CAPABILITIES AND COMPETENCIES OF PAKISTANI RURAL WOMEN IN PERFORMING HOUSE HOLD AND AGRICULTURAL TASKS: A CASE STUDY IN TEHSIL FAISALABAD

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Rural women play a significant role in the household chores and agricultural activities. This study was planed to investigate the capabilities and competencies of rural women in Tehsil Faisalabad. A multistage random sampling technique was used to select sample and collect the data form 768 respondents (384 husband and 384 wives) regarding the household errands and agricultural activities. Pre-testing was used to get relevant information and improve the interview schedule. Data collected were subjected to analysis using the SPSS® Version 16.0. Majority of the rural women were illiterate (60.7%) as compare to their husband (25.26%). Rural women were involved in almost all activities. However, they were not found much competent in agricultural, social and political activities. The results further revealed that competency levels were significantly associated with the age, education level and family system.

Keywords: Role, capabilities, competencies, rural women, household, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan depends substantially on agriculture and other rural activities to provide livelihoods for the majority of its people. Almost 68% of the country's total population is rural, where agriculture accounts for nearly half of employment (GOP, 2008). In many areas of rural development, Pakistan lags behind its Asian neighbors with fewer natural resources. About half of the adult population in Pakistan (women) is not given due weightage in the overall development process. Gender roles and responsibilities in agricultural production systems vary from region to region according to culture, religion and socio-economic conditions. Gender is a socio-economic variable, which is being used to analyze assigned roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and incentives of people involved in agriculture. Nearly four decades have passed when, for the first time, it was called into question if women and men benefited equally from economic development. Since then, gender issues in agriculture have become an important subject of inquiry (PARC, 2004). Particular attention is normally given to the roles of women, because in many cases, in addition to performing household chores and reproductive/child rearing activities, these undertake major responsibilities in agricultural production, processing and marketing Women in the agricultural sector are heavily involved in home production activities like childcare, food preparation, and carrying of water and fuel (Yisehak, 2008). Men and women inequality has resulted in rural women to loose control over their own labour and living sources. (Etrurk, 1996). Women farmers receive very limited services from extension. The major reasons are: lack of extension services for women, local cultural values restricting women to attend extension meetings, and heavy involvement in household chores (Othman and Martin, 2000). The reality is, however, that the majority of women in developed and developing countries confront the need to combine their productive role with the care and nurturing of children. Generally, decisions regarding the activities requiring technical competency and money related matters are taken by male members. Since knowledge and economic independence are the parameters of women empowerment therefore enhancing their technical knowledge and skills becomes of paramount importance to empower them (Santra and Kundu, 2001). This study was planned to analyze the competencies of rural women in performing household and agricultural related tasks/activities. It was envisaged that in areas/tasks in which they will be identified as less competent, specific training programmes would help for them be more competent to get their jobs done.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tehsil Faisalabad was selected as the universe for this study. Eight villages out of from Faisalabad tehsil were selected at random. From each selected village 48 farm families were randomly selected through systematic random sample technique, thus making a sample of 384 farm families from each selected family both husband and wife were interviewed. Therefore, there was total sample of 768 respondents. A diagrammatic representation of the samplinf procedure is presented in Figure 1.

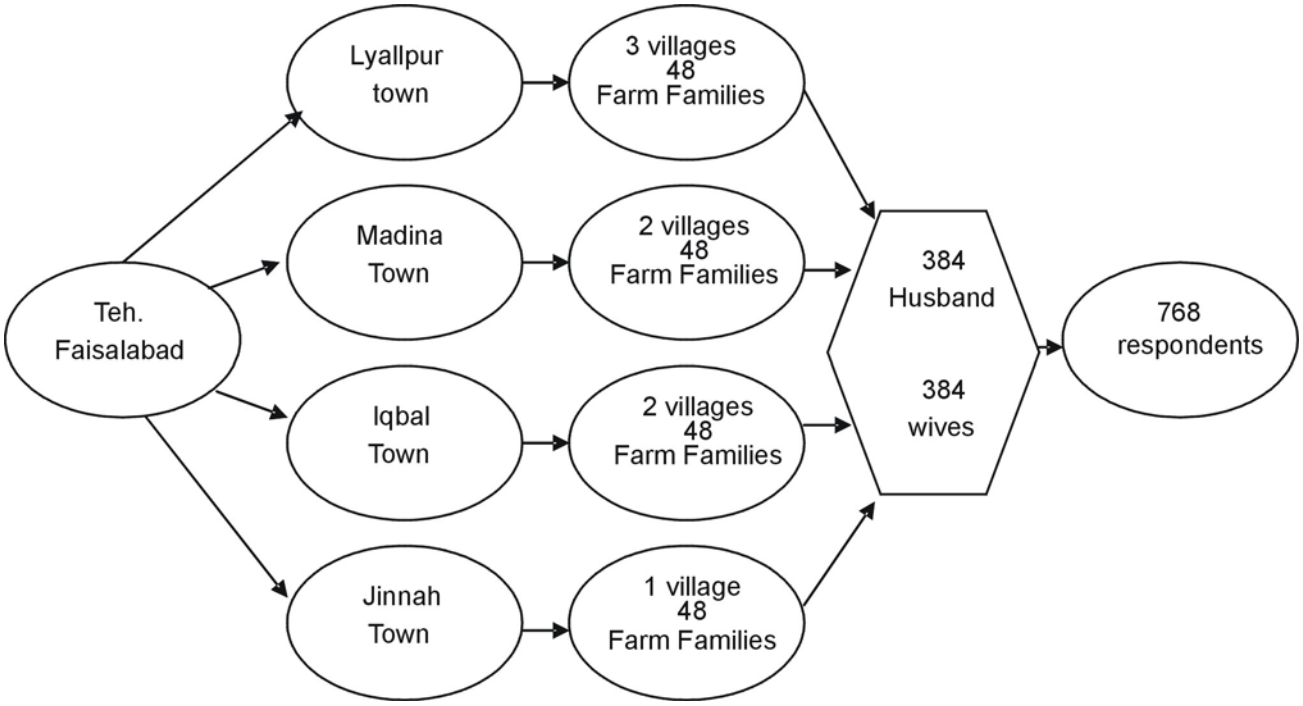

Fig. 1. Pathway for sample selection

Total number of villages, total population and number of randomly selected villages from each town (sample) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Selection of villages using proportionate random sampling technique

Sr. No.	Name of the town	No. of total villages	Ratio	Total rural population	Ratio	No. of selected villages
1	Lyallpur town	57	2.49	310617	2.69	3
2	Madina Town	37	1.62	164207	1.39	2
3	Iqbal Town	58	2.53	268297	2.26	2
4	Jinnah Town	31	1.35	180989	1.56	1
Total		183		924110		8

Source: CDGF (City District Government Faisalabad). 2006

From the above mentioned villages farm families (husband and wives) were selected for the interview. These farm families provided the information related to the quires discussed in the interview schedule. Pre-testing was performed to make the interview schedule more reasonable and logical.

The respondent farm families from each selected village were selected by using the list obtained from the Revenue office, Faisalabad. Using the lottery method 48 farm families from each village were chosen for the interview (Thakur, 2003; Hassan, 2008).

The data of 768 respondents (384 farm families) were collected and entered on Microsoft Excl® Spread Sheet. All data were subjected to the SAS/STAT®, 1990 for frequencies and analysis of variance. Further, the data regarding the competency level, were subjected to the paired t-test to estimate the significant difference between the husband and wife responses regarding the capabilities/competencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the male respondents were matriculate (31.51%), followed by illiterate (25.26%), middle (16.41%), primary (13.54%), intermediate (7.81%), graduate (4.95%) and postgraduate (0.52%) respectively. The percentages of female respondents in each level of education mentioned above (except primary level) were lower as compared to those of male respondents. The data concerning education

level of male (husband) and female (wife) respondents are presented in Table 2 given below.

Table 2. Educational level of husband and wife respondents

Educational Level	Husband		Wife	
	n	%	n	%
Illiterate	97	25.26	233	60.7
Primary	52	13.54	67	17.5
Middle (8^{th})	63	16.41	42	10.9
Matric (10^{th} grade)	121	31.51	38	9.9
Intermediate (12^{th} grade)	30	7.81	4	1.1
Graduate (14^{th} grade)	19	4.95	Nil	Nil
Postgraduate (Above 14^{th} grade)	2	0.52	Nil	Nil

The data presented in Table 2 further indicate that the adult literacy level among male (husband) respondents was considerably higher (84.74%) as compare to the literacy level among female (wife) respondents (29.3%). These findings lead to the conclusion that there is gender inequality regarding education in the study area. Adult literacy campaign needs to be initiated in the study area especially for women.

Shaleesha and Stanley (2000), indicated that at the household level, children of poorer households were generally likely to receive less education. High literacy rate plays a vital role in the development of any nation by transforming its socio-economic prosperity. The literacy rate in developed countries is almost 100% but unfortunately, this is not the case in developing countries. There is much evidence that education is highly correlated with levels of development of people regarding the home management, decision making, and capability to complete the assignments related to the home management and agricultural development. Higher education for mothers is associated not only with healthier children, but with children's acquisition of knowledge, language, and literacy skills as well. Further, parent and child interaction at the preschool level promotes the development of cognitive, language, and preschool literacy skills in children (Sticht, 1994; Sticht and McDonald, 1990). Research by the World Bank in Egypt and Thailand indicates that mother's education level, more than the father's education, is positively related to higher aspirations for and participation in education by their daughters (Cochrane, et al., 1986). The interconnectedness of women's literacy with family and society highlights the importance of women's participation in family literacy programs. Improvement in the educational status of women was advocated principally on the grounds of human rights, social justice, and equality. It is now evident that literacy for women can also produce significant social, economic, and personal benefits such as better personal and family health, lower fertility, the readiness to participate in new economic activities, and female empowerment (Caldwell, 1986; Cochrane, 1979; Myers, 1995; Puchner, 1995; Stromquist, 1992; Subbarao & Raney, 1993).

The data presented in Table 3 indicate an important finding i.e. among the younger age groups there were more number of wife respondents as compared to the number of husband respondents. Contrary, in the older age groups there was more number of husband respondents as compared to wife respondents.

Table 3. Distribution of respondent according to their age group

Age	Husband		Wife	
	n	%	n	%
20-30	28	7.29	66	17.19
31-40	128	33.33	140	36.46
41-50	117	30.47	110	28.65
51-60	68	17.71	58	15.10
61-above	43	11.20	10	2.60

The data revealed that most of the respondents belonged to the age groups of 31-40 years among both husband (33.33%) and wife (36.46%), respondents followed by age group the 41-50 years having husbands 30.47% and wives 28.65%.

Similar findings were reported by Fakoya, et al., (2006) who reported that the farmers were within the ages of 40-50 years. A large proportion of sampled male farmers (64%) were between 39-47 years of age while (24%) of sampled female farmers were between 35- 44 years. Similarly Halim et al. (2001) reported that majority of respondents (66%) were in the age group of 20-39 years. Only 6% women respondents were very young aging below 20 years. About 24% respondents were in the middle age i.e., between 40-59 years and only 4% women respondents were old (above 60 years). Majority (57.3%) of the rural women were young followed by middle and old with an average of 31.21 years (Hassan et al., 2007).

Based on the in-depth review of literature, field observations made, and qualitative interviews conducted the Amin (2009) a theoretical model regarding some important tasks/activities being performed by farm families was developed. This model is presented below in Figure 2.

Questions were asked from the respondents whether they were performing the identified tasks/activates as a routine matter or not was this task, activity, or role being performed by the husband, wife, or both? Their answers to these questions were considered as the data of the study. The data regarding this aspect are presented in Table 4.

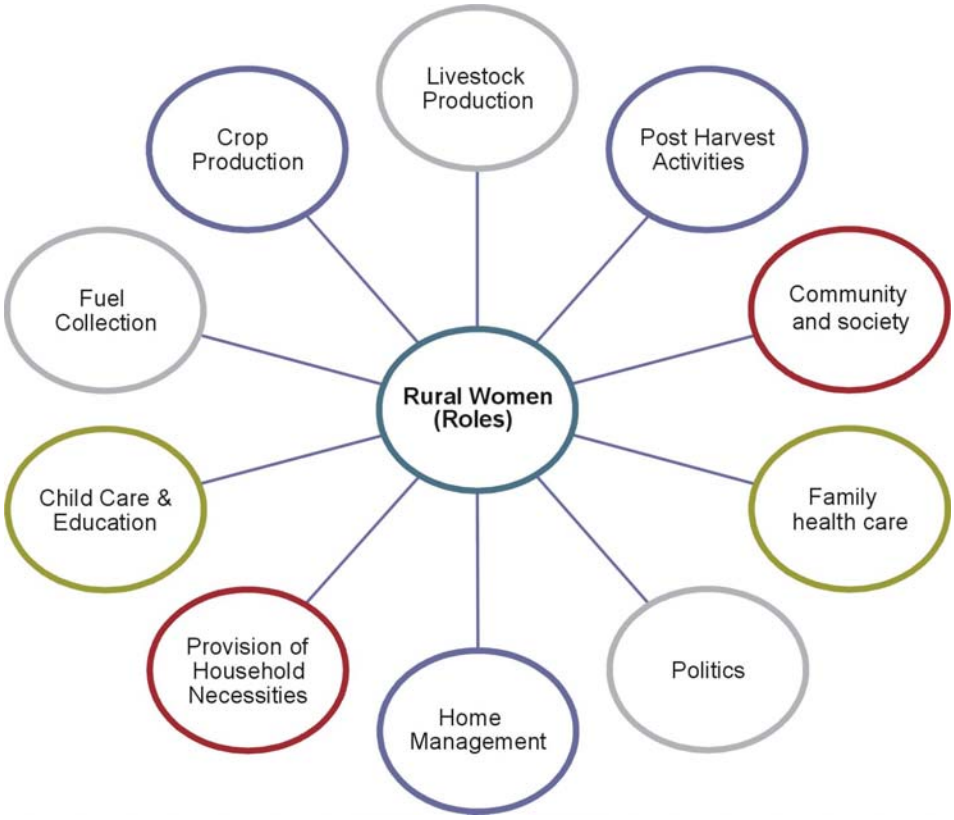

Figure 2. A model indicating the tasks/activities being performed by farm families in the study area

A critical look on data presented in Table 4 indicates that the male (husband) specific tasks, were; i.. Dealing with political matters; ii. Dealing with or performing community matters; iii. Attending social meetings and dealing with social matters; and iv. Crop production/protection. The female (wife) specific tasks, activities, or roles were: i. Handicraft making; ii. Home decoration; iii. Child care, household chores, poultry production for domestic purposes; iv. Fuel collection; v. Family health care; and vi. Livestock management.

Table 4. Perceptions (frequencies and percentages) of respondents regarding who (husband, wife or both) performed identified tasks, activities or roles

Task/Activitiy/Role	Husband						Wife					
	Husband		Wife		Both		Husband		Wife		Both	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
House hold chores	87	22.66	278	72.40	19	4.95	81	21.90	287	74.74	16	4.17
Child care	51	13.28	277	72.14	56	14.58	47	12.24	288	75.00	49	12.76
Family health care	97	25.26	220	57.29	67	17.45	91	23.70	229	59.64	64	16.67
Fuel collection	110	28.65	222	57.81	52	13.54	103	26.82	232	60.42	49	12.76
Social matters	212	55.21	116	30.21	56	14.58	213	55.47	120	31.25	51	13.28
Community matters	225	58.59	102	26.56	57	14.84	230	59.90	113	29.43	41	10.68
Political matters	315	82.03	59	15.36	10	2.60	320	83.33	53	13.80	11	2.86
Home decoration	41	10.68	315	82.03	28	7.29	38	9.90	319	83.07	27	7.03
Handicraft making	21	5.47	345	89.84	18	4.69	17	4.43	355	92.45	12	3.13
Crop production and protection	175	45.57	129	33.59	80	20.83	170	44.27	136	35.42	78	20.31
Animal production and protection	152	39.58	153	39.84	79	20.57	148	38.54	160	41.67	76	19.79
Livestock management	118	30.73	238	61.98	28	7.29	110	28.65	231	60.16	43	11.20
Poultry husbandry	37	9.64	251	65.36	96	25.00	31	8.07	267	69.53	86	22.40

The above finding indicates that there are some gender specific roles being performed by adult male and female segments of the rural society. Females perform more number of roles than males but the nature of roles performed by females is soft whereas, the nature of roles performed by males is hard i.e. crop production or on farm work.

The respondents were further asked to identify the levels of their competency (possessed level) in different tasks, activities, or roles, though self assessment on a 1-5 likert scales. The data regarding their possessed competency level are in Table 5.

Table 5. Mean, standard deviation and paired t-test to compare the competence levels of male (husband) and female (wives) respondents in different household and agricultural tasks, activities, or roles

Role	Husband		Wife		t value	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
House hold chores	3.59	1.42	4.55	0.50	-12.51	0.00 **
Child care	3.89	1.24	4.54	0.50	-9.44	0.00 **
Family health care	3.59	1.16	4.48	0.55	-13.75	0.00 **
Fuel collection	3.40	1.26	4.20	0.52	-11.83	0.00 **
Social matters	4.00	0.67	4.07	0.52	-1.60	0.11 NS
Community matters	3.61	0.90	3.90	0.75	-4.81	0.00 **
Political matters	3.89	0.85	3.79	0.99	1.70	0.90 NS
Home decoration	3.68	1.04	4.02	0.74	-5.25	0.00 **
Handicraft making	3.76	0.89	4.03	0.73	-4.50	0.00 **
Crop production and protection	4.24	0.58	3.20	0.53	0.87	0.001**
Animal production and protection	4.12	0.71	4.26	0.59	-3.15	0.002 **
Livestock management	4.22	0.81	4.42	0.58	-4.27	0.00 **
Poultry husbandry	3.97	1.02	4.30	0.96	-6.16	0.00 **

Scale: 1 = Very low 2 = Low 3 = Medium 4 = High 5 **=** Very high

The data presented in Table 5 indicate that both male (husband) and female (wives) respondents possessed medium to high level of competency in performing various tasks, activities, or roles. There were significant differences in the mean levels of competencies possessed by husbands and wives almost in all tasks, activities, or roles except social, political matters and crop production. Husbands possessed more competencies in performing activities related to political matters and crop production than their counter part wives. As a whole, the means of the self rated competencies of wives were higher than the mean of the self rated competencies of husbands in almost all tasks, activates, or roles except social/political matters or crop production/protection activities.

The educational needs of rural women were not perceived to be in agricultural production, but in home management child care and, education. The home management sector is a valuable part of the livelihood systems of rural women, hence policy decisions on the regulating and formalizing of activities in this sector need to be developed. Because of the invisibility of aspects of women's contribution to development, upgrading and modernizing of informal sector economic activities can have detrimental consequences on members of rural households especially women. Simultaneously with the characterizing and redefining of the value of women's contribution to rural development there should be a public awareness campaign to help dismantle the institutional and attitudinal obstructions to women's contribution to development. Efforts should be made to increase women’s access to appropriate sources of information friendly home management and farm based technologies and opportunities to work shoulder to shoulder with their husbands in non farm activity for a alleviating rural poverty and developing gender equality.

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