

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF LIVESTOCK FARM WOMEN ON INFORMATION NEED PERCEPTION

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Abstract: While there is great variability across systems and socioeconomic contexts, women generally play a major role in managing and caring for animals, even when they are not the owners. They take active part in livestock farming similar to that of opposite gender. Hence, the present study was conducted in Tamil Nadu state of India to identify the information need perception of farm women. In this research, a total number of 100 rural women were selected through simple random sampling technique from five villages of Thiruvallur district of Tamilnadu. A questionnaire was built in consultation with extension specialists of the area to collect data. According to these findings, among the farm women respondents, majority (51.00 per cent) of them had a low perception of information need followed by high (37.00 per cent) and medium (12.00 per cent) levels. Farm women respondents perceived more information requirement about farm credit, breeding, disease control, marketing, feeding and management in order. Further, this study revealed that only four characteristics of farm women viz., Occupation, Extension agency contact, Economic motivation and Social Participation were positively and significantly correlated with information need perception of farm women.

Keywords: farm women, livestock enterprise, information need perception.

Introduction

Women play an important role in animal husbandry activities. Their work often remains physically visible but conceptually and culturally invisible. In the rural areas, even though women are playing a major role by undertaking the most tiring and time consuming work in livestock enterprises, their contribution is not recognized.

Although two-thirds of the world's 600 million poor livestock keepers are rural women (Thornton et al. 2003), little research has been conducted in recent years on rural women's roles in livestock keeping and the opportunities livestock-related interventions could offer them. This is in contrast to considerable research on the roles of women in small-scale crop farming, where their importance is widely recognized and lessons are emerging about how best to reach and support women through interventions and policies (Quisumbing and Pandolfelli 2010).

While there is great variability across systems and socioeconomic contexts, women generally play a major role in managing and caring for animals, even when they are not the owners. Flintan (2008) documented participation of women in every aspect of livestock management in different pastoral systems around the world. Indian women play a significant role in livestock-keeping by providing labour; in poorer families, their contribution typically exceeds that of men (George et al. 1990). Moreover, Women from landless families spend a greater portion of their workday caring for livestock, compared to landed families (Heffernan, 2003). To understand the contribution of women in agriculture and animal husbandry activities in a purposeful and meaningful way, it is of utmost necessity not only to look at the role and activity patterns of farm women, but also information need perception of them. Keeping this point in view, a study has been designed to assess the information need of the farm women in respect of livestock enterprises.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in Thiruvallur district of Tamilnadu State of India. The district has 10 blocks, out of which one block i.e. Kadambadur was selected as it ranks first in livestock population. From the identified block, five villages falling within radius of 20 kms from each direction of the block headquarter were selected. The selected villages are Kadambadur, Kannur, Kilacheri, Mappedu and Pinjivakkam. Twenty farm women having at least 2 numbers of livestock in each of the five selected villages constitute the sample size for the study. By using a pretested / interview schedule, data were collected.

A pilot study was conducted in one of the block, using 25 people. The aim was to test and improve the instrument. Two people conducted interviews, out of which one of them was a resident of the place, where the study was carried out. Percentage and mean per cent scores were used to arrive at conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Degrees of information need perception

The perception of the farm women involved in livestock enterprises about their future information need on various aspects may provide an indication about their ambitions and aspirations to improve their farming operations. It may also give a clue to the change agents to equip themselves to meet the expectations of the farming community. Hence an analysis was made and presented in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1
Degrees of information need perception of farm women (n =100)

Sl.No.	Category	Number of respondents	Percentage
1.	Low	51	51.00
2.	Medium	12	12.00
3.	High	17	37.00

It could be noticed from Table 1 that majority (51.00 per cent) of farm women had a low perception of information need followed by high (37.00 per cent) and medium (12.00 per cent) levels. The reason for majority of farm women belonging to low category might be due to their low level of education and socio-economic status.

Major areas of information need perception of farm women

The perceived information need by the farm women on different domains of livestock enterprises viz., breeding, feeding, management, disease control. Farm credit and marketing with many sub components were obtained and presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Information need perception for various dimensions in livestock management (n = 100)

Sl. No.	Major area	Percentage	Rank
I	BREEDING		
1.	Repeat breeding problems	87.67	II
2.	Artificial insemination with improved germplasm	87.33	
3.	Presenting cows for AI at proper time of heat	85.67	
4.	Pregnancy diagnosis	81.33	
5.	Service after calving	64.67	
	Mean	81.33	
II.	FEEDING		
6.	Provision of mineral mixture	77.67	V
7.	Feeding balanced concentrates	62.33	
8.	Colostrum Feeding	61.67	
9.	Extra ration to pregnant animals	60.00	

10.	Feeding cereals and legume fodder mix	56.67	
11.	Water Sanitation	44.67	
	Mean	60.50	
III.	MANAGEMENT		VI
12.	Insurance to animals	88.33	
13.	Dehorning	55.33	
14.	Clean milk practices	55.00	
15..	Maintenance of cleanliness in animal sheds	52.33	
16.	Feeding schedule	48.67	
	Mean	59.93	
IV.	DISEASE CONTROL		III
17.	Regular and timely vaccination against contagious diseases	91.67	
18.	Treatment of cattle diseases	90.33	
19.	Deworming	89.33	
20.	Isolation of diseased animals and reporting the same to vets	60.00	
21.	Proper disposal of dead animals	58.33	
	Mean	77.93	
V.	FARM CREDIT		I
22.	Sources of availability	94.33	
23.	Interest and repayment	83.67	
24.	Rules and procedures	82.33	
25.	Mode of disbursement	79.67	
	Mean	85.00	
VI.	MARKETING		IV
26.	Selling milk through the co-operative	83.67	
27.	Purchasing animals from reliable sources	69.33	
28.	Getting loans from the reliable sources	66.33	
29.	Purchase of animals with veterinarian	51.00	
30.	Purchase of animals with suitable records and certificates	48.00	
	Mean	63.67	

*Multiple responses.

It could be observed from the Table 2 that the farm credit (85.00 per cent) was considered as the most important area requiring information to the farm women respondents. The other areas perceived by the respondents were breeding (81.33 per cent), disease control (77.93 per cent), marketing (63.67 per cent), feeding (60.50 per cent) and management (59.93 per cent).

In case of farm credit, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (94.33 per cent) need information on sources of availability of credit for livestock enterprises together with the procedures of obtaining and repayment.

Majority of the farm women respondents perceived information need for tackling infertility or repeat breeding problems (87.67 per cent), information about artificial insemination (87.33 per cent), time of impregnation (85.67 per cent) and pregnancy diagnosis (81.33 per cent) as these operations are vital in running the farm on economic lines.

In the domain of disease control measures majority of the respondents perceived the need for more information about timely vaccination against contagious diseases (91.67 per cent), treatment of cattle diseases (90.33 per cent), and deworming (89.33 per cent). The information need on the practices like isolation and reporting of the outbreaks to the veterinarian (60.00 per cent) and proper disposal of dead animals (58.33 per cent) were not felt essential by the respondents, which indicate that the women respondents were not aware of the fact that the contagious diseases would spread like a wild fire. Moreover they have not realized their collective responsibility of preventing the spread of diseases to other areas and vice-versa.

Under marketing, the perception was found to be highest about sale of milk through co-operatives (83.67 per cent). This might be due to the absence of a co-operative society in the study area and the respondents had perceived the importance of having such a society to have a regular remunerative price for their products. Besides the information need was also perceived in the area like purchase of animals from reliable sources (69.33 per cent). This might be due to the fact that the women were not involved much in the financial matters. Less than one-half of the respondents perceived the information need of purchasing animals with suitable records and certificates (48.00 per cent). This might be due to the fact that they might not have heard about such a system existing except in government farms. The low literacy and localite nature would be the other reasons.

With regard to feeding, the respondents need more information on feeding mineral mixture (77.67 per cent). Besides farm women perceived the information need on other

practices such as feeding balanced mixture (62.33 per cent), feeding of colostrum to new born calves (61.67 per cent), cereal and legume fodder mix (56.67 per cent) and water sanitation (44.67 per cent).

In respect to management practices, majority of the farm women perceived information need on cattle insurance (88.33 per cent). The reason might be that they can avoid high economic loss due to mortality and morbidity by many coantagious diseases affecting farm animals. The other areas which were perceived at different levels were dehorning (55.33 per cent), clean milk production (55.00 per cent) and cleanliness in sheds (52.33 per cent). The information on feeding schedule (48.67 per cent) was least perceived. This might be due to their personal experience with the desi animals which may not require such a scientific treatment.

Influence of the characteristics of farm women on information need perception

The influence of the characteristics of farm women on information need perception was analyzed with the help of zero order correlation and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Relationship between Characteristics of farm women (independent variables) and information need perception

S.No.	Characteristics (Independent variables)	Information Need Perception (Dependant variable)
1	Age	0.1499
2	Education	0.1206
3	Nature of family	0.1260
4	Occupation	0.2318*
5	Livestock possession	-0.0498
6	Farm size	0.0563
7	Annual income	-0.1162
8	Social Participation	0.2913**
9	Mass media Exposure	0.1601
10	Extension agency contact	0.2840**
11	Economic motivation	0.2641**
12	Credit behaviour	-0.0319
13	Cosmopolite-localite behaviour	-0.0156
14	Decision making behaviour	-0.0799

It could be observed from the Table 3 that out of 14 independent variables taken for the study, only four variables namely occupation, social participation, extension agency contact, and economic motivation exhibited a positive and significant relationship with the information need perception. The other variables did not exhibit any significant association. This showed the important role these variables would play in influencing information need perception.

Farm women confining to livestock farming activities as their occupation have a general tendency to seek more information, to keep their animals in a good condition so to reap more profit and this might be the reason for positive and significant association with the information need perception.

Social participation would have facilitated farm women to have more contacts with local leaders, officials, fellow villages and extension personnel which in turn would have made them to aspire for more and more information for proper maintenance of their farm. The extension agency contact would have acted as a catalyst for seeking more information.

The farm women generally have an urge to earn more to improve their status, which in turn would have been the motivating force for the positive and highly significant association of the variable, economic motivation.

The variables such as age, education, nature of family, farm size and mass media exposure exhibit a positive but non-significant relationship with information need perception of the farm women.

It was found that livestock possession, annual income, credit behaviour, cosmopolite-localite contact and decision making behaviour showed non-significant negative relationship with the information need perception.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the farm women respondents perceived more information requirement about farm credit, breeding, disease control, marketing, feeding and management in order. In addition to this, it can be concluded that the information need perception of farm women was influenced by their occupation, social participation, extension agency contact, and economic motivation. Hence, there is a need to educate women regarding improved livestock management activities to get more production potential from livestock products. For these specialized training programmes can be arranged for them at village level. Moreover, this study would help the extension system to design appropriate technology transfer model

and strategies to diffuse technical know-how and do-how with respect to livestock farming activities.

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