

Study of Profile of Farm-Women in Sericulture

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Abstract: Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. It is most unfortunate that the role of women and their contribution in Sericulture are yet to be recognized. Although they perform almost all the activities in farm but by and large they have been remained as invisible workers. They are supposed to be considered as the equal partner of their male counterpart but they are victim of gender biases at their workplace. Considering therefore, the importance of women in sericulture the present study was conducted. The study revealed that more than half (53.33 per cent) of the respondents were belonged to the middle age group, two-fifth (36.67 per cent) were educated up to secondary level, majority (76.66 per cent) were married, nearly 70.00 per cent belonged to nuclear type of family, majority (66.67 per cent) were exclusively engaged in main occupation agriculture + sericulture, 43.33 per cent had small size of land holdings, 73.33 per cent had low level of annual income.

Keywords: Profile of farm women, sericulture.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Sericulture' is derived from the Greek word i.e. 'Sericos' which means 'silk' and the English word i.e. 'culture' which means 'rearing'. It is a multidisciplinary programme. It involves the cultivation of mulberry plants to produce leaf, rearing of silkworm to convert leaf to cocoon, reeling of the cocoon to obtain silk yarn and waving to convert yarn to fabrics. Silk is a natural fibre where two independent fibroins called brins are completely covered with sericin.

Sericulture is one of the rural based agro industry with global reach. While providing sustainable income and employment opportunities to the rural poor who are the main practitioners, silk production activity fetches an annual export earnings of more than Rs. 36000 million (C. S. Rama Lakshmi, 2007); Some unique features of the silk sector are its rural nature, agro based, ecologically and economically sustainable activity for the poor, small and marginal farmers, agriculture labour and women in particular. Many studies indicated that

60 per cent of the activities in the pre-cocoon and post-cocoon sectors are carried out by the women. It has been seen that the sericulture activity brings regular in come to the community without any bias of caste, creed, gender or religion. A remarkable feature of this activity is its egalitarianism- sericulture farmers, rich and poor, earn the same income from it. As women has a crucial role in the activities of sericulture, it equally creates opportunities and make them independent socially, economically, politically, and otherwise (Geetha & Indira, 2010, 2011; Goyal, 2007;).

The international development community has recognized that the agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor but the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere

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face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources. Efforts by national governments and the international community to achieve their goals for agricultural development, economic growth and food security will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contributions that women make and take steps to alleviate these constraints. Women make essential contributions to the sericulture and rural economic in all developing countries.

Sericulture is a labour intensive industry in all its phases. It can generate employment upto 11 persons for every kg of raw silk produced. Out of which more than 6 persons are women. More than 60.00 lakh persons are employed as full time workers in the production chain out of which 35-40 lakh persons are women (C.S. Rama Lakshmi, 2007;). Ever increasing demand to meet the domestic handloom industry requirements and equally increasing potential for exports provide tremendous opportunities for the women to avail sustainable income generating activities.

Though India produces all four varieties of silk, mulberry sericulture dominates with 89.00 per cent in total production and 95.00 per cent in exports. 98.00 per cent of mulberry silk production takes place in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir.

METHDOLOGY

Age

Age of the respondents was measured as revealed by the respondents themselves in the form of number of years completed as on the date of interview. The chronological age of the respondent farm women was taken into consideration and then respondents were classified into three age groups as per prevailing Govt. Rules.

| Sr. No. | Category | Age group |
|---------|----------|--------------|
| 1. | Young | Upto 35 |
| 2. | Middle | 36 to 55 |
| 3. | Old | 56 and above |

Education

It refers to the formal education attained by an individual. According to their formal education, the respondents were classified into five categories as given below.

| Sr. No. | Category | Level of education |
|---------|------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Illiterate | No schooling |
| 2. | Primary education | 1 st to 4 th standard |
| 3. | Secondary education | 5 th to 10 th standard |
| 4. | Higher secondary and diploma | 11 th to 12 th standard |
| 5. | Higher education | Graduation |

Marital status

The marital status of the respondents was considered. The respondents were then categorised on the basis of their marital status and were scored as below.

| Sr. No. | Category | Marital Status (score) |
|---------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1. | Married | 4 score |
| 2. | Unmarried | 3 score |
| 3. | Divorce | 2 score |
| 4. | Widow | 1 score |

Family type

There are two types of families i.e, joint family and nuclear family. The joint family refers to a group of persons in which all members live under one common roof, cooked and ate together and the earnings from all the sources pooled together and managed by one family head and also consisted of two or more living conjugal pairs. The nuclear family refers to a group of persons in which other characteristics of the joint family being the same, the number of living conjugal pair is one. The type of family was studied by using the socio-economic status scale (rural) of Trivedi (1963) by following scoring system.

| Sr. No. | Category | Family type (score) |
|---------|----------|---------------------|
| 1. | Nuclear | 1 score |
| 2. | Joint | 2 score |

Occupation

This gives information about the profession to which their individual and her family belongs for earning livelihood. The occupation from which women respondents gets more than fifty percent of total annual income was considered as main occupation. The scoring pattern followed for this variable is as below.

| Sr. No. | Category | Score |
|---------|------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Sericulture | 6 |
| 2. | Sericulture + Agriculture | 5 |
| 3. | Sericulture + Agriculture + Dairy | 4 |
| 4. | Seri. + Agri. + Sheep/Goat rearing | 3 |
| 5. | Sericulture + Agri. + poultry | 2 |
| 6. | Any other | 1 |

Land holding

The size of land holding refers to the total number of hectares of land owned by the respondent. On the basis of the landholding, the respondents were categorized into four categories as below.

| Sr. No. | Category | Land holdings (ha) |
|---------|----------|--------------------|
| 1. | Marginal | Upto 1.00 ha |
| 2. | Small | 1.00 to 2.00 ha |
| 3. | Medium | 2.01 to 4.00 ha |
| 4. | Large | 4.01 ha and above |

Annual income

It refers to the annual income received by the respondents family both from sericulture and other sources and was operationally measured in terms of rupees. The minimum annual income of the respondent was Rs. 30,000/- while the maximum annual income of the respondent was Rs. 6,20,000/-

The respondents were categorized into four groups by using the following formula.

$$\text{Range} = \frac{\text{Maximum annual income} - \text{Minimum annual income}}{\text{Number of category (4)}}$$

The first category (low) was calculated with above formula and minimum income i.e. Rs. 30,000/

- was added in it. The total of first group plus the range were calculated for medium group and the total income of second group plus range were consider to have third income group. Likewise fourth income group was calculated.

| Sr. No. | Category | Annual income |
|---------|----------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Low | Upto Rs. 1,77,500 |
| 2. | Medium | Rs. 1,77,501 to 3,25,000 |
| 3. | Moderate | Rs. 3,25,001 to 4,72,500 |
| 4. | High | Rs. 4,72,501 and above |

Mass media exposure

It refers to the exposure of the respondents to the radio, television, newspapers, farm magazines, farm publications, farmer’s rally, agricultural exhibition and puppet show for getting information about agriculture.

The minimum mass media exposure of the respondent was 1, while the maximum mass media exposure of the respondent was 5.

The respondents were categorised into four groups by using the following formula.

$$\text{Range} = \frac{\text{Maximum MME} - \text{Minimum MME}}{\text{Number of category (4)}}$$

The first category (low) was calculated with above formula and minimum mass media exposure i.e. 1 was added in it. The total of first group plus the range were calculated for medium group and the total score of second group plus range were consider to have third group, in the same way fourth group was calculated.

| Sr. No. | Category | Score |
|---------|----------|---------------|
| 1. | Low | Upto 2 score |
| 2. | Medium | 3 Score |
| 3. | Moderate | 4 Score |
| 4. | High | Above 4 Score |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the farm women

Age: Age denotes chronologically completed years of the respondents. Age influences the behaviour

of an individual by exposing him or her to varied situations, a number of times. The information regarding the age of the respondents was collected and presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of the respondents according to their age group

| Sr. No. | Age group | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Young (up to 35) years | 22 | 36.66 |
| 2. | Middle (36 to 55) | 32 | 53.34 |
| 3. | Old (56 and above) | 6 | 10 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

It was observed from the Table 1 that 53.34 per cent of the respondents were from middle age group, followed by young age group (36.66 per cent) and old age group (10.00 per cent).

From the above findings, it is concluded that majority of the respondents were from middle age group, having experienced ups and downs in the life for a considerable period. During this period, they might have participated in many agricultural practices and decisions which might have helped them in improving their self confidence.

Education

Formal education enhances the decision making ability of an individual. It helps to broaden the outlook of person towards the new technologies. In view, of this, the information pertaining to the level of education was collected tabulated and analysed. The results are presented in Table 2.

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

| Sr. No. | Level of education | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|---|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Illiterate | 12 | 20 |
| 2. | Primary Education (1st to 4th standard) | 14 | 23.34 |
| 3. | Secondary Education (5th to 10th standard) | 22 | 36.67 |
| 4. | Higher Secondary Education (11th and 12th standard) | 8 | 13.33 |
| 5. | Graduation | 4 | 6.66 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

The analysis of the results presented in Table 2 revealed that two-fifth (36.67 per cent) of the respondents had secondary education followed by one-fourth (23.34 per cent) of the respondents with primary education. Furthermore, it was observed that 13.33 per cent and 6.66 per cent of the respondents were educated up to higher secondary education and graduation, respectively. A higher proportion of the respondents (20.00 per cent) were found illiterate.

From the Table 2, it is inferred that only 20.00 percent of the respondents are illiterate while majority had education. Education enriches the horizons of knowledge of an individual and helps an individual in applying proper logic to perform the role allotted to them by the family.

Marital status

The observations with regard to marital status of the respondents are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Distribution of the respondents according to their marital status

| Sr. No. | Marital status | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|----------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Married | 46 | 76.66 |
| 2. | Unmarried | 4 | 6.67 |
| 3. | Divorce | 2 | 3.33 |
| 4. | Widow | 8 | 13.34 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

The data presented in Table 3 showed that majority (76.66 per cent) of the respondents were married and (6.67 per cent) and 3.33 per cent of the respondents belonged to unmarried and divorce category, respectively and 13.34 per cent of the respondents were widow.

A married women, especially the wife of the head of the family, holds influential position in the family. Since, most of the farm women were married they might have played a significant role in sericulture cultivation.

Family type

Joint family provides a surrounding to the women respondents for group action and group decision

in sericulture and allied fields. This enables them to work together for better achievement and output, whereas in nuclear family expenditure on day to day life is limited. The distribution of the respondents according to family type is indicated in Table 4.

Table 4
Distribution of the respondents according to their family type

| Sr. No. | Family type | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|--------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1. | Nuclear | 42 | 70.00 |
| 2. | Joint | 18 | 30.00 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

The data presented in Table 4 showed that two-third (70.00 per cent) of the respondents were from nuclear type of family, while remaining one-third (30.00 per cent) were from joint type of family. Now a days nuclear family type have started dominating joint family types in rural areas due to fragmentation of farm land, communication gap, high cost of family expenditure, student education, change in society etc. Hence more per cent of nuclear families are observed.

Occupation

The findings in respect of occupation of the respondents are given in Table 5.

Table 5
Distribution of the respondents according to their occupation

| Sr. No. | Occupation | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1. | Agri.+ Sericulture | 40 | 66.67 |
| 2. | Agri.+ Sericulture+Dairy | 20 | 33.33 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

The data pertaining to the occupation structure of farm women was presented in Table 5. It was evident from the table that 66.67 per cent of the respondent's main occupation was exclusively Agri. and Sericulture, whereas 33.33 per cent of the respondents family occupation was agriculture,

sericulture and dairy. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood and almost all the respondents are engaged in it.

Land holding

The size of land holding refers to the total number of hectares of land owned by the respondent. The data with regard to land holding of the respondents are presented in Table 6. It was observed from the Table 8 that 36.67 per cent of the respondents had marginal land holding and 43.33 percent of the respondents had small land holding, whereas 16.66 and 3.34 per cent of the respondents have medium and large size of land holdings respectively. Average land holding of the respondents was 1.50 ha.

Table 6
Distribution of the respondents according to their land holding

| Sr. No. | Land holding | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1. | Marginal (Upto 1.00 ha) | 22 | 36.67 |
| 2. | Small (1.01 to 2.00 ha) | 26 | 43.33 |
| 3. | Medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha) | 10 | 16.66 |
| 4. | Large (Above 4.00 ha) | 2 | 3.34 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

Land fragmentation is a continuous process in rural areas. In each generation land is fragmented within family members. Hence majority of the respondents are observed in marginal to small land holding.

Annual income

It is operationally defined as the total annual income earned through all sources by the respondent's family during the operational year.

The data with regard to annual income of the family of the respondents are presented in Table 9. It was cleared from Table 9 that, majority (73.34 percent) of the respondents were in the low annual income category, while 16.67 per cent of the respondents were from medium annual income category.

It was further noticed that 6.66 per cent and 3.34 per cent of the respondents were from high and moderate annual income category, respectively.

Table 7
Distribution of the respondents according to their annual income

| Sr. No. | Annual income | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Low (Up to Rs. 1,77,000) | 44 | 73.33 |
| 2. | Medium (Rs. 1,77,501 to Rs. 3,25,000) | 10 | 16.67 |
| 3. | Moderate (Rs. 3,25,001 & 4,72,500) | 2 | 3.34 |
| 4. | High (4,72,501 and above) | 4 | 6.66 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

Mass media exposure

It refers to the exposure of the respondents to the radio, television, newspapers, farm magazines, farm publications, farmer's rally, agricultural exhibition and puppet show for getting information about sericulture.

The data with regard to mass media exposure of the respondents are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Distribution of the respondents according to their mass media exposure

| Sr. No. | Mass media exposure | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Low | 36 | 60.00 |
| 2. | Medium | 16 | 26.66 |
| 3. | Moderate | 6 | 10.00 |
| 4. | High | 2 | 3.34 |
| | Total | 60 | 100 |

It is noticed from the Table 8 that more than one half (60.00 per cent) of the respondents were in low category of mass media exposure, followed by 29.66 per cent of the respondents were in medium category of mass media exposure, while more than one-tenth (10.00 per cent) of the respondents were observed in the moderate level of mass media exposure category and only 3.34 per cent of them had high level mass media exposure.

Table 8.1
Distribution of the respondents according to their use of different mass media

| Sr. No. | Mass media | Frequency (N=60) | Percentage |
|---------|-------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. | Television | 55 | 91.66 |
| 2. | News paper | 45 | 75.00 |
| 3. | Field Visit | 32 | 53.33 |
| 4. | Radio | 30 | 50.00 |
| 5. | Magazines | 12 | 20.00 |
| 6. | Agril. Exhibition | 08 | 13.34 |
| 7. | Farmers rally | 04 | 06.66 |

The findings are in accordance with the findings pertaining to the education of the farm women. It is clear from the results that the farm women had a lower degree of mass media exposure. The poor economic and educational status of the farm women might be responsible for their low exposure to mass media.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it was concluded that majority of the respondents were in middle age group, educated up to secondary level, majority were married, belonged to nuclear family, had agriculture + sericulture as main occupation, had small size of land holding, belonged to low income category and low level of mass media exposure.

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