Himachal Journal of Agricultural Research 37 (1):65-70, 2011

Drudgery prone activities of hill farm women of Himachal Pradesh

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Manuscript Received: 30.07.2008; Accepted: 05.02.2011

Abstract

Women's contribution to the Indian agriculture and allied activities is a recognized factor. Women play a pivotal role in all household, farm and allied activities. They participate in several activities such as harrowing, weeding, picking and transplanting. Hence, the present study was undertaken to determine the extent of participation of women in different activities and also identifying most drudgery prone tasks. A total sample of 900 women respondents from three different zones of Himachal Pradesh was selected and data were collected through personal interview method on percentage of performance, time, performance and difficulty score which were recorded to calculate drudgery index. The data analysis showed that among household activities cooking, washing utensils and washing clothes were the most drudgery prone activities and paddy transplanting and cutting of fodder were most drudgery prone farm activities.

Key words: Drudgery index, work, farm women, percentage performers.

Introduction

Nearly two-third of Indian population lives in the villages and depends mainly on agriculture and other related occupations for their livelihood. They work very hard, but live a poor life due to number of constraints, such as poor village community facilities and resources. The women who play a pivotal role in all types of household, farm and allied activities are deprived from most of the privileges of life. Their work is not recognized in any statistical terms. Several research studies over the years have confirmed that women work for 14-18 long hours (Kaur and Punia,1986) of manual work daily on farming operations, livestock raising, fetching fodder, fuel and water from distant places and expending more total energy a day (Batliwala, 1982). They are deprived from the right of decision-making in important household affairs, adequate food, roper education and recognition in household and social affairs.

The contribution of women to the Indian agriculture and allied activities is a recognized factor. As per Census, 34.22 per cent rural women are cultivators, 44.93 per cent fall in the category of agricultural labourers and 1.60 per cent are engaged in livestock, forestry and allied activities. Women as agricultural labourers participate in several activities such as weeding, sowing, transplanting, harvesting and grain storage. Gender blindness towards women's involvement in work is partly the result of paternalistic biasness and also of women themselves who have been conditioned by their culture and society to under value the worth of their work. Assessment in Indian Himalaya depicted that a pair of bullock work for 1,064 hours, a man for 1,212 hours and a woman for 3,485 hours in a year on one-hectare farm. Though modernization of agriculture is taking place at a rapid pace, but the jobs attended by women remain more or less the same. Thus the

present study was proposed with the following objectives:

1. To find out the extent of participation of women in different activities.

2. To identify the most drudgery prone activities in home, farm and allied tasks.

Methodology

An inventory of all the different activities performed by farm women was prepared and the activity profile of 900 women respondents from three different zones of Himachal Pradesh was thereby studied. The data were collected personally regarding types of activities performed in the household, farm and allied domain. The frequency of performance score, time score and difficulty score were recorded.

1. Time score- Average time spent (minutes/day)

2. Frequency score- Frequency performance of each activity on five point scale was recorded and calculated. (Daily-5, Alternate days-4, weekly-3, monthly-2, seasonal-1)

3. Difficulty score- Difficulty score of each activity on five point scale was obtained and calculated. (Very difficult-5, difficult-4, neutral-3, easy-2, very easy-1)

Only those activities were considered for perusal which were undertaken by more than 25 per cent women. For calculating Drudgery Index the three parameters viz., time spent (min.), frequency of performance and difficulty score were compiled by linear combination method after drawing coefficients of each activity.

Drudgery Index = [(x+y+z)/3] x 100

X=Coefficient pertaining to difficulty score

Y=Coefficient pertaining to frequency score

Z=Coefficient pertaining to time score

Results and Discussion

The activity profile of the women in terms of Drudgery index was studied and results are reported as follow:

Majority of the women were involved in performing various household activities such as sweeping (99.58), washing vessels (99.53%) and cleaning of kitchen (99.47%). Cutting of vegetables (99.38%), personal care (99.18%) and cleaning of cereals (99.06%), mopping and plastering was performed by 98.19 per cent followed by washing of clothes (98.4%). Cooking activity was performed by 96.71 per cent of women was also confirmed by Dilbaghi *et al.* (2006). Food preparation related tasks and cleaning tasks were considered as female oriented tasks so these were performed by women only.

By linear combination method after drawing coefficients of each item the drudgery index calculated was maximum for cooking food (83), washing clothes (59.6) and washing vessels (54) (Table 1). The indoor household activities were being performed almost daily and therefore the coefficients calculated for cooking and similar activities showed them as drudgery prone. Fetching water was not drudgery prone as the houses have taps installed either inside or a common tap for three to four families

Table 2 depicts the hierarchy order of most drudgery prone operations to least ones in agricultural activities. Majority of the women were involved in performing various farm activities such as cutting/uprooting (85.52%),

weeding (79.32%), bundling (74.20%), picking/diffing (72.79%) and removing of stalks& stubble (70.81%). Among farm activities paddy transplanting (71) and transportation of manure (61.6) were found to be the most drudgery prone activities followed by dusting (38) and weeding (37.3) activities.

Table 1. Activity profile of women in household work in terms of drudgery index

S.N.	Activity	Percentage of women performers	Performance coefficient	Time coefficient	Difficulty coefficient	Drudgery index (DI)
1.	Cooking activity	96.71	0.99	1	0.50	83
2.	Washing clothes	98.4	0.85	0.27	0.67	59.6
3.	Washing vessels	99.53	1	0.13	0.49	54
4.	Sweeping	99.58	1	0.10	0.51	53.6
5.	Mopping/ Plastering	98.19	0.78	0.12	0.71	53.3
6.	Cleaning cereals	99.06	0.97	0.08	0.49	51.3
7.	Dusting of house	95.1	0.70	0.15	0.68	51
8.	Bringing firewood	65.12	0.44	0.16	0.87	49
9.	Cleaning of kitchen	99.47	0.99	0.07	0.41	49
10.	Serving food	96.98	1	0.09	0.34	47.6
11.	Chatting with friends	95.18	0.99	0.12	0.29	46.6
12.	Personal care	99.18	0.99	0.08	0.29	46.6
13.	Cutting of vegetables	99.38	0.89	0.06	0.37	44
14.	Knitting	49.03	0.3	0.06	0.48	38.6
15.	Grinding & pounding	69.96	0.48	0.06	0.57	37
16.	Preparation of food items	28.66	0.23	0.004	0.65	29.4
17.	Fetching water	84.19	0.99	0.08	0.55	21

(DI- Drudgery Index)

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Table 2. Activity profile of women in farm work in terms of drudgery index

S.No	Activity	Percentage of women performers	Performance coefficient	Time coefficient	Difficulty coefficient	Drudgery Index
1.	Transplanting	55.93	0.2	1	0.93	71
2	Transportation of manure	56.49	0.97	0.42	0.46	61.6
3	Dusting	41.19	0.62	0.14	0.38	38
4	Weeding	79.32	0.20	0.10	0.82	37.3
5	Dibbling	48.64	0.25	0.06	0.78	36.3
6	Spreading of manure	52.96	0.34	0.08	0.63	35
7	Cutting/uprooting	85.52	0.2	0.07	0.75	34
8	Removing of stalks & stubble	70.81	0.2	0.02	0.71	31
9	Sieving	49.89	0.20	0.03	0.65	29.3
10	Harrowing	53.75	0.23	0.06	0.56	28.3
11	Heaping	72.95	0.23	0.01	0.58	27.3
12	Picking/diffing	72.79	0.22	0.04	0.55	27
13	Bundling	74.20	0.2	0.02	0.52	24.6
14	Winnowing	55.93	0.2	0.02	0.65	24
15	Bagging/Matting	52.28	0.2	0.01	0.50	23.6
16	Threshing	27.67	0.21	0.04	0.42	22.3

(DI- Drudgery Index)

Table 3. Activity profile of women in allied work in terms of drudgery index

S.N.	Activity	Percentage of women performers	Performance coefficient	Time coefficient	Difficulty coefficient	Drudgery Index
I	**Dairy**					
1.	Cutting & collection of fodder	35.81	0.57	1	0.83	80
2.	Cleaning shed	35.05	1	0.44	0.45	63
3.	Bringing fodder	35.69	0.61	0.52	0.73	62
4.	Collecting dung	34.74	1	0.32	0.44	58.6
5.	Feeding animals	36.39	1	0.29	0.38	55.6
6.	Milking	28.26	1	0.22	0.45	55.6
II	**Tea plantation**					
1.	Picking/ Plucking	33.45	0.2	1	1	73.3
2.	Tipping	33.45	0.2	0.28	0.9	46
3.	Pruning	33.45	0.2	0.26	0.9	46
4.	Manuring tea nurseries	33.45	0.2	0.16	1	45.3
5.	Planting of tea	26.61	0.2	0.13	1	44.3
6.	Weeding	33.45	0.2	0.15	0.9	41.6

(DI-Drudgery Index)

Dairy

Majority of the women were involved in feeding animals (36.39%), collection of fodder (35.81%) and bringing fodder (35.69%). Sharma (1991) also supported that most of the women were involved in milking & feeding of animals. Collection of fodder (DI-80), cleaning shed (DI-63) and bringing fodder (DI-62) were found to be the most drudgery prone activities under dairy activities.

Tea plantation

Regarding tea plantation activities most of the women (33.45%) used to perform all tea related activities i.e. weeding, manuring of tea nurseries, pruning, tipping and plucking. However, comparatively less women were involved in planting tea (26.61%). Plucking tea (DI-73.3) was found to be the most drudgery prone activity under tea plantation activities.

Conclusion

- Cooking activity was the most drudgery prone household activity followed by washing clothes and vessel washing.
- Transplanting and transportation of manure were considered to be the most drudgery prone farm activities.
- Cutting and collection of fodder for animals was drudgery prone activity under dairy tasks.
- In tea plantation picking/plucking of tea leaves involved a lot of drudgery.

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