

Full Length Research Paper

Women's role and their decision making in livestock and household management

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Rural women play a key role in the livestock management and household activities. However, it is often argued that their contributions are undermined and their decision making power is highly limited. This study was carried out in Yilmana Densa district in Amhara Region, Ethiopia with the objectives to investigate the role of rural women in livestock and household activities, and to examine the level of rural women participation in decision making. Three villages were selected purposefully and from each village 30 women respondents were selected randomly. Data were collected from the respondents using standardized questionnaire and focus group discussions (FGDs), and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The majority of rural women participated 'regularly' in cleaning of animal sheds, preparing milk products, gathering dung, selling milk/milk products, selling egg/poultry, and egg collection. In household management, majority of rural women are 'regularly' engaged in food preparation, looking after all family members, preparing local beverages, cleaning the house, clean-up after meals, washing clothes, child care, fetching water, and embroidery. Capacitating rural women in all rounded developmental aspects can affect their livelihoods which enables them actively participate in various agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Maximum attention should be given for rural women to build their capabilities in decision making. Moreover, appropriate ways and approaches to educate rural women should be given more emphasis to get equal access with rural women.

Key words: Decision, household and livestock management, participation, rural women.

INTRODUCTION

Rural women play a key role in the livestock management and household activities. Women are the majority of the world's agricultural producers, playing important roles in agriculture sector, and in fisheries and livestock management. Women make a significant contribution to food production, particularly in horticulture and small livestock (FAO, 1997; Khushk and Panhwar,

2006; Arshad et al., 2010). In addition to agricultural activities, women often devote more time and resources under their control towards improving household concerns related to food security as compared to men and their involvement (Quisumbing et al., 1995). Rural and national developments can hardly be achieved with the neglect of this important and substantial segment of

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the society (Kishor et al., 1999). In the recent times, there have been increasing sociological attention focused on trends in domestic or household labour patterns and the gender participation and contribution (Bianchi et al., 2000). The changes in patterns of family formation and dissolution, in conjunction with the changing gender distribution in paid work would lead to changes in the distribution of work between men and women in the home (Brines, 1994). Most researchers tend to suggest that women's hours on housework are declining as a result of involvement in paid employment but there are mixed views about whether men's hours on housework have changed. However, women continue to perform a greater proportion of domestic tasks than men do (Mederer, 1993).

In rural Ethiopia, women play key role in both livestock management and household activities besides farming activities. They are the household managers but their work is considered as non-productive, unorganized, and undocumented (Bishop-Sambrook, 2004; Lemlem et al., 2010). Hence, development assistance has failed to reach women in the rural areas both in absolute and relative terms compared to men for two reasons: agricultural development programmes were traditionally focused on men as producers; and a lack of knowledge or false assumption about the role of women in agriculture (Habtemariam, 1996; Wude, 2006). Hence, this paper presents how far rural women in Yilmana Densa district of Amhara region, Ethiopia, participate in decision making process of livestock and household management.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in three villages (namely Mesobo, Gosheye, and Angar) found in Yilmana Densa district in Amhara region, Ethiopia. Villages were selected purposely on the basis of the information collected during the reconnaissance survey. Representative households were selected from list of household in the three villages. The list of the households in each village was used as a sampling frame and it was secured from the offices of village administrations and development agents. A total of 90 respondents were used for the study and a systematic random sampling technique was used to select 30 sample respondents from each village. Data were collected from women respondents using semi-structured questionnaire. Focus group discussion were executed with men group, women group and district level experts to supplement on the information generated using questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) used to analyze the data collected. The extent of rural women participation in livestock and household activities were assessed by using a three point continuum namely 'Regularly,' 'Occasionally' and 'Not at all' which was assigned scores of 2, 1 and 0, respectively. For the purpose of ranking of different activities performed by rural women, the frequency of responses from each of the three point continuum of a specific activity under major activity was tabulated and multiplied by concerned score. Then, they were added together to get the total score for each specific activity for the purpose of their ranking (Sailaja and Reddy, 2003). The relationship between the extent of rural women participation and certain socio-personal and socioeconomic variables was computed through Pearson's correlation test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of the respondents according to the extent of participation in various farming activities along with participation indices and rank order is depicted in Table 1. The overwhelming majority (98.9%) of the respondents participated 'regularly' in cleaning of animal sheds, preparing milk products, and gathering dung followed by selling milk and milk products (94.4%), selling egg (85.5%), egg collection (84.4%), and selling of poultry (77.8%). Rural women 'occasionally' participated in watering of animals and grazing of animals as responded by 66.7% of the respondents. Barn preparation, selling of oxen and cows, delivery assistance of cows and selling of small ruminants (sheep and goat) were 'not at all' performed by 97.8, 95.5, 87.7 and 77.8% of the respondents, respectively. It is acknowledged that among all the livestock production and management; rural women perform most of them. Gathering of dung, cleaning of animal shed and preparing milk products are the main livestock activities with better rank orders which were being performed by rural women. More or less similar results were observed with the work of Younas et al. (2007). Khushk and Panhwar (2006) explained about the role of rural women in livestock management on a wide range of activities such as making feed concentrates, feeding, collecting fodder, grazing, cleaning animals and their sheds, making dung cakes, collecting manure fertilizer as well as milking, processing and marketing of animal products such as ghee and eggs.

Extent of rural women participation in household activities

Table 2 depicts the extent of rural women involvement in various household activities. Almost all respondents were 'regularly' engaged in food preparation, looking after all family members, preparing local beverages, cleaning the house, clean-up after meals, washing clothes, child care, fetching water, and embroidery. Women 'occasionally' participated in shopping household utilities, taking grains to mill, and milking cows as reported by 36.7, 33.3 and 28.9% of the respondents, respectively. However, cleaning farm implements was 'not at all' performed by 67.8% of the respondents. This shows that rural women share a larger burden of household work which related with their huge responsibility and superiority in the skills of household chores (Becker, 1991).

Gender division of labour in household management

The extent of rural women's and their husbands' participation in household activities is presented in Figure 1. All respondents were engaged in food preparation,

Table 1. Extent of rural women participation in various livestock activities.

Livestock activities	Extent of participation			Participation indices	Rank order
	Regularly	Occasionally	Not at all		
Cleaning of animal sheds	89 (98.9)	0(0)	1(1.1)	178	2
Watering of animals	23(25.6)	60(66.7)	7(7.8)	106	8
Milking of animals	29(32.2)	35(38.9)	26(28.9)	93	9
Preparing Ghee/milk products	89(98.9)	0(0)	1(1.1)	178	2
Egg collection of poultry birds	76(84.4)	13(14.4)	1(1.1)	165	6
Grazing of animals	14(15.6)	60(66.7)	16(17.8)	88	10
Taking off fodder	12(13.3)	42(46.7)	36(40.0)	66	11
Gathering dung	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	1
Delivery assistance	4(4.4)	7(7.8)	79(87.8)	15	14
Barn preparation	0(0)	2(2.2)	88(97.8)	2	16
Animal health treatment	9(10)	18(20)	63(70)	36	12
Selling of livestock (ox, cow)	1(1.1)	3(3.3)	86(95.5)	5	15
Selling of small ruminant (sheep, goat)	7(7.8)	13(14.4)	70(77.8)	27	13
Selling of poultry (hen, cock)	70(77.8)	18(20)	2(2.2)	158	7
Selling of egg (poultry)	77(85.5)	13(14.4)	0(0)	167	5
Selling of milk and milk products	85(94.4)	5(5.6)	0(0)	175	4

Figure in parenthesis are percentages. Note: Participation indices = Regularly x 2 + Occasionally x 1 + Never at all x 0. Source: Survey results, 2012.

Table 2. Extent of rural women participation in various household activities.

Household activities	Extent of participation			Participation indices	Rank order
	Regularly	Occasionally	Not at all		
Food preparation	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	2
Fuel collection	78(86.7)	12(13.3)	0(0)	168	10
Looking after all family members	85(94.4)	5(5.6)	0(0)	175	8
Preparing beverages	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	2
Taking grains to mill	60(66.7)	30(33.3)	0(0)	150	12
Purchasing utilities	50(55.6)	33(36.7)	7(7.8)	133	13
Cleaning the house	90(100)	0(0)	0(0)	180	1
Clean-up after meals	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	2
Cleaning farm yard	6(6.7)	23(25.6)	61(67.8)	35	15
Washing clothes	85(94.4)	4(4.4)	1(1.1)	174	9
Child care	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	2
Shopping/buying food items	73(81.1)	15(16.7)	2(2.2)	161	11
Fetching water	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	2
Milking cows	37(41.1)	26(28.9)	27(30)	100	14
Embroidery	89(98.9)	1(1.1)	0(0)	179	2

Figure in parenthesis are percentages. Note: Participation indices = Regularly x 2 + Occasionally x 1 + Never at all x 0. Source: Survey results, 2012.

fuel collection, looking after all family members, preparing local beverages, taking grains to mill, cleaning the house, clean-up after meals, child care, fetching water, and embroidery. Other household activities performed by rural women were washing clothes, shopping of food items, purchase of household utilities, and milking cows

as reported by 98.9, 97.8, 92.2 and 70% of the respondents, respectively. However, only 32.2% of the respondents are engaged in cleaning farm implements. Concerning household participation, 95.6, 87.5, 86.7, and 81.1% of the respondents reported that their husbands are participating in cleaning farm implements, taking

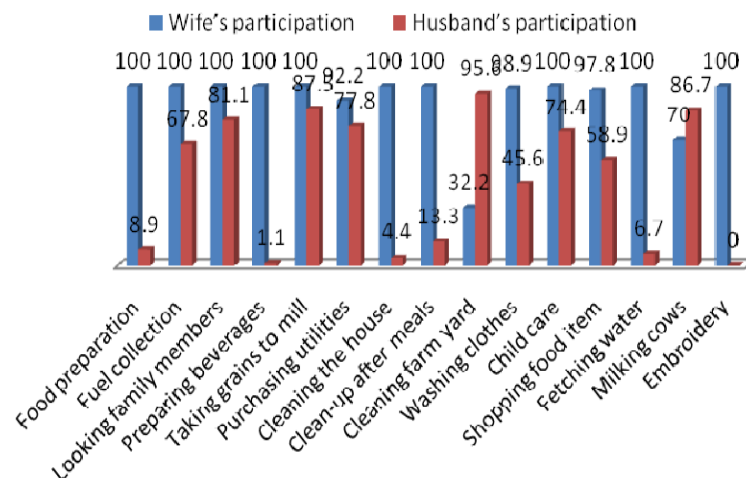


Figure 1. Wife's and husband's engagement in household activities. Source: Survey results, 2012.

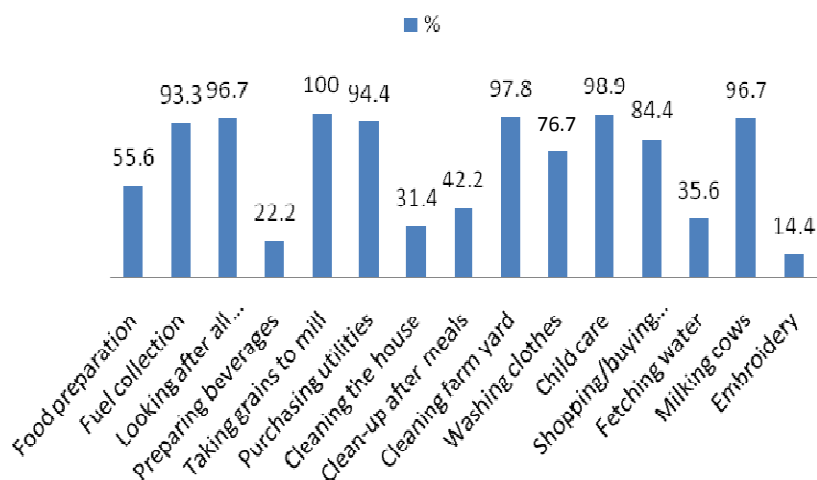


Figure 2. Percentage response of the respondents about their perception on men's household activities. Source: Survey results, 2012.

grains to mill, milking cows, and looking after all family members, respectively. The participation of husbands in assisting their wives in preparing local beverages, cleaning the house, fetching water, and food preparation were limited as reported only by 1.1, 4.4, 6.7 and 8.9% of the respondents, respectively. None of the respondents' husbands participated in embroidery. In most of the household activities, the support of husbands was moderate which is in agreement with the work of Nosheen et al. (2011). Men contribute less in home management activities and with better division of labour in rural Pakistan (Akram, 2002). During FGDs, it was reported by male and female groups' participants, the support of husbands to their wives in household activities is showing progress; though not satisfactory.

Women perception on men's household activities

Figure 2 depicts that all respondents believed that rural men should participate and assist their wives in household activities in taking grains to mill followed by child care (98.9%), cleaning farm implements (97.8%), milking cows (96.7%), looking after all family members (96.7%), shopping household utilities (94.4%), fuel collection (93.3%), shopping food items (84.4%), and washing clothes (76.7%). This indicates the need of critical support that wives demand from their husbands. Some women also expressed their wish if their husbands assist in embroidery (14.4%), preparing local beverages (22.2%), cleaning the house (31.4%), fetching water (35.6%), and clean-up after meals (42.2%). The

Table 3. Extent of rural women participation in decision making of animal husbandry.

Decision making areas (livestock activities)	No consideration	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Role in final decision
Selling/purchasing of livestock (ox, cow)	21(23.3)	34(37.8)	10(11.1)	25(27.8)
Selling/purchasing of small ruminant (sheep, goat)	16(17.8)	36(40)	12(13.3)	26(28.9)
Selling/ purchasing of poultry (hen, cock)	1(1.1)	22(24.4)	26(28.9)	40(44.4)
Selling/ purchasing of egg (poultry)	1(1.1)	19(21.1)	29(32.2)	40(44.4)
Selling/ purchasing of milk & milk products	2(2.2)	20(22.2)	25(27.8)	43(47.8)
Hired shepherds	18(20)	20(22.2)	18(20)	33(36.7)
Making artificial insemination	30(33.3)	16(17.8)	33(36.7)	8(8.9)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages. Source: Survey results, 2012.

majority of the respondents do not want their husbands to participate in the so called 'female's tasks' such as cleaning the house (68.6%), embroidery (85.6%), and preparing local beverages (77.8%).

Participation of rural women in decision making in animal husbandry

The level of rural women involvement in taking various livestock decisions is depicted in Table 3. Husbands consider the opinion of their wives in decision making for activities of making artificial insemination and selling/purchasing of egg which actually reported by 36.7 and 32.2% of the respondents, respectively. Concerning the role of rural women in final decision, the highest percentage of responses were found in the case of selling/purchasing of milk and milk products (47.8%) followed by selling/purchase of egg and selling/purchase of poultry (hen, cock) each reported by 44.4% of the respondents. The less involvement of rural women in final decision was observed in artificial insemination, selling/purchasing of livestock (ox, cow), and selling/purchasing of small ruminant (sheep, goat)

that reported by 8.9, 27.8 and 28.9% of the respondents, respectively. Similar results were also reported by Arshad et al. (2010) about the relatively low participation of rural women in sale of animals, breeding of animals and construction of animals' sheds in Pakistan. The contribution of rural women in livestock management is very crucial, but their involvement in decision making still seems questionable (Arsahq et al., 2010)

Participation of rural women in decision making in household activities

The majority of household activities are performed by wives. Table 4 reveals the level of the respondents' participation in various household activities. About 71.1% of the respondents were involved in the final decision making in preparation of feast for local holidays, followed by to be a member in community based organizations (64.4%). The limited involvement was reported in purchase of clothes for husband (15.6%). Less than 30% of the respondents were only consulted in all household activities except sending children to school where about 35.6% of the respondents

were consulted.

Relationship of social variables with women participation in livestock and household activities

The relationship between social and the participation of rural women in livestock and household activities is presented in Table 5. The participation of rural women in animal husbandry was significantly and positively associated with family size and number of children. In the remaining, except the level of education, there was a positive but non-significant relationship. For the case of household activities, the participation in informal institutions had shown highly significant and positive relation with rural women's participation. It means that the rural women's participation increases with the increase in the level of their participation in community based organizations. Distance from the nearest town was negatively and significantly associated with the rural women's involvement in household activities. This most likely explains that there are better educational status and frequency of urban contact of rural women living in the near town.

Table 4. Extent of rural women participation in decision making of household activities.

Decision making areas (household activities)	No consideration	Only consulted	Opinion considered	Role in final decision
Schooling of children	6(6.7)	32(35.6)	23(25.6)	29(32.2)
Purchasing cloth for children	16(17.8)	26(28.9)	18(20)	30(33.3)
Purchasing cloth for husband	40(44.4)	17(18.9)	19(21.1)	14(15.6)
Purchase of household utilities	5(5.6)	18(20)	33(36.7)	34(37.8)
Marriage of children	6(6.7)	18(20)	32(35.6)	32(35.6)
Preparation of feast for local holidays	0(0)	6(6.7)	20(22.2)	64(71.1)
Membership in community based organizations	4(4.4)	9(10)	19(21.1)	58(64.4)
Membership in local saving institutions (<i>ekub</i>)	9(10)	25(27.8)	26(28.9)	30(33.3)
Membership in women association/or others	21(23.3)	18(20)	25(27.8)	25(27.8)
Saving of money	17(18.9)	20(22.2)	28(31.1)	25(27.8)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages. Source: Survey results, 2012.

Table 5. Relationship between social variables and participation of rural women in livestock and household activities.

Independent variable	Correlation coefficient ('r' value) livestock activities	Correlation coefficient ('r' value) household activities
Distance from nearest town	0.049 ^{NS}	-0.262*
Age (years)	0.040 ^{NS}	0.149 ^{NS}
Level of education	-0.166 ^{NS}	-0.082 ^{NS}
Family size (number)	0.312**	0.093 ^{NS}
Number of children	0.314**	0.080 ^{NS}
Farming experience (years)	0.036 ^{NS}	0.097 ^{NS}
Participation in formal institutions	0.189 ^{NS}	-0.159 ^{NS}
Participation in informal institutions	0.162 ^{NS}	0.326**
Land size (ha)	0.123 ^{NS}	0.093 ^{NS}

*,**Correlation significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively; ^{NS} Non significant. Source: Survey results, 2012.

Participation in formal institution had shown negative association with rural women involvement in household activities which may be justified with women that spent more time on non-household activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Among livestock activities rural women participated 'regularly' in cleaning of animal sheds, preparing milk products, gathering dung,

selling milk and milk products, selling egg and poultry, and egg collection. Rural women also 'regularly' engage in household activities including food preparation, looking after all family members, preparing local beverages, cleaning

the house, clean-up after meals, washing clothes, child care, fetching water, and embroidery indicating the great responsibilities of rural women in household activities. The participation of rural women is limited in livestock activities such as barn preparation, selling of oxen and cows, and deliver assistance of cows which considered as tasks that should not be performed by women. Rural women are more involved in livestock activities apart from their legitimate roles as wives and mothers. In most of the household activities the support of husbands is moderate, but the level of husbands' participation in household activities is below the demand of their wives. The level of rural women participation in decision making is also low in animal husbandry activities associated with better financial income. Most rural women were not benefited from existing extension service indicating the limited attention towards rural women. Thus, maximum attention should be given for rural women to build their capabilities in decision making. Moreover, appropriate ways and approaches to educate rural women should give more emphasis to get equal access with rural women.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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