

Research Article

Gendered Poverty as a Scourge and Catalyst to Women Socio-economic Hindrance

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Abstract

Gendered poverty remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges of the 21st century, disproportionately affecting women and exacerbating global inequalities. Often conceptualized as the "feminization of poverty," this phenomenon highlights the ways in which structural discrimination, patriarchal norms, and institutional barriers restrict women's access to education, employment, land, and financial resources. Women's overrepresentation in informal, insecure, and low-paying work, coupled with the disproportionate burden of unpaid care responsibilities, further entrenches cycles of economic vulnerability. Intersectionality deepens these inequalities, as women's experiences of poverty are mediated by race, class, geography, and other social identities. The consequences of gendered poverty extend beyond individual women to household welfare, national productivity, and the achievement of global development goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study employs Structuration theory and Black Feminist theory and uses a qualitative methodology. Addressing gendered poverty requires a multidimensional approach that goes beyond income redistribution to include structural reforms, gender-responsive social protection, and the recognition of women as key agents of development. This paper critically examines gendered poverty as both a scourge and a catalyst of women's socio-economic hindrance, highlighting its causes, impacts, and implications for inclusive development. Gendered poverty, limited land access, and indigenous knowledge systems intersect to marginalize the socio-economic empowerment of women. This study critically examines globally how structural discrimination, patriarchal norms, and institutional barriers restrict women's access to education, employment, land for food security, and financial resources, reinforcing cycles of economic vulnerability. Indigenous knowledge, while culturally significant, often legitimizes practices that marginalize women, particularly regarding land ownership and decision-making, further entrenching inequality. Employing Structuration theory and Black Feminist theory, this qualitative study highlights the compounded impact of poverty, land deprivation, and exclusionary cultural practices on women's livelihoods, household welfare, and community development. Findings emphasize the need for the Gender Commission to regulate the application of indigenous knowledge to prevent the marginalization of rural women and enhance their socio-economic agency, including rural women in innovative strategies to enable their participation in land ownership and effectively embark on agricultural activities. By situating local challenges within global development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this study contributes to debates on gender, poverty, and empowerment, offering evidence-based recommendations for inclusive socio-economic transformation.

Keywords

Gendered Poverty, Feminization of Poverty, Socio-economic Inequality, Women's Empowerment, Intersectionality, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Gender Equality

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1. Introduction

Gendered poverty is a persistent global challenge that demonstrates how economic deprivation is not a neutral phenomenon but one deeply structured by social hierarchies, cultural norms, and systemic inequalities. While poverty affects all social groups, women are disproportionately impacted, a phenomenon often described as the “feminization of poverty” [53, 62]. This concept highlights not only women’s overrepresentation among the poor but also the specific structural and institutional barriers that limit their economic participation and reinforce cycles of marginalization. Thus, gendered poverty functions both as a scourge by perpetuating systemic inequalities and as a catalyst for women’s socio-economic hindrance worldwide.

The roots of gendered poverty lie in patriarchal structures and discriminatory practices that constrain women’s access to productive resources such as education, land, credit, and technology [5]. Women also carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work, spending nearly three times more time on such activities than men [8]. This “double burden” reduces their opportunities to participate in the formal labour market, while occupational segregation and persistent gender wage gaps further limit their economic returns [9,78,79]. Consequently, many women remain trapped in low-paying, insecure, and informal work, which not only undermines their financial independence but also restricts their upward mobility.

Intersectional analyses reveal that women’s experiences of poverty are not homogenous but shaped by overlapping social categories such as race, class, age, disability, and geographic location. For example, rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa face heightened risks of poverty due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to markets, and persistent gender norms restricting land ownership [45, 12]. Similarly, migrant and minority women in urban areas often encounter compounded discrimination, leaving them excluded from decent work and social protection systems [59]. These intersecting inequalities make gendered poverty a multidimensional phenomenon that requires holistic interventions.

The implications of gendered poverty extend far beyond individual women. At the household level, women’s lack of economic empowerment negatively affects child health, education, and overall family welfare [30, 39, 76, 77]. At the societal level, gender inequality in access to resources and opportunities reduces national productivity and hinders inclusive economic growth [96]. Furthermore, gendered poverty undermines global development efforts, particularly the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Addressing these issues requires transformative approaches that go beyond income redistribution to tackle structural discrimination, ensure gender-responsive social protection, and recog-

nize as well as redistribute unpaid care work.

Understanding gendered poverty as both a cause and consequence of women’s socio-economic exclusion is critical for policy design and development practice. Women must be positioned not merely as passive recipients of aid but as central agents in poverty reduction and sustainable development. As such, addressing gendered poverty is not only a matter of justice and human rights but also a prerequisite for building equitable, resilient, and inclusive societies [30].

2. Background

The existing literature highlights the role of women in South African history, emphasizing their significant contributions to social, economic, and political life despite enduring systemic oppression and marginalization [49]. She underscores how historical inequalities, including restricted access to land and resources, have shaped contemporary challenges for women’s empowerment and participation in society. Many people worldwide, particularly women, still suffer from a lack of security of tenure. This presents unique risks and challenges for women who till the land but do not own it. Women around the globe are routinely denied their human rights to access, own, control, or inherit land and property [2]. In many parts of the world, innovative practices and programs have been developed to facilitate gender-equitable property rights. [95, 19] has suggested that legal and policy reforms might be considered as part of strategies to address these issues.

Land is a critical asset in agricultural economies, providing a means for rural people to feed themselves and their families. In several developing countries, laws have been enacted to protect women’s land rights [96]. Understanding the complexities surrounding women’s land rights is essential for ensuring these rights are protected and improved. This entails acknowledging that laws, customs, and norms vary widely from country to country, region to region, and among ethnic groups within countries. Therefore, the meaningful inclusion of women in the design and implementation of projects and policies to secure women’s land and property rights is imperative [63, 13, 19].

Land reform, as defined by [3], involves reallocating rights to establish a more equitable distribution of farmland. This can be a powerful strategy for promoting both economic development and environmental quality. Facilitating access to land can therefore be a cornerstone for sustainable rural livelihoods and community development. Acquisition of land through inheritance or marriage is often complicated by social customs that conflict with legal reforms aiming to achieve gender equality. Even when some women inherit land, decision-making power over such land may be assumed primarily by male family members. Land registration practices in some countries record only the male’s name, based on the assump-

tion that the male is the head of the family, thereby limiting women's rights to land [63, 13, 19].

3. Definition of Terms

Gendered poverty: Refers to the disproportionate experience and impact of poverty on women and girls due to systemic social, economic, and cultural inequalities. It recognizes that poverty is not only about income deficiency but also about unequal access to resources, education, healthcare, and decision-making power based on gender.

Land deprivation: The condition in which individuals or groups are denied secure access to land for use, ownership, or inheritance, often due to legal, social, or cultural barriers. It undermines livelihoods, economic security, and social status.

Socio-economic impact: The effect of social and economic conditions on individuals, communities, or groups, encompassing factors such as income, employment, education, health, living standards, and social participation.

Livelihood: The means by which individuals or households secure the necessities of life, including income, food, and other resources, through employment, agriculture, trade, or other economic activities.

Food security: Exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Rural women: Female individuals living in non-urban areas who often engage in agriculture, informal work, or household-based labor. They face specific challenges related to limited access to education, resources, healthcare, and land, shaped by both gender and rural contexts.

4. Literature Review

The prevalence of poverty in South Africa, particularly among women, constitutes a complex and multifaceted issue with deep roots in structural inequalities. The escalation of poverty in women, referred to as the 'feminisation of poverty,' symbolises a widening gender gap and denotes a higher rate, severity, and increasing incidence of poverty among women compared to men [6]. A better understanding of the nature of poverty is a crucial step toward finding solutions to alleviate it. Poverty can be interpreted in absolute and relative terms. Absolute poverty signifies a situation where individuals cannot afford a basic basket of goods necessary for material survival, such as nutritional and other essential items [6]. In contrast, relative poverty describes individuals whose income is lower than the median or average value, such as those within the lowest 10, 20, or 40 percent of the income distribution. This form of poverty varies across countries and even regions within a country, such as the disparity between the US and South Africa [6].

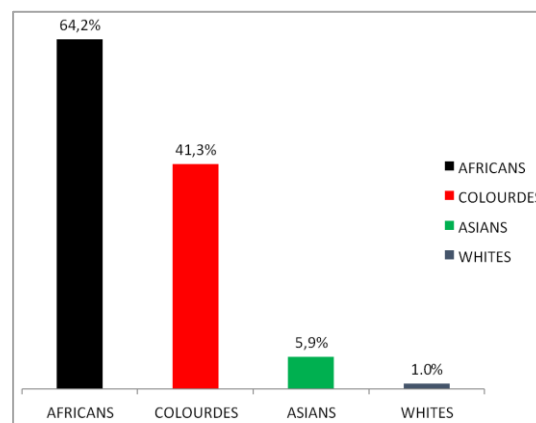


Figure 1. Living in poverty statistics. [83].

The South African context reveals that these manifestations of poverty are intimately associated with landlessness and structural character, with poverty rates persistently high and large populations trapped in chronic poverty, with few opportunities for social mobility [4]. These conditions tend to be more severe in rural regions, where poverty rates exceed those in urban areas, particularly among individuals living in female-headed households [39, 71, 77].

Decades of exclusionary policies based on race have resulted in an unequal distribution of resources, leading to high levels of poverty among marginalized groups [71, 77]. Despite the gains made since the advent of democracy in 1994, decentralized democracy in South Africa has not succeeded in promoting equal land distribution for rural women, as men continue to dominate as the primary beneficiaries [17]. There is evidence that agricultural programs are most effective when women have control over land and decision-making. In South Africa, however, the democratic government has struggled to provide women with a meaningful voice in land redistribution. Despite constitutional commitments to gender equality, rural women remain largely excluded from land ownership and policy influence, highlighting a persistent gap between formal rights and actual empowerment in land reform processes [26]. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development [18] the onset of COVID-19 exposed the feminization of poverty, revealing that poverty disproportionately affects women. Consequently, [81] argue that women have become integral to migration patterns across Africa, prompting a growing body of scholarship on feminized migration. As noted by [20], the growth of large farms in land-abundant countries presents significant concerns regarding the distribution of benefits and governance of land. They stress that transparent land allocation and the acknowledgement of local rights are crucial for promoting equitable development. Similarly, [21] finds that greater accountability in public service delivery improves outcomes, particularly when citizens are informed and engaged. Together, these studies suggest that without strong governance and accountability, land reforms may continue to marginalize rural women and deepen existing

inequalities. This raises critical questions about the extent to which the South African Constitution upholds its commitment to gender equality and equitable access to land, especially for rural women who remain excluded from meaningful land ownership and decision-making processes.

Women in South Africa, especially those in rural areas, often face social isolation, limited access to education and training, and barriers to accessing information regarding land reform programmes [5]. This state of affairs contributes to the maintenance of women's inferior societal status and complicates their poverty experiences, making them more complex than those of men [24, 45]. [81] in their study outlined that poverty has a face of women hence women have embarked on feminized migration patterns.

According to [28], individual assets and human capital at marriage play a significant role in shaping intrahousehold resource allocation in South Africa, supporting the collective model of household decision-making. Their findings show that women's assets, including land ownership or access, positively influence household spending on education and nutrition. This underscores the importance of enhancing women's access to land and other resources to promote equitable decision-making and improve household welfare.

To measure and understand these nuances in poverty experiences, some researchers have proposed assessing poverty at an individual rather than a household level more accurately. Traditional measures of poverty, such as household income or consumption, often fail to capture the realities of within-household inequalities, particularly disadvantageous for women [24, 45, 31]. By assessing poverty at the individual level, we can better account for these internal disparities.

However, tackling the 'feminisation of poverty' in South Africa requires more than understanding its nature and manifestations. Policies and interventions aimed at eradicating poverty should incorporate various mechanisms such as increasing employment, incomes, and productivity as well as social protection and quality public services [45, 31]. They should also consider women's decision making in relation to assets, an essential aspect of their empowerment, especially in rural areas [5].

It is vital to remember that these efforts should not inadvertently deepen existing divides or have counterproductive effects. Some policies aimed at reducing poverty and creating opportunities for women have sometimes had paradoxical consequences, deepening the chasm separating urban and formal 'insiders' from rural and informal outsiders [1]. An approach that integrates the complexities of poverty and the specific challenges faced by women is therefore essential to the success of these endeavours.

The 'feminisation of poverty' in South Africa is a manifestation of systemic gender inequalities and historical, race-based exclusionary policies. To combat this phenomenon, it is crucial to understand its complexities and apply a multi-dimensional perspective [45, 31]. Furthermore, gender-sensitive poverty measures and interventions, coupled

with a commitment to social transformation and the redistribution of resources, are key to achieving the goal of poverty eradication.

A comprehensive overview of the poverty landscape in post-apartheid South Africa reveals significant but uneven progress toward socio-economic equality [30]. Highlighting a pronounced rural-urban divide and spatial patterns closely linked to apartheid-era segregation, the study presents a multifaceted picture of poverty, with notable concentrations in rural areas and provinces such as the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo. It further underscores that female-headed households and Black South Africans are particularly affected, reiterating the interplay of race, gender, and spatiality in poverty manifestation.

Historical apartheid policies, predicated on racial exclusion, engendered high poverty levels by systematically impeding most of the country's population from meaningful economic participation and accessing basic public services. As a consequence, resources were unfairly distributed, relegating marginalised groups to enduring hardship. However, the advent of democracy in 1994 brought an urgent call for transformation and redistribution, instigating policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA), and subsequently the National Development Plan (NDP). South Africa's NDP envisions the elevation of living standards through a blend of initiatives, including the augmentation of employment opportunities, income levels, and productivity, bolstered by social protection and quality public services. The government's commitment to poverty eradication is embodied in its fiscal policy, and the effectiveness of development policies will be gauged by improvements in the living conditions of the poorest South Africans [22].

Considering the gendered experiences of poverty, the [22] asserts that women's encounters with extreme poverty can often be more intricate and multi-layered than men. This can be attributed to the intersection of gender with existing socio-economic marginalisation and the burdens of social norms and expectations [22]. Traditionally, poverty measurement has centred on household-level income or consumption metrics, such as the World Bank's guidelines rooted in purchasing-power-parity. Nevertheless, such approaches can be critiqued for their gender-blind nature, which may obscure the actual extent of poverty among women and fail to encapsulate their unique experiences [22].

As highlighted by [25], increasing land pressure and restricted access to arable land in Kenya's densely populated rural regions have significantly undermined smallholder livelihoods. The study notes that rising population density leads to shrinking farm sizes and declining productivity, particularly beyond a critical threshold where fragmentation renders production unviable. This situation disproportionately affects rural women, who often lack secure land tenure and face systemic barriers in land markets and inheritance systems.

The authors argue that without institutional reforms that promote equitable land access and strengthen land rights, especially for women, the goals of food security, poverty reduction, and gender equality will remain unattainable in many African contexts.

To effectively discern the prevalence of extreme poverty among women compared to men, it is necessary to shift from household-based assessments to individual-level analysis. The latter confronts conventional assumptions of equal intra-household resource distribution, revealing the gendered disparities within domestic settings. Despite the methodological difficulties, this individual-focused approach can generate a more nuanced understanding of poverty, exposing women's often disadvantaged positions in accessing income and assets [24, 45].

Some scholars argue that poverty should not be confined to income-based measurements, echoing the multidimensional conceptualisation of human well-being. Such an approach promotes the incorporation of diverse deprivation forms experienced by men and women into poverty assessments. This broader, more inclusive understanding of poverty is imperative to comprehensively address the phenomenon in South Africa, particularly in light of the persistent rural-urban divide and the gendered and racialised disparities in poverty experiences [97].

5. Theoretical Framework

This section of the paper critically outlines the contribution of the Structural Theory and the Black Feminism Theory. Structuration theory is a framework developed by sociologist [51] that explores the relationship between social structures and the actions of individuals within them. It views societal systems as the outcome of both structured social orders and the actions of individuals, without prioritizing one over the other. In simpler terms, structuration refers to how our social systems are both created and maintained through our daily interactions. This process, which can both change and develop the social systems, is driven by the actors within the system. According to [51], structuration is the process by which social relationships are organized over time and space due to the duality of social structures.

In essence, the crux of society isn't rooted in the individual's experience or in a societal whole, but in social practices. It's through these practices, carried out by individuals, that social systems are maintained. Structures, which are different from systems, provide the rules and resources necessary for individuals to transform social relationships. In a study that applies Structuration Theory to examine poverty among rural women. The approach provides a renewed lens for understanding social conditions by recognizing that both structural forces and individual actions sustain poverty, unemployment, and inequality despite efforts to alleviate them. This dynamic is evident in challenges such as rural women's limited access to land and illustrates how societal structures and individual

agency jointly contribute to persistent deprivation. The author argues that analysing social issues like poverty requires avoiding the separation of structural influences from individual behaviour [51].

When poverty becomes deeply entrenched in a society, it can lead to wider social problems and unsafe communities. Tackling this requires cooperative efforts from both the government and individuals. By empowering individuals, specifically those who rely on land, to generate income and transform land ownership, the society can restore dignity and address poverty, inequality, and hunger.

According to [51], Structuration Theory highlights the continuous interplay between societal processes and individual actions, which together shape institutions and organizations. It offers valuable insights into social practices such as knowledge sharing an aspect especially relevant to understanding rural poverty and landlessness, which cannot be explained by structures and policies alone.

Furthermore, [51] demonstrates the complex relationship between human behaviour and social structure, showing that although individual choices are constrained, they still influence the environment. His theory emphasizes that analysing social systems requires integrating both structural and agent-based perspectives. He argues that social practices should be the central focus of social science, with structures understood as the rules and resources that enable social transformation. This theory offers a balanced approach to understanding societal systems by reconciling the divide between structural and individual factors. It recognizes the interactions between societal structures and individuals as a driving force in shaping outcomes, especially in contexts like poverty. With this understanding, it becomes clearer how societal structures and individual actions can either contribute to or alleviate social problems such as poverty. By considering factors like power, communication, and sanctions, it provides a framework for understanding both the structural barriers to overcoming poverty and the role of individual actions in perpetuating or challenging these structures to promote social justice (Hassim, 2006).

The Black Feminism Theory

This study draws on the Black Feminism perspectives as an entry point of theorizing injustices that are experienced by rural women in KwaZulu-Natal in the context of land rights, access and usability. Black Feminist scholars consider justices from the analytical lens of intersectionality. The feminist conception of justice arises from a critical understanding of the intersecting patterns of discrimination as it relates to race, gender, gender, class and other key markers of identity within a broader community. Black Feminist tradition of theorizes how social identities intersect lived experiences of black women on daily basis.

In this context, a feminist viewpoint recognizes the varied circumstances experienced by women and the institutions that influence those situations. Studies in this domain could concentrate on policy issues pertinent to achieving social justice

for women in particular contexts or explore oppressive scenarios faced by women. Moreover, feminist theory extends the analysis beyond race, class, and gender to incorporate sexuality as another oppression form. It acknowledges that the fight for justice surpasses any specific group, individual, or social justice movement. According to this theory, the cultural construction of women contributes to their subordinated status and underlines the physical labour women perform without men's aid [7]. By scrutinizing structural elements contributing to women's subjugation and considering race, class, gender, and sexuality intersections, we can develop a comprehensive understanding of women's experiences and strive for gender equality and social justice.

Black Feminist theory explores fundamental aspects of Black feminist and womanist ideologies. It emphasizes the intersections and interconnections of race, gender, class, and other sociocultural and political identifiers. By studying the systematic and systemic oppression endured by Black communities throughout the African diaspora, this theory offers a comprehensive view of the oppressive forces these communities face. The theory investigates not just gender inequality, but also the broader constitution of gender. It utilizes a critical intersectional lens to examine the world, stressing that the feminist theory's focus is not solely women but various forms of oppression and their intersectionality [7].

The author maintains that Black women have a unique perspective on global oppression because they simultaneously confront racial and gender discrimination, along with other forms of oppression. This viewpoint highlights that women's experiences of oppression are shaped by multiple factors, including racism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, and ableism [77].

Research Methodology

The study was guided by qualitative research methods, which are inductive in nature. Qualitative methods aim to understand social reality by capturing individual definitions, experiences, in-depth descriptions, and meanings attached to specific events [42, 43, 46]. Researchers employing qualitative methods believe that human consciousness, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions are essential for understanding the depth of people's experiences in their natural context. These experiences are then analyzed to determine whether policies have achieved their intended outcomes or contributed to the marginalization of vulnerable groups, allowing researchers to develop holistic and overarching interventions. The use of qualitative research in this study was also shaped by two theoretical frameworks discussed earlier, as perspectives from these frameworks necessitate detailed accounts of rural women's experiences in the context of land access, land ownership, and land usability. The qualitative research is praised for exploring complex social phenomena, such as rural women's access to land and agricultural resources, where gaining an in-depth understanding of experiences is critical [48]. The case study research design was employed for this study, as it is particularly well-suited for exploring re-

al-life phenomena, specifically women's experiences of land ownership, within a defined context [80]. The qualitative case study methodology allows for an in-depth examination of multiple aspects of the phenomenon, providing rich insights into participants' lived experiences [68]. This approach is especially appropriate for understanding how individuals perceive and experience poverty and inequality, making qualitative methods ideal.

Case study research enables researchers to analyse and describe participants' needs, life situations, and life histories. In the context of this study, the focus is on rural women and key activists involved in land rights advocacy. By using a case study design, the researcher can immerse themselves in the real-world context of the participants, capturing detailed narratives and thick descriptions of their experiences [68].

The primary objective of this design is to collect data directly from participants rather than relying solely on technological or secondary sources. Data collection is empirical and inductive in nature, with in-depth interviews serving as the primary method. This method aligns closely with the objectives of qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to pose open-ended questions that encourage participants to narrate their experiences in detail. Through probing and follow-up questions, the researcher continues until thematic saturation is reached, ensuring the credibility, validity, and reliability of the research findings [64, 80].

Women and Climate Change

Climate change has manifested through a series of catastrophic events felt globally, and research indicates that women are disproportionately affected. The brunt of these ecological disruptions is often borne by women, especially those in vulnerable positions. Therefore, a path to sustainable future must inevitably integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into climate crisis solutions. This is particularly essential in regions like KwaZulu Natal, where women's livelihoods are greatly intertwined with environmental stability.

In the rural sectors of KwaZulu Natal, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has observed firsthand the gender-specific impacts of climate change. Natural disasters and changing environmental patterns disproportionately threaten women's education and livelihood. This heightened susceptibility results from a complex interplay of women's social roles, systemic discrimination, and prevalent poverty [58].

The climate crisis is exacerbating existing gender inequalities, as disadvantaged groups, including women and girls, face further deprivation. For instance, the lives of indigenous women are inextricably tied to natural resources, which are rapidly diminishing due to ecological degradation. Droughts, floods, and other calamities triggered by climate change are leading to loss of livelihoods, forcing women and girls to traverse longer distances for firewood and water. Such efforts expose them to heightened risks of sexual or physical violence and compromise their opportunities for education, employ-

ment, and social participation [31, 34].

Women's responsibilities often increase in the face of climate change. More time and energy must be spent procuring water and food, which could have been dedicated to income-generating activities. As resources dwindle, girls are often pulled from schools to assist with these burdens. Yet, despite their intimate knowledge of their environments and their significant contributions, women frequently find themselves excluded from decision-making processes [58].

Women's unique insights, drawn from their traditional roles and responsibilities, could be instrumental in formulating effective climate adaptation and mitigation measures. As powerful agents of change, they possess indigenous knowledge that can enhance food security, prevent environmental degradation, and maintain agricultural biodiversity, however, women mostly in rural communities are marginalized by patriarchy. Gendered land rights influence the adoption of agricultural technologies in Mozambique, as shown by [27], whose study reveals that women often face limited access to land and decision-making power, hindering their ability to adopt and benefit from agricultural innovations. This underscores the importance of securing women's land rights to enhance their participation in agricultural development and improve overall productivity. Therefore, their active participation and consultation must be ensured in environmental planning, financing, budgeting, and policymaking processes. For instance, rural women's involvement in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts at the community level has been shown to improve resilience and sustainability outcomes [52].

The call for gender equality in climate action stems from the recognition that gender concerns are intrinsically linked to every aspect of climate change. Just as climate policy interventions are evaluated for cost-effectiveness and environmental impacts, they should also be assessed for their implications for social justice and gender equality. To ensure this, binding requirements for gender assessment should be incorporated into policy design and implementation. The expertise available in gender analysis should also be utilized to optimize climate action outcomes. This integration of gender concerns is crucial in navigating the complex challenges of the climate crisis and building a sustainable future.

Women and Tradition Customs

Customary, cultural and religious practices are often imbued with patriarchal ideologies that place women in subordinate positions [66]. The roles assigned to women are typically stereotyped and confining, and thus women are often excluded from meaningful participation, leadership and decision-making in cultural and religious practices.

The challenges faced by rural women, who account for a quarter of the world's population, are particularly marked. These women struggle more than men in accessing public services, social protection, employment and markets due to cultural norms, security issues, marginalisation, exclusion and lack of identification documents [66]. Therefore, the empowerment of rural women is a matter of urgency.

Women have concerns about the rights and security they have when men die, abandon them, divorce them or take other wives. As such, inheritance practices and customary law become significant issues for women when discussing land rights. They are also concerned about the rights of their daughters and unmarried women [66]. Studies have shown that women experience a significant degree of powerlessness in relation to land access. Land redistribution grants are predominantly given to male household heads, while unmarried women and those without land or homes of their own are generally ineligible for such grants. Single men are often able to inherit their parents' land, and conflicts over inheritance have in some cases resulted in women being dispossessed. Divorced women with children may apply for land only if they can produce a divorce certificate, a document that men are sometimes reluctant to provide. These patterns demonstrate that women's access to land in South Africa continues to be limited by gendered norms, marital status, and customary tenure systems [50]. Consequently, while men directly benefit, women are left to face the harsh realities of the economy [16].

In Cameroon, Indigenous women face significant barriers to land access due to entrenched gender-based discrimination within customary land-tenure systems. These systems often deny women direct ownership or control over land, relegating them to secondary status in land-related decisions [84, 15]. This exclusion is compounded by societal norms that prioritize male authority in land matters. Similarly, a report by the [15] found that in many African countries, laws protecting women's land rights are either weak or nonexistent, leaving Indigenous women vulnerable to displacement and marginalization. Despite their critical role in land stewardship and food production, these women are often denied legal recognition and decision-making power regarding land use and conservation.

Significant gender differences exist in asset ownership in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, with women often having limited access to land and other productive assets compared to men. These disparities are reinforced by both customary and formal institutions, which favor male household heads in the allocation and inheritance of property. As a result, women's ability to directly benefit from land or exercise control over it is constrained, even though they play a central role in agricultural production and household livelihoods. Such patterns reflect broader systemic barriers to women's economic empowerment and decision-making within rural communities [60]. These customary and patriarchal practices are often at odds with national legislation, such as Chapter 12 (211) of the Constitution (No. 108 of 1996), which recognises traditional leadership in the context of customary law, especially in cases where traditional leadership is obliged to promote non-sexism and gender equality in rural areas [8]. Issues of male dominance, gender stereotypes, gender inequality and discriminatory practices against women persist within traditional authorities [8].

In rural parts of South Africa, land is largely under the

custodianship of chiefs and kings, which gives traditional leaders a significant degree of control over land resource [65, 70]. This concentration of authority can lead to unfair distribution, as allocation decisions may be influenced by personal relationships, social status, or political considerations rather than objective criteria. As a result, marginalized groups, including women and the poor, often face exclusion from land ownership and access, perpetuating inequality and limiting opportunities for economic empowerment. Research indicates that in KwaZulu-Natal, only one out of about 300 traditional leaders allocated land to women, highlighting the gender disparities in land distribution [85]. Such practices underscore the need for reforms to ensure equitable access to land for all community members. Women's access to social resources and opportunities in any given society is often influenced by their disadvantaged position, which is based on a matrix of class, race and gender relations. Therefore, it is important to examine the effects of these relations on different aspects of women's lives, particularly rural women. Class should be understood as "social relations premised on access to resources as well as the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services" [85].

Conversely, 'gender' should include social roles and attitudes, and societal expectations, which describe social and cultural beliefs about the interactions between women and men. Gender can thus be seen to encompass both "sexual division of labour and cultural definitions and ascriptions concerning femininity" [86]. In communities, the systemic allocation of land to men exacerbates women's dependency on their husbands. Married men, being accorded the highest status in the community, are expected to participate in all decisions concerning community welfare [66]. Women's exclusion from decision-making roles often prevents them from challenging many discriminatory practices.

Within communities, the systemic allocation of land to men amplifies the dependence of women on their husbands. Married men, who enjoy the highest status within the community, are typically expected to partake in decisions pertaining to the welfare of the community [86, 66]. The exclusion of women from decision-making roles frequently hinders their ability to challenge numerous discriminatory practices. This underscores the powerlessness experienced by women, as obtaining land rights would empower them to transition from a subordinate economic, social, and political position. Land rights possess the potential to fortify women's capacity to contest prevailing gender inequalities across the realms of society, culture, politics, and economics.

The examination of select laws, policies, and strategies in South Africa revealed varying degrees of acknowledgment concerning poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. In general, policy and strategic documents exhibited a higher level of recognition, both prior to and post-2011, in contrast to legislative documents [87].

These documents recognized the presence of vulnerable groups and the necessity to integrate them into public policy.

Attention to gender and spatial disparities was widespread within certain sectors but not universally embraced. Consequently, the theories employed in this study endeavor to elucidate how poverty, inequality, and restricted access to land adversely impact the lived experiences of rural women in KwaZulu-Natal.

Women and Land

Studies conducted by [11, 60, 84] emphasize that land and its use are central to the livelihoods of rural women, providing access to natural resources essential for their survival. However, the lack of land rights for women and girls exacerbates their vulnerability, affecting not only their living conditions and economic empowerment but also their physical well-being, while hindering their ability to challenge patriarchal inequalities. Despite being responsible for the majority of agricultural food production and household labour in South Africa's rural communities, women are largely denied land ownership due to the patriarchal nature of African society. Furthermore, customary practices and Indigenous knowledge systems often reinforce male dominance, limiting women's access to land and natural resources and marginalizing them in decision-making processes within rural communities. The influence of this patriarchal system in land decision-making procedures often results in the marginalisation of women, particularly when it comes to land ownership. Rules governing access and inheritance in rural societies consistently favour men over women, with Indigenous knowledge and customary practices often serving as the deciding factor in who is entitled to land or inheritance, thereby contributing further to the gender disparity in land ownership [75].

Gender is a social construct, emphasizing that gendered inequalities are not natural but are created and sustained through social, cultural, and institutional practices. Understanding gender in this way highlights how systemic norms and expectations shape women's opportunities, roles, and access to resources, including land and agricultural inputs. This perspective underscores the importance of addressing socially constructed barriers to empower women and promote equity in both economic and social spheres [54]. These customary and patriarchal systems reinforce male dominance, limiting women's ability to own or control land independently. Despite women's central role in agricultural production and household livelihoods, their access to land is frequently mediated through male relatives, such as fathers, husbands, or sons. As a result, women are often marginalized in decision-making processes regarding land use and resource management. The intersection of patriarchy and Indigenous knowledge thus perpetuates structural inequalities, undermining women's economic empowerment and sustaining gendered patterns of exclusion in rural communities [69].

The marginalization of women from owning or inheriting land remains a significant policy concern. Women worldwide play a pivotal role in various sectors of economic production, from agriculture and livestock to business. Nevertheless, several studies show that in numerous countries, legislation

limits women's ability to fully exercise their rights, particularly those related to land ownership. Additionally, prevalent customary land tenure systems frequently bar women from possessing or controlling land, inhibiting their inheritance rights. This state of affairs leaves divorced and widowed women particularly susceptible to dispossession, despite the existence of formal legal systems and policies advocating gender equality [60, 84, 82].

In Latin America, it has been observed that "having legal rights alone does not necessarily lead to substantial progress towards gender equality. For a land reform to be truly effective in terms of gender sensitivity, it is crucial that women have the ability to own and access land in their own right" [75]. In Zimbabwe, divorced women are denied any rights to their ex-husband's land, including trees they might have planted themselves. They are even barred from residing in homes they have built and furnished. Similarly, in Rwanda, issues surrounding gender inequality and land access persist. Prior to the implementation of the law on prenuptial agreements, gifts, and inheritance in 1999, a widowed woman would have usufruct rights to all properties the couple had acquired. However, under the current law, a widow's entitlement to marital property hinges on whether the prenuptial agreement stipulated a system of joint ownership [89]. The referenced literature sheds light on the breadth of experiences that women undergo within the framework of patriarchal customs and gendered inheritances, where men are often favoured over women.

Customary law, which serves as the foundation for the practices and activities of many indigenous societies, is considered a living set of regulations. Although indigenous groups generally regard land as a collective resource, several disputes have arisen over land rights, primarily those concerning ownership and control. As an ancestral gift, land is considered a natural resource meant to be conserved and passed on to future generations. Male local leaders or family heads customarily hold land in trust for the entire community and have the authority to "lease" land to individuals for various purposes, such as farming, hunting, or construction [84].

Studies have consistently revealed that the majority of the world's impoverished population, particularly women, reside in rural areas, with agriculture as their primary source of livelihood. However, addressing the pressing issues of poverty, hunger, and gender disparities requires not only a focus on women but also the active involvement of men in transformative efforts to reshape gender relationships [13].

This necessitates an in-depth examination of the lifestyles of rural women in Africa, especially within the context of globalization and its associated neoliberal capitalism, which has become the dominant socioeconomic framework worldwide. Globalization, while leading to significant wealth accumulation for a select few, has disproportionately excluded marginalized populations, with rural women and children being among the most affected [88].

Structural adjustment policies, closely intertwined with globalization, have exacerbated the challenges faced by

women and children in Africa. [13], in a comprehensive analysis spanning 25 years of research on African women farmers, highlights how gender shapes women's subordinate positions within families and communities, manifesting in restricted access to land, labor, and agricultural resources, as well as the persistent devaluation of women's work despite longer working hours compared to men. Black rural women face compounded disadvantages due to intersecting race, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities, leaving them among the world's poorest and limiting access to markets, credit, education, healthcare, and land.

Empowering women through education, access to resources, and gender-sensitive interventions has been shown to improve productivity, enhance family health, increase child survival, and promote investments in children's human capital, ultimately contributing to societal benefits such as economic growth, longer life expectancy, and stronger political institutions [38, 39]. Agricultural extension services, however, often fail to meet women's needs due to structural and gender biases [23, 29]. Incorporating gender-sensitive approaches such as employing female extension workers, tailoring content to women's needs, and providing access to rising agricultural innovations and technologies can improve women's access to knowledge and resources, enhance productivity, and support their socio-economic empowerment [36, 40].

Despite numerous challenges in Africa, including civil conflicts, corruption, debt crises, natural disasters, and health issues such as malaria and tuberculosis, women remain disproportionately vulnerable to absolute poverty and food insecurity. The Food and Agriculture Organization [20] emphasizes that limited access to land, productive resources, and agricultural technologies undermines women's capacity to contribute to food production and achieve economic security. Addressing these intersecting structural and institutional constraints is therefore essential not only for improving household food security but also for meeting broader development goals, including those established by the World Food Summit and the Millennium Development Goals. Qualitative research methods (Flick, 2002; 2009) provide the tools to understand these lived experiences in depth, enabling policies and interventions that are contextually grounded, culturally sensitive, and effective in promoting rural women's empowerment, land access, and participation in the agricultural sector.

Access to clean drinking water presents a substantial hurdle for rural women in Africa. Collectively, these women lose over 40 billion work hours annually due to the necessity of obtaining safe drinking water. Additionally, the time spent collecting firewood further compounds their challenges. The lack of access to clean water jeopardizes the safety and privacy of rural girls and women, increasing their vulnerability to sexual abuse. Furthermore, inadequate sanitation facilities in schools contribute to the high dropout rates among girls, especially during menstruation [98].

The arduous journey undertaken by rural African women to

collect water places immense physical strain on them. In many regions, women and girls are primarily responsible for fetching water, often walking over 6 kilometers daily to reach the nearest water source. This task involves carrying heavy containers, sometimes weighing up to 20 kilograms, which can lead to physical exhaustion and health issues [77]. Additionally, the water they collect is frequently contaminated, posing significant health risks. This situation underscores the urgent need for improved water infrastructure and access to clean water in rural areas to alleviate the burdens on women and enhance their well-being.

Disparities in water costs further compound the difficulties faced by the population, with Nairobi, Kenya, residents paying five times more for one liter of water than their North American counterparts. Additionally, 1.5 billion individuals worldwide suffer from parasite infections resulting from inadequate hygiene, sanitation, and water access. Rural women, often marginalized due to their remote locations and lack of information, are disproportionately affected by various calamities [99].

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations conducted a study to analyse the patterns of land ownership in countries once affected by colonialism, comparing the extent to which women's empowerment was prioritised in relation to land rights [24]. The study aimed to propose ways to improve the inclusion of women in policy processes and recognise them as a crucial group of beneficiaries. In South America, for example, around sixty million rural women work for over 12 hours a day to ensure their families' survival. Despite their central role in maintaining their families, these women's access to resources is often not guaranteed. It has been reported that men and women do not enjoy equal access to land resources, reflecting a gender disparity in land ownership [24, 22].

The gender inequality in land ownership has been linked to a bias towards men in matters of inheritance, marital privileges, community and state programs of land distribution, as well as within the land market. Men are more likely to acquire land through community or state distribution or via the market than women [90].

Secured land rights are vital for the economic empowerment of women and can play a significant role in the fight for equality and sustainable development in South Africa. Issues of land redistribution have been fiercely contested and have long been a part of the national dialogue around equality, equity, and sustainable development. Women have traditionally been key drivers of stability, progress, and long-term development within societies [73]. Significant barriers exist for women in accessing land, as revealed by a study examining farmland redistribution in South Africa. The study found that land grants were often only awarded to household heads, who were predominantly male. Unmarried women, or women without land or homes, were generally deemed ineligible for land grants. Single men, however, could inherit their parents' land. The study also found cases where sons evicted their

mothers due to conflicts. Divorced women with children could apply for land only if they produced a divorce certificate, a document that men were often reluctant to give [91, 67].

The empirical study conducted by [67] identifies four types of women who face barriers to land access:

Widows with grown-up children: These women are in the best position under the current tenure system. Their families are viewed as acceptable and are accepted by the wider community.

Widows with no children: These women are equivalent to abandoned wives with young children who were already settled on their own land holdings before their husbands passed away.

Single mothers with children: These women are considered the most disadvantaged group as they head their households but are not seen as eligible for land rights.

Married women with an absent husband: These women are usually disadvantaged in securing arable land, have limited freedom, and may not be able to move the house without the husband's support and permission.

Women play a crucial role in food production in the developing world and are often responsible for feeding their families. Access to land is therefore central not only to food security but also to the broader struggle for equal rights and the decolonization of resource ownership. Creating safe environments for women, particularly in rural areas, is essential, and legislative compliance should be monitored and enforced by the government to ensure women can participate fully in community structures and economic activities [49].

However, agricultural extension services often fail to meet the needs of women farmers due to gender biases and structural barriers [23, 29]. Inclusive programs that recognize women's roles and address their specific constraints, such as employing female extension workers and tailoring content to women's needs, can improve access to agricultural knowledge and resources, enhancing productivity and empowerment. Research also highlights how structural and psychological factors intersect to limit women's socio-economic opportunities. show that women's underrepresentation in leadership is influenced by lower power motivation, constraining decision-making and participation in positions of authority. Similarly, [29] reveal that rural women face significant barriers in accessing critical land-related information due to inadequate training and institutional support. Together, these findings suggest that both individual factors, such as confidence and motivation, and systemic barriers, such as restricted access to knowledge and resources, jointly reinforce the marginalization of women. Addressing these intersecting constraints is therefore essential for enhancing women's leadership capacities and their control over socio-economic assets, particularly land, which remains foundational for livelihoods and empowerment in rural communities.

Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment or perception of individuals based on gender, stemming from empirical distinctions or socially constructed norms [92]. This

inequality is not only perpetuated through limited access to material resources; entrenched gender norms and stereotypes further shape behavior, constrain opportunities, and reinforce gendered identities.

Raising the productivity of women farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa requires targeted interventions that address gender-specific constraints, including access to land, inputs, and extension services [38]. Reforming legal frameworks and regulations that restrict women's economic opportunities is crucial to ensure they have equal access to resources and decision-making [30]. Methodologically, [41] argues that combining quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges women face, enabling the development of evidence-based policies and programs that effectively promote women's empowerment in agriculture.

6. Findings

The research reveals that Gendered poverty continues to hinder women's socio-economic advancement, particularly in rural areas, by limiting access to education, employment, and basic necessities. Its effects perpetuate cycles of marginalization, affecting livelihoods, food security, and overall well-being. Tackling this issue requires targeted policies and interventions that empower women, ensure equitable access to resources, and promote social and economic inclusion. Addressing gendered poverty is not only a matter of justice but a crucial step toward sustainable development and societal progress. Empowerment initiatives, including mentoring, community leadership programs, and social safety nets, are critical to improving women's confidence and societal influence. It further exposes that;

Table 1. Critical debates affecting rural women in South Africa.

Themes	Descriptions
Economic Dis-empowerment:	Women living in poverty often have limited access to formal employment and income-generating opportunities due to systemic barriers such as gender discrimination, lower educational attainment, and restricted mobility [93]. Informal sector participation is high, but wages are low and unstable, limiting their ability to invest in family welfare or personal development.
Impact on Livelihoods	Gendered poverty restricts women's ability to engage in sustainable livelihood activities. Women-headed households are more vulnerable to economic shocks, making it difficult to accumulate assets or savings. In rural areas, women often rely on subsistence farming, small-scale trade, or domestic work, which are susceptible to climate variability and market fluctuations [94].
Food Security	Poverty disproportionately affects women's capacity to secure sufficient and nutritious food for their households. Limited income and unequal access to land and resources constrain food production and procurement. This contributes to malnutrition, particularly among children and female-headed households, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.
Housing and Shelter	Women in impoverished communities face challenges in accessing safe and adequate housing. Many live in overcrowded or informal settlements without proper sanitation, water, or security [94]. Housing insecurity exacerbates vulnerability to gender-based violence and poor health outcomes.
Rural Women's Socio-Economic Development	Rural women are disproportionately affected by poverty due to limited infrastructure, education, and healthcare services. Participation in agricultural cooperatives, community-based programs, and digital skills training has shown promise in improving rural women's economic status and agency [94, 74]. Access to microfinance and vocational training enhances entrepreneurship and income diversification, enabling women to contribute to household and community development.
Educational and Skills Inequality	Limited access to education and digital skills training prevents women from entering formal employment or benefiting from technological advancements. Bridging these gaps can empower women to navigate higher education and professional opportunities, thereby advancing human well-being and reducing systemic inequality.
Social and Psy-	Persistent poverty and marginalization affect women's mental health, social participation, and deci-

Themes	Descriptions
Psychological Impact	Decision-making power.
Economic Dis-empowerment	Women living in poverty often have limited access to formal employment and income-generating opportunities due to systemic barriers such as gender discrimination, lower educational attainment, and restricted mobility [94]. Informal sector participation is high, but wages are low and unstable, limiting their ability to invest in family welfare or personal development.
Impact on Livelihoods	Gendered poverty restricts women's ability to engage in sustainable livelihood activities. Women-headed households are more vulnerable to economic shocks, making it difficult to accumulate assets or savings. In rural areas, women often rely on subsistence farming, small-scale trade, or domestic work, which are susceptible to climate variability and market fluctuations [94].
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Educational and Skills Inequality	Limited access to education and digital skills training prevents women from entering formal employment or benefiting from technological advancements. Bridging these gaps can empower women to navigate higher education and professional opportunities, thereby advancing human well-being and reducing systemic inequality.
Social and Psychological Impact	Persistent poverty and marginalization affect women's mental health, social participation, and decision-making power. Empowerment initiatives, including mentoring, community leadership programs, and social safety nets, are critical to improving women's confidence and societal influence.
Limited Land Ownership for Women	Women are disproportionately denied ownership or inheritance rights to land due to customary laws, patriarchal traditions, or legal restrictions. This limits their ability to generate income, access credit, or invest in productive agriculture.
Reduced Agricultural Productivity	Because women often have smaller or less fertile plots than men, their agricultural output is lower, which reinforces poverty and food insecurity in households reliant on subsistence farming. Gendered poverty and land deprivation are mutually reinforcing lack of land worsens poverty for women, while poverty limits their ability to claim or secure land rights.
Indigenous knowledge	While indigenous knowledge supports sustainable land use, patriarchal interpretations and customary norms often restrict women's access to land, limiting their economic empowerment and decision-making in rural communities [9].

7. Conclusion

Gendered poverty remains a persistent barrier to women's socio-economic development worldwide, disproportionately affecting access to education, employment, healthcare, and basic needs such as food and shelter. The intersection of poverty with gender amplifies vulnerabilities, particularly for rural women, who face limited opportunities, systemic discrimination, and inadequate social support structures. Poverty is not only an economic challenge but also a social and cultural issue, as it reinforces cycles of marginalization and limits women's agency in decision-making processes. This aligns with international positions, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5, and 10, which emphasize ending poverty, achieving gender equality, and reducing inequalities as prerequisites for sustainable development [71, 72].

A critical dimension of this marginalization is land deprivation. Women in rural areas frequently face limited access to land ownership and inheritance due to customary practices, legal restrictions, and patriarchal norms. Patriarchal interpretations of indigenous knowledge and customary laws often exacerbate these restrictions, preventing women from claiming or using communal land, which limits their ability to engage in productive agriculture, access credit, or invest in income-generating activities. This restriction reinforces economic vulnerability and dependency, undermining both household and community development. Land deprivation has direct economic and social consequences. It reduces agricultural productivity, household food security, and income generation. Women with insecure land rights are more vulnerable to eviction, land grabs, and disputes, which heighten the risk of poverty and reliance on external support. Their capacity to diversify livelihoods through farming, livestock rearing, or small-scale enterprises is constrained, reducing resilience to economic shocks. The intergenerational implications are profound: women without secure land rights struggle to provide stable economic foundations for their children, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. These findings resonate with international literature highlighting the gendered dimensions of land access, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure, which call for gender-equitable land rights to improve food security and empower women farmers [24, 32, 44].

Beyond economic effects, land deprivation diminishes women's social standing, decision-making power, and participation in community governance, reinforcing broader patterns of marginalization. The interplay between gendered poverty, land deprivation, and restrictive interpretations of indigenous knowledge illustrates how structural inequalities systematically limit women's access to critical resources and socio-economic opportunities. A key contribution of this study is the demonstration that combining culturally sensitive indigenous knowledge with institutional support from bodies

such as the Gender Commission provides a robust framework for women's empowerment. Leveraging indigenous knowledge ensures sustainable land management while empowering women to participate fully in decision-making and resource use. Meanwhile, the Gender Commission and related institutions offer legal and policy support that safeguards women's rights, monitors implementation, and challenges patriarchal norms. Complementing these approaches, technological innovations including climate-smart tools, improved seeds, and digital platforms enhance women's agricultural productivity, strengthen decision-making power, and increase income-generating opportunities. By integrating these innovations with gender-sensitive interventions, structural constraints such as limited access to land, credit, and resources can be addressed effectively, supporting both economic empowerment and social equity.

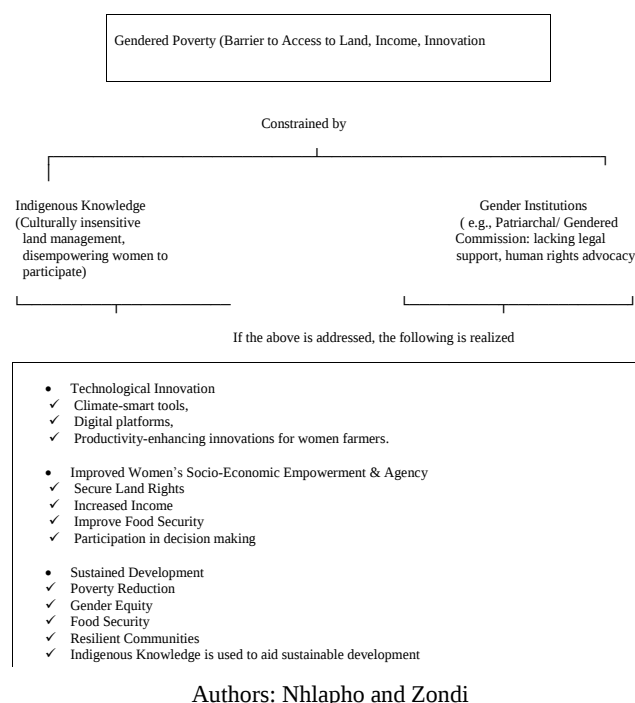


Figure 2. Conceptual Map of Key Contributions to Wo AfricaSocin.

This study's findings align with prior scholarship emphasizing multi-dimensional interventions. Practical constraints, as well as social and gender norms, must be addressed to empower female farmers [35]. Agricultural innovations play a key role in promoting both land and gender equity, with policy incentives and technologies supporting sustainable intensification [36]. Evidence-based, context-specific interventions that involve both men and women, foster shared decision-making, and use gender-disaggregated data are essential for effective programs [40]. Secure property rights are fundamental to women's socio-economic empowerment [47]. In the South African context, food security remains a pressing concern, particularly for rural women, requiring targeted

agricultural support and equitable access to resources [56]. Gender quotas and legislation enhance women's participation in decision-making, ensuring more equitable access to power, resources, and opportunities [57]. Finally, addressing both structural and cultural factors that perpetuate poverty is crucial, highlighting the importance of socially and economically responsive interventions [61]. In summary, this study contributes a framework that combines indigenous knowledge, gender-focused institutions, and technological innovations to address the multidimensional challenges of gendered poverty and land deprivation. By fostering women's economic empowerment, secure land rights, and participation in decision-making, this approach not only improves rural livelihoods but also advances broader goals of food security, gender equality, and sustainable development.

Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
NDA	National Department of Agriculture
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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