

# An Investigation of Agricultural Productivity and Peasant Movement in North Hashtnagar, District Charsadda, Pakistan

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**Abstract:** Pakistan's economy is mainly based on agriculture, but unfortunately, the country is not self-sufficient in food production. Every year, billions of rupees of foreign exchange are spent on wheat, cooking oil, and milk imports. Our agriculture does not provide basic food items. The primary reason is the feudal landholding setup, wherein feudal lords own thousands of acres of land. The peasants (agrarian labourers) are forced to migrate to the cities for their livelihood. This lack of farmers' interest in the feudal system resulted in low productivity per unit of land. In this regard, the land reforms of Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's era also didn't bring the desired social and economic change. In Northern-Hashtnagar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the mechanization of agriculture and the introduction of modern technologies increased food productivity, but feudal lords appropriated the benefits. Therefore, peasants agitated against feudal lords and took control of the land on their own. It provided the peasants' with ownership of land and as a result of day-and-night care for the crops by the peasants, agricultural output increased as compared to the system of feudal landholding system. The uprising of peasants against landlords enhanced their social standing because they now produce more agricultural goods than before. This study aimed to determine how the peasants' movement affected agricultural output. The interview schedule was used to collect data from 380 sampled respondents from landlord, peasant, and labourer communities for the study. Both the independent variable (agricultural productivity) and the dependent variable (peasants' movement) were included in the study variables. A Likert scale was used to measure the variables, and the chi-square test was used to see how the independent and dependent variables were related.

**Keywords:** North-Hashtnagar; Landlords; Peasants' Uprising; Agricultural productivity.

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## Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy and a major contributor to food security. But in Pakistan, feudal lords own more than ten hectares of land, and the farmers who work on their lands are merely tenants. The tenants do not get many incentives for their hard work and therefore have no interest in capital investment (Aslam, 2016). Reports show that large landholdings do not lead to high agricultural productivity, but instead are very unproductive.

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In Pakistan, land reforms were implemented so that land ownership and access might be fairly distributed. It entailed modifications to the laws, rules, and conventions governing the relationships between landowners, tenants, and their land. In Pakistan, the feudal lords wield monopolistic influence that impedes the social and economic prosperity of the poor. The objective of the land reforms is to redistribute the extensive control of landowners over local political and economic resources to poor workers at the primary level. This discrepancy results mostly from the unequal distribution of land ownership and the masses' lack of access to land (Khan et al., 2009).

The land reforms of 1959 and 1972 failed because the land ceiling was defined as an individual and not for the whole family. The land taken by Ayub Khan's government was 1.9 million acres, and the land resumed from landlords by Bhutto's government was just 0.6 million acres. So far, the majority of the land freed up by these reforms remains undeveloped, with only 0.01% of its value being used for farming (Jalal, 2014).

Pakistan's land reforms are exceedingly criticised on the premise that land is never taken from the feudal lords. They redistribute the land among their relatives. Lawsuits began between the peasants and landowners after land reforms. In a few territories, these changes turned out to be praiseworthy; that is, the authoritarian rule of landlords declined. Khan et al. (2009) found that peasants were happier and more at peace, and that yields per acre of the land went up.

No doubt, agriculture in Pakistan faces multiple challenges, but in North-Hashnagar and Charsadda, the major hindrance to crop production is the conflict between landlords and peasants. After years of being taken advantage of by powerful landlords, the landless peasants rose up against them and bought farmland, which hurt the productivity of farming.

### **Literature Review**

A quarter of the world's population is rural and impoverished; they are landless peasants or agriculturists who must supplement their income with daily employment. The majority of these rural residents rely on agribusinesses that lack water systems, composting facilities, and modern equipment. Consequently, many are malnourished, preventing them from working well and from adequately nourishing their children to prevent physical and even cognitive disability. Aside from the repeated study of holy texts, few of them receive formal schooling. One in every four children dies before the age of ten, while the rest live the same lives of exhaustion, starvation, insensibility, and sickness as their forefathers for thousands of years. Most of the time, they borrow money from landlords with high-interest rates and give a large part of their crops as payment (Lipton, 1989).

Farmers are also frequently denied access to other profitable assets, such as farm crops, biodiversity, and water. Numerous advanced agricultural practices, such as pesticide use, destroy biodiversity. Due to these tendencies, a substantial number of rural labourers suffer from hunger and poor health today. Even though there is enough food on the earth, peasants are driven to the periphery, where their lives are wretched. They receive no assistance from their government, and the preparation of agricultural produce is concentrated in the hands of a small number of international corporations. Under these perilous situations, the peasants' privileges are also neglected. The well-being of peasant families and their school enrollment are deteriorating. In addition, they face significant violations of their civil and

political rights. Their ability to protect and fight for their lives, as well as their political role in the social order, is getting worse, and they have very little access to fairness (Arif, 2008).

Rural development is one of the most daunting challenges for nations, particularly those with an agrarian economy, such as Pakistan. The Pakistani government has developed several programmes and interventions to help poor farmers. Ali (2015) says that the real cause of poverty in Pakistan is the discriminatory distribution of land in rural areas.

There have been numerous instances in every country in which farmers have united for their rights and accomplished a great deal. Occasionally, peasant uprisings result in a lasting revolution or insurgency. Some groups can join together to form a political party, while others help farmers on a smaller scale (Sanders, 1977).

Ayub Khan's land reforms of 1959 encouraged landlords to declare their land as self-cultivated. They began employing new machines and expelling people from the land. Under the initiative of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, eviction was deemed illegal, and landowners were refused *begar* (free service). These circumstances lead to conflicts between landlords and peasants. Farhad (Farhad, 1970) explains how the state apparatus and feudal lords' private militias were used to repress peasants. In the 1960s and 1970s, land reforms were implemented to legitimise land circulation, provide access to assets, reduce poverty, and end exploitation. Also altered were rules and the relationship between peasants and landlords. According to some research in Pakistan, 9% of the land is owned by 42% of the landowners, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not an exception (Naqvi et al., 1989).

The British established the feudal system of North Hashtnagar in the district of Charsadda, Pakistan; there was no such system before their arrival because all agricultural land was illegally transferred to landlords. These landlords were then given police authority, court authority, and permission to maintain their private militia. All people, including peasants, were gradually made landless. These peasants were the true landowners. When landlords gained power, they used to use forced labour, including women, to clean raw wheat, wash clothes, and serve on Eid. Peasants were subjected to private taxes such as *Tora* and *Tip* (Khan, 2011).

Similarly, peasants in Pakistan have agitated against landowners at various times and places. Punjab peasants, like those in District Okara, clashed with the administration of military farms. A dispute arose, and the peasants rejected the new rent assertion, just as they did in 2000. Anjman Muzareen (Punjab Tenants Movement) was formed to protect their interests, with the slogan *Malkiya Mout* (possession or demise). Several clashes ensued between the two parties in 2002, 2003, and 2014 (Sheikh, 2016).

In 1948, when the lease of land in Hashtnagar was increased from 40 rupees per *jareeb* to 70 rupees per *jareeb*, the conflict between peasants and feudal lords in Pakhtunkhwa began. Throughout Hashtnagar, peasants fought against the rent increase. The police effectively suppressed the rebellion at Abdul Qayyum Khan's order (Pakistan Forum, 1972).

On April 19, 1970, the Mazdoor Kisan Party organised an open assembly in Mandani Town and presented the slogan "*Hamara Tumhara Sub Ka Nagar, Hashtnagar*" to the peasants. This phrase means "*your town, my town, Hashtnagar*" (Zafarullah Khan, 1994). The North The North Hashtnagar peasant

revolts were ideologically motivated by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The most remarkable impact of Marxism on them was that it compelled landlords to listen to some of the peasants' appeals. It unified farmers and improved their economic conditions. Even though the programme was unfinished, it helped farmers get better hospitals and schools (Khan and Mughal, 2013).

### **Methods & Materials**

This study investigates the relationship between agricultural productivity and peasant movement in North Hashtnagar, District Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The information was gathered from the selected villages of Tangi Tehsil in the district of Charsadda was chosen considering the nature of the study. Due to large landholdings and absentee landlords, the peasantry movement persisted in this portion of the region. The scope of the study included the North-Hashtnagar villages of Kuz Behram Dheri, Bar Behram Dheri, Shodag, Marghan, and Shakoor. 380 respondents were selected at random through stratified sampling. Population-based stratified random sampling was used to select the sample population from these villages. The strata comprised landowners, peasants, and Mazdoor (labourers). A questionnaire based on the study objectives, conceptual framework, and other necessary information was used to collect primary data. The secondary data was collected from research papers, books, and news reports. Following data collection, it was entered into SPSS software. SPSS was used to process and analyse the data to determine the results using frequencies and percentages. In addition, the Chi-Square test was used to assess the relationship between the dependent variable (peasants' uprising) and the independent variable (agricultural productivity).

### **Results and Discussion**

The perception of the respondents regarding agricultural productivity is given in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 revealed some facts that in Pakistan, land reforms of the '60s and '70s accelerated the peasants' movement (92.4%); agricultural productivity increased after the peasants' movement (92.1%); and free labour (beggar) to landlords was abolished, which increased agricultural productivity (92.4%). The results further show that the majority (92.1%) of respondents were of the view that the pre-existing system of beta (sharecropping, rent in-kind) was replaced with a new, cash-based system of land tenure. In the past, the land was owned by the landlord and cultivated by peasants. Farmers weren't interested in making their farms more productive because they didn't get much out of it, and yields stayed low. Land reforms of the 1970s and the peasant movement plunged for peasants' rights, which motivated peasants to get higher agricultural productivity from their farms. Class conflict theory of peasant uprising has revealed a great analysis of 20th-century peasants' politics and their movements in China, Central America, the Philippines, and some other underdeveloped countries. It analysed the present conflict with landlords who exploit them. The class conflict holds that the rural environment is, in fact, a set of class-based relations among landlords, peasants, labourers, and the state machinery. Landlords exploit the peasants through rent, high interest, free labour, taxes, and the imposition of fines. So, landlords establish a robust system of exploitation. Exploited peasants can resist when class consciousness is aroused in them. A radical party formed on the spot with a disciplined organisation and a robust political base can eradicate their sufferings permanently (Little, 1989).

The result further shows that 92.1% of respondents stated that peasants achieved food security after the movement, and 92.1% reported that peasants used modern agricultural machinery, artificial fertilisers, and pesticides after the movement. Also, 89.5% agreed that peasants produced surplus agricultural yield

after the movement; 87.9% stated that peasants also increased their productivity through poultry farms and other live stocks; and 92.9% reported that the right to own the manure produced by peasants' livestock was granted after the movement. From these results, it is evident that an increase in agricultural productivity is a slow and gradual process that is associated with the diffusion of modern farm technologies, land reforms, and admittance of land rights to non-owner groups on agreed terms. Pakistan's agricultural production changed as the conventional agricultural basis shifted to technologically based innovative agriculture. At the heart of these advancements are two interconnected marvels: the modernization of the farming area using high-return seeds; automation; and an improved water system framework (all collectively known as the Green Revolution); and the advancement of an essential yet rapidly developing assembly part (Javed, 2015).

Table-1.1: Sampled respondents' perceptions of agricultural productivity

S/No.	Statements	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree
1.	The land reforms of the '60s and '70s accelerated the peasants' movement.	18(4.7)	11(2.9)	351(92.4)
2.	Agricultural productivity increased after the movement.	21(5.5)	9(2.4)	350(92.1)
3.	Free labour (beggar) to landlords was abolished, which increased agricultural productivity.	19(5.0)	10(2.6)	351(92.4)
4.	The old system of batai (sharecropping or rent in kind) was changed to a new one that is based on cash.	19(5.0)	11(2.9)	350(92.1)
5.	Food security has been achieved after the movement.	18(4.7)	12(3.2)	350(92.1)
6.	Peasants used modern agricultural machinery, artificial fertilisers, and pesticides after the movement.	18(4.7)	12(3.2)	350(92.1)
7.	Peasants produce surplus agricultural yields after the movement.	17(4.5)	23(6.1)	340(89.5)
8.	Peasants also increased their productivity through poultry farms and other live stocks.	35(9.2)	11(2.9)	335(87.9)
9.	After the movement, the peasants were given the right to own the manure (fertilizer) that their animals made.	16(4.2)	11(2.9)	353(92.9)

Source: Survey

### 1.3. Associations between Agricultural Productivity and Peasants Movement

The conventional agricultural system was based on muscle power; therefore, the food production system was labor-intensive. The highest number of labourers was engaged in farm-related activities for greater yield. Peasants of large families were preferred for subletting land on tenancy as they were able to engage more labour and grow more crops. With the mechanisation of agriculture and modernisation of agricultural technologies, the large size of peasant families has become a liability. The landlords started to relinquish their lands and eject peasants to employ modern cropping techniques on their land and enhance their income through higher productivity. The peasants resisted these ejections and revolted against the landlords through the peasant movement. To test the relationship between the ejection and

the peasants' movement in a reliable way, the peasants' movement was limited to a few statements, as shown in Table 1.2 and explained below.

A highly significant association ( $P = 0.0001$ ) was found between land reforms of the '60s and '70s accelerating peasant unrest and the peasants' movement. Furthermore, a significant ( $P = 0.002$ ) association was found between agricultural productivity and peasants' movement, with productivity increasing after the uprising. Besides, a significant ( $P = 0.001$ ) association was found between free labour and landlords' being abolished, which increased agricultural productivity and peasants' movement. As indicated by a few investigations in Pakistan, 9% of landowners possess 42% of the land, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not exempt (Naqvi et al., 1989). The land reforms of Ayub Khan in 1959 sensitised landlords to announce their land as self-cultivated. They began to utilise modern machinery and ejected peasants from their land. Under the initiative of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, the ejection was pronounced unlawful; also, *begar* (free service) to landowners was denied. Conflicts between landowners and peasants started. Feudal lords' private militias, alongside state apparatus, were used to suppress the peasants (Farhad, 1970). In the 1960s and '70s, land reforms were carried out to legitimise the circulation of land, access to assets, the diminishment of poverty and the abolition of exploitation. Also, regulations and the way peasants and landlords worked together were changed (Naqvi et al., 1989).

Moreover, a highly significant ( $P = 0.000$ ) association was found between the pre-existing system of *batai* (sharecropping) being replaced with a new, cash-based system of land tenure and the peasants' movement. Again, a significant ( $P = 0.002$ ) association was found between food security having been achieved now and the peasants' movement. The results further show a significant ( $P = 0.003$ ) association between peasants' use of modern agricultural innovative technologies after the uprising and the peasants' movement. Again, a highly significant ( $0.000$ ) association existed between peasants also increased their productivity through poultry farms and other livestock and the peasants' movement. Changes in the land tenure system provided more power and liberty to the peasant group to manage the fields as per their wisdom and in line with the market. The ability to make decisions gave peasants a sense of ownership; they entered into various cash-based contractual agreements with the landlord and acquired land. The rent was paid to the landlord, and the agricultural products became the property of the peasant. The peasants introduced innovative technologies and integrated crop, poultry, and livestock management into practice and increased their income many-folds. These findings are in line with Javed (2015), which stated that in Pakistan's situation of agricultural production changed as the conventional agricultural basis shifted to technologically based innovative agriculture. At the heart of these changes are two amazing things that work together: the modernization of farming with high-yield seeds, automation, and a better water system (called the "Green Revolution"), and the improvement of an important but quickly changing assembly part.

Conversely, a non-significant association ( $P = 0.490$ ) was found between peasants producing surplus agricultural yield after the movement and the peasants' movement. Also, there was no link ( $P = 0.720$ ) between the right to own the manure that the peasants' animals made and the peasants' movement.

In summary, peasants were engaged intensively by the landlords to get maximum agricultural production. Various tactics were used to keep peasants engaged and under control with low returns to them. With modernisation, demand for excessive labour was falling, and the landlord compelled the

peasants to abandon their lands. The peasants rejected the stance of the landlords and started systematic efforts to topple the landlords' supremacy. The new power equilibrium was established with a more balanced power structure and relations between peasants and landlords. Peasants entered into agreements with landlords under new terms and conditions and paid cash rent to them, with the right of use of land vested in peasants. The freedom of the peasants to use land opened up new ways for them to use technology and do integrated farming, which increased their agricultural output and income.

**Table-1.2: Associations between Agricultural Productivity and the Peasant Movement**

Do you consider the peasant movement to be your saviour?

S.No	Attribute		Disagreed	Uncertain	Agreed	chi-square test
1	The land reforms of the '60s and '70s accelerated the peasants' movement.	Disagreed	0	0	18 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> =52.401 P=0.000
		Uncertain	0	0	11 (100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.8)	3 (0.9)	324 (92.3)	
2	Agricultural productivity increased after the movement.	Disagreed	0	0	21 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> =32.491 P= 0.002
		Uncertain	0	0	9 (100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.9)	3 (0.9)	323 (92.3)	
3	Free labour (beggar) to landlords was abolished, which increased agricultural productivity.	Disagreed	0	0	19 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> =44.401 P=0.001
		Uncertain	0	0	10 (100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.8)	3 (0.9)	324 (92.3)	
4	The old system of batai (sharecropping or rent in kind) was changed to a new one that is based on cash.	Disagreed	0	0	19 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> = 36.491 P=0.000
		Uncertain	0	0	11 (100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.9)	3 (0.9)	323 (92.3)	
5	Food security has been achieved since the movement.	Disagreed	0	0	18 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> = 29.491 P=0.002
		Uncertain	0	0	12 (100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.9)	3 (0.9)	323 (92.3)	
6	Peasants used modern agricultural machinery, artificial fertilisers, and pesticides after the movement.	Disagreed	0	0	18 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> = 22.491 P=0.003
		Uncertain	0	0	12 (100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.9)	3 (0.9)	323 (92.3)	
7	Peasants produce surplus agricultural yields after the	Disagreed	0	0	17	x <sup>2</sup> =3.419
		Uncertain	0	0	23	

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	movement.	Agreed	24 (7.1)	3 (0.9)	313 (92.1)	P= 0.490
8	Peasants also increased their productivity through poultry farms and other live stocks.	Disagreed	1 (2.9)	0	34 (97.1)	x <sup>2</sup> = 56.087
		Uncertain	0	0	11 (100)	
		Agreed	23 (6.9)	3 (0.9)	308 (92.2)	P=0.000
9	After the movement, the peasants were given the right to own the manure (fertilizer) that their animals made.	Disagreed	0	0	16 (100)	x <sup>2</sup> = 2.087
		Uncertain	0	0	11(100)	
		Agreed	24 (6.3)	3 (0.8)	353 (92.9)	P=0.720

### Major Findings

Perception of the respondents regarding agricultural productivity shows that 92.4% of respondents were of the view that in Pakistan land reforms of the '60s and '70s accelerated the peasants' movement; agricultural productivity increased after the peasants' movement (92.1%); and free labour (beggar) to landlords was abolished, which increased agricultural productivity (92.4%). The results further show that the majority (92.1%) of respondents were of the view that the pre-existing system of *batai* (sharecropping, rent in-kind) was replaced with a new, cash-based system. Also, 92.1% stated that peasants achieved food security after the movement. Similarly, 92.1% reported that peasants used modern agricultural machinery, artificial fertilisers, and pesticides after the movement. Also, 89.5% agreed that peasants made more money from farming after the movement; 87.9% said that poultry farms and other livestock helped peasants make more money; and 92.9% said that peasants were given the right to own the manure their animals made after the movement.

Associations between Agricultural Productivity and the Peasants' Movement show that the peasants' movement had a highly significant association with the land reforms of the '60s and '70s. The reforms accelerated peasant unrest ( $P = 0.000$ ); the pre-existing system of *batai* (sharecropping) was replaced with a new, cash-based system of land tenure ( $P = 0.000$ ); and peasants also increased their productivity through poultry farms and other livestock ( $P = 0.000$ ). Furthermore, the peasants' movement had a significant association with agricultural productivity that increased after the uprising ( $P = 0.002$ ). Similarly, free labour for landlords was abolished, which increased agricultural productivity ( $P = 0.001$ ), food security has been achieved now ( $P = 0.001$ ) and peasants used modern agricultural innovative technologies after the uprising ( $P = 0.003$ ). On the other hand, the peasants' movement was not linked to the fact that peasants produced more agricultural yield after the movement ( $P = 0.490$ ) or that peasants had the right to own the manure their livestock made ( $P = 0.720$ ).

### Conclusion

The peasants were engaged intensively by the landlords to get maximum agricultural production. Various tactics were used to keep peasants engaged and under control with low returns to them. With modernisation, demand for excessive labour was falling, and the landlord compelled the peasants to abandon their lands. The peasants rejected the stance of the landlords and started systematic efforts to



topple the landlords' supremacy. The new power equilibrium was established with a more balanced power structure and relations between peasants and landlords. Peasants entered into agreements with landlords under new terms and conditions and paid cash rent to them, with the right of use of land vested in peasants. The freedom of the peasants to use land opened up new ways for them to use technology and do integrated farming, which increased their agricultural output and income.

The landlords managed to rule and exploit the peasant class due to their disorganisation. The landlord's strategies kept peasants disorganised and powerless. Awareness of the peasants regarding their disorganisation and its repercussions was mostly from outsiders. The peasants were organised under the peasants' movement to raise their voices against the landlord's oppression and secure their rights. The landlords tried to stop the peasants' political movement by causing religious and political disagreements among their leaders, but they failed.

### Recommendations

1. Poverty is the primary cause of social divisions and conflicts between the peasant and landlord classes. It is suggested that peasants and landowners be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to increase agricultural output and engage in alternative employment opportunities. In addition, the dissemination of modern agricultural technologies, such as seeds, pesticides, fertilisers, and other innovative farming practices, as well as the provision of lenient loans, can further reduce poverty and increase the locals' income.
2. Implementing land reforms in the way they were meant to be done and giving preemption rights to the peasant class. This means that instead of selling land to buyers from other districts, land should be sold to peasants first at the price they are willing to pay.

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