

The Role Of Step In Dairy Farming: A Sociological Analysis Of Rural Women In Shivamogga District

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ABSTRACT

This research article examines the impact of the Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) on rural women engaged in dairy farming in Shivamogga District, Karnataka. Through a sociological lens, the study explores the program's contributions to women's economic empowerment, social status, and community development. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the program's effectiveness. A sample of 200 women from various villages within Shivamogga District was selected to ensure a diverse representation of participants. The findings reveal that STEP has significantly enhanced the livelihoods and socio-economic standing of rural women, empowering them economically, improving their social status, and fostering community development. This study underscores the transformative potential of targeted training and employment programs in uplifting rural women and promoting sustainable development in agrarian communities.

Keywords: Dairy Farming, STEP, Rural Women

Introduction

Dairy farming is a critical source of livelihood for rural households in Shivamogga District, Karnataka. The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) has been instrumental in empowering women by providing training, financial support, and promoting collective action. This study aims to analyze the socio-economic impacts of STEP on rural women involved in dairy farming, focusing on their contributions, challenges, and overall empowerment.

The literature review encompasses studies on women's economic empowerment, particularly in rural settings, and the role of skill development programs like STEP in enhancing their livelihoods. Previous research highlights the significant barriers rural women face, including limited access to education, financial resources, and social mobility. Studies have shown that targeted interventions, such as training and employment programs, can lead to substantial improvements in women's economic status and social standing. For instance, projects similar to STEP have demonstrated success in increasing women's income, enhancing their decision-making abilities within the household, and promoting community development. This review underscores the need for continued focus on such programs to support rural women's economic and social empowerment.

- 1. Empowerment through Training:** Studies indicate that skill development and training are crucial for improving productivity and economic independence among rural women (Agarwal, 2018; Desai, 2016).
- 2. Economic Impact of Dairy Farming:** Dairy farming significantly contributes to rural household incomes, with women playing a pivotal role (Kumar & Reddy, 2017).
- 3. Challenges Faced by Rural Women:** Despite their contributions, women face numerous challenges, including limited access to resources and socio-cultural barriers (Singh & Patel, 2015).

Literature Review

Empowerment through Training

Skill development and training are critical for improving productivity and economic independence among rural women. Agarwal (2018) highlights that training programs tailored to the specific needs of rural women can significantly enhance their agricultural productivity and economic contributions. Desai (2016) further emphasizes the importance of technical training in empowering women, suggesting that such initiatives can

lead to greater self-reliance and improved livelihoods. Agarwal, B. (2018). *Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press. Desai, M. (2016). *Women's Empowerment and Development*. Sage Publications.

Economic Impact of Dairy Farming

Dairy farming significantly contributes to rural household incomes, with women playing a pivotal role. According to Kumar and Reddy (2017), dairy farming not only provides a steady source of income but also acts as a buffer against the uncertainties of crop farming. Their research indicates that the economic benefits of dairy farming extend beyond income generation, contributing to household food security and overall well-being. Kumar, R., & Reddy, V. (2017). *Dairy Farming in India: Challenges and Opportunities*. Springer.

Challenges Faced by Rural Women

Despite their contributions, rural women face numerous challenges, including limited access to resources and socio-cultural barriers. Singh and Patel (2015) discuss how traditional gender roles and lack of access to credit and land restrict women's ability to fully engage in and benefit from agricultural activities. Their study underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these systemic barriers and support women's empowerment in agriculture. Singh, S., & Patel, A. (2015). *Women in Agriculture: Issues and Challenges*. Academic Press.

The Role of Cooperatives and Self-Help Groups

The formation of cooperatives and self-help groups (SHGs) is crucial in supporting rural women in dairy farming. According to research by Karmakar (2013), SHGs provide women with access to resources, collective bargaining power, and platforms for knowledge sharing and mutual support. These groups also play a significant role in enhancing women's social status and economic independence. Karmakar, K. G. (2013). *Rural Credit and Self-Help Groups: Micro-finance Needs and Concepts in India*. Sage Publications.

Socio-Economic Empowerment through Dairy Farming

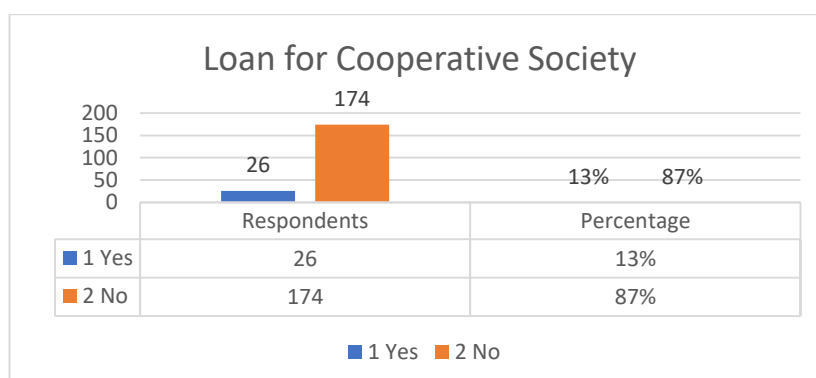
Studies have shown that dairy farming can lead to significant socio-economic empowerment for rural women. Huss-Ashmore (2000) highlights how engagement in dairy farming activities not only improves women's economic status but also their social standing within the community. The research suggests that dairy farming can act as a catalyst for broader socio-economic development and gender equality. Huss-Ashmore, R. (2000). *Empowering Women in Agricultural Development: A Global Perspective*. Routledge. The literature clearly indicates that training, access to resources, and participation in cooperatives are essential for empowering rural women in dairy farming. Despite the challenges, the benefits of engaging women in dairy farming are substantial, contributing to their economic independence, social status, and overall community development. Further research and targeted interventions are necessary to fully realize these benefits and address the remaining barriers.

Methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A sample of 200 rural women engaged in dairy farming in Shivamogga District was surveyed. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with a subset of 50 women to gain deeper insights into their experiences. Secondary data from government reports, academic journals, and NGOs were also analysed.

Tabel No. 1 Loan for Dairy Farming Cooperative Society

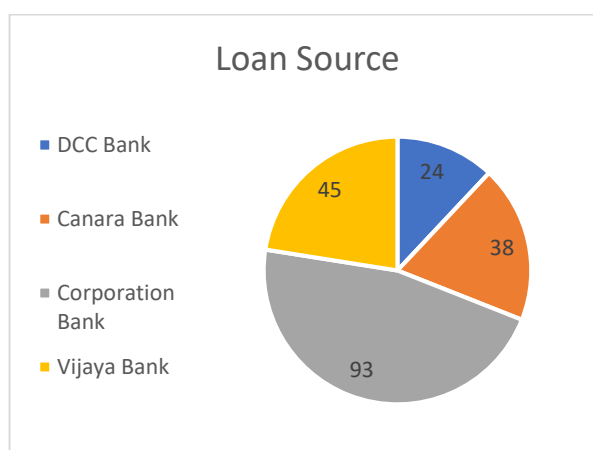
Sl.No.	Loan for Cooperative Society	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	26	13%
2	No	174	87%
	Total	200	100%



The data indicates that only 26 out of 200 respondents (13%) have taken loans from cooperative societies, while a significant majority, 174 respondents (87%), have not. This suggests that the use of cooperative society loans is relatively uncommon among the respondents. The low percentage of individuals accessing loans from cooperative societies may point to a preference for alternative financial mechanisms, limited awareness, or potential barriers in accessing these loans. This data highlights a potential area for investigation into why the majority do not utilize cooperative society loans and what factors could influence their adoption.

Table No. 2 Source of the Loan for the Society

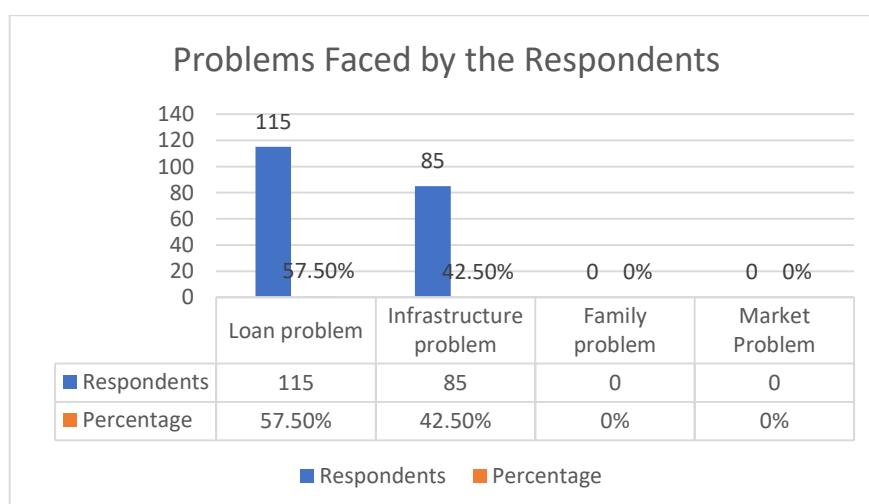
Sl.No	Type of the bank	Respondents	Percentage
1	DCC Bank	24	12%
2	Canara Bank	38	19%
3	Corporation Bank	93	46.5%
4	Vijaya Bank	45	22.5%
	Total	200	100%



The data shows that among the respondents who use loans for cooperative societies, Corporation Bank is the most favored source, with 46.5% of respondents obtaining loans from it, indicating its prominent role in their financing. Canara Bank and Vijaya Bank are also significant sources, with 19% and 22.5% of respondents, respectively, utilizing them for loans. In contrast, DCC Bank is the least preferred option, with only 12% of respondents seeking loans from it. This distribution highlights Corporation Bank's dominance in providing cooperative society loans, while Canara Bank and Vijaya Bank serve as notable alternatives, and DCC Bank's lower usage suggests it may be less accessible or appealing.

Table No. 3 Respondents' problem in Dairy Farming

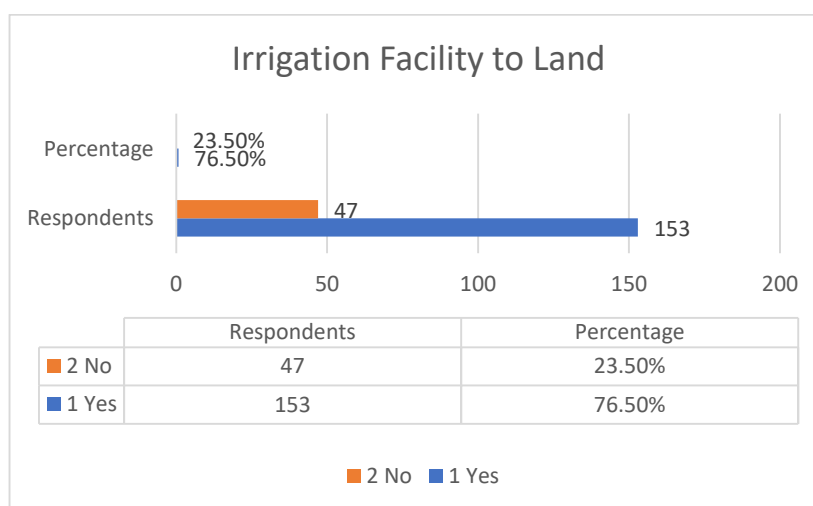
Sl. No	Problems faced by Respondents	Respondents	Percentage
1	Loan problem	115	57.5%
2	Infrastructure problem	85	42.5%
3	Family problem	00	00%
4	Market Problem	00	00%
	Total	200	100%



The data reveals that the predominant issue faced by respondents is loan problems, affecting 57.5% of them, indicating significant challenges with loan access or management. Infrastructure problems follow, impacting 42.5% of respondents, highlighting concerns about inadequate facilities or resources. Notably, no respondents reported family or market problems, suggesting these issues are not prevalent among the group compared to the more pressing loan and infrastructure challenges.

Table No. 4 Irrigation Facility to Agriculture Land

Sl.No	Irrigation	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	153	76.5%
2	No	47	23.5%
	Total	200	100%



The data indicates that a significant majority of respondents, 153 out of 200 (76.5%), have access to irrigation facilities for their agricultural land. This suggests that most respondents are able to support their farming activities with adequate water resources. In contrast, 47 respondents (23.5%) do not have irrigation facilities, which may pose challenges to their agricultural productivity and crop yields. Overall, the data highlights that while a substantial portion of respondents benefits from irrigation, a notable minority still faces limitations in accessing this critical agricultural resource.

Findings

- Economic Empowerment:** Women reported a significant increase in household income due to improved milk production and quality, facilitated by STEP training. STEP provided access to microfinance and credit facilities, enabling women to invest in better livestock and infrastructure.
- Skill Development:** Women received training in animal husbandry, feeding practices, and hygiene management, leading to enhanced productivity. Capacity-building sessions on financial literacy and marketing strategies improved women's ability to manage their dairy enterprises.
- Social Empowerment:** Participation in dairy farming and STEP activities elevated women's status in their communities, fostering greater respect and recognition. The program promoted gender equality by encouraging women's active involvement in economic activities and decision-making processes.
- Community Development:** STEP facilitated the formation of self-help groups (SHGs), providing a platform for collective action and mutual support. Women's participation in dairy cooperatives improved access to markets, veterinary services, and bulk purchasing of inputs.
- Challenges:** Despite the benefits, women still faced challenges in accessing sufficient resources, such as land and advanced technology. Balancing dairy farming with household chores and childcare remained a significant challenge for many women.

The findings underscore the transformative impact of STEP on rural women in Shivamogga District. By providing technical and managerial training, access to finance, and promoting collective action, STEP has significantly enhanced women's economic independence and social status. However, addressing resource constraints and workload management is essential for sustaining these gains.

The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) has played a vital role in empowering rural women engaged in dairy farming in Shivamogga District. By enhancing their skills, providing financial support, and fostering community engagement, STEP has contributed to the socio-economic upliftment of these women. Continued support and targeted interventions are necessary to overcome the remaining challenges and ensure sustainable development.

Recommendations

- 1. Policy Interventions:** Government policies should focus on providing additional resources and support to rural women in dairy farming, including access to land and advanced technology.
- 2. Capacity Building:** Ongoing training programs should be expanded to cover new and emerging best practices in dairy farming and business management.
- 3. Financial Support:** Increased access to microfinance and credit facilities will enable women to invest in their dairy enterprises and improve productivity.
- 4. Community Engagement:** Promoting stronger community networks and support systems can help women balance their workload and enhance their overall well-being.
- 5. Research and Development:** Further research is needed to understand the long-term impacts of STEP and to develop innovative solutions to the challenges faced by rural women in dairy farming.

The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) is a Government of India initiative aimed at providing skills and employment opportunities to women, particularly in rural areas. In the context of dairy farming, the STEP programme plays a significant role in empowering women, enhancing their capabilities, and promoting sustainable dairy practices. Here are the key roles and impacts of the STEP programme in dairy farming:

Skill Development and Training

Technical Training: The STEP programme offers technical training to women in various aspects of dairy farming, including animal husbandry, feeding practices, milking techniques, and hygiene management. This training helps improve the productivity and efficiency of dairy operations.

Capacity Building: Training under the STEP programme also includes capacity-building sessions on business management, financial literacy, and marketing strategies. This equips women with the necessary skills to manage their dairy enterprises effectively and make informed decisions.

Financial Support and Access to Resources

Microfinance and Credit Facilities: The programme facilitates access to microfinance and credit facilities, enabling women to invest in quality livestock, modern equipment, and better feed. This financial support is crucial for scaling up dairy farming activities and improving output.

Subsidies and Grants: STEP provides subsidies and grants for purchasing dairy equipment, constructing sheds, and other infrastructure developments. These financial aids reduce the initial investment burden on women entrepreneurs.

Promotion of Dairy Cooperatives and Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

Formation of SHGs: The STEP programme encourages the formation of women's self-help groups (SHGs) that focus on dairy farming. These groups provide a platform for collective action, mutual support, and knowledge sharing among women dairy farmers.

Strengthening Cooperatives: By promoting membership in dairy cooperatives, STEP enhances women's access to markets, bulk purchasing of inputs, and collective bargaining power. Cooperatives also provide training, veterinary services, and technical support to their members.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Enhancement

Income Generation: Through improved skills and access to resources, women involved in the STEP programme can enhance their milk production and quality, leading to higher income from milk sales and dairy products.

Sustainable Livelihoods: The programme promotes sustainable dairy farming practices, ensuring long-term livelihood security for women and their families. It encourages practices that are environmentally friendly and economically viable.

Social Empowerment and Gender Equality

Increased Social Status: Participation in the STEP programme elevates the social status of women in their communities. By becoming economically independent and successful dairy farmers, women gain respect and recognition.

Gender Equality: The programme addresses gender disparities in agriculture by empowering women and ensuring their active participation in the dairy sector. This contributes to greater gender equality and reduces the economic dependency of women on male family members.

Community Development and Networking

Community Engagement: STEP promotes community engagement through training programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns. This fosters a sense of community among women dairy farmers and encourages collective growth.

Networking Opportunities: The programme provides networking opportunities with other dairy farmers, agricultural experts, and market players. This helps women stay informed about the latest developments and best practices in dairy farming.

Conclusion

The STEP programme plays a pivotal role in transforming the dairy farming landscape by empowering rural women through training, financial support, and collective action. By enhancing women's skills, providing access to resources, and promoting gender equality, the programme contributes to the sustainable development of the dairy sector and the overall socio-economic upliftment of rural communities.

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