



Gender Differences in Work Participation and Decision Making in Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Activities in Sikkim

Kesang Wangmo Bhutia

Department of Economics, Sikkim Government College, Gyalshing, West Sikkim, India

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyses the gender differences in work participation and decision making in agricultural and non-agricultural activities in Sikkim. A comprehensive survey was undertaken by using multi stage random sampling method to collect data from four different villages in Sikkim viz. Upper Legship village from Rabong block, South district comprising of 46 households; Bop village from Chungthang block, North district containing 25 households; Nazitam village from Martam block, East district constituting of 79 households and Lagay village from Gyalshing block, West district comprising of 62 households. It was found that women in the sample villages in Sikkim participated in agricultural as well as non-agricultural activities at par with her male counterpart. There was not a single activity, which was absolutely dominated by male or female in the agricultural sector however slight variation was observed in work participation. Ploughing, the activity, which in earlier times, were completely dominated by men had been taken up by the women in few pockets as per the survey report undertaken by the researcher. On the other hand, insignificant variation was found in gender work participation in the livestock economy; in non-agricultural activities, there was an enormous gender division of work which was not a good representation. While observing the gender decision making in agriculture, livestock/animal husbandry and in general, religious, social and family affairs, it was governed by men except in child's education, child nurturing, house decoration and in taking marriage decision it was controlled by the women. Better education system focusing on girl's education would help in reducing such gaps. Awareness and training programmes from government's side would add to its advantage.

1. Introduction

With the prevailing system of sex stratification and patriarchal values in the society, women's work and economic contributions are viewed as non-essential and as auxiliary to men's work, though majority of the women are farmers who make agricultural decisions, who do most of the agricultural work and who grow most of the food as their male counterpart migrate to work in mines and construction sites (Constantina Safilios 1985). Women being active participants in the farm production system of North-West hill regions of India, they fully participate in decision-making regarding choice of crops, livestock, credit and farm inputs. In most cases the decision is characterized by family consultation. However, women generally play a greater role in decisions about how much produce is to be stored for

family use over the year ahead and how much is to be sold (Bhati and Singh 1987).

In the North East regions of India, the Mishings women dominated by patriarchal system perform number of works both at home and in the fields (Medhi and Birichi 2009). They do hard labour equal to those of men rather sometimes more than men. Womenfolk perform almost all the work but they have no right to give decision in serious matters inside the house. So, they have less decision-making power in the family matters. They have no right to inherit property. Though women play an important role in every dimension of the society but the multidimensional role played by them in the society are not understood, recognized or acknowledged by the other members of the society (Medhi and Birichi 2009).

*Corresponding author: kesang1319@gmail.com

In Sikkim, female participation dominance has been seen in most of the activities like feeding of animals, watering of animals, milking and milk disposal, which show the frequency of gender wise participation in different activities. They do participate in decision making of selling of milk/poultry items but dominance of men has been found in decision making of selection of breed of animals, purchasing/selling of livestock and procurement of dry fodder from the market. The main reason behind this is that women have little access to market, so, market related activities remain under men's control and hence, women have been deprived of getting real benefits from livestock. Male participation dominance has been seen in the activities like vaccination and visits to animal hospitals, breeding of animals and health care of animals. (Dwivedy 2014). The lack of cattle ownership and equal access to land and other production resources have made women poor and socio-economically insecure (Dwivedy 2014).

Rural women performed functions which were both critical and burden-some and they spend 10 to 12 hours per day on household chores, cooking, child care etc., the labour which lacked economic value and hence their contributions remained invisible (Mukherjee 1993; Gopalan 1987). Tiwari (1997) discovered that during the 19th century, it was not a commonly accepted idea that women should go out to earn for the family, but gradually such restrictions lost because of increasing economic pressure and increase in the cost of living. Lollen (2009) revealed that apart from agriculture the people in the Zirdin village in West Siang District in Arunachal Pradesh practiced different types of activities like hunting, fishing, trapping, domestication of animals, handloom and handicraft, collection of forest product etc. to supplement their subsistence. Some people of the village engaged themselves in business and contract work and many of them were also absorbed in the government services as in the study area. There was no specialization of the occupation and every household was a production unit of different items. One man can be engaged in different activities at the same time such as agriculture and other activities like hunting, fishing, domestication of animals, handicraft and handloom etc. The village represented mixed economy. Every household member is engaged in various types of agricultural activities leading to division of labour in agriculture on the basis of age, sex and social norms.

Women comprises 43 percent of the world's agricultural labour force but do not have access and control over all land and productive resources (Nisha Meena 2018). Women perform both economic and non-economic activities within families which most of the time remain invisible (Desai Neera et. al. 2001). Gender differences in work participation and decision making in agricultural activities exist in Sikkim, India (Dwivedy 2014), which is why the

researcher has taken up the present study. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to find the gender differences in work participation and decision making in agricultural and non-agricultural activities in Sikkim.

2. Materials and Methods

The study is solely based on primary sources. The primary data and information were collected from the study area comprising of 212 households. A comprehensive survey was undertaken by using multi stage random sampling method to collect data from four different villages in Sikkim. So, for the study, first state of Sikkim was selected and then categorized into four districts viz., - South, North, East and West. Each district was again divided into blocks namely, Rabong, Chunthang, Martam and Gyalsing. Finally, one village from each block was selected to collect data for the study using complete enumeration method. The four sample villages were Upper Legship village from Rabong block comprising of 46 households, Bop village from Chungthang block consisting of 25 households, Nazitam village from Martam block comprising of 79 households and Lagay village from Gyalshing block containing 62 households. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, graphical and tabular representation. The statistical software namely Microsoft Excel 2010 had been used for processing, analyzing and finally interpretation of the primary data.

3. Results and Discussion

The Table 1 below shows gender participation in cultivation in the study area. Slight variations are found across the sample villages and across gender in the work participation in the agricultural sector. Even in activities like sowing, weeding, harvesting, threshing and winnowing both male and female participate at par with each other. In plantation crops, male overtakes female marginally while equal participation is observed in the kitchen garden. The outcome is quite motivating which gives an idea that gender differences in work participation in agricultural sector can be eliminated in the near future with government interference and mass awareness.

In Bopp village, ploughing is totally absent due to its rugged terrain as said by the respondents and the concerned panchayat therein. While observing the gender participation in activity such as ploughing in other three sample villages, though it is male dominated, the optimistic scenario is that in recent times, nearly 8 to 9 percent women have started participating in it overcoming the taboo. The participation rate of women in this field can be enhanced through trainings and awareness programmes

Table 1. Gender Work Participation in Cultivation

Work Participation in Cultivation	Sample Village												All		
	Upper Legship			Bopp			Nazitam			Lagay					
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Ploughing	41	09		00	00		76	03		72	00		189	12	
	82%	18%	50			00	96%	4%	79	100%		72	94%	6%	201
Sowing	55	58		43	32		121	102		99	99		318	296	
	49%	51%	113	57%	43%	75	54%	46%	223	50%	50%	198	52%	48%	614
Weeding	55	61		44	34		119	102		100	104		318	301	
	47%	53%	116	56%	44%	78	54%	46%	221	49%	51%	204	51%	49%	619
Harvesting	55	59		45	31		128	109		100	103		328	302	
	48%	52%	114	59%	41%	76	54%	46%	237	49%	51%	203	52%	48%	630
Threshing & winnowing	55	57		45	32		113	100		96	102		309	291	
	49%	51%	112	58%	42%	77	53%	47%	213	48%	52%	198	52%	49%	600
Working in plantation crops	55	50		44	26		47	42		73	64		219	182	
	52%	48%	105	63%	37%	70	53%	47%	89	53%	47%	137	55%	45%	401
Working in kitchen garden	55	60		52	41		113	111		110	113		330	325	
	48%	52%	115	56%	44%	93	50%	50%	224	49%	51%	223	50%	50%	655

Source: Field Survey and Interview, January-March, 2019

Table 2. Work Participation in the Livestock and Animal Husbandry

Work Participation in livestock & animal husbandry	Sample Village														
	Upper Legship			Bopp			Nazitam			Lagay			All		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Food & fodder; cleaning & feeding of animals	58 48%	62 52%	120	45 56%	35 44%	80	112 53%	100 47%	212	81 49%	84 51%	165	296 51%	281 49%	577
Grazing	56 48%	61 52%	117	40 56%	32 44%	72	99 51%	94 49%	193	81 49%	83 51%	164	276 51%	270 49%	546
Milking & egg collection	37 47%	41 53%	78	40 53%	36 47%	76	47 48%	50 52%	97	55 47%	63 53%	118	179 49%	190 51%	369
Selling of products: Household premises	54 47%	61 53%	115	35 51%	34 49%	69	76 45%	94 55%	170	52 51%	50 49%	102	217 48%	239 52%	456
Selling of products: Outside	42 49%	43 51%	85	19 58%	14 42%	33	14 54%	12 46%	26	48 71%	20 29%	68	123 58%	89 42%	212
Health care and breeding	44 51%	42 49%	86	32 62%	20 38%	52	83 50%	84 50%	167	49 57%	37 43%	86	208 53%	183 47%	391

Source: Field Survey and Interview, January-March, 2019

Table 3. Work Participation in the Non-Agricultural Activities

Work participation in non-agricultural activities	SAMPLE VILLAGE														
	Upper Legship			Bopp			Nazitam			Lagay			All		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Household & cottage industry	01 100%	00	01	00	00	00	05 62.5%	03 37.5%	08	04 80%	01 20%	05	10 71%	04 29%	14
Shops & restaurants	02 50%	02 50%	04	01 20%	04 80%	05	12 36%	21 64%	33	00	08 100%	08	15 30%	35 70%	50
Preparation of beverages	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01 100%	01	00	00	00	00	01 100%	01
Preparation of food products	00	00	00	00	01 100%	01	06 32%	13 68%	19	00	07 100%	07	06 22%	21 78%	27
Preparation of wood products	00	00	00	00	00	00	04 100%	00	04	01 50%	01 50%	02	05 83%	01 17%	06
Preparation of decorative items & souvenir	00	00	00	00	00	00	06 60%	04 40%	10	01 11%	08 89%	09	07 37%	12 63%	19
Homestay	00	00	00	00	00	00	01 100%	00	01	03 100%	00	03	04 100%	00	04
Transport	03 100%	00	03	03 100%	00	03	16 100%	00	16	05 100%	00	05	27 100%	00	27

Source: Field Survey and Interview, January - March 2019.

Table 4. Gender Decision Making in Agriculture

Gender participation & decision making in agriculture	Sample Village														
	Upper Legship			Bopp			Nazitam			Lagay			All		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Selection of crops of the season to be sown	45	43	88	29	20	49	76	66	142	58	45	103	208	174	382
	51%	49%		59%	41%		54%	46%		56%	44%		54%	46%	
Selection of harvesting time	44	42	86	30	20	50	77	67	144	58	46	104	209	175	384
	51%	49%		60%	40%		53%	47%		56%	44%		54%	46%	
Purchase of agricultural equipments	44	41	85	31	19	50	81	63	144	62	38	100	215	161	376
	52%	48%		62%	38%		56%	44%		62%	38%		57%	43%	
Selection and procurement of fertilizer	45	42	87	30	16	46	81	68	149	59	43	102	215	169	384
	52%	48%		65%	35%		54%	46%		58%	42%		56%	44%	
Selection and procurement of seeds	46	43	89	32	21	53	78	67	145	58	43	101	214	174	388
	52%	48%		60%	40%		54%	46%		57%	43%		55%	45%	
Selling of crops/cereals/vegetables	47	45	92	38	29	67	73	67	140	70	61	131	228	202	430
	51%	49%		57%	43%		52%	48%		53%	47%		53%	47%	

Source: Field Survey and Interview, January - March 2019.

Table 5. Gender Decision Making in Livestock and Animal Husbandry

Gender participation & decision making in livestock and animal husbandry	Sample Village														
	Upper Legship			Bopp			Nazitam			Lagay			All		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Purchasing and selling of livestock	43	44	87	31	20	51	78	56	134	45	39	84	197	159	356
	49%	51%		61%	39%		58%	42%		54%	46%		55%	45%	
Selection of breed of animals	44	43	87	32	19	51	81	55	136	46	35	81	203	152	355
	51%	49%		63%	37%		60%	40%		57%	43%		57%	43%	
Storage of green fodder for lean period	49	50	99	25	19	44	90	63	153	71	66	137	235	198	433
	49%	51%		57%	43%		59%	41%		52%	48%		54%	46%	
Selling of surplus dry fodder	04	02	06	02	01	03	23	11	34	02	00	02	31	14	45
	67%	33%		67%	33%		68%	32%		100%			69%	31%	
Procurement of dry fodder from the market	45	42	87	29	20	49	81	49	130	51	25	76	206	136	342
	52%	48%		59%	41%		62%	38%		67%	33%		60%	40%	
Selling of green fodder in the market	03	02	05	00	00	00	14	12	26	01	01	02	18	15	33
	60%	40%					54%	46%		50%	50%		55%	45%	
Selling of milk and poultry items	37	35	72	35	32	67	34	32	66	46	44	90	152	143	295
	51%	49%		52%	48%		52%	48%		51%	49%		52%	48%	

Source: Field Survey and Interview, January - March 2019.

Table 6. Gender Decision Making in General, Religious, Social and Family Affairs

Work participation in general, religious, social and family affairs	Sample Village														
	Upper Legship			Bopp			Nazitam			Lagay			All		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Selling and purchasing of land	34 52%	32 48%	66	32 62%	20 38%	52	42 55%	35 45%	77	60 56%	48 44%	108	168 55%	135 45%	303
Education	32 44%	41 56%	73	26 54%	22 46%	48	82 49%	84 51%	166	56 51%	54 49%	110	196 49%	201 51%	397
Nurturing Children	29 41%	41 59%	70	26 53%	23 47%	49	78 47%	87 53%	165	54 50%	54 50%	108	187 48%	205 52%	392
Health	32 44%	40 56%	72	26 53%	23 47%	49	112 50%	113 50%	225	57 51%	55 49%	112	227 50%	231 50%	458
Marketing of household goods	45 51%	44 49%	89	30 54%	26 46%	56	72 52%	66 48%	138	67 57%	51 43%	118	214 53%	187 47%	401
Celebrations of festivals	42 48%	45 52%	87	26 57%	20 43%	46	112 52%	105 48%	217	62 52%	58 48%	120	242 51%	228 49%	470
Celebrations of religious festivals	38 47%	43 53%	81	26 57%	20 43%	46	110 51%	106 49%	216	60 51%	58 49%	118	234 51%	227 49%	461
Decoration	15 20.5%	58 79.5%	73	21 37.5%	35 62.5%	56	41 26%	116 74%	157	25 19%	109 81%	134	102 24%	318 76%	420
Marriage decision	37 50%	37 50%	74	23 50%	23 50%	46	57 47.5%	63 52.5%	120	51 50%	52 50%	103	168 49%	175 51%	343
Social and political participation	48 50%	48 50%	96	32 52%	29 48%	61	109 51%	103 49%	212	88 49%	93 51%	181	277 50%	273 50%	550

Source: Field Survey and Interview, January - March 2019.

The Table 2 above shows gender participation in the livestock/animal husbandry in the study area. A small difference in work participation in the livestock activity is observed across the sample villages and between the males and the females. In Upper Legship and Lagay village, participation of the female is more in activity like cleaning and feeding the animals whereas in Bopp and Nazitam village it is just the opposite. In grazing activity, female participation is somewhat greater in Upper Legship and Lagay village while in Bopp and Naziatm village male outshines. On an average it is found that in activity such as milking, egg collection and selling of products in household premises, female counterpart supersedes the male while in case of selling of products outside and in health care and breeding it is subjugated by the males.

From the above analysis, it is found that women are deprived from engaging in activities which require her movement away from home. While interacting with the respondent, it was found that in some cases, their male counterpart does not allow them due to their suspicious outlook and in other cases it was the lack of education and confidence among the womenfolk which discouraged them from taking part in such activity.

The Table 3 shows gender participation in the non-agricultural activities in the study area. It is seen that in certain activity males outshine while in some occupation female overwhelms. Here in the study area, it is discovered that male colleagues outperform the females in responsibilities such as household and cottage industry, preparation of wood products, homestay and transport while the female associates surpasses the male collaborators in activities connected with shops and restaurants, preparation of beverages, preparation of food products, preparation of decorative items and souvenir. The results are quite disappointing. Huge gender differences occur in the non-agricultural activities in the study area. This is again due to illiteracy, lack of awareness and training, and lack of confidence among the women in the study area.

Gender Decision Making in Agricultural Activities and Societal Affairs

The participation of women in decision making pertaining to farming, village meetings, selling of crops and purchase of animals, orchard plantation and purchase of durables in the two villages from two districts of Odisha viz., Nuasasana and Madhusudanpur were very low (Trivedi 2009). Mishings women perform almost all the work at home and outside but they have no right to give decision in serious matters inside the house. They have less decision-making power in the family matters. (Medhi and Birichi 2009).

Sikkim's women do participate in decision making of selling of milk/poultry items but dominance of men has

been found in decision making of selection of breed of animals, purchasing/selling of livestock and procurement of dry fodder from the market. (Dwivedy 2014).

The Table 4 above discusses on the gender participation and decision-making in agriculture in the study area. It is found that in all the areas whether it is selection of crops of the season to be sown or selection of harvesting time or purchase of agricultural equipment's or selection and procurement of fertilizer or selection and procurement of seeds or selling of crops/cereals/vegetables, men control it though women also participate but her participation is lesser than her counterpart. The reason for such inequality in the study area is due to the existence of patriarchy society which can be eradicated through female education and mass awareness.

The Table 5 above shows gender participation and decision-making in livestock and animal husbandry in the study area. It is learnt that variations occur across the sample villages. In Upper Legship village specifically in making decisions concerning purchasing and selling of the animals and in storage of green fodder for lean period, the female overtakes the male counterpart. The result is quite convincing and, in the days, to come, the other sample villages may also show an upward trend in this field. But on an average, it is seen that men are more participating than the women in decision-making in areas like purchasing and selling of livestock, selection of breed of animals, storage of green fodder for lean period, selling of surplus dry fodder, procurement of dry fodder from the market, selling of green fodder in the market and selling of milk and poultry items.

The Table 6 above discusses on the gender participation and decision making in general, religious, social and family affairs in the study area. In selling and purchasing of land, marketing of household goods, celebrations of festivals and in celebrations of religious festivals male participation in decision making is greater than the female. This is because of the patriarchy society which can be removed through female education and awareness. Equal participation in decision making is observed in health sector and in social and political affairs. Women's participation in decision-making is higher than the menfolk in child's education, child nurturing, house decoration and in taking marriage decision in the family.

This is a positive finding and an indicator to train both men and women accordingly since health, education and political affairs are the backbone of a progressive society.

4. Conclusion

Women in the sample villages in Sikkim participated in agricultural as well as non-agricultural activities at par with her male counterpart. There was not a single activity, which was absolutely dominated by male or female. Ploughing, the activity, which in earlier times, were completely dominated

by men had been taken up by the women in few pockets as per the survey report undertaken by the researcher. It is a positive indication, indeed a success of the women in removing the taboo associated with it and a healthier revolution that will surely lead to a just society where gender division of work does not exist. Therefore, to encourage more women farmers to take up those activities dominated by the males and to eradicate gender division of work, it is very important from the part of the government to conduct relevant awareness and training programmes to uplift those women.

An insignificant variation was found in gender work participation in the livestock economy in the study area. The government can eradicate this problem through various awareness and training programmes targeting the womenfolk.

In non-agricultural activities, there was an enormous gender division of work, which was not a good representation. In activities like preparation of beverages it was absolutely controlled by women while in activities like homestay and transport, it was completely dominated by men. The participation of the women was greater in some activities like operating shops and restaurants, preparing food products, preparing decorative items and souvenir. On the other hand, men's involvement in household and cottage industry and in preparing wood products was greater than women. Such huge gender differences in work are not a healthy scenario. Hence, the government should come up with policies that will favour women to take up activities that was totally male dominated and vice versa. Similarly, awareness and training programme will help in achieving gender equality with greater contribution that will further help in enhancing the economy of the state. The rural women should be given opportunity to take up occupations in transportation and hospitality services which have better economic prospect in the state. For this, the Government should take initiative in framing policy that will favour her and boost her morale and self-confidence to take up such activity.

While observing the gender decision making in agriculture, livestock/animal husbandry and in general, religious, social and family affairs, it was governed by men. Women were deprived from engaging in activities which require her movement away from home. As per the information from the respondent, it was found that in some cases, their male counterpart does not allow them due to their suspicious outlook and in other cases it was the lack of education and confidence among the womenfolk which discouraged them from taking part in such activity. In activities related to child's education, child nurturing, house decoration and in taking marriage decision it was controlled by the women. Better education system focusing on girl's education would help in reducing such gaps.

A mentally, intellectually and economically sound mother can lead to a progressive society since a child's health and education depends on the mother's input on him/her as it is understood from the findings in the study. These qualities in women can be enhanced further through various awareness and training programmes and appropriate policies focusing on economic and social empowerment of a women for which the government and the NGO's should take proper initiatives.

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