

General Health Problems of Farm Women in District Kangra of Himachal Pradesh

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INTRODUCTION

Health care is one of the most important endeavour of the government to improve quality of life of people in the country. The issue of health is important from the view point of an individual as well as a nation. The Health is an important problem both in advanced and developing countries. The problems of women in relation to health resource management can not be viewed in isolation but have to be examined critically and remedies applied in totality of economic, educational and social welfare areas. Govt. of India is committed to the goal of "Health for all by the end of 2000". Surprisingly despite of all this, utilization of these services have remained low particularly in rural areas of the country and the situation is worse in hilly areas. The present study was under taken i) to assess the common health problems faced by women, and ii) to know the health hazards to women's health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Panchrukhi and Bhawarna Blocks of Kangra district which was purposively selected because of its highest proportion of women population and a high number of development agencies, educational and research institutions. Out of these blocks, twelve villages in total were selected for the research investigation. For both the blocks, using land holding as a base, the farm households were categorised into three groups.

Small: Land holding up to 0.8 ha (20 kanals)

Medium: More than 0.8 ha upto 1.6 ha (40 kanals)

Large: More than 1.6 ha (40 kanals)

A total sample of 180 Farm Households was selected for the present study. An interview schedule was prepared for the collection of data from the respondents (housewives) in the selected farm households. General information included age, education, occupation, caste, fam-

ily, size, land and livestock inventory. The specific information included, number and distance of various health care facilities from the village to find out availability and accessibility of health care facilities. The data were critically scrutinised and arranged in tabular form. Simple averages and percentages were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The highest percentage of women respondents were found in the age group of 31-45 years, out of which the maximum percentage of this age group of women was concentrated in large category (62.96%) followed by medium (61.11) and small (46.46%) categories (Table 1).

Highest percentage of illiterate women (43.44%) were found in the small category, which decreased with the increase in land size (Table 2). In medium and large category households highest number of primary and matric women were found, respectively. Maximum graduate respondents were found in large category (11.12%). The occupational pattern of the sampled households has been shown in table 3. Agriculture with livestock was found to be the major source of livelihood for 32.78 per cent of total farm households out of which 25.92 percent were large category households and 30 per cent of small category households were depending

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to age

S.No.	Age-Group (Years)	Household Category			
		Small	Medium	Large	All
1.	Upto 30	34 (34.36)	12 (22.22)	3 (11.12)	49 (27.22)
2.	31-45	46 (46.46)	33 (61.11)	17 (62.96)	96 (53.33)
3.	46-60	15 (15.15)	7 (12.96)	7 (25.92)	29 (16.12)
4.	Above 60	4 (4.04)	2 (3.70)	0 (0.00)	6 (3.33)
Total		99 (100)	54 (100)	27 (100)	180 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Table 2: Education status of the respondents

S. No.	Education Status	Small	Medium	Large	All
1.	Illiterate	43 (43.44)	16 (29.63)	2 (7.41)	61 (33.89)
2.	Primary & Middle	38 (38.46)	21 (38.89)	10 (37.03)	69 (38.33)
3.	Matric & Higher	15 (15.15)	16 (29.63)	12 (44.44)	43 (23.89)
4.	Secondary Graduate & above	3 (3.03)	1 (1.85)	3 (11.12)	7 (3.89)
	Total	99 (100)	54 (100)	27 (100)	180 (100)
	Mean Scores	0.9899	1.4444	2.1481	1.3000

Figures in parentheses indicate per cent to total

upon it. The majority of people in all farm households were found to depend upon service. Business was another important sector of profession which was reported as largest constituent by large household category and it revealed direct relationship with land size.

Health Care Facilities in the Study Area

Availability and accessibility of health care facilities are determined by geographical location in macro environment. India has a wide network of health care institutions spread along the length and breadth of the country. Table 4 reveals village wise availability of health care facilities in terms of percentages. It reveals that only 58.33 per cent villages were having a chemist shop within 5 km range. Further it was found that 83.33 per cent villages were having allopathic practitioners 63.3 per cent ayurvedic and

Table 3: Occupational pattern of the household

Occupation	Small	Medium	Large	All Farms
Main Occupation				
i) Agriculture with livestock	30 (30.30)	22 (4.07)	7 (35.92)	59 (32.78)
ii) Service (Govt. or private both)	53 (53.54)	23 (42.59)	13 (48.15)	89 (49.44)
iii) Business	4 (4.04)	6 (11.11)	7 (25.93)	17 (9.44)
iv) Manual labour	9 (9.09)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	9 (5.00)
v) Others*	3 (3.03)	3 (5.05)	0 (0.00)	6 (3.34)
Total	99 (100)	54 (100)	27 (100)	180 (100)

*Others include masons, carpenters, blacksmiths etc.
Figure in parentheses indicate percentage

Table 4: Availability of health care facilities in the study area

S. No.	Type of Facility	Availability	
		Number of Villages	Percentage of total number of Villages (N=12)
1.	Chemist shops	7	58.33
2.	Allopathic practitioners	10	83.33
3.	Homeopathic practitioners	2	16.66
4.	Ayurvedic Practitioners	8	66.66
5.	Folk treatment specialists	12	100
6.	Faith healers	12	100
7.	Vaccination facilities	12	100
8.	Surgery facilities	2	16.66
9.	Maternity facilities	8	66.66

only 16.66 per cent had homeopathic practitioners within a range of 5 km. It is important to mention here that 100% villages were having folk treatment specialists and faith healers who have emerged to be major provider of health care in the hilly areas. Vaccination facilities were available to all the villages but only 16.66% had surgery facilities and maternity facilities were available to 66.66% in 5 kms range.

General Health Problems of Women

In case of women, the priority needs to be given to female specific problem. Furthermore, the major health problems of women are caused not by a single factor but are derived from long term conditions which are difficult to be measured. On observing all farm household situation,, a vast majority of women (77.77%) were found to be suffering from dental problems (Table 5). Next common health problem faced by women was back ache reported by 66.10 per cent of the respondents. Nearly 58.89 per cent of the respondents complained about general tiredness, Stomach problems shared another major contribution to general health problem since 55.55 per cent reported the complaint. Another major area of health problems were gynaecological. 59.44% women suffered from these problems. Maximum percentage of back-ache, body ache, joint pain, lethargy, headache suggests the presence of nutritional deficiency diseases, anaemia in particular.

Table 6 exhibits the distribution of respondents according to their maternal health history. In overall situation, 53.89% of women had

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to health problems

S.No.	Type of problem	Small			Medium			Large			All		
		Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always
1.	Problem in Eyes	54 (54.54)	32 (32.32)	13 (13.13)	32 (59.26)	19 (35.18)	3 (5.55)	18 (66.66)	8 (29.62)	1 (3.70)	104 (57.77)	51 (32.77)	17 (9.44)
2.	Problems in Ears	68 (68.69)	27 (27.30)	4 (4.04)	39 (72.72)	14 (25.92)	1 (1.85)	19 (70.37)	8 (29.62)	Nil (0.00)	126 (70.00)	49 (27.22)	5 (2.78)
3.	General Tiredness	32 (32.32)	46 (46.40)	21 (21.20)	22 (40.74)	24 (44.44)	8 (14.81)	20 (74.07)	5 (18.52)	2 (7.40)	74 (41.41)	75 (41.57)	31 (17.22)
4.	Giddiness	45 (45.45)	57 (57.60)	3 (3.03)	33 (61.11)	21 (38.89)	Nil (0.00)	19 (70.37)	7 (25.92)	1 (3.70)	97 (53.89)	85 (47.22)	4 (2.22)
5.	Forgetfulness	37 (37.8)	47 (47.4)	15 (15.15)	28 (51.85)	19 (5.18)	7 (12.96)	18 (66.66)	8 (29.62)	1 (3.7)	83 (46.11)	74 (41.11)	23 (12.78)
6.	Fainting Fits	69 (69.7)	30 (30.30)	Nil (0.00)	38 (70.37)	16 (29.62)	Nil (0.00)	18 (66.66)	9 (33.33)	Nil (0.00)	125 (69.44)	55 (30.55)	Nil (0.00)
7.	Improper sleep	41 (41.4)	42 (42.40)	16 (16.16)	30 (55.55)	17 (31.48)	7 (12.96)	15 (55.55)	10 (37.08)	2 (7.40)	86 (47.78)	69 (38.33)	25 (13.89)
8.	Stomach Problems	45 (45.45)	40 (40.40)	14 (14.14)	23 (42.59)	23 (42.29)	8 (14.81)	12 (44.44)	11 (40.70)	4 (14.80)	80 (44.44)	74 (41.11)	26 (14.44)
9.	Backaches	26 (26.27)	50 (50.50)	23 (23.20)	23 (42.59)	23 (42.59)	8 (14.81)	12 (44.44)	9 (33.33)	6 (22.22)	61 (33.89)	82 (45.55)	37 (20.55)
10.	Lethargy	42 (42.42)	49 (49.50)	8 (8.08)	34 (62.96)	20 (37.03)	Nil (0.00)	21 (77.77)	6 (22.22)	Nil (0.00)	97 (53.89)	75 (41.67)	8 (4.44)
11.	Skin Problem	66 (66.66)	23 (23.20)	10 (10.10)	39 (72.22)	13 (24.07)	2 (3.70)	22 (81.48)	4 (14.81)	1 (3.7)	127 (70.56)	40 (22.22)	13 (7.22)
12.	Severe headaches	48 (48.5)	43 (43.40)	8 (8.08)	37 (68.51)	17 (31.48)	Nil (0.00)	16 (59.25)	11 (40.70)	Nil (0.00)	101 (56.11)	71 (39.44)	8 (4.44)
13.	Bodyaches	43 (43.40)	42 (42.40)	14 (14.14)	26 (48.15)	22 (40.74)	6 (11.11)	18 (66.66)	6 (22.22)	3 (11.11)	87 (48.33)	70 (38.88)	23 (12.77)
14.	Joint Pains	55 (55.50)	36 (36.40)	8 (8.08)	40 (74.07)	14 (25.92)	Nil (0.00)	20 (70.07)	6 (22.22)	1 (3.70)	115 (63.89)	50 (31.11)	9 (5.00)
15.	Gynae Problem	31 (31.31)	53 (53.50)	15 (15.15)	28 (51.85)	26 (48.15)	Nil (0.00)	14 (51.85)	10 (37.08)	3 (11.11)	73 (40.55)	89 (49.44)	18 (10.00)
16.	Dental Problem	16 (16.16)	68 (68.69)	15 (15.15)	16 (29.63)	38 (70.37)	Nil (0.00)	8 (29.62)	15 (58.55)	4 (14.80)	40 (22.22)	121 (67.22)	19 (10.55)
17.	Throat Problems	63 (63.63)	33 (33.33)	3 (3.03)	37 (68.52)	17 (31.48)	Nil (0.00)	20 (70.07)	4 (14.80)	3 (11.11)	126 (70.00)	54 (30.00)	6 (3.33)
18.	Nose Problem	54 (54.54)	36 (36.36)	9 (9.09)	32 (59.26)	19 (35.18)	3 (5.55)	19 (70.37)	6 (22.22)	2 (7.40)	105 (58.33)	61 (33.89)	14 (7.78)
19.	Eye Problem	52 (52.52)	38 (38.39)	9 (9.09)	32 (59.26)	19 (35.18)	3 (5.55)	20 (74.07)	7 (25.92)	Nil (0.00)	104 (57.77)	64 (35.55)	12 (6.66)

Scoring pattern : Never = 3, Sometime = 2, Always = 1

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to their maternal health history

S. No. pregnancies	Household Category			
	Small	Medium	Large	All
Part A				
1. Upto 3	37 (37.37)	25 (46.30)	13 (48.15)	75 (41.67)
2. 4-6	57 (57.58)	27 (50.00)	13 (48.15)	97 (53.89)
3. 7 and more	5 (5.05)	2 (3.70)	1 (3.70)	8 (4.44)
Total	99 (100)	54 (100)	27 (100)	180 (100)

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to frequency of abortions

S. No. abortion episodes	Small	Medium	Large	All
1. Nil	28 (28.29)	13 (24.07)	9 (33.33)	50 (27.78)
2. 1	33 (33.33)	19 (35.18)	4 (14.81)	56 (31.11)
3. 2	12 (12.12)	4 (7.41)	3 (11.11)	19 (10.55)
4. 3	3 (3.03)	2 (3.70)	2 (7.41)	7 (3.89)
5. More than 3	23 (23.23)	16 (29.63)	9 (33.33)	48 (26.67)
Total	99 (100)	54 (100)	27 (100)	180 (100)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

pregnancies from four to six and 4.44 per cent had 7 or more than 7 pregnancies. Abortion is one of the biggest health hazard of women. It is shown in table 7 in all farm household irrespective of the land holding category, only 27.78 per cent had not suffered from any abortion hazard spontaneous or induced both. Rest (72.22 per cent) had suffered either one, two, three or even more abortion.

On being asked whom were they consulting for gynaecological advice, most of the women (47.23%) looked towards their elders in the family who may be mother, mother-in-law, sister or sister-in-law (Table 8). In all households. Heavy reliance on the advice of friends was also found (13.33%) in overall situation. In large category households 25.92% women reported going to doctor for any gynaecological advice and the

Table 8: Sources of consultation for seeking gynaecological advice

S. No.	Household	Elders in the family	Friends	Village health guides	Nurse	Doctors
1. Small	47 (47.48)	15 (16.16)	3 (3.03)	15 (15.15)	18 (18.18)	
2. Medium	27 (50.00)	7 (12.96)	0 (0.00)	8 (14.82)	12 (22.22)	
3. Large	11 (40.74)	1 (3.70)	2 (7.40)	6 (22.23)	7 (25.92)	
4. All	85 (47.23)	24 (13.33)	5 (2.77)	29 (16.11)	37 (20.56)	

Figure in parentheses indicate percentages

trend declined category wise. It was 22.22% for medium and 18.18 % for small categories.

KEY WORDS Health. Maternal health. Gynaecological advice.

ABSTRACT To investigate general health problems of farm women of district Kangra (H.P.), 180 respondents were selected for investigation. Majority of women were in 31-45 years age group. Higher rate of illiteracy was found in small category households (land holding upto 0.8 ha) whereas more number of graduates were found in large category households (land holding above 1.6 ha). Diverse subsidiary occupations were adopted by the households to supplement the income from main occupation. General health problems of the respondents were explored. Dental, gynaecological and stomach problems along with backache emerged as the most common health problems. More than half of the respondents had pregnancies from four to six 72.22 per cent respondents had suffered either one, two, three or more abortions. Majority of the women sought elders advice in situations when they faced gynaecological problems.

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