

An overview of the existing problems faced by Pakistani women in agriculture: conclusion and recommendation

Problems
faced by
Pakistani
women

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Received 29 April 2020
Revised 5 June 2020
Accepted 5 June 2020

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is an attempt to cover available literature on natural resource management, which reflects the involvement of Pakistan communities living in different regions for sustainable management in agriculture, forestry and livestock sectors differentiated by women. In addition, it was also highlighted about the lack of access to productive resources for rural women farmers. The conclusion was drawn and key recommendation were suggested.

Design/methodology/approach – It is authors real-life experiences or observations in a given field to support colleagues in a variety of ways including advising, establishing best practices and noting trends.

Findings – It was concluded that there are no opportunities such as training of most advanced launched technologies for the sake of better crop production, dairy and fisheries sector sustainable development, as well as the availability of microfinance to support the women farmers in Pakistan rural areas to make them self-dependent.

Originality/value – The opinions and key recommendations are genuine and useful, which should be adopted for the more bright future of women farmers, especially in Pakistan's rural area.

Keywords Pakistan, Agriculture, Natural resource management, Women role

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction

The overall human needs including food, shelter, fuel, medicines and other desired materials for the survival of human being are fulfilled by available natural resources (Lal, 2015). At



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Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Ecofeminism and Climate Change
Vol. 1 No. 2, 2020
pp. 97-104
Emerald Publishing Limited
p-ISSN: 2633-4062
e-ISSN: 2633-4070
DOI 10.1108/EFCC-04-2020-0010

present, the existing natural resources, especially in developing countries, are facing potential threats of their exhaustion (Jowit, 2008). The poor natural resource management becomes a cause of a variety of unwanted changes (natural disaster) such as deforestation, the threat to biodiversity conservation, global warming, water scarcity problems, flood and drought period, which are accelerated by technology advancement, population expansion and poverty issues (Abramovitz *et al.*, 2001). In other words, it can be described as follows: “the consumption of available natural resources by human activities is faster than the potential of the planet to replenish and produce it.” Sustainable natural resource management is a key approach to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals (Garrity, 2004). Therefore, the agenda of sustainable use of natural resources for the sake of natural resource management and environmental protection has gained fame around the globe.

Gender refers to the socio-cultural contribution, attitudes, attributes, participation and opportunities for men and women, which are considered acceptable in any society. It is very acceptable that men and women do not have equal rights over natural resources because they have their priorities and benefits over natural resource use and management perspective point of view (Resurreccion and Elmhirst, 2012). Hence, the knowledge level, expertise and field practices from both ends men and women directly attached to conservation, sustainable management and improvement of natural resources under different aspects (Homburgh, 1993). Therefore, there is a need to look at the interplay in different factors including roles, knowledge level and desired needs of women for the sake of sustainable management of natural resources (Mikkelsen, 2005).

There are plenty of studies already available about the geographic spread of gender research in the agriculture sector as presented in Table 1. However, this article is an attempt to cover available literature on natural resource management, which reflects the involvement of Pakistan communities living in different regions for sustainable management in agriculture, forestry and livestock sectors differentiated by women. The participation and responsibilities of women change as the geographic area changes, along with variation in local customs, norms and traditional values. That is why, in this study women role for agriculture sector in four provinces or two regions of Pakistan is highlighted. This article suggests agriculture sector-specific recommendations-based opinion.

Table 1.
Geographic spread of
gender research in
the agriculture sector

Chapter number and name	General studies	Total	Country and region-specific studies				
			Latin Africa	South America	Southeast Asia	Other	
5. Gender asset gap	21	51	25	7	11	6	2
6. Gender equity and land	26	55	32	7	13	3	0
7. Nonland agricultural inputs, technology and services	20	66	50	5	7	2	2
8. Access to financial services	37	64	33	11	14	5	1
9. Livestock	32	86	64	4	16	1	1
10. Gender and social capital	21	49	15	6	22	6	2
11. Nutrition and health	35	38	25	2	6	3	2
Geographic spread (%)			59	10	22	6	2

Source: Quisumbing *et al.* (2014)

Selected characteristics of rural area women

All around the globe, the role of women to participate in agricultural tasks and in livestock management cannot be denied. Pakistan is an agricultural country, 70% of its population has engaged with the agriculture sector through different aspects. As Pakistan is an agricultural country, so the major labor forces have engaged in agriculture associated activities about half of which is comprising women forces that endorsed the gender aspect cannot be ignored (Luqman *et al.*, 2006). In Pakistan, it is considered that women are used to starting working in their early age period than the men. In the case of animal caring, look after and management, women perform this duty very well when compared with men's performance. In all provinces of Pakistan, women spend most of the time in farming and livestock-related activities such as cultivation, irrigation, weeding, harvesting, fodder chopping, watering, grazing animals, milk processing, respectively (Iftikhar *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, for regular rural activities including domestic tasks, livestock caring and farming practices, women perform these tasks more hardly, gently and efficiently.

Role of women for agriculture sector in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) province is located in northeastern Pakistan. The economy of this area is based on agriculture and tourism sectors, services offer and remittances by members of the large Kashmiri living in foreign countries. Both men and women play different roles for agricultural-related activities encountered in rural farm set-up. However, women have a major contribution to crop processing, poultry and livestock management. Unfortunately, it has monitored that the productivity of farm's land is below the standard when compared with their actual potential, which was referred to as the less land holding scenario, implementation of conventional farming techniques, limited access to modern extension services, etc. In addition, the lack of knowledge about the adoption of high yielding varieties, practices of agronomic practices such as crop rotation, balanced fertilizer application, insects, pests and disease prevention through different measures. Previously, the AJK Government has taken steps for the sake of natural resource management by providing various services including seed and fertilizer distribution to the farmers and vaccination services for livestock sector (Khursheed *et al.*, 2019).

Role of women for agriculture sector in Balochistan

In terms of land area, Balochistan is the largest province located in the southwest of Pakistan. It is the most underdeveloped province in terms of infrastructure and profound poverty. The area mostly covered with barren nature Rocky Mountains ranges, deserts and arid grazing lands except for a limited portion, which has reasonably productive grazing land. The economy is remarkably dependent on agricultural activities including fisheries and livestock (Noman *et al.*, 2018; Shafiq and Kakar, 2006). Women in Balochistan are engaged in almost every sector. However, Women's participation in agriculture-based tasks is relatively higher. Rural women have performed multi-tasks related to crop production, livestock rearing and fisheries development despite their household responsibilities. Moreover, women's more interest in the livestock sector has reflected by considerable livestock production than their contribution to crop production activities. In rural areas, Poultry farming, camel, goat and sheep rearing are the key route for earning and nutrition intake for the living community (Shafiq, 2008). For livestock raising, women adopted conventional methods for rearing, breeding and management associated practices, which they have learned from their family elders. Women also bound for the production of dairy items including butter, yogurt and oil. Men is only responsible for the medication of sick animals, which revealed that women has major role in overall crops farming, livestock raising and their concerned management activities. In addition, costal women also engaged

with salting and the drying standard methods adopted for the sake of fish preservation. Besides, coastal women also participate to make decoration masterpieces and ornamental jewellery from unique stones come out of seashells. Therefore, it is stated that the Socio-economic setup of Balochistan reflects unbalanced labour force division with major role of women's in agriculture.

Role of women for agriculture in Gilgit Baltistan

The Gilgit Baltistan (GB) territory is located in the northern areas of Pakistan. Its economy is predominantly based on the agro-pastoral system as the majority of inhabitants are linked with agriculture (Joekes, 1995). Women play potential and crucial roles for the full range of agriculture activities as well in allied fields such as crop pre-harvest and post-harvest operations, horticulture concerning assignments and livestock management (Beg, 2011). Major cereal crops found in this area are barley, maize and wheat. In the case of vegetable gardening, major vegetable crops obtained in GB are cabbage, potato, peas, tomatoes and onion. For vegetable production, women have more authority such as a decision about the selection of variety for growing purpose is rests with women. Besides, GB suitable climate for the production of dried fruits became a source of cash income especially in winter season for small farming communities. From the past 30 years, the private sector, NGOs, government projects and development participants are playing a role to support women in developing these sources of earning sectors.

Role of women for agriculture in Khyber Paktunkhwa

The Khyber Paktunkhwa (KPK) in the province of Pakistan located in the subtropical zone with varied terrain, which is connected through three mountain ranges; Himalayas, Karakorum and Hindu Kush elevation. Overall, KPK could be subdivided into three major zones. The southern area, which has the potential for cereal crop production. The central zone, which has comprising productive lands surrounded by hilly areas. Because of suitable environmental conditions, this zone has sufficient water availability, which is used for the farming of cash crops that is the main cause of higher income levels of society members living in this zone. The northern zone is covered with hilly mountains terrain with no access to the valleys. Especially, off-season crops and vegetables are produced in this region such as; saffron mushrooms.

Because of the prevalent poverty scenario all across the province, rural areas women have been offering their services in diversified agricultural associated activities. For example, Women have their key role in agriculture post-harvesting activities including husking, grading and the preservation of agriculture products, as well as they also participated in livestock raising and caring (principally cattle, goats and poultry) (Andaleeb *et al.*, 2017). The income generated from the selling of dairy items and animals to urban residents is a source of livelihood for rural areas families (Akhtar *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, large amounts of women farmers are attached to agro-forestry. There are numerous private nurseries available to cope with the demand for seedlings.

Role of women for agriculture in Punjab

In terms of population, Punjab province is the most populated area of Pakistan. Punjab lies in the tropical zone with wet and dry climate conditions. The extensive irrigation through the world's largest canal irrigation system designed by the British Government makes this area rich in agriculture activities and overall higher productivity. As compared to other provinces, Punjab has the largest contribution to agriculture farming. The agricultural sector is considered as the backbone for the source of livelihoods especially in rural areas of Punjab. The rural women farmers have a great contribution to the agriculture farming and livestock rearing sector (Manzoor *et al.*, 2018). Rural women perform different farming activities with men including both pre-harvesting and post-harvesting tasks. No matter,

women farmers have their effective key roles and responsibilities in the agriculture sector, but women cannot interfere in decision-making due to cultural values and norms barriers in different communities (Ishaq and Memon, 2017).

Women's inputs in the livestock sector derived by-products are admirable then men's contribution. It should be noted that income generated from agriculture crops is highly seasonal-based prevails in harvesting regimes. However, income obtained from livestock activities is normally generated regularly, which is a good source to fulfill different domestic needs, especially in rural areas.

Role of women for agriculture in Sindh

After Punjab, both in terms of population and economic growth, Sindh province is taken as a second dominant area of Pakistan. Except for Karachi city, Sindh is an agriculture-based area. Especially in rural Sindh, almost 70% population has linked with agriculture activities. Banana, Cotton, mangoes, rice, wheat and sugarcane are the main crops produced in the Sindh area. The participation of rural women farmers has not been weighted to the extent they devoted (Druzza and Peveri, 2018). Their role in various sectors including cropping, livestock rearing and dairy development, back yard poultry, back yard kitchen gardening, agro-forestry and fisheries are more than men, but they do not acknowledge due to local customs and cultural norms (NoorMmemon *et al.*, 2015). The women farmers produced poor crops yield due to the use of conventional methods and limited access to the latest technologies, lack of technical knowledge and non-availability of inputs needed.

Conclusions and recommendations

The province wise percentage of women and men contribution into Pakistan agriculture sector is presented in Figure 1. It has concluded from the available literature about the effective role of women farmers in agriculture farming, livestock husbandry and dairy development, all over Pakistan especially in the rural area of all provinces. They participated in the overall majority of on-farm and off-farm activities. Due to socio-economics, cultural milieu and technological obstacles such as lack of decision-making, no availability of desired needs, very strange family behavior, lack of knowledge about modernized agriculture technologies as depicted in Figure 2. There are no opportunities such as training of most advanced launched technologies for the sake of better crop production, dairy and fisheries sector sustainable development, as well as the availability of microfinance to support the women farmers in Pakistan rural areas to make them self-dependent. There are few key recommendations as presented in Figure 3, which should be adopted for the more bright future of women farmers, especially in Pakistan's rural area.

- Government of different provinces should arrange related sectors technical training program or workshops especially for rural women farmers to enhance their technical knowledge, improve their skills by adopting modernize technological advancement routes for crop farming activities, livestock, dairy and fisheries sector improvement for the sake of better productivity and income generated.
- The microfinance loan availability to rural women farmers should be ensured on time in different geographic regions at the provincial level in Pakistan.
- There is a dire need for extension system improvements, which timely introduce new advanced technologies for different sectors sustainable development and there should be subsidy offer if someone adopted these newly launched technologies for the better and effective use of the available natural resource (Baloch and Thapa, 2018).

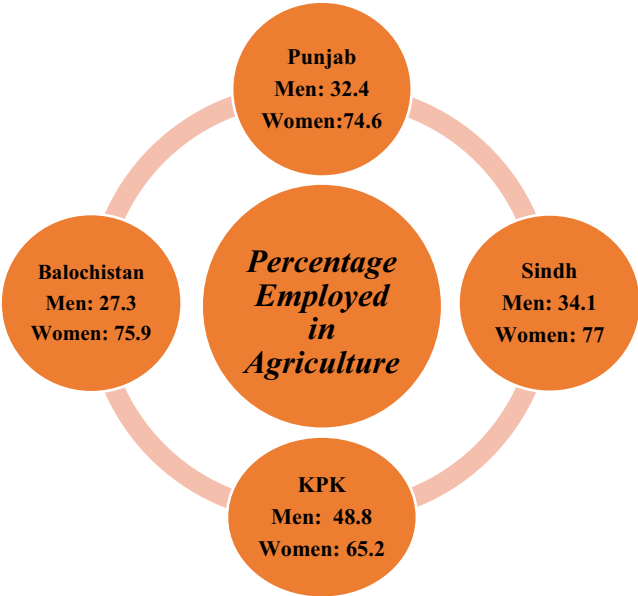


Figure 1.
The percentage-wise
gender participation
in agriculture in
Pakistan by province

Source: Labour Force Survey 2014-15 (2015). Islamabad:
Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS)

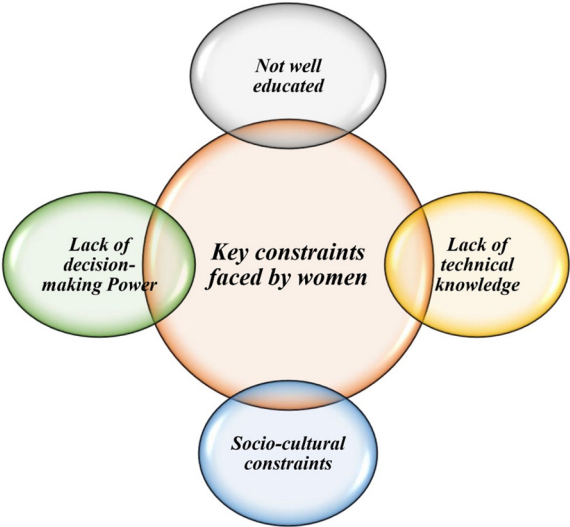


Figure 2.
Key constraints faced
by women, which
disturb their effective
role in agriculture in
Pakistan

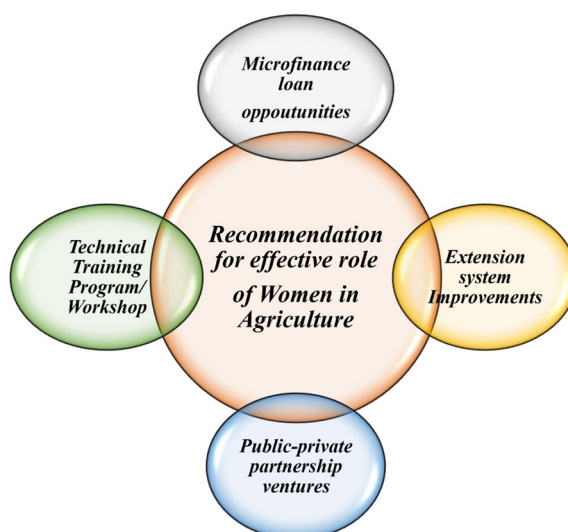


Figure 3.
Key recommendation
for the effective role
of women in
agrikulture in
Pakistan

- Provincial and regional-based agriculture associated policy reforms should provide opportunities related to agro-based small-scale industrial setup especially in the rural area to promote employment for women farmers.
- The participation of rural women farmers in policy-making and development planning must be ensured.
- The concept of public-private partnerships should be implemented between public sector institutions and women-oriented civil society agencies that may assist to promote the services especially to remote areas for by providing microfinance opportunities, infrastructure, as well as farm power.

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