

POULTRY FARMING: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL TAKE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FOOD SECURITY AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

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Abstract: In developing countries poultry rearing has been practiced for many years. The study focused on revealing the level of empowerment of rural women and food assurance through poultry farming especially chicken. Data was collected from one hundred and one respondents through semi structured interview form Chakwal city. The research was conducted over a period of six weeks. The data was entered and then analyzed by correlating it through SPSS. Scope of the study was to observe the effects of poultry rearing on the life of rural women and the way it has contributed to her empowerment and food security at household level. It was observed that poultry rearing at household level has not much enhanced the overall household income yet plays role in contributing to sustain household economy. Besides being healthy and nutritious source of food, it somehow contributes in securing dietary needs especially of the young ones. It has made the women self-employed, more confident, socially empowered and more valued not only in their families but also in their community.

Key Words: Poultry, Women empowerment, Food security, Poverty alleviation, Employment, Household economy

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, small scale poultry industry may lead towards the endorsement of gender equality, enhancement of household income and poverty alleviation. Poultry refers to domestication of birds that produce eggs and meat that can be consumed and traded by small scale producers as well as large scale produces. At village level almost all families even the poorest own poultry specially chickens and most of the time women owned and managed the chickens (Upton 2004). It is difficult to overcome poverty and malnutrition in one single intervention. However livestock production especially poultry could be seen as first effective step (Mack, et al. 2005; Islam, et al. 2014).

Poultry keeping provides a chance to women for self-employment which may lead her towards income generation and a better standard of living eventually. Poultry is significant in empowerment of poor women and poverty reduction. It is a good source of income for women especially who want to work by staying at their home doing other household chores aside (Fattah 2000).

The indigenous chickens have a good immune system to resist diseases, are well adapted to native climatic conditions because they have evolved through natural selection of thousand years. So this farming system could be characterized as low input

and low output system of production that provides protein based nutrition, a good source of income, food security and women empowerment to the rural women and their families (Parveen, et al. 2013).

Empowerment is a process in which one develops his capabilities and uses this development for the betterment of his life socially, economically and politically. So poultry provides women a chance to be economically empowered by selling poultry, their products and becomes a valuable source of income. Women use this money for various purposes such as food, clothing, medical expenses, school fees of kids etc. (Conroy 2005). Women play a vital role in the poultry industry at household level though they do not use the modern techniques for rearing chicken to enhance production, yet at least provide for food security of its household members (Butt, et al. 2010; Achamyelesh 2000).

Food security includes an easy accessibility and availability of food to the members of society, ensuring sufficient amount of diet to all members of household, either purchased or achieved by production. Poultry is integral to food security, as it provides not only food but also a chance to earn money by which any person could easily buy food (Sonaiya, et al. 1994).

Poultry is an easy source for generating income. Firstly, as compared to larger livestock poultry does not require much investment because chickens are left during day time to scavenge for their feed only a minimum amount of supplementary feed is required. It is an industry at household level which generates quick and frequent profit on day to day basis (Todd 1998). Secondly, when poultry keeping is compared to the other income generating activities such as working at an organization or day laboring etc., which requires consecutive hours of working and women have to leave her home. Instead poultry are kept at house. So women can perform their domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning and rearing of kids easily and do not need to give extra time to manage poultry. Thirdly, women do not leave her house or village without a male along her due to some societal, cultural and religious reasons. So income generation through poultry keeping is suitable for them (Jennifer2006). Through money earned by poultry keeping, women become an economic agent like men. They earn money so they assume their responsibilities for household expenditures such as food, clothing and school fees of kids. Initially these responsibilities are bear by men, but if the wife earns, he expects from her to contribute (Kryger, et al. 2010).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present study was conducted in Chakwal city. Semi structured questionnaires were used to obtain information from one hundred and one respondents in the area. Respondents were selected to take information through purposive sampling. Other anthropological research techniques such as informal interviews, key informant and participant observation were used to get an insight on local cultural context of women empowerment in rural household women. Data was analyzed by correlating variable in SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dependent Questions	Independent Question	Sign Value
Enhanced status in family	Empowering women	0.003
Less investment		0.05
Meeting the dietary needs of family members		0.007
Increase in household income		0.002
Income generation for personal needs		0.000

This table shows the results obtained by using correlation through SPSS, representing the relationship between an independent variable and multiple dependent variables. In first question H_0 is that there is no enhancement of women status by this kind of empowerment and H_1 is that there is an enhancement of status in her house is seen with a significant value of 0.003 which is smaller than the 0.05 ($0.003 < 0.05$). So, poultry keeping makes the women financially strong. If women start earning and uses this money wishfully to fulfill the needs of house and members of the house then the status of such a woman enhances because now she is contributing in the household expenditures (Parveen, et al. 2013).

In second question H_0 is that no there is no lesser amount of investment required in poultry rearing. H_1 is that lesser amount of investment is required in poultry rearing and ultimately resulting in empowerment of women. Significance value for second dependent variable which is less investment required in poultry keeping is 0.05 which is equal to the 0.05 ($0.05 = 0.05$). So there is a significant relationship among dependent and independent variable. Poultry keeping is a small business for household women because it requires lesser amount of investment to initiate the business as compared to other income generating activities. But according to some of the respondents some time and expenses have to spent for the treatment of some diseases and to prevent mortality or loss and sometime expenses have to spend in order to fulfill their feed needs by using supplementary feed (Kryger, et al. 2010).

In third question H_0 is that dietary needs cannot be fulfilled by keeping poultry. H_1 is that dietary needs of family can be fulfilled by keeping poultry. Significance value for the third dependent variable which is that women can fulfill their and their family dietary needs by keeping poultry is 0.007 which is smaller than 0.05 ($0.007 < 0.05$). So there is a significant relationship among dependent and independent variable. If women kept poultry at home then it is a readymade source of proteins for the family members, since these chickens are raised at home with the bread and food leftovers especially for those who cannot afford to purchase meat and eggs from market. It is also assumed that the quality of eggs and meat of the household chickens is better than the commercial chickens and are more nutritious (Shakir, et al. 1999). In this way women feel confident as her efforts in poultry management gives her a good result in contributing to the diet of her family members. Moreover she

sells the chicken and eggs in the vicinity, and thus can purchase anything in the time of need.

In forth question H_0 is that keeping poultry has no impact on income generation. H_1 is that poultry keeping increase the income of the household that will ultimately empower the women. Significance value for this variable is 0.002 which is smaller than 0.05 ($0.002 > 0.05$). So there exists a significant relationship among dependent and independent variables. If a woman keeps poultry and sells their products then definitely it increases household income (Agri Food Consulting International 2007). And this increased income can be used in multiple ways by the women i.e. she may use it to buy food, savings which help her at the time of need (even some time women conceal these savings from her husband so that he does not ask her for this money or she could use it for some specific purpose) and also use to make their daughter's dowry.

In fifth question H_0 is that women cannot fulfill their personal needs. H_1 is that women can fulfill their needs by keeping poultry through which women get empowered. Significance value for the fifth variable is that personal needs can be fulfilled by keeping poultry is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 ($0.000 > 0.05$). So there is a significant relationship among dependent and independent variable. Poultry keeping at home enables the women to fulfill their personal needs and her children's needs such as clothing, medical expenses, school fees, tuition fee and expenses of school things (pencils, copies, uniform etc) easily. During this time of inflation if a husband cannot earn enough to fulfill household needs then women can help him by contributing (Moreki and Dikeme 2011).

Poultry keeping made the women not only economically empowered but also made her socially empowered because exchanging the poultry and poultry products increased her social circle. With a larger social circle, she is able to make a network of relationships that may help her at the time of need.

CONCLUSION

Present study demonstrated that small scale poultry could play important role in developing countries where different problems of food security and employment are faced. Through egg and meat production the protein intake can be increased decreasing the chances of malnutrition. By creating self-employment in the poultry sector on large scale, unemployment could also be reduced. Poultry keeping at household level contributes to poverty alleviation, food security at household level, women empowerment. With right policies, significant economic and social benefits and

participatory interventions this small scale industry at household level can bring a tremendous change in rural areas and in the country overall.

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