

Women's participation in livestock activities under small-scale farming system in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

S. Mthi[#], N. Nyangiwe¹, R. Menhas², A. Mushunje³ & I.D. Ighodaro³

¹Dohne Agricultural Development Institute, P. Bag X 15, Stutterheim 4930, South Africa

²Department of Sociology Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan

³Department of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Science and Agriculture, University of Fort Hare, Alice 5700, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Abstract

Women play an important role in livestock production and their contribution remain un-recognized by researchers and policy makers. The study was conducted to investigate the participation of women in livestock production activities at two district municipalities of the Eastern Cape. A simple random sampling technique was used to select five communities in surveyed municipalities and 40 women farmers. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and was analyze using descriptive statistics. The parameters investigated included age, educational background, marital status, types of livestock raised and their participation in livestock management practices. The study revealed that a mixed crop-livestock production system was dominant in the study sites. More than 60% of women were married and approximately 42.5% of the women were older than 60 years. A total of 45% of these women had basic education with a mean family size of 4.4 ± 3.6 . Most of the rural women (62.5%) inherited foundation stock, but 22.5% were obtained from bride price and 15% were bought from neighbouring farmers. Of the agricultural activities, which women participate, caring for sick animals (80.6%) was the highest, followed by cleaning of shelters (66.7%), selling of animal products (50.9%), selling of live animals (40.1%), feeding of animals (36.4%), watering of animals (31%), purchasing feed (27.1%) and milking of animals (25.6%). Taking of animals to grazing (10.9%) and cleaning of feeding troughs (7.7%) were the least activities women performed. Within the context of the study, women play an important role in the livestock sector, therefore government should encourage programs that empower women in various aspects of livestock management and should form part of decision making in livestock production.

Keywords: agricultural activities, livestock management, participation, women

[#]Corresponding author: siza.mthie@gmail.com

Introduction

Agriculture remains economy's mainstay in South Africa and livestock play a very important role in socio-economic wellbeing of people who live in the rural areas. South Africa has an inventory of about 13.7 million cattle, 24.1 million sheep, 5.9 million goats and 1.6 million pigs and this show a potential in the livestock sector to flourish (Livestock Statistics, 2015). According to Ahmad (2014), women in the rural areas can play a huge role in realizing the potential that the country has in the livestock sector. Along with agriculture, women also play a significant role in terms of rearing of livestock (Moser, 2007) with the aims of enhancing family income (Etenesh, 2005; Batool *et al.*, 2014) as well as to meet household food needs (Mullins *et al.*, 1996; Dolberg, 2001). An estimation given by the United Nations indicated that women comprise an average of 45 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. Younas *et al.* (2007) reported that women in rural areas are the first to rise and last to go to bed. Khan *et al.* (2012) reported that time spent by women on livestock related activities was 6.23 hours per day. Rural women are involved in both domestic and livestock related activities. Their participation in household activities include preparing food, cleaning home, raising of children (Hashmi, 2009); while in livestock management activities include cleaning of animals shelters, taking care of sick animals, calf rearing, feeding, milking and providing water (Zubair *et al.*, 1999).

A number of research studies had proven women's participation in various economic activities in agriculture with the male counterparts (Oladeji 2003; Oyesola, 2004). The participation of women in different livestock management practices varies by culture and region.

In some regions around the world rural women contribution to livestock in mixed farming systems, remains under-recognized by scientists and policy makers (World Bank, 2009; FAO, 2012). These women carry out a wide diversity of tasks such as feeding, collecting fodder, grazing, cleaning animals and their shelters, collecting manure, milk processing and marketing of animal products (Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, 2004; Saghir *et al.*, 2005a). There are a number of constraints for women in agriculture and the livestock sector, such as lack of inputs and resources (Odoemelam *et al.*, 2014).

Information on the participation of women in various livestock practices is very limited in the Eastern Cape Province. Therefore, the present study was conducted with the objective of investigating women's contribution to small-scale livestock production systems in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape Province.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in five communities of the Eastern Cape Province, which fall under Amathole and Chris Hani district municipalities. Purposive sampling technique was used to select five communities namely, Dudumashe, Ntibane, Tora, Sinqumeni and Wartburg. Forty women participated in the survey through the assistance of extension officers and community elders, based on their involvement livestock management. Interview schedules were used to collect data on women socio-economic characteristics, livestock ownership, sources of foundation stock, job status, sources of family income; and women participation in livestock management activities. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics involving frequency, mean and percentage.

Results and Discussion

Women socio-economic characteristics

The age of women involved in livestock farming in the study area is summarized in Table 1 and ranged from 24-72. The mean age of the respondents was 55.72 years. The respondents were placed in five age categories, with 42.5% women farmers age older than 60 years, 27.5% in 51-60 age group, 30% in 41-50 age group, 5% in 31-40 and 5% in 21-30 age group. The reason for the majority being in the older age group may be due to their farming experience and ownership of livestock. The study shows that the majority of women in livestock production (>70%) had between 7-15 years of experience and belong to age category older than 45 years. The middle (36-45 years) and young (<35 years) groups belonging to age categories of between 21-45 years had less than seven years livestock production experience. This implies that the young and middle age group migrate to urban areas to seek better opportunities and do not consider farming as a potential business while some are involved in other farming enterprises (crop farming) and non-agricultural activities. The finding is in line with the findings of Arshad *et al.* (2010) who reported that a higher proportion of farming women were old. The result of this study is in contrast with findings of Devaki *et al.* (2015) who reported that most women farmers involved in livestock enterprise belong to the young age group (16-29 years) and Ayoade *et al.* (2009) who observed that most farming women were middle aged (30-49 years).

Table 1 Socio-economic characteristics of women in the study area

Factors	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	21-30	2	5
	31-40	2	5
	41-50	8	20
	51-60	11	27.5
	>60	17	42.5
Marital status	Single (never get married)	10	25
	Married	24	60
	Divorced	4	10
	Widowed	2	5
Household size	≤ 5	32	80
	6-10	5	12.5
	≥ 11	3	7.5
Job Status	Employed	2	5
	Not employed	38	95

In the study area, it was observed that, more than 50% of women are involved in livestock production activities were married, followed by singles (25%), divorced (10%) and widowed (5%). The findings agree with that of Fabiyi *et al.* (2007) and Ayoade *et al.* (2009) that majority of women involved in livestock production were married.

More than 75% of farming women had a smaller family size of ≤ 5 while the remaining 20% had more than five members. The mean family size was 4.4 members per household. This is higher than the provincial and national average family size of 3.9 and 3.6 respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2011). However, the results are similar to that reported by FAO (2010) where the average family size in Vietnam was between 4.0 and 5.2. These findings are in line with the findings of Yadav & Grover (2012) who concluded that farm women labour belong to particular type of families (≤ 5). Contrary with our findings, Adamu *et al.* (2013) reported that household size in Africa is about seven persons, which suggests that women in rural areas have relatively large families.

The results on education level revealed that the majority of respondents (45%) had primary education, 32.5% were illiterate, 17.5% had junior high school and 5% had tertiary education (Figure 1). It means that the majority of women can read and write. The findings from this study are in contrast with UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015) that in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa women cannot read and write and also contradicting with the surveys of Deribe (2007), Iftikhar *et al.* (2009) and Girei *et al.* (2013) where there was high illiteracy rate among women farmers. This can be used as an opportunity to improve communication in agriculture, easily adopt new technology and keep simple records, which are important in decision-making.

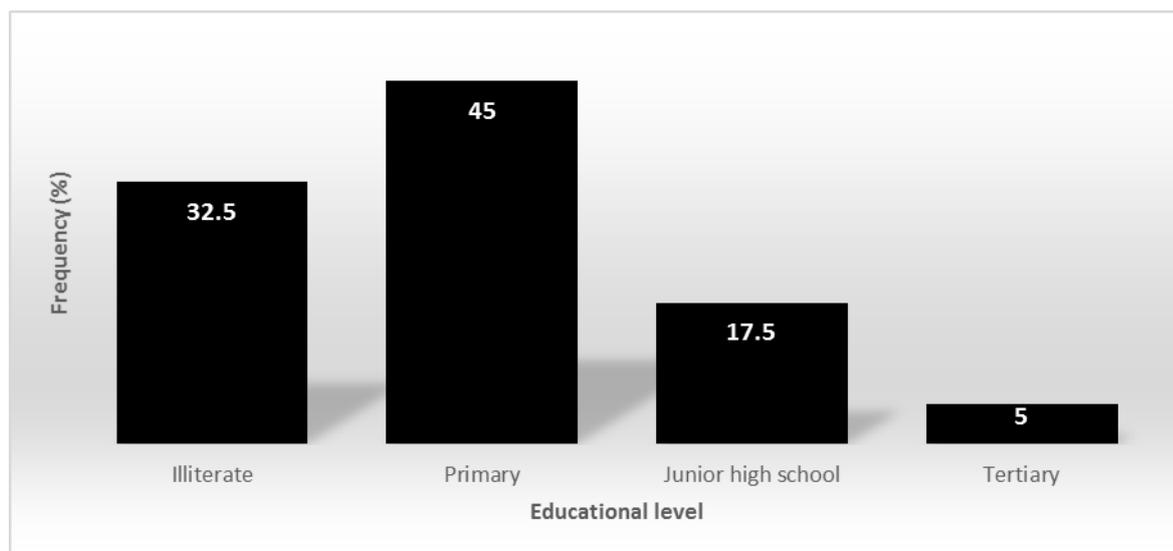


Figure 1 The educational levels of the respondents in the study area

It was observed that women in the study areas had other source of income including employment (5%), pensions (21%), social grants (32.5%), crop sales during cropping season (17%), wool sales during shearing season (15%); as well as support from family members (9.5%) as presented in Figure 2. Such findings also been reported by Ighodaro *et al.* (2013) in the Eastern Cape where social grant was the major source of income.

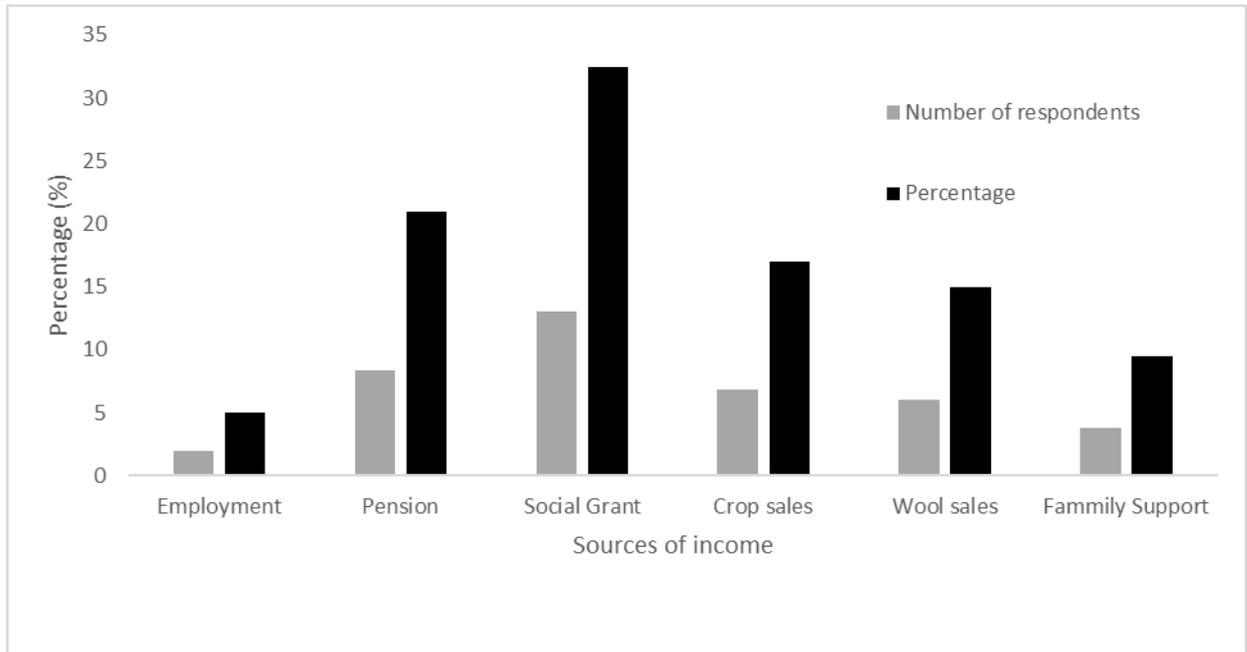


Figure 2 Additional sources of income of respondents

Livestock

Majority of women in the study area own poultry (30%), followed by sheep (18%), goats (14.5%), cattle (10%), donkeys (5%) and other livestock species contributed 5% (Figure 3). Figure 4 show that the gender differences in more pronounced in the ownership of large animals than in that of monogastric animals (poultry and piggery).

The findings are similar with findings of Okitoi *et al.* (2007) who reported that majority (63%) of chicken in Kenya were owned by women, while in Gambia, Jaitner *et al.* (2001) reported that women owned more than 50% of goats. Contrary with our findings, Chawatama *et al.* (2005) reported that women own more than 6.1, 5.2 and 4.5 head of cattle in Chikomba, Kadoma and Matobo districts. A high proportion of women who own cattle was reported in Botswana (Oladele and Monkhei, 2008). In general, households in this study were small-scale farmers and mixed livestock farming was practiced by a majority of households.

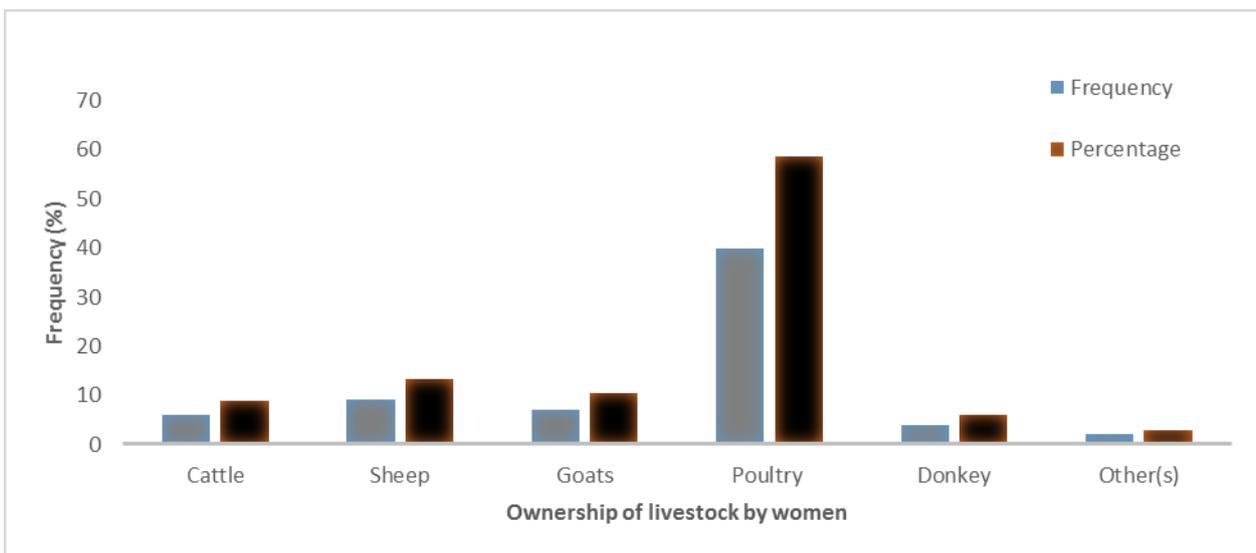


Figure 3 Number of different livestock species owned by women in the study area

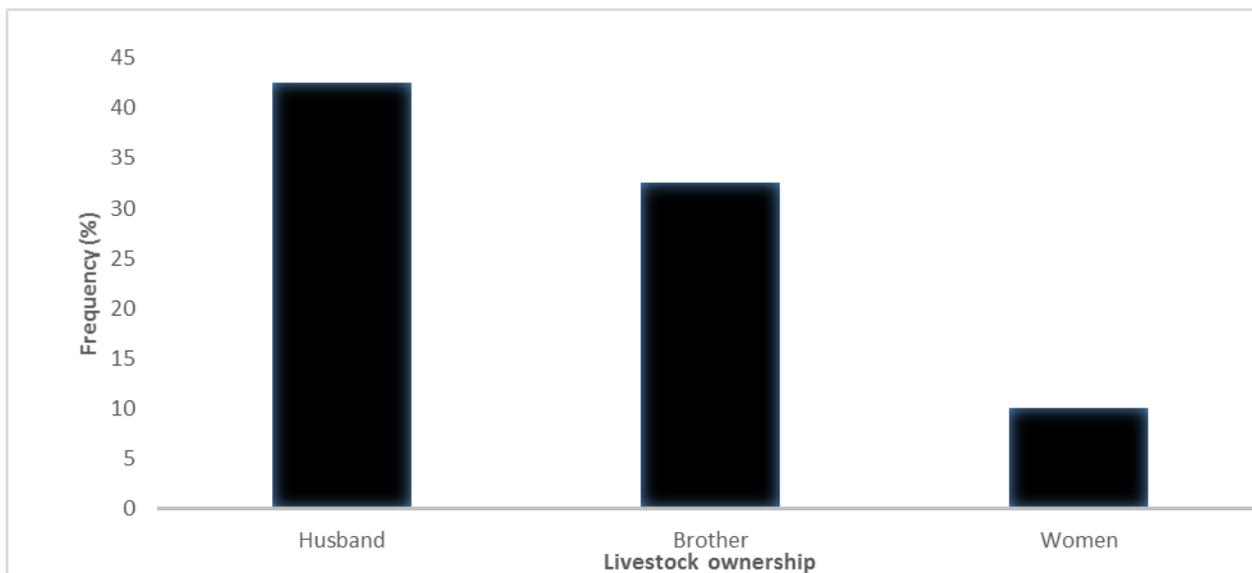


Figure 4 Livestock ownership by gender

In the study area, the major (62.5%) source of foundation livestock for women was through inheritance, while the remaining 22% and 15% were from bride price (lobola) and purchase, respectively (Figure 5). In contrast to our findings, Njuki and Sanginga (2013) reported that in Kenya and Tanzania the majority of women acquire the foundation stock through purchases.

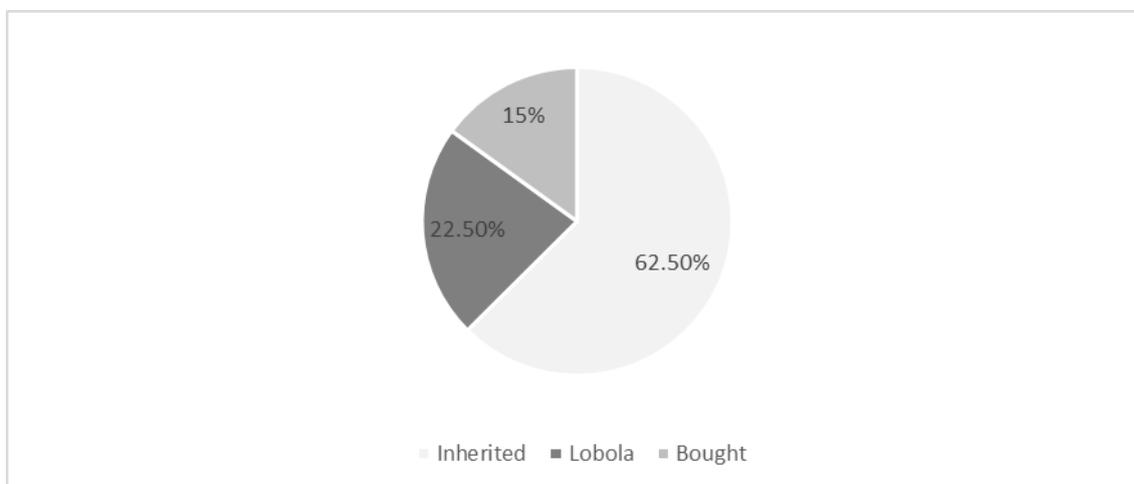


Figure 5 Sources of foundation stock of the respondents

Women participation in livestock management activities

Table 2 revealed that rural women were involved in taking animals to grazing (10.9%), feeding (36.4%), purchasing feed from co-operatives (21.7%) and watering of animals (31%). Similar findings were observed by Arshad *et al.* (2013) that 0.8%, 75.8% and 77.5% were involved in taking animals to grazing, feeding and provide water to the animals in Tehsil Jhang. In studies conducted by Toppo *et al.*, 2004 and Kathiriya *et al.*, 2013, they reported that women were also involved in feed purchasing (27.1%) and taking animals to grazing (10.9%).

The study revealed that women performed activities like cleaning of shelters (66.7%), milking of animals (25.6%), and cleaning of feeding troughs. Javed *et al.*, (2006) and Kathiriya *et al.*, (2013) reported that the majority of women in Faisalabad-Pakistan and Rajkot district were involved in the cleaning of shelters for dairy cattle. Contrary to our findings, Tegegne (2012) and Menhas *et al.* (2014) reported that the

majority of women (>50%) were involved in milking of animals in Halaba Special Woreda in Ethiopia and District Jhang respectively. It was observed that women in some areas perform other activities like cleaning of feeding troughs (7.7%) for cattle and this was found to be the least among all the activities performed in relation to livestock management practices.

Table 2 Women participation in livestock farming activities

Activities	Women participation in livestock farming activities					
	Cattle Freq.	Sheep Freq.	Goats Freq.	Poultry Freq.	Total Freq.	%
Feeding & Watering						
Taking animals for grazing	3	10	7	-	20	10.9
Feeding the animals	6	18	3	40	67	36.4
Purchasing feeds	1	7	-	32	40	21.7
Watering animals	5	15	2	35	57	31.0
Management						
Cleaning of shelters	-	-	-	26	26	66.7
Cleaning of feeding troughs	3	-	-	-	3	7.7
Milking	10	-	-	-	10	25.6
Health Care						
Care for sick animals	10	21	16	32	79	80.6
Purchasing of medicines	2	4	2	11	19	19.4
Marketing						
Sales of products (wool)	-	2	-	12	14	51.9
Sales of live animals	-	3	-	10	13	48.1

Freq. = Frequency; % = Percentage

Rural women participation in caring for sick animals was found to be the highest among all the activities performed by women in the study area. The study revealed that 80.6% of rural women were actively involved in taking care of sick animals. Similar findings were reported by Adams and Ohene-Yankyera (2014) that women were taking care of small ruminants in Ghana.

The study revealed that 51.9% of women were involved in selling of wool and live animals (40.1%). It was also noticed that women were involved in the procurement of stock remedies for sick animals (19.4%). In contrast with our findings, Kathiriya *et al.* (2013) reported that in Rajkot District in India women participated in procurement of feeds and fodder and sale of milk products.

Conclusion

The results of study show that women played a significant role in all livestock activities like their male counter parts, but that their participation in decision making is low on sales of livestock and that women are playing a leading role in the livestock sector in the study area. More encouragement is required from government to improve participation of women in agriculture in the rural areas.

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