



Exploring Men's Perceptions of Women's Role in Agriculture: A Qualitative Study of Union Council 79, Multan

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ABSTRACT

In the patriarchal society of Pakistan, women are viewed as inferior to men. This gender prejudice is also evident in the agriculture industry. This study intends to investigate men's perceptions of women's role in agriculture-related activities. Utilizing a qualitative study design, the researcher conducted six focus group discussions and eight in-depth interviews with the men in Multan district, Punjab, thematic analysis was performed on the data in order to deeply comprehend the phenomenon. The bulk of the male population partially recognises women's contributions in the agriculture sector, the study revealed. Most of the population believed that poverty is the primary reason why women work in agriculture. In men's views, women are weaker than men and, as a result, unable to conduct agriculture-related activities, particularly the activities requiring extra force. Their attitude was strongly patriarchal in that they viewed women as unpaid or low-paid workers. The vast majority of the population recognises that their contribution is of crucial importance to food security. It can be concluded that the majority of male members view women as lesser and weaker workers than males. Men's sexist attitudes toward women demonstrate the urgent need to confront patriarchal society, which not only hinders women's development in the agriculture industry but also affects their productivity and food security.

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1. Introduction

The agricultural productivity and maintaining household food security, as well as the available statistics, show that 72 percent of Pakistan's female workforce is involved in agriculture (Muhammad, Hassan, & Mehmood, 2020). As in other regions of Pakistan, rural women are among the millions of landless labourers who struggle for food, clothes, and shelter. These women have a significant role in agricultural production, animal farming, and the operation of cottage industries. They are responsible for productivity, water collection, fuel wood collecting, livestock management, and child care. The vast majority of field preparation is performed by women. During crop harvest, when agricultural labour becomes scarce, wheat and cotton are intensively harvested by the female workforce. For vegetables and fruits, the majority of work is conducted by women. Women are responsible for gathering, cleaning, washing, and packing fruit (Muhammad et al., 2020). In Pakistan, however, patriarchal culture prevents the full recognition of women's roles by society.

Women in rural Pakistan have a high percentage of participation and livestock production, in addition to their domestic responsibilities. They are involved in weeding, seed cleaning, drying, and storage of crops (Muhammad et al., 2020). The significant contribution of women in agriculture, on the other hand, is rarely acknowledged. In traditional economic and agricultural

analyses and policy, men remained the only focus of analysis (Ball, 2020). Rural women's experiences and participation in agriculture and livestock have also been overlooked by the field's body of research, particularly in terms of men's perceptions of women's role in agricultural activities. Women's involvement in agriculture dates back to the Stone Age, and they are currently involved in the production of major crops such as rice, vegetables, cotton, and pulses. They help with cotton picking and rice transplanted. Their impact is felt more strongly in the cattle sector than in agriculture. It is also true that women control about 90 percent of family farms. Livestock production in Pakistan varies from area to region (Muhammad et al., 2020).

Women are also suffering systematic discrimination which disadvantaged them. Women are barred from several essential rights including owning property, access to education and health services, being part of transferring technology, and acquiring bank credits (Berger, 2021). Women have to give up their rights in favour of any male member of their household, notably a husband or a sibling. Findings also demonstrated that patriarchal tradition limits the rights of women to be achieved. They have neither control over resources nor ownership; Men confront the least challenges as contrasted to women in agriculture (Gebre, Isoda, Rahut, Amekawa, & Nomura, 2021).

Even though women in rural areas do a fair amount of work in agriculture, this is not fully recognised. Women's weak position in agriculture has slowed down not only the growth of agriculture but also the growth of individuals. Most of the time, these women are controlled by others, mostly the men. Because of this, it is important to find out what men think about women's roles in agriculture-related activities. It's clear from reading that women work between 12 and 15 hours a day. Their share of vegetable, wheat, and cotton production is higher than that of other crops. Feminization of the agricultural sector keeps up this kind of hard work, which is needed for many things, especially the production of cotton and vegetables (Samee et al., 2015). Gender plays a big role in how work gets done.

More women than males work in agriculture, yet they have little control over their work. Why are women underrepresented? Due to Pakistan's patriarchal framework, men dominate women's life; therefore, it's necessary to learn what males believe about women's position in agriculture. Men's perceptions of women's role in agriculture are influenced by culture. Patriarchal standards and ideals make men view women as inferior in practically every way. This perception may limit women's agricultural business development. Access to agricultural extension is crucial to reducing poverty, developing agriculture, and ensuring food security (Feder, Birner, & Anderson, 2011). Men and extension workers limit women's access to agricultural information and training (Mudege, Mdege, Abidin, & Bhatasara, 2017). Men's perceptions are vital for women's development, poverty reduction, and agricultural development. This is because men's perception is the main thing that women are to deal with on a routine basis. No study has been found with the focus on men's perception about women's role in agriculture. For these reasons, unrecognized role of women is the key concern of this study. The objectives of the study are following: first, to explore the perceptions of men about role of women in agriculture related activities. Second, to find out how men's perceptions vary about role of women in agriculture related activities.

2. Literature Review

Men's attitudes about women in agriculture are not well-documented, according to literature. According to one study, men's perceptions of women's participation in Bangladesh's rural areas were examined. Interviewees and focus group participants were both single and married men. This qualitative study found that understanding men's perceptions about women in development projects can be summarised in three categories: acknowledging the importance of women in the welfare of their families, fearing the loss of male domination, and appreciating women's autonomy (Karim, Lindberg, Wamala, & Emmelin, 2018). According to Rahman, Palash, Jahan, Jalilov, and Mainuddin (2020), women are deeply involved in farm management and other agricultural activities but their role is under-valued or overlooked by the men. The study further revealed that women with a higher levels of education are viewed as positively by their male counterparts.

Another study looked into men's attitudes toward women's empowerment and gender equality. According to the study's qualitative analysis, men oppose gender equality and women's empowerment in their perceptions and attitudes. Men's hegemony is also sustained, according

to research, by men's perceptions and attitudes regarding women's empowerment and gender equality (Kaiser, Amin, Ganepola, Hussain, & Mostafa, 2015). According to Ogunlela and Mukhtar (2009), policymakers do not see rural women's contributions as productive work. Most of their labour is unpaid, and they are overworked as a result of agricultural, animal, and household duties. Furthermore, they are the least involved in making decisions regarding their own lives.

Another study highlighted the important role that women play in the management of dairy farms, and it included participants from small farm holders in the province of Punjab in Pakistan. According to the findings of the study, women participate in a wide variety of farming tasks, such as grazing, transportation, fodder cutting, butter manufacturing, and preservation, milking, feeding, and cleaning the sheds. Additionally, women contribute to the marketing of milk products, as well as the production of milk products, and they play a significant part in the upkeep of general health (Ahmad & Khan, 2001).

Women's roles and responsibilities shift as the geographic location shifts, as do local customs and traditions. Even gender roles, food and nutrition practises change between places, ethnic groupings, and natural zones (Batool et al., 2014). Environmental deterioration caused by economic and development activities has harmed rural women in agriculture (Sachs, 2018).

In Punjab, women are involved in agricultural development through participation in farm operations and animal rearing, but they frequently lack authority in decision-making due to a patriarchal society that restricts their role and provides men more control in decision-making. Women devote approximately 12 to 15 hours per day to agricultural tasks. The farm work of women is typically disregarded, unpaid (Kaiser et al., 2015), and not counted as a constraint due to the increasing impact of climatic changes and catastrophic situations involving standing crops and livestock. Furthermore, women farmers do not adopt effective resilience mechanisms because they lack access to relevant information.

Ishaq and Memon (2016) found why most women began working in agriculture between the ages of 29 and 39, and almost 86% of them did not know how to read or write. Up to 81 percent of the women get information from their families. Rice and wheat were the main crops they grew. Their job was also shown by what they did with the dung, the fodder, and the shed. The study's conclusion is that women play a huge role in agriculture and livestock production, but their role is not seen through the eyes of men.

Kaiser et al. (2015) looked at how men see women's empowerment and equal rights for men and women. Qualitative analysis of the study showed that men's thoughts and actions are against gender equality and giving women more power. Research also found that men's hegemony is kept up by how they see and feel about women's empowerment and equal rights for men and women.

In a world dominated by men, women's engagement in agriculture-related activities does not ensure their empowerment. In terms of men's perceptions, the current study reveals cultural difficulties in recognising women's role in agriculture-related activities. Men's perceptions are important to investigate since males have decision-making authority in practically every aspect of women's life. The study will be useful to policymakers and academics in the sector.

3. Research Methodology

Men's perspectives of women's roles were examined utilising qualitative research methods in order to better meet the study's aims. The descriptive study design was used to gather and analyse all of the data. Focus group discussions were conducted to obtain data on men's perceptions about the role of women in agricultural activities.

Purposive sampling was used to pick respondents because the objectives of the study was to reach out the male counterparts of women in agriculture. For this reason, the purpose of selection was to choose men working in the same agricultural location where women work.

In-depth interviews (IDIs) with chosen respondents were also undertaken to have a deeper understanding. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants for the FGD, with the goal of finding men from various categories. To bolster the findings, the researcher

conducted in-depth interviews (IDIs) with five males from various social groups. Participants in the FGDS and in-depth interviews were asked the same questions. It has confirmed the findings and increased the data's reliability. The researcher has designed the tools for both FGDS and IDIs using existing literature on the very topic.

The researcher chose 44 males from diverse backgrounds. The key reason for sample size is that male members have necessary study information. Eight were interviewed and 36 participated in six FGDS. Eight case study individuals were chosen and separated for examination. Teachers and local authorities helped pick participants. Men must be residents of the selected community and willing to freely express their viewpoint to be selected. Considering participant availability, researchers conducted 6-person FGDS. Six FGDS were held with union council participants.

With the help of a literature review, an interview guide was established, and the same questions were asked of the participants in focus group discussions (FGDs). It was asked of the respondents what they thought, how they felt, and what their expectations were about women's participation in agricultural operations.

Table 1
Demographic Information of FGD's Participants

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
25-35	10	27.77
35-45	16	24.46
45and above	10	27.77
Total	36	100
Occupation		
Farmer	10	27.77
Laborer	15	41.66
Business	04	11.31
Landlord	03	8.43
Jobs	04	11.31
Total	36	100
Education		
Illiterate	21	58.33
Primary	04	11.31
Middle	04	11.31
Matric	03	8.43
Intermediate	03	8.43
Graduation & above	01	2.18
Total	36	100

Table 1 lists the demographics of those who took part in the focus group. Males between 35 and 45 years of age were the majority of those who participated in the survey. A sizable majority of the population is between the ages of 25 and 35, with 20% of the population being 45 years old or older. All of the people who answered the survey were of legal drinking age. It's possible that their comments represent how men in the study area actually see themselves.

According to Table 2, the bulk of the respondents fell within the age bracket of 25 to 35 years old. Literacy was quite uncommon among those who participated in the survey. Every participant in the study was married and they all lived together as a family. Thirty-thousand to forty-thousand dollars was the range of monthly income for fifty percent of the respondents.

Table 2**Demographic Information of Participants of In-depth Interviews**

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
25-35	3	37.5
35-45	4	50
45and above	1	12.5
Total	8	100
Education		
Illiterate	6	75
Matric	1	12.5
Graduation & above	1	12.5
Total	8	100
Monthly Income (In Thousands)		
10 to 20		
20 to 30	2	25
30 to 40	2	25
Total	4	40
Marital Status	8	100
Married		
Total	8	100
Type of Family	8	100
Joint	8	100
Total	8	100

3.1 Analysis FGD's Themes

A majority of respondents claimed that women's engagement in agricultural production is of the utmost importance; nevertheless, some of them saw this as women's responsibility to raise their children and ensure family food security. They stated that women contribute to the production of rice, cotton, maize, and vegetables in agriculture. They noted that men play an important part in agricultural productivity as well. Some were of the opinion that women dominate the agriculture sector and perform better than men in the same field.

Poverty is the reason why women have to work in agriculture. Their families have to send them to work in agriculture because they are poor. Not only do women help the economy and food security, but they also help in other ways. Women work in agriculture because they are poor and want to make sure their families have food. These are the two main things that get them to work in farming.

Women have a critical role in livestock management since it helps alleviate poverty and improves food security in rural areas. As a part of their jobs, women tend to the cattle buildings and collect feed from the fields. They are primarily responsible for milking cows, producing dung cakes, and cleaning livestock. Keeping cattle is a major source of income and sustenance for many impoverished families. Most respondents agreed that farming harms women's health. Most saw a need to prevent diseases. They highlighted mother and child health difficulties in agriculture. One respondent mentioned fertilizer's downsides. Some fertilisers include carcinogens that might cause cancer, he said. Fatigue, headaches, and minor injuries are common among agricultural women.

The majority of respondents claimed that there is a wage disparity between women and men working in the agriculture industry, including paddy fields and cotton picking. However, various individuals had differing perspectives on why this gap arises. Some of them believe that the salary disparity exists because of the government's ineffective agricultural policies, which have increased farmers' economic risks. As a result, farmers continue to look for low-cost labour. Others believe that certain farmers' careless behaviour contributes to the income disparity between men and women. Women are economically marginalised; some acknowledged this view, but the majority opposed it, claiming that women must remain economically dependent on men in order for society to function properly.

3.2 Analysis of In-depth Interviews' Themes

The majority of people believe that women are superior to males and uphold patriarchal rules and ideals. These are the perspectives that shape women's social standing in society. This

is a regular man's opinion of women's roles in agricultural tasks. Such a view contributes to women's lower status than men's. Believing in patriarchy entails believing in the weakness of women. The beliefs embody patriarchal mentality, which stifles women's advancement and the overall development of society.

Since inflation is making it increasingly difficult for many working women to meet their families' most basic necessities, a wage difference isn't an issue for them. Respondent said that women can be farmers if they are educated. Women's roles in the agricultural sector can be beneficial. Working with their hands meticulously is preferable. Women who work in agricultural and animal management should take care of their health. Respondent argued that these ladies are at risk of contracting infections due to their labour in the agricultural industry.

Women endure mobility issues and sexual harassment. Although most people accepted women's little participation, they stressed that it was not equal to men's in agricultural operations. Poverty and family background drove women into agriculture, they said. Each family manages livestock differently. Gujjar women understand their tasks and feel proud working with animals. Such women don't want their husbands to complete little agricultural labour because they handle everything.

3.3 Comparison of Themes of FGDs and In-depth Interviews

The themes that emerged from the two different sources of data collecting suggested that poverty was the primary cause for women's participation, followed by the food security of their families as the second most important reason. The recurring themes provided support for the contention that women should be the ones who handle animals because the majority of men view this to be one of the responsibilities that women have around the house. According to the perceptions of the males who make up society, the work that women perform in such a role is unpaid.

FGD themes supported the concept that women play a vital role in agriculture-related product production. In-depth interviews showed that women are weaker than men and cannot do forceful duties. Men think women shouldn't have public roles or lives. Men don't consider women's work in agriculture public because it benefits families.

Harassment was a significant concern in the themes of focus groups and in-depth interviews. The themes did not properly recognise sexual harassment. It implies that the majority of men in the agricultural industry do not consider sexual harassment of women. This demonstrates the obstacle to the advancement of women in the agricultural industry. The vulnerability of women's health was a common theme in both FGDs and in-depth interviews. This indicates that the majority of men in agriculture are worried about the health of women. This is a positive indicator that male perceptions of women's engagement in agriculture are shifting.

Education and skill development for women can help women advance in the agricultural sector, according to themes suggested by both FGDs and in-depth interviews. This is a good shift in men's perceptions of women as more productive workers provided they are given sufficient training, credit, and awareness of modern technologies. This demonstrates that men's perceptions were not impeding women's advancement in the agricultural industry.

In terms of the wage gap, both FGDs and In-Depth Interviews showed that there are a number of reasons why women are paid less, such as government policies about agriculture. The main idea is that women are paid less because they do less work that requires a lot of force. Men, on the other hand, do hard work in agriculture, which is why they are paid less. This argument shows the patriarchal view of women, which says that women are less important than men.

4. Discussion

Men's perceptions of women's engagement in development projects, according to Karim et al. (2018), fall into three broad categories: recognition of women's role in the welfare of the family, fear of losing male dominance, and value of women's autonomy. According to the findings of this study, the majority of males acknowledge the importance of women's roles, although only to a limited extent. Because of women's liberty, they also fear the loss of male dominance. This

suggests that men view women as less capable in the agricultural sector. As a result, it's possible that women in agriculture have a lower social position. This is further confirmed by another study which indicated that men face rare challenges in agriculture than women (Gebre et al., 2021).

Ishaq and Memon (2016) observed that 81% of women acquire knowledge from their family and sow rice and wheat. They also collected dung, cut fodder, and cleaned sheds. The study reveals that women play a huge role in agriculture and cattle production, but males don't recognise it. These discoveries filled a research gap in the field of women in agriculture. Research shows that men recognise women's importance in agriculture. Men's view contributes to women's inferior status in agriculture. Amin, Ali, Ahmad, and Zafar (2009) concluded that economic policies and customary patterns make women vulnerable.

The hegemonic connection between men and women is manipulated by men's perceptions of women in agriculture (Rahman et al., 2020). The current study found that men's perceptions of women are built in such a way that they are not only treated as second-class citizens, but also have power over their status. Women are gaining the privileges that males are willing to give. Men's hegemony is also sustained by men's perceptions and attitudes toward women's empowerment and gender equality, according to Kaiser et al. (2015). The current study has expanded on the premise that men control women's labour and that employers perceive women employees as cheap labour, implying economic exploitation of women in agricultural-related activities.

The fact that the majority of women conduct uncompensated agricultural labour suggests that women not only receive lower earnings but also work to support their families. However, their function in the eyes of males is to undertake unpaid work that supports the family. In Pakistan, the social standing of women is preserved through traditional codes and religious interpretations, according to Jamal (2014). The cultural role of women is to labour without compensation till their last breath. Additionally, the present research revealed that the majority of men's perceptions mirror the cultural role of women. Perhaps because of this, the standing of women in agriculture, especially cattle management, is relatively low.

The current research has added to what is known about how men think of women taking part in agriculture-related activities. Researchers haven't looked at this phenomenon in this way in the past. Men's views on women's role in development, women's autonomy, women's bodies, women's role in development, and their sexuality have been studied. Scholars didn't pay attention to what men thought about women working in agriculture. This study has added to the body of knowledge and helped us learn more about how and why women are positioned as secondary class in agriculture.

5. Conclusion

Even though women play a big role in agriculture, a large portion of the population still believes that men are solely responsible for its production. Men listed poverty as the primary reason for women's participation in agriculture; nevertheless, a sizable percentage of the population believed that women's strong ties to their families was also a factor in their willingness to work in agriculture. Women's involvement, in the opinion of the majority of men, can be made more beneficial by raising women's awareness of the latest technical applications in agriculture. Second, men pointed to the importance of making small loans easier to obtain as a way to encourage more women to work in agriculture.

The majority of respondents highlighted cotton picking, seeding vegetables, fodder cutting, and collecting wood for cooking as examples of women's work in agriculture, and they acknowledged women's role in this industry. All of them believe that women play an important and substantial part in this sector, but some believe that women are unable to undertake specific activities, such as watering the fields and loading and unloading agricultural products onto vehicles and transporting them to markets for sale. They identified these tasks as a male-dominated field. The majority of them believed that women were incapable of performing these activities.

According to both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, women handle the majority of the duties associated with livestock care. This includes everything from milking cows to bathing and feeding animals to collecting manure to watering animals to preparing and storing dung cakes. According to men's perception, women do most of the work, but there are still a substantial number of people who fail to see the full potential of women's roles.

There is evidence of misogyny in the majority of the population's assessment of the health repercussions for women in the agricultural sector. Significant section of the society believes that women fake illness in order to get attention. This pattern of perception reveals sexist attitudes toward women. Such patriarchal beliefs are present in both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The majority of the public stated that women face a lot of health hazards that can be avoided; nonetheless, a sizable proportion of the population claimed that God protects women from illness when they execute religious duties. In the opinion of the majority of respondents, women's health issues in agriculture are of less significance. This impression is founded on a patriarchal culture that oppresses women and favours males.

According to a large part of the community, women working in paddy fields or picking cotton are fairly paid, demonstrating no wage discrimination. Women are paid less than men, but men who think they're fairly compensated say it's because they perform tasks that need less force. Men think women can't water fields for two reasons. First, it demands force that women don't use. Second, it's largely a nighttime male performance. Women aren't allowed to be alone in public. Most people believe women are paid less for the same work. Those who believed in wage discrimination against female farmers were more educated.

Cotton picking, seeding vegetables, foraging for fodder, and collecting wood for cooking were listed by the majority of respondents as women's agricultural activities. All of them agreed that women play an important role in this industry, and just a few thought that women couldn't undertake certain activities like watering fields and loading and unloading agricultural items from trucks and carrying them to markets for sale. This was seen a male-dominated sector of work by them. Most of them thought that women couldn't do these jobs. The kind of thinking that has come to light in this research is very male-centered and very repressive, with the goal of keeping women down.

5.1 Recommendations

According to the conclusions of this research, there may be numerous policy ramifications. There is an urgent need to develop a strategy on the launch of gender-focused campaigns to educate the public, particularly men, about the importance of women in the agriculture industry.

Agriculture policy should address sexual violence against women in the agricultural industry, where women are subject to rape, sexual harassment, and discrimination. As a result of men's lack of familiarity with the health risks associated with farming than with those for women, agricultural policy needs to place a greater emphasis on educating them about the dangers of working in agriculture.

Agriculture policy should be based on the idea that women can be taught more about modern farming techniques so that they can do their jobs in a way that increases productivity. The focus of agricultural policies should be on making it easy for poor women to get small loans and giving them a chance to get out of poverty. Developing agriculture in a way that reduces poverty is a key part of any progressive policy for agriculture. A women-centered programme could reduce poverty and boost agricultural productivity. Empowering rural women, especially farmers, can help. Government must focus on women's health in agriculture, a gendered field.

Future researches should emphasis on the women's perception about their role in agriculture. This is likely to enhance the understanding about the issues of perception regarding gender equality in the agriculture.

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