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Exploring women's attitude and role in agricultural practices: Evidence from Satna district, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

Agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods in India, with women playing a vital yet often underrecognized role in this sector. Despite their significant contributions to farm labour, women's participation is frequently constrained by socio-cultural norms, limited access to resources, and inadequate training opportunities. This study aims to assess the attitudes, knowledge, and participation of rural women in agricultural activities in the Sohawal and Unchehra blocks of Satna district, Madhya Pradesh. A total of 120 women respondents were selected using simple random sampling from four villages—Susuwar, Kanchanpur, Mahdeii, and Beerpur. Data were collected through structured interviews and analyzed using percentage and frequency methods.

The findings reveal that a majority of women (80%) believe they are equally capable as men in performing farm work, and 91.66% agree that women should participate in farm decision-making. All respondents (100%) believe that farm work done by women is undervalued. While 75% reported enjoying farm activities, 93.33% acknowledged the physical strain as a limiting factor. Additionally, 81.66% expressed a need for training in advanced farming techniques, and 95.83% reported that social norms hinder women's involvement in agriculture. Notably, 90% of the respondents felt confident managing farm activities independently.

The study concludes that rural women possess a strong sense of capability and interest in agriculture but face notable challenges that hinder their full participation. Addressing these issues through targeted training programs, awareness initiatives, and supportive policies is crucial for empowering women, improving agricultural productivity, and promoting gender equity in rural development.

Keywords: Women in agriculture, rural development, gender roles, farming participation, Madhya Pradesh, agricultural attitudes

Introduction

Agriculture continues to be the backbone of rural economies across many developing countries, with women playing a pivotal yet often underrecognized role in this sector. Despite contributing significantly to farm labour, their involvement is frequently constrained by socio-cultural norms, limited access to resources, and inadequate training opportunities. Understanding women's attitudes toward agriculture, their level of knowledge, and the extent of their participation in various farming activities is critical for enhancing productivity, achieving food security, and promoting gender equity in rural development.

This study aims to explore the multidimensional role women play in farming, examining how their perceptions, knowledge, and engagement influence agricultural outcomes. By identifying the factors that shape women's involvement and competence in farm activities—ranging from land preparation and planting to post-harvest handling and marketing—the research seeks to inform policies and

programs that can empower rural women, improve farm efficiency, and drive sustainable development.

India is basically an agricultural country as about eighty percent of its population is living in rural areas. Women constitute 46.68 per cent of India's rural population and they have played a pivotal role in agricultural sector in India. According to 1971 census, out of 31.3 million women workers, 28 million (89.40%) were engaged in rural work and among them, 87.00% were performing agricultural operations. Also, majority of the Indian workers were involved in agriculture; 67.48 per cent of the male workers and 80.07 per cent of the female workers were either cultivators or agricultural laborers. Among the female workers (80.07 per cent) the per cent of agricultural laborers was significantly higher (50.46 per cent) than that of cultivators (29.61 per cent) (Menon, 1976) ^[1].

Methodology

The study was selected in Sohawal block of Satna district of

in Madhya Pradesh. Satna District has 5 Blocks. Due to maximum number of women play the role in agricultural practices out of these Sohawal and Unchehra block was purposely selected for the study. The sample of the study has been selected simple random sampling techniques. Sohawal block total 266 villages out of these Susuwar and Kanchanpur and Unchehra block total 322 village out of these Mahdeii or beerpur selected for the study. Thus, The total four village will be selected. 30 respondents selected from each village. Total 120 respondents selected for the

study. The interview schedule was used for data collection through personal interview method. The data were interpreted in terms of percentage and qualitative data were tabulated on the basis of categorization methods. After tabulation, percentage and frequency was carried out.

Results and Discussion

Attitude Assessment

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Table 1: Distribution of respondent according to attitude level of agreement with the following statement

Statement	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Women are equally capable as men in performing farm work.	96	80	20	16.66	4	3.33
Women should take part in farm decision-making.	110	91.66	10	8.33	00	00
Farm work done by women is undervalued.	120	100	00	00	00	00
I enjoy doing farm activities.	90	75	25	20.83	5	4.16
Women need more training in advanced farming techniques.	98	81.66	18	15	4	3.33
Physical strain makes it hard for women to do some farm tasks.	112	93.33	6	5	2	1.66
social norms affect women's involvement in farming.	115	95.83	5	4.16	00	00
I feel confident managing farm activities on my own.	108	90	12	10	00	00

Agree, Neutral, Disagree (Frequency Percentage)

The study provided important insights into how rural women view their roles and abilities in agriculture. Most respondents, 80%, agreed that women can perform farm work just as well as men. Meanwhile, 16.66% were neutral and only 3.33% disagreed. A strong majority, 91.66%, supported women's involvement in farm decision-making. The remaining 8.33% were neutral, and no one disagreed. Every participant, 100%, agreed that the work done by women on farms is not properly valued, showing a widespread feeling of gender-based inequality in recognizing their contributions.

In terms of personal involvement, 75% of the women said they enjoy participating in farm activities, while 20.83% were neutral and 4.16% disagreed. A large number, 81.66%, expressed a strong need for more training in modern farming techniques. Fifteen percent were neutral, and a small percentage, 3.33%, disagreed. They identified physical strain as a major barrier; 93.33% agreed that some farming tasks are physically tough for women, while only 5% were neutral and 1.66% disagreed.

Additionally, 95.83% of respondents recognized social and cultural norms as key factors affecting women's participation in farming, with 4.16% remaining neutral. Finally, when asked about their confidence in managing farm operations independently, 90% of the women felt sure they could do so. Ten percent were neutral, and no one disagreed. These findings suggest that rural women have a strong sense of their abilities and a desire to contribute to agriculture, despite facing challenges related to physical work, social expectations, and limited opportunities for skill development.

Conclusion

The study highlights that women in rural Madhya Pradesh play a crucial role in agriculture and hold positive attitudes toward their capabilities and participation. However, they face significant challenges including physical strain, lack of training, and restrictive social norms. Addressing these

issues through training programs, awareness campaigns, and policy support can help empower women and enhance agricultural productivity.

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