
Opinion of Farm Women about Working Method, Work Load and Their Health Status While Working with Conventional Technologies: A Sociological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the multifaceted participation of farm women in both agricultural and diversified activities, analyzing the tangible extent of their involvement and the subjective perceptions of empowerment associated with these engagements. The necessity of gender-sensitive agricultural technology, recognizing the pivotal role women play in food production Doss (2001). The importance of tailored interventions for poor female farmers, acknowledging their contribution to household welfare and agricultural productivity Quisumbing and Pandolfelli (2010). Agarwal (2001) delves into community forestry initiatives, highlighting the nuanced dynamics of women's participation. Through an integration of these insights with empirical data, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the contemporary landscape of farm women's participation in agricultural and non-agricultural activities. The findings contribute to the discourse on gender-inclusive rural development, informing policy and programmatic interventions that empower farm women and foster sustainable agricultural practices. The study was conducted in two cultural zones, Hisar from Bagar and Mahandragarh from Ahirwal zone were selected. The study was conducted on 320 rural farm women

who were selected randomly from Hisar I, Hisar II and Mahandragarh, Kanina Blocks.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a primary unorganized sector where women farm workers predominantly engage in labor-intensive tasks, commonly referred to as drudgery (Rani, 2007; Nag & Nag, 2004). Women, whether as farmers or farm workers, are involved in a multitude of activities including seeding, transplanting, weeding, fertilizer application, plant protection, thinning, harvesting, processing, selling, winnowing, and storing. These tasks, characterized as drudgery, entail significant physical and mental strain, agony, monotony, and hardship. The condition of women in this context is particularly concerning due to their ongoing struggles with illiteracy, malnutrition, and unemployment. There is a consensus that women's extensive involvement in agricultural activities imposes a substantial burden of drudgery on them (Verma & Sinha, 1991).

The participation of farmwomen is notably higher in activities such as seed treatment, transplantation, nursery raising, weeding, pruning, grain storage, manual harvesting, vegetable picking, and the collection and transportation of animal dung to fields. Notably, post-training evaluations revealed that farmwomen experienced a 74.6 percent increase in knowledge and skills pertaining to drudgery reduction technologies (Kumar et al., 2021).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For the present investigation, Haryana state was purposively selected as the locale due to its relevance to the researcher's affiliation with CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, and its notable development across various domains. Haryana is characterized by five distinct cultural zones: Nardak, Khadar, Bagar, Bangar, and Ahirwal. A simple random sampling technique was employed for this study.

Two cultural zones within Haryana were randomly selected, and one district from each of these zones was also chosen at random. Subsequently, two blocks from each selected district were randomly picked. From each block, four villages were selected through random sampling, resulting in a total of 16 villages for the study.

INSTRUMENT

Data collection was conducted through personal interviews. The investigator personally interviewed all respondents at their homes, ensuring availability and convenience for the participants.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The collected data were systematically coded, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted in alignment with the objectives of the present study, utilizing appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistical tools, including frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and total weighted score, were employed to derive inferences from the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information regarding the opinion of farm women about the working methods in field and home, workload, and the physical health status is presented in Table 1.1. More than half of the respondents (55%) in Hisar had modern working methods in the field and at home, whereas more than half of the respondents (53%) in Mahendragarh had traditional working methods in the field and at home. Half of the respondents in the district of Mahendragarh had a moderate workload whereas in Hisar two-fifths of the respondents had heavy workload. More than half respondents in Hisar (56.9%) and almost three-fifths of the respondents in Mahendragarh (61.3%) had healthy and fit health status.

Table 1.1: Opinion of women about working method, work load and health status

STATEMENT		District		
1	Working Method in field and home	Hisar N=160	Mahendragarh N=160	Total N=320
	Traditional	72(45.0)	85(53.1)	157(49.1)
	Modern	88(55.0)	75(46.9)	163(50.9)
2	Work load			
	Sedentary	29(18.1)	24(15.0)	53(16.6)
	moderate	67(41.9)	80(50.0)	147(45.9)
	Heavy	64(40.0)	56(35.0)	120(37.5)
3	Physical health status			
	Healthy and fit	91(56.9)	98(61.2)	189(59.1)
	Sick	69(43.1)	62(38.8)	131(40.9)

Figures in the parenthesis denote percentage

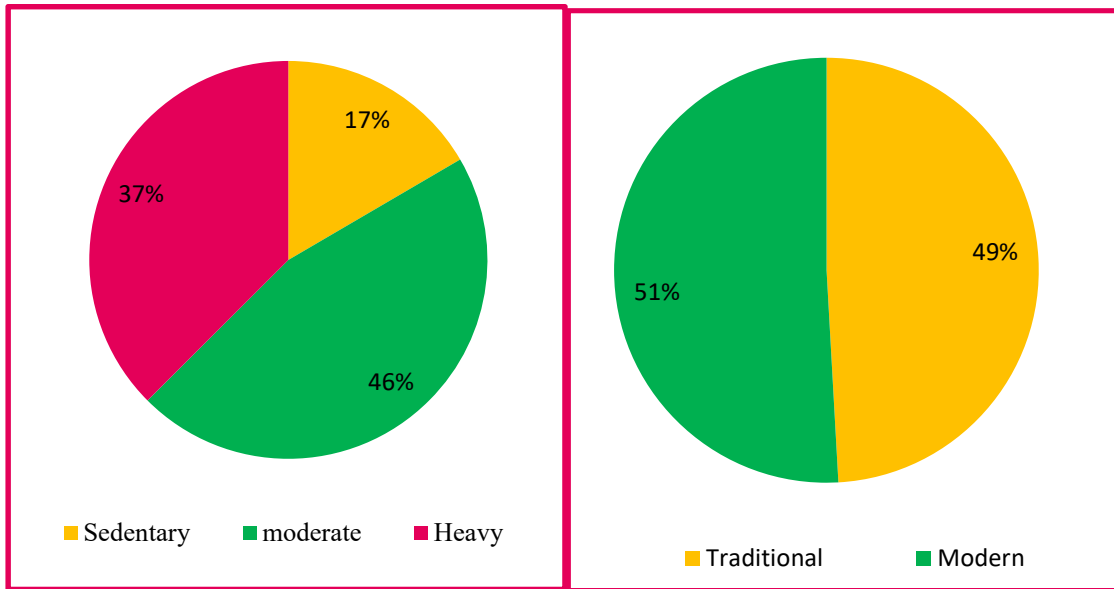


Fig. 1.1: Respondent's working method

Fig. 1.2: Respondent's working load

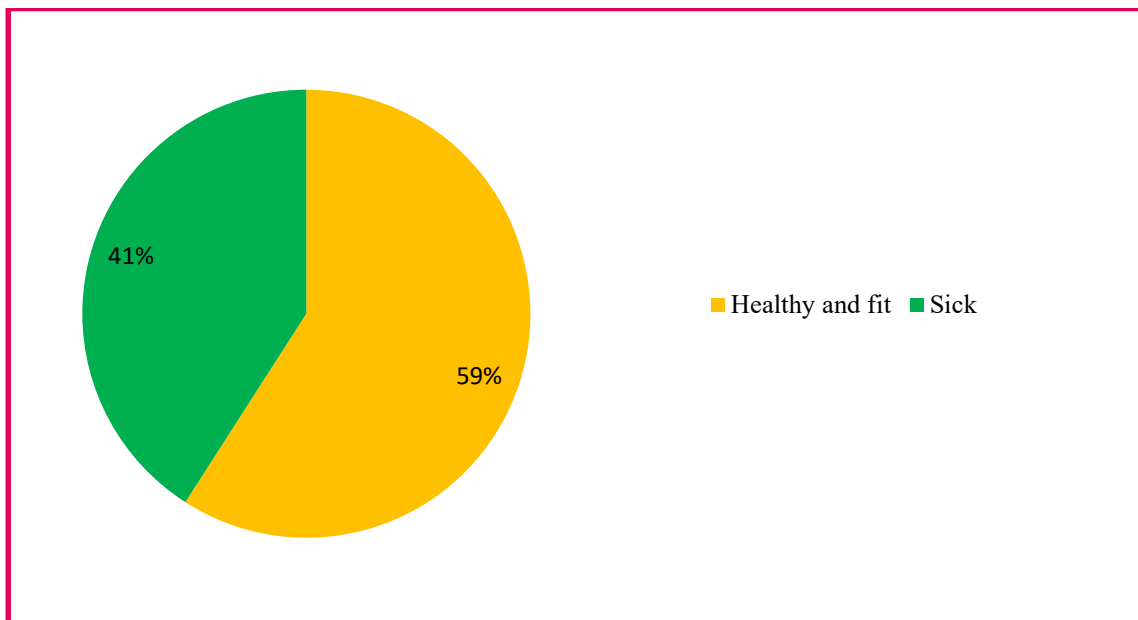


Fig. 1.3: Respondents' physical health status

4.1.10 Perception of the Farm Women while working with Conventional Technology

The perception profile of the farm women regarding conventional technology is given in Table 1.2. More than half of the respondents in Hisar and almost three-fourth in Mahendragarh perceived a lot of drudgery while working with conventional technology. More than half of the respondents in both the districts perceived time consumption and fatigue as their perception of the conventional technology are full of drudgery.

Table 1.2: Perception of farm women about conventional technology

Sr. No	Statement Perception	Hisar(N=160)	Mahendragarh (N=160)	Total(N=320)
1	Time consuming	80(50.0)	90 (56.2)	170(53.1)
2	Full of fatigue	96(60.0)	85(53.2)	181(56.5)
3	Lot of drudgery	92(57.5)	120(75.0)	212(66.2)
4	Energy consuming	104(65.0)	82(51.2)	186(58.1)
5	Feeling burden	88(55.0)	112(70.0)	200(62.5)
6	Low Cost	72(45.0)	48(30.0)	120(37.5)

Figures in the parenthesis denote percentage

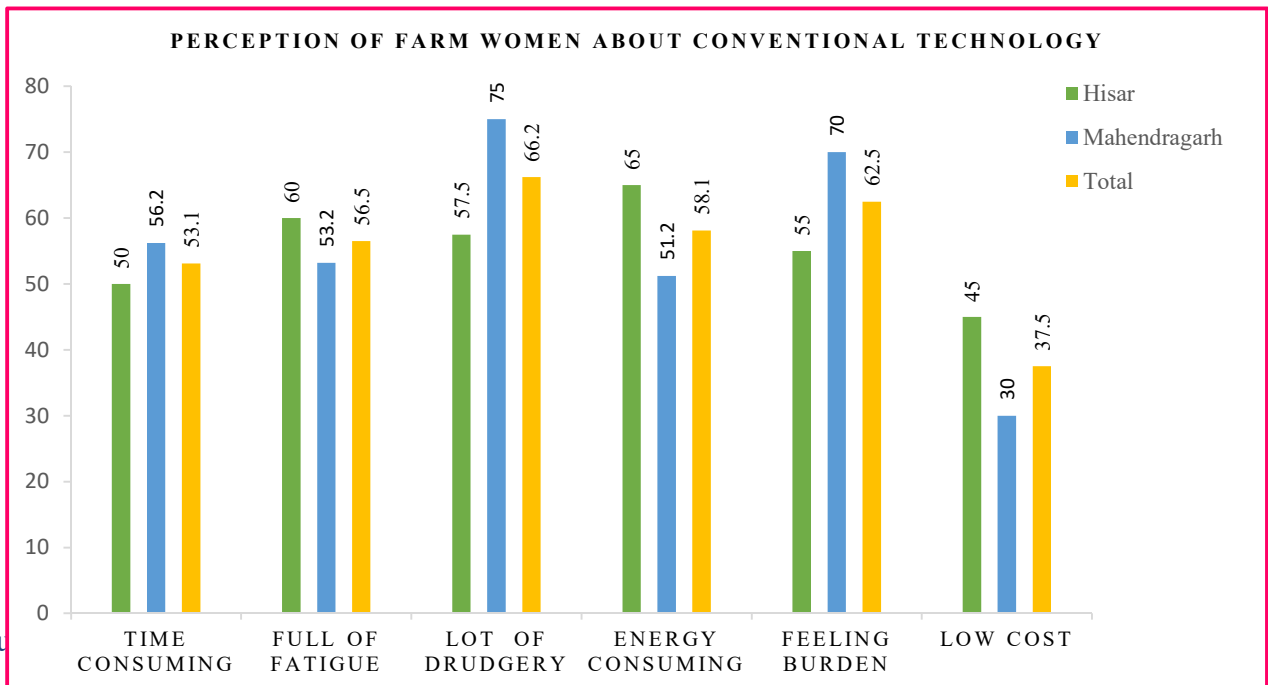


Fig. 1.4: Perception of farm women about conventional technology

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study correlate with those of Tarar et al. (2016), who reported that a significant majority (90.6%) of respondents experienced substantial health issues over the last two seasons, with 60% suffering from physical injuries or illnesses. Additionally, 33.1% faced reproductive health problems, and only 6.9% encountered mental health issues. Notably, 99.4% of respondents indicated that on-farm activities were a major cause of health problems, while 92.5% reported that off-farm activities also significantly contributed to their health issues. Furthermore, 95.6% of respondents attributed socio-economic stress as a primary cause of their health problems, and 93.8% experienced substantial health problems related to pesticide exposure during their farm activities.

Singh (2017) found that farm women play a crucial role in Indian agriculture and its allied activities, with livestock management being a predominant task. Women engage in a wide range of livestock activities, including fodder collection, dung collection, animal care, and milking. These tasks often require awkward postures, leading to numerous musculoskeletal disorders due to the heavy workload and poor ergonomic practices.

Gunawan (2019) observed that the modernization of agriculture reduces the demand for female farm laborers. The introduction of agricultural technology has particularly replaced manual labor in harvesting, primarily benefiting land-owning farmers. This trend, if continued, will disproportionately impact female workers who do not own land, leading to job losses and increased inequality between landowners and laborers. The loss of employment among female farm workers would significantly diminish their welfare, as it often represents their sole source of income.

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