

The Obstacles of Rural Women Participation in Agricultural Development in Erbil Province of Iraq

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Abstract

The role of rural women's in agricultural activities is substantial in Iraq in general and in the Erbil province in particular. The aim of the study is to determine the problems faced by rural women during agricultural activities. This study was conducted in Erbil located in the Northern Iraq. The data was collected from 250 women from 25 villages by face to face interviews. The results showed that the obstacles of women's role in agricultural development are lack of literacy due to their poor academic background. The majority of the respondents claimed that their obstacles lie in the increased work inside and outside of activity of rural women. Due to the family obstacles, the women always face disagreement with their family while attending to social and economic activities. The women also have obstacles in the agricultural development due to the gender discriminations. The respondents every time encounter obstacles because of the low attendance of women NGOs to track their problems.

Keywords: *Obstacles, agricultural development, rural women, Erbil, Iraq.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's globalized community has preferred the agriculture as an engine for the overall growth and development of the world. It plays a crucial role to reduce the poverty level in the countries as it is regarded as the main occupation of the poor people (Rivera and Qamar 2003). But the facts that nowadays people involve less in the agriculture sector rather commercial. People are attracting to the commercial business activities like banking, financing, corporate, etc. as they see more profit and quality life in that sector rather than agricultural sector (Boon, 2009). In many developing countries, rural women are regarded as the foundation for everyday family survival and agriculture. Though women play a major part in the agriculture, they are probably facing different problems which obstruct women empowerment (Chowa et al., 2013). Economic status of Iraqi Kurdistan region has been primarily dominated by the agriculture sector. Despite the shift towards industrialisation, this sector has been a mainstream source for rural economy contributing to the overall socio-economic status of the community. (Moscovice et al., 2000) Therefore, it is obvious that improvement in the agriculture sector is the fundamental activity needed to reduce poverty and improve quality of life especially in rural parts where woman is central in agricultural activities. Iraq, being an agriculture based country the role of woman in the agricultural sector is same as in other parts of the rural community. The women are primarily involved in farming, maintenance of livestock, crop harvesting activities and other household works. Women have to work through the whole day to feed children and working men of the family, (Ranjha et al., 2009). Women in rural areas can contribute to the agricultural development and economic development in all developing countries. It is said that around 50% of rural women inhabitants have a considerable role in the economic and social development (Oluwasola, 2013). Additionally to develop sustainability, it is very important to pay attention to the condition of women beside men for the participation in various economic and social development activities. in spite of huge efforts of rural women, their role is ignored in economic developmental activities (Mbori, 2013).

Extension, in general terms, is a function that can be applied to various areas of society. It operates in the industrial, health and education sectors, as well as agricultural and rural development. The term «extension» is, therefore, applicable to various areas of development. If extension is assumed as an educational process with the aim of conveying useful information for rural producers and changing their insight, knowledge, attitude and skills in order to access a better life for their family and society (Fami, 2000). The rural women participation is very significant for the sustainable development, and also they are considered as the center of the development process and help to improve the agricultural condition (Umeta et al., 2011). Rural women considers 70% of agricultural workers, 80% of food producers and percent of rural women process basic food stuff and are involved in the marketing activities also from around 60% to 90% (Benson and Jafry, 2013; Amghani et al., 2013). Women should be encouraged and motivated (Andeca and Rebecca, 2012). From the viewpoint of macro-economic like creating income, production, and entrepreneurship, science and technology development, women participation is equally important (Rivera and Qamar, 2003) . The effective result from any activities is not gained by the single involvement, expertise, knowledge and personal management rather participation of both male and female. Men and women work together in a society and yet affect with the job conditions that are provided to them (Soltani et al., 2011).

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1. Research Methodology

This chapter aims to outline the research methodology used for the study. In this section, the methods and procedures used for conducting research have been briefly discussed. The plans, structure, and scheme are considered to support the research process along with finding the answers to the questions raised (Hawler Governorate, 2015). The researcher has maintained the confidentiality of the information gained from the participants. Also, the researcher follows the principles of ethics like objectivity, honesty, openness, integrity along with respect for the intellectual property (Israr, 2014). Since the survey is conducted through questionnaire method, the respondent is assured to maintain the privacy of their answers, views and opinions and won't be disclosed without their permission.

2.2. Research Survey Method and Data Collecting

Primary and secondary are the two methods of data collection (Dawson, 2013). For achieving the result, simple random samplings are used. Questionnaires are distributed among 250 women from 25 villages in Erbil province namely: Qushtapa, Talmusak, Grdarash, Saedan, Drash, Qafar, Khrabadraw, Gaynj, Jdeda, Qultapa, Duztapa, Jmka, Mastawa, Chaluk, Kawrgosk, Grdasher, Parpetan, and Arabkand. Erbil is one of the governors of the Iraqi Kurdistan region. It covers an area of 15,074 km² in the north of Iraq, with an estimated population (in 2009) of 1,713,461 (5% of total) people. The location of Erbil governorate is between latitudes 35° 30' and 37° 15' N, and longitudes 43° 22' and 45° 05' E. The required information is gathered from these women through questionnaire method. In this study, different women were invited to answer the questions through convenience sampling method. After the preparation of the initial questionnaire, a set of questions is given to teachers and experts who are in the field of agriculture and natural resources.

This study was used simple random sampling that is section from probability sampling techniques. Background information consists of 21 questions with tables based on the demographic information age, education level, etc. The data were gathered during regular-schedule class meeting times and lasted almost 15 minutes with farmers in 2016.

2.3. Data Analysis Methods

After then this replies corrective action and finally the questions about the questionnaire has been set. And then data will be collected and fed to a computer for statistical analysis with the help of the SPSS software tool.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics or Respondents

This section analyzes the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, including age, marital status, education level and household size. The total number of women participating in this survey is 250 women from 25 different villages in the study area. The necessary strength to carry out these operations.

3.1.1. Age of farmers

Therefore, as farmer's age, there is a tendency that productivity will continue to fall owing to their declining strength. In Table 1, the result shows the age of that farmer containing four groups. The first group of farmers age between 36-45 years it was 32.53% of the farmers, and the second group of farmers who are between the ages of 25-35 years, which represents 27.31% of the respondents, and this indicates that the majority of participants in the questionnaire small and duty age integrated, and young people have the physical strength and the middle aged are on those who have experience in agriculture work and indicate the result. Farmers in most of these young people on the completion of the world health organization to make an impact significantly on agricultural production, These factors affect the participation of women differ in different environments has found many studies that tend older women from families more affluent to be more involved in the institutions (Warner et al., 1997; Agarwal, 2001 and Adams., 1982).

3.1.2 Marital status

As shown in the Table 1. The 92.77% of women are married, and this reduces the time and opportunity to participate effectively. The primary reason for women's inability to expand their work to market is their extensive involvement in family care and household activities (Elias et al., 2013)

3.1.3 Educational background of rural women farmers.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents 59.84% majority of farmers were not educated. Education status plays an important role in the acquisition of skills and technology transfer. Respondents reported different levels of educational attainment. While the percentage of women who participated completed elementary school was the 30.92%. In addition, it was about 0.44% of the respondent's grades, including (diploma and bachelor). The minority of the respondents had professional (BSc) educational achievements in agriculture. It is likely to be more efficient in the use of inputs from counterparts little or no education, farmers have higher levels of education. This low level of education, no doubt, affects the level of adoption of technology and skills. According to Al-Rimawi (2002), formal education has the potential to provide some of the deficiencies in the human, that is understood and communication boosts in the field of agriculture.

Table .1. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents in Erbil Province

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age of rural women farmers	18-25	43	17.27
	25-35	68	27.31
	36-45	81	32.53
	46-60	57	22.89
The Marital Status of women farmers	Married	231	92.77
	Single	6	2.41
	Widow	12	4.82
The educational levels of rural women farmers	Illiterate	149	59.84
	Primary	77	30.92
	Secondary	14	5.62
	High school	8	3.21
	Bachelor	1	0.40

3.2 The Obstacles of Rural Women Participation in Agricultural Development

Rural women work hard for long hours, usually for a small reward, often neglected by extension services. As women have been playing an important role in the agricultural sector, Elias et al. (2013)

3.2.1 Individual obstacles

The individual obstacles for women farmers and the main difficulties cause the women farmers do not engage with activities and training on agricultural extensions due to the lack of education and also their duties in the home for care about family members in cooking and cleaning in addition outside the home Low accessibility of rural women to various resources, including participation in the extension programs due to social and family obstacles has hindered the role of women in the agricultural development(Amghani et al., 2013). As shown in Table 2 explain individual obstacles for woman farmers and the main difficulties cause the woman farmers not engage with activities and training on agricultural extensions due to the lack of education and also their duties inside home for care about family members for cooking and cleaning in addition outside home which taking care of animals. Furthermore, the results indicate that the participation of rural women in the extension programs decreases with the increasing education in contrast to the findings from [Soltani et al., 2011;Al-Rimawi, 2002)] the level of education and experience in the cultivation influence the participation of rural women in the extension programs. The finding by FAO (2013) reported that several governments have their undivided attention in agricultural sector these days.

The results of the statistical analysis that show the respondents sometimes faced with the obstacles of literacy due to their poor academic background. The survey results showed that obstacles of the respondents in regards to the lack of self-confidence are never. The Table depicts that the inferiority feeling and resignation among the respondents is never. The majority of the respondents claimed that their obstacles lie in the increased work inside and outside of activity of rural women (Table 2). Since rural women take different responsibilities and roles, such as producers of crops, ranching and keeping poultry, children's education, housekeeping, supervising family economy and managing it, and so, would not be effective in developing rural societies. So, the importance of education is very critical for rural women especially extensional educations.

The results of Table 2. Shows the majority of the obstacles women in agricultural development is the easy availability of low information and handicrafts and ranching as well as the findings of the researchers from the individual obstacles. Rural women have the potential to work for increasing food production, but, to meet the future demands, it won't be sufficient. To ensure the best living conditions in vulnerable communities, special measures should be taken to fight malnutrition in the region. In most UN reports, women have been considered as the greatest deprived group of the human societies (Doss, 2011).

Table 2. The individual obstacles of rural women participation in agricultural development

Individual obstacles	Never (%)	Sometime (%)	Always (%)	Mean (*)	Std. Deviation
Literacy	6.00	71.0	23.0	1.17	0.51
Lack of self-confidence	77.0	23.0	0.00	0.23	0.42
Inferiority feeling and resignation	93.0	7.00	0.00	0.07	0.25
Increased work inside and outside	0.00	5.00	95.0	1.95	0.22
Home affairs	0.00	8.00	92.0	1.92	0.27
Handicrafts and ranching	0.00	6.00	94.0	1.94	0.25
Low information	4.00	56.0	4.00	1.36	0.56
Their applied scientific knowledge	4.00	46.0	49.0	1.17	0.51

***The Mean of Never = 0; Sometimes = 1; Always = 2**

Table 3 gives the result of χ^2 between agriculture extension training and individual obstacles that would show the relation between non-participate the women farmers in the extension training and handicrafts and ranching. The general challenges facing women farmers this objective aimed at investigating various challenges women potentially face in life generally apart from access to agricultural information. Networks

operating in rural areas, especially rural women's organizations are involved in the conception of development programs. These organizations must be aware of the local reality. A general belief was that women in some parts of Erbil can neither talk to male strangers, nor can they talk to male extension agents. However, the majority of respondents in both districts disagreed that married women are forbidden from talking to male strangers (Swanson and Rajalahti, 2010)

Table 3. Factors affecting the rural women's participation in agriculture extension training with individual obstacles

Individual obstacles.		Agriculture extension training			x ² test (P-Value)
		Sometimes (%)	Never (%)	Total (%)	
Literacy	Always	67.2	32.8	100.0	0.328 (0.849)
	Sometimes	64.2	35.8	100.0	
	Never	60.0	40	100.0	
Lack of self-confidence	Sometimes	58.6	41.4	100.0	1.206 (0.277)
	Never	66.5	33.5	100.0	
Inferiority feeling and resignation	Sometimes	64.7	35.3	100.0	0.000 (1.00)
	Never	64.7	35.3	100.0	
Increased work inside and outside	Always	64.4	35.6	100.0	0.125 (0.488)
	Sometimes	69.2	30.8	100.0	
Home affairs	Always	65.1	34.9	100.0	0.207 (0.409)
	Sometimes	60.0	40.0	100.0	
Handicrafts and ranching	Always	66.5	33.5	100.0	5.519 * (0.021)
	Sometimes	37.5	62.5	100.0	
Low information	Always	63.6	36.4	100.0	0.075 (0.788)
	Sometimes	65.3	34.7	100.0	
Their applied scientific knowledge	Always	65.0	35.0	100.0	1.886 (0.389)
	Sometimes	66.1	33.9	100.0	

***Statically important at 5% level**

*** If P-Value ≤ 0.05 statistically significant**

*** If P-Value > 0.05 not statistically significant**

Gender, cultural norms and security issues make it more difficult for women than for men in accessing public services, social protection, employment, and markets (UN, 2012). The problems of rural women can be divided into four main categories that are economic, social, family and individual (FAO, 1997). These problems are interconnected and they are closely linked to environmental, social and political changes. The level of education and experience in the cultivation influences the participation of rural women in the extension programs. As a result, female individuals may not be able to attend meetings and training opportunities program benefit or extension of a relationship because they simply do not have time (Carr and Hartl, 2010).

3.2.2 Family obstacles

The family obstacles for women farmers in Table 4. The result shows the survey that women have always faced obstacles in agricultural development because of gender discrimination; respondents revealed that in some cases, have faced obstacles in agricultural development because of the economic poverty of the family. And family biases and husband and father's disagreement with women's attendance at social and economic activity due to various cultural reasons and also the lack of knowledge about how to behave with girls and women. And those factors come similar to the conclusion of researchers from where the researchers concluded the family obstacles is the lack of knowledge how to act with women and girls biases the family and husband and disagreement the father with female presence in social and economic activities resulting and the negative attitude about the woman abilities (Varzgar, 2001).

Table 4. The Family obstacles of rural women participation in agricultural development

Family obstacles	Never %	Sometime %	Always %	Mean (*)	Std. Deviation
Disagree family attendance	0.0	12.0	88.0	1.88	0.32
Gender discriminations	2.0	12.0	86.0	1.84	0.42
Economic poverty of family	16.0	81.0	2.0	0.86	0.41
Lack of knowledge, behave them	16.0	84.0	0.0	0.84	0.37
Negative attitude about their abilities	93.0	7.0	0.0	0.07	0.26

***The Mean of Never = 0; Sometimes = 1; Always = 2**

Due to their involvement in household activities and child-rearing women are only able to participate in self-employment opportunities rather than high paying employment programs. The extension program should be introduced to meet the demands and interest of many family members.

The Table 5. Shows the χ^2 test between agriculture extension training with family obstacles, the results showed although there is a strong correlation between the lack of participation of rural women in agricultural extension training with the negative attitude about the woman abilities but no significant relationship between the participation of rural women in extension training and family obstacles.

Table 5. Factors affecting the rural womens participation in agriculture extension training with family obstacles

Family obstacles		Agriculture extension training			x ² Test (P-Value)
		Sometimes (%)	Never (%)	Total (%)	
Disagree family attendance	Never	45.5	54.5	100.0	2.403 (0.148)
	Always	66.4	33.6	100.0	
	Sometimes	51.7	48.3	100.0	
Lack of knowledge, behave them	Sometimes	65.6	34.4	100.0	0.453 (0.308)
	Never	60.0	40.0	100.0	
Negative attitude about their abilities	Sometimes	83.3	16.7	100.0	2.961 (0.067)
	Never	63.2	36.8	100.0	
Gender discrimination	Always	65.0	35.0	100.0	0.079 (0.961)
	Sometimes	62.9	37.1	100.0	
Economic poverty	Sometimes	65.9	34.1	100.0	3.666 (0.160)
	Never	58.5	41.5	100.0	

***Statically important at 5% level**

*** If P-Value ≤ 0.05 statistically significant**

*** If P-Value > 0.05 not statistically significant**

The policies for rural agriculture development should be tested and reassessed when necessary to ensure effective social learning by rural women. The women who possess expertise and expertise should be treated as important part of the development process; this finding is in line with the findings from Soltani et al. (2011). The rural women had the least participation in the items; attending the training courses, reading the extension brochures and interaction with the male extension workers. However, as noted in previous chapters, various family members and the community facing their own and have their own needs that must be taken into account in the guidance programs obstacles. The reason may be in some cases the lack of knowledge regarding how to behave with the women and girls resulted into obstacles in agricultural development. Womens organizations and other farmers having concepts for developmental programs should be provided with financial and political support for implementing their ideas and introducing income generating activities in rural areas. Researchers have noted the less availability of time and cultural norms, male dominance, etc.

These constraints faced by women farmers (FAO, 2001; FAO, 1995). The Raju et al. (2001) Mention to design and provide extension programs of effective services for women, it is essential to understand the roles of men and women in production practice, their information desires, the nature of the special constraints faced by females, and the implications of these constraints for extension. The findings of this study conclude that the

rural women in Erbil Province participation in the extension programs are lower than average(Amghani et al., 2013).

3.2.3 Social obstacles

Through social obstacles in Table 6 The 85% participants said that bad habits and traditions may be the reason for the lack of effective participation of rural women. As we note that 88% of respondents think the patriarchy and disagreeing it is one of the social reasons behind the lack of effective participation in agricultural activity, more than 82% of the respondents believed the low presence of women is the cause. Gender differences become clearer when looking at women's workloads. It is estimated that women provide 85-90 percent of the time spent on household food processing and preparation across a wide range of countries (Fontana and Natalia, 2008).

Table 6. The social obstacles of rural women participation in agricultural development

Social obstacles	Never (%)	Sometime (%)	Always (%)	Mean (*)	Std. Deviation
Patriarchy and disagreeing	0.0	12.0	88.0	1.88	0.33
Low extent of rural women's	0.0	13.0	87.0	1.87	0.34
Being far of accessibility	0.0	14.0	86.0	1.86	0.35
Bad customs and traditions	0.0	15.0	85.0	1.85	0.36
Low attendance of women	0.0	18.0	82.0	1.82	0.39
Limited number of females	21.0	76.0	3.00	0.82	0.46
Problems of access	33.0	66.0	1.0	0.67	0.45
Low women's access	90.0	10.0	0.0	0.10	0.29

***The Mean of Never = 0; Sometimes = 1; Always = 2**

The table indicates that the respondents always faced obstacles because of the low attendance of women NGOs to track their problems and issues, women are mostly involved in household activities such as rearing of livestock and child-rearing. This work is unpaid and acts as a burden to expand themselves to participate in economic opportunities,

Accordingly, it is important to pay attention to how we can increase their participation and involvement in a development process, especially because of past research efforts, so often ignored, or misrepresented them. Most of the women are illiterate or less educated and often unable to attend or continue formal training courses, social or economic services. In these conditions, rural women remain inactive with less chance to develop their own abilities (Thomas, 1990). As a result, this situation has caused the women to be the most vulnerable group in rural development programs. As shown in Table 8. To find a χ^2 test relationship between agriculture extension training and social obstacles. The results show a relationship between the non-participation and there were no significant correlation between the difficulty of access to agricultural extension services and lack of participation in agriculture extension training, It was concluded that cultural norms, male

dominance, and traditional belief system were the major social constraints faced by rural women as reported by the responden. The major constraints in agriculture are women's access, the difficulty of access to agricultural extension and limited number female's services (Manfre and Robin, 2012).

Table 8. Factors affecting the rural women's participation in Agriculture extension training with social obstacles.

Social obstacles		Agriculture extension training			x ² Test (P-Value)
		Sometimes (%)	Never (%)	Total (%)	
Bad customs and traditions	Always	64.2	35.8	100.0	0.161 (0.852)
	Sometimes	67.6	32.4	100.0	
Patriarchy and disagreeing	Always	66.7	33.3	100.0	3.207* (0.058)
	Sometimes	50.0	50.0	100.0	
Low women's access	Sometimes	79.2	20.8	100.0	2.444 (0.087)
	Never	63.1	36.9	100.0	
The difficulty of access to agricultural extension services.	Always	68.7	31.3	100.0	10.836* (0.02)
	Sometimes	40.0	60.0	100.0	
Limited number females	Sometimes	62.2	37.8	100.0	2.348 (0.146)
	Never	73.6	26.4	100.0	
Problem so f access	Sometimes	64.5	35.5	100.0	0.09 (1.000)
	Never	65.1	34.9	100.0	
Low extent of rural women's	Always	63.4	36.6	100.0	1.084 (0.334)
	Sometimes	72.7	27.3	100.0	
Low attendance of women	Always	67.0	33.0	100.0	2.625 (0.125)

***Statically important at 5% level**

*** If P-Value ≤ 0.05 statistically significant**

*** If P-Value > 0.05 not statistically significant**

When discussing gender issues, literature and actors in the development tend to distinguish the concept of men and women as two separate categories, but none of the two is a homogeneous group, can be found on the homogeneity across the levels of the economic situation or social status, ethnicity, age, origin or religion, and so on (Agarwal, 2001; Whitehead,1984).The analysis of cultural factors that can be divided women and proved that women are not, and not a given category homogeneous and solidarity. Recent studies have suggested that rural women a full range of obstacles faced by rural women and hinder their participation further. These can be summarized obstacles as follows Cultural, Must be cultural obstacles even in the

customs and traditions and religious practices. In some communities, women are prohibited from speaking directly with men outside the family. (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1998).

Conclusions

This research identifies and analyzes the agricultural extension role in rural women participating in agricultural development in Erbil province. The research also focuses on identifying the socioeconomic characteristics of women and identifying the constraints militating against women in agricultural activities.

In summary, basic barriers for extension activities to women are as follows:

a. Absence, shortage, and insufficiencies of based knowledge among women.

b. Lack of women's access to informational resources and educational references.

c. Lack of performance or inadequacy of educational programs that are appropriate for rural women's need.

d. Inattention to perform basic education programs (literacy, religious, cultural and economical-social education).

e. Lack of applying adequate schemes to assign educational and developmental agents among qualified women in villages according to the activity at villages.

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