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Involvement of rural women in animal husbandry decision-making

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Abstract

The active involvement of rural women in decision-making processes related to animal husbandry is crucial for sustainable agricultural practices and rural development. This research paper examines the involvement of rural women in animal husbandry decision-making and explores their socio-economic, communication, and psychological attributes. The study is based on a sample of 340 respondents in a specific region (Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh, India). The results show variations in participation levels across different practices. The findings reveal significant relationships between participation and variables such as age, education, family size, family type, annual income, total number of milch animals, and mass media exposure. This knowledge can guide policy makers and stakeholders in designing interventions and strategies to enhance the involvement of rural women and promote their active participation in decision-making processes. By recognizing the specific areas of low participation and addressing the socio-economic barriers, it is possible to empower rural women and contribute to the overall development of rural communities.

Keywords: Animal husbandry, decision-making, rural women, participation level, socio-economic factors

Introduction

The active involvement of rural women in decision-making processes related to animal husbandry is crucial for promoting sustainable agricultural practices and fostering inclusive rural development. Animal husbandry serves as a vital sector in many rural communities, contributing significantly to livelihoods, food security, and economic growth. Recognizing the importance of rural women's participation in decision-making within this context becomes imperative to ensure equitable and effective development strategies. The aim of this research paper is to explore and analyze the involvement of rural women in animal husbandry decision-making. By examining the roles, responsibilities, and agency of women in shaping and influencing decisions related to animal husbandry practices, this study seeks to highlight the significance of their contributions and shed light on the challenges and opportunities they encounter.

Rural women have long played integral roles in agricultural and livestock-related activities, yet their participation in decision-making processes has often been marginalized or overlooked. Understanding the factors that either enable or hinder their involvement in animal husbandry decision-making is essential for promoting gender equality, empowering women, and ensuring the sustainability of agricultural practices.

Jyoti Vishwakarma and NR Meena (2020) [3] Rural women play a consequential role in agriculture and allied sectors. Women not only serve as a backbone in household chores but also show their significance in agricultural and livestock management activities. However, the involvement of women in decision making is inadequate and lagging behind. This study assessed the participation of women in livestock activities and decision making process. 120 women who were residents of rural area of Varanasi district were selected using random sampling technique. Majority of the decision taken were joint decisions and independent decisions were limited

Chauhan N M 2011 [2] conduct a study on tribal farm women in agricultural and animal husbandry in Gujarat. He concluded that farmwomen made their own decisions for home management, including choosing and preparing meals (70.83%) and decorating the house (79.17%). The majority of farm management decisions were made by the wives' husbands, and women entirely controlled animal husbandry.

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Women are significant managers, decision-makers, and skilled workers in the animal husbandry industry. In the Indian social system, caring for animals is seen as an extension of domestic duties, and farm women typically handle tasks like gathering fodder from the field, chaffing it, preparing feed, providing water to animals, protecting animals from ticks and lice, cleaning animals and sheds, making dung cakes, milking, making ghee, and marketing the produce. As a result, farm women participating in farming chores is a typical occurrence in rural India. They assist with farm work, take their animals out for grazing, handle milk sales, and also carry out tasks relating to housekeeping. While old men or children take the cattle for grazing and the male members attend public meetings that are related to animal husbandry, the majority of the work and decision-making by women occurs at the family level. The man and woman in charge of the household almost always agree on major issues. These choices include selecting which animals to sell and at what price, determining the cause of a sickness, and caring for sick animals. Sarma and Payeng 2012 carried out a study in Assam's Sonitpur area. 140 randomly selected farm women from 14 villages in 7 developmental blocks of the district were personally interviewed to gather the data. They conclude that the majority of activities involve farm women making decisions either on their own or in partnership with their husbands. Most farm women were reported to be making decisions on their own in regards to issues like whether or not to feed concentrates (48.57%), how much concentrate to feed (56.43%), whether or not to feed green fodder (32.86%), how much crop residue to feed (62.86%), and whether or not to chafe or not (34.26%). Only the husband independently decided on issues like whether or not to feed mineral mixtures (43.57%), how often to feed mineral mixtures (40.71%), how much green feed to feed (30%), and how to store straw (45%). Kavithaa and Rajkumar 2016 conducted a study on decision making behaviour of farm women in dairy farming activities in Erode district of Tamilnadu. The study's conclusions showed that rural farm women dominated decision-making in non-financial tasks such building a shed, caring for animals, immunizing and deworming them, managing newborn calves,

caring for ill and pregnant animals, milking and processing milk, and making use of dung. The fact that 76.66% of rural farm women actively participated in decision-making during the construction of the shed may be attributed to the abundance of locally available building materials and the rural women's efficient use of the available resources. The study also revealed that 63.33 percent of rural farm women actively participated in the decision-making process for immunisation and deworming.

Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, empirical data collection, and analysis, this research aims to uncover the dynamics and complexities surrounding rural women's participation in animal husbandry decision-making. It will examine socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that shape women's roles, decision-making power, and access to resources within the context of animal husbandry. To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions will be conducted with rural women, livestock farmers, community leaders, and relevant stakeholders to gather insights into their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations regarding animal husbandry decision-making.

The findings of this paper will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on gender and rural development, specifically focusing on the involvement of rural women in animal husbandry decision-making. It is anticipated that the results will inform policy recommendations and interventions that can enhance the participation and agency of rural women, leading to more inclusive and sustainable agricultural practices.

Material and Methods

Study was conducted in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh. Dewas district is spread over 7020 Sq. km. of Madhya Pradesh (Figure 1). A sample of 340 farm women was selected. The data was collected with the use of a questionnaire. Independent variables and measurements were taken as per specified standards and references (Table 1).

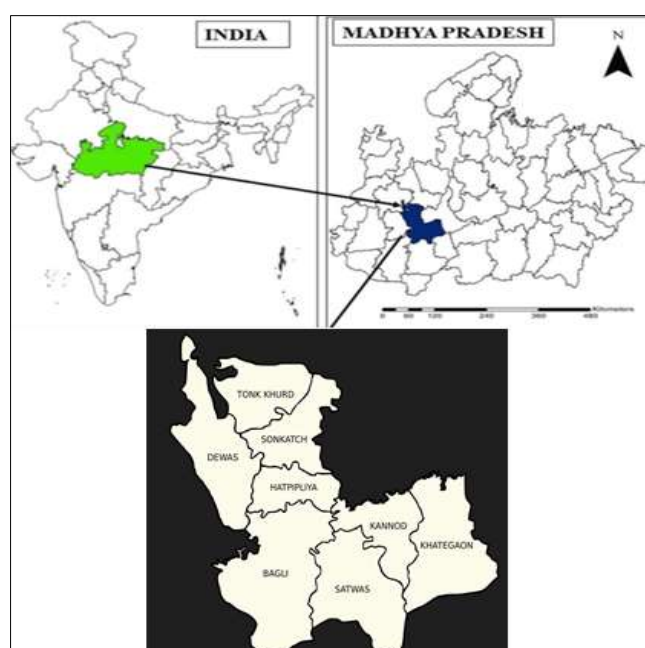


Fig 1: Location map of Dewas district

Table 1: Independent variables and measurements

	S. No	Independent variables	Measurement	References
A: Socio-Economic variables	1	Age	Actual chronological age	
	2	Educational Status	Scale	Thakare & Ingle (2007) [8]
	3	Family Size	Scale	Thakare & Ingle (2007) [8]
	4	Family Type	Scale	Thakare & Ingle (2007) [8]
	5	Annual income	Scale	Thakare & Ingle (2007) [8]
	6	Total number of milch animal	Scale	Thakare & Ingle (2007) [8]
B: Communication variables	1	Information source utilization	Structured schedule	--
	2	Mass media exposure contact	Structured schedule	--
	3	Cosmopolitaness	Scale	Bhaskaren (1976) [1] and Trivedi (1963) [9]
C: Psychological variables	1	Economic motivation	Scale	Supe (1969) [6]
	2	Scientific orientation	Scale	Supe and Singh (1969) [7]
	3	Knowledge about animal husbandry practices	Structured schedule	--

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic attributes of the farm women

The distribution of respondents based on their socio-economic attributes, including age, education status, family size, family type, annual income, and total number of milch animals (Table 2). Regarding age, the respondents were categorized into three groups: young (<35 years), medium (36 to 55 years), and old (>55 years). The results show that the majority of respondents fell into the medium age category (56.47%), followed by the young category (27.35%) and the old category (16.17%). In terms of education status, the respondents were classified based on their educational attainment. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of the respondents were illiterate (43.23%), while others had received primary education (36.17%), middle education (12.94%), higher secondary education (5.29%), or had completed undergraduate (1.76%) or postgraduate (0.58%) levels of education. Family size was categorized into small (up to 5 members), medium (6 to 10 members), and large (above 10 members) categories. The results indicate that a substantial number of respondents belonged to the medium family size category (33.82%), followed by the large family

size category (40.58%) and the small family size category (25.58%). Family type was divided into nuclear and joint categories. The majority of respondents belonged to the nuclear family type (62.94%), while the remaining respondents belonged to the joint family type (37.06%).

Annual income was classified as low, medium, or high. The data shows that the largest proportion of respondents had a medium annual income (56.76%), followed by those with low income (22.06%) and high income (21.18%). The total number of milch animals owned by the respondents was categorized as low (<5 animals), medium (5-10 animals), or high (>10 animals). The results indicate that a significant number of respondents fell into the medium category (45.88%), followed by the low category (27.94%) and the high category (26.17%).

The socio-economic attributes of the respondents play a crucial role in shaping their involvement in decision-making processes related to animal husbandry practices. The distribution of respondents across different categories provides insights into the demographic and economic factors that may influence their level of participation.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their socio-economic attributes (n=340)

S. No	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
1	Age	Young (< to 35)	93	27.35	1.65	0.904
		Medium (36 to 55)	192	56.47		
		Old (> to 55)	55	16.17		
2	Education Status	Illiterate	147	43.23	2.84	1.36
		Primary education	123	36.17		
		Middle education	44	12.94		
		Primary	4665 (23.0043)			
		Higher secondary education	18	5.29		
		UG Level	6	1.76		
		PG Level	2	0.58		
3	Family Size	Small (Upto 5 members)	87	25.58	9.36	3.88
		Medium (6 to 10 members)	115	33.82		
		Large (above 10 members)	138	40.58		
4	Family type	Nuclear	214	62.94	1.65	0.48
		Joint	126	37.06		
5	Annual income	Low	75	22.06	2.85	1.63
		Medium	193	56.76		
		High	72	21.18		
6	Total number of milch animals	Low (> 5 animals)	95	27.94	3.56	1.98
		Medium (5-10 animals)	156	45.88		
		High (> 10 animals)	89	26.17		

Communication attributes of farm women

The communication attributes of farm women, including information source utilization, mass media exposure, and cosmopolitanism (Table 3). The majority of farm women in the study displayed a low level of information source utilization, accounting for 54.70% of the respondents. This suggests that a significant proportion of rural women have limited access to diverse sources of information related to animal husbandry practices. The study examined the frequency of mass media exposure among farm women. Results indicate that a substantial portion of respondents (59.11%) reported frequent exposure to mass media. This suggests that a significant number of rural women have regular access to mass media platforms such as television, radio, or print media. Cosmopolitanism refers to the degree of exposure and openness to external influences and ideas. The findings reveal that the majority of farm women (56.18%) exhibited low levels of cosmopolitanism, indicating limited exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences beyond their immediate rural environment. This suggests that rural women may face challenges in accessing and integrating new knowledge, innovations, and practices into their animal husbandry decision-making processes.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to their communication attributes

(n=340)

S. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
1	Information source utilization	Low	186	54.70	0.98	0.80
		Medium	123	36.17		
		High	31	9.13		
2	Mass media exposure	Regularly	68	20.0	0.85	0.75
		Frequently	201	59.11		
		Never	71	20.89		
3	Cosmopolitanism	Low	191	56.18	16.54	4.61
		Medium	132	38.82		
		High	17	5.00		

Psychological attributes of farm women

The distribution of respondents according to their psychological attributes, including economic motivation, scientific orientation, and knowledge about animal husbandry practices (Table 4). The majority of respondents (68.82%) exhibited a medium level of economic motivation. This suggests that a significant proportion of the participants were moderately motivated by economic factors in their involvement in animal husbandry practices. A smaller percentage of respondents (22.94%) demonstrated a low level of economic motivation, while a minority (8.24%) exhibited a high level. The mean score of 15.40 indicates a moderate overall economic motivation among the respondents. These findings imply that while economic factors play a significant role in their engagement with animal husbandry, other motivations and considerations may also influence their decision-making processes. The table reveals that 49.12% of the respondents displayed a medium level of scientific orientation. This suggests that a substantial proportion of participants had moderate inclination towards scientific approaches and knowledge in relation to animal husbandry practices. Around 30.29% of the respondents showed a high level of scientific orientation, while 20.59% exhibited a low level. The mean score of 40.34 indicates an overall moderate scientific orientation among the respondents. Knowledge

about Animal Husbandry Practices: Regarding the knowledge about animal husbandry practices, the results indicate that 45.29% of the respondents had a medium level of knowledge, while 28.53% demonstrated a high level. Approximately 26.18% of the participants displayed a low level of knowledge. The mean score of 31.23 suggests an overall moderate level of knowledge about animal husbandry practices among the respondents. This finding highlights the need for continuous learning and improvement in understanding various aspects of animal husbandry. Enhancing knowledge levels can positively impact decision-making processes, leading to better animal care, productivity, and overall outcomes.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their psychological attributes

(n = 340)

S. No.	Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percent	Mean	S.D.
1	Economics motivation	Low	78	22.94	15.40	7.23
		Medium	234	68.82		
		High	28	8.24		
2	Scientific orientation	Low	70	20.59	40.34	9.34
		Medium	167	49.12		
		High	103	30.29		
3	Knowledge about animal husbandry practices	Low	89	26.18	31.23	8.33
		Medium	154	45.29		
		High	97	28.53		

Extent of participation of farm women in decision making

In order to assess the active participation of women in animal husbandry decision making process, it is crucial to determine their level of involvement. To achieve this, a decision-making index was developed to assess the extent of participation of farm women in various agricultural practices. This comprehensive tool takes into account multiple factors, including decision-making power, access to resources, and involvement in key activities. Using the decision-making index, the participation levels of farm women were evaluated and categorized into low, medium, and high levels. The mean and standard deviation were used to accurately identify the extent of participation in each category. This information is critical in creating targeted interventions to promote the engagement of women in agriculture and ensure their full inclusion in decision-making processes (Table 5 & Figure 2).

Table 5: Distribution of farm women according to their practice wise extent of participation in decision making in relation to animal husbandry practices

(n= 340)

Name of practices	Participation			Mean	S.D.	Total score	Rank
	Low	Medium	High				
Fodder production	39	240	61	2.065	1.96	702	IV
Feeding practices	68	202	70	1.77	1.73	682	V
Daily practices	54	134	152	1.38	0.90	778	I
Housing facility	61	178	101	2.03	0.742	720	II
Milking and milk products	98	187	55	1.92	0.82	637	VIII
Breeding practices	198	124	18	1.39	0.73	500	XI
Management practices	49	204	87	1.88	0.68	718	III
Marketing practices	165	102	73	1.47	0.70	588	IX
Health care facility	178	134	28	1.35	0.64	530	X
Financial practices	107	152	81	1.94	0.92	654	VI
Profit utilization	79	209	52	1.93	0.73	653	VII

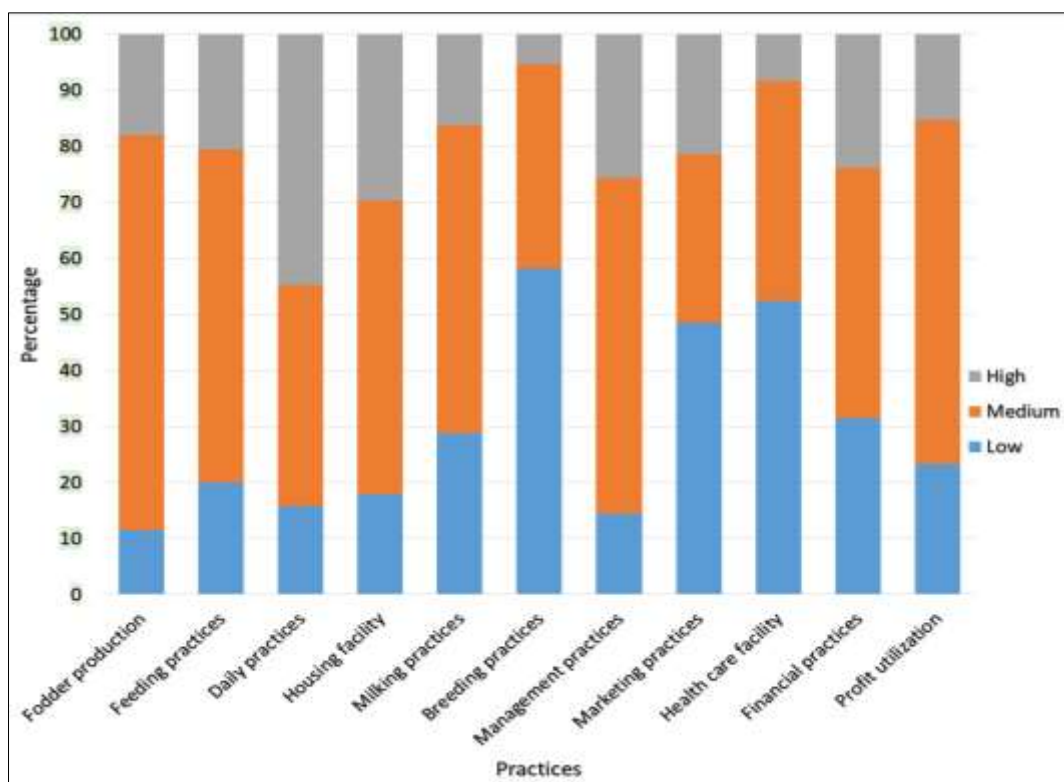


Fig 2: Distribution of farm women according to their practice wise decision making

Relationship between participation of rural women in decision-making process of animal husbandry activities

The results suggest that there is a significant relationship between the profile of rural farm women and their participation in decision-making processes related to animal husbandry activities (Figure 3).

Age has a negative correlation with participation, indicating that younger women are more likely to participate in decision-making processes. Education has a positive correlation, indicating that women with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in decision-making processes.

Family size and family type have a positive correlation with participation, indicating that women from larger families and joint families are more likely to participate in decision-making processes.

Annual income has a weak positive correlation with participation, indicating that higher-income women may be slightly more likely to participate in decision-making processes. The total number of milch animals has a positive correlation with participation, suggesting that women with more milch animals are more likely to participate in decision-making processes. Mass media exposure has a positive correlation with participation, indicating that women who have more exposure to mass media are more likely to participate in decision-making processes.

The results suggest that factors such as age, education, family size, family type, the total number of milch animals, and mass media exposure play a role in determining the extent of rural farm women's participation in decision-making processes related to animal husbandry activities.

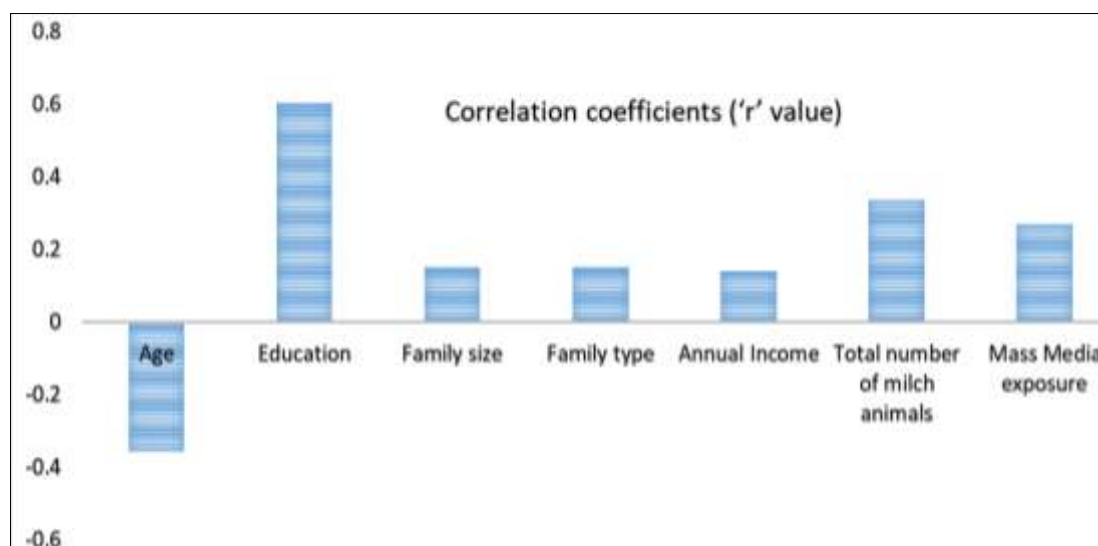


Fig 3: Relationship between participation of rural women in decision-making process of animal husbandry activities

Conclusion

This research paper sheds light on the involvement of rural women in decision-making processes related to animal husbandry practices. The study has provided valuable insights into the extent of participation and the factors influencing rural women's involvement in decision-making. The findings highlight the significance of socio-economic factors such as age, education, family size, family type, annual income, total number of milch animals, and mass media exposure in shaping the level of participation. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies that promote the active engagement of rural women in decision-making.

The results also reveal variations in participation levels across different animal husbandry practices. Identifying areas with low participation, such as breeding practices or marketing practices, can guide efforts to empower rural women and enhance their involvement in these specific areas.

Promoting the active participation of rural women in decision-making processes is essential for achieving sustainable agricultural development and rural empowerment. By involving women in the decision-making process, their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences can be harnessed to develop more effective and inclusive strategies for animal husbandry practices.

The implications of this research extend beyond the study region, providing valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working in the field of rural development and gender empowerment. By recognizing the role of rural women in decision-making and addressing the socio-economic barriers they face, we can foster a more equitable and sustainable agricultural sector.

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