

Women's Access to Productive Agriculture Assets and Economic Empowerment: The Case Study of Pakpattan Sharif



PIDE
PAKISTAN INSTITUTE
OF DEVELOPMENT
ECONOMICS

**SUBMITTED BY
KHADIJA LATIF**

SUPERVISED BY

DR. MUHAMMAD JAHANGIR KHAN

MUHAMMAD AJMAL KHAN

**PIDE School of Policy, Development and Governance
PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS
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Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad
PIDE School of Policy, Development & Governance

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled: **"Women's Access to Productive Agriculture Assets and Economic Empowerment; The Case Study of Pakpattan Sharif."** submitted by Khadija Latif is accepted in its present form by the PIDE School of Policy, Development and Governance, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad as satisfying the requirements for partial fulfillment of the degree in Master of Philosophy in Development Studies.

Supervisor:

Dr. Muhammad Jehangir Khan

Signature: _____

Co-Supervisor:

Mr. Ajmal Kakar

Signature: _____

External Examiner:

Dr. Sarfraz Khan

Signature: _____

Director,

PIDE School of Policy,

Development & Governance Dr. Hafsa Hina

Signature: _____

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Women's access to productive agricultural assets, such as land, livestock, and agricultural inputs, is indispensable to their active participation and empowerment. In today's global world, women contribute considerably to the agricultural sector in general, in underdeveloped economies in particular. However, women in agrarian household still go through many systemic barriers to owning and controlling these assets (FAO, 2018). In South Asia, and Pakistan specifically, gender disparities in land ownership and asset control are attributed to various factors such as cultural, legal, and policy frameworks (Agarwal, 1994; Ali & Khalid, 2019). In Pakistan, women constitute around 40-50% of the agricultural labor force, but less than 5% own land independently (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Hussain et al., 2019). This land ownership disparity circumscribes women's decision-making power in farming activities, access to credit, and ability to invest in productivity-enhancing technologies, consequently limiting their economic empowerment (Quisumbing et al., 2014).

The local of this study is Pakpattan (Pir ghani), which is mainly agrarian district where wheat and maize are the main crops (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The reality is that women form an important part of agricultural workforce, but they are still sidelined regarding property ownership and decision-making. According to Labour Force Survey (PBS, 2020-21), approximately 65 percent of rural women in Pakpattan are working in the agriculture sector mostly in informal or unpaid labour. Furthermore, the process of legally owning agricultural land by women in the district is less than 2 (Punjab Land Records Authority, 2021), indicating that there is an evident issue of gender inequalities in terms of accessing and controlling assets. Although the current literature indicates a close relationship between land ownership and empowerment results (greater household welfare, food security and control of decision-making) of women (Bibi et al., 2020; Deere and Leon, 2001), the studies tend to ignore local socio-cultural contexts like patrilocal residence patterns and inheritance practices of women. Moreover, the relationships between the assets ownership and their influence on women empowerment have only been reported in the past without looking at the various categories of women. Nonetheless, this paper, recognizes the local environment of various groups of women in the district. And, contrasts the

role of access to and ownership of productive resources on their inclusion and empowerment. Thus, covering a significant evidence gap and educate more gender-responsive agricultural and land policies in Pakpattan.

The involvement of women in agriculture, especially in livestock and crop sectors, is crucial towards rural livelihood and food security in a country. Nevertheless, the degree to which they are involved is often limited by socio-cultural standards, access to resources, and the lack of support of the policy (FAO, 2019). In Pakistan, women play an important role in crop farming as well as in keeping livestock, but have to endure systemic limitations that limit their usefulness and empowerment (Ali & Khalid, 2019). The Government of Pakistan has realized this and, therefore, has devised different policies that seek to increase the role of women in the agricultural industry. The National Policy Development and Empowerment of Women (2018) focuses on enhancing access of women to land, credit and agricultural extension services and markets. Also, there are industry-specific initiatives within the Ministry of National Food Security and Research that facilitate increased involvement of women in livestock and crop production (Government of Pakistan, 2018).

Nevertheless, these efforts fail to eliminate the gaps in the implementation as a result of insufficient gender mainstreaming, cultural limitations, and ineffective monitoring (FAO, 2019; World Bank, 2020). As an illustration, although the coverage of extension services is farmers in general, women farmers are not always included because of mobility barriers and social principles (Mahmood, 2017). Moreover, livestock policies can be more easily accessible to women, as the work with livestock has been considered a female sphere, and no one has participated in the crop sector since it is regarded as a male sphere (Ali & Khalid, 2019).

It is essential to review the current policies and their efficacy in order to find out the strengths, weaknesses, and the areas to be improved. The analysis can guide the future policy formulation to increase the role of women in both crop and livestock production that will result in higher agricultural productivity and empowerment of women. The issue of enhancing women involvement and empowerment in agricultural activities entails the need not only to identify the factors that women are challenged by but also to organize policy interventions that are effective in mitigating the challenges. In Pakistan and globally, the lack of access to land, credit, extension

services, and markets restricts the potential contributions of women to the agricultural productivity and rural development (FAO, 2018; World Bank, 2020). Policies that are currently in place in Pakistan like the National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women (2018) have established some foundational promises on gender equity. Nonetheless, the tangible progress is hindered by the constant socio-cultural limitations, policy implementation gaps, and insufficient gender mainstreaming (Mahmood, 2017; FAO, 2019). The policy proposals should be contextual, inclusive and address structural disparities in order to promote meaningful participation and empowerment. Some of the strategies, such as enhancing land rights of women, more gender sensitive extension and training, improving access to financial institutions, and encouraging women-led agricultural operations, have demonstrated success in various contexts (Quisumbing et al., 2014; Deere and Leon, 2001).

The goal of the research is to build on policy suggestions that can be implemented on the basis of empirically collected data about Pakpattan, which is to address the barriers that are associated with land inheritance, marital residence, and possession of productive assets. This kind of proposal will help in ensuring an enabling environment in which women can engage in crop and livestock sectors, which will eventually lead to better livelihood and agricultural results.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In agricultural districts such as Pakpattan Sharif, where women have been very active in the crop and livestock production, the structural barriers still limit their access to productive means of production, especially land ownership and control. Some women are given land on a parental side, but most fall short of being given land, or they engage in working on the land as tenant farmers who are not given any conditions. This paper will seek to address and compare women participation and empowerment in specific categories: (i) women with access and entitlement on the part of parent(ii) women with access and entitlement on the part of spouse(iii) women with access and no entitlement on the part of either parent or spouse (iv) tenant women who work on leased land and (v) women who lack access and do not have entitlement on the part of either parent or spouse.

In such environments, women, despite being the main source of labor in agriculture, do not have the right to make decisions, own the means of production, or participate in the planning of agriculture due to gender norms that are so ingrained and unequal distribution of assets (Naz, 2022; Mumtaz and Salway, 2021). Through these differences, the paper will illuminate the impact of different levels of access to land on the participation of women, their independence, and economic empowerment. It will also examine current institutional and policy structures that strive to achieve gender equity in agriculture and indicate the implementation gaps that prevent their interaction (Ali and Khan, 2023; IFPRI, 2022). The study shall produce evidence-based and locally applicable recommendations to policymakers to promote the participation of women in agriculture and, as a result, gender-based rural development in Pakpattan and other similar districts in Pakistan.

1.3 Study Objectives and Questions

Based on the narrative of the statement of the problem as stated in the preceding text, the study has narrowed down the research problem into “**Women's Access to Productive Agricultural Assets and Empowerment in the Crop and Livestock Sectors: A Case Study of Pakpattan Sharif**”. And we have operationalized this topic into the following research objectives and questions.

1.3 Study Objectives

This study is designed to achieve the following objectives;

- To analyze women's access to productive agricultural assets and women's empowerment in Pakpattan.
- To review the existing policies affecting women's participation in the livestock and crop sector.
- To suggest a policy proposal to foster women's participation, engagement, and empowerment.

1.4 Study Questions

This study is designed to address the following research questions;

- How does women's access to productive agricultural resources influence their participation in the crop and livestock sectors and contribute to their empowerment in Pakpattan?
- How do existing policies affect women's participation in the livestock and crop sectors in Pakpattan, and what policy changes could enhance their engagement and empowerment?

1.5 Unit of Data Collection (UDCs)

For this study, there are four Units of Data Collection (UDCs), including five categories of agrarian households and representatives from the agriculture and livestock departments.

Agrarian Household Women: In this study, the agrarian household women include five categories such as (i) women with access and entitlement to land from their parents' side, (ii) women with access and entitlement from spouse side, (iii) women with access but no entitlement to from either parents and spouse (iv) tenant women working on leased land and (v) Women with neither access nor entitlement from parents or spouse.

Agriculture Sector Representatives: The District Agriculture Officer (DAO) served as the key informant and unit of data collection for this study, conducting semi-structured interviews with agriculture sector representatives.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Literature review

The accessibility of productive agricultural resources to women like land, livestock, credit, and agricultural inputs is essential in their empowerment, economic independence, and agricultural productivity (FAO, 2018). In the world, women are the ones providing close to 43 percent of the agricultural labor force, yet they possess approximately one-fifth of agricultural land, which shows the presence of serious gender imbalances in terms of property ownership (FAO, 2018). In South Asia, this disparity is particularly high because cultural customs and the laws of inheritance restrict the rights of women to property (Agarwal, 1994). In Pakistan, the land ownership among women is very low and as per Pakistan Rural Household Survey (PRHS, 2015), the land area owned by women is less than 5 percent. This inequality is highly limiting to the power of women in agricultural production and earnings (Hussain et al.), (2019). In a rural Punjab study by Bibi et al. (2020), women who owned land were also much more empowered, in terms of decision-making autonomy, income control, and mobility, than women who did not own land. This explains how necessary land access is in increasing the agency of women in rural agrarian environments such as Pakpattan.

Siddiqi and Aslam (2006) point out that Pakistani women are engaged in agricultural work, particularly livestock rearing, crop processing; however, they do not own productive resources, which makes it difficult to shape agricultural choices. Mahmood (2017) also highlights that women are not empowered because their role in agricultural activities is too significant, and cultural and familial demands do not allow them to manage the agricultural resources on their own. Deere and Leon (2001) also believe that land rights have effects on empowerment because they believe that land ownership gives power to bargain, economic and social security, which are fundamental in empowering women. This, however, is a context-specific relationship; in a recent qualitative study, Ali and Khalid (2019) found that women in livestock farming in Punjab and Pakpattan, in particular, possess greater control over productive assets than those in crop farming because of the cultural roles that regard livestock management as a female domain. But ownership of livestock might not necessarily be translated fully into empowerment without further access to the market, credit, and even extension services.

Access to agricultural information and extension services are essential in empowering women but are very inaccessible to most of the rural women in Pakistan. The World Bank (2020) reported that in rural Pakistan, women farmers, not even half of whom are smallholders, only have access to agricultural extension services at a rate of 6 percent, against 27 percent among men, which restricts women to use improved agricultural solutions and technologies. A policy, like the National Policy on Development and Empowerment of Women (2018), is aware of these gender gaps but cannot be fully implemented locally because of socio-cultural norms and poor institutional capacity (FAO, 2019). The socio-economic situation of Pakpattan, with its highly agrarian economy, based on wheat and maize production, offers a crucial location to investigate how these policy gaps are transformed into on-ground realities of women (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Various studies contend that empowerment is multidimensional and needs to be quantified in other areas than ownership of assets. Quisumbing et al. (2014) recommend a holistic strategy that includes agency, resource access, and accomplishments in order to gain a complete picture of what women can do in the field of agriculture to foster their presence. Similarly, Sultana and Ali (2013) emphasize the need to have intra-household bargaining power, education, and social capital of women in the measurement of empowerment results.

The government of Pakistan has implemented several policies to facilitate the role of women in agriculture. The National Policy on Development and Empowerment of Women (2018) directly addresses the issue of gender equality by facilitating women in gaining access to land, credit, training, and markets. Other programs of economic empowerment of women in rural spaces are provided by the Punjab Women Development Program, as well as under the Ministry of National Food Security and Research through skills training, microfinance, and extension services (Government of Punjab, 2019). These policies notwithstanding, some studies indicate that there are a number of implementation gaps. According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2019) on the topic of Gender and Agriculture in Pakistan, the services offered by the extension agencies tend to be predominantly male and cannot be delivered to women in rural areas because of the restriction of movements and social conventions (FAO, 2019). On the same note, Mahmood (2017) says women are not able to access policies, as they would not access training or inputs to agricultural practices due to cultural barriers. Women have higher access to the livestock industry because, according to cultural standards, livestock is usually left in the hands

of women in the household compounds (Ali & Khalid, 2019). It is through this cultural acceptance that some of the policy programs have entered the livestock as a point of entry for women into the economic dimension. Nevertheless, crop production has remained a matter of male dominance, and women are normally engaged in unpaid labor and post-harvest tasks (World Bank, 2020).

According to the World Bank Pakistan Gender Assessment (2020), despite the policies in place regarding women farmers, there is no gender-sensitive budgetary processes, monitoring, and accountability, which results in ineffective service delivery. Besides, intra-gender differences like land ownership status, marital residence, and socio-economic class are not frequently covered by policies, and this aspect determines the real possibility of women contributing to agriculture (Mahmood, 2017; FAO, 2019). The international researches have further indicated that in order to succeed, policies encouraging women to be involved in agriculture should be context specific and culturally sensitive (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011). Unless socio-cultural constraints are tackled, policies are prone to being useless or to benefiting few women, who will in most cases be the already advantaged (Quisumbing et al., 2014). To increase the involvement and empowerment of women in agricultural activities, there are multi-layered and context-dependent policy interventions that should be undertaken to overcome structural constraints, social-cultural practices and inequities in resource access. It has been found that increasing the amount of labor of women in agriculture is not enough without additional access to productive resources, control over decisions, and economic opportunities (Quisumbing et al., 2014).

Other researches emphasize the relevance of land tenure reform in ensuring that women have property rights, which act as a source of empowerment (Agarwal, 1994; Deere and Leon, 2001). Women also gain economic security and bargaining power at the household and community level with secure land rights. In Pakistan, Mahmood (2017) emphasizes that policy frameworks must not be only based on legal provisions but must take an active part in socio-cultural realities. As an example, policies to enhance access to extension services by women should consider mobility constraints and come up with women friendly delivery options like extension workers who are women or mobile advisory services. The effects of microfinance and credit programs that cater to rural women have demonstrated positive effects on empowering women as it enables them to invest in productive activities (Mayoux, 2014). Such programs however must be combined with training and market access in order to make them sustainable and as well as benefit the maximum.

It is important to have gender-sensitive agricultural extension and training programs that increase the technical skills and knowledge of women. Livestock-centered training programs enhanced the involvement and income of women greatly according to Ali and Khalid (2019), which indicates that livestock interventions may be effective points of entry.

There are numerous obstacles to women having productive agricultural resources, which have a direct impact on economic empowerment. Many agricultural policies that claim to be gender neutral do not address the needs of female farmers by providing them access to land, credit, extension services, and irrigation. The study cited in the textbook about the Ambo district of Ethiopia demonstrates how women's agricultural productivity in that area is limited because of inadequate access to important resources. The same has been reported in other regions, such as in Pakistan (Agarwal, 1994; Doss, 2001). The issues these women face are the same in both cases. They do not participate in the informal credit system, are excluded from the formal credit system, do not possess land, and are cut off from owning land. Without access to these important resources, women lose the ability to improve agricultural productivity, deepen their economic status, and rise in their economic status (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011). Providing gender responsive policies to women such as improving their access to land , irrigation, and credit have shown to improve productivity and income at the household and national level (Quisumbing, 1996). This data is pertinent to the case study of Pakpattan Sharif because women in that area face the same barriers to accessing agricultural assets and highlight the need for such policies to foster women empowerment tailored to these economic barriers.

The text brings significant questions to the redistribution of assets compared to income redistribution in the economic safety and empowerment of rural female citizens. The authors assert redistribution of income alone won't suffice unless women are given control of productive assets such as land and technology, which is necessary to improve their economic standing. Asset redistribution is effective in solving the long-term gendered structural problems such as the skewed gendered power relations in the marketplace, and property rights, technology, healthcare, and governance (Agarwal, 1994). In addition, the enhanced control of rural women over land and irrigation systems, and agricultural tools like planters and grinding mills, enable them to boost agricultural productivity, thereby promoting individual economic security, and contributing to rural development (Doss, 2001).

In the case of China and India, the policies regarding inclusive growth need to consider the socio-economic disparities among women in rural India and their access to land and other productive assets. There has been some improvement, but the concern of rural women's access to new technologies, such as rainwater harvesting and efficient farming tools, is not prioritized in most development policies (Quisumbing, 1996). The increasing feminization of agricultural work and the ongoing gender pay gaps in agriculture and its related fields are significant barriers to women's economic growth as well as women's socio-economic advancement, which are urgent calls for reform (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011). This viewpoint indicates that, to achieve women's economic empowerment, policies need to be centered on capital or asset redistribution and women's guaranteed access to land, technology, and property, as opposed to solely income-based strategies.

The article is concerned with the difference in asset accumulation and access between men and women. It provides a women's economic empowerment and agricultural productivity prism of the effects of access to productive factors, including land, technology, and finance, on women. The framework theorizes that as women gain better control and access to land and agricultural technologies, their bargaining power and productivity increase, and consequently, the results of their well-being and health will become more desirable (Agarwal, 1994; Doss, 2001). This perspective is useful in interpreting your case study on Pakpattan Sharif, where women are not only struggling to own and control land, credit, and irrigation systems, but also to be actively involved in agriculture. Under this gender-sensitive approach, your research may focus on the ability of improving accessibility of productive assets in Pakpattan Sharif to increase economic and community development outcomes, empower women, and address the requirement of gender-discriminatory policies on asset ownership (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011).

The study outcome of Western Kenya provides research findings that relate to your research on the access of productive farm resources by women and the economic empowerment of women in Pakpattan Sharif, Pakistan. As the study demonstrates, empowerment of women significantly leads to the productivity of agriculture and this may apply to your case as well. In Pakpattan Sharif, where most of the rural women are disadvantaged in accessing land, credit, and technology, your research may measure the outcome of empowering women with improved access to such resources in increasing agricultural output and economic gains in the area, just as it occurred in Kenya (Doss, 2001; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011). The heterogeneity of effects, especially concerning the

management of farm plots, allows for consideration of the intra-household division of labor in your case study which focuses on gendered agriculture. There is a possibility that women's empowerment might close the gender productivity gap and improve agricultural, food security, and poverty alleviation outcomes in Pakpattan Sharif, as seen in Kenya.

Policies and programs have historically ignored women's important role in the economic development process, mainly viewing them as subjects for population control programs instead of considering their productive roles. This is evidenced by the reproductive health expenditures as compared to women's enterprises and participation in paid work, especially in agriculture, the informal sector, and formal employment, which have received very little investment. Women's participation in economic activities is always accompanied by low earnings. Most development-oriented agencies have traditionally provided menopausal women with so called "micro projects" which in reality were small-scale income-generating projects that too, out of social welfare, too small in scale and design to be anything but charity. This projects give women a few hours of low-skilled work in knitting and sewing which have no significant demand in the job market. In contrast, better accepted these days are self-help groups and NGOs which are in the form of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India. These groups have improved women's wealth by changing the perception concerning women's roles with an understanding of women as active players in the development process. Unlike welfare organizations, these groups strive for lasting and real change, providing long-term sustainable autonomy instead of aid by providing the necessary means and supporting women (Kabeer, 2005).

The most important thing to note is that any attempt to help women should be focused on their economic roles first. Efforts to aid women should remove the barriers that prevent women from being active participants in the economy, such as productive resources, markets, or even access to high-ranking positions. Development policies that aim to remove barriers that help women reach their full potential actively promote sustainable growth.

Africa continues to face issues such as gender disparity, even after the adoption of international agreements and the commitments made by African countries. Compared to men, women engage less in the formal labor market, and when they do, it is in low-paying, informal jobs. Although women are critical in the economy. The women are faced with major challenges such as the

scarcity of credit, land, farm inputs, farm machinery, extension services, and market for their produce. At home, women are placed with caregiving responsibilities. Such gender inequalities are based on culture and social practices, which are not accommodating to the economic empowerment of women (United Nations, 2014). To address these inequalities, it is important to abolish the current policies that promote gender inequality and implement new policies that enable women to engage in economic activities. Women's economic empowerment may be increased through participation in the labor market, skills training, creation of micro-credit schemes, and facilitating access to markets to enable women to lessen the time spent on household duties through technology such as mobile phones.

Moreover, women's empowerment and anti-gender inequality can be facilitated through the establishment of partnerships to sponsor women-led businesses, cash transfer schemes, welfare, and subsidized childcare services; as well as improving infrastructure like water and electricity infrastructure (Grown et al., 2015).

These strategies demonstrate the ways in which gender inequality can be resolved with the help of policy and structural transformation that enhances access of women to productive factors and the economy. Through appropriate resources and encouragement, economic development of women can be an inclusive, as well as equitable development of both men and women. These inferences that touch on gender-responsive policies, infrastructure, and technology investments will be of significance in designing policies governing women economic practices and empowerment in your study of the issue of economic empowerment of women in Pakpattan Sharif.

Women empowerment in Agriculture Index or WEAI is an integrated tool, which is created to assess the empowerment, agency and access of women in the agricultural sector. It comprises two subindexes. The first one evaluates women's empowerment in five dimensions: (1) involvement in agricultural production decisions, (2) access to and control over productive resources, (3) control over income expenditure, (4) community leadership, and (5) time use. These dimensions of empowerment reflect a woman's ability to engage and benefit from agricultural activities, which is more than just access to resources. The second subindex assesses the gender disparity of households and shifts the focus onto women by measuring and comparing the empowerment achievements of women to men's achievements. Moreover, this subindex for women who face

gender-based gaps computes the relative empowerment deficit in comparison to their male counterparts. The WEAI was developed using pilot studies in Bangladesh, Guatemala, and Uganda, and the authors of the index also published an article which explained their findings and the purpose of the index in relation to tracking and evaluating women's empowerment in agriculture (Alkire et al., 2013).

The WEAI framework is helpful in studying the linkage of gender, agriculture, and empowerment which can be applied to your case in Pakistan. In your case, studying women's empowerment in agriculture using the WEAI framework would look at the women's role in agriculture. This includes their income-generating activities, the resources available to them, and their access and control over the agriculture finances. This approach could help your study pinpoint important gaps that, if addressed, would promote gender equality in agriculture and enhance women's economic development. In addition, the pilot studies conducted in Bangladesh, Guatemala, and Uganda could provide comparisons of the other implemented the policies and programs that positively affected women's empowerment in agriculture.

Meta-analyses and systematic reviews often evaluate the impacts of an intervention and its outcomes, while the reasoning and the concepts behind the intervention is often overlooked. In the case of empowering women farmers, interventions would focus on either allocating new investment towards women or improving their access to the resources already available to them. Here, empowerment refers to the increased ability of women to make decisions regarding the control and management of resources and production processes (Doss, 2001). The set of assumptions for such interventions to bring about increased productivity or health is that they would (i) eliminate the gender-specific barriers to access important resources (outputs such as seeds, tools, credit, and even health), and (ii) capitalize on gendered variations in resourceful risk-taking, time management, and social preferences to allow women to manage resources in a way that yield the best results.

Looking at everything, it does seem that removing gender inequalities when it comes to having farming tools could actually improve productivity. Also, it's been shown that women sometimes do use resources differently as influenced by their culture. But, there is some evidence that hiring women as farmers would pay back many times over in productivity and economic growth. But, the evidence on the economic benefits of enabling women to work in agriculture is sparse and

contradictory. This lack of proof data is why more research is needed to measure and confirm the economic benefits of enabling women to work as farmers (Quisumbing et al., 2014).

This particular research concerns itself with the definition and measurement of women's empowerment as viewed from the lens of rural women. It explores stronger concepts or more expansive definitions rural women have towards empowerment. Through qualitative studies done alongside quantitative surveys in eight agricultural development projects in different countries, the researchers developed a project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI). It shows that, in most contexts, empowerment is not viewed as a faculty or capacity alone but as the ability and agency to achieve the economic means to support oneself, family, and community. Albeit, there is a collective positive perception to empowerment; in a more complex understanding, both men and women seem to disagree with the concept of women having the power to dominate others, particularly men. The research also showed that women's unpaid domestic work and the burden of household chores restrict not only their mobility but also their engagement in income-generating activities (work or groups of activities that are deemed as indicators of empowerment). There is a need to combine the emic (local) and the etic (standardized) in the assessment of empowerment that is accurate. More context-sensitive development responses can be shaped, thus, it can provide useful information for the research concerning women and their access to agricultural assets and economic empowerment in Pakpattan Sharif, Pakistan, where the use of the same qualitative and quantitative techniques may expose local notions and constraints towards the empowerment of women in agriculture (Alkire et al., 2013).

Women's economic empowerment hinges on their control over land, which remains one of the most important resources in agriculture. Yet, women encounter numerous barriers and hardships ranging from acquiring, controlling, and benefitting from land due to sociocultural norms and legal frameworks. An approach based on gender to land rights and empowerment of women emphasizes the problems that women encounter and the socio-economic inequalities that women are exposed to and how those obstacles are obstructing women economic empowerment. Women are usually denied access to land and even where they are given legal titles they are not given control over land and in most cases they are controlled by their male kin. This inequity does not just suffocating the ability of women to invest in the land and make decisions with regard to the farming. It also suffocates the incomes of women, and the general economic participation. Conversely, it is also

found that land tenure security among women enhances agricultural productivity, food security within the household, and their bargaining power in intra and inter household and community relations (Agarwal, 1994). Reforms in the law, including joint land titles or having women with resources that secure land tenure, are essential steps towards ensuring women's empowerment in agriculture. Such explicitly gendered restrictions on land ownership may significantly increase the well-being of women economically and allow women to become active participants in the economic growth of the state (Deere & Leon, 2003).

2.2 Research Gap and Contribution of the Study

Although there is increased focus on gender in agriculture, there are limitations to the literature on the subject. The majority of the quantitative data lumps women together into one group, neglecting the differences in the ownership of the land, marital residence, and cultural settings. Qualitative research to investigate the lived experiences of the women, particularly in those districts such as Pakpattan, which are representative of the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of rural Punjab, is lacking. Moreover, while many policies exist to promote women's empowerment, there is limited evaluation of their effectiveness in local contexts. The disconnect between policy design and cultural realities contributes to poor implementation and limited impact on women's empowerment and participation. Additionally, this study will contribute for the first time to compare the women's access to productive agricultural resources and empowerment for five distinct categories such as (i) women with access and entitlement to land from their parents' side, (ii) women with access and entitlement from spouse side, (iii) women with access but no entitlement to from either parents and spouse (iv) tenant women working on leased land and (v) Women with neither access nor entitlement from parents or spouse.

2.3 Conceptual Framework:

The Figure 1, presents the conceptual framework of this study, that how access to productive agricultural assets including land, livestock, and essential farm inputs plays a foundational role in shaping women's participation in the agricultural sector on the one hand and women empowerment on the other hand. In fact, women's equitable access to these resources augment their active role in crops and livestock management. Subsequently, their active participation foster women's empowerment in the form of economic independence, improved social standings and enhanced

control over livelihood opportunities. Additionally, this study has identified the policy gaps hindering women's participation and empowerment in Pakpattan Sharif. And, finally, this study suggests actionable policy recommendation to foster women's participation and empowerment. To sum up, access to productive agricultural assets is not only a matter of equity but a substance for empowering rural women in both economic and social spheres.

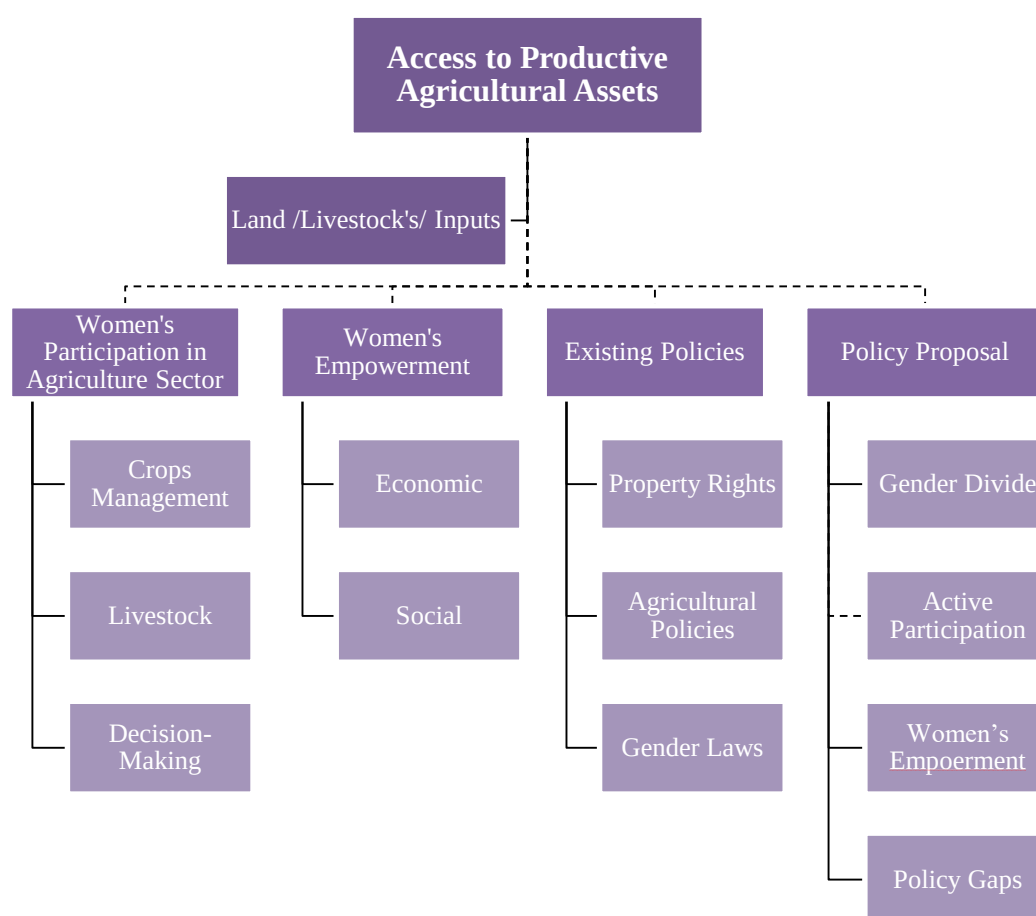


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.4 Key Indicators

The table 1, presents the key indicators that would be used to assess access to productive agricultural products and women's empowerment.

Table 1 Key Indicators for Assessing Access to Productive Agricultural and Women's Empowerment

Sr.No	Domain	Indicator
1	Access and land/livestock's ownership	Agricultural land and livestock ownership
		Decision-making power over land and livestock (animals management, crop choice, buying and selling)
		Entitlement status (legal or inheritance)
		Duration and stability of access(for instance permanent, seasonal, lease-based)
2	Access and control over inputs (seeds, fertilizers, tools irrigation, livestock)	Autonomy over the use and timing of inputs
		Availability of possible credit or subsidies on inputs
3	Production and Income related decision making	Share of income gained from agriculture and livestock
		Authority to sell, produce and use of the products
4	Access to Financial Services (including savings, credit, and insurance options)	Ownership of smart phones (used for agri-related transactions)
		Access to banking services and ability to operate accounts independently
5	Networking and Participation	Frequency of participation in different groups and leadership roles
		The information gain through these groups (prices, trainings, buying and selling)
6	Access and participation in trainings	Participation in agricultural trainings or programs
		Trainings received (technical, management, financial, entrepreneurial)
		Tailored trainings from women farmers (women specific)
7	Decision-Making Autonomy	Perceived and actual bargaining power within household (production, input purchase, sales, income use)

		Authority to engage in agriculture related work outside home
8	Time use in agriculture and domestic work activities	The time allocated for domestic and agriculture related activities
9	Legal Awareness and Rights	Knowledge and information of land rights and inheritance laws

Chapter 3 Data and Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section of the study presents the research data collection method and methodology. In fact, in order to address the stated research questions, we adopted a qualitative research strategy, utilizing primary data using in-depth interview from three distinct categorizes of women in agrarian households and Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) from subject experts. Additionally, for the content analysis of policies secondary data has been used. Finally, thematic analysis technique adopted to analyses the data. The details of the proposed methodology are provided in the following section.

3.2 Research Strategy

To address the stated research question and achieve the objectives of this study, we conducted a qualitative research strategy. The primary objective of qualitative research study strategy is to investigate, collect, evaluate, and interpret data. A greater understanding of a certain occurrence or situation can be attained by the collection and analysis of non-numerical data. And, to find patterns, themes, and meanings, it entails gathering and analyzing text, images, and other media (Denzin, 2011). Additionally, (Geertz, 1973), defines the qualitative research as a technique of getting knowledge and information about a phenomenon in a society by being deeply and personally engagement with its subjects, regularly particular time period. We adopted this strategy because, our study objectives primarily women's access to productive resources effects on their participation and empowerment, content analysis and policy proposals based on the preliminary findings and key informant's insights require an in-depth understanding of the women's experience, social, cultural and policy contexts, which would be appropriately explored using qualitative research strategy.

The qualitative strategy is **inductive** in nature, focusing on collecting information from field data rather than testing existing theories. From an **epistemological perspective**, the study is interpreting, with objective to understand the meaning and persisting women's experiences in the agricultural sector. Ontologically, it is based on **constructivism**, endorsing that realities are socially constructed and may vary depending on individual or group perspectives.

3.3 Research Design

Considering the study objectives and research questions, this study uses an exploratory qualitative research design. In fact, an exploratory research design is an appropriate technique for getting depth impacts of women's agricultural productive resources access/ ownership on their participation and empowerment. Similarly, this design has been suited for the understanding of institutional or policy-related factors determining their participation in the livestock and crop sectors. As the primary focus of this study is to explore complex social realities, lived experiences, and contextual challenges that have not been thoroughly studied in Pakpattan, a qualitative exploratory design allows researcher for rich, detailed data collection through methods such as in-depth semi-structured interviews, key informants insights and content analysis. Therefore, this design also supports the recommendation of contextually grounded policy recommendations to augment women's participation and empowerment in agriculture sector in Pakpattan Sharif.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

This section of the proposed study presents the data collection sources and tool. Data collection is the process through which the investigator gets relevant and reliable information to address research problem/ analyze stated hypothesis or theories and evaluate the outcomes. There are mainly two sources of data collection such as, primary and secondary. The choice of opting one or both as source of data depends on primarily on study question. Primary data refers to original and first-hand information collected by researcher using different tools including surveys, interviews, experiments, and books etc. (Bryman, 2006). On the other hand, secondary data refers to the already collected, processed and published information's and mainly collected through different tools for instance government reports, existing literature, official data banks, books and published journal articles.

However, to adequately address study questions and objectives, this study rely on both primary and secondary sources of the data collection. Primary data had been collected through unstructured in-depth interviews from women in agrarian households and key informant's interviews from subject experts. Furthermore, secondary data has been collected from existing government policies related to women role in agriculture sector focusing on Pakpattan Sharif.

3.3.1 Unstructured In-depth Interviews

To gain information on women's access to productive resources and their impact on (women's) participation in crop and livestock and empowerment has been collected through unstructured interviews for five distinct categories such as (i) women with access and entitlement to land from their parents' side, (ii) women with access and entitlement from spouse side, (iii) women with access but no entitlement to from either parents and spouse (iv) tenant women working on leased land and (v) Women with neither access nor entitlement from parents or spouse.

3.3.2 Secondary Data

Additionally, for the content analysis of this study rely on secondary sources such as government policy drafts, reports and existing literature on the subject.

3.4 Sampling Design and Size

This study had make use of snowball and purposive sampling technique to collect data. Snowball sampling is a kind of non-probability sampling method in which existing study participants suggest or connect with additional respondents from among their acquaintances. This type of sampling technique is primarily helpful for reaching hard-to-reach or hidden populations (Goodman, 1961). Whereas, Purposive sampling assumes that the researcher can identify the characteristics and attributes of the population that are most relevant to the research questions and objectives (Patton, 2015). In fact, for the agrarian household women we would, apply snowball sampling and purposive sampling for key informants.

The snowball sampling size is not pre-defined, instead it would be determined based on the *principle of data saturation*. The point at which additional data from respondents do not add meaningful or new insights relevant to the research question. Therefore, the size of women participants has been decided during field work.

On the other hand, the sample size of key informant's interviews would be around 6, with 2 from relevant district departments, 2 from subject specialist and two interviews with women local leaders. The details of key informants sample size are given in the table 2.

Table 2 Key Informants Sample Size

Category	Interviews	Description
District Department Officials	2	Representatives from relevant local departments
Subject Specialists	2	Experts in the relevant subject area
Women Local Leaders	2	Women leaders from the local area

3.5 Locale of the Study

The locale of this study is Pakpattan Sharif, located in Punjab, Pakistan. It is a predominantly agricultural district with a robust reliance on staple crops like wheat, maize, and sugarcane, making it an excellent locale for studying women's access to efficient agricultural belongings and empowerment. The district's agricultural economic system underscores the significance of ladies' roles in crop cultivation and cattle control, but socio-cultural limitations often limit their participation and manipulate over assets. The gender relations in rural Punjab, where decision-making in agriculture is dictated with the help of guys, highlight the issues of access to land and agricultural services by women. Pakpattan is an important web page where the effect of land tenure on empowering girls can be examined, since it is not patriarchally inherited. Furthermore, simultaneously with the existence of countrywide policies such as the National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women (2018), the difficulties in implementation within the neighborhood continue to exist. Pakpattan gives an opportunity to observe how cattle, which are extra on hand to ladies, can serve as a pathway for empowerment and the way-centered interventions can bridge policy gaps. The socio-cultural context and the vicinity's agricultural diversity provide a precious framework for offering localized coverage innovations that might enhance women's participation and empowerment in agriculture throughout rural Pakistan.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Finally, the data collected from the agrarian households through unstructured interviews and the subject's specialist, thorough semi-structured interviews, have been analyzed through a thematic analysis approach. In fact, for the thematic analysis, a six-stage scientific strategy to develop the

final themes and report, developed by Clarke (2006). The details of this approach are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis

Steps	Activity	Details
1	Familiarizing yourself with data	• If required, transcribe the data. • Reading and rereading the data. • Noting down any initial ideas.
2	Generating Initial Codes	• Coding interesting features of the data methodically across the data sets. • Collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	• Organizing data into potential themes. • Proceeding to gather all data into relevant themes.
4	Reviewing the themes	• Checking that themes work concerning the coded extract. • Generate a thematic “map” of the analysis.
5	Defining and naming themes	• Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and overall patterns the content shows. • Generating clear definitions for each theme.
6	Producing the findings	• The final opportunity for analysis. • Selecting vivid and compelling extract examples

Chapter 4 Study Findings

Results and Discussion

4.1 Preamble

This section shares the results of the research conducted among thirty women from the rural areas of Pakpattan District in Punjab. The research aimed to evaluate the level of women's access, in the context of empowerment, to productive agricultural resources such as land, livestock, agricultural inputs, and finance.

The analysis includes both quantitative and qualitative information that was collected during the interviews. To provide the demographic, educational, occupational, and other pertinent data and the rates of asset ownership and agricultural decision-making among the participants, quantitative responses were summarized with the help of descriptive statistics. This statistical image provides an impression of the situational conditions of women that can assist in explaining the circumstances in which rural women are.

Thematic coding and analysis were used to code and analyze the qualitative data, which was based on open-ended questions. This assisted the researcher in recording the experiences and perceptions of women and the barriers they encounter in regard to the control of their income, financial autonomy, social and professional networks, legal empowerment, and feelings of empowerment or disempowerment in general. The analysis is structured based on nine main indicator domains that were suggested in the conceptual framework, which are ownership of land and livestock, level of autonomy in decision-making, access to farming inputs, the active participation in trainings, legal entitlements, and the use of time.

Moreover, the results are discussed in four groups of women:

1. Women as recipients of their father's land.
2. The women were given land by their husbands.
3. Inaccessible and unentitled women.
4. Women with different levels of empowerment.

This chapter provides an integrated and sophisticated perspective on the nexus of gender, agriculture, and empowerment by merging statistical data with stories. These results indicate both the opportunities and structural constraints of rural women to access and exploit productive agricultural resources and form a foundation of their policy recommendations in the final chapter.

4.2 Description of Respondents

This section summarizes the socio-demographic and contextual background of the 30 women interviewed in this study who live in rural areas. Their profiles give us the idea of the frameworks of access, ownership, and empowerment that determine the participation of women in agriculture in the Pakpattan District.

4.2.1 Age Distribution

The majority of the respondents were middle-aged aged with 63.3% of them within the 31-42 age bracket and 33.3% above 42 years. Only 16.7% were younger than 30. This age bracket is a mixture of experience and the generation's views on land access and empowerment.

Table 4 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
25–30	5	16.7%
31–36	6	20.0%
37–42	9	30.0%
43–50	10	33.3%
Total	30	100%

4.2.2 Marital Status

Most of the respondents, 70% were married, with 30% being single. Access to land was a major factor that depended on marital status, as married women used to claim the land as belonging to their husbands, yet they had no direct control.

Table 5 Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	21	70.0%
Single	9	30.0%
Total	30	100%

4.2.3 Number of Children

There was variation in the family size of married women. Some had no children at all 43.3%, usually because of age, or other educational commitments - others had one to four children.

Table 6 Average Family Size

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
0	13	43.3%
1	4	13.3%
2	6	20.0%
3	2	6.7%
4	5	16.7%
Total	30	100%

4.2.4 Household Size

The division of labor, domestic workload, and income pressure were crucial factors based on household size. Half of the respondents, 50%, were living in households of 5-7 people, and 36.7% lived in households of more than 8.

Household Size	Frequency	Percentage
Small (1–4)	4	13.3%
Medium (5–7)	15	50.0%
Large (8+)	11	36.7%
Total	30	100%

4.2.5 Education Level

Education levels were relatively high for a rural sample: 40% had graduate-level (15+ years) education, 30% had 9–14 years, and the remaining 30% had completed only primary or lower-secondary education.

Table 7 Education Level of Respondents

Years of Education	Frequency	Percentage
1–8 years	9	30.0%
9–14 years	9	30.0%
15+ years	12	40.0%
Total	30	100%

4.2.6 Regular Source of Income

A modest majority (56.7%) of women or their family members reported having a regular income. These earnings were derived mostly from agriculture, livestock, teaching, or small businesses.

Table 8 Regular Sources of Income

Regular Income Source	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	56.7%
No	13	43.3%
Total	30	100%

4.2.7 Occupation of Earners

Among households with income earners, 50% worked in agriculture or livestock, while others were employed in education (21.4%), skilled trades (21.4%), or informal labor (7.1%).

Table 9 Occupation of Earners

Occupation Type	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture/Livestock	15	50.0%
Education	6	20.0%
Skilled Jobs (e.g., Health, Teaching, NGOs)	6	20.0%
Other/Informal	3	10.0%
Total	14	100%

4.2.8 Ownership and Access to Agricultural Land

While 80% of respondents reported that their family-owned land, only 46.7% said they had any land claim, most through inheritance or informal promises. Yet actual legal entitlement or access to decision-making was significantly lower.

- 80% of families owned land
- 46.7% respondents claimed some land through inheritance
- Only ~10–15% had legal papers or control

This highlights the disconnect between cultural norms and actual land access among women.

4.2.9 Ownership of Livestock

60% of respondents reported ownership or partial control over livestock (mostly cattle or goats). However, income from livestock (milk, meat, etc.) was still controlled by male household members in most cases.

4.2.10 Summary of Socioeconomic Profile

The socioeconomic and demographic description of the 30 women respondents, who responded, reveals rural women of Pakpattan, Punjab, and reveals contrasts between formal education, the role of women in the household, and their empowerment and ownership in the agricultural fields.

40 percent of the 30 women respondents had 15 years or more of formal education, which is quite high, but with a lack of empowerment or ownership in the agricultural field.

The majority of the women were married (70%) and lived with their families in medium to large households, and in most cases, these were extended families, which shaped the control of resources. Over 56.7% of the respondents said that they or their family had a stable income. A big part of this money, though, was from male workplaces or male-dominated workplaces. Even when women were engaged in farming and other activities related to livestock, they could only control their finances.

The ownership of land and access to agricultural land were opposites of each other. Although 80 percent of the participants affirmed that their families owned the land, few of the women affirmed that they had informal or formal rights to land at 46.7 percent, and even fewer of them had the land registered to their names. The difference between symbolic inheritance (where women hope to be given land) and legal entitlement (where women have rights to the land and the relevant documents) was stark and indicates an embedded system of patriarchal inheritance. As a few women shared, the future promises from fathers or brothers were neither tangible nor ultimately helpful in the present.

Ownership of livestock was slightly more common, with 60% of respondents reporting managing or caring for livestock. However, even in this context, the financial rewards from selling milk or meat were largely captured by male members of the family. While women's work was vital, their contributions were ignored in formal governance structures of the household and, therefore, were absent from income distribution.

As we have seen in the previous section, descriptive statistics showcase a paradox where a number of women are educated and live in an active agricultural and livestock-rearing family, yet remain structurally and culturally excluded from the benefits of their knowledge and labor. This is a different kind of disempowerment, beyond poverty and illiteracy. The outcome of gendered systems that put women in a bind is narrow finances, limited involvement in agricultural leadership, and limited ability to operate land according to their choice, and these leave women, mostly, as the backbone of the household and farm practices.

These lead us to the thematic analysis, which follows, where the women narrate their stories and the researcher investigates the tactics women use to negotiate their roles to push boundaries and project the ways to empower themselves.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

4.3.1 Introduction to Thematic Analysis

To examine the complexities of the relationships between access to productive agricultural resources and empowerment of women within the framework of the Pakpattan district, a thematic analysis was used on the qualitative data collected using semi-structured interviews. The data were subjected to coding, categorization, and development of the theme following the six-stage approach developed by Braun and Clarke. The central themes revealed as a consequence of the study's conceptual framework reflect the different factors affecting women's agricultural participation, which include land ownership, income stewardship, access to resources and inputs, livestock roles, legal and civic awareness, leadership and the current sociocultural orientations.

The respondents were also diversified by the gender of the women and were classified into four broad areas:

1. Women who received the land of their fathers.
2. Women who were given land by their husbands.
3. Women whose access to or entitlement to land is nonexistent.
4. Self-identified women feel empowered.

The research findings indicate that the system of agriculture is highly gendered, with the labor of women being the most vital and invisible; the rights of women are symbolic, and the position of women is limited by well-established patriarchal norms. Each of the themes is discussed below.

Theme 1: Limited Land Ownership and Symbolic Entitlement

The availability of agricultural land is a key aspect of women's empowerment in rural economies. But the qualitative data analysis demonstrates that although there are women, technically, who are the owners of land, few have practical control over the land, how it is used, managed, or to earn income. This lack of alignment between official ownership and environmental empowerment is not only common but also very deeply rooted in the male-dominated systems. This theme embodies contradictions between symbolic entitlement and functional exclusion, especially to inheritance, legal recognition, as well as today making of agricultural decisions.

Sub-theme 1.1: Land Titled to Men (Father or Husband)

Most of the respondents, particularly those who belonged to the agricultural families, indicated that their families possessed land. But the property of the land was patrilineal with overwhelming dominance, owned by fathers, brothers, or husbands. The name of women was not recorded in land books, and in instances where women were supposed to inherit land, the decision-making was all male-dominated.

“My father and husband are both landowners, and I do not have any access or right.”

“My brother takes care of my land and finances my education, but I do not receive any income or make any decisions.”

Women in the rural economy should be empowered by the opportunity to cultivate farmlands. Based on the qualitative data analysis, it is evident that even though some women can be termed as the owners of land, only a small percentage of them control how the land is used, managed, or even benefited. Such an unequal division of control and real power is a normal situation and is enshrined in a male-dominated system. This disparity shows that there are differences between the reality of these women being owned and their socio-political inclusion as compared to functional exclusion, with emphasis on inheritance, legal category, and practical governance of farms.

Sub-theme 1.2: Ownership Without Control

In instances where women indicated that they privately owned land or were legally titled to land, they did not have control in making important decisions about agriculture, such as the choice of

crops to be planted, whether to sell land or crops, and even on how the land could be used to earn income. It is a situation of agency-free ownership. These were women who were technically landowners, that is, what scholars call paper owners.

“Although I have some land on the side of my parents, all decisions are made by my husband or brother.”

“I hope one day my father will give me a piece of land, but I would not even be able to use it without his allowance.”

Such a lack of control is the direct opposite of the indicators of empowerment presented in the framework. Precisely, on the one hand, these women seem to meet the requirement of the so-called entitlement criterion, but they do not meet the requirement of autonomy over land use and the power to make decisions. This is a cultural trend that allows female possession of things, so long as it does not interfere with male dominance.

This symbolic right is also compromised by the denial of inheritance, as the culture does not encourage daughters to take their legal possession of land in order to prevent conflict within the family. One respondent stated:

“In our culture, it is quite unethical to steal any part of agriculture when one is single or at their parents' place.”

These beliefs act as cultural gatekeepers that deny land to women even when laws are formally established to enforce the rights of women. Not only does this perpetuate gender inequality, but it also deprives women of the economic foundation that they need to be empowered, such as the generation of income, borrowing, and productive investment.

Theme 2: Lack of Decision-Making Power

Decision-making autonomy is a crucial indicator of empowerment. Within Khadija's research, it became evident that rural women in Pakpattan are rarely involved in decisions regarding land use, crop selection, livestock management, or income utilization, even when they actively contribute labor and possess formal education or land entitlement. This lack of decision-making power

highlights the disconnect between women's responsibilities and their authority and reinforces broader gender inequality in agricultural households.

Sub-theme 2.1: Exclusion from Agricultural Decision-Making

Across the interviews, a consistent narrative emerged: women are excluded from decisions about what to plant, when to harvest, how to manage animals, and how to spend the income generated. These decisions are typically made by male members—fathers, husbands, or brothers—regardless of women's educational status or contribution.

“Even though I am a PhD scholar in biotechnology, I’m not consulted on what crops to grow or when to plant.”

“My husband decides everything. I just help with feeding or milking the animals.”

This exclusion reflects the deep-rooted perception that agricultural expertise and authority lie with men, even when women are academically or technically more qualified. Respondents with degrees in agriculture-related fields expressed frustration at being sidelined in decisions they were professionally trained to make.

This sub-theme links directly to the conceptual domain of “Production and Income-Related Decision Making”, which includes indicators like:

- Decision-making over crop and livestock production
- Income management and use
- Selling and purchasing authority

Khadija's findings reveal a gap between informal labor contributions and formal decision authority. Women often bear the burden of execution (e.g., feeding animals, watering crops), while men retain control over planning and income.

Sub-theme 2.2: Defined Gender Roles and Role Disempowerment

The second layer of this theme examines the gendered division of labor, which positions women's activities as primarily auxiliary, even where considerable physical work is done. Respondents

reported that their activities as “nothing” roles, while framing assisting in “household or field work” as non-decisional processes.

“I do all the livestock care—feeding, milking, cleaning. But selling or buying is not my job.”

“I work the whole day in the field. However, I am not permitted to go to the market.”

Such self-descriptions depict the internalized disempowerment of women; they are the result of social conditioning, leading women to only perceive their contributions as physical, not managerial or leadership. In such sociocultural realities, empowerment is not access alone. It requires changing the concealed belief systems that women’s knowledge, skills, and experiences are inadequate.

In addition, the physical barriers to mobility contributed to the invisibility of women in the market as they could not negotiate, market train, or even attend the market because of the act of public visibility which is regarded as male work.

This is the second layer of the theme concerning the division of labor, which relates to "Time Use and Bargaining Power." It has already been established that women’s work is yoked as they are burdened with considerable work, which becomes bounded within the confines of non-strategic and non-decisional frameworks.

Theme 3: Male Control Over Agricultural Income

One of the significant indicators of empowerment in agriculture is a woman's capacity to manage the income generated from her work, be it in her field of crops, livestock she sustainably nurtures, or in retail operations from her home. From Khadija’s study, it is clear that even with active female participation in agriculture as well as livestock production, the income control and expenditure utilization is predominantly a male affair. This part reveals the underlying factors that hinder women from achieving economic empowerment and agency even when they actively participate in income-generating activities.

Sub-theme 3.1: Exclusion from Financial Decisions

Women provided responses that paints a similar picture. They are involved in agriculture and livestock, and at times even engage in selling dairy products such as milk or butter. Unfortunately, the earnings are gathered, controlled, and spent by male figures in the family such as fathers, brothers, or husbands. Very few women were able to claim that they possessed the monetary resources that they helped to earn.

“My brother handles the land, and the income is spent on his children, not shared with me.”

This falls under the third domain of the study framework which is

“Production and Income-Related Decision-Making” which includes:

- Authority to sell and manage income
- Autonomy over product use and investment
- Share of income gained from production

The findings suggest that earning the income does not guarantee the individual access to that money. In fact, multiple women reported that they did not possess any notion of how much income was earned and did not have any say on how the money was spent. In a few households, the income from livestock was spent solely on the children's education and groceries without any say from the women.

This not only restrict the women's economic freedom, but also curtails women's ability to plan, save, or invest in farming activities, which in turn, reinforces dependency and hinders productivity in the future.

Sub-theme 3.2: Absence of Banking Access and Mobile Financial Autonomy

A large number of respondents indicated they do not operate a bank account independently, even when they technically own one. Mobile financial tools (e.g., Jazz Cash, Easy Paisa) were mentioned, but these were not used for agricultural transactions or savings. Instead, women relied on male relatives for all financial interactions.

“I have a Jazz Cashaccount, but I don’t operate it myself.”
“Even if I sell livestock products, the money is handled by my husband.”

This sub-theme directly relates to the fifth domain of study framework: “Access to Financial Services”, including:

- Use of bank accounts
- Control of mobile money platforms
- Autonomy in savings and investment decisions

The data underscores the digital and institutional exclusion of women from rural financial systems. Even when they have the technology or access, they lack the training, confidence, or cultural permission to manage finances independently.

Theme 4: Women’s Invisible Contribution in Agriculture and Livestock

One of the most striking findings of the research is the scope of women’s engagement in agriculture and animal husbandry, and how their efforts go unrecognized and undervalued. This theme examines the erasure of women’s work in the agriculture and agrarian economies of Pakpattan in the household, the marketplace, and in policy frameworks, where their efforts are crucial but remain unacknowledged.

Sub-theme 4.1: Labor Without Recognition

Women have reported performing agricultural and livestock-related chores, including sowing, weeding, feeding and milking animals, cleaning sheds and harvesting, as well as watering crops. However, their contributions were most of the time framed as “help” or “supportive” rather than managerial, professional, or core to production processes.

“I take care of all livestock feeding, milking, cleaning—but I’m just a helper. I have no say in decisions.”

“I work all day on the land, but my role is never acknowledged. My brother or husband is called the farmer.”

Such invisibility corroborates the under appreciation of Women's Work bias, particularly in South Asia, where women's agricultural labor is systematically marginalized, especially when performed in the context of a household or family farm. Societal and cultural perceptions oftentimes restrict the scope of women's work to the background, perpetuating the notion that "real farming" is masculine labor, even when women perform the most of the manual work.

In the study's context, this sub-theme is associated with the following

- Time Use in Agriculture and Domestic Work
- Access to Productive Agricultural Assets
- Decision Making Autonomy

Respondents reported that even when they exceeded male counterparts in hours of work performed, their contributions were classified as informal and natural, devoid of any expectation for remuneration.

Sub-theme 4.2: Absence in Market Participation

A large number of women said that they actively participated in the production of agricultural or livestock products, but very few of them participated in their selling. Alternatively, the market, in both its physical sense and in terms of decision-making, remains firmly a male space. While some women reported that they were outright forbidden from going to the market, others felt it wasn't their obligation to sell or negotiate.

"I sell milk at home, but a man collects it. I'm not allowed to go to the market."

"I do everything for the animals, but the selling is done by my brother."

The invisibility of women in the market brings about the following two effects:

- It renders women's participation in market activities as underappreciated, for it appears that men singlehandedly oversee and manage production and profit.
- It renders women incapable of being self-sufficient or self-employed by depriving them the ability to understand the concepts of price setting, negotiation, and the workings of buyers.

These are directly relevant to Khadija's criteria under:

- Networking and Participation
- Access to Market Spaces
- Production and Income Decision-Making

Theme 5: Yearning for Self-Empowerment versus Cultural Limitations

This theme captures the emotional and mental manifestations of tension that several rural women undergo in the context of agriculture. The women articulate awareness of their education and potential competencies in the farming and livestock sectors. At the same time, they talk about being restrained by norms of culture that are deeply rooted. This tension where women have to negotiate what they want to pursue and what they are permitted to pursue features prominently as a unifying theme in several interviews.

Sub-theme 5.1: Understanding of Rights and the Call for Social Change

Particularly, a number of respondents such as those with advanced education, displayed a great deal of understanding of their legal rights, modern farming techniques, and traditional farming techniques. These women highlighted the need for a right to claim, engage in, and hold leadership positions in agriculture.

“It is possible to increase yield with modern techniques, but we lack access to land or inputs.”

“As a teacher in a university, I still do not feel in control of the power I hold, as the power is still with the male members of the family.”

Such narratives as the previous two highlight the fact that access to knowledge or education in a patriarchal context is not as helpful without additional resources. Socially entrenched norms make it impossible for women to exercise the management knowledge they possess regarding land, livestock, or finances.

This sub-theme complements the following indicators:

- Legal Awareness and Property Rights

- Access and Control Over Agricultural Resources
- Participation in Agricultural Decision-Making

Sub-theme 5.2: Cultural Boundaries Restricting Participation

Most women described cultural norms that limited not only mobility, but also participation in agriculture as anything beyond physical labor. From customs of inheritance to gendered mobility restrictions and the dominant male structure in households, women often described feeling disempowered, disconnected from the skills they possess and the aspirations they hold.

"Back when I was single, I made decisions for myself. Now, I feel voiceless at my in-law's place after marriage."

"If we inquire about our obligations and responsibilities, we are labelled as disrespectful or selfish."

These stories highlight the burdensome cost of culture in women's dependency—aspirations not limited by a lack of will or capability, but by the weight of judgment, disapproval, or societal consequences. Women tend to systematically rationalize these restrictions as a result of feeling unworthy. Such a perception leads to believing that they do not deserve to access, much less control, the limited resources available.

This sub-theme is closely associated with:

- Autonomy in Decision-Making
- Active Participation in Community and Policy-Making
- Access to Platforms for Empowerment

Theme 6: The Systemic Hurdles to the Empowerment of Women

This theme zeroes in on the systemic and institutional gaps that lack enabling frameworks for women in agriculture to access resources, partake in governance, and enjoy the benefits of development initiatives. Numerous individual and societal obstacles to women's empowerment in agriculture have already been discussed. The findings indicate a gap in the constructive

enforcement of policies, scant outreach of agricultural programs, a gender-neutral financial and legal infrastructure, and lack of constructive exclusion and dependency policies.

Sub-theme 6.1: Inadequate Enforcement of Property and Gender Laws

Practically all women surveyed noted that for various reasons, including not being physically available, not being document signatories, or being left out of decision-making processes, they would not be recognized as inheritors or landowners. Certain laws may be set out to provide rights to individuals, however, those rights are not implemented in practice, or in most cases, are not accepted socially.

“I have land from my parents’ side, but my brother controls it completely.”

“There is land in my name, but even though my family thinks I do not know how to manage it, I cannot decide anything.”

This phenomenon portrays the absence of adequate governance structures. There are no social systems in place within communities to defend or monitor women’s land rights, and social policing by communities to enforce inheritance laws is nonexistent.

This sub-theme aligns with:

- Legal Awareness and Rights
- Entitlement and Duration of Access
- Agricultural Policy Implementation

Sub-theme 6.2: Lack of Comprehensive Agricultural Assistance

Participants of the survey were not issued with agricultural inputs, were not issued with training invitations, and had no exposure to extension or NGO services. The primary reason behind this is that agricultural outreach programs are tailored for male farmers, and it is presumed that men farmers are the only or primary participants.

“Nothing was ever sent to us—in terms of aid, no seeds, no fertilizers, no tools. No one ever came to ask us.”

“No one calls us to training sessions, so we no longer want to attend, but we are willing to attend training programs.”

Even women with education or those who involve themselves in agriculture were excluded from the activities of the government and NGOs. This invites the assumption that the design of the outreach is gender blind.

This sub-theme concerns the following indicators from:

- Access to Inputs and Subsidies
- Participation in Agricultural Training
- Access to Technical Support Services

Sub-theme 6.3: Insufficiencies in Financial Inclusion and Credit Access

Only a small number of women owned independent bank accounts, and even fewer applied for agricultural credit or micro loans. Most of these women either lacked knowledge of these services or assumed they would not be eligible without a male’s endorsement.

“We don’t even know how to apply for any loan. No one guides us.”

“Even if I had land access, I’d need a male guarantor to get credit.”

This highlights the deep-rooted financial disempowerment of women, especially in rural areas. Women are either systematically overlooked by financial institutions, or the policies of these institutions intrinsically necessitate male endorsement, further entrenching women’s exclusion from the economy.

This problem relates to:

- Access to Financial Services
- Bank Account Operation and Ownership
- Agricultural Loans and Credit Availability

Theme 7: New Empowerment Pathways

The study's findings present some emerging positive trends, even in the context of relentless structural, cultural, and financial barriers. Some younger and more educated women seemed to be more willing to challenge the traditional culture and actively seek knowledge, control, and strategies for future self-governed independence. This theme focuses on those nascent trajectories of empowerment, which while still in the early stages, are delicate and reveal new hope for rural women in agriculture.

Sub-theme 7.1: Progression of Education and Self-Efficacy

Women who had attained a secondary education or higher showed confidence in their decision-making ability regarding agriculture. This is often due to their comprehension of modern farming techniques, biotechnology, and effective crop management. This form of self-efficacy, even if mismatched to access or control, suggests an emerging form of internal empowerment.

“As women, we know more than our elders about farming, but we are waiting for the opportunity to prove ourselves.”

“I want to start vegetable farming as a business if I get land access.”

This suggests education serves a higher function than a mere credential. It is capable of nurturing agency, aspiration, and even knowledge. There is a sense of women, even when access is constrained, preparing to act when the opportunity presents itself.

This is consistent with other indicators pertaining to:

- Legal and Technical Awareness
- Modern Knowledge in Agriculture
- Confidence and Autonomy

Sub-theme 7.2: Family Support along with Changing Gender Norms

In a few illustrative cases, supportive fathers or brothers emerged who, by virtue of their familial tie, recognized the right of women to participate in decision-making and promised to offer land to women as they do to their male counterparts. While a few, these examples illuminate the changing face of intra-family gender relations.

"My father said he will give me equal land like my brothers."

"My family asks for my opinion in livestock matters now."

These modest opportunities mark incremental progress but are promising in paving the way toward future changes. Motivating supportive male advocates within families as well as community dialogues that promote gender-sensitive norms can help to scale the changes.

This connects with:

- Entitlement and Shared Access
- Inclusion in Family Decision-Making
- Intra-household Negotiation of Roles

Sub-theme 7.3: Interest in Training, Groups and Policy Engagement

A considerable number of respondents, including those that had had no formal training in agriculture, expressed a desire to attend training sessions, participate in women's agricultural groups, and learn about the management of crops and agricultural inputs. Furthermore, there is a shift toward understanding government policies and regulations as they relate to women farmers, indicating a willingness to shift from a passive to an active stance—if there are appropriate support systems.

"Instructors need to consider zones for females for us to be able to attend trainings."

"Programs need to be tailored for females if they are to be taken seriously."

This enthusiasm suggests the possibility for grassroots organizing within:

- Women's groups or cooperative societies
- Skill development platforms
- Female farmer empowerment initiatives

Such approaches can create the first steps towards women's collective empowerment by enabling them to transcend individual burdens to advocacy coalitions with interdependent support frameworks.

Women's inability to access timely support for farming entrenches productivity, and reinforces dependence on male intermediaries.

Theme 8: The Gendered Time Burden of Agricultural and Domestic Work

This theme emphasizes the agricultural and domestic work singularly undertaken by women with livestock, providing them with a full-time job. The qualitative data and time use data suggest that women have suffered a loss of wellbeing, alongside the inability to engage or learn, compounded by chronic fatigue.

Sub-Theme 8.1: Extended Working Hours: Livestock and Agriculture

Several respondents reported daily involvement in livestock and agricultural activities such as animal feeding, milking, weeding, watering, and even harvesting for 4 to 8 hours. Alongside these activities, they also performed all household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children.

“My whole day is spent working in the field, taking care of cattle, and then I also do all the housework.”

Women often undocumented as full-time householders, and alongside these roles, women carry out domestic work, which is mostly invisible to the outside world. There are no boundaries set for the time set for rest, self-care, or education, which lowers the physical and mental reserves further perpetuating the cycle of exclusion.

This sub-theme reflects the indicators of:

- Time Allocation in Agriculture and Other Work
- Decision-Making Autonomy and Role Division
- Hidden Work and Burnout

Sub-Theme 8.2: Insufficient Time to Participate in or Attend Any Training

This is noted, responding to the theoretical availability of the training, the majority of women expressed not attending due to the time burden. Their engagement in public functions, women farmer groups, or even the village meeting is restricted due to the prevailing conservative norms that expect a woman to be indoors.

“I would be interested in attending workshops, but I cannot be away from the house for an entire day.”

This limits their access to advanced knowledge for modern farming practices as well as access to peer networks, collective bargaining, and conversations surrounding policy. The unseen burden of time poverty silently restricts the potential for self-empowerment, even for the most enthusiastic prospective contributors.

Theme 9: Fragmented Legal Awareness and Policy Disconnect

Accessing and exercising legal rights is often a complex issue for women due to a lack of information and legal awareness. Even in the context of Pakistani legal frameworks which include inheritance laws and policies regarding agriculture, women in this particular study demonstrated a lack of understanding of legal frameworks which oftentimes excluded them from relevant discussions.

Sub-theme 9.1: Deficiency in Understanding of Ownership of Land and Rights to Inheritance

A notable proportion of women lacked clarity on whether they had rights to land, and if so, what actions they could take to access it. Even amongst the few who had received land as a part of an inheritance, securing access, or updating the title documents was an alien concept. Societal narratives often intertwine legal rights with morals, collapsing the clear distinction that exists between the two.

“I have received land from my father, however it is not a registered property under my name, thus I doubt I have a legal right to it.”

“Men always take care of those things, so we have no idea how inheritance works.”

The lack of direct engagement with women in rural areas, coupled with the absence of accessible legal frameworks, results in women not having any tangible influence despite being deemed landowners.

This describes the following indicators:

- Legal Awareness and Rights
- Entitlement Status and Policy Gaps
- Women's Disconnection from Legal Mechanisms

Sub-theme 9.2: Exclusion from Policy Platforms and Governance

Women had little to no contact with any government agency, agricultural extension personnel, or women's rights organizations. They had not been provided with any form of public consultation regarding agricultural policy, government aid programs, or even development projects within their villages.

"Policies come and go, but we are never told what they mean for us."

"No one from any office has ever visited us."

This highlights the critical absence of integration between women farmers and the government, suggesting that policies are created in such a way that completely ignores the provisions for the population they are intended to assist.

This sub-theme illustrates gaps in:

- Policy Communication and Implementation
- Grassroots Representation
- Consultative Governance

4.4 Overview of Thematic Analysis and Comparison with Literature

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data from women in agriculture in Pakpattan reveals a great deal about the challenges and new prospects that are emerging in relation to women's

empowerment in agriculture. The analysis centered on nine themes, in which women's legal rights, land and input access, decision making, workload, financial inclusion, institutional shortcomings, and empowerment pathways were included.

A consistent motif throughout the themes is the gap between formal entitlements and on-the-ground practice. Although many women legally possessed land or livestock, very few were able to exercise control over them. They were often culturally and socially situated within families to play secondary, even if active, roles. This closely mirrors Agarwal's (1994) seminal study on women and land in South Asia, which argues that having ownership in possessions without control does very little to change power relations. Moreover, Meinzen-Dick et al. (2014) studied secure tenure rights and concluded that such rights are only empowering in association with requisite apportioning of power, access to appropriate training, and financial participation, which further resonates with the barriers uncovered in the current study.

From the study, it emerged that having education without any other supporting resources does not lead to empowerment. Several respondents with advanced degrees reported feeling disempowered due to cultural norms and inadequate legal or institutional frameworks. This supports Kabeer's (1999) theory that empowerment is not only about individual capability but also having access to favorable systems that aid in making tactical life decisions. Equally, FAO (2011) illustrates that women, even where the bulk of the work in agriculture is performed by them, are systematically and substantively marginalized from participation in decision-making, active market engagement, and other avenues of participation.

As illustrated by the data, Quisumbing et al. (2015) describes the phenomenon of "double burden" as women engaging in both intensive agriculture and household work without any acknowledgment of their efforts or compensation. This overarching burden restricts them from participating in training programs or collective action, thus reinforcing the continued cycle of disempowerment.

Empowering emerging trajectories, particularly among women aware of their rights and those motivated to initiate agribusiness, are highlighted in the study, which, on a more hopeful note, broadens women's empowerment. These findings are in line with those of the World Bank (2020),

which bolstered the notion that rural women's empowerment is most effective when resource accessibility is coupled with market engagement, group participation, and responsive policy work.

However, the more strongly emphasized purpose-built landscape is still lacking, remaining largely exclusionary. Most respondents did not possess a basic level of government program awareness, legal processes, and were largely excluded from political spaces. Nazli and Hamid (2021) also criticize the Pakistani agricultural policy, which overlooks women's needs, implementing narrow, gender-neutral frameworks devoid of development or gender-responsive reform.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Policy Proposals

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the issues of productive rural agricultural assets accessibility and empowerment of women in Pakpattan, Punjab. The study conducted a primary data analysis through a thematic analysis to reveal that there exist structural and socio-cultural obstacles that continue to affect the full involvement of women in the agricultural economy. The women still have no access to land, no freedom in decision making, no financial independence, and little awareness and support of their rights under the law, despite their enormous contribution in the farming and livestock sector.

The results showed no relationship between legal rights and real empowerment. Though legally there are women who own land, only a very small percentage of these women control the use of the land; in addition to that, they usually do not economically rely on the land. Land, in most instances, is controlled by male relatives, either fathers, brothers, or husbands. Even highly educated and career-oriented women stated that they are not in agricultural decision-making, and this revealed the gender norms that had existed at an early stage of marginalizing women, irrespective of their qualifications.

The research also established that there were no affordable agricultural inputs e.g., seeds, manure, machinery, and irrigation systems. The time poverty was found to be a major limitation, and women had to work on the farms and do the chores, which did not leave time to train and network, and thus had no time to plan their strategies. The voices of the women come out clearly that women can not just be empowered by ownership, education, but it is a process that requires independence, access to institutions, and culture.

The study also identified the lack of coherent legal awareness and the ineffective policy application as the major obstacles. A lot of respondents did not know their rights to inheritance or whether there could be programs to help women farmers. The dissemination of information, legal services, and active outreach of governmental institutions needs to be improved.

These results coincide with the rest of the literature on gender and agriculture in South Asia (Agarwal, 1994; Kabeer, 1999; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2011). Empowerment of women, as demonstrated by other researchers, must go beyond the ownership of assets, having to include decision-making power, being seen in governance, and specific institutional encouragement (FAO, 2018; World Bank, 2020).

Overall, the article shows that the empowerment of women in agriculture is limited by three barriers, namely, cultural norms, institutional exclusion, and low legal activation. However, even in these difficulties, there is an opening and an opportunity, especially among young and educated women who will show their potential in leadership and innovation in agriculture with the help of effective policies and community transformation.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

1. Enhance Legal Awareness and Land Entitlement Access

- ❖ Launch community-based legal literacy campaigns to inform women of their inheritance and land rights.

2. Improve Agricultural Extension and Training Services

- ❖ Appoint female extension officers and develop tailored training programs addressing women's needs in farming and livestock.
- ❖ Promote peer mentorship among women in agriculture for knowledge exchange and motivation.

3. Facilitate Access to Inputs, Credit, and Support Services

- ❖ Provide subsidized input packages (seeds, fertilizers, tools) directly to women farmers.
- ❖ Expand access to women-focused microfinance and credit schemes with low interest and flexible terms.

4. **Promote Collective Action and Institutional Inclusion**

- ❖ Support the formation of women-led agricultural cooperatives and ensure their access to markets and services.

5. **Strengthening Gender-Responsive Policy and Institutional Coordination**

- ❖ Integrate gender goals into all agricultural and rural development policies with specific indicators and targets.
- ❖ Provide gender-sensitivity training to government staff and conduct regular gender audits of programs.

6. **Bridge Information Gaps and Cultural Barriers**

- ❖ Disseminate policy information using accessible media and formats (SMS, posters, local gatherings).

5.3 Limitations of the Study

- **Geographic Scope:** The study was limited to the district of **Pakpattan**, which may not fully reflect the conditions in other parts of rural Pakistan.
- **Sample Size:** The qualitative sample was relatively small and may not capture the full diversity of women's experiences across socio-economic or ethnic lines.
- **Time Constraints:** Time limitations affected the depth of follow-up interviews and observational data, which could have enriched the findings.
- **Lack of Institutional Data:** The study primarily relied on individual narratives and did not incorporate institutional records or government datasets to triangulate findings.
- **Focus on Women Only:** The research excluded the perspectives of male family members, policymakers, or agricultural officers, which could have added balance to the analysis.

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