Peasants' Viewpoint on Bringing the Next Generation into Agriculture: Insights from Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Peasant farming is not merely about producing food, but it embodies a lifestyle, wisdom, and existence for rural communities, reflecting their values, traditions, and relationships with nature, land, family, and society. Therefore, understanding how these communities pass on their farming practices to the next generation is crucial. In Bangladesh, significant changes in socioeconomic sectors have affected the rural social structure and peasant life. A mixed-method study was conducted in 2022 in two northwestern villages, Chanduria and Ratoil. The study aimed to understand the aspirations of peasants about their children's involvement in agriculture. The results showed that about 87% of the peasants surveyed were hesitant to involve their children in farming. This reluctance can be attributed to three main reasons: low financial returns from farming (85% of respondents), aspirations of the younger generation for higher-paying and prestigious jobs (70% of respondents), and concerns about exposing their children to environmental and market uncertainties (69% of respondents). Focus group discussions with young people revealed similar attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, it's important for policymakers to consider these attitudes when formulating strategies for sustainable development in Bangladesh.

Key words: Peasants, Youth, Agriculture, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that the peasantry, as the most significant social group in world history, has played an indispensable role in the growth and prosperity of various cultures and civilizations (van der Ploeg, 2010; Vanhaute, 2008, 2021). Their contribution lies in the crucial tasks of nourishing and providing food and employment for the majority of the global population (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2023). Peasants have played a crucial role in preserving agricultural knowledge and practices over time. This knowledge has been shaped by their intimate connection with the land and their dedication to farming practices, which they have passed down to future generations. Scholars such as Braudel (1982), Scott (1976), Shanin (1966), and van der Ploeg (2017) have highlighted the important role of peasants as the custodians of agricultural knowledge throughout history.

The traditional responsibility of peasants to pass down farming practices is deeply rooted in cultural and social frameworks. In many societies, agriculture holds significant cultural value, representing a way of life and serving as a source of identity (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2009; Kroeber 1923; Redfield 1953; Shanin, 1966, 1971, 1987; Vanhaute, 2008; Wolf, 1955, 1966). Peasants often live in close-knit communities where agriculture is not just an economic activity but a way of life. According to de Schutter (2014), the responsibility of nurturing the future generation in agriculture is seen as a collective effort within the peasant community. Family and community values play a significant role in shaping the peasants' viewpoint on passing down agricultural knowledge and skills. These values emphasize the importance of cooperation, mutual support, and the shared responsibility of ensuring agricultural practices. Historian Thompson (1963) also highlighted the importance of agricultural traditions in shaping social structures and community cohesion.

Peasants believe in the importance of inter-generational knowledge transfer to ensure the continuity of

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agricultural practices. As stated by Moyo et al. (2019), peasants view this responsibility as a way of preserving their cultural heritage and maintaining sustainable farming systems. The responsibility of peasants to pass down farming practices is closely tied to the sustainability and adaptation of agricultural systems. Through their accumulated knowledge and experience, peasants have developed farming techniques that are adapted to local conditions, including climate, soil fertility, and pest control. Regarding this matter, Polanyi (1944) put forth the argument that in the past, customary farming methods were frequently more enduring and environmentally friendly compared to contemporary industrial farming practices.

Over the course of time, however, there have been modifications in the customary organization of the peasantry, resulting in notable alterations in the experiences of rural communities. The traditional organization of peasantry underwent a notable transformation due to the advent of industrialization, urbanization, technological advancements, and changes in land ownership and land-use policies (Deininger et al., 2009; van der Ploeg, 2023; Vanhaute 2021), and growth-led economic policies (Misra, 2016). These changes have given rise to two divergent trends – depeasantization and repeasantization, both of which have significant implications for the future of peasantry.

Depeasantization refers to the process by which individuals or communities disengage from traditional agricultural practices and move away from the peasantry lifestyle (Bryceson & Jamal, 1997). This trend has been observed in various regions across the globe (McMichael, 2012; Hussain & Anzar, 2019). Several factors contribute to depeasantization, including urbanization and industrialization, the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few large-scale commercial farmers or corporations; globalization and market forces that put pressure on traditional agricultural practices; and the introduction of modern agricultural technologies and machinery that altered the dynamics of farming (Bryceson, 2000a, 2000b). The process of depeasantization is also observed from a change in strategies for diversifying livelihoods for peasants. Depeasantization is closely related to the commodification of agricultural practices. It can be defined as the process of commodification of subsistence agricultural practices as well as the erosion of the peasantry as a family-farm unit (Bernstein, 2003; Bryceson,1999; Vanhaute, 2021), a shifting of livelihood from farming to non-farming sectors, and the replacement of rationality with market forces in agriculture (McMichael, 2012). Additionally, it indicates that the peasantry is shrinking.

On the other hand, some scholars have demonstrated that many peasants have reemerged in different parts of the world (Araghi, 1995; Vanhaute, 2021). This challenges the idea that peasantries are fading away. Ploeg (2017) argues that peasants can sustain their farming by having multiple income sources or migrating for work. He claims that this will lead to more repeasantization over time.

Like many other developing countries, the peasantry has long been an integral part of the rural fabric in Bangladesh, with customary arrangements playing a vital role in their daily lives. The peasantry of Bangladesh has been significantly impacted and molded by a multitude of factors, resulting in different stages of progress. The traditional agrarian system can be described as a form of subsistence farming with some traditional commitments and way of life (Islam, 2017; Rahman, 1986, 2014). According to Thapa and Gaiha (2014), around 17 million peasants resided in Bangladesh as of 2014[1]. These individuals play a crucial role in the country's agricultural sector, serving as the primary providers of food (Rapsomanikis, 2015).

Bangladesh has overcome a number of socioeconomic constraints and denigrated statuses, and has witnessed significant economic progress, structural changes and transformations in agrarian structure in recent decades (Huq, 2023; Khan, 2015). Additionally, the focus on export-led economic growth has overshadowed the historical importance of the peasantry in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2014).

In the current time period, as the agricultural sector's economic influence continues to decline and amidst

external economic strategies, internal social unrest, and the ongoing low social status of the farming community, numerous peasants, especially the younger generation, are increasingly distancing themselves from the unfavorable economic prospects of their rural homes and gradually shedding their peasant identity (Misra, 2016). The young tend to escape from the crippling way of peasant life. So, an ideological fissure between generations is taking place.

In these contexts, this paper investigates whether there have been any changes in the motivations of peasants to protect and transmit agricultural practices to future generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intergenerational transmission of peasantry refers to the process by which agricultural practices, values, and knowledge are passed down from one generation to the next within rural communities. This phenomenon has garnered significant attention from social scientists who aim to understand the complex dynamics involved in the continuation of peasantry. In this section, a selection of studies conducted by social scientists that shed light on the nature of passing down peasantry to the next generation will be explored.

Several studies have emphasized the significance of intergenerational learning and socialization in the transmission of peasantry. Social scientists have explored the economic implications of intergenerational transmission in peasantry. For instance, Chayanov (1919, 1966) argues that the passing down of agricultural practices allows for the accumulation of knowledge and experience over time, contributing to the sustainability and productivity of peasant farming. This knowledge transfer is particularly crucial in the face of changing agricultural landscapes and external pressures.

According to Redfield (1953, 1956), the term ‘peasants’ pertains to individuals involved in small-scale production, particularly those who support themselves through the cultivation of land. The individuals engaged in this profession exhibit a deep connection to their homeland, a profound respect for their ancestors and their customs, and a dedication to placing the well-being of their family and community above their own personal desires.

The traditional obligation to transmit peasantry to the next generation is not solely confined to practical knowledge but also encompasses cultural and symbolic dimensions. According to Wolf (1966), the intergenerational transmission of peasantry involves the transfer of values, rituals, and a sense of belonging to the land. This cultural and symbolic transmission helps reinforce the cohesion and collective identity of peasant communities.

In Shanin’s (1987, 1990) opinion, peasants can be described based on four specific features rather than being defined outright, among them first three are directly or indirectly related to the intergenerational transmission of peasantry. For instance, firstly, peasants are family farms that serve as a crucial social unit that are characterized by the coexistence and collaboration of two to three generations. Secondly, in contrast to commercial enterprises, family farms do not place profit maximization as their main priority. Instead, they follow a structured division of labor, where the heads of the family assume the role of patriarchs in managing the farm. These family farms prioritize the well-being of their members and the sustainability of their agricultural practices over monetary gains. Thirdly, land holds significant importance in the livelihood of peasants. They deeply value the concept of ownership, recognizing the land as a vital asset that supports their livelihood and sustains their communities. They have shared cognitive frameworks and norms to pass down it to next generations.

According to Scott (1976), peasants often adhere to traditional norms and customs, including the obligation to pass down peasantry to future generations. This transmission of knowledge and practices ensures the

continuity of agricultural skills and maintains the cultural identity of peasant communities.

Another aspect investigated by social scientists is the role of education in the intergenerational transmission of peasantry. A study by Bebbington (1991) examined the educational aspirations of youth in rural Ecuador and its impact on their willingness to pursue agricultural activities. The research revealed that access to quality education and alternative livelihood opportunities affected negatively the desire to continue the tradition of peasantry.

Grignon and Grignon (2000) highlight the importance of apprenticeship within peasant families, where children learn agricultural techniques and acquire practical knowledge from their elders. This process ensures the preservation of traditional agricultural practices and fosters a sense of continuity within peasant communities.

In a study by van der Ploeg (2003), the economic aspects of intergenerational transmission of peasantry were explored. The research indicated that economic factors, such as land inheritance and access to resources, significantly influenced the decision to continue farming among the younger generation. The study emphasized the importance of economic viability in sustaining the traditional obligation of passing down peasantry.

A study by Rigg et al. (2006) examined the traditional obligation of Thai peasants to pass down their agricultural practices to their offspring. The research highlighted the influence of cultural beliefs and societal norms, emphasizing the importance of preserving familial ties to land and maintaining community identity. The study emphasized the role of cultural continuity in perpetuating the tradition of passing down peasantry.

In essence, by exploring the findings and insights from the aforementioned studies, we gain valuable insights into the complexities surrounding the traditional obligation of peasants to pass down their profession.

METHODS

Philosophical paradigm of the study aims to comprehensively understand the research problem. In line with this argument, the present study adopts a mixed-method approach, drawing on the postpositivism paradigm of pragmatism. The study employed a mixed-method sampling strategy with a combination of cluster sampling and cluster sampling in order to ensure the representativeness of the sample and to generalize the findings. Both numeric and narrative data were generated from mixed-method samples.

Using secondary literature, Tanore upazila of Rajshahi was purposively selected due to its agricultural practice dominance and agroecological challenges. Following this, the researchers visited six villages in two adjacent unions within Tanor upazila, Chanduria and Saranjai. All six villages are home to peasants. The two villages chosen from Chanduria union, namely Chanduria and Ratoil, are adjacent to one another

To conduct a questionnaire survey, a cluster sampling was used to stratify respondents into homogenous groups based on a quantitative method. Considering the criteria set for peasants, a rapid door-to-door survey was conducted in both villages to identify and map respondents. To categorize, identify, and select the sample, and to ensure consistency among respondents, the study uses the following criteria:

- Small-scale farming and subsistence agriculture are the primary occupations of the household head (farming is not profit-driven);
- The household owns farmland between 0.50 acres and 2.5 acres[2];
- A total of 5 acres of operated farmland of the respondent is not exceeded by sharecropping, leasing, or other arrangements;

- Household keeps a significant portion of agricultural production (particularly grain) for household consumption.

The initial step involved conducting a rapid door-to-door survey in two villages, which led to the identification of 331 peasant households. Subsequently, a total of 299 peasants were interviewed using a structured questionnaire. Out of the remaining households, 22 were unavailable for participation, while 10 declined to take part in the survey. It is worth noting that there were twelve questionnaires that contained inconsistencies, resulting in their exclusion from the analysis. As a result, a total of 287 questionnaires (103 from Ratoil and 184 from Chanduria) were considered for further examination and analysis.

Three focus group discussions (FGDs) were organized with a group of young individuals from peasant households. Each FGD included 8-10 participants aged between 15 and 30. These discussions were carried out concurrently with the administration of the questionnaire survey. In order to ensure a thorough analysis of the data obtained from the discussions, moderators diligently followed a standardized checklist and meticulously examined the information. Moreover, to validate the initial results derived from the FGDs, the participants who attended the same meetings were actively engaged. Moderators were trained to ensure that the researcher's bias was minimized by conducting FGDs. For triangulation, several trained moderators were engaged in different locations of the two villages who generated and analyzed the same checklist and data. Participants in the same meeting also validated preliminary results from the FGDs.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis of the results, this study utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect of the study utilized numerical data and figures to analyze and interpret the findings. On the other hand, the qualitative aspect involved a comprehensive text analysis of the data gathered from focus group discussions and open-ended questions in the questionnaire. By employing both approaches, the study aimed to provide a more nuanced and complete understanding of the results.

RESULTS

The decision of whether or not peasants choose to involve their future generations in farming relies on how they evaluate and interpret the prospects and obstacles of peasant-agriculture in the current and forthcoming circumstances. According to the findings, a significant majority of peasants, approximately 87 percent, lack of interest in introducing the next generation to farming practices becomes apparent (Figure 1).

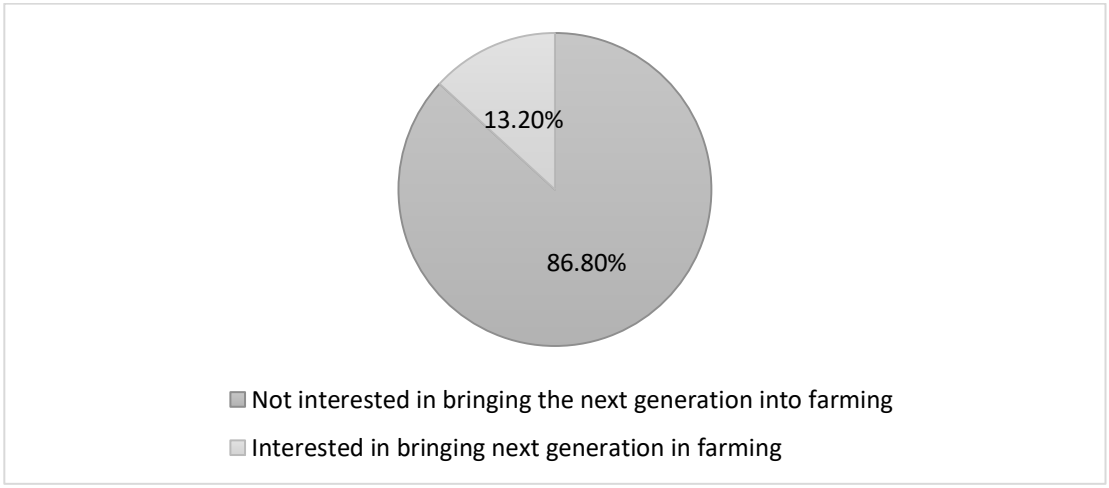

Figure 1. Peasants' Views on Engaging Next Generation into Agriculture

Peasants encounter a multitude of obstacles that consequently impede their inclination to transmit their agricultural expertise and abilities to succeeding generations. The responses of the peasants to a subsequent inquiry about their lack of interest in involving the younger generation in farming can indeed be divided into

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three distinct categories (Figure 2):

a. Low Returns: A significant majority (84.7%) expressed disappointment with the low returns they received from their hard work and involvement in demanding tasks. This suggests that the economic viability of farming is a major concern.

b. Better Opportunities: Many (70.4%) stated that the younger generation, having better education, aspired to pursue higher-paying and higher-status jobs in other sectors. This indicates a shift in aspirations driven by education and the promise of a better lifestyle.

c. Uncertainty: More than two-third (68.6%) mentioned that farming was becoming more uncertain due to environmental and market challenges. This highlights the impact of external factors on the attractiveness of farming as a profession.

Figure 2. Objections to Bringing the Next Generation into Agriculture Among Peasants

Note. Multiple response counted; A total of 249 respondents who were not interested to engage the next generation in farming.

In order to delve deeper into the matter, the study found that over half of the peasants, comprising approximately 53%, possessed less than ten decimals of residential land. Additionally, nearly half of these respondents, accounting for 49%, owned less than one acre of agricultural land. A significant proportion of the farmers, approximately 43%, encountered seasonal unemployment lasting between two to three months each year. This unemployment led to adverse consequences such as poverty, scarcity of food, and elevated prices.

The majority of peasants, comprising 97% of them, expressed that their expenses related to seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, machinery, and irrigation had significantly increased. Approximately half of the peasants stated that they were unable to generate substantial profits due to an unjust market system that was controlled by middlemen. Another 41% of the peasants highlighted their struggle with fluctuating prices for both their agricultural products and purchases. Among the peasant households, 78% had pesticide sprayers, which were locally manufactured and easily available at affordable prices. However, a majority of peasants lacked power tillers, with only 18% of them having access to this machinery. Similarly, 16% of peasants had access to threshers. It indicates that a large proportion, about 80%, did not have access to labor-saving technology.

Besides, the study area has a warm and humid climate with high temperature, humidity and rainfall. The temperature is rising, especially in the second half of the year. The humidity is high all year, except in March and April. The rainfall is low, mostly in the wet season (May–October), and erratic. These conditions

affect peasants and agriculture negatively. They cause health problems, crop losses, water shortages, pests, diseases, and soil degradation. Most peasants (84%) face environmental challenges that reduce their yield and increase their costs. About 71% peasants also mentioned that their land had become less fertile over time. The peasants report that all these problems have worsened in the last decade. They also use more pesticides, which add to their costs.

Consequently, the total household income of the peasants was negatively affected by all of these factors combined. Research findings revealed that a majority of peasants, specifically 53%, had an annual income of less than 200 thousand Bangladeshi currency (approximately 2 thousand US dollar), which was insufficient to maintain a decent standard of living. Based on the expenditure preferences, the majority of the peasants (56%) allocated their funds towards purchasing food items. Subsequently, 35% of the peasants utilized their money for agricultural purposes. As a result, approximately 82% of the peasants expressed that their low income posed a significant obstacle to their livelihoods.

Moreover, to gain insights into the viewpoints of individuals between the ages of 15 and 30 regarding their involvement in agricultural activities, the research conducted three FGDs in two villages, with a participation of eight to ten young individuals in each session. The FGDs yielded a diverse range of perspectives on the topic of engaging in farming, as highlighted below:

1. *Lack of Appeal:* Farming was generally viewed as unattractive, unprofitable, and unskilled to the youths. It was perceived as an occupation that did not align with the aspirations and preferences of the youth, nor offer much room for improvement.
2. *Hard Work and Uncertainty:* The participants acknowledged that farming involved a lot of hard work, difficulty, and uncertainty. This perception could potentially deter young people from considering it as a viable career option.
3. *Access to Resources:* Challenges in accessing essential resources such as land, water, inputs, credit, markets, and infrastructure were highlighted. These resources are often limited or controlled by older generations, creating barriers for young people to enter farming.
4. *Educational Influence:* Education was found to increase the aspirations and expectations of youth for better living standards, income, and opportunities. These expectations may not be met by peasant farming, further discouraging youth from engaging in this sector.

DISCUSSION

According to the results, there are number of factors that contribute to the reluctance of most peasants to involve their future generations in farming activities, as well as the increasing disinterest of young people in agriculture. To begin with, farming is an arduous profession that demands strenuous effort and extended working hours, yet the financial rewards are often meager. Secondly, in addition to being unappealing to many peasants due to their low-income status and minimal profits, farming is also subject to various uncertainties, including unpredictable weather conditions and fluctuations in the market. Moreover, the higher levels of education tend to lead to a less favorable perception of farming as a viable career option. The issue of accessing crucial resources including land, water, inputs, credit, markets, and infrastructure was also brought to attention. It was emphasized that these resources are frequently restricted or under the control of older generations, posing obstacles for young individuals who aspire to engage in farming. Lastly, limited prospects for the future in terms of income growth and social mobility also contribute to the hesitation among peasants to involve their future generations in farming practices. Overall, these factors collectively contribute to the majority of peasants choosing not to pass down farming to their children. Simultaneously, there is a lack of interest among the youth to pursue a career in agriculture.

To support these claims, various sources can be referenced. One of the earliest references to the negative perception of farming can be traced back to the 19th century. In his book “Our Mutual Friend,” Charles

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Dickens (1865) portrays farming as a laborious and monotonous occupation. He describes the character of Silas Wegg, a failed farmer who is forced to resort to other means of livelihood due to the unprofitability of farming. This depiction reflects the prevailing sentiment of the time that farming was an undesirable profession. Other scholars such as Akram-Lodhi (2009) argues that the economic viability of farming is undermined by various factors, including unfair trade practices, market concentration, and inadequate policy support. A study conducted by the World Bank found that small-scale farmers are particularly vulnerable to market shocks, which often lead to reduced incomes and financial distress (World Bank, 2020). This unpredictability makes farming less attractive as a profession. The lack of efficient market linkages denies farmers the opportunity to sell their produce at fair prices and hampers their potential for growth and profitability. A report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) emphasizes the need for investments in market infrastructure and improved market access to enhance the attractiveness of farming (IFPRI, 2018).

In addition to this, the study demonstrates that farming becomes a less appealing choice for a career due to the added stress and uncertainty caused by environmental and market challenges. The evidence for this conclusion is backed by multiple research studies. For example, Ericksen et al. (1997) and Wreford et al. (2010) demonstrate that the agricultural sector faces uncertainty caused by unpredictable weather conditions, pests, and diseases. Additionally, Rapsomanikis (2015) highlights that market instability poses a significant threat to small-scale farmers. Studies by FAO (2018) and Niewolny et al. (2019) also emphasize that farmers frequently struggle with managing risks related to climate change, market volatility, and technological progress. Another significant environmental issue impacting agriculture is soil degradation. As per another FAO study, around 33% of the world's soils are degraded due to factors like erosion, chemical contamination, and nutrient depletion (FAO, 2021).

A multitude of research indicates a positive link between education and heightened aspirations among the youth. Studies by Auta et al. (2010), Ochieng (2020), and White (2012) suggest that higher education levels correlate with increased income expectations, implying that education equips young individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to envision a prosperous future. Further, research by Akramov et al. (2017), Bebbington (1991), and Hossain (2011) indicates that education also shapes young people's expectations regarding living standards and opportunities, providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the world and exposing them to various career paths. In this study, a significant number of peasant families had members who completed school, with 80% having members who finished secondary school, and one-third having members who graduated. Consequently, the results of the study are in line with the findings mentioned above, as both peasants and young individuals have a strong desire to pursue careers that match their educational background.

In this connection it is noteworthy to mention here that the role of education and child policy in many developing countries raises questions about the relationship between education and the continuation of farming. Katz (2004) demonstrates how current educational practices, particularly secondary education, contribute to a process where rural youth are 'deskilled' and farming is downgraded as a profession. This process leaves children who have attended school ill-prepared for local work opportunities and inadequately educated for other types of employment. In wealthy countries, the devaluation and disappearance of manual work from educational curricula are just beginning to be understood. Moreover, in his critique, White (2012) raises concerns about the growing disconnection between young individuals and their understanding of agricultural practices and rural life skills. He also addresses the perspective of anti-child labor activists who advocate for a pure childhood experience devoid of any work involvement. White posits that work, when combined with education, plays a crucial role in the development of young individuals and can significantly enhance their prospects in the labor market upon completing their education. Hence, the findings of this study further support the proposed adjustments to educational objectives and policies regarding the rights of children, as advocated by White.

The research further suggests that a factor causing reluctance among young individuals to participate in

farming is the extended time period they must endure before being able to independently engage in farming, even when land is easily accessible. The results of this study are consistent with the study conducted by White in 2012. White demonstrates that in numerous agrarian societies, the older generation endeavors to retain control of the land for as long as possible. Consequently, a conflict arises between the older generation's aspiration to maintain authority and the younger generation's ambition to establish their own farms and achieve economic and social independence.

Overall, the study findings are consistent with Ellis's 2005 concept of agriculture-skepticism, which elucidates the reasons why peasants exhibit hesitation in passing down the tradition of farming to the next generation. Several factors contribute to this reluctance, including the arduous nature of agriculture, the unpredictable fluctuations in weather patterns and market prices, the financial instability caused by low-profit margins, the social stigma attached to farm occupations, and a divergence in values and aspirations across different generations.

Nevertheless, agriculture serves as the main economic pillar for rural communities, with the majority of farmers being smallholders or peasants who depend on their land for their livelihoods (FAO, 2014; IFAD, 2019). By empowering the younger generation with the essential knowledge and skills required to effectively manage their land and resources, it becomes possible to break the cycle of poverty and make significant contributions to economic development.

Furthermore, traditional farming techniques often involve indigenous knowledge and practices that have been adapted to local conditions over generations. These practices are often more environmentally friendly, as they are tailored to local ecosystems and promote biodiversity conservation (Pretty et al., 2018). Thus, the passing down of farming practices to the next generation in developing country like Bangladesh plays a crucial role in ensuring food security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The viewpoint of peasants regarding the responsibility of nurturing the next generation in agriculture is influenced by their past experiences and the values they hold within their families and communities. This perspective is also driven by the need to transfer knowledge and skills across generations. This study reveals that many peasants are reluctant to involve their children in farming due to their insufficient income and limited access to resources. The statement implies that there will be a significant process of "depeasantization" in Bangladesh in the near future.

Acknowledging the significant contribution of peasants in fostering the forthcoming cohort in the field of agriculture, it is of utmost importance to extend assistance and execute policy measures that cater to their distinct requirements. Governments, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies should give precedence to allocating resources for enhancing rural infrastructure, facilitating credit accessibility, implementing land reforms, and promoting educational and training initiatives.

Furthermore, the implementation of policies that support agricultural modernization, offer financial assistance, and enhance the overall appeal of farming as a feasible profession is of utmost importance. By undertaking these measures, it becomes possible to empower the peasants and effectively transfer essential knowledge and skills to future generations in Bangladesh.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] In the context of Bangladesh, if we categorize smallholders as peasants, the data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) revealed that the number of smallholders in 2018 was 15.83 million (BBS, 2019).

[2] Based on the classification of small farmers in the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Agricultural Census Report, 2022, and the Agricultural Extension Manual (4th ed.) of the Ministry of Agriculture, GoB, 2018). However, it excluded the lowest level of farmland ownership (0.05 – 0.49 acres) since the poverty rate at this level is high (HIES Report of BBS, 2016)