GENDER AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Gender participation in livestock management is as old as mankind. In rural areas women's participation rate in agricultural and livestock management activities is high as compared to men. They get up early in the morning and continuously work till night. A rural woman in Punjab works almost 15 hours a day, spending about 5-6 hours in caring for livestock. They are responsible for 60 to 80% of the feeding and milking of cattle. They remain busy in activities like: cutting fodder, cleaning sheds, milking dairy animals, processing animal products and looking after the health of the herd. The present study was conducted to determine the role of rural women in decision-making in livestock management in district Jhung in 2009. A sample of 120 female respondents was selected randomly from tehsil Jhang through multistage random sampling technique. They were interviewed through a reliable and validated interview schedule. The data collected, were processed through a computer software i.e. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results show that Age, male dominance and traditional belief system were the main factors, which had effected the involvement of rural women in decision-making process. Traditional belief system, misinterpretation of religious teachings and cultural norms also had great influence on the women's involvement in decision-making process.

Key Words: **Gender, decision-making, livestock management.**

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INTRODUCTION

Livestock management is a gender activity as both men and women are involved in it (Ali, 2007). Women's participation in livestock development is significant and varies from region to region according to socioeconomic, agro-ecological, ethnic, and religious factors (Tipilda, 2008). Women's contribution in agricultural labour force in developed countries is 36.7% while, it is about 43.6% in developing countries. In rural areas women's participation rate in agricultural and livestock management activities is high as compared to men (UNDP, 1997). Rural women get up early the morning and work from morning to evening the field or at home. In their varied roles as agricultural labourers, fetching and managing water and fuel, cooking, cleaning and maintaining the house, and taking care of the young and old, they mainly participate in all operations related to livestock management. They also assist their husbands in various farm operations in the fields. List of the jobs performed by them in a day is very long. A rural woman in the Punjab works almost 15 hours a day, spending about 5-6 hours in caring for livestock. They are responsible for 60 to 80% of the feeding and milking of cattle. Livestock management has always been considered to be the sole responsibility of women. Women take responsibility for cutting fodder, cleaning sheds, milking dairy animals, processing animal products and looking after the health of the herd (Younas et al., 2007). Their participation in stall feeding of animals is 31%, whereas, in milking, milk processing is round about 58% and in preparing dung cakes is 90%. A vast majority (90%) of women is involved in shed cleaning and 85% in collection of farmyard manure. Watering is also performed by 69% of females. Males, however, share the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities (Bokhari, 2002). They are economically active and substantially contribute to many activities, such as crop farming and livestock keeping, post harvest activities, household management, off-farm and non-farm economic activities (Habib, 2000). No doubt women's contribution in livestock sector is incredible. They are required to participate in agricultural decision-making. But they have no power to take decisions especially with regard to livestock production activities in rural context of Pakistan. Women do not enjoy complete legal equality with men. The level of women participation in decision-making process not only varies from region to region but also from one

activity to another (Tipilda, 2008). They have no or very little power to take decisions due to many reasons like lack of education, lack of mobility, lack of control over resources, low level of awareness of their civic/ human rights, lack of credit facilities from the Government etc. (FAO, 2003, Habib, 2000)

OBJECTIVES

To identify the specific tasks performed by rural women relating to livestock production activities.
To identify the areas/activities of livestock in which women are consulted.
To analyze the factors affecting women participation in decision making in livestock production.
To compile suggestions to improve the participation of women in livestock decision-making.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in tehsil Jhang which consists of 32 rural union councils, and 5 union councils were selected randomly. From each selected union council, 2 villages were selected at random and from each village 12 women respondents involved in livestock management were selected randomly, thereby making a sample of 120 respondents. The data were collected with the help of a pre-tested and validated interview schedule. The data thus collected were analyzed with the help of a computed software to draw results, conclusions and present recommendations accordingly. Ranking and weighted score of different factors affecting the participation in decision-making process related to livestock management was tabulated and multiplied by concerned score. Then, they were tabulated and interpreted to get the total score for each specific activity for the purpose of their ranking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data regarding demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, education and marital status are given in Table I.

Table 1 ***Distribution of the respondents according to the demographic characteristics***

Age (years)	**No.**	**%**
Young (up to 35 years)	46	38.3
Middle (above 35-50)	25	20.7
Old (above 50)	49	40.6
Mean	**40**	**33.2**
Education		
Illiterate	60	50.0
Up to Primary	38	31.7
Primary to Middle	17	14.2
Middle to Matric	5	4.2
Marital Status		
Un-married	5	4.2
Married	87	72.5
Widowed	27	22.5
Divorced	1	0.8
Total	**120**	**100**

Above data shows that 40.6% of the respondents belonged to old age group followed by 38.3% and 20.7% to young and middle aged groups respectively. In case of education level, half of the respondents (50.0%) were illiterate and the remaining 50% were literate/educated. Among the literates, most (31.7%) of the respondents were up to primary, 14.2% were primary to middle and only 4.2% were middle to matriculation. In case of marital status, a large majority (72.5%) of the respondents was married, 22.5% were widowed, 4.2% were un-married and only few (0.8%) of the respondents were divorced.

Table II ***Frequency distribution of respondents according to the factors affecting their involvement in decision-making process***

Factors	**No.**	**%**
Age	120	100
Education	10	8.3
Control over resource	14	11.7
Lack of awareness	4	3.3
Cultural norms	67	55.8
Traditional belief system	116	96.7
Male dominance	120	100
Resistance from family members	11	9.2

Misinterpretation of religious teachings	75	62.5

The present study indicates that the most of the respondents were young and old aged. Majority of the respondents were married. The Frequency distribution of respondents according to the factors affecting their involvement in decision-making process is presented in Table II.

Table II reveals that age, male dominance and traditional belief system were the main factors, which had an adverse effect on the involvement of rural women in decision-making process as, disclosed by almost all respondents. The other important factors which had affected the decision-making process were misinterpretation of religious teachings (62.5%) and cultural norms (55.8%). Education, lack of awareness, control over resources and resistance from family members were indicated to be the factors affecting the decision-making process by very few respondents. Younger women are less involved in decision making whereas, with the increasing age their involvement is increasing. Education plays a significant role in decision making process. Educated women are more influential in the family.

Table III ***Ranking of different factors affecting the respondents participation in decision-making process related to livestock management***

Factors	Rank order	Mean	S.D.	Weighted score
Age	1	4.96	0.18	596
Male dominance	2	4.8	0.42	576
Traditional belief system	3	3.31	0.93	398
Misinterpretation of religious teachings	4	1.77	1.47	213
Cultural norms	5	1.49	1.46	179
Resistance from family members	6	0.23	0.77	28
Control over resources	7	0.21	0.62	26
Education	8	0.15	0.55	18
Lack of awareness	9	0.04	0.23	5

Table III illustrate from the likert scale of questionnaire which shows that age and male dominance both fell in the range of high and very high categories with mean values 4.96 and 4.8, respectively. It means that these two factors had affected the most in decision-making process. Traditional belief system fell in the range of medium category with the mean value 3.31. While misinterpretation of religious teachings, cultural norms were the factors, which fell in between low and medium categories with mean values 1.77 and 1.49, respectively. The areas resistance from family members, control over resources, education and lack of awareness fell in between very low and low categories. It means these factors had very little influence on decisions-making process.

Table IV ***Distribution of respondents rating according to suggestion to improve participation power***

Suggestions	No.	%
Proper educational facilities should be provided for females at village level	50	41.66
Awareness should be created among women about their social/civic rights by Govt./Private sector	25	20.83
Govt. should focus more attention on problems of rural women	20	16.66
Women should be imparted training in livestock management	25	20.83

Table IV reveals that important suggestions given by the respondents were provision of educational facilities for females at the village level (41.66%), creation of awareness among women about their social/civic rights by public/private sector (20.83%), giving more attention by government on problems of rural women (16.66%) and imparting training to rural women in livestock management (20.83%).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pakistani women are playing a leading role in livestock sector. They are responsible for 60 to 80% of the feeding and milking of cattle. They take responsibility for cutting fodder, cleaning sheds, milking dairy animals, processing animal products and looking after the health of the herd. Livestock management has always been considered to be the sole responsibility of women. Despite their incredible role in livestock sector, their involvement in decision-making regarding livestock management is still seems questionable. Age, male dominance and traditional belief system were the main factors which had affected the involvement of rural women in decision-making process. Their participation may be further enhanced by creating awareness among them about their social and civic rights in livestock sector.

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