***Original Research Article***

# QUANTIFICATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF RURAL WOMEN IN SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT


## ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, rural women contribute in social development and they are good partners to economic development too. Rural women spend much of their time for addressing various rural socioeconomic issues. However, their contribution to the socioeconomic development by spending time in various ways has not been quantified yet. The study aimed to quantify the extent of contribution of rural women in socioeconomic development. The study was conducted at two villages named Sachibunia and Islamnagar of Batiaghata upazila under Khulna District of Bangladesh. Data were collected from purposively selected 120 respondents using a structured interview schedule. The selected characteristics of the respondents were age, educational qualification, family size, farm size, annual family income, organizational participation, extension media contact, training exposure, poverty status, number of performed daily activities, time spent in performed daily activities, involvement in income generating activities, role in decision making and problems faced by respondent for participating in income generating activities. The extent of contribution to socioeconomic development was the dependent variable. Spearman's rank order correlation co-efficient (ρ) was computed to ascertain the relationships between the selected characteristics and dependent variable. Rural women's performed different daily activities and spent time for those activities were converted into money. Through this way, the obtained quantified contribution to family income of the unemployed respondent was 26% and of employed respondent was 50%. Quantified contribution to family income by educated paid respondent was 48% and by highly educated paid respondent was 60%. Quantified contribution to family income by low educated unpaid respondent was 29% and by highly educated unpaid respondent was 23%. The average quantified contribution to family income made by rural women was 53.32% which had been ultimately used for better standards of living. Negative significant relationship was found between the faced problems and their contributions in socioeconomic development. Family is the smallest constituting unit of the society and the country as well. Thus, it could be concluded that the contribution made by women in socioeconomic development is more than its men counterpart at rural level. It might be recommended that, adequate support should be provided to rural women to nurture this contribution by ensuring due acknowledgement and honor for them.



*Key words: Contribution, Rural women, Income generating activity, Participation, Socioeconomic development.*


## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, women is about half of the total population [1] and have an important role in economic activities [2] which leads to the entire social development of the country. This scenario is same for urban and rural areas. Therefore, in order to achieve rural development, an attention to women that involves economic and other development activities with men is required. Rural women contribute in socioeconomic development as they are involved in different forms of economic activities for their families. Such economic activities include agriculture, trade, gardening, social forestry, food processing, hairdressing, weaving and so on. To explain the important roles played by women, the world conference on the "United Nations Decades for Women" stated that two-third of the total daily life works done by

women, especially by the rural women who live in rural communities with poor social amenities [3]. However, still the worth of the economic activities of rural women in the area of sustainable development is not well recognized.

Bangladesh is basically an agricultural country. Agriculture contributes about 14.74% to country's total GDP [4]. Sustainability in agricultural systems center on the need to develop technologies and practices, which do not have adverse effects on environmental goods and services, which are accessible to and effective for farmers, and which lead to improvements in food productivity. Rural women are inherently involved in this sustainable form of agricultural production from the time immemorial [5]. As half of the total population, women's participation and their role in economic structures is an indicator of the modernization of the national economy and economic development [6]. Development strategies should be based on a more active participation of rural women in economic activities. Providing the fact that women make the half of the population in rural communities is considered the vital manufacturers of food and income for rural households which are the important aspects of agricultural production as well as socioeconomic development all over the world. Women in our rural area greatly contribute through their household and agricultural work but their work has hardly been recognized. The women in rural areas of Bangladesh usually start their works before dawn and continue working till dusk, sometimes even late at night. They execute all household works, take care of the children and aged family members, shares homestead-centered agricultural operations (e.g., postharvest activities, homestead gardening, cattle rearing, etc.) with their husbands and so on. They do not care for any monetary return or formal recognition. As a consequence valuation of their works has not been done, even simple appreciation has not been made. However, now it is time for recognition of their immense contribution to every aspects of family life which in the long run profoundly contribute to socioeconomic development of the country. The present socioeconomic characteristics of the rural women also deserve to be described. Considering these facts the researchers persuaded to conduct the present research with the following specific objectives**.**

i. To diagnose and describe the personal socioeconomic characteristics of the rural women.
ii. To quantify the contribution of rural women in socioeconomic development.
iii. To explore the relationships between selected characteristics of rural women with their contribution in socioeconomic development.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was a descriptive and diagnostic survey research, keeping the vision of ascertaining the relationships between selected characteristics of rural women with their contribution in socioeconomic development. The study was designed to describe the contribution of rural women in socioeconomic development through quantification process by converting time into money. Data were collected by conducting a face-to-face interview with respondents using a structured interview schedule containing quantitative and qualitative questions of both open and close types. The study was conducted in two villages namely Sachibunia and Islamnagar under Batiaghata upazila of Khulna district in Bangladesh. A list of women performing different productive activities related to socioeconomic development were collected with the help of field level officers (Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) and the concerned Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs)) of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE). The total number of women were considered as the population of the study and among them sample were selected purposively. Irrespective of size of population of the selected two villages, the researcher selected 120 women taking 60 from each of the villages. In order to collect relevant

information from respondents, an interview schedule was carefully prepared focusing the objectives of the study. The interview schedule differed from questionnaire as the enumerating researcher directly visited the respondent and wrote the furnished responses and opinions of both quantitative and qualitative types by himself. Both open and close form as well as simple and direct questions were included in the interview schedule. The questions were systematically arranged to help the respondents to understand the consequence easily. Appropriate scales were used for collecting information required for measuring the selected characteristics. Before finalization, the interview schedule was pre-tested with 10 women of the study area who were excluded from the sample. On the basis of the pre-test experiences, corrections, modifications and alterations were made before finalizing the interview schedule for final data collection. During modification of the schedule, valuable suggestions were received from the relevant experts. Data were collected from the respondents during January to February, 2019. During this time the researcher had to made several visits for collecting valid and reliable data from the respondents. After completion of the data collection, collected data were summarized and inspected thoroughly. A master sheet was prepared to tabulate the data by transferring all the individual variables in order to meet the objectives of the study. During data processing, appropriate scoring technique was followed to convert the data into quantitative form in case of qualitative data. Local units of measurements were converted into standard units. In case of some variables, proper indices and scales were made through the simple accumulation of score assigned to individual attributes. All personal characteristics were categorized and arranged in simple tables for interpretation and discussion. (independent variables) of the respondents were age, educational qualification, family size, farm size, annual family income, organizational participation, extension media contact, training exposure, poverty status, number of performed daily activities, time spent in performed daily activities, involvement in income generating activities, role in decision making and problems faced by respondent for participating in income generating activities. The extent of contribution to socioeconomic development was the dependent variable.

Contribution in terms of money (time spent for performing different daily activities converted into money) constituted dependent variable of the study. Time spent for performing different daily activities was converted into money by using formula. For example, a woman performing different types of daily activities was asked how many hours per day she had spent for those activities. Suppose, she had spent 8 hours. A standard working day = 8 hours, and 8 hours working a day equivalent to 500 BDT (general monetary payment for a worker). For 8 hours per day, earning money = 500 BDT. Women usually perform different types of activities every day without any weekly leave. Thus, monthly earning = (500×30) BDT= 15,000 BDT. Similarly, yearly earning = (500×365) BDT = 1,82,500 BDT. This conversion was established through experts' discussion held in Agrotechnology Discipline of Khulna University, Bangladesh.

Contribution to family income (%) by respondent was quantified by using the following formula:

$$\text{Quantified contribution to family income by respondent (\%)} = \frac{\text{Annual income by respondent}}{\text{Total annual family income}} \times 100$$

Role in decision making regarding different family affairs by women was also measured. Decision score (DS) and Decision Index (DI) were calculated by using the following formulae:

DS = $(N_1 \times 0) + (N_2 \times 1) + (N_3 \times 2) + (N_4 \times 3)$

Where,

DS = Decision Score

$N_1$= No. of respondents played no role

$N_2$= No. of respondents played rare role

$N_3$= No. of respondents played passive role

$N_4$= No. of respondents played active role

$$\text{Decison Index} = \frac{\text{Observed decision score}}{\text{Possible highest decision score}} \times 100$$

Following the above mentioned similar way, the Problem Score (PS) and Problem Index (PI) was calculated.

Various statistical measures such as number, mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and percentage were used in describing the independent and dependent variables of the study. For clarity of understanding, tables were used to present the data. Spearman's rank order correlation co-efficient (ρ) (a nonparametric measure of the strength and direction of association that exists between two variables measured on at least on an ordinal type data) was computed for exploring the relationships between the selected characteristics of the respondents and their contribution in socioeconomic development. Data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Selected characteristics of the rural women

The results of selected characteristics have been shown in Table 1. It is observed in this Table that, middle aged women (44.2%) were highly involved in socioeconomic development followed by young aged (40%) and old aged (15.8%) women. About half (46.7%) of the respondents had secondary level of education followed by primary level (30.8%), and illiterate (11.7%). 3.3% of the respondents had above higher secondary level of education. Half (50.8%) of the respondents had medium sized family followed by small sized family (35.8%) and large sized family (13.3%). About half (45.8%) of the respondents had small sized farm and only 3.3% had large sized farm. However, 7.5% of the respondents had medium sized farm and 30.8% of the respondents had marginal sized farm and only 12.5% of the respondents were landless. Highest proportion (45.8%) of the respondents had medium family income followed by low income (31.7%) extremely low income (11.7%), and high income (10.8%). 58.3% of the respondents had medium participation, 30% had low participation and 3.3%high participation in any social organization. Very few (8.3%) of the respondents had no participation in any social organization. Half of the rural women (49.2%) had low extension contact followed by medium extension contact (47.5%). There were so small amount of women (3.3%) who had higher extension contact. Most of the respondents (85.8%) had attended low number of training followed by no training (8.3%). 4.2% of the respondents had attended medium number of training opportunity followed by high number of training (1.7%). Most (81.7%) of the respondents had low status in terms of poverty profile. About half (52.5%) of the respondents were involved in medium number of daily activities followed by high number of daily activities (41.75), and 5.8% were involved in low number of daily activities. About four-fifth (78.3%) of the respondents spent moderate time in performing different types of daily activities whereas one-fifth (20%) of the respondents spent long time. 43.8% of the respondents were involved in moderate number of days per month for performing different types of income generating activities whereas 29.8% were involved in short number of days and 25.6% were involved long number of days. About half of women (47.5%) had medium role in decision making for different activities whereas 45.8% had low role and only 6.7% of had high role in decision making for different activities. More than half of the respondents (54.2%) faced low problem in

taking part in income generating activities compared to high problem (27.5%) and medium problem (18.3%). (Table 1)

**Table 1. Distribution of rural women according to their selected characteristics (N= 120)**

1,20,000●14●11.7●2,49,475●821511.21●1,12,000●3,90,00000●●●Low

●1,20,001-2,40,000●38●31.7●●●●●●●●Medium High ●2,40,001-3,60

Table 1. Cont

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Parameter● Category● Score● Respondents(N=120

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●●Poverty status (Score)●No●0●9●7.5●6.19●4.91●00●25●●●L

ow • 1-10 • 98 • 81.7 • • • • • • Medium • 11-20 • 9 • 7.5 • • • • • • High • 21-3

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Number of performed daily activity • Lo

w • < 4 • 7 • 5 . 8 • 6 . 6 7 • 1 . 9 3 • 3 • 1 0 • • • Medium • 4 - 7 • 6 3 • 5 2 . 5 • •

- High
- >7
- 50
- 41.7
- Time spent in performe

daily activities (Hours per day) ● Short ● < 6

•2•1.7•7.25•1.31•5•11•••Moderate•6-8•94•78.3••••

- Long time
- > 8
- 24
- 20
- Involved in income-

earning activity (Days per month)
● Short
● < 15
● 36
● 29

.8
•
17.67•4.24•12•30•••Moderate•15-20•53•43.8••

● SD = Standard de

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