MANAGERIAL ROLE OF FARM WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Women constitute about 50 per cent of the human resource in the country, contributing significantly for agricultural development. However, little attention was paid to involve them directly with development activities. Justification for improving farm women's access to agricultural extension system must begin with analysis of their participation in managerial aspects of agricultural operations. A study was conducted in four mandals of Mahabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh with a sample of 80 randomly selected farm women. Majority of the respondents were reported to have under "medium" managerial role category. Education, risk orientation and scientific orientation were found to be significantly contributing towards their managerial role. Considering the substantial role played by women farmers, the extension service must be directed with special efforts towards them.

INTRODUCTION

The prosperity and growth of a nation depends on the status and development of women as they constitute about 50 per cent of the human resource of the country. There has been a progressive increase in the number of women involved in Agriculture, both as cultivators and wage workers. But this contribution made by them is often not adequately recognized. Very little attention was paid to involve farm women directly with development activities and enable them to become more effective and productive.

Women play a significant role in agricultural development and allied fields including crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations etc. She also performs several management and decision making roles in farming and homemaking practices with her male counterpart and sometimes alone.

The type and extent of participation by farm women in farm operations, vary from state to state. The participation rate of women in crop production is higher in North Eastern region and Andhra Pradesh accounting for 70 per cent and 95 per cent respectively (Singh and Bhattacharya, 1987). Khelkar (1995) found that 18.18 per cent of the farm women had a high level of farm management, 64.55 per cent had a medium level of farm management while 17.27 per cent had a low level of farm management. Shilpa (2001) reported that majority (62.00 per cent) of farm women were grouped into medium level of managerial role followed by high (20.67 per cent) and low (17.33 per cent) level of managerial role category. Premavati and Netaji Seetharamam (2002) reported that 8 to 13 per cent of the women had taken their own decisions, while 37 to 53 per cent had consulted their spouse/ elder to take operational decisions on farm activities. Justification for improving farm women's access to agricultural extension system must begin with analysis of women participation in managerial aspects of agricultural production process.

With this background, the present study was conducted with the following objectives:

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1. To understand the profile of farm women on selected characteristics.
2. To find out the managerial role of farm women in farm activities.
3. To unearth the relationship between profile characteristics of farm women and their managerial role.

METHODOLOGY

An ex-post facto design was adopted. The study was conducted in four purposively selected mandals of Mahabubnagar District in Andhra Pradesh. Two villages were selected randomly from each mandal i.e. Edira and A. Venkatapuram from Mahabubnagar; Gollapalli and Ammapalle colony from Jadcherla; Pothulamadugu and Amistapur from Boothpur; Rangapur and Ayyavaripally from Pebbair mandal.

From each village 10 farm women were selected by using random sampling technique thus constituting the total sample size of 80 for the study.

The dependent variable Managerial role was operationally defined as the role of women in the management of farm activities i.e. in planning, organizing, supervision, communication, coordination and controlling of the farm activities. To find out the managerial role of farm women, an index developed by Shilpa (2001) was used for the study. 29 items were incorporated in the index under six managerial functions i.e. Planning, organizing, supervision, communication, coordination and controlling. Each item of the schedule was rated on 5 point continuum always, frequently, sometimes, rarely and never with weightages of 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively. Suitable measures were determined to quantify the selected independent variables of the study. The data were collected with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule. The data thus obtained was processed through frequency, percentage, correlation and MLR analysis for meaningful interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile characteristics of farm women

An attempt was made to understand the personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of the farm women and the results thus emanated are presented in Table 1. The age of farm women has an important impact on their participation in joint as well as independent decision making. Regarding age, more than half (53.75 per cent) of the respondents were found to be middle aged followed by young (42.50 per cent) and old (3.75 per cent) aged. The result indicate the fact that the young, energized and talented women are being involved in agricultural, for want of other more remunerative and economic viable ventures in the villages.

Formal education has always been considered as an important asset of an individual in building her operational career. Half of the farm women (50.00 per cent) were illiterate followed by functionally literate (20.00 per cent), middle school & above (17.50 per cent) and primary education (12.50 per cent). Financial compulsions, lack of encouragement and traditional outlook towards daughters' education might be the reasons for this result. Neelaveni et al (2002) also reported similar findings.

The data on farming experience revealed that a great majority (52.50 per cent) of the respondents had 10-20 years of farming experience followed by upto 10 years (25.00 per cent) and 20-30 years (22.50 per cent) of experience. This trend shows that their rich experience could be better exploited to

Table 1 : Distribution of farm women based on profile **(n=80)**

S.No	Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Young age (below 35 years)"	34	42.50
		Middle age (35-58 years)	43	53.75
		Old age (58 and above)	3	3.75
2	Education	Illiterate	40	50.00
		Functionally literate	16	20.00
		Primary School	10	12.50
		Middle School and abqye	14	17.5G
3	Farming experience	Upto 10 years	20	25.00
		10-20 years	42	52.50
		20-30 years	18	22.50
4	Annual income	Rs. upto 25,000	49	61.25
		Rs. 25,000-50,000	17	21.25
		Rs. above 50,000	14	17.50
5	Mass media exposure	Low	19	23.75
		Medium	49	61.25
		High	12	15.00
6	Risk orientation	Low	18	22.50
		Medium	51	63.75
		High	11	13.75
7	Scientific orientation	Low	4	5.00
		Medium	63	78.75

adopt profitable technologies. It is vivid from the Table 1 that majority (61.25 per cent) of the farm women had upto Rs. 25,000 annual income while 21.25 percent had Rs. 25,000-50,000 and the remaining 17.50 per cent were with above Rs. 50,000 of annual incc .e. The primary occupation of the respondents is the agriculture only and few of them were having subsidiary occupation with one or two milch cattle and backyard poultry. Hence mostly they depends on crop production for their annual income for sustenance of family. This calls for immediate attention of the concerned agencies to provide necessary infrastructure and financial support for establishment of economically viable units in the villages. Awareness building is also required on the Government programmes available, to raise the economic standards, besides diversification of farming enterprise.

Mass media are proved to be the most powerful opinion makers in this information age. They cover more people in less time and with less cost. This strength of mass media is of great help to extension workers in providing cost effective and efficient service to farm women. With regard to mass media exposure, majority (61.25 per cent) of farm women belonged to medium category where as 23.75 per cent and 15.00 per cent belonged to low and high categories respectively. Illiteracy and inaccessibility might be the reasons for this trend. This finding was substantiated with finding of Neelaveni et al (2002).

It could also be observed from Table 1 that majority of the respondents (63.75 per cent) had medium risk orientation. Little less than one-fourth (22.50 per cent) belonged to low while 13.75 per cent had high risk orientation. Due to lower annual income and small land holdings they could not venture to take risk in farming. Scientific orientation is the degree to which an individual is inclined to use scientific methods in farming and decision making. A great majority (78.75 per cent) of farm women were reported to have medium scientific orientation while 16.25 per cent and 5.00 per cent had high

and low scientific orientation respectively.

Managerial role of farm women.

The results pertaining to dependent variable, managerial role are presented in Table 2.

It could be noticed from Table 2 that 53.75 per cent of the respondents were grouped into medium level of managerial role while 36.25 per cent and 10.00 per cent were in low and high groups respectively. Thus there is a scope to increase the farm women participation and level of farm management. The findings of Khelkar (1995) and Shilpa (2001) were also in conformity with the present finding.

Table 2 : Distribution of farm women based on their managerial role (n=80)

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low Managerial role	29	36.25
2	Medium Managerial role	43	53.75
3	High Managerial role	8	10.00

Women were consulted more for selected agricultural decisions like amount of grains to be sold, used and stored, getting credit and its repayment, employment of labour for operations like sowing, weeding, harvesting and buying of equipment etc. Their participation in matters like adoption of practices and farm credit was found to be supportive in nature. Farm women participation was found to be better in managerial roles like planning, organizing, communication and coordination of agricultural activities than supervision. Rarely they use to supervise the operations because they themselves participate in these operations.

Relationship between profile characteristics and managerial role of farm women.

With a view to understand the nature of relationship between independent and dependent variable, the data were subjected to correlation co-efficients and presented in Table 3.

The bird's eye view of the relationship analysis revealed that the computed 'r' value of education (0.6213), farming experience (0.4201), annual income (0.5241), mass media exposure (0.6473), risk orientation (0.8318) and scientific orientation (0.7437) were found to be significant at 0.01 level of probability. This indicates that education, annual income, farming experience, mass media exposure, risk orientation and scientific orientation exhibited a positive and significant relationship with managerial role of farm women.

Education is the means for development. Education facilitates -for the understanding and interpretation of facts. About fifty per cent of the respondents were either functionally literate, educated up to primary or middle school level. Farm women having some education were being consulted by their male counterparts in decision making and management of agricultural operations. Therefore the variable education could establish positive and significant relationship with managerial role. Those who expose to various mass media channels, they try to seek information and knowledgeable women had a larger share in management of farm operations. Shilpa (2001) also reported similar result.

Risk orientation is expressed as the degree, to which a farm women is oriented to take risk and has courage to face uncertainities. The respondent having this trait coupled with comparatively more annual income and farming experience will normally search for avenues of latest information for modernizing their farm and ready to participate in farm activities that warrants

Table 3: Relational and Multiple linear Regression Analysis of Independent variables with managerial role of farm women (n=80)

S.No.	Variables	Correlation Coefficients 'r' value	Regression Co-efficient (b-value)	Standard error (SE)	't' value
1	Age(X_1)	0.0921	0.0278	0.2802	0.1692
2	Education (X_2)	0.6213**	6.3422**	3.2849	2.1384
3	Farming experience (X_3)	0.4201**	0.160	0.3458	0.487
4	Annual income (X_4)	0.5241**	0.8069	0.5842	1.4824
5	Mass media exposure (X_5)	0.6473**	0.7269	0.5408	1.3622
6	Risk orientation (X_6)	0.8318**	2.3248**	0.892	2.724
7	Scientific orientation(X_7)	0.7437**	4.2864**	0.9677	3.9162

** - Significant at 0.01 probability level

drudgery and hardship. The scientifically oriented farm women were found better in farm management activities because of scientific thinking which leads to analyze and assess the problems and doing the work with objectivity and precision.

Multiple regression analysis was carried out in order to determine the combined effect of all the independent variables towards variation in dependent variable viz., managerial role of farm women and results are presented in Table 3.

It could be understood that out of seven indep ndent variables fitted in regression equation, three variables viz., education, risk orientation and scientific orientation were found to be positively significant at 0.01 level of probability. Coefficient of multiple determination (R) was found to be 0.721 indicating that all independent variables could explain variation towards dependent variable viz., managerial role of farm women to the extent of 72.10 per cent for which 'F' test was significant at 1 per cent level of probability. The independent variables viz., education (X2), risk orientation (X6) and scientific orientation (X7) were found to have positive and significant contribution towards managerial role of farm women. An increase of one unit in education, risk orientation and scientific orientation would result in an increase of 6.3422, 2.3248 and 4.2864 units respectively in the managerial role of farm women.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings revealed that only 10.00 per cent of farm women were in high managerial role category. As management provides maximum profit from farm business by effective use of all resources. The present investigation will be useful as guideline for the farm women, extension workers and policy makers. Considering the substantial roles played by women farmers in overall agricultural process, the extension service must be directed with special efforts towards them. In order that women accept the change and contribute fully to development. It is essential to develop first their potentiality by improving their knowledge, attitude and skills with much concern for long range consequences. Adequate extension facilities preferably by female workers should also be made available to acquaint them with latest agricultural developments along with necessary inputs.

The variables like education, risk orientation and scientific orientation could contribute significantly towards managerial role of farm women. The District Agricultural Advisory & Transfer of Technology Centre (DAATTC) and State Department of Agriculture should take

care of the variables found to be important in increasing managerial role of farm women while designing their activities.

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