

RESEARCH NOTE

Access to and Control Over Household Resources: A Consistency Check Using Gender Analysis and Household Survey Data

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted during 1998 covering three Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Chitwan district, Nepal, to examine the consistency of results if carried out independently using formal and informal methods of information collection. Gender analysis (access and control profiles), and a face-to-face household survey (n = 123 households) were employed for this purpose. Gender differences in access to and control over household resources was studied. Results showed a consistent response from both household survey and gender analysis for most of the parameters studied, such as access to agriculture extension and veterinary services, participation in training, and community work. Gender response for control over resources, such as income from small animals was also similar from both methods. However, some of the parameters were not consistent in response. For example, there was no participation of women in control over income from cash crops and cereal crops and large animals as strongly indicated by gender analysis, which was not visible in the case of household survey. This raises a question about the reliability of using only one approach of information collection for rural development research. On the basis of these results, we suggest a combine approach of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, which could be more reliable, informative and appropriate. The use of multiple methods also allows the researcher to cross-reference in order to validate the trustworthiness of information.

Key words: Gender analysis, household survey, triangulation

INTRODUCTION

Sociological research, particularly in agricultural development and planning are mostly carried out with questionnaire or personal interview. Usually clear instructions and unambiguous question design is required for the questionnaire (Sharma and Sharma 1981), while personal interview gives researcher the greatest level of control over the data collected (Gordon 1975).

Participatory approaches of information collection for sociological research are also increasingly in use mainly after the decades of 80s and are being popular (Chambers 1994). Techniques such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which can be also described as a method to enable local people to express, share and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan themselves, supports analysis of rural resources and socio-economic conditions in different communities. Approaches such as gender analysis (GA) (Shrestha 1994), group discussion and key informants interview are practically common for sociological research (Bajracharya 1994).

Either questionnaire survey method (quantitative) or participatory approaches (mostly qualitative) are usually used independently without considering the usefulness of using both approaches simultaneously to collect information related to sociological research, also for rural development planning and policy

formulation. However, use of only quantitative or qualitative approach may not be always applicable to get actual information about rural people, particularly in the developing world where people are mostly uneducated, and are with subsistence or poor economic situation (William and Charles 1997). It is also because some of the information associated with rural people having small-scale farming is difficult to address by the use of any single approach. Consistency checking about results obtained from household survey, and other participatory methods such as gender analysis could give practical insights about the methods used for information collection related to the agriculture and rural development planning. The use of multiple methods also allows the researcher to cross-reference in order to validate the trustworthiness of data (Robson 1993).

A research was carried out in Chitwan, Nepal, a country of an ethnically diverse, with many different languages and dialects and associated different cultures. The objective of the research was to examine the consistency on the results obtained from both household survey and gender analysis in identifying gender roles of access to and control over household resources.

METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork for this research was carried out between April and June 1998 in Chitwan. The Chitwan district, in the Tarai region of Nepal had a population of 354,488 during the time of study (CBS 1997). Three Village Development Committees (VDCs) were purposively selected for the study based on their concentrations of the ethnic population of research interest. Four different data collection methods were used: PRA (social maps and seasonal calendars), gender analysis (activity profiles, access and control profiles, and time use charts), key informant interviews (n = 14) and a face-to-face household survey (n = 123 households). The household survey was administered separately to a male and female from 123 households representing the three chosen ethnic groups (Devkota 1999). The household survey data were analysed using statistical software for descriptive analyses (SAS 1997), whereas information obtained from qualitative approach were organised into the tabular forms (Gordon 1975). Results from both face-to-face survey with female members and the group exercises (gender analysis) which were conducted in an endeavour to understand the roles of gender in access to services and control over household resources are mainly incorporated for the brevity reason.

RESULTS

Gender roles in access to resources

Survey results in relation to access of men and women to three types of services: agricultural extension, community activities and training, and finance are presented in Table 1. Males overwhelmingly dominated in gaining access to agricultural and veterinary services than women among the researched communities. Likewise, gender differences was common in the level of participation in community activities. The community activities examined were the opportunity to participate in community meetings, training and study tours. The category in which women fared best was access to skill development training (Table 1). In relation to study tours, however, involving travel away from home, male domination was found common in the society.

Similarly, access to finance was also dominated by men (Table 1). Women were largely illiterate and thus were not involved in financial activities, which need specific knowledge and skills, and require information. The gender analysis concurred with most of the parameters of survey results. However, some differences were found while comparing the results of gender analysis and household survey data (Table 2).

Table 1. Gender roles in access to resources in the Chitwan district, Nepal: Household survey approach (Percent respondents reporting)

Access to resources	Gender roles		
	Male	Female	Joint
Agricultural extension			
Agricultural extension worker (n = 119)	79	12	9
Veterinary services (n = 119)	74	9	17
Community activities and training			
Community meetings (n = 122)	58	16	26
Skill development training (n = 101)	35	31	34
Farming study tour (n = 93)	69	17	14
Finance			
Banking facility (n = 85)	75	15	10
Private money lender (n = 117)	66	20	14
Savings (n = 97)	65	27	8

Table 2. Gender roles in access to resources in the Chitwan district, Nepal: Gender analysis approach

Access to resources	Gender role		
	Male	Female	Joint
Agricultural extension			
Agricultural extension worker	✓✓		
Veterinary services	✓✓		
Community activities and training			
Community meetings	✓✓	✓	✓
Skill development training	✓✓		
Farming study tour	✓✓		
Finance			
Banking facility	✓✓	✓	✓
Private money lender	✓✓	✓	✓
Savings	✓✓	✓	✓

✓✓ Denotes strong and ✓ weaker gender participation for access to resources.

Access to skilled development training, agricultural extension, veterinary services, farming study tour all had a strong male domination, while other activities such as access to finance, and participation in community meetings had although, men domination, but also had women's involvement at a low level. These all activities also had low level of joint participation of both men and women (Table 2).

Gender roles in control over household resources

The survey result revealed the information about men's and women's control over household income from the three main sources: crops, livestock, and off-farm employment are presented in Table 3. There was not strong gender domination in the income generation from crops, livestock and off-farm employment. However, relative male domination was found in crops and off-farm related income while female relatively dominated for small animal income (Table 3). Off-farm income typically comes from household members working for government and non-governmental services, running small businesses or casual farm-work. Off-farm income provides a valuable source of cash to many rural Nepalese households.

The gender analysis result on control over household resources is summarised in Table 4. Income generated from off-farm employment was strongly controlled by males only. Women's participation to control income generated from cereal crops, cash crops, and large animals were almost none. However, there was a weaker level of participation of both men and women for the same (Table 4).

Table 3. Gender roles in control over household income in the Chitwan district, Nepal: Household survey approach (Percent respondents reporting)

Control over income	Gender roles		
	Male	Female	Joint
Cereal crops (n = 102)	41	27	32
Cash crops (n = 102)	40	29	31
Large animals (n = 98)	47	30	23
Small animals (n = 77)	36	46	18
Off-farm (n = 100)	43	29	28

Table 4. Gender roles in control over household income in the Chitwan district, Nepal: Gender analysis approach

Control over income	Gender role		
	Male	Female	Joint
Cereal crops	✓✓		✓
Cash crops	✓✓		✓
Large animals	✓✓		✓
Small animals	✓✓	✓	✓
Off-farm	✓✓		

✓✓ Denotes strong and ✓ weaker gender participation for control over household resources.

DISCUSSION

Both household survey and gender analysis revealed consistency for most of the parameters studied. However, there was a contradiction on some of the parameters. For example, household survey results reported overwhelming domination of male in gaining access to agricultural and veterinary services, community activities and training, and finances than women, which was not seen in gender analysis. Likewise, level of gender participation in access of skill development training, agricultural extension, veterinary services and farming study tour was found more or less similar for both men and women as indicated by the household survey results, while gender analysis results showed a complete male domination for those services.

Similarly, survey results did not report about the strong gender domination in control over household resources in relation to income generation from off-farm employment, while gender analysis results supported strong male domination for off-farm employment income. However, there was a weaker level of participation of both men and women for crops and livestock income as revealed by the gender analysis results.

This raises a question about the validity of the methods used, and the reliability of the results obtained. There are some grounds to rely on the results obtained from gender analysis than the household survey since gender analysis results was based on thorough discussion on the topic and the general consensus of the participants. Still, it is difficult to underestimate the results obtained from household survey since individual member's perception was considered in the results. What we can understand from such inconsistency in the result is that, there is a possibility of contradiction in results obtained from household survey and participation methods.

The results from this study clearly revealed that some of the issues related to rural household decision-making, mainly that of sociological research associated to the agriculture and rural development planning are difficult to identify just on the basis of only one method of information collection. While the other are very much specific to the participatory methods of data collection only.

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