

# TH2.1: “Empowerment” without Transformation? A Scoping Review on Women Empowerment, Masculinities and Social norms in Agricultural Research

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# GREAT Research Cluster: Women empowerment, Masculinities and Social norms

- Focus: Mixed methods study
- Community perceptions on women's empowerment, femininities and masculinities - implications for agric interventions that seek to reach, benefit and empower women

# Outline: On the Scoping Lit Review

- Brief Introduction
- Research Gap
- Theoretical anchoring & Method
- Findings from the scoping study
- Conclusion

# Introduction

Discussions on Women's empowerment & notions of men and masculinities have gained traction as part of the global interventions to address the underlying social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequalities (Ambler et al., 2021; Casey et al., 2016; FAO et al., 2020; Lecoutere & Wuyts, 2021; Santoso et al., 2019) – **Transformation!**



Article

## “They Came Home Over-Empowered”: Identifying Masculinities and Femininities in Food Insecurity Situations in Tanzania

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# Research Gap

Despite the increasing 'turn' towards agricultural research interventions working on WE & masculinities, there still remains limited knowledge on how notions of women's empowerment, masculinities, femininities & social norms in various contexts are *conceptualized*, **linked** and **applied** within agricultural research.

**Research Qn:**

**How have notions of women empowerment, masculinities and social (gender) norms been conceptualized and applied in agriculture research and development interventions?**

# Theoretical anchoring

## Women's Empowerment

Naila Kabeer's (1999) conceptualization of women's empowerment

- Empowerment along three indivisible domains - resources, agency & achievements
- Concept tied up with power - "in terms of the ability to make choices: to be disempowered, therefore, implies to be denied choice" (1999, p. 436).
- Conceptual contestations: its feminist goals appropriated & applied within development discourse with mixed results - Zero-sum-game, stripped of its potential to analyze power, bestowed on individual Vs self consciousness, instrumentalism

## Masculinities

R.W Connell's conceptualizing of dominant masculinities -  
**Hegemonic - hierarchy, relationality, diverse, contextual)**

- Critical masculinity studies (Connell, Kimmel, Ratele, Cornwall, 2000, Bonatti et al, 2019), and others)
- Ideas on 'male involvement', working with men & boys (FAO, IFAD, WFP 2020), in gender equality and WE initiatives

# Method

Area of focus	Description
<i>RQ: How have notions of women empowerment and masculinities been conceptualized and applied in agriculture research and development interventions?</i>	
Search terms	“Women’s empowerment”, “masculinities”, “gender norms”, “agency” “Power relations”, “Rural masculinities” “male involvement in agriculture”
Content scope –	Agricultural domains - Food security, nutrition and assets control and management
Geographical focus	Literature with a global perspective, Sub-Sahara Africa, South & Southeast Asia, local focus on Uganda.
Category of Lit	Peer reviewed open access journal articles
Time Duration	2000 – to-date
Databases to work with – Digital libraries	AGORA ScienceDirect Google Scholar Jstor
Excluded	Lit focusing on gender and agriculture without deliberate discussions on women’s empowerment or masculinities - <b>42,500 initial articles - 56 finally reviewed</b>

# Findings: Conceptualizing WE & Masculinities

- **Most agricultural research studies clearly define, illustrate, conceptually anchored in Kabeer's theoretical ideas** –voice, choice, agency, access to resources. (Santoso et al (2019); Lecoutere & Wuyts (2021); Ambler et al (2021))
  - Ambler et al (2021) & their work is on *Facilitating women's access to an economic empowerment initiative* in Eastern Uganda - empowerment as a 'process' by which “*those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability*”.
  - Power within-power to decide – acting in groups (Santoso et al (2019))
- **Few studies that explicitly highlight & use the concept “Masculinities” – social expectations that define who a man is in particular contexts** (Bonatti et al 2019; Cole et al 2015, )
  - Socially constituted, -context specific
  - Variations (toxicity, progressive behaviour, supportive men/husbands, couple collaborations – rural masculinities/agricultural masculinities...)
  - Hierarchy



# WE & Masculinities linked

- **WE Empowerment in relation to men:** Both FAO, IFAD and WFP (2020) and Sraboni and others (2014) hint on the notion of empowerment in relation to men, even when this concept has historically been used in relation to women.
  - Using WEAI to measure women's empowerment in Bangladesh, Sraboni and others (2014, p. 21) argued "[this] analysis has shown that the areas in which men and women are disempowered are quite different, with the implication that, depending on local context, different programmes and policies will need to be put in place to empower women and men alike".
  - Masculinities and femininities closely connected – influence each other. Addressing one without the other creates tensions in HH relations (Bonatti et al 2019)

# Findings: WE & Masculinities linked

- **Absence or Uncritical engagement with men, masculinities**

- Not many studies **deliberately** conceptualize the notion of masculinities and later on **link** it with women's empowerment...
- Studies that operationalise the question of men in WE work 'simply' by looking at 'couples' (husband and wife) or agric. trainings targeting men & women groups foster gender balance, & joint decision making (Ambler et al., 2021; Lecoutere & Wuyts, 2021).
- Qn such as which men to engage, how, what change we want to see? – beyond homogenization, guarding against reproduction of male domination

Critical masculinities as suggested by Ratele (2008), Kimmel, Connell and Hearn (2005) suggest that focus on men and masculinities should be characterized by *specific* rather than and implicit or incidental, *focus* on the topic of men and masculinities, recognition of men as gendered, socially *constructed*, produced and reproduced rather than natural, variable and changing across time (history) and space (culture).

# Conclusion: Towards a nuanced understanding WE, Masculinities & Social norms

Meaningful transformation of persistent forms of inequalities requires us to ask certain questions:

- How do members of farming communities perceive empowerment?
- Who is a man? Who is a woman? What sets of expectations regulate feminine and masculine behaviors & Practices?
- How does this knowledge enable us focus on empowerment that speaks to gender transformation?



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