

## Rural Women Power, Effects and Role in Farm Management and Decision Making in North Kordofan State-Sudan

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**ABSTRACT:** This study was conducted in Um Rowaba and Bara localities of North Kordofan State during 2013/2014 cropping season. The objectives of the study were to assess the role of rural women in farm management and decision making in crop production. The primary data was collected via structured questionnaire using stratified simple random sampling techniques; the samples of the village were selected randomly in each administrative unit in both localities, hence. 20 villages were selected; and 6 persons were collected from each village. The secondary data was obtained from the reports and literature. Data were analyzed via descriptive statistics, tables of frequencies and cross-tabulation. Chi-square was used to test the association between the variables. Study results showed that certain socio-economic factors encourage women farmer to participate positively in farm management decision making. Study results revealed that, 32.5% of the respondents were married and 28% were not married while 20.8% were widows and 18.3% were divorced that. 31.7% were woman headed household. 50.8% of the respondents were illiterates while 26.7% had attended basic education, and 22.5% had attended secondary education and this indicates that most of women farmers were facing illiteracy problem which inhabit them to attend class training. 35% of the respondents were members in community organization. 77.8% of the respondents who attended secondary school level make the final decision, and followed by 56.3% respondents who attended basic school level followed by 44.3% of illiterate respondents make the final decision. The result of chi-square revealed that education level of women farmers significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) influence their role in decision making in allocating area for cultivation. Three-quarter of women who attended secondary education and half of women who attended basic education make final decision compared to lesser percentages of illiterate women. The results of chi-square revealed that the state of land ownership has no influence on participation of women in decision making in area allocation for cultivation, for these difference were not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). The results of chi-square revealed that the age of women significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) influence their role in decision making in type of crops to be grown. The results of chi-square revealed that educational level of women farmers significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) influence their role in decision making in type of crop to be grown.

**Keywords:** *Decision making, Chi-square, Participation, North Kordofan State*

## INTRODUCTION:

Women are central to overcoming rural poverty because of their roles in productive activities and in the household economy. Rural women are generally poorer than men and have less chance of escaping poverty. On the other hand, when women are empowered and gender inequalities are addressed, development interventions often are more effective. In fact, some NGO-supported programmes and projects have demonstrated that women drive change at the community level and, at the household level. Resources in the hands of women consistently result in greater investments in the well-being of household members, especially children and poverty reduction (IFAD, 2008). Sudan is a developing country that faces many challenges in regards to gender inequality. Freedom House gave Sudan the lowest possible ranking among repressive regimes during 2012. Sudan ranks 171st out of 186 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), and it is also one of very few countries that are not a signatory on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 2009). Gender inequality in Sudan is seen through sexual and gender-based violence occurred throughout Darfur. The difference in education between boys and girls is one of the most obvious and critical inequalities in Sudan. There are a variety of social obligations required of women in Sudan that are not necessary for men. These range from birth, marriage, female genital mutilation, and the performance of family death rituals. These rituals require physical, mental, and time commitments that are not responsibly of men. In Sudan, subsistence women farmers face economic development limitations. There is an inconsistency between the policy goals in agricultural improvement and the resulting demise of women farmers (Medani, 2011). Although women are not expected to work for pay or have a profession, there are sometimes opportunities to earn income as long as it is 'assisting' the household financially. These women are allowed to work at home and in the fields with the cultural understanding that this is not a profession. Women are publicly and culturally relegated to a position inferior to that of men and there is an assumption that division of work along sex lines prevails. Although women play a crucial role in the agricultural cycle, their role has not improved as a result of technology in the agricultural sector. It tends to concentrate on the production of cash crops, and women are not encouraged to participate in this activity (Afshar, 1985). In many societies rural women serve as the main work force in agricultural activities. These activities may include farm works, from planting to harvest, animal husbandry and some marketing. Involvement of women in the labor market is believed to be one of the main indicators of a country's development that reflects women's interests in different economic and social activities. The extent of rural women activity is far more influenced by economic, social, cultural and ecological factors than it is in case of men. Rural women, either directly or with indirect engagement in agricultural activities, are considered to have significant potential effects on a society (Mosavi et. al, 2011). In North Kordofan State rural women play a major role in the economics. They participate actively in crop production; (being involved in planting, weeding and harvesting the staple crops of sorghum and millet in their own and the family fields). They have exclusive and full responsibility for the "jubraka" (house gardens) near their houses, where vegetables and some early maturing staples are cultivated. Women also play an important role in livestock production, looking after animals near the homesteads; milking them and watering them, when this is done in the compound. They also take care of all the young offspring until they

are old enough to go and graze on their own. With respect to basic services, women do most of the water collecting, though men are also involved when it comes to watering the animals. Women are also the prime collectors of fuel wood although, again, men also have some involvement in these activities. Women are involved in all forms of marketing, at markets and elsewhere, with respect to crops, livestock and handicrafts (WSRMP, 2004). According to FAO Women contribute between 40 and 65% of all hours spent in agricultural production and processing and also undertake 60 to 90% of the rural agricultural product marketing, thus providing more than two thirds of the workforce in agriculture (FAO, 1985). Women not only prepare all, or most of the family food requirement, but also play a significant role in production of those kinds of commercial products which are exclusively produced by men (Liming, 1991). The important roles of women in the processes of production and marketing have always been ignored by the development designers. They are not included in the educational programs regarding new planting strategies, food stuff production, and use of technology in managing the workforce, animal husbandry, small industries, marketing and other services. Official credits are rarely given to women and often the men are those who can apply for cooperatives and benefit the loans (Dulyapach, 1985). The role of women in decision-making process in agriculture has however not widely been explored. Male dominance in decision making in the household and economy has continued even in areas where women are the key providers of labour because the influence of women has not been recognized. According to the Agricultural Research Institute, men mainly make decisions about farming and women have more important roles in managing the family (Anony, 1991). The women have more or less been regarded to play second roles in the economy. There is no recognition given to them as an important contributor and their contribution is not recorded. They are still remained invisible workers. Over the years women cultivators are typically and wrongly characterized as economically inactive and women cultivator play only a supportive role in agriculture as farmers' wives (Samanta 1994). The role of women in farm management in study area cannot be overemphasized. Rural and national developments cannot be achieved without considering the role of women farmers in farm management. Women farmers have always been neglected and considered only to play secondary roles in the economy. Little is known about the degree to which women participate in decision making process in agricultural operations. Such situations need to be corrected, therefore this study was undertaken to highlight the role of women farmer in agricultural production.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Questionnaire field survey was developed and a stratified simple random sampling technique was used, Due to the homogeneity in socio-economic characteristics among women farmers in study area, sample was selected in the appropriate representatives. Sample of selected village was randomly selected for each administrative unit in both localities, hence. 20 villages (which represent 10% of total villages in study area); descriptive statistic was used for data entry, analysis, and results presentation. The secondary data were obtained from the reports and books.

**Tool of analysis:** Data were analyzed via descriptive statistics, tables of frequencies and cross-tabulation. Chi-square was used to test the association between the variables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

Table (1) showed that 32.5% of the respondents were married and 28% were not married while 20.8% were widows and 18.3% were divorced.

Table (1) Distribution of the respondents according to marital status

<b>Social status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not married	34	28.3
Married	39	32.5
Widow	25	20.8
Divorced	22	18.3

Source: Field survey

Table (2) showed that 68.3% of the respondents in the study area were not sponsoring their families, whereas 31.7% were woman headed household.

Table (2) Distribution of the respondents according to family sponsorship

<b>Family sponsorship</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Woman headed household	38	31.7
Not sponsoring family	82	68.3

Source: Field survey

Table (3) showed that 50.8% of the respondents were illiterates while 26.7% had attended basic education, and 22.5% had attended secondary education and this indicates that most of women farmers are facing illiterate problem which inhabit them to attend class training.

Table (3) Distribution of the respondents according to educational level

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Illiterate	61	50.8
Basic	32	26.7
Secondary and above	27	22.5

Source: Field survey

Table (4) showed that 35% of the respondents were members in committees, where as 65% were not members this indicates that women either not interesting to be member or the community organization or did not give them the chance.

Table (4) Distribution of the respondents according to membership in institutional organization

<b>membership</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Being member	42	35.0
Not a member	78	65.0

Source: Field survey

Table (5) showed that 77.8% of the respondents who attended secondary school level make the final decision; followed by 56.3% respondents who attended basic school level followed by 44.3% of illiterate respondents make the final decision. The result of chi-square revealed that education level of women farmers significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) influence their role in decision making in allocating area for cultivation. Three-quarter of women who attended secondary education and half of women who attend basic education make final decision compared to lesser percentages of illiterate women.

Table (5) Association between educational levels and participation in decision making in area allocation for cultivation

Education level		Not participated	Make final decision	Total
Secondary	Count	6	21	27
	(%)	(22.2)	(77.8)	(100.0)
Basic	Count	14	18	32
	(%)	(43.8)	(56.3)	(100.0)
Illiterate	Count	34	27	61
	(%)	(55.7)	(44.3)	(100.0)
Total	Count	54	66	120
	(%)	(45.0)	(55.0)	(100.0)

Source: Field survey  $N=120$ ,  $\chi^2=8.52$ ,  $P < 0.01$

Table (6) showed that 60.7% of the respondents who purchased land for cultivation make the final decision in allocating area for cultivation, followed by 55.4% of respondents who obtained their land by other means like renting or gift, followed by 48.1% of respondents who obtained their lands by heritage make the final decision. Despite this variations in percentages, the result of chi-square revealed that the state of land ownership has no influence on participation of women in decision making in area allocation for cultivation, for these difference were not significant ( $p > 0.05$ )

Table (6) Association between land ownership and participation in decision making in area allocation for cultivation

Land ownership		Not participated	Make final decision	Total
By heritage	Count	14	13	27
	(%)	(51.9)	(48.1)	(100.0)
Purchase	Count	11	17	28
	(%)	(39.3)	(60.7)	(100.0)
Other	Count	29	36	65
	(%)	(44.6)	(55.4)	(100.0)
Total	Count	54	66	120
	(%)	(45.0)	(55.0)	(100.0)

Source: Field survey N=120,  $\chi^2=0.89$ ,  $P>0.05$

Table (7 ) showed that 92.1% of the elder respondents who were more than 50 years old make the final decision, followed by 61.5% of the middle aged respondents whose ages between 31 and 50 years old, followed by 11.6% of the younger respondents whose age between 20 and 30 years old. The result of chi-square revealed that the age of women significantly ( $p<0.01$ ) influence their role in decision making in type of crop to be grown. Almost all elder women and tow-third of middle aged women make the final decision compared to less percentage of younger women.

Table (7) Association between age category and participation in decision making in type of crop to be grown

Age categories		Not participated	Make final decision	Total
20 - 30	Count	38	5	43
	(%)	(88.4)	(11.6)	(100.0)
31 - 50	Count	15	24	39
	(%)	(38.5)	(61.5)	(100.0)
More than 50	Count	3	35	38
	(%)	(7.9)	(92.1)	(100.0)
Total	Count	56	64	120
	(%)	(46.7)	(53.3)	(100.0)

Source: Field survey .N=120,  $\chi^2=54.05$ ,  $P<0.01$

Table (8) showed that 96.3% of the respondents who attended secondary school level make the final decision, followed by 56.3% the respondents who attended basic school, followed by 33% of illiterate respondents. The result of chi-square revealed that educational level of women farmers significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) influence their role in decision making in type of crop to be grown. Almost all women attended secondary education and half of women attended basic education make the final decision, compared to lesser percentage of illiterates.

Table (8) Association between age category and participation in decision making in type of crop to be grown

Age categories		Not participated	Make final decision	Total
20 - 30	Count	38	5	43
	(%)	(88.4)	(11.6)	(100.0)
31 - 50	Count	15	24	39
	(%)	(38.5)	(61.5)	(100.0)
More than 50	Count	3	35	38
	(%)	(7.9)	(92.1)	(100.0)
Total	Count	56	64	120
	(%)	(46.7)	(53.3)	(100.0)

Source: Field survey. N=120,  $\chi^2=54.05$ ,  $P < 0.01$

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the women farmers were heavily involved in farm management in the study area, yet the level of their participation in decision making was moderate. The study concluded that certain socio-economic factors encourage women farmer to participate positively in farm management decision making.

### Recommendations

1. Raise the awareness of the whole community in the importance role of the rural women in agriculture

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