

ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE DECISION MAKING RELATED TO FARM AND HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Decision making is a part and parcel of everyone's life. It is done frequently and regularly at any time or place depending on the need and situation. Any individual, whether male or female is put up with various choices in his daily life and he/she has to select one among them. This process is called as Decision Making. Decision Making is an integral part of management and it leads to the empowerment of individuals and families. This paper tries to analyze the role of men and women in decision making related to farm activities, marketing, and transactions related to the farm produce, financial transactions related to the farm and household activities, and socio-religious activities. The results showed that the decision making related to all the three activities was mostly made jointly by men and women. A positive result was gained in the study which showed that women were also involved in the decision making. The study results were against the fixed notion that says that women will not be involved in the decision making mostly, mainly in the patriarchal societies which are prevalent in India.

KEYWORDS: Men, Women, Decision Making, Role, Household & Farm

INTRODUCTION

Decisions are the choices available for an individual in order to carry out a work. The final decision is taken by the individual by seeing the pros and cons of each choice available. This process is called as Decision Making. This decision making may be hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or at any time or place. It may at the household level or at the occupational level. But the decision maker has to be self-sufficient to make a decision in order to move in the right path.

At the household level, the decision making may be related to child care, education, marriage, socio-religious activities, financial issues or any other. At the occupational level, it always depends on the type of occupation a person chooses. Farming is one of the major occupations of rural families in India. Both men and women take part in farming. As it is a daily work, decision making also has to be done frequently. But the role of men and women in decision making may vary due to the male-dominant society.

This paper tried to analyze the role of men and women in the decision making related to the different farm activities, marketing and financial transactions and socio-religious activities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the Objectives of the Study-

- To study the role of men and women in the decision making regarding the farm activities.
- To assess the role of men and women in the decision making related to the marketing transactions (farm produce) and financial transactions (farm and household activities).
- To analyze the role of men and women in the decision making regarding the socio-religious activities.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory research design was adopted for conducting the study in two villages namely Aurepalle and Dokur of Mahbubnagar district. The study was conducted in 112 households (66 households from Aurepalle and 46 Households from Dokur). The households were selected using simple random sampling technique. The principal couple (one male and one female) of the household who were involved in the decision making were selected, and surveyed using a structured interview schedule. The data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Following information is related to the results gained in the study-

Role of Men and Women in Decision Making Related to Farm Activities

The results displayed in the Table 1 showed the majority of the decisions related to agricultural process were taken up jointly, followed by the independent male decision. Very few per cent of women had the right to decide about the various activities to be done in the agricultural process, though they were involved in it.

All the decisions regarding kind of crops to grow, type of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to use, harvest and post-harvest management decisions, use of new technologies, irrigational activity related decisions were taken up jointly. None of the women had an individual role in deciding what crops to grow and the amount of area to be used. The results were not in harmony with the results of the study by Ngome and Angella (2003) which stated that women had an upper hand in deciding about the kind of crops to grow.

A small percentage of women had ability to take individual decisions regarding the use of old or improved seeds (1.79%), use of cash (2.23%) and involvement of children in farm works, time allocation for different activities, use of implements and quantity and type of fertilizers and pesticides to use, irrigation facilities, use of new technologies and other activities (1.34% in each category). On the other side, about 8-26 per cent of men had ability to take a decision regarding the activities done in agricultural process which is mentioned before.

There were some exceptional cases, where the decisions regarding agricultural process were taken by others which included agricultural officers, fellow farmers, friends/ relatives, shop keepers etc. There were also some respondents who had not given the responses to these questions as they had no agriculture or their land was given on lease. If the land was given on lease, the respondents had no role in decision making.

It is surprising to see that majority of the labour allocation activities were done by women. Arranging wage labour inside (49.11%) and outside the villages (36.61%) were the two areas where women played a major role in decision

making. On the other side, men were dominant (40.18%) in deciding about the number of labour to be hired, whereas very few (2.68%) of the women decided on number of labour to be hired. This showed that men were the major decision makers regarding the labour allocation. The men were the decision makers in labour allocation and women just implemented it. The good bargaining power of women regarding the wages of the labourers might be the reason why most women were sent out to bring labour for their farm

Majority (87.50%) of the total respondents (both men and women) expressed that the decisions regarding the number and types of livestock to be kept were decided jointly. Men were dominant in deciding about the feeding of livestock (21.43%) and vaccination or treatment of sick animals (32.14). Women took care of the animals, but the ultimate decision regarding the fodder and vaccination was in the hands of men. The majority of the respondents (66.07%) didn't answer to these questions, as they had no livestock with them and among them some of the respondents expressed they were not interested in rearing livestock, as hectic works will be involved. The results were similar to an earlier study conducted by Singh and Srivastava, 2011.

The decision regarding the buying/ selling of land (98.21%) and buying/ selling of livestock (97.32%) was mostly taken up jointly. Very few men (1.79% and 0.89%) had the ability to take individual decisions regarding the selling/ buying of buying off and or livestock. None of the women had the ability to take individual decisions regarding these two issues. As huge monetary investments were involved, the decisions regarding these issues were taken up jointly.

The decisions regarding the purchase of inputs and implements were dominated by men as they were the ones who had access to go to the nearby town easily and established contacts with the shop keepers. Similar results were obtained by a study by Tsegaye et al. (2012) which found that the roles of women in final decision making on purchase/sell of farm implements was quite minimal. A meagre portion (7.14%) of the women was able to decide about the farm implements and inputs. Some of the reasons which allowed women to take the decisions regarding the purchases of inputs and implements were - age and health conditions of the husband, experience gained through years and some of the men believed that women would do careful selection and bargaining while purchasing when compared to them.

The decisions regarding the selling of food grains and vegetables were dominated by men (66.07%). Only the aged couples went to the market place together and sold their produce, which showed that they took the decisions about selling the produce in a joint manner. Very few women had the individual decision making power regarding the selling of produce.

Table 1: Decision Making in the Respondent Households Regarding the Farm Activities

Decision Related Area	Total (N=224)			
	MD	FD	JD	Others
Agricultural Process				
Kinds of crops to grow	18(8.04)	0(0.00)	152(67.86)	54(24.11)
No. of crops to grow and area given to a particular crop	24(10.71)	0(0.00)	145(64.73)	55(24.55)
Use of own or improved seeds	57(25.45)	4(1.79)	106(47.32)	57(25.45)
Use of cash	57(25.45)	5(2.23)	106(47.32)	56(25)
Use family or hired labour and Involvement of children in farm works	55(24.55)	3(1.34)	110(49.11)	56(25)
Time allocated for different activities	58(25.89)	3(1.34)	106(47.32)	57(25.45)
Use of implements	59(26.34)	3(1.34)	104(46.43)	58(25.89)
Type, quantity and use of fertilisers and pesticides	58(25.89)	3(1.34)	104(46.43)	59(26.34)

Type and use of irrigational sources, no. of times the field to be irrigated	60(26.79)	3(1.34)	102(45.54)	59(26.34)
Construction of irrigational facilities and plant protection	59(26.34)	3(1.34)	104(46.43)	58(25.89)
Harvest and post-harvest decisions	58(25.89)	3(1.34)	106(47.32)	57(25.45)
Use of technology	60(26.79)	3(1.34)	104(46.43)	57(25.45)
Labour Allocation				
Arranging wage labour and hiring locally available labour	45(20.09)	110(49.11)	12(5.36)	57(25.45)
Hiring labour from other villages	73(32.59)	82(36.61)	12(5.36)	57(25.45)
Number of labour to be hired	90(40.18)	6(2.68)	71(31.7)	57(25.45)
Deciding others and own work outside home	47(20.98)	0(0.00)	122(54.46)	55(24.55)
Livestock Related				
Types and number of livestock to be kept	2(0.89)	2(0.89)	196(87.5)	24(10.71)
Feeding of livestock	48(21.43)	12(5.36)	16(7.14)	148(66.07)
Vaccination and treatment of sick animals	72(32.14)	2(0.89)	2(0.89)	148(66.07)
Capital Transactions				
Buying/ selling of land	4(1.79)	0(0.00)	220(98.21)	0(0.00)
Buying/ selling of livestock	2(0.89)	0(0.00)	218(97.32)	4(1.79)
Purchasing Farm Inputs				
Buying farm inputs	134(59.82)	16(7.14)	22(9.82)	52(23.21)
Buying farm implements	136(60.71)	16(7.14)	20(8.93)	52(23.21)
Disposal of Food Grains				
Selling of food grains	148(66.07)	4(1.79)	18(8.04)	54(24.11)
Selling of vegetables	10(4.46)	8(3.57)	0(0.00)	206(91.96)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

**MD= Male decision, FD= Female decision, JD= Joint decision

The results showed that though the majority of the decisions were made jointly, number of men had a greater power over deciding about the works to be done in the agricultural process, when compared to women. It was good to note that even women were involved in decision making for farm activities. As most of the women worked in their family farms, they were also involved in decision making. The age and experience of the women were some of the added advantages for the women and hence they were involved in decision making.

Still, there were gender differences seen in the decision making regarding farm related activities and the decisions were dominated by men. Lack of education, mobility barriers, and improper access to information and latest technologies, male dominance and lack of opportunities can be considered as some of the reasons which hindered women's role in decision making regarding the farm activities. Chayal et al., 2012 also indicated the same kind of results which stated that though women were actively involved in agricultural operations, but their involvement in decision making in agriculture was very poor.

Gender Differences in Decision Making for Marketing Transactions Related to Produce and Financial Transactions Related to the Farm and Household Activities

The results regarding the marketing transactions related to farm produce showed that the majority (66.96%) of the men had an individual role in the case of decision making about the selling or keeping the produce, the amount allocated for market and domestic consumption and saving for the next period. This was followed by joint decisions (15.18%) and very few (1.79%) of women had an individual role. The other 33.96 percent of the respondents did not answer the question as they had no agricultural produce earned by them, as shown in the Table 2. The results clearly showed that men were

dominant in taking the decision making regarding the marketing transactions related to the produce. Lack of mobility, education and limited access to markets were some of the reasons which attributed to the low role of decision making in women regarding the marketing transactions.

Regarding the financial transactions like taking credit for household / occupational purposes, a majority of the respondents (99.11%) expressed that they made joint decisions. None of the men had an individual decision making role with regard to the use of cash and credit and deciding about the sources of credit to be taken. It is good to see that 0.89 per cent of women had an individual decision maker role in deciding about the credit to be taken from money lenders, relatives or friends. As small amounts of credits were required for household purposes and the decisions regarding household activities were dominated by women, they had a little higher and individual role in decisions regarding the financial transactions for the household purposes.

The results showed that there were no differences seen in the levels of decision making among men and women in case of financial decisions for household/ occupational purposes. The decisions were taken up jointly in the majority of households. In some of the remaining households either male or female would take the decisions on financial matters, but only for the case of household purposes and if the amount of money to be borrowed was small or if any emergencies occurred.

Table 2: Decision Making Pattern Regarding the Marketing Transactions Related to the Produce and Financial Transactions Related to the Farm and Household

Decision Related Areas	Total (N=224)			
	MD	FD	JD	Others
Use of Agricultural Produce				
Selling or keeping for domestic consumption, amount allocated for market and domestic consumption, saving for next period	150(66.96)	4(1.79)	34(15.18)	76(76.93)
Credit				
Use of cash and credit	0(0.00)	2(0.89)	222(99.11)	0(0.00)
Sources of Credit				
Banks	0(0.00)	2(0.89)	222(99.11)	0(0.00)
Money Lenders	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	224(100)	0(0.00)
Friends/ Relatives	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	224(100)	0(0.00)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

**MD = Male decision, FD = Female decision, JD = Joint decision

Gender Differences in Decision Making for Socio-Religious Activities

The results regarding the gender differences seen in decision making for social- religious activities showed that the majority (97.32%) of the respondents took the decisions jointly, regarding giving and taking small non-interest loans. As women were the one who carried out household activities, few (2.68%) of them had the ability to take decisions in borrowing and giving non-interest loans, in the case of emergencies and if the amount was small (Table 3).

Regarding the decisions to be taken for giving or taking a small amount of grains or vegetables from/ to their neighbours, female dominance (90.63%) was seen. The decisions regarding gifts to be given and giving a small amount of cash or kind to a visiting neighbour/ daughter were taken up jointly as the majority of the respondents expressed. The decisions regarding the capital transactions were also taken up jointly in majority of the cases (89.73%), followed by male decisions (9.38%).

The decisions regarding the visit to a nearby mela or attending calls also were taken up jointly in majority of the respondent households. The decisions regarding the socio-religious obligations like when to call and send back daughters to their in-laws, attending marriage/ birth/death ceremonies, kind and amount of charity or donations to be given and attending religious gatherings or functions were taken up jointly in majority of the respondent households. This showed that the decisions regarding the socio-religious activities were taken up jointly in majority of the cases. Very few men and women had the ability to take up individual decisions regarding the socio-religious activities. These were some of the gender differences seen in different decision related areas.

Table 3: Decision Making in the Respondent Households Regarding the Socio-Religious Activities

Decision related areas	Total (N=224)			
	MD	FD	JD	Others
Inter Household Exchange				
Giving and taking small non-interest loans	0(0.00)	6(2.68)	218(97.32)	0(0.00)
Giving and taking small amount of grains/ seasonal vegetables	4(1.79)	203(90.63)	17(7.59)	0(0.00)
Giving small amount in cash or kind to a visiting daughter/ neighbour	9(4.02)	3(1.34)	212(94.64)	0(0.00)
Gifts to be given	8(3.57)	3(1.34)	213(95.09)	0(0.00)
Capital transactions	21(9.38)	2(0.89)	201(89.73)	0(0.00)
Visit to a nearby mela	3(1.34)	2(0.89)	219(97.77)	0(0.00)
Attending courtesy calls	3(1.34)	135(60.27)	216(96.43)	2(0.89)
Socio-Religious Obligations				
When to call and send back daughters to their in-laws	0(0.00)	1(0.45)	58(25.89)	165(73.66)
Attending marriage/birth/death ceremonies	6(2.68)	4(1.79)	212(94.64)	2(0.89)
Kind and amount of charity to be given	4(1.79)	3(1.34)	217(96.88)	0(0.00)
Giving donations	4(1.79)	3(1.34)	217(96.88)	0(0.00)
Attending religious gatherings	0(0.00)	1(0.45)	223(99.55)	0(0.00)
Attending religious functions	0(0.00)	1(0.45)	221(98.66)	2(0.89)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

**MD = Male decision, FD = Female decision

These were the results gained in the study related to decision making regarding the farm and household activities.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the study results showed that the majority of the decisions regarding the agricultural process were taken up jointly, followed by male decisions. Men had an upper hand in deciding about the labour allocation, treatment and feeding of livestock, buying farm inputs and implements and selling of food grains. Negligible amounts of women had the ability to take independent decisions regarding the agricultural process, though they were involved in agricultural works. The decisions regarding marketing transactions were dominated by men. The decisions regarding the credit and loans for household and farm purposes were mostly taken up jointly. The socio-religious decisions were taken jointly by a majority of the households. Women were dominant in decision making regarding inter household exchange as they were the ones who had the upper hand in deciding about household activities. Men had a greater role in the capital transactions when compared to women. On the whole joint decisions, followed by independent male decisions were made regarding the farm and household activities. Hence, strategic interventions and programs have to be conducted in the rural areas to mobilize the individuals and families to give an equal role to men and women in the decision making process. Taking up such measures will surely involve both men and women in the decision making and this will promote women empowerment and gender equality.

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