

# Decision Making style of Farm Women: a critical analysis

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## Abstract

*This study examines the constraints experienced by farm women while participating in decision making and the nature and extent of participation of farm women in decision making on farming. The constraints reported by the respondents are of varied types and intensity. The findings revealed that lack of time, lack of knowledge / information, poor economic status of the family, lack of adequate help and support, secondary status of women in family, and fear of failure were the important constraints faced by them. Majority of the farm women had medium level of participation in decision making on farming.*

## Introduction

Women constitute nearly fifty per cent of the population in India. Despite the legal and constitutional provisions for equal status, they have been traditionally put in a weak position in Indian society and have a subordinate role to play. In spite of this fact, women share most of the family responsibilities and perform a wide range of duties on the farm and in the home.

The contribution of farm women in the decision making process is roughly estimated to be 50 to 60 per cent in our country. The farm operations in which women are engaged include application of manure, land preparation, seed grading, sowing, dibbling, planting, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, weeding, thinning, harvesting, threshing, shelling, hulling, winnowing, cleaning, storing grains, feeding the cattle, looking after milch animals and poultry, kitchen gardening etc.

In fact, in every aspect of life; profession etc., the decision taken at an appropriate time has its impact on the success of any endeavor. Achievement of the family goal depends upon effective decision making involving coordinating, supervision and checking of action. In the rural farm family too, the decisions are

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required to be taken in farming, dairying and family activities. Decision making, basically is a thinking process which involves a process of discriminating from alternatives and possibilities involving many complex elements. In practice the farming community does not take decisions unilaterally or in isolation about several aspects of farming and home activities, but they have to arrive at an decisions collectively at appropriate level in a rational manner. The adoption of an innovation is dependent on the decision making process.

Farm women's roles in agriculture vary from region to region. Women from rich households have limited role in farm decision making and the supervision of field labour (Mencher and Shardmoni, 1983).

### **Objectives**

Firstly, an attempt was made to know the difficulties faced by farm women while participating in decision making, which would hopefully provide guidelines to planners, policy makers and extension workers with respect to women's programmes.

Women play an important role in the social and economic welfare of the family. Rural farm women have to play many roles in their day life such as wife, mother, farm producer, livestock raiser etc. However it is observed that in many families, even the home decisions are taken by males. It may be said that participation of women in decision making would enhance the decision making power of males and also improve the quality of the decisions.

Therefore this study was designed with following objectives.

- 1) To determine the difficulties experienced by the farm women while participating in decision making
- 2) To study the nature and extent of participation of farm women in decision making on farming.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in the development block of the College of Agriculture, Dapoli which comprises four Tehsils namely, Mandangad, Dapoli, Khed and Chiplun of Ratnagiri District.

Ratnagiri District was purposively selected for the present study because the sex ratio (females per thousand males) in this district was highest (1:1. 21). Secondly, the literacy percentage among women in this district was lowest (51.61 per cent). Obviously, agriculture in Ratanagiri District is female dominated. The exploratory

survey design was used for the purpose of this study. Ten villages were randomly selected by using a two digit random number table. From each selected village, twenty farm families were selected randomly by using simple random technique. The housewives in these families were identified as respondents. Thus a sample of 200 farm women was drawn for the study. Personal interview technique was used for collection of data.

The extent of participation in decision making, was measured using a four point response continuum namely 'no participation', 'husband's decision', 'authority decision', 'joint decision' (Self + husband) and 'Family decision' (including self). The weightages allotted to these responses were 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

The total score obtained by the respondents on the farm decisions was converted into the extent of participation index by using the following formula.

$$EPI = \frac{\text{Obtained Score}}{\text{Obtainable Score}} \times 100$$

On the basis of Extent of Participation Index, the respondents were grouped into three categories by using the formula mean  $\pm$  1 standard deviation.

## **Results and Discussion**

The constraints reported by the respondents in Table 1, indicate that the constraints are of varied types and intensity.

Since the farm women are engaged both in household and farm activities they might not be finding time to participate in the process of decision making. This is evident from the two constraints related to time namely 'higher time consumption for household work', which is 99.5 per cent and 'perplexity of time for farm and home activity' which is 96.5 per cent.

The poor economic status of the family was also responsible for less participation of farm women in the decision making process. This becomes clear from the constraints reported by the farm women such as, increasing prices of farm inputs (98.5 %) and poor economic status of the family (72.5%). The finding is supported by Singhal et.al (1990).

It is observed that the farm women also complained that they did not get adequate help and support which would help them in taking decisions, and they did not get proper guidance (92%), help for seeking information about the solution to problems (88.5%) help in diagnosing the problems (87.5%) and help for seeking information about new things (78%). A similar finding was reported by Khorate (2000).

**Table 1. Difficulties experienced by Farm Women while participating in Decision Making**

N = 200

Sl. No.	Difficulties	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	Higher time consumption for household work	199	99.50
2.	Inability to take decision due to contingent problems	198	99.00
3.	Increasing prices of farm inputs	197	98.50
4.	Inability in anticipating the possible repercussion of the decision taken	194	97.00
5.	Perplexity of time for farm and home activities	193	96.50
6.	Lack of information about the sources of availability of resources to solve the problems	190	95.00
7.	Inability in diagnosing the problem about which decision is to be taken	189	94.50
8.	Lack of adequate information about the solutions to problems	186	93.00
9.	Lack of information about government schemes	185	92.50
10.	Lack of proper guidance for taking decisions	184	92.00
11.	Lack of help for seeking information about the solution to problems	177	88.50
12.	Afraid of making any improvement in farming	176	88.00
13.	Lack of help in diagnosing the problems about which decision is to be taken	175	87.50
14.	The present system of decision making is right	172	86.00
15.	Lack of help for securing information about new things	156	78.00
16.	Poor economic status of the family	145	72.50
17.	Lack of confidence required to take decisions	138	69.00
18.	No knowledge about improved technology	95	47.50
19.	Dominance of male members in the family	85	42.50
20.	Resistance of family members to make any improvement in farming	74	37.00
21.	Inability to take decision due to lack of education	73	36.50
22.	No permission to take decisions due to younger age	63	31.50
23.	Lack of confidence about solving the problems within available resources	35	17.50

The secondary status of farm women in the family also posed problems in their participation in taking the farm decisions. This is evident from the constraints reported by them namely, dominance of male members in the family (42.5%), resistance of family members to make any improvement in farming (37 %) and no permission to take decisions due to younger age (31.5 %).

The farm women have also expressed their inability to take decisions because of some reasons, the important among those were contingent problems (99.5%), anticipating the possible repercussions of the decision taken (97%), diagnosing the problems about which decisions are to be taken (94.5%) and lack of education (36.5%). The fear in the mind of the farm women also becomes evident from the constraints namely afraid of making any improvement in farming (88%) and lack of confidence required to take decisions (69%), lack of confidence about solving the problems within the available resources (17.5%). The findings of the present study are in conformity with the findings of Patil and Sawant (1996).

The findings regarding the nature and extent of participation of farm women in decision making on farming are discussed here. An attempt was made in the present investigation to understand the nature of participation of farm women in decision making on the five sub areas which are presented and discussed below.

**Crops:-** The nature of participation of the respondents in decision making on the sub area related to crops is seen in Table 2.

**Table 2. Nature of Participation of the Farm Women in Decision Making on Crops** N = 200

Sl. No.	Sub areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Crops to be grown on the farm	1 (0.50)	2 (1.00)	47 (23.50)	90 (45.00)	23 (11.50)	37 (18.50)	200 (100.00)
2)	Area allocation to crop on farm	2 (1.00)	1 (0.50)	50 (25.00)	87 (43.50)	26 (13.00)	34 (17.00)	200 (100.00)
3)	Cropping Pattern	2 (1.00)	1 (0.50)	48 (24.00)	86 (43.00)	27 (13.50)	36 (18.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,  
H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

It is seen from Table 2 that in case of all the three sub-areas of decision making related to crops, 'Wife' was taking the decision, followed by 'Husband'. The percentage of 'Wife' oriented decision ranged between 43 to 45 per cent, while that of 'Husband' oriented decision ranged between 23.5 per cent to 25 per cent.

**Technology:** - The findings pertaining to nature of participation of the Farm Women in decision making regarding sub-area of technology are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Nature of participation of Farm Women in Decision Making on Technology**

N = 200

Sl. No.	Decision making areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Type of technology to be used for crops	1 (0.50)	2 (1.00)	50 (25.00)	86 (43.00)	27 (13.50)	34 (17.00)	200 (100.00)
2)	Type of technology to be used for A.H. and Dairy	104 (52.00)	- (0.00)	28 (14.00)	40 (20.00)	10 (5.00)	18 (9.00)	200 (100.00)
3)	Type of technology to be used for poultry	170 (85.00)	- (0.00)	13 (6.50)	6 (3.00)	3 (1.50)	8 (4.00)	200 (100.00)
4)	Type of technology to be used for kitchen gardening	5 (2.50)	1 (0.50)	50 (25.00)	96 (48.00)	20 (10.00)	28 (14.00)	200 (100.00)
5)	Extent of use of technology for kitchen gardening	5 (2.50)	1 (0.50)	52 (26.00)	94 (47.00)	20 (10.00)	28 (14.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,

H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

It becomes clear from the findings presented in Table 3 that two sub-areas of technology namely 'type of technology to be used for Animal Husbandry and Dairy' and the 'type of technology to be used for Poultry' were not applicable in case of majority (52% and 85% respectively) of the respondents. In the remaining three areas, 43 per cent to 48 per cent of the respondents stated that they 'themselves' took the final decision. This was followed by the decision taken by 'husbands'. It implies that the authority decisions with regard to sub areas of technology are taken mainly by the family.

**Nursery Management:** - The data with regard to nature of participation of the farm women in decisions about sub area of nursery management are presented in Table 4.

It is revealed from Table 4 that in all the eight sub-areas of decision making on nursery management 'wife' that is the respondents themselves took the final decision followed by the husband.

**Table 4. Nature of Participation of Farm Women in Decision Making on Nursery Management**

N = 200

Sl. No.	Decision making areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Time of sowing seed in nursery	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	50 (25.00)	94 (47.00)	24 (12.00)	28 (14.00)	200 (100.00)
2)	Seed treatment	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	48 (24.00)	95 (47.50)	26 (13.00)	27 (13.50)	200 (100.00)
3)	Area of nursery of field crops	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	52 (26.00)	93 (46.50)	25 (12.50)	26 (13.00)	200 (100.00)
4)	Type of seed bed in nursery	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	51 (25.50)	95 (47.50)	25 (12.50)	25 (12.50)	200 (100.00)
5)	Method of sowing seed in nursery	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	50 (25.00)	94 (47.00)	25 (12.50)	27 (13.50)	200 (100.00)
6)	Fertilizer management for nursery	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	47 (23.50)	93 (46.50)	27 (13.50)	29 (14.50)	200 (100.00)
7)	Plant protection measures for nursery	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	52 (26.00)	95 (47.50)	24 (12.00)	25 (12.50)	200 (100.00)
8)	Irrigation management for nursery	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	49 (24.50)	95 (47.50)	28 (14.00)	24 (12.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,

H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

**Transplanting / Planting / Sowing:-** The observations in respect of nature of participation of the farm women in decision making on sub-areas of transplanting / planting / sowing are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Nature of Participation of Farm Women in Decision Making on Transplanting / Planting / Sowing**

N = 200

Sl. No.	Decision making areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Spacing between seedling of field crops	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	51 (25.50)	90 (45.00)	24 (12.00)	31 (15.50)	200 (100.00)
2)	Age of the seedling at the time of transplanting	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	49 (24.50)	92 (46.00)	26 (13.00)	29 (14.50)	200 (100.00)
3)	Method of transplanting	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	47 (23.50)	94 (47.00)	25 (12.50)	30 (15.00)	200 (100.00)
4)	Time of sowing seed in field	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	48 (24.00)	89 (44.50)	27 (13.50)	32 (16.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,

H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

It is evident from Table 5 that in all the four sub-areas of the decision on transplanting / planting / sowing, the 'wife' was playing the dominant role, followed by the 'husband'.

**Intercultural Operations:-** The results regarding nature of participation of the farm women in decision making on the sub-areas of intercultural operations are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Nature of Participation of Farm Women in Decision Making on Intercultural Operations**

Sl. No.	Decision making areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Weeding time	4 (2.00)	- (0.00)	53 (26.50)	96 (48.00)	22 (11.00)	25 (12.50)	200 (100.00)
2)	Time of Fertilizer application	3 (1.50)	3 (1.50)	48 (24.00)	93 (46.50)	21 (10.50)	32 (16.00)	200 (100.00)
3)	Method of irrigating the field crops	150 (75.00)	- (0.00)	32 (16.00)	12 (6.00)	5 (2.50)	1 (0.50)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,

H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

It is seen from Table 6 that the sub-area namely 'method of irrigating the field crops' was not applicable to three fourth (75 %) of the respondents. The decisions regarding the remaining two sub-areas were taken mainly by the respondents followed by 'their husband'.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Farm Women play a crucial role in the decision making on intercultural operations.

**Input Use:** - The findings pertaining to nature of participation of the farm women in decision making on the sub-area of inputs use are presented in Table 7.

It is seen from Table 7 that two sub-areas of decision making on inputs use were not applicable to a majority of respondents. These sub areas were 'varieties of fruit crop to be planted' and 'Number of seedling / grafts of fruit crops to be planted' (71.50 % respectively). This may be because respondents was either not having suitable land for horticultural plantation or they might have already established orchards. However, in the remaining sub-areas of input use, 'wife' was taking the final decision, followed by the 'husband'.

**Table 7:- Nature of Participation of Farm Women in Decision Making on Input Use**

Sl. No.	Decision making areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Varieties to be sown	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	48 (24.00)	91 (45.50)	24 (12.00)	33 (16.50)	200 (100.00)
2)	Area allocation for different varieties	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	46 (23.00)	90 (45.00)	25 (12.50)	35 (17.50)	200 (100.00)
3)	Quality of Fertilizer to be used	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	49 (24.50)	89 (44.50)	26 (13.00)	32 (16.00)	200 (100.00)
4)	Manure to be used	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	47 (23.50)	92 (46.00)	23 (11.50)	34 (17.00)	200 (100.00)
5)	Quantity of manure to be used	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	46 (23.00)	93 (46.50)	24 (12.00)	33 (16.50)	200 (100.00)
6)	Procurement of Seeds	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	48 (24.00)	91 (45.50)	27 (13.50)	30 (15.00)	200 (100.00)
7)	Use of improved seeds	2 (1.00)	2 (1.00)	49 (24.50)	90 (45.00)	24 (12.00)	33 (16.50)	200 (100.00)
8)	Varieties of fruit crops to be planted	143 (71.50)	- (0.00)	24 (12.00)	19 (9.50)	9 (4.50)	5 (2.50)	200 (100.00)
9)	Number of seedlings / grafts of fruit crops to be planted	143 (71.50)	-	26 (13.00)	17 (8.50)	8 (4.00)	6 (3.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,  
H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

**Harvesting:** - The results regarding nature of participation of the farm women in decision making on harvesting are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8. Nature of Participation of Farm Women in Decision Making on Harvesting**

Sl. No.	Decision making areas	NA	NP	H	W	H+W	F	Total
1)	Methods of harvesting of field crops	13 (6.50)	2 (1.00)	45 (22.50)	89 (44.50)	22 (11.00)	29 (14.50)	200 (100.00)
2)	Implements / tools to be used for harvesting fruit crops	147 (73.50)	- (0.00)	21 (10.50)	22 (11.00)	7 (3.50)	3 (1.50)	200 (100.00)
3)	Time of harvesting field crops	13 (6.50)	2 (1.00)	47 (23.50)	87 (43.50)	24 (12.00)	27 (13.50)	200 (100.00)
4)	Time of harvesting fruit crops	147 (73.50)	- (0.00)	23 (11.50)	20 (10.00)	6 (3.00)	4 (2.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

N.A. = Not applicable, N.P. = No participation, H = Husband, W = Wife,  
H + W = Husband and Wife, F = Family.

It is observed from Table 8 that two sub-areas of decision making on harvesting namely 'implements / tools to be used for harvesting fruit crops' 73.50 per cent and 'time of harvesting of fruit crops' 73.50 per cent were not applicable to the majority of

respondents. In the remaining two sub-areas, the 'respondents' themselves were found taking decisions followed by 'husband' and 'family'.

**Extent of Participation in Decision Making:-** The information with regard to extent of participation of Farm Women in decision making on farming is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9:- Distribution of Farm Women according to their extent of Participation in Decision Making**

Sl. No.	Category	Respondents n = 200	
		Number	Percentage
1.	Low	39	19.50
2.	Medium	132	66.00
3.	High	29	14.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>200.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

It is observed from Table 9 that two thirds (66 %) of the respondents were from 'Medium' category, while 19.50 per cent and 14.50 per cent of the respondents, were from 'Low' and 'High' category of extent of participation in decision making, respectively.

This implies that majority of farm women had medium level of participation in decision making on farming. The findings of the present study are similar to Chhaya Badiger (1979), Khanand Harode (1988), Satyawati *et al* (1993).

## Conclusion

The findings pertaining to difficulties experienced by the farm women while participating in decision making on farming revealed that lack of time, lack of knowledge / information, poor economic status of the family, lack of adequate help and support, secondary status of women in family, and fear of failure were the important difficulties faced by them. Governmental and non governmental interventions should facilitate and promote women's participation in decision making.

It was found that the 'farm women' were taking the decisions followed by their 'husband' in sub-areas regarding animal husbandry followed by kitchen gardening, technology, input use, harvesting, intercultural operations and farm produce.

Regarding extent of participation in decision making it is concluded that majority of the farm women had medium level of participation in decision making on farming. Many factors like the kind of decision required to taken, risk involved in the decision, repercussion of the decision etc. might be responsible for deciding their role in decision making.

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