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Gendered Pathways: A Comparative Review of Women's Contributions to Household Food Security in Rural and Urban Household Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review explores the different ways women support household food security in rural and urban Punjab, Pakistan, and how these roles are shaped by social, economic, and environmental factors. A structured search of academic databases and grey literature published between 2005 and 2023 was conducted. Studies were screened for relevance to women's involvement in food production, household food management, income generation, and nutrition-related decision-making. The final selection of literature reveals clear contrasts between rural and urban contexts. In rural Punjab, women contribute primarily through agricultural labor, livestock rearing, home-based food processing, and participation in informal markets, while often facing constraints such as limited ownership of land, restricted mobility, and reduced access to agricultural services. Urban women contribute by managing household budgets, engaging in formal or informal employment, making food-purchasing decisions, and applying nutrition knowledge to improve family diets. Across both settings, women's contributions are influenced by gender norms, education levels, access to resources, and intra-household power structures. The review highlights that although women play a central role in ensuring food availability, stability, and nutritional quality, their contributions remain undervalued. Strengthening women's agency, improving resource access, and integrating gender-responsive approaches into food security programs are essential for sustainable outcomes in both rural and urban Punjab. This comparative perspective aims to inform policymakers and practitioners seeking inclusive, sustainable food systems in Punjab.

Keywords: Women's Contribution, Household Food Security, Gender Roles, Rural Households, Urban Households, Punjab, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

1.1 Household food security in Punjab:

Maqbool et al. (2005) define household food security as a multifaceted concept that goes



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beyond mere food supply to include access, consumption, and stability over time. It ensures that every family member consistently has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life, both economically and socially. Originating from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), this concept highlights that food security is not only a national or agricultural issue but also a deeply social and household-level concern, shaped by social interactions, gender relations, and economic capacity. In developing countries like Pakistan, several factors influence household food security, including income, employment opportunities, agricultural productivity, societal norms, and intra-household distribution of resources. These constraints determine who eats, how much, and how frequently, underscoring the critical role of both structural and social factors in shaping food security outcomes.

What roles do women play in ensuring household food security in rural and urban areas of Punjab, Pakistan?

To examine the role of women in ensuring household food security in rural and urban areas of Punjab, Pakistan.

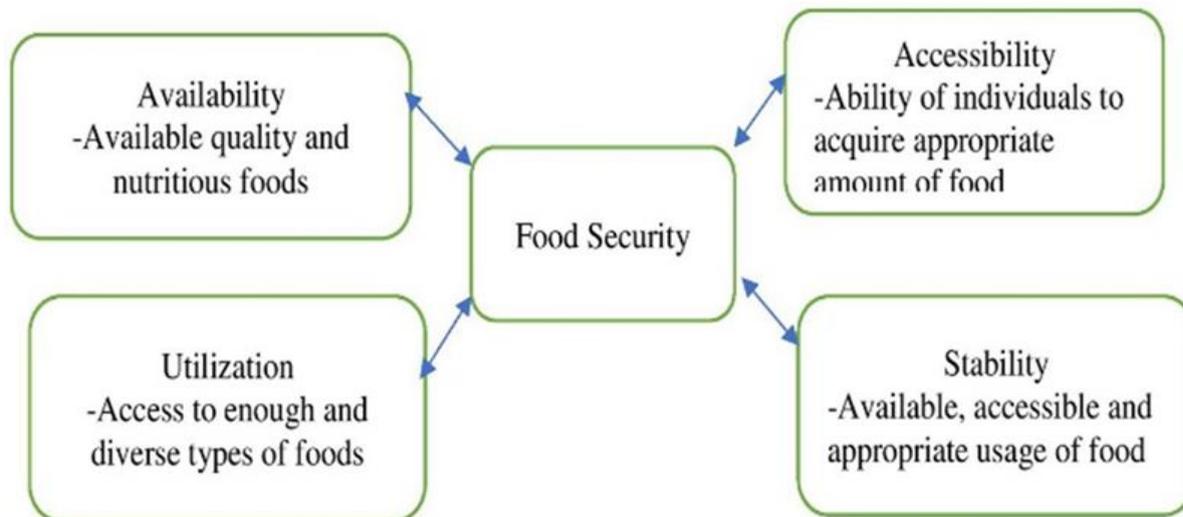
2. Women's Role in Household Food Security

2.1 Gendered Contributions in Rural and Urban Punjab

FAO (2006) highlights that intra-household differences in food availability and consumption in Punjab, Pakistan, are strongly shaped by gendered divisions of labor and patriarchal norms although women are primarily responsible for meal preparation and childcare, they often lack equitable control over food-related resources. Men typically manage household finances and make key decisions regarding agricultural investments and food purchases. In rural households, women make substantial contributions to agricultural productivity and livestock care; however, these efforts are frequently undervalued financially, limiting their influence over the allocation of food and income and excluding them from decision-making processes. In urban contexts, gendered dynamics persist, albeit in different forms. While women increasingly participate in income-generating activities, prevailing social norms can still restrict their decision-making power regarding household purchases, and their earnings are often dependent on or subordinated to men's income. These findings underscore the importance of considering gendered power relations and social structures when assessing household food security, as women's roles and agency are central to both food access and distribution.

Sandhu et al. (2007) emphasize that conventional gender roles, which define and regulate the duties, rights, and opportunities of men and women within families and society, have a significant impact on household food security in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab. Rooted in patriarchal social structures, these norms position men as primary earners and decision-makers, while women are largely responsible for domestic work and caregiving. Such gendered disparities in labor and power affect food production, distribution, and access, limiting women's ability to influence food security outcomes. Despite their critical roles in household food preparation, childcare, and agricultural activities, women's contributions are often undervalued or overlooked in both economic and political contexts. This gendered invisibility frequently excludes women from decision-making processes related to resource allocation, financial management, and food production, all of which are essential determinants of household food security. These findings underscore the need to consider gendered power relations and social structures when assessing food security, as women's agency is central to equitable access, distribution, and overall household well-being.

2.2 Food Security and its Components:



2.3 Components of Food Security and Economic factors:

Imran and Rizwan (2008) highlight that the unequal distribution of resources within households both reflects and reinforces gendered power dynamics. When women have limited control over productive assets and household resources, their ability to influence food choices, nutritional outcomes, and dietary diversity is significantly constrained. This often results in “hidden food insecurity,” where overall household food availability masks disparities in individual nutritional status. Addressing these inequalities requires recognizing women as active participants in managing household resources rather than as passive consumers. Enhancing women’s access to economic opportunities, education, land rights, and decision-making processes can substantially improve household food security. Furthermore, understanding the differential use and allocation of resources in rural and urban Punjab is critical for analyzing the gendered dynamics that perpetuate or alleviate food insecurity. The study underscores the importance of gender-responsive policies that promote equitable access to and control over resources as a strategy for achieving sustainable household food security in Pakistan.

What socio-economic and cultural factors influence women’s contributions to household food security in both rural and urban households?

To analyze the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing women’s contribution to household food security in both rural and urban settings.

Table 2.4 Household Food Security Punjab, Pakistan:

Component	Indicator	Statistical Value	Source (Year)
Availability	Provincial cereal (wheat) production / physical supply	~19.6 million tones (Punjab’s share of national wheat production; Punjab is Pakistan’s major wheat-producing province).	Punjab Crop Reporting Service; MNFSR Wheat Policy 2021–22 / 2022–23
Access	Households below minimum calorie requirement / poverty affecting buying power	35.3% households below minimum calorie requirement (HIES-based estimates). 27.4% poverty headcount in Punjab.	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), HIES 2018–19, HIES-based poverty analyses



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Utilization	Diet quality / child nutrition / sanitation influencing nutrient absorption	Household Diversity Score (HDDS) ≈ 6.2 / 12 (provincial surveys). Underweight (U5) ≈ 17–24% (range across NNS 2018 & SCANS district data).	Dietary Score (HDDS)	Punjab Report; Nutrition 2018; nutrition/health surveys	SCANS National Survey Provincial
Stability	Vulnerability to shocks (floods, price spikes) affecting supply & access	Food price inflation (YoY) ~30% in 2023. Flood impacts: 3–4 million people affected in Punjab in 2022 (crop, livestock & livelihood losses).		PBS CPI Reports 2023; Flood Situation Reports 2022–24	WFP/NDMA

2.5 Gendered Decision-Making and Resource Control:

How does women’s decision-making power affect household food security in rural and urban households?

To explore the impact of women’s decision-making power on household food security in rural and urban Punjab, Pakistan.

Abdullah et al. (2009) emphasize that achieving long-term household food security requires the implementation of gender-responsive policies that ensure equitable access to and control over resources. In countries like Pakistan, where gender disparities persist in land ownership, income distribution, education, and decision-making, structural barriers continue to limit women’s agency, undermining household food security. Women’s capacity to contribute effectively to food production, income generation, and nutritional well-being is constrained by restricted access to productive resources such as land, capital, agricultural inputs, and training. Gender-responsive policies aim to address these inequalities by integrating a gender perspective into agricultural, economic, and social development programs. Such policies not only acknowledge the critical roles women play in managing household nutrition and food supplies but also provide them with the rights, opportunities, and authority to influence resource allocation and decision-making processes, thereby strengthening overall household food security outcomes.

Table 2.6 Gender Differences in Food Security:

Aspect	Women	Men	Reference
Food insecurity rate	Higher (women are 2–3% more likely to be food-insecure)	Lower	FAO, SOFI Report 2022 Global gender food-insecurity gap
Role in food production	(women contribute 50–70% of food production in many developing regions)	More involvement in commercial agriculture and market access	FAO, Women in Agriculture Report 2011; IFAD Gender Assessments 2016–2020



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Access to land / resources	Lower access (women own <20% of agricultural land)	Higher access	World Bank, Women, Business & the Law 2020; FAO Gender & Land Rights Database 2019
Decision-making in agriculture	Limited household and farm decision-making authority	Greater control over farm and financial decisions	IFPRI, Gender, Agriculture & Asset Gap Project (GAAP) 2013

Stephens et al. (2010) argue that more equitable and sustainable household food security can be achieved by providing women with meaningful participation in decision-making at both household and community levels. Women who have access to and control over resources are more likely to invest in food, healthcare, and education, thereby improving overall household well-being. Targeted interventions, such as participation in agricultural cooperatives, access to microcredit, financial literacy programs, and women's self-help groups, enhance women's confidence and negotiating power. Promoting legislation and raising community awareness about gender norms can also transform perceptions regarding women's roles in economic and decision-making domains. Recognizing women as equal partners in managing households and resources is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic approach to improving food security and reducing poverty. Although rural and urban contexts in Punjab differ in terms of opportunities and constraints, the underlying challenge remains the same: limited decision-making power restricts women's ability to contribute effectively to household food security. Addressing these disparities is essential for establishing gendered pathways that strengthen household resilience and promote inclusive development in Pakistan.

What is the relationship between women's control over household resources and food security in rural and urban Punjab?

To examine the relationship between women's control over resources and food security in rural and urban households of Punjab, Pakistan.

Lewis (2011) emphasizes that gendered perspectives on household food security are shaped by women's extensive yet often undervalued contributions to agricultural and subsistence activities in rural Punjab. Women play essential roles in planting, harvesting, livestock management, and post-harvest food processing; however, their capacity to enhance household resilience is limited by lack of land ownership, restricted access to agricultural extension services, and other structural constraints. External factors such as market fluctuations, water scarcity, and climate variability exacerbate vulnerabilities, with women disproportionately affected through increased labor burdens or dietary compromises. In urban settings, gendered challenges persist in different forms. Despite greater opportunities for income generation and food access due to participation in wage labor and small-scale businesses, women face structural barriers including time poverty, wage discrimination, and inadequate social security, which impede their ability to secure stable livelihoods. Efforts to strengthen household resilience that do not incorporate gender-sensitive approaches risk perpetuating existing inequalities, highlighting the critical need to address gendered dynamics in both rural and urban contexts to achieve



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sustainable food security outcomes.

2.7 Gendered Vulnerability and Household Food Security:

Uhlmann and Cohen (2012) argue that when gendered power dynamics and the distinct roles of men and women within households are not adequately considered, interventions aimed at enhancing family resilience risk reinforcing existing inequalities. Many food security and development programs adopt a household-centered approach, treating the family as a uniform unit while overlooking the unequal distribution of resources, responsibilities, and decision-making authority along gender lines. In such contexts, initiatives focused on social protection, income diversification, or agricultural productivity may inadvertently consolidate authority among men, while marginalizing women, who perform critical yet often unrecognized roles in securing household food. This oversight undermines the transformative potential of resilience-oriented development programs, perpetuating systemic disparities in both decision-making and access to resources. In Pakistan, where patriarchal norms and traditional gender relations shape multiple dimensions of social and economic life, resilience strategies must adopt a gender-responsive approach to ensure that they promote equity and do not reinforce women's marginalization.

Filipovic (2013) emphasizes that resilience strategies must be explicitly gender-responsive to ensure they promote equality rather than reinforce existing inequalities. This is particularly relevant in regions such as Punjab, Pakistan, where prevailing gender norms significantly influence household decision-making and access to resources. A gender-responsive approach recognizes that men and women experience and respond to food insecurity differently due to disparities in power, resource ownership, and cultural expectations. Traditional resilience models, which often focus on income generation, technological innovation, or agricultural diversification, frequently overlook these gendered dimensions of vulnerability. As a result, interventions may fail to effectively reach women and children, who are among the most vulnerable populations. Integrating gender perspectives into resilience planning allows policymakers and practitioners to identify and address the structural causes of inequality that limit women's participation in and benefits from development programs. By empowering women, fostering collaborative decision-making, and addressing household food insecurity, such an approach shifts resilience-building from short-term coping mechanisms toward long-term, transformative outcomes that enhance both equity and sustainability in food security.

2.8 Food insecurity in Pakistan:

Parveen (2014) highlights that women's empowerment enhances household food security in Pakistan by increasing women's ability to influence social and economic outcomes within their homes and communities, thereby fostering collaborative decision-making. Key dimensions of household food security including food production, income allocation, and nutrition are more effectively managed when women are empowered to participate in decision-making. Evidence indicates that families with active female participation often experience greater dietary diversity, more efficient use of resources, and improved resilience to shocks. However, institutionalized gender inequalities in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, continue to constrain women's empowerment and, consequently, household food security. Persistent patriarchal norms, unequal access to education, restricted mobility, and limited ownership of productive assets restrict women's autonomy in both rural and urban settings, reinforcing gendered pathways of vulnerability and contributing to long-term household food insecurity.



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What challenges do women in rural and urban households face in achieving food security in Punjab, Pakistan?

To analyze the challenges faced by women in rural and urban households in achieving food security in Punjab, Pakistan.

Table 2.9 Food Insecurity: Pakistan vs. Global:

Dimension	Pakistan (National Context)	(National International Context (Global))	Statistical Reference (Source & Year)
Prevalence of Food Insecurity	Around 36–40% of households insecure	Around 29–30% of world population food-insecure	NNS Pakistan 2018; FAO SOFI 2022
Severe Food Insecurity	About 12–18% population severely food-insecure	About 11% of global population severely food-insecure	FAO SOFI 2022; Pakistan nutrition & food security analyses 2018–2021
Acute Food Insecurity (IPC Phases)	Around 11 million people in crisis/emergency levels in rural districts	Over 280 million people globally in crisis/emergency	IPC Pakistan Report 2022–23; Global IPC Report 2023

Saifi and Mehmood (2015) argue that persistent gendered pathways of vulnerability are a major contributor to chronic household food insecurity within Pakistan’s social and economic context. These pathways are shaped by gendered systems of access, power, and opportunity, which influence how individuals and households experience and respond to food poverty. Cultural norms and institutional constraints often confine women to subordinate roles, limiting their mobility, access to resources, and participation in decision-making. This marginalization increases women’s susceptibility to economic shocks, poverty, and hunger, while simultaneously undervaluing their contributions to household nutrition, food production, and income generation. Intra-household disparities further exacerbate this issue, leaving women and children disproportionately food insecure even in households that appear to be adequately supplied overall. These findings indicate that gendered vulnerabilities operate as a hidden driver of chronic food insecurity in both rural and urban Punjab, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive approaches in food security interventions.

Milne and Plourde (2016) highlight that gendered vulnerability serves as a hidden driver of chronic food insecurity in both rural and urban Punjab, reflecting entrenched social and institutional inequalities that shape access to food, resources, and decision-making. Traditional measures of food security often focus on household-level outcomes, overlooking the unequal intra-household dynamics that influence these outcomes. Despite this, household and community institutions continue to exhibit significant gender disparities. Women’s limited mobility, restricted control over productive resources, and exclusion from decision-making processes not only constrain their economic agency but also directly impact household food access, utilization, and nutritional outcomes. Consequently, women experience food insecurity in ways that are often more severe and less recognized, even though they play a critical role in ensuring the nutrition and well-being of their families. This underscores the importance of integrating gender-sensitive



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approaches into food security assessments and interventions to address both visible and hidden dimensions of vulnerability.

Oakes and Rossi (2017) emphasize that, despite their central role in maintaining household nutrition and well-being, women in both rural and urban Punjab face institutional barriers that limit their influence over household food security outcomes. Women often have restricted control over financial resources and are primarily responsible for daily decisions regarding food purchases, meal planning, and child care. Their extensive knowledge of local food systems, nutritional requirements, and adaptive coping strategies positions them as key actors in enhancing household resilience to food shortages. However, patriarchal norms continue to constrain women's access to land, income, education, and decision-making authority. This disjunction between women's critical responsibilities and their marginalization in resource management creates gendered pathways that perpetuate food insecurity. Contributions such as agricultural labor, livestock management, and participation in informal economic activities remain undervalued, and women are frequently excluded from household and community-level decision-making processes that directly influence food production, allocation, and consumption. These dynamics underscore the importance of gender-sensitive policies and interventions that recognize and strengthen women's agency to improve household food security.

3 Women's contribution in food security both rural and urban:

3.1 Rural Households:

Milne and Plourde (2018) highlight that women in Punjab play a critical, yet often overlooked, role in ensuring household food security across multiple dimensions, despite being largely excluded from family and community decision-making processes related to food production and distribution. Women are engaged in all stages of the food system from production and processing to preparation and consumption making them central to maintaining household nutrition and livelihoods. In rural areas, their extensive involvement in agricultural labor, seed selection, livestock care, and food preservation significantly impacts household food availability and security. This unpaid or underappreciated labor forms the backbone of rural subsistence economies, even though it is rarely formally recognized. Furthermore, women's traditional knowledge of local crops, soil fertility, and dietary diversity contributes substantially to sustainable food systems. However, limited access to land ownership and agricultural extension services restricts their capacity to influence agricultural innovation and strategic objectives. Consequently, women continue to produce and sustain household food supplies while remaining largely excluded from the decision-making processes that determine how food security is achieved, perpetuating gendered pathways of vulnerability within both rural and urban contexts.

How can women be empowered to enhance household food security based on the needs and conditions of rural and urban settings?

To suggest recommendations for empowering women to improve food security at the household level based on research findings in both rural and urban areas.

Ijaz (2019) highlights that women's contributions to food production are often overlooked in the decision-making processes that determine household food security, reflecting persistent gender disparities in Punjab that affect livelihoods and nutrition. Despite playing a critical role in preserving traditional knowledge of local food systems, managing household food supplies, and sustaining agricultural production, women frequently remain undervalued and excluded from formal decision-making forums. These disadvantages are further reinforced by structural inequalities in land ownership, access to credit, technology,



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and institutional support, alongside entrenched cultural norms. In rural Punjab, women’s engagement in essential agricultural activities including planting, weeding, harvesting, and food processing is often categorized as “subsistence work,” denying them recognition as active contributors to the economy. Restricted control over productive assets perpetuates gendered pathways of vulnerability and food insecurity by limiting women’s capacity to influence decisions related to resource allocation, crop diversification, and income utilization. These dynamics underscore the need for gender-sensitive policies and interventions that enhance women’s agency and decision-making power within household and community food systems.

Atinaf and Petros (2020) emphasize that, despite the differing context of urban Punjab, women face comparable gendered restrictions in asset control and income utilization. Male household members typically assume the role of primary financial decision-makers, leaving women who work in the service or informal economy with limited control over their earnings. Even when women contribute substantially to household income, this economic disempowerment constrains their ability to prioritize expenditures on food, healthcare, and education. Urban women’s limited access to credit, savings mechanisms, and property ownership further restricts their capacity to build financial resilience against rising living costs and fluctuating food prices. These challenges are exacerbated by the absence of gender-sensitive financial institutions and social protection initiatives, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and dependence. Across both rural and urban settings, women’s restricted control over productive and financial assets undermines their participation in decision-making processes that directly influence food availability, household nutrition, and overall well-being. These dynamics highlight the necessity of gender-responsive policies and interventions that enhance women’s economic agency and strengthen household food security in diverse contexts.

Table 3.2 Women’s Role in Food Security: Rural vs. Urban Households

Aspect	Rural Households	Urban Households	Key Statistic
Women’s share in agricultural labour	High involvement in household food production	Less farming; more in food-value activities or non-farm work	Women are ~43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries
Food production for household	Women produce a large share of subsistence/family food	Women support food access through income, trade, and processing	Women produce 60–80% of the food in many developing countries
Land ownership / control	Very limited; often less secure land rights	Often no or little control/ownership of productive land	In some regions, women are <5% of landholders
Impact of women’s empowerment on food security	More empowered rural women → higher food & nutrition security	Empowered urban women → better household food access and nutrition	Pakistan study: 70% of empowered rural households food-secure;



3.3 Urban Households:

FAO (2021) highlights that women in urban settings contribute to household food security primarily through purchasing, preparing, and generating income for food. Due to limited direct access to farmland, urban women often rely on market-based strategies to meet their families' nutritional needs. Many women work in the informal sector, engaging in activities such as street vending, small-scale businesses, or petty trade, to generate income for food procurement. Decisions related to budgeting, food selection, and meal preparation have a direct impact on household dietary quality and nutritional outcomes. To enhance household food supply and reduce dependence on volatile market systems, an increasing number of urban women are participating in urban agriculture, including home gardens and rooftop farming. These activities not only improve access to fresh and diverse foods but also strengthen household resilience against market fluctuations, highlighting the critical role of urban women in ensuring food security.

3.4 Community Based Interventions:

Foster and Brindley (2022) emphasize that promoting farming and home gardening as strategies for household food security requires policy recognition of women's central role in these activities. Supporting community garden cooperatives, providing women with access to seeds, tools, and water, and integrating them into agricultural training programs can enhance both productivity and resilience. Local governments and development organizations can further strengthen women's participation by promoting rooftop gardens, funding urban agriculture initiatives, and implementing women-focused agricultural extension models. Recognizing the economic and nutritional significance of women's home-based food production challenges the traditional division between "productive" and "reproductive" labor, which has historically marginalized women in agricultural policy. Providing women with resources, technical support, and institutional recognition enables them to contribute effectively to small-scale farming and home gardening, thereby reducing food insecurity in Punjab. Increased engagement of women in these activities not only improves household nutrition and financial security but also fosters more equitable and sustainable food systems in both rural and urban contexts.

Ashraf et al. (2023) emphasize that actively engaging women in food production, management, and distribution not only enhances household nutrition and financial stability but also supports more sustainable and inclusive food systems in both rural and urban contexts. Integrating gender considerations into food system governance is essential to ensure equitable access to resources, improve productivity, and strengthen community resilience. In Punjab, women's participation in domestic farming and food production extends beyond fulfilling household needs, playing a crucial role in regional economies and social cohesion. Access to markets, capital, education, and land empowers women to influence broader food systems, increasing food availability while promoting diverse, ecologically sustainable, and nutrition-sensitive farming practices. Their involvement is critical for addressing rural poverty and urban food insecurity, highlighting the need to recognize women as central actors rather than as supplementary contributors. Promoting women's agency in all aspects of food systems is therefore fundamental for establishing equitable and sustainable pathways to household and community food security.

4 .Theoretical Framework



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4.1 Gender and Development (GAD) Theory of Caroline Moser's:

This study is guided by Caroline Moser's Gender and Development (GAD) framework, which emphasizes analyzing how gender relations shape women's access to resources, decision-making power, and opportunities within broader socio-economic structures. The GAD approach moves beyond viewing women solely as vulnerable or disadvantaged, instead focusing on the unequal power dynamics that influence their roles in both productive and reproductive spheres. In the context of household food security in rural and urban Punjab, this framework facilitates an understanding of how women's contributions are shaped not only by their responsibilities in agriculture, income generation, and household food management, but also by social norms, mobility restrictions, education levels, and institutional barriers. Moser's concepts of gender roles, needs, and strategic interests provide a lens for comparing how women's labor is valued differently across rural and urban contexts, revealing structural factors that either enable or constrain their participation. Applying the GAD perspective allows the review to move beyond merely describing women's activities and instead critically interrogates the gendered systems that affect their capacity to secure food for their households. This underscores the importance of policies that challenge inequitable power relations rather than merely increasing women's workload (Moser, 1989).

4.2 Entitlement Theory of Amartya Sen's:

Amartya Sen's Entitlement Theory provides a critical analytical framework for examining household food security in rural and urban Punjab through a gendered lens. The theory posits that food security is not determined solely by food availability, but by individuals' entitlements that is, the resources, rights, and opportunities they possess to acquire food through production, employment, trade, or social support. Applying this perspective to women's roles highlights how structural inequalities such as limited land ownership, wage disparities, restricted mobility, and unequal access to markets and financial resources shape their capacity to secure food. In rural Punjab, women's entitlements are often linked to agricultural labor and informal livestock work, which are undervalued and poorly compensated, thereby limiting their influence over household food choices. In urban settings, women's entitlements are more closely tied to income-earning opportunities, purchasing power, and access to stable employment, all of which are constrained by gender norms and household power relations. Sen's framework reveals how these gendered barriers reduce women's effective command over food, even when they make significant contributions to household livelihoods. Integrating the Entitlement approach emphasizes that enhancing women's economic rights, control over resources, and access to social protections is central to improving household food security outcomes across both rural and urban contexts (Sen, 1981).

4.3 Postmodern Feminist Theory of Haraway's Cyborg:

Donna Haraway's Postmodern Feminist "Cyborg Theory" provides a critical and innovative framework for analyzing the complex and evolving roles of women in ensuring household food security in both rural and urban Punjab. Haraway's cyborg metaphor challenges rigid boundaries between traditional categories such as human and machine, public and private, or productive and reproductive labor, emphasizing how women navigate hybrid, fluid, and constantly shifting social spaces. Applied to this context, the theory highlights how women's contributions to food security transcend fixed gender roles, as they simultaneously engage in physical labor, economic activities, household care, and digital communication. In rural areas, women increasingly integrate agricultural



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technologies, mobile platforms, and government programs, creating cyborg-like identities that merge traditional knowledge with technological adaptation. In urban settings, women's interaction with digital markets, online food networks, and modern household tools similarly reflects a blending of embodied labor and technological mediation. Haraway's perspective facilitates a deeper understanding of how women negotiate power, agency, and identity within intersecting social norms, technological change, and economic pressures. Through this lens, women's roles in household food security are interpreted not as static or biologically determined, but as dynamic, technology-infused practices shaped by postmodern gender transformations (Haraway, 1985).

5. Methodology:

This review adopted a systematic approach to identify studies examining women's contributions to household food security in rural and urban Punjab. A comprehensive search of academic databases and grey literature published between 2005 and 2023 was conducted using keywords related to women, food security, gender roles, and Punjab. Studies were included if they focused specifically on Punjab, addressed women's involvement in food production, household food management, income-generating activities, or nutrition-related decision-making, and provided gender-specific insights. Research was excluded if it was conducted outside Punjab, did not examine women's roles in food security, lacked empirical evidence, or contained incomplete data. After removing duplicates, the remaining literature was screened for relevance and methodological rigor. Eligible studies were subsequently analyzed thematically to compare the distinct pathways through which women in rural and urban areas contribute to household food security, and to identify the social, cultural, and structural factors that shape and constrain these roles.

6. Discussion

The findings illustrate that women are central but undervalued actors in ensuring food security in Punjab. While they contribute significantly to both productive and reproductive labor, systemic gender inequalities suppress their influence over household decisions and resource allocation. Addressing these barriers requires gender-sensitive agricultural policies, improved access to credit and land for women, and greater recognition of women's roles in food systems.

7. Conclusion

Women's contributions to household food security in Punjab are substantial and multifaceted. However, socio-cultural norms, structural inequalities, and limited resource access hinder their full participation. Strengthening women's agency, improving access to productive assets, and integrating gender perspectives into food security programs are essential for achieving sustainable food security outcomes.

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