

CLIMATE CHANGE IN RELATION TO FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY AND WOMEN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS; REFLECTIONS ON THE UNEXPLORED LINK

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the status of women occupy the state of “poorest of the poor”; often denied access to land, credit and other fundamental rights. The study employs qualitative research methods of in-depth, one to one interview. The sample distributed in 2 age groups, i.e. 11 women aged 40 to 60 and 11 women of 25 to 35 were taken to examine the trends of climate change. The results demonstrate that climate change is negatively affecting the livelihood of people, especially rural women. The study concludes that climate change is making women more vulnerable to poverty and increasing their dependency on men and proves that the effects of climatic extremes lead to women’s further subordination and marginalization. Although this research analyses the effects of climate change on women, there is a dire need to mitigate these effects in the preparedness phase of disaster management so that women’s increasing vulnerability can be controlled.

Keywords: Climate Change, Feminization of Poverty, Female Labor-Force Participation, Female Poverty, Economic Development,

INTRODUCTION

This present paper aims to explore the link between the unpredictability of weather condition with the feminization of poverty. Women being a marginalized sector in rural communities are deprived of basic needs and climate change is enhancing the pre-existing vulnerabilities for their improved livelihood. The paper contemplates that decreased agricultural productivity through instable rains, and hailing patterns affects the livelihood of female farmers. As they receive lesser than every family member among the house.

Climate change has been universally accepted as a reality that the world is experiencing in the form of high temperatures, melting glaciers and global warming and many more. Researchers suggest that these effects will get more intense in the coming decades (Barker, T. et, al., 2007) (Moss, R. et al., 2010). The issue of climate change is related to extreme weather conditions which are experienced all over the world. Effects of climate change embrace food insecurity, health issues, deforestation, and economic instability (FAO, 2008).

UNDP, (UNDP, 2010) discusses that indigenous women hold expert knowledge of local resources and preservation of resources. Women as expert knowledge holders constitute half of the global population but without equal participation in politics and decision-making power. Society shapes men and women in different ways and expects them to work differently. Based on different roles and responsibilities of men and women, their access to and control over resources are also different. Being a breadwinner of the family, men face different vulnerability, but women who are maintaining households and taking care of dependent one’s at home counter different susceptibilities (FAO, 2011).

Disaster events such as floods cause loss of life, damage to infrastructure and disturb the daily lives of people. Severe floods may also cause unemployment, massive migrations, and vulnerabilities

(Alam, M., Bhatia, R., & Mawby, B., 2015). Due to devastating effects of a disaster on services men go out from homes to find employment according to their skills, while women are left behind with the children and elderly people at home. The absence of male member from houses puts all the responsibilities of food collection on woman's shoulder. Thus, they go out in search of natural resources to feed their families and themselves (Azad, A. K. et al., 2013). Women, after floods, are more vulnerable to face harassment, verbal, and sexual abuse, as well as domestic violence, and poverty, which upsets their social life caused by the floods (Gonda, N., 2016). Women play a significant role in every aspect of life, especially in terms of providing food to their families, and contributing to the country's development. Women in all their capacity are more vulnerable than men due to lack of opportunities. Water scarcity is an issue, affecting women lives, particularly in drought-prone areas, where rainfall is low. Shortage of water consumes a larger part of women's time, spent in collecting water, food, and fodder from outside. When a larger proportion of their time is consumed in water collection, they don't get the time and energy to pay attention towards their personal hygiene and health, which in a way contributes to the feminization of poverty. Other health problems faced by women due to water scarcity include tuberculosis, hepatitis, and pregnancy complications due to improper health care facilities (Honda, Y. et al., 2014).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term 'Feminization of poverty' was initially used by Pearce (1976). Women occupy a marginalized sector of poorest of the poor among society. Economic development and women's empowerment are at the core of feminization of poverty. Feminization of poverty with respect to feminist perspective has been described as poverty with a female face. Poverty makes women more vulnerable to social, physical, and environmental issues (Pearce, D., 1978).

Women in rural setups are more dependent on natural resources. They work on agricultural land but do not have control over them. Land ownership of women is less than 2 per cent globally (FAO, 2008). In fact, the greater part of agricultural products, as well as the income produced by selling those products, goes in the pocket of the landowner (DAC, 1998). Women are vulnerable because they are doing work in the fields owned by someone else (usually men), but they cultivate according to male orders. Women cultivate but men are eating the fruits cultivated by women in all its meanings (Mwanduka, J. & Thampy, R., 1995).

Vulnerability profile of Pakistan is indicating that due to climate change poverty is prevailing (ABD, 2015). Pakistan's agricultural land spreads about 23.4 million hectares, contributing 21 per cent the Gross domestic product and giving employment to 45 per cent of labour force. Climate change has diverse impacts on productive resources. Increasing temperature, drought, irregular rainfall patterns, water shortage and other extreme weather events make the vulnerable situation for poor farmers (Chaudhry, Q., 2017).

International Union or Conservation of Agricultural in Pakistan states that in Pakistan, agricultural yields are predicted to decline by 15-20 per cent the near future due to drastic changes in climate (Dehlavi, A. et al., 2015). Wheat demand is very high, but it is affected by climate change more significantly. By 2080, wheat yield will be highly reducing, which is alarming for Pakistan and there is a need for coping and mitigation strategies. Due to climate change, water stress level also increases (Ahmad, S. & Steenberger, F., 2007).

Due to social and economic powerlessness, poor people and local communities are pushed towards marginalized areas where they are dependent upon goods coming from the natural environment. Wood, fodder, food, and fuel are the primary and secondary sources of sustenance in rural communities (Kelkar, U., & Bhadwal, S., 2007). Loss of forests are misbalancing the chain of the ecosystem by depleting biodiversity, increased temperature damage, coral reefs, and other marine life, thus decreasing the quality of natural resources (Baloch, H., 2008). Major subsistent patterns in the global south are agriculture, but agriculture is the most affected part of climate change, increasing the poverty among low-income countries. In agricultural sector, climate change impacts can be seen on two parameters. First is directly through food production and the other is purchasing power (Dehlavi, A. et al., 2015). Decreased productivity correlates with decreasing purchasing power. Through deforestation, land degradation occurs from which quality of soil disrupts that effects the productivity of crops. Drought, storms, and rising sea level damages soil fertility and adds stress on the agriculture sector, as suitable

days for production are decreasing, it is important to preserve the productive lands to combat poverty. Climate change deteriorates food supply and aggravates poverty (UNDP, 2011).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the Socialist feminism, women play an important role in socio-economic development of society because this right can be violated by playing a resistive role in economic sector (Sarvasy, W., & Vanallen, J., 1984). The concept of the feminization of poverty has been linked to gender inequality in every sector i.e., lack of quality education, decision making power, access to and control over limited resources and access to political representation as compared to men. According to the 2nd tool of Harvard's having access to resources does not mean that the person has control over resources. In rural areas, women are working on lands, but the landowners are usually men. It means that women can work on lands but not as owners but as workers. The benefit will be given to the landowner in every aspect. Access to land can fulfil the demands of food but cannot fulfil the demands of education and daily life needs (March, C. et al, 1999). Food, water, and shelter are the basic needs of human beings if they are not fully filled a person cannot upgrade the level of self-satisfaction. Maslow's need hierarchy tells the same. Without having the complete fulfilment of basic needs, a person cannot reach the level of love and affection. Literature is supporting the argument that after the climatic disasters rate of violence increases because the high level of stress due to unavailability of basic resources and that stressed has been faced by women in form of violence. When basic needs are fulfilled then a person can take charge of love and peaceful life (McLeod, S., 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out by using Qualitative research method. Our purpose was to explore the links between climate change and feminization of poverty and qualitative research methods proves the best when it comes to the in-depth interview methods. Researchers identifies the experiences of rural women in their on natural settings during crop cutting seasons of Tehsil Khari Murat of Punjab Pakistan. Distribution of sample was 11 women aged between 40 to 60 to take a review of past trends and practices of climate effects so that they may throw light on past climatic trends and cope-up strategies. The other distribution consisted of 11 women their ages were between 25 to 35 years. Their monthly income getting from wage labour was rupees 15,000 or less. Their children were school going and getting primary education. The reason behind this distribution was to see the comparison between past and present trends of climate change. To gather data, a Semi-Structured Interview guideline was constructed in Urdu based on an in-depth review of the literature and discussions with experts, with the complete relevance of research objectives. In-depth interviews were conducted to gather the personal lived- experiences and thoughts of the respondents about the subject matter. Interview guideline for both the age groups was the same. The respondents were assured confidentiality and their free, full, and informed consent was sought prior to the interview. The interviews were audio-recorded after the permission of the respondents. Pseudonyms were used in the transcription and results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Climate Change, Livelihood and Women's Socio-Economic Status

This section includes the research findings on major indicators of the feminization of poverty and their linkages with climate change. Climate change is a gradual process that is intervening in people life but how it is enhancing the existing state of poverty among women is the main thing discussed here.

Climate Change and Agriculture in Context of Women

Climate change and agriculture are in direct contact with each other. Older women shared their experience that in the past, agriculture was essential to women livelihood. They used to cultivate crops from their own investments. Those investments were usually in the form of money, physical labour and time consuming as the seed they sow was not being provided by their landowners but by themselves. Women are pushed towards agriculture because they do not have any other means of money. Women are being ignored in a productive side, agriculture is a productive activity, but women are not getting revenues from agriculture but a portion of crops. Being an employer of productive sector women are not getting money. One of the main findings of the present research is that women are sowing but men are eating.

When they cultivate whole year, half portion of the whole crop goes to the landowner and the other portions are distributed to the farmers working at the land. From major subsistent patterns, women are not getting any money but only food. The irony is they don't have full access to good food to consume. Every good meal such as chicken, butter and other dairy items are served to men rather than women. For the better living standard food is not the only necessity to be meet. But education, health facilities decision making power should also be granted to the women to be a productive part of the society.

When there is any climatic disaster such as rainfall instability and hailing women get very less from crops. In the past, the barter system was common, so people mostly exchange their goods with goods to survive. For the money, women were totally dependent upon their husbands. They did not spend on themselves in their young ages because, for them, spending on their children, their families, and their household expenses come first. In their families, there were hierarchies that defined which expenses came first on their priority. Usually, it starts with the household's expenditures, then husband, then children, and then if something is left, they spend on themselves.

As compared to the elderly women, young women in the rural areas have lesser knowledge about the preservation strategies. Though, men and women are dependent on agriculture, but now men have other means of income such as wage labour, government jobs and seasonal income. Young women are staying at home and taking part in agriculture with no additional incomes. Their status are as same as elderly women. Here, we can apply the concept of the feminization of poverty, the concept of poorest of the poor in which male is part of agriculture as well as earning from wage labour but women are only getting a portion of food while giving physical labour to households as well.

If we analyse the concept of poverty, it is characterized as scarcity of resources and money. In this case, lack of money, and no other source of income is leading women towards poverty. From agriculture, women are gaining no salaries or daily wages but only a portion of the crop that she cultivated. Even in the present era conditions have not changed but now the climate is affecting the agriculture. Weather instabilities such as lower rainfall and higher temperatures are affecting the productivity that is affecting the livelihoods of people who are totally dependent on agriculture.

When a woman is not getting money from her major occupation, i.e., agriculture, then it is impossible for her to spend a good amount of money and time on herself. A portion of the crop can (sometimes) prevent food insecurity, but it cannot fulfil the day-to-day demands such as paying the fee for their children, paying electricity bills, and other items that can only be bought with money. If people, especially women, are not earning money or do not have opportunities of earning they will never come out of the cycle of poverty. In any climate disaster, rich people have other income sources, but poor people only depend on that portion of the crop which was affected by the disaster.

Women, Health, and Climate

Based on biological difference male and female possess different health issue. If we talk about the social construction of gender different norms and values are being attached to both male and female bodies. Climate change has differential impacts on both genders as well they have different attitudes towards their medication. High temperatures are the direct cause of spreading malaria, especially for pregnant women in rural areas who are mainly responsible for water collection they are experiencing malaria as compared to male (WHO, 2008).

In years of low productivity anxiety level increases due to food insecurity. Women in those years are more prone to domestic violence that impacts adversely on their health. The other reasons in health impacts are globalization as well pollution. Things were purer and more organic as well healthy, now due to climatic instability fertilizers has used to increase productivity and profit, things are impure and not organic. These impurities pollution and fertilizers usage have impacted negatively on human health.

Inequalities in health care facilities are putting women into poor health situations. Poverty and women's nature that she will not spend on herself is the major factor of poor health. Women take her health for granted and keep on working even in illness.

Decision Making

Usually, deciding is a synonym for having power. For centuries women are excluded from decision making because the decisions are usually made by their husbands. At home or at workplace men are the power holders. Even in old age women cannot make their decisions even for themselves but men can.

‘‘Hm log to sirf khyto mei kam krty hei, baki fasal ki katai k bad hmara kam khtm ho jata hei. Jitna bhi hisab kitab hei wo sb mrd krty hei. Gandum, Makai or baki fasly mard bychty hei jis mei hmara hisa srf itna he hei k hmy poory saal k liye khana mil jata hei’’.

Deciding about preventive measures from climatic disasters and raising no voice on getting a portion of the crop rather than money are the regular patterns that make women more submissive and powerless in patriarchal bargains.

Land Ownership

In rural setups men and women, they do not have land ownership even though they are spending their whole days on lands, investment in the form of money and physical fatigue. Lack of land ownership for women meant that she was totally dependent on landowner and secondly on the weather conditions. An old lady said.

‘‘Hamary khandan mei mardo k pass b koi zameen ni thi to aurto ki to boht door ki bat hei.’’

Even in the twenty-first century, women are far away from getting the ownership of lands. They are working on the land which is owned by someone else (usually men). If they own their lands they can benefit more, they can run a business by selling their lands and can use more productively. It is not just the land that women should own it is the matter to what extent women have control over lands. As young women explains that,

‘‘Abhi hmary mardo k name zameeny hei lein hmary name koi zameen ni hei. Agar hmary name ho b jay to tmam fysly mardo ny lyny hei.’’

According to Harvard’s Framework Access and control profile, women have access to resources but do not have control over resources. In case of climate change if women have no land ownership she lacks in productive opportunities, the incentives which landowner is enjoying and better able to conserve lands. There is no investment of landowner but being the owner of land is making him more dominant, powerful, and rich. Owners are getting food and money by selling their surplus, but women who are the investor of their time and physical labour are not getting money because they are just farmers and cannot control the land (Quisumbing, A. et al., 1995).

Education

Education is considered a power that can prevent poverty. But due to poverty resulting from climatic changes, it is difficult for poor people to educate their children, especially girls. In past, there was less concept of girl's education. In this study researcher specifically, include old age experience and norms that hindered girls' education. One of the young lady said.

‘‘Hamary gau mei lrkai prhi likhi ni hei, Deeni taleem di jati hei or lrko ko sheher mei bheja jata hei prhny. Lrkio ki jaldi shadi kr di jati hei.’’

Education brings knowledge as well other resources that can prevent poor people from the cycle of poverty. Due to this reason, children of poor people remain in the cycle of poverty due to lack of education. In years of less productivity when parents can afford to educate one child, they always prefer to educate their boy child. It does mean that only one gender is getting the education, but the girl remains at home having no access to education. No education means fewer income opportunities that increase more dependence of women on agriculture and natural resources. If parents have resources to educate one child, they will invest more in boys' education rather than girls.

Labour and Other Sources of Income

Women in the village had no technical specialty because of their illiteracy. They are not earning from any other sources because all time is consumed by fulfilling their basic needs then they have no other sources. This increases women’s dependence upon men. Here, weather condition and only one source.

Time Consumption

In low productive years, more time is consumed to secure daily life products. They had their small gardens in which poor people cultivated small products to survive in the low productive years. They spend the whole day out that consumes excessive time, that’s why they do not have any time to think about having education or any other income generation activity.

To sum up, according to the findings of this research, young women are showing more dependence on their husbands as compared to women in the past. Mostly women have electric water motors in their houses, but they must bring drinking water from outside. Now women are facing more strictness as compared to past with respect to their mobility. This is a reason why socio-cultural norm

is not permitting women to develop themselves. Lesser education, early marriages (Lukuba, D. A., 2015), and no access to credit are leading women towards poverty.

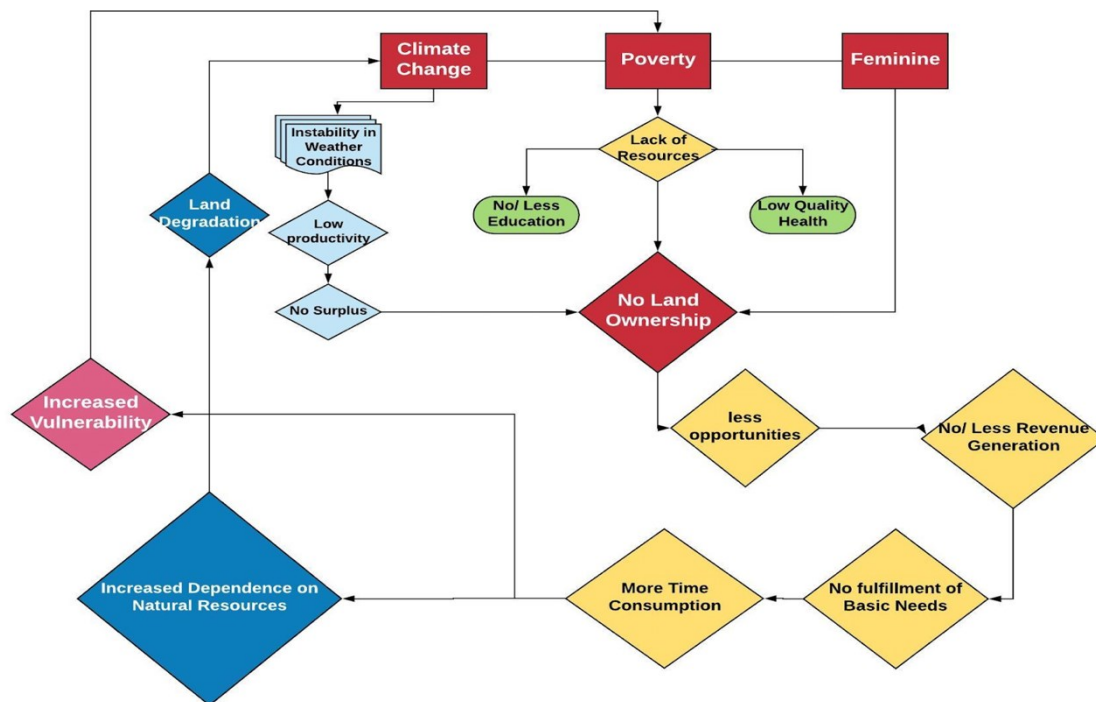


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Poverty

In the above-mentioned figure, three variables i.e., climate change, poverty and female subordination are interlinked with each other. Climate change effects such as instabilities in weather conditions are causing agricultural vulnerabilities due to which productivity has affected. Poor farmers do not have enough so that they can sell their surplus and get money. After the long process of crop ripening, poor people only get a portion of the crop but not money because they lack landownership. A landowner gets food as well as money by selling his surplus. A portion of food can provide a handful of food but not quality health, education, and other utilities those can only bring through money. Here climate change is linked to poverty where poor people do not have resources; do not have access to health facilities and education. This phenomenon is more affecting the feminine face of poverty. Women lack in resources and facilities and inequalities in access to such services. To secure their livelihood poor are depending on natural resources such as wood, water, and agriculture.

Poverty is another variable that has been generated through this figure. Without having cash, they cannot get the facilities like quality health, education, and land ownership. A portion of the crop can provide a handful of food but cannot provide education, good health and other utilities can be only bringing through cash. People who are living in poverty spend more time in collecting food in low productive years. They are totally dependent on natural resources. Excessive consumption of natural resources is the major cause of climate change and then again, the cycle goes on.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, it can be concluded from the research that climate change has increased the vulnerability of poor people. Climatic variations such as rainfall instability, high temperatures and other factors are affecting the livelihoods of people. Effects of climate change cannot be completely removed but we can play a part in reducing carbon emissions, which are one of the major sources of climate change and temperature increase. Now, this is a never-ending process, that, on the name of development people are running the natural essence of the land and its beauty. These negative effects of climate change are damaging resources also, on which poor people especially women are dependent. Facilities provided by government are not enough for them to let them live their lives happily, so they are dependent more on nature. But continuous dependence on nature is also disturbing the balance of the ecosystem. Not only poor people are consuming the natural resources, but also the people who have all facilities that

poor people lack use the natural resources as a source of a commodity are exploiting more. Climate change although is an environmental phenomenon but it is affecting people economically, socially and environmentally as well. Persistent patterns of women in poverty are enhanced by climatic conditions. Therefore, the findings suggest that women's experiences should be considered while making strategies for climate adaptations. Education is the main source for women to participate in the decision-making process and better able to develop strategies for the empowerment of women (also see DAC, 1998). There should be the implementation of policies to lessen the impacts of climatic disasters on poor people, especially women. The mindset of response to any climate disaster should be broken and we should move towards preparedness phase so that it will reduce the potential impacts of climate change. Though every disaster cannot be prevented, its impacts can be reduced by the mitigation and preparedness. Women, who're already experiencing social exclusion from education, should have the opportunity of equal participation in policymaking. Decision making, and equal political participation can enhance women abilities to conserve land and better establish herself.

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