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INVOLVEMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN HOME GARDENING PRACTICES IN SHARIATPUR DISTRICT OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

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The prime objective of the study was to find out the involvement of rural women in home gardening practices in Shariatpur district of Bangladesh. Involvement of rural women in home gardening practices was measured by computing involvement in 11 selected operations and in 14 different vegetables production. Attempt was also made to explore the relationship between the involvements of rural women in home gardening practices with their selected characteristics. The characteristics were age, education, family size, annual family income, knowledge on homestead gardening, training experience, use of information sources, cosmopolitanism, organizational participation and attitude towards homestead gardening. Data were collected during 3 November to 10 December, 2007 from 102 randomly selected farmers of Naodoba union of Zanjira Upazila under Shariatpur district of Bangladesh. Result showed that 69.6 percent rural women had medium involvement followed by 16.7 percent had low involvement in home gardening practices. Positive significant relationships were found with rural women's education, knowledge on home gardening, use of information sources and attitude towards home gardening and the negative significant relationships were found with rural women's age and annual family income. So extension teaching should be given to young and middle aged women who will help them to involve in income generating activities by utilizing homestead space properly and in improving their livelihoods.

Key words: *involvement, rural women, home gardening practices*

INTRODUCTION

Homestead is the dwelling place and is the center where all vegetables and quick growing fruits are cultivated. Homestead as defined by Abdullah (1986) if the land owned and occupied by the dwelling unit of the household and immediate area surrounding the dwelling unit including courtyard, pond, road space around homestead, space used for cultivation of trees and vegetables and unutilized space. In Bangladesh, about eighty five percent of the people live in rural areas. Moreover, a vast number, approximately 64 percent (Anonymous 2003) of our rural people are landless. Landless families possess a small piece of land in the homestead area; women of these landless families cultivate different kinds of vegetables, fruits and earn money more than medium and large farm size family (Halim 1991). This income may meet a part of household expenditure for an average of 5.5 member family sizes (Anonymous 1991). Home gardening can play a very important role to improve the nutritional level in the country through supplying minerals and vitamins. Vegetable and fruits play a very important role in human nutrition as sources of minerals (iron, calcium, etc.) and different vitamins which are not in adequate qualities in other food items.

Bangladesh has almost attained self-sufficiency in cereal production. But the production of vegetables in homestead area is still very low. Little attention is given cultivate of these vegetables, though these are very important sources of human nutrition. For balanced nutrition everybody should intake sufficient vegetable. But most of the homestead area is not utilized properly. Fortunately, Bangladesh is a country of favorable climate where three to four crops could be grown in a year. It has given a wonderful climate to cultivate vegetable such as cauliflower, cabbage, brinjal, potato, tomato, turnip, kholrabi, okra, sweet gourd, snake gourd etc. In the country, majority of the rural women cultivate homestead vegetable in unplanned way. But diversified vegetable cultivation considering harvesting period can easily provide vegetable production from their homestead all the year-round. Rural women can play a vital role if they are properly involved in income generating activities like vegetable cultivation. The study areas are suitable for growing vegetable. There is a great scope for increasing the production of vegetable throughout the year. The rural women would cultivate vegetable efficiently if they could provide advisory services regarding vegetable cultivation. Considering the fact SDS, a local NGO, started a program on homestead gardening in the study area. They have record number of population in their program and they are running the program for a long time. But they didn't conduct any systematic study regarding rural women's involvement in home garden practices. Considering the above issues the present study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

- To determine the extent of involvement of rural women in home gardening practices;
- To determine some selected characteristics of rural women, are: age, education, family size, annual family income, knowledge on homestead gardening, training experience, use of information source, cosmopolitanism, organizational participation, attitude towards homestead gardening; and
- To determine the relationship between the involvement of rural women in homestead gardening with their selected characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

Population and sampling design

The study was conducted at Zanjira Upazila under Shariatpur district of Bangladesh which was purposefully selected. Naodoba Union was purposively selected among 12 unions of the Zanjira upazila. Naodoba Union consists of twenty villages. Again, out of the twenty villages two village namely Naodoba and Purba Naodoba were randomly selected. With the help of Sub-Assistant Agricultural Officer a list of all farm families of the selected villages were prepared. The list comprised of a total of 512 farm families in the study area. The women housekeeper of these farm families constituted the population of this study. There were 390 rural women in Naodoba and 122 rural women in Purba Naodoba. Twenty percent of the population of each village was randomly selected as representative sample by using random number. Thus, the sample size for Naodoba was 78 and that of Purba Naodoba was 24 which made the total sample size 102. In addition, 2 percent of the population was selected randomly and proportionately from each of selected villages. Thus, the additional sample, so drawn stood 10 rural women, which were included in the reserve list and used in case of unavailability of the sample rural women during interview. Data were collected during 3 November to 10 December, 2007 from 102 randomly selected farmers through interview schedule. Analysis was performed using some statistical treatments, such as number, frequency count, percentage, range, mean and standard deviation were used in describing the selected variables. Pearson's product-moment coefficient correlation (r) was used to find out the relationship.

Variables of the study

Involvement of rural women in home gardening practices is selected as focus variable. It was measured by computing extent of involvement in 14 different vegetable production and 11 selected operations during the time of interview. Scoring was made in the following way for involvement in each respondent.

$$\text{Involvement score} = \Sigma (\text{OI} + \text{PI})$$

Where,

OI = Operation involvement score

PI = Production involvement score

Operational involvement score was computed based on extent of operational involvement where 0, 1, 2, 3 was assigned for no involvement, rarely involvement, occasional involvement and regular involvement, respectively. Production involvement score was assigned based on number of year involves. For each year involvement 1 score was assigned. The involvement score of a respondent was obtained by the involvement scores in all the operation and production of all vegetables on the basis of her responses. Finally, the overall involvement score of respondent was obtained.

Personal and socio-economic characteristics of rural women were considered as independent variables of this study. They are age, education, family size, annual family income, knowledge on homestead gardening, training experience, use of information source, cosmopolitaness, organizational participation, attitude towards homestead gardening. Age of a respondent was measured in terms of actual years from her birth to the time of interview. Education was measured in terms of grades of education completed by an individual from educational institutions. Whereas family size of a respondent was determined in terms of actual number of members in her family including herself. Annual family income of a respondent was measured on the basis of total yearly earning from agriculture and other sources (business, service, etc.) by the respondent herself and other family members. Training experience of a respondent woman was measured by counting the actual days of her agricultural training up to the time of interview on the basis of her statement. It was measured in terms of actual days. Knowledge on home gardening of a respondent was measured based on assigned score of 50 on 18 questions regarding homestead gardening. Use of information sources refers to contact of rural women with some selected information sources and it was measured on the basis of her extent of contact with some selected information sources. Cosmopolitaness was measured in terms of her nature of visits to the eight different types of places. The cosmopolitaness was measured by assigning score 4 for visit once per month, 3 for one visit per three month, 2 for one visit per six month, 1 for one visit per one year and 0 for no visit at all. The cosmopolitaness score of the respondents could range from 0 to 28, where 0 indicating no cosmopolitaness and 28 indicating very high cosmopolitaness. Organizational participation of a respondent was measured by her membership in different social organization for particular period of time. Furthermore, attitude of the rural women towards home gardening was measured by using a five point Likert scale consisting 8 statements (four positive and four negative).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of involvement of rural women in home gardening practices

The observed score of the involvement of rural women in home gardening practices ranged from 45 to 67 against the possible range of 0 to 103. The mean and the standard deviation (SD) were 57.08 and 4.38,

respectively. The respondents were classified into three categories on the basis of their extent of involvement in home gardening practices such as: low involvement (up to 52), medium involvement (53-61) and high involvement (above 61). The distribution of the respondents according to their involvement score are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the rural women according to their involvement in home gardening practices

Range		Respondents			Mean	SD
Observed	Possible	Categories	No.	%		
45-67	0-103	Low involvement (up to 52)	17	16.7	57.08	4.38
		Medium involvement (53-61)	71	69.6		
		High involvement (Above 61)	14	13.7		

Results of Table 1 shows that 17 respondents (16.7%) had low involvement, overwhelming majority of the respondents (69.6%) had medium involvement and only 14 respondents (13.7%) had high level of involvement in home gardening practices.

Socio-economic characteristics of rural women in home gardening practices

The involvement of rural women in homestead gardening can be influenced by a large extent of her personal and socioeconomic characteristics. In this study, only ten characteristics of them were selected, are: age, education, family size, farm size, annual family income, knowledge on homestead gardening, training experience, use of information sources, cosmopolitaness, organizational participation and attitude towards home gardening. The distribution of the respondents according to their different socio-economic characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics (measuring unit)	Range		Respondents			Mean	SD
	Obs.	Pos.	Categories	No.	%		
Age (year)	22-78	-	Young aged (up to 35)	40	39.1	38.86	8.62
			Middle aged (36-55)	61	58.9		
			Old aged (56 and above)	1	1		
Education (year of schooling)	0-12	-	Illiterate (0)	6	5.90	4.96	3.74
			Can sign only (0.5)	28	27.5		
			Primary education (1-5)	19	18.7		
			Secondary education (6-10)	45	44		
			Above secondary education (above 10)	4	3.9		
Family size(member)	2-11	-	Small family (up to 4)	22	21.6	5.80	1.80
			Medium family (5 to 7)	62	60.8		
			Large family (8 and above)	18	17.7		
Annual family income ('000' Tk.)	25-65	-	Low income (up to 30)	14	13.8	39.84	10.9
			Medium income (31-50)	68	66.9		
			High income (above 50)	20	19.8		
Knowledge on homestead gardening(score)	23-41	0-50	Low knowledge (1-27)	18	17.7	31.86	4.42
			Medium knowledge (28-36)	62	60.6		
			High knowledge (above 36)	22	21.9		
			Medium experience (3-5)	94	92.1		
Use of information sources (score)	12-23	0-42	Very low level of use (1-13)	8	7.9	16.27	1.92
			Low level of use (14-18)	78	76.4		
			Medium level of use (19-23)	16	15.6		
Cosmopolitaness (score)	4-10	0-28	Very low (up to 5)	10	9.8	6.73	1.1
			Low (6-8)	88	86.2		
			Medium (9-10)	4	3.9		
Organizational participation (scores)	5-7	0-24	Very low participation (up to 5)	98	96.1	5.06	0.3
			Low participation (6-7)	4	3.9		
Attitude towards home gardening (scores)	18-28	0-40	Low favourable attitude (0-20)	20	19.6	23.74	2.9
			Moderately favorable attitude (21-26)	61	59.8		
			Highly favorable attitude (above 26)	21	20.6		

Findings of Table 2 show that majority (58.9%) of the respondents were middle aged and had secondary level of education (44%). More than half of the respondents (60.8%) had medium family size and an overwhelming majority of the respondents had medium family income, medium knowledge on homestead gardening, medium training experience and moderately favorable attitude towards on homestead gardening. In respect of information use and cosmopolitanness overwhelming majority of the respondent belongs to low level categories and almost all of the respondents (96.1%) had very low organizational participation.

Relationship between rural women's characteristics and their extent of involvement in home gardening practices

This section deals with the relationship of the ten selected characteristics of the rural women and their involvement in home gardening practices. The purpose of this section was to examining the relationships of each of the independent variables with dependent variable. The correlation coefficients showing the relationship is given in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation co-efficient of the selected characteristics of the respondents and their involvement in home gardening practices

Dependent variable	Independent variables	Computed value of "r"	Table value of "r" at 100 degree of freedom	
			5%	1%
Involvement of rural women in home garden practices	Age	-0.196*	0.195	0.254
	Education	0.212*		
	Family size	-0.062 ^{NS}		
	Annual family income	-0.256**		
	Knowledge on home gardening	0.232*		
	Training experience	0.103 ^{NS}		
	Use of information source	0.270**		
	Cosmopolitanness	0.106 ^{NS}		
	Organizational participation	0.129 ^{NS}		
	Attitude towards home gardening	0.334**		

NS = Not Significant, * = Significant at 0.05 level, ** = Significant at 0.01 level

Table 3 shows that among the ten selected characteristics of the rural women, only two, namely use of information source and attitude towards home gardening had significant positive relationship with their involvement in home gardening practices at 0.01 level of probability. Similar findings were also observed by Aurangozeb (2002), Nahar (1996) and Karim (1993). Education and knowledge on home gardening had positive relations at 0.05 level of probability. Similar findings were also observed by Islam (2002), Aurangozeb (2002), Akhter (2000), Chowdhury (2000), and Nahar (1996). This means that use of information source; favourable attitude and high knowledge and higher education influence rural women's involvement in home gardening practices. Other variables age, annual family income had negative significant relations with their involvement in home gardening practices. Rest of the variables like family size, training experience, cosmopolitanness and organizational participation had no significant relationship with their involvement in home gardening practices.

Inference can be drawn that education helps the farmers to face the adverse condition and adjust with the unfavourable condition through reading leaflets, booklets, books and other printed materials in this case (Kundu *et al.* 2013). It helps them to broaden their outlook and expand their mental horizon by helping them to develop favourable attitude and knowledge and thus influence women to involve income generating activities like homestead gardening practices. Education increases knowledge and having more knowledge they became confident enough and take decision to use more information sources to utilize their homestead space for cultivation vegetables, fruits, etc. Older women and rich family are not interested in involving themselves in homestead gardening practices. Younger women and comparatively poor women can make themselves engaged with some income generating activities to maintain their families.

CONCLUSION

The study indicated that majority of the respondents comprised of either young or middle-aged categories and its relationship with their involvement in home gardening practices is negatively significant. It may therefore be concluded that extension teaching should be given to young and middle age categories of women especially on the young aged rural women because they are more receptive in nature than the older. A respondent with more education was found to be more aware to solve her problem more efficiently and financial hardships of the respondents allow them to access involvement in home gardening practices. When she gathered more knowledge and possessed favorable attitude towards home gardening, she had better involvement in home gardening practices by using more information sources.

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