PARTICIPATION OF GENDER IN PADDY CULTIVATION PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in Assam focusing on gender roles and division of labor in different activities related to paddy cultivation. A total of 320 numbers of respondents were selected for the study. The data were collected through personal interview with the help of research schedule during 2022. The participation of respondents engaged in paddy cultivation were studied in seven domains: activities related to seed, raising of nursery and transplanting, preparation of field, fertilizer application, water management and intercultural practices, harvesting and Post- harvest and marketing of produce. The responses were collected in frequency and percentage in three-point continuum of "Active participation", "Partial participation" and "No participation" having the score of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The overall extent of participation of both men and women in paddy cultivation was calculated to gain an overall view of low, medium and high level of participation. A two sample Z- tests was performed to determine whether there existed any difference in paddy cultivation practices between men and women. Thus, frequency, percentage, Mean, Standard deviation and two sample Z test were used as statistical tools to conduct the present study. The results revealed that majority of the farm women (57.50%) had active participation in seed preservation, transplanting of seedlings into main field (83.75%), post-harvest activities (91.25%). Men were playing role in fertilization (66.25%), water table maintenance (89.38%), chemical applications (89.38%), marketing related activities (90.63%). It can be concluded that women contribute equally with men. They should empower with all necessities which will help to reduce gender gap in agriculture.

Keywords : gender, participation, paddy cultivation

INTRODUCTION

India is primarily an agricultural country and agriculture plays a strategic role in the process of economic development. In the current agricultural landscape, gender plays an important role in it. Here, gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. Women constitute a significant resource in agriculture and the rural economy, as farmers, laborers, and entrepreneurs. While women are the driving force behind sustainable and socially inclusive development, they also play a supporting role in agriculture (Chauhan and Vinaya, 2016). Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises etc. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the well-being of rural households. They make an essential contribution to agriculture and rural economies in all developing countries but are unpaid farm workers in their own family (Patil et al. 2019).

According to International Labour Office, women make up 41% of the world's agricultural workforce. A comparison of women's participation in north and south India also shows that traditionally more female labor is used in rice cultivation (Rosenzweig *et al.* 1982). Women play a predominant role in all kinds of paddy cultivation. Their role is not less than men; in fact they are the equal partners in paddy cultivation practices. Therefore, the present study focuses on gender roles in paddy cultivation practices and the division of labor in different activities related to paddy cultivation in the tribal dominating districts of Assam.

OBJECTIVE

To ascertain the gender's degree of participation in paddy cultivation practices

METHODOLOGY

Among thirty two districts of Assam, four districts i.e. Jorhat, Morigaon, Baksa and Dhemaji were selected for their high concentration of tribal populations involved in paddy cultivation. Two tribal-dominated villages engaged in paddy cultivation were randomly selected from one purposively

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selected block of each district. Twenty tribal households from each village were considered and finally, two members from each household that comprised both husband and wife was included which makes a total of 320 numbers of respondents for the study. The data were collected through personal interview method with the help of a research schedule during the year 2022. The participation of the respondents engaged in paddy cultivation were studied in seven domains i.e activities related to seed, raising of nursery and transplanting, preparation of main field, manure and fertilizer application, water management and intercultural practices, harvesting and Post- harvest and finally marketing of farm produce.

The responses were collected in frequency and percentage in three-point continuum of "*Active participation*", "*Partial participation*" and "*No participation*" having the score of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The overall extent of participation of both men and women in paddy cultivation was calculated to gain an overall view of low, medium and high level of participation. A two sample Z- tests was performed to determine whether there existed any difference in paddy cultivation practices between men and women. The Z calculated value was compared with Z table value (two tailed ± 1.96) which reflected the significance at 5 % probability level. Thus, frequency, percentage, Mean, Standard deviation and two sample Z test were used as statistical tools to conduct the present study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Extent of gender division of activities in paddy cultivation

It is a usual fact that both women and men of a tribal farming community are involved in agriculture. However, there exists a variation in the extent of participation between them. Therefore, an attempt was made to ascertain their degree of participation on seven domains of paddy cultivation practices using a three point continuum scale. The idea could be visible from the results which are depicted in the following tables.

a. Activities related to seed

The Table 1 (a) indicated that majority of the farm women (57.50%) had active participation in seed preservation followed by seed soaking (43.75%) whereas, men farmers were seen having active participation in seed selection (56.88%) and seed soaking (52.50%). However, in seed purchasing, both genders did not have much involvement as the data reflected that more than ninety five percent of women and men did not have any participation in it. This might be due to the fact that they used to keep their own seeds of previous years that could be used for succeeding year or probably their inability to afford seeds or might be due to nonavailability of seeds as and when required. These findings are contrary to the findings of Nikulsinh *et al.* (2011).

Active Participation Partial Participation No Participation Activities Sr. f (%) f (%) f (%) No. Seed Women Men Women Men Women Men 1 Selection of seed 51 (31.88) 91 (56.88) 26 (16.25) 18 (11.25) 83 (51.88) 51 (31.88) 2 Seed purchasing 03 (1.88) 04 (2.50) 03 (1.88) 03 (1.88) 154 (96.25) 153 (95.63) 3 Seed preservation 92 (57.50) 54 (33.75) 16 (10.00) 14 (8.75) 52 (32.50) 92 (57.50) 4 Soaking of seed 70 (43.75) 84 (52.50) 29 (18.13) 24 (15.00) 61 (38.13) 52 (32.50)

 Table 1 (a) : Distribution of respondents according to their participation in activities of seed

(n=320)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

b. Activities related to raising of nursery and transplanting

As revealed in the Table 1 (b), active participation of women were observed in transplanting (83.75%) and uprooting of seedling (76.88%). But it was found that that most of the women did not participate in certain activities like nursery bed preparation (94.38%), sowing (90.00%). While full participation by men farmers were found in those activities where participation of women were less such as nursery bed preparation (94.38%) and sowing (90.63%) followed by manuring (78.13%). Accordingly no participation by farm men were seen in uprooting (76.88%) and transplanting (76.88%) which were largely being performed by farm women. The findings are in line with the finding of Dhruw (2020) as it stated that involvement of tribal farm women was maximum in transplanting.

Sr. No.	Activities		Active Participation f (%)		Partial Participation f (%)		o pation %)
	Nursery Raising & Transplanting	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1	Preparation of Nursery bed	01	151	08	01	151	08
		(0.63)	(94.38)	(5.00)	(0.63)	(94.38)	(5.00)
2	Sowing	07	145	09	06	144	09
		(4.33)	(90.63)	(5.63)	(3.75)	(90.00)	(5.63)
3	Manuring & Fertilization in seed bed	27	125	19	08	114	27
		(16.88)	(78.13)	(11.88)	(5.00)	(71.25)	(16.88)
4	Application of water in seed bed	70	89	22	19	68	52
		(43.75)	(55.63)	(13.75)	(11.88)	(42.50)	(32.50)
5	Uprooting of seedling	123	28	27	09	10	123
		(76.88)	(17.50	(16.88)	(5.63)	(6.25)	(76.88)
6	Transplanting in main field	134	32	16	05	10	123
		(83.75)	(20.00)	(10.00)	(3.13)	(6.25)	(76.88)

Table 1(b): Distribution of respondents according to their participation in raising of nursery and transplanting
activities(n=320)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

c. Activities related to preparation of main field

The data presented in Table 1 (c) depicted that no women was found to have active participation in ploughing and puddling activities except a meager portion (1.25%) who had partial participation in it. However, (13.33%) and (1.25%) had active participation in stubble collection and bund formation respectively. The finding of the study was

similar to the finding of Appalanaidu (2020) that women had less participation in land preparation. This might be due to the fact that land preparations demand much more physical involvement and lack of gender friendly farm tools might be the possibility of less participation of women in land preparation. Whereas, farm men were found to take a lead role in field preparation as above ninety percent had fully participated in bund formation and ploughing respectively.

 Table 1 (c) : Distribution of respondents according to their participation in preparation of main field activities

(n=320)

Sr. No.	Activities	Active Participation f (%)		Partial Participation f (%)		No Participation f (%)	
	Field preparation	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1	Ploughing and Puddling	0	108	02	13	158	39
		(0.00)	(67.50)	(1.25)	(8.13)	(98.75)	(24.38)
2	Formation of bund	02	154	03	01	155	05
		(1.25)	(96.25)	(1.88)	(0.63)	(96.88)	(3.13)
3	Stubble removal	21	62	77	77	62	21
		(13.33)	(38.75)	(48.13)	(48.13)	(38.75)	(13.13)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

d. Activities related to manuring and application of fertilizers

From Table 1 (d) it was observed that men farmers were playing a predominant role in manuring and fertilization. More than sixty percent of men farmers actively participated in carrying fertilizer and manures to the field (66.25%) which was followed by application of fertilizer (63.135). Also fifty percent of them actively participated in compost preparation. But very less women had active participation in carrying fertilizer (26.25%), compost preparation (18.13%). Moreover, active involvement in fertilizer purchase (1.25%) and application of fertilizer (1.25%) were very minimal. This implies that women had less autonomy on buying or purchasing or they did not possess appropriate knowledge, skills in the preparation and application of fertilizers. These findings are in contrast with the findings of Naik *et al.* (2014).

Sr.	Activities	Active Par f (rticipation %)	Partial Par f (-	No Participation f (%)		
No.	Manures & Fertilizers	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	men	
1	Compost preparation	29 (18.13)	80 (50.00)	77 (48.13)	77 (48.13)	54 (33.75)	03 (1.88)	
2	Fertilizer purchase	02 (1.25)	99 (61.88)	13 (8.13)	09 (5.63)	145 (90.63)	52 (32.50)	
3	Carrying fertilizer and manures	42 (26.25)	106 66.25)	17 (10.63)	13 (8.13)	101 (63.13)	41 (25.63)	
4	Fertilizer application at different crop stages	02 (1.25)	101 63.13)	11 (6.88)	07 (4.38)	147 (91.88)	52 (32.50)	

Table 1 (d) Distribution of respondents according to their participation in application of manure and fertilisersactivities

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

e. Activities related to water management and intercultural practices

The data obtained from Table 1 (e) indicated that active participation by men was observed in water table maintenance (89.38%) and chemical applications (89.38%). No any participation was observed in application of irrigation water by both of them as it might be due to non-availability of irrigation canals or tanks. Also no participation was observed in thinning and gap filling by (90.63%) farm men and women (86.25%). This implied that both the gender did not possess adequate knowledge on the importance of weed removal, thinning and gap filling that necessitated the intervention of concerned departments. It was also observed that women's participation was less as about (98.13%) and (90.63%) of them did not participate in chemicals application and weed removal This finding does not support the finding of Yadav *et al.* (2018) that women performed active role in weeding and plant protection measures.

Table 1 (e) Distribution of respondents according to their participation in water management and intercultural
practices(n=320)

Sr. No.	Activities	Active Participation f (%)		Partial Participation f (%)		No Participation f (%)	
	Irrigation and Intercultural operations	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1	Water table maintenance in the standing crop	14	143	14	03	132	14
		(8.75)	(89.38)	(8.75)	(1.88)	(82.50)	(8.75)
2	Application of water	0	0	0	0	0	0
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
3	Removal of weeds	04	11	11	11	145	138
		(2.50)	(6.88)	(6.88)	(6.88)	(90.63)	(86.25)
4	Thinning and gap filling	13	04	09	11	138	145
		(8.13)	(2.50)	(5.63)	(6.88)	(86.25)	(90.63)
5	Application of chemicals	01	143	02	01	157	16
	(Pesticides, weedicides etc.)	(0.63)	(89.38)	(1.25)	(0.63)	(98.13)	(10.00)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

f. Activities related to harvesting and Post-harvest

It was observed from the Table 1 (f) that majority of the farm women had active participation in post- harvest activities such as winnowing (91.25%), sun drying and cleaning (81.88%). Most of the women were also seen to participate actively in harvesting and tying of crops (67.50%). The findings of the study is supported by the finding of Sekhar (2014) that participation of women was more in the activities of harvesting and post-harvest of crops. Whereas, men farmers were having full participation in shifting harvested crop to threshing floor (97.50%), bundling (96.25%) and milling (88.13%). In threshing, equal percent of men farmers (48.13%) fell into full and partial participation. The reason might be that they were using hire mechanized tools which indicated that there was a gradual tendency towards mechanization of farm. Moreover, 27.50 percent of men farmers had full participation in harvesting and tying which indicated that in certain tribal pockets men were also involved in harvesting activity.

Sr. No.	Activities		Active Participation f (%)		Partial Participation f (%)		icipation %)
	Harvest and Post- harvest activities	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1	Harvesting	108	44	08	10	44	106
		(67.50)	(27.50)	(5.00)	(6.25)	(27.50)	(66.25)
2	Tying and bundling	04	154	05	01	151	05
		(2.50)	(96.25)	(3.13)	(0.63)	(94.38)	(3.13)
3	Shifting harvested crop from field to threshing	0	156	05	01	155	03
	floor	(0.00)	(97.50)	(3.13)	(0.63)	(96.88)	(1.88)
4	Threshing	32	77	77	77	51	06
		(20.00)	(48.13)	(48.13)	(48.13)	(31.88)	(3.75)
5	Winnowing	146	07	12	09	02	144
		(91.25)	(4.38)	(7.50)	(5.63)	(1.25)	(90.00)
6	Sun drying and cleaning	131	17	12	06	17	137
		(81.88)	(10.63)	(7.50)	(3.75)	(10.63)	(85.63)
7	Milling	08	141	06	04	146	15
		(5.00)	(88.13)	(3.75)	(2.50)	(91.25)	(9.38)
8	Storing of grains	94	69	30	37	36	54
		(58.75)	(43.13)	(18.75)	(23.13)	(22.50)	(33.75)

Table 1 (f) Distribution of respondents according to their participation in harvesting and post-harvest activities

(n=320)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

g. Activities related to marketing of farm produce

From the Table 1 (g) it was evident that extent of men's participation in this activity was prominent and women were taking less part in marketing as the data showed that farm men had and active participation in taking farm produce to selling point (90.63%) and in selling the farm produce (81.88%). While it was noticed that about above ninety percent of farm women did not participate in transporting and (88.75%) in sale of farm produce. The finding is in conformity with the findings of Mohanta (2017). This implies that when the question of monetary gains arose, women were not given the chance to take part.

Table 1 (g) : Distribution of respondents based on their participation in marketing of farm produce activities

(n=320)

Sr. No.	Activities	Active Participation f (%)		Partial Participation f (%)		No Participation f (%)	
1	Marketing	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2	Sale of farm produce	05 (3.13)	131 (81.88)	13 (8.13)	14 (8.75)	142 (88.75)	15 (9.38)
3	Transport to selling point	08 (5.00)	145 (90.63)	06 (3.75)	04 (2.50)	146 (91.25)	11 (6.88)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

2. Extent of participation of gender division of activities in overall paddy cultivation practices:

Respondents were grouped into three categories as high, medium and low based on their degree of participation in overall paddy cultivation practices. It was evident from table 2 that more than fifty percent tribal farm women had medium overall extent of participation in paddy cultivation practices which was followed by high (24.38%) and low level (22.50%). The finding of the study is supported by the finding of the study conducted by Chandravadia *et al.* (2020) and Bora et al. (2022) where above fifty percent of tribal farm women had medium extent of involvement in agricultural production. A medium participation (54.38%) level was also observed in tribal farm men. A total of (28.13%) of them had

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high and remaining (17.50%) had low level of participation in paddy cultivation practices.

Although both gender of tribal farmers belonged to medium level of overall participation in paddy cultivation practices, but the mean scores varies between them. Women had mean score of (49.29) with the standard deviation of (4.85) while, mean score of (70.31) with standard deviation (3.51) was found in women. This indicated that differences in extent of participation existed between gender, but that did not reflect that women did not have any contribution towards paddy cultivation. Women were also contributing significantly like men. There was no any activity where women were not involved. But in some activities such as land preparation, fertilizer application, plant protection measures, marketing, less extent of women's participation were visible for which there existed the difference in overall participation between them.

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents according to their extent of participation in overall paddy cultivation activities (n=320)

Sr.		Men						
No.	Category	Frequency	Mean	S.D.	Category	Frequency	Mean	S.D.
		(%)				(%)		
1.	Low	36			Low	28		
	(<44.44)	(22.50)			(<66.80)	(17.50)		
2.	Medium	85	49.29	4.85	Medium	87	70.31	3.51
	(44.44-54.14)	(53.13)			(66.80-73.82)	(54.38)		
3.	High	39	1		High	45	1	
	(>54.14)	(24.38)			(>73.82)	(28.13)		

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

3. Two sample Z test of participation of gender division of activities in paddy production practices: A Z-test (two sample) was conducted to assess whether there were difference between two population mean in paddy cultivation. The Table 4.2.4 showed the Z- value of women and men farmers along with their mean scores and sample variance.

Table 3. Z- Test of significance on extent of participation in paddy production practices

(n=320)

Sr.	Activities	Mean		Sample Variance		Z- calculated	Z- table
No.		Women	Men	Women	Men	value	value (Two tailed)
1	Seed activity	6.46	7.28	5.38	1.28	4.041*	
2	Nursery raising	10.96	13.43	1.91	2.35	15.074*	
3	Field preparation	3.78	8.17	0.75	0.83	44.122*	1.0.6
4	Manuring and fertilization	5.60	9.49	2.01	8.96	14.837*	1.96
5	Water management and intercultural practices	4.62	7.93	1.25	0.52	31.310*	
6	Harvest and post-harvest activities	15.35	18.62	4.73	2.27	15.65*	
7	Marketing of farm produce	2.51	5.39	1.16	1.21	23.64*	

* denotes significance at 5% level of probability

The Table 3 depicted that all the seven major activities in paddy cultivation showed significant differences between women and men. No any activity was found to be non-significant. Thus, the null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the extent of participation between women and men may be rejected. Therefore, in this case, we accept alternate hypotheses that there was significant difference between women and men in paddy cultivation practices.

CONCLUSION

Agriculture plays an important role in the economy as significant portion of the population is involved in agriculture. Gender plays a significant role in agriculture. The division of labor in the farm is found to be mostly dependent upon gender. Farm women contribute equally with men in various cultivation practices of paddy. However, despite of their significant contributions, women are still considered as invisible segment of farming community. Women are not enjoying equal benefits and opportunities as men in farming. Thus, women should be empowered by providing all the necessities required for farming. This will definitely help to reduce the gender gap in agriculture

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study provides the following recommendations:

- a. Empowering women farming community by equipping them with the improved agricultural skills and innovative knowledge to enable them to adopt new technologies, technical packages and to create viable options for those who remain.
- b. More emphasis should be given by state government, SAUs and reputed NGOs, ICAR for promotion of women friendly agriculture technology among farming communities.
- c. Equal participation of males and females should be encouraged. Females should be equally involved in the decision-making process so it increases gender participation in agriculture.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This is to declare that there is "No conflict of interest" among researchers.

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