



Gender Role in Decision Making on Paddy Cultivation Activities

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ABSTRACT

The International development community has considered Agriculture is the only profession that acts as an engine for growth and poverty reduction in countries like India, dependent on agriculture. Women's roles are always suppressed when contrast to men. The word farmers remind men in mind but not women. Many paddy cultivation activities involving women in the majority, which are usually considered economically active, are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts (FAO, 2011). Still, they are essential for the well-being of rural households. The majority of farm men are medium (60.00%) to high (23.33%) level decision-makers. Majority of farm women belong to medium (50.00%) to low (28.33%) level decision-making category. Farm men are alone involved in decision making in most of the paddy cultivation activities such as seed rate and seed treatment (90.00%), water management (90.00%), nutrient management (88.33%), nursery preparation (83.34%), transplanting method (81.67%) and disease/ pest management (78.33%). In contrast, women alone take decisions in few activities like value addition (40.00%), employing labourers (11.67%), weed management (11.67%), and selection of varieties (8.34%). Variables like age and farming experience are positive and significant with the decision-making pattern of farm women.

Key words : Decision making; Gender role; Paddy cultivation; Farm men and Farm women;

Agriculture is the profession considered and recognized by the international development community as an engine for the growth and poverty reduction in countries like India, which are dependent on agriculture. When considered developing countries scenario like India, men and women both make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies. Rural women are a multitasker; they often manage complex households and follow some multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities mainly include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in farming or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members, and maintaining their homes.

Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts, but they are (FAO, 2011) very much needed for the well-being of rural households.

Paddy growing communities are facing common problems like scarcity of labour, high cost of cultivation, non-adoption of mechanization, fragmented paddy fields, conversion of paddy area to other commercial crops, and low market price for paddy produce. Gender roles are very crucial to tackle these issues. Roles played by farm men and women are always based on various interrelated socio-economic (class, ethnicity, age, religion), political and environmental factors, which can be named as 'gender roles.' However, these roles are

not static and can change over time. Women are majority contributors to rice-based agriculture than men. This has been depicted in the finding of many rigorous studies on men's and women's different roles and responsibilities from other socio-economic groups in rice-based agriculture (Farhana Nosheen, 2009). Women are often involved specific tasks such as transplanting, weeding, or harvesting. Their rice production participation varies by country, production systems, type of household (nuclear or extended), socio-economic status, and availability of male family members. Women, who undertake much of the work in traditional rainfed, mangrove, and upland rice in Africa, are mainly responsible for looking on household food, health, and nutritional security.

Generally, operations performed by men are those that entail the use of machinery and animals. Contrary to this, women always rely on manual labour using only their energy. Despite women's essential contributions in farming and livelihoods, they have been virtually ignored by agricultural extension units and family members in deciding on various aspects of agriculture. As a leader of farm family men only take the majority of decisions right from varietal selection till marketing. Even if women do receive visits from extension agents or attend extension training courses, they are frequently taught home economics and other subjects unrelated to their agricultural roles, so they might fail to participate in the decision making process in agricultural activities (Fartyal et al. 2014).

This paper throws light on gender debate in paddy farming by assessing the empirical evidence of farm men and farm women's decision-making process. In many of the developing countries, Agricultural sector is underperforming in part since women, are the important resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers, and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere they face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. Thus, women who play a large and crucial role are often still unrecognized across the rice sector; more efforts are needed to ensure they have the same opportunity as men in accessing new technologies (Mishra, 2009). Specifically, development experts interested in gender issues should look at how they address some of the policy interventions for women's development. The main

challenge is to see that gender issues are identified through rigorous gender analysis, emphasizing on differential access to assets and technologies, technology impact assessment, and making both men and women to involve in adaptive research. In a bird view usually Women are expected to be emotionally expressive, dependent, passive, cooperative, warm, and accepting of subordinate status in marriage and as well as in employment. There is a strong need to empower farm women to reduce gender inequities.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three talukas of Shivamogga district, namely Bhadravathi, Soraba, and Sagara. From each taluka, four villages were selected based on the highest area under paddy cultivation. Five farm men and five farm women were randomly selected from each village. From 12 villages of three talukas, 60 farm men and 60 farm women were selected. Thus, total of 120 respondents constituted the sample for the study. The criteria for selecting respondents were the family having both husband and wife involved in agriculture and cultivating paddy crop for three years. The ex-post facto research design was used, and the data was collected through a personal interview method using a structured interview schedule. Frequency and per centage are used to interpret the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall decision-making pattern in paddy cultivation activities : On cursory perusal of figure 1 reveals that a majority (60.00%) of farm men belonged to the medium-level decision-making category. In contrast, 23.33 and 16.67 per cent of farm men belonged

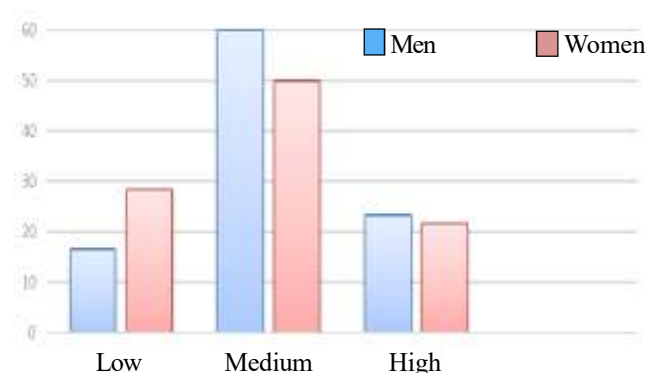


Figure 1. Overall decision-making pattern of farm men and women in paddy cultivation

to high and low levels of decision-making categories, respectively. The results also reveal that exactly half (50.00%) of farm women belonged to the medium level of decision-making category, whereas 28.33 and 21.67 per cent of farm women belonged to low and high decision-making categories, respectively.

From figure 1 and we can observe that a majority (60.00%) of farm men belonged to the medium level of decision-making category, while 23.33 per cent and 16.67 per cent of farm men belonged to high and low levels of decision-making categories, respectively. The reason for the medium and high level of overall decision-making by farm men in various paddy cultivation activities is due to the fact that even today, Indian rural society is male-dominated society. Majority of the decisions concerning household activities and farm-related activities are taken by men alone as the head of the family. Men are solely involved in decisions concerning the selection of paddy variety, seed rate and seed treatment, nursery preparation, mainland preparation, transplanting methods, disease and pest management, nutrient management, weed management and water management. He is also jointly taking the decisions with his spouse in the activities like employing the laborers, hiring/ purchasing farm equipment, the extent of paddy area to be cultivated and post-harvest operations like value addition and paddy marketing produce. Due to his involvement in all these activities, farm men's overall decision-making pattern falls under medium followed by high category. Only 10 out of 60 men respondents (16.67%) fall under a low level of overall decision-making pattern as these respondents come under joint family. Most of the decisions are taken either by elderly members of the family or they take decisions in consultations with other family members hence the result.

The results also revealed that half of the (50.00%) farm women belonged to the medium level of overall decision-making category, followed by 28.33 per cent of farm women belonged to the low category of overall decision-making pattern. It is inferred that the role of farm women concerning the decision making in the selected 17 paddy cultivation activities is significantly less or negligible. However, few farm women are involved in decision making on the selection of variety, employing labourers, weed management, and value addition activities. In addition to this farm, women had

less education, little knowledge about the latest techniques of farming, low level of mass media participation, less contact with extension agency, and low level of achievement motivation. In case of joint families, women are less consulted for decision making since almost all the decisions are taken either by male member or elderly members of the family, hence the result.

Activity wise decision making pattern on paddy cultivation by farm men and women of the farm family: As many as 17 paddy cultivation activities were selected for the study to know the activity-wise decision-making pattern of farm men and women in paddy cultivation. Table 1 depicts activity-wise decision making by 'farm men alone', farm women alone', 'both farm men and women' and 'respondents together with family members' respectively.

It is seen from Table 1 that farm men are alone involved in decision making with respect to seed rate and seed treatment (90.00%), water management (90.00%), nutrient management (88.33%), nursery preparation (83.34%), transplanting method (81.67%) and disease/ pest management (78.33%). The probable reason for this could be that farm men's involvement in these activities makes him make the right decisions. Due to his contact with the extension agency he has knowledge on leading paddy varieties, seed treatment with chemicals and bio-agents, use of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals. Farming experience, attitude towards farming, achievement motivation, and economic motivation are additional factors contributing for the result. On the other hand, farm women had less exposure and less knowledge on these cultivation activities; hence men alone will take the decisions without consulting their spouse. From table 2 it is observed that women alone take decisions in activities like value addition (40.00%), employing labourers (11.67%), weed management (11.67%), and selection of varieties (8.3%). As farm women are involved in value addition of paddy, employing women labourers for nursery activities, transplanting, harvesting, and manual weeding in paddy fields makes some of the farm women decide on the said activities. Women are involved in cooking activities, which makes her to decide on the selection of suitable varieties for home consumption.

Both farm men and women jointly take decisions

Table 1. Activity wise decision making pattern on paddy cultivation by farm men and women of the farm family (N= 60)

Paddy cultivation activities	Men alone		Women alone		Both men and women		With all members	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Extent of paddy area	30	50.00	3	5.00	10	16.67	17	28.33
Selection of variety	41	68.33	5	8.34	4	6.67	10	16.66
Seed rate and seed treatment	54	90.00	3	5.00	2	3.33	1	1.67
Nursery preparation	50	83.33	3	5.00	6	10.00	1	1.67
Land preparation	47	78.34	3	5.00	8	13.33	2	3.33
Transplanting methods	49	81.67		5.00	5	8.33	3	5.00
Employing labourers	24	40.00	7	11.67	15	25.00	14	23.33
Hiring/purchasing of machineries/ equipment's	13	21.67	3	5.00	18	30.00	26	43.33
Disease and pest management	47	78.33	3	5.00	3	5.00	7	11.67
Nutrient management	53	88.33	3	5.00	1	1.67	3	5.00
Weed management	40	66.66	7	11.67	7	11.67	6	10.00
Water management	54	90.00	3	5.00	2	3.33	1	1.67
Time of harvesting	40	66.67	3	5.00	10	16.67	7	11.66
Method of harvesting	39	65.00	4	6.67	9	15.00	8	13.33
Post-harvest operations	31	51.67	3	5.00	15	25.00	11	18.33
Value addition	15	25.00	24	40.00	16	26.67	5	8.33
Marketing	21	35.00	6	10.00	15	25.00	18	30.00

on Hiring/purchasing of machinery/ equipment (30.00%) as the cost of machinery/equipment's are high. They decide jointly on the marketing of paddy produce (25.00%) since part of the produce is retained for home consumption, some part is used for value addition and the surplus paddy is sold to meet financial requirement of their family so the joint decision is taken. They also jointly decide on employing labourers (25.00%) since paddy cultivation requires both men and women labourers for different activities.

It was also evident from Table 1 that respondents took decisions together with family members in activities like hiring/purchasing farm machineries/ equipment (43.33%), marketing (30.00%), extent of paddy area (28.33%) and employing of labourers (23.33%) since these respondents belong to joint family and they prefer to take a decision in consultation with an elderly member of the family.

Decision making pattern of farm men and women in paddy cultivation activities : Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to know the association between independent variables with the decision-making pattern of farm men and women. From Table 2, it can be observed that Age, Achievement motivation, Extension participation are highly significant with the decision-making pattern of men at one per cent

Table 2. Association of independent variables with the decision-making pattern of Farm men and women in paddy cultivation activities (N= 120)

Independent variables	Farm Men 'r' value	Farm Women 'r' value
Age	0.78**	0.71**
Education	-0.15 ^{NS}	0.10 ^{NS}
Family type	-0.25 ^{NS}	-0.21**
Land holding	-0.05 ^{NS}	-0.08 ^{NS}
Annual family income	-0.18 ^{NS}	-0.20 ^{NS}
Farming experience	0.29*	0.22**
Agril.implements	-0.01 ^{NS}	-0.01 ^{NS}
Attitude towards farming	-0.07 ^{NS}	-0.01 ^{NS}
Innovativeness	-0.03 ^{NS}	-0.05 ^{NS}
Achievement motivation	0.83**	0.09 ^{NS}
Economic motivation	-0.07 ^{NS}	0.06 ^{NS}
Mass media participation	0.08 ^{NS}	0.12 ^{NS}
Extension agency contact	0.21 ^{NS}	0.14 ^{NS}
Extension participation	0.87**	0.10 ^{NS}

NS= Non-significant

*= Significant at 5 per cent level

**= Significant at 1 per cent level

level of significance, and farming experience is also significant with decision-making pattern of farm men at five per cent level of significance.

The results from Table 2 also reveal that women's

age and farming experience are highly significant, with the decision-making pattern of women at one per cent level of significance.

The explanation for the independent variables having significant to highly significant association with the decision-making pattern of farm men and women are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Age and decision-making pattern of farm men and women : It is evident from the results presented in Table 2 that there exists a significant association between age and the decision-making pattern of farm men and women. As the age increases, the farmer's experience and knowledge also increase, which helps to understand the situation better and enhance their decision-making ability to make appropriate decisions.

Farming experience and decision-making pattern : The results reveal that paddy farming experience had a positive and significant association with farm men and women's decision-making patterns. Experience in paddy cultivation aids ineffective management and helps in making quick decisions to perform farm activities. Experience of the respondents acts as a pathway for making the right decision.

Achievement motivation and decision making pattern : It can be observed from the results that achievement motivation had a positive and significant association with the decision-making pattern of farm men. Achievement motivation influences the individual's urge to excel in their life and is the important determinant of excellence or perfection in what one does. (Nishitha K., 2016). It is the value associated with an individual that drives them to excel in farming and attain a sense of

personal accomplishment. More the person gets motivated towards their goals decision-making ability also varies.

Extension participation and decision making pattern : It can be observed from the results that extension participation had a positive and significant association with the decision-making pattern of farm men. Participation in extension activities like demonstrations, discussion, general meetings, field days, campaigns, krishimelas, etc., promotes the acquisition of knowledge and helps the farmers to involve in making decisions to adopt newer technologies. Frequent and effective participation by farm men in extension activities might act as a strong motivational factor for making decisions and aids in better farming management.

CONCLUSION

Women are the essential contributors to the agricultural and rural economies of all regions of the world. However, the exact contribution in terms of magnitude and its nature is often hard to assess and it shows a high degree of variation across countries and regions. Despite women's important contributions in farming and livelihoods, most women come under low to medium category decision-makers, since they have been neglected while making decisions on various farming aspects. As a leader of the farm family men only take the majority of decisions right from varietal selection till marketing. Women are less approach than men towards knowledge and skills, productive assets, including agricultural inputs, improved seeds, land, credit, agricultural extension services, and small equipment/light machinery.

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