

An Empirical Study on Farm Women Respondents in Tamil Nadu – Profile Status

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ABSTRACT

“To awaken people, it is the women who must be awakened, once she is on move; the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves”-Jawaharlal Nehru

The rural women in India constitute nearly 77.00 per cent of the total female population. About 79.00 per cent of rural women workers are involved in agriculture related pursuits as cultivators and laborers. Farm and home were integral parts in the rural society in India and the 'housewife' in the farm stead often plays multiple roles as producer, entrepreneur, worker, consumer and homemaker. In the Indian scenario poverty in general and extreme poverty in particular, have a significant 'gender' dimension. Women were more sensitive than men to the extremes of poverty and its consequences. For poor households, the women's capacity to work, her health, her knowledge and her skill endowments were often the only resources to fall back for survival. The rural women in India were, therefore, critical to the processes of moving their families out of poverty. Around 30.00 per cent to 35.00 per cent of the rural Indian households were estimated to be headed by women. Even where there is a male earner, women's earnings form a major part of the income of poor households. Although women often have little control over their earnings, there is enough evidence to show that given some discretion, they prefer to spend their money on family needs. The most desirable option to generate their own income was through self employment and income generating activities despite the problems they face in gaining access to assets and resources. According to FAO, women account for more than half of the labour required to produce the food consumed in developing countries. Reforms are needed on several fronts from education and training to land ownership. Women's income have a greater impact on household Food security and on improving child health and nutrition.

Keywords: Gender, Entrepreneur, Homemaker, Food security, FAO.

INTRODUCTION

In a social study, it is important to analyze the profile characteristics because they would serve as the base for clear and thorough

understanding of the subject area. This in turn would help in giving appropriate policy implications based on derived research findings.

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In this study seventeen independent variables were selected by perusing the literature, discussion with the scientists concerned and extension officials. Distribution of farm women respondents according to their characteristics and the discussion relevant to the study are presented in this section.

Objectives

1. To analyze the profile characteristics of farm women pertaining to their empowerment.

The following **hypotheses** have been set forth in consistent with the specific objectives mentioned above.

- i. There is no difference in the profile characteristics of the farm women.

Research Methodology

The Coimbatore District was selected as study area. Because, Coimbatore district is one of the district executing women oriented Agricultural developmental programmes in Tamil Nadu. In this district, in general most of the farms are managed by the farm women and

they were noted for their farm entrepreneurship. No research study of this nature had been conducted in the study area earlier. An empirical study was conducted with a broad spectrum of highlighting the empowerment of women with a significant view of not only reformation and refining their life towards the egalitarian society but also into the direction of economic achievement of the country. In this context, 337 farm women were selected using simple random sampling procedure. There were 17 independent variables were selected using judges opinion techniques.

Independent variables

1. Age

Age would reflect the mental maturity of an individual to take decisions which induces the farmer to choose and adopt the technologies. Hence, age was considered as one of the variables. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to age (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Young (upto 35 years)	80	23.74
2.	Middle (36-45 years)	154	45.70
3.	Old (above 45 years)	103	30.56
	Total	337	100.00

It could be seen from Table 1 that 45.70 per cent of the respondents belonged to middle age category followed by old (30.55 percent) and young (23.74 percent).

Nearly 70.00 per cent of the farm women were distributed in the category of middle to young. It could be inferred from the result that the middle to young age group were more enthusiastic and interested in participating in all development activities which in turn increased their farm income and their status in the society.

This finding derives support from the results of Sailaja (2002) observed that 95.00 percent of the farm women were belonged from middle to young age group.

2. Mother's education

Educational status of an individual plays a vital role in enhancing the farmers knowledge level. Education motivates individual in knowing new things and understanding them in relation to their local conditions. The education level of the parents pave a way for providing basic attributes like discipline, good education, punctuality, helping tendency saving etc., to their children. Hence the parental education was included in this study in addition to the respondents education. The details on the mother's education of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of respondent's mothers according to education (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Illiterate	40	11.87
2.	Functionally literate	29	8.61
3.	Primary education	257	76.26
4.	Middle education	-	0.00
5.	Secondary education	11	3.26
6.	Collegiate education	-	0.00
	Total	337	100.00

A perusal of Table 2 indicates that majority (76.26 percent) of the mothers of the respondents were educated upto primary level. A meagre percentage was observed in functionally literate and secondary level education of 8.61 and 3.26 per cent respectively. Illiteracy existed only among 11.87 per cent.

More than 75.00 per cent of the total farm women's mothers were distributed in primary level of education.

The result reveals that the mother's of the respondents might not have the educational opportunities as that of to-days mushrooming institutions. So, most of the parents were educated upto primary level. A decade before, girls were married in early ages. They had to travel quite longer distance to acquire higher education. The above may be the probable

reasons for not possessing higher education. The parents who had positive attitude towards female child allowed them to get higher education as revealed from the result (3.26 percent). Because of the compulsion to study, the illiterates were functionally literate with the help of programmes like Arivoliyakkam. Hence the minimum percentage was seen in the illiterate category.

This finding is in line with the findings of Shylashri (2001). She studied that the mother's of the respondents have primary to middle education. Mother's education was the base for the development of their children.

3. Father's education

The distribution of respondent's fathers according to their education level is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of respondent's fathers according to education (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Illiterate	27	8.01
2.	Functionally literate	10	2.97
3.	Primary education	231	68.55
4.	Middle education	67	19.88
5.	Secondary education	2	1.00
6.	Collegiate education	-	0.00
	Total	337	100.00

It could be observed from the Table 3 that more than three-fourth of the fathers (68.55 percent) were educated upto primary educational level and nearly one-fifth (19.88 percent) of the respondent's fathers had middle level education. A meagre percentage was observed in functionally literate (2.97 percent) and secondary (1.00 percent) level education. This finding is not in line with the finding of Shylashri (2001) that they had collegiate

education. Illiterates were only 8.00 per cent. Further, while comparing the education of mothers and fathers of respondents, the fathers were distributed more in the category of middle education. The parents have positive attitude and high aspiration coupled with vicarious experience would have made them to fund their progeny for higher education. The above may be the reasons for the findings.

4. Respondent's education

Distribution of respondents according to educational level is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to education (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Illiterate	25	7.42
2.	Functionally literate	23	6.82
3.	Primary education	102	30.27
4.	Middle education	151	44.81
5.	Secondary education	29	8.60
6.	Collegiate education	7	2.08
	Total	337	100.00

It is evident from the Table 4 that more than 80.00 per cent of the farm women were distributed in the categories like primary and middle levels put together. Illiteracy was observed among 7.42 per cent of the farm women and 6.82 per cent were functionally literate. However, it was heartening to note that 2.08 per cent of the respondents had collegiate education.

More than 80.00 per cent of the respondents were distributed in middle to primary level of education. It may be inferred that the education of the farm women in the study area has helped them to participate in the development programmes. As emphasized by Mira Seth (2001) that the education is the seed which has to be planted in the minds to become empower in all spheres of life. This finding is in parallel with the

findings of Rexlin (1984), Balaji et al. (1990), Jane Sujatha (1996) and Sailaja (2002) as they identified among the farm women engaged in different farming systems and hold positions in the milk cooperative societies.

5. Family type

The joint family / nuclear family is one in which all members lived under one roof, cooked and ate together and managed by one family head. The number of conjugal pair was one in nuclear family, whereas in joint family it was two or more. In joint family since the number of persons are more helps to take firm decisions quickly to solve any kind of problems with this background, this variable is included.

The distribution of respondents according to type of family is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to family type (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Nuclear	195	58.00
2.	Joint	142	42.00
	Total	337	100.00

It could be viewed from the Table 5 that 58.00 per cent of the respondent's family belonged to nuclear type followed by 42.00 per cent of joint family.

The result clearly says that nearly sixty per cent were the nuclear family type. It could be because of their self-confidence and independentness. In traditional India, the joint family system is the predominant one in earlier

periods. The young one has to depend for all his necessities on the elders. Whereas in the nuclear family system the individual held responsibilities for each and every aspects that she face. It is the positive sign to build self confidence and self responsibility.

This finding is in line with the study of Helen et al. (1990), Grover et al. (1991), Baby Kumari (1998) and Sailaja (2002) who

reported that more number of respondents belonged to nuclear family type. This finding is not in line with the findings of Pushpa (1995) and Sumathi (1999) observed that majority of the farm women belonged to joint family system.

6. Place of education

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to place of education (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Native village	238	70.62
2.	Native district (outside the village but within the district)	87	25.82
3.	Native state (other districts of the native state)	12	3.56
	Total	337	100.00

From the Table 6, it could be observed that 70.62 per cent of total respondents educated in native village. More than 25.82 per cent had from native district and 3.56 per cent learned from native state.

It could be concluded that more than seventy per cent of the farm women had education in their native village where as one-fourth of them were educated outside of their village, but within their native district and the remaining had in other districts of their native state.

This finding reflects the improvement in transport facilities. Since remote villages are being connected with the main roads, the

The place of education enhances the quality of education and an individual has got an opportunity to gain new experiences. Hence this variable has been included. The distribution of respondents according to place of education is presented in Table 6.

villagers are having opportunity to have education outside of their village also. The study results are in line with the results of the Shylashri (2001) who revealed that more than one-third had education outside of their native village. One-tenth of them had collegiate education and the remaining had education in their own village.

7. Occupational status

The occupational status of a respondent decides the time available to the farm women for other productive or non-productive activities. Hence, an attempt was made to study the occupational status of the farm women and the data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to occupational status (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Farming alone	30	8.90
2.	Farming + Agricultural labourer	32	9.50
3.	Farming + Agro-business	270	80.10
4.	Farming + Service	5	1.50
	Total	337	100.00

From the data in Table 7 inferred that the majority of the farm women (80.10 percent) were involved in Farming + Agro-business and nearly 9.50 per cent were engaged in Farming + Agricultural labour. Farming + Service was practiced by only 1.50 per cent respondents (Fig.5).

Majority (80.10 percent) of the farm women were practicing Farming + Agro-business and almost equal per cent were

observed in the category of Farming + Agriculture labour and Farming alone and the remaining seen in Farming + Service.

The higher percentage involving in Farm + Agro-business could be because of uncertainty in farming in the recent past. So the farmers have added some agro-based business to compensate the loss in farming. This finding is in parallel with the findings of Palmurugan (2002) and Sailaja (2002). The results of them

revealed that most of the farm women were engaged in the preparations of milk products, masala powder, and pickle and vadam preparation as off seasonal self employment. Thus they have engaged in the different types of occupations so as to increase their farm and home income which helps to improve socio-economic conditions.

8. Farm size

The extent of farm size possessed by an individual indicates the economic condition. It also reveals the cropping pattern followed by the farm women. Hence, it has been studied and the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents according to farm size (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Marginal (< 2 ac)	82	24.33
2.	Small (2 – 5 ac)	149	44.21
3.	Medium (5 – 10 ac)	78	23.15
4.	Big (> 10 ac)	28	8.31
	Total	337	100.00

It is evident from the Table 8 that nearly half (44.21 percent) of the total respondents hold 2 to 5 acres and an equal percentage was distributed in marginal (24.33 percent) and medium categories, but 8.31 per cent had more than 10 acres. Thus more than 80.00 per cent of the respondents were distributed under small and marginal. Apart from this marginalized groups, around 10.00 per cent had more than 10 acres under big farmer category.

In the study area mostly commercial crops like, banana, sugarcane, turmeric and cotton are grown and the land value is very high. Hence the minimum percentage was observed in big farmer category. The minimum

percentage observed in big farmer category is due to some unavoidable circumstances the lands were being sold and fragmented. Hence the maximum respondents possessed 2 to 5 acres. This is not in conformity with the findings of Sumathi (1999). She observed that nearly fifty per cent of the farm women owned large sized farms followed by small and marginal holdings. This is in conformity with the findings of Sriram (2000).

9. Innovativeness

The innovativeness of the farmers indicates their readiness to adopt technologies earlier than majority of their fellow members. Hence the important variable was studied and the findings are given in Table 9.

Table 9: Distribution of respondents according to innovativeness (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	-	0.00
2.	Medium	232	68.84
3.	High	105	31.16
	Total	337	100.00

A perusal of the Table 9 revealed that around 68.84 per cent of the total farm women had medium level innovativeness, whereas, high level was seen among 31.16 per cent of the respondents. Nearly seventy per cent of the farm women had medium level of innovativeness followed by more than one-third belonged to high level of innovativeness. It could be seen that there was nobody under

low level category. This could be because of their educational level and participation in extension activities and information seeking behaviour. It may be due to easy access to the scientific institutions as FDG convener and members to attend the trainings, demonstrations, farmer's days etc., similarly they are having frequent contact with the extension officials so as to get inputs and

information. As a result, the farm women might be the first to adopt the teacher's adoption. It is a good sign to note that the distribution of all farm women in medium to high level of innovativeness because of the possession of above said developmental attributes. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Theodore (1999), Palmurugan

(2002) and Jamatia (1999). Their study revealed that the majority of the farm women possessed medium level followed by high level of innovativeness.

10. Risk orientation

Risk orientation is one of the important psychological aspect, it was studied and the results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Distribution of respondents according to risk orientation (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	79	23.44
2.	Medium	123	36.50
3.	High	135	40.06
	Total	337	100.00

A glance at Table 10 shows that 40.06 per cent of the total respondents possessed high level risk orientation which is followed by medium (36.50 percent) and low (23.44 percent) levels.

As the result shows that more than three-fourths possessed medium to high category towards risk orientation.

A considerable percentage of farmers had been innovative and had the tendency to take risk, in spite of the worst affected drought they faced for the quinquennial years. The ground water depletion was also acute due to the

devastation of drought. Apart, they were not able to get reasonable price for their commodity.

11. Mental activity

Mental activity is the degree to which farmers are positively oriented and evaluated the importance of mental as opposed to physical activity. The individual's orientation towards mental activity is characterized by the habits of record keeping, planning, organizing etc., in farming. Hence it has been studied and the results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Distribution of respondents according to mental activity (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	130	38.58
2.	Medium	62	18.40
3.	High	145	43.02
	Total	337	100.00

Table 11 explained that 43.02 per cent of the farm women had high level of mental activity in carrying out their farm activities followed by low (38.50 percent) and medium (18.4 percent) levels. It is evident from the result that more than sixty per cent of the farm women possessed medium to high level of mental activity, whereas more than one-third of them had low level of mental activity.

It is further revealed that the low level of mental activity might be due to low literacy level and less level of rapport with the

developmental departments. This could be the probable reason for the higher level of mental activity.

This finding is not in agreement with the findings of Nanjaiyan (1985). He reported that more than three-fourth of the total respondents had medium level of mental activity in carrying out their farm activities and only 2.50 per cent had high level.

12. Economic motivation

Economic motivation is considered as an important variable as it will influence the

effective involvement of the respondents in agriculture. Hence this variable was considered. The distribution of respondents

according to economic motivation is given under Table 12.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents according to economic motivation (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	107	31.75
2.	Medium	107	31.75
3.	High	123	36.50
	Total	337	100.00

It could be seen from the Table 12 that 36.50 per cent of the total farm women had high level economic motivation followed by an equal percentage of respondents distributed in low (31.75 percent) to medium (31.75 percent) levels. The study positively strengthened by the results shown in the Table 12. That is more than seventy five per cent of the farm women possessed medium to high level of economic motivation.

The possible reason for the present result may be the regular and increased income due to high innovativeness, risk orientation, mental activity and practicing farming with

allied enterprises so as to increase the farm income.

The result is in line with the finding of Baby Kumari (1998) and Sailaja (2002) where the farm women increased their socio-economic conditions by engaging in the allied activities in addition to farming.

13. Progressiveness

The progressiveness helps to know the receptiveness of the farm women (respondents) towards the modern values and practices exists in the agriculture. Hence it was chosen. The distribution of respondents according to progressiveness is given in Table 13.

Table 13: Distribution of respondents according to progressiveness (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	105	31.16
2.	Medium	80	23.74
3.	High	152	45.10
	Total	337	100.00

It could be observed from Table 13 that 45.10 per cent of the total farm women belonged to high level of progressiveness followed by low (31.16 percent) and medium (23.74 percent) levels. Around seventy per cent of the total respondents were seen in the categories viz., medium to high levels of progressiveness followed by more than one-third in the low level.

From the results, it may be inferred that the majority of the farm women possessed high level of economic motivation and innovativeness it could be led them to have

high level of progressiveness. The reason for the low level may be due to low level of literacy and not involving any developmental activities.

14. Scientific orientation

Scientific orientation facilitates to know the extent of use of scientific methods by the farm women both in agriculture and agro based activities in turn to increase their farm and home income. Hence, it was studied. The distribution of respondents according to scientific orientation is mentioned in Table 14.

Table 14: Distribution of respondents according to scientific orientation (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	84	24.93
2.	Medium	115	34.12
3.	High	138	40.95
	Total	337	100.00

The Table 14 reveals that the high level scientific orientation was noticed among 40.95 per cent of total farm women followed by medium and low levels, i.e., 34.12 and 24.93 per cent respectively. The farmers were distributed mostly in the categories of medium to high (75.07 percent) level of category. The probable reason that could be attributed for the high level of scientific orientation might be due to high level economic motivation and progressiveness leading them to seek modern technologies thereby to increase their farm income. This finding is in parallel with the findings of Sailaja (2002) who noted that the

high level of scientific orientation followed by medium and low levels. But the result is not in line with the results of Palmurugan (2002), Baby Kumari (1998), Saravanakumar (2000) and Yeswanth (2000) who identified that majority of the farm women were distributed in medium to high level.

15. Self confidence

Self confidence denotes the ability, initiative and zeal to achieve an individual's goal. Hence it was included in this study. The distribution of respondents according to self confidence is noted in Table 15.

Table 15: Distribution of respondents according to self-confidence (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	103	30.56
2.	Medium	116	34.42
3.	High	118	35.02
	Total	337	100.00

It is clearly understood from the Table 15 that the farm women were distributed almost equally in the three categories of self confidence that is high, medium and low with 35.02, 34.42 and 30.56 per cent respectively. The farm women were distributed maximum in the medium to high level category (69.44 percent).

The increase of self confidence might be due to the increase in progressiveness, risk orientation, high level economic condition, and scientific orientation and also due to nuclear type of family. The level of knowledge and skill acquired by the farm women by participating in various training programmes

and their access to various information sources would have given them the self confidence. This finding is similar to the results of Jayalakshmi (1995) and Kalaivani (1999) and Shanthasheela (2002) explained that due to high level of self confidence due to high level of literacy and who efficiently engaged in the organisations, political activities etc.

16. Self responsibility

Self responsibility helps to know the ability of an individual to do anything at their own without depending on others help. Hence it was studied. The distribution of respondents according to self responsibility is given under Table 16.

Table 16: Distribution of respondents according to self-responsibility (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	125	37.09
2.	Medium	94	27.89
3.	High	118	35.02
	Total	337	100.00

It could be revealed from the Table 16 that 37.09 per cent of the total respondents had low level self responsibility, whereas 35.02 and 27.89 per cent of the farm women possessed high and medium levels respectively. From the result, it could be concluded that more than sixty per cent of the farm women were distributed in medium to high level of self-responsibility, whereas nearly 40.00 per cent of them had low level of self responsibility.

The probable reason for the low level might be due to belongingness of joint family type and low level was observed in the literacy, innovativeness, progressiveness, risk bearing ability, economic motivation, mental activity, scientific orientation and self confidence would be the reason for this high percentage of farm women in the low level of self responsibility. It also due to the dominance of other members in the family for example the inputs and infrastructure were purchased by the husband and son of the farm women and lack of freedom in spending and taking decisions towards the financial related

activities. These reasons would prevent them to take self responsibility. The high level of self responsibility because of full support from their family members in all walks of their life. Freedom in taking decisions and possession of positive attitude towards empowerment.

These results are corroborated with the results of Krishnasrinath (1992) opined that of the women had positive attitude towards the empowerment who may be aware of all facts of life, economically independent, courageous, enough to do what they think right and be responsible for their own life and living besides running their families.

17. Trainings undergone

Trainings undergone give the details on the nature and number of trainings attended by the farm women. It also gives chance to a person to be functionally literate and to do her job proficiently. Hence it was included in the study. The distribution of farm women according to training undergone is presented in Table 17.

Table 17: Distribution of respondents according to trainings undergone (n=337)

S.No.	Category	No.	Percent
1.	Low	128	37.98
2.	Medium	102	30.27
3.	High	107	31.75
	Total	337	100.00

It was analyzed from the Table 17 that almost around 40.00 per cent of the total respondents possessed low level in attending training programmes whereas an equal percentage of farm women were seen in the high and medium categories with 31.75 and 30.27 per cent respectively. The result shows that the maximum number of farm women were distributed in medium to high (62.02 percent) level which was followed by low level by around forty per cent. It could be derived from the results that the farm women were willing to participate if the trainings were conducted in their premises with short duration. They expressed their identity if at all trainings were held at a longer distance, due to engagement in household chores plus farm related activities.

This finding derives support from Anandaraja (1999). The study also revealed that the respondents had training from high to low levels in irrigated farming situations and found that, majority (76.25 percent) of the respondents had undergone low levels of training followed by high (12.50 percent) and medium (11.25 percent) levels of trainings. Another study by Krishna kumar (1996) reported that more than two-fifth of the farm women (42.50 percent) attended more than one training, followed by 30.83 per cent farm women who had attended one training and 26.06 per cent attended no one training. The study also supported by Shanthasheela (2002) reported that 30.14 per cent of the respondents had not attended even a single training, 23.28

per cent attended one training, 28.77 per cent attended two trainings, 12.33 per cent attended three trainings and 2.74 per cent each attended four and five trainings. Furthermore, Karthikeyan (1986) and Alagesan (1990) observed that majority of the respondents (91.00 percent) preferred village as the most suitable place for training on cultivation practices.

Muthaiah et al. (1990) reported that majority of the respondents preferred their own village and progressive farmer's fields for training.

CONCLUSION

It could be concluded from thefore said discussed findings on profile characteristics, the farm women were distributed differently in various levels of independent variables. Hence, the findings are against the hypothesis framed for the study. This study would pave way for multi-dimensional process which enable the women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of their life. The implications could be derived that the developmental organizations which had objectively feminism should consider all the empowerment dimensions viz., social, economic, extension, scientific, psychological and political while formulating policy issues.

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