RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF WOMEN PRACTING DAIRY FARMING

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Majority of the Indian village women, nearly 84.0 percent those who are economically weak are engaged in agriculture and dairy farming activities either directly or indirectly. Despite the fact, dairywomen are not included among the extension beneficiaries. About 54.0 percent of the total population is actively engaged in agriculture and entire allied farm activities in the rural India. Increase in production and productivity of agriculture and dairying is mainly due to the results of awareness, gain in knowledge, improvement in skill and acceptance of latest improved farm technologies by the farming communities. Hence, a study was conducted to determine the knowledge level of women involved in dairy farming and its relationship between socio-economic characteristics was analyzed.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Thondamuthur block of Coimbatore district in Tamilnadu State. The dairywomen possessing minimum 2-3 milch animals were considered for selection as respondents. Thus a sample size of 100 dairywomen was selected by random sampling technique from the entire block. The knowledge level of the respondents was selected as a dependent and age, education, occupation, caste, farm size, herd size, annual income, experience in dairy farming, material possession, social participation, contact with extension agency and mass media exposure were selected as independent variables.

The zero order correlation coefficient was worked out to study the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics with knowledge level of the respondents and multiple regression analysis was worked out to find out the relative contribution of the socio-economic variables towards the knowledge level of women involved in dairy farming.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The zero order correlation coefficient was worked and results were as presented in the table1

Table 1. Zero order correlation between the socio-economic characteristics of the dairywomen and their knowledge level

Sl. No.	Variables	Correlation coefficient(r)
1.	Age	- 0.1914
2.	Education	0.7517**
3.	Occupation	0.2100
4.	Caste	0.4631**
5.	Farm size	0.3441*
6.	Herd size	0.1078
7.	Annual income	0.4735**
8.	Experience in dairying	0.0780
9.	Material possession	0.6216**
10.	Social participation	0.4268**
11.	Contact with extension agency	0.4328**
12.	Mass media exposure	0.8092**

Where as** Significant at 1.0 percent level and* Significant at5.0 percent level

From the above table1 it was observed that out of 12 characteristics, eight viz., education, caste, farm size, annual income, material possession, social participation, contact with extension agency and mass media exposure had positive and significant association with

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knowledge. Fifty eight percent of the respondents had primary education up-to college level. hence majority of the dairywomen had been exposed to various sources of mass media exposure (84.0 %) this might be due to the reason the association of education level with knowledge level. The caste also had shown a positive association with the knowledge level of dairywomen. Nearly (58.0 %) owned the farm size from 2.51 to 5.00 acres, it shows that the dairywomen would have been exposed to various sources of information related to dairying. Contact with extension agency was also high (72.0%). The annual income of women showed a positive and significant relation with their knowledge level. Due to active participation of the respondents in dairy farming the annual income of the respondents might have been increased and this would have helped them for their better perception about the benefits of dairy farming thus the annual income had a positive and significant relationship with the knowledge level.

Material possession of the respondents showed a positive and significant relation with the knowledge level. The social participation of the dairywomen also showed a positive and significant relation with their knowledge level in dairying. Participation of an individual in any group or organization would help her or him to have more interaction and exposure with the knowledgeable peer group as well as a formal source of contact. This would have been the main reason behind the positive and significant relationship between social participation and knowledge level. This indicates that the extent of social participation will lead to the maximum gain in knowledge level. The extension agency contact and mass media exposure had shown a positive and significant relation with the knowledge level of the dairywomen. The study revealed that greater the contact and media exposure more would be the gain in knowledge.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis of socio-economic variables towards the knowledge level of dairywomen

S. No.	Variables	Regression coefficient 'b'	S.E. of b	t value
1.	Age	-0.0405	0.0509	-0.7946
2.	Education	0.2446	0.3157	0.7748
3.	Occupation	0.3407	0.3019	1.1286
4.	Caste	1.5006	0.7993	1.8775*
5.	Farm size	-0.3010	0.3165	-0.9512
6.	Herd size	1.9786	1.7132	1.1549
7.	Annual income	0.8206	0.7407	1.1079
8.	Experience in dairy farming	0.2339	0.1488	1.5719
9.	Material possession	-0.1587	0.1972	-0.8046
10.	Social participation	0.0483	0.0933	0.5181
11.	Contact with extension agency	-0.0726	0.1365	-0.5321
12.	Mass media exposure	0.4648	0.1078	4.3130*

$R^2 = 0.7602$ F= 8.7806** A= 9.5089

* Significant at 0.01 level of probability
** Significant at 0.05 level of probability

The table 2 clearly indicates that the co-efficient of multiple determinations R^2 is which was found to be significant at 5.0 percent level of probability. This meant that 76.0 percent of the variations in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables chosen for the study. The results indicated that the contribution by the selected 12 variables was 76.0 percent and it was significant. However, it showed that there would be some other variables that could explain the rest of the variation in the context of knowledge level of dairywomen about the dairy farming practices.

A unit increase in Caste Ceteris Paribus would result in an increase of 1.50 units of knowledge level regarding dairy farming practices. The respondents from backward caste showed more interest in dairy farming. Since, the dairy enterprise provided them an opportunity to increase their annual income this might have also played a vital role in increasing the knowledge level of dairywomen.

An increase in mass media exposure by one unit, Ceteris Paribus would increase the level of knowledge by 0.46 unit regarding dairy farming practices. The mass media exposure had contributed for increase in knowledge level of the dairywomen by providing the basic knowledge, technical information and the economic profitability. More than 80.0 percent of dairywomen had medium to high level of mass media exposure and this appeared to be the main reason for their high level of knowledge regarding dairy farming practices.

CONCLUSION

The socio-economic variables viz., education, caste, farm size, annual income, material possession, social participation, contact with extension agency and mass media exposure showed positive and significant relationship with the knowledge level of women involved in dairy farming. The caste of the respondents and mass media exposure influenced the knowledge level of the women involved in dairy farming.

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