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Constraints and their suggestions in agricultural decision-making among women farmers in Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Mandsaur district which is situated in Madhya Pradesh. The study were conducted in Twenty villages of Mandsaur, Dalauda, Sitamau and Malhargarh blocks of Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh. The rural economy in India is traditionally based on Agriculture, livestock and household activities. Study found that Ranked as the top two constraints, lack of knowledge (75%) and lack of education (73.33%), indicate significant barriers followed by third-ranked constraint, maximum time devotion to household work (67.67%), male dominance in family decision-making (59.33%) and restrictions due to younger age (25%) further illustrate structural inequality. A lack of access to information and resources significantly hinders decision-making. Training emerged as the top suggestion, supported by 75% of respondents. This underscores the critical need for skill development and capacity-building programs tailored to the specific challenges faced by farm women and ranked second, education was emphasized by 73.33% of respondents, illustrating its central role in fostering informed decision-making. The challenges faced by farm women in decision-making are multidimensional, stemming from socio-cultural, educational, and personal barriers. The suggestions provided by farm women for enhancing their participation in decision-making processes reflect a balanced mix of educational, infrastructural, and motivational needs.

Keywords: Farm women, decision making, participation, farming and capacity-building etc.

Introduction

In both household and agricultural tasks, women are essential. Depending on their family's socioeconomic standing and local conditions, they engage in agriculture in various ways. They are employed as paid workers, farmers who toil on their own property, and supervisors who oversee specific facets of agricultural output. At least 1.6 billion rural women, primarily farmers, make up more than 25% of the world's population. The majority of agricultural labour is performed by women, who make up over half of all farmers worldwide.

In the socioeconomic setting of India, women—particularly those living in rural areas—place a high value on earning a living. Both in rural as well as urban areas, the rapidly evolving times have significantly changed the pattern of home life and introduced a plethora of new interests and duties for women. Maintaining a family's financial stability has become challenging due to the constantly rising cost of living. Therefore, women's involvement in income-generating activities is essential for maintaining the larger socioeconomic system as well as for the survival of individual families. Despite entering a variety of areas, women's low workforce involvement is caused by their lack of individual status, limited mobility, inadequate skills, and

illiteracy. Chari (1983) ^[1]. Women are employed mainly in the unorganized sector Mehta and Sethi, (1977) ^[4]. In addition to this, voluntary organizations, as well as Government organizations, engage women in the production of different items.

Women contribute significantly to maintaining household income and have a vital and unique role in rice-based farming systems. India has the highest rate of female participation in agriculture, with 47% of the workforce employed in agriculture being female. From sowing to harvesting, they carry out nearly every function. In the decision-making process pertaining to farm operations, farm women are also crucial. According to Soni *et al.* (2001) ^[8], between 60 and 70 percent of women participate in decision-making and make decisions together.

Men and women make up roughly equal numbers in human civilisation, and both have contributed to societal progress and all facets of human evolution in complementary ways. Whether it was the fight for bread or independence, women have made an equal contribution to all revolutions and have played a significant part in the socioeconomic and national growth of their countries. The majority of tasks related to agriculture and animal husbandry are performed by women. However, the state of women, especially those living in

rural areas, remains appalling even in the new millennium. In our society, they have been ignored and deprived.

In terms of work, education, health, nutrition, politics, and other socioeconomic areas, their deprivation intensifies. Women have been disregarded and denied the chance to take part in the process of growth and gain from it because of social pressure, customs, cultural elements, and historical circumstances.

Women have played an important and vital part in agricultural development and related disciplines such as crop production, livestock, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agro-forestry, etc., since the beginning of time. We cannot accomplish the objectives of rural upliftment without the full intellectual and physical participation of women. Despite this, it is regrettable that the actual and prospective role of women in society has been overlooked due to conservatism, ignorance, and inertia, preventing them from contributing appropriately to societal advancement. Given these facts, the current endeavour aims to determine the primary barriers to crop production technology adoption as they are seen by rural women in relation to rice-based

farming systems.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Mandsaur district which is situated in Madhya Pradesh. The study was conducted in Twenty villages of Mandsaur, Dalauda, Sitamau and Malhargarh blocks of Mandsaur district of Madhya Pradesh. Village wise lists of farm women were prepared and 15 farm women from each village were selected through random sampling method. Thus the total sample drawn was 300 respondents. The data were collected by personally interviewing the respondents farm women in an informal atmosphere either at home or farm. A well-structured questionnaire was being prepared for the collection of data.

Results and Discussion

The constraints faced by farm women in decision-making processes were detailed in the table no. 1. This data presents a layered understanding of how societal, educational, and personal challenges influence the role and efficiency of women in agricultural contexts.

Table 1: Constraints perceived by farm women in decision making pattern

S. No.	Constraints	No. of Farm Women	Percentage	Rank
1.	Maximum time devotion in household work	203	67.67	Third
2.	Family norms	190	63.33	Fourth
3.	Lack of knowledge	225	75.00	First
4.	Perplexity of time for farm and home activities	90	30.00	Twelfth
5.	Afraid of making any improvement in farming	103	34.33	Eleventh
6.	Dominance of male members in the family	178	59.33	Fifth
7.	Lack of education	220	73.33	Second
8.	No permission to take decisions due to younger age	75	25.00	Thirteenth
9.	Lack of confidence to take decision	73	24.33	Fourteenth
10.	Inability to take decision due to contingent problems	140	46.67	Eighth
11.	Lack of information about the sources of availability of resources to solve the problems	153	51.00	Seventh
12.	Inability in diagnosing the problems about which decision is to be taken	165	55.00	Sixth
13.	Lack of adequate information about the solution to problems	66	22.00	Fifteenth
14.	Lack of proper guidance for taking decision	116	38.67	Ninth
15.	Inability in anticipating then possible repercussions of the decision taken	115	38.33	Tenth
	Average	140.8	46.93	

Table 1 indicates the constraints perceived by the farm women in their decision making pattern in agricultural activities.

The average percentage of further constraint perceived by farm women in their decision making pattern was 46.93. The percentage of one, two, three, six, seven, eleven, twelve and fifteen were higher than the percent of average i.e. 46.93. This means that these eight constraints were more important as compared to other.

Ranked as the top two constraints, lack of knowledge (75%) and lack of education (73.33%), indicate significant barriers. These challenges stem from systemic issues such as limited access to quality education and inadequate agricultural training for women. Educational opportunities in rural areas are often skewed in favor of men, leaving women with insufficient skills to make informed decisions about farming and related activities. The lack of knowledge further exacerbates their inability to access or understand information critical for efficient farm management. This finding was in an agreement with the findings of Soni et.al., 2001, Niranjana, 2016 and Rajula, 1999^[8, 5, 7].

The third-ranked constraint, maximum time devotion to

household work (67.67%), highlights the disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities on women. This often leaves them with minimal time for participation in farm activities or decision-making processes. Additionally, family norms (63.33%), ranked fourth, reveal cultural expectations and societal structures that limit women's autonomy. Patriarchal norms in many rural societies dictate that women focus on household management, sidelining their contributions to agriculture despite their significant involvement.

Male dominance in family decision-making (59.33%) and restrictions due to younger age (25%) further illustrate structural inequality. In traditional households, men often hold the authority to make key decisions, with women's roles relegated to supportive tasks. Younger women, in particular, face additional challenges, as their opinions are often undervalued, and they are excluded from critical discussions based on their age and perceived inexperience.

A lack of access to information and resources significantly hinders decision-making. The constraints, including lack of information about resource availability (51%) and inability to diagnose problems (55%), highlight systemic gaps in

knowledge dissemination. Women often lack exposure to modern farming techniques, financial planning, or resource management, leaving them ill-equipped to address agricultural challenges effectively. This finding was in an agreement with the findings of Soni et.al., 2001, Niranjana, 2016 and Rajula, 1999)^[8, 5, 7]

Psychological constraints, such as lack of confidence (24.33%) and fear of making improvements in farming (34.33%), reflect deeply ingrained societal attitudes that discourage women from taking proactive roles. These issues may stem from a lifetime of being undervalued in decision-making processes and a lack of opportunities to develop critical thinking skills in a supportive environment. This finding was in conformity with the findings Praveena et.al. (2005)^[6].

The perplexity of balancing home and farm activities (30%) is a logistical challenge. Women in rural settings often multitask between managing households and contributing to agricultural labor. This dual responsibility not only exhausts their physical and emotional capacities but also limits their ability to engage effectively in decision-making roles. This finding was in conformity with the findings Khare and Jaiswal (2002)^[3].

The inability to access proper guidance (38.67%) and anticipate repercussions of decisions (38.33%) underlines a lack of mentorship and strategic resources. This deficit often results in decisions being either postponed or made with incomplete information, further affecting productivity and production.

Table 2: Suggestions expressed by form women regarding participation and decision making pattern.

S. No.	Suggestions		Respondents	Percentage	Rank
1.	Training needs for Women		225	75.00	First
2.	Education		220	73.33	Second
3.	Separate school		141	47.00	Eight
4.	Parent co-operation		216	72.00	Third
5.	Good transport facility		203	67.67	Fifth
6.	Proper guidance		206	68.67	Fourth
7.	Family support		191	63.67	Sixth
8.	Creating interest	towards	178	59.33	
	agriculture				Seventh
	Average		197.50	65.83	

Table 2 indicates the constraints perceived by the farm women in their suggestions in agricultural activities.

Training emerged as the top suggestion, supported by 75% of respondents. This underscores the critical need for skill development and capacity-building programs tailored to the specific challenges faced by farm women. Training initiatives can bridge knowledge gaps, enhance productivity, and foster confidence, enabling women to make informed decisions. These programs could encompass areas like modern farming techniques, financial management, and leadership development, which are essential for holistic empowerment. This finding was in conformity with the findings Jena et.al., (2021)^[2] 'training need' referred to the need to be minimized by imparting training towards participating in Income Generating Activities of rural women.

Ranked second, education was emphasized by 73.33% of respondents, illustrating its central role in fostering informed decision-making. Access to education equips women with the tools to understand and address agricultural challenges, paving the way for better participation in both farm and household decisions. Literacy and numeracy skills, coupled with awareness about agricultural advancements, empower women to evaluate options critically and advocate for their perspectives within families and communities. This finding was in conformity with the findings Jena et.al., (2021)^[2] women's empowerment is not limited only to Indian society. If we deliberate the global aspect, we see that women are being given equal treatment in developed nations. If we recollect history, we come to know that women have always been given secondary positions in society.

Parental cooperation and family support were ranked third

and sixth, with 72% and 63.67% support respectively. These suggestions highlight the importance of an enabling environment that encourages women to engage actively in decision-making. Parents and families often act as gatekeepers in traditional societies, where cultural norms might restrict women's autonomy. Supportive families can challenge such norms, providing emotional and logistical backing to women as they navigate decision-making roles.

Suggestions like better transport facilities (67.67%) and separate schools (47%) reflect the logistical and structural challenges faced by rural women. Reliable transportation is crucial for accessing training centers, markets, and educational institutions, while separate schools may address cultural barriers that discourage female education. These measures not only improve women's mobility but also enhance their exposure to diverse experiences and knowledge sources, which are essential for informed decision-making.

Proper guidance was supported by 68.67% of respondents, highlighting the need for mentorship in agricultural decision-making. Guidance from experienced individuals or institutions can help women anticipate challenges, evaluate alternatives, and implement effective solutions. Structured mentoring programs could provide ongoing support, ensuring that farm women feel confident and capable in their roles.

Creating interest in agriculture, suggested by 59.33% of respondents, addresses motivational challenges. Many women view farming as an extension of domestic responsibilities rather than a field of personal growth and innovation. Programs designed to highlight the rewards and opportunities in agriculture, including entrepreneurial ventures, can inspire greater enthusiasm and involvement in

decision-making processes.

Recommendations

It is recommended that to improve the productivity of agriculture involvement of farm women in decision making needed to increase. This requires capacity building of farm women regarding latest technical know how, agriculture information acquisition and processing.

Conclusions

The challenges faced by farm women in decision-making are multidimensional, stemming from socio-cultural, educational, and personal barriers. Addressing these requires a holistic approach, including better access to education, restructuring societal norms, and creating supportive policies that empower women in agriculture. Promoting gender equality in decision-making roles can unlock the full potential of farm women, driving better outcomes for the agricultural sector. The suggestions provided by farm women for enhancing their participation in decision-making processes reflect a balanced mix of educational, infrastructural, and motivational needs. Addressing these priorities through targeted interventions can foster an environment where women are empowered to contribute meaningfully to agriculture and household management. This empowerment benefits not just the women themselves but also the broader agricultural sector and rural communities at large.

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