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Sociological Study of Work Load and Autonomy among Female Farm Workers in Punjab Pakistan

Tehmeena Ikram Ullah¹, Nazia Malik², Sadaf Mahmood³, Farhana Nosheen⁴

1. Ph.D Scholar, Department of Sociology, Government College University, Faisalabad
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Government College University, Faisalabad
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Government College University, Faisalabad
4. Assistant Professor, Department of Home Economics, Government College University, Faisalabad

ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p>History: Received: August 09, 2021 Review: August 17, 2021 Accepted: September 12, 2021 Available Online: September 13, 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Female autonomy, Farming Activities, Workload, Decision Making, Economic growth.</p> <hr/> <p>DOI: https://doi.org/10.52700/assap.v2i2.45</p>	<p><i>Literature suggests that women are underprivileged around the globe in all spheres of life with mere differences. Female labor participation in the agricultural sphere is most significant for the economic development of any country, especially for developing countries. Almost 43% of agricultural labor consists of female workers around the world and 67% of the female labor force work in agriculture in Pakistan. The research in hand was gender based study conducted to assess the work load and level of autonomy among female farm workers in Punjab Pakistan. It was cross sectional quantitative study, interview schedule was used as data collection tool, multistage and proportionate sampling was used to draw sample of 400 female respondents from Punjab. SPSS was used for Univariate, bivariate and Multivariate data analysis. The study concluded that female in farming bear heavy work load with least level of autonomy in Punjab Pakistan.</i></p>
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Corresponding author's email address: naziamalik@gcuf.edu.pk

1. Introduction

The development community at the global level has recognized that agriculture is an important component for the growth and alleviation of poverty in those countries where their main source of income for poor people in agriculture (World Bank, 2007).

The agricultural sector in many developing countries is not performing well underperforming because women who are contributing largely in the resources for agriculture and the rural economy and the role of women as farmers, laborers, and entrepreneurs are not appreciated.

Moreover, they have to face more stern constraints than men in the way of getting any productive resources. Policies at the national level and at the international level to attain their goals for progress in the agricultural sector, economic prosperity, and security for food will be strengthened and accelerated if they build on the contribution that women make, and take steps to alleviate these hurdles. (FAO, 2010-11)

With the globalized situation social and economic environment in the sense of agricultural production, women are engaged in all the various farming activities in different territories at the international market. Rural women are often active in the management of several households and various livelihood strategies. They mainly undertake practices such as the cultivation of crops, animal husbandry, Food Processing, and gathering, earning a living as a worker, gathering timber for the cooking meal and carrying water for domestic use, participating in the selling and exchange of goods, taking care of their children and maintaining their homes. However, in the sense of an economic contribution, their contribution is not recognized and considered significant. In the context of the national income, they are not considered to be productive people. Rather than, they are seen as helpers to organize and look after the family as a whole (FAO, 2010-11).

In practice, women farmers have to rely on rain irrigated agriculture, and have less access to input resources (fertilizers, seeds and water), and have very little excess to markets for selling their products. Women are also responsible to look after their immediate family members and those in their community. These practices affect their potential and autonomy as agricultural producers. At the same time, by force of circumstance or by culture, women are often highly repressible, able to turn their hands to many different tasks and to find ways of overcoming hurdles (Lindiwe, 2012).

Blaai (2009) highlighted in her study that the absence of women's rights to decide any matters created hurdles in their way to improve their lives in rural areas. Besides performing on-farm activities like harvesting, seeding, weeding and many others, they had to perform other domestic chores like preparing food, washing clothes, stitching, look after dependent, wood collection, preparing handmade home items many others. All these duties on-farm and off-farm put more workload on women and their mental and physical health affected badly due to it.

The current study was conducted to find out the relationship between workload and autonomy among female farmworkers in Punjab, so that, based on findings the role of women in this sector can be acknowledged and suggestions can be made for their social, cultural and economic autonomy in Pakistan.

2. Review of literature

Dose, *et,el* (2017) stated that internationally determines goals for sustainable development with the name of SDGs and from these goals, second and eleven goals are related to women empowerment and elimination of gender discrimination from the world. Despite the need for reliable indicators, stylized facts on women, agriculture, and the environment persist. This paper analyzes four gender myths: 1) 70% of the worlds poor are women; 2) Women produce 60to80%oftheworld'sfood; 3) Womenown1%oftheworld'sland;and4) Women are better stewards of the environment. The above information related to these myths regarding food security and availability has become very essential all over the world. Although the phenomena, women as breadwinner and food security has become a serious and emerging concern of all over the globe so there is a need to explain this phenomena in detail. The conventional facts gathered from the numeric data on gender in perspective to food availability including land ownership by women, right to hold assets independently and workload beside the domestic chores.

Akhter.S (2017) expressed in his paper adding information regarding ecological situation of the literature by providing tangible and solid information regarding gender disparities from four Southeast Asian countries Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. The results disclosed new dimensions that are contrary to the conventional argument on male and women's contribution in the agriculture sector is equally significant. Women have equal access to all types of resources like land ownership and access to control family economic and financial matters in all above said countries. As community level empowerment and hegemony contract situation was observed all over the region. As it is evident from data women's participation is significant in the farming system of Thailand and the Philippines but the situation is different in Indonesia and Myanmar.

Chandrama Goswami (2013), conducted a case study on those females who worked in the agricultural sector in Assam. He concluded in the light of his research that women with impoverishing economic conditions were contributing more effectively and energetically in the agriculture sector as compared to women who were empowered, independent economically and have resources. In spite of this fact women with the poor economic condition, they were feeding and helping their families economically and financially. Although the majority of women had no right to land ownership. The most miserable condition was that they could use their earnings independently. Illiterate women can work at farm without any formal education and skills despite another profession where professional skills and training were required and that kind of employment is not permanent, it is seasonal.

FAO (2010-11) reported that it is evident that that women's participation in the agriculture field contributing to the economy of rural areas of almost all developing countries around the globe. Majority of Women from rural areas engaged in managing miscellaneous household activities and practice different earning activities. They engaged in various activities like the cultivation of different crops, animal rearing, gathering food and also participate in paid labor, collecting timber for fuel and fetching water for drinking and washing, participating in marketing and selling the products, work as caregivers mothers, and maintenance of their homes. But their contribution is not recognized and appreciated as an earner and contributing economically. They are considered passive employ in the context of national account.

The research was conducted by Tahir Munir Butt et al. (2010) in the Okara district of Pakistan. The study analyzed the role of both rural male and female workers in agriculture. He found that though they had strong potential to contribute to crop and livestock production and cottage industry but had to face obstacles like insufficient access to resources, lack of knowledge regarding latest technology and innovation in agricultural sector. The data showed that some cultural norms such as patriarchy and superstitious approach were the fundamental social hurdles faced by rural women.

A quantitative Study conducted in Bangladesh by Farid et al (2009) measured the nature and extent of rural women's engagement in farming and non farming activities. The study revealed that only poor women made the larger portion of workforce operating in agricultural and nonagricultural chores. The research found that there was no positive relation between literacy rate and level of participation in farming activities. Women belonging to deep pocketed families used more time in child rearing and domestic activities as compared to farming activities. Generally, poor people are involved in farming tasks to meet the need of bread and butter of their families.

Fortin (2009), executed a longitudinal study in US on Evolution of Gender Role Attitudes over time. The study showed that there was close relationship between the evolution of gender roles and female labour force participation. Until the mid 1990s, gender roles for women had grown less traditional. The idea that husbands were breadwinners and wives were homemakers was

changed with time. Women disagreed with conventional roles distribution which declared them only housewives. Till the 1990s these role distribution trends were reversed. Resultantly the new trends mitigated the gender gap in labor force participation.

C. U. Thresia (2004) pointed out certain issues facing by the female in agriculture in his paper “women workers in agriculture”. These issues were working environment, unfair treatment with female workers gender discrimination, working conditions and health related complications. One of the grim problems was related to gynecological conditions like abortion, stillbirths, and premature deliveries and psychological problems because of the increasing working hours, economic and social uncertainty and poverty. Beside the health problems they had to face some other social issues like gender inequity in terms of right of education, employment and resources, which made them dependent and defenseless with low self respect. Basic facilities like availability of save drinking water and toilet facilities were also unavailable in spite of having long working hours with lower wage rates on farms.

According Hoddinott et al. (2001) the women role in farming activities was crucial and dominant though degree vary a little bit. As a result their share in agricultural output was really important but it was difficult to quantify it rightly. Though both men and women participate in farming chores and it is difficult to segregate their contributions gender wise, but it is ascertained that women alone generate 60-70 percent of sthe food. However, a gender based contribution could be found by ascertaining that some crops are sprout by females only in these areas. All other crops are grown by men. We can find gender wise share in production through this fact. The method of determining gender wise share was applicable in West Africa where we could observe specific cropping patterns by gender.

The above mentioned review helps us to find out the status of female farmers in agriculture and the how they are being treated in society.

3. Materials and Methods

It was a quantitative cross sectional study conducted in Punjab, Pakistan, multistage sampling and proportionate sampling techniques were used to draw the sample of 400 female farm workers as audience/respondents. Survey method and well-structured interview schedule was used to collect the data. The collected data was coded and analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Univariate, Bivariate and Multivariate analysis was made.

3.1 Results and Discussions

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to the workload on them

Workload	Frequency	Percent
High	161	40.3
Moderate	194	48.5
Low	45	11.2
Total	400	100.0

Table 1 reveals the numerical information of respondents according to the workload on them. The values of high, moderate and low workload were drawn by computing the index variable consisting of eleven indicators of workload. The indicators were raising of sheep, collection of animal feed, cleaning of animal sheds, cleaning and making of dung cakes, cooking food, cleaning and dusting of home, washing clothes, washing utensils, child care, look after of

dependents and poultry raising. Table 1 shows that 40.3% of respondents bear a high workload and the majority of respondents (48.5%) have moderate workload whereas 11.2% of respondents reported low workload on them. Mihai Aniței et al (2015) concluded in a study that women bear a high level of workload and Amin and Paulina (2019) adds that high workload makes it difficult for women to maintain the balance between family and work.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to autonomy they have

Autonomy	Frequency	Percent
Low	76	19.0
Moderate	221	55.2
High	103	25.8
Total	400	100.0

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of respondents according to the level of autonomy they enjoy. The values low, moderate and high were drawn by computing index variable consisting of indicators of autonomy as decision making involvement, marriage right autonomy, market visit autonomy, visit to doctor autonomy, purchasing power, access to education, family planning autonomy, use of technology, selling farming products and satisfaction about market price. Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents (55.2%) have moderate autonomy, 25.8% of respondents enjoy high autonomy and 19.0% of respondents have a low level of autonomy. At the same time, rural women manage three tasks, both in the home and at the group level at work. The conflicting demands associated with this threefold position make women poor in terms of time. Despite the advantage, this work brings to the family and the society as a whole, most of the work of women remains unpaid and unacknowledged. This impacts their standard of living and decision-making, places their wellbeing at stake and prohibits them from participating in wage activities to reap the benefits of economic opportunities. This affects the entire family, particularly children and adolescents when females are overburdened (UN Women, 2015; M. Blackden & Q. Wodon).

Table 3: cross tabulation between workload and autonomy

Workload	Autonomy			
	Frequency (Percent)			
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Low	7(15.6)	26(57.8)	12(26.7)	45(100.0)
Moderate	48(24.7)	114(58.8)	32(16.5)	194(100.0)
High	21(13.0)	81(50.3)	59 (36.6)	161(100.0)
Total	76	221	103	400(100.0)
Chi square; 21.42, P .000		Gamma ; -.253, P .001		

Table 3 shows the relationship between workload and autonomy among female farmworkers. Chi square value 21.42 (p.000) shows a significant association between variables and gamma value -.253 at the significance level of .001 shows that there is significant negative relationship between work load and autonomy. The negative relationship means that the increase of workload there is decrease in autonomy of female farm workers. Bala (2010) quoted in his study that the participation of women in farming activities was high and impressive. Females had limited

decision power in agricultural activities despite of their active and strong contribution in the agriculture.

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regressions

	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		21.952	.000
raising of sheep	.160	2.699	.007
collection of animal feed	-.085	-1.260	.208
cleaning of animal sheds	.039	.630	.529
cleaning and making dung cakes	-.142	-2.493	.013
cooking food	-.015	-.270	.787
cleaning and dusting of home	-.125	-2.247	.025
washing clothes	-.070	-1.025	.306
washing utensils	-.089	-1.283	.200
child care	.192	2.898	.004
look after dependents	-.153	-2.448	.015
Poultry raising	-.054	-.858	.392
R² = .338			

Multiple linear regression (MLR) is utilized to decide a scientific relationship among various random variables. In different terms, MLR looks at how multiple independent variables are linked with one dependent variable. When every one of the independent components has been decided to anticipate the dependent variable, the data on the multiple variables can be utilized to make an exact expectation on the level of impact they have on the dependent variable. The model makes a relationship as a straight line (linear) that best approximates all the individual information focuses.

The standardized coefficient beta value lies between 0 and 1, where 0 means that the independent variable cannot predict the response variable or in other words change in the independent variable will not bring about the change in dependent variable and value 1 means that change in independent variable must bring about the change in dependent variable perfectly.

In this table beta value of .160 at the significant level of .007 is indicating that the one unit change in the sheep raising workload will change the autonomy as dependent variable .160 units positively. Beta value of "cleaning and making dung cakes" is -.142 at significance level of 0.13 which indicates that dung cake related work load decreasing autonomy of female farmworkers. Cleaning and dusting of home beta value -.125 (P .025) have an inverse impact on autonomy, child care beta value .192 (P .004) have a positive impact on autonomy and look after dependents have beta value -.153(P .015) which indicates the negative impact of workload on autonomy. As a whole the change in one unit in independent variables cause the .338 units change in the dependent variable (R² .338). In other words collectively independent variables bring about the change independent variable 33.8 percent. Other variables have no significant impact on the dependent variable. There can be certain indirect factors through which workload can affect autonomy such as Cezar et al (2015) concluded in their study that excessive workload is a cause of mental disorder among female farmworkers which in turn hinders them from social wellbeing and decision making. Similarly, Lukmanji (1992) reported that agricultural workload consumes more energy of female farm workers than the energy intake which is damaging their health. Farm strong Commissioned Research (2018) concluded that absence of sufficient time

for female farm workers off the farm is one of major hindering factor of their well-being. Vast literature suggests that due to the fatigue of excessive work at farms female farm workers have less time and a low level of remaining energy with bad health hinders them to actively participate in self-care decision making.

4. Conclusion

The study concluded that there is a negative relationship between excessive workload and autonomy among female farmworkers despite that workload indicates the economic participation of female farmworkers but at the same time other factors like physical and mental fatigue due to excessive work load, low energy intake, less off farm time for self-care hinders female farm workers from autonomy/ decision making empowerment. Although, Janet (1981) explained that there were some facts which showed the change in women's attitude in Pakistani culture. These indicators were delaying marriage, family planning, and participation in the job market and leading their families. Females were changing their outlook towards themselves as they did not accept conventional roles which were expected from them. Though they accepted marriage and motherhood as their important duty they were also reconstructing their family roles and self-identification. Women were gaining a sort of autonomy. But the current study emphasized that still there is a need for developing such an environment in which females can feel free to decide about their lives.

5. Recommendations

The following suggestions are presented based on current study results for future policy making:

1. It is a need of time to create awareness among women regarding their participation and organized them for their rights. It can be possible by providing education, capacity building, training and other measures. It is also important to make policies and laws regarding women's empowerment and encouraging their participation in different sectors.
2. It is also important to enhance women's participation politically so that women's issues can be understood and handled in effective. Such measurements help to reduce the economic disparities among men and women and enhance employment opportunities.

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