



## Poverty and Gender Inequality in Rural Livelihood Evidence and Policy Option

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### ABSTRACT

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This study was designed to examine poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihoods, focusing on evidence and policy options. The main objectives were to assess the impact of socioeconomic status on poverty and gender inequality, evaluate the effectiveness of gender inequality interventions for income generation and poverty alleviation in rural areas, and provide recommendations to address these issues. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and the study was conducted in Faisalabad district using a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, Faisalabad district was selected through simple random sampling. Four peri-urban communities Samundari Road, Jaranwala Road, Shaikhupura Road, and Sargodha Road—were then chosen. A systematic sampling technique was applied to select 30 respondents from each area, resulting in a total sample size of 120. Data were collected through face-to-face surveys using a structured interview schedule, developed in alignment with the research objectives. Univariate and bivariate analysis techniques, including the chi-square test and gamma test, were employed for data analysis. The findings revealed a significant association between respondents' education levels and their perceptions of poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihoods, highlighting critical areas for policy intervention.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The connection between rural economic life poverty and gender inequalities affects multiple facets from individual people all the way up to communities and entire societies across the globe. The following text summarizes these issues through examinations of evidence about rural poverty together with female inequality alongside policy options that might resolve these challenges. Worldwide the rural areas face an urgent issue of poverty when observed through statistics showing larger numbers of individuals in extreme poverty. When people cannot fulfill their fundamental requirements for food, water, healthcare and educational opportunities poverty becomes a difficult continuing cycle. Poverty levels intensify further because rural workers lack sufficient employment opportunities yet face high energy costs which product from inadequate infrastructure and farmers cannot access financing support due to rural isolation (George *et al.* 2007).

Gender discrimination works to intensify the challenges that affect rural communities. The poverty strain in rural parts disproportionately affects women who face escalated challenges for economic growth along with societal development. Access barriers to land resources and lack of equality between genders along with discrimination and deep-rooted cultural stereotypes keep the rural livelihood gender gap persistently strong. Many investigations demonstrate that poverty affects rural areas through multiple dimensions while clear gender inequalities exist in these settings. Studied data demonstrates that female inhabitants of rural territories struggle intensely with making income and acquiring assets while experiencing restricted ability to take decisions. Gender inequalities in access to healthcare and education systems foster the continuous development of poverty as well as social disparities (Borloz 2021).

Policymakers have developed multiple solutions for handling these intricate concerns. A main policy strategy requires enabling rural communities to achieve sustainable development through inclusive economic development. The policy focuses on developing rural infrastructure as well as agricultural development while establishing employment opportunities. The availability of productive resources like land together with credit and technology capability for women creates opportunities to decrease poverty rates as well as inequality between genders. Social policies need to make social protection policies stronger specifically for rural community populations. Social programs that include cash transfers with insurance systems act as protective measures for populations most at risk while decreasing their exposure to threats and sudden events. Programs that serve rural women specifically need to use a gender-sensitive strategy to meet their distinct needs together with their unique vulnerabilities (Mintrom and Luetjens 2016).

The vital importance of education together with skill-based training must specifically address the needs of rural women. The delivery of high-quality educational opportunities with training programs allows women to boost their job market ability while increasing their income levels and autonomy in decision-making processes. Strategies based on community engagement together with gender awareness programs help create changes in rural livelihood gender relations. Successful policy implementation demands active collaboration between different social groups. Local communities together with civil society organizations and international development

agencies and governments must create and execute complete programs that handle rural livelihood gender disparities and poverty issues. The effective integration of marginalized groups requires policies that invite inclusive and participatory schemes to include the voices and experiences of rural women and rural populations in their creation and execution process (Balayar and Mazur 2021).

Strategies to combat rural poverty alongside gender inequality must include infrastructure investments such as road building alongside implementing water and sanitation networks and power systems because these developments offer market access together with service benefits and relieve women from domestic responsibilities. Smallholder farmers especially women become eligible for financial resources and skill development programs along with technology access to advance their farming profitability. Social protection initiatives that include cash aid distributions act as a support system for households containing female leaders and households that experience critical events. Women need to achieve their rights and gain decision-making power because this forms an essential strategy for rural live livelihood gender equality implementation. Both national legislation and social change programs focused on equality and societal belief systems need to be implemented in order to realize gender equality. Girl and women educational programs coupled with skills development create better opportunities that enable them to make wise decisions about their futures (Desai *et al.* 2019).

Organizations within international development together with national governments and civil society groups with private sector entities need to actively tackle rural livelihoods' poverty and gender inequalities. These various actors should create joint partnerships which utilize their combined expertise to create successful policies and programs. Monitoring interventions alongside evidence-based research helps to assess how policies and programs perform toward reaching their expected results as they are properly guided by reliable data. The fight to reduce poverty and inequality in rural lives shows advancement yet various important problems persist. Rural communities proved especially vulnerable during times of climate change as well as conflicts and pandemic spread of COVID-19 thereby establishing the paramount importance of adaptive ability and resilience. Traditional gender barriers through discriminatory legal frameworks and social traditions restrict women from achieving their potential opportunities and active inclusion in society. Lack of resources together with insufficient political willpower become major obstacles for resolving poverty as well as gender inequality in rural livelihoods (Phillips 2017).

The successful remedy of rural poverty together with gender inequality demands enduring engagement from various actors who operate across multiple levels. This effort calls for both knowledge about the mutual relationships between poverty issues and gender equality problems and active work with various rural community dynamics in diverse situations. The establishment of evidence-based policies and programs based on rural women and men's voices will help develop sustainable rural livelihoods that benefit everyone. The solution to combat rural livelihood issues demands immediate attention through effective policies because poverty and gender inequality are deeply interconnected issues. Rural areas will achieve sustainable development and social justice along with inclusive growth through multidimensional poverty recognition combined with gender

equality promotion and localized policy implementation (Wiedt *et al.* 2020).

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Azumha *et al.*, (2023) studied that the research has sought to draw correlation between land access and poverty alleviation based on agricultural, economic, environmental and developmental parameters. Relations did not necessarily indicate positive policies and outcomes. Bial *et al.* (2019) provide an interdisciplinary analysis of the relationship between gender inequality and rural poverty. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive approaches that address social, economic, and cultural dimensions of inequality. Policy options include targeted skill-building programs, access to credit and productive resources for women, and community-based initiatives promoting gender equality.

(Gupta and Santhya 2020) Multiple developing nations reveal empirical evidence about the gendered characteristics of rural poverty. Social norms and institutional policies together with bias attitudes require immediate attention according to the study findings. The government should enhance women's land rights together with improved market access and financial services and protective welfare initiatives. The analysis presented by Bagilhole 2009 uses intersectionality to study how rural women face poverty. The study illustrates how gender and race together with class status work as interconnected factors in generating inequalities. Affirmative action policies combined with rural development programs that welcome everyone as well as community projects which give power to excluded females form a policy framework.

The article Gender Inequality and Agricultural Productivity in Rural Communities (Isoda *et al.* 2021) investigates how gender-based inequality influences farm production in rural settings. This research demonstrates the untapped financial growth that results from reducing gender differences in agriculture and it recommends extending agricultural assistance to women along with technical education. The paper Addressing Rural Gender Inequality: Lessons from Microfinance Interventions (Senou and Manda 2022) conducts research on the effects of microfinance programs on rural gender inequality. According to the research findings multiple interventions show success by giving women economic and social power. Public policies should focus on extending financial services for women as well as delivering entrepreneurship training and enabling women to join decision-making institutions.

Dorosh and Thurlow (2021) analyze rural livelihood approaches from a gender-sensitive viewpoint that examines their relationship with poverty elimination in their study titled Rural Livelihood Strategies and Poverty Alleviation: A Gendered Perspective. The research demonstrates the necessity of developing multiple income opportunities and requires financial investments toward social infrastructure alongside gender-responsive value chain promotion. The implementation of policy measures must focus on expanding market access along with backing collective business ventures of women while reinforcing social protection programs. The investigation of gender-based climate change impact on rural living conditions is examined in Gendered Vulnerability to Climate Change in Rural Livelihoods (Alauddin *et al.* 2022). Climate change hits rural women harder than men according to the research while demonstrating that gender-sensitive adaptive and mitigating programs are essential. Several policy solutions exist

which combine gender-based elements into climate change policies with the addition of climate-smart agriculture and better access to climate finance for women. He et al. (2022) explore through their research the relationship between resources such as land, credit, education with gender disparities in rural societies. Equitable resource management requires implementing women-friendly land reform programs combined with efforts to ensure women can obtain credit opportunities and receive educational support.

Academic researchers have developed multiple intervention methods to fight rural livelihoods' problems of both poverty and gender equality. Gender-responsive policies together with intervention methods that enhance female access to healthcare and education and cultural resources have demonstrated productive results. Social protection programs specifically designed by Malapit et al. (2019) delivered poverty reduction effects that also supported rural gender equality. World Bank (2017) demonstrates how projects that teach skills and empower women through business ventures create enduring income sources with reduced gender-based disadvantages.

Numerous important effects stem from poverty together with gender inequality during rural income generation. *κοштiв* restrict poor rural women from accessing education services as well as healthcare facilities along with economic prospects. According to Quisumbing and Pandolfelli (2009) together with Doss (2013) females who lack control of resources as well as decision-making power experience negative life outcomes that sustain poverty. Hoddinott and Haddad (1995) disclosed that rural children encounter poor nutritional status and restricted educational possibilities due to poverty in combination with gender inequalities.

Gender remains a major factor in poverty due to the fact that rural women encounter both occupational limitations and resource decision-making restrictions in agricultural activities. Women located in the majority of rural places encounter gender-specific exclusion and discrimination because they have restricted access to agricultural property as well as financial services and educational and health resources. These barriers together with cultural norms on gender roles provide a background that may lock out women from finding more direct ways out of poverty. For instance, now that most of the rural communities completely depend on women as the main force in farming, women lack any authority regarding decision-making in such fields of production or even have the discretion of how the money earned from their taboo should be spent. Research evidence from many studies indicates that when women are given the power by increasing their access to education, land, or credit facilities, they transform the socio-economic status and benefit themselves as well as their households leading to near food secure rather than food insecure, better health among children, and overall improved community development. Some of the policy measures that can be taken on these deficits include extending gender sensitive agriculture policies, facilitating the women in the acquisition of land and other productive resources and recognizing women's leadership at all levels. Eradicating poverty in the rural settings thus means that there is the need to have inter-sectorial policy frameworks that working towards equipping women for capability enhancement while at the same time working on the factors that maintain women's subordinate status.

## 2.1 Objectives

- To examine the impact of socio-economic status on poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood.
- To know the level of gender inequality interventions for income generation and poverty alleviation in rural areas.
- To give some suggestions to control poverty and gender inequality betterment of rural livelihood evidence and policy option.

## 3.0 Methodology

This present study was designed to study the poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and policy option. This study was quantitative in nature. It was conducted in district Faisalabad. Multistage sampling technique was used for this purpose. At first stage a simple random sampling technique was used to select Faisalabad district. For this purpose, 4 communities Samundari Road, Jaranwala Road, Shaikhupura Road, and Sargodha Road of Peri Urban areas in the Faisalabad region. The samples were selected using a simple random sampling process. From each selected area, 30 respondents were selected using systematic sampling techniques, and the sample size was 120. The data were collected through a face-to-face survey using the interview schedule as a data collection tool, which was prepared in light of the research objectives. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The data were analyzed using SPSS. Univariate and Bivariate data analysis techniques, including chi-square and gamma test frequencies, were used to analyze the data.

## 4.0 Findings and Results

**Table 4.1: Socioeconomics Characteristics of Respondents (n=120)**

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the respondents	21-25 years	14	11.7
	26-30 years	66	55.0
	31 years or above	40	33.3
Education of respondent	Literate	13	10.8
	Primary	93	77.5
	F.A	14	11.7
Religion of the respondent	Muslim	120	100.0
Family type	Nuclear	120	100.0
Marital status of the respondents	Unmarried	67	55.8
	Married	39	32.5
	Divorced	14	11.7
Male family members	1	13	10.8
	3	39	32.5
	4	27	22.5
	5	14	11.7

	6	27	22.5
Female family members	1	13	10.8
	2	13	10.8
	3	27	22.5
	4	54	45.0
	5	13	10.8
Number of years the respondent is living in the village	24-28 Years	27	22.5
	29-32 Years	79	65.8
	Throughout life	14	11.7
Village have a primary sch001	Yes	120	100.0
Type of house respondent live in	Kacha	66	55.0
	Pacca	54	45.0
<b>Monthly income</b>	0 to 15000	27	22.5
	16000 to 20000	26	21.7
	21000 to 35000	41	34.2
	36000 to 40000	26	21.7

Demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 4.1. A majority (55.0%), aged 26-30 were, and they were all (100%) living in a nuclear family system. Seventy-seven-point five percent had primary education and fifty-five-point eight percent were unmarried. Lastly, on income, 34.2% fell in the bracket of Rs. 21,000 to 35,000, and 55.0% of the respondents lived in a kacha house.

**Table 4.2: Regarding to the view of the respondents on different variable:**

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender is a primary marker of social and economic stratification	Agree	107	89.2
	Uncertain	13	10.8
There are systematic gender differences in material well-being	Agree	94	78.3
	Uncertain	26	21.7
Gender inequality is a characteristic of most societies like	Strongly Agree	26	21.7
	Agree	55	45.8

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	Uncertain	39	32.5
Males on average better positioned in social	Strongly Agree	26	21.7
	Agree	55	45.8
	Uncertain	39	32.5
Males on average better positioned in economic	Strongly Agree	40	33.3
	Agree	41	34.2
	Uncertain	26	21.7
	Disagree	13	10.8
Males on average better positioned in political hierarchies	Strongly Agree	40	33.3
	Agree	40	33.3
	Uncertain	27	22.5
	Disagree	13	10.8
Agriculture increase the family income of female	Strongly Agree	40	33.3
	Agree	40	33.3
	Uncertain	27	22.5
	Disagree	13	10.8
Women makes strong contribution in livestock	Strongly Agree	40	33.3
	Agree	40	33.3
	Uncertain	27	22.5
	Disagree	13	10.8
Women makes strong contribution in agriculture productivity	Strongly Agree	14	11.7
	Agree	66	55.0
	Uncertain	27	22.5
	Disagree	13	10.8
Female education plays a vital role in the reduction of poverty	Strongly Agree	14	11.7

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Agree	39	32.5
Uncertain	54	45.0
Disagree	13	10.8

While 45.8 percent agreed and 32.5 percent were unsure, 89.2 percent agreed with the statement, 10.8 percent were unsure, 78.3 percent agreed and 21.7 percent were unsure, and 21.7 percent strongly agreed, according to Table 2. In contrast to 45.8% who agreed, 32.5 percent who were unsure, 33.3 percent who strongly agreed, 34.2 percent who agreed, 21.7 percent who were uncertain, and 10.8% who disagreed with the statement, the study found that 21.7 percent strongly agreed with the statement. According to Table 2, 22.5 percent disagreed with the statement, 10.8 percent disagreed with it, and 33.3 percent strongly agreed with it. In addition, 10.8 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, 11.7 percent strongly agreed, 55.0 percent agreed, 22.5 percent were unsure, and 10.8 percent disagreed. 11.7 percent of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, compared to 32.5 percent who agreed, 45.0 percent who were unsure, and 10.8 percent who disagreed.

**Table 4.3: Shows that the opinion of the respondents on different statement:**

Statement	S. Agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		S. Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Female education contributes to the promotion of sustainable growth in developing countries	0	0	66	55.0	41	34.	1	10.	0	0
Increasing women’s education boosts women’s wages	0	0	53	44.2	54	45.	1	10.	0	0
Women are facing economic problem due to their family system	13	10.	68	56.7	39	32.	0	0	0	0
Women feels satisfied due to their economic independency	27	22.	54	45.0	39	32.	0	0	0	0
Women have great contribution in economic sector	41	34.	53	44.2	26	21.	0	0	0	0
Low income of family effect on women’s health	41	34.	79	65.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychological problems	41	34.	27	22.5	39	32.	1	10.	0	0
Hatred from studies	41	34.	40	33.3	26	21.	1	10.	0	0

Financial burden	28	23.	53	44.2	26	21.	1	10.	0	0
Inability to handle heavy workload	0	0	67	55.8	26	21.	2	22.	0	0
Parent's low social status	13	10.	54	45.0	39	32.	1	11.	0	0
Women education has strong implications on child educational performance	13	10.	54	45.0	39	32.	1	11.	0	0
Educated mothers help their children in their early days of education	26	21.	80	66.7	14	11.	0	0	0	0
There is a strong impact of maternal education on their child's test scores	107	89.	0	0	13	10.	0	0	0	0
Women as half of the population, have a great impact on the development of the country	107	89.	0	0	13	10.	0	0	0	0
Education allows women greater mobility and economic freedom	94	78.	26	21.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women education helps a country attaining increase in human capital	68	56.	52	43.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Women education directly contributes to GDP of country	81	67.	39	32.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
working force is dramatically increasing the economic growth	68	56.	52	43.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Female can reduce fertility rate and play a magnificent role in economic growth	81	67.	3	32.	0	0	0	0	0	0

Respondents had different views on different statements; the views are reflected in Table 4.3. Through multiple statements, a major portion of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the statements, with the agreement ranging from 55.0% to 89.2%. Nevertheless, many statements were uncertain also, with up to 45.0% of the respondents reporting uncertainty. Level of disagreement ranged between statements, with the maximum of 32.5%. By the analysis of the data it can be inferred that Hypothesis 1 about the linkage of respondents ideas influenced by their level of education is correct, since it can be understood that such ideas are shaped by individual views.

**Table 4.4 shows the respondents' distribution by correlation between their perceptions of poverty and gender disparity in rural livelihood evidence and policy options and their monthly income from all sources.**

Monthly income from all sources (Rs.)	Monthly income from all sources of the income and their perception about the poverty and gender inequality.			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Up to 8000	7	14	11	32
	21.9%	43.8%	34.4%	100.0%
8000 to 16000	4	17	3	24
	16.7%	70.8%	12.5%	100.0%

16000 to 24000	12	10	11	33
	36.4%	30.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Above 24000	18	56	37	111
	16.2%	50.5%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	41	97	62	200
	20.5%	48.5%	31.0%	100.0%

Chi-square = 13.24    d.f. = 6    P-value = .040\*\*    Gamma = .107

\* = Significant

Table 4.4 displays how the respondents' financial income affects their views about rural livelihood evidence and social policy as well as gender disparities in poverty. The statistical chi-square value reveals that monthly income from different sources shows significant correlation with how people see poverty and gender differences concerning rural social and evidence policy. There exists a positive connection between these variables when looking at the gamma value. It indicates that, in comparison to low-income farmers, high-income farmers had a greater perception of poverty and gender disparity in rural livelihood evidence and social policy. According to the hypothesis, "respondent distribution based on correlation between monthly income from all sources and their perception of poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and policy option"

**Table 4.5: Respondents were distributed based on the relationship between their age and their perceptions of gender disparity and poverty in rural livelihood evidence and policy options.**

Age	Age and their perception about poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and policy option.			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
<b>20-30</b>	8	3	5	16
	50.0%	18.75%	31.25%	100.0%
<b>31-40</b>	30	11	25	66
	45.5%	16.6%	37.9%	100.0%
<b>41-50</b>	18	8	14	40
	45.0%	20.0%	35.0%	100.0%

<b>51-60</b>	28	11	19	58
	48.2%	18.9%	32.7%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	84	33	63	180
	46.6%	18.3%	35.1%	100.0%

Chi-square = .593a    d.f. = 6                      P-value = .000\*\*                      Gamma = -.023  
 = significant

The relationship between respondents' age and their perceptions of gender disparity and poverty in rural livelihood evidence and policy options is shown in Table 4.5. Age and their impression of poverty and gender imbalance in rural livelihood evidence and policy options are significantly correlated, according to the chi-square value. A negative correlation between the variables is indicated by the gamma value. This indicates that older farmers were more likely than younger women to see poverty and gender disparity in rural livelihood evidence and policy options. The idea that the respondents' perceptions of poverty and gender disparity in rural livelihood evidence and policy options are related to their age is thus accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There is association between marital status of the respondents and their perception about the poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and policy option.

**Table 4.6: Distribution of respondent according to association between marital status and their perception about the poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and policy option.**

Marital status	Marital status and their perception about the poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and social policy.			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Unmarried	11	59	50	120
	9.2%	49.2%	41.7%	100.0%
Married	30	38	12	80
	37.5%	47.5%	15.0%	100.0%
Total	41	97	62	200
	20.5%	48.5%	31.0%	100.0%

Chi-square = 29.83    d.f. = 2                      P-value = .000\*\*                      Gamma = -.609  
 \*\* = Highly significant

Table 4.6 Respondents' marital status and perception about poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and social policy. There is a connection between their ideas. The rectangular cost shows a surprisingly wide correlation between respondents' marital reputation and their beliefs about the difficulties of perception about poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and social policy. Among the variables, the gamma fee shows a poor court. This means that single women are more concerned with the issue of poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and social policy than married children. It is therefore common to speculate that "there is a unity between respondents' perceptions of marital status and their views on rural livelihoods and participation in poverty and gender inequality in policy choices.

## 5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the poverty and gender inequality in rural livelihood evidence and policy option. The study concludes that the overall comment is that diversification in economics is a trend that characterizes the survival and earning techniques of individuals and families in rural areas of developing countries. It is established that the opportunity index for women in the rural context is greatly restricted with regard to resource, education, and decision-making potentials, which in return reduces the prospects of the former group in contributing to economy and development. These challenges can only be solved by a complex framework that combines the gender-sensitive policies with anti-poverty activities. Some such policy interventions are; equal land, credit or agricultural input access to women; women representation and participation in leadership and policy making; educational, health and social protection for women. Supporting the rural woman not only improves the quality of life of the woman involved but is also impactful to the development of household and the community as they create sustainable livelihoods in the rural areas involved. The fact is that by targeting gender issues directly linked to poverty reduction, political authorities can unleash the potential of women and girls living in rural areas of developing countries and create conditions for inclusive development of these territories.

## 5.1 Suggestions

In order to equip them with the most recent information on agricultural management and care, which is lacking among rural women, access to modern technology and information should be guaranteed. Whether policies can be utilized to achieve gender equality depends on how gender and livelihood problems are incorporated into national and international policies. Government mandates, whether national or worldwide, can act as focal points for mobilizing support for the rights of women or men in vulnerable situations. The government, non-governmental organizations, and private sectors ought to initiate agricultural awareness and training initiatives for women.

**Sonia:** Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

**Muhammad Ayub:** Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

**Saira Abrar:** Methodology and Revision

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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