

Role of Women in Livestock Management: An Analysis of Charkhi Dadri (Haryana)

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ABSTRACT

Women form the backbone of livestock management and allied agricultural activities in rural India, yet their contributions often remain undervalued and undocumented. This study investigates the role of women in livestock rearing across the Charkhi Dadri district of Haryana by analysing their participation, decision-making power, and access to resources. Using purposive sampling, eight villages were selected from four community development blocks: Badhra, Jhojhu, Charkhi Dadri, and Bond Kalan. Primary data were collected from 80 women actively engaged in livestock rearing through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews. The findings reveal that women predominantly handle routine tasks such as feeding (53.75%), fodder collection (38.75%), and shed cleaning (80%), while men are more involved in milking (47.5%). Despite their significant labour contribution, only 5% of respondents received formal training, and 15% controlled livestock-related income, highlighting gender disparities in access to resources and decision-making. Heavy workload (90%) and inadequate veterinary services (47.5%) emerged as major challenges. The study highlights the importance of gender-sensitive interventions, including capacity-building programs, credit facilities, and improved institutional support, to empower women and enhance livestock productivity. Recognising and addressing these constraints is crucial for inclusive rural development and improved livelihoods in Haryana.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Livestock Rearing, Gender Roles, Rural Development

INTRODUCTION

India's rural economy is deeply rooted in agriculture and livestock, with women constituting a critical, yet often under-recognised, workforce in these sectors. Haryana is a state with high dairy activity, women significantly contribute to livestock rearing and allied agriculture, yet face gendered constraints in access, decision-making, and recognition (Swaminathan & Vijayamba, 2022; Dudi, Devi, & Kumar, 2025).

Livestock is a foundational pillar of India's rural economy and a vital source of household sustenance. It contributes significantly to agricultural GDP, with estimates indicating that approximately 23% of agricultural value added comes from this sector. In contrast, the livestock sector contributed 28% to agricultural GDP in 2018–19, growing at 7.9%, compared with 2% for crop farming (Swaminathan & Vijayamba, 2022). Women perform the majority of livestock-related tasks, often in addition to household responsibilities (Swaminathan & Vijayamba, 2022); The Role of Rural Indian Women. Despite this, official labour data grossly underestimates women's contribution: surveys suggest around 12 million rural women were involved in livestock, while time-use surveys indicate closer to 48 million, revealing a stark undercount (Swaminathan & Vijayamba, 2022). Women in rural areas spend, on average, 5–8 hours daily on livestock care, including feeding, cleaning, and milking, despite this work being invisible in formal labour statistics (Swaminathan & Vijayamba, 2022). Their work is central to livestock-based livelihoods, especially for landless or marginal households.

Various studies reinforce that women bear the brunt of livestock in Haryana:

- i. In Hisar district, rural women devoted an average of 5.17 out of 6.76 hours per day to animal husbandry. They performed 64% of feeding tasks, 76% of management tasks, 100% of dung disposal, and 89% of milking. Men largely handled non-routine activities or tasks with more mobility.
- ii. Moreover, women's participation in decision-making was limited; only around 20% reported any real say in livestock-related decisions. Their access to external financing, breeding services, and markets was notably constrained. Many did not participate in animal husbandry development programs.
- iii. In Kurukshetra district, while farm women had high knowledge and some adoption of practices related to health, breeding, and milking, their adoption in marketing remained low.

iv. Social and cultural norms limit women's mobility and restrict their involvement in outdoor tasks like fodder cutting and marketing, confining them mostly to indoor work.

These patterns reflect deeply embedded patriarchal structures that assign routine, labour-intensive tasks to women while retaining decision-making and access to resources largely in men's hands.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Study highlights the pivotal yet underrecognized role of rural women in livestock management and allied agricultural activities in Charkhi Dadri district, Haryana. By documenting their contributions, challenges, and limited access to resources, the paper provides empirical evidence to inform gender-sensitive agricultural policies and development programs. Understanding women's participation and constraints helps design targeted interventions, such as training, credit facilities, and institutional support, ultimately enhancing productivity and improving their livelihoods. The study also contributes to the broader discourse on rural development and women's empowerment, emphasising their central role in sustaining livestock-based rural economies.

OBJECTIVES

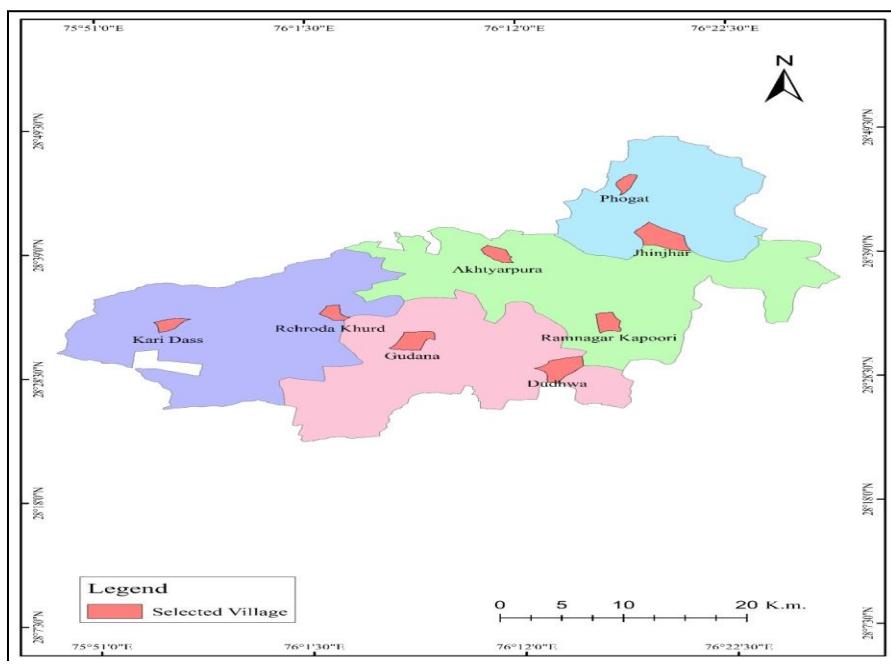
Following were the objectives of the study:

- i. To study Women's Participation in Livestock Management.
- ii. To study Women's perspective regarding access to resources and training

STUDY AREA

Charkhi Dadri district is situated in the southwestern part of Haryana, India, and was established as a separate district in 2016. It comprises four community development blocks: Badhra, Jhunjhu Kalan, Charkhi Dadri, and Bond Kalan. Geographically, the district lies between approximately 28°25'N to 28°50'N latitude and 75°25'E to 76°00'E longitude. It shares boundaries with Bhiwani district to the north and west, Mahendragarh to the south, and Jhajjar to the east. Covering approximately 1,370 square kilometres, the district has a semi-arid climate with hot summers and scant rainfall, making livestock rearing a significant source of livelihood alongside agriculture. The rural economy is dominated by mixed farming systems where cattle, buffaloes, and goats are widely reared. These agro-climatic and socio-economic conditions make Charkhi Dadri an ideal location for studying the role of women in livestock management and allied agricultural activities.

Map 1: Location of the Selected Villages



Source: Prepared by Research Scholar with the help of Arc-GIS

METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a purposive sampling design to investigate the role of women in livestock management and related agricultural activities in the Charkhi Dadri district of Haryana. The district comprises four community development blocks: Badhra, Jhojhu, Charkhi Dadri, and Bond Kalan. From each block, two representative villages were selected to ensure adequate spatial coverage and diversity of socio-economic conditions. The selected villages were Kari Dass and Rehrroda Khurd from Badhra block, Gudana and Dudhwa from Jhojhu block, Akhtyarpura and Ramnagar Kapoori from Charkhi Dadri block, and Phogat and Jhinjhar from Bond Kalan block. Within each village, ten households were chosen based on the criterion that at least one woman member of the household was actively engaged in livestock rearing. Thus, a total of 80 women respondents (10 from each village) constituted the study sample. Primary data were collected directly from these respondents using a well-structured, pre-tested questionnaire that covered demographic details, the nature and extent of their involvement in livestock activities, their decision-making roles, access to resources, and the challenges they faced. The survey was conducted through personal interviews to ensure clarity and accuracy of responses, enabling the collection of reliable, in-depth information on rural women's participation in livestock and allied agricultural activities across the district.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 highlights significant patterns in livestock ownership and management. Among the respondents, buffaloes were the predominant livestock owned, reported by 80 women (80%), followed by cows, owned by 22 women (22%), and goats or sheep, owned by 5 women (5%). Interestingly, no respondents reported owning poultry, indicating that its role in the area's rural economy is negligible. Regarding legal ownership of livestock, only 8 women (8%) had the animals registered in their own names, while 72 women (72%) reported ownership in the name of other family members, reflecting gender disparity in property rights. Regarding the number of livestock owned, the majority (42 respondents or 42%) possessed 1–2 animals, 25 respondents (25%) owned 3–5 animals, while a smaller proportion (7 respondents or 7%) had 6–10 animals, and only 3 respondents (3%) reported owning more than 10 animals, indicating that small-scale livestock rearing dominates.

Table 1: Assessment of Women's Participation

Sr. No.	Women's Participation	Response	No. of Respondents
1	Types of Livestock Owned	Cow	22
		Buffalo	80
		Goat/Sheep	5
		Poultry	0
2	Legally, Ownership of the livestock	Self	8
		Other Family Members	72
3	No. of Livestock Owned	1-2	42
		3-5	25
		6-10	7
		More than 10	3
4	Purpose of livestock keeping	For Household Needs	35
		For Sale of Produce Income	23
		Both	22

Source: Computed by Research Scholar from the data collected during the primary survey

As for the purpose of livestock keeping, 35 women (35%) kept animals primarily for household needs, such as milk consumption. Twenty-three respondents (23%) kept animals to generate income through the sale of produce, while 22 respondents (22%) stated that both purposes were significant. These findings collectively highlight that livestock rearing in Charkhi Dadri is primarily small-scale, focused on household sustenance, and involves limited legal ownership for women and a significant gender gap in economic control.

Table 2 represents the Tasks Performed in Livestock Rearing. Based on the primary survey of 80 respondents, the division of tasks in livestock management reveals clear gendered patterns. In fodder collection, 31 women (38.75%) were primarily responsible, while 16 men (20%) were responsible. Twenty-seven respondents (33.75%) reported that it was done jointly by

both, and 6 (7.5%) relied on hired labour. Feeding and watering of animals showed even higher female involvement, with 43 women (53.75%) engaged, compared to 22 men (27.5%), 9 (11.25%) sharing jointly, and 6 (7.5%) hiring labour. Milking activities reflected a more balanced distribution, with men slightly dominant, 38 men (47.5%) handled milking, 29 women (36.25%) participated, 7 (8.75%) did it jointly, and 6 (7.5%) hired labour. Cleaning of animal sheds remained overwhelmingly a woman's responsibility, with 64 women (80%) performing it, compared to only 8 men (10%). Two respondents (2.5%) reported joint efforts, and 6 (7.5%) used hired help. These figures highlight that while men are more involved in milking, women bear the brunt of most routine and labour-intensive tasks, such as feeding, fodder collection, and shed cleaning.

Table 2: Tasks Performed in Livestock Rearing

Sr. No.	Tasks	Performed by	No. of Respondents
1	Fodder Collection	Women	31
		Men	16
		Both	27
		Hired labour	6
2	Feeding and Watering of Livestock	Women	43
		Men	22
		Both	9
		Hired labour	6
3	Milking	Women	29
		Men	38
		Both	7
		Hired labour	6
4	Cleaning of Sheds	Women	64
		Men	8
		Both	2
		Hired labour	6

Source: Computed by Research Scholar from the data collected during the primary survey

Table 3 highlights significant gaps in women's access to training and control over livestock-related resources. Only 4 respondents (5%) reported receiving any formal training related to livestock or agriculture, while 76 respondents (95%) reported no exposure to formal training programs. Access to key resources also varied: 42 respondents (52.5%) had access to veterinary services, 23 (28.75%) could avail loans or credit facilities, 26 (32.5%) were linked to cooperative dairy societies, 16 (20%) benefited from government subsidies, and 31 (38.75%) were members of women's self-help groups (SHGs). Regarding financial control, 12 women (15%) managed income from livestock products independently, 63 (78.75%) reported that male family members controlled the income, and only 5 (6.25%) indicated that they made joint decisions. Regarding challenges faced in livestock and agriculture, the most pressing issue identified was heavy workload, reported by 72 respondents (90%), followed by lack of veterinary services (38 respondents, 47.5%), lack of access to credit (29 respondents, 36.25%), and lack of fodder (12 respondents, 15%). These results underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve women's access to training, credit, veterinary services, and greater control over income from livestock activities.

Table 3: Women's perspective regarding access to resources and training

Sr. No.	Women's perspective	Response	No. of Respondents
1	Formal training related to livestock or agriculture	Yes	4
		No	76
2	Access to the facilities	Veterinary Services	42
		Loans/Credit Facilities	23
		Cooperative Dairy Society	26
		Government Subsidies	16
		Women SHGs	31
3	Income earned from livestock products controlled by	Women (self)	12
		Male Family Member	63
		Jointly	5
4	Main challenges faced in livestock/agriculture work	Lack of Access to Credit	29
		Lack of Veterinary Services	38
		Lack of Fodder	12
		Heavy Workload	72

Source: Computed by Research Scholar from the data collected during the primary survey

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above analysis following points can be helpful to boost the status of women in the field of livestock management:

- i. **Enhancing access to extension, veterinary, and financial services:** Training tailored for women and delivered near home can improve adoption of better husbandry practices.
- ii. **Promoting credit, inputs, and digital tools:** Haryana has experimented with soft loans and interest subvention for women farmers, though outcomes remain under-evaluated. Digital tools, mobile apps for husbandry advice, and marketplaces can empower women, particularly if paired with literacy and digital training.
- iii. **Strengthening collective structures:** Women's Self-Help Groups, cooperatives, and Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs) can create bargaining power and access to resources.
- iv. **Gender-sensitive policy implementation:** Mainstreaming gender in designing and implementing livestock schemes, like reserving training slots for women, is essential.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that women in Charkhi Dadri play a crucial role in livestock management and allied agricultural activities, contributing significantly to routine tasks such as feeding, shed cleaning, and fodder collection, while facing heavy workloads and limited decision-making power. Their access to training, credit, and institutional support remains inadequate, and income from livestock is largely controlled by male family members. Addressing these gaps through gender-sensitive policies, capacity-building programs, and improved access to resources is essential. Empowering rural women in livestock management can enhance household income, improve livestock productivity, and foster inclusive rural development in Haryana.

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