



RESEARCH PAPER

Mainstreaming Women in Sustainable Development Projects in Pakistan

¹Rahool Sharma*, ²Habib Ali Katohar and ³Sajjad Gul

1. Research Consultant, District Development Association Tharparkar, Mitthi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Pakistan Studies at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Campus Khairpur Mirs, Sindh, Pakistan
3. Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, the University of Campania, Caserta, Italy

***Corresponding Author:** rksharmabpa53@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to investigate the approaches used to integrate rural women working with Sindhiyani Tehreek and Aurat Foundation in Pakistan into sustainable development programs and determine the impact of such efforts on individual empowerment, community resilience, and overall socioeconomic development. The research has adopted a qualitative approach to collect the primary and secondary sources of data. The data is analyzed using thematic analysis. The study has also incorporated case studies of the Aurat Foundation and Sindhiyani Tehreek to trace the role of rural women in sustainable development projects in Pakistan. The findings of this study are set to add to academic knowledge as well as policy formulation. Policymakers, NGOs, and development practitioners can plan and implement more targeted and impactful interventions if given strategies are effectively implemented that integrate rural women of these organizations into sustainable development programs. Finally, this research aims to inform a more inclusive and gender-sensitive approach to sustainable development, ensuring that women working in Sindhiyani Tehreek and Aurat Foundation have been playing a key role in sustainable development projects in Pakistan.

KEYWORDS Aurat Foundation, Mainstreaming Women, Sindhiyani Tehreek, Sustainable Development Projects

Introduction

Sustainable development has become a major concept for tackling global concerns in the twenty-first century, encompassing economic growth, social fairness, and environmental stewardship (Dylan, 2021). However, the specific conditions of rural women, characterized by variables such as limited access to education, healthcare, and economic resources, necessitate a specialized focus within the broader discourse of sustainable development (Braidotti, 1994). The urge to include rural women in sustainable development projects stems from gender equality and social justice concepts. Rural women's empowerment not only coincides with international development goals, but also helps to break the cycle of poverty, strengthen community resilience, and promote inclusive progress in different societies (Bangert, 2017).

Moreover, women living in far-flung areas account for nearly half of the global population, and they play a critical part in the farming industry, local economics, and community development in Pakistan (Ahmad, 2013). Despite their critical contributions, however, these women frequently confront disproportionate barriers that prevent them from taking part in and benefiting from sustainable development programs (Agarwal, 2017).

The rural women working in Sindhiyani Tehreek, and the Aurat Foundation have long been playing a role in sustainable development projects in Pakistan. The role of these women ranges from agricultural development, advocacy for environmental effects and sanitation, and promotion of equitable educational and health services, to political activism for gender equality, voice against violence against women, and engagement for women

empowerment at the gross root level (Jalal, 2002). For instance, the Aurat Foundation has been providing microcredit financial loans to women of rural areas to expand their financial and economic resources and become independent in society (Maroof, 2022). The organization has also been providing training on education and health to improve rural development in literacy and health (Noor, 2022).

However, the Sindhiyani Tehreek has been working to promote the development and progress of rural women in politics, legal battles, and access to clean water for rural families (Arab Naz, 2013). For instance, their successful movement during the 1980s against the dictatorship in Pakistan helped promote the participation of rural women in politics, and empowered women to fight for legal rights by discouraging the Hudood Ordinance (Aslam, 2021).

Recognizing the crucial relevance of including rural women in such programs, this study conducts a thorough examination of the techniques, problems, and outcomes related to mainstreaming rural women in the context of sustainable development in Pakistan. Further, this study aims to shed light on the numerous aspects of mainstreaming rural women working with Aurat Foundation and Sindhiyani Tehreek, considering the socioeconomic status and geographical location in determining their experiences.

Literature Review

The present review of literature examines existing studies on the inclusion of rural women working with Aurat Foundation and Sindhiyani Tehreek in sustainable development projects in depth. This review intends to provide a comprehensive perspective of the problems and opportunities associated with empowering rural women working with these two organizations within the context of sustainable development by summarizing major findings, identifying gaps, and examining theoretical frameworks.

Gender Dimensions of Sustainable Development

Economic Empowerment: The work of (Seyfang, 2001) and (Robertson, 1999) highlighted this approach as a significant part of the improved role of rural women in development projects. The studies recognized countryside women's economic empowerment as a major tenet. This includes not simply generating revenue but also gaining equitable access to resources such as land, credit, and technology. According to (Seyfang, 2001) and (Robertson, 1999), sustainable development must encourage economic agency, allowing rural women to actively contribute to local economies.

Education and Information: Education is emphasized as a change agent, with a focus on providing rural women with an accessible and high-quality education. The work of (Butt, 2010) has provided foundations to understand the value of education for the growth of rural women in development projects. The study of (Butt, 2010) elucidates that the empowerment of women with knowledge is critical for fostering informed decision-making, ending poverty cycles, and guaranteeing the transmission of sustainable practices between generations.

Health and Well-being: Studies by academicians such as (Kaur, 1991) and (Metwally, 2006) suggested that the concept of health and well-being emphasizes the inextricable link between health and long-term development. They believed that the gendered sustainable development agenda includes ensuring access to comprehensive healthcare and reproductive rights, as well as addressing gender-specific health concerns.

Methods for Integrating Rural Women's Education Into the Mainstreaming:

This research enterprise highlights the approach of (Rönblom, 2005) and (Unterhalter, 2010) that addresses how education can empower rural women, end poverty cycles, and encourage their active involvement in sustainable development projects. Further, this approach is highlighted below with academic literature:

Economic Empowerment: To improve rural women's economic agency, promote financial independence, and aid in community development, income-generating ventures, and microfinance programs (Kabeer, 2010) have been investigated.

Healthcare Access: Studies (Duflo, 2012) and (Pandey, 2021) highlight the need for focused efforts to address maternal health, family planning, and illness prevention, as well as the reciprocal relationship between healthcare access and sustainable development.

Social Inclusion and Participation: Community-based initiatives and participatory approaches (Moser, 1998) are acknowledged for their capacity to promote social inclusion and encourage rural women's active engagement in decision-making processes.

Challenges in Mainstreaming Rural Women

Cultural Norms and Gender Stereotypes: Deep-seated cultural norms frequently perpetuate gender inequities, impeding rural women's effective inclusion in development programs (Agarwal B. , 2003)

Uneven Access to Resources: Unequal access to resources, such as land and credit, creates substantial impediments to rural women's economic empowerment and limits their ability to engage in sustainable livelihoods (Doss, 2018).

Impact of Mainstreaming Women in Far-Flung

Individual Empowerment: Studies constantly indicate that mainstreaming activities strengthen rural women's self-esteem, decision-making autonomy, and overall well-being (Kabeer, 2010; Pandey, 2021).

Community Development: Rural women's empowerment is linked to larger community development outcomes such as improved healthcare, education, and sustainable farming methods (Duflo et al., 2012; Moser, 1998).

Research Gaps

Long-term Sustainability: Few studies have been conducted to analyze the long-term sustainability of mainstreaming projects, raising concerns about the long-term consequences beyond project deadlines.

Technology and Innovation: The potential of technology and innovation in breaking down barriers and improving the effectiveness of mainstreaming tactics warrants further investigation.

In a nutshell, this literature analysis emphasizes the need to include rural women in sustainable development programs. This synthesis provides a foundation for understanding the complexities inherent in empowering rural women by addressing theoretical frameworks, techniques, obstacles, and impacts. As the world strives for sustainable development goals, a comprehensive and inclusive approach that prioritizes the needs and ambitions of rural women is essential. This analysis lays the groundwork for future research and policy actions targeted at making the future more egalitarian and sustainable for everybody.

Theoretical Approaches

Gendered Sustainable Development and the Rural Nexus

A comprehensive and coherent theoretical framework that discusses the gendered elements of rural development is vital in achieving the goal of sustainable development. This theory, dubbed "Gendered Sustainable Development and the Rural Nexus," aims to integrate feminist ideas and sustainable development principles into a unified framework (Calléja, 2022). This theory aspires to lead research, policy, and practice toward a more inclusive and equitable future by revealing the intricate connection of gender, rurality, and sustainable development (Calléja, 2022). Following are the main applications of this theory that help explain the dimensions of this research venture: This theoretical approach tries to address

the link between rural women the sustainable development. This link acknowledges the critical role that rural women play in determining the socioeconomic and environmental characteristics of rural communities. The Gendered Sustainable Development and the Rural Nexus theory provides a holistic and integrated framework that blends feminist viewpoints and sustainable development principles. The theory seeks to guide research, policy, and practice toward a more inclusive and equitable future by addressing economic, educational, health, and governance dimensions, ensuring that rural women's unique challenges and opportunities are central to the global sustainable development agenda.

Material and Methods

Since the nature of the research is descriptive, the study has employed a qualitative research approach. This approach is used to address the core areas of the statement through thematic analysis of the views and opinions produced during in-depth interviews, available surveys, and other sources of secondary information.

Sampling

Snowball Sampling

This research enterprise has incorporated snowball sampling to select samples for the conduct of interviews. Implementing snowball sampling for qualitative components makes it easier to identify key informants within communities, developing a greater awareness of local perspectives and facilitating access to difficult-to-reach people.

Data Collection

This research venture has maintained a balanced approach by incorporating secondary and primary sources of data. For primary data, in-depth interviews through focus group discussions have been conducted with participants. The study has also incorporated secondary sources of data. The information reviewed was collected from existing research journals, books, articles, documentaries, and official reports.

In-depth Interviews

This research enterprise is conducted through In-depth interviews with the activists, leaders, and members of the Sindhiyani Tehreek, and Aurat Foundation operating in Pakistan for the empowerment of women at the grassroots level. The participants were interviewed through semi-structured interviews and a deep examination of personal experiences, motivations, and challenges was sought.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were also part of the research. Focus group discussions were organized to facilitate participants and their interactions. This way, information gathered is based on collective perspectives on the role of women in mainstreaming sustainable development projects.

Data Analysis Approach

The thematic analysis approach is employed that allows for the identification of recurrent patterns, themes, and narratives within the collected data. The process of thematic analysis involves the following areas:

Thematic Analysis

A set of themes was produced from the information received during the interviews with the leaders, members, and activities of Sindhiyani Tehreek and Aurat Foundation. Later, these themes were converted into a coding scheme to analyze the data.

Coding Scheme

The research applied a coding scheme of themes to investigate and analyze the opinions and perspectives of participants during the interviews.

Theme Development

The finalization of themes was done, and themes were sought to address the role of mainstreaming women in sustainable development projects.

Data Interpretation

Developing an interpretation of the findings, considering the context and connections between themes used as techniques to seek findings. This phase involved drawing conclusions and identifying implications.

Case Studies

This research venture has adopted the mainstreaming of women from two major political and non-governmental organizations based on the empowerment of women to address the core concerns. The leaders, activists, and members of these organizations were interviewed.

Aurat Foundation

The Aurat Foundation, which was founded in 2008, is a Pakistani non-governmental organization committed to women's empowerment. The organization's purpose is to promote gender equality and social justice for Pakistani women. It generally concentrates its efforts in the following areas:

Legal Liberation: The Aurat Foundation provides women with legal assistance and education about their rights and how to achieve justice.

Economic Empowerment: It provides women with training and funding to foster business and financial independence.

Health and Educational Services: This organization has also been playing a crucial role in providing loans to rural women for the development of literacy and health sector in Pakistan.

Sindhiyani Tehreek

Sindhiyani Tehreek is a nationalist political party founded during the 1980s to support the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The movement was formed with the directions of Awami Tehreek led by Rasool Bux Palijo. Since then, the organization has been promoting the participation of rural women in political affairs at gross root levels to federal levels. The organization has also been supporting women's education and women's empowerment at the local level. The aim has been to develop the status of rural women in Sindh.

The Sindhiyani Tehreek, driven by an ideology profoundly steeped in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, attacked the prevalent patriarchal norms and discriminatory practices that plagued Sindhi society. Their uncompromising voice rang across the streets, condemning honor killings, forced conversions, and unequal land allocation. Their activity went beyond protests; they were actively involved in organizing literacy initiatives and creating.

The Sindhiyani Tehreek has left a history of resilience and constant commitment to women's empowerment. Their fight against Zia's authoritarian government, as well as their relentless pursuit of social justice for Sindhi women, have left an indelible mark on Pakistan's feminist landscape.

Results and Discussion

The thorough study on mainstreaming rural women in sustainable development projects depicts a variety of insights on the barriers, strategies, and consequences involved with integrating rural women particularly those working in the Aurat Foundation and Sindhiyani Tehreek organizations into development initiatives. The subject matter weaves together major findings from qualitative assessments, shedding light on the obstacles of

mainstreaming efforts and their consequences for rural women's empowerment and community development.

Stereotypes as Impediments to Rural Women's Inclusion

Cultural Norms and Gender Divisions: The findings of the study emphasize that deeply rooted cultural norms and gender stereotypes continue to pose substantial barriers to rural women's effective integration in Pakistan. Participants in all case studies voiced concern about the continuance of conventional roles, which limit women's agencies and prevent them from participating in economic and decision-making activities.

Inequitable Access to Resources: The findings also highlight that inequitable access to resources emerged as a persistent impediment in countries like Pakistan. The qualitative research identified discrepancies in land ownership, financial access, and technology, showing that economic empowerment projects must address structural inequities to be effective.

Structural Impediments: The study identified institutional obstacles as key constraints to mainstreaming rural women working with Aurat Foundation and Sindhiyani Tehreek in Pakistan. The nature of these challenges is found as bureaucratic bottlenecks and policy deficiencies. Weak governance structures and a lack of gender-sensitive policies have been identified as barriers to the long-term execution of development programs in Pakistan resulting in the long impacts on mainstreaming rural women in the country.

Impacts on Rural Women in Pakistan

Interpersonal Independence: The research repeatedly revealed that mainstreaming activities had a favorable influence on rural women's empowerment in Pakistan. Across varied groups, improved self-esteem, increased decision-making autonomy, and increased confidence were observed, demonstrating that tailored treatments provide concrete outcomes.

Social Resilience: Qualitative shreds of evidence demonstrated a good relationship between rural women's empowerment and community resilience. Women's active participation in sustainable development projects resulted in stronger social cohesion, enhanced infrastructure, and a higher ability to react to external problems.

Economic Growth and Poverty Alleviation: Economic empowerment projects helped to boost local economic growth and alleviate poverty. Increased income for rural women translated into higher living standards, better educational possibilities for children, and less need for foreign aid.

Mainstreaming Strategies to Ensure Rural Women's Inclusion

Educational Programs: The study suggests ensuring successful education programs in Pakistan can help promote this cause. Successful educational programs have been regarded as change agents globally. Moreover, literacy rates among women increased significantly in places where education initiatives were incorporated. As a result, they were better able to make decisions and were more conscious of their rights in Pakistan.

Economic Empowerment Programs: The study found that there is a dire need to ensure economic empowerment programs in the country. Economic empowerment programs, particularly those focusing on microfinance and income-generating activities, have shown promising results internationally as well as in Pakistan. The qualitative findings emphasized instances of enhanced financial independence, higher household income, and the formation of women-led cooperatives in Pakistan.

Access to Healthcare: The study stressed the need to enhance healthcare access for rural women in Pakistan. Improved healthcare services in communities had a positive influence on maternal health, family planning, and overall well-being. The combined effects of integrated health and education programs on the progress of the community.

Conclusion

To conclude, the wide-ranging discussions and conclusions provide insights into the complex processes of mainstreaming rural women in sustainable development programs. The study emphasizes the importance of context-specific techniques for dealing with cultural nuances, institutional obstacles, and overlapping identities. In Pakistan, integrating women into sustainable development projects has emerged as a vital need for attaining holistic and long-term growth. This study delves into the many facets of incorporating gender perspectives into sustainable development programs, emphasizing the importance of empowering women to promote inclusive and resilient communities. Several major findings highlight the need to use a gender-sensitive approach to project planning, implementation, and evaluation. The Aurat Foundation and Sindhiyani Tehreek's lessons are compelling case studies that highlight the need to include women in sustainable development projects in Pakistan. These groups have been critical in advocating for gender equality, empowering women, and contributing to the broader targets of sustainable development. These case studies demonstrate the concept that empowering women is a strategic need for attaining comprehensive and steady progress in achieving sustainable development goals. Lessons from such instances can be used to guide future projects, highlighting the importance of a coordinated and inclusive strategy that recognizes and uses women's distinctive contributions to the improvement of society.

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