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Engagement of rural women's in dairy farming activities

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Abstract

The present study, "Participation of Rural Women in Dairy Farming," was conducted during 2024–26 in Akola and Barshitakli tehsils of Akola district, Maharashtra. An ex-post facto research design was adopted, and 120 rural women engaged in dairy farming were selected from eight villages. Data were collected through a pre-tested structured interview schedule and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and correlation analysis. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents belonged to the middle age group (44.17%), had higher secondary education (38.33%), possessed marginal landholdings (32.50%), and reported annual income above ₹4,50,000 (49.17%). Most respondents had up to 18 years of dairy farming experience (57.50%), belonged to families of 5–7 members (59.17%), and maintained herds of up to 11 animals (74.17%). Medium information access (59.17%), joint decision-making (76.67%), medium scientific orientation (65.83%) and medium market orientation (75.83%) were predominant, while 100.00 per cent had received no formal training. Active participation was highest in Nutrition and Food Security (85.00%), followed by Value Addition (66.67%) and Animal Care and Management (48.33%). Moderate participation predominated in Fodder Collection and Feed Preparation (55.83%) and Decision Making (57.50%). The study suggests strengthening need-based training, scientific guidance, veterinary services, information access, credit facilities and labour-saving technologies to enhance women's participation and empowerment in dairy farming.

Keywords: Rural women, dairy farming, participation, women empowerment, constraints, decision-making, scientific orientation

1. Introduction

Agriculture plays an important role in providing food, employment, and livelihood security to rural households in India. Dairy farming is an important component of agriculture and provides regular income, employment, and nutritional security, particularly for small and marginal farm families. It also serves as an important source of livelihood diversification in rural areas.

Rural women play a significant role in dairy farming and are involved in activities such as feeding and watering animals, cleaning cattle sheds, milking, fodder collection, calf care, and management of dairy animals. However, their contribution often remains unrecognized, particularly in decision-making, access to resources, technical knowledge, and control over income.

Women's participation in dairy farming is influenced by factors such as education, family size, availability of dairy animals, access to training, veterinary services, credit, and extension information. Understanding their involvement in different dairy activities is therefore important for improving productivity, income, and women's empowerment.

Despite their significant contribution, location-specific information on the extent and nature of rural women's participation in dairy farming remains limited. Such information can help Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), dairy development agencies, and policymakers develop suitable programmes for rural women.

In view of this, the present study was undertaken to assess the participation of rural women in dairy farming and to identify factors influencing their participation in various dairy farming activities.

2. Methodology

The present study was conducted in Akola district of Vidarbha region in Maharashtra state using an ex-post facto research design. Two blocks, namely Akola and Barshitakli, were purposively selected for the study. From each selected block, four villages were selected through simple random sampling. Further, 15 rural women from each selected village were selected by adopting a simple random sampling technique. The total sample comprised 120 rural women.

Data were collected through personal interviews using a structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The participation of rural women in dairy farming was measured on a three-point continuum comprising Active Participation, Moderate Participation, and No Participation, with scores of 2, 1, and 0, respectively. Mean scores were computed to assess and rank the level of participation of rural women in various dairy farming activities. The collected data were

analysed using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, and ranking.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile Characteristics of the Respondents

The profile characteristics of the respondents were studied using selected characteristics and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile characteristics of the respondents (n = 120)

Sr. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age (Years)	Young (Up to 35)	40	33.33
		Middle (36-50)	53	44.17
		Old (Above 50)	27	22.50
2.	Education	Illiterate	03	02.50
		Primary	06	05.00
		Middle School	16	13.33
		Secondary School	41	34.17
		Higher Secondary School	46	38.33
3.	Land holding (ha)	College and above	08	06.67
		Marginal (Up to 1.00)	39	32.50
		Small (1.01-2.00)	34	28.33
		Semi-medium (2.01-4.00)	32	26.67
		Medium (4.01-10.00)	11	09.17
4.	Annual income (₹)	Large (Above 10.00)	04	03.33
		Up to 2,20,000	34	28.33
		2,20,001-4,50,000	27	22.50
5.	Experience in dairy farming	Above 4,50,000	59	49.17
		Upto 18 years	69	57.50
		18-34 years	43	35.83
6.	Family size	Above 34 years	08	06.67
		Upto 4 members	28	23.33
		5 to 7 members	71	59.17
7.	Herd size	Above 7 members	21	17.50
		Upto 11 animals	89	74.17
		12 to 21 animals	18	15.00
8.	Time use pattern	Above 21 animals	13	10.83
		Upto 4 hr	39	32.50
		5 to 6 hr	30	25.00
9.	Source of information	Above 6 hr	51	42.50
		Low (<11)	30	25.00
		Medium (12 to 16)	71	59.17
10.	Training	High (>16)	19	15.83
		Training received	00	00.00
		Training not received	120	100.00
11.	Decision making	Self (upto 4)	12	10.00
		Jointly (5 to 9)	92	76.67
		Above 9	16	13.33
12.	Scientific orientation	Low (<13)	21	17.50
		Medium (14 to 18)	79	65.83
		High (>18)	20	16.67
13.	Market orientation	Low (<3)	26	21.67
		Medium (4 to 9)	91	75.83
		High > 9	30	02.50

The findings revealed that the majority of rural women participating in dairy farming belonged to the middle age group (36–50 years) (44.17%), had higher secondary education (38.33%), and possessed marginal land holdings (32.50%). A majority of the respondents had an annual income above ₹4,50,000 (49.17%) and up to 18 years of experience in dairy farming (57.50%). Further, most respondents belonged to the 5–7 members family size category (59.17%) and maintained a herd size of up to 11

animals (74.17%). Regarding time-use pattern, the majority spent more than 6 hours per day (42.50%) on dairy farming activities. A majority had a medium level of information access (59.17%), while 100.00 per cent had not received any formal training. Most respondents had joint decision-making (76.67%) rural women in dairy farming a medium level of scientific orientation (65.83%), and a medium level of market orientation (75.83%).

3.2. Participation of rural women in dairy farming

The findings indicate in table2 that rural women played a significant role in various dairy farming activities, although the level of participation varied across different dimensions. The highest active participation was observed in Nutrition and Food Security (85.00%) indicating that women had a major role in activities related to household nutrition and food security through dairy farming. This was followed by Value Addition, where 66.67 per cent of respondents showed active participation, highlighting women's important contribution to processing, value addition, and marketing of dairy products. In Animal Care and Management, 48.33 per cent of respondents had active participation, while 39.17 per cent had moderate participation. This indicates that women were substantially involved in the routine care and management of dairy animals. In Fodder Collection and Feed Preparation, the majority (55.83%) had moderate participation, followed by

24.17 per cent with active participation, suggesting that women contributed considerably to feeding-related activities. With respect to Decision Making, the majority of respondents (57.50%) had moderate participation while 40.83 per cent reported no participation and only 1.67 per cent had active participation. This indicates that, despite women's substantial involvement in physical dairy activities, their participation in decision-making was comparatively limited. In Labour and Support, 48.33 per cent of respondents had moderate participation, whereas 32.50 per cent had active participation. Regarding Social and Economic Empowerment, 38.33 per cent of respondents had moderate participation, followed by 35.00 per cent with active participation and 26.67 per cent with no participation. In other dairy-related activities, the majority (62.50%) had moderate participation, while 35.00 per cent had active participation.

Table 2: Participation of rural women in dairy farming

Sr. No.	Participation of rural women in dairy activities	Active participation		Moderate participation		No participation	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1.	Animal care & management	58	48.33	47	39.17	15	12.50
2.	Fodder Collection & Feed Preparation	29	24.17	67	55.83	24	20.00
3.	Value Addition	80	66.67	30	25.00	10	08.33
4.	Nutrition & Food Security	107	85.00	12	14.17	01	00.83
5.	Decision Making	02	01.67	69	57.50	49	40.83
6.	Labour & Support	39	32.50	58	48.33	23	19.17
7.	Social & Economic Empowerment	42	35.00	46	38.33	32	26.67
8.	Other.	42	35.00	75	62.50	03	02.50

4. Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that rural women play an important and substantial role in dairy farming. Their contribution is particularly evident in activities related to nutrition and food security, value addition, and animal care and management. Women are also considerably involved in fodder collection, feed preparation, labour support, and other routine dairy-related activities. However, their role in decision-making and social and economic empowerment is comparatively limited. Thus, the findings suggest that rural women contribute significantly to the day-to-day functioning of dairy farming, but their participation needs to be strengthened in areas involving decision-making, access to resources, technical knowledge, and economic empowerment. Greater opportunities for training, capacity building, institutional support, and market access can help enhance their overall participation and strengthen their role in dairy farming and household livelihood improvement.

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