Economic Role of Women: A Systematic Analysis of Women Income Generating Activities in Rural Areas of Pakistan

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Abstract: Income is the very important part for women’s social welfare. Development programs provide sources for earning money. Rural women are engaged in different agriculture activities to earn money. Pakistan is an agrarian country and agriculture is the basic pillar of the economy. Rural women play a vital role in several fields of life. The Village women of Pakistan are the part of livestock activities. Women are participating in different types of activities like milking, watering, cleaning and caring of animals, feeding and cleaning of sheds to generate income in order to uplift the standards of living. Pakistan’s current population is about 180 million. Such an alarming growth rate will be damaging to an emergent country like Pakistan to make progress. Women represent the 50% of the population. Women population should actively participate in boosting the economy. The ratio of women is increasing day by day, so there is a need to involve them in income generating activities. A key objective of the present study was to search the kind of women's income generating activities in which women take part in the villages and check out the level of involvement of women in those income generating activities. In present scenario, feminization of livestock has been occurred in Pakistan. The present study was conducted in rural areas of district Faisalabad. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents were said that their income had a significant impact on their socioeconomic status. A significant majority of the respondents was performing agricultural activities, while rural women were also involved in stitching of clothes.

Key words: Agricultural Activities • Faisalabad • Livestock • Socioeconomic Status • Feminization

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is an agriculture country where 62% population lives in rural areas and depends upon agriculture [1]. Availability of financial assistance is very significant for any income generating activity. In Pakistan there are two sectors that mainly provide financial assistance, the informal sector and the formal sector. In informal sector women are dependent on financial support of local money lenders on high interest rate [2]. Another informal source of financial assistance is traders of local market. A large majority of skilled women are captive in the hands of these dealers, who exploit their skills and their labor. Some mediators are also working in this context who pay to these rural women less than the market rate and manage the sale of their product in urban areas at a higher price [3]. Livestock play an important role in the development. More than 70% of rural people own livestock [4]. Rural women of Pakistan are also involved in livestock activities. Watering, feeding, milking, cleaning and caring of animals, cleaning of sheds, product sales and manure collection were identified as the main responsibilities of rural women. Women are also essentially involved in post-harvest and storage related activities [5]. Many social scientists believe that poverty in developing countries could be coped with investment on women development and their empowerment. Faisalabad is an industrial city; agriculture could not contribute towards poverty alleviation. Most of the females were engaged in income generating activities i.e. agriculture and handicraft and working at industries. In this regards participation of the women in income generating activities could be an effective tool to reduce poverty and hunger, reduce violence, improve child nutrition and ensure access to better health and education facilities.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Pakistan is an agriculture country and agriculture is considered backbone in Pakistan’s economy. Most of the population of Pakistan are living in rural areas and belongs to the agriculture profession. Present study was conducted in rural areas of Faisalabad. Faisalabad is the third largest metropolis in Pakistan and formerly known as Lyallpur. Due to textile industries, it is also known as “Manchester” of Pakistan. Faisalabad is divided into eight towns administratively. In agriculture sector, rural areas of Faisalabad have 52% contribution in exports. Females are performing various activities in agriculture and a feminization of agriculture has been occurred in Pakistan. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for data collection. At the first stage one town was selected from the four towns through simple random sampling technique. At the second stage two union councils were selected through randomly sampling technique. At the third stage 4 villages (two from each UC) were be selected simple random sampling technique. At the last stage a sample of 140 female’s respondents was selected according to the proportion of the population of the village through snow boll sampling technique. A well-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. Questionnaire was based on open ended, close ended and contingency questions. Collected data were analyzed through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of data and interpretation of results are the most important steps in scientific research. Without these steps generalization and prediction cannot be achieved, which is the target of scientific research. Generalization and conclusion are drawn because of characteristics and attitudes of the respondents.

Table 1 reflects that only 12.1 percent of the respondents had no earner female family members, while a large majority i.e. 74.3 percent of the respondents had one earner female member and 13.6 percent of the respondents had two earner female members in their family.

Table 2 indicates that only 8.6 percent of the respondents were spending 1-4 hours in income generating activities, while little more than a half i.e. 52.9 percent of them were spending 5-8 hours and 38.6 percent of the respondents were spending more than 8 hours in income generating activities.

The information recorded in Table 3 describes the ranking of agricultural activity based on their participation level. Harvesting, binding, fodder cutting, feeding and carrying of livestock and vegetable picking, sowing, selling were the most participated agricultural activities, with the rank order 1 to 5, respectively. While cleaning shelters, milking, cleaning of grain, food preservation,
dung cakes, collecting fodder, sowing and storage of feed, threshing had the rank order 6th to 14th, respectively. Whereas making animals sheds, spreading chemicals, selling products, seed partition, preparation concentrates and processing milking had rank order 15th to 20th respectively on the basis of performing agricultural activities. Grazing, treating sick animals, bathing the animals, converting manure to fuel, hatching of eggs, slaughtering, any other and poultry care had 21st to 28th rank order, respectively. Similar conclusions were found by [6-10]. They found that the women participation in different types of activities like milking, watering, cleaning and caring of animals, feeding and cleaning of sheds. Women are also involved in other agriculture function like harvesting, fodder cutting, sowing seeds, storage of grain, handling and processing of milk product.

CONCLUSION

Women’s status can be improved by making them ‘earning’ family members. Women who participate directly in economic activities can expect a higher status within the household than those women whose activities are confined primarily to housework. A woman plays an important role in building the societies on better and stronger bases. Most of the women in rural areas faced double burden of outside and domestic work. They have the first to rise and last go to the bad. They wake up before sun and then women are engaged in family chores and then she spends her time at family farms. When other members are enjoying the life women are busy in work. Pakistan’s current population is 180 million. Such an alarming growth rate will be damaging for the emergent country like Pakistan to make progress.

Suggestions:

- Govt. should promote the role of women in livestock through education. It is dire need of the time that awareness among masses must be created regarding the role of women in society. Govt. has already started gender reforms action plan but it is needed that effectiveness of this program must reach at rural level.
- A sound infrastructure development like clean drinking water, sanitation, electrification, schools and hospitals would change the fate of desert women.
- Women agricultural agent should be appointed to address rural women and to bridge the information gap between rural women and research.
- The role of rural women should be promoted through print and electronic media.
- There is need to encourage women to join hands in furthering the adoption of modern agricultural practices and to farm and strengthen livestock cooperatives and group ventures.

REFERENCES