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ROLE OF AGE, EDUCATION AND LANDHOLDING ON COTTON PRODUCING COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT MULTAN

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Cotton growing community comprises, cotton growing farmers and cotton pickers mainly. Cotton growing farmers (male) involved in preparation of agricultural land, sowing the cotton seed, irrigation of crops and marketing of cotton crops. Whereas, cotton pickers (female) are involved in picking of cotton mainly. To assess the impact of age, education and land holding on cotton growing community, this study was designed and conducted in 20 villages of district Multan selected by multistage random sampling technique. From the selected villages 220 cotton growers and 150 cotton pickers were selected by simple random sampling technique and interviewed through a reliable and validated interview schedule. The data collected were processed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results showed that 42% of cotton growers (male) with age 51 years and above were at the top. Whereas, 39% of cotton pickers (female) were lying in the category with age up to 30 years. Education of respondents showed that almost 75% of cotton pickers were illiterate i.e. were not in a position to read or write even their own names. Similarly when size of landholding of respondents was probed, almost 96% of cotton growing respondents owned their agricultural lands whereas, almost 85% of cotton picker women (chonies) possessed no agricultural land.

Keywords: Impact, age, education, landholding, cotton growing community.

INTRODUCTION

Cotton was at the top priority in choice of consumers all over the world for clothing and wearing accessories. From Bermen to Beijing to Brasila, consumers worldwide overwhelmingly preferred cotton, according to the recent Global Lifestyle Monitor Survey—GLM III – the findings were released in 2004 by Cotton Council International and Cotton Incorporated. The survey conducted third time since 1999, revealed that more consumers than ever considered cotton fiber content a key factor in clothing purchases, 78% of respondents, up from 75% in the previous survey in 2001. More than half i.e 70% of those in the latest survey said, they preferred clothing made of cotton to any other fiber natural or synthetic (World Report, 2005). According to ICACI the world cotton production in 2005-06 dropped by 1.5 million tons or 6.96 million bales from previous season to 24.78 million tons (113.81 millions bales of 480 lbs). While cotton production was forecasted at 24.69 million tons or 113.4 million bales in 2006 07, major increases in production were expected in China (mainland), Pakistan and India.

The national yield in (2005-06) was also declined to 713 kgs. per hectare, thereby showing a decrease 9.3% over the target and 6.2% over the achievement of 2004-05 season (GOP, 2006).

Exports of textile manufactures grew by 19.2%, prominent among those were exports of bed wear (58.4%), readymade garments (31.0%), cotton yarn(21.4%), cotton cloth(16.5%) and towels(12.0%). (EPB, 2006).

The Federal Committee on Agriculture in Pakistan (FCA) had fixed the cotton production target for 2005-06 at 12 million bales. Subsequently, it was enhanced to 15 million bales from an area of 3,247 million hectares. National yield was thus envisaged at 786 kgs. per hectare. According to available information, the weather conditions and flood in some districts of the Punjab and pest attack in Sindh had effected the cotton crop, resulting the declined production to 13.0 million bales achieved from 3.10 million hectares, showing decreases of 13% in production and 4.53% in area over the targets of 2005-06 season and 8.87% and 2.88% respectively over the achievements in the last season (2004-05). The national yield in (2005-06) declined to 713 kgs per hectare, thereby showing a decrease of 9.3% over the target and 6.2% over the achievement of 2004-05 season (GOP, 2006).

Nazly (2003) concluded that the average age of the rural women respondents was 29.22 years, which showed that comparatively younger women were involved in agricultural activities.

Usher (2006) found that the rural women in several small land holders contexts provided substantial labour input to most aspects of cotton production cycle, frequently as unpaid 'family labour' or low-paid daily wages-laborers and commonly performing some of the most difficult tasks representing in manual work such as picking.

Nawaz (2001) noted a significant association between education of family members generally and that of spouse particularly and their cooperation with working

women rather appreciation of working women and adoption of innovations.

The role of women in national growth and development has been reaffirmed in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) which emphasized to provide women with more rights and choices in access to education, health services, skill development, and employment and eliminate the practices that discriminate against women all over the world (United Nation, 1995).

Naz (1997) concluded that 54.0% of the respondents were illiterate without history of school going, followed by 22.7% primary, 7.3% middle and 10% were matric (10^{th} grade education), respectively. She further reported that 35.5% of the respondent's husbands were matric, 29.3% had higher education, 11.3% were middle, 7.3% were primary and 16.7% of the respondent's husbands were illiterate with no history of school going.

According to the Panhwar (1998) the statistical compendium on Women in Asia and the Pacific in 1981 the country's total illiteracy rate was 84.8%, while urban area had 65.3% and illiteracy rate in rural area was 92.7%.

Kulkarni (2007) studied that almost all agricultural women said that they wanted their daughters to have a different role in the community other than they had to take up jobs and labour in agricultural fields. By the project's completion at the end of 2005, almost 86 percent of female CBO members were sending their daughters to school, compared to 63 per cent in 2001, and 95 per cent had accessed health information or services, compared to 66 per cent in 2001. CBOs had also become active in lobbying the government for services and over half of these requests were successful.

Khubaib (2000) found that 72.0% of the agricultural respondents belonged to small farmers category possessed cultivating land up to 12 acres, 25.0% of the respondents were medium size farmers having agricultural land holdings 12-25% acres. Only 3.0% of the respondents were large farmers having agricultural land more than 25 acres.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

By using multiple stage random sampling technique, 20 villages from district Multan were selected. Thus 220 cotton grower respondents and 150 cotton picker females were selected by using Fitzgibbon *et al*. (1987) table. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, an interview schedule was developed for data collection. The data collected were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age

Age means the chronological age. The data regarding the age of the respondents are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents according to their age

Age categories (in years)	Cotton growers		Cotton pickers	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Upto 30	49	22.3	59	39.0
31-40	49	22.3	39	26.0
41-50	30	13.6	33	22.0
51 & above	92	41.8	19	12.7
Total	220	100.0	150	100.0

The data given in Table 1 indicate that male cotton grower farmers with up to 30 years were 22.3% while in case of this category female cotton pickers were 39% of the respondents involving in picking of cotton. About the same percentage of farmers (22.3%) with age 31-40 years was involved in growing cotton, while, female cotton pickers in this category were 26%. Similarly having age group 41-50 years and "51 and above" were 13.5% and 41.8% respectively while for the same categories female cotton picker were 22% and 12.7%, respectively.

Above mentioned results are supported by Nazly (2003). The research conducted by Usher (2006). This Table shows that highest percentage of cotton grower farmers was in age category of "51 and above" while in case of cotton picker women the highest percentage were within category of up to 30 years. It indicates that on the whole cotton picker women were younger in age competed to cotton growers (male). The observation and qualitative interviews indicated that cotton growing was the activity of mature and experienced male farmers. Whereas cotton picking was less technical in nature and it involved even minor children (below 18 years).

The respondents were asked about their level of education, which means the number of years of schooling completed by the time of interview.

Education

Education level of individuals has association with the level the adoption of innovations (Rehman, 1970 and Nawaz, 2001). The data regarding this aspect are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their education level

Education level	Farmers		Pickers	
	f.	%age	f.	%age
Illiterate	53	24.1	109	72.7
Up to primary (5^{th} grade)	48	21.8	31	20.7
Up to middle (8^{th} grade	63	28.6	10	6.7
Matric (10^{th} grade)	48	21.8	-	-
FA & above (12^{th} and above)	8	3.6	-	-
Total	220	100.0	150	100.0

The data presented in Table 2 indicated that the literacy rate among cotton growers was 75.9%, which indicated a good sign of development, but situation was much frustrating regarding literacy rate among cotton pickers (27.3%). It indicates an alarming situation for the government and the Pakistani community. Measures needed to be taken to increase literacy rate among rural women such as cotton pickers (United Nations, 1995; Naz, 1997; Panhwar, 1998 and Kulkarni, 2007).

The size of land holding of a family is an indicator of the economic status of that family. The respondents were asked about the size of landholding of their family.

Size of land holding

The land holding of the size of 12.5 acres or less size is categorized as small where as that of 12.5 to 25 acres is medium and that of above 25 acres size is considered as large. The data concerning the land holding of the respondents are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to the size of land holdings

Land holding	Cotton growers		Cotton pickers	
	f.	%age	f.	%age
No land holding	9	4.1	128	85.3
Small (upto 12.5 acres)	164	74.5	17	11.3
Medium (12.5-25 acres)	41	18.6	5	3.3
Large (>25 acres)	6	2.7	-	-
Total	220	100.0	150	100.0

It can be depicted from the data presented in Table 3 that 74.5% of cotton growers had small land holding. There were only 2.7% of respondents who had large land holding. Among the cotton pickers only 14.6% reported that their family owned agricultural land. Majority of them were also involved in cultivation on small land holdings. A great majority of pickers (85.3%) belonged to non-farming families who were performing labor work or doing menial jobs for farmer families. About 4.0% of the cotton growers did not own agricultural land but they had hired the land for the agricultural purposes.

Shafiq *et al.* (1993) elaborated that most of cotton pickers belonged to landless families, which is supportive to researcher's results. Khubaib (2000) concluded similar results in his study.

It is concluded from results of Table 2 and 3 that gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) are miserable in cotton growing community (UNDO, 2000 and NDP, 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

The data shows that most of the cotton growing farmers were matured in age reflecting their vast experience in cotton cultivation whereas, most of the cotton picker women were less than 30 years of age reflecting that good health and sharp reflexes are required for cotton picking activity. Results also showed that literacy rate among the cotton pickers were miserable as compared to cotton growing farmers. No cotton picker woman was observed having more than middle class of education. It was due to the miserable socioeconomic status of cotton picker women as compared to cotton growing farmers as reflected from the results of Table 3 that almost 96% of cotton growing farmers owned agricultural land, whereas almost 85% of cotton pickers were without any agricultural land.

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