

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF THE MEMBERS OF WOMEN SELF – HELP GROUPS IN GOAT FARMING IN THRISSUR DISTRICT

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Abstract: This is a study on the knowledge of the members of women SHGs in goat farming and their attitude towards group activity, operating under Kudumbashree, in Thrissur district. Among 300 members engaged in goat farming for at least one year, 150 were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. The data were collected through structured questionnaire and interview. Three-fourth of the respondents (75.33%) had medium knowledge of goat farming. More number of respondents (16%) fell in the high category than low (8.67%). As for attitude towards group activity, majority of respondents (64.67%) expressed high level of favourableness. About one-fourth of the respondents (28%) had medium degree of favourableness and few (7.33%) had low degree of favourableness.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Goat farming, Self-Help Group.

Introduction

The SHGs are small informal groups those enable women to come together, discuss and analyze their issues and problems and reap economic benefit out of mutual help, solidarity and joint responsibility (Anand, 2002). The group-based approach enables the members to accumulate capital by way of small savings and helps them to get access to formal credit facilities. The steps taken by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for implementing the linkage programme of the SHGs with the formal credit institutions have strengthened this approach. The groups function as Thrift and Credit societies whose members pool savings and relend within the group on rotational or need basis. Regular meetings of the members strengthen the relationship among the members through sharing of experiences and informal discussions. Issues on gender and social problems also get a platform for discussion. SHGs operate under the principles of self help, mutual trust and cooperation to achieve the goal of empowerment.

The micro enterprises in Animal Husbandry sector have considerable potential as sustainable income generating activities for the rural women in SHGs. Especially, goat farming as a micro enterprise has special advantage for women since the management of goats is comparatively less labour and input intensive. The projects in goat farming are being implemented successfully by some SHGs under Kudumbashree in Thrissur district.

In this context, it is imperative to look into the aspects as, 'Do the members of the women SHGs in goat farming have adequate knowledge in goat farming ? and How do they feel about the attitude towards the group activity ?

The present study has been devised to address these issues. The findings of the study are expected to serve as valuable feedback to the policy makers of the SHG strategy and shall help to improvise appropriate strategies for enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of SHGs of rural women.

Materials and methods

The members of women SHGs engaged in goat farming for atleast one year, operating under Kudumbashree in Thrissur District were studied. At the time of data collection, the members comprised a total of 300 in 30 SHGs. Among them, 150 were selected for the study using proportionate stratified random sampling.

Knowledge of Goat Farming:

In the present study, knowledge was operationally defined as the body of understood information possessed by the respondents about goat farming.

A knowledge test was developed to measure the SHG members' knowledge of goat farming. Items for the test were framed after referring to literature and discussing with subject matter specialists. Initially the test comprised of 40 items, which were either open type questions, or in dichotomous or multiple choice format. For the final selection, the items were subjected to relevancy rating by a panel of ten subject matter specialists in the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Mannuthy.

The judges were asked to rate the relevancy of the items on a four point continuum viz., very relevant, relevant, somewhat relevant and not relevant with scores 4,3,2 and 1 respectively. The midpoint of the four point continuum ranging from 10 to 40, the minimum and maximum possible scores respectively, was found out and this was assumed to be the cut off point for the final selection of items. The midpoint being 25, the items having scores above this were selected for inclusion in the final questionnaire. Thus the final knowledge test comprised of 37 items.

The data were collected using structured questionnaires, distributed in person at the time of data collection. The summation of scores for the correct answers over all the items for a particular respondent indicated her knowledge score.

Based on the knowledge scores obtained, the respondents were classified into three categories

Category

High [Above (Mean + S.D.)]

Medium [(Mean + S.D.) to (Mean – S.D.)]

Low [Below (Mean – S.D.)]

Attitude towards Group Activity:

Attitude towards group activity was operationalised as the respondents' attitude towards team work in women SHGs.

A scale to measure the attitude towards group activity was adopted with verbal modifications to suit the situation. The scale consisted of six statements out of which four were positive and two were negative. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement towards the statements. Accordingly, the statements were rated on a three point continuum viz., agree, undecided and disagree with scores five, three and one respectively for positive statements. The scoring pattern was reversed for negative statements. The attitude score for each respondent was the sum of the scores assigned to all the statements by the respondent.

Based on the attitude scores obtained, the respondents were categorized as follows.

<u>Category</u>	-	<u>Score</u>
High		28 to 30
Medium		25 to 27
Low		22 to 24

Results and Discussion

Knowledge of Goat Farming

The data in Table 1 depicts that majority of the respondents (75.33 per cent) had medium level of knowledge of goat farming. The knowledge level of 16 per cent of the respondents was high and 8.67 per cent had low knowledge.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on knowledge of goat farming
n=150

Sl. No.	Knowledge of goat farming	Frequency (f)	Percentage
1	Low (Below 25.2)	13	8.67
2	Medium (31.42 – 25.2)	113	75.33
3	High (Above 31.42)	24	16
	Total	150	100

Mean = 28.31

S.D. = 3.11

Attitude towards Group Activity

On analysis of data pertaining to attitude towards group activity, it was found that majority of the respondents (64.67 per cent) expressed high level of favourableness and 28 per cent, medium level of favourableness. Only 7.33 per cent of the respondents had low level of favourableness (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on attitude towards group activity
n=150

Sl. No.	Attitude towards group activity	Frequency (f)	Percentage
1	Low (22 to 24)	11	7.33
2	Medium (25 to 27)	42	28
3	High (28 to 30)	97	64.67
	Total	150	100

It is worth noting that three-fourth of the respondents had medium knowledge of goat farming and more number of respondents fell in the high category than low. This finding goes along with that of Lalitha and Seethalakshmi (1999) who reported that the SHG members had high level of knowledge in dairying. Moreover, two third of the respondents had highly favourable attitude towards group activity. Similar finding was reported by Saravanakumar (2000) in his study on SHGs, that majority of the members were having high level of favourable attitude towards the group action.

The findings regarding the respondents' knowledge of goat farming as well as their attitude towards group activity indicates that the SHGs had enough potential to be developed into successful entrepreneurial units, provided adequate training is imparted to the members. These points out to the need of organizing training programmes for the members to enable them make more profit out of the enterprise.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the majority of respondents had medium level of knowledge of goat farming (75.33%) and as for attitude towards group activity majority of them expressed high level of favourableness. Hence, there is need to educate farm women regarding improved goat rearing management activities to become a successful entrepreneur.

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