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Jasvinder Kaur
EEI Nilokheri, CCS HAU,
Hisar, Haryana, India

Mubashir Ali Rathar
Department of Sheep
Husbandry, Kashmir, Srinagar,
Jammu and Kashmir, India

Safeer Alam
SKUAST-Kashmir, Shalimar,
Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir,
India

Role performance in sheep farming activities: A gender perspective

Jasvinder Kaur, Mubashir Ali Rathar and Safeer Alam

Abstract

The present study was undertaken to ascertain the role of men and women in sheep rearing activities. There are many management practices which are necessary in sheep farming and the gender role in those activities is an important aspect. It is necessary to know the sharing of the work in routine management practices for future planning and improvements. The data were collected from 73 sheep rearers of district Budgam, having sheep population in concentration. The independent participation of men was observed in health care, decision making and marketing related activities. The women folk were an integral part of sheep rearing and the major activities related to sheep rearing like grazing of the animals in pastures was managed by men folk while their spouses looked after the feeding and watering of sheep and cleaning of animal houses etc. Collection, conservation and storage of fodder were shared by male and female both. Present study concluded that both men & women play an important role in sheep rearing business. The male farmers were also sharing responsibilities in decision making and market related activities, whereas, women shared more responsibilities in colostrum feeding, collection and disposal of manure, feeding of animals, watering, care of pregnant animals, care at lambing, providing special feed to lambs and cleaning of animal houses etc. Men played dominant role in marketing of animals as well as wool.

Keywords: role, sheep farming activities, gender

Introduction

The bulk of the country's sheep population is found in rural areas, mainly raised by the people belong to socio-economically weaker sections of the society (Kumar *et al.*, 2015), living below the poverty line. Similar conditions prevail in Kashmir Valley too, where the sheep farmer possess small or marginal land holding. The sheep rearing under Semi-intensive feeding systems during early spring and late autumn, intensive system during winter from December to April and extensive system from May to November are being adopted in the valley (Rather *et al.* 2021) ^[12]. Sheep are mostly reared under mixed crop-livestock farming system using a mixture of grazing and stall feeding. During the grazing season, village sheep flocks were reared by the shepherd, locally known as *Pohal* (Rather *et al.* 2021; Want *et al.* 2016) ^[12]. The sheep rearing is semi-intensive and semi-migratory in Kashmir valley. Wherein sheep are shifted to highland alpine pastures, at an altitude of 6000-14000 feet above sea level and allowed to graze there from June to September (Rather *et al.*, 2021) ^[12]. The participation of rural women in agriculture contributes three-fourth of the labour force and its allied sector (Sunman, 2008) ^[14]. The women participation in agriculture has better economic implications, on an average, a woman contribute 3.5 hr/d towards animal husbandry activities against only 1.6 hr/d devoted by men (Verma and Goldey, 2007) ^[16]. In sheep production activities, women hold key role and are sharing more than 60 per cent work (Gautam and Tripathi, 2001; Tripathi, 2004) ^[6, 15]. The present study was therefore, undertaken to highlight gender participation in various sheep husbandry management activities.

Materials and Methods

The present study was carried out in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir to ascertain the extent of gender-wise participation in various sheep farming activities. Five major activities of sheep farming including routine management practices covering grazing and shearing, colostrums feeding, dehorning /trimming etc., nutrition management, health management, breeding management and marketing of sheep and sheep products are included in study. Accordingly seventy three sheep owners interviewed to collect primarily data using pre-structured format.

Corresponding Author
Jasvinder Kaur
EEI Nilokheri, CCS HAU,
Hisar, Haryana, India

Results and Discussion

The gender-wise participation in farming activities of sheep rearing in Kashmir valley is presented in Table 1. The gender-wise activities performed by men and women in managing sheep rearing in Kashmir valley were studied with respect to breeding, feeding, health care, housing, marketing etc. It was observed that sheep rearing was secondary economic activity for most of the rural families. However, it was primary livelihood earning source or economic activity for some of the Chopan families (9.59%), who were rearing village flocks against remuneration (fixed compensation for rearing sheep for 7 to 8 months), paid to Chopan by sheep owners, according to his work performance. The farmers who keep sheep as secondary source of income for the livelihood earning were managing sheep only during winters and early spring and late autumn. During these period sheep were housed mostly under stall-fed conditions. Further, it was observed that women were the active workers in most of the indoor activities whereas men were more actively involved in outdoor activities.

General management

In the present study it was observed that only men were responsible for grazing and shearing of sheep and females were responsible for collecting and disposal of manure, removal of umbilical cord from animal houses and cleaning of animal houses. The colostrums feeding to new born lambs was shared by both men and women (Table 1). The dehorning/ docking/ Hoof trimming operations were not practiced by the farmers under study. Meena and Dudi (2015) and Gadekar and Kalal (2021)^[5] reported higher participation of women in different managerial operations. The present study revealed that out of the several activities related to livestock rearing, men folk looked after grazing of the animals in pastures and local community lands while women folk looked after the indoor management activities of animals. Khan *et al.* (2013)^[8] reported that out of the several activities related to livestock rearing, men folk looked after grazing of the animals in pastures and local community lands while women folk looked after the feeding, watering and cleaning of animal houses during winter.

Nutrition management

The cultivation and harvesting of fodder for winter, storage of fodder, providing feed, fodder and water to their animals were looked after men and women both. The purchase of fodder for winter was looked after by men only where as chaffing of fodder and its fortification was not done. Meena and Dudi (2015)^[10] and Gadekar and Kalal (2021)^[5] reported collection, preservation and storage of fodder were shared by men and women. Backyard poultry farming was found to be exclusively the domain of farm women as integrated animal husbandry activities. However, women were also reported to be mainly responsible for livestock and poultry rearing in Sunderbans of West Bengal (Anand *et al.* 2012)^[4]. Khan *et al.* (2013)^[8] reported that collection, preservation and storage of fodder were shared by men and women, while marketing of surplus animal produce or the animal as whole was taken care

by men folk.

Breeding management

The breeding rams were mostly provided by Department of Sheep husbandry. Only 37.33 % (28/73) had received superior quality breeding rams for future breeding of their animals. However, as flock mating in village flocks, reared by Chopan (shepherd) against remuneration without any data recording was observed. Therefore, farmers who do not having breeding rams were also benefited. Special care to lambs and ewes during pre-lambing period was provided by both men and women. Meena and Dudi (2015)^[10] reported more independent participation of women in care of pregnant sheep, high male participation were recorded for observing animals at the time of estrus and taking estrus animals for breeding. Meena and Dudi (2015)^[10] and Gadekar and Kalal (2021)^[5] reported that both male and females were involved in care of ewes and lambs.

Health management

Male members were involved as sole manager in health care management activities and treatment of livestock as compared to female members. The joint participation and participation of women in health care management was observed very less. Meena and Dudi (2015)^[10] also reported high involvement of male members in health care operations except deworming of animals. Gadekar and Kalal (2021)^[5] also reported that the health management was mainly performed by men.

Marketing

For marketing wherever the financial component involved it was observed that male were hundred percent involved in management of these activities and it was observed that marketing of animals was male dominated.. The finding was in agreement with reports of Meena and Dudi (2015)^[10] and Gadekar and Kalal (2021)^[5].

Conclusion

It is concluded that both men & women play important role in sheep rearing. However, men were more involved in grazing, health care, decision making and market related activities, whereas, women participate in colostrum feeding, collection and disposal of manure, feeding, watering, care of pregnant animals, care at lambing, providing creep feed to lambs and cleaning of animal houses. Men played dominant role in marketing of animals and wool. Therefore it is concluded that both men and women both play an active role in sheep management and the laborious tasks were performed by women only

Suggestions

Since women folk were equally responsible for important sheep rearing management practices, they must also be given similar weightage while conducting trainings, demonstration, distribution of critical inputs and credit facilities by the agencies. Self Help Groups (SHG) may also be created in these villages for technical as well as financial programme.

Table 1: Gender-wise participation in sheep farming activities (N = 73)

Activities	Primary N (%)	Secondary N (%)	N (%)
Source of earning	7 (9.59)	66 (90.41)	
General management	Men	Women	Both
Grazing of animals	73 (100)	0	0
Collecting and disposal of manure	0	73 (100)	0
Removal of umbilical cord	0	73 (100)	0
Shearing	73 (100)	0	0
Dehorning/ docking/ Hoof trimming	0	0	0
Cleaning of animals	0	73 (100)	0
Colostrums feeding to new born lambs	23.00 (30.67)	35.00 (46.67)	15.00 (20.00)
Cleaning and disinfection of animals houses	0	73 (100)	0
Nutrition management			
Cultivation and harvesting of fodder for winter	28 (37.33)	5 (6.67)	40 (53.33)
Purchase of fodder for winter	73 (100)	0	0
Chaffing of fodder	0	0	0
Storage of fodder	61 (81.33)	5 (6.67)	7 (9.33)
Providing feed and fodder to the sheep	26 (34.67)	20 (26.67)	27 (36.00)
Providing water to the animals	26 (34.67)	20 (26.67)	27 (36.00)
Breeding management	28 (37.33)	0	0
Arranging rams form flocks	15 (20.00)	0	0
Record keeping	0	0	0
Providing special care to lambs and ewes around lambing period	8 (10.67)	15 (20.00)	50 (66.67)
Health management			
Deworming of animals	53 (70.67)	5 (6.67)	15 (20.00)
Identifying the sick animals	50 (66.67)	6 (8.00)	17 (22.67)
Bringing veterinary doctors at home/taking sick animals for treatment	59 (78.67)	4 (5.33)	10 (13.33)
Providing special feed and medicine to sick animals	59 (78.67)	4 (5.33)	10 (13.33)
Marketing			
Marketing of animals entrepreneurial activities	73 (0)	0	0
Culling and disposal of animals	73 (0)	0	0
Attending training/meeting/camp	73 (0)	0	0
Getting credit and input	73 (0)	0	0
Grading of wool & sorting of wool	73 (0)	0	0
Selling surplus animals and wool	73 (0)	0	0

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