67	06	03.33
Adoption of new animal husbandry practices	31	17.22	27	15.00	45	25.00	77	42.78

r= 0.936 **indicates significance of value at P=0.01

economic decision making ability. Joint decision was found predominant in case of purchase and sale of animals which deals with type and number of animals to be purchased/sale (32.68-36.67%) followed by adoption of new animal husbandry farming practices which includes adoption, rejection, discontinue etc. (24.44-25.00%). Individual husband decision was observed predominant in case of type, quantity and place of purchasing of food, concentrates, dairy utensils etc. (31.67%). Consultation of others was mostly taken in case of adoption of new animal husbandry practices (42.78-54.44%).

The decision making pattern in animal husbandry related economic activities varies from zone to zone. In arid zone, joint decision was taken in case of purchase of feed and concentrates, sale of milk and milk products. It was observed in the arid zone that decisions pertaining to type of animal to be kept were mainly decided by the husband and joint decisions were mainly taken in the area of sale of milk and milk products. In arid zone, husbands were found mostly decided type of animal to be kept. In western zone Marwar region, wives mainly decided purchase of feed and concentrates.

The overall finding of the study regarding decision making pattern in animal husbandry related economic activities shows communality with some findings of the earlier researchers. Vashishtha and Sontakki (2006)

observed female's domination in decision making regarding selling of milk and milk products, retention and utilization of milk and milk products, feeding of concentrates and predominant joint participation in decision making regarding type of livestock to be raised and in purchase and sale of animals. Kumari (1999) and Upadhyay and Intodia (2007) also reported predominant joint participation in deciding type and number of livestock to be kept. Shetter *et al.* (2005) observed that decision pertaining to the number of animals to be reared was mostly made by both men and women. Pandey *et al.* (2006) reported that females mainly decided the type and quantity of milk products to be prepared. Findings confirm with the findings of Borgohain and Akand (2011).

Women participation in decision making on household related economic activities:

It can be observed from Table 5 and 6 that individual husband participation in decision making on household related economic activities was not found predominant in any activity and their relatively higher involvement was observed in taking decision regarding household purchasing (27.78%). Husband-wife joint participation was found predominant in decision making regarding building of new house that deals with deciding place, process, type, renovation, etc. (39.44-42.78%) followed by household purchasing which includes type, place of

Activities	[Husband's response, (n=180)]							
	H		W		HW		a/others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Building new house	49	27.22	31	17.22	71	39.44	29	16.11
Household purchasing	50	27.78	51	28.33	60	33.33	20	11.11
Education of children	30	16.67	53	29.44	57	31.67	40	22.22
Selection of occupation for children	22	12.22	40	22.22	45	25.00	107	59.44
Marriage of the children	22	12.22	26	14.44	47	26.11	85	47.22
Financial activities	46	25.56	36	20.00	43	23.89	55	30.56

r=0.897

**indicates significance of value at P=0.01

Activities	[Wife's response, (n=180)]							
	H		W		HW		a/others	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Building new house	47	26.11	34	18.89	77	42.78	22	12.22
Household purchasing	41	22.78	59	32.78	66	36.67	14	07.78
Education of children	24	13.33	35	19.44	48	26.67	73	40.56
Selection of occupation for children	21	11.67	37	37.56	57	31.67	65	63.89
Marriage of the children	20	11.11	37	20.56	43	23.89	80	44.44
Financial activities	36	20.00	34	18.89	49	27.22	61	66.11

r= 0.912

**indicates significance of value at P=0.01

purchase, mode of payment, etc. (33.33- 36.67%); selection of occupation for children which involves deciding type of occupation, place of occupation, etc. (25.00-31.67%); education of children in term of selection of school, selection of private teacher, level of education to be given, etc. (26.67-31.67%) and financial activities related to saving, borrowing, repayment, etc. (23.89-27.22%). Marriage of the children was found mainly decided in consultation with others involving family members and relatives (44.44-47.22%).

However, some inter-zonal variations were reported in decision making pattern regarding household related economic activities. It has been found in arid zone that decisions pertaining to education and marriage of children were mainly taken in consultation with children. In Marwar region, decisions regarding education and selection of occupation for children were mainly taken in consultation with children. In western zone, decisions regarding education and selection of occupation for children were mainly taken with the help of experts and decisions pertaining to financial activities (saving, borrowing, repayment, etc.) were mainly taken by wives. Husbands of Marwar region zone mainly took the decision regarding building new house and wives mainly took the decision regarding education of children. The findings of the study are in conformity with some findings of earlier researchers like Awal *et al.* (2000); Masure (2000); Kunwar (2004); Singh *et al.* (2016); Roy and Kadian (2016) and Mishra *et al.* (2009).

Conclusion :

It may be concluded that the many matters where rational decisions are sought. These matters include establishment matters, farm management matters; child related matters, social and religious matters as well as financial matters like saving, borrowing, repayment, etc. If the rational and proper decisions are not taken in these matters, a family may face problem, which adversely affects the family living. Again, analysis of decision making pattern in household activities reveals a clear picture of the position and importance of every member in the family and identifies the key decision maker of the family in household related activities. Analysis of women participation in decision making on farm and household related economic activities of a resource-poor farm family is essential to delineate the level of women economic empowerment in that family. Here an attempt

had been taken in this direction. From the present study it can be summarized that males were dominant decision maker in the areas of selection of cropping pattern and cultivars, capital allocation to different crops and procurement of inputs whereas decisions were mainly taken jointly in case of purchasing or hiring of land, selling of produce and borrowing for agriculture. Most of the decisions related to animal husbandry were taken either by wives or jointly. Decisions regarding milking and processing of milk, utilization of dung and sale of milk and milk products were dominantly taken by wives, where purchase and sale of animals, type and number of animals to be kept and adoption of new animal husbandry practices were mainly decided jointly. Decisions for building new house, household purchasing, education of children, selection of occupation for children and financial activities were mainly taken jointly by husband and wife. Considering the extent of involvement of female members of the family in decision making process of farm and household related economic activities, it can be inferred that there is satisfactory level of women economic empowerment in resource-poor farm families and the findings of the study imply the necessity of training and capacity building of the women folk in the areas where they are key decision maker so that they can make right decisions.

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