

PERCEIVED WORK SATISFACTION OF RURAL WOMEN IN DRY ZONE AGRICULTURE IN ANURADHPURA DISTRICT

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Introduction

In Sri Lanka 80% is rural population Census and Statistics (2001). They secure livelihood from agriculture Census and Statistics (2002) in which rural women has strong footing. Women agricultural workers as a percentage of total employed women (37.9%) exceeds male agricultural workers as a percentage of total employed men (29.1%) (Census and Statistics, 2007). Highest female employments participation (38.2%) is from skilled agricultural and fishery category (Census and Statistics, 2008). Rise in women in agriculture was evident from 1996 (34%) to 2006 (41%) (Census and Statistics, 2007). Rural women occupy different statuses, perform diverse roles and work in rural social life. Work-role relationship is highly interwoven. Rural women's role is not only limited to agricultural activities but also household chores and social engagements encompassing household work; food preparation; child rearing; participation in exchange labor; assisting men in farm operations (Sirisena, 1986); caring of family and other community activities. Thus, rural women's work life is highly complex and diverse, also in most areas they work more than rural men. Socio-cultural transformations have altered their multiple roles as well. Pragmatically no unambiguous definition for 'work'. Work is an activity that transforms nature, usually undertaken by social institutions. It depends on specific social circumstances under which such activities are undertaken and how these circumstances and activities are interpreted by those involved Keith (2005). Work also refers to productive activities receiving remuneration in cash, in kind or remains unpaid (United Nations, 2000). It is difficult to demarcate work from non-work. Farming also involves no clear separation of work from non-work. Perceived work satisfaction develops general attitude through organization and interpretation of sensory impressions adding meaning to work environments (Stephan, 2004). It determines active participation and interest to continuation with the roles. Multiple work-roles are managed differently by rural men and women and may be advantageous or disadvantageous. Thus, affecting their work satisfaction differently. Research has done about rural women in agriculture, but less or no attention on their work satisfaction. Thus, a research gap in perceived work satisfaction of rural women in agriculture prevails. Purpose of this paper is to discuss perceived work satisfaction of multifaceted work-roles of rural women in dry zone agriculture with reference to selected traditional villages in Anuradhpura district.

Methodology

Anuradhapura district in North Central dry zone of Sri Lanka having highest women labor force participation (40.7%) (Census and Statistics, 2007) was the study area. *Central Nuwaragam Palatha (CNP)* and *Thirappane* District Secretariats (DSs) were randomly selected for the research. From *CNP: Elayapatthuwa, Mahamankadawala* and *Illandaghawewa* and from *Thirappane: Puliyankulama, Mawathwewa, and Periyakulama Grama Niladhari* divisions (GNs) were selected. A village was selected from each of the six GNs. Total sample comprised 150 rural women involved in agriculture. In this study 'work' was identified as roles essential to survival of women within family, economy and society as identified by them through experience and exposure despite the fact paid or not. Perceived satisfaction of domestic, economic and social work; decision making on purchase and usage of household and farm

technology; and usage of household and farm technology by women was studied at four levels: high, moderate, less and not at all satisfied. Further, narratives espoused the reality. Primary data were collected through household survey, household and individual case studies, in-depth interviews, key informant discussions, participatory observations, and time-use diary. Secondary data sources were available literature and reports. Descriptive statistics and narratives were used for interpretation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Respondents' age ranged between 17 - 69 years. Mean age was 38 years. Ninety percent of them were married, 1% unmarried and 9% widowed. Out of the total families 83% were nuclear and 17% were extended. Average family size was four. Four percent of them had no education at all, 15% had primary level (1-5), majority (80%) secondary level (6-A/L) and 1% above secondary level (diploma or degree) education. All the respondents were fulltime farmers except for single case of part-time farmer; a government teacher. While doing fulltime farming 3% involved in other non-farm activities such as running retail shops and hiring three wheelers.

Table1: Perceived work satisfaction of rural women

Attribute	Level of perceived satisfaction(% of responses)			
	high	moderate	less	not at all
Work - domestic sphere	0.0	36.0	63.3	0.7
Decision making-purchase and usage; and usage of household technology	38.0	31.3	20.0	10.7
Work - economicsphere	43.4	37.3	18.0	1.3
Decision making-purchase and usage; and usage of farm technology	14.7	12.7	42.0	30.6
Work - social sphere	90.0	10.0	0.0	0.0

Results revealed that in domestic sphere 64% were discontented of their work, in economic sphere (paddy, *chena* cultivation and cattle management) majority (81%) were contented of their input in livelihood activities and in social sphere all (100%) were contented of their societal engagements. Further, 69% were contented about decision making on purchase and usage; and usage of household technology whereas 73% were discontented about decision making on purchase and usage; and usage of farm technology (Table 1). Their satisfaction was attached with self-contentedness, interest, recognition and self-esteem while dissatisfaction with work-overload, uncertainty, stress and exhaustion. Following expressions further exposed the reality.

'My son is still schooling. My husband is dead. I do shoulder all the household, economic and social drudgeries. It is hard. No relief.' (widow, age45). *'All household work cooking, cleaning, washing... I manage alone'* (mature woman, age49). *'I suggest wants. I and my husband collectively decide affordable purchases of household technologies. Household items we all access, use and manage. I am happy about my input in deciding what we want at home.'* (young woman, age37).

'We are fulltime farmers. We cultivate 2ac of paddy on anda basis and 10 ac of own chena. We grow paddy, maize, pumpkin, chilli, sesame, and finger millet. Lots of field work. From morning to evening I and my husband, sometimes with other villagers are busy in the field. It is tough...with unpredictable ups and downs. But, for 20 years I have been doing all these and contributing to family survival. Now we are well established. I am highly contented of what I do.' (mature woman, age43). *'It's my husband who decides needs of farming. I extend either less or no input in purchase*

and usage decisions of farm technology. I am neither satisfied of purchasing nor of usage of farm technology.' (mature woman, age44).

'Attam, life cycle rituals, community based organizations provide good platform of social aggregation for villagers. Power of people is important for attam. Both men and women participate in attambut, women are inevitable. I amhighly satisfied about my contribution to attam.' (mature woman, age41)

In domestic, economic and social spheres of Sri Lankan agriculture, rural women have strong footing. Though contribution of rural women in agriculture has been surfaced, less or no attention has been paid on their work satisfaction. This paper discusses perceived work satisfaction of work-role performance of rural women in dry zone agriculture. Results revealed that they had poor satisfaction of domestic work. In contrast, they were satisfied of economic roles and social engagements. Their satisfaction was attached with self-contentedness, interest, recognition and self-esteem while dissatisfaction with work overload, uncertainty, stress and exhaustion.

Rural women's domestic, economic, and social work-roles were essentialities of rural communities studied. Their domestic work-role was inevitable. Women possessed poor satisfaction of their domestic work-roles. Agricultural activities were yet rural men's territory, but, women's work-roles in it were inevitable essentiality as well. They were satisfied of their economic roles. Rural women's social footing was significant and they were satisfied with it too. Further, they were satisfied about their involvement in decision making on purchase and usage, and overall usage of household technologies, but not in farm technologies.

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