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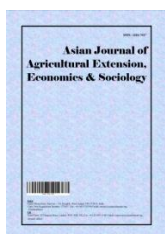
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Decision Making Pattern of Farm Women in Different Farm and Non-farm Activities

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJAEES/2021/v39i1230797

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/79308>

Original Research Article

Received 06 October 2021
Accepted 12 December 2021
Published 14 December 2021

ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to study the decision making pattern of farm Women in different farm and non-farm activities with following objectives i) to study the selected personal and socio personal and socio-economic characteristic of rural women and ii) to analyze the decision making pattern of rural women in different farm and non farm activities. The study was conducted in Six Districts of Assam. A purposive cum simple random sampling technique was adopted for selecting the respective samples for the study. Altogether 1200 farm women were selected for the present study. Data was collected personally by interview method. The findings reveals that farm women belonged to low socio-economic status, less than fifty per cent of farm women took independent decision in maintenance of house (35.25%), followed by buying food items for family consumption (34.17%) and crop harvesting and transporting (33.75%). majority (78.75%) of farm women took joint decision in purchase of household items, purchase of implements (73.66%) followed by selling of crops and where to sell (72.42%), buying of clothes for family members (67.25%).

Keywords: *Decision making; rural women; farm and non-farm activities; socio-economic characteristic.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Women are the backbone of agricultural workforce and also make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Compared to men, women are generally involved in a wider range in crops, livestock and agro-based activities. Despite their role in different activities of farming, their involvement in decision making process is still seems questionable. Most of the farmer in India are women [1] and also many decisions from seeds to resources such as land, labour and input allocation, marketing, storage are taken by women themselves or jointly with their husband or with the family members. It is understood that women responsibility in agriculture is far more than male because of their involvement in multifarious activities. In villages farm women are fully occupied and over burdened with three fold responsibility of home, agriculture and livestock management Malapit et al. [2] and [3]. Despite their great involvement in India's agricultural economy, they remain most downtrodden and oppressed, seeking recognition and reward for their effort. Formalized restraints of seclusion within the four walls of their home, ineffectiveness in living and work decision are still the traditional codes. We know that decision making is the root of all human activities. Therefore success and development of farming and family living depend upon how well the family makes its decisions and contribution of women in such decision as manager of her family are valuable. Thus the present study was taken with following objectives, to throw light on the real picture of decision making pattern of women

- i) To study the selected personal and socio-economic characteristic of rural women.
- ii) To analyze the decision making pattern of rural women in different farm and non farm activities

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study was conducted in three agro-climatic zones of Assam state in India : Upper

Brahmaputra Valley Zone, Central Brahmaputra Valley Zone and North Bank Plain Zone. A multistage purposive cum- random sampling design was followed. From each selected agro-climatic zone two districts, (total six) were selected purposively. Again from each selected district one sub-division (total six) were selected purposively considering the involvement of farm women in agricultural activities. From each selected sub-division two blocks total (twelve) were selected purposively. From each selected block four villages were selected randomly. Thus 48 villages were selected for carrying out the study. From each selected village 25 farm women, (total 1,200) were selected randomly.

2.2 Variable and Its Measurements

2.2.1 Socio-economic status

This refers to the position of the respondent in society and was determined by various social and economic variables such as caste, land holding, education, type of house, main family occupation, family type, family size, material possession and organizational membership of farm women. The socio-economic status of farm women were measured by the socio-economic scale developed by [4] with slight modification. On the basis of score obtained by the farm women they were categorized into the 3- three categories: Low with score range below $X - S_d$, medium with $X - S_d$ to $X + S_d$ and high with above $X + S_d$.

2.2.2 Participation of farm women in decision making in different farm and non-farm activities

Decision making is a thinking process. Nevertheless, farm women knowingly or unknowingly participate in decision making process in farming as enterprise, which is based on her long- standing field experience [5]. In the present study it refers to the decision in farm and non-farm activities.

2.3 Analysis of Data

The collected data were coded, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the present study by using appropriate tests and techniques.

Table 1. The categorization and scoring was done as follows

Category	Score
No participation	1
Joint participation	2
Independent participation	3

Table 2. Similarly, according to the maximum obtainable score and scores obtained by the farm women they were classified as follows

Category	Score Range
Low	Below ($\bar{X} - Sd$)
Medium	$\bar{X} - Sd$ to $\bar{X} + Sd$
High	Above $\bar{X} + Sd$

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-Economic Status of Farm Women

Majority 55.08 per cent of farm women of the study areas belonged to middle age group i.e.30-40 yrs. Large majority (91.66%) of farm women were married. 44.75 per cent of farm women belonged to general caste. 41.33 per cent of farm women belonged to the category of marginal farmer. 38.50 per cent of farm women had education up to middle school. 46.42 per cent farm women had mixed type of house. 46.50 per cent of the farm women's family occupation was farming. Majority (77.89%) of farm women belonged to nuclear family. The data reveals that majority (63.95%) of farm women belonged to small family. Cent per cent of farm families possessed hoe and hand tools, followed by desi plough (99.08%) and bullock (98.25%). Majority 60.91 per cent of farm families possesses two wheelers. 87.08 per cent of farm families possess mobile followed by television (70.42%). Large majority (95.42%) of farm families possess traditional chullah. 64.09 per cent of farm women were member of one organization. 52.60 per cent of farm women belonged to low socio-economic status.

3.2 Decision Making Pattern of Farm Women in Different Farm and Non-farm Activities

Empowerment of farm women in decision making is a need of the time in agrarian country like India, where farming is a family occupation. Farm women who are associated with their husband in various activities have greater role in decision

making process. Thus timely and judicious decision making ability of the farm family have a direct bearing on the development of agriculture sector. The farm women of Assam though deprived of getting timely extension service, they were contributing a lot to the agricultural development in the selected regions. It is therefore imperative to assess the participation of farm women in decision making in different farm and non-farm activities.

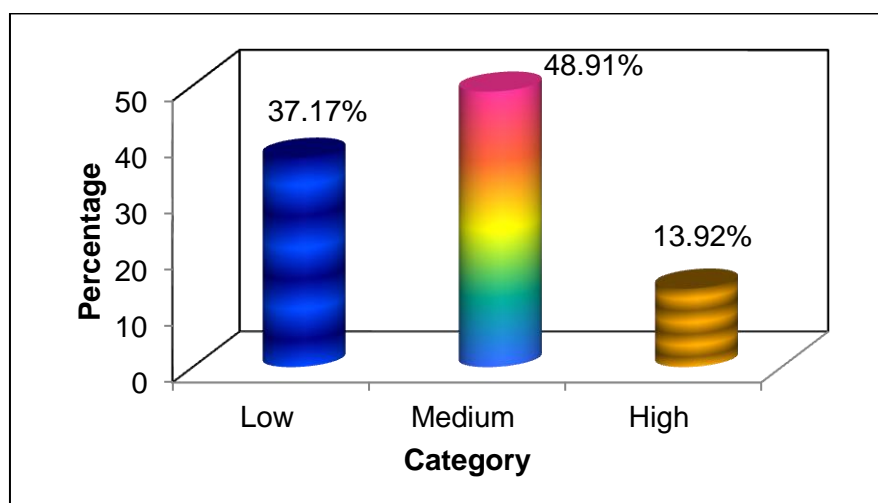
The data presented in Table 3 shows that less than fifty per cent of farm women took independent decision in maintenance of house (35.25%), followed by buying food items for family consumption (34.17%), crop harvesting and transporting (33.75%), buying and selling of livestock and poultry (26.00%) and saving of money (25.83%).

It is interesting to observe that majority (78.75%) of farm women took joint decision in purchase of household items, purchase of implements (73.66%) followed by selling of crops and where to sell (72.42%), buying of clothes for family members (67.25%), crop harvesting and transporting (62.75%), selection of crop varieties (62.08%), children's education (58.67%), retention of grain for consumption (56.42%), buying and selling of livestock and poultry (53.75%) and purchase of land for cultivation of crops (52.33%). This finding is in line with Sharma [6], Premavati and Seetharaman [7] and Saikia *et al.* [8].

Equal participation of farm women in decision making process indicates that they have an important role in decision making which is an important aspect of empowerment.

Table 3. Distribution of farm women according to decision making pattern in different farm and non-farm activities N=1200

Sl. No.	Decision making activities	Decision making pattern					
		Independent participation		Joint participation		No participation	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Farm activities							
1	Purchase of land for cultivation of crops	36	3.00	628	52.33	536	44.67
2	Purchase of Implements	73	6.03	884	73.66	245	20.41
3	Selection of crop varieties	42	3.50	745	62.08	413	34.42
4	Amount of manure and fertilizer to be purchased	21	1.75	421	35.08	728	63.17
5	Plant protection	9	0.75	351	29.25	840	70.00
6	Crop harvesting and transporting	405	33.75	753	62.75	42	3.50
7	Hired labour for transplanting	146	12.16	623	51.92	431	35.92
8	Retention of grain for consumption	93	7.75	677	56.42	430	35.83
9	Selling crops and where to sell	71	5.92	869	72.42	260	21.66
10	Seeking loan for farm resources	10	0.83	564	47.00	626	52.17
11	Buying and selling of livestock and poultry	312	26.00	645	53.75	243	20.25
12	Buying food items for family consumption	410	34.17	471	39.25	319	26.58
Non-farm activities							
13	Children's education	175	14.58	704	58.67	321	26.75
14	Buying of clothes for family members	204	17.00	807	67.25	189	15.75
15	Purchase of household items	35	2.92	945	78.75	220	18.33
16	Maintenance of house	423	35.25	511	42.58	266	22.17
17	Saving of money	310	25.83	571	47.58	319	26.58

**Fig. 1. Distribution of farm women in overall participation in decision making**

3.2.1 Overall participation of farm women in decision making pattern in both farm and non-farm activities

Fig. 1. shows that 48.91 per cent farm women had medium level of participation in decision making followed by low (37.17%) and high level (13.92%) participation.

From the literature reviewed, it is observed that, traditionally women had no definite decision making role in majority of family affairs because of the dominance of male members in the joint family system. The situation now seems to have changed owing to the disintegration of this family system in the rural areas. Considering the data it is observed that women farmers took active role in decision making both in farm and non-farm activities. It is felt that farm women participation in farming decision might help in the adoption of agricultural messages related to field crops received from the extension trainings. Moreover, this finding might develop the awareness among extension personnel to include a proportionate number of farm women in their planned extension activities along with other clientele.

To sum up, farm women are socio-economically empowered to some extent due to availing different extension services by them. It was observed that farm women had ownership of economically important resource like milch animal, had access to credit, majority of farm women saved money in between Rs. 1000 to 5000, enjoy liberty to some extent in incurring the expenditure. It was further observed that farm women had little exposure to communication media, sometimes had contact with extension agencies, had good social exposure, low level of leadership ability and took part in decision making.

Empowerment is a complicated process, which comprises of short-term and long-term strategy. To empower the farm women there is need to increase their access to new information as well as to credit. Further, by increasing their social and institutional participation at all levels by strengthening training programmes for them, there should be long drawn strategy for increasing their access to and control over appropriate technology.

Less than fifty percent of farm women took independent decision in crop harvesting and transporting (33.75%) followed by as maintenance of house (35.25%) and buying food

items for family consumption (34.17%). 48.91 per cent farm women had medium level of participation in decision making followed by low (37.17%) and high level (13.92%) participation.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that decision-making patterns in farm work seem to be changing and women have increasingly become important members of the family as decision-makers, both on the farm as well as at home. This indicates that farm women were socio-economically empowered to some extent due to availing different extension services.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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