

# RURAL WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF KANGRA DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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## ABSTRACT

Woman were found to play a significant role in the development of agriculture and contributed significantly to the per capita gross domestic product. It has been reported that is 80% of all economically active women in rural area depend on agriculture and related industries for their livelihood. However, their participation in decision making process was not found satisfactory. Keeping this in view, the study conducted on a random sample of 120 respondents, selected from eight villages of Kangra district revealed that more than three fifth of the rural women were engaged in various household activities like preparing family budget(89%), washing utensils and clothes(77%), bringing fodder(69%), fetching water from taps/bowris (66%), bringing fuel for cooking(61%), those who were not involved in the activities like taking loan for the family, making investment plans, and saving plans were found to be 23 to 30 percent.it has also been observed that more than 50% of the respondents have solely taken the decision regarding food management(59%), cloth management for family members(52%) and taking care of house (54%). Some of the decisions have been taken jointly like family planning, recreational activities, marital decisions, religious matters and health care. However, the percentage of those in which only the spouse had taken decisions in various household activities ranged from 12 to 26 percent. Overall, the decision-making behaviour of farm women was found to be moderate. Most of the respondents (78%), faced the problem of lack of recognition, and appreciation by family members, ignorance about loan schemes, uncooperative attitude of society, health related problems, no regular source of income, etc., in participation and decision-making pertaining to various household activities. The study implies that govt. should frame concrete policies for the improvement of health and nutritional status of farm women besides strengthening their decision-making power by organising short duration training programmes for them.

**Keywords:** Participation, decision-making, household activities, uncooperative attitude, concrete policies, women

## INTRODUCTION

It has been reported through various research studies that 80 per cent of all economically active women in rural areas depend on agriculture and related industries for their livelihood, out of which 48 per cent are independent farmers and 33 per cent work in the agricultural labour force. The proportion of women to men employed in the agriculture industry has risen through time and has contributed significantly to per capita Gross Domestic Product and found to play pivotal role in development of a sustainable food system (Patel and Sethi, 2021).

Women are gradually making the transition from invisible to be visible force and are being acknowledged as great partners in the development of nation. Through their participation in agriculture /horticulture, and other related agricultural activities, they are playing a substantial and essential role in the growth of agricultural industry in the country. Though Women's development has been given due attention by the government during the last few years yet their participation in various household and income generating activities was not found to be satisfactory. Keeping this background in view, the present study entitled "Rural Women's Involvement in

*Household Activities- An empirical study of Kangra District (HP)*” was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

- To analyze the extent of involvement of farm women in different, household activities.
- To determine the decision-making behavior of farm women in household activities.
- To identify the constraints/ problems faced by the farm women while participating in various farm activities, and household activities.
- To provide suggestive measures for further strengthening/promoting empowerment among farm women.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Locale of the Study:** - The study was conducted in Himachal Pradesh. Out of the total twelve districts of the state, Kangra district was purposively selected because the district has a greater number of females in comparison to males i.e. 1012 females per 1000 males (Census, 2011).
- **Selection of respondents:** One hundred and twenty respondent rural women were selected randomly from four different blocks namely, Baijnath, Sulah, Nagrota Bagwan, and Dharamshala. From each selected block two villages were randomly selected and from each village, fifteen respondents were selected randomly. Thus, constituting a total sample of 120 respondents.

#### DEPENDENT VARIABLES:

- **Involvement:** According to Levasseur *et al.*, (2010), social participation can be understood as “a person’s involvement in activities that provide interaction with others in society or the community”. However, for the purpose of the present study, rural women’s involvement has been operationalized as the extent of involvement of farm women in various farm and household activities. A score of 3, 2 and 1 was given in the case the respondents indulged in the activity i.e. Wholly, Partially and Not at all.
- **Constraints faced by the rural women:** It referred to the problem/difficulty faced by a rural woman in various household activities. To identify the main constraints, an inventory was prepared by consulting experts and relevant literature on the subject. The response of the respondents was taken on three-point continuum scale viz; Most serious, Serious and Not so serious with respective scoring of 3, 2 and 1. The respondent’s frequency under each continuum/column was multiplied with its respective score to compute total score which, in turn, was divided by the total number of respondents to calculate mean constraints seriousness score.

Similarly, suggestions were elicited from the experts, advisory committee members and the pertinent literature and accordingly and inventory was prepared. These suggestions were then administered on the respondents for taking their opinion on three-point continuum scale i.e. Most useful, Useful and Not so useful with respective scoring of 3, 2 and 1. Accordingly, mean usefulness score was calculated.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main findings of the study have been discussed as under:

Respondents’ involvement in various household activities: The respondents were asked to what extent they were involved in various household activities; the response has been given in Table-1.

**Table-1: Respondents' involvement in Household activities (n=120)**

S.No.	Activities	Wholly		Partially		Not at all		Mean Score
		F	%	F	%	f	%	
1.	Buying of food materials	28	23.33	87	72.5	5	4.17	2.19
2.	Buying of clothing for Family	33	27.5	83	69.17	4	3.33	2.24
3.	Fetching water from taps/bowris	79	65.83	39	32.5	2	1.67	2.64
4.	Bringing fuel for cooking etc.	79	60.83	44	36.67	-	-	2.58
5.	Bringing of fodder	83	69.17	35	29.17	2	1.67	2.68
6.	Washing utensils and Clothes	92	76.67	22	18.33	6	5	2.72
7.	Making of family budget	47	89.17	48	40	25	20.83	2.18
8.	Making of saving plans	31	25.83	61	50.83	28	23.33	2.03
9.	Making of investment Plan	26	21.67	64	53.33	30	25	1.97
10.	Taking loan for the family	22	18.33	62	51.67	36	30	1.88
11.	Cutting down expenditure	28	23.33	69	57.5	23	19.17	2.04
12.	Taking care of ill family member/(s)	62	51.67	51	42.5	7	5.83	2.46
13.	Keeping surroundings clean and hygienic	67	55.83	50	41.67	3	2.5	2.53
14.	Social activities like (marriage ceremony/birthday celebration etc)	49	40.83	67	55.83	4	3.33	2.38
15.	Purchasing of gifts for different occasions	38	31.67	78	65	4	3.33	2.28
16.	Paying visit to relatives in some function / auspicious celebration etc.	35	29.17	83	69.17	2	1.66	2.28
17.	Arrangement of religious activities at home	45	37.5	71	59.16	4	3.33	2.34
18.	Home decoration	61	50.83	54	45	5	4.16	2.47
19.	Cleaning of house sand Kitchen	70	58.34	46	38.33	4	3.33	2.55
20.	Stitching clothes	53	45	41	34.16	26	20.83	2.23
21.	Care of children etc.	69	57.5	49	40.83	2	1.67	2.56
Overall Involvement Mean Score = 2.34								

It has been observed from the data that a majority of respondents were Wholly involved in activities namely making of Family budget (89.17%), Washing utensils and clothes (76.67%), Bringing of fodder (69.17%), Fetching water from tap or bowri (65.83%) and Bringing fuel for cooking (60.83%) etc. Those who reported that they were Not at all involved in various household activities like taking Loan for the family, making of investment plan and saving plan were 30 per cent and 23.33 per cent each respectively. Those who were Partially involved in the activities namely Buying of food materials, buying of clothing for family and paying visit to relatives in some functions/ auspicious celebrations were found to be 87 per cent, 83 per cent and 69.17 per cent. The overall involvement mean score of 2.34 clearly indicated that the respondents were Partially to Wholly involved in various household activities. Sukhija (2014) concluded that an average farm woman spent 6 hours and 32 minutes, on home duties. The time spent, however, varied depending on the size of the farm, the number of dairy and draught animals kept and the number/composition of family members. Similarly, Srichandan (2016), also reported that farmers were primarily responsible for applying fertilizers and moving manures, while farm women were mostly in charge of compost preparation. Because most farm women were unaware of how to prepare compost pit properly, most compost pits were little and found in backyards. Farm women took an active part in khelua, thinning, irrigation, irrigation channel cleaning, and gap filling. In the multicultural paddy farming and package practices, the farm women worked with the men significantly more than the men did. However, these findings were in contrast with those of, Pattnaik and Dutt (2020) who reported that women participated in non-traditional home activities at a lower rate than in conventional activities had less access to markets and demonstrated less budget management skill. Because it was considered a household chore, women were usually in charge of taking care of the cattle. Whereas, most men work on a few jobs, such as maintaining animal shelters and purchasing processed feed and fodder from markets.

**RESPONDENTS' OVERALL INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES:**

On the basis of mean involvement score and standard deviation, the respondents were classified in the following three categories presented in Table-2

**Table-2: Involvement in Household activities (n=120)**

S.No.	Category	f	%
1.	High Involvement (> 53.70 score)	18	15.00
2.	Moderate Involvement (44.10 to 53.70 score)	86	71.67
3.	Low Involvement (<44.10 score)	16	13.33

It is evident from the data that a majority of respondents (71.67%) had Moderate level of Involvement in household activities. Those who had High level of Involvement and Low level of Involvement pertaining to various household activities were found to be 15 per cent and 13.33 per cent respectively.

**CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE RESPONDENT FARM WOMEN:**

An inventory of the constraints was prepared in consultation with the Experts, Advisory Committee Members and Pertinent literature. These constraints were then divided into two categories namely Social Constraints and Physical Constraints. The respondent's response was obtained on a three-point continuum scale. The frequency under each column of seriousness was multiplied with its respective score in order to compute the total score. The total score under each constraint was then divided by the total number of respondents to find out the Overall Mean Seriousness Score. The data have been presented in tables 3 and 4.

**Table-3: Social Constraints faced by respondents (n=120)**

S.No.	Constraints	Most Serious		Serious		Not so serious		MeanScore
		F	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	Excessive burden of work and responsibility	19	15.83	48	40.00	53	44.17	1.72
2.	Conflicts owing to dual responsibility	11	9.17	60	50.00	49	40.83	1.68
3.	No appreciation for independent decisions	8	6.67	83	69.17	29	24.17	1.83
4.	Lack of recognition and appreciation on part of the family	8	6.67	97	80.83	15	12.50	1.94
5.	Unaware of financial/loan schemes	25	20.83	73	60.83	22	18.33	2.03
6.	Personal harassment	6	5	7	5.83	103	89.17	1.13
7.	Conservative attitude of society towards women	18	15	25	20.83	77	64.17	1.51
8.	Lack of marketing facilities in the nearby area	35	29.17	66	55.00	19	15.83	2.13
9.	Lack of awareness about various training programmes and government schemes	22	18.33	73	60.83	25	20.83	1.98
10.	Non-cooperative attitude of the society	31	25.83	77	64.17	12	10.00	2.16

Overall Mean Seriousness Score = 2.01

**Table-4: Physical Constraints faced by respondents (n=120):**

S.No.	Constraints	Most Serious		Serious		Not so serious		Mean Score
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	While working in paddy fields the knees, toes and legs of women are injured due to water in the fields. Due to this, women are unable to perform other chores in the home	43	35.83	30	25.00	47	39.17	1.97
2.	While spraying pesticides and insecticides women laborers experience burning of the eye, stomach, skin allergies	32	26.67	37	30.83	51	42.50	1.84

3.	Women experience inflammation of their palms during harvesting	13	10.83	53	44.17	54	45.00	1.66
4.	Women experience backache and body ache due to continuous bending posture while performing weeding operations	11	9.17	41	34.17	68	56.67	1.53
5.	Drudgery reducing equipments are not available for both farm and home level activities	15	12.50	61	50.83	44	36.67	1.76
6.	Non-availability of timely medical aid during occupational health hazards and accidents	21	17.50	67	55.83	32	26.67	1.91
7.	Exertion/ physically exhaust due to more manual work at home & field	10	8.33	67	55.83	43	35.83	1.73
8.	Health problem	5	4.17	103	85.83	12	10.00	1.94
9.	Lack of technical supervision/guidance in various field operations	13	10.83	71	59.17	36	30.00	1.81
10.	No regular source of income	18	15.00	79	65.83	23	19.17	1.96
11.	Poor health of family members	21	17.50	89	74.17	10	8.33	2.09
Overall Mean Seriousness Score = 1.85								

It has been observed from the data that more than 80 percent of the respondents reported that Lack of recognition and appreciation on the part of family members, Unawareness about facilities/loan schemes of the government, Lack of marketing facilities in the nearby area and non-cooperative attitude of the society were the main social constraints perceived by them as Serious to Most serious. However, the constraints like There are no appreciation for independent decisions (24.17%), Conflicts owing to dual responsibility (40.83%), Excessive burden of work and responsibility (44.17%), Unfavorable attitude of family members (15%), Male dominated society (9.17%) and Personal harassment (6.67%) were considered Not so serious by the respondents. The Overall Mean Seriousness Score of 2.01 clearly indicated that most of them Social Constraints faced by respondents were of Serious nature. These findings were in agreement with those of Baruah (2018) who reported that dual responsibility of women at home and in farm was the major constraint faced by farm women in farm and household activities. Conflicts due to dual responsibility had further limited their opportunities at home and farm. Awasthi et al., (2020) also found that due to evolving agricultural equipments and methods, women's work was becoming more time-consuming and difficult.

Similarly, a cursory look at the data in table 4.50 revealed that more than 80 per cent of the respondents perceived that Health problems (90%), No regular source of income (80.83%) and Poor health of family members (90.67%) were some of the major constraints perceived as Serious to Most Serious by the respondent farm women. The constraints like non-availability of timely medical aid during occupational health hazards and accidents, lack of availability of drudgery reducing equipment's for both farm and home labour activities and exertion/physically exhaustion due to more manual labour at home & field were also perceived as Serious to Very Serious constraints by 63 to 73 per cent of respondents. However, there were some other constraints like Burning of the eye, stomach, skin allergy while spraying pesticides, Inflammation of their palms during harvesting, Injury to knees, toes, legs while performing operations in the paddy fields and backache and Body ache due to persistent bending posture while performing weeding operations etc. which were perceived Not so serious by 42.50, 45, 39.17 and 56.67 per cent, of the respondents. These findings were in consonance with those of Chauhan (2005) who stated that the majority of female farmers experienced back pain, while a small percentage reported respiratory issues that limited their ability to participate in other household tasks. Similar findings were also reported by Gurjar (2015) who reported that skin allergies were the major constraint followed by application of Chemicals which had caused severe headache among them.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER PROMOTING WOMEN’S INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING BEHAVIOR:**

The suggestions were elicited from the respondents for further strengthening their decision-making behavior, the results are presented in Table-5.

S.No.	Activities	Most useful		Useful		Not so useful		Mean Score
		F	%	f	%	f	%	
i.	Vocational training on different aspects like: Bee keeping, Floriculture, Dairy farming, Poultry etc. should be organized for farm women	47	39.16	45	37.50	28	23.33	2.15
ii.	Farm women should be motivated to initiate their own enterprise which not only would make them self-sufficient but also facilitates them to generate employment for others	60	50	32	26.67	28	23.33	2.26
iii.	To make easy availability of Loan/Credit at cheap/low rate of interest	55	45.83	30	25.00	35	29.17	2.16
iv.	Sincere efforts should be made to improve their communication skills so that they may not hesitate in expressing their opinion independently	55	45.83	35	29.17	30	25.00	2.20
v.	Concerted endeavors need to be made for strengthening their decision-making powers by organizing short duration training programme or orientation programmes for them	48	40.00	45	37.50	27	22.50	2.17
vi.	Awareness should be created among family members to encourage women for higher education which will make them self-confident and self-dependent	66	55.00	30	25.00	24	20.00	2.35
vii.	The government should frame some concrete policies for the improvement of health and nutrition status of women	44	36.67	55	45.83	21	17.50	2.19
viii.	Awareness must be created among the women about various government plans and some policies must be framed for welfare of women particularly residing in rural areas	85	70.83	55	45.83	30	25.00	3.29
ix.	Some mechanism/tools should be devised to reduce the drudgery of women which they have to face in performing various agricultural and household operations/activities	41	34.17	44	36.67	35	29.17	2.05
x.	There is need to change the unfavorable attitude and lackadaisical approach of the elder members of family towards women so that they could provide positive contribution to the society	74	61.67	36	30.00	10	8.33	2.53

Overall Mean Suggestion Utility Score = 2.25

It has been observed from the data a majority of the respondents desired that the government should frame some concrete policies for the improvement of health and nutrition status of women, 77.50 per cent of respondents suggested that concerted endeavors need to be made for strengthening their decision-making powers by organizing short duration training programme or orientation programmes for them. Similarly, 76.66 per cent of the respondents found Vocational training on different aspects and motivating the farm women to initiate their own enterprise Useful as suggestions, 75 per cent of respondents opined that sincere efforts need to be made to improve their communication skills, 74 per cent of respondents suggested there is need to change unfavorable attitude of family members towards women so that women can provide positive contribution towards society. In addition, 70 per cent of respondents suggested that some mechanism or tools should be devised to reduce the

drudgery of women in household and farm activities and to make easy availability of loans and credit schemes for women. These findings were in agreement with those of Awasthi (2020) who suggested that women should be encouraged to get involved in politics, and leadership development programmes need to be organised. The author further advocated that the modern technology needs to be made accessible right outside their door since it could help rural women gain technical empowerment. Similarly, Gurjar (2015) also observed that since government has launched a number of development programmes to improve the lives of farm women, therefore, extension services must be made available in all villages and isolated places so that all the women workers may be informed about them,

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that a majority of the respondent rural women were engaged in various household activities like preparing family budget, washing utensils and clothes, bringing fodder, fetching water from taps/bowris, bringing fuel for cooking. Those who were not involved in the activities like taking loan for the family, making investment plans, and saving plans were found to be 23 to 30 percent. More than 75 percent of them had faced the problem of lack of recognition and appreciation by family members, ignorance about loan schemes, uncooperative attitude of society, health related problems, no regular source of income, etc., in participation and decision-making pertaining to various household activities. The study implies that govt. should frame concrete policies for the improvement of health and nutritional status of farm women besides strengthening their decision-making power by organising short duration training programmes for them.

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