



A Study on Role of Rural Women of District Anantnag of Kashmir Valley in Natural Resource Management

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Abstract: *A natural resource is a material that comes from the natural environment and in its raw or “natural” state is of value for support and sustenance of life on earth with its ecological value and diverse resources. The natural resource management is the taking care of natural resources like land, water. It has been noticed that use and abuse of natural resources is a key issue that has been caused by mankind. The misuse of natural resources directly or indirectly refers to excessive use, destructive use or achieving imbalance between natural resources either individually or in combination. The purpose of current study was to investigate the role of Rural women in natural resources management and utilization in Anantnag, J&K. The role of women in natural resource management is crucial for sustainable development. This abstract explores the multifaceted contributions of women of this domain, including their roles as farmers, forest users, and water managers women’s local knowledge and expertise often lead to effective resource conservation and community resilience .Despite their significant contributions ,women often face barriers such as limited access to resources and decision making power and empowering women in natural resource management can enhance conservation efforts and promote equitable and inclusive development. In the current study quantitative as well as qualitative data was collected from 100 rural women selected at random using simple random sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The study revealed that the respondents understudy in majority have limited access of latest technology, skill training, education, extension services and current information. In order to strengthen the women’s participation in resources management and sustainable uses, the researchers suggest that suitable measures should be taken to empower women in decision making, skill training, education and extension activities.*

Keywords: *Natural Resources, Women, Environment, Anantnag, Statistics.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Natural resources are the elements, materials, and substances found in the environment that are essential for sustaining life and supporting human activities. We know natural resources can be classified into main categories i.e., renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources, such as sunlight, water, wind, and forests, can be replenished over time. Non-renewable resources, like fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) and minerals, are finite and cannot be replaced once depleted. Natural resources play a crucial role in various aspects of human life, including food production, energy generation, shelter construction, and the creation of consumer goods. They also provide essential ecosystem services, such as pollination, climate regulation, and water purification, which are vital for maintaining a balanced environment. As the global population continues to grow and human activities exert increasing pressure on natural resources, sustainable management and conservation practices are becoming ever more important to ensure their availability for future generations. Rural women play a crucial role in managing and conserving natural resources. They are often responsible for activities like farming, gathering water and firewood, and caring for livestock. Their knowledge of traditional practices and sustainable techniques contributes to preserving the environment. Additionally, rural women are involved in community-based initiatives that promote environmental conservation, biodiversity protection, and sustainable development. Their active engagement empowers them and fosters resilient and inclusive rural communities.



In a study it was found that women have a significant role to play in, promoting sustainable development especially those related to environmental protection (Aye,2018). It is noticed that Rural women are involved in agricultural operations to a greater extent; they need



assistance from Government, private or any other agency for newest information sources related to crop production, livestock and especially quality poultry production. Generally, there are no specific information sources and training facilities for rural women, although it has been found that Rural women farmers play a vital role in food production and food security in India. It has been found that, although women participation and involvement in agriculture sector is active but they are very far from agricultural extension education services throughout the globe (Butt et al 2010). In another study conducted by Blocker and Eckberg (1989) it was reported that women and men often respond differently to environmental issues: women were more concerned than men about local environmental issues while there was little difference on general environmental issues between men and women. It was reported by Ahmed and Hussain (2004) that Rural women play a key role in agricultural sector production by working with full passion in production of crops right from the soil preparation till post harvest and food security activities. We observe that over half of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend heavily on natural resources for their survival. Rural people men as well as women depend on availability of natural resources so availability of food for their household as well as the conservation and sustainable use and management of natural resources is their concern. It has been found that majority of such people are rural women, who have virtually no access to farm-based resources. Hence, increases women's vulnerability and their livelihood strategies to be dependent on the availability of natural resource. The researchers reported that proper natural resource management can release more time for women to use on income generation activities, child care and personal development. In the light of literature (Blackden, 2006; Coleman, 2008; Marothia, 2010; Belay, 2016; Nyamekye and Oppong-Mensah, 2016 etc), we chose this study with the main aim to examine the role of rural women in natural resources management in Kashmir valley.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in South Kashmir, Kashmir valley of J&K region. In this paper, we chose in total 100 rural women at random from the study area. A well designed questionnaire validated was used to collect the data from the women under study. The women who participated in this study were given a verbal explanation regarding the purpose of the present study and were assured that information collected will be used only for academic purpose only. The data collected using simple random sampling technique (Cochran, 1977), was analyzed using standard statistical techniques.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented in Table 1, reveals that majority (26%) of the respondents understudy were in the age group of >45 years, 45% reported that their family size was 5-8, 43% reported that their monthly income (approximately) was Rs 20000-40000, and majority (70%) respondents understudy reported that they possess upto 10 Kanals of land.

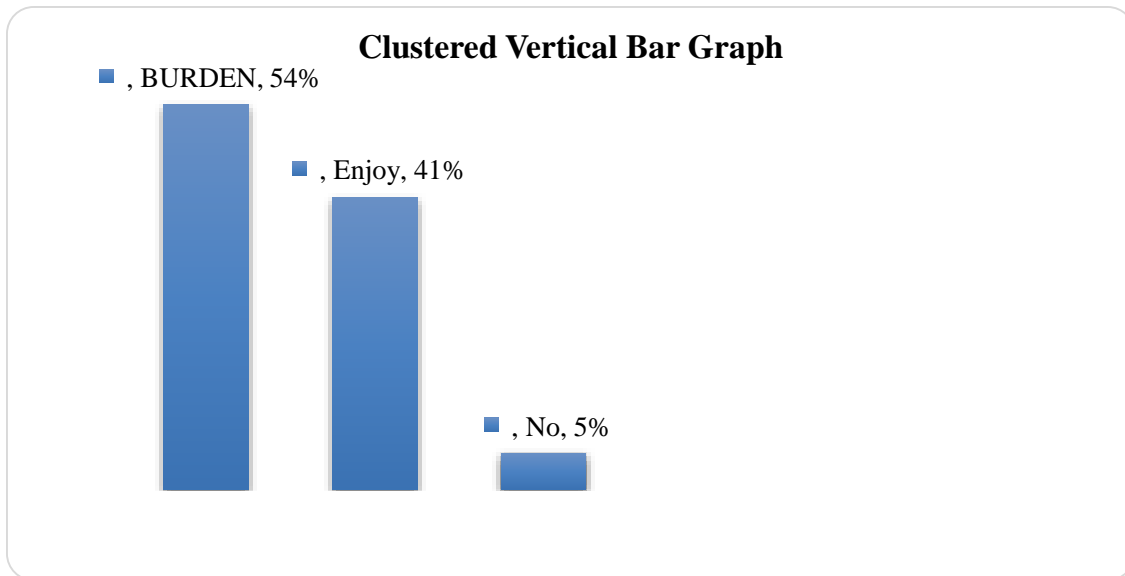
Table 1: Distribution of the study population as per general information (n=100)

S.No.	Characteristics	Variable	Frequency	%
1	Residence	Anantnag	100	100
2	Age (years)	25-35	21	21
		36-45	53	53
		>45	26	26
3	Family Size	2-4	45	45
		5-8	45	45
		>8	10	10
4	Family Income (Monthly)	10000-50000	76	76
		50000-100000	23	23
		>100000	1	1
5	Time Spend in Field (Daily)	< 2 hours	70	70
		2-4 hours	16	16
		4-6hours	14	14
6	Land Holding (Kanals)	landless	4	4
		Upto 10	70	70
		11-20	14	14
		21-30	9	9
		>30	3	3

“n” is total number of respondents

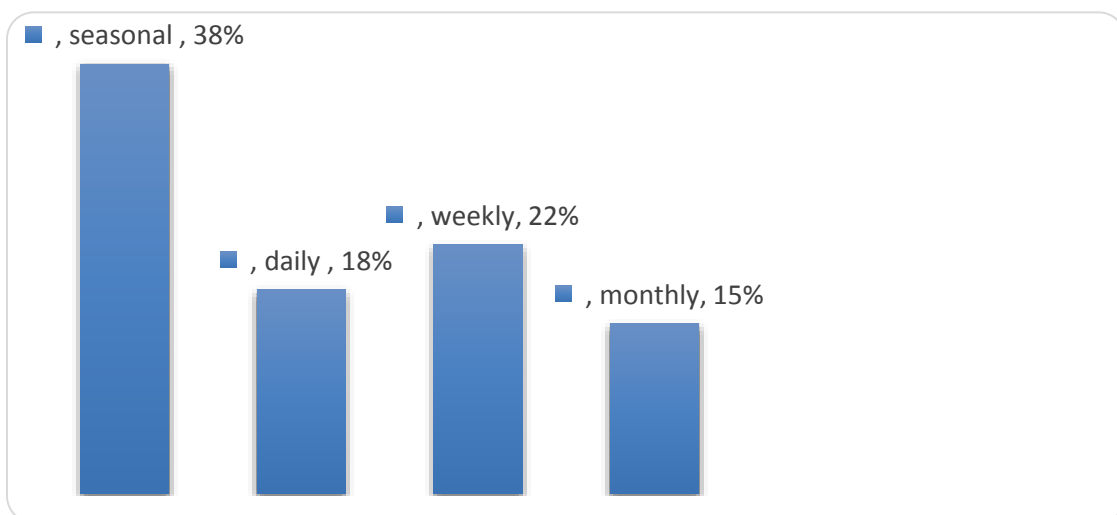


Figure 1: Does working on field increase your burden or do you enjoy it?



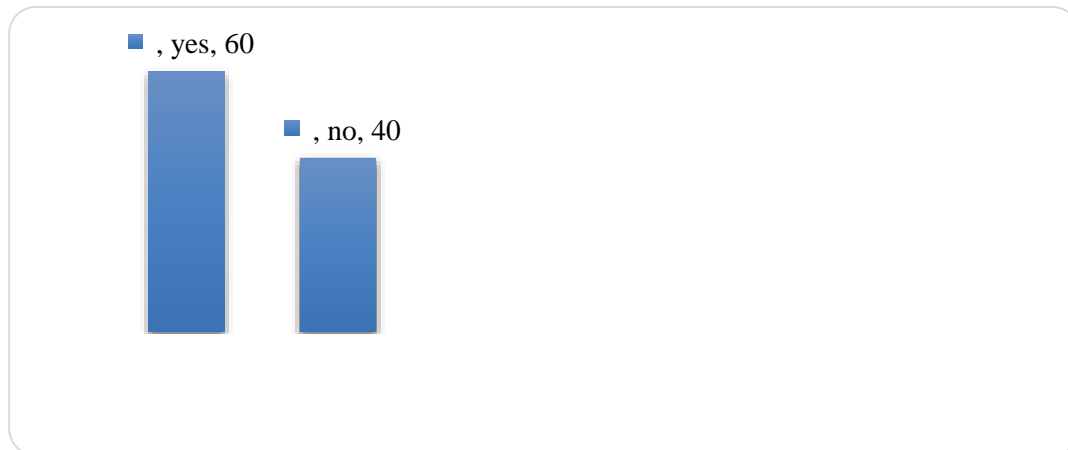
The data presented in Figure 1, revealed that majority (54.%) respondents reported that they enjoy working in field. The believe by working in field they remain physically as well as mentally fit.

Figure 2: frequency of field visits?



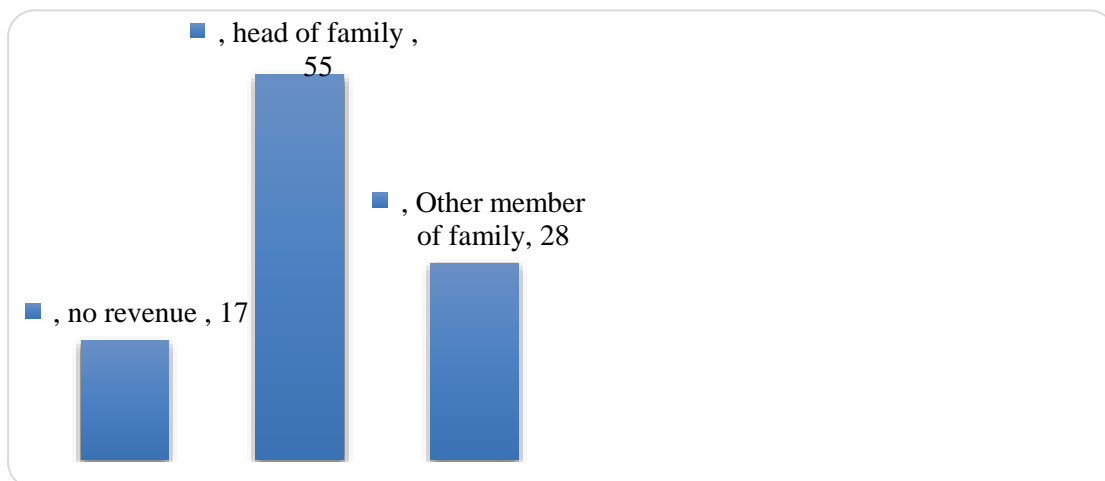
The data presented in Figure 2, revealed that majority (38%) respondents reported that they visit to their field daily. They believe that field is part of their family visiting daily halped them to closely monitor crops ,identify pest or disease issues early and make informed decisions about irrigation ,fertilization and harvesting .

Figure 3: Do you have any information about crop rotation/mulching/inter cropping /fallowing?



The data presented in Figure 3, revealed that majority (60%) respondents reported that they have basic knowledge of agriculture. The respondents were keen to learn about latest techniques available in agricultural field.

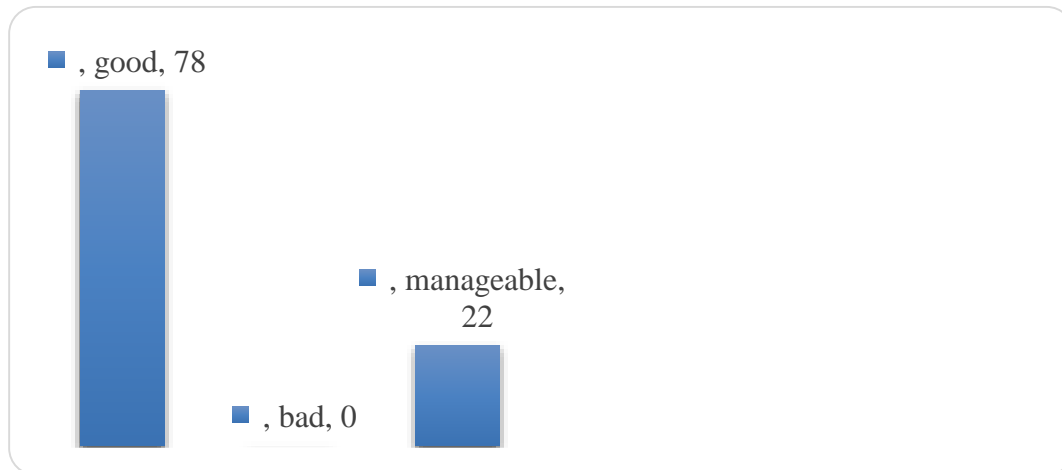
Figure 4: who takes care of the money/revenue generated from agricultural produce?



The data presented in Figure 4, revealed that majority (55%) respondents reported that they enjoy the decision making on the revenue generated from agricultural produce. The head of the family typically manages the revenue generated from agriculture by overseeing various aspects of the farming operations like crop selection, cultivation, harvesting, or labour for farming activities .overall their role involves strategic planning and decision making to optimize the revenue generated from agricultural activities .

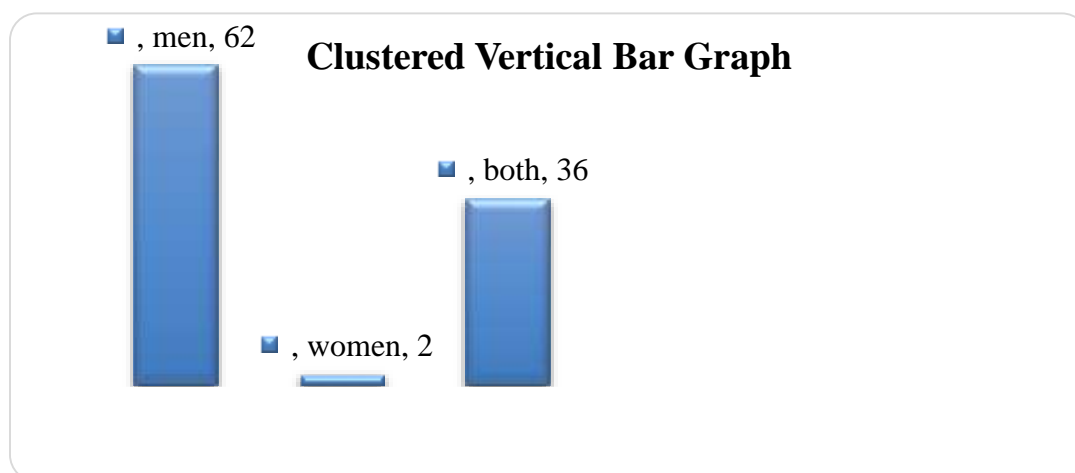


Figure 5: How is the supply of water?



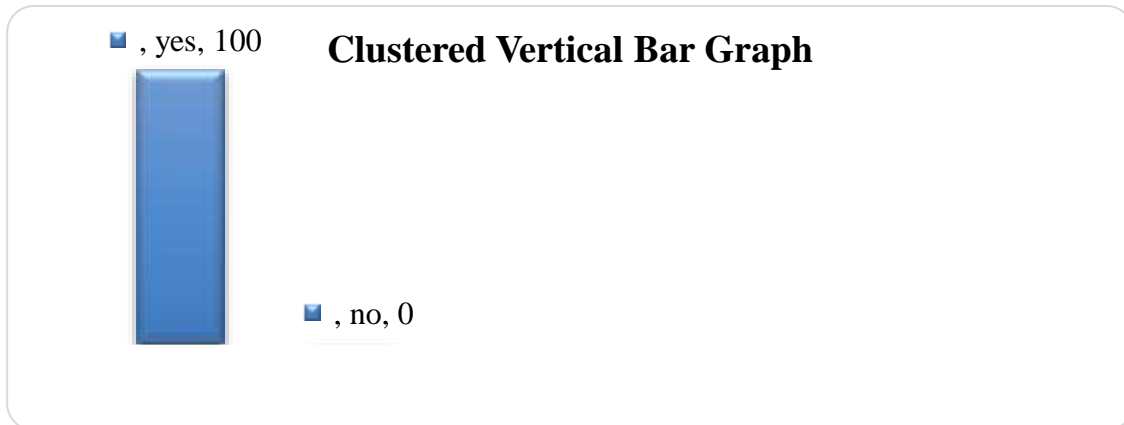
The data presented in Figure 5, revealed that majority (78%) respondents reported that quality and quantity of water is good and is not same as was decade back.it is because of the involvement of various governmental schemes of the JAL SHAKTI DEPARTMENT which is entrusted with the responsibility of providing safe drinking water facilities to all the human settlements ,by tapping the available water resources and treating the same through filtration and chemical through a network of pipes.

Figure 6: Who do you think are more preferred for agricultural work?



The data in the figure shows that majority (62%) respondents reported that men are more preferred for agricultural work due to their physical stamina and strength. Also traditional gender roles often assigned men to physically demanding roles while women are responsible for domestic chores, these roles have influenced perceptions of strength and capability leading to preference for men in certain agricultural roles and 36 % agreed that both are equally fit for the agricultural purposes.

Figure7: Good tools and technology can lead to good production?



The data in the above figure represents that 100 % of the respondents agree to that modern tools and good technology can lead to good production. As these advancements enable more efficient planting, harvesting, irrigation, and pest control ultimately improving yields and reducing labour requirements

Discussion

(a) Women and Agriculture: women play a significant role in agriculture, contributing to various aspects of farming, from planting and cultivating crops to live listock management. They often work as labourers, but also take on leadership roles and contribute to decision making in many farming communities .However ,gender disparities can limit women’s access to resources, education, and land ownership in the the agricultural sector. Efforts are being made to empower women in agriculture and address these challenges. Land resource is mostly controlled by men, while women have limited power to control the resource and have also limited or no access to external inputs such as extension, fertilizer and credits. It is one of the most vital natural resources for people and it partly determines the volume of output and the status of a farmer in the social setting of the society. It is a store house for minerals and forest resources of various kinds. The group discussion revealed that women are equally conscious about the importance of land

(b) Women and Water Resource: Women are good water managers and play a crucial role in managing water resources as they are responsible for collecting ,using ,and safeguarding water for households and agricultural purposes In many regions ,women spend a significant amount of time fetching water ,which can limit their opportunities for education and economic activities empowering women in water management can lead to more sustainable and equitable water use, improving both household well being and community development .Efforts to involve women in water related decision making and providing them with access to education and resources are important for achieving these goals. They can play key community management roles in domestic water supply at the community level including maintenance of traditional sources. Over centuries, women have acquired extensive



knowledge about water quality, health and sanitation. They consider it a religious duty to save water.

(c) Women in Biomass Energy Consumption and Management: Women over centuries, have gathered and managed biomass energy for household consumption. Most domestic energy in rural Kashmir comes directly from biomass sources which include fuel-wood, charcoal, agricultural residue, animal dung and bushes but due to modernization and development the use of LPG gas has been introduced that has made it easy and feasible for rural women as it has proven to be a great aid in time management

Women and Livelihood Agriculture: The rural women support to prepare farm, and then plows, harvests, weeds and transplants, while they do milking and cleaning of sheds and other livestock activities. The women understudy were involved in various other activities besides agriculture. Women's involvement in agriculture is a fundamental aspect of livelihood in many rural communities around the world. They make significant contributions to the agricultural sector, playing crucial roles in various stages of farming and food production. In developing countries, women often represent a substantial portion of the agricultural labor force, working as farmers, laborers, or livestock caretakers. They are responsible for activities such as planting, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing. Additionally, women play a crucial role in ensuring food security within their families and communities by managing household gardens and small-scale farming. Despite their essential role, women in agriculture often face challenges and inequalities. They may have limited access to resources, such as land, credit, and technology, which can hinder their productivity and economic independence

Challenges Related To Infrastructure and Service Provisions

- (a) Food Quality and Quantity due to lack of knowledge about latest technologies
- (b) Transportation problems
- (c) Quality and Quantity of water
- (d) Lack of health facilities
- (e) Shortage of fuel wood do to deforestation
- (F) Climatic Hurdles

4. CONCLUSION

Rural women play a crucial and multifaceted role in natural resource management. Their active involvement in various aspects of agricultural and environmental practices makes them indispensable contributors to sustainable development and conservation efforts. However, they often face gender-based challenges that limit their access to resources and decision-making power, hindering their full potential in this field.

Recommendations:

Empowerment and Education: Promote programs that empower rural women through education, training, and capacity-building initiatives. This will enhance their skills and



knowledge, enabling them to adopt sustainable practices and make informed decisions regarding natural resource management.

Land Rights: Advocate for equal land rights and ownership for women in rural communities. Secure land tenure will give them a sense of security and encourage long-term investments in sustainable land use and conservation.

Access to Resources: Improve access to credit, technology, and market opportunities for rural women engaged in natural resource management. This will enable them to invest in sustainable farming practices, adopt eco-friendly technologies, and access better markets for their produce.

Women's Participation in Decision-Making: Encourage and support the participation of rural women in community-level decision-making processes related to natural resource management. This will ensure that their perspectives, needs, and concerns are considered, leading to more inclusive and effective policies and practices.

Networking and Collaboration: Facilitate networking and collaboration among rural women's groups, NGOs, government agencies, and other stakeholders involved in natural resource management. This will foster knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and collective action for sustainable development.

Recognition and Incentives: Acknowledge and reward the contributions of rural women in natural resource management through awards, incentives, and recognition programs. This will encourage more women to actively engage in sustainable practices and conservation efforts. By implementing these recommendations, we can create an environment where rural women's roles in natural resource management are valued, supported, and recognized, leading to more resilient and sustainable communities for the benefit of current and future generations.

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