

Voices from the Fields: How Women Shape Agricultural and Domestic Decisions in Haryana

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Abstract

In an area where women's participation in decision-making has frequently been limited by traditional gender roles, this research aims to highlight their voices and experiences in affecting family dynamics and agricultural practices. By concentrating on the experiences of women, the study highlights the important but sometimes disregarded impact that women have on family welfare, resource management, and farming operations. The instances highlight how women balance power, authority, and autonomy in their day-to-day lives, demonstrating the intricate relationship between tradition and modernity. The study emphasizes the vital yet underappreciated role that women play in the home and rural economies of Haryana. The results challenge traditional notions of gendered labour and push for a greater acknowledgement of women's contributions to rural development by illuminating the complexity of women's responsibilities in household and agricultural contexts. The ultimate goal of this study is to create a fairer and more inclusive environment for decision-making in both the public and private domains by contributing to policy discussions and community efforts that support women's empowerment in Haryana.

Keywords: Decision-making, Women Empowerment, Inclusive Environment, Resource Management, Tradition and Modernity

1. Introduction

The core of India's economy is agriculture, and women are essential to this sector, making substantial contributions to both domestic and agricultural tasks. Haryana is a state in the heart of India that exemplifies the vital significance that agriculture plays in the socioeconomic fabric of the country. Farming is a way of life that is intricately entwined with social structures and familial duties in the lush plains of Haryana, not just an economic endeavour. Haryana's agricultural achievements are commonly viewed through a patriarchal perspective, but the efforts of women—who are sometimes overlooked—are vital to the story. In an effort to give women's voices more prominence and comprehend how they handle the challenges of home and agricultural decision-making, this study explores the lives of women in Haryana.

Women in Haryana participate in many aspects of agriculture, from planting to harvesting, albeit faced with social restrictions and restricted access to resources. They bear the heavy burden of raising families and running houses at the same time. Women work in the fields doing a variety of tasks, such as handling to livestock, planting, and harvesting, as well as labour-intensive operations. They are the major carers in the home, overseeing everyday activities, creating budgets, and making important choices that have an impact on their families' well-being. Women are in a unique position to influence decisions that affect not

just their families but also the region's agricultural environment because of this junction of agricultural labour and household responsibilities. Although women's involvement in agriculture are becoming more widely acknowledged, little is still known about how women in places like Haryana manage these multiple occupations and have a say over choices made in both fields. The purpose of this research is to investigate how women make decisions in the setting of agricultural communities in Haryana. It also looks at how women manage their duties and responsibilities in a system where they are frequently denied or undervalued as decision-makers.

It is important to comprehend the decision-making responsibilities that women have in domestic and agricultural settings for a number of reasons. First of all, by emphasising their active involvement and strategic thinking, it refutes the conventional view of women as just assistants in agricultural tasks. Second, policies that aim to empower women, improve agricultural production, and advance gender equity in rural areas may be informed by acknowledging the contributions made by women and the obstacles that stand in their way when it comes to making decisions.

Recognising the contributions of women in Haryana and promoting more inclusive and equitable development strategies both depend on our proficiency to comprehend how they make decisions. The various facets of women's decision-making in Haryana will be examined in this paper. The research attempts to provide a thorough picture of how women make decisions about agriculture and the home, various factors influencing those decisions, and the effects those decisions have on their communities and beyond through these narratives.

2. Objective

To explore the decision-making roles of women in the agricultural and domestic spheres in Haryana, India.

3. Research Methodology

A narrative research technique is used in this study, which is appropriate for examining and comprehending the intricacies of women's responsibilities in domestic and agricultural contexts. This work employs research approaches based on a narrative literature review, such as reading books, journal articles, and other publications in the topic of study, and employing a checklist to systematically gather pertinent data.

4. Review of Literature

Decision Making of Women in Agriculture and Household Work in Haryana

The first civilization that man learned to practise as a way of life and a means of subsistence is agriculture. It is the main economic sector in any country. Four out of every five financially active women in the nation work in this area. In India, women make up about 48% of the self-employed farmers. Women carry out roughly 70% of the agriculture labour. The role of rural women in agriculture and other agro-based activities such as crop production, animal production, horticulture, post-harvesting activities, agro/social forestry fisheries, and related fields is considerable. However, they still hold a very low status in the agricultural sector, which is controlled by men. They do not have a larger voice in decisions about how to establish national and household-level agricultural strategies (Rani et al., 2019). All forms of farm operations have seen a very high proportion of female engagement. Compared to men, women put in more labour, yet they make significantly fewer decisions regarding farm operations. Decision-making was statistically significantly influenced by factors such as age, education, income, farm size, spouse income,

family size, and the proportion of male household workers. The engagement of women in the agricultural sector is largely influenced by economic factors, it can be said (Godara & Varsha, 2017). Women make up 55.86% of the labour force in the agricultural sector. Only 3.59% of female employees work in the household sector, while 40% of female employees are employed elsewhere. Women perform inter-cultivating tasks at a rate of 86%, followed by harvesting, storage, and other harvesting operations at a rate of 84%, and cleaning and sowing seeds at a rate of 80%. NSS figures show a rise in the percentage of women who are working (Rani, 2019). More farm women were discovered to have high levels of engagement in agricultural activities (53.57%), followed by medium levels (33.73%) and low levels (15.20%), in that order. The study also showed that the majority of farm women (57.11%) were found in the low category of decision-making, followed by 27.74% and 15.15%, respectively, in the case of medium and high decision-making processes. The participation and decision-making patterns of farm women had been significantly influenced by factors such as age, education, family size, size of land holding, social participation, extension participation, information seeking behaviour, cosmopolitanism, economic motivation, exposure to training, and management orientation. The study also showed that favourable and significant socioeconomic influences were observed on farm women's decision-making and agricultural operations (Aishwarya & Meena, 2017). In all forms of farm work, the proportion of women has been extremely high. Compared to males, women put substantially more effort, yet they make a much smaller percentage of decisions about how to run farms. Rural areas' quick agricultural growth is thought to depend on women's active engagement in decision-making. The engagement of women in agriculture in rural areas is, however, influenced by a variety of social and economic factors. Women who lived in joint households were more likely to work in agriculture than those who lived in tiny or nuclear families. It is evident that women's involvement as planners in the district of Jind's agricultural sector has not been extensively reported (Rani et al., 2018). In line with this, the level of women's engagement in various parts of the agriculture sector's decision-making process has not been satisfactory in the district Fatehabad. As a result of the selections made in regards to choosing the actions to enhance output, purchasing, and spending activities, the situation has gotten worse. Based on the findings, it suggests that there is a pressing need to encourage women to accurately understand their legal rights. Workshops, extension lectures, and high levels of knowledge can all help women in the long run by giving them more ability to make decisions in their communities (Godara et al., 2014). The degree to which farm women participated in agricultural tasks and made decisions was unsatisfactory. Their level of involvement was minimal when it came to activities like distributing fertiliser and herbicides, which are typically considered to be the domain of men. The majority of rural women were not involved in making decisions on the purchase or sale of farming equipment, the preparation of the land, or the type and quantity of chemicals (pesticides, herbicides) that were utilised (Pal & Halder, 2016). Women in the Kaithal district were successfully given more power thanks to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) programme. MGNREGA participation among rural women has increased. Through this programme, women can get more control over their own income, savings, daily household expenses, precious assets, sale and acquisition of real estate, and began exercising control of debt repayment (Chahal et al., 2021). Women participate in particular ways in the wheat production system, with modest variations between states. In these states (Haryana, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh), women invest even more time in tasks like irrigation and harvesting than males do. In all the states under investigation, almost all decisions regarding the technology to be employed, marketing of produce, storing of produce, and consumption are almost always undertaken by men alone, though occasionally men and women of the home will make decisions

together. Women are more likely to participate in decision-making in households where the male head of the family is less involved, their own education levels are not very high, and their families are not particularly wealthy. Despite the fact that women spend more time on agricultural tasks, their ability to influence decisions is still significantly influenced by the socioeconomic circumstances of the farm household (Mittal & Hariharan, 2021). The feminization of agriculture is primarily a result of men leaving rural regions, hence there is no direct correlation between this development and broader indicators of women's social or economic empowerment. Instead, a number of poverty indicators appear to be closely correlated with the increased involvement of women in agriculture. A decrease in women's involvement in agriculture and an increase in their involvement in non-agricultural occupations as average holdings of land and incomes per capita improve and, as a result, the poverty ratio decreases. The increased labour contribution of women in agriculture shows that the feminization of agriculture is more accurately described as the feminization of agrarian distress since it adds to the already onerous work loads of most rural women and further undermines their well-being (Pattnaik et al., 2018). While the majority of rural women were identified as having secondary roles with passive engagement in technological, financial, and marketing activities, they were found to play major roles with active involvement in production, protection, and processing. The majority of rural women fell into the category of decision-making patterns associated with information seeking behaviour and consulting. All of the socioeconomic and individual factors appear to be significantly correlated with the engagement in production and protection areas (Ritu et al., 2016). With a few notable outliers like Kerela, Punjab, and West Bengal, where women are actively involved in non-agricultural industries like the household industry, service sector, etc., practically all states have active involvement and participation of women in the agricultural sector. Women are now recognised as "agricultural workers," since female engagement in agriculture has grown over time (Ghosh & Ghosh, 2014).

In the rural agrarian economy, the capacity of women to make decisions about domestic and agricultural matters has not significantly increased. Rural areas (53.65%) have more households with women as the head of the household than urban areas (33.23%) do. In the current agrarian economy in rural areas, just 17% of women make the ultimate decisions about the sale and purchase of livestock. In order for women to benefit, the formulation and implementation of policy related women's empowerment should be enhanced (Kumar & Shorey, 2021). The involvement of rural women in tasks including taking care of a newborn calf, treating sick animals, cleaning tasks, gathering produce, and feeding animals was generally high. However, their involvement in tasks like the purchase and raising of animals, the gathering of fodder, farming, and the upkeep of animal barns was comparatively limited. The key elements that had an impact on rural women's participation in decision-making were male domination and traditional beliefs (Bhanotra et al., 2015). The majority of the participating rural women were middle-aged, married, uneducated, and from one joint household. They actively participated in a variety of dairy farming activities, such as milking, making milk products, watering, wallowing, and bathing, and they exhibited high levels of knowledge in these areas. However, it was noted that they had medium levels of expertise in breeding, animal health, and marketing. It was found that women actually worked less outdoors, such as marketing and choosing animals, and more indoors, such as tasks connected to animal care. In dairy farming, women participated to a moderate extent (Kumari et al., 2015). The average amount of time a household spent on animal care was 6.76 hours. 5.17 hours were contributed by this woman farmer. Male family members made less of a contribution and were primarily responsible for managing and feeding the family. They made a small contribution to the management of the dung and milk. Women apparently made a

considerable contribution, accounting for 64% of feeding, 76% of management, 100% of manure removal, and 89% of animal milking. And there were specific responsibilities that men and women adopted in non-routine activities (such as healthcare, breeding, and animal marketing) (Anika et al., 2015). 7 out of the 13 decision-making domains are dominated by collaborative decision-making by the majority of the households. In the majority of households, the husband and wife jointly make decisions about land, purchases, sales, the choice of animals, and household finances. Female decision-making is primarily limited to managing cattle. Females play a significant role in decision-making in the majority of households when it comes to the arrangement of feed and the consumption or sale of milk. Therefore, women can make judgements in areas that are related to their domestic duties. They play a very small part in deciding on economic and agricultural operations. The elements influencing a woman's decision-making include caste, size of landholding, age, literacy level, and form of nuclear family (Ahuja & Narayan, 2016). (Pal, 2020) in their study showed that, more respondents reported working on both their own land and land that the family had leased. Many were performing agricultural tasks on other people's land. This high proportion of women working in agriculture was mostly caused by low literacy rates, poverty, and a lack of employment opportunities outside of agriculture. The main issue was that they were responsible for 90% of the family's decisions while having few rights and little influence outside of the family. Despite making significant contributions to farm operations, women workers' involvement in decision-making appears to be minimal. When it came to resources like agricultural land, farm equipment, inputs like better seeds, fertiliser, and insecticides, retaining produce for market, managing labour, managing money, and obtaining and repaying loans, men had greater access and control than women. One of the greatest obstacles to women's equal involvement in economic activity and decision-making is a lack of access to and control over productive resources (Gupta & Jain, 2011). Women's participation in agricultural activities, both farming and non-farming, is negatively impacted by education, age, and the size of the land. When compared to household and non-farming activities, middle-aged women who have completed senior secondary education and own less than 2 hectares of land are more likely to engage in farming activities. On the other hand, as compared to farming and home duties, highly educated women with more than two hectares of land prefer to engage in more non-farming activities (Rani, 2021). Even if male emigration has made places where women must participate in order for farming to exist as a viable source of income, education is still a significant transforming force on the doxa. Women believe that education enables them to think differently about themselves and their capabilities, whether they live in places with a high or low gender difference. Women in all communities are beginning to recognise diverse life options and are taking action to realise them (Farnworth et al., 2021). Agriculture innovation has a big impact on women's lives, but there are many societal, political, cultural, and economic restrictions that make it difficult for them. The importance of innovation for women in agriculture was to close the gender and social capital gaps, improve household and individual wellbeing, expand employment opportunities and acknowledge their work, close the technological gap, boost confidence, help them become more visible, and for the overall growth (Sumit et al., 2020).

Women play a very important part in agriculture. Despite her extensive involvement, her contribution and dignity have not yet been acknowledged. By every social, economic, and political metric, the standing of women is low. Women may learn the best practises for cultivating and growing their own wholesome foods, which they can then sell at marketplaces, through agriculture, which is essential for economic progress. So, it is crucial to close the gender gap in agriculture if we want to increase production and guarantee food security (Maheshwari & Mangtani, 2018). It is discovered that the majority of women

participate to an average degree. According to observations, there is a statistically significant positive link between age and level of engagement. The amount of education also affects the engagement of women in agriculture, with greater education having a lower participation rate. Women's levels of education and their degree of participation have not been favourably associated. The main source of household income and the percentage of women participating in agricultural activities do not have a statistically significant relationship (Devi, 2020). Compared to women in other sectors, those working in agriculture confront far greater challenges. Women who work in the agriculture sector typically lack formal education, skills, and knowledge. Women who work in agriculture are not only not aware of their rights but also lack suitable regulations (Sheokand, 2018). Agricultural activity such as harvesting, gathering product in one location, packing it for transit, storing, and treating grains and seeds, as well as threshing, was the main line of work for the majority of female heads. In-laws, neighbours, acquaintances, and other kin often stepped in to assist female heads during family disagreements. It was discovered that women in charge of the houses were overworked. They were discovered to be in charge of managing all domestic and economic issues independently, in addition to the double workload they share with all rural women. The conclusion was that all of the agricultural affairs were being managed solely by female heads. Other argument made was that female heads needed training to help them create revenue because they were unaware of agricultural development programmes (Deswal et al., 2021). In comparison to urban women, rural women participated more in family duties, and non-working women's participation was higher than that of working women. Women made individual decisions about home tasks. The majority of rural residents, both employed and unemployed, made decisions on their own regarding how to care for their children and disabled family members, prepare meals for the family, and welcome visitors. The urban area had the same pattern. It seems that women make a lot of independent judgements when it comes to home tasks but not when it comes to money or other matters (Ruchi et al., 2021). In contrast, (Kumari & Chander, 2022) in their study showed that working women made decisions collectively regarding the use of loans, borrowing money, storing grain, and selling or buying farm equipment. There were very few decisions made independently about farm activity. In rural families, men tended to make the majority of farm decisions. The head of the household or the husbands were primarily responsible for making decisions about the purchase and sale of land, machinery, and other agricultural instruments, as well as improvements to harvest and livestock management (Sharma et al., 2013). Men typically make decisions regarding the farm and the money. Both men and women made decisions on household management and religious rites. Men made the majority of decisions regarding agriculture, including choices for seed types, land usage patterns, and other issues (Anshu & Varma, 2016). Women's roles in agriculture in rural Haryana range from planting seeds to harvesting crops, but they rarely have a say in important agricultural decisions like crop choice, technology use, and resource allocation. In the home, women are in charge of daily tasks and food security, but they are frequently deprived of decision-making authority when it comes to money and family matters because of socio-cultural norms.

5. Conclusion

The study highlight the fact that, despite being restricted by gender prejudices and sociocultural norms, women actively participate in decision-making and have an impact on household management and agricultural practices. From planting to harvesting, women are integral to every aspect of agricultural production in Haryana. Their opinions are particularly important in formulating farming plans and managing available resources. In the same way, they are the backbone of how their households run in the

domestic realm, making vital choices that impact their families' well-being and financial security. Nonetheless, the research also emphasises how patriarchal systems, a lack of money and education, and cultural norms that value male authority frequently restrict their ability to make decisions.

The conclusions drawn from this study highlight the need for a change in the perception and appreciation of women's responsibilities in household and agricultural work. Women's decision-making abilities may be improved by education, training, and resource availability, which will benefit not just their homes but also the agricultural sector as a whole. In addition, encouraging gender equality and questioning conventional wisdom can contribute to the development of a more welcoming atmosphere where women's contributions are acknowledged and appreciated.

The study shows that rural communities cannot flourish sustainably unless women's involvement in decision-making are recognised and supported. In order to create a more productive and fairer agricultural sector and to ensure that women's contributions are properly acknowledged in the future, politicians, practitioners, and communities must listen to women's perspectives and remove any hurdles that stand in their way. In order to go forward, systematic obstacles that prevent women from fully participating in society must be removed, and chances for them to take on leadership roles in both the home and the workplace must be created.

6. References

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