

Challenges of doing gender research as a male researcher in Pakistan: reflections from online and in-person fieldwork

Rahat Shah

Angaben zur Veröffentlichung / Publication details:

Shah, Rahat. 2024. "Challenges of doing gender research as a male researcher in Pakistan: reflections from online and in-person fieldwork." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 23: 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069241230021>.

Nutzungsbedingungen / Terms of use:

CC BY 4.0



Challenges of Doing Gender Research as a Male Researcher in Pakistan: Reflections From Online and In-Person Fieldwork

International Journal of Qualitative Methods

Volume 23: 1–12

© The Author(s) 2024

DOI: 10.1177/16094069241230021

journals.sagepub.com/home/ijqRahat Shah¹

Abstract

In this reflection paper, which stems from my PhD project and explores the gender arrangements and subjective experiences of female breadwinning couples (FBCs) in Pakistan, I delve into the distinctive challenges faced by a male researcher conducting gender research in a patriarchal cultural context. Drawing from both in-person and online fieldwork experiences, which began during the pre-pandemic period and extended through the pandemic into the post-pandemic era, this article unveils the layered intricacies posed by entrenched gender norms, societal expectations and the dynamics of a male researcher probing gendered issue. These challenges were further intensified in online mediums of interviewing, presenting obstacles from participant hesitations surrounding online privacy to inconsistent Internet connectivity and continuous disruptions. This paper also underscores the fluidity and multifaceted nature of the researcher's positionality, navigating interplays of gender, age, and cultural perceptions. My dual role, both an insider (by virtue of my cultural connection to the fieldwork area) and an outsider (owing to my affiliation with a Western academic institution), added layers of complexity to the fieldwork experiences. By juxtaposing in-person and online encounters, a rich tapestry unfolds, depicting both intersecting and unique challenges inherent to each mode of interviewing. Contributions of this reflection paper are multifold, which not only offers valuable insights for future researchers venturing into similar sociocultural contexts but also highlights the nuanced experiences of male-led gender research in predominantly patriarchal settings. The paper also contributes to the discourse on the fluidity of insider-outsider roles, reflexivity, and the methodological resilience and adaptability needed while conducting gender-focused fieldwork within specific cultural contexts.

Keywords

reflections, positionality, gender research, male researcher, fieldwork, Pakistan

Introduction

Reflection is a continuous process that involves revisiting previously acquired knowledge and evaluating past experiences in order to reshape the meanings attributed to these encounters. This approach facilitates generating novel insights (Finlay, 2012; Mann, 2016). Nevertheless, reflective practices can also pose challenges for researchers when presenting their field as largely detached from their roles and research activities (Emerson, 1983). The concept of reflection originated in the 1930s and is currently considered a crucial component of effective fieldwork endeavors (Pillow, 2003). According to Harrison et al. (2001), it is widely agreed upon that a researcher's personal experiences, values, and position in

various hierarchies have an impact on their research interests, methodology, and the way they communicate their findings. Thus, the personal reflection of a researcher is acknowledged as a crucial aspect of qualitative research methodology. It assists in addressing biases or misconceptions researchers might inadvertently introduce into their qualitative studies (Roller & Lavrakas, 2012).

¹Institute of Sociology, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Corresponding Author:

Rahat Shah, Institute of Sociology, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.
Email: rahat.shah331@gmail.com



Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>).

Moreover, it is also a crucial component in feminist research studies, which prompts feminist scholars to reflect on the influence of their gender identity on their fieldwork and research practices. The scholarly discourse on this matter has progressed from the initial question of “Who is asking whom?” (Arendell, 1997) to more intricate questions such as “Who is asking whom and about what?” (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001), and has subsequently expanded to include the additional aspect of “Where is the inquiry taking place?” (Pini, 2005). Despite this evolution in the field, researchers navigating cross-gender studies often grapple with multifaceted difficulties and challenges. While the precise definition and implementation of reflexivity remain a topic of debate, there is consensus that a reflexive turn has significantly shaped sociological and ethnographic theories and approaches (Caetano, 2015; May & Perry, 2011). However, most of the current literature on this issue predominantly revolves around researcher-participant dynamics in Western settings, with limited exploration into the influence of a researcher’s gender identity and its implications for the research process.

This paper offers a reflexive account of a study probing the lived experiences of female breadwinning couples (FBCs) within Pakistan’s highly patriarchal milieu. Reflexivity in this study hones on the gender interplay between the researcher and the participants and how it affected and altered the fieldwork (Mies, 1991). Specifically, this paper emphasizes the dimension of self-reflexivity (Lather, 1993)—or personal reflexivity (Wilkinson, 1988)—where a researcher’s individual identities play a pivotal role during fieldwork. Put differently, attributes like gender, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and social class background of the researchers can shape their interactions, accessibility, and the quality of the data gathered during their fieldwork (Berger, 2013). This research focuses on the gender identity of the researcher in the specific cultural context, resonating with Horn’s (1997) assertion that gender dynamics play a key role when conducting research in a male-dominated environment compared to other contexts. Consequently, when a male researcher interviews a female respondent or vice versa, the research process becomes intricately tied to gender dynamics and ensuing gendered power struggles (Campbell, 2003; Horn, 1997; Pini, 2005).

To lay the groundwork for this research, I leaned on personal acquaintances and social media platforms, given that I lacked direct access to potential interviewees. However, the path to interviewing participants was not straightforward, and I encountered reluctance and resistance from potential male and female participants. I interpreted this reluctance as tied to my positionality—affected by factors such as my gender, age, marital status, and perhaps even the research topic, all of which seemed to cast a negative impact on my fieldwork endeavours. My “perceived identity” appeared to shape participants’ reactions to both me and my invitation to participate in the study. My research topic (pertaining to female breadwinning couples), combined with my dual role as both an insider (by virtue of my cultural connection) and an outsider (owing to my affiliation with a Western academic institution), added layers of complexity to the

fieldwork. My fieldwork spanned the pre-pandemic period and extended through the pandemic into the post-pandemic era. Consequently, I was contending not just with challenges stemming from my positionality but also grappling with the intricacies of online interviews. This mode of interviewing presented distinctive communication challenges, which contributed to the increased intricacy of the data collection procedure. Faced with these difficulties, I developed strategies to navigate these hurdles, strategies that ultimately played a crucial role in achieving my fieldwork objectives. Still, it had many consequences for me, such as prolonging the time of my fieldwork and causing me anxiety and stress.

This study offers substantial contributions to the fields of gender and fieldwork studies, as well as insider/outsider positionality, by comprehensively exploring researcher identity and reflexivity within a complex cultural setting. This study fills the gap in existing literature that predominantly focuses on the dynamics between researchers and participants in Western settings, specifically emphasizing the underexplored impact of a male researcher’s gender identity (Caetano, 2015; McKeganey & Bloor, 2019). This paper explores the practical obstacles and approaches to carrying out gender-specific fieldwork in Pakistan, a setting characterized by distinct digital inequalities and cultural intricacies (Shah, 2023a, 2023b). This study also highlights the need to prioritize the mental and emotional well-being of researchers and emphasizes the strength and adaptability needed in feminist research, particularly from the often-neglected perspective of male researchers in non-Western contexts. This enriches the discourse on the fluidity and intersectionality of insider/outsider roles in qualitative research. The main research question which guides this study is: What are the specific challenges and strategies encountered by a male researcher conducting gender-focused fieldwork, and how do these experiences contribute to the broader understanding of reflexivity, resilience, and the insider/outsider dynamic in fieldwork?

The subsequent section delves into the influence of positionality, particularly gender identity, on a researcher’s experiences and the data collection process. Following that, I will introduce my fieldwork, detail the project that this reflection paper centers on, and describe the method employed. It then discusses the impact of my positionality on my fieldwork experiences, followed by an exploration of the challenges I faced while gaining access to the field and engaging with participants. Further discussion touches upon the intricacies of strategies I used to navigate those challenges and the ethical issues I encountered during the fieldwork. In the conclusion section, I discuss the implications and contributions of this reflection paper.

Gender and Fieldwork

Feminist scholars argue that a researcher’s socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity impact their relationship with the

participants and the results of their research (Gilbert & Stoneman, 2015; Suen et al., 2020; Oakley, 2016). LaRocco et al. (2020) argue that due to varying life experiences and distinct personalities, women and men experience fieldwork differently. Therefore, a shared gender identity between a participant and the researcher facilitates the rapport-building process during fieldwork. These observations are more pronounced in research studies carried out by male researchers in hyper masculine or patriarchal cultural contexts. For instance, Johnston's (2016) analysis of male security officers at Ottawa hospitals illustrates how acknowledging previous hardships and common gender identity may prompt a reevaluation of beliefs, promoting empathy and confronting gendered violence and prejudice. Conversely, an alternative perspective posits that cross-gender interviews might present intricacies and difficulties (Sowatey et al., 2021). However, these interview dynamics may also reveal insights that would otherwise be obscured in same-gender interview scenarios (Falen, 2008; Rodriguez-Dorans, 2018).

The concept of "doing gender" is a central framework in gender studies, emphasizing the shift from perceiving women and men as fixed categories to understanding gender as an active social process (West & Zimmerman, 2009). The "doing gender" theory also acknowledges the fluid, dynamic nature of social identities and roles, whether in the context of research (insider-outsider) or gender expression, underscoring the context-dependent and complex nature of these constructs. This perspective has its roots in West and Zimmerman's groundbreaking work in 1987, which, over time, has evolved and significantly influenced subsequent research in the fields of gender, organizations, and work (Jurik & Siemsen, 2009; West & Zimmerman, 2009). In this article, my focus is centered on the "doing gender" concept and the various perspectives that emerge from this approach. It is important to recognize that within "doing gender," there exist multiple viewpoints, each highlighting different aspects and fostering varied arguments. These range from post-structuralist stances to ethnomethodological frameworks (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). This section, therefore, is not an exhaustive exploration of these multifaceted concepts but is intended to highlight essential theoretical insights that underscore the diverse ways in which gender is enacted and performed in fieldwork and how gender and other dynamics of the researcher's identity (insider-outsider) shape their fieldwork experiences.

A key element of the "doing gender" theory is the idea of being accountable to sex category membership (West & Zimmerman, 2009), meaning that individuals are constantly engaged in behaviors that reflect their gender, and these behaviors are subject to continuous scrutiny and evaluation. Deviating from the culturally prescribed ways of "doing gender," which are often rigid and heteronormative, can lead to significant social repercussions (Butler, 2011). Consequently, the concepts of male and female, as well as femininity and masculinity, are only meaningful in relation to each other and are often constructed as binary opposites, though

inherently unequal (Paechter, 2006). However, if gender is something that is "done" rather than an innate attribute, it implies the potential for "undoing" gender – challenging and transforming the restrictive and hierarchical norms (Deutsch, 2007). Theoretical possibilities thus arise for gender to be enacted differently. Researchers should be alert to moments where traditional gender binaries are questioned and gender norms appear malleable (Butler, 2004). Increasingly, as people identify as non-binary, this challenges entrenched gender binaries and opens new avenues for rethinking and undoing traditional gender constructions (Smith et al., 2022).

This indicates that the topic is multifaceted and open to various analytical perspectives, incorporating additional dimensions of social relations like social class, race/ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, and disability. However, this article narrows its focus to specific dimensions pertinent to my fieldwork experiences. I acknowledge the expanding body of feminist and critical men's and masculinities studies that delve into the dynamics of interviewing men, including the power relations in interactions between male participants and female researchers (Kaspar & Landolt, 2016) and the distinct dynamics when male researchers interview men (Rodriguez-Dorans, 2018). There is also an increasing focus within qualitative research on aspects like sexuality and sexual desire (Kaspar & Landolt, 2016). Nevertheless, there remains a gap in the discussion around the various intersectionalities of gender, sexuality, nationality, and social class in transnational feminist studies, particularly in contexts like Pakistan. This includes studying how these factors influence data collection, considering who conducts the interviews, in what contexts, using what interview styles, and the dynamics that unfold within and across these interviews (Broom et al., 2009).

The Current Project

This article is a reflective account of my doctoral project, which was designed and started in 2019 within the pre-pandemic times and continued during the pandemic. My doctoral study explores gender arrangements and subjective experiences of female breadwinner couples in Pakistan. The purpose of the study is to explore how transitioning to non-normative work-family roles is experienced and negotiated among female breadwinner couples. An increase in the ratio of women's education, employment opportunities in the labor market, rising unemployment among men, and transformations in the family structure are resulting in the entry of more women into breadwinning roles (Shah, 2023a, 2023b). However, the transition towards gender non-normative arrangements has not been fully explored in the context of the global south. Pakistan, with its highly patriarchal cultural context, prioritized gendered division of responsibilities, and specific institutional context with no provisions of a welfare state and no support systems such as unemployment insurance available, provides a unique context for researching these transitions (Parvez et al., 2015; Shah, 2023a, 2023b).

Therefore, I analyze the different dimensions of men's and women's transition towards non-normative family-work and carer-breadwinner arrangements in my doctoral thesis. By focusing on the experiences, practices, and coping strategies of female breadwinners and their male partners, especially in the face of stigmatization, I highlight different aspects of "doing transitions" and how the specific social situation, institutional regulations and cultural discourses shape individual experiences.

The constructivist grounded theory method, which is an approach that emphasizes the role of the researcher in interpreting and understanding the data, guided my study. This method is particularly useful for studying sensitive and complex social phenomena like gender arrangements and subjective experiences, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Charmaz, 2021). Data for the study was mostly collected through in-person face-to-face interactions with participants, with a few interviews conducted online (Zoom and WhatsApp calls). The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the homes and workspaces of the participants or in a location that participants considered appropriate. I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 FBCs in the urban center and rural outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan. The study sample comprised exclusively of heterosexual married couples wherein the female spouse was the sole or dominant earner for the household and the male spouse was consistently either unemployed or contributed to the household income at a lesser scale. Purposive sampling strategy was employed to select this sample. The tool for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide, with an average interview duration of roughly 60–90 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Urdu and Pashtu languages, and the format was open-ended, allowing participants to share their experiences and viewpoints openly.

Goethe University Frankfurt provided ethical approval for this study, thus ensuring that all methodologies conformed to ethical protocols and standards. A key ethical consideration in this study was ensuring informed consent and voluntary participation. I provided detailed information to all participants on the aims and methods of the research and informed them of their rights as participants. I gave them details on their right to withdraw from the study at any point, and after providing all these details, I obtained informed consent from those willing to participate in the study. I did not collect personal contact details from participants who showed hesitance. I replaced the names of all participants with pseudonyms while writing my research report to eliminate any possibility of their identification. Furthermore, to prevent any potential breach of confidentiality and anonymity, I generalized or omitted sensitive demographic information, such as ethnicity, age, or current employment status of the participants.

When I began recruiting participants and asked if they could connect me with FBCs, I was met with scepticism and queries like, "What's the purpose of this study?" or "Why

probe into the personal affairs of couples?" "Couldn't you find a more relevant research topic?" "Isn't this a Western concern?" or accusations like "Are you pushing a Western agenda with your research?" and so on. The prevailing scarcity of a research-driven environment in Pakistan, compounded by the political and ideological narratives around gender and women's rights, has given rise to such a challenging atmosphere for gender research (Shah, 2023a, 2023b). My observation shows the widespread scepticism towards research in the social sciences, and therefore, researchers, including myself, are often perceived as affiliates of governmental bodies and NGOs or even suspected to be spies. Such suspicions confronted me right at the outset of my fieldwork. This scepticism becomes even more pronounced when delving into sensitive topics like female breadwinning within a highly patriarchal society.

In the following section, I will elaborate on the challenges I encountered while accessing the research participants. Subsequently, I will discuss challenges in relation to my positionality while conducting my fieldwork, accompanied by an exploration of the strategies I employed to navigate these obstacles.

Challenges in Gaining Access to Participants

The research study discussed in this article involved fieldwork in Pakistan from June 2019 to December 2022, spanning multiple time periods. By employing the grounded theory approach—which requires concurrent data collection and analysis—I iteratively revisited the field to further explore emerging themes in the data (Charmaz, 2021). A major obstacle I confronted throughout this process was research fatigue, a type of exhaustion that can affect the researcher because of extended involvement in field and research endeavors (Clark, 2008). This problem becomes significantly pronounced when trying to interview hard-to-reach participants. To alleviate this challenge, I capitalized on my personal connections and networks to gain access to prospective research participants. When I gained access to a few female breadwinning couples, my initial idea was to interview both couple partners simultaneously; however, persuading the male counterpart to participate in a couple interview was frequently unsuccessful. Although I managed to conduct a few of the couple interviews, the male partners dominated these interview sessions, which resulted in inadequate information and data.

Within the cultural context of Pakistan, and given my role as an outsider, it was customary for me to approach the husband first. Treading carefully, I sought to maintain a balance in addressing both partners without inadvertently placing undue emphasis on the wife's perspective over the husband. In couple-based interviews, I usually posed questions to the male partner first, a gesture rooted in cultural respect, before engaging the female partner for her insights. Ideally, I anticipated responses from both; however, instances

were frequent where the male partner would intercede and answer on the female's behalf even when the query was directed towards her. This was reflected in the interview responses of a couple that I interviewed in Islamabad:

Interviewer (addressing the husband): Could you elaborate on how the financial responsibilities are distributed in your household?

Husband: Well, in our home, I handle most of the things like bringing home the groceries taking care of the financial matters. I also participate in ceremonies and events in the community.

Interviewer (turning to the wife): And how do you feel about this arrangement and your responsibilities?

Wife: Yes, it's fine...I manage earning and..... Household..... (before she can continue, the husband intervened)

Husband: I think she is quite happy with it. Everything is going well for us.

This situation was causing me a mix of understanding and frustration. The cultural deference to male voices in the setting was at odds with my objective of capturing an equitable perspective from both couple partners. The tension between upholding the research's integrity and respecting local customs was a persistent concern, and I often grappled with feelings of inadequacy when I hesitated to solicit more direct responses from the female partners.

In light of the challenges posed by couple interviews, I resolved to interview female partners in their workspaces and male partners in their homes or other appropriate spaces. I began contacting women in the role of primary earners for their household, I managed to secure consent for interviews from five women. Leveraging my personal networks and being introduced through their colleagues, they felt more at ease consenting to an interview in their respective workspaces. However, a prevalent condition emerged: many opted for the presence of a female coworker during the interview. This seemed to preempt any potential misperceptions arising from their engagement with an unfamiliar male person. Keeping in view the cultural implications and importance of their comfort, I agreed to this stipulation. I found these women to be more forthcoming in the absence of their male partners, and there was a great sense of relief. However, the presence of a female coworker to facilitate this openness was a harsh reminder to me of the gendered realities in my specific fieldwork context. Furthermore, this also implied recognition of the cultural barriers I was required to overcome and navigate.

In the workspaces of the female participants where they preferred to be interviewed, most of them opted to observe complete *Purdah* (veil). They kept a considerable distance from me throughout the interview process. Some of them also showed reservations regarding the audio recording of the interviews. Despite my continuance assurance of keeping their personal information and voice recordings completely confidential, they still showed reluctance to be recorded, which I respected and avoided recording our conversation. Concerns shown by these participants regarding voice recordings reflect

the deep-rooted cultural beliefs about the confidentiality of women's voices and the fear that they may be overheard by their friends or family members. This depicts the peculiarity of privacy of women in a specific socio-cultural environment (Ibtasam et al., 2019). Moreover, this can also be linked with the deeply venerated value of *ghairat* or honor, which is indigenous to the cultural norms in Pakistan (Naseer, 2019). These concerns were more visible in the case of online interviews. The female interviewees showed concerns regarding the potential consequences of their interviews with me and voice recordings, which they viewed will not only have an impact on their personal honor but might bring shame to their whole family. They were more anxious as they were giving interviews to a male interviewer. During such situations, women may feel uneasiness and discomfort while conversing with a stranger male individual who is not part of their family, mainly due to their fear of being overheard by acquaintances or male family members.

The fear of participants regarding audio recording was also a sign of the fragile and nuanced nature of trust, which is reflected in parts of my research (Batool et al., 2022). My assurances of confidentiality and anonymity could in no way replace or ameliorate the deep-rooted cultural concerns that the participants held. In the sociocultural context of Pakistan, recording a female voice can have implications for her and her family. These implications might not be immediately visible or sensible to some extent to an outsider who does not understand the interrelation of honor, reputation and *purdah* intertwined with family dynamics and social identity in Pakistan (Haque, 2008). Observing these sensitive circumstances, I felt enormous empathy and solidarity with these participants. It is also important to acknowledge that the weight of *ghairat*, or honor, in their lives is not just a concept but a lived reality that dictates their day-to-day lives and interactions within their communities (Mustafa & Khalid, 2022). The fear that their recordings could be used against them, despite being in secure and professional settings, highlights the intricate ties between personal agency and societal expectations that they deal with. I was sensitive to the fact that cultural norms and gender dynamics were at play and was constantly reassessing my approach and trying to build rapport and trust in every possible way despite these complexities and challenges.

To deal with hesitancy surrounding audio recordings, I opted to manually document participants' responses through notetaking (Oltman, 2016). Conducting interviews with female participants in their workspaces yielded positive results, where they were more open and expressive regarding their female breadwinning arrangement and overall experiences. Away from the influence of their male partners, they openly shared their experiences, anxieties and feelings regarding their non-normative work-family arrangements and the societal reactions towards them. Their narratives were significantly more in-depth and richer compared to my previously conducted couple interviews. Nevertheless, as I began to progress in my data collecting, the COVID-19 outbreak emerged,

resulting in the shutdown of most workspaces. This unexpected event halted my research progress, barring me from conducting additional interviews. Following a hiatus six-month break and consultations with my PhD advisor, we decided to conduct further interviews online.

However, shifting to online interviews introduced a set of perplexing challenges, as it was hard to reach potential participants and convince them to engage in online conversation at a time when face-to-face interactions were impossible. To remove these limitations, I tried to locate my research participants via social media platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook. With the use of these platforms, besides personal contacts, I managed to gain access to a number of potential interviewees. This process emphasized the increased challenges I now faced in accessing prospective participants. For instance, one of my interviewees, an HR manager of a private firm, only agreed to have an interview when her husband was not in town. She was also not in favor of the video call option and any sort of recording, and I only had to rely on a WhatsApp voice call. After starting the interview, we faced continuous disruptions due to an unstable Internet connection. We tried to reconnect nearly ten times, but the call quality remained poor on both ends. The disruption proved frustrating for the participant, leading us to end the interview. She told me about her husband returning home, and she would have to disconnect because of that, too. Further, she promised to get back to the online interview and complete it sometime else when she finds a proper time and stable Internet connection. However, months went by without any contact from her. Respecting her privacy and keeping in mind the concerns regarding her husband, I did not contact her from my side.

I was grappling with mixed emotions in these frustrating and challenging circumstances. I had twofold worries at the time: firstly, my anxiety over the difficulty in collecting necessary data, and secondly, the challenge of meeting institutional deadlines and the expected delay in my doctoral project (Shah, 2023a, 2023b). However, my primary concern remained the safety and well-being of my participants. For instance, the abrupt discontinuation of the interview on the participant's side due to her husband's arrival at home was a sign of my complex challenges. The many incidents like these in my research prompted deep reflections on my part. They made me wonder if my interaction with participants was putting them at risk or in harmful situations and protecting them from adverse repercussions and ensuring their safety took precedence in my mind (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). This also indicated the intense consideration of ethical responsibilities required when researching in such cultural contexts (Batoool et al., 2022).

Amidst these challenges, it was necessary to put off the online interviews and wait for a more conducive setting, which was only possible with the reopening of their workplaces. This decision significantly delayed my research progress as the workplaces started reopening after an interlude of almost six months. I recommenced my fieldwork with the reopening of

the workplaces. Nevertheless, I still faced the same challenges I encountered earlier. Even in the in-person interviews, the female participants were reluctant to share their experiences with a male researcher.

Issue of Positionality

The issues related to researcher-participant unease and the gender-sensitive contexts were major positionality concerns in my study. The most prominent challenge during my fieldwork was the reluctance of the male partners in the female breadwinning arrangement to discuss their unconventional roles. The prospect of discussing a breadwinning arrangement, in which they felt marginalized, with another male person was uncomfortable for them. Consequently, they not only declined to be interviewed but also prevented their female partners from speaking with me. To them, I was an outsider, potentially with a hidden motive, and despite my efforts to validate my genuine intentions as a researcher, doubts lingered about my identity. This scepticism was amplified by my association with a Western academic institution and was further intensified due to the sensitive nature of my research topic.

On one occasion, I got a chance to meet a FBC (about whom I learned of their female breadwinning arrangement from a personal contact) who not only welcomed me very warmly but also offered me a cup of tea. When we were having the tea, I gave them details about my academic background and research project where the female partner showed great interest in the topic, saying 'Your research topic sounds very interesting, and we can share our experiences with you'. Conversely, her husband seemed unsure and rather upset about this situation. His discomfort was visible when we talked about their unconventional female breadwinning arrangement. At this moment, he interrupted our conversation, saying, 'although we wanted to talk to you, but now I feel that we may not be the kind of couple you are looking for in your research, and I think we cannot proceed with this interview'. I tried my best to explain the relevance and significance of their participation in the study and repeatedly assured them of their confidentiality and anonymity. However, he remained unresponsive, refused to participate further in the study, and asked his wife to avoid further conversation with me. This situation resulted in an unsuccessful interview attempt, and I left their home with great disappointment.

Moreover, my status as young, male, and unmarried, created further complications during my interviews (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001), and a stark example of these issues and challenges occurred during an interview with a participant at her workplace when her husband made an unanticipated appearance. When we were deciding for the interview, I asked the participant about her husband's potential response. She stated that he might not agree, given our existing work-family arrangement and his unemployment, as well as he holds more conservative views about women conversing with stranger men. However, despite these challenges, she still agreed to participate in the study,

mentioning that she thinks this is an interesting topic and wants to share her experiences, but at her workspace, where she is away from her family. I agreed to this arrangement, and we decided to have this interview at her workplace.

When we started the interview, which had only been underway for about 20 minutes, her husband appeared unanticipated in her office, who looked suspicious and surprised by my presence and conversation with her. This was a situation I did not anticipate, and given the cultural context, it made me worried about its likely repercussions, especially for the participant (Shah, 2023a, 2023b). He started asking his wife about my identity and the purpose of our meeting and seemed unhappy and angry with this situation. I attempted to explain my study's objective and the overall situation, but he seemed unsatisfied with everything. I felt embarrassed and very worried for my participant and apologised to her husband for any inconvenience, but he still seemed unhappy and asked me to leave as they wanted to have a private conversation. I left the office with numerous thoughts racing through my mind. I pondered how this situation could have been avoided and how it could affect the comfort and safety of the interviewee (Parvez et al., 2015). I was also feeling guilty for putting my participant in an uneasy situation and after this incident, I lost contact with the participant, and I also choose not to contact her again, fearing this could result in increasing her difficulties.

Such experiences reflect that navigating my role in this research was volatile and complicated. I was continuously straddling between shifting identities, finding it challenging to pin myself solely as an outsider or insider (Kerstetter, 2012). Acker (2000) posits that the dichotomy of insider and outsider will always remain a conundrum, but it is imperative for a researcher to innovatively work within these parameters. Echoing this, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) contend that researchers invariably find themselves oscillating between these dualities, with no one ever entirely on one end of the spectrum. From the viewpoint of the FBCs, there were factors that cast me as an outsider—my academic background and affiliation with a Western academic institution. Yet, certain facets of my identity, such as my fluency in their language and familiarity with their cultural nuances from having spent most of my life there, rendered me an insider. This complex identity, especially my insight into the cultural nuances of defying gender norms, made some participants, notably men, hesitant to converse with me. Chavez (2008) highlights that researchers, especially when engaging with communities they belong to, are often evaluated against existing cultural standards and norms. In my specific context, being a single, unmarried man influenced the interactions of my participants with me.

My positionality was pivotal in shaping the study in multiple facets, as outlined by Berger (2013). While one's position can often ease fieldwork access (Berger, 2013; Johnston, 2019), my journey towards building rapport and securing the trust of interviewees was gradual. As participants discerned my empathetic alignment with their circumstances, I observed a heightened willingness to divulge personal

anecdotes (De Tona, 2006). The trusted personal contacts through whom I reached out to FBCs bolstered my credibility, often prompting the couples to participate actively in interviews. Similarly, individuals contemplating relocation overseas saw me as a resource of pertinent knowledge regarding overseas experiences, enhancing their engagement and candor during interviews (Berger, 2013). Furthermore, my identity as a doctoral student studying abroad might have influenced the dynamics of my relationship with interviewees (Berger, 2013). Echoing this, Kacen & Chaitin (2006) highlight that the researchers' viewpoint, personal history, preconceptions, and background - can profoundly shape the analysis and interpretation of findings. In the context of my research, my pre-existing relationships with two of the FBCs significantly enriched my understanding and allowed me to interpret their narratives more deeply.

Navigating the Challenges

Given the challenges in both online and in-person interviews described above, I was dealing with uncertainties regarding the completion of my project in the projected timeframe. Furthermore, conducting the interviews within the planned schedule was essential as I was already behind the deadlines set by my research supervisor. As a result, I started making strategies to overcome obstacles in accessing my potential participants. For example, to reduce potential biases against me based on my age, gender, and dual roles as both outsider and insider, I prioritized fostering understanding and building rapport with the male participants. For instance, I tried to integrate myself into their daily activities by meeting them more often, playing games like cards and Ludo with them, and keeping in touch via text messages. I also invited them to lunches, which created a more relaxed and informal atmosphere for the interviews. This also made the participants more willing to talk. Additionally, to assure them of my authenticity as a researcher, I showed them pictures from my time at the German university, my academic credentials, and previously published articles. The main concern and hesitation about participation in the study for most of the male participants was their perceived stigmatized status in the context of a female bread-winning arrangement. These consistent engagements and informal interactions on my part alleviated their concerns about me. I also approached them with genuine empathy and, during our conversations, avoided topics that could make them feel marginalized or judged. These strategies proved helpful, and I was able to establish trust with some of them, who eventually agreed to an interview. However, these male participants mostly wanted to be interviewed outside their homes and in the absence of other people, and most were still reluctant to allow their female counterparts to participate in the study.

Based on my earlier experiences, I began leveraging informal networks to reach potential participants instead of relying on key informants only. This enabled me to access a broader group of participants. I found this strategy more effective as the participants I contacted through these networks displayed fewer biases

or reservations towards me. This opened the opportunity for me to connect with participants who were more open and receptive to talk about their personal experiences and breadwinning arrangements. For instance, during my tenure at the social welfare office in Pakistan, I reconnected with an old fellow student who worked as a computer assistant at the same department. During our conversation, I told her about my research project and my search for participants. She introduced me to a colleague who matched my target group (having a female breadwinning arrangement). Her colleague was a helpful contact, giving me access to four other participants. Owing to her familiar relationship with those potential participants, I gained their trust more easily, and they agreed to an interview with me. Moreover, the relationships developed with these interviewees proved particularly valuable as they helped me expand my access to other female breadwinning couples.

Similarly, I also put significant energy and time into building rapport with potential interviewees and a few key informants and personal contacts who became instrumental in my interviewing process. A variety of strategies facilitated this rapport-building process for me. For instance, one of my key insights was recognizing that my international exposure, especially in Germany, intrigued many participants. This connection acted as a bridge, narrowing the gap between me, the researcher, and them, the research participants. My role as a cultural insider, combined with my established network within relevant circles, further eased the recruitment process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The fluency with which I conversed in the local languages (Urdu and Pashtu) gave me an edge. Being a native Pashtu language speaker and conducting interviews in Islamabad—a city with a significant Pashtu-speaking population—aided my interactions with the local Pashtun community, facilitating interviews with FBCs belonging to this demographic (Bell, 2005).

I also found that vulnerability played a part. Sharing the hurdles and frustrations I faced in my research journey made me more relatable, particularly to female participants. When these female breadwinners saw a male researcher willingly discuss his challenges, the emotional barrier between us seemed to dissolve. This newfound closeness created an environment of trust, allowing them to open up about their personal experiences (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). Additionally, I strategically spent significant hours in parks and cricket grounds, where many male FBC partners would often unwind in the evenings. It is essential to clarify that these men represented diverse backgrounds and typically did not know one another, so my visits spanned various parks and playgrounds. Investing time in these spaces allowed me to initiate casual conversations with them. Over time and through repeated interactions, I gained their trust, and then it became more natural to introduce them to my research endeavors.

Additionally, to enhance the depth of the data collected, I took the support of a female research assistant. Recognizing that female participants often communicate more openly with female interviewers (Oakley, 2016), I hoped her shared cultural and gender background would foster a comforting atmosphere. Indeed, her presence allowed many female

participants to see her not just as an interviewer but as someone with whom they could confide (Oakley, 2016). While some feedback from these interviews lacked the depth I desired, they still provided vital insights into the experiences of these female participants. Furthermore, I also offered monetary incentives and small tokens of appreciation from my modest budget to several participants. These gestures were received well and proved helpful in furthering rapport, often leading to increased willingness from the potential participants to participate in the study (Grady, 2001).

Ethical Issues and Considerations

Multiple ethical considerations arose during various stages of my research. A major one pertained to the use of financial incentives for recruiting participants (Hennink et al., 2011). It is customary in Pakistan to offer research participants monetary compensation and I offered such incentives in line with this practice to ensure ample participation. This approach proved helpful in enticing several individuals to take part in my research. Similarly, I also extended other tokens of gratitude besides monetary compensation, such as gifts, to express my appreciation for their active involvement in the study. In instances where participants declined these tokens, I opted for culturally appropriate small gestures like bringing fruits, cookies or cakes, aligning with the local custom of presenting gifts when visiting someone's home.

Ensuring voluntary participation in the study was also a significant challenge I was trying to navigate during my fieldwork (Hennink et al., 2011). For instance, on several occasions, I felt that my interviewees might have felt obligated to participate in the study due to their personal and professional connection with my key informants and contacts. This situation posed ethical and methodological dilemmas and raised questions in my mind: Were the participants genuinely consenting to participate, or were they influenced by a key informant or superior? By not insisting on directly obtaining the consent of female participants in some cases, was I inadvertently perpetuating a patriarchal structure? Had I forsaken my role as a researcher to bring forth 'subjugated knowledge' (Hesse-Biber, 2012)? Ultimately, whenever I detected potential involuntary participation, especially where a power dynamic existed between the key informant and the potential participant, I abstained from pursuing an interview. Recognizing the possibility of subtle coercion due to these power dynamics (Hennink et al., 2011), I emphasized the voluntary nature of participation. I insisted on personally obtaining informed consent from each participant, ensuring they were aware they could withdraw at any point (ASA 1987; Miller & Bell, 2002) and assured them that declining participation would remain confidential from the key informants. On several occasions, curious key informants inquired about the participation status of those they had introduced. However, I consistently maintained the privacy of my participants. To further minimize the potential for subtle coercion, I allowed

potential participants ample time for consideration before committing to the interview. I also refrained from collecting personal contact details if I sensed any hesitation.

Besides that, in my pursuit of data collection, I inadvertently put some women in positions that could be perceived as socially compromising and uncomfortable. Within the framework of a traditional Pakistani household, it is often deemed inappropriate for a woman to converse with a non-family male person. Though my persistence led a few participants to permit interviews, especially in their workspaces away from their homes, this did not shield them from potential social repercussions or judgment from their colleagues. It was only later in my research that I fully grasped the implications of this and sought the assistance of a female research assistant to conduct further interviews with me.

Navigating relationships with research participants can also pose ethical challenges (British Sociological Association, 2002). Post-interview, I grappled with determining the appropriate boundaries between myself and the interviewees. Some reached out, sending me “friend” requests on Facebook, “following” me on Instagram, or continuing our conversation on WhatsApp, inquiring about my personal life. This was a challenging situation, and I was uncertain about integrating them into my personal social circle online. Accepting these requests might inadvertently expose them to my wider social network, risking the disclosure of their participation in my study. Ultimately, I chose not to accept their Instagram “follow” and Facebook “friend” requests, but I continued to engage in courteous text and email exchanges even after the study concluded.

Finally, my age also played a noticeable role in determining the study sample. Being younger influenced the age distribution of the participants, as it was relatively easier for me to engage with individuals between the ages of 20 and 40. Engaging with those over 40 presented a challenge as they often did not perceive me as a credible researcher and were also more reluctant to be interviewed by me. As a result, the age bracket of the participants in this study predominantly spanned from 20 to 40 years old.

Conclusion

In this article, I reflected upon my fieldwork experiences while trying to access interviewees for a study centered on the experiences of FBCs in Pakistan. Despite the difficulties associated with accessing participants, I found the overall process valuable because my fieldwork experience allowed me to explore the research topic through a gendered lens. The contributions of this study to existing literature are manifold, particularly within the realm of feminist research methodologies. Firstly, it shows how my male identity posed various challenges when attempting to interview both male and female participants on a sensitive subject of female breadwinning within Pakistan’s cultural context. Establishing initial connections and fostering trust with participants proved to be a complex task, causing considerable delays in my research fieldwork. My experiences further illustrate that the “doing

gender” during my fieldwork was a mutual categorization (Kosygina, 2005), evolving through continuous interactions among personal contacts, male partners in FBCs, the participants, and myself in the researcher’s role. Similarly, reflections from this study also contribute to the evolving understanding of positionality, as influenced by studies challenging the rigid insider-outsider dichotomy (Britton, 2020; Bukamal, 2022) and arguing for the blurring of positionalities (Kim et al., 2022; Parikh, 2020).

This study makes a notable contribution to the understanding of these complex and changing roles in feminist qualitative research. During the research journey, I experienced the interplay between being an insider and an outsider and, at times, embodying both roles simultaneously. This fluid nature of positionality is a common experience in the context of diaspora and globalization, which resonates with Hertz’s (1997) assertion on the importance of recognizing the continuum between insider and outsider statuses. These roles are not distinct; they exist in a state of flux. Humphrey (2007) also emphasized this in the concept of insider-outsider hyphen. During all interactions with the participants, I experienced a continuous shift between ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness’ taking place during the same conversation, reflecting the variability and complexity of these roles. This resonates with the key tenets of “doing gender” theory, which acknowledges the dynamic and fluid nature of roles and social identities (West & Zimmerman, 2009) whether in a research context or gender expression and underscores the context-dependent and complex nature of these constructs.

Moreover, reflections from this paper contribute to the debate on adaptability and resilience required of researchers confronted with multifaceted, recurrent challenges (Suadik, 2022). This research journey was a testament to resilience in the face of multifaceted challenges and the pursuit of hard-to-reach participants (Hamberg et al., 2020) by working through the complexities of the researcher’s unique positionality – encompassing his insider-outsider status, age, and gender. Similarly, the sensitive nature of the research topic and dealing with the unanticipated challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic not only complicated access to participants but also put my well-being and health at risk. Nevertheless, I did not stop my research journey; I remained adaptable and flexible and manoeuvred through the multifaceted recurring challenges both in online interviews and in the field. The resilience observed in this research mirrors the concept of Doern et al. (2019) that emphasized the adaptability of a research project to enable it to succeed and maintain its function during a crisis by having a robust contingency plan developed using critical reflections. The fieldwork was completed despite the experience being emotionally draining and stressful. This provided a profound learning that highlighted the ethical considerations and responsibilities required when conducting research in a sensitive cultural context (Batool et al., 2022).

This paper further highlights the importance of reflexivity in understanding the relevance of the researcher’s identities and interactions with participants during fieldwork. Researchers must

record the impact of their identities during each research phase, from the first interaction with participants to the final analysis of interview data. This paper demonstrates the importance of safety training to prepare field researchers for the threats and challenges they will likely encounter. This paper also addresses the unique problems of conducting online research in contexts like Pakistan, including participants' hesitance about digital engagement and the challenge of inconsistent internet connectivity. Furthermore, this paper advocates for psychological support and counselling for researchers, especially PhD students who undertake fieldwork on sensitive topics with hard-to-reach participants. As for me, I had to sideline the emotional turmoil that stemmed from the pandemic-related challenges and constant disruptions in the field to keep continue my research. Considering these reflections, I believe that academic institutions need to furnish their researchers with robust professional training, safeguards, and support after and before the fieldwork.

In addressing the varied challenges of my fieldwork, I developed and implemented a range of strategic responses which not only contribute new understandings to the field but can also be helpful for fellow researchers working in a similar domain. Building rapport through extended engagement and ensuring data confidentiality mitigated participant hesitancy, while my willingness to share personal research struggles enhanced relatability, particularly with female participants, dissolving emotional barriers. To address cross-gender interview challenges and cultural norms against interviewing women, strategies like gaining male partners' consent, involving them in discussions, and hiring a female research assistant proved effective. I also navigated the male dominance in couple interviews by conducting separate interviews with female participants in their workspaces. This allowed for more candid discussions, free from their partners' influence. My immersion into the participants' daily lives, including shared activities and casual interactions, helped alleviate biases linked to my gender and dual insider-outsider role. These actions, coupled with the adaptation to COVID-19 by utilizing social media for recruitment and delaying online interviews, highlight the flexibility and ethical commitment needed in fieldwork. The manuscript details these strategies, providing a guide for researchers navigating similar challenges and contributing to the conversation on methodological adaptability, the blurring of the insider-outsider continuum and researcher resilience in feminist research.

Finally, it is important to note that this article does not encompass the entirety of methodological challenges and practical strategies but rather highlights significant experiences pertinent to those venturing into qualitative research in similar fields and cultural settings. While I endeavored to delve into and elucidate the obstacles I encountered and strategies I employed, it is vital to recognize that these insights are context-specific and rooted in my individual personal experiences. I believe that this reflection piece, supplemented with insights from existing literature, serves as a valuable resource for emerging researchers and those in the planning

phase. Moreover, it may benefit those supervising such research, especially within the global south and highly patriarchal cultural contexts.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all participants for taking part in my study. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my doctoral supervisors, Prof. Sarah Speck, and Prof. Pia Schober, for their invaluable guidance and support.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Rahat Shah  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3856-9900>

References

- Acker, S. (2000). In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 28(1-2), 189–210.
- Arendell, T. (1997). Reflections on the researcher-researched relationship: A woman interviewing men. *Qualitative Sociology*, 20(3), 341–368. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1024727316052>
- ASA. (1987). ASA ethics. Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK. Retrieved from <https://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml>
- Batool, R., Fleschenberg, A., Glattli, L., Haque, A., Holz, S., Khan, M. S., & Tareen, M. (2022). Researching South Asia in pandemic times: Of shifting fields, research tools, risks, emotions and research relationships. *South Asia Chronicle*, 11, 445–451.
- Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research project* (4th ed.): Open University Press.
- Berger, R. (2013). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- British Sociological Association. (2002). *Statement of ethical practice for the British sociological association*. British Sociological Association. Retrieved from <https://www.britisoc.co.uk/media/27107/StatementofEthicalPractice.pdf>
- Britton, J. (2020). Being an insider and outsider: Whiteness as a key dimension of difference. *Qualitative Research*, 20(3), 340–354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794119874599>
- Broom, A., Hand, K., & Tovey, P. (2009). The role of gender, environment and individual biography in shaping qualitative interview data. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(1), 51–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701606028>

- Bukamal, H. (2022). Deconstructing insider–outsider researcher positionality. *British Journal of Special Education*, 49(3), 327–349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12426>
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. verso.
- Butler, J. (2011). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*. Taylor and Francis.
- Caetano, A. (2015). Defining personal reflexivity: A critical reading of Archer's approach. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 18(1), 60–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431014549684>
- Campbell, E. (2003). Interviewing men in uniform: A feminist approach? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(4), 285–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570110109115>
- Charmaz, K. (2021). The genesis, grounds, and growth of constructivist grounded theory. In *Developing grounded theory: The second generation revisited* (pp. 153–187).
- Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *Qualitative Report*, 13(3), 474–494.
- Clark, T. (2008). We're over-researched here!—exploring accounts of research fatigue within qualitative research engagements. *Sociology*, 42(5), 953–970. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094573>
- De Tona, C. (2006). But what is interesting is the story of why and how migration happened. *Forum for Qualitative Social Research*, 7(3), 1–12.
- Deutsch, F. M. (2007). Undoing gender. *Gender & Society*, 21(1), 106–127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206293577>
- Doern, R., Williams, N., & Vorley, T. (2019). Special issue on entrepreneurship and crises: Business as usual? An introduction and review of the literature. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 31(5-6), 400–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2018.1541590>
- Duncombe, J., & Jessop, J. (2002). *Doing rapport' and the ethics of 'faking friendship'* (vol. 2). Ethics in qualitative research.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>
- Emerson, R. M. (1983). *Contemporary field research: A collection of readings*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Falen, D. J. (2008). The “other” gender? Reflections on fieldwork in Benin. *Men and Masculinities*, 11(2), 164–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x08315094>
- Finlay, L. (2012). Five lenses for the reflexive interviewer. In J. Gubrium, J. Holstein, A. Marvasti, & K. McKinney (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 317–332): Sage.
- Gilbert, N., & Stoneman, P. (Eds.), (2015). *Researching social life*. Sage.
- Grady, C. (2001). Money for research participation: Does it jeopardize informed consent? *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 1(2), 40–44. <https://doi.org/10.1162/152651601300169031>
- Hamborg, S., Meya, J. N., Eisenack, K., & Raabe, T. (2020). Rethinking resilience: A cross-epistemic resilience framework for interdisciplinary energy research. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 59, 101285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2019.101285>
- Haque, R. (2008). The institution of purdah: A feminist perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 1(1), 47–71. <https://doi.org/10.46568/pjgs.v1i1.255>
- Harrison, J., MacGibbon, L., & Morton, M. (2001). Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative research: The rigors of reciprocity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(3), 323–345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040100700305>
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. Sage.
- Hertz, R. (Ed.), (1997). *Reflexivity and voice*. Sage.
- Hesse-Biber, S. (2012). Feminist approaches to triangulation: Uncovering subjugated knowledge and fostering social change in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), 137–146. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437184>
- Horn, R. (1997). Not ‘one of the boys’: Women researching the police. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 6(3), 297–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.1997.9960690>
- Humphrey, C. (2007). Insider–outsider: Activating the hyphen. *Action Research*, 5(1), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750307072873>
- Ibtasam, S., Razaq, L., Ayub, M., Webster, J. R., Ahmed, S. I., & Anderson, R. (2019). My cousin bought the phone for me. I never go to mobile shops. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 3(CSCW), 1–33.
- Johnston, M. S. (2016). Men can change: Transformation, agency, ethics and closure during critical dialogue in interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 16(2), 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115569561>
- Johnston, M. S. (2019). When madness meets madness: Insider reflections on doing mental health research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919835356>
- Jurik, N. C., & Siemsen, C. (2009). “Doing gender” as canon or agenda: A symposium on West and Zimmerman. *Gender and Society*, 23(1), 72–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208326677>
- Kacen, L., & Chaitin, J. (2006). The times are a changing: Understanding qualitative research in ambiguous, conflictual and changing contexts. *Qualitative Report*, 11(2), 209–228.
- Kaspar, H., & Landolt, S. (2016). Flirting in the field: Shifting positionalities and power relations in innocuous sexualisations of research encounters. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 23(1), 107–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2014.991704>
- Kerstetter, K. (2012). Insider, outsider or somewhere in between: The impact of researchers' identities on the community-based research process. *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 27(2), 99–117.
- Kim, E., Badrinathan, S., Choi, D. D., Karim, S., & Zhou, Y. Y. (2022). Navigating “insider” and “outsider” status as researchers conducting field experiments. *PS: Political Science*

- and Politics, 55(4), 754–758. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096522000208>
- Kosygina, L. V. (2005). Doing gender in research: Reflection on experience in field. *Qualitative Report*, 10(1), 87–95. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2005.1859>
- LaRocco, A. A., Shinn, J. E., & Madise, K. (2020). Reflections on positionalities in social science fieldwork in northern Botswana: A call for decolonizing research. *Politics and Gender*, 16(3), 845–873. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1743923x19000059>
- Lather, P. (1993). Fertile obsession: Validity after poststructuralism. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(4), 673–693. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1993.tb00112.x>
- Mann, S. (2016). *The research interview: Reflective practice and reflexivity in research processes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- May, T., & Perry, B. (2011). *Social research and reflexivity: Content, consequence and context*. Sage Publication.
- McKeganey, N., & Bloor, M. (2019). Spotting the invisible man: The influence of male gender on fieldwork relations 1. In *Selected writings in medical sociological research* (pp. 144–161). Routledge.
- Mies, M. (1991). Women's research of feminist research? The debate surrounding feminist science and methodology. In M. M. Fonow, & J. Cook (Eds.), *Beyond methodology: Feminist scholarship as lived research* (pp. 60–80). Indiana University Press.
- Miller, T., & Bell, L. (2002). Consenting to what? Issues of access, gate-keeping and 'informed' consent. *Ethics in qualitative research*, 53, 69.
- Mustafa, G., & Khalid, M. U. (2022). Exploring the status of honor killing in islam. *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, 4(2), 12–21.
- Naseer, N. (2019). Tribal women, property and border: An auto-ethnographic critique of the Riway (Tradition) on the Pakistan–Afghanistan borderland. *Geopolitics*, 24(2), 426–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2018.1543662>
- Nentwich, J. C., & Kelan, E. K. (2014). Towards a topology of 'doing gender': An analysis of empirical research and its challenges. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 21(2), 121–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12025>
- Oakley, A. (2016). Interviewing women again: Power, time and the gift. *Sociology*, 50(1), 195–213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515580253>
- Oltmann, S. (2016). Qualitative interviews: A methodological discussion of the interviewer and respondent contexts. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 17(2), 1–15.
- Paechter, C. (2006). Masculine femininities/feminine masculinities: Power, identities and gender. *Gender and Education*, 18(3), 253–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250600667785>
- Parikh, A. (2020). Insider-outsider as process: Drawing as reflexive feminist methodology during fieldwork. *Cultural Geographies*, 27(3), 437–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474019887755>
- Parvez, S., Rehman, M. Z. U., Javed, J., & Raza, I. (2015). Working women in Pakistan: Analysis of issues and problems. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 35(2), 997–1011.
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635>
- Pini, B. (2005). Interviewing men: Gender and the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. *Journal of Sociology*, 41(2), 201–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783305053238>
- Rodríguez-Dorans, E. (2018). Reflexivity and ethical research practice while interviewing on sexual topics. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(6), 747–760. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1490980>
- Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2012). *Applied qualitative research design: A total framework approach*. Guilford Press.
- Schwalbe, M., & Wolkomir, M. (2001). The masculine self as problem and resource in interview studies of men. *Men and Masculinities*, 4(1), 90–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x01004001005>
- Shah, R. (2023a). Navigating non normative roles: Experiences of female breadwinning couples in Pakistan. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.3013>
- Shah, R. (2023b). The social stigmatization of stay-at-home fathers in Pakistan. *Men and Masculinities*, 26(3), 435–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x231170143>
- Smith, E., Zirnsak, T., Power, J., Lyons, A., & Bigby, C. (2022). Social inclusion of LGBTQ and gender diverse adults with intellectual disability in disability services: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities: JARID*, 35(1), 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12925>
- Sowatey, E. A., Nyantakyi-Frimpong, H., Hussey, L. K., Annan-Aggrey, E., Pinkrah, A., & Arku, G. (2021). Reflections from cross-gender fieldwork experiences in open markets in Ghana. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211053102>
- Suadik, M. (2022). Building resilience in qualitative research: Challenges and opportunities in times of crisis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221147165>
- Suen, L. W., Lunn, M. R., Katuzny, K., Finn, S., Duncan, L., Sevelius, J., & Obedin-Maliver, J. (2020). What sexual and gender minority people want researchers to know about sexual orientation and gender identity questions: A qualitative study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 49(7), 2301–2318. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01810-y>
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (2009). Accounting for doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 23(1), 112–122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208326529>
- Wilkinson, S. (1988). The role of reflexivity in feminist psychology. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11(5), 493–502. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(88\)90024-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(88)90024-6)