

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH VILLAGE SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The present study was conducted in District Swabito explore the role of village support organizations (VSOs) in gender development. The study was cross-sectional and quantitative. A sample size of 384 respondents was selected through Sekaran (2003) from whom data was collected through interview schedule. Chi-square and T^b were used to test the association between gender development and VSOs. The findings of the study shows that VSOs stressed upon to device specific gender strategy in community development projects, gaining attention from VSOs by women, empowering women in their decision, and women's participation is important in community based projects. However, it is evident from the results that VSOs failed to encourage upto extent to encourage women to get vocational trainings to start their own business, in designing and giving training exclusively on gender issues, and encouraging women to participate in management committees. Therefore, in order to overcome these challenges, VSOs should bring all the marginal groups to the main domain, entrust financial resources for their uplifting and put pressure on government to form policies in their best interest.

Keywords: Gender Development, Village Support Organizations, Women empowerment, Community Planning, Vocational Training.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are several developing nations with agriculturally based rural communities who have been working to improve their rural communities from last many decades. Countries whose economy is centered on agriculture have numerous obstacles in enhancing their current socioeconomic conditions. These rural settlements are characterized by a low per capita income, high unemployment, a lack of education, and a dearth of other essentials. The construction of community groups (VOs) is of highest importance for the acceleration of economic development in the country (Douangneuneet *al.*, 2005). Members of village organizations (VOs) work towards the common goal of bettering their means of subsistence through collective effort. They are distinct from traditional organizations in that they function as mediators between villagers and economic, institutional, and political actors from outside the agricultural community. Traditional organizations are primarily responsible for regulating relationships between members of the same community (Mercoiret&Berthome, 1997). In addition, they are distinct from conventional organizations in that they have a formal membership structure and a status as a legal entity. They offer members a political voice and supply services in the event that the market fails, club commodities or local public goods in the event that states fail, and vice versa (Collion&Rondot, 1998; Diagne&Pesche, 1995). These organizations can take the form of anything from narrowly focused producer cooperatives to expansive multifunctional organizations depending on where in the world they are located.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality is defined as no difference in rights, duties, or opportunities for individuals based on whether they are born masculine or feminine (Warth and Koparanova, 2012). It may also be described as a condition in which "Without the restraints of traditional gender roles that women



and men have distinct objectives and needs, all human beings are free to develop their personal capabilities and make judgments are considered, respected and favored equally (Holzner *et al.*, 2010). Gender equality's ultimate goal is to eliminate discrimination based on one's gender (Alvarez *et al.*, 2013).

Similarly, gender participation, involvement, and empowerment in the field of rural development of oppressed groups is an essential concept and very responsive and required. It predicts, through gender equality and the participation of disadvantaged groups, the individual and collective activities of groups in development work. With the goal of raising people's awareness and enhancing the acceptability of rural people's gender-related capabilities and skills in order to better respond to development programs in accordance with gender needs. Promoting gender pro and the inclusion of people's disadvantaged stigma for local events with regard to community growth through the participation of people in decision-making and empowerment of marginalized group is an important concept and is very sensitive in the field of rural development. Through gender equality and the inclusion of excluded groups, it anticipates individual and collective efforts of groups in development efforts. With the goal to rise the awareness and improving acceptance of gender-related capabilities and skills among rural people, so that they may better react to development projects as per gender needs. Encouragement of gender pro and inclusion of disadvantaged stigma of individuals for carrying out local activities with regard to community growth from the participation of individuals in decision-making as a participatory method involves stages of program implementation, participation of individuals in program enhancement and acknowledgment of their efforts to assess such programs (Morgan, 2003).

Moreover, women's empowerment is critical in this regard (Alvarez, Faruq and Lopez, 2013). The concept of sustainable development comes as a result of a shift in human perception. The outlook for growth has changed over time, resulting in what we now consider being sustainable development. The emphasis throughout the 1950s and 1960s was on a country's economic development and capacity for production. However, when awareness of the widespread inequality between wealthy and poor grew in the 1970s, the focus shifted to equity issues, such as social progress and wealth distribution. Simultaneously, environmental conservation emerged as an important part of development comprehending the environmental consequences of economic progress (Drexhage and Murphy, 2010).

A lot of studies have indicated that sustained growth is improbable without the emancipation of oppressed women and gender equality. As a result, gender equality is seen as both a human rights issue and a prerequisite for, as well as a measure of, long-term progress (Alvarez *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, gender inequities in economic, social, and environmental elements are widespread and persistent (Women, 2014).

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2008), "every development project must incorporate and guarantee that both genders contribute equally to it and benefit equally from it." In order to achieve sustainability, women and oppressed groups should be empowered and equitably able to contribute to and profit from all areas of growth. Women's empowerment and gender equality are being promoted as a means of achieving long-term progress in the country. Bossel's (1999) statement corroborates the argument that, the environmental, material, environmental, social, economic, legal, cultural, political, and psychological components of human society's long-term evolution deserve to be taken seriously.

The topic of women's empowerment in the context of poverty alleviation is one of the most important studies, especially in light of the inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment as one of the Millennium Development Goals' primary focuses. Investing in areas where men and women are regarded equally yields the highest returns and encompasses nearly all aspects of development (OECD, 2008). Typically, women devote a greater proportion of their time and energy than men, especially to issues pertaining to the domestic and social life of society. Economic empowerment increases women's access to a broader array of economic resources and opportunities, such as paid work, banking and other financial services, property and other productive assets, opportunities for skill development, and market-specific information. For the



advancement of women's rights and the facilitation of their ability to exercise control over their lives and have an impact on society, it is essential that women participate in the economic life of their communities and attain economic independence (Swedish ministry pertaining to foreign affairs, 2006).

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research design

A cross sectional or one-shot study design was used to conduct this study. A Cross-sectional research is the most effective method for comprehending a phenomenon, problem, attitude, viewpoint, or concern by analyzing a sample of the population (Olsen and George, 2004).

Nature, universe, sampling procedure & sample size of the study

The study was conducted in rural areas of District Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Furthermore, this is a strictly quantitative study in its nature. The present analysis was restricted to the district of Swabi for various reasons, including the rural socioeconomic structure of the area and the extensive work conducted by VSO's in these areas. Based on previous community development work on CBOs and NGOs in rural communities, and due to the recently emerged circumstance of COVID-19, the data was gathered through multiple methods including personal visits, VSO's meetings, telephone calls, and emails (Couper, 2011; McGrath, 2005). According to statistics from the Directorate of Social Welfare KPK (2019), a total of "177,254" beneficiaries were registered with various VSO's in the study area. Consequently, a sample size of 384 was selected by using the criteria of Sekaran (2003). In addition, the designated sample size was proportionally distributed to each stratum, i.e. Tehsil, according to Bowley's (1925) formula (see table 1).

Table 1. Table showing sample size for each Tehsil in district Swabi, KPK

Tehsil	Population Size	Beneficiaries	Sample Size
Lahor	264,748	34,113	74
Topi	275,317	38,358	83
Razr	557,775	72,651	157
Swabi	250,851	32,132	70
Grand Total	13,48,727	177,254	384

Source: Directorate of Social Welfare Khyber Puktukhwa (2019)

Tool of data collection

A Likert scale approach was used to quantify the variables proposed for this study (see table 3). Based on the available literature, personal experience, meetings with district social welfare officers, and discussions with CBOs, LSOs, and VOS members, multiple statements describing the various aspects of the dependent and independent variables were developed for the current study. A pre-tested structured interview schedule is used to determine the validity and reliability of the queries, as well as the consistency between the attributes (Reynolds *et al.*, 1993). Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha test was more suitable for assessing reliability in the proposed study. In the social sciences, Cronbach's Alpha values up to 0.6 are permissible (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). Thus, the Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.61 for gender development, and 0.70 for community satisfaction with the effectiveness of VSO's met the minimum requirements for indexation (see table 2).

Table 2. Reliability results of the scale

Variables	Cronbach's alpha
Gender development	0.60
Community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's	0.70



Conceptual Framework

Table 3 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Gender Development	Community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's

Data Analysis

For the purpose of data analyzing statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) was used to analyze the primary data to frequency and percentage distributions at the univariate level, whereas the chi-square test was utilized to determine the relationship between variables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4 shows the association of gender development and community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's where different gender development was measured with community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's. A highly significant ($P=0.000$) and positive ($T^b=1.200$) association was found between community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's and specific gender strategy is necessary to the device in the overall community-based projects. These results were similar to the findings of UNICEF Gender Action Plan (2018-21) who disclosed that, equal rights, resources, opportunities, and protections are enjoyed by men and women, however, in most societies around the globe still faced power structures dilemma which favor male then women. Therefore, achieving gender equality through addressing the disadvantages of girls position and power is the order of the day. Gender disparity affects both men and women and pervades personal, familial, and social interactions and institutions. To achieve justice and equality, both sexes must collaborate. Gender equality requires changes in the power dynamics that establish gender norms and relationships.

Similarly, a highly significant ($P=0.000$) and positive ($T^b=3.397$) association was found between women express specific needs and gain specific attention from the VSO's with community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's. From these results, it can be inferred that women make up half of the population in the research area (about 50.2% of the population is male, while 49.8% is female). Over the previous 19 years, the region's population has increased by around 36 percent (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company, 2020), however, they do not express the same basic demands for living as man. However, due to the dominance of patriarchal norms, women were unable to properly express their basic rights and decisions, which may have led to discriminatory attitudes in VSO's in particular (Khan et al., 2021, Nisar et al., 2022).

Moreover, a significant ($P=0.005$) and positive ($T^b=3.397$) association was found between community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's and women are empowered to decide for their own self. In the context of Pukhtoonwla, it could be attributed that women were empowered as a result of educational attainment (Khan et al., 2021) and other institutional dynamism in politics (Khan et al., 2019), jobs (Shah, 2019), familial affairs, and the ability to decide what they want in life (Khan et al., 2019). However, in other spheres of life, such as inheritance rights (Shah, 2019, Nisar et al., 2022), poverty, patriarchy, Swara (forced or compensation marriage to settle a dispute), Walwar, Ghag, honor killing to protect the man's Nang, and Miratah (Afghanistan Analysts Network, 2016; Sanaullah, 2020; Bangash and Fariha, 2020; Khan et al., 2020). Empowering women is another goal. It has both intrinsic and instrumental value, as it leads to economic efficiency and other development results. Strengthening "women as economic, political, and social agents" can change policy decisions and make institutions more divers (The World Bank, 2011; Iqbal et al., 2022).

Likewise, a non-significant ($P=0.157$) and positive ($T^b=0.934$) relationship was found between women are encouraging to get vocational training to initiate their personal business and community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's. Based on these results, it could be concluded that, women were not considered to give full attention in terms of technical education which in turn women suppression. However, as a result of technological advancement, the world has become a global village, and nations must adopt modern practices to survive. Women, who make up half of



the world's population, can never compete in economic advancement if ignored. The 5th SDG emphasizes gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. Humans must have a general education, but they lack the technical skills required for advanced jobs. Education that emphasizes the application of skills, information, and attitudes required to work in any area of social or economic activity is called technical and vocational education and training (Ezeet *al.*, 2013). These are the parts of education that mix technology, practical knowledge, and general education. To thrive in today's world, one must broaden one's knowledge and attitude on numerous economic and daily vocations (Audu et al., 2013). Technical and vocational education and training prepares individuals for employment and survival in a competitive age (Chijioke, 2013). Women make up 48.54 percent of Pakistan's population, according to World Bank data, yet their literacy rate remains low. Fewer women pursue higher education and technical training. Women also make a small contribution to household income (Abid et al., 2020). Moreover, technical and vocational education is the best strategy to develop a country's workforce's technical skills. Empowering them to work in the industry or create their own business can emancipate women. T&V prepares students for employment by providing them with relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes, according Chukwuedoet *al.* (2015) technical and vocational education and training programmes help produce demand-driven workers. But Auduet *al.* (2013) argue that reducing unemployment is not a problem for emerging countries. Vocational and technical programmes can help reduce it. These projects create income, jobs, and a sustainable way of life.

Furthermore, a non-significant ($P=0.721$) with negative ($T^b = -1.545$) association was found between VSO's of study area are involved in designing training which exclusively address gender issues and community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's. These results were also similar as preceding outcomes, and negated the work of Chukwuedoet *al.* (2015) who disclosed that technical and vocational education and training programmes help produce demand-driven workers. But Audu et al. (2013) argue that reducing unemployment is not a problem for emerging countries. Vocational and technical programmes can help reduce it. These projects create income, jobs, and a sustainable way of life.

Moreover, a non-significant ($P=0.171$) and negative ($T^b = -0.805$) relationship was found between male members of the VSO's encourage women to participate in management committees or activities and community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's. On the basis of these results, women were not fully empowered in VSO's due to prevalence of patriarchal norms despite women held fully acknowledged administrative roles inside VSO's and were treated in a manner comparable to that of males. In addition, in the location that was researched, women proved to be more successful organizers than men. In contrast to these findings, the International Labor Organization (2015) places Pakistan near the bottom of the list of nations that have a significant percentage of women in managerial positions. According to the report, there are a number of factors that diminish women's participation in managerial positions in Pakistan. These factors include more responsibilities at the household level, a masculine corporate culture, the prevalence of patriarchy, the lack of role models for women, the absence of a company's equality policy, negative stereotypes about women, the absence of a flexible working environment, and inadequate labor and non-discrimination laws. In addition, there is a lack of role models for women in Pakistan. Similarly, a significant association ($P=0.005$) and positive ($T^b=0.785$) relationship was found between community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's and participation of women in your VSO is important for the success of any community-based projects. It can be deduced from these results that women have been medically proven to be physically and emotionally fragile, and that this notion is still prevalent in the studied area. In addition, these findings disproved the commonly held belief that women in community-based projects cannot fully secure socioeconomic development at the community level. Annis (2008) and Nelson & Levesque (2007) echo the same premise when they assert that women lose interest in senior jobs due to difficulties such as their caring nature, stereotyping, gender discrimination, and household duties. It has been hypothesized repeatedly that the biological clocks and career clocks of women are identical. Their growth is



severely hindered by their lifelong efforts to maintain a balance between job and domestic responsibilities (Hughes *et al.*, 2009).

Likewise, a non-significant ($P=0.355$) with positive ($T^b=0.913$) association was found between are you involved in strategic and management processes in your community-level planning processes and community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's. Based on these results it could be inferred that women involvement in strategic and management process at community level were not fully acknowledged due to the various reason including prevalence of patriarchal norms, gender stereotyping, discriminatory attitudes towards female, subordinate sex, lack of knowledge or educational attainment in the study area. However, it is impossible to overestimate the significance of women's participation in community development to the well-being of a society. Some sociologists believe that the majority of decisions that affect a household's participation in the community, such as those pertaining to healthcare, education, and culture, are made by the household's female head of household. Reducing gender disparity, meeting the needs of women and families, and putting an end to centuries of discrimination against women can all be accomplished through the participation of women in community development in parts of the world where women's rights are still in the process of being established (Ellis, 2022).

Moreover, a significant ($P=0.002$) and positive ($T^b=0.988$) association was found between community satisfaction towards the efficacy of VSO's and VSO's encouraged rural women through activists to take local initiatives and join hands in the mission of rural up lifting programs as a whole. These results were also similar with United Nation Women's Fund for Gender Equality (2022) disclosed that rural women have a crucial role in the process of bringing about the revolutionary economic, environmental, and social reforms required for sustainable development. However, limited access to credit, healthcare, and education are among the many challenges they face. These difficulties are worsened by the global food and economic problems and by climate change. Empowering women is crucial not just to the success of individuals, families, and rural communities as a whole, but also to the growth of the economy as a whole, given that women make up such a large amount of the agricultural labor force throughout the world.

Table 4. Association between Gender Development and Community Satisfaction Towards the Efficacy of VSO's

Gender Development	Dependent variable (Indexed)	Chi-Square, P-value & T ^b
Specific gender strategy is necessary to the device in the overall community-based projects	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=18.001$ ($P=0.000$) $T^b=1.200$
Women express specific needs and gain specific attention from the VSO's	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=17.619$ ($P= 0.000$) $T^b=3.397$
In your area women are empowered to decide for their own self	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=10.430$ ($P=0.005$) $T^b=0.934$
Women are encouraging to get vocational training to initiate their personal business	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=3.702$ ($P=0.157$) $T^b= -1.545$
VSO's of study area are involved in designing training which exclusively address gender issues	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=0.653$ ($P=0.721$) $T^b= -0.805$



Male members of the VSO's encourage women to participate in management committees or activities	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=3.527$ (P=0.171) $T^b=0.785$
Participation of women in your VSO are important for the success of any community-based projects	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=10.430$ (P=0.005) $T^b=0.913$
Are you involved in strategic and management processes in your community-level planning processes	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=2.070$ (P=0.355) $T^b=0.988$
VSO's encouraged rural women through activists to take local initiatives and join hands in the mission of rural up lifting programs as a whole	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=12.904$ (P= 0.002) $T^b=0.532$

Source: Author (2021)

With regards to the association between gender development and community satisfaction towards the efficiency of VSO's (table 5) a highly significant (P=0.000) and positive ($T^b= 1.959$) association was found between both indexed variable. It could be inferred from such findings that gender development could be addressed through proper utilization of VSO's in the study area and a sound mechanism for all gender gaps, which lag the development root in the study area. These results were also in line with UNICEF Gender Action Plan (2018-2021) who reported that gender equality is achieved when women and men, as well as girls and boys, have equal rights, resources, opportunities, and protections. Because power systems in civilizations throughout the world predominantly favor boys and men, attaining gender equality entails addressing the disadvantages encountered by girls and women. Nonetheless, because gender inequity permeates personal, family, and social interactions and institutions, it also affects men and boys and requires the participation of both sexes to achieve justice and equality. In addition to changes in awareness and conduct, shifts in gender equality necessitate alterations in the fundamental power dynamics that create gender norms and relationships. According to the current GAP, programming should adhere to five gender-programming principles and should be at scale, well resourced, expert-led, evidence-based, and innovative (UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2018 -2021).

Table 5. Association between Gender Development And Community Satisfaction towards the Efficiency Of VSO's

Independent Variable	Dependent variable	Chi-square, P-Value and T^b
Gender development	Community Satisfaction towards the Efficacy of VSO's	$\chi^2=136.647$ (P=0.000) $T^b= 1.959$

Source: Author (2021)

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that specific gender strategy is needed in overall community-based projects in order to provide equal chances to both the genders. Similarly, VSOs empowered the women in the study area in decision-making process, where they can make decisions regarding their various walks of life. Moreover, it was also found in the study that women participation is necessary for the success of community-based projects as they make half of the population. VSOs encouraged and made it possible that local women should take part actively in local activities and join hands with their male counterparts for the uplifting of their community. However, it was also noted that VSOs



failed to some extent to sensitize women to get vocational training, devising specific trainings that target gender-based issues which is key for the development of any community. Due to patriarchal structure of the society, most of the men members of VSOs did not allow women to participate in management committees and activities openly. Gender development interventions by VSOs has certain issues like patriarchy, non-cooperation of women with VSOs, lack of specific programs to target gender issues especially women. To overcome these problems, VSOs should give equal representation to both genders, give financial support to women, and lessen male dominance in order to bring both genders on equal stage.

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