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DECISION MAKING STATUS OF RURAL HOUSEWIVES IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PROVINCE: A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT MARDAN

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to find out the decision-making profile of rural women in Pakistan. The study was delimited to one district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In multi stage sampling union council was selected on the first step. In second step two villages of the UC were selected randomly. In third stage, 117 women were selected from already selected villages by using random sampling technique. The study was kept descriptive in nature while using a household survey baseline data was collected. The results of the study showed that majority of the respondents were of middle age, married and literate at school level. They had livestock rearing experience up to 11-15 years. Decisions regarding crop production activities and household provisions were generally dominated by male members. Similarly, they dominated in the livestock activities like breeding (79%) and marketing of animals (85.47%). The study revealed active participation of rural women in feeding (79.49%) and health care (64.10%) of animals, and women were jointly involved in such decisions. Similarly, rural women were involved in joint decisions related to food for family, medical care, and construction/repair of house. Study recommends maximum attention towards their capacity building in decision making.

KEYWORDS

Rural Housewives, Decision Making, District Mardan

1. INTRODUCTION

Women folk are better half of men in almost all spheres of community development. In Pakistan, rural women are about half of the total Pakistani population and an enormous proportion of agricultural labour force in the rural areas. In Pakistan, they are among millions of landless and small farmers who perform unpaid work in harsh agriculture circumstances. In dearth of other skills, they rely on crop production and livestock activities in fulfilling their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. These women play a key role in crop growth, livestock raising, cottage industry and stay busy from sunrise to sunset in providing food in fields, fetching water, collecting fuel wood and management of livestock. While working shoulder to shoulder with men, they supplement their efforts in the cultivation of the crops right from the preparation of soil to the post-harvest operations (Zahoor et al. 2013).

The activities of rural women typically include helping in agricultural crop production, tending animals, processing and preparing food, rarely working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, caring for family members and maintaining their homes (Arshad et al. 2010). However, despite all this, due recognition is not given to them, neither is their contribution ever recorded. This negligence towards their efforts has caused many problems negatively affecting their capacities and weakening their confidence in themselves.

The level of women participation in decision-making process not only varies from region to region but also from one activity to another (Tipildaand Panhwar, 2008). In relatively open societies women, alone or together with men, play important roles in most of the decisions related to livestock production activities. However, in some areas gender biases prevail against women and the males dominate in making decisions even where women are key providers of the labour (Arshad et al. 2010). Generally, women undertake livestock handling or milking but its selling remains a right defined for men. In such societies, the system does not allow women access to any type of cash or earnings. They are paid in kind instead of cash that further makes them dependent on their male partners who ignore their role in livestock management (Assan, 2014 and Mulugeta and Amsalu 2014).

Traditionally in rural communities, women had been playing vital role not in agriculture alone but also in related activities e.g.; of farms, livestock and domestic activities. However, despite great toil their role is hardly recognized that leads to their negligible say at any echelon. Given the traditionally limited role of rural women in decision-making processes at the household, village and national levels in most cultures, their needs, interests and constraints are often not reflected in policy-making processes and laws which are important for poverty reduction, food security and environmental sustainability. For these reasons, the identification of role of women and their inclusion in the decision-making process of various farm and nonfarm activities is considered very important. Ideally all decisions related to crop production, livestock, and household should jointly be arrived at by all in a family. In this back drop, the study has been undertaken to understand the component-wise decision-making profile and status of rural women of district Mardan, Khber Pakhtunkhwa which is expected to increase congenial decisions at family level.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey research design has been used to determine the decision-making profile of rural women in rural neighbourhood of Mardan District selected as the universe of this research. Using multistage random sampling technique one tehsil; namely Katlang was randomly selected in the first sampling stage. In the second stage, two villages namely; Sarobi and Qasmi were selected randomly from the already selected union council. In the third sampling stage 39 and 78 households were further selected from each village by proportional allocation technique. In the fourth and last stage, a total of 117 rural women respondents were selected from those households for interview. The relevant information was collected using well pretested interview schedule. The data collected during 2010 focused on the variables like age, literacy status, marital status, livestock experience and decision-making profile of rural women categorically in livestock, household and miscellaneous activities.

The state of decision-making profile of rural women was studied with respect to their percentage involvement in various decisions at the household level. Per some earlier studies, involvement of an individual family member in decision making may not be of the same level for all activities. In some cases, women might be more free to take decision at their own, while in other cases they might not be involved at all. In this study, the involvement of rural women in decision making was studied in three categories i.e. crop production activities (e.g. source of borrowing, amount of credit to borrow, investment in high yielding varieties, fertilizer, insecticides/pesticides and agricultural land transactions), livestock activities (e.g. rearing and breeding, feeding, health care management and marketing etc.), and household activities (as food for family, medical care, child education, marriage, construction/repair of house and purchase of household assets). The rural women were asked to indicate who was taking decision in each activity on a three point Likert scale i.e.; independently female decisions, independently male decisions and Joint decision. The data were compiled and analysed by using descriptive statistics through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Partial secondary information was also collected from the different published articles, policy papers, project papers, government and other useful websites, etc.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic data were collected from the study sample earlier in formatting the main quarry of decision-making profile. Some household level demographic details, like information regarding the age, literacy, marital status and experience in livestock rearing, were acquired to improve our understanding of their empowerment profile in terms of controlling decisions at the household. The summary statistics are being presented in Table 1.

The respondents were mainly found in the range of 20 to above 40 years of age. Majority (44.4%) of the respondents were young i.e. under the age of 30- 40 years. Most of them were married (68.38%) followed by 19.06 percent, 9.40 percent and 2.56 percent unmarried, widow and divorced respectively. Almost 70 percent of the respondents were literate and the remaining (29.91%) were illiterate. Among the literates, majority (32.93%) of the sample respondents was up to metric level, 24.39 percent primary, 23.17 percent middle and 19.51 percent were of above metric level. The results show that majority of the respondents in livestock production (34.19%) had between 11-15 years of experience; resultantly women in the study area were reasonably skilled with livestock management.

Table 1. Age, Education, Marital Status and Experience Profiles of Rural Women Under Study

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age (years)		
20—30	34	29.06
31—40	52	44.44
Above 40	31	26.50
Total	117	100
Marital Status		
Single	23	19.66
Married	80	68.38
Divorced	03	2.56
Widow	11	9.40
Total	117	100
Literacy Status		
Illiterate	35	29.91
Literate	82	70.09
i) Primary	20	24.39
ii) Middle	19	23.17
ii) Matric	27	32.93
iv) Above matric	16	19.51
Total	117	100
Livestock rearing experience (in years)		
1—5	12	10.26
6—10	33	28.20
11-15	40	34.19
Above 15	32	27.35
Total	117	100

In crop production activities, male was found sovereign. The source of credit was chosen by male members (61.54%) whereas the amount to be borrowed was decided jointly (56.41%). Similarly, the decisions primarily taken by male members were adoption of high yielding varieties (95.72 %), fertilizer (85.47%), insecticide/ pesticide (89.74%) and purchase of agricultural land (88.03%). Damanisa and Yohana (2007) reporting similar results stated that the level of rural women participation in agriculture decision making was quite low. Table 2 presents male and female decision making levels and status in traditional Pathan area of Khyberpakhtun Province.

Table 2. Percentage Gendered Participation in Decision Making in Crop Production Activities

ACTIVITIES	FEMALE ONLY	MALE ONLY	BOTH
Source of borrowing	00.00	61.54	38.46
Amount of borrowing	00.00	43.59	56.41
High yielding varieties	00.00	95.72	4.28
Fertilizer	00.00	85.47	14.53

Insecticides/pesticides	00.00	89.74	10.26
Purchase of agricultural land	3.42	88.03	8.55

As evident from the results presented in table 3, the decisions about breeding and marketing were mainly taken by male members, while the decisions regarding feeding and health care were made jointly. The female was dominant only in the case of management related decisions. In the case of breeding the decisions related to number of animals (62%) were taken by both male and female whereas the decisions related to breed of animals (79%) and artificial insemination of animals (75%) were taken by male members. Dubey et al. (1982), Singh and Srivastava (2012) and Kaur and Raj (2008) had also reported similar results that majority of women had low level of participation in decision making in breeding practices of animals.

Decisions with respect to feeding, type and quantity of feed (50.00%) and storage of fodder (79.49%) were made jointly whereas the quantity of concentrate (57.26%) was independently decided by rural women. The findings are in line with Singh and Srivastava (2012) and Sarma and Payeng (2012) who concluded that rural women were involved in the decision-making process in most of the activities either independently or jointly with their spouses. About health care of animals, the decisions related to vaccination (55.56%) and consultation with veterinary doctor (64.10%) were taken by both male and female members of the family. In case of control of external parasites (57.26%), it has been entirely female's decision which may be attributed to their extreme exposure regarding care of diseased animals, however partially (28.21%) such decisions were taken jointly. In case of management aspect of livestock, it is observed that decisions related to type of shed i.e.; kachha or pakka (75.21%) were also jointly arrived at in a family, while in case of decisions related to flooring of animals' shed (47%) and time of milking of animals (87.18%) were taken by female members of the family.

In terms of marketing decisions, the observed response clearly indicates that male members of family were predominant in all transactions like purchase of animals (83.76%) and sale of animals (85.47%), while female members were predominantly deciding about sale of milk and milk products (57.26%). The results are in line with the findings of Katiyaret *al.* (2008) that woman were less involved in taking decisions related to marketing of animals.

Table 2. Percentage Gendered Participation in Decision Making in Livestock Activities

ACTIVITIES	FEMALE ONLY	MALE ONLY	BOTH
REARING AND BREEDING OF ANIMALS			
NUMBER OF ANIMALS	15.00	23.00	62.00
BREED OF ANIMALS	09.00	79.00	12.00
Artificial Insemination or natural service	15.00	75.00	10.00
Feeding			
Type and quantity of feed	33.33	16.67	50.00
Quantity of concentrate	57.26	14.53	28.21
Storage of fodder	14.53	05.98	79.49
Health care			
Vaccination	00.00	44.44	55.56
Consulting veterinary doctor	12.82	23.08	64.10

Control of external parasite	57.26	14.53	28.21
Management			
Type of shed	10.26	14.53	75.21
Flooring of animal shed	47.00	28.21	24.79
Time of milking	87.18	04.27	08.55
Marketing			
Purchase of animals	05.13	83.76	11.11
Sale of animals	04.27	85.47	10.26
Sale of milk and milk products	21.37	21.37	57.26

Results presented in table 4 reveal that in the household level decisions males predominantly were deciding about education (74.36%), marriages (53.85%), construction/repair of house (51.28%) and purchase of household assets (49.57%) in these traditional families. Similar results are reported by Nosheen et al. (2009) that male counterparts were the main decision makers in the family with highest involvement in family matters, education of children and their marriages. The decisions related to medical care of a family, 46.15 percent were taken jointly by male and female, however, males have relatively 44.45 percent higher authority over females. The choice for the food for family was in most cases taken by both male and female (64.10%). The results generally show that males exercised relatively higher autonomy in family affairs.

Table 4. Percentage Gendered Participation in Decision Making in Household Activities

ACTIVITIES	FEMALE ONLY	MALE ONLY	BOTH
Food for family	28.21	7.69	64.10
Education	08.55	74.36	17.09
Medical care	09.4	44.45	46.15
Marriage	00.00	53.85	46.15
Construction/repair of house	00.00	51.28	48.72
Purchase of household assets	11.11	49.57	39.32

4. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this research study show that respondents were mostly of middle age group, married, literate and had experience of 11-15 years in livestock rearing. The decision-making profile under three scenarios of crop production, livestock and household activities generally displayed that male household members exercised greater autonomy, even where women worked more. It can be concluded that most of the decisions related to crop production resided with male counterpart while the decisions related to management, feeding and health care practices of livestock showed more rural women participation. In household activities, rural women were involved in joint decisions related to food for family and medical care while the rest of the activities like education, marriage, construction/repair of house and purchase of household assets were decided mainly by male members and joint decisions were also involved to some extent. There is a need to provide technical knowledge and guidance related to livestock to rural women so that they could do more

to optimize their participation in decision-making vis-a-vis improvement in their conditions of living in these areas that would lead to overall improvement.

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