



Role of Rural Women in Household Decision Making

Kulkarni Madhumati Vithalrao

Assistant Professor, Extension Education, Agricultural Technology Information Center ,
VNMKV, Parbhani.

ABSTRACT

Women are at the centre, so far as the household decisions are concerned. The present study, which was conducted from Ardhapur Taluka of Nanded District in 2013-14, basically focuses on the role of rural women in household decision making. The universe of the study was five villages of Ardhapur Taluka from which 30 families were selected randomly as sample size. In any human society the development of women determines the development of the society. The basic objective of the study was to understand the degree of involvement of women in household decision making, in addition to their contribution in agricultural decisions. The results of the study are discussed in detail in the main text.

Key words : Decision, Role, Women.

Women are the pivots around whom the family, society and the whole humanity moves. The growth and prosperity of a nation depends on the status and development of its women. In our country women constitute half of the total population. They play very crucial role in agriculture, agriculture allied enterprises and as a sole worker at home. Women not only contribute to production process but also in decision making. Women's work, efforts and role in decision making is usually economically invisible not only at family level but also in the society as well as many development agencies.

Now a days the role of women in the decision making process is being recognized, and their active participation is being encouraged, in almost all spheres of human activity. But if we look at the statistics regarding their participation one has to accept that till we have to go miles to achieve our goal.

Due to paucity of information on these lines, the present investigation was carried out in Nanded district of Maharashtra region. Nanded district was selected because in Marathwada region, Nanded District is supposed to be comparatively less developed than the other districts of Marathwada region in Maharashtra state. The aforesaid topic of investigation is relevant in the present context.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the year 2013-14 from Nanded District. Ardhapur Taluka was selected which was very adjacent to Nanded, from Ardhapur Taluka 5 villages were selected randomly. From each village thirty families were selected, hence the total sample consisted of 150 respondents. The data was collected with the help of structured interview schedule, through personal interview. Data were processed by percentage & frequency. The study was conducted with following objectives.

1. To study the personal characteristics of rural women
2. To understand their involvement in household decision making
3. To identify the areas of agricultural operation in which they contribute in decision making

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the home related decisions which are categorized under three sub-areas i.e. decisions related to child, home management and agriculture related areas. The data clearly states that the rural women played key role in the decision making pertaining to immunization of children and feeding of children as two major areas of decision making (80 per cent and 66.66 per cent) respectively. The study carried out by Anita Kumari (2002) was in agreement with the findings obtained in the present investigations.

Table 1. Participation of rural women in household decision making.

Children related decision	Male		Female		Both	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Feeding of the children	10	6.66	120	80.00	20	13.34
2. Immunization	40	26.66	100	66.66	10	6.68
3. Education of children	100	66.67	30	20.00	20	13.33
4. Occupation of children	90	60.00	20	13.33	40	26.67
5. Purchase of the children	80	53.34	40	26.66	30	20.00
6. Recreation of the children	70	46.67	60	40.00	20	13.33
7. Higher education of the children	110	73.33	10	6.67	30	20.00
8. Marriage of the children	95	63.34	27	18.00	28	18.66
9. Job selection of the children	78	52.00	24	16.00	48	32.00
10. Medical treatment	75	50.00	60	40.00	15	10.00

Table 2. Participation of rural women in home management decisions.

Home management decisions	Male		Female		Both	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Construction of new house	120	80.00	10	06.67	20	13.33
2. Repairing of exiting house	119	79.33	11	07.34	20	13.33
3. Decorating the house in festivals	80	53.33	60	40.00	10	06.67
4. Preparation and construction of Household item (Like basket, chullha, chakki etc.)	70	46.67	60	40.00	20	13.33
5. Purchasing of household equipment's (like kapat, mixture, cooker, refrigerator etc.)	98	65.33	10	06.67	42	28.00
6. Purchasing of grocery	60	40.00	70	46.67	20	13.33
7. Purchasing of cloths	88	58.67	12	08.00	50	33.33
8. Purchasing of electric goods	106	70.67	11	07.33	33	22.00
9. Hospitality of guests	87	58.00	55	36.67	08	05.33
10. Tour and recreations for family	125	83.33	14	09.34	11	07.33

Table 3. Participation of farmwomen in agriculture and related decision making .

Home management decision	Male		Female		Both	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1. Land development	125	83.33	09	6.00	16	10.67
2. Taking loans for cultivation	132	88.00	08	5.33	10	06.67
3. Fixing time for agricultural operation	122	81.33	12	8.00	16	10.67
4. Selection of crop varieties and Fertilizer	100	66.67	15	10.00	35	23.33
5. Application of insecticide and Pesticides	135	90.00	05	3.33	10	06.67
6. Buying of farm implements	131	87.33	09	6.00	10	06.67
7. Care of animals, poultry birds	111	74.00	31	20.67	08	05.33
8. Storage of grains	32	21.33	95	63.33	23	15.34
9. Development of kitchen garden	25	16.67	100	66.66	25	16.67
10. Sale of produce	118	78.67	11	7.33	21	14.00

The areas which cover decisions such as education of the children, their probable occupation, and purchase related to them and their higher education etc. In the decision making process pertaining to deciding what occupation their children can opt for (26.67 per cent); 20 per cent women were found actively involved in deciding the things to be purchased for their children and 18.66 per cent played vital role in finalizing the marriages of their children. This clearly indicates that the role of women in household decisions is equally important along with their counterparts at the family level.

Table 2 which highlights another dimension of this study also revealed encouraging results. Apparently, it seems that decisions such as purchase of grocery, the kind of hospitality to be offered to the guests were dominated by women. But no adequate space was found by women regarding the decisions such as construction, regarding tours and recreation for the whole family, purchase of clothes etc. where more than 80 per cent decisions were made by the male members.

During interactions with the respondents they regretted for being illiterate, for not having their own income as such. Majority of them lamented for not having wider exposure with outside world due to restricted social participation, and as a consequent result of all these factors they were found living with a feeling of inferiority and were thus forced to accept a secondary status in decision making process at family level on many issues.

Table 3 pertains to the participation of rural women in agriculture and agriculture related decisions. This table indicates that the participation of rural women in land development and crop loan was found hopelessly negligible (i.e. 6 per cent and 5.33 per cent respectively). The study by Patil and Savant

(1996) revealed same results. Their participation in the development of kitchen gardens (66.66 per cent), storages of food grains (63.33 per cent), care of animals and poultry birds (20.66) etc was quite satisfactory. But unfortunately the decision making process pertaining to the use of insecticides and pesticides (90 per cent), buying farm implements (87.33 per cent), land development (83.33 per cent), fixing time for cultivation (88 per cent) and selection of crop varieties and fertilizers etc have been found totally dominated by the male members. Similar findings were reported by Kulkarni *et al.* (1990). This may be due to age old attitude of the society towards women, and our misconceptions of them that they are weak, do not have abilities required for undertaking hazardous responsibilities etc. Hence, efforts at all levels are to be made to enhance women's participation in the different spheres of human life. Moreover, their equal participation will help us to achieve most of the developmental objectives.

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