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Transforming agriculture through rural women's participation in Farmers interest group

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Abstract

Rural livelihoods are based on agriculture. Agricultural operations depend on rural women. Despite their vital contributions, they often faced challenges in gaining access to markets, technology, training and resources. Farmers Interest Groups (FIGs) are an efficient way to deal with these problems by promoting collective action, information sharing, and capacity building. By actively engaging in FIGs, rural women enhance their agricultural skills, get access to improved farming practices, strengthen their market contacts, and gain more negotiating power. The study looks into the participation of rural women through the farmers' interest group. The All India Coordinated Research Project on Women in Agriculture (AICRP-WIA) was creating FIGs in Jhadol Panchayat Samiti, which was situated in the Udaipur district. As per data information collected from AICRP staff, a total of ten female FIGs were made in various Jhadol Panchayat Samiti villages. Ten to twelve members in each FIGs had drawn, so there was a total of 102 members. A systematic interview schedule was used to gather the data, which was then analysed using frequency, percentage, and mean percent score.

Keywords: Farmers interest group (FIG), rural women, Agriculture, self-help group (SHG), livelihood

1. Introduction

In the field of agriculture and the growth of rural economies, women are crucial. They work in a variety of jobs as labourers, farmers, and business owners. The majority of agri-technologies may improve rural women's access to structured markets and cooperatives, generate new job possibilities, and greatly boost the productivity and efficacy of rural women-owned businesses (Thakur, 2023). Food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable rural development all depend on rural women's involvement in agricultural operations. Globally, women make up a sizable fraction of the agricultural labour force, and their participation has several advantages. But they frequently encounter gender-specific obstacles that prevent them from fully participating (Duwa bin Khoja, 2021) ^[2]. In their efforts to provide food for their family, they encounter several obstacles (Karaya *et al.*, 2013) ^[5]. Farmers Interest Group (FIG) is an autonomous, self-governing association of farmers with a common objective and passion (Kriti *et al.*, 2023) ^[6]. The Women Farmers Group was formed to improve the ability of farmers and their families in agriculture (Wulandari and Kusumaningrum, 2024) ^[15]. The development of women farmers in rural areas is fostered through a group forum (Rustini *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. Activities

such as vocational training, joint business ventures, and savings groups significantly contribute to household income and women's economic independence (Suigarto *et al.*, 2025). Women's participation in socio-economic development at the local level is important and strategic because women have two roles as actors in developing a household by taking care of children and helping in the family economy (Windiasih *et al.*, 2023) ^[14]. However, there is ongoing discussion over their importance, potential, and efficacy in enhancing the rural economy generally and women's empowerment specifically. Enhancing access to market information systems, bolstering internal cooperative governance, and removing structural, financial, and physical obstacles that hinder interest in and participation in cooperatives are all crucial (Shrestha *et al.*, 2024) ^[11]. Therefore, this research focuses on analysing the participation of women farmers (Manullang, 2023) ^[8] which will work as a transformation for agriculture and its related activities. In the article, we will be highlighting that active participation is very important for rural women in farmers' interest groups for their livelihood security.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the participation of rural women through

farmers interest group.

2. Methodology

An exploratory research method was adopted for the study, wherein the sample comprised 102 respondents, i.e. Jhadol Panchayat Samiti, which was located in the Udaipur district, where the All India Coordinated Research Project on Women in Agriculture (AICRP-WIA) were developing FIGs. As per data obtained from AICRP staff, a total of ten female FIGs were made in various Jhadol Panchayat Samiti villages. Ten to twelve members in each FIG had drawn, so there was a total of 102 members. The data was collected through a structured interview schedule, which included their participation level in different FIG activities on three continuums, i.e. low, medium and high. The data was analysed using frequency, percentage and Mean percent score.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Participation of rural women through farmers interest group

Participation refers to the active involvement of individuals in collaborative efforts to solve problems in any situation. This section represents the active participation of rural women through Farmers interest group and they are as follows:

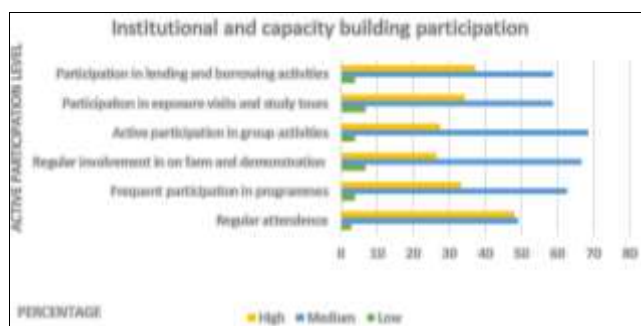


Fig 1: Distribution of the respondents according to institutional and capacity building participation

The data on institutional and capacity-building participation, depicted in Figure 1, shows that 58.82 per cent of the respondents participated in lending and borrowing activities. This shows that respondents had better participation in this activity and utilised the financial services willingly. More than half of the respondents (58.82%) participated in exposure visits and study tours. This enhances their experiential learning activities but efforts should be made to increase the participation of the respondents. More than two-thirds (68.62%) actively participated in group activities, which represents their high level of participation in knowledge sharing capacity building and strengthening their social networks. Nearly two-thirds (66.66%) of the respondents had participated in regular involvement in on-farm demonstrations. Additionally, 62.74 per cent of the respondents had frequently participated in programmes. 49.01 per cent of the respondents had participated in regular attendance, which represents their low level of participation and need to develop some strategies so that respondents attend their meeting regularly.

(Mathuabirami and Kalaivani, 2021) [9], Results showed that

majority of tribal FIG members recommended that the government or other funding organisations provide financial resources (76.00%), that all members participate in group activities (73.00%), and that all FIG members receive training (70.00%).

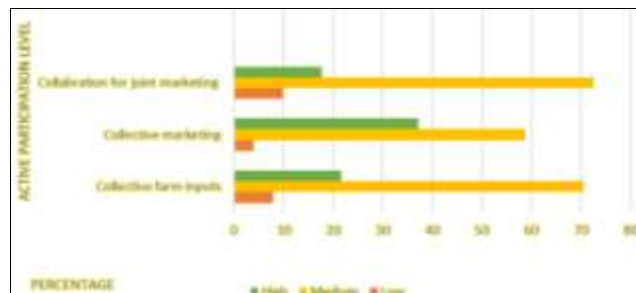


Fig 2: Distribution of respondents according to collective economic activities

Figure 2 gives data regarding their collective economic activities. More than half of the respondents (72.04%) had participated in collaboration for joint marketing, which indicated a high level of participation and recognised benefit of working together. 58.82 per cent of the respondents had participated in collective marketing, which reflects an improvement in their market practices. However, there is scope to improve their cooperative practices. More than half of the respondents (70.58%) had participated in collective farm inputs.

(Dande and Kalegaonkar, 2025) [3], suggested that national goals like the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the results show that SHG involvement greatly enhances income diversification, soil and water management, crop rotation, and biodiversity protection. Additionally, SHGs have built social capital in rural areas, enhanced decision-making, and empowered women.

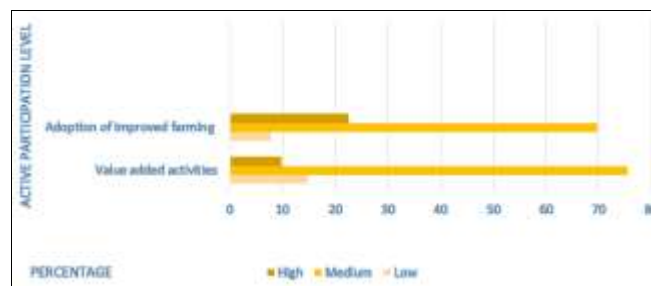


Fig 3: Distribution of respondents according to agriculture development activities

Figure 3 gives data regarding agricultural development activities in which the more than two third of the respondents (69.60%) had participated in the adoption of improved farming, which indicates their awareness regarding modern agricultural methods. Additionally, three-fourths of the respondents (75.49%) had participated in value-added activities which reflects their participation in making, processing, packaging and other form of value addition activities.

(Kumar *et al.*, 2023) [7] results showed that, in comparison to untreated farmers, FPO members had 2.11 per cent higher prices and 39.14 per cent greater yearly agricultural

revenue. FPO membership was heavily affected by a number of factors, including education, adherence to Good Agricultural Practices, farm experience, access to better inputs, and loans.

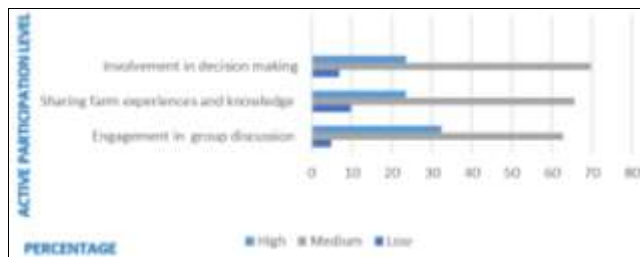


Fig 4: Distribution of respondents according to knowledge sharing and decision making

Figure 4 presents data regarding knowledge sharing and decision making in farmers interest group in which 69.60 per cent of the respondents had participated in involvement in decision making which indicates high level level of involvement in planning and managing the activities. Although, 65.68 per cent of respondents had participated in sharing farm experience and knowledge. Meanwhile, 62.74 per cent of the respondents had participated in group discussion activities.

(Goswamy and Kashyap, 2024) ^[4], The results of this study suggested that the effectiveness of swarm-intelligence-based group decision-making was influenced by seven important factors: decision impulse, conviction of the decision, engagement in the decision, decision duration, decision alignment, extent of participation, and real-time physical negotiation.



Fig 5: Distribution of respondents by their overall participation

Figure 5 represents the overall participation of the respondents in farmers' interest groups, in which 54.90 per cent of the respondents fall under the medium category, which represents their moderate level of participation in all activities, whereas 37.25 per cent of the respondents fall under the high category and 7.85 per cent of the respondents fall under the low category highlighting some interventions trainings, awareness programmes for better upliftment and providing equal opportunities for all respondents. The overall MPS is 60.71; it assesses the overall participation quantitatively and gives an overall interpretation of how respondents fall across FIG activities.

(Aduna and Woldeyes, 2023) ^[1], Findings revealed that the women have low, medium and high participation in cooperatives with 23.5, 60.8 and 15.7% respectively.

4. Conclusion

- More than two-thirds (68.62%) of the respondents had actively participated in group activities.
- Majority of the respondents (72.04%) had participated in collaboration and joint marketing activities.
- Three-fourths (75.49%) of the respondents had participated in value-added activities.
- 65.68 per cent of the respondents had participated in sharing farm experiences and knowledge.
- The overall MPS regarding participation is 60.71, which represents their activeness in FIG activities.

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