



International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2018; 4(3): 220-222
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 23-07-2018
Accepted: 25-08-2018

Queen Chetia

Department of Extension and
Communication Management,
College of Home Science, Assam
Agricultural University, Jorhat,
Assam, India

Dr. Manju Dutta Das

Department of Extension and
Communication Management,
College of Home Science, Assam
Agricultural University, Jorhat,
Assam, India

Dr. Daisy Hazarika

Department of Extension and
Communication management,
College of Home Science, Assam
Agricultural University, Jorhat,
Assam, India

Involvement of rural women in farm and non-farm activities

Queen Chetia, Dr. Manju Dutta Das and Dr. Daisy Hazarika

Abstract

An investigation was designed to know the involvement of rural women in selected farm and nonfarm activities. The study was conducted in eight villages of Jorhat subdivision and Titabor subdivision of Jorhat district of Assam. The total respondents included in the study were 120. Personal Interview method was used for data collection. Statistical techniques viz., frequency, percentage, mean, standard error, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation were used for analyzing the data. The findings revealed that cent percent of rural women always involved in farm activities such as transplanting, harvesting and winnowing followed by weeding(84.83%), care and maintenance of cattle (77.50%), cleaning of cattle shed (71.66%), cleaning of poultry shed (51.66%), care and maintenance of poultry (50.00%), marketing of farm produce (35.00%), storage of grain (19.16%) and 0.83 per cent nursery raising and non farm activities like sweet and snack preparation (94.16%), weaving (60.00%), pickle making (55.00%) and marketing of non farm produce (14.16%) respectively.

Keywords: Involvement, rural women, farm activities, nonfarm activities, household livelihood security

Introduction

Rural poverty is one of the important characteristics of India and nearly 45 percent of rural people are below the poverty line. Most of them are just surviving with their day-to-day earnings. Rural women are the most vulnerable group affected by poverty. They are the centers of the family. Though the role of women is very important and crucial in an economy, yet they are the invisible workers and leads a tough life. These women are also actively engaged in all activities right from the household chores to the field works. Rural women are half of India's demographic dividend; if they are given the right tools and community support, they can not only become financially independent but also become efficient engines that fuel India's future growth.

Rural women are resourceful economic agents who contribute to the income of families and the growth of communities in a multitude of ways. They work as entrepreneurs, as farm and nonfarm laborers, in family businesses, for others and as self-employed; while they take on a disproportionate share of unpaid work at home. However, their contribution is limited by unequal access to resources as well as persistent discrimination and gender norms which are needed to be addressed to allow the realization of their full potential.

Rural women are induced to contribute to farm and nonfarm activities by push and pull factors. The push factors mainly characterize financial demands. These women from the poorest families are pushed into farm and nonfarm activities due to severe economic necessity. A family with lower income is more likely to increase their family income by involving female members in farm and nonfarm activities. On the other hand, a family with a high income might reduce the necessity of augmenting income by involving women in the labor force. The pull factors also attract rural women for taking part in farm and nonfarm activities. Neoclassical economists consider education to be one of the key determinants of women's entering into the labor market. The higher the education level, the greater is women's involvement in the labor market.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Jorhat district of Assam. A multistage purposive cum simple random sampling method was followed for the present study. One block from Jorhat subdivision and Titabor subdivision were selected purposively where the majority of the rural

Correspondence

Queen Chetia

Department of Extension and
Communication management,
College of Home Science, Assam
Agricultural University, Jorhat,
Assam, India

women were marginal and small landholding. Four villages from each block were selected by using simple random sampling method. Then, 15 respondents were selected randomly from each village. Altogether 120 respondents were selected for the present study. The data were collected through personal interview method with the help of the interview schedule developed for the purpose according to the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

Background characteristic of rural women

Personal characteristics of the respondents were studied with the following variables i.e. age and marital status. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents included caste, main family occupation, education, organizational membership, land holding, material possession.

The findings presented in the table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents (86.66%) belonged to lower middle age group ranging from (32-45) years followed by 11.67 in young age i.e. 18-31 years and 1.67 in upper middle age group i.e. 46-59. A large percentage of rural women were married (85.00%) followed by 9.17 percent belonged to the widow and 5.83 percent women unmarried. 4.3 that the majority of the respondents (57.50%) were from the OBC/MOBC category followed by 25.00 and 17.50 percent in SC/ST and General respectively. It is apparent from the Table 1 that farming was

the major family occupation (54.16%) of the rural women followed by daily wage earner (24.17%) and business (15.00%). Further, it revealed that very less percent belonged to service holder (6.67%). It may be due to lack of higher education for applying or joining the regular public or private services. 59.17 percent of the respondents were educated to the middle school level, followed by primary school level (25.84 %), high school level (5.83%), higher secondary level (5.00%) whereas 4.1 percent of the respondents were illiterate. The reason behind this could be due to the lack of opportunity for availing proper education due to the poor financial background and lack of educational institutions in their vicinity. That majority (75.00%) of rural women were a member of more than one organization such as self-help group and Bandhan group. Followed by 25.00 percent had membership in one organization. It was found that majority of the respondents (73.34%) had marginal land holding followed by 22.50 and 4.16 percent in small and semi-medium landholding. This might be due to the disintegration of the family system in rural areas for which their farmlands are divided into equal portion among the family. 37.50 percent of rural women had the high level of household assets followed by 34.16 percent had the medium level and 28.33 percent had the low level of household assets. 81.66 percent of rural women had the medium level of farm assets and 18.34 percent had the low level of farm assets.

Table 1: List of selected variables and instruments used

S. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	Young	14	11.67
		Lower middle	104	86.66
		Upper middle	2	1.67
2.	Marital status	Unmarried	7	5.83
		Married	102	85.00
		Widow	11	9.17
3.	Caste	SC/ST	30	25.00
		OBC/MOBC	69	57.50
		General	21	17.50
4.	Main family Occupation	Daily wage earner	29	24.17
		Farming	65	54.16
		Business	18	15.00
		Service holder	8	6.67
5.	Education	Illiterate	5	4.16
		Primary School	31	25.84
		Middle School	71	59.17
		High School	7	5.83
6.	Organizational Membership	Higher Secondary	6	5.00
		Member of one organization	30	25.00
		Member of more than one organization	90	75.00
7.	Land Holding	Marginal (Below 7.5 bigha)	88	73.34
		Small (7.5-15 bigha)	27	22.50
		Semi Medium (15-30 bigha)	5	4.16
8.	Household assets	Low	34	28.33
		Medium	41	34.16
		High	45	37.50
9.	Farm assets	Low	22	18.34
		Medium	98	81.66

The extent of involvement of rural women in selected farm and nonfarm activities

The data presented in table 2 shows that cent percent of the rural women always involved in farm activities such as transplanting, harvesting and winnowing followed by weeding (84.83%), care and maintenance of cattle (77.50%), cleaning of cattle shed (71.66%), cleaning of poultry shed (51.66%), care and maintenance of poultry (50.00%),

marketing of farm produce (35.00%), storage of grain (19.16%) and 0.83 per cent nursery raising and non farm activities like sweet and snack preparation (94.16%), weaving (60.00%), pickle making (55.00%) and marketing of non farm produce (14.16%) respectively.

It further shows that a large percentage of rural women never involved in farm activities such as land preparation (97.50%) followed by applying insecticides (89.16%), irrigation or

water management (85.83%), storage of grain (65.83%), nursery raising (46.67%), applying manure and fertilizer(33.34%), cleaning of poultry shed (29.16%), care and maintenance of poultry (25.00%) and weeding (11.00%)

and non farm activities such as handicraft product making (75.00%), tailoring (58.34%), weaving (29.16%), pickle making (15.83%), marketing of non farm produce (10.55%) respectively.

Table 2: Extent of involvement of rural women in selected farm and nonfarm activities. N=120

S. No	Items of Operation	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
Farm Activities				
1	Land preparation	-	2.50	97.50
2	Applying manure and fertilizer	-	66.66	33.34
3	Nursery raising	0.83	52.50	46.67
4	Transplanting	100	-	-
5	Applying insecticides	-	10.83	89.17
6	Weeding	84.84	4.16	11.00
7.	Irrigation or water management	-	14.16	85.84
8	Harvesting	100	-	-
9	Winnowing	100	-	-
10	Storage of grain	19.16	15.00	65.83
11	Care and maintenance of poultry	50.00	25.00	25.00
12	Cleaning of poultry shed	51.66	19.16	29.16
13	Care and maintenance of cattle	77.50	22.50	-
14	Cleaning of cattle shed	71.66	18.34	10.00
15	Marketing of farm produce	35.00	51.66	13.34
Nonfarm Activities				
16	Weaving	60.00	10.83	29.16
17	Tailoring	-	41.66	58.34
18	Pickle making	55.00	29.16	15.83
19	Handicraft products making	-	25.00	75.00
20	Sweet and snacks preparation	94.17	5.83	-
21	Marketing of nonfarm produce	62.33	27.12	10.55

Conclusion

Women are good partners of the socio-economic development of the country in general and the family in particular. They can contribute significantly to the socio-economic upliftment of the family if the proper environment with facilities can be ensured.

In today's society, the role of women extends way to beyond home and bringing up children. Women have to perform the dual role of housewife and wage earner. Both roles make heavy demands on women's time and energy. Rural women play an important role in agricultural and non- agricultural activities especially in harvesting, livestock and poultry rearing, weaving, handicraft products making, pickle making etc. Economic pressure is forcing them to break away their traditional roles of housewives into the farm and non-farm laborers. In this present study women, contributions in selected farm and nonfarm activities are more prominent.

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