

Perceived constraints of tribal women in agriculture

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment generally refers to the process by which women enhance their power to take control over decisions that shape their lives in relation to access to resources, participation in decision making and control over distribution benefits. The present study was conducted in Bastar district of Chhattisgarh. A sample of 300 respondents was selected (150 beneficiaries and 150 non-beneficiaries) through population proportionate to sample size from six blocks representing 24 villages. A pre-tested interview schedule was administered to the respondents. Relevant data on constraints with respect to social, economic, psychological, and technological constraints were analysed. Under social constraints heavy workload on women ranked first (91%) and under economic constraints biggest constraint was lack of proper market facilities (89%). In overall psychological constraints worry about children being left uncared ranked I (92%); biggest political constraint was lack of cooperation and coordination from local leaders (89.33%) and lack of knowledge of postharvest technology constraint ranked at number one (93.66%) under technological constraints. All these multiple hindrances for the empowerment of tribal women could be easily nullified by sincere efforts made by the developmental agencies by planning effective policies and extension personnel giving their services.

Keywords: Empowerment; women; tribal; constraint; empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture in India is basically a family enterprise in which women are active participants. Women are responsible for at least 50.00 per cent of the total food production of the country (Kapur 1988). Tribal women are the backbone of the tribal economy of Bastar area of Chhattisgarh. In agriculture sector rice is grown

predominantly during Kharif season as rain fed crop but the productivity of this crop is low 08.53 q/ha in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. The irrigated area (1.67%) and fertilizer use (4.6 kg/ha) in the district are very less which is insufficient to supply adequate nutrient to the crop ([http://plantarchives.org/paper/Plant%20Archive%20vol%20\(11-1\)%20351-354.pdf](http://plantarchives.org/paper/Plant%20Archive%20vol%20(11-1)%20351-354.pdf)). The pattern of livelihood in Bastar

continues to be dictated by tradition. Even today agricultural practices are traditional. Use of wooden ploughs is overwhelming while the number of iron ploughs is negligible. The same is true for bullock carts. The number of tractors is negligible while the bullock carts are all pervasive. The usage of traditional agricultural implements has lowered the production of agriculture. Collection and sale of forest produce and other forest related work supplements meager agricultural income.

Most of the people do not find employment all year round. The cycle of floods and droughts makes livelihoods extremely vulnerable. The people are often forced to resort to moneylenders in times of crisis which usually means a life of continued indebtedness. The absence of alternate employment opportunities is responsible for the high incidence of poverty in the area. In the Bastar plateau, irrigation coverage is only 1.2 per cent (http://planningonline.gov.in/data/report/DP2009-2010_374Merge.pdf).

Exceptionally fortunate in its water resources the region has good rainfall and rapid run off due to the undulating terrain. There is potential for rainwater harvesting (<http://chhattisgarh.nic.in/book/hdr.pdf>). However it has been realised that the tribal women are still backward and lack behind in many aspects of their life. The present study was therefore formulated to identity the various constraints faced by tribal women.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was undertaken in Bastar district which was purposively selected with a view to judge empowerment extent of tribal women in the district. The list of tribal women was collected from the KVK, Bastar for each selected village. A total of 300 women respondents (150 beneficiaries, 150 non-beneficiaries) were selected through random sampling technique. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed including different indicators, pre-tested and modified accordingly for assembling the relevant data pertaining to social, economic, psychological, political, and technological constraints under which a set of parameters was put before the respondents.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Social constraints: Table 1 indicates the social constraints faced by the respondents. The percentage of each constraint shows the degree of seriousness which caused poor empowerment of tribal women. Under social constraints heavy workload on women ranked first (91%) followed by lack of support from male members of the society (84%), lack of exposure to outer world and limited exposure within the territorial boundaries (84%), lack of social mobility due to restrictions from the family members (83%), being ignored while taking decisions (80%), social taboos, superstitions, unhealthy traditions and

customs (78.33%) while the least perceived constraint was women lacking in self expression (69.99%). The trend was almost same for beneficiary women also. In this category heavy workload on women ranked I (88%) followed by exposure to outer world and limited exposure within the territorial boundaries (82%), lack of support from the male members of the society (78%), lack of social mobility because of restrictions in the family (77%) while the least perceived constraint was women lacking in self expression (54%). Under non-beneficiary category heavy workload on women ranked I (91%) followed by lack of support from the male members of the society (90%), lack of social mobility because of restrictions in the family (88%), exposure to outer world and limited exposure within the territorial boundaries (86%) while the least perceived constraint was dependable nature of women (76%). The data on the social constraints showed that the trend was almost similar in overall as well as in both the categories. This might be because of the reason that respondents belonged to the same community ie scheduled tribe. Though their sub-castes were different the customs and traditions were more or less similar. Singh and Chand (2005) and Das (2012) reported that dependable nature of women, social taboos, superstitions, unhealthy traditions and customs and the family members opposition to participate in social activities were the social constraints which caused poor empowerment of tribal women.

Economic constraints: Table 2 envisages the ranking order of six economic constraints. In overall economic constraints biggest constraint was lack of proper market facilities (89%) followed by low price of the sellable produce (88.66%), poor transport facilities (85%), delay in credit facilities (80%), high labour cost (76%) while least perceived economic constraint was delay in utilizing funds and implementing programmes (71%). In beneficiary category low price of the produce (85.33%) was the biggest constraint followed by lack of proper market facilities (80.66%), poor transport facilities (78.66%), delay in credit facilities (73.33%) and least perceived economic constraints was delay in utilizing funds and implementing programmes (54.66%).

In non-beneficiary category low price of the produce ranked I (92%) followed by poor transport facilities (91.33%), lack of proper market facilities (90.67%), delay in utilizing funds and implementing programmes (88%) and least perceived economic constraint was delay in credit facilities (86.67%). Bhartamma (2005) reported that lack of sufficient finance and lack of education were the major constraints for empowerment of rural women. Thomas et al (2005) reported that low price of the produce, lack of proper market facilities, high labour cost and poor transport facilities were the major economic constraints faced by the farmers.

Table 1. Social constraints faced by the tribal women of Bastar

Constraint	Beneficiaries (n= 150)			Non-beneficiaries (n= 150)			Overall (n= 300)		
	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank
Lack of higher educational institutes near the village	102	68.00	VIII	128	85.33	V	228	76.00	VI
Dependable nature of women	103	68.66	VII	114	76	X	217	72.33	X
Lack of self-confidence to express	82	54.66	X	127	84.66	VI	209	69.66	IX
Opposition from family members to participate in meetings etc	92	61.33	IX	122	81.33	IX	214	71.33	VII
Social taboos, superstitions, unhealthy traditions, customs	112	74.66	VI	123	82.00	VIII	235	78.33	V
Being ignored in decision making	114	76.00	V	127	84.66	VI	241	80.33	IV
Non-exposure to outer world and limited exposure within the territorial boundaries	123	82.00	II	129	86.00	IV	252	84.00	II
Lack of social mobility due to family restrictions	116	77.33	IV	132	88.00	III	241	80.33	III
Caste system prevailing in the village	104	69.33	VII	124	82.66	VII	228	76.00	VI
Lack of support from the male members of the society	117	78.00	III	135	90.00	II	252	84.00	II
Heavy workload on women	132	88.00	I	142	94.66	I	274	91.33	I

F= Frequency, Multiple responses were allowed

Psychological constraints: Table 3 envisages the rank order of nine constraints perceived by the respondents. The percentage of each constraint showed the

degree of seriousness that caused poor empowerment of tribal women. In overall constraints worry about children being left uncared ranked I (92%) followed by fear

Constraints of tribal women

Table 2. Economic constraints faced by the tribal women of Bastar

Constraint	Beneficiaries (n= 150)			Non-beneficiaries (n= 150)			Overall (n= 300)		
	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank
Delay in credit facilities	110	73.33	IV	130	86.67	VI	240	80.00	IV
Delay in utilizing funds and implementing programmes	82	54.66	VI	132	88.00	IV	214	71.33	VI
Low price of the produce	128	85.33	I	138	92.00	I	266	88.66	II
Lack of proper market facilities	121	80.66	II	136	90.67	III	267	89.00	I
High labour cost	103	68.66	V	131	87.33	V	234	76.00	V
Poor transport facilities	118	78.66	III	137	91.33	II	256	85.00	III

F= Frequency, Multiple responses were allowed

of social security, mobility etc (91%) while least perceived psychological constraint was lack of faith in fellow members (60%). Almost similar trend was found in beneficiary category but in non-beneficiary category psychological constraints perceived differently. In beneficiary category worry about children being left uncared ranked I (91%) followed by fear of social security, mobility etc (88%) while least perceived psychological constraint was fear of failure of any activity undertaken (crop failure, low production in poultry, mushroom cultivation etc) (34%). In non-beneficiary category the trend was different as the constraint of confining to woman's role ranked I (95%) followed by fear regarding social security, mobility etc (94%), worry about children being left uncared (93%) and low expectation from

life and dependency on forest produce (92%).

Political constraints: Political constraints faced by the respondents are given in Table 4. In overall political constraints the biggest was lack of cooperation and coordination from local leaders (89.33%) followed by monopoly of traders (83.33%) and the least perceived psychological constraint was exploitation by middlemen (72.66%). But the trend was different in two categories. In beneficiary category lack of cooperation and coordination from the local leaders ranked I (90%) followed by monopoly of traders (79.33%) while exploitation by middlemen was perceived as least important constraint (57.33%). In non-beneficiary category powerful and large farmers taking the benefits was the biggest constraint

Table 3. Psychological constraints faced by the tribal women of Bastar

Constraint	Beneficiaries (n= 150)			Non-beneficiaries (n= 150)			Overall (n= 300)		
	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank
Fear of failure of any activity undertaken (crop failure, low production in poultry, mushroom cultivation etc)	52	34.66	VIII	138	92.00	IV	190	63.00	VIII
Lack of motivation	63	42.00	VI	134	89.00	VI	177	67.00	VI
Lack of faith in fellow members	53	35.33	VII	127	84.66	VIII	180	60.0	IX
Low expectation from life and dependency on forest produce	63	42.00	VI	138	92.00	IV	201	67.00	VI
Shyness in behaviour	117	78.00	IV	131	87.33	VII	248	83.00	IV
Lack of rewards and recognition	129	86.00	III	136	90.66	V	265	88.00	III
Fear of social security, mobility etc	132	88.00	II	141	94.00	II	273	91.00	II
Worry about children being left uncared	136	90.66	I	140	93.33	III	276	92.00	I
Confining to woman's role (cooking, brooming of house, fetching of water, collection of forest produce, fuelwood etc)	102	68.00	V	142	95.00	I	244	81.00	V

F= Frequency, Multiple responses were allowed

(90%) followed by lack of cooperation and coordination from the local leaders (88.67%). This might be due to the political and social situations prevailing in the area.

Technological constraints: Table 5 depicts ten technological constraints perceived by the respondents. In overall technological constraints lack of knowledge of postharvest technology constraint

Constraints of tribal women

Table 4. Political constraints faced by the tribal women of Bastar

Constraint	Beneficiaries (n= 150)			Non-beneficiaries (n= 150)			Overall (n= 300)		
	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank
Exploitation by middlemen	86	57.33	IV	132	88.00	III	218	72.66	IV
Powerful and large farmers taking the benefits	102	68.00	III	135	90.00	I	237	79.00	III
Monopoly of traders	119	79.33	II	131	87.00	IV	250	83.33	II
Lack of cooperation and coordination from the local leaders	135	90.00	I	133	89.00	II	268	89.33	I

F= Frequency, Multiple responses were allowed

Table 5. Technological constraints faced by the tribal women of Bastar

Constraint	Beneficiaries (n= 150)			Non-beneficiaries (n= 150)			Overall (n= 300)		
	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank	F	%	Rank
Lack of market link	139	92.66	I	132	88.00	IV	271	90.33	II
Poor storage facilities	116	77.33	IV	119	79.33	VII	235	78.33	IV
High cost of chemical fertilizers	128	85.33	II	134	89.33	III	262	87.33	III
Difficulties in getting the HYV seeds, inputs etc in time	90	60.00	VI	117	78.00	VIII	207	69.00	VI
Lack of knowledge about procurement of drudgery reducing and other implements	20	13.33	VIII	126	84.00	VI	146	48.66	IX
Poor extension services	29	19.33	VII	129	86	V	158	52.66	VIII
Lack of information about schemes and programmes	126	84.00	III	109	72.66	X	235	78.33	IV
Lack of technological skill oriented trainings	29	19.33	VII	138	92	II	167	55.67	VII
Surplus produce being sold on lower rates	114	76.00	V	112	74.66	IX	226	75.33	V
Lack of knowledge of postharvest technology	139	92.66	I	142	94.66	I	281	93.66	I

F= Frequency, Multiple responses were allowed

ranked at number one (93.66%) followed by lack of market link (90.33%). In beneficiary category the major constraint lack of knowledge of postharvest technology and lack of market link ranked at number one (92.66%). In non-beneficiary category the major constraint was lack of knowledge of postharvest technology (94.66%) closely followed by lack of technological skill oriented trainings.

All these multiple hindrances for the empowerment of tribal women could be easily nullified by sincere efforts made by the developmental agencies by planning effective policies and extension personnel giving their services.

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