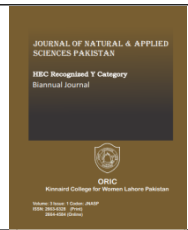




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CLIMATE CHANGE IN PAKISTAN; UNDERSTANDING GENDER PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The literature on gender dynamics and climate change is reviewed in this research. Our understanding of susceptibility and the effects of climate change, adaptations in various contexts, disparities in climate governance, and knowledges and social action on climate change are all aided by gender analysis. Overall, the body of literature has demonstrated that gender relations are a key aspect of the societal changes brought on by climate change. This presents a problem for gender-neutral social science studies on climate change. Without gender analysis, we leave out important facets of social life in a dynamic environment. The gendered nature of climate change must be acknowledged and further investigated in the social sciences and humanities.



Keywords

Climate Change, Gender Disparities, environmental issues, cultural norms, economic circumstances.

1. Women and Climate Change; Perspective from Pakistan

Women are especially susceptible to organized criminal traffickers during catastrophes like drought or flooding because communities become dispersed and protective mechanisms in families and society are disturbed. Due to unequal power relationships, cultural norms, and societal structures, women in the

South are more susceptible to the effects of catastrophes. Women are also crucial for creating sustainable adaption choices because of their expertise, capacity for handling several tasks at once, and positions in productive industries (Care, 2010). Poor and vulnerable people are more at danger due to patterns of growth and settlement since many are obliged to live on the only accessible land at the

moment, which is all too frequently subject to flooding and mudslides. Because communities are dispersed and protective patterns in families and society are disrupted during disasters like drought or floods, women are also more susceptible to organised criminal traffickers. This is a point highlighted by INTERPOL and non-governmental organisations, as well as a pattern of exploitation known from armed conflicts and other disasters (Alston, 2014). All of these are covered, including homes, income-generation, livelihoods, and other sociocultural and political-economic institutions and relationships, as well as agriculture, rangelands, biodiversity, and forests. Around the world, women make up 43% of the agricultural workforce. This percentage is greater in Asia and Africa, frequently exceeding 50%, especially in mountainous areas. Therefore, as the climate changes, women are crucial to adaptation efforts, environmental sustainability, and food security (Khandekar *et al.* 2019). In general, women have much less control over and access to the resources they rely on. In addition, they lack possibilities for direct control and meaningful participation in politics at all levels—from the family to the community to the worldwide. In some situations, women are frequently the targets of domestic abuse, harassment, and gender-based violence. Due in large part to gender disparities that result in women suffering the disproportionate burden of catastrophe consequences, women are more at risk during extreme events like drought, floods, and other climate-related disasters. In addition, women are frequently prevented from acquiring coping mechanisms and lifesaving abilities, such how to swim or climb trees. They are

at a disadvantage when floods occur because of those considerations (Ajibade *et al.* 2013). Women frequently need the permission of their husbands or other older males in their families or communities in order to leave their homes. Their movement may be restricted by gendered cultural clothing restrictions during crises, leading to more disproportionate mortality during numerous calamities. Women and girls are commonly the targets of rape, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and intimidation at such gatherings. With the influx of calamities brought on by climate change, women and girls today confront an even greater risk: organised trafficking (Nishat and Rahman, 2019). An increasingly severe concern linked to environmental issues is organised trafficking of women. Due to the erosion and collapse of typical social controls and safeguards, climate-related calamities like flood, drought, or hunger may disrupt local security safety nets, leaving women and children alone, split up, or orphaned. They are thus particularly susceptible to the abuse of human trafficking. Following a natural catastrophe, women who are in charge of houses and livelihoods could feel the need to temporarily seek refuge, shelter, and livable circumstances in extremely unsafe environments, making them possible victims of exploitation and human trafficking. Some of the push factors that encourage trafficking are disasters that harm women and children, create physical, social, and economic vulnerability. As a result, unstable catastrophe sites need to be taken into account as possible hotspots for these dangerous behaviours. Given the rapid speed of climate change, women endure acute and distinct effects. These effects worsen already-existing

disparities in socially imposed gender roles, obligations, attitudes, and unbalanced power interactions that favour males over women. Though they also play a unique role in agriculture, food security, livelihoods, income generation, household management, the management of natural resources in various eco-systems, and participation in a range of socio-cultural, political-economic, and environmental institutions, women also offer crucial hope for successful adaptation (Terry, 2009). According to the FAO (2011), women make up a sizable share of the workforce in the food production industry and are essential to managing and maintaining mountain civilizations' natural resources and surroundings. They also typically face disadvantages in terms of power dynamics and resource access, as well as greater risks from climate change during catastrophes and lost revenue from climatic shocks, despite being in the centre of chances to adapt to changing climates. These dangers include being further marginalised, being shut out of decision-making, being cut off from resources necessary for survival, and having the risk of being trafficked for forced work or the sex trade increased. If their rights are not upheld and if gender, socio-cultural, and political economic inequities within the context of gender relations and institutions are not addressed, as various studies have shown, women face the disproportionate weight of the expenses of catastrophes. Due to a lack of knowledge, mobility, decision-making ability, access to resources and training, gender-based cultural norms and restrictions, and high rates of male out-migration, more women than males perish when disasters strike. For instance, a recent research

that examined catastrophes in 141 countries found that the greater mortality of women in disasters causes the gender difference in life expectancy—in most countries, women outlive men, with the exception of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh—to grow narrower (Andrijevic *et al.* 2020). However, extreme caution and attention must be taken to avoid attributing this association to sex variations in biology that exist between males and females. As a result of societal norms, roles, exclusions, discourses, and power dynamics, women and men are socially constructed to vary from one another (i.e., gender differences). To put it another way, greater hazards and vulnerabilities during conditions of too much or too little water are caused by sociocultural views regarding gender differences rather than biological ones. Therefore, it is crucial to underline the connections between climate-related catastrophes, development, and women's social marginalisation, lack of choice, and unbalanced power relations in order to minimise the risk of injury during such situations (UNDP, 2011). As a result, certain groups are more or less vulnerable than others depending on factors such as gender, age, social standing, health, wealth, or poverty, the presence or absence of a handicap, and other sociocultural traits. Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by climate change, a great majority of whom are residents of rural areas, especially women. Therefore, there are several causes, all of which are related to the aforementioned sensitivity traits. Women are frequently less educated, poorer, and excluded from decisions affecting their life in politics, the community, and the home. Due to such economic and social

injustices, women have less assets and limited resources to deal with the harmful repercussions of climate change (Bee *et al.* 2013). Increased vulnerability is also a result of women and girls' propensity to depend more on natural resources for their survival. For instance, climate stress on water and forest resources frequently forces women to go further and for longer periods of time to gather water or wood, putting them at risk for health problems⁴ and reducing their opportunities to participate in high-return activities like business, politics, and education⁵. Similar to this, disasters frequently have disproportionately worse effects on women despite posing hazards to everyone in their path (Butler, 1988). Studies have indicated that women are substantially more likely than males to die in disasters. This is mostly because women have less access to information and early warning systems and different coping mechanisms depending on their gender.⁶ For instance, women made up 61 percent of the deaths brought on by storm Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, 70 to 80 percent in the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, and 91 percent in the Bangladesh storm of 1991.⁷ Geographic, economic, social, educational/informational, and political power disparities in countries are the main causes of this gendered disparity in sensitivity to catastrophe risk (Butt *et al.* 2020). The gender gap, which is the subject of this review, is a significant area of inequity. For those coping with climate change, gender inequality has social, economic, political, and cultural ramifications. Examining gender is crucial because, while being hardly homogeneous groups, women, men, boys, and girls frequently experience climate change differently due to the

inequities connected with socially established gender roles. In terms of how women, men, boys, and girls are impacted by and adapt to climate change, gender plays a significant role in both susceptibility and adaptation. Generally speaking, vulnerability refers to social, economic, political, cultural, or other variables that increase a group's susceptibility to unfavourable change. The capacity to alter behaviour in reaction to the effects of an event in order to reduce negative effects is known as adaptation (Chan *et al.* 2018). Gender-based disparities in susceptibility and capability for adaptation are being addressed by the aforementioned initiatives to achieve gender parity in policymaking, enhance the use of gendered terminology in environmental treaties, and guarantee that gender is a key consideration in climate funding schemes. However, there is a critical piece of this literature that is lacking. There are currently relatively few scholarly papers or reports from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that explain how these initiatives had an influence on how both men and women benefited from climate legislation and funding (Cook *et al.* 2019). Initial research on environmental issues conducted in the 1960s and 1970s often indicated no differences in gender-based attitudes towards the environment or support for environmental policy. However, research conducted since then reveals the following trends. When it comes to local environmental issues, women are more concerned than males are, especially when they involve issues like nuclear waste that might endanger the health and safety of community residents. When the focus is on global environmental issues (such as pro-environmental views and support

for environmental conservation) and non-local issues without discernible threats to health and safety, gender inequalities still exist, but to a lower level. Women generally exhibit higher worry than men do, especially when measures of general environmental concern directly tap risk concerns (Blocker and Eckberg, 1997). According to the majority of researchers, the reason why men and women have different levels of environmental concern is because they have different levels of certain key social or cultural factors (Davidson and Freudenburg, 2007). This straightforward gender socialisation hypothesis is supported by studies that show a direct relationship between gender and environmental concern (where women exhibit greater care than do males), particularly when adjusting for important social role characteristics. Strong evidence that early years of gender socialisation affect both males and females' environmental concern may be seen in Zelezny and colleagues' (2000) result that young girls reflect pro-environmental attitudes and beliefs more strongly than do young boys. Gender socialisation, in particular, explains why women are more worried than males about neighbourhood environmental issues that pose serious health and safety threats to neighbourhood residents. The discriminatory, patriarchal laws, norms, customs, and institutions that prevented women from participating in decision-making and community processes, limited awareness of legal rights, including human rights, limited or no access to or control over resources and assets, unequal access to and control over resources, and reduced resilience and adaptive capacity were the most frequently cited reasons for women's

increased vulnerability to climate change impacts when compared to men. According to several submissions, indigenous women are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change because they depend on natural resources for their livelihoods and because they experience multiple forms of discrimination because of their gender, ethnicity, and level of poverty. Women and men differ in their involvement in climate decision-making, policy development, and implementation, according to research (United Nations, 2019). In light of the fact that women are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change in societal structures that are dominated by males, the study noted the key point made by many academics on the need to prioritise increasing women's adaptation ability. For instance, a research by (Nchu *et al.* 2019) shown that patriarchal societal systems in underdeveloped nations have hindered women's access to the resources they need to hasten the process of their empowerment in Cameroon. According to studies, development measures implemented over the past 20 years have helped some groups of women in society by improving their economic circumstances. However, in order to successfully support women in their independent response to climate risk, transformative change is needed to address the power of males over resources that results from the patriarchal asset ownership structure. Even though they make a significant contribution to the household's wealth, women in patriarchal societies in developing countries do not have the power to decide what happens to the household's financial resources (Acharya *et al.*, 2010; Nchu *et al.*, 2019; Onwutuebe, 2019; Rao *et*

al., 2019). According to studies, women's identities and roles in decision-making platforms within societies are determined by their relationship to their husbands' or fathers' status within that culture (Ferdous & Mallick, 2019). According to the review's findings, women are in a hazardous situation when there are extreme weather events because they must stay at home to take care of their families and maintain the home (Garcia *et al.* 2020; Jost *et al.* 2016; Meira *et al.* 2017). Additionally, it was discovered that these social practises were causing women to participate in community activities less and to have less flexibility to pick their own activities, which may have an impact on their capacity development (Balehey *et al.* 2018; Rao *et al.* 2019; Singh, 2018). The fact that the patriarchal mindset has led to making simplistic and dishonest narratives about women as vulnerable sufferers of climate change impacts who need extensive support for adaptation and parallel connotation of blaming gender norms for all sorts of problems specific to women is frequently overlooked and even loosely discussed in a few reviewed articles. This results in a failure to recognise or appreciate the crucial role that women play in leading and initiating climate change adaptation activities (Garcia *et al.* 2020). One of the main findings of the investigation is that, aside from the oversimplified explanation of the weaknesses of the male and female gender categories, the complexity of gender roles and identities has largely been ignored. Further debate is required about how gender is defined in developing nations and how that definition compares to western conceptions of gender in relation to climate change. The underlying social process of rigid and well

defined gender identities for men and women, as well as how it produces distinct climate change consequences, are not well supported by empirical data (Dev and Manalo, 2022).

2. Perspective from Pakistan

Due to women's exclusion from climate action discussions despite their deep local knowledge of shared natural resources, Pakistan is now listed as one of the most susceptible nations to the vast and cross-sectoral consequences of climate change. The Climate Change Gender Action Plan seeks to strengthen its efficacy by ensuring that women have the ability to influence climate change choices and that men and women are equally represented in all areas. The Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) focuses on recognising gender equality as a basic concept and include women in local and national level policy programme and design in order to enable inclusive policy discourse, capacity building, and pilot initiatives for women. Months-long consultative meetings between numerous stakeholders, including important sector experts from the IUCN, the government, civil society, think tanks, and academic leaders, were held as part of the process to support the role of women in climate action and build their resilience in the face of climate-related impacts. The six main areas of agriculture and food security, forests and biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, water sanitation and hygiene, integrated coastal management, and energy and transport have all influenced the development of the ccGAP. These priority sectors highlight the need to increase the integration of gender considerations, as well as to increase climate-related resources that integrate gender priorities and

reflect the needs of women and girls. Examples of this include addressing women's unique vulnerability to natural disasters, understanding women's role in agriculture and food production, and supporting women entrepreneurs in the energy and transportation sectors (Saeed, 2022). Last year, the Darkut Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan's Ghizer district revealed the alarming fact that the majority of men leave the house in search of work, leaving the women to care for the young and elderly. Most importantly, this leaves the women vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), flash floods, cloudbursts, and land sliding. Migration from the Darkut valley to other places has been prompted by the loss of livelihoods and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather occurrences. It is obvious that women are at the forefront of climate change. If an integrated strategy to adapt and mitigate climate change is implemented, their capacity to withstand its effects may be constrained, but it may be increased. It's imperative that we comprehend their problems and work to provide them the tools they need to contribute to the solution. Women's voices must be amplified and heard (CDKN, 2016). In Pakistan, gender inequality has always been a problem, and the severe effects of climate change are making it worse for women. Nobody will contest that gender does not have a role in the phenomena of climate change, which has an impact on all facets of society. However, new analyses and research studies on climate change reveal that because women are a vulnerable and disadvantaged group in society, the natural occurrences that cause changes in atmospheric patterns have been catastrophic for

them. Worrying are the effects of climate change on the majority of Pakistani women's health. They receive poor-quality healthcare services, and there aren't nearly enough facilities to handle the demand from people alone, let alone women, who suffer from non-communicable illnesses and reproductive health difficulties more severely than males. Due to food insecurity brought on by climate change, pregnant moms who require high-nutritional food for both themselves and their unborn children suffer from malnutrition and undernourishment. Due to increasing exposure to heat, poor air quality, water-borne illnesses, and extreme weather events, climate change causes a multitude of health issues that are disproportionately felt by women, who are the most susceptible group. Due to their reproductive health difficulties and generally lower degree of immunity than males, women are more quickly afflicted by infections. A survey claims that 39% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty and is at risk of losing their jobs, which would have a serious negative impact on their health and capacity to access healthcare. Women are now disadvantaged in the face of the many difficulties they experience in daily life as a result of gender issues caused by the climate. Their ability to make decisions has been constrained by societal and cultural standards that are oppressive to their development and evolution. It is believed that a woman cannot make wise judgements because she lacks excellent judgement and reasonable thought, which further restricts her positive mobility and forces her to follow other people's judgements in areas pertaining to her personal life. When a woman's capacity to move freely within society is restricted by internal causes,

her ability to adapt to climate change declines, leaving her vulnerable to the disastrous effects of climate change. Another research titled "Gender Discrimination of Climate Change Vulnerabilities" found that women in Pakistan are at a disadvantage when families are uprooted owing to catastrophes and floods brought on by climate change. The results demonstrate that the majority of women experience various forms of violence from spouses or even complete strangers, whose frequency rises during the immediate aftermath of a tragedy. In an interview done as part of this study, a woman who had been uprooted by flooding painted a bleak image of her difficult existence in a patriarchal environment made worse by climate change. Women require gender-sensitive climate change and disaster management strategies to lessen their susceptibility and strengthen them in the face of impending problems since they are more severely affected by climate change than men are (Kunwar, 2022). 19 of Pakistan's 25 poorest areas have been deemed disaster-hit. Women are among the most affected by climate-related disasters among the most vulnerable groups there. Women typically put forth greater effort to ensure household subsistence during periods of harsh weather, such as droughts and floods. We met Mai Nira on one of our travels to Khairpur Mir Tehsil in the Sindh province's Sukkur district. Mai Nira treks 2 kilometres each day to gather drinking water for her family.

3. Conclusion

Due to a lack of resources and understanding, women are the primary observers of climate change, and sadly, their resistance to withstand its effects is relatively low. However, it may be developed or

enhanced by using a coordinated strategy to adapt to and reduce climate change from a gender perspective. The empowerment of women may be crucial in fostering resistance against climate change. However, it has been discovered that women in the study regions are important contributors to community revenue creation and active agents of adaptation at the home level. The voices of women must also be amplified and heard. Women must be included immediately in climate adaptation initiatives and policies. Their resilience might be improved by capacity building through training in disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate wise solutions, such as rainwater harvesting, tunnel farming, etc. The change agents who can most successfully address climate vulnerability are women. Every town needs to have a group for women where they can gather to talk about problems and provide solutions. Last but not least, ensuring women's access, control, and ownership towards resources (such as land, financial resources, livestock, property, and income-generating possibilities) would be vital to improve women's livelihoods and enhance their degree of adaptability.

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