



WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

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ABSTRACT

*The study was conducted in purposively selected Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh on a random sample of 120 respondents. The sample was taken from four randomly selected blocks viz; Dharamshala, Baijnath, Nagrota Bagwan and Sulah of the selected district. A majority of the respondents (>70%) were **moderately involved** in household activities, only 8.33 percent of them were highly involved in farm activities. More than three-fifths respondents (67.50%) had **moderate involvement in decision making** regarding farm activities and household activities (71.67%). Overall, the decision-making behavior of women respondents was found to be **Moderate** i.e. most of the decisions related to various agricultural activities were taken by both i.e. self and their husbands. More than 80% of the respondents had faced the problems of **lack of recognition and appreciation** on the part of family members, **ignorance about loan schemes** of the government, lack of marketing facilities in the nearby area and **uncooperative attitude of the society** besides health problems, no regular source of income and poor health of family members. Therefore, it has been suggested that **the government should frame some concrete policies for the improvement of health and nutritional status of women**. Concerted efforts need to be made for strengthening their decision-making powers by organizing short duration training programme/orientation programs for them.*

Keywords: *Moderate Involvement, Decision making, Concerted efforts, Orientation programme, Uncooperative attitude, Concrete policies etc.*

The first Prime Minister of India- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had rightly stated that the women must be awakened in order to awaken the masses. "When a woman moves, the household, the village, and the nation also move." As per the report of **World Bank (2022)**, about half of the population in India made up of women particularly in rural regions, depends on men for their livelihood with no voice for them to be heard. When we talk about the neighboring countries of India, 59 per cent of Bangladeshi women, 64 per cent Pakistani and 85 per cent Nepali women are employed in agriculture (**Roy and Tisdell, 2002**). Thus, the empowerment of women is essential not only to ensure their individual welfare but also for the welfare of the entire home because they often manage their household health and nutrition.

Rural women have been actively engaged in various farm and household activities. Although they were found to be involved in every aspect of agriculture right from crop selection to land preparation, to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing, and processing, yet it is the male members who usually take all the decisions. It has been observed that only 4 to 9 per cent of the female workers had taken decisions in water management and fertilizer application (**Sharma and Varma, 2008**). Despite their dual responsibility at home and at the farm, their participation in decision making pertaining to agricultural activities was not found to be satisfactory. Keeping this in view, the present study entitled "**Women's Involvement & Participation in Decision Making**" was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

- To analyze the extent of involvement of farm women in different farm activities.
- To determine the decision-making behavior of farm women in various farm activities.

- To identify the main constraints/problems faced by the respondents in various farm activities.
- To provide suggestive measures for further straightening decision making behaviour of farm women.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in purposively selected Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh because of its highest sex ratio (Anonymous, 2011). Out of the total 15 development blocks, four development blocks viz: Nagrota Bagwan, Dharamshala, Baijnath and Sulah were randomly selected. Out of the selected block, two villages were randomly selected and from each village, fifteen respondents were selected randomly. Thus, in all 120 respondents constituted the sample for the purpose of the present study.

For the purpose of the present study, decision making behavior was operationalized as the perception of farm women in decision making about various activities related to agriculture. In other words, the opinion of the women on whether the decision was taken by “Self” or Both or” Spouse” and accordingly a score of 3, 2 and 1 was given. The data were collected with the help of well-prepared and pre-tested interview schedule by personally interviewing the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main findings of the study have been presented under the following heads and sub- heads:

RESPONDENTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN VARIOUS FARM ACTIVITIES:

On asking to what extent the farm women were involved in various farm activities, the response has been shown in Table-1

Table-1: Respondents’ involvement in Farm activities (n=120)

S.No.	Activities	Wholly		Partially		Not at all		MeanScore
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	Ploughing	23	19.17	90	75	7	5.83	2.13
2.	Pre-sowing activities	31	25.83	84	70	5	4.17	2.22
3.	Paddy transplantation	31	25.83	86	71.67	3	2.5	2.23
4.	Selection of crop varieties	40	33.33	75	62.5	5	4.17	2.29
5.	Irrigation	40	33.33	72	60	8	6.67	2.27
6.	Weeding	41	34.17	74	61.67	5	4.17	2.30
7.	Hoeing	39	32.5	75	62.5	6	5	2.28
8.	Applying of fertilizer/manures	34	28.33	73	60.83	13	10.83	2.18
9.	Spraying of pesticides	40	33.33	68	6.67	12	10	2.23
10.	Harvesting	34	28.33	83	69.17	3	2.5	2.26
11.	Tying of crop bundles	33	27.5	81	67.5	6	5	2.23
12.	Transplantation of crops	32	26.67	82	68.33	6	5	2.22
13.	Harrowing	32	26.67	81	67.5	7	5.83	2.21
14.	Threshing and winnowing	34	28.33	78	65	8	6.67	2.22
15.	Grain storage	30	25	77	64.17	13	10.83	2.14
16.	Marketing	20	16.67	79	65.83	21	17.5	1.99
Overall Involvement Mean Score = 2.21								

A majority of respondents were **Partially** involved in various farm activities like Ploughing (75%), Pre sowing activities (70%), Paddy transplantation (71.67%), Selection of crop varieties (62.50%), Irrigation (60%), Weeding (61.67%), Hoeing (62.50%), Applying of manure/fertilizer (60.83%), Tying of crops bundles (67.50%), Transplantation of crops (68.33%), Harrowing (67.50%), Threshing and winnowing (65%), Storage of grains (64.17%) and Marketing of produce (65.83%). Those who were **Wholly involved** in all of sixteen activities were found to be 16 to 28 per cent. The overall mean involvement score of 2.21 also indicates that a majority of respondents were **Partially involved** in various farm activities.

RESPONDENTS’ OVERALL INVOLVEMENT IN FARM ACTIVITIES:

The respondents were classified into three categories based on their Mean Score and standard deviation and the figures are presented in table- 2

Table-2 Involvement in Farm activities (n=120)

S.No.	Category	f	%
1.	High Involvement (> 40.92 score)	10	8.33
2.	Moderate Involvement (26.80 to 40.92 score)	93	77.50
3.	Low (< 26.80 score)	17	14.17

Mean=33.86, SD=7.06

It has been observed from the data more than three-fourths of the respondents (77.50%) had moderate level of involvement in farm activities. Those who had high level of involvement in farm activities were meagre i.e., 8.33 per cent only.

RESPONDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING RELATED TO FARM ACTIVITIES:

On probing, who takes the decision so far as farm activities are concerned, the response has been depicted in Table -3

Table-3: Participation in farm related decision making (n=120)

S.No.	Activities	Self		Spouse		Both		Mean Score
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	Land preparation	46	38.33	19	15.83	54	45.00	2.21
2.	Selection of crop	51	42.50	18	15.00	51	42.50	2.28
3.	Selection of variety	55	45.83	26	21.66	39	32.50	2.24
4.	Time of sowing	56	46.66	45	37.50	45	37.50	2.53
5.	Use of fertilizer	45	37.50	25	20.83	50	41.66	2.17
6.	Use of pesticide	41	34.16	27	22.50	52	43.33	2.12
7.	Application of irrigation	36	30.00	20	16.66	64	53.33	2.13
8.	Weeding of crops	47	39.16	13	10.83	60	50.00	2.28
9.	Harvesting of crops	35	29.16	23	19.16	62	51.66	2.10
10.	Storage of agriculture produce	37	30.83	35	29.17	48	40.00	2.01
XI.	Marketing of the produce	23	19.17	57	47.50	40	33.33	1.85
Overall Mean Decision-Making Score = 2.12								

It has been observed from the data that 40 to 47 percent of farm women had taken decision themselves so far as selection of crop, selection of varieties and time of sowing are concerned. The decision pertaining to land preparation (45%), use of pesticides (43.33%), use of fertilizer (41.66%), weeding of crops (50%) and harvesting of crops (51.66%) were taken **Jointly** i.e., by farm women and their husbands. However, those who reported that the decision related to selection of variety, use of pesticides, storage of agricultural produce was taken by their **Spouses** were found to be 21.66 per cent, 22.50 per cent and 29.17 per cent respectively. The overall mean decision-making score was found to be 2.12 indicating that most of decision pertaining to farm activities were taken jointly i.e. by both by women and their husbands.

Respondents’ Overall Participation in Decision Making Pertaining to Farm Activities.

The respondents were classified into three categories based on mean score and standard deviation and results are presented in Table-4

Table-4 Participation in decision making regarding Farm activities (n=120):

S.No.	Category	f	%
1.	High Involvement in Decision Making (> 29.29 score)	27	22.50
2.	Moderate Involvement in Decision Making (17.33 to 29.29 score)	81	67.50
3.	Low Involvement in Decision Making (<17.33 score)	12	10.00

It is clear from the table that more than two-thirds of the respondents 67.50 per cent had moderate involvement in decision making related to farm activities. Those who had High and Low involvement in decision making were found to be 22.50 and 10 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 viz; **Most serious, Serious** and **Not so serious** with respective scores of 3, 2 and 1. The frequency under each column of seriousness was multiplied with its respective score in order to the compute 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 5 and 6.

Table-5 Social Constraints faced by respondents (n=120):

SN	Constraints	Most Serious		Serious		Not so serious		Mean Score
		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-6 Physical Constraints faced by respondents (n=120):

SN	Constraints	Most Serious		Serious		Not so serious		Mean Score
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	While working in paddy fields theknees, toes and legs of women areinjured due to water in the fields. Due to this, women are unable toperform other chores in the home	43	35.83	30	25.00	47	39.17	1.97
2.	While spraying pesticides andinsecticides 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 oftheir palms during harvesting	13	10.83	53	44.17	54	45.00	1.66
4.	Women experience backache andbody 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 arenot available for both farm and home level activities	15	12.50	61	50.83	44	36.67	1.76
6.	Non-availability of timely medicalaid 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**.

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 perceives **Not so serious** by 42.50, 45, 39.17 and 56.67 per cent, of the respondents.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STRENGTHENING DECISION MAKING BEHAVIOR:

The suggestions were elicited from the respondents for further strengthening their decision-making behavior, the results are presented in Table-7.

Table-7 Suggestions (n=120):

SN	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.

CONCLUSION

It has been concluded from the study that a majority of the decisions related to various agricultural activities/operations were taken **Jointly** i.e. Both wife and husband. The study implied 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 them besides changing the unfavorable attitude of family members towards them.

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