

The Factors Affecting Women's Empowerment and Participation in Floriculture Farming in Madurai District

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Abstract: The study aims to examine the factors that influence women's empowerment in floriculture growing in the Madurai region. Floriculture growing is an important aspect of agriculture that provides employment and contributes to the socio-economic development of women in the region. The objectives of this study are to examine the socioeconomic characteristics of female floriculture farmers, assess the economic empowerment of women through floriculture farming, and outline the managerial and legislative measures to support women's empowerment in floriculture businesses. A systematic approach was used to collect primary data through a questionnaire among 230 female respondents in the floriculture industry. Percentage analysis was used to outline the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. The empowerment outcomes, financial independence, participation in decision-making, and social recognition were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The Garrett ranking approach was employed for finding out the major obstacles faced by female farmers. The findings of the study revealed that floriculture cultivation is having a good impact on women empowerment, even though climate conditions, price volatility, and financial limitations are major obstacles.

Keywords: women empowerment, floriculture farming, Rural women entrepreneurship, economic empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

People living in rural areas of India, agriculture is one of the major sources of earning money and gaining employment. Due to the increasing demand for flowers for consumption, religious practices, and for export, floriculture has become one of the major aspects of horticulture in recent times. Being small landholders, farmers have an opportunity to earn money through floriculture cultivation, as they possess less land for cultivation. Due to favourable climatic conditions and availability of labour, floriculture cultivation has become one of the major sources of livelihood for people living in Tamil nadu, especially in districts like Madurai.

Women have played a critical role in the agricultural workforce. They have made a great contribution to different aspects of farming. Despite this, Women have not receiving the recognition they deserve. In addition to this, women In revenue, In addition to this, women have been facing various challenges in accessing resources ,funding, technology and market intelligence. One of the of empowering women in revenue – generating activities is through floriculture gardening. Women can make a great contribution to the family in decision –making processes, earning money for the family in decision –making process , earning money for the family , and improving their economic status by engaging in floriculture gardening. In this regard rural women can build their leadership ,self-esteem and recognition

However, despite the increasing possibilities in floriculture farming, women farmers who are involved in floriculture cultivation encounter various challenges that affect the sustainability and development of their floriculture farming enterprises. Women who are involved in floriculture cultivation encounter challenges such as a lack of funding, price fluctuations in flower markets, a lack of technical knowledge, and weather patterns. The challenges need to be addressed

using effective management techniques, support from institutions, and appropriate legislative policies that encourage women to be involved in floriculture cultivation and support their entrepreneurial development.

With this in view, the present study has chosen women from Madurai district who are involved in floriculture farming activities. The socioeconomic profile of women floriculture farmers, the influence of floriculture farming activities on women's economic empowerment, and the managerial and policy strategies to improve women's empowerment through floriculture farming activities are the objectives of this study. It is expected that the findings of this study would provide valuable information to policymakers and organizations in promoting sustainable floriculture practices and improving the socioeconomic status of rural women in the future.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Floriculture has emerged to be a vital livelihood activity, especially in rural areas, and has demonstrated considerable promise in the empowerment of women. Various studies have been conducted to evaluate the role of floriculture

And horticulture enterprises in the socio-economic development of women farmers. For example, a study on women entrepreneurs in floriculture in the niakottai block of the dindigul district found that floriculture enterprises act as alternative sources of income for women in rural areas, which in turn ensures the stability of the household economy. This study also noted that finance plays an important role in the sustainability of women floriculture enterprises.

Similarly, research carried out on floriculture as a tool for women empowerment showed that rural women can use flower cultivation for improving their levels of income and social participation. The research findings showed that rural women can use floriculture for improving financial independence and decision-making abilities. Another research carried out on floriculture and livelihood development showed that flower cultivation provides rural women with job opportunities and improves their socio-economic conditions.

Research undertaken concerning horticulture enterprises has also proved that women's participation in these activities improves their managerial skills and enhances their participation in family decision-making. Likewise, research undertaken concerning female floriculture entrepreneurs in Dishing Kannada district indicated that women who practice flower cultivation mostly have intermediate educational backgrounds and face issues such as few funds and market uncertainty.

Moreover, studies conducted on the employment prospects in flower production have shown that floriculture farming improves the employment prospects of rural women. In addition, studies conducted on rural women involved in floriculture have shown that the self-esteem, social class, and economic independence of rural women are all enhanced.

Furthermore, studies on microcredit and women's empowerment in Madurai district have found that the economic development of women, as well as their entrepreneurial activities, is greatly influenced by financial resource allocation. Value-added activities like flower processing and marketing, undertaken in floriculture, have also been found to be significant activities in improving the earnings and employment potential of women.

Overall, studies have found that floriculture businesses are effective in promoting the social and economic empowerment of women. However, there are several studies that have found the existence of challenges like institutional support, price volatility, and financial constraints. Thus, further research is needed to understand the factors affecting the empowerment of women in floriculture cultivation, especially in regions like Madurai district.

Research Gap

Previous studies have examined the role of floriculture in enhancing rural women's income and potential for gainful employment. However, most of these studies have mainly focused on issues of general empowerment and employment generation. The factors affecting women's participation and empowerment outcomes of floriculture cultivation have not yet been examined in detail. The present study therefore aims to investigate these factors among women engaged in flower cultivation in the Madurai district.

Objective

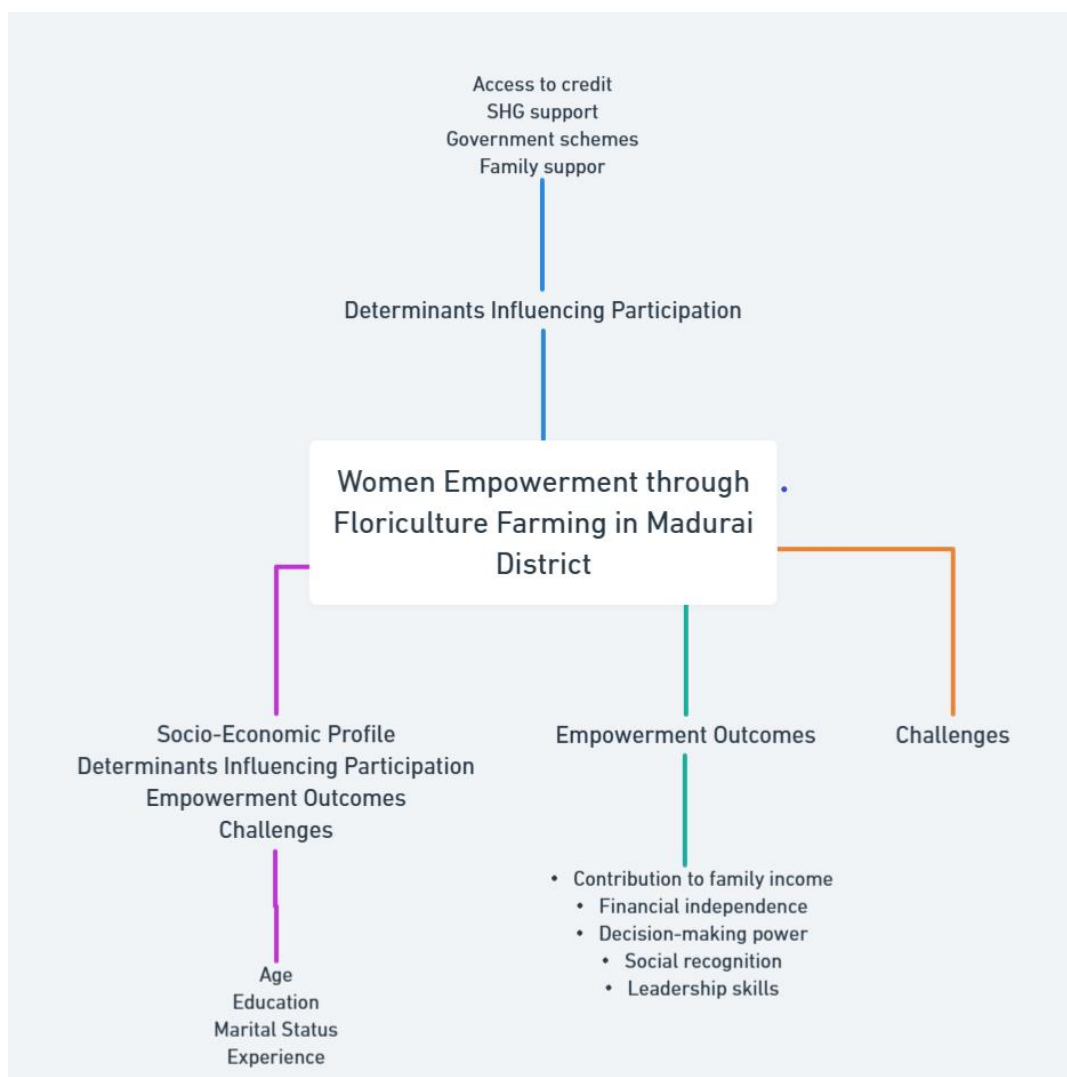
1. To study the socioeconomic status of women involved in flower cultivation in the Madurai district.
2. To assess the role of floriculture farming on women's economic independence and savings.
3. To suggest management and legal interventions that could be undertaken for women's empowerment in floriculture farming.

The study's theoretical framework

The concept of women's empowerment and improvement in livelihoods through agricultural entrepreneurship is the basis of the study's theoretical framework. The improvement in the economic and social status of women is termed women's empowerment. The economic and social status of women in the rural area improves with their engagement in profitable activities such as floriculture cultivation.

The empowerment concept, which emphasizes the capacity of individuals to improve their social and economic situations through access to opportunities and resources and institutional support, provides credence to this study. Within this framework of agriculture, floriculture farming provides women with the opportunity to engage in productive activities and support their families and improve their managerial and leadership skills.

Further, the sustainable livelihood approach emphasizes the importance of income-generating activities in improving the general living standards of people in rural areas. Additionally, income-generating activities such as floriculture farming provide women farmers with economic independence and social status. Consequently, this framework provides insight into how involvement in floriculture farming improves women's social and economic status in the study region.



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In order to examine the factors that affect the involvement and empowerment outcomes of women who are involved in floriculture farming in the Madurai area, the current study has used a descriptive research approach. The descriptive research methodology helps to understand the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and assesses the impact of floriculture on women empowerment. Sample size

The study is based on 230 female respondents who are actively involved in floriculture growing in the Madurai area. The women involved in flower gardening and other activities in the study region are represented by the selected respondents.

Method of Data Collection

The primary data collection tool used in this study was a standardized questionnaire. The main objective of the questionnaire was to collect information on factors that affect female floriculture growers in terms of their socioeconomic characteristics, factors that affect their participation, the outcomes of their empowerment, and the challenges they face.

Instruments for Analysis

The following statistical measures were used for analysing the collected data:

1. Percentage analysis is used for describing the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents.
2. In order to analyse empowerment indicators such as financial independence and participation in decision-making, use mean and standard deviation.
3. Garrett ranking is employed for determining and ranking the major impediments faced by female floriculture farmers.

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Table 1.1 Primary data- source

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20–30 years	72	31.3
	31–40 years	95	41.3
	41–50 years	63	27.4
Education	Primary	58	25.2
	Secondary	94	40.9
	Higher Secondary	48	20.9
	Degree	30	13.0
Experience in Floriculture	Below 5 years	70	30.4
Marital Status	5–10 years	96	41.7
	Above 10 years	64	27.9
	Married	160	69.6
	Unmarried	40	17.4
	Widowed	30	13.0

Interpretation

The largest number of respondents, especially those aged 31-40, fall under the middle age group, based on the percentage analysis of the socioeconomic profile of women engaged in floriculture farming in the Madurai district. This reveals that women in the prime age of productivity are participating in floriculture activities. Fewer respondents have higher education qualifications, while most have only attained secondary education. This reveals that floriculture farming is practiced by women at a moderate educational level. Based on the data, it is evident that a significant number of respondents had five to

ten years of experience in floriculture cultivation, revealing that they have acquired valuable knowledge and skills in floriculture farming. Additionally, the fact that the majority of the respondents are married indicates that the business of growing flowers offers a reliable source of income for the people living in the rural areas. Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of the floriculture farmers operating within the study area are middle-aged women with a moderate level of education and knowledge.

2. To analyse the impact of floriculture farming on the economic empowerment of women in terms of savings and financial independence.

Table 1.2

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
My contribution to family income has increased (Q20)	230	3.32	0.759
I am financially independent (Q21)	230	2.81	0.781
I manage my own bank account (Q22)	230	2.85	0.750
I actively participate in household decision-making (Q23)	230	2.85	0.856
I participate in community meetings (Q24)	230	2.78	0.849
I feel socially recognised in my village (Q25)	230	2.93	0.724
I feel confident managing my floriculture business (Q26)	230	2.70	0.711
I have developed leadership skills (Q27)	230	2.82	0.866

Primary data-source

Interpretation

In addition, the mean and standard deviation analysis was used to assess the empowerment effects of the floriculture activities on the participating women. From the results, it was evident that the statement on “My contribution to family income has increased” had the highest mean value of 3.32, thus showing the effects of floriculture activities on the economic empowerment of the participating women. Other variables, such as financial independence, management of bank accounts, and involvement in household decision-making, had relatively moderate values, thus showing the effects of floriculture activities on the empowerment of participating women. However, the relatively low values of the standard deviation show consistency in the opinions of the respondents. Participation in community meetings, recognition, and leadership development show the effects of floriculture activities on the empowerment of participating women. From the results, floriculture activities play a significant role in enhancing the empowerment of participating women.

3. To suggest suitable managerial and policy measures to strengthen women empowerment through floriculture enterprises

Table: 1.3 Garrett Ranking of Problems Faced by Women Floriculture Farmers

Problems	Garrett Score	Rank
Lack of financial support limits my growth	78	1
Price fluctuation affects my income	72	2
Climate conditions affect flower production	65	3

Primary data – source

Interpretation

Garrett ranking technique was used to determine the major problems that women face in floriculture farming. From the results obtained in this study, it can be deduced that **lack of financial support limits my growth ranked first with a Garrett score of 78, indicating that the major problem facing women in floriculture farming is the lack of financial support . Price fluctuation affecting income ranked second with a Garrett score of 72, indicating that the major problem facing women in floriculture farming is the fluctuating prices that affect their 65 indicating that environmental conditions have an impact on floriculture farming.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that women in floriculture farming face financial constraints, markets instability, as well as environmental conditions. In order to empower women in floriculture farming, appropriate managerial strategies as well as government policies need to be put in place to support women in floriculture farming.

Hypothesis

H₀₁	There is no significant association between the socio-economic characteristics of women and their participation in floriculture farming.	Rejected
H₁₁	There is a significant association between the socio-economic characteristics of women and their participation in floriculture farming.	Accepted
H₀₂	Floriculture farming has no significant impact on the economic empowerment of women.	Rejected
H₁₂	Floriculture farming has a significant impact on the economic empowerment of women.	Accepted
H₀₃	There is no significant relationship between institutional or managerial support and the empowerment of women engaged in floriculture enterprises.	Rejected
H₁₃	There is a significant relationship between institutional or managerial support and the empowerment of women engaged in floriculture enterprises.	Accepted

From the hypothesis testing results, it is evident that socio-economic characteristics play a significant role in determining women's participation in floriculture farming. Additionally, it is evident from the analysis that floriculture farming is economically empowering for women, as it improves financial independence and decision-making abilities. Lastly, it is evident from the findings that institutional and policy support play a crucial role in improving women empowerment through floriculture enterprises.

Study Limitations

When interpreting the results, it is essential to consider the limitations of the current research. Firstly, the findings might not represent the realities of female floriculture farmers in other regions since the research was based on female floriculture farmers in the Madurai district. Secondly, the research was based on primary data collection through structured questionnaires, which are based on opinions. Thirdly, although the research was based on 230 respondents, providing insightful information, the number might not be adequate to represent the realities of all female floriculture farmers. Fourthly, other factors, like psychological empowerment, might not have been sufficiently researched, with the research focusing on economic and social empowerment.

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of floriculture gardening, which provides women with economic empowerment in the Madurai district. The study has shown that women who engage in floriculture farming can enhance their engagement in home financial activities, sharpen their decision-making skills, and become popular in their communities. However, the sustainability of floriculture farming is affected by various factors, such as the absence of funds, market price fluctuations, and climate change concerns. The empowerment of women can be greatly enhanced by addressing the challenges using effective financial support, institutional support, and capacity-building programs. Based on all the above, floriculture cultivation has the potential to be a major means of improving the social status and economic independence of women in the rural area.

Recommendations to Lawmakers

The financial aid programs that support female floriculture farmers should be strengthened by lawmakers, particularly in terms of easy loans and subsidies. In order to raise awareness among women about the latest developments in floriculture, the government and other organizations should introduce training programs. Better market facilities and pricing can also help women floriculture farmers avoid income insecurity due to unstable pricing structures. In addition, cooperative marketing and self-help groups can help women access markets and improve their bargaining power.

Recommendations for Researchers

To conduct a comparative study of geographical variations in terms of women's participation in the cultivation of floriculture, it is recommended that the study be expanded by including many districts or states. Further, researchers could also explore different variables such as access of women farmers to digital markets, climate resilience, and technology adoption. To gain insight into the long-term empowering impacts of floriculture enterprises, longitudinal studies could be undertaken. To gain insight into the relationship between institutional support and participation and empowerment outcomes, advanced statistical techniques could be utilized in future studies.

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