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Problems Faced by Women in Agriculture: A Study of Sub Mountainous Region of Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Present paper is planned with specific objective to study the problems faced by women in different farm operations in sub mountainous region of Roopnagar and Hoshiarpur districts of Punjab state and provide suitable suggestions for their role enhancement in agriculture. From two blocks three villages were selected randomly, then ten women respondents, five marginal and small farmers and five farm labourers families were interviewed, for making the sample of 120 respondents. Respondents faced many obstacles which hindered their full participation in agricultural and allied activities such as low level of technical knowledge, low level of acknowledgement from family, less access to market, low physical strength of women, dual responsibilities of family. Paper suggested that farm women should be given training for the use of farm technology to improve their work participation and reduce drudgery and recognition should be there to uplift their morale.

Key words: Farm operations; Problems in agriculture; Sub mountainous region; Farm women; Farm labour.

Women form the backbone of the agrarian sector in India as farmers, laborers and entrepreneurs. The two things, namely, development of women and development of agriculture, are need of development for any nation. However, in the recent years, different parts of the world have provided credible evidences on the role and participation of women in agriculture and the relationship between women and agriculture (ICAR, 2014). Similar results were also revealed by Chayal and Dhaka, 2010.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2011 women produced 60 to 80 per cent of food including basic food such as rice and maize in developing countries. Their involvement in agriculture force in developing countries was about 43 per cent.

The results of a study conducted by Women and Population Division of FAO stated that in developing countries women provided 60-80 per cent labour for household production, 70 per cent for agriculture labour and 100 per cent for processing the food items. No doubt, women played great role in nation's

development but how much nation support them for their own development was always unknown due to some socio- economic barriers (FAO, 2013). Similar results were also revealed by Krishna, 2022.

Punjab agriculture has been highly mechanized. There is differential use of machinery in a agriculture in different regions. But due to these mechanization labour has decreased at excess rate. Only eight day per labour is required for one acre land for wheat cultivation and 26 day per labour is required for one acre land of paddy cultivation. It displaced many labourers from their work. Especially women got more displaced from agriculture with these machines. Similar results were also revealed by Mehta (2005), Mada and Mahai (2013) and Ramya and Muruganandham (2016).

Agriculture has become highly mechanized which has altered the roles of women in agriculture. Women participation in agriculture is such a hard job. Displacement of women in agriculture after modern technologies or modernization has a big impact on rural women. Displaced women lose their cultural and

social identity after displacement. They were forced to move and change their traditional and manual type of work or livelihood. The country needs new strategies to resolve the problems of these displaced women (Asthana, 2012; Mishra, 2014 and Kumar and Mishra 2018).

Science and technology were made a very important part of daily living. This science and technologies resolve many problems of rural women's life. The budget for Ministry of Agriculture has been increased from Rs 57,600 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 1,40,764 crore in 2019-20. The total allocation for women farmers was just 2 per cent of the total expenditure for the same year. This amount is too little. Through policy interventions, remedies and programme development we are able to address the constraints faced by women in agriculture or enhance their role in agriculture. These all efforts not only improve the living pattern of farm women but also it is the best step for the well-being of society (Tiwari, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in sub mountainous region of Punjab. Multistage random sampling technique was used. Two districts viz. Roopnagar and Hoshiarpur were randomly selected. Then two blocks were randomly selected from each district and from each block three villages were selected. Ten women respondents, five marginal and small farmers and five farm women labourers families were interviewed with the help of a structured interview schedule, making the sample of 120 respondents. There were many obstacles which were faced by respondents that hinders full involvement of respondents in agricultural and allied activities. These problems were ranked according to the mean score responses with the statements whether they agree, neutral and disagree with the particular problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women in India are the backbone of the society and important resource in agriculture and rural economy. Traditionally, women have always played an important role in agriculture - as farmers, co-farmers, wage labours and managers of farms. The multiple role of women leads to a significant contribution in real terms to be productive system. Agriculture *prima facie* is considered to be a male dominated activity

and females working in the field are treated just as, helpers. Despite sharing the equal hand with husband, farm women faced many problems & constraints, difficulties, many faced sexual assaults & abuse inside the household situation and outside of their households too. Farm women played significant role in working women population in our rural area. Similar results were also revealed by Sing *et al.* 2018.

Data given in Table 1 revealed that half of

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their socio- economic profile

SE profile	Farm women (n=60)	Farm Labourer (n=60)	Overall (120)	Z-value
Age				
Up-to 25	12 (20.00)	8 (13.33)	20 (16.66)	0.9797 ^{ns}
26- 50	29 (48.33)	30 (50.00)	59 (49.16)	0.1826 ^{ns}
51-75	19 (31.67)	22 (36.67)	41 (34.16)	0.5774 ^{ns}
Average Age	39	42		41
Caste				
General	30 (50.00)	4 (6.67)	34 (28.33)	5.27**
SCs	9 (15.00)	29 (48.33)	38 (31.66)	3.92**
BCs	21 (35.00)	27 (45.00)	48 (40.00)	1.12 ^{NS}
Annual family income				
50,000 -1,00,000	7 (11.67)	55 (91.67)	62 (51.66)	8.76**
1,00,000- 1,50,000	18 (30.00)	5 (8.33)	23 (19.16)	3.01**
1,50,000- 2,00,000	10 (16.67)	-	10 (16.67)	3.30**
2,00,000- 2,50,000	11 (18.33)	-	11 (18.33)	3.47**
2,50,000- 3,00,000	8 (13.33)	-	8 (13.33)	2.92*
3,00,000 and above	6 (10.00)	-	6 (10.00)	2.51 ^{NS}
Average Annual family income (Rs.)	95,000	Rs.66,422	69,243	

Note-Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

**Significant at 1% level, *Significant at 5% level

NS - non significance

the respondents (48.33% farm women and 50% farm labourer) belonged to 26-50 years age group. Average age for farm women was 39 years and for farm labourers, it was 42 years. Overall average age was 41 years for both the categories. No significant difference found between the age of respondents for the both categories. Half of the farm women belonged to general castes and 48.33 per cent farm labourer belonged to scheduled castes indicating the fact that a significant majority of the farm women belonged to general castes whereas farm labourers were mostly either SCs or BCs. Regarding annual family income it was found that farm women earned fifty thousand to three lakh rupees whereas, labour class families earned just in thousand and very few earned up to Rs. 1.5 lakh. A significant difference was found between income of farm women and farm labourers.

Farm women faced many problems in their daily life. With the highest mean score low level of technological knowledge was the biggest problem for the farm women which hinders their full involvement in agriculture. After green revolution technological knowledge was the need of every farmer. Ninety-eight per cent of farm women had problem in operating the modern agricultural equipment. Low level of acknowledgement from family was the second highest ranked problem to whom 66.67 per cent of farm women were fully agree which means no one from family's respect farm women after their hard work. Less access to marketing infrastructure ranked third with the mean score 2.40. Farm women had less access to markets. Due to male dominance, there was no permission for farm

women to go outside from their houses. Low physical strength for some agriculture activities ranked IVth with the mean score 2.25. More than half (56.67%) of them were agreed with this problem. Lack of female extension worker (Xth), less exposure to mass media (XIth) and less sharing in household chores (XIIth) ranked last. Farm women had good exposure to mass media (Table 2).

According to the responses of farm labourers the obstacles faced by them were ranked in Table 3. Due to mechanization the traditional way of agriculture has changing continuously. For operating new technologies there was a need of proper technical knowledge about new implements. But due to low level of education labourer class had less knowledge about it. So, with the mean score 2.96 this obstacle ranked first. With the mean score 2.88 low level of acknowledgement from family ranked second. After working for many hours to fulfill the needs of family members no one gave them credit for that. She always under estimated by the family members which lower their self-confidence. As farm labourers were not owner of any land they just worked as a labour. They had lack of knowledge about marketing infrastructure which ranked IIIrd with the mean score 2.86. According to them all the family members belonged to working class, no one was ready for taking care of their children after them which diverted their mind from work (Ranked IVth). No cooperation from husband and family ranked last in obstacles list. All the family members of farm labour were belonged to working class so they understand how difficult job she had done.

Respondents were asked to give some suggestions

Table 2. Distribution of farm women on the basis of problems they faced

Obstacles	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	MS	Rank
Low level of acknowledgement from family	40 (66.67)	20 (33.33)	-	2.67	II
Less technical knowledge	59 (98.33)	1 (1.67)	-	2.98	I
No cooperation from husband and family	18 (30.00)	17 (28.33)	25 (41.66)	1.88	IX
Role conflict	14 (23.33)	35 (58.33)	11 (18.33)	2.05	VIII
Less access to marketing Infrastructure	31 (51.67)	21(35.00)	9 (15.00)	2.4	III
Lack of female extension worker	12 (20.00)	31 (51.66)	14 (23.33)	1.87	X
Less sharing in child rearing	24 (40.00)	26 (43.33)	10 (16.67)	2.23	V
Less time for personal care	25 (41.67)	14 (23.33)	21(35.00)	2.06	VII
Less sharing in household chores	2 (3.33)	18 (30.00)	40 (66.67)	1.36	XII
Credit taken by others	15 (25.00)	40 (66.67)	5 (8.33)	2.16	VI
Lack of free time	16 (26.67)	32 (53.33)	12 (20.00)	2.06	VII
Low physical strength for some agriculture activities	34 (56.67)	7 (11.67)	19 (31.67)	2.25	IV
Less exposure to mass media	16 (26.67)	11 (18.33)	33 (55.00)	1.71	XI

Note-Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

Table 2. Distribution of farm women on the basis of problems they faced

Obstacles	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	MS	Rank
Low level of acknowledgement from family	40 (66.67)	20 (33.33)	-	2.67	II
Less technical knowledge	59 (98.33)	1 (1.67)	-	2.98	I
No cooperation from husband and family	18 (30.00)	17 (28.33)	25 (41.66)	1.88	IX
Role conflict	14 (23.33)	35 (58.33)	11 (18.33)	2.05	VIII
Less access to marketing Infrastructure	31 (51.67)	21 (35.00)	9 (15.00)	2.4	III
Lack of female extension worker	12 (20.00)	31 (51.66)	14 (23.33)	1.87	X
Less sharing in child rearing	24 (40.00)	26 (43.33)	10 (16.67)	2.23	V
Less time for personal care	25 (41.67)	14 (23.33)	21 (35.00)	2.06	VII
Less sharing in household chores	2 (3.33)	18 (30.00)	40 (66.67)	1.36	XII
Credit taken by others	15 (25.00)	40 (66.67)	5 (8.33)	2.16	VI
Lack of free time	16 (26.67)	32 (53.33)	12 (20.00)	2.06	VII
Low physical strength for some agriculture activities	34 (56.67)	7 (11.67)	19 (31.67)	2.25	IV
Less exposure to mass media	16 (26.67)	11 (18.33)	33 (55.00)	1.71	XI

Note-Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

Table 3. Distribution of farm labourers on the basis of problems they faced

Obstacles	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	MS	Rank
Low level of acknowledgement from family	47 (78.33)	16 (26.67)	-	2.88	II
Less technical knowledge	58 (96.67)	2 (3.33)	-	2.96	I
No cooperation from husband and family	14 (23.33)	34 (56.67)	12 (20.00)	2.03	XI
Role conflict	37 (61.67)	23 (38.33)	-	2.61	VI
Less access to marketing infrastructure	52 (86.67)	8 (13.33)	-	2.86	III
Lack of female extension worker	21 (35.00)	32 (53.33)	7 (11.67)	2.23	X
Less sharing in child rearing	42 (70.00)	18 (30.00)	-	2.70	IV
Less time for personal care	32 (53.33)	26 (43.33)	2 (3.33)	2.50	VII
Less sharing in household chores	30 (50.00)	30 (50.00)	-	2.50	VII
Credit taken by others	30 (50.00)	30 (50.00)	-	2.50	VII
Lack of free time	22 (36.67)	31 (51.67)	7 (11.67)	2.25	IX
Low physical strength for some agriculture activities	39 (65.00)	21 (35.00)	-	2.65	V
Less exposure to mass media	23 (38.33)	30 (50.00)	7 (11.67)	2.26	VIII

Note-Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

for their role enhancement. Farm women suggested that there should be formation of farmer producer organizations (FPO) (Ranked Ist) at village level which could resolve their problems and keep them abreast with the latest information regarding agricultural and allied activities. Access to extension services and training ranked second with mean score 2.78. They further suggested more training should be provided to farm women which will enhance their full involvement in agriculture. There should be more exposure to new technologies (Ranked IIIrd) as opined by them. Subject matter specialist (Ranked IVth) was another need of farm women. They said training should be provided by the subject matter specialist who understand their needs

and who gave all possible suggestions for resolving any problem. Strengthening of agency aspect and access to marketing facilities ranked similar by the farm women. Access to institutional credit (Ranked VIth), provision of female extension workers (Ranked VIIth), support from husband and family (Ranked VIIIth), access to subsidy (Ranked IXth) and more exposure to mass media (Ranked Xth) were some other suggestions given by them. Same question was probed to farm labourers and the suggestions such as formation of FPOs (Ranked Ist), subject matter specialist for respondents (Ranked IVth), access to marketing facilities (Ranked Vth), access to institutional credit (Ranked VIth) and more mass media exposure (Ranked Xth) were the same suggestions as

suggested and ranked similar by farm women. Farm labourers further suggested that family and husband should be more supported (Ranked IInd) and followed by strengthening of agency aspects (Ranked IIIrd) farm labourers expected more exposure towards new technologies (Ranked IVth), access to subsidy (Ranked VIIth) and extension services (Ranked VIIIth), provision of female extension workers (Ranked IXth) were more suggestions given by farm labourers.

CONCLUSION

After the agricultural technologies and as a result of modernization in agriculture women's role in agriculture has changed a lot. Majority of women disclosed that due to lack of gainful employment they had enough free time at their disposal, but of what use was idle time when they can't even ensure basis sustenance level for themselves & their family.

Based on the results of the study, the some suggestions are as: Farm labourers who got displaced due to mechanization of agriculture should be provided with off farm employment avenues in order to assure basis substations level. Farm women should be given training for the use of farm technology to improve their work participation and reduce drudgery. Government intervention is strongly needed for training of female farm labourers in alternative skills to promote self-employment and financial security among them. Role of small farm women and farm labourers could be enhanced through their collective participation and much needed government interventions. In this direction farm producer organization (FPOs) seems to be the need of hour.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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