

# Impact of women dairy co-operative societies on empowerment of women members

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**ABSTRACT :** Dairy co-operatives are playing a prominent role in the development of dairy industry as well as to increase the income of rural people. Livestock sector in India has experienced remarkable growth during the last two decades in terms of production, value addition and trade. Livestock sector contributes nearly 25 per cent to the gross value of agricultural output at the national level. The role played by women in dairy farming is worthy enough to compare with their male counterparts. In commercial dairy farming, women seem to monopolies almost all the dairy operations, however, their participation is less only in health care aspects of dairy animals. Women actively participate and take decision with regard to management of dairy animals, production and processing aspects of dairying. Women dairy projects being implemented under “Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)” for women by the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. STEP is being implemented to ensure well-being of women in traditional informal sectors. It aims at increasing self-reliance of women by enhancing their productivity and enabling them to take up income generation activities. A number of state level dairy federations took up organizing women dairy co-operative societies under STEP. Women dairy co-operative system is owned, controlled and managed by women only. It was, therefore, planned to focus attention on functioning of women co-operative societies and their impact on empowerment of members. The present study investigated the impact of women dairy co-operative societies on empowerment of women members. A sample of 150 members was selected through proportionate random sampling technique. Thus, the study was carried out on 150 members of Women Dairy Co-operative Societies. The data were collected with the help of interview schedule. Majority of the respondents reported that there was improvement in economic resources of the family, women’s own development, decision making capacity regarding education and marriage of children and participation in social activities.

**KEY WORDS :** Empowerment, Dairy co-operatives, Women members

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## INTRODUCTION

India is a densely populated country and maximum people live in villages. Majority of them are involved in

agriculture. India produces only five per cent of the total quantity of milk produced in the world. This amount is too inadequate to meet the country’s demand. The supply of milk in some parts of India is higher than the local

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demand. On the other hand, supply of milk in the rest of the country as well as in urban areas is much lower than the demand. Many dairy co-operatives have been formed to meet local demand and to develop dairy industry. Development of dairying in India is not only to increase the milk production but also to provide assured employment to the rural people. Dairying fits most appropriately in the country's development programme for increasing food production, rural employment and equitable distribution of income. In Punjab, dairy farming operates usually in unorganized form. Milk producers sell their products to traders, private milk producers, and private dairies etc., which all act as middle men and enjoy a huge share of profits. To check exploitation of dairy farmers by these middlemen dairy co-operatives were started. The contribution of co-operatives in India's dairy industry is enormous. These co-operatives are managed by farmers themselves according to the needs and demands of the community (Rao, 2004).

The dairy co-operative movement has transformed the lives of living in rural India, by providing them some measures of economic independence. In fact, the dairy co-operatives have been the biggest employment generator for women in modern India. Throughout the country, women from 11 million families, attend to their buffaloes and cows at home, while their husbands toil in the fields. Income from dairying is the women's contribution to the total family income. Women play a major role at home as a mother, housewife, care taker and decision maker. The role played by women in dairy farming is worthy enough to compare with their male counterparts. In commercial dairy farming, women seem to monopolise almost all the dairy operations, however, their participation is less only in health care aspects of dairy animals. Women actively participate and take decision with regard to management of dairy animals, production and processing aspects of dairying. Today in India, there are 75000 dairy co-operative societies spread all over the country with a membership of 10 million. The farmer in the village is now assured of better future due to these co-operatives. Involvement of women in livestock production is a long standing tradition. Women contribute more than 70 per cent to the labour requirements. Although the involvement and participation of women folk in dairy is high but their efforts are neither recognized nor rewarded. The government of India realized these disparities and potential of women and initiated women dairy co-operative societies (WDCSs)

through the various State Dairy Co-operative Federations in the country. There are over 9000 women dairy co-operative societies with a membership of 3.6 lakhs in 10 states (Rao, 2004). In view of the above, the present study has been planned with the objective to study the profile of selected members of women dairy co-operative societies and to assess the impact of women dairy co-operative societies on empowerment of women members.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in purposively selected district of Punjab state *i.e.* Ludhiana. A sample of 150 members was selected through proportionate random sampling technique from 40 selected women dairy co-operative societies. Thus the study was carried out on 40 WDCS and 150 members of women dairy co-operative societies. To study the profile of WDCS members, the parameters like age, education, marital status, occupation of the family, family type, family size, family education, family income, caste and motivating factors were selected with the help of experts and the literature. Empowerment of women was defined in terms of her influence over financial position of family, women's own development, improvement in decision making power about general welfare of the family, education and marriage of children and their participation in social activities. An interview schedule was developed and used for data collection. The statements related to all above mentioned aspects were developed with the help of experts and the literature. The responses of respondents were measured on a three point scale *i.e.* Improved, remained same, can't say and were scored as 3, 2 and 1, respectively. After assigning the scores to categories of parameters selected, the total scores were calculated for each member. On the basis of score range obtained, the categories were developed with the help of cube root method. The data collected were analyzed by using appropriate statistical procedure such as frequencies, percentages and mean score.

## OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

The socio-economic profile of the WDCS members was studied with the selected parameters like age, educational status, marital status, type of family, family size, caste, occupation of the family, subsidiary occupation of the family, area under fodder and land holdings.

**Age :**

The data regarding socio-economic profile of women dairy co-operative societies (WDCS) member presented in Table 1 illustrates that the majority of the WDC members *i.e.* 62 per cent were in age group of above 45

<b>Table 1 : Distribution of WDC members according to socio-economic profile (n=150)</b>		
Profile	No.	%
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18-25	2	1.33
26-35	8	5.33
36-45	47	31.67
>45	93	62.00
<b>Educational status</b>		
Illiterate but can sign	51	34.00
Primary	19	12.67
Matric	71	47.33
Graduation	8	5.33
Above graduation	0	1.67
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	131	87.00
Unmarried	5	3.33
Divorced	1	0.67
Widowed	13	8.67
<b>Family type</b>		
Joint	43	10.67
Nuclear	107	71.33
<b>Family size</b>		
Upto 4	130	86.67
5-8	20	13.33
<b>Caste</b>		
General	150	100
<b>Family occupation *</b>		
Agriculture	140	93.33
Service	19	12.67
<b>Subsidiary occupation *</b>		
Dairy	150	100
Beekeeping	2	1.33
Poultry	7	4.66
<b>Land holdings (acres)</b>		
Marginal (< 2.5 acres)	37	24.66
Small (2.5 – 5 acres)	62	41.33
Medium (5 – 15 acres)	49	32.66
Large (> 15 acres)	2	1.33
<b>Multiple responses *</b>		

years which is followed by 31.33 per cent from age group of 36-45 years. This period is considered to be the most productive period in the person's life. The proportion of members in the age range of above 26-35 years was 5.33 per cent and those in the age group of 18-25 years were only 1.33 per cent indicating that majority of WDC member enrolled themselves in the most productive age group.

**Educational status :**

An analysis of the educational status of the respondents revealed that 47.33 per cent WDCS members were matric followed by 34.00 per cent, who were illiterate but can sign. A small percentage *i.e.* 12.67 per cent WDCS members were educated upto primary level. A small percentage of 5.33 members was graduate and only 1.67 per cent of the respondents were above graduate.

**Marital status :**

A large majority of respondents *i.e.* 87.33 per cent were married. Only 3.33 per cent of respondents were unmarried. This may be due is the age group of majority of the members *i.e.* 26 years to 35 year, the age at which most women are usually married. The results further revealed that 0.67 per cent and 8.67 per cent of the respondents were divorced and widowed, respectively.

**Type of family :**

Members living in joint family usually characterize rural life but same trend was not observed in the present study because a majority of 71.33 per cent respondents belonged to nuclear family whereas only 28.67 per cent were from joint family.

**Family size :**

The findings of the study revealed that a large majority 86.67 per cent of the selected respondents had family members up to four in their family, followed by 13.33 per cent respondents who had 5-8 members in their families. This trend may be due to the large percentage of respondents from nuclear families.

**Caste :**

The distribution of respondents according to the caste revealed that the all the respondents belonged to general caste.

### Occupation of family :

The data presented in the table revealed that large proportion *i.e.* 93.33 of the respondents were engaged in agriculture and only 12.67 per cent were from service or both.

### Subsidiary occupation :

As the research was on members of dairy cooperative societies, so all the respondents had dairy as a subsidiary occupation followed by poultry carried out by 4.66 per cent respondents. A very small percentage *i.e.* 1.33 per cent members were also engaged in bee keeping.

### Land holdings :

The findings revealed that a large proportion of selected families *i.e.* 41.33 per cent members had small land holding (2.5-5 acres) while 32.66 per cent of the selected families had medium land holding (5-15 acres). It was also found that 24.66 per cent had marginal land (< 2.5 acres) and only 1.33 per cent had large land holding (> 15 acres).

### Empowerment of women through WDCS :

This part of the findings focus on the impact of

WDCS on empowerment of women. In present study empowerment was defined in terms of improvement in economic resources of the family, women's own development, improvement in decision making role regarding education, marriage of children and increased participation in social activities.

Data presented in Table 2 show that a large majority of 90.00 per cent respondents felt more confident in dealing with people whereas only 7.33 per cent of the respondents reported that confidence in dealing with people remained same. Majority of the respondents 88.67 per cent felt more confident in sharing their views in meetings followed by 8.67 per cent who realised no change in this regard and only 2.67 of the respondents had no opinion regarding this change.

Data further indicated that 86.00 per cent of the respondents reported that there was improvement in dealing with officials after joining the group whereas 11.33 per cent reported that they felt no improvement after joining the group and only 2.67 per cent of respondents had no idea regarding the statement. As far as improvement in technical skills was concerned data in table revealed that 48.00 per cent of the respondents agreed that technical skills of women were improved whereas 42.67 per cent reported technical skills of

**Table 2 : Distribution of members according to their own development**

Statements				(n=150)
	Improved (%)	Remained same (%)	Can't say (%)	Mean
Confidence in dealing with people	135 (90.00)	11 (7.33)	4 (2.67)	2.83
Confidence in sharing views in meeting	133 (88.67)	13 (8.67)	4 (2.67)	2.80
Improvement in dealing with officials	129 (86.00)	17 (11.33)	4 (2.67)	2.75
Improvement in technical skills	72 (48.00)	64 (42.67)	14 (9.33)	2.05
Exchange of views/feelings in the family	105 (70.00)	39 (26.00)	6 (4.00)	2.44

**Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to their decision making role**

Statements				(n=150)
	Improved (%)	Remained same (%)	Can't say (%)	Mean
<b>Decision making regarding</b>				
General welfare of family	140 (93.33)	4 (2.67)	6 (4.00)	2.91
Education of children	124 (82.67)	14 (9.33)	12 (8.00)	2.73
Marriage of the children	107 (71.33)	27 (18.00)	16 (10.67)	2.53
Purchase and sale of milch animals	74 (49.33)	31 (20.67)	45 (30.00)	2.29
<b>Decision making regarding spending money on</b>				
Personal grooming	67 (44.67)	65 (43.33)	18 (12.00)	2.01
Family members	100 (66.67)	37 (24.67)	13 (8.67)	2.42
Clothing of self and family	101 (67.33)	35 (23.33)	14 (9.33)	2.44
Food items	88 (58.67)	54 (36.00)	8 (5.33)	2.23
Recreation	58 (38.67)	70 (46.67)	22 (14.67)	1.92
Electronic gadgets	35 (23.33)	91 (60.67)	24 (16.00)	1.63
Furniture items	44 (29.33)	83 (55.33)	23 (15.33)	1.74
Renovation of house	35 (23.33)	91 (60.67)	24 (16.00)	1.63

women remained same. Nearly 9.33 per cent of the respondents were not sure about the improvement in this aspect. A large majority 88.66 per cent of the respondents reported that there was improvement in exchanging their views and feelings in the family whereas 26 per cent reported that position of women remained same. Only 4 per cent reported that they were not sure for improvement regarding this act particularly. The mean score 2.83, 2.80, 2.75, 2.44 and 2.05 shows that the women’s own development become high after joining the dairy co-operative societies. Madheswaran and Dharmadhikary (2002) also reported that the status of women, both within household and outside was improved, after getting the membership of dairy co-operative societies.

Empowerment of women can be assessed from the changes occurred in the decision making role within the family. The data presented in Table 3 indicated that large majority *i.e.* 93.33 per cent of the respondents agreed that their role in decision making about general welfare of the family was improved whereas 2.67 per cent reported that role of women in decision making remained same and only 4.00 per cent of the respondent revealed that they were not sure about the change. Wadewale (2004) also found that there was increased participation of women in family decision making, positive change in behaviour of their husbands and family members towards them. Further data indicated that 82.67 per cent of the respondents reported that position of women in decision-making regarding education of children was improved. Whereas 9.33 per cent of the respondents revealed that there was no change in this direction and only 8.00 per cent of the respondents had no opinion regarding this statement. It was also found that majority of the members reported improvement in decision making regarding marriage of children (71.33%) purchased and sale of mulch animals, (49.33%) spending money on personal

grooming, (44.67%) on family members, (66.67%) clothing, (67.33%) and food items (58.67%). It was also found that their decision making role regarding expenditure on clothing (67.33%), food items (58.67%), recreation (38.67%), electronic gadgets, (23.33%), furniture items (29.33%) and renovation of the house (23.33%) was improved. Gangwar *et al.* (2004) revealed that the study reflected the trend of mutual participation of husband and wife in majority of families where women were employed. Both husband and wife participated equally in the matters of education, career and marriage of children. Results revealed that majority of respondents reported that their decision making role regarding spending money on electronic gadgets (60.67%), furniture items (53.33%) and renovation of house (60.67%) remained same. The mean score values on decision making role indicated that highest improvement in decision making role was found in general welfare of the family (2.91), in education of children (2.73), marriage of children (2.53), spending money on clothing (2.44) and family members (2.42). The least improvement in decision making role was found in electronic gadgets (1.63) and renovation of house (1.63). Rangenekar and Rangenekar (1992) reported decision-making was an important factor as far as women empowerment was concerned. In livestock rearing disposal of milk and milk products and feeding of animals were decided by women.

The data given in Table 4 revealed that 49.33 per cent of the respondents reported that their authoritative role in family had improved whereas 38.67 per cent revealed no change in this direction and only 12.00 per cent of the respondents had no opinion in this respect. Regarding the participation in development work of village it was found that nearly half of the respondents reported that their participation in social activities such as participation in welfare activities (50.67%), organizing social/cultural functions in the

**Table 4 : Distribution of members according to their participation in social activities**

Statements				(n=150)
	Improved (%)	Remained same (%)	Can't say (%)	Mean
Authoritative role in the family	74 (49.33)	58 (38.67)	18 (12.00)	2.11
Participation in development work of village	40 (26.67)	70 (46.67)	40 (26.67)	1.80
Organizing social/cultural functions in the village	62 (41.33)	63 (42.00)	25 (16.67)	1.99
Participation in welfare activities	35 (23.33)	76 (50.67)	39 (26.00)	1.73

**Table 5 : Distribution of respondents according to their level of empowerment**

Level of empowerment			(n=150)
	No.	%	
Low (upto 38)	25	16.77	
Medium (39-54)	10	6.77	
High (>54)	115	76.77	

village (42.00%) and participation in development work of village (46.67%) remained same. Findings are in line with the result of Luis and Vaidya (2010) who reported that social empowerment of rural women means that the woman should get an important place in her family and in the society and should have a right to enable her to make use of available resources. The mean score values depicted that highest improvement was found in authoritative role in the family (2.11) followed by organizing social/cultural functions (1.99) and participation in development work of village (1.80). It may be concluded from the above results that with the improvement in financial position of women, their decision making role also improved. But their participation in social activities did not correspond to the improved financial condition and decision making role. This may be due to the conservative mind set of rural society.

The perusal of data presented in Table 5 revealed that 76.77 per cent members of dairy co-operative societies achieved 'high' level of empowerment followed by 16.77 per cent who achieved low level of empowerment. Only 6.77 per cent members were empowered up to medium level. It may be inferred that women after becoming the member of dairy co-operative society and taking up the enterprise improved their financial conditions, communication skills and their decision making role. Moreover, they gained the confidence to share their views and feeling. Similarly Kadam (2014) worked on the empowerment of women through self-help group in Marathwada region, Kakade (2010) on empowerment of women in agriculture, Antwal *et al.* (2015) on Dynamic and performance of women self help groups, Gupta and Patel (2015) on women empowerment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment and Naik *et al.* (2012). on empowerment of rural women through SHG's and Patil (2014) on impact of television programmes in empowerment of rural women of Bijapur district and the results obtained were more of less similar to the present investigation.

### Conclusion :

The study concluded that there was improvement in financial position and personal development of members but there is need to promote participation of members in development work and in social activities of

the village. It was revealed that dairy co-operative societies brought changes in the lives of their members. Their communication skills and decision-making role improved with the economic empowerment. Economic empowerment enabled them to shun their inhibition and share their views openly in the family and in meetings.

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