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The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

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Exploring the Role of Political Memes in Shaping Youngsters’ Perception
in Twin Cities of Pakistan

Ghulam Safdar¹ and Hafsa Khan²

Article Information	Abstract
Received: Jan 10, 2025 Revised: June 28, 2025 Accepted: June 29, 2025	The purpose of this study was to analyse the role of political memes in shaping perception of youngsters in twin cities of Pakistan. The research paper deeply focused on impact of political memes on thoughts and beliefs of individuals, the way these memes changed youngsters’ behaviour and social perception. To achieve the objectives, researchers followed quantitative methodology and conducted survey in twin cities of Pakistan. For the data collection, self-designed questionnaire was used consisted of three main segments including respondents’ information, social media use and political memes. Purposive sampling technique was adopted, and data was collected from (n=240) youngsters living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Results revealed that a youngsters’ perception is highly influenced by political memes. Their cognitions, behaviour and social norms are highly affected after consuming political memes on social media. The study concluded that political memes had great role in shaping youngster’s certain attitudes and this leads the individuals to take part in politics actively and enhance their political participation.
Keywords <i>Political Memes</i> <i>Youngsters</i> <i>Cognitive perception</i> <i>Behavioural perception</i> <i>Social Perception</i>	

1. Introduction

Internet had been developed from simple network of computers to a worldwide trend, which connect itself to the structure of modern life and had changed the way of communication. Just as political memes has been emerged as the new global trend and become a penetrating force for influencing political debates and changing public opinion in this digital age (Pasha, 2022; Saleem et al., 2022).

Richard Dawkins in his book “The Selfish Gene” first time introduced Memes in 1975. According to him memes are counterculture which are spread from one person to another by imitating each other and this imitation became the reason to propagate memes in a culture (Dawkins, 2006; Javed and Javed, 2023; Sharif et al., 2024). Political memes have become the source to increase political attention and awareness among public in this digital world. These political memes help to know about the current and former political issues and create interest of politics in public (Kasirye, 2019). The political memes are made by common people and is the mixer of user generated content with humour as the major element. Viewers are highly influenced by the political memes (Pearce & Hajizada, 2013). Nowadays social media platforms are filled with political events and happenings. It is common to come across with humorous political post or tweet by the political figure while scrolling (Kasirye, 2019). Memes are considered an integral form of political participation (Ross and Rivers, 2017). Political memes are used as to counter dishonesty of politicians and making comments on their mistakes (Moody-Ramirez & Church, 2019).

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Political participation and discussions are encouraged among youth, and it increases online political participation (Intyaswati & Fairuzza, 2023). In Pakistan social media has become the new trend for providing latest information and updates within a very short span of time to a large number of people. And now people do not depend on traditional outlets such as print and electronic media for information. Usages of memes in Pakistan have become common and strong. There are user generated memes on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Fatima, 2020). The research on Role of Political Memes shaping youngster's perception in twin cities of Pakistan was conducted to fill the study gap in several areas of political memes research. There is a little understanding of how political memes are changing the cognitive, behavioural and social perceptions of youngsters. There was methodological limitation as well most research on political memes were based on qualitative methods but this study had use quantitative approach and provide better insights after taking feedback from target individuals. Moreover, there was no data providing the response of youth from Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

1.1 Problem Statement

In this digital era political activities are taking place on social media platforms. Political parties mainly target young generation and influence them through the messages and online content. In the same way some youngsters engage with politics by liking and sharing the content of their favourite political party, while others add humour and satire to the political content. They engage with others by sharing political memes.

This research is particularly concerned with the impact of political memes on perceptions of youngsters in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. How these memes change the attitudes about politics, political actors and impacting their cognitions, behaviour and social perception.

1.2 Significance of Study

This study is significant for investigating the impact of political memes on the perceptions of youngsters in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It is also important for guiding people about political memes and to explore different complexities of political discourse. It provides strategies for political activists to use memes effectively to engage their target audience. This research also gives directions to inform people about politics through memes.

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main aim of this research was to investigate how political memes changes youngster's perception.

1.3.2 Sub-objectives

To understand if thoughts and beliefs effect and bring change in individual's perceptions.

To analyse the way in which behaviour influence youngster's perceptions.

To identify the effect of social construct impacting adolescent perceptions.

1.4 Hypotheses

How do political memes impact youngster's perception?

How do political memes effect thoughts and beliefs and bring change in individual's perceptions?

How behavioural intentions of youth are influence by political memes?

How political memes impact social perception?

1.5 Study Gap

Political memes have emerged as a powerful and popular mode for political communication among youth around the globe, there was limited quantitative research which specifically focused on the influence of political memes within the social and political context of Pakistan, particularly in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Moreover, the international research from Uganda, Malaysia, Singapore etc. had addressed meme culture in different contexts, localized research focusing on digitally literate youth in Pakistan's twin cities was lacking. The cities where politically engaged youth and high social media usage provide a distinctive environment for meme consumption and political discourse but still remain unexplored. This research had examined the versatile impact of memes on individual's perceptions. Also, there was the need for an integrated analysis on cognitive perception, behavioural perception and social perception to fully analyse the influence of political memes on youth.

2. Literature Review

Kumar (2023) research focused to explore the meme's impact on the inter-cultural communication. The study was assumed that memes play huge role in cross cultural communication. Exploratory qualitative study was conducted to examine the data from websites and to investigate how memes effect the idea of intercultural communication among public. The outcome was that memes were available in every category and according to cultural narrative people had formed virtual community and their surroundings had been globalized.

Kovtun et al. (2020) the central inquiry of this study was how internet memes make modern digital culture. Researcher had explored the causes of meme's popularity. The analysis of the content was done by using semiotic and hermeneutic qualitative methods. The result of the study was that memes are the new information source that grabbed audience attention. They removed the stress from individual's life.

Johann (2022) research endeavour on co-relation between internet memes and politics. On social media people expressed their political point of view through new format. Quantitative methodology was used; online survey was conducted for the research. Data was collected from fringe web communities and social media platforms. Findings showed that memes posting were dependent on the political affiliations and the amount of social media content consumption. These memes contain such power of expression that can change individual's political participation online and offline.

Ashfaq et al. (2022) research analysed the parallels and distinctions in the portrayal of politicians on Facebook memes. Study also aimed the examination of memes framing politicians. Content analysis was performed using quantitative methodology. Five prominent politicians were selected, and data was collected from ten most followed meme pages. Outcome was that visual composition was used for the political leaders. The important part in making memes on political actors was framing. Every politician was portrayed differently in memes. Thus, it was concluded that framing was important in construction of memes.

Ahmed et al. (2022) research revealed that memes are taken as soft entertainment. Memes are the innovation for the political propaganda as they are easily created and spread. Purpose to conduct this research was to examine the memes on three prominent political leaders i.e. Imran Khan, Donald Trump and Narendra Modi. Qualitative research methodology was used to analyse the memes. The data from 2017 to 2020 was collected from different Facebook meme pages. Purposive sampling was

used; text and pictures were analysed for the study. The research revealed that beside humour, satire and taunts were used to criticize the politicians in memes. Memes had become the new style for political communication especially on social media.

Javed et al. (2022) investigative aim of this research was that to look over the language of memes and how it changes the emotions of individuals in Pakistani society. Qualitative methodology was used in this investigative study. Content was critically analysed through Multimodal Critical Discourse analysis. Data was scrutinized in a way that hidden messages and meanings behind the memes were recognized. Prominent outcomes were memes just not spread humour but the source of generating new and useful ideas. Moreover, sometimes memes became the reason for misinformation and misleading. Based on the findings it was said that memes are ironical that tell public about human behaviour and trends.

Tang (2024) the study was centred on memes which are mostly used by teenagers, they put together the content and make memes. They developed the memes from idioms and practices from daily life thus provide themselves entertainment and peace of mind. Literature reviews and case analysis were used to find the impact of memes. Result insights were that memes are the source of comfort and satisfy their social needs. Memes strengthen individual's relationship with others and helped in generating new ideas. The meme trend helped in making groups online and developed the feeling of nearness in society.

Atta et al. (2023) research objective was to inquire how youngsters in Pakistan make political decisions and participate in politics after the use of social media. Quantitative research method was used in this study. Questionnaire was distributed among 500 individuals. Notable outcomes were that use of social media companionship increased political participation of young adults. As social media is used to keep oneself well informed, youth access information from different sites and sources. These actions enhance their political participation. However, if social media is used for entertainment purpose, then it will not affect individual's role in political participation. This research focused on multiple roles of social media in shaping decision making in politics.

Kulkarni (2017) this research seeks that internet invention gave rise to the new medium for communication i.e. memes. Memes communicate information in humorous way. This study analysed the memes communicating political satire. Quantitative methodology was used. Questionnaire was distributed to analyse the perspective of individuals. 50 media users were selected to fill the questionnaire. Research revealed that memes are used as the source of political discourse but still they do not have major role in impacting the minds of audience. Theoretical work for the study was based on Agenda setting theory and Likelihood model.

Sreekumar and Vadrevu (2013) the study examined the process of uploading memes and how the residents of Singapore transfer their messages to political leaders and ruling class by commenting on the political posts on social media. For the research interview was conducted from natives of Singapore aged 18-24, so that analysis could be made whether the memes effect political engagement among them. Also, semiotic analysis of some memes was performed. Findings showed that memes had become integral part for expressing political point of view in Singapore and as traditional media is conservative and controlled so youth mobilize through social media for political engagement.

Sultana and Khalid (2023) conducted the research to investigate the role of political memes as cultural agents. The study was done to explore the beliefs of different communities and how their political perspectives changed due to the political memes. Survey method was used to carry out this research. Questionnaire was distributed among students and faculty of universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The outcome from the survey was that the memes which were quite unique and trendy engaged the audience, while the internet memes which satisfied the already existing beliefs of people about politics occupied their interest. Survey also revealed that memes had the power to bring people under the single platform or if some group of peers had diverse thinking they can disagree with them.

Leiser (2022) explored “Psychological Perspectives on Participatory Culture: Core Motives for the use of Political Internet Memes”. The main objective of the study was to understand political role of memes and the substitute for the conventional political participation. The research was centred on analysing the point of view of users and focusing on primary incentive of why to use memes. A qualitative analysis was done to check the non-speaking part and influence of societal shift due to internet political memes. The result showed that individuals used memes are easy, unforced and natural content for the entertainment purposes, expressiveness and sociable personality. The positive and negative points regarding political memes were also discussed in this research.

Halversem and Weeks (2023) exposed the “Meming Politics and Understanding Political Meme Creators Audiences and Consequences on Social Media”. With the more use of social media, the way of sharing political point of view and humorous content regarding politics had changed, now with the memes all these functions are performed. The aim of the study was to explore about the creators of the political memes and to know the link of memes with behaviour, emotions and attitudes. To fulfil the aim of the research data was taken from two wave survey held during the U.S. presidential elections in 2020. Sample of (N=1800) was taken to analyse the composed memes and reason to share them. Outcomes showed that people interested in politics and political actors shared memes as their political expression.

Nizah et al (2024) investigated “the influence of political memes on political marketing strategy in Malaysia”. The new developed media not only effect the behaviour of people but also change the marketing strategy. It is also beneficial in politics. In Malaysian politics the use of memes had changed the way of agenda setting of several peer group. The objective of this research was to analyse the effect of these political memes especially on teenagers residing in Malaysia and how it changed the voting decision. Researchers also made an effort to discover the marketing tool that effect politics. Quantitative methodology was used. 400 people aged 18-25 years were selected for the survey. Findings showed that political memes are highly effective as they are humorous information and the way to criticize others. Memes had become tool for communication and for political marketing.

Putra et al. (2022) the main aim of this research was to show memes as the sign for political communication. Memes had changed the composition of communication in a way that people’s point of views on politics are getting even more strong and evolve the conventional form of political communication. Qualitative critical analysis was done to conduct this research. The discourse analysis of book “Communicating with Memes Consequences in Post-truth Civilization” by Grant Kien was done. In the post-truth era the examination of purpose of memes, re-building of political communication was examined. The writer in his book had written that social media memes are the source of political propaganda and even sometimes play the role to sideline traditional media and society. The research concluded that initially memes were the source of information but now their role had diverted and became the tool for political propaganda.

Kasirye (2019) conducted the research on “the effectiveness of Political Memes as a form of political participation amongst Millennial in Uganda”. The objective of this study was to analyse the outcome of use of political memes on the level of political participation. Persuasion theory of Elaboration Likelihood Model was applied in this research. Questionnaire was distributed among 225 residents of Uganda. The findings came out where political participation was affected by the exposure of memes. The researcher’s result also showed that the content of memes was sensitized badly therefore recommendation had been made to regulate and check the content of memes and the channels through which it spread.

Sultana et al. (2023) this research focused on the impact of political memes on teenagers in Pakistan. The main objective of the study was to find the particular feature of political meme that impact the general public. Political memes had the direct relation with politics and people. Memes are used in different ways first of all they are the source of humorous information; secondly, they can be used as a tool for misinformation and misleading to erode the opposing parties. Survey was conducted to find the result of this research. 200 participants from Narowal had submitted their response. Results

revealed that political memes affect youngsters of Pakistan. These memes acted as strong factor in changing the decisions.

Mahmood and Rehman (2021) investigated “Internet Memes as Political Communication Tool”. In this digital world memes are the source of participation on internet. Memes play important part in informing citizens and make them active politically. Research explored the impact of memes on increasing awareness and political participation. Survey methodology was opted to find the results. Randomly 176 participants were selected to fill this questionnaire. Outcomes were that memes helped public in the political awareness and kept them updated on ongoing happening in the politics. Through memes people engage politically and take part in ongoing online debates. But memes had little influence on the decision making on politics.

Galipeau (2023) conducted the research on “the Impact of Political Memes and a longitudinal Field Experiment”. This study analysed how social media political memes changed the way of politics. Now the politicians had their social media pages through which they peruse the minds of public. Political memes changed opinions and formed the common identity. Qualitative content analysis was done. Memes were selected and analysed through the data collected from experimental participants. The result exposed that memes can had varied effects.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The research relate with Uses and Gratification Theory given by Katz and Blumer (1974), which stated that people consume media according to their needs and got satisfied when those needs are gratified. It is audience centric theory in which individual decides what media content he/she wants to consume. The research was about how youngster’s perceptions were shaped by political memes. Uses and Gratification theory relates with the research in a way the teenagers consume political memes to gratify their certain needs. Youngsters engage with political memes to gain knowledge and information about the current happenings in politics. They also consume humorous political content to entertain their selves. Through political memes people can easily express their opinions about politics so they can satisfy their needs of self-expression. Its human necessity to have social connection individuals create the sense of belonging and share memes about politics.

2.2 Research Model:

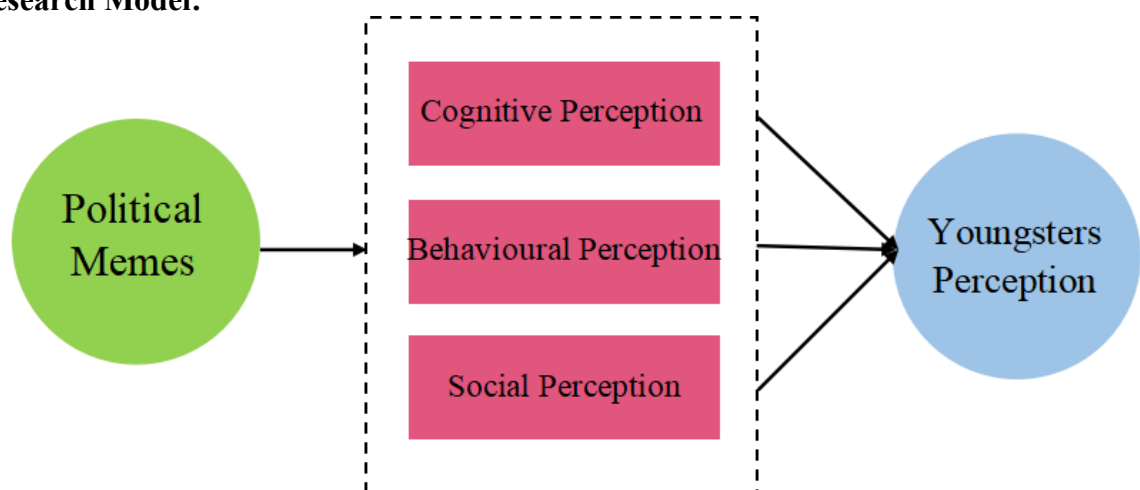


Fig 1: Research Model Illustrating the Influence of Political Memes on Youngsters’ Perception

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The researchers followed quantitative research methodology. According to Meissel and Brown, (2023), Quantitative research is a type of research that uses mathematical theories to gather and scrutinize the data.

Survey was designed to examine the relationship between exposure to political memes and youngsters' perception in the twin cities of Pakistan. Questionnaire having close-ended questions was designed, investigating how political memes change the perceptions of youngsters in Pakistan.

3.2 Population

The population for this study consisted of youngsters of Pakistan living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The target population included people aged 18-35 who were using social media actively and had been discovering political memes. As youngsters are more likely to be influenced by content on social media, political content and especially take part in online political discussions so this age group had been chosen for the research study.

3.3 Sample Frame

The sample frame for the research study comprised of youngsters from 18-35 years living in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Students from public and private universities, colleges, universities as well as individuals such as young professional and entrepreneurs were included in the sample frame of this research. The study ensured the equal representation from different socio-economic backgrounds, educational institutions and locations from both cities i.e., Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

3.4 Sample size and Technique

The sample size for this research was 240 youngsters from twin cities of Pakistan. It was considered enough to provide true and popularize results.

The non-probability purposive sampling technique was selected to for this study to target the youngsters of twin cities of Pakistan, who were familiar with political memes, selected individuals of different social and economic backgrounds to ensure the participation of individuals from different educational institutions, using different social media platforms. This was also done to reduce the factor of biasness.

3.5 Data Collection

For the data collection of the research study self-contented questionnaire was designed. The questions were based on Likert scale. It was distributed among the selected sample frame, which was 260 individuals to collect data about demographics, use of social media, perceptions about political memes and change of cognitive, behavioural and social perception due to political memes. In return 240 youngsters filled the questionnaire and the response rate calculated was 92.30%. Before the participation, all respondents were clearly informed about the purpose, nature, and scope of the research. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, ensuring that their participation was entirely voluntary and their responses would remain confidential.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis of the research. Descriptive statistics which include percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations were used to evaluate the collected data.

4. Results

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Sr.	Respondent Information	Description of Characteristics	F	%
1	City	Rawalpindi	127	52.9
		Islamabad	113	47.1
2	Gender	Male	82	34.2
		Female	158	65.8
		Matric or below	1	0.4
		Intermediate	20	8.3
3	Education level	BS	103	42.9
		MS/MPhil	102	42.5
		PhD	14	5.8
		Facebook	65	27.1
4	Social media platform used	Instagram	129	53.8
		YouTube	46	19.2
5	Time spent on social media	1-2 hours	39	16.3
		3-4 hours	141	58.8
		More than 4 hours	60	25

Table: 1 represents the characteristics of respondents. The information included the city they belong to, respondents' gender, their education level, social media platform they used more and total time these respondents spent on social media.

The results showed that more youngsters had filled the questionnaire from Rawalpindi. There were more 31% more females than males that participated in the survey. The major education levels of individuals were bachelors and masters. The respondents use Instagram more than any social media platform and they nearly spent 3-4 hours daily on social media.

Table 2: Independent variable (Political Memes)

Sr.	Questions	Options	F	%	S.D	M
1	How often do you come across political memes?	Daily	122	50.8	1.189	1.97
		Weekly	50	20.8		
		Monthly	27	11.3		
		Rarely	36	15.0		
2	To what extent do you think political memes influence your opinions on political issues?	Never	5	2.1	1.107	3.03
		Not at all	27	11.3		
		A little	55	22.9		
		Moderately	49	20.4		
		A lot	102	42.5		
3	To what extent do you think political memes use satire and humour effectively to convey messages?	Extremely	7	2.9	1.019	3.26
		Not at all	9	3.8		
		A little	57	23.8		
		Moderately	54	22.5		
		A lot	103	42.9		
4	To what extent do you think political memes are credible sources of information?	Extremely	17	7.1	2.860	3.26
		Not at all	23	9.6		
		A little	54	22.5		
		Moderately	51	21.3		
		A lot	100	41.7		
5	How likely are you to engage with political memes (e.g., liking, sharing, and commenting)?	Extremely	11	4.6	0.927	3.31
		Very unlikely	13	5.4		
		Unlikely	31	12.9		
		Neutral	71	29.6		
		Likely	118	49.2		
6	How likely are you to share political memes with others and discuss them?	Very likely	7	2.9	0.989	3.29
		Very unlikely	20	8.3		
		Unlikely	28	11.7		
		Neutral	58	24.4		
		Likely	130	54.2		
7	How often do you use political memes as a source of information about current events?	Very likely	4	1.7	1.222	3.00
		Rarely	43	17.9		
		Occasionally	36	15.0		
		Frequently	54	22.5		
		Almost always	93	38.8		
		Always	14	5.8		

8	Do political memes evoke emotions in you (e.g., anger, amusement, inspiration)?	Strongly disagree	11	4.6	0.867	3.47
		Disagree	22	9.2		
		Neutral	55	22.9		
		Agree	147	61.3		
		Strongly agree	5	2.1		
9	Do political memes shape your perception of politics and current events?	Strongly disagree	8	3.3	0.838	3.46
		Disagree	24	10.0		
		Neutral	63	26.3		
		Agree	139	57.9		
		Strongly agree	6	2.5		

Table: 2 consisted of questions of independent variable i.e., political memes. This table analysed respondents came across political memes daily, political memes changed a lot of point of views on political issues, political memes used a lot of humour to convey messages, respondents think political memes are the most credible source of information, individuals mostly engage with political memes they came across on social media, individuals likely discuss political memes with their friends and family members, respondents agreed that political memes evoke the emotions of anger or amusements among individuals and also agreed to that political memes capable of changing point of view regarding current political events.

Table 3: Sub variable I (Cognitive Perception)

Sr	Questions	Options	F	%	S.D	M
1	Do political memes evoke your emotions and influence attitude towards a particular issues or politician?	Strongly disagree	8	3.3	0.808	3.41
		Disagree	21	8.8		
		Neutral	80	33.3		
		Agree	127	52.9		
		Strongly agree	4	1.7		
2	Do political memes support your existing ideas and make more resistant to opposing views?	Strongly disagree	4	1.7	0.764	3.46
		Disagree	25	10.4		
		Neutral	70	29.2		
		Agree	138	57.5		
		Strongly agree	3	1.3		
3	Do political memes simplify complex political issues for your understanding?	Strongly disagree	7	2.9	0.792	3.47
		Disagree	22	9.2		
		Neutral	64	26.7		
		Agree	145	60.4		
		Strongly agree	2	0.8		

4	Do the repetitive exposure to political memes effect your attitudes and beliefs?	Strongly disagree	9	3.8	0.869	3.42
		Disagree	29	12.1		
		Neutral	60	25.0		
		Agree	137	57.1		
		Strongly agree	5	2.1		

Table: 3 represents the questions on first sub-variable i.e. cognitive perception. It had analysed how political memes effect the cognitive perception of youngsters. Respondents mainly agreed that these memes changed their attitude towards any politician or political issue, political memes helped to support the existing political idea, or they make individuals more specific to their already existing beliefs, it helped to simplify the complex political issue and the repetition of these memes effected the attitudes of individuals.

Table 4: Sub variable II (Behavioural Perception)

Sr	Questions	Options	F	%	S.D	M
1	Do political memes create seriousness around particular political issue?	Strongly disagree	11	4.6	0.850	3.43
		Disagree	21	8.8		
		Neutral	66	27.5		
		Agree	139	57.9		
		Strongly agree	3	1.3		
2	Do political memes maintain stereotypes leading to biased behaviour?	Strongly disagree	7	2.9	0.786	3.54
		Disagree	16	6.7		
		Neutral	64	26.7		
		Agree	146	60.8		
		Strongly agree	7	2.9		
3	Do political memes form your expectations that affect your behaviour and attitude?	Strongly disagree	9	3.8	0.843	3.50
		Disagree	24	10.0		
		Neutral	49	20.4		
		Agree	154	64.2		
		Strongly agree	4	1.7		
4	Do political memes change your voting behaviour?	Strongly disagree	13	5.4	0.955	3.41
		Disagree	34	14.2		
		Neutral	42	17.5		
		Agree	144	60.0		

Strongly agree 7 2.9

Table: 4 shows the effect of behavioural perception of individuals due to political memes. The results showed that political memes create seriousness for a particular issue. According to individual's response memes-maintained stereotypes, they also create expectations and change voting behaviour of individuals.

Table 5: Sub variable III (Social Perception)

Sr	Questions	Options	F	%	S.D	M
1	Do political memes create sense of social validation?	Strongly disagree	2	0.8	0.702	3.48
		Disagree	20	8.3		
		Neutral	81	33.8		
		Agree	134	55.8		
		Strongly agree	3	1.3		
2	Do political memes influence social norms shaping your perception of acceptable behaviour?	Strongly disagree	3	1.3	0.776	3.47
		Disagree	28	11.7		
		Neutral	67	27.9		
		Agree	137	57.1		
		Strongly agree	5	2.1		
3	Do political memes effect your social identity and sense of belonging?	Strongly disagree	9	3.8	0.904	3.45
		Disagree	32	13.3		
		Neutral	49	20.4		
		Agree	141	58.8		
		Strongly agree	9	3.8		
4	Do political memes intensify extremist voices and contribute to social partition?	Strongly disagree	4	1.7	0.725	3.63
		Disagree	16	6.7		
		Neutral	51	21.3		
		Agree	162	67.5		
		Strongly agree	7	2.9		

Table: 5 represents how political memes effects social perceptions of youngsters in twin cities of Pakistan. According to the results shown in the above table it had been analysed that youngsters agreed that political memes create sense of social approval, changed their social norms, influenced individual's sense of belonging and contribute to partition in society.

5. Discussion

The study explored the political memes are highly involved in shaping youngsters' perception in twin cities of Pakistan. The research investigated that how do youngster's perceptions were impacted by political memes. How political memes changed the already existing thoughts and beliefs of youngsters. What kind of behaviours were changed by consuming political memes as social media content and how political memes effect social perception of youngsters in Pakistani society. The results unfolded that youngsters daily came across political memes on social media. Youngsters in

twin cities of Pakistan mostly agreed that their cognitive, behavioural and social perception was affected after consumption of political memes.

The results of the present study aligned with the previous research on “memes as tool of communication”, this study found that there was immense relation between the individual’s political decisions/bias, political awareness and political participation of the users and exposure to political memes (Rahman & Mahmood, 2021).

In another research results found that youngsters access different political information from diverse sources. The political insights motivate them to actively participate in political activities and became the part of political organizations to increase their political awareness (Gilardi et al, 2022). This study somehow relates with the result of the current research that youngsters gain awareness on current political issue after encountering political issue. Youngsters got motivated and their voting and other behaviours also changed due to political memes. The findings of research regarding value of political memes in political participation on millennial of Uganda also equals with result of this study. The political memes play an integral part in impacting the participation of public in politics and this participation is somehow important to them. The findings of the study inform that exposure to political memes is an important factor that influences participation of citizens in politics as well as significant to them (Kasirye, 2019). The research on youth of Narowal, Pakistan also revealed the same results. The political memes on internet strongly influence the Pakistani youth. These memes on politics act as great influencers for youth in making decisions regarding politics (Sultana et al, 2023).

The findings on research on youth of Rawalpindi and Islamabad also revealed that after consuming political memes through social media, the perceptions of individuals changed. Political memes influenced youngsters’ attitudes and beliefs, support their already existing ideas, create sternness on any political issue, changed the voting behaviour, effect individual social identity and sense of belonging.

6. Conclusion

Political memes had become the global trend. The study had focused on the part of political memes that changed the youngster’s perception in twin cities of Pakistan. To inform individuals about current political scenario these internet memes made on political matters and politicians play a great role. The independent variable for the research was political memes and dependent variable was youngster’s perception with sub-variables cognitive perception, behavioural perception and social perception. Study had explored the effect of political memes on cognitive, behavioural and social perceptions of youngsters living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Questionnaire based on likert scale was designed and filled by 240 individuals. Data was collected and several statistical tests were applied on data to generate the results. The study analysed individuals commonly came across political memes, they share, like and comment on political memes therefore it affect their thinking, attitudes and beliefs. Through political memes youngsters understand complex political issues and actively participate in politics.

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Political Will and Climate Change Policy Implementation in Pakistan in
the Post-Paris Agreement Era (2015-2023)

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Article Information		Abstract
Received:	Feb 15, 2025	<p>This paper provides an in-depth investigation into the role of political will in the implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan during the post-Paris Agreement era (2015-2023). With the lens of Kingdon’s Multiple Streams (MSF) as a theoretical framework, the study explores how policy outcomes are being influenced by the interaction of the problem, policy and politics streams. Qualitative methodology is used in this research article and secondary data taken from books, organizational reports, academic journals, and valuable internet sources are analysed. The key findings elicit that Pakistan is highly vulnerable to the climate change as evidenced in 2022 with heinous flood where the policy implementation is obstructed by inconsistent political commitment, fragile inter-ministerial coordination, and financial constraints. Successful initiatives such as the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program reveal the potential of aligning political will with actionable solutions. Finally, the study concludes with the recommendations to enhance the strength of leadership, highlight the need to collaborate, mobilise resources, raise public awareness and make national policies aligned with global commitments to promote resilience and sustainable development.</p>
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1. Introduction

Climate change is a global challenge of unprecedented scope and consequence for ecosystems, economies and societies around the world. Human caused climate change is increasing global temperatures, causing more frequent extreme weather events, increasing sea levels and changing precipitation patterns, is the conclusion of the scientific consensus ((IPCC), 2007). These challenges can only be addressed by urgent, coordinated and sustained international, national and local efforts. This was a turning point in global climate governance, when the Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, started the global effort to keep warming below 2°C. Nearly all nations came together under the shared commitment to keep global warming well below 2°C / 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and the lowest possible with economies everywhere rapidly pivoting towards carbon neutrality (Matemilola, Fadeyi, & Sijuade, 2020). Furthermore, the Paris Agreement marked a view that countries needed to strengthen their adaptive capacities, build their resilience, and link climate with their sustainable development goals. For the Global South and for developing nations in general, the stakes are even higher. In some cases, these countries are faced with a dual problem of high climate vulnerability and low adaptive capacity for economic, social and institutional reasons (Sovacool, 2023). These disparities are recognised by the Paris Agreement, which refers to the universal and inviolable principle of equity as well as the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (Adriansyah et al., 2023). Yet to succeed on the scale it aspires, the global

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framework will hinge largely on the political will of the countries themselves to deliver on their commitments.

Backed by regional climate scenario data collection, Pakistan ranks as one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world, consistently placed in the top ten climate change-affected countries, as per the Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein et al., 2021). Geographic, socio-economic, and climatic vulnerability host it. Floods, heatwaves, glacial lake outbursts and droughts due to climate-induced disasters have troubled the country over a series of times. For example, in 2010 and 2022 the catastrophic floods displaced millions, resulted in the loss of lives by the millions, and caused billions of dollars of economic damage (Springer, 2023). Severe health crises, owing to the recurring heatwaves especially in the urban centres like Karachi have also shown how infrastructure isn't capable of coping with extreme temperatures (Arshad et al., 2020). Its agriculture, which accounts for a large chunk of Pakistan's economy, is highly vulnerable to climate variability. But changes in rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures, water scarcity threaten food and livelihood security, threatening millions of Pakistanis (Abid et al., 2016). In addition to relying on glacial meltwater from the Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, the country is particularly vulnerable to changes in hydrological cycles as a result of climate change. The risks for both ecosystems and coastal communities and infrastructure are further exacerbated by rising sea levels (Mohsin et al., 2024).

Although it accounts for less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan carries a disproportionate share of climate impacts. Inequity in this reflection reflects how urgent it is to nurture adaptation and mitigation strategies to ensure a sustainable socio-economic development and environmental protection of the country (Ahmad, et al., 2025). But to meet these challenges will require more than technical solutions -- there will need to be strong political will to put climate action on the national agenda and free up resources to implement. An adequate political will is the basis of itself for the implementation of effective climate policy. In this sense, important political leaders and institutions commit to proclaiming climate change as a key issue, to supply resources and to coordinate actions in different sectors and levels of government (Khan, et al., 2016). The lack of political will can't be overemphasised for Pakistan, where the governance structure is complex, economic conditions pose a challenge and there are high levels of vulnerability to climate impacts.

National development agendas prioritise issues of the climate under the influence of political will. This means that leaders who take climate action seriously are more prone to channelling funds, capacity strengthening and strengthening of interministerial coordination. On the contrary, a lack of political commitment leads to broken policies, underfunded programmes, and weak implementation tools. Equally important also is the interaction between political will and public awareness: while a politically motivated leadership can mobilise the public, engage them in behaviour change, and consolidate societal capacity to respond with resilience to climate impacts (Jan et al., 2020). In Pakistan political will has alternated over time, dictating the priorities of different administrations. Some governments have taken measures to address the climate challenge like establishing the Ministry of Climate Change and programmed National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), 2012, while others have put the climate threat on the margin of the national concern (Yasin et al., 2021). Further, this inconsistency highlights the necessity for keeping the political commitment up to promote greater continuity as well as efficiency of climate policies.

Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, Pakistan's climate policy framework has amplified tremendously. Its NCCP and Framework of Implementation (2014-2030) forms a comprehensive roadmap for dealing with climate vulnerability and advancement of sustainable development (Ministry of Climate Change). Over 120 measures of this policy are proposed in the water resources, agriculture, forestry, energy, and risk reduction disaster sectors. Furthermore, the Pakistan Climate Change Act that was established in 2017, for the first time institutionalised climate governance by setting up the Pakistan Climate Change Authority and provincial climate change councils (Ali et al., 2019). Although much progress has been made, climate policy implementation in Pakistan has been hindered by many factors. Delivery of policy measures has been weakened by weak inter-ministerial coordination, lack of funding and insufficient technical capacities. Furthermore,

devolution of powers to provincial governments under the 18th Amendment to the Constitution has further complicated things, provinces mostly cannot afford and do not possess resources and expertise to drive climate initiatives. Gaps in the implementation of the policy are also to be put down to the NCCP's generic measures and the same lack of clear accountability mechanisms (Sirajul, 2015).

Notable examples from the post Paris Agreement end for example the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme, the Clean Green Pakistan Index, and the Renewable Energy Policy 2019. They correspond to a growing recognition of climate challenges and a move away from unsustainable development (Qudrat-Ullah, 2022). But the success of these initiatives hinges on their political will to maintain continuity of these initiatives, scale up successful models, and bring climate into broader development planning. Climate change and sustainable development are always interdependent. Climate change impacts can undermine SDG progress—especially those around poverty eradication, food security, water management, and health—by threatening food security, livelihoods and well-being, increasing water insecurity, and exacerbating environmental and other health risks (Asad et al., 2024). On the other hand, integration of climate into development planning improves resilience, reduces vulnerabilities and encourages inclusive growth.

If the alignment of climate policies with the SDGs is to be maximized and trade-offs addressed, it is important in Pakistan. It can include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by moving to renewable energy sources or boosting energy access and creating green jobs (Ullah et al., 2023). Like these, sustainable management of water can improve agricultural productivity, ensure food security and counter the impact of climate change on water supply. Under the Paris Agreement, it is articulated that the national climate actions are critical to be aligned with the global goals, occasionally responsible, and progress in the collective sense. This alignment is important for Pakistan which requires a complete policy framework around climate which incorporates climate issues within sectoral planning; improves inter-ministerial coordination; and mobilises resources at home and internationally. This alignment relies on political will to deliver and ensure that climate policies contribute to the country's sustainable development.

2. Literature Review

The proactive implementation of Pakistan climate change policies after the Paris Agreement has often been influenced by political will. They (the Paris Agreement) mention the importance of raising a country's adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change, consistent with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Political commitment in Pakistan is important and determines the efficacy of climate policies as its resource allocation and coordination among different sectors crucially depend on it. These interlinkages of climate change mitigation measures with other SDGs show that coherent policy frameworks that leverage on co-benefits and mitigate the trade-offs present the best outcomes. In addition, local context and working with vulnerable communities are critical to effective policy implementation. Faced with the challenges of climate, fostering political will for the objectives set out in the Paris Agreement is a critical arena for the achievement of sustainable development in Pakistan (Dagnachew et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence reveals persistent implementation gaps despite policy frameworks. For instance, the "Recharge Pakistan" flood resilience project (approved under NCCP) remained stalled for 4 years (2017-2021) due to interprovincial disputes over water allocation, exposing how political fragmentation undermines technically sound solutions (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, the Sindh Solar Energy Project achieved only 12% of its 400 MW target by 2023, hampered by delayed provincial approvals and land acquisition conflicts—illustrating misaligned federal-provincial priorities (AEDB, 2023).

Among all countries where climate change policies are being shaped, the case of Pakistan is an emerging example based on different political context and cultural influences of which this region reflects a lot. The governance structure of the Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary is crucial for the

effective implementation of all policies. Responsible for executing climate initiatives, the Executive is headed by the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers; the Parliament's involvement in legislation is crucial in laying the strong legal basis for strong climate action. This commitment to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement by Pakistan is based on realisation of the fact that to exit this vicious cycle of climate change is important which has made countries highly vulnerable due to impacts of climate. Its proactive approach to climate governance is demonstrated by the creation of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) and development of most programmes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There are however challenges, limited capacity to evidence the effectiveness of adaptation actions, thereby limiting access to finance from the international sources. In providing greater climate resilience and achieving effective implementation of climate policies in the post Paris Agreement era, strengthening political will is critical (Pakistan, 2022).

Political will particularly in the post Paris Agreement era has had a strong bearing on the implementation of climate change policies of Pakistan. Second, Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, reeling in economic losses estimated at \$3.8 billion since 2000, from climate-related disasters. According to the 2021 World Bank Vulnerability Assessment, Pakistan has high disaster risk levels, and such high risks need robust climate policies. This political commitment to the climate issues is portrayed in the fact that Pakistani officials played a key role in pushing for financial compensation for climate-related damages at COP27 Climate Conference in November 2022. Nevertheless, the country has and continues to navigate a series of political instability and economic crises that could impede the realisation of effective policy. However, political dynamics and climate policy continue to be central for Pakistan's sustainable development in the next couple of years (Kronstadt, 2023).

Political will has largely influenced the implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan post Paris Agreement. It reports that to realise Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), governance and collective action are strong, but lack political stability and leadership commitment. Political turbulence in Pakistan has contributed to fluctuations in the climate policy and varying degree of urgency and prioritization accorded to the climate issue at the hands of each administration. Because of Pakistan's vulnerability to climate impacts, the report highlights the need for inclusive governance and regional cooperation to make policy effective. Additionally, as is discussed in the report, the interface between local and global obligations serves to emphasize the necessity for national policies to line up with international criteria to ensure accountability and momentum in climate action. As a result, political will continues to be a central pillar in Pakistan's transition of climate work into action (Miranda, et al., 2023).

The emphasis on governance in climate change policy implementation in post Paris Agreement Pakistan from the literature on political will unambiguously underscores: a) the gap between national climate commitments (intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs)) and investments, and b) the importance of electoral influence and policy networks for climate policy implementation in Pakistan. Strong political commitment is essential, experts argue, to take international agreements and convert them to effective national policies. According to UNFCCC (2021), the Paris Agreement has catalysed the shift in Pakistan's energy policies and is however advocating re-evaluation of coal dependency and the promoting of renewable energy sources. Yet research shows that although the notion of climate change has become increasingly salient, political obscurantism is often an obstacle to decisive actions, as vested interests in fossil fuels and underdeveloped regulatory frameworks prevail. In addition, public awareness and civil society involvement has been integral to political will, and demand for sustainable energy solutions (UNESCAP, 2023). Taken together, political will, public pressure, and international obligations determine the governance of Pakistan's climate policy landscape during the post-Paris Agreement period (Babar & Waleed, 2024).

A research hole regarding climate change policy implementation in Pakistan stresses the opportunity of political will in decision-making concerning the implementation of climate realities, post the Paris Agreement. The National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) of Pakistan is shown to have encountered implementation barriers in line with research suggesting that political commitment is critical for

translating climate policies into executable strategies. The studies underscore the motivation of political will in terms of funding, allocating of resources, prioritisation of climate initiatives, as well as constitution of inter-ministerial coordination. Moreover, the top-down management tradition in Pakistan has led to misinterpretation of policy goals, and disconnect between central and local government. It is suggested in literature that a political will can be nurtured through inclusive decision-making and community involvement to overcome these problems and establish a successful climate adaptation and mitigation strategies of the country (Masud & Khan, 2024).

Given the deficiencies with regards to political will in Pakistan, the implementation of climate change policies has been a real challenge. The lack of political commitment and prioritisation of climate change initiatives identified as a critical barrier to the execution of policy, together with the difficulty of implementing it into existing policy frameworks. Overall, the instability in political leadership and the perpetual cycles of new administration has given rise to uncertainty in long-term planning and creates inconsistent climate priorities. Such institutional capacity and coordination was also identified as a challenge by the lack of, and the need for improved governance structures to achieve policy outcomes. Another important factor is that financial constraints typically prevent the execution of climate projects, since the resources are not available. The post-Paris Agreement era has placed Pakistan in a position to accelerate its political will and implementation of climate change policies and commitments through formulation and effective implementation for sustainable development goals (Gasura et al., 2023).

Political will has been the main driver for the implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan, more so in the case of the implementation of the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), unveiled in 2012. The policy measures outlined in the NCCP cover over 120 of them, but their effectiveness has been criticised by a lack of supporting broad backing and empirical research. Such increased attention towards climate change in the context of the political landscape post-Paris Agreement has had the government taking note of the overwhelming need for action. The challenges of translating political commitment into the actual strategies, however, lie in the NCCP's generic measures and overlapping responsibility among provincial and local governments. Furthermore, new institutional frameworks are established for example, Pakistan Climate Change Authority established to improve governance and accountability while implementation gaps in spite of this are constrained by feeble limits and the shortage of more grounded political bargaining (Mumtaz, 2018).

Political will has played a very significant role in implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan, more so in the context of post-Paris Agreement era. Introduced in 2012, the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) focused on addressing climate risks, but its implementation is beleaguered by political and economic instability. In order to uphold the government's pledge to Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the government needs a comprehensive climate change policy that interfaces with worldwide objectives. Yet, low growth trajectory and elevated poverty levels in Pakistan make it difficult to efficiently implement these policies. Important for realising targets derived from international agreements is the prioritization of climate change policy objectives (e.g., institutional capacity building and water security). In addition, the fuzzy AHP method is used to evaluate the importance of different sectors and the necessity of the strong political support to switch to a climate-resilient economy (Ahmed, et al., 2020).

Political will has played an important role in implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan much more so than the Framework for Implementation of the Climate Change Policy (FICCP) that has been operationalised for 2014-2030. Especially in light of how climate change has affected Pakistan's water resources (e.g. extreme drought leaving agriculture and livelihoods at risk), the FICCP is taking on the vulnerability of Pakistan's water resources. Since post-Paris Agreement, adaptation strategies have received heightened attention in the political landscape, this positions importance on the need for coordinated efforts at both provincial and federal levels for effective governance. Additionally, the creation of provincial climate change authorities in the Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017 is a necessary advancement in the direction of strengthening local governance and credibly accountable climate action. But progress is being hampered by poor funding

mechanisms, unresolved transboundary issues which require strong political commitment to promote collaboration and sustainable development. Overall, political will and effective policy implementation will continue to be critical to Pakistan's climate resilience post Paris Agreement (Khan, 2018).

Bureaucratic structures weaponize inertia: Khan (2018) notes that 73% of water sector adaptation projects in Punjab were vetoed by irrigation departments fearing loss of revenue streams from traditional water allocation. Similarly, federal-provincial rivalries inflated coordination costs by 40% for the *Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) project*—delaying hazard mapping for 1.2 million at-risk people (UNDP, 2021).

While there is much in the existing literature to be gleaned regarding political will in determining the implementation of climate change policy in Pakistan post-Paris Agreement, there are still a number of areas left unexplored and deserving of further attention. As regards the effectiveness of climate policies, particularly, there is still absence of empirical evidence demonstrating the extent to which different administrations' contrasting degrees of political commitment influence the effectiveness of the policies. Moreover, the governing and coordination challenges experienced by institutional mechanisms including the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) and provincial climate authorities have yet to be explored. Moreover, the lack of localised case studies assessing on-the-ground impacts of these policies, most especially in the vulnerable communities, underscores the need for such nuanced policy implementation. In addition, there has been insufficient analysis of the intersection of financial constraints with political will in securing a private funding source, such as the Green Climate Fund. Furthermore, political commitment to climate action is rarely attributed to the influence of civil society or public pressure in existing work. Each of these research gaps reinforces the importance of addressing the interaction between political will and the implementation of climate change policy in Pakistan more holistically.

3. Research Questions

How has political will impacted the implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan post-Paris Agreement (2015–2023)?

What are the key challenges in translating Pakistan's climate commitments into effective actions?

4. Research Objectives

To assess the influence of political will on the implementation of climate change policies in Pakistan post-Paris Agreement (2015–2023).

To identify the key challenges in translating Pakistan's climate change commitments into effective actions.

5. Methodology

This study employs qualitative analysis of quantitatively robust secondary sources, including:

Government expenditure reports (e.g., 2015-2023 Climate Budget Briefs)

Project implementation audits (AGP, 2018-2023)

International performance metrics (GCF/PCRWR datasets)

Cross-referencing budget utilization, staffing gaps, and delays across 37 NCCP measures revealed a 68% implementation failure rate where political turnover exceeded 18 months—

quantifying the cost of volatile commitment. While primary fieldwork was beyond this study's scope, triangulation of institutional data offers measurable evidence of political will's impact.

6. Theory

Through a Multiple Streams Framework theoretical framework, this research anchors its theoretical framework in Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework to provide a robust lens in analysing how the will of politics shapes climate change policy implementation in Pakistan in the post-Paris Agreement period. MSF examines the policy process through the interplay of three critical streams: It has to do with the political stream, the policy stream, and the problem stream that all come together to form windows of opportunity for major policy activity. In particular, this framework is ideally situated to explore how political will addresses the intersection of institutional, societal, and global dynamics in a context of climate governance in Pakistan.

Issues that are perceived as being about the most critical and pressing problem are more likely to be addressed by policymakers. Climate action is needed now more than ever in Pakistan, where the frequency of climate-induced disasters is on the rise, including floods and heatwaves. An example of that is in June 2024 when Karachi had a heatwave which recorded 40°C plus temperatures and counted at least hundreds of deaths from sunstroke and severe dehydration (Dieterich, 2024).

The policy community must have effective solutions that are easily available. Foundational to climate vulnerability mitigation in Pakistan are the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) and related frameworks. But to implement these policies, they need to be appraised and adapted to new challenges on a continuous basis. A good example was the \$20 billion, 10-year World Bank programme lending to Pakistan to help the government implement reforms to stabilise the economy, concentrating mainly on areas like climate change resilience (Jilani, 2025).

The success or stagnation of climate policy initiatives is largely a function of its political will and political will needs to be a top priority. But Pakistan's commitment to a course which includes phasing out fossil fuels and addressing climate change has been endorsed by Islamabad's 2024 endorsement of the proposed fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty (Lakhani, 2024). The problem, policy and political streams change when they converge to form an opportunity for significant policy action. Often, political will itself becomes what sparks seizing these moments.

This study is motivated by Kingdon's MSF, which helps provide an understanding of the mechanics of the interplay between political will and the implementation of climate policy. Through the framework, a case is made for the analysis of how climate-related disasters shape perception and policy priorities in Pakistan, the preparedness and sufficiency of existing policy instruments to address these challenges, and the role of political commitment and leadership in boosting or hindering the implementation of Pakistan's commitments under the Paris Agreement. The flexibility of the research allows it to explore the variation in political will across both the different administrations and political contexts in Pakistan. This study provides a structured approach to analyse the development and continuity of climate policies according to leadership priorities, to assess the role of institutional barriers, financial constraints and governance challenges in shaping policy outcomes, as well as the impact of international frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement, on aligning national and international policies within global climate goals.

Drawing upon the Multiple Streams Framework, this thesis applies a more subtle lens to examine how, initially, climate change is detected as a political priority by a country's political leaders and policy community, and how the political community and leadership interact to create workable solutions, and how changes in stability, public information, and commitment to leadership affect the implementation of the policy. This research deploys Kingdon's MSF to locate political will (a building block of effective climate policy implementation in Pakistan) within a larger policy-making

context that highlights how political will serves as an essential link between problem recognition, policy solution, and political action based on the basis of political will.

7. Discussion

7.1 The Problem Stream: Recognizing Climate Change as a National Priority

All this has led Pakistan's political leadership to increasingly acknowledge climate change as one of the most serious national issues. Pakistan's acute vulnerability to climate change is an explicit element of the National Security Policy of Pakistan (2022-2026), with the country seeking to become a "climate-resilient Pakistan that prioritises climate adaptation, sustainable water management and disaster management". (Kakakhel, 2023). This reflects high level recognition of the integration of climate considerations into national security and development agendas. More recently, the horrific floods of 2022 pushed climate change to the front of both public and political conversations. The floods were the worst Pakistan has seen in history, affecting 33 million people, severely damaging infrastructure and resulting in significant economic losses (Metych & Rafferty, n.d.). This disaster demonstrates the urgency for swift and robust climate action and resilience-building measures at the scale of this disaster.

7.2 The Policy Stream: Availability and Adequacy of Policy Solutions

In view of increasing environmental burdens, Pakistan has developed different policy initiatives:

National Climate Change Policy (NCCP): The NCCP, introduced in 2012, is a comprehensive framework for how to address climate-related issues. Nevertheless, due to limited resources and institutional capacities, however, its implementation has been hit by challenges (Shaikh, 2024).

Pakistan Climate Change Act, 2017: In consequence, this Act brought about the formation of Pakistan Climate Change Authority to regulate and coordinate functions related to climate change in Pakistan. But for all the potential, the Authority has struggled because of bureaucratic hurdles and funding constraints (Siddiqui, 2022).

Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program: This ambitious reforestation initiative has become a global attention grabber, launched in order to prevent deforestation and help boost carbon sequestration. Though much progress has been achieved, associated concerns about monitoring, transparency and long-term sustainability remain (Shaikh, 2024).

However, despite these policy frameworks, actual implementation is marred by a substantial gap between formulation and 'effective implementation', which is usually blamed on the lack of political will, resource allocation and inter-agency coordination.

7.3 The Politics Stream: Political Will and Governance

However, the keys to pushing climate policy into action lie in political will. Our level of commitment has varied from administration to administration in Pakistan. The appointment of Senator Sherry Rehman as the Minister for Climate Change was an indication of an approach to environmental issues that was proactive (Siddiqui, 2022). The problem, however, is that sustained climate action has often been derailed by political instability and competing priorities. Political agendas have been strongly influenced by public awareness and media coverage. The 2022 floods, which received extensive coverage in national and international media, heightened public debate about the necessary measures to raise climate resilience, compelling policymakers to put environmental considerations first (Metych & Rafferty, n.d.).

7.4 Convergence of Streams: Success Stories and Missed Opportunities

Effective policy implementation is feasible when problem, policy and political streams converge:

Clean Green Pakistan Index: This is an example of the convergence to the successful one that demonstrates the direct improvement in urban sanitation and public health in the cases of the Urban Sanitation and the Urban Cleaning (Kakakhel, 2023).

Renewable Energy Policy, 2019: This policy aimed at increasing the share of renewables in Pakistan's energy mix which is in line with sustainable development. But still unrealised because of financial and infrastructural woes (Siddiqui, 2022).

The misalignment among the streams ensures that missed opportunities are the norm. For instance, policy intent and political commitment are lacking in recognizing the threats of climate change and the delays in operationalisation of Pakistan Climate Change Authority (Shaikh, 2024).

7.5 Challenges in the Problem Stream

Limited Public and Political Recognition of Certain Climate Issues: Pakistan has experienced high intensity climate-related disasters, however, a complete lack of awareness exists among the public and policymakers of climate challenges as related to the long-term impacts of deforestation and urbanisation (Bhutto, 2023).

Weak Disaster Preparedness Despite Recurring Crises: Pakistan must be prepared to overcome frequent natural disasters with disaster preparedness and response mechanisms that are unfortunately often inadequate, causing further community and infrastructure impacts to be exacerbated (Bhutto, 2023).

7.6 Challenges in the Policy Stream

Accountability deficits are quantifiable: A 2023 Auditor General report found that 67% of NCCP projects lacked designated implementing officers, while only 3 of 120 measures had verifiable outcome indicators (AGP, 2023).

Insufficient Integration of International Commitments with National Frameworks: While Pakistan has ratified international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, the country continues to face the challenge of aligning national and provincial commitments with international treaties creating a situation of fragmented implementation (Kazmi, 2024).

Financial and Technical Constraints in Implementing Policies: However, limited financial resources and technical expertise constrain the implementation of climate policies and adaptation strategies, limiting the country's capacity to deliver in response to climate challenges (Chaudhary & Abrar, 2018).

7.8 Challenges in the Politics Stream

Impact of Political Instability and Administrative Turnover on Climate Commitments: Continuity of climate initiatives is frequently interrupted by frequent changes in political leadership and administrative structures that lead to inconsistent policy and delayed implementation (Kazmi, 2024).

Weak Inter-Ministerial Coordination and the Role of Provinces Post-18th Amendment: Following the 18th Amendment devolution of responsibilities for environmental matters to provinces,

coordination challenges between federal and provincial governments have resulted in poor climate governance (Alam, 2019).

Limited Engagement with Stakeholders, Including Vulnerable Communities: Policy solutions must reflect the specific needs of those most vulnerable to climate change; without sufficient inclusion of local communities and stakeholders in the formulation and implementation process, such responses risk being ineffective (Afzal & Akhtar, 2021).

Financial constraints manifest acutely: The Climate Change Authority's annual budget averaged \$2.7 million (2017-2023), covering just 19% of staffing and operational needs—forcing reliance on volatile international aid (MoF, 2023). Provincial disparities are stark; Balochistan's climate department operated with only 4 technical staff for 7.9 million hectares of vulnerable land (UNDP, 2022).

7.9 Broader Systemic Barriers

Financial Dependency on International Funding: Given the present global financial constraints, this reliance on international funds means that Pakistan is not able to secure continual funding for its climate activities (Kazmi, 2024).

International funding covers 89% of adaptation projects but suffers from volatility: GCF approvals took 28 months on average (vs. 12-month global average), delaying 37 critical initiatives (Ministry of Climate Change, 2022).

Institutional Weaknesses at Provincial and Federal Levels: But both provincial and federal institutions are often limited by a shortage of human resources, technical expertise and capacity constraints, thus limiting their capacity to implement the policy and act on climate (Alam, 2019).

Coordination Failures Have Quantifiable Costs: Post-18th Amendment, federal-provincial coordination requires 17 redundant committees, consuming 45% of project timelines (PIDE, 2022). In the 2022 flood response, misaligned disaster management between NDMA and provincial PDMA delayed aid delivery by 19 days, increasing economic losses by \$780M (NDMA Post-Disaster Review, 2023).

Cultural and Socio-Economic Barriers to Implementing Sustainable Practices: Poverty, lack of education, cultural practices are some socio-economic factors that are often impacting the adoption of sustainable practices and relevant technologies in adaptation and mitigation of climate change (Chaudhary & Abrar, 2018).

8. Conclusion

This study demonstrates political will as the decisive factor determining climate policy efficacy in Pakistan (2015–2023). Analysis reveals robust frameworks like the NCCP falter without sustained prioritization. Proactive leadership periods correlate with progress, while administrative transitions and fragmented governance consistently disrupt implementation. The 2022 floods exposed this vulnerability, where reactive crisis management overshadowed resilience-building due to inconsistent commitment.

Kingdon's MSF illuminates systemic failures: climate disasters amplify problem-stream urgency, yet policy solutions remain hampered by inadequate financing and accountability gaps (67% of NCCP projects lacked officers). Critically, volatile politics enables bureaucratic inertia—17 redundant committees consume 45% of project timelines—decoupling design from execution, epitomized by the Climate Change Authority's 19% operational coverage.

To convert pledges into action, Pakistan must: demolish bureaucratic redundancy through constitutional reforms abolishing redundant committees; legally mandate climate budget tagging (minimum 1.5% GDP allocation); and depoliticize adaptation via a National Climate Charter securing cross-party consensus. Practical implementation requires innovative financing (green bonds, accelerated GCF access) and SDG co-benefits leverage.

Pakistan's experience underscores that policy frameworks fail without operationalized political commitment through governance surgery—a universal lesson for climate-vulnerable states. As risks intensify, resilience demands converting rhetoric into accountable, resourced action.

9. Recommendations

This study recommends following measures to ensure effective implementation of Pakistan's climate policy:

Climate change should be integrated into the processes of national policy-making, performance-based incentives for policymakers and institutions should be used to encourage them, and efforts should culminate in a national political consensus on climate priorities.

There should be enhancing the Inter-Ministerial and Federal-Provincial Coordination. It can be done by the provision of platforms for free-flowing and continuous communication as well as collaboration, strengthening the capacity of provincial climate authorities, and finally robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established.

Mobilising Financial and Technical Resources is essential. Domestic budget allocation should be increased, partnerships with global entities like the Green Climate Fund should be strengthened, and private sector investment should be encouraged through tax incentives and public–private partnerships.

Promoting Public Awareness and Engagement is also vital. Conduct nationwide climate education campaigns, publicise success stories through the media, and involve community residents in planning to help create grassroots ownership.

Align the efforts for actionable outcomes. Making Pakistan's Paris Agreement commitments practical and sustainable, and in building climate resilience to fight against growing climate challenges.

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Socio-Political and Economic Challenges of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan after 9/11: A Study of Lahore

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: March 13, 2025	Sectarian violence refers to a clash of or animosity out of religious beliefs or divisions within the same religion. In Pakistan, it mostly happens between Sunni and Shia Muslims plus their little offshoots whereby violence keeps happening. Over the time, these sectarian conflicts have become worse, and instability has increased. It became a centre in the war on terrorism after the 9/11 attacks hence facilitating and fighting against religiously motivated violence. The country has violent threats everywhere, terrorism separatist insurgencies and interfaith conflicts. Post 9/11 change of security environment in Pakistan gave rise to conditions that nurtured sectarian violence. Internal factors, particularly long-standing sectarian divisions and extremist ideologies, overlaid with external political manipulation and regional dynamics, have again amplified the crisis. This paper tried to identify the socio-political and economic challenges that sectarian violence raises in Pakistan along with an overview of how religious intolerance, political interests, and outside influences are perpetuating these conflicts.
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Keywords <i>Sectarian violence</i> <i>9/11</i> <i>Sunni-Shia conflict</i> <i>Terrorism</i> <i>Socio-political challenges</i>	

1. Introduction

Violence can be considered as any act or behaviour, intentional or unintentional, that causes physical or psychological harm to someone else – crime, discrimination, abuse or violence in all sorts of contexts. (WHO, 2023) While some centre their attention on direct interpersonal violence, others broaden the perspective to include harmful consequences as an outcome of social, political and economic practices. Sectarian violence is the violence of a religious or sectarian nature. It is mostly seen between different groups within the same religion. In Pakistan Sunni and Shia Muslim sectarian ideologies have expressed violence with such extremes of targeted killing and bombing besides attacks on religious congregations (Rafiq, 2014). Despite having their roots in theological disagreements, these conflicts are made worse by social, political, and outside forces that widen societal gaps. The Zia era (1977–1988), which imposed state-sponsored Islamization policies that favoured Sunni versions, especially the Deobandi School, deepened Pakistan's long-standing sectarian tensions (Alvi, 2023). Sectarian conflict was sped up by this institutional injustice as well as geopolitical events like the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the Afghan War (1980s), which further divided the Sunni and Shia communities (Nasr, 2020).

By overflowing Pakistan with militant ideologies, weapons, and outside funding, the Afghan war created new undercurrents. During this time, fundamental Sunni groups like SSP (*Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan*) and its branch, LeJ (*Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*), came into being. They clearly targeted Shia

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communities and assisted the idea of Pakistan becoming a Sunni-dominated state (Rafiq, 2014). Shia groups in Pakistan improved strength as a result of the Iranian Revolution, which improved political engagement through organizations like the TNFJ (*Threek Nifaz Fiqah-e -Jafria*)³. Sectarian splits were worsened when Saudi-backed Sunni factions reacted unpleasantly to these Shia initiatives.

The use of sectarian violence made Pakistanis situation more vulnerable after (9/11)⁴, and Pakistan's following strategic alliance in the US-led war on terror. Radical organizations in Pakistan found new opportunities to increase their power, Pakistan's involvement in the war on terror changed the whole dynamics of sectarianism (Abbas, 2012). The situation of Sectarian violence in Pakistan became more complex as a result of various religious parties joined alliances with Al Qaeda. This diffusion of extremist ideologies, and the growing of global jihadism further intensifies the environment. TTP with clear jihadist agenda joined other sect prone groups like LeJ to launch attacks against Shia Muslims especially in holy days like Muharram (Irfani, 2004). These networks became more lethal as foreign warriors joined them with resources like weapons and money. State of Pakistan has been facing serious challenges in dealing with these unholy alliance (Majeed, 2021).

This study helped us in deepen our understanding of sectarian violence impacts on political, social, and economic dimensions in Pakistan after 9/11. This study clears how extremist organizations are responsible in weakening social cohesiveness and also breeding sect-based revenge seeking culture. Sectarian identities have been used for political and ideological ends. This article demonstrates how sectarianism impact communities in many ways other than assaults, by using the Comprehensive Conception of Violence (CCV) framework, which broadens the definition of violence to encompass psychological, economic, and structural harm. The study emphasizes the role of domestic and international actors in fostering sectarianism, underscoring how political manipulation, historical grievances, and geopolitical rivalries continue to shape Pakistan's sectarian landscape. By analysing these interconnected issues, the article aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors driving sectarian violence in Pakistan and the long-term implications for its society and governance.

2. Research Question

What are the core tenets and narratives of Shia and Sunni in Pakistan, and how do they contribute to or challenge sectarian divides?

Did the "War on Terror" discourse and rhetoric contribute to sectarian tensions within Pakistan?

Do social, political, and economic factors have impact on sectarian violence in Pakistan?

3. Objectives

Investigate the influence of extremist organizations in fuelling and exploiting sectarian violence.

Analyse how the post-9/11 environment, particularly the "War on Terror," reshaped the nature and targets of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

To explore the impact of social, political, and economic factors of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

4. Methodology

This research employs historical, descriptive analytical and quantitative methods to analyse the factors influencing sectarian violence in Pakistan post-9/11. Data was collected through **convenient sampling**, analysed using **regression analysis** to examine the effect of social, political, and economic aspects on sectarian violence. Additionally, **Principal Component Analysis (PCA)** was utilized for

³ The Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown by the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which turned Iran into an Islamic republic. Iran then began importing Shia ideology into its neighbours.

⁴ According to reports, Al Qaeda's commanders were in Afghanistan when terrorists attacked the United States' twin towers and the Pentagon. The United States then attacked Afghanistan in the name of the war on terror.

dimension reduction, leading to the growth of indices related to social, political, and economic factors. The reliability and validity of the constructs were ensured through **Cronbach Alpha** and **Average Variance Explained (AVE)** tests, while **factor loadings** were used to measure the relevance of the variables. Data collection through secondary sources like books, journals and reports whereas primary data collected through survey. To further support the results, the study assimilates historical case studies of sectarian incidents, providing an inclusive understanding of how these factors contribute to the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

5. Literature Review

Carter & Caton (2022), Interreligious conflicts that occur within the same religious group are determined by the social and political environment in which the sectarian group operates. These conflicts go beyond theological disagreements and often arise out of competition for political and communicative resources. When groups lack access to these resources, it fosters negative attitudes toward one another, even among members of the same religious identity. Sectarian violence is no longer simply rooted in ancient religious teachings; instead, it is increasingly shaped by contemporary political factors shaped by the interaction of the state with religious groups. Such conflicts often arise when groups compete for limited political and religious resources controlled by the state, reinforcing their divisions and identities.

Palicka (2021), the focus is on understanding sectarianism, particularly within the context of Sunni Muslims and Alawites. To establish a common understanding, the term 'sect' is defined as a group of individuals with distinct beliefs and practices, often within or separated from a larger religious group. Sectarianism, however, is a complex concept with no universally accepted definition, often carrying negative connotations. It can encompass violent conflicts between sects, but also extends to broader notions like bias, prejudice, or stereotypes. Such variability in its definition can hinder effective analysis by simplifying cause-and-effect relationships. Sectarian identity is framed as the sense of belonging to a collective marked by major, institutionalized, intra-religious divisions. It is crucial to note that mere affiliation with a group is insufficient; individuals must actively identify themselves as Sunni. Identity is not static; it is shaped by social and political processes from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Analysing these processes will be fundamental in exploring sectarian violence.

Holtmann (2014), traditionally sectarian violence within Islam's sects has been uncommon, often orchestrated by way of clerics or political leaders instead of spontaneous outbreaks. Today, extremist organizations, regularly supported with the aid of states, are the principle drivers of sectarian killings. Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, whilst outstanding, do not outline their actions in sectarian phrases, alternatively using anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and anti-American narratives for his or her jihad. Sectarian identification has surged due to battle and chaos. Extremist groups have leveraged satellite television and the internet for propaganda and recruitment.

Haqqani (2023), within the overdue 1970s and early 1980s, Pakistan went via a duration of Islamization underneath well-known Zia-ul-Haq's army rule. Throughout this time, tensions between extraordinary non secular corporations increased. The Ahmadis had been the primary to be focused, as the authorities, influenced via Sunni Islamists, declared them a non-Muslim minority in 1974. The authorities additionally brought regulations like the imposition of zakat (charitable donations) and the growth of spiritual faculties that favoured Sunni companies. This caused protests by means of the Shi'a minority. The *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-Fiqh-e-Jaafariya* (TNFJ), a Shi'a set, emerged and demanded the right to comply with their very own non secular laws. Matters escalated when the authorities tried to forcefully deduct zakat from Shi'a money owed, main to huge-scale protests in Islamabad in 1980. Ultimately, the authorities exempted the Shi'a from this policy. The demands of the TNFJ for multiple interpretations of Islamic law and the formation of an Islamic navy have been considered with suspicion by way of the Sunni-led nation. This era marked the start of sectarian conflicts and confrontations in Pakistan.

Fair (2015), the rise of Sunni and Shia Islamist moves, in conjunction with local dynamics related to Iran and Iraq, further contributed to sectarian violence. Inside the Nineteen Eighties, Pakistan have become a battleground for militant agencies involved within the Afghan Jihad, and the Kashmir struggle furnished any other area for their sports. The events of Sep 11 considerably modified the situation, as Pakistan was compelled to cooperate with America against terrorism. This cooperation additionally uncovered inner militant dynamics within Pakistan. One first-rate organization that emerged throughout this time was the Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP), which had robust Deobandi influences and operated especially in Punjab. This highlighted the complexity of Pakistan's militant panorama. All through its stormy records, sectarian violence and the continued battle to define Pakistan's identity have remained great issues.

Abbas(2011), after the September 11 attacks, the Pakistani government briefly debarred both Sunni & Shia sectarian militant groups under President Musharraf. However, concerns have arisen about the revival of anti-Shia militant groups, like SSP, since Musharraf's withdrawal. The Shia tribes in Pakistan's FATA are mostly vulnerable, as the Taliban and al-Qaida have been gaining ground there and targeting Shia communities, particularly in Parachinar (Kurram Agency). Regardless of these attacks, Shia replies have been comparatively controlled, with sporadic reactive attacks against the native Taliban. Furthermore, a debarred Shia radical group termed SMP seemingly reappeared in the years 2008 & 2009. Shia in Pakistan has an assessment that the growing sectarian attacks are threat to their existence, which has effected Shia's political activities. Attacks on Pakistan's Shia population can also strain relations with Iran, a Shia-majority country, and worsen regional tensions.

6. Research Gap

Lots has been investigated on the topic of sectarian violence but this study focused on the contextual gap in the field in the context of global war on terror after 9/11. The topic is carefully selected to measure the socio-political and economic, impact of sectarian violence after 9/11. Lahore was selected since it has long been home to a variety of sectarian groupings due to its sacred sites. After 9/11, a number of violent incidents occurred in the city, prompting a survey to assess the effects of sectarian violence in the Lahore region. This study enables us to generalize the impact of sectarian violence in other urban areas as well.

7. Political, Social, and Economic Impacts of Sectarianism in Pakistan after 9/11

Sectarianism in Pakistan, historically rooted in religious differences between Sunni and Shia Muslims, was largely influenced by the events of 9/11. The war on terror not only deepened the existing sectarian conflict but also presented new dynamics. Political actors manipulated sectarian identities for personal and electoral gain, non-state actors gained unparalleled power, and the country's economy suffered as violence upset daily life. This section unfolds post 9/11 political, social, and economic concerns of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

7.1 Political Consequences of Sectarian Violence

7.1.1 Weakening of Democratic Institutions

Politicians used to exploit sect-based identities to meet their political goals which damages the democratic institutions in Pakistan (Rafiq, 2014). Combining sect with political agenda became common in Post 9/11 years to earn the support of voters and bag votes during elections. The government put half-hearted efforts to address sectarianism which ends up in affecting good governance, weakening national unity with sharpening deep polarization (Bhattacharya, 2019).

In elections JI formed an alliance with SSP and LeJ to create its political influence. In 2002 *Jammat-Islami*, extended its alliance by joining another religious alliance MMA, which helped it gain more political power in KPK (Majeed, 2021). In 2010s TLP, another extremist group which draws its

support from the *Barelvi* Sunnis group, and Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) emerged as major players in sectarian politics (Haqqani, 2023).

Electoral violence is a byproduct of sectarian division, undermines the democratic process in Pakistan. In the 2008 elections, representatives from Shia community were often targeted by religious extremist groups. Representatives were facing threats, pressure, and even assassination attempts from the above-mentioned groups. Elections legitimacy was questioned due to widespread violence, compromising freedom and fairness in the election process (Irfani, 2012). General elections 2013 reflects how sectarian violence effects the voting process in the cities of Balochistan and Karachi, which further divides the political landscape (Rafiq, 2014).

7.1.2 Erosion of State Legitimacy

Incapability of state to deal with sectarian violence in the cities of Balochistan and Karachi has weakened its legitimacy. Hazara Shias were targeted in Quetta, this incidence exposed performance of law enforcement agencies. These incidences broke the trust of marginalized communities on state institutions (Bhattacharya, 2019)

Almost 100 people were killed in bombing in January 2013 in Quetta, illustrate the state's failure to protect defenceless populations (Chandran, 2003). These types of events disappoint people with the government and raised questions about the state's claim in providing peaceful environment free from sectarian violence. Allegations of complicity and prejudice within the security apparatus have further eroded public trust. Many have faith that elements within the state selectively target or protect few sectarian groups based on political or ideological reflections, undermining the state's authority and its ability to govern efficiently (Majeed, 2021).

7.1.3 Strengthening of Non-State Actors

One of the most disturbing consequences of sectarian violence has been the authorization of non-state actors, particularly militant groups that flourish on sectarian conflict. Organizations like LeJ, ASWJ, and TLP have added significant influence in local and national politics. These groups challenge the state's claim over use of mean of violence, they have created parallel governance structures in those regions where state presence is weak (Fair, 2015).

In Waziristan & tribal areas, sectarian militant groups have set up their own Sharia courts and indigenous administrations, which provides security and basic services to local populations. In the bog city like Karachi, few areas are controlled by sectarian groups who provide security and infrastructure, henceforth they establish no go areas that are difficult to govern (Haqqani, 2023). These parallel state groups damaged the state's power, further confusing efforts to restore law and order.

7.1.4 Impact on Regional and Global Relations

Neighbouring countries of Pakistan i.e. Iran and Afghanistan are responsible in exporting sectarian violence in Pakistan. Cross-border extremist ideologies sectarian networks have stressed Pakistan's diplomatic relations with Iran, which has frequently expressed concern over the security of Shia communities. The participation of Pakistani militants in exporting sectarian violence in Afghanistan has also complex Pakistan's relations with its neighbour, contributing to regional uncertainty (Fair, 2015).

Globally, Pakistan's image has suffered due to continued sectarian violence. Pakistan being recognized as sectarian militancy hub, its efforts to attract foreign investment, secure international aid, and build strategic alliances are all in vain. Pakistan's fight against sectarian violence often questioned

in its communications with global powers, particularly the United States, as the country navigates its role in the war on terror (Amara Tul Kubra, 2022).

7.2 Social Implications of Sectarian Violence

7.2.1 Decline in Social Harmony

Sectarian violence further deepens the existing divisions within Pakistani society, which ends up in the decay of social coherence and increased split along sectarian lines. In urban areas like Karachi and Quetta, societies have become gradually segregated, with Sunni and Shia groups living within their marked areas for safety. This demarcation highlights sectarian identities, limiting inter-sectarian interactions and establishing divisions within society (ICG, 2013).

7.2.2 Marginalization and Persecution of Minority Communities

The harassment of Shia minority has always been the most notable concerns of sectarian violence. The Hazara Shia community in Quetta has been frequently targeted by extremist groups like LeJ, facing bombings, shootings, and other forms of violence. In January 2013 bombings, which killed over 100 Hazaras, exemplify the vulnerability of this community and the continuing threats they face. Due to continue attacks Hazara community flee their homes, looking for refuge in safer areas and upsetting their livelihoods (AI, 2012).

7.2.3 Psychological Trauma

The psychological Impact of sectarian violence particularly among survivors and witnesses of attacks has been deep. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), nervousness, & hopelessness are consistent among those who were exposed to repeated violence. Women and children, in particular, are defenceless to the long-term psychological effects of living in conflict-affected areas. Save the Children organization data show that children in regions like Balochistan and KP suffer from cognitive and emotional growth issues due to their prolonged contact to violence (Siddiqui, 2023)

7.2.4 Disruption of Social Services and Infrastructure

Sectarian violence disturbed social services, in conflict-prone regions like KP and Balochistan. Educational institutions are often closed due to security issues, depriving thousands of students from attending their classes. This challenge has a long-term impact over the literacy rate in these regions (UNESCO, 2022). The health sector is no different than education, health facilities are often unavailable or lack staff, henceforth communities have no access to essential medical services. The stress on healthcare systems worsens existing health disparities pushing people in absolute poverty (WHO, 2013).

7.3 Economic Impact of Sectarian Violence

7.3.1 Disruption of Economic Activities

Pakistan's economic activities adversely effected due to sectarian violence particularly in major cities like Karachi. Karachi is taken as the country's economic hub, brutally exposed to sectarian violence. There has been reported regular violence in the city which leads to business disruptions, market closures, and property damage. Due to compromised law and order situation in Pakistan, investor were not interested to invest led slow economic growth and drop in trade activities (ICG, 2011).

7.3.2 Economic Hardships on Affected Communities

Reportedly communities suffering from sectarian violence were also facing severe economic challenges, including the destruction of property, loss of livelihoods, and displacement. Many families in violence-prone areas have been compelled to flee their homes, which effects their economic activities hence pushing them into poverty (AI, 2012). In agricultural regions like KP, it's difficult for farmers to access markets, and fear of violence has prohibited them from harvesting their fields. This trouble has had a significant impact on food security and local economies, contributing to extensive economic instability (UNESCO, 2022).

8. Al Qaeda and Sectarianism in Pakistan

8.1 Formation of Alliances with Local Militant Groups

Local militant groups with fundamental Sunni ideology in Pakistan built an alliance with Al-Qaeda after 9/11. Al Qaeda in alliance with local militant group LeJ and SSP carry out high-profile sectarian attacks, targeting Shia communities across Pakistan. In Pakistan complex sectarian environment this local alliance allows Al Qaeda to function more efficiently (Rafiq, 2014).

8.2 Increase in Sectarian Clashes

Sect base violence increased in Pakistan with the arrival of Al Qaeda's, usually bombings and other form of violent attacks on Shia communities were conduct by this organization. Al Qaeda and its alliance with LeJ and SSP came into limelight with high-profile incidents i-e-2013 Quetta bombings and the Ashura procession bombings in Karachi. In sect base violence attack not only people lost their life but this also deepens sectarian tensions, leading to reciprocal violence.

8.3 Foreign Fighters and Sectarianism

In post 9/11 scenario militants from Afghanistan cross border and entered Pakistan these militants also involved in sect base violence due to which there was rise in sectarian violence. These fighters, many of whom were associated with Al Qaeda's radical ideology, brought with them resources and expertise that improved the abilities of local militant groups. This involvement of fighters from outside further complicate law and order situation in Pakistan, making it tougher for the state to contain sectarian violence (Rafiq, 2014).

9. TTP and Sectarian Violence

9.1 Targeting Shia Communities

TTP which draws its support from TTA , posed a considerable challenge to government of Pakistan after 9/11, it played a vital role in sectarian tensions in Pakistan. The TTP claims to draw its ideology from Sunni sect which allows them to target Shia communities, attacks comprise of bombings during religious processions. The aim of these attacks were to maximize casualties of Shia community led to deepen the divisions within Pakistani society (Sayed, 2021).

9.2 TTP's Collaboration with Other Groups

To operate more effectively TTP formed alliance with other sectarian organizations i.e. LeJ and SSP, this alliance aimed to carry out coordinated attacks on Shia communities. During the days of Muharram this alliance conducted a joint operations on Muharram processions and other gathering of Shia community led to mass fatalities. Operational capability of TTP increased due to its alliance with other group which led to the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

9.3 Impact on Social Cohesion and Community Relations

Militant organization TTP's actions in under developing areas of KPK and Balochistan in Pakistan seriously effects the social consistency in Pakistan. By attacking Shia communities and public spaces related with Shia religious practices, the TTP has impaired mistrust and aggression between Sunni and Shia populations. This environment of fear and doubt has made it gradually difficult for communities to involve in fruitful dialogue or work towards compromise (Sayed, 2021).

10. Results and Analysis

This study intended to find out what were the key factors which impacted the sectarian violence in Pakistan. Sectarian violence dependent variable was studied under socio-political and economic independent variables. Principle component factor method is used for dimension reduction and developed index of social, political, economic and sectarian violence.

Cronbach Alpha and average variance explained is used to check the reliability and validity of construct. The results of Cronbach Alpha and AVE are reported in Table. Moreover, regression analysis is used to examine the impact of social, economic, and political factors on sectarian violence. The results of regression are reported in Table. The values of Factor loading indicate the relevance of each question with the main construct. Results of factor loading are reported in Table.1.1. Sample was selected through convenient sampling.

Table.1.1: Regression Analysis
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.012	.078		.147	.883
social factors	.037	.097	.036	.382	.703
Political	.246	.094	.244	2.624	.010
Economic	.030	.083	.030	.365	.716

- a. Dependent Variable: sect Sig value should be less than **.05** means significant relationship between Independent and dependent Variable. Beta explains size of impact and it should be above.

Table.1.2:ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	12.671	3	4.224	4.302	.006 ^b
Residual	153.153	156	.982		
Total	165.825	159			

- a. Dependent Variable: Sectarian Violence

- b. Predictors: (Constant), economic, political, social factors

If value of F is greater than 3 model is good fit

Table1.3: Principle Component Analysis

Construct(Q)	KMO	Bartlett	Cronbach Alpha
Social factors	.651	66.9 (0.00)	.521
Political factor	.645	92.07	.628
Economic factor	.586	45.621	.692
Sectarian awareness	.539	10.26	.550

Bartlett and KMO two test reflect is dimension reduction is possible or not if its value is above .5 then dimension reduction is acceptable. Cronbach alpha value should be greater than .5

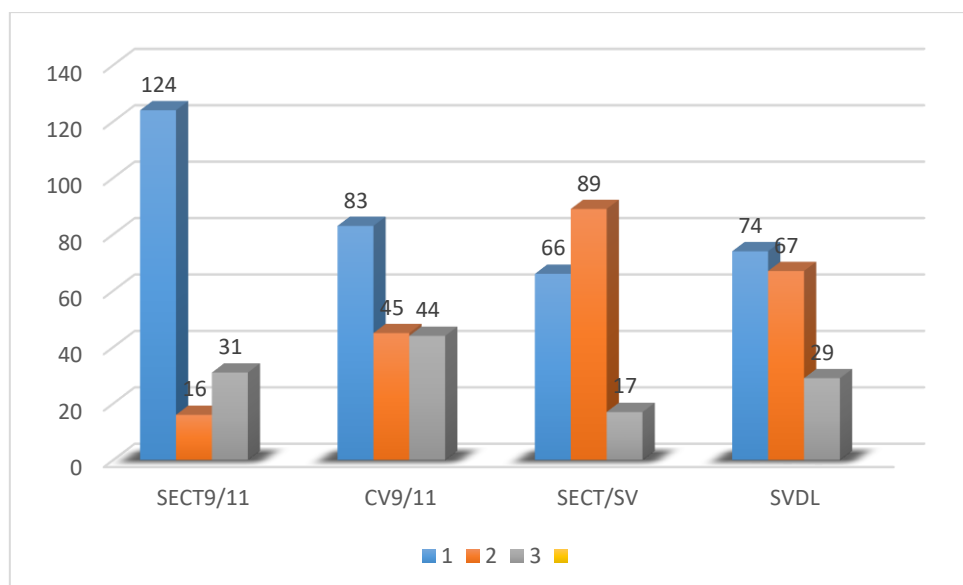
Table 1.4: Factor Loading

Items	Factor loadings	Average Explained Variance
Soc	.760	58.63
DISP	.747	
INTSECT	.789	
FI	.601	53.02
PIP	.797	
TECO	.770	
POL	.719	61.93
RL	.806	
LL	.832	
SECT	.734	42.64
RSECT	.693	
PSECT	.510	

Each individual question should be 40 percent related to construct. As a rule of thumb average variance should be AVE 50. Here AVE indicates that **58 %** variance has been explained by these three indicators (q).

10.1 Analysis.

Results of regression analysis showed that political factor value .01 has a significant relation with sectarian violence. Which also means social and economic factors as showed in results has no significant impact on sectarian violence.

**Figure 1.1 War on Terror after 9/11 and Its Impact on Sectarian Violence in Pakistan**

*Sectarian violence after 9/11 *Causes of sectarian violence and 9/11.*Terrorism post /11 overshadowed sectarian violence. *Sectarian violence effect on daily life.

As per the 124 respondents sectarian violence increased after the incident of 9/11. 83 Respondents believe that causes of sectarian violence were increased external influence. 89 respondents agreed with the idea that 9/11 diverts focus of authorities from sectarian violence. 74 of respondents agree that sectarian violence have effect on their daily life.

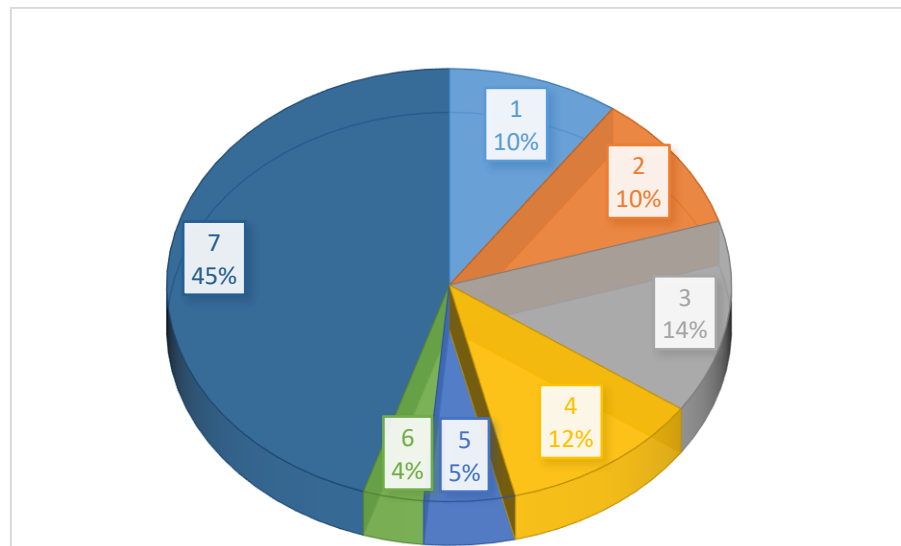


Figure1.2: Indicators of Inter Faith Harmony

Factors that shape interfaith harmony was media (10%), interfaith dialogue (10%), education (14%), religious leaders (12%), political leaders (5%), community program (6%) and all of above (45%). Hence it was established that 45% of respondents believe all these efforts are relevant in creating interfaith harmony among sectarian groups.

As per the assumptions that sectarian violence is linked with socio-economic and political factors regression analysis results showed people believe that political factor had positive impact with sectarian violence as compared to socio and economic factors in Pakistan. Hence government of Pakistan needs to work on political aspect engaging local, religious and political leadership in managing the sectarian violence in Pakistan.

10.2 Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

Principal component analysis (PCA) was used to reduce the dimensionality of the information and identify key factors that contribute to sectarian violence. The analysis focused on three main categories: political, social, and economic factors. These categories were broken down into specific indicators, such as political manipulation, economic instability, and social fragmentation, which were then analysed to determine their impact on sectarian violence.

The results of the PCA showed that political factors, particularly political manipulation and instability, explained the majority of the variance in sectarian violence. Social and economic factors, while still relevant, contributed less to the overall variance.

10.3 Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between sectarian violence and the independent variables of political, social, and economic factors. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between political factors and sectarian violence ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that political manipulation, particularly during election periods, plays a crucial role in fuelling sectarian conflict. The social and economic factors, while important, did not exhibit the same level of significance.

10.4 Factor Loadings and Variance Explained

The factor loadings indicated that political factors explained 58% of the variance in sectarian violence, highlighting the central role of politics in shaping the conflict. Social factors explained 42% of the variance, while economic factors contributed only 30%. These results suggest that political dynamics, particularly the manipulation of sectarian identities for electoral gain, are the primary drivers of sectarian violence in Pakistan.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

Sectarian violence is deeply rooted in Pakistan's historical, religious, and geopolitical dimensions. It has shaped the country's socio-political environment, through conflicts between Sunni and Shia communities, and other minority sects as well. Sectarian violence can be traced back to state policies, particularly under General Zia in the 1980s. Zia's Islamization actions deepened sectarian divides in Pakistan. His government endorsed Sunni-centric descriptions and madrassas that became centres for sectarian ideology.

Local militant groups in Pakistan draw financial and moral support from their foreign supporter like Saudi Arabia and Iran, who want to support their respective ideologies in Pakistan resulting in the spread of violence. The socio-economic situation of Shia Muslims is weak as they face discrimination, violence, and marginalization in comparison with other communities in Pakistan. The impact of sect-based violence not only erode the social fabric of Pakistani society but also negatively affects the economic indicators of Pakistan, especially in underdeveloped areas of Pakistan like Parachinar and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The government of Pakistan banned extremist organizations like LeJ and SSP but it turned out that ban has not reduced the intensity of sectarian violence. Furthermore delays and inconsistent policy executions along with political challenges slow down the process. Ad-hoc solutions like security measures should be paired up with long term measures like socio-economic growth, education transformations, and diplomatic initiatives.

- To address sectarian violence, the government of Pakistan must address the core issue i-e political modifications in which religious and political leadership should come together to address the causes of violence.
- Electoral reforms is another aspect which could prevent political parties from using sectarian rhetoric.
- Law enforcement agencies should observe impartiality in contesting sectarian violence.
- Social cohesion via education and economic growth via investment are additional, efforts in violence-affected regions to break the cycle of sectarian conflict.

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The Rise of Ethnic Nationalism and Its Implications for Pakistan’s Multi-Ethnic Future

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Article Information			Abstract
Received:	April	15, 2025	<p>The concept of an ethnic state and its implications for a multi-ethnic society are critical areas of study in understanding the political and social dynamics of Pakistan. Historically, Pakistan was conceived as a multi-ethnic nation, consisting of diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious groups. However, over time, the notion of an ethnic state dominated by a dominant ethnic or cultural group has raised challenges to the integrity and unity of the country. The rise of ethnic nationalism in Pakistan has been influenced by political, historical, and regional factors that have shaped the nation's trajectory since its creation in 1947. This abstract explores the complexities surrounding Pakistan's multi-ethnic identity, examining the socio-political forces that have sought to define the nation's future along ethnic lines. The future of a multi-ethnic Pakistan depends on its ability to balance regional autonomy with national unity, address the demands of various ethnic groups, and foster an inclusive political framework. This discussion also delves into the potential outcomes of an ethnic-driven state structure and the risks of exacerbating ethnic tensions, destabilizing national cohesion, and marginalizing smaller ethnic groups. The study concludes that for Pakistan to remain a multi-ethnic society, policies that promote ethnic inclusivity, equitable allocation and distribution of resources, and respect for Pluralism and cultural diversity are essential for long-term stability and peace.</p>
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<i>Pakistan</i>			
<i>Diversity</i>			
<i>Ethnic conflict</i>			
<i>Societal integration</i>			

1. Introduction

The question of ethnic identity and the challenges faced by multi-ethnic societies have been central to the political converse in numerous countries, particularly in post-colonial countries like Pakistan. When Pakistan established in 1947, it surfaced as a different nation with a rich mosaic of diverse ethnicities, verbal, and artistic groups. The vision of its founding fathers was that of a unified state where these differences would attend within the frame of a participated public identity. Still, over the decades, the emergence of ethnic nationalism, indigenous difference, and political movements calling for lesser autonomy have brought the idea of an ethnic state into sharp focus. This pressure between maintaining a multi-ethnic identity and the rise of ethnicity- driven politics has led to significant debates on the future of the country.

The birth of an ethnic state, which is frequently driven by the dominance of a single ethnic or dominant group, poses a unique challenge in a multi-ethnic society like Pakistan. Pakistan’s political

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history, characterized by indigenous difference, insular divides, and ethnic movements, has made it decreasingly delicate to maintain a cohesive public identity. The rise of demands from ethnic groups for lesser autonomy or recognition of their artistic and verbal rights has led to complex conversations about the future of Pakistan as a multi-ethnic state. Understanding the counteraccusations of these dynamics is pivotal in prognosticating the unborn line of Pakistan, particularly in terms of its political stability, social cohesion, and profitable substance.

This paper seeks to explore the literal environment of ethnic identity in Pakistan, dissect the forces that have shaped the demand for an ethnic state, and examine the challenges and openings that lie ahead for a multi-ethnic Pakistan. By probing these rudiments, the study aims to offer perceptivity into how Pakistan can navigate its complex ethnic geography while seeking to insure public concinnity and social harmony in the face of growing ethnic and indigenous demands. The paper will also address implicit policy results to alleviate ethnicity pressures and foster a further inclusive political terrain that supports the different races that make up Pakistan.

1.1 Historical Background

Pakistan's ethnic complexity has deep historical roots. Before its formation in 1947, the subcontinent was home to numerous ethnic groups, many of which were governed under the British rule. The colonial administration's policies—especially their reliance on specific ethnic communities (notably Punjabis and Urdu-speaking migrants) for military and bureaucratic roles—contributed to long-term imbalances in picture. These disparities laid the basis for ethnic grievances that would reemerge in times to come.

The secession of East Pakistan in 1971 was mainly due to ethnic and linguistic deprivation's, The 1973 Constitution recognized the importance of provincial identities and laid the foundation for federalism. However, central authorities retained key powers, limiting the autonomy of provinces. Even reforms like the 18th Amendment which decentralized substantial powers to the provinces have not fully addressed the ethnic dissatisfaction, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh.

1.2 Major Ethnic Movements

One of the most persistent ethnic-nationalist movements in Pakistan originates in Balochistan, Baloch nationalists argue that the central government exploits their resources while offering little in return. This sentiment has spurred multiple insurgencies. Pashtun nationalist Movements such as The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) has emerged in recent years. Sindhi nationalism emerged strongly in the 1970s under leaders like G.M. Syed, who proposed the idea of Sindhudesh, a separate homeland for Sindhis.

Additional ethnic demands include the call for a Saraiki province in southern Punjab and a Hazara province in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These demands are rooted in diverse linguistic, cultural, and economic identities. Though less militant, these movements reflect a broader pattern of regional groups seeking recognition and political space within the federal framework.

1.3 Impacts on Governance

Ethnic nationalism has had a deep consequence on how Pakistan is governed, often highlighting the tensions between centralized authority and regional strains. Although the constitution outlines a federal structure and reforms like the 18th Amendment have aimed to devolve power, much of the real control remains with the central government over areas such as natural resources, taxation, and security policy. This has left many ethnic groups, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh, feeling politically put aside and economically underprivileged.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study explores the intricate relationship between race and state dynamics, with a particular focus on Pakistan. It examines the literal emergence of ethnic countries and their part in shaping the contemporary transnational system, pressing the influence of ethnicities on global political structures. Also, the study analyses the impact of social diversity on state cohesion in Pakistan, assessing the country's challenges and unborn prospects as a multi-ethnic state. Another crucial ideal is to probe the level of dependence within multi-ethnic countries, examining how profitable difference among various ethnicities contribute to political insecurity, indigenous inequalities, and public cohesion. By addressing these objects, the exploration will give a comprehensive understanding of the complications restraining race and its consequences for governance and public concinnity.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study holds substantial academic and policy applicability as it provides a nuanced understanding of race's part in shaping state structures and political stability. By assaying the emergence of ethnic countries in the transnational system, the exploration contributes to global conversations on state conformation, nationalism, and identity politics. Likewise, it offers perceptivity into the challenges of maintaining public cohesion in a multi-ethnic state like Pakistan, where ethnical divisions have historically told political conflicts and governance structures. Understanding the profitable dependences of different ethnical groups will further punctuate the socio- political consequences of resource distribution and profitable marginalization. The findings of this exploration will be precious for policymakers, scholars, and institutions working on ethnical conflict resolution, governance, and inclusive state- structure. By offering practical policy recommendations, the study aims to contribute to the development of further indifferent and stable governance fabrics that fete and address ethnic diversity within the state.

2. Literature Review

The converse on race and nationalism in Pakistan has been extensively explored, with scholars examining the complications of ethnic identity, political struggles, public integration, and state responses to ethnic demands. This section critically evaluates being literature on the subject, pressing crucial themes, exploration gaps, and areas for beyond discussion.

Ahmed (1986) provides an in- depth analysis of ethnical nationalism in Pakistan, fastening on the Baloch, Sindhi, and Muhajir communities. He discusses the literal and political surrounds in which these groups have sought lesser autonomy. Still, the study doesn't explore the contemporary part of globalization and digital activism in ethnical movements, an area taking farther disquisition.

Jalal (1995) offers a critical perspective on Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership and the creation of Pakistan. She argues that Jinnah's vision for a Muslim state shaped the country's political structure and ethnical relations. While furnishing precious literal environment, her work doesn't address the post-independence elaboration of ethnical politics. Unborn exploration could compare Jinnah's vision with contemporary state programs to more understand ethnical challenges.

Harrison (1981) examines Baloch nationalism within the frame of indigenous power dynamics and Soviet influence. His study is pivotal in understanding the external factors shaping ethnical movements in Pakistan. Still, it primarily focuses on Cold War politics and doesn't dissect post-Cold War developments in Baloch nationalism. Unborn exploration should explore how enterprise like the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) impact ethnical politics in Balochistan.

Aziz (1993) compares Pakistan's ethnic politics with other post-colonial countries, pressing common challenges faced by multi-ethnic nations. His work effectively explains issues related to public

cohesion but lacks an in- depth analysis of digital media's part in ethnical rallying. In moment's digital age, farther exploration should explore how social media platforms impact ethnical converse in Pakistan.

Ahmad (2002) explores the relationship between race and politics, fastening on how ethnical groups like Punjabis, Pashtuns, Sindhis, and Baloch influence public concinnity. While his exploration provides a broad overview, it doesn't adequately address the part of youth in ethnical movements. Unborn studies should examine how youngish generations engage with ethnical politics, particularly in civic areas.

Ahmed (2013) traces the literal development of Pakistan's political system and the part of race in governance and political stability. His analysis is essential for understanding structural factors contributing to ethnical pressures. Still, he doesn't significantly bandy the impact of recent indigenous changes on ethnical politics. Unborn exploration should explore how degeneration programs affect ethnical autonomy.

Metcalf (2000) examines Islamic revivalism in British India and its influence on ethnical and religious individualities. Her work provides essential background for understanding Pakistan's religious-ethnical dynamics. Still, it doesn't dissect how contemporary Islamist movements interact with ethnical politics. Farther exploration should probe how religious groups impact ethnical conflicts in Pakistan moment.

2.1 Research Gap

A significant exploration gap exists in understanding the part of digital activism and social media in shaping ethnic politics and rallying in Pakistan. While being education has considerably examined literal surrounds, state responses, and socio- political confines of ethnical movements, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis on how digital platforms impact ethnical identity conformation, political engagement, and rallying strategies. The adding reliance on social media for political converse, particularly among youngish generations, necessitates an inquiry into how digital activism reshapes traditional ethnical movements, alters power dynamics between the state and various ethnicities, and facilitates transnational advocacy. Also, the crossroad of digital governance, state surveillance, and online suppression in the environment of ethnicities rallying remains unexplored. Addressing this gap through an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, will contribute to a nuanced understanding of contemporary politics of ethnicity in Pakistan and inform policy interventions for conflict resolution and inclusive governance. Separatists' inclinations, Politics, and limited Dynamics in Pakistan ethnicity plays a pivotal part in shaping political confederations and party systems in Pakistan. Various political parties have historically aligned themselves with specific ethnic identities, constituencies, leading to the regionalization of political power (Ahmed, 1986). The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has traditionally drawn support from Sindhis, while the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has represented the interests of Urdu- speaking Muhajirs (Jalal, 1995). also, Baloch nationalist parties similar as the Balochistan National Party (BNP) and Pashtun oriented parties like the Awami National Party (ANP) have shaped indigenous political geographies (Harrison, 1981). Still, being literature has not sufficiently examined the part of globalization and digital activism in reshaping ethnic political alliances. Unveiling the study should explore how social media platforms impact political rallying among ethnical groups in Pakistan (Khosro & Rovidad, 2023).

The crossroad of ethnicity and religion in Pakistan has created complex socio- political dynamics, frequently aggravating intergroup pressures and differences (Metcalf, 2000). The Sunni- Shia rift has historically attached with ethnic diversities, particularly in regions with different insular compositions, similar as Karachi and Gilgit- Baltistan (Qureshi, 2014). also, non-Muslim ethnic minorities, including Hindus and Christians, face systemic demarcation, farther complicating their ethnic and religious individualities (Siddiqi, 2019). While former studies have explored the part of religious

confederations in shaping ethnical conflicts, there's a lack of exploration on the influence of contemporary Islamist movements on ethnical identity conformation. Farther inquiry is demanded to assess the impact of religious- political associations on ethnical solidarity and divisions (Khan, 2020).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the crossroad of ethnicity, nationalism, and state policies in Pakistan. Exercising a case study and descriptive and analytical methodology, it analyses crucial ethnical movements, including the Baloch, Pashtun, and Muhajir struggles. The research further integrates both primary and secondary sources, for data collection. alongside getting data from published research papers and policy papers assessing public comprehensions of ethnic identity and political participation. Also, sanctioned government reports on ethnic programs give critical perceptivity. Secondary data sources include books, journal papers, policy papers, and media reports, offering both literal and contemporary perspectives on ethnic politics in Pakistan. The study employs thematic analysis to identify recreating patterns in ethnical rallying, state responses, and the influence of external actors. A relative analysis further contextualizes Pakistan's ethnic dynamics within broader global gestic of multi-ethnic nationalism.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Rooted in Realist Security Theory, this frame views ethnic conflicts as security dilemmas in which different ethnicities seek power and security in response to perceived pitfalls from the state or rival groups. In Pakistan, ethnic movements, similar as the Baloch nationalist struggle, can be interpreted through this lens, where the central government prioritizes territorial integrity while ethnic groups demand lesser autonomy. The state's response, including military operations and indigenous reforms, reflects a Realist approach to maintaining public concinnity through power and control.

Unlike other school of thoughts, Constructivism argues that ethnic individualities and nationalisms are socially constructed and evolve over time grounded on political converse, literal narratives, transnational influences. In Pakistan, ethnic identity is shaped by social traditions, migration patterns, and consequences of globalization. The part of digital& social activism, cross-border language traditions and norms uniformities, confederations, and transnational connections and movements (e.g., Pashtun Tahafuz Movement) illustrates how individualities are continuously constructed and readdressed rather than being stationary realities.

By integrating Realist Security Theory and Constructivism, this study provides a comprehensive frame to examine how ethnical groups in Pakistan both respond to state power and reconstruct their individualities through social and political processes (Constructivism). This binary approach allows for a nuanced understanding of ethnical politics and informs implicit policy results for ethnical integration and public cohesion.

4. Analysis of Ethnic Diversity in Pakistan

Pakistan's ethnic division and its demography and its connection to its geography is characterized by significant diversity, with major groups including Punjabis (roughly 44.7), Pashtuns (15.4), Sindhis (14.1), Baloch (3.6), and Muhajirs, who form a sizable civic demographic (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Each group exhibits distinct socio-artistic individualities shaped by literal migration patterns and indigenous confederations. The demographic attention of these groups influences political power distribution and socio- profitable structures. While Punjabis dominate civil and military institutions (Rais, 2017), Pashtuns hold significant influence in transnational trade and security sectors (Ahmed, 2013). The uneven indigenous representation of ethnic groups has counter accusations for governance, federalism, and policy- makers, frequently fuelling inter-ethnic contestations (Shaikh, 2020).

Ethnic identities in Pakistan plays a vital part in shaping social unrest and the narrative mostly propagated goes beyond the moral grounds and devised standards, language, and social structures. Language remains a central element of ethnic distinction, with major languages including Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, and Urdu, which also serves as a lingua franca (Rahman, 2002). Artistic practices similar as carnivals, myth, and traditional vesture support ethnical pride but also contribute to divisions in public identity construction (Jaffrelot, 2004). Ethnic confederations frequently mandate social networks, marriage patterns, and profitable openings, strengthening intra-ethnic cohesion while contemporaneously fostering inter-ethnic competition (Shah, 2019). The absence of an inclusive public identity has aggravated ethnic compartmentalization, leading to grievances regarding artistic representation in state narratives and media converse (Hussain, 2018). Race is a defining factor in Pakistan's political geography, impacting electoral gaster

Political parties' alliances, and governance structures. Political parties similar as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Awami National Party (ANP), and imaginative Baloch nationalist coalitions decide support from specific ethnical constituencies (Waseem, 2012). Still, the state's approach to ethnic politics has been inconsistent, oscillating between accommodation and suppression. The 18th amendment to the Constitution, which regressed power to provinces, was seen as a step toward lesser ethnic exploitation, yet a major opportunity over fair and just representation in civil institutions persist (Rumi, 2021). This provision played a significant part in managing the demands of ethno-national politics through co-optation or compulsion further complicates traditional relations, frequently sidelining popular processes in favour of centralized control (Siddiq, 2007).

Ethno-national difference are not positive or fruitful tendencies or developments that have fuelled grievances and movements demanding more resource allocation and autonomy. Punjab, as the profitable centre, attracts the maturity of artificial investment, while regions similar as Balochistan and interior Sindh remain economically marginalized (Ali, 2015). These difference manifest in employment patterns, with Muhajirs traditionally dominating regulatory and marketable sectors, while Sindhis and Baloch remain underrepresented in civil employment (Ahmed, 2020). Resource allocation, particularly in energy-rich regions like Balochistan, has been a flashpoint for ethnical conflict, with allegations of profitable exploitation by the central government (Grare, 2013). Also, ethnic divisions in labour requests contribute to occupational isolation, with Pashtuns constantly engaged in transport and trade sectors, while Sindhis and Baloch remain concentrated in agriculture (Shah, 2022). The unstable profitable geography not only exacerbates ethnical divides but also impacts public stability, gruelling programs that address indigenous profitable imbalances and promote inclusive development strategies.

4.1 Case Studies of Ethnic Conflict

The Balochistan conflict remains one of Pakistan's most prolonged case of ethno-national struggles, driven by grievances over political marginalization, profitable difference, and resource control (Grare, 2013). Baloch nationalist movements argue that the fiefdom's vast natural coffers, including gas and minerals, have been exploited by the central government without acceptable reinvestment in original development (Bansal, 2012). Consecutive governments have responded with a combination of military operations, profitable impulses, and political accommodations, similar as the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package (Rumi, 2021). Still, executed encounters, extrajudicial killings, and restrictions on political expression continue to fuel separatist sentiments (Ahmed, 2020). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has further exacerbated pressures, with Baloch chauvinists viewing it as a civil action to alter the fiefdom's demographic composition and excerpt coffers without serving original communities (Wolf, 2019).

The Mohajir community, composed of Urdu-speaking settlers from India following the 1947 partition, has faced challenges assimilating into Pakistan's socio-political geography (Verkaaik, 2004). Originally privileged due to their regulatory dominance, the rise of ethnic Sindhi nationalism and the posterior share system marginalized Mohajirs in government jobs and educational institutions

(Ahmed, 2013). This led to the conformation of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) in the 1980s, which sought to assert Mohajir identity and political influence (Waseem, 1996). Still, Karachi's ethnic diversity and MQM's militant body redounded in violent civic conflicts, drawing state crackdowns and shifting political alliances (Shah, 2022). In recent times, MQM's fragmentation and declining influence have raised questions about the future of Mohajir political identity (Raza, 2021).

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) represents a new form of extremist ethno-national activism, arising in response to state-led counterterrorism operations in the Pashtun belt (Abbas, 2020). Pashtuns have historically played a central part in Pakistan's security geography, with numerous servings in the service and being impacted by the Afghan conflict (Ahmed, 2013). Still, military operations in the Federally Administered ethnic Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) led to large-scale deportations and moral rights violations, fuelling resentment (Gul, 2021). PTM, led by Manzoor Pashteen, advocates for justice regarding enforced discoveries, extrajudicial killings, and ethnic profiling of Pashtuns (Shah, 2019). The state has responded with surveillance, apprehensions, and repression, framing the movement as a security trouble (Rumi, 2021). PTM's emergence highlights evolving ethnic dynamics in Pakistan, where youngish generations use digital activism to challenge state narratives (Kugelman, 2020).

4.2 Impact of race on National Unity

Ethnic diversity or ethnic pluralism in Pakistan has played a complex part in shaping public identity, frequently challenging the state's sweats to foster unified nationalism. The duty of a singular public identity, particularly through the state's emphasis on Islam and Urdu, has led to resistance from ethno-national groups seeking lesser recognition of their distinct individualities (Rahman, 2011). This resistance has contributed to regionalism and ethno-nationalist movements, particularly in Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Waseem, 2019). While people from different races culture traditions rallying have frequently been framed as a trouble to public cohesion, scholars argue that embracing ethnic pluralism rather than suppressing it could strengthen Pakistan's concinnity (Ali, 2020).

The Pakistani state has employed a combination of indigenous vittles', political accommodations, and military interventions to manage ethnic diversity. The 18th Correction to the Constitution, which granted lesser autonomy to businesses, was a significant step toward addressing ethnic grievances (Siddiqui, 2016). Still, critics argue that the perpetration of parochial autonomy remains inconsistent, with civil intervention persisting in crucial areas similar as resource distribution and security policy (Rumi, 2021). Military operations, particularly in Balochistan and the former Federally Administered ethnic Areas (FATA), have been justified as necessary for public security but have also fuelled further ethnic souring (Abbas, 2020). Despite these challenges, enterprise similar as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and targeted development systems in marginalized ethnic regions indicate sweats toward socio-profitable addition (Kugelman, 2020).

Institutional demarcation, media representation, and socio-economic and political difference continue to hamper tendencies towards ethnic disintegration in Pakistan. Ethnic minorities frequently face systemic disadvantages in employment, education, and political representation, buttressing being grievances (Ahmed, 2013). The depiction of ethno-national movements in mainstream media constantly frames them as security pitfalls rather than legitimate political expressions, further marginalizing these groups (Shah, 2019). Also, civic migration and demographic shifts have led to pressures between indigenous ethnic groups and migratory communities, particularly in Karachi and Balochistan (Verkaaik, 2004). Addressing these challenges requires inclusive governance strategies that promote indifferent development, original recognition, and political participation for all ethnic communities (Raza, 2021).

5. Findings and Results

This study provides an in- depth analysis of ethnic politics and identity conformation in Pakistan, pressing their consequences for governance, public concinnity, political and social development and social integration. The important findings are as follows:

- I. **Culture and Political Allegiance** Political parties in Pakistan frequently align with ethnic groups, leading to regionalized political geographies. Ethnic- grounded political rallying has redounded in both political commission and insular divisions, impacting electoral issues.
- II. **Economic difference and Marginalization** Economic inequalities among various ethnic grouping's energy grievances and demands for more autonomy. Unstable distribution of coffers, employment openings, and structure development have aggravated ethnical pressures, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh.
- III. **The part of Religion in Ethnic Identity**, Religious identity intersects with multiethnic Pakistan, ethno-national identity, impacting political representation and social cohesion. Sunni-Shia divisions, as well as the marginalization of non-Muslim ethnic nonages have contributed to social fragmentation.
- IV. **Multiple Ethnic and ethno-national Conflicts and State Response** Ethnic conflicts, similar as those in Balochistan and Karachi, demonstrate a pattern of state responses involving military interventions, political lodgement, and profitable impulses. Still, these measures are unable to completely address the root causes of ethnic disgruntlement.
- V. **Impact of Globalization and Digital Activism** The part of digital activism in ethnic rallying has increased significantly. Online platforms have handed marginalized ethnical groups with a space to state grievances and organize political movements, similar as the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM).

Table 1

Findings	Description / Implications
Historical Centralization	Power was concentrated among dominant ethnic groups, leading to the marginalization of smaller communities.
Inadequate Federal Reforms	Constitutional measures to increase provincial autonomy exist but have been implemented unevenly across regions.
Ethnic Depiction	Some ethnic groups have gained partial inclusion, but Baloch, Sindhi, and other minorities still face significant barriers.
Economic and Cultural Marginalization	Many ethnic movements stem from long-standing economic neglect and efforts to preserve distinct cultural identities.
Security Measures and Human Rights	State responses to ethnic dissent have often involved human rights violations, deepening mistrust.
Autonomy vs. Independence Tensions	While some groups seek greater autonomy, others push for independence; Pakistan's history (e.g., Bangladesh) highlights risks of unresolved ethnic conflict.

6. Conclusion

Ethnicities remain a central factor in shaping Pakistan's socio- political geography. This study underscores how ethnic identity influences political stability, profitable progress, and social political cohesion and development. While the state has introduced programs to manage multiple ethnic diversities, challenges persist in icing indifferent representation and addressing grievances. The crossroad of race, religion, and nationalism continues to shape Pakistan's domestic stability and state-structure.

7. Recommendations

To address ethnic difference and foster public concinnity, the ensuing recommendations are proposed:

- I. Equitable Resource Distribution The government must ensure fair allocation of resources and profitable openings to reduce ethnicity- grounded differences. Special focus should be given to underdeveloped regions similar as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- II. Inclusive Political Representation Electoral reforms should promote political inclusivity, icing acceptable representation of ethnic minorities in governance structures. Commensurable representation mechanisms could enhance nonage participation.
- III. Conflict Resolution through Dialogue A shift from military- led results to political and social dialogue is essential in managing ethnical conflicts. Establishing forums for inter-ethnic communication and disagreement resolution can contribute to long- term stability.
- IV. Strengthening Social Cohesion Educational reforms should emphasize inter-ethnic harmony, promoting artistic exchange programs and public narratives that celebrate diversity rather than consolidate divisions.
- V. Digital Governance and Ethnic rallying taking the multiple ethnicities on board while making decisions regarding their majority areas the part of social media campaign in ethnic gatherings must be conceded and regulated to help misinformation while icing that digital spaces remain accessible for licit political converse.

Upcoming investigations should concentrate on understanding the evolving nature of ethnic identities in Pakistan, particularly in the environment of globalization, digital activism, and transnational influences. Relative studies with other multi-ethnic countries could offer precious perceptivity into conflict resolution strategies. Also, empirical assessments of government programs, including the effectiveness of degeneration and affirmative action programs, are necessary to formulate further inclusive governance structures and programs because Pakistan is an amalgamation of multiple ethnicities not a nation to single ethnic group.

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Understanding China's Growing Global Influence: Perspectives and Assessments

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Article Information			Abstract
Received:	April	19, 2025	<p>From its aberration to classical Westphalian statehood features to global ascendancy, the key words such as ideational factors, identity, and normative structures, hold key to debate the growing global influence of China. The classical scholarship of modern statehood and international relations is pre-dominantly western, and it has its structural limitations to take on the key question of this research which goes as following: ‘<i>How to understand the increasing power and influence of China in the global arena?</i>’. So far, a conscious effort has been made to give Chinese International Relations’ scholarship an edge over the western literature as self-perception and identity politics holds key to understand the recent expansionist mood in global arena. Methodologically, the qualitative approach has been adopted to address the given question. As scholarship of international relations theories has been the key focus of the research so the key question has been first dealt in taking appraisal of causal and constitutive theories. The subsequent portion takes on the estimate of historicizing China’s Theory of International Relations. The last two sections have been focused on application of social constructivism to assess the China’s rise on global stage, and likewise the internal academic quest of China’s International Relations scholarship has been placed under the assessment to deliberate post-reformist International Relations Theory of International Relations. The research concludes on the note; that despite of its limitations still social constructivism provides a robust framework for understanding China’s foreign policy as a dynamic process of identity formation and normative adaptation, offering insights into its future trajectory in an increasingly interconnected world.</p>
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<i>Social Constructivism</i>			

1. Introduction

There has been an exhaustive debate going on to discuss the rise of China. Among the multifaceted reasons, the identity politics is at the centre stage. As it remains the most consistent feature of China's policies from 1949 to the date. It is imperative to mention here, that interplay of perceptions both at internal level and external level have been affecting the discourse of Chinese foreign politics. Particularly after 1978 when China had decided to adopt the reformist perceptive political policies, the subsequent years have been manifestation of the aforementioned state policy. So far, this research

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focuses on historicizing the varying trends of International Relations Theory within China and its impact on outlook of China as a state. The resultant role designation has not only been consistent with foreign policy preferences, but it also shaped the domestic political landscape in China over the years. Academically, three great debates of International Relations Theory are enlisted as *Revolutionaries vs Reformist (later Realist vs Reformist)*, *Realist vs Liberalist*, and *Liberalism, Realism (Causal Theories) vs Social Constructivism (Constitutive/Reflective Theories)*. The last theoretical debate in particular focuses upon the rise of China. It goes without saying that so far, officially none of Western International Relations Theory has been pronounced to be the most relevant to explain China's political trajectory. But the theoretical underpinnings of Social Constructivism such identity, perceptions, reference point, and social construction of knowledge comes close to explain the rise of China. So far, this research is based on first tracing the difference between causal and constitutive theories in terms of making sense of Chinese rise; then historicizing the various trends of International Relations Theory and its impact on State Functioning in China, and lastly it evaluates the relevance and shortcomings of Social Constructivism to explain the rise of China.

2. Literature Review

Traditionally, International Relations theory is typically divided into two: causal (problem solving), constitutive (reflective) theories. The predominance of these two theories is much anchored due to larger scholarship and audience in the discipline of international relations. It will be appropriate to look up for definition of tradition from *Oxford English Dictionary* before expounding into the details of this research, the tradition is defined as 'a long established and generally accepted custom or method of procedure, having almost the force of a law' (*Tradition Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at Oxford Learners Dictionaries. Com*, n.d.). In this regard, this will be safe to assume that anything 'traditional' is 'bound and observant by tradition'. The categorization of various theories in field of international relations is bound by their origin and immediate research agendas, so far, the traditional theories include realism and its off shoots, liberalism and its off shoots, and the English School. These theories inherit the classical teachings from Aristotle to Voltaire, and at times the proponents of traditional theories are bent upon reinterpreting these writings as if these were written for contemporary age (Soederberg, 2006). In addition to that, these theories are called traditional as they claim to possess the force of law, where for instance the realist logic of 'self-interest' and liberal logic of common-sense in face of 'absolute-gains' is among the various laws, which these two traditions claim to be omnipotent (Guilhot, 2017). On the other hand, the theories considered to be constitutive/critical/post-positivist include critical theory, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, feminism, normative theory, and historical sociology (Baylis & Smith, 2001). This will be worth probing question that, 'what makes them critical'? among multiple explanations, one is propounded by Steven Roach as he states, 'what makes critical IR theory "critical" is its self-awareness as a theory' an awareness reflective upon the critical/constitutive traditions of Hegel, Kant, Marx, Habermas, Butler, Derrida, and Michel Foucault (Roach, 2010). The fundamental difference between causal (problem-solving) theories, and constitutive (reflective) theories is furthered by their relative standpoint on epistemological and ontological reasoning, along with foundational and anti-foundational methodological underpinnings. In order to have a comprehensive understanding of the difference between the two traditions, this research may take on the questions of *causation, questions/premises, and inquiry into explanations/description*, should be done holistically.

On Causation, even though the difference between the causal and non-causal theories is quite known in literature of international relations, but the very genesis of this dichotomy has not studied in purview of etymology of cause itself. This has given way to implicit acceptance of Humean discourse of causation, which ultimately compels researchers to assume that causes or causal analyses imply, determinism, laws, and objectivism, along with referral to 'push and pull' factors to go for law-like generalizations. Kurki (2006), suggests the researchers of international relations to be aware of payoffs of Humean assumptions of causation, he rather suggests that 'we can also understand social scientific causal analysis as epistemically reflective, methodologically pluralist and complexity-sensitive'. So far, the overarching emphasis on empiricism by positivist/causal theories have set limits

on the concept of cause if it has not diminished it at all, so it remains an imperative to reassess the meanings of cause based on deeper ontological grounds. In this regard, philosophical realist aims at putting forth the new ontological framework about the objects of science, which in turn asks for both epistemological and methodological reassessment of 'scientific causal analyses. The scholarly contribution of Alexander Wendt, David Dessler, Colin Wight, and Heikki Patomaki as philosophical realist is worth referring to redirect meanings of cause (Kurki, 2006). Their subsequent contribution can be summarized as following:

- i. First, philosophical realist has helped reclaiming ontological conception of causation, as a result a radically anti-Humean ontological conception of cause has been brought forth, which suggests that causes must be assumed to exist as real ontological entities, and these are not mere creation of our imagination, but have real existence in the world outside our thought and observation. These causes are out there to be deciphered and analysed contrary to the view of Humean empiricist and sceptics' reflectivist.
- ii. Second, by virtue of reclaiming the ontological meaning of cause, the philosophical realists have helped the scholarly debates of international relations and social science to transcend the regularity dependence of Humeanism. As conventionally held by Humean Empiricism regularity is both necessary and sufficient for establishing the casual analysis, the philosophical realist on the contrary assign a new role to the observable regularities to be a part of scientific objective study instead of being whole of it. This in turn expands the scope and agenda of research in international relations and social science.
- iii. Third, the philosophical realist questions the regularity-determinism of the Humean empiricists in their construct of model of causation. The philosophical realist concedes to the idea that causal trajectory is complex and unpredictable. Therefore, the central focus of causal analysis should not be the analysis of independent variable, rather it should entail the study of complex interactions of compound factors.
- iv. Fourth, the surge of philosophical realist has resulted in redefinition of cause, quite devoid to scientific 'closed system' connotation. Resultantly, the causal analysis is defined not be abstract and 'scientific': rather scientific causal analysis is a 'refinement and extension of what we do in the practical functioning of everyday life'.

The above-mentioned debate has a visible impact on positivist vs hermeneutic and cause vs reason debate in social science and international relations. Despite of the fact, that philosophical realist has broadened the agenda of causal analysis but they still fell prey to the 'efficient causal reasoning', and as a result they are more prone towards 'pushing and pulling' factors of causal analysis. It brings them at odd with critical realist such as Bhaskar (2015), who claims that the said position of philosophical realist to be logical individualism. So far, Kurki (2006), asks for revisiting Aristotle to broaden the concept of cause. As it has been known to us that Aristotle presented the idea of four causes, *material, formal, efficient, and final cause* (Lear, 1988). An extensive revision can help the scholarship of social science to understand the constitutive causes of reality; material causes as something the world is made of, formal causes which shapes and defines matter, efficient cause as primary mover or a source of change, and final cause the ultimate objective for this craftsmanship which gives a seed to look up for causal analysis to begin with. After revising, the concept and misconceptions associate with the very word cause', now is the time to take a review of which type of questions are raised in causal and constitutive theories, that ultimately set these traditions apart from each other, as is described by their respective proponents.

On Questions, the particular proponents of both causal and constitutive theories base their relative standpoint on both epistemological and ontological differences, which ultimately leads to methodological differences as well. But scholars, like Wendt (1998), are of his view that epistemological difference between the two camps is overstated and zero-sum game. In either case, the scope of inspecting the questions cannot be omitted from investigation, as a careful view of the

questions that both causal and constitutive theories ask can give us a proper view that why a particular school of thought looks at the world with a different viewpoint, and how it eventually sums up in explanation/description scheme. The subsidiary questions in either of the camp entails the fundamental question, 'how are things in the world put together so that they have the properties that they do?' (Kaplan, 1966). Not only these questions further establish the Great Divide among various theories of international relations, but they also settle the objectives of various research conduct. One of the fundamental differences between the natural and social world relies in its building blocks; the natural world is made up of material sources, whereas the social world is made up of ideas. Based on this ontological difference and epistemological compulsions the characterization of questions should be taken into consideration. Causal theorists have almost an overwhelming consensus to frame and answer questions based on 'why' connotation, whereas there has been a debate and divide on questions based on 'how' (Kaplan, 1966). Among the causal theoreticians those who are more aligned with empiricism prefer questions based on 'how' as they are more bent upon deductive inference. These questions in turn give way to three assumptions in pursuits of causal analysis of how X caused Y: 1) X and Y exist independent of each other; 2) X precedes Y in time, and 3) but for X, Y would not have occurred. The said scheme explains change in the state of some variable system (Wendt, 1998). So far, Robert Cummins proclaims causal theories as 'transition theories', as it encapsulates the transition of dependent and independent variables (Levine, 1987).

On the other hand, bounded by different objectives, constitutive theories are meant for putting up the questions to account for properties of things in a particular structure, where they exist. So far, these theories are suggested as 'property' theories (Levine, 1987). Unlike transition theories, the constitutive theories are considered to be static. Even though, the constitutive theories are meant to study the dynamic systems, both in natural and social science, but constitutive theories abstract away from these processes and take clues, in an order to explain how systems are constituted. So far, the constitutive questions are based on forms like 'how-possible?' or 'what' (*Designing Social Inquiry*, 2021). This is quite notable, that constitutive theories/questions are bound to make counter-factual assessment part and parcel of their research pursuit to hold the veracity of their research conduct. Keeping in view that necessity is conceptual or logical, instead of causal or natural. This takes us to assess the objectives of explanation and understanding that leading proponents of both causal and constitutive theories claim to be the central point of departure between the two schools of thought.

On Explanation/Understanding, if the first great debate of theories of international relations between the idealist and realist camp can be transcended to the questions that 'why do war occurs? And 'how can we eliminate/contain wars from the face of the earth?' The second great debate between the Traditionalist vs Behaviouralists can be transcended to the fundamental question 'Can we study politics scientifically?' The associated debates in preceding years paved the way between the positivist vs post-positivist camp, and the great divide between the natural and social world came at the heart of processes of theorizing and objectives that these theories entail. In this regard, one of the most significant academic input has been put forth by Hollis and Smith (1990, pp. 1–10), in their thought-provoking book, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, when they suggest that social scientists have to make a choice between the two approaches or stories in their pursuit to search for knowable truth and that is based on account of an 'insider' and 'outsider' storyteller. The outsider's story is quite similar to that of natural science, and its gives perk of separating fact from practice which enables a researcher to explain the phenomenon quite effectively, this storyteller works on the principle of natural science and can rightfully labelled as positivist as he/she works on causal mechanism. Whereas the other storyteller accounts on making us understand what the events mean distinctly to that of laws of nature. This particular storyteller aims at recovering the individual and shared meanings that motivates actors to do what they did in particular instance. So far, an insider job is brought into the light the process of theorizing itself, and this will be a mistake for an insider to fall prey to causal mechanism and law-like generalization. The ultimate objective of the insider is to help us understand the processes under inquiry. So far, this is suggested that the differences between the positivist and post-positivist traditions are hard grind and almost impossible to reconcile, however the social constructivist does not agree with this assumption, and this is considered to be a middle range theory.

3. Methodological Considerations: Historicizing China's Theory of International Relations

There are three central questions that set the scope of Chinese theory of International Relations; first, should China open up to the rest of the world? Second how should China assess its national interest? Third, and the most important, can China rise peacefully? Ever since, China's has aimed at reforming and extending its role regionally and internationally, these questions have been at the heart of academic discourse of international relations, as it portrays a connection between China and international system/international society. It is imperative to mention here that the traces of China's role and status in International Relations can be traced back to Opium War in 1840, as by that point of time to the date the foundational questions such as, 'Who is Chinese nation?', 'Where does China stand vis-à-vis western dominated architect of statehood?', and 'How China can survive and rise up to the potential that it possess?' (Qin, 2011). This research in particular aims at investigating the response of China's IR scholarship, as it not only helps us to assess the merits/demerits of internal academic discourse, but it also helps us to have an oversight over development of International Relations in China from 1979 to the date.

It is pertinent to mention here that the indigenous response of IR theory within China has been largely the response to the corresponding Western IR theory. The combination of both identity and reform factor has given way to distinct pattern of the IR discourse within China (Qin, 2011), which resulted in shaping three debates among Chinese IR scholars:

- i. First debate has been largely dominated by orthodox vs reformist scholars; the time period of this debate can be bracketed from 1980 to 1990's. The question of opting for opening up for the rest of world of staying confined within its locale has the sustained traces in academic discussion. Later on, this debate turned the tables between newly rising realist scholars' vs reformist scholars, who aimed at discussing the challenges and prospects of China's commitment to be interest determined nation or ideologically motivated state.
- ii. Second debate has been largely dominated between the realist vs liberal scholars on the question of recognition of national self-interest and how to pursue its augmentation. It is obvious to mention here that the realist was bent upon pursuing the material power aspect, whereas the liberals were more prone to assimilate with international institutions, the decade of 1990's along with initial few years of twenty-first century can be marked under the influence of this debate.
- iii. Third debate has been largely dominated by tripartite contention among realist, liberals, and social constructivist both inside and outside academic circles of International Relations Theory. The focus of this debate has been upon the question of peaceful rise of China. The claims and counterclaims make the larger scope of this ongoing debate. Even though, the traces of this debate are dated back to later part of 1990's but it is almost become an exclusive agenda of academic discussions since 2000 to the date. In the light of these debates, this research looks further into the prospects of China's realization of national and international goals.

The focus of prospective debates and further discussions are anchored on the question of China's identity *versus* international society. So far, an effective study of International Relations Theory within China can be studied in following three headings.

3.1 China as a Revolutionary or a Normal Nation-state

The year 1978 marks China's departure from proletarian revolutionary state to normal nation-state in international system, when the Chinese policy makers categorically decided that economic well-being should be ranked above the political ideology. So far, CCP's communique of the Third Plenary Session in 1979 reads, 'the priority of the whole party should be shifted to socialist modernization', as China was making strategic adjustment with international system. This shift has (Sanzhong, n.d.) been the single most outstanding step in China's foreign policy to create and maintain a favourable international environment, which ultimately paved way economic development in China. The initial probe was moved by the question: how should China understand the overall international situation? Was it war or peace that is defining feature of international system in 1979? Till that point of time, China's understanding of international politics can be referred to Leninism, particularly Lenin's argument that the world was in the era of war and revolution, meaning that imperialism was war and that the only proletarian revolution could eliminate imperialist war. So far Orthodox scholars remained committed to the prophecy of Lenin, 'Countries want independence, nations want liberation and people want revolution' (Lenin, 1993), subsequently China's foreign policy and international relations theory remained pre-occupied with political consolidation and war preparedness. The belief on Lenin's stance was so hardwired that the instrumental communique of the 3rd Plenary Session of the CCP, the reformist camp did not dare to absolutely ignore the war factor for devising foreign policy. The immediate impact that is worth mentioning, is startup of debate of alternative and reinterpretation of Lenin's theory. This was the time when the journal of '*Reference on World Economics and Politics*' published 15 articles within a year i.e., 1982-83, (Qin, 2011, p. 236) which were based on posing questions to reinterpret Lenin's theory. The focus of these articles remained on three aspects: first, whether capitalism was dying or it is adoptive enough to cope with changing international system, second, whether war is continued to dominate international system or it is peace which is working at pace in international system, and the third, what has the leading priority of world in terms of making choice for economic development of making alliance for war preparedness. In the light of these concerns the reformists gained currency in China's foreign policy making and international relations theory.

Even though, the notion of economic development was gaining space in Chinese academic discourse of IR and foreign policy preferences, but this was not possible with gradual cautious scale. In 1977 Deng Xiaoping said, 'world war could be postponed', and same was the line adopted in 1982 CCP's Twelfth Congress. Even though, this was the heightened time of Cold War rivalry, so China was not absolutely dismissive of new strategic underpinnings but somehow the possibility of trusting international system to work for peace was finding its prints in China's international relations perspective. So far, Deng argued in 1985, 'It is possible to have no large-scale world war in the relatively long period of time and it is hopeful that world peace can be maintained'. (Deng Xiaoping Wenxun, 1993) However, in preceding years by the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1987 the major shift of placing peace and development on China's domestic and international policy fronts took place. This gradual shift from war to cooperation resulted in shaping China's foreign policy in subsequent years. This debate took the new turn in which the reformist was replaced with Chinese Realist scholars to contest with Orthodox scholars. The debate between the Chinese realist camp and Orthodox camp took shape in 1990's after translation of seminal work of Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. This was for the first time that Western International Relations leading realist camp was finding its way in China's international relations discourse. The most arduous task that Chinese Realist camp had to deal was to undo the very conception of self-interest, which was traditionally believed to be representative of ruling class's self-image in international realm. This has been the dividing factor between the proletariat and bourgeois states, and as China and its key policy makers had fresh memory of national interest defined in terms of representative class's self-interest, so far, a revision was inevitable if the debate of International Relations Theory has to go any further in China. In this regard, Yan Xuetong's book *An Analysis of China's National Interest* (Deng, 1998) was considerably first of its type, as it laid down three basic assertions:

- i. First, this will be a mistake to take national interest to its face value as representative of the class, state, or dynasty's interest. This cannot only be defined on ideology as well. It should rather be defined and understood as combination of interests per se of that of, the ruling and the ruled, which includes security, economy, political, and cultural interests.
- ii. Second, national interest should be dealt as independent variable, it should not be taken as dependent variable to international system/ international society. This gives comparative leverage to people at helm of affairs to navigate national self-interest independently, without an absolute compliance of international compulsions.
- iii. Third, national interest comes first than any other consideration or liability that a leader or nation holds dear. If the international system's modalities are aligned with national interest, there is no harm in accepting it, and if it is otherwise, there is no harm in ignoring it altogether.

It is on the credit of above-mentioned points of Chinese Realist camp that long standing question of China's identity vis-à-vis international system started to find the answer and subsequent policies in following years. The details of which are part of the next discussion.

3.2 China as an Extension of Hobbesian Power or Lockean State?

After settling down the paramount importance of national interest, the realist camp in China's international relations theory has to deal with the liberal counterparts. The realist stressed the importance of power in an anarchic international system, whereas the liberals advocated the international institutes anchored cooperation. This gave way to translation of liberal classic works within China in a year bracket of 2001-02, which includes Keohane's *After Hegemony*, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, likewise Keohane and Nye's *Power and Interdependence*, and Rosenau's *Governance with Government*. The academic rift between the realist camp and liberal camp gained momentum in following years, jointly the proponents of both school of thought published almost 70% of international relations research articles based on these two strands. In the same manner, Wang Yizhou published *An Analysis of Contemporary International Politics*, which played a crucial role in introducing liberalism in China (Zhang et al., n.d.). Even though, all strands of liberal international relations theory have been explored during this period of time, but neoliberal institutionalism stands the most influential in this category.

The following debate had one theme and two basic focal points. The theme was China's national interest and the focal points were: what was China's most important national interest and how China should realize it? Based on their comparative standpoint both realist and liberals started working on pinpointing China's national interest and ways to consolidate it. The first response to this objective was tabled by the realist camp, which based its arguments of relative position of China in international system, and strategic compulsions induced by anarchic system. The particular focus remained in highlighting the proximate issues of survival and sovereignty with focus on Taiwan, Tibet, and Nansha Islands, the success story of US and NATO in Kosovo was being quoted as an eye opener for China's foreign policy choices.(Yan, n.d.). The recipe to ensure China's survival and sovereignty was to ensure economic strength which should ultimately fill the gap between of its military might with rest of the world. The leading discourse of these scholars have taken impression from Kenneth Waltz (The Long Game, 2021).

Even though, Chinese liberals did not disagree with realists in terms of recognizing China's national interest and means to attain it, but they did not concede to the idea that structure-derived understanding of world with focus on traditional threats can take China and its foreign policy any further (Su, 1997). They rather argued that such myopic understanding of international system will further aggregate threats to China's national interest. So, they insisted that aspects of non-traditional

security threats should be given due importance if China aims at making formidable progress in world affairs. Their principal stance against realist camp can be enlisted as following;

- i. First, even though traditional security was considered to be matter of significance for China's national interest but an equal emphasis was laid upon the economic development as well. As the onus of traditional security waned after end of cold war. This turned out to be major shift in national goals as were envisioned by Deng Xiaoping.
- ii. Second, the liberal camp through their academic input gave currency to complexity of international system and actors involved in it. Significant focus has been added to the meanings and processes of globalization, with the suggestion that there has been fundamental shift in international system with end of Cold War, so it is advisable for China to better adopt with it as soon as possible, to avoid lagging behind.
- iii. Third, by the dissuasion of US-Soviet rivalry and bipolarity, the problem of international level has made their way through in international political discourse, such as IO's, IGO's, and environment, so this was suggested that China should better adopt with changing international realities.
- iv. Fourth, as the nature of new threats in international system are transnational in its formations, so no country can single handedly tackle it. So, China should make a choice to open up with rest of the world.

Within China, both on account of practice and theory Liberal institutionalism dominated rest of the debates, as it furthered the debate of national interest of China and proposed co-efficient means to attain it through participation and integration in international institutions. The significance of this discourse can be rectified by China's major foreign policy shift in terms of joining international institutions such as World Trade Organization, and almost 89 research articles were published in favor of liberal institutionalism in one of the leading journal of China, *World Economics and Politics*, from 1998 to 2005 (Qin, 2011). This will not be a mistake to suggest. The realist has helped China to recognize its national interest and challenges to attain it, whereas the liberals have helped China to streamline its energies and strategize its potential to address the structural disadvantages. So, in a sense, in an anarchical international system these two great debates of IR theory have provided option for China to either adopt the Hobbesian nation-state, or to internalize the rational Lockean actor, willing to join and gain in international institutes by first accepting their rules and regulations and then to have its due place in international politics. The resultant feature of this policy shift helped China a recognizable place in international politics, but the challenges and narratives associated with its rise are one of the most significant point of attention for international politics, which makes the third part of on-going discussion.

3.3 China as a Revisionist Challenger or a Status Quo Power

By the turn of 21st century, social constructivism joined in the prevailing debates of Chinese international relations theory between realism and liberalism. Although, social constructivism scholars have their natural inclination more towards liberalism but they did not absolutely subscribe to the idea of rational argument in pursuit of China to be an active member of international society. In this regard, the translation of *Social Theory of International Politics* by Qin Yaqin in year 2000 and subsequent articles have given way to third round of debate of international relations theory in China. Even though, the question of rise of China has been part of western academic discourse since 1990's in shape of book *The Coming Conflict with China* by Bernstein and Munro, articles such as *Clash of Civilization* by Samuel P. Huntington, and John J. Mearsheimer's book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, had implied that China with rapid growing material power, would be inevitably the challenger in international system (Wang, 1995). Internally, the debate regarding rise of China and the potential challenges that it has to face been augmented by Zheng Bijan's speech in 2003, where he said, 'China's road to a strong and prosperous power was a road of peace, a new path of 'peaceful

rise', he further argued, 'China would not repeat the road of previous rising powers, which had disrupted the international order, engaged themselves in violent expansion and started systematic war for world hegemony' ('The 'Peace' in China's Peaceful Rise," 2015). Zheng Bijan's use of term 'peaceful rise', gave way to new debate among Chinese IR scholars. China's flagship journal, *Social Sciences in China*, organized thematic research overview to debate about peaceful rise of China and its counter arguments. It is however, interesting to mention here that the mainstream literature of power politics has also influenced hard core scholars in China's as well, when they were moved to state, 'Can a sheep rise peacefully among a pack of wolves?' (Yan et al., 2004). With reference to the 2500 recorded human history with the dictum of 'might is right' and how can an existing hegemon afford rise of a new hegemon even in the guise of peaceful prospects. So far, they suggested China to stay militarily prepared and give up illusion of peaceful rise.

In the meantime, Liberals have followed Robert Keohane's institutional approach and argued that China should get more integrated into the international system, and China has much to gain by abiding by the norms of international institutions. Being a member of international institutes, China will have the maximum benefits of global economic trade, and this will render a positive restraining influence both on China and powers which opposes its rise. Constructivist in Chinese academic circles are agreed with liberals that China has much to gain by participating and integrating in international system (Wang, 2003). However, Chinese constructivist goes beyond the liberal emphasis on China's membership of international society rather than international systems. They argue that by integrating in international society China has not only gain economically, but it has also got sense of approval in terms of associating itself with international norms. This has resulted in making significant shifts of foreign policy within Chinese foreign policy making ranks, now China is more of a status-quo power than a revisionist state, and its interest is not purely defined in terms of pure political-military perspective but it has started to make comprehensive policy, and its strategic culture has been turned from conflictual to a more cooperative one. To sum up, Chinese proponents of constructivism argue that China's peaceful rise will eventually rely on its identity. As it qualifies all the essentials to be ranked as a responsible member of international system. Resultantly, the major focus of Chinese research input has been around the focus areas of ideas, identity, and international norms.

4. An Assessment of China's Rise through Social Constructivism

International society provides the context for state's existence. This context is both constraining and enhancing simultaneously. Both the attributes of international society and constraints shape the identity, role, and expectations of respective states. Resultantly, the templates of behavior are significant to study for sake making a better assessment that how does a particular state sees itself and how does the rest of world portrays an image of it? (Kachiga, 2021, pp. 141–144). In case of China, the political interest to trace the trajectory of China's ascendancy to power based on the international society's assumptions, template, and expectations, is present both within and outside. There has been exhaustive literature available to discuss the rise of China through theories of realism and liberalism, but the central question of identity remains unanswered, so far social constructivism presents an alternative yet influential discourse to study rise of China in recent history. The following discussion will be based on a quick revision of social constructivism, how it helps us to understand the rise of China, what does it suggest about China's proximate and distant security concerns, and what are the theoretical limitations of social constructivism that are worth considering in this particular case.

4.1 Crux of Social Constructivism

Constructivism is regarded to be a social theory rather than a substantive theory of international relations. The conceptualization of relationship between agents and structure is at the heart of social constructivism. It gives us theoretical insight of mutual relationship between states and international structure. The main points of social constructivism can be traced as following (Baylis & Smith, 2001, pp. 152–157):

- a. Contrary to the substantive theories which offer causal explanations; claims, hypotheses, and quires of 'what' and 'why' to decipher the patterns in international politics, social constructivism quite akin to rational choice theory offers framework of analysis to under the social processes of world politics, where agent and structure are symbiotically associated with each other.
- b. Social constructivism is credited with giving us insight about the preferences that particular state is endowed with by its own position an international setting, without determining any particular preference in fixed manner.
- c. Unlike impression of rational choice theory that is marked in neo-liberalism and neo-realism, social constructivism suggests scholars to delineate principal actors, their interest, and capacities, within the ambit of normative structure of international politics.
- d. Constructivism is considered to be an extension of human consciousness in international politics, it entails commitment to idealism and holism in realm of international politics.
- e. Constructivism believes on the vitality of ideational foundation of state and its associated components, but unlike idealism it does not claim these ideas to be psychological in nature, rather it suggests these ideas to be social.
- f. Constructivism does not believe on law-like generalization and objective essence of concepts like Balance of Power and Anarchy, it does not subscribe to the idea that any such concepts are universally present and effective, it rather suggests that the application of these ideas is dependent upon on state's own choices.
- g. Constructivism concedes with principles of holism and structuralism. Its scholarship agrees that international structure cannot decomposed into properties of already existing actors. In the same senses it warrants impact of agent over structure and vice-verse.
- h. One of the major arguments of social constructivism is based on social construction of reality.
- i. When it comes to the rules, social constructivism delineates and debate about the interplay of regulative rules and constitutive rules. In the same sense social constructivism gives authenticity to the logic of consequences and logic of appropriateness.

4.2 An Assessment of Post-Reformist International Relations Theory of China through Social Constructivism

Any formidable Chinese International Relations Theory is not yet placed, so far both causal and constitutive theories offer theoretical assessment of China's ascendancy to power, and in this regard this particular part of research will be based on social constructivist assessment. It is imperative to mention here that Chines approach to international relations will be rooted in epistemic culture and history which shapes its identity, as that of Western world in general and America in particular. So far, multiple interpretations will come at play in terms of defining and describing the role of China in today's world. As it is the case, for the realist the structure of international system is predetermined, so far, a reinvention is not what is desirable. Whereas, for the constructivist, the altering functionality of international structure gives way to reassessment and reformulation of international politics. This means altering rules and conditions which guide the behavior of actors is significant to study and understand. If the identity of a particular agents is warranted to alter, it has certain potential to impact the structure as well, and this gives the students of international relations, an enhancing insight to varying nature of academic and practitioner debates within China since 1978 to the date. Comparatively a simple explanation of any such transition can be encapsulated by power transition theory, but it has been backed up with the certain sense of power augmentation. Whereas, in case of China the identity process both in revolutionary phase and reformist phase is quite entrenched in

influence projection historical process, so this makes social constructivism a viable framework of analysis (Kachiga, 2021).

There has been plethora of literature available which discusses the change of identity in case of China, but it entails the central question that which particular Chinese identity is being mentioned in here? In our attempt to define national identity of China, we may render ideas of Wendt (1999), in which he divides identity to four sub-categories; *corporate identity*, *traditional identity*, *regime identity*, and *role identity*. On the collective operationalization of these components, this is difficult to trace down the national identity of China and particularly the national identity as it further gives us insight to understand the foreign policy of China, so the perception of China about itself, its role, and rest of the world will ultimately determine the fate of Chinese rise in the world politics. On the constructivist mode, a student of international relations can make a better sense out of Chinese reform policies from 1978, its capacity to deal with outstanding issues, liberalization of its economy, capability to answer the internal challenges, and composed response to both traditional and non-traditional transnational security challenges.

In the same sense, China can be regarded as constructivist as it believes in change both at the unit level and structural level. Even if we do not stretch to classic history, the China's role and identity from 1949 to the date has been testimony to the fact, that state's identity and cultural understanding of itself and rest of the world can change for good, so China adheres to the principle of change for the agent. Quite consistent with the ideas of Wendt China's foreign policy is aligned with the notion that relationship between agent and structure is not independent of each other, so far through its rapport and relations with others in the system, in recent times China is making headway. It will be pertinent to mention here that all these processes changes transform the structure as they necessitate adjustments of norms and replacement of old with the new ones. As in words of Wendt (1999, p. 336), "Structural change occurs when the relative expected utility of normative versus deviant behaviour changes", so far China is not oblivious to the structural realities altogether.

Generally, few constructivists' scholars address China's regional strategy with the special focus on the ideational factors which are shaping Beijing's behaviour but some of the constructivist are of their view that China's national identity is at the heart of its foreign policy approaches. (Liu, 2010). Rozman argue that since 1990s China aspired to follow the 'great power identity' (Rozman, 1999) and this persuasion has shadows of several factors which include the perception of other powers such as United States and the interaction among the great powers and the most important one which scholars like Michael Leifer, Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross described as China's historical background which has traces of victimization at the hands of Western Imperialism. Nathan and Ross suggest that in comparison of American and Chinese nationalism there are certain contrasts, the former is self-confident while the latter has national feeling of humiliation in the shape of 'century of humiliation' when China was exploited by western imperialists in 1840s (Chong, 2014, pp. 947–949). China's economic rise offered the opportunity to wipe out that feeling of national humiliation and to replace it with national pride.

For constructivist the rise of China and its behaviour towards other states is not about Beijing's economic or military might but it is more of the perception problem. Some Constructivists such as Kang holds optimistic approach regarding China's rise and its acceptance by the neighbouring states, Kang suggests that since East Asian nations have same policy of non-intervention in domestic affairs and sovereignty and Southeast Asians share ethnical, historical and cultural ties with China hence, they have accommodated China's rise rather than balancing it. However, Kang fails to make clear that why sovereignty, identity along with other factors in Chinese history translates its current national identity (Kang & Kang, 2007). For China sovereignty is important since Beijing always refuse any intervention of multinational institutions to address the questions of sovereignty in South China sea, but it remains unclear that which aspect of sovereignty identity is important, the great power identity or the formation of China's identity. Kang also could not answer the possibility of China's unquestioned power status and the continuity and relevance of the 'peaceful' rise in that scenario.

The constructivists such as Muthiah Alagappa has different views regarding China's rise and the perception of East Asian nations. Alagappa argues that China's military and economic competition is viewed differently by the neighbouring nations, to few it has created a sense of mistrust and fear and raised security concerns, but the others do not perceive it a threat and there are some which are threatened to some extent. For countries like Vietnam and Taiwan, the rise of China is a threat but other like South Korea and Thailand has accommodated China as the great power and do not consider it a threat. Indonesia and Malaysia have concerns over South China Sea dispute and the existence of economically sound Chinese diaspora in their states (Alagappa, 1998).

4.3 Limitations of Constructivism to Explain Rise of China and its International Relations Theory

Constructivist has offered a valuable social dimension of China's rise which was missing in the mainstream debates of realism and liberalism. However, the scope which the Constructivists offer is narrow and address the two aspects, the first one is the dominance of Western perspectives on the available literature addressing the China's regional cooperation in East Asia. The approach of Chinese policymakers towards other East Asian powers and the regional cooperation has been addressed independent of its relation to regional role and self-identification. The questions associated with Chinese perception of the region and the shared regional identity and its relation with China's identity (both great power identity and sovereignty identity) influence Chinese policy making but there is lack of theoretical and systematic depth to explore Chinese sources and to address these aspects (Liu, 2010). There is inadequate literature on Chinese perception and the available such as Gries addresses the Chinese perception but lacks theoretical and systematic depth (Sun, 2005). Constructivists do not come up with the answer that why material interests are least important than ideational factors in shaping China's cooperative behaviour towards regional states and how the regional cooperation is shaping Chinese sovereignty perception and shaping outlook of Chinese regional strategy.

5. Conclusion

Keeping in view the trajectory and potential of Rise of China, this will be safe to assume, that China is all set to replace US as superpower. Self-restraint, as it happens to be the prime feature of China's foreign politics, but how long China can sustain with the same posture is matter of concern. Identity politics has undoubtedly played a great role for China to consolidate its position internally and externally, but for rising on global stage the daunting challenge to preserve a cultural appeal for rest of the world is still far from reached. In the same sense, this will become imperative for China to manifest its official perspective on particular strand of international relations theory which may give an idea that with which ideational and material perspective its aims at taking lead of global affairs.

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Assessing Workplace Harassment Practices and Violence: A Case Study
of Working Women in Bahawalpur District

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Article Information			Abstract
Received:	May	9, 2025	<p>Workplace harassment and violence remain pervasive yet underexplored challenges, particularly within patriarchal societies where structural inequalities constrain women’s autonomy and mobility. Despite increasing global advocacy for gender equity exemplified by movements such as #MeToo; such issues continue to affect women across professional sectors in many developing countries. This study investigates the multifaceted impact, social, economic, and psychological of workplace harassment experienced by women in the Bahawalpur District of Pakistan. The research aims to identify the forms and frequency of harassment, evaluate its psychological, social, and professional consequences, assess the level of awareness regarding legal protections (particularly the <i>Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010</i>), examine coping strategies, and analyze the effectiveness of institutional responses and preventive mechanisms. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 female employees from both public and private institutions. Thematic analysis revealed recurring instances of verbal and physical harassment, often shaped by gendered power dynamics, socio-economic inequalities, and religious identity. While participants expressed general awareness of their rights, they reported a lack of institutional support and limited capacity to seek redress due to entrenched male dominance within workplace hierarchies. Furthermore, familiarity with relevant legal protections was minimal, and formal training on complaint mechanisms was largely absent. The findings highlight the urgent need for institutional reforms, enhanced legal literacy, and the implementation of zero-tolerance policies to ensure safe and equitable work environments for women in Pakistan.</p>
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1. Introduction

Sexual harassment, one of the most prevalent forms of abuse, reflects broader patterns of gendered inequality. While globalization has led to increased female participation in the workforce and global

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recognition of women's skills and potential (Keplinger et al., 2019), local patriarchal structures often resist this transformation. In conservative areas such as Bahawalpur, women who report harassment are frequently blamed, silenced, or accused of violating social norms. Rather than being protected, victims are subjected to reputational damage under the guise of preserving "honour," which further discourages reporting and reinforces impunity.

This oppressive environment contributes significantly to psychological distress among victims, weakening their capacity to engage in economic and social development (Elghossain et al., 2019). According to the World Bank (1993), one in three women globally has experienced violence in her lifetime, ranging from assault and harassment to trafficking and forced harmful practices. Often, the perpetrator is a family member, neighbour, or colleague, further complicating the victim's ability to seek justice. These intimate violations generate an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, where women are coerced into silence to protect themselves within the confines of socially constructed roles.

In extreme cases, traditional practices such as *Karo-Kari* prevalent in Bahawalpur and other regions exemplify the lethal consequences of entrenched patriarchal values. Women are murdered under false accusations of dishonour, while perpetrators are protected by customary norms. Such practices reinforce a sense of inferiority and fear among women, leading to widespread suffering both in private and professional spaces (Liu et al., 2019). However, the current study tried to investigate these complex socio-legal dynamics, with the aim of identifying institutional gaps, understanding women's awareness of protective legislation, and proposing strategies to foster safer and more inclusive workplaces in Pakistan.

Violence against women in Pakistan remains a pervasive and deeply rooted issue that demands urgent and coordinated national intervention. Despite various legal and policy frameworks, the prevalence of gender-based harassment and violence; particularly in professional environments continues to undermine women's safety and restrict their participation in public life. Recognizing the severity of the problem, the government introduced several initiatives, such as the *National Policy for the Development and Empowerment of Women (2002)*, which adopts a zero-tolerance stance toward perpetrators, and the *Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (2010)*. These measures were designed to create secure and enabling workspaces by allowing women to report incidents of abuse without fear of reprisal. However, these initiatives have largely failed to meet their objectives, as complaints often remain unresolved or unreported, particularly in conservative regions of the country (Jafree, 2017).

Despite these legislative developments, workplace harassment remains widespread. Most women remain silent due to fear, stigma, and the lack of institutional support. This study examines the prevalence and dynamics of workplace harassment and violence in Bahawalpur district, with a particular focus on working women in the public and private sectors. It explores the level of awareness, understanding, and utilization of legal protections such as the *Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Amendment) Act, 2020*.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Violence Against Women: A Structural Challenge

Violence is an act committed with the intent to physically harm another person. When it comes to gender-based violence, it has become a widespread and pervasive problem around the world, from the home to the workplace, affecting all aspects of women's lives (Karmaliani et al., 2012). Women can be considered valuable part of factors of production as 50% of Pakistan population comprised of women, so they can contribute significantly towards the economic development (Parveen, 2016). However, patriarchy and religious misinterpretation hurdle women active participation in an economy, leaving half of the population unproductive. In Pakistan society, men are associated as head

of household responsible of making all kind of decisions like from maintaining daily chores to financial, educational and marriage decisions.

Men generally control their actions and behaviour whether they are fathers, husbands, or brothers but the Pakistani women are viewed as inferior entity and at lower rank having little voice even in minute household decision. So, they must fight for a long time for their survival and equality. The economic opportunities for the women are conditional to economic status of their husbands and fathers (Jahangir et al., 2023). Further, women's views on the job possibilities are shaped by society's views and tradition, as per in Pakistan society medicine and education is most comfortable and rewarding sector for females and if they deviate into some other sector like banking, their capabilities being suspicious (Mirza & Jabeen, 2020).

In some traditional families of Pakistan, men are considered as the financially responsible for the nourishment of their family and women are not allowed to work even the family is suffering from miserable conditions (Jabeen et al., 2020). Yet, because of these cultural beliefs, men seek employment, while women, who are dependent on men, seek to marry men having good financial position. These kind of attitudes and norms discourage the females to explore their inner talents and to take part in economic progress of the country. The intensity of violence varies from place to place, as rural areas women suffer more violence than women of urban areas (Hunnicut, 2009).

In rural areas, inhuman customs and traditions are strictly practiced as women are considered as commodity used to trade, settle debt or disputes. Moreover, the young daughters and sisters are sometimes given in marriage in lieu of compensation of their relative crimes or to safeguard their mischievous acts, this cruel practice called "*SWARA*" in KPK and "*VANNI*" in Punjab (Gauhar, 2014). The most prominent example of this brutal act is incident of "*MUKHTARAN MAI Case*", happened in 2002 in Southern Punjab, where a woman named Mukhtar Mai was raped in front of the tribal council of the village as her 12-year brother was suspected of involved in sexual relation with girl of another tribe. So, she was firstly raped and then forced to walk nude in front of whole tribe as a means of punishment (Afzal-Khan, 2015).

2.2 Workplace Sexual Harassment: Prevalence and Typologies

Sexual harassment is usually perpetrated by the bosses and seniors because of their strength, status, and power, especially when the female workers are weak and working in low positions (Sapiro, 2018). The results of the study done by Sadrudin (2013) revealed that the boss or senior management involved in malicious practices, where they either threat or making lucrative offers to the females to satisfy their immoral needs. Furthermore, Pathak (2015) identified sexual harassment as unwelcomed, disturbing, and humiliating behaviour that divides into five main categories like (a) sexually coloured remarks; (b) physical contact and advances; (c) verbal, non-verbal physical unwelcome conduct of sexual nature; (d) showing pornography; and (e) demanding sexual favours.

Salman et al. (2016) further classified harassment into three core forms: sexual coercion, gender-based harassment, and unwanted sexual attention. They stress the importance of differentiating these types, noting that many victims may not recognize the legal definitions of their experiences. Johnson et al. (2018) described sexual harassment as threatening, bribing, and pressurizing women to involved into sexual activities. The most common type of harassment is gender based where males use to abuse females in their daily conversations, make derogatory remarks and fun of their appearances. While unwanted sexual attention involved inappropriate touching and persistent sexual proposition. Often, sexual harassment has a detrimental effect on job performance.

The role of institutions in either mitigating or perpetuating harassment is critical. Asif (2011) examined the role of media and police in controlling violence against women in Pakistan. The author stated that crimes are even backed up by institutions and the police and the media which are considered as driving force to set values, rules, norms, and cultural patterns in the society but

unluckily, the media and police in Pakistan are backing the criminal mindset in the society. Media has normalized the violence and abuses in the marital relationship and is promoting the concept of staying in the abusive marriages and come only in case of death for the daughters. Moreover, the assaulters are obliged by the police and security forces as they mostly belong to influential class and male dominated society (Bugti et al., 2024). Thus, this growing trend of crime and institutional incompetence has increased the institutional incredibility leading to most the cases to remain unreported.

Despite of being in age modernity and open-mindedness, Pakistani females are still harassed at their workplaces, which deteriorates their mental health and self-esteem leading to poor job performance and work efficiency (Sadrudin, 2013). However, current research has proven this phenomenon with results where workers are harassing by their superiors because of the continuing their jobs. Further, Nadler and Stockdale (2012) stated that the woman in our society are being discriminated at all levels. The male dominant society had nurtured the society to view women as inferior entities which needs to sacrifice their needs, wishes and lives for the males. Due to this, the women are suffering badly in their own homes where males are being preference over them in education, wealth, and decision-making authorities.

Since most of the household in Bahawalpur district are either having feudal background or belongs to middle and lower-income group. The males are considered as asset of the household, who will support parents in their old age. So, the parents usually prefer to make their best investment on males whether in case of education or wealth distribution, therefore the female of this area expose to limited educational opportunities and economic freedom.

2.3 Empirical Studies on Workplace Harassment

Several empirical studies have attempted to quantify the extent of workplace harassment. Unnikrishnan et al. (2010) conducted the cross-sectional study on harassment among women at workplace in the Costal South India. The participants of the study included working women from banks, educational institutions, shops, and hospitals. The results of this study revealed that about 28 percent women had experienced with harassment and 37 percent were in the age of less than 25 years because, the younger girls are not familiar with the job requirements. Further, 48 percent of women experienced harassment within a year of their joining in the job and they ignored their right to file a complaint against harassment because of the fear of losing the job. Therefore, it can be said that the harassment is an alarming issue that must be dealt by government on priority basis to ensure a safe working environment for female.

The study carried out by Raj et al. (2020) conducted the study by using the sex-stratified logistic regression model to assess the association between gender parity at work and workplace sexual harassment. This primary survey-based study revealed that 42 percent of women and 15 percent of men was experienced sexual harassment at workplace. Logistic regression analyses showed that women who were working in female-dominated industries and the men who were working in the male-dominated professions were experienced less sexual harassment at workplace. Therefore, women who were working in the male-dominated professions were more in reporting harassment while men who working in male-dominated professions were less in reporting harassment.

In the context of rural Pakistan, Mohyuddin and Ambreen (2012) described have examined the situation of women who of rural areas of Baluchistan, where women are burdened to perform dual duties i.e. to maintain household and to work on the farms. Not only this, most of the male of rural areas consider women to be their subordinates and servants, who need to act as per their wishes. Therefore, this situation leads to increase in beating, abusing, and assaulting among the females.

Kapila (2017) provides a theoretical perspective, analysing workplace harassment through five conceptual lenses: organizational theory, feminist theory, biological/natural theory, socio-cultural

theory, and sex-role spillover theory. This multidimensional framework revealed that workplace harassment is not only a behavioural issue but also a systemic failure requiring structural change. Moreover, Kapila (2017) asserted that the sexual harassment the global and unacceptable which needs to eliminate at every cost.

3. Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to critically examine the nature, prevalence, and perception of workplace harassment experienced by women employed in both public and private institutions within the Bahawalpur district of Pakistan. The study seeks to explore the various forms of harassment encountered by female employees, assess the psychological, social, and professional impacts of such experiences, and evaluate their level of awareness regarding legal protections, particularly the Workplace Harassment Protection Act of 2010. Furthermore, the research aims to investigate the coping strategies adopted by women and to analyse the effectiveness of institutional responses and preventive mechanisms in mitigating workplace harassment. Based on this, following subsidiary questions were derived.

3.1 Subsidiary Questions (Sub-Themes)

1. Do you know about violence against women?
2. What do you think about the term harassment with women?
3. Have you ever faced harassment at workplace?
4. If yes, then which type of harassment do you mostly face at the workplace?
5. Have you ever suffered because of harassment practices?
6. What are the basic rights of women?
7. Have you heard about the Workplace Protection Act 2010 against harassment at workplace?
8. Are you trained to tackle harassment practices?

4. Research Methodology

The present study investigates workplace harassment and its perception as the primary variables of interest, explored through a series of carefully designed, semi-structured interview questions. A qualitative research methodology was adopted to examine the experiences of working women in the Bahawalpur district. Based on key indicators identified in the literature, interviews were conducted in Urdu and the local language to ensure authenticity and minimize language bias. These interviews were subsequently transcribed into English, with assistance from female linguistic experts to further reduce the potential for gender bias and to maintain the original context and meaning.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, in accordance with the guidelines of Creswell et al. (2007). A total of 20 female employees; 10 from public institutions and 10 from private institutions voluntarily participated in one-on-one, audio-recorded interviews. The sample size reached saturation, where no new significant information was emerging from additional interviews. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study, with participants' identities kept confidential and informed consent obtained before data collection. Demographic diversity was ensured by including women from different age groups and with varying levels of professional experience. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

The transcribed data were then analysed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method allowed for the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns (themes) across the dataset. The analysis was conducted in three structured stages: compiling, coding, and theming.

1. During the first phase (compiling) every audio-recorded interview obtained during the field research was transcribed, and stored as an individual document, to trace the data. The listening of the recording was followed by a transcription procedure that included going over every piece of information that was read.
2. In the second phase (coding), the transcripts of the interviews were studied so carefully, and meaningful codes were determined manually to the words, phrases, and ideas that reflected important issues on the experiences of the participants. These codes were not only data-driven (inductive) but also based on already existing literature (deductive). Coded data marked with the most noticeable concerns such as emotional distress, power relations, and gaps in the institution were cross-verified with the literature on sexual-based workplace harassment to guarantee analytical soundness. As an example, such codes as the verbal abuse, lack of reporting mechanisms, and fear of retaliation have occurred quite often and were combined with the well-proven findings of related studies.
3. During the last step (theming), these related and similar codes were combined to come up with broad themes. Such a repetitive procedure of rechecking and rearranging the topics made them internally coherent and theoretically relevant.

The seven major themes that emerged from the data are:

- i. Violence Against Women
- ii. Harassment with Women
- iii. Basic Rights of Women
- iv. Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010
- v. Types of Harassment Mostly Faced at the Workplace
- vi. Suffering Due to Harassment Practices
- vii. Training and Preventative Measures

These themes indicate the multidimensional and multidomain of workplace harassment on the part of working women in Bahawalpur. They do not only shed light on specific cases, but they also reveal institutional discontinuities in the areas of legal awareness, institutional help, and the ethical climate of work. These themes provide the basis of the interpretation and discussion which is conducted in the following sections of this research work.

Table 1: Demographic Participants of the Study

Participant	Age	Occupation	Marital Status	Nature of Job Sector
1	29	Banker	Single	Private
2	26	Doctor	Married	Public
3	39	Teacher	Married	Private
4	21	Lady Health Worker	Single	Public
5	34	Nurse	Married	Public
6	29	Banker	Married	Private
7	28	Admin Officer	Single	Public
8	25	Doctor	Single	Public
9	31	Nurse	Single	Public
10	40	Teacher	Married	Private
11	19	Receptionist	Single	Private
12	23	Clerk	Married	Public
13	25	Accountant	Married	Private
14	27	Teacher	Single	Public
15	33	Anchor	Single	Private
16	22	Clerk	Single	Public

17	34	Cashier	Married	Private
18	24	Accountant	Married	Public
19	27	Receptionist	Single	Private
20	29	IT Manager	Married	Private

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Findings from Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Violence against Women

“Violence is a harmful act committed against an individual or group based on their gender, involving the misuse of power and destructive societal norms.”. (P3)

“In my opinion, violence is gender-based that physically, sexually or mentally harm women and due to which women and girls of our society is suffering”. (P8)

“Violence is conduct and attitude that hurts women without any legal and ethical justification”. (P2)

“Violence against women is a threatening behaviour with women either by men or women”. (P18)

“Violence against women is about oppressing women’s rights beyond the legal act”. (P16)

Theme 2: Harassment with Women

“Any misconduct which is ethically, legally, and socially based on gender biases is known as harassment”. (P6)

“I consider it as ill-treatment of the female gender”. (P4)

“According to my, exploitation of women’s rights who are considered a major segment of society”. (P12)

“I think, marginalizing someone based on gender, creed, caste, race, color, and ethnicity is harassment”. (P5)

“Harassment is regarded as unwelcome sexual behavior, request for written and verbal immoral communication or sexual favors, or the physical conduct of a sexual nature including sexual demeaning attitudes towards women”. (P13)

“Sexual harassment is the worst issue that affects me at the workplace, whenever I faced it. Sexual harassment suffered me physically and psychologically. Many times, I was forced to quit my job or even I had taken sick leave to escape from the harassment”. (P20)

Theme 3: Basic Rights of Women

“Yes, I know about the basic rights of women, and these include right to live violence, slavery and without any discriminatory life; choice of education; right to own property and vote, and right to earn a fair and equal wage. I have read somewhere that women’s rights are equivalent to human rights”. (P7)

“Yes, I’ m aware of my basic rights as women which comprises of the right of freedom; a freedom to practice my choices without any pressure and compulsion from the society, a violence free save life where I can enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; right of education and to buy property; to vote, and to have equal share in market wages”. (P15)

Theme 4: Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010

“Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 is a preventative act that secures the women right at workplace. This act was passed in March 2010 and implement across the country whether you belong to private or public sector. As per this law sexual harassment at workplace and public spaces a criminal act and needs to be dealt with zero tolerance”. (P9)

“This act abides all public and private organizations to formulate Internal Code of Conduct to ensure women security at their workplaces. It demands the organization to develop harassment and violence online portals where women can register complaint or appeal against these inhuman acts. This act ensures that all these complaints should be dealt with zero tolerance policy and on priority basis. It shall also establish an Ombudsman at Federal and provincial levels”. (P11)

“The prime objective of this act is to provide safe working environment to women that is free from harassment, abuse, and intimidation. This will facilitate their right to work with dignity”. (P3)

Theme 5: Type of Harassment mostly Faced at Workplace

“I always faced discriminatory harassment at my workplace from my colleagues even one of my female colleague members expressed her discriminated views towards me”. (P10)

“One of our participants was a female banker, she shared her traumatic experience of workplace violence and harassment that she was beaten with glass ceiling and is mocked for not being “leader material” at her workplace which shows gender harassment”. (P1)

“I always criticized religiously by my colleagues because I am a Christian. They taunted, make fun of me, and associated me with inferior community”. Apart from sexually harassment we are religiously harassed too, so it is very difficult to practice our religion freely”. (P7)

“I have faced sexual harassment at my workplace by my boss who always did unwanted sexual advances and behaviour such as sometimes he (boss) shared sexual photos (pornography) and sexual comments, jokes, questions. Even one day, he did (boss) inappropriate sexual touching to me”. (P8)

“I am bearing psychological harassment, and it is negatively impacting my psychological well-being. My professional and personal capabilities are questioned and ridiculed for just being a woman that’s why I often feel down and belittled, this is destroying our self-esteem and creating a domino effect. Our physical, social, and mental health are greatly impacted due to this as it creates the sense of insecurity, depression, fear, and anxiety. Sometimes this situation feels like a hell and even I try to commit suicide get rid of it”. (P19)

Theme 6: Suffering due to Harassment Practices

“Yes, I have suffered a lot because of harassment practices that psychologically affect my health including anxiety, depression, headaches, sleep disorders, lowered self-esteem, and sexual dysfunction”. (P6)

“Yes, I have faced harassment practices many times”. (P17)

Theme 7: Training to Tackle Harassment Practices

“No, I cannot tackle harassment practices because I always remain very shy and less confident. I’m afraid that raising my voice will harm my dignity and life”. (P13, P6, P19)

“Yes, I can tackle this kind of harassment practice”. (P1, P8)

5.2 Discussion

The result indicated the prevalence of workplace harassment both in private and public sector and its frequency and intensity vary according to their economic, social, and religious status. A significant chunk of working women had experienced with different forms of harassment, including verbal abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, and psychological intimidation.

5.2.1 Prevalence and Forms of Harassment

The interview results reported that most common form harassment are sexual harassment and verbal abuse. Many women had to bear with inappropriate comments, threats from male colleagues and supervisors and unwanted advances. Workplace bullying, including unfair treatment, excessive workload, and exclusion from professional opportunities, was also commonly observed.

5.2.2 Workplace Environment and Organizational Responses

The study finds that many organizations lack clear anti-harassment policies and effective reporting mechanisms. Even where policies exist, women often hesitate to report incidents due to fear of retaliation, job loss, or victim-blaming. Additionally, many organizations fail to take strict disciplinary actions against perpetrators, reinforcing a culture of impunity.

5.2.3 Psychological and Professional Impact

Harassment and workplace violence have severe psychological effects, leading to stress, anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem among victims. Many women reported a decline in job satisfaction, productivity, and motivation, with some considering quitting their jobs to escape the toxic work environment.

5.2.4 Societal and Cultural Factors

Cultural norms and social stigmas in Bahawalpur play a significant role in shaping workplace harassment dynamics. Many women face family pressure to remain silent about harassment, fearing reputational damage. Additionally, male-dominated workplaces often foster an environment where gender-based discrimination is normalized.

5.2.5 Gaps in Legal Protections and Law Enforcement

Despite the presence of laws like the *Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (2010)*, the study highlights major gaps in implementation. Due to limited exposure many women are ignorant about their legal rights, and law enforcement agencies often fail to take workplace harassment complaints seriously. The absence of effective monitoring bodies further weakens the legal framework.

6. Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

This study sheds light on harassment practices and workplace violence, its prevalence, severity, and impact of gender-based violence in the professional setting of Bahawalpur District. A semi-structured interview technique was adopted to get the data from 20 working women of public and private institutes of Bahawalpur district. The discussion-based findings indicate that many women face verbal abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, and psychological intimidation, which significantly affect their mental well-being, job performance, and career growth. Despite existing legal protections, weak enforcement, lack of awareness, and social stigma prevent many women from reporting incidents. Organizational shortcomings, such as the absence of clear policies, inadequate complaint mechanisms, and fear of retaliation, further exacerbate the problem. Cultural and societal norms also play a role in normalizing harassment and discouraging victims from seeking justice.

To create a safe and inclusive work environment, it is essential to strengthen legal frameworks, enforce strict workplace policies, and raise awareness about women's rights. Women should be well versed on anti-harassment policies and fully trained in their self-defence. Providing legal aid and free counselling will not ensure the sense of protection but also increase frequency of case reporting. Secondly, organizations must implement zero-tolerance policies, anonymous reporting systems, and regular training programs to combat harassment. Additionally, community engagement, male allyship, and mental health support can help change societal attitudes and empower women in the workforce. Technology driven and digital solutions like development of harassments reporting portals, CCTV and AI monitoring and complaint tracking system will aid to reduce workplace harassment and violence. Lastly, addressing workplace harassment is not only a legal and ethical obligation but also a critical step toward gender equality and economic development. By ensuring a harassment-free workplace, women in Bahawalpur can fully contribute to the workforce, leading to greater productivity, innovation, and social progress. Based on the findings of this study, the following policy interventions are recommended to address the issue of workplace harassment:

6.1 Promote the Enforcement and Legal Awareness

There should be an active application of legal frameworks and regular audits and punishment of non-conforming. The governments and services must partner together to initiate awareness programs about leg rights and reporting system, especially during remote or urban underserved locations to women.

6.2 Reforms of Institutional Policies

Detailed and effective anti-harassment policies which contain preventive strategies and penalties as well as protection standards are supposed to be implemented in organizations. These policies should be brought out and written such that everybody can be aware of them.

- Institute institutionalized internal complaint system, which should be composed of gender-sensitized members and must guarantee anonymity and complainants protection.
- Periodically, hold compulsory programs on anti-harassment and sensitivity training to employees of all ranks.

6.3 Technology-Driven Interventions

Apply technology to such solutions as:

- Unidentified Internet reporting systems.

- Communal working space CCTV staffing.
- Artificial intelligence driven complaint monitoring and early-warning mechanisms.

Such tools will make it more accountable and have fewer incidents due to improved surveillance and access.

6.4 Support Structures to Women

Make available financial support legal assistance, psychological therapy, and self-defence classes. Allied with non-governmental organizations, outreach and reputability of support services can be increased.

6.5 Cultural and Community Participation

Promote men as allies, involve leaders in religious and educational groups as well as in the community to shatter those social norms that encourage the normalization of harassment. The learning institutions must include gender equity, ethical workplace, and how to communicate clean in their syllabuses.

7. Limitations of the Study

Although this research presents valuable qualitative findings on the issues of harassment at the workplace, one needs to note a few limitations. One, the sample size of 20 members of the Bahawalpur is too small to have a generalizable research output to other parts of the country or fields. Pure self-report data have the possibility of made-up recalls or emotional inhibition even with the focus on the confidentiality. Moreover, the research only included interviews with women, and the analysis lacks opinions of male coworkers, supervisors, or human resource workers, who might represent an additional perspective on the issues surrounding the workplace. Gender-based violence also has cultural sensitivities that might have limited subjects to express their complete experiences.

8. Future Implications

This study primarily focuses to the Bahawalpur district and respondents are taken from the few of the public and private institutes. Moreover, incorporating the women workers who are working informally from the homes will give more vivid picture of workplace harassment and violence. This study has employed the quantitative technique and questionnaire survey while future research can adopt the qualitative technique and interview survey. In last, the future research can be conducted on all over Pakistan by using even higher, more varied samples, combining mixed methods, and discussing long-lasting effects to provide better policy and intervention-driven guidance to investigate a similar case.

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The Gwadar Conundrum: Navigating the Concerns and Prospects of China's Presence

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Article Information			Abstract
Received:	Jan	2, 2025	<p>The Indian Ocean region has emerged as a critical geopolitical hub in the 21st century, driven by global transformations and shifting security paradigms that necessitate enhanced maritime capabilities among regional stakeholders. China's investment in Gwadar, Pakistan, has cemented its all-weather friendship, amidst geopolitical rivalries and regional challenges. Gwadar's strategic location at the mouth of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf makes it a critical node for energy corridors and economic hubs. However, this development project faces opposition from regional and global actors, including the US and India, who harbour concerns about China's growing influence and potential security threats. Baloch leaders also express reservations, fearing marginalization and environmental degradation. Despite these challenges, the project presents opportunities for enhanced economic cooperation between South and Central Asia, thereby bolstering Pakistan's economy and supporting China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This paper will examine the implications of China's presence in Gwadar, exploring the geopolitical dynamics, regional security concerns, and economic potential, to provide insights into the future of Pakistan-China relations and regional developments. The study has applied the exploratory, qualitative, and analytical research methodology.</p>
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1. Introduction

Pakistan-China's all-weather friendship is unprecedented in the world. The Chinese presence in Gwadar is poised to deepen the relationship with Pakistan further. The strategic location of Gwadar, situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, makes it an ideal hub for economic and social activities. However, this friendship is facing many challenges. Regional and global actors like the US, India, and local people pose significant threats to China's presence in Gwadar. The Baloch people have faced decades of negligence, state repression, and economic marginalization, fuelling deep-rooted grievances among its residents. Despite these challenges, China's control of the Gwadar seaport is expected to enhance economic cooperation between South Asia and Central Asia. The port will likely become a critical energy corridor, connecting China with the Middle East and Africa. To address the challenges and ensure the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), both countries must prioritize the socio-economic needs of local communities. Ultimately, the Pakistan-China friendship has the potential to drive economic growth, promote regional stability, and strengthen their strategic partnership. However, it requires careful management of the challenges and a commitment to ensure the benefits of CPEC, which should be shared equally among all stakeholders.

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1.1 Research Methodology

This study employs an exploratory, qualitative, and analytical research methodology to examine the regional and international implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The exploratory approach facilitates an in-depth investigation of CPEC's multifaceted impacts, enabling the identification of emerging themes and patterns within a complex geopolitical and economic context. Qualitative methods, including document analysis of policy papers, academic literature, and official reports, are utilized to gather nuanced insights into the perspectives of key stakeholders, such as Pakistan, China, India, and the United States. The analytical component involves a critical evaluation of these sources to assess the strategic, economic, and security dimensions of CPEC, drawing on theoretical frameworks such as realism and economic interdependence. This methodological triangulation ensures a comprehensive understanding of CPEC's implications, addressing both its opportunities and challenges within the evolving global order.

1.2 Research Gap

While existing literature on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) extensively explores its geopolitical, economic, and security implications, there remains a significant gap in comprehensive studies specifically focusing on China's presence in Gwadar and its localized impacts. Much of the current scholarship either addresses CPEC broadly or focuses on macro-level geopolitical rivalries, such as those involving the United States and India, with limited attention to the micro-level dynamics at Gwadar Port. Specifically, there is a dearth of research that integrates qualitative insights from local stakeholders—such as Baloch communities, regional policymakers, and small-scale economic actors—with geopolitical and economic analyses to assess how China's involvement in Gwadar shapes local socio-economic conditions, security perceptions, and Pakistan-China bilateral relations. This study addresses these gaps by employing an exploratory, qualitative, and analytical methodology to provide a holistic understanding of China's role in Gwadar and its broader implications for regional dynamics.

1.3 Research Questions

This paper explores the answers to these questions. (1) Why do the US, India, and Baloch leaders have serious reservations about China's presence in Gwadar? (2) How will BRI/CPEC affect the regional political landscape? (3) Which Challenges and opportunities will arise in the wake of Gwadar for Pakistan, China, and the Region?

1.4 Organization of Study

This paper consists of four sections in addition to the introduction and conclusion: The first section outlines the strategic significance of Gwadar and Sino-Pak interests in Gwadar Port. The second section deals with literature review on BRI/CPEC, Gwadar, and regional political calculus. The third section highlights internal and external geopolitical concerns. The fourth section examines the concerns and opportunities arising from China's presence in Gwadar.

2. Literature Survey of Gwadar Port as a Joint Venture of Pak-China Friendship

Pakistan and China have a longstanding, robust friendship, and diplomatic ties established on May 21, 1951. Their multidimensional cooperation has significantly contributed to regional stability and global peace. Like historical tendencies, Pakistan's contemporary foreign policy is based on its strong relationship with China, built on shared interests in regional peace and stability, and adherence to the UN Charter and principles of peaceful coexistence (Asif, 2023). Pakistan and China's enduring friendship has remained resilient despite global geopolitical shifts. China has provided substantial financial and technical assistance to Pakistan, facilitating the completion of landmark projects such as

the Ghazi Barotha Hydro Power Project, Silk Route, and JF-17 Thunder Aircraft (Ishaq, Khan, & Rafeeq, 2024).

The Gwadar Port, a symbol of unprecedented friendship, was constructed with significant Chinese support. Gwadar, a strategic port city in Pakistan's Balochistan province, is a joint Pakistan-China development project situated near the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf (Iqbal et al., 2023). Constructed at a cost of around USD 248 million, the port was inaugurated by Pakistan's President in 2007 (Gupta, 2014). The operational management of the Port was formally transferred to China in 2013, marking a significant milestone in the bilateral collaboration. China played a pivotal role in designing the project and provided 80% of the port's construction costs through grants and soft loans. Over 500 Chinese engineers are engaged in the project, with China's ongoing financial and resource support. Furthermore, China's Dry Port at the Pak-China border is aimed at leveraging the shorter route to the sea via Gwadar. China has also invested approximately US\$360 million in upgrading the Silk Road, connecting Pakistan and China. Feasibility studies and engineering surveys are underway to link Gwadar with China through pipelines and railway tracks, with the latter expected to be an engineering marvel of global significance (Ahmad, 2023).

2.1 Strategic Importance of Gwadar

Pakistan's strategic location, natural resources, and borders with Afghanistan and Iran render it a pivotal player in regional politics. The Gwadar Port has emerged as a critical economic hub, facilitating access to the Central Asian Republics (CARs) for regional and extra-regional powers. As noted by (Boni, 2019) Gwadar Port has the potential to become a key gateway to the Strait of Hormuz in the Indian Ocean. By enhancing existing links to the Caspian Region, Gwadar Port can compete with UAE ports and provide a more efficient trade route to the landlocked Caspian Region, thereby bolstering regional connectivity and commerce (Aslan, & Rashid, 2020).

Gwadar, situated along the Balochistan coastline, is strategically located, facilitating communication and trade between South Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia, owing to its proximity to the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Gwadar's strategic significance is multifaceted (Haider, 2009). It offers the shortest trade route between China and the Middle East and between India and Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. Moreover, Gwadar provides the sole land route for Iran and Afghanistan to access India via Pakistan. This pivotal location enables Gwadar to facilitate trade between China, the Middle East, and the broader world, underscoring its critical role in regional connectivity and commerce.

2.2 Gwadar Port's Potentials for Pakistan

The Gwadar Port possesses significant strategic and economic potential for Pakistan, owing to its proximity to international Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and suitability for trans-shipment facilities. Its location provides enhanced security against eastern threats and natural protection from adverse weather conditions. Gwadar is meant to enhance trade opportunities with the Caspian Region and energy-rich Afghanistan. Gwadar Port is offering a range of harbour services, including warehousing, trans-shipment, and manufacturing facilities, catering to regional and extra-regional stakeholders, including the United Arab Emirates and European nations (Ali, 2020).

Gwadar Port has the potential to evolve into a major trade and transshipment hub, drawing goods from various regions and facilitating trade between Pakistan, China, and neighbouring countries. This amplifies Pakistan's trade volume and revenue. CPEC will bring substantial infrastructure investments to Pakistan, including roads, railways, energy projects, and the development of Gwadar Port. These investments drive economic growth, generate jobs, and enhance the overall infrastructure in the country. Pakistan confronts energy shortages, and CPEC encompasses the development of power projects to tackle this issue. This enhances Pakistan's energy supply, diminishing blackouts and

bolstering industrial growth. CPEC improves connectivity within Pakistan, enhancing transportation networks and reducing travel times. This benefits domestic trade and regional integration. The development of industrial zones and infrastructure projects generates job opportunities for Pakistan's workforce, decreasing unemployment and poverty. CPEC promotes foreign investment in Pakistan by providing a stable and attractive environment for businesses. This has the potential to diversify the country's economy. Economic development in Balochistan, the location of Gwadar, can address longstanding grievances and decrease instability in the region.

2.3 China's Interests in Gwadar Port

China's growing naval expansion in the Indian Ocean is positioned to establish it as a formidable naval power, countering Indo-US dominance in the region (Pillsbury, 2015). Furthermore, China's utilization of Gwadar Port and existing land links will significantly enhance its trade with Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, reducing sea distances from 10,000 km to 2,500 km.

China's strategic interests in Gwadar are multifaceted (Rahman & Naeem, 2022), driven by its dependence on Gulf oil and the need for a safer, cheaper, and shorter route to western China. China's oil imports pass through the Strait of Malacca, a long and unsafe route under US influence in Gwadar. Gwadar Port offers a strategic alternative, enabling China to bypass the Strait of Malacca and access the Middle East markets more efficiently. The port's connectivity to the Karakoram Highway (KKH) makes it an attractive option for China's energy imports and exports. China's natural dependence on the Middle East for oil reserves and large markets necessitates a strong presence in the region (Saeed, 2011). It provides China with a strategic foothold, allowing it to enhance investment in Middle Eastern countries. The industrial zone in Gwadar will also enable China to set up industries close to its markets, further strengthening its economic presence in the region. Pakistan's commitment to providing a naval base to China in Gwadar underscores the strategic importance of this port city. While this development may not further strengthen Pakistan-China relations, it will undoubtedly enhance China's geopolitical presence in the area. China's products will easily reach the Middle East, boosting trade and investment. The industrial zone presents a great opportunity for Chinese companies to establish and expand their businesses (Khan, Shi, & Ali, 2024).

China's assistance in developing the Gwadar Deep Sea Port is to enhance its bilateral relationship with Pakistan and enhance its geo-strategic ties. According to Prof. Zhang Youngling, China's primary foreign policy objective is to cultivate a stable surrounding environment, recognizing that instability in neighbouring regions can have far-reaching consequences for China's security (Hussain, 2020). This perspective underscores China's commitment to fostering friendly relations with neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, to ensure regional stability and promote mutual benefit. The Gwadar project is a testament to China's strategic approach to foreign policy, which prioritizes the creation of a peaceful and stable environment conducive to economic growth and development. China aims to promote a secure and prosperous environment that benefits all parties involved by strengthening its ties with Pakistan and investing in regional infrastructure.

3. Literature Review: BRI/CPEC and Gwadar in Regional Calculus

This literature review examines scholarly perspectives on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)/CPEC's regional and international implications, highlighting its role in reshaping geopolitical dynamics, economic interdependencies, and security paradigms. The spectacle of interstate competition and conflict over strategic interests is deeply rooted in human history, often displayed through economic, geopolitical, and military rivalries (Mearsheimer, 2001). In current global politics, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's BRI, has emerged as a focal point of such contestation. Described as a transformative infrastructure and economic development initiative, CPEC connects Pakistan's Gwadar Port to China's Xinjiang region through a network of roads, railways, and energy projects (Hussain, 2017). But its strategic significance extends beyond bilateral

cooperation, eliciting varied responses from regional and global actors, including the United States, India, and others.

BRI is aimed at the strategic interconnectedness of Asia, Europe, and Africa, along with regional economic integration in South, East, West, and Central Asia. Pakistan's integration into the BRI through CPEC can play a vital role in bringing multiple economic dividends for Pakistan and the South Asian Region. The CPEC connects the whole region from Kashgar in China to Gwadar in Pakistan and holds a remarkable magnitude for alternatively supporting the unstable economic conditions of Pakistan, ranging from the manifold areas of China-Pakistan partnership in the fields of infrastructure, trade, transportation, energy, and industrial cooperation (Javaid, 2016). In addition, the landlocked Afghanistan and the Central Asian states can access the shortest possible route to connect them with the international marketplace. Given the CPEC project's opportunities, the region has huge potential to get its due share of international resources and the advantage, as almost the whole region possesses enormous raw materials, natural resources, and agricultural, industrial, and household productions.

Gwadar serves as the major destination (Khan et al., 2020) throughout the CPEC. The Port enables China and Pakistan to dominate the regional economic and trade activities, whereas it has a convincing function to moderate the chances of many regional and extra-regional powers' hegemonic ambitions to dominate the regions throughout the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Such a distinguished position allows both China and Pakistan to control the strategic hubs and take over the energy sea lanes across the Persian Gulf.

Apart from its economic effectiveness, the Gwadar Port is a great source of lessening the importance of the other ports in the region, such as the Chahbahar Port of Iran. Before the development of Gwadar, the Chahbahar Port served for the Indo-Iran trade and economic activities and remained an instrumental part of exercising a noticeable level of economic influence in the region. The advent of the Gwadar Port brought rampant frustrations and strategic implications, particularly for India, which considered Chahbahar as a source of dominating the regional waterways (Small, 2015).

The foremost transitional purpose of China's view of the CPEC is through the obvious relevance of the objectives. Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, along with regional countries like Iran and Afghanistan, are eagerly waiting to join the CPEC project. Particularly, Iran, despite its Chahbahar Port, keenly participates in seeking free trade opportunities across the Gwadar Port. It has announced to invest in building a \$4 billion oil refinery in Gwadar to meet the fuel needs of the harbouring ships at the port (Benvenuti, et al., 2022). However, for India, such issues have enduring implications since its dreams of emerging as a regional dominant power through US support.

Gwadar has the outstanding perspective to obtain the central position as a gateway across the Straits of Hormuz and viably connects the existing links to smoothly access the energy-rich areas around the Caspian region. The coastline of Gwadar is also a decisive enactment of China's campaign to modernize and enhance its naval power to meet the challenges of the US naval fleet posture and increase its influence in the South China Sea (Kaplan, 2014), the Pacific Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea. Gwadar Port is also strategically important for China because it enables China to carry out its trade shipments swiftly and reliably. In the present scenario, a 60% ratio of China's oil transportation takes place via the Persian Gulf to its mega-city of Shanghai which costs a huge amount of resources and is a time-consuming process whereas, through Gwadar, it would become able to get all the desired means with spending much lesser than the current level of time and resources (Kaplan, 2014).

4. Internal and Extra-Regional Concerns

Pakistan and China launched the Gwadar Port project in 2002 to leverage natural resources and communication networks, fostering regional economic integration across Asia. However, this cooperation has sparked concerns among internal and international players, who perceive China's involvement as a strategic attempt to dominate the Indian Ocean, with Gwadar serving as a potential military outpost that threatens the geostrategic interests of other nations.

The Gwadar Port facilitates China's efforts to expand its energy supply chains and reduce dependence on vulnerable Middle Eastern routes. Furthermore, China's expanded presence in the Indian Ocean, facilitated by the Gwadar Port, enables it to monitor US naval activities, thereby enhancing its maritime security in the region.

4.1 Balochistan's Concerns Regarding Gwadar Port

The Gwadar Port project faces opposition from local Balochis, who perceive it as exploiting their natural resources. Despite Balochistan's Sui gas reserves fulfilling 38% of Pakistan's energy needs, the province receives minimal royalties and limited access to gas. The murder of Chinese engineers highlights the gravity of the situation, underscoring the need to address Balochi grievances and ensure fair resource distribution.

Balochistan's strategic location makes it a critical regional and global political hub. According to Kaplan (2009), the future of Balochistan is inextricably linked to Gwadar's development (Kaplan, 2009) which may either unlock Central Asia's riches or exacerbate Pakistan's civil unrest. Since the Gwadar port's construction began in 2002, Balochistan has faced widespread instability, posing a significant challenge to Pakistan.

Pakistan and China claim the Gwadar Seaport will boost Central Asian trade, but Baloch nationalists view it as a threat to their independence. Influential Baloch leader Amir Suleman Daud sees the project as an attack on his people's autonomy (Jetly, 2021).

The Baloch leadership alleges that the federal government exploits Balochistan's energy resources, treating the province as a colony. A Baloch Leader, Hasil Bizenjo, supports China's presence in Gwadar, citing potential employment opportunities. However, he expresses concern that an influx of outsiders may lead to Balochis becoming a minority group in their province (Jetly, 2021).

The Gwadar Port project has sparked concerns over China and Pakistan's true intentions, with some questioning whether the port will serve commercial or strategic purposes. China aims to utilize Gwadar as a key energy hub, connecting it to Xinjiang, with naval expansion in the Indian Ocean. However, the Baloch leadership has vehemently opposed the project, dismissing claims that Pakistan could control global energy resources or intercept Indian tankers due to Gwadar's proximity to the Strait of Hormuz. Baloch's opposition to the Gwadar port can be taken as: At first, Baloch residents of Gwadar, numbering around 200,000, fear that an influx of migrants could dilute their demographic dominance, threatening their cultural heritage and identity in their homeland. Secondly, locals demand priority in job allocations, citing the project's failure to trickle down economic benefits to the grassroots level. Lastly, Baloch people resent the Pakistan Army's presence, fearing Gwadar will become a garrison restricting civilian access (Jetly, 2021). These concerns underscore the need for addressing Baloch's grievances and ensuring inclusive development to mitigate the project's risks.

4.2 US Reservations over China's Presence in Gwadar

There are growing concerns among various stakeholders, particularly the United States, regarding the strategic importance of Gwadar Port. The US perceives the port as a crucial element in China's String of Pearls strategy, (Butt et al., 2020) aimed at enhancing its influence in the Indian Ocean and

securing energy supplies. The Pentagon Report, "Energy Futures in Asia," highlights US concerns regarding China's presence in Gwadar, which may enable Beijing to maintain strategic balance, monitor US ship movements, and establish electronic listening posts (Raju, 2022). Furthermore, the US fears that China's commercial port may threaten strategic chokepoints, creating insecurity for ships navigating the high seas.

The US has vested interests in the region, prioritizing freedom of seas and unhindered access to oil while containing China's growing influence (Malik, 2012). The Gwadar Port has intensified US concerns about Pakistan-China relations, sparking fears that China may utilize the port to monitor US naval activities in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the US has reservations about China's possible establishment of a naval base at Gwadar, which could threaten the stability and security of the Indo-Pacific and Persian Gulf region.

4.3 Indian Concerns about China's Control of Gwadar

India views China's control of Gwadar as a strategic encroachment, exacerbating concerns about Beijing's String of Pearls strategy in the Arabian Sea. The increasing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean may compromise India's traditional geographic advantages. Furthermore, the Gwadar port raises specific concerns regarding Pakistan, as it potentially enables Islamabad to limit Indian access to Central Asian resources, manipulate global energy routes, and prevent Indian tankers from navigating nearby.

China and India's strategic rivalry is intensifying, driven by their competing interests in the Indian Ocean. Chinese defence analysts view India's maritime security cooperation with Southeast Asian states as a bid to dominate the Indian Ocean. Equally, India's Look East policy (Butt et al., 2020) aims to counter China's growing influence. India perceives China's expanding presence in the Indian Ocean as an encirclement policy, prompting New Delhi to pursue counter-encirclement strategies through security ties with Taiwan, Japan, and Vietnam. Both nations, fuelled by rapid economic growth, assert their right to regional power status, engaging in a complex strategic game.

The Indian Navy has voiced concerns over China's String of Pearls strategy to establish a network of ports and naval bases in the Indian Ocean to expand China's maritime power (Ali, 2015). This strategy involves securing security agreements with regional countries to achieve its objectives. Arun Prakash, former Indian Naval Chief, has expressed concerns about China's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean, which he views as a threat to India's security and dominance in the region.

4.4 Iran's Concerns

Iran has expressed concerns that the Gwadar Port could undermine the importance of its Chabahar Port, which is being developed with Indian assistance as a counterbalance to Gwadar. This perceived rivalry has the potential to exacerbate Pakistan-Iran tensions, which have been strained due to Pakistan's role in the US-led war on terror and concerns over energy-related trade competition with Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, it is essential to reframe the Pakistan-Iran rivalry surrounding Gwadar Port from a security-centric perspective to one that emphasizes potential economic and trade cooperation. By doing so, both nations can capitalize on the port's strategic location to foster regional connectivity and growth. Notably, Iran's decision to provide electricity to Gwadar marks a positive endeavour towards cooperation, underscoring the potential for collaborative initiatives to prevail over competitive interests.

5. China in Gwadar: New Horizons of Development Opportunities

Gwadar Port can give numerous economic benefits to Pakistan and the region. Gwadar's economy is witnessing speedy growth as it uses advanced technology and communication networks. The port area is designated as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at the port (Khan & Anwar, 2024) is likely to

enhance economic and industrial development. This SEZ can offer various key incentives, including elimination of Value Added Tax (VAT), general tax exemptions, and positive incentives for job creation, and promote industrial development etc. Furthermore, enhanced defence facilities and equipment are constructed to ensure security and to attract investors. This will make Gwadar Port compatible to the UAE ports, offering a strategic trade route to the landlocked Caspian Region for better trade and investment opportunities.

The Government of Balochistan is developing an industrial estate in Gwadar to meet the growing industrial investment demands. Plans are in the pipeline to extend the railway lines, which will connect Gwadar to Quetta, Karachi, Iran, and Central Asia. A dedicated industrial park will be established for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Khan & Anwar, 2024). Gwadar Port is poised to attract businesses in various sectors, including construction, transportation, and logistics. The Gwadar Industrial Estate Development Authority (GIEDA) has been established to oversee Gwadar's development and facilitate the speedy growth (Kalim, & Syed, 2020).

Gwadar's development is expected to spur regional growth and address the economic disparities in Balochistan, a historically marginalized province. However, local people express concerns over the arrival of outsiders and potential cultural displacement. The region has experienced intermittent unrest since 1947, marked by insurgency, nationalism, and lawlessness. Port's capability aims to meet these socio-economic constraints by creating a new era of prosperity and tranquillity, ultimately changing the local people's living standard.

Gwadar's strategic location offers Afghanistan, rich in natural resources, a direct and viable route to the Indian Ocean. Pakistan can capitalize on Afghanistan's resources by providing a secure transit corridor, fostering economic cooperation, and promoting growth. This synergy can unlock new opportunities for regional development, underscoring Gwadar's potential as a vital trade hub (Kataria & Naveed, 2014). The US prefers Afghan trade to be routed through Pakistan, bypassing Iran. Gwadar's port amenities, transit services, and import opportunities will benefit Afghanistan. The port's success hinges on cooperation with Afghanistan and usage by Central Asia, South Asia, and China. Gwadar has the potential to foster cultural and economic ties among regional countries. Afghanistan's rich natural resources can be exported to the world through Gwadar's port. Regional stability, particularly in Afghanistan, is crucial for trade with Central Asian Republics (CARs), which possess an estimated 250 billion barrels of petroleum and gas reserves (Yar et al., 2023). Ongoing pipeline projects, including one connecting Afghanistan and Pakistan to Gwadar, underscore the region's growing importance in the global energy landscape.

Gwadar Port's strategic location will significantly impact the Gulf region, with Oman poised to benefit substantially from trade with China and the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Oman's government has demonstrated keen interest in the project, allocating millions of dollars in grants for development schemes, including a Rs 50 million electric powerhouse. The Gwadar Port complex will offer comprehensive trans-shipment services, creating opportunities for global export-import trade.

Gwadar Port holds strategic significance for Western nations, particularly the US-led European alliance, as it provides a secure trade route for Caspian Region energy resources to access global markets, bypassing Iranian and Russian territories (Aggarwal & Newland, 2015). This aligns with US interests, as Afghanistan's alternative route through Iran would counter US objectives. A strong Chinese presence near the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, driven by US interests in Middle Eastern and Central Asian energy resources, highlights Gwadar's strategic importance for the US. Gwadar Port will provide strategic depth to Pakistan's marine assets, enabling the Pakistan Navy to monitor the Arabian Sea and respond to hostile activities. The port is going to bring prosperity to the entire region, leveraging its position as a prime marketplace in the world.

6. Conclusion

The Indian Ocean region has emerged as a critical geopolitical hub in the 21st century, with the security environment and global changes prompting stakeholders to strengthen their maritime capabilities. China's development and operational control of Gwadar Port in Pakistan has sparked both opportunities and challenges, with the port being likened to a "string of pearls" - a formulation that oversimplifies the complexities of China's presence in the region. China's primary objective in Gwadar appears to be economically driven, focusing on commercial gain rather than military expansion. Regional and extra-regional stakeholders' express apprehension regarding the development of Gwadar Port, raising concerns about China's potential establishment of a naval base and surveillance facilities to monitor maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

The development of Gwadar Port is a crucial component of the CPEC. It is a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The port's strategic location provides China with direct access to the Indian Ocean, enabling it to bypass potential naval blockades and reduce its reliance on the Strait of Malacca. In response to China's strategic development of Gwadar Port in Pakistan, India has invested in the development of Chabahar Port in Iran, establishing a maritime gateway to facilitate trade and connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia via the Indian Ocean.

The Chabahar port project is seen as a counterbalance to China's BRI project. Gwadar port, as a game-changer project, will connect Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia, thereby fostering significant economic opportunities for Pakistan. The project strengthens Pakistan's bilateral relations with China, giving it leverages over the US and India in the region. The port will be a hub for friendly ties with neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Iran, and the Central Asian Republics.

To ensure the success of the Gwadar port, Pakistan must integrate the marginalized Baloch population, provide them with economic, social, political and moral stakes, which may enable them to benefit from Gwadar's growth.

Pakistan has the potential capability to maximize its economic and strategic powers through the Gwadar Port and CPEC projects. The Gwadar Port greatly enhances China's counter-balancing ambitions to overcome the posed challenges by the United States and its allies through the Asia-Pivot strategy and traverse out of the encircled boundaries drawn by the Pacific Fleet of the American government.

Rising China is the main US concern, which is gradually challenging the US's global politics and economy. However, adopting win-win cooperative policies is the only possible way for both countries to safeguard their interests individually and globally. Thus, keep away from both the Cold War-style rivalry based upon a clear policy of mutual enmity and assured destruction. Unlike the Soviet Union, China's power and capabilities spread throughout the world, and the American economic interests is also closely linked with China; therefore, the political settlement of the issues and the peaceful coexistence are the only viable options for the progress of the region and the whole world.

Pakistan is suffering as being compelled from each side, mainly due to its partnership with China and the United States. The strategic and military interests of Pakistan are closely interlinked with the United States whereas the economic interests are greatly associated with China. The hard-to-replace rule always keeps Pakistan from interacting with these powers with ever-enhanced eagerness.

Pakistan has yet to develop a comprehensive long-term strategy that prioritizes cooperation with China over competition, leveraging the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to address enduring regional disputes, such as the Kashmir conflict. Similarly, enhanced cooperation with Japan is poised to materialize following the successful implementation and operationalization of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

Having a deep trust and all-weather friend China; Pakistan must increase the ratio of Chinese trade and investment and seek Chinese support for the strongly required industrialization of its mega-cities. The infrastructural development and the means of CPEC are the tools that Pakistan can greatly employ for the attainment of economic strength. However, the factors of globalization and the regional free-trade engagements would increasingly demand better industrial production within Pakistan. Trade and investment through multilateral engagements with a special focus on the need for cooperation and peaceful coexistence are the only possible ways through which Pakistan can overcome its current economic and political issues.

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Integrating Critical Discourse Analysis and Genderlect: A Framework for Reshaping Democratic Institutions Towards Gender Equity in Pakistan

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: Dec 27, 2024 Revised: June 25, 2025 Accepted: June 28, 2025	<p>This study explores the intersection of language, gender, and democratic leadership using Norman Fairclough's CDA Model and Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory, in this regard, the study seeks to inquire as to how gendered discursive patterns build power relationships and thereby influence decision making within a democratic system. It proposes a bicameral system of governance where two gendered parliamentary forums, male and female, would synergistically tackle gender-specific issues and constitute an inclusive government. Organizations led by women are said to be women-centered, while those headed by men are male-centered. The model under consideration is based on cross-gender cooperation, mutual inclusion of both houses, and equality. The model stemming from the Islamic participatory spirit reiterates gender equality perceived in cultural and religious light. To this end, the present study proposes constitutional amendments to grant legitimacy for the establishment of women's and men's parliaments within institutional reforms. The issues somehow call for reforms due to recent happenings involving gender, particularly issues like the issue of the terrible rape of a girl in Punjab College and judicial pronouncement of the Lahore High Court barring male staff going to work in women-only institutions. The gravity with which the incidents demand looking into structural and legal means to protect women as well as give them visibility in governance. Drawing upon campaign trails, policy briefs, parliamentary debates, media narratives, and interviews with students, this study carried out discourse and thematic analyses as lenses to analyze the patterns of leadership and gendered social communication in action. Finding results thus lead to a democratic governance agenda in Pakistan where gender-inclusive policy-making facilitates social cohesion, equity, and progressive change.</p>
Keywords <i>Gendered Leadership</i> <i>Critical Discourse Analysis</i> <i>Genderlect Theory</i> <i>Islamic Ideology</i> <i>Democracy</i>	

1. Introduction

The issue of gender equality has risen to higher prominence in contemporary democratic societies because language and power relationships determine social operations. Critical Discourse Analysis emerged as one of the main analytical frameworks developed by Norman Fairclough for understanding how language and ideology interact with power dynamics to construct political reality. When blended with Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory, which considers how men and

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women communicate, such analytical frameworks provide a comprehensive approach to understanding how gender influences democratic processes. This effort seeks to synthesize these two theoretical stances to produce a novel paradigm of gender-sensitive governance and a democratic philosophy capable of addressing historically prevalent gender disparity.

Fairclough (2013) says Critical Discourse Analysis reveals how power inequalities are embedded in institutional language, so structural change is inevitable. Challenging the masculine past, the paradigm being proposed has gendered parliaments and women have a voice in politics beyond patriarchal norms. This addresses gendered issues and a more balanced political culture where men and women can participate in government according to their respective communication style.

Sociolinguistic studies of language and gender show that gender plays an integral role in communication patterns and political participation. The paradigm allows male politicians to be direct within frameworks that respect their sociolinguistic identity, while female politicians can use their negotiation and collaboration skills by offering different but equal spaces (Coates, 2015). This adds equity and representation to the democratic process, because good governance requires multiple communication modalities.

The main argument of the study is that democracy can be changed through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis's critique of political talk and Genderlect Theory's understanding of communication styles. According to this idea, we should have a parliament for men and one for women to address the issues specific to each gender as the demographics change. This is because current political institutions do not give women equal opportunities to participate. Separate election processes and institutions for each gender may reduce the biases generated by patriarchal communication in political talk and give women a better platform to air their concerns (Baxter, 2010).

By exploring these subjects, this study builds on previous research concerning gender and political activity. As indicated in studies like Lazar's (2005) feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, it seems essential to consider how language, mainly political speech, influences the regulation of power within communities. Research by Eagly and Carli (2007) on gender and leadership also highlights that gendered expectations greatly affect how women can lead in both corporate and political spheres. By arguing that linguistic analysis is important to understanding and overcoming the barriers women face in political leadership, this research contributes to a growing body of literature calling for gender-sensitive reforms in democratic governance.

Recent (though unverified) event in Lahore, where reports of gender-based abuse at Punjab College Gulberg Campus, Lahore led to widespread protests, highlight the urgency of this research. After a security officer reportedly assaulted a female student on October 11, 2024 (The Friday Times, 2024), protests erupted across Punjab, prompting a holiday on October 18, 2024 and highlighting the need for gender-sensitive reforms in governance (Daily Ausaf, 2024).

Such protests demonstrate the nation's ongoing struggle with issues like discrimination and gender-based violence. The proposed constitutional reform seeks to incorporate gender-specific issues into democratic governance, ensuring that all voices are fairly heard and represented in decision-making process. Much like earlier amendments sought to include marginalized communities in the national framework, the current effort builds on that legacy. Moreover, historical passage of the 26th Amendment by the National Assembly, supported by 225 lawmakers with only 12 opposing, marks a collective acknowledgment of the need for systemic governance reform.

This further emphasizes that achieving gender empowerment and inclusivity also requires the same dedication and urgency as Pakistan witnessed in the passage of the 26th Amendment. The same seriousness must now be applied to address these critical issues, as they truly impact the rights and lives of all members of society.

2. Research Objectives

- To explore how gendered communication patterns as per Genderlect Theory affect leadership positions in democratic institutions.
- To use Critical Discourse Analysis to expose gender-based power imbalances in political discourse especially in the wake of Lahore's Punjab College incident.
- To propose a new democratic model inspired by 26th Amendment that can ensure gender equity in governance by having separate parliaments and institutions for men and women.
- To investigate how the proposed democratic model can address gender-specific needs following the Punjab College incident and promote cross-gender cooperation in governance.

3. Research Questions

- What structural reforms can be suggested to ensure equitable gender representation and leadership in democratic institutions in the wake of the Punjab College incident?
- How do gendered communication styles, as defined by Genderlect Theory, affect leadership roles in democratic institutions?
- In what ways does gender-based power inequality persist in political discourse, as shown through Critical Discourse Analysis?
- Given the recent events in Punjab, how can gender-specific issues be effectively addressed by separate male and female parliaments while promoting inter-gender collaboration?

4. Statement of the Problem

Despite some reforms in gender equality, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in democracies. One of the reasons for this underrepresentation is that women's voices are being silenced in political discourse due to gendered communication styles that conform to masculine norms. With patriarchal structures still dominating our political language, the recent incident of a female student at Punjab College demands immediate gender sensitive governance reforms. Current democratic institutions are not addressing these issues; hence women are being excluded from meaningful political participation. To bridge this gap, this research will propose a restructured democratic framework that will integrate Critical Discourse Analysis and Genderlect Theory for immediate reforms

5. Significance of Study

The study at hand presents multiple significant aspects to the academic field. The research deepens existing knowledge about the relationship between language and power in democratic systems which expands current scholarly focus on women's political rights. The research integrates Genderlect Theory with Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the impact of female communication styles on political leadership positions.

The current study also proposes a gender-inclusive governance model which stands as an innovative solution to resolve the long-term problem of women's political exclusion. The study disrupts conventional democratic frameworks by promoting the establishment of segregated male and female legislative bodies which could lead to genuine representation.

Moreover, this research is also pertinent to policymakers and politicians striving to achieve gender equality in governance. It outlines a set of institutional reforms that address gender concerns and support leadership collaboration across genders. Finally, the research is valuable to activists,

organizations promoting gender equality in politics, and scholars and policymakers committed to inclusive governance. By presenting both a theoretical and practical framework for addressing barriers to women's participation, it supports the broader goal of building more equitable and inclusive democratic systems.

6. Literature Review

Several studies have earlier been carried out concerning equitable gender inclusion, their specific quota or mixed-gender participation in our legislative bodies, there still remains a gap in the exploration of structural models where gender-specific parliamentary bodies and other institutions coexist with effective and regular coordination. Furthermore, little or no focus has yet been paid on as to how gendered communication style as theorized by Genderlect Theory, impact democratic decision-making systems. Current unique and innovation model fills this gap by proposing and analyzing a dual-gender parliamentary system through the lens of CDA.

Critical Discourse Analysis has been shown as an efficient technique for demonstrating that language is able to depict and subvert existing power relationships within democratic organizations (Fairclough, 2013). Discourse, far from being neutral, contains values that represent and uphold common power relations, most notably gendered ones. Gender discursive patterns are capable of opening or closing the doors of possibility for equal access to democratic space, where open decision-making is the preferred ethos. CDA, as Wodak (2001) outlines, has the crucial function of revealing the unstated means whereby language, particularly in public and political life, perpetuates inequality. With the application of CDA, the present study exemplifies how patriarchal norms are reproduced in democratic governments and how the voice of women is undermined in male-dominated political discourses. At the same time, Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Theory explores how gender-specific communication patterns influence relationships in both cultural and political situations. Tannen says men and women follow different conversational norms, men assertive and regulated, women cooperative and indirect. These are expressions of larger societal norms and gender roles too. Male dominated norms can create conversation patterns that exclude women from their place in governing institutions in democracies on account of different forms of communication (Holmes, 2006). To explain how gendered speech styles affect political participation and governance in democracies, Genderlect is added to the CDA model.

The relationship between democracy, gender and speech has been studied extensively specifically in terms of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Genderlect Theory. Moreover, how political regimes use communication, thought and power is explained in Norman Fairclough's CDA. Fairclough (2013) also speaks on how language is crucial when it comes to rewriting and redrawing the equilibrium of power. Language becomes a symbol for social hierarchy as well as a means of ensuring gendered inequality, particularly within government, in which patriarchal practices continue to abound, according to Fairclough. The application of political discourse to exclude or marginalize specific groups, especially women, from active participation in decision-making has also been studied by scholars such as van Dijk (1993) and Wodak (2001).

However, Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory examines the precise distinctions between the communication styles of men and women. According to Tannen (1990), women tend to speak more collectively and relationally, whereas men tend to speak more directly and authoritatively. Here, the distinction is influenced by both personal characteristics and more general cultural standards regarding what conduct is considered masculine and feminine. When female views are often ignored and male talk is presented as the norm, such gendered communication tactics can be responsible for power discrepancies within political coalitions (Holmes, 2006). Building on Tannen's work, scholars such as Baxter (2010) have investigated how gendered styles are perceived differently in male-dominated firms, which are often disadvantageous to women who aspire to become high-ranking employees.

Gender and leadership studies also contribute significantly to this debate. Gender biases in leadership are, according to Eagly and Carli (2007), a product of deeply embedded cultural norms that associate men with leadership qualities such as decisiveness and aggressiveness. This hinders women's ability to take up leadership roles, particularly in democracies where political debate often adheres to norms traditionally seen as masculine. Power relations are embedded within language, as further exemplified by Lazar's (2005) feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), which advocates for a more advanced comprehension of the manner in which discourse can be altered to further gender equity in political regimes.

This body of literature is further supplemented by the present research in applying Genderlect and CDA as a mixed theoretical framework in putting forth a model of governance to remedy women's structural exclusion in political leadership and include gender-oriented forms of communication into account. This framework recommends a redesign that will allow both sexes to equally contribute to and benefit from representation and leadership opportunities to strive against the patriarchal construct propping up democratic organizations.

7. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore as to how gendered discourse is constructed, communicated, and interpreted within democratic institutions in Pakistan. The research aims to examine the relationship between language and power in political contexts, with a particular focus on how gendered patterns influence participation, leadership, and representation.

7.1 Research Design

The qualitative design of the study at hand paves the way for an in-depth inquiry into both textual and experiential data. It's not about statistical generalization but mainly about interpretation of discourse and meaning in political and social domains. CDA along with thematic analysis is used to look into institutional language practices and how individuals perceive gendered communication.

Data was gathered using two main tools: semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. Textual data includes transcripts of parliamentary debates, political speeches, election campaign brochures, government policy reports and a news story about a judgment from the Lahore High Court. These texts were chosen because they represent formal political communication and legislative discourse.

In addition to textual data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with male and female undergraduate students from different Pakistani universities. Interviews aimed to gather participants' experiences and thoughts about gendered communication in political, academic and professional contexts. This mix of official documents and personal narratives makes for a good qualitative data set.

7.2 Sampling Methods

Purposive sampling was employed for selecting both the participants and the texts. Participants were selected based on their education, sex and willingness to talk about political discourse and gender. Students from different social and academic backgrounds were included to get diverse responses. For textual data, sources were selected based on relevance to themes of governance, gender equality and institutional power. These sources represent the spectrum of political discourse in Pakistan and the different platforms where gendered communication happens.

7.3 Analysis Techniques

The data collected were examined using two qualitative analysis techniques: Critical Discourse Analysis and thematic analysis. CDA was used to analyze institutional and political texts. The purpose was to identify how language constructs, maintains, or challenges gendered power relations. Attention was given to vocabulary use, grammatical structures, representations of authority, and the framing of leadership in political language. CDA helped uncover how male-dominated (patriarchal) discourse shapes policy narratives and excludes alternative voices.

Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data to capture common patterns in participants' views on gendered communication. Interview transcripts were carefully read and annotated. Meaningful data segments were identified and grouped into initial codes. These codes were then refined into broader thematic categories, which reflected recurring perceptions of leadership, communication style, exclusion, participation, and representation. The process involved continuous comparison across interviews to ensure consistency and coherence in theme development.

7.4 Purpose and Outcome

Through the combination of CDA and thematic analysis, the study explores both public and personal dimensions of gendered discourse in democratic settings. The findings serve as the basis for proposing a governance framework that incorporates both masculine and feminine voices/ perspectives in policy dialogue and decision-making. This proposed framework aims to promote equity, encourage participatory governance, and challenge the linguistic patterns that have historically limited women's political involvement.

8. Data Analysis

The conclusion-based information from these sources will guide the creation of an advisory framework which aims to enhance gender equality in democratic bodies. The approach bases its recommendations on the analysis of data.

8.1 Election Campaign Materials

Speech texts including billboards and political party manifestos from the general elections of 2018 and 2024 in Pakistan were analyzed. In the campaign advertisements, females commonly resorted to a more nurturing approach while males took a more aggressive stance. Based on Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Theory, language used highlights deeper socio-cultural aspects and relationships defined by different communication patterns of men and women. Although female candidates raised important issues like education and healthcare, they were, unfortunately, overshadowed in credibility by the existing patriarchal structures of society. In interviews conducted, students expressed that they perceived the male candidates as more adept in multifaceted situations which was indicative of entrenched social realities (Ali & Khan, 2023).

8.2 Parliamentary Debates

The transcripts from the recent meetings of Pakistan's National Assembly and Senate were thoroughly examined, with the aim of identifying the frequency of gendered language and the depiction of women's issues in political discourse. The analysis showed severe inconsistency in the use of description whereby male politicians were branded as "strong," "decisive," and "leaders" whereas females were described in supportive or interpersonal roles. For instance, during a debate at a renowned institution, male members discussed infrastructure, tough decisions and security, while

female members stressed victim support policies and gender-based policies. These patterns highlight the associative effects of governance on the socio-structurally subordinate feminine sphere.

8.3 Policy Documents

Key documents, comprising the *National Gender Policy (2002)* and the *Framework for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (2021)*, were also analyzed for their linguistic framing of gender inclusivity and gender balance. Both documents, while acknowledging the need for greater women's participation, lacked concrete measures or accountability mechanisms. Vague language and non-specific targets failed to address structural barriers, allowing systemic exclusions to persist (Government of Pakistan, 2002; Ministry of Human Rights, 2021).

8.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

Undergraduate students from various universities were interviewed to understand their experiences with gendered communication in academic and political settings. Three core themes emerged:

- a. **Perceptions of Leadership:** Leadership was commonly associated with masculinity; women in leadership were judged more harshly than their male counterparts.
- b. **Barriers to Participation:** Participants identified harassment, societal expectations, and dismissal in discussions as major deterrents to women's political engagement.
- c. **Recommendations for Inclusivity:** Many students proposed the creation of separate legislative chambers for men and women to ensure balanced representation and respectful communication environments.

9. CDA of Gendered Language in News Discourse

The Express Tribune article "No Male Staff in Female Institution, Says CJ" was analyzed from both a CDA and thematic analytical perspective with regard to a ruling of the Lahore High Court regarding the male staff in female educational institutions due to harassment concerns. In this case, four themes were theorized:

Harassment in Female Institutions: The article spotlighted repeated incidents of harassment pointing towards a systemic failure in guaranteeing women's safety;

Gender-Specific Staffing as a Safeguard: Although framed as a protection, the court ruling implied that co-educational spaces are dangerous;

Institutional Accountability: The judiciary berated ineffective response on the part of the police and educational institutions which exposed oblique power play and institutional apathy;

Media Framing: Media built up a public opinion that gender segregation is necessary for protection thus reiterating patriarchal gender norms.

These layers of discourse reflect broader societal constructions of gender, vulnerability and authority and the CDA finding that language both mirrors and shapes institutional power dynamics.

10. Proposed Governance Model

Drawing from the analysis, the study proposes a **shift in existing governance model** aimed at dismantling patriarchal structures within democratic institutions. The model comprises:

Parallel Legislative Structures: Separate chambers for male and female representatives to ensure that gender-specific concerns are directly addressed, while collaborative bodies tackle broader national issues.

Replication in Other Sectors: Establishing sex-parallel structures in sectors like education, law, sports, and professional spaces to encourage safe and inclusive environments and balanced power structures.

Language Reform in Policy: Institutional language in official documentation must include gender-sensitive terminology and clear accountability frameworks to promote representation. In addition, neutral language may be prioritized.

This model does not support or call for a complete segregation but rather puts forth a **gender-responsive structure** that provides equal communicative space, encourages mutual respect, and combats long-standing biases embedded in political and societal institutions.

11. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the selected political texts and interview data revealed consistent patterns in how gender is communicated and perceived within democratic institutions. Parliamentary debates, political speeches, and campaign materials often relied on language that reflected traditional male authority. These forms of communication emphasized control, command, and firmness i.e. the traits that are commonly associated with male leadership. Such patterns addressed the third research question, showing how unequal gender dynamics continue in the language of political discourse.

Through Critical Discourse Analysis, it became apparent that male voices and perspectives are more frequently present and more strongly framed in institutional language. When women were mentioned, it was often in limited contexts or through terms that reinforced conventional roles. Even in discussions related to gender or inclusion, the language used often lacked depth or empathy.

Interviews with undergraduate students helped bring personal perspectives into focus. Many participants expressed awareness of the differences in how male and female leaders are perceived. They noted that when women adopt assertive communication styles, these are often judged more harshly than when the same approach is employed by the men. In addition to it, when women lead through care, collaboration or empathy, such traits are not always recognized as valuable. Such feministic traits receive little or no acknowledgement. These observations can directly be linked with the second research question, which examines the influence of gendered communication styles on leadership.

The discussion gains further relevance when the Punjab College event is brought up. Although the specifics of the event are still debated, it sparked conversations highlighting how easily gender-related topics can become emotionally charged. According to the interviews, such instances often divide public opinion, whether the events are real, fabricated or merely perceived. The challenge in addressing gender issues lies in the fact that the surrounding discussions rarely foster genuine dialogue; instead, they tend to reinforce existing assumptions and beliefs, making it difficult to approach these issues with the compassion and objectivity they truly require.

The study also dived into the idea of having distinct parliamentary spaces for both genders. When this concept was shared with interview participants, the reactions were mixed. Some believed it could create a more equitable platform for both genders to voice their unique concerns. Others, however, raised doubts about whether establishing separate forums might unintentionally broaden the divide instead of fostering unity. These responses tie closely to the fourth research question, indicating that

while separate spaces might help bridge some gender-related gaps, they also bring up important questions about long-term inclusivity..

Suggestions for structural reforms came forward in both interviews and document analysis. Participants highlighted the need for more balanced representation, clearer guidelines for respectful and inclusive language, and leadership development programs that focus on gender awareness. These ideas speak to the first research question and support the need for changes in both mindset and structure.

12. Conclusion

This study looked into how gendered communication shapes leadership roles and representation within democratic systems. The results point out that political discussions still appear to incline towards male-centric styles, which can hamper the acknowledgment and involvement of female voices in our political discourse and social spheres. Both the language used by institutions and public opinion reflect these trends, highlighting the pressing need for change; not alone in policies, but also in our ways of discussing leadership and inclusion.

The combination of interviews and text analysis shows that how something is said is just as important as what is said. When communication styles associated with women are dismissed as invalid or ineffective, a whole perspective is excluded from decision making. Bridging this gap requires us to be fair in how we understand, support and practice leadership.

The proposal for separate parliamentary spaces for men and women as presented in this study is one possible solution to achieve equitable representation. While this has its own challenges, it could ensure both voices are heard, acknowledged and valued. Ultimately the study calls for these spaces to work together not in isolation so democratic practices become stronger not more fragmented.

In summary the study asks for a renewed focus on how gender and language shape public life. Leaders, policymakers and teachers all in their own domains have a role to play in building more inclusive systems; the ones where communication is open, respectful and truly representative of the people. Moving in this direction will not only improve participation but also a more thoughtful and responsive democracy.

13. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Institutional Reforms

Institutional reforms need to be executed to establish separate parliamentary committees for men and women which will address gender-specific concerns and facilitate cooperative governance.

Training and Education

The establishment of gender-sensitive communication training programs for political leaders and government officials would result in better inclusiveness of political discourse and a deeper understanding of diverse communication styles.

Policy Development

The promotion of gender-responsive policy design and enforcement needs to be advocated by policymakers to solve the distinctive problems which stop women from political involvement so that their voices can take part in decision-making.

Community Engagement

Grassroots initiatives receive support to educate the public about political gender parity which enables women to enter politics and disrupt current power dynamics.

Comprehensive Anti-Harassment Policies

Anti-harassment guidelines must be established in all organizations along with educational institutions to identify all forms of bullying and sexual harassment. Organizations and institutions need to offer ongoing training and bystander intervention programs which will create an accountable and respectful workplace environment.

Gender-Specific Staffing in Female Institutions

Staffing in Female Institutions In light of judicial guidelines that limit the presence of male staff in female-only institutions, it's crucial to focus on hiring female personnel in these settings. This not only boosts safety but also fosters empowerment and trust among female students and staff. In this way, we can be in a better position to sustain mental well-being and encourage women to play an active part in education and leadership.

Development of Soft Skills for Female Employability

The integration of gender-sensitive curricula that highlight both technical and soft skills specifically designed for female students also becomes imperative here. This evenhanded approach is expected to enhance employability by tackling the unique challenges women face in the job market, ultimately promoting greater gender empowerment and increasing their presence in traditionally male-dominated fields

Addressing Male Harassment in Policy Discourse

It is important to acknowledge and tackle harassment faced by males to ensure that policy discussions are balanced and inclusive. Legislators need to treat all harassment incidents with the same level of seriousness to promote social justice and gender equality.

Promoting Ethical Conduct and Personal Growth

Encouraging a cultural shift may probably require a strong emphasis on ethical principles, moral standards and personal development as essential tools in fighting harassment and assault. True societal change hinges not merely on implementing policies but also on individuals' dedication to integrity, honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect.

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The Role of the Supreme Court in Democratic Development in Pakistan (2009–2021)

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: May 23, 2025 Revised: June 27, 2025 Accepted: June 29, 2025	<p>This article studies the role of the apex judiciary in the democratic development in Pakistan from 2009 to 2021, while focusing on the complex institutional interaction and power negotiations between the institutions and politicians. This study utilises a qualitative approach by conducting a case study analysis of selected important judicial verdicts of the apex court through the theoretical lens of the democratic consolidation theory, which requires the “willingness” of key players of a polity to keep democracy as the only game in town. This study contributes to the understanding of the apex judiciary’s behaviour towards democracy in Pakistan, by analyzing selected verdicts of apex court involving important political disputes: the legitimacy of Musharraf’s emergency during PPP’s government, disqualification of PPP’s Prime Minister, allegation of defaming the military against PMLN’s Prime Minister, disqualification of PMLN’s Prime Minister and the PTI’s demand for open balloting for Senate’s election. It underscores that the role of the apex judiciary didn’t remain consistent towards democratic development during this period, as some verdicts exhibited a high “willingness” towards democratic development, but other verdicts prioritized compliance of judicial orders, accountability and procedural adherence over political stability, substantial democracy and representation, which resulted into the political loss to the ruling parties PPP, PMLN and PTI during this period. Therefore, the article concludes that the apex judicial forum played a mixed role towards democratic development during the period 2009–2021.</p>
Keywords <i>Supreme Court of Pakistan</i> <i>Democratic Consolidation</i> <i>Judicial Activism</i> <i>Hybrid Democracy</i> <i>Civil-Military Relations</i>	

1. Introduction

Pakistan has remained in a quest for stable democracy during its political evolution. This article evaluates the role of the Supreme Court in democratic development during an important period (2009–2021), which is marked by continued civilian rule despite substantial judicial activism. For the sake of contextualising this study, it is crucial to understand basic concepts and the historical trajectory of judicial behaviour towards democracy.

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1.1 What is Democracy?

Democracy, in its minimalistic definition, means a political system where citizens elect their leaders through free, fair, and competitive polls, which is accompanied by guarantees of civil liberties, political pluralism, and institutional accountability (Schumpeter, 2013; Dahl, 2008). Elster (1988) has simply defined democracy as a rule of simple majority on the “one vote per person” basis. The substantive democracy even goes beyond elections, by requiring emphasizes the protection of fundamental rights, the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the meaningful participation of citizens in governance. According to Schumpeter (1975), democracy means that the people have the power to both elect and remove their leaders.

1.2 What is Democratic Development?

The term Democratic development refers to the *process* of strengthening democratic institutions, substantial democratic norms, and practices over time for the purpose of enhancing political participation, ensuring government accountability, expanding civil liberties, and embedding constitutionalism within state-society relations (Diamond, 1999). Democratic development is not merely the absence of authoritarianism, but it also requires that a resilient democratic culture and infrastructure be actively cultivated. According to O'Donnell, Schmitter, & Whitehead (1986), democratic development is ordinarily divided into two phases, i.e., democratic transition and democratic consolidation. Democratic transition starts with the fall of the undemocratic regime and ends with the installation of a democratic regime. On the other hand, the democratic consolidation phase ordinarily starts after the installation of the democratic regime. Therefore, according to Linz & Stepan (1996), the democratic transition phase is marked by a period of fluidity, when there is still apprehension of reversion to the authoritarian regime.

1.3 Democratic Consolidation

Democratic consolidation is a part of democratic development because democratic development is related to the overall democratic progress of institutions, whereas democratic consolidation relates to ensuring that democracy should not be reversed. In a democratically consolidated polity, democratic governance becomes the only option. It occurs when the key political players believe in democracy as the sole legitimate system of governance and that the power transition should only be through a democratic process, instead of resorting to coups (Linz, 1996). The "willingness" of major institutions (military, judiciary, political parties) is a paramount requirement.

1.4 Historical Background

Since independence, Pakistan was aimed, by its Constituent Assembly (1949), to be governed through the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice outlined by Islam. But, there emerged a power imbalance as the political institutions were weak against strong state institutions such as the army, bureaucracy, and judiciary (Waseem, 2012a). The legacy of British colonial governance had influenced these state institutions; therefore, they intervened in civilian governance and exploited the vulnerabilities of political institutions, hence resulting in a political system which they predominantly controlled (Khan, 2018). The power struggle between elites resulted in the removal of five prime ministers during 1947-1958, which Choudhury (1974) names as the era of the ‘revolving door’ of Prime Ministers. The continuous power struggle between the political and state institutions often created political crises, which came to the Pakistani apex court for their resolution.

Historically, the Supreme Court rendered important decisions to resolve important political disputes, including the dismissal of prime ministers and assemblies, and the legitimacy of military coups. During 1947-1987, most of the verdicts passed during this period legitimised and supported the undemocratic regimes by relying on the doctrine of necessity. Such decisions harmed the democratic

development. For example, Pardesi (2012) notes that the Dosso verdict and the Tamizuddin verdict reversed the constitutional growth. Similarly, the Nusrat Bhutto verdict (1977) legitimised General Zia's coup. However, during this period, only a few verdicts like the Fazlul Quader Chowdhry Case (1963) and the Asma Jilani Case (1972) supported the idea of democratic governance under substantial democratic norms. In the former verdict, the Supreme Court invalidated President Ayub's ordinance, which had allowed his unelected cabinet members to speak in the Assembly. In the latter verdict, the Supreme Court invalidated the 1969 martial law by overruling the principle of necessity. However, these decisions were short-lived due to the lack of their implementation or the return of the authoritarian regime. However,

Even during the democratic era (1988-1999), the Supreme Court impacted democracy by passing inconsistent verdicts, influenced by the doctrine of necessity, regarding the presidential dismissals of the National Assembly in 1988, 1990, 1993, and 1996 (Waseem, 2012). Later during Musharraf's regime (1999-2008), the Supreme Court passed verdicts like Zafar Ali Shah Case (2000) and Tika Iqbal Khan Case (2007) legitimizing the emergencies imposed by Musharraf. These verdicts, passed during 1947-2008 supporting the undemocratic power transitions highlight the negative and subservient role of the judiciary which was influenced by the undemocratic principles like the doctrine of necessity or doctrine of revolutionary legitimacy.

However, following General Musharraf's decline, the Supreme Court passed a ruling in the 2009 PCO Judges dismantling the doctrine of necessity and reversing the undemocratic laws that Musharraf had enacted to consolidate his authority. Since then, the country has not seen any direct martial law so far. Therefore, the 2009 PCO judges' verdict is an important historical marker highlighting the shift in the Supreme Court's institutional behaviour towards democracy in Pakistan.

1.5 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The PCO Judges' verdict (2009) highlights the emergence of the Supreme Court as a pivotal political player, with the ability to shape the political landscape through its decisions. From 2008 to 2021, three consecutive elections were held in 2008, 2013 and 2018, showing the democratic development marked by a continued civilian rule. The era 2009-2021 witnesses the continued civilian governance of the state, but also the judicial dismissal of two prime ministers, signifying the complex judicial role towards democracy. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to study the role of the Supreme Court in democratic development during this era. Therefore, this article examines the role of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the democratic development from 2009 to 2021. The study will be significant in understanding the importance of judicial participation in democratic development by highlighting the consequences of selected judicial verdicts on democratic development. The objective of this study is (1) to assess the role of the Supreme Court in democratic development in Pakistan during 2009-2021, by analysing the selected verdicts, and (2) to assess the consistency of judicial behaviour in those verdicts towards democracy during 2009-2021.

2. Literature Review

Newberg (2002) has studied the judicial role in Pakistani politics during the era 1947-1993. She argues that the courts had to define politics through their verdicts, because of incompetent politicians and unclear ideas about rights & powers. The judiciary bolstered the foundations of the polity by establishing the mechanism for solving political disagreements. They didn't advocate the perpetuity of military rule, even while supporting the military coups.

Ashraf et al. (2025) have studied the historical application of the doctrine of necessity by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. They have concluded that the Supreme Court applied this doctrine on several occasions, between 1958 to 2000, to support the military coups, negatively impacting the democratic institutions and democratic development in Pakistan.

Waseem (2012a) argues that the apex Court, under CJ Chaudhry, enhanced its powers by employing the broader interpretation of laws and using a populist approach during the adjudication of executive actions, which has resulted in the enhancement of institutional conflicts. In another work, Waseem (2012b) has discussed the evolving trajectory of the dispute between elected and unelected forces in Pakistan. He argues that historically, the military has removed elected governments, but this role has been replaced by the judiciary. He cites, in this regard, the example of the judicial removal of the PM. In this way, he criticises that the apex court has assumed the role of such a non-democratic force against the elected government, which has shifted the dynamics of conflict.

Khan (2016) has discussed the conduct and lives of the judges of the superior courts of Pakistan, which impacted the state. He has argued that the incompetence of other departments of the state resulted in the expansion of the judicial role in Pakistan. In another work, Khan (2017) has analysed the judicial roles in the constitutional and political history of Pakistan. He has discussed the important political disputes, their judicial decisions and the consequences of these verdicts on the constitutional and political history of Pakistan. In another work

Cheema (2016) has studied the political impact of the Pakistani judiciary. He argues that since the court's decisions impact politics, therefore, these decisions can also be treated as a form of politics. He further argues that since there are situations when the judiciary is the only hope to solve the hostile political deadlocks, therefore, the court's silence or inaction can also impact the politics. He cited the example of CJ Chaudhry, who declined to take up the issue of electoral rigging on the pretext of judicial restraint, which enhanced the political instability. In another work, Cheema (2018b) has criticized that the Pakistani apex court lacks a specific jurisprudential mechanism for decision of political disputes, which often results in arbitrariness particularly in suo-moto cases, as sometimes these cases are decision on the first day of hearing without affording any reasonable time and opportunity to the respondents. He suggests the reformative legislation for regulating the suo-moto decisions and affording the right to file review against such decisions under a coherent jurisprudence.

Khan & Hassan (2025) have analysed the impact of judicial activism on the parliamentary democracy in Pakistan from 2018 to 2022. They have concluded that judicial activism has negatively impacted the parliamentary democracy during this era. They have recommended the legislation of laws controlling judicial conduct and powers to safeguard the trichotomy of power and ensure fairness in decisions.

Gul et al. (2025) have comparatively analysed the judicial review in Pakistan and the UK. They have concluded that Pakistani courts are not neutral because of institutional and political pressures. They have suggested that judicial neutrality should be promoted in Pakistan by legislating reforms.

2.1 Literature Gap

The existing literature is in scattered form as it does not comprehensively discuss the Supreme Court's role within the period under study (i.e., 2009-2021). Therefore, the existing literature does not sufficiently describe the changes in the trajectory of the institutional behaviour of the Supreme Court during this period. Moreover, the existing literature has analysed different theoretical lenses like the separation of power, independence of judiciary or the judicialization of politics, but they lack the lens of Linz's Democratic Consolidation Theory, which is most relevant to this research topic due to its emphasis on the "willingness" of the judiciary towards democracy. Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap in the literature by examining the selected judgments of the apex court of Pakistan under the lens of Linz's Democratic Consolidation Theory during the period under study (i.e., 2009-2021).

3. Problem Statement

After the fall of Musharraf's regime, Pakistan witnessed a continued civilian governance in Pakistan supported by the regular conduct of general elections, which signifies the democratic development.

Therefore, it becomes pertinent to study the role of the Supreme Court in democratic development after that historical shift in 2009. Since the democratic consolidation theory connects the process of democratic consolidation to the “willingness” of the key political players or institutions, therefore, this theoretical lens becomes pertinent for assessing the judicial role towards democracy. But the existing literature lacks this aspect. Hence, this study intends to assess the Supreme Court’s role during the era (2009-2021) through this lens. It aims to explore whether such a role remained consistent or changed during this period. And whether such role positively or negatively impacted the democratic development in Pakistan?

4. Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following research question:

1. What was the role of the apex judiciary in the democratic development in Pakistan during 2009-2021?
2. Whether such a role remained consistent during said period?

5. Methodology

As the courts behave and act through their verdicts, therefore, the judicial behaviour can be assessed by analysing the judicial verdicts. Therefore, this study utilises a qualitative approach by employing Case Study Analysis of the following selected verdicts in important political disputes:

- i. PCO Judges Case (2009)
- ii. Gilani Contempt Case (2012)
- iii. Military's Defamation Case (2014)
- iv. Panama Scandal Case (2017)
- v. Senate's Secret Ballot case (2021)

By scrutinising these decisions and their consequences on democratic governance, this study attempts to deliver a thorough understanding of the judiciary's influence on Pakistan's political landscape. This study has used primary data (i.e., legislations and selected verdicts of the apex court) and secondary data (i.e., books and journal articles). The democratic development is the dependent variable, whereas the court's “willingness” to prioritise democracy is an independent variable in this research.

The theoretical foundation is based on Democratic Consolidation Theory, which argues that democratic consolidation requires the “willingness” of key players under a broader consensus that the country should be run through democratic means only (Linz, 1996).

6. Case Study

The case study analysis of the selected verdicts in important political disputes is given as under:

6.1 PCO Judges Case (2009)

This verdict of the apex court was titled as SHCBA etc. vs. FOP etc. (2009), which invalidated Musharraf's emergency, undid his constitutional alterations and restored the judges deposed by him (Kalhan, 2013). In doing so, the court overruled its past precedents that had validated military coups under necessity; hence, obstructing any such attempt in future (Munir & Mahmood, 2019). The main underlying controversy behind this case was about the restoration of judges, including the Chief Justice Chaudhary, who had been deposed by the past dictator. Therefore, the court restored those deposed judges; however, in doing so, the court also invalidated the past dictator's laws and the emergency.

This was a post democratic transition verdict, because Musharraf had already lost his reign, being replaced by a civilian president. Therefore, the passing of such like verdict against the past dictatorship was not a big surprise. The civilian President was reluctant to restore the Chief Justice deposed by Musharraf in past. This reluctance was because of the President's fear that the Chief Justice would reopen the corruption cases against the president by invalidating the immunity granted by Musharraf. The lawyers' movement, demanding the restoration of the Chief Justice, also received support from the civil society and the opposition parties to pressure the civilian government. With such a supportive political milieu, this verdict came in the wake of tension between the civilian government and the supporters of the Chief Justice's restoration. Therefore, the timing of this verdict highlights the impact of the prevailing political environment on the judicial behaviour regarding democracy. This situation fulfilled the requirements of the democratic consolidation theory, like the willingness and broad consensus of key political actors, such as the judiciary and opposition parties. The lack of any outright opposition from the military's Chief General Keyani also brought the military establishment among those key political actors willing to make democracy the only game in town.

The pro-democratic aspects of this verdict highlight the judicial "willingness" towards maintaining democracy. Firstly, the court abolished the necessity doctrine and overruled its necessity verdicts that had been relied in past to legitimize the undemocratic usurpation of power in the name of necessity and security of the state. Rather, the verdict declared in clear words that any such action would tantamount to an unconstitutional act. Therefore, the verdict buried the doctrine of necessity. Secondly, the past dictator Musharraf enacted some undemocratic amendments in the constitution to consolidate his control over power. After his departure, such prevailing amendments acted as structural limitations against the parliament and the judiciary. Parliament, being a conventionally weak institution, couldn't challenge these dictatorial laws. Therefore, the court invalidated those amendments through this verdict, thereby liberalising the parliament and the courts to exercise their respective powers, and giving the parliament a chance to set its future course through parliamentary legislation. Therefore, the removal of undemocratic clauses from the constitution liberated the parliament, facilitating the legislation of democratic provisions, such as the 18th Amendment to the constitution. Thirdly, this verdict also consolidated the authority of the elected government by legitimising the elections of 2008 (Kalhan, 2013). These democratic features show (1) the judicial involvement as one of the key political players of the state, and also demonstrate (2) the judicial "willingness" towards democratic progress by acting as the democratic consolidator, commensurate with the requirement of key political players' willingness under the democratic consolidation theory.

6.2 Gilani Contempt Case (2012)

This verdict was an extension of the NRO dispute. Through NRO law, Musharraf had granted immunity to politicians, including Zardari, against corruption cases. However, later, the apex court stripped this immunity in the NRO verdict and instructed the PPP's government to approach Swiss authorities to reopen cases against Zardari. But, the government didn't want to comply with this direction, as such action could result in unfavourable circumstances (Almeida, 2012). The democratic and political stability endowed by the PCO Judges' verdict (2009) was already thinned by the NRO verdict, as Cheema (2016) argues that the judicial invalidation of NRO brought the civilian government and the judiciary into confrontation with each other. Similarly, Waseem (2012a) criticises that such invalidation of a law by judicial order amounted to the assumption of a legislative role by the judiciary, while disturbing the trichotomy of powers. Moreover, Kalhan (2013) notes that the NRO verdict aligned with the conventional narrative of the Army, which historically distrusted the elected parliamentarians and therefore tried to control them. Therefore, due to these undemocratic aspects, the NRO verdict (2009) didn't demonstrate sufficient "willingness" to consolidate democracy and the civilian government. The court pressed the government to comply with its order, while insinuating severe consequences, including the initiation of contempt proceedings against the Prime Minister (Munir, 2022). This situation was further exacerbated as these events ultimately led to the passing of the Gilani contempt verdict (2012), when Gilani refused due to Zardari's presidential immunity, the Suo-Motu Contempt proceeding was initiated against him by the apex court through

Suo-Motu No.4 (2012). The court convicted him with a symbolic sentence, without expressly mentioning any disqualification from his office (Iqbal, 2012). This vagueness caused the political upheaval (Hussain, 2012). This dispute between the ruling party and the opposition, as the opposition construed the conviction as disqualification; therefore, the matter again went to the apex court, which declared the disqualification, while overruling the speaker's ruling (Munir, 2022).

Due to undemocratic aspects, the Gilani contempt verdict (2012) highlighted the lack of judicial "willingness" towards maintaining democracy. For example, firstly, this decision exuberated the perception that the judicial department, being authorised by "public will", is equivalent to the parliament (Walsh, 2012). Such idea is based on that belief that since the constitution is will of the people, therefore, the courts act as public representative when they punish a contemnor for non-compliance of constitution. Such self-perception challenges the supremacy of the parliament and was contravening the constitutional requisite of separation of power which assigns legislative function to the parliament and adjudicative function to the judiciary. Secondly, the court overruled Gilani's plea of presidential immunity already provided in the constitution, and insisted on the strict implementation of its orders at any cost. Such approach highlights the paternalistic undertone. Thirdly, the issue of qualification of the prime minister fell into the functional domain of the parliament. Therefore, the direct judicial declaration of disqualification, instead of referring the matter to the parliament, downsized the constitutional role of the parliament and Election Commission (Kalhan, 2013). Hence, this verdict enhanced the judicial involvement into parliamentary affairs (Munir, 2022). Fourthly, the contempt proceeding and disqualification destabilized the political situation, as it not only reduced the control and legitimacy of the civilian government, but also lowered the public trust in the ruling party.

The democratic consolidation theory requires the "willingness" of all key political players of a state for the consolidation of democracy. But, these four aspects (1) judicial self-perception of being a public representative, (2) paternalistic undertone, (3) interference into internal affairs of the parliament, and (4) resultant political instability demonstrated lack of judicial "willingness" as required under the democratic consolidation theory for the consolidation of democracy. Rather, the verdict enhanced the judicial role in politics and demonstrated the insistence on the executive's compliance with judicial orders, without considering its effects on the political and democratic situation of the country.

6.3 Military's Defamation Case (2014)

The tensions were high between the military and the elected government due to several reasons, including the government's increasing control over foreign & defence policymaking (Fair, 2017). It's another reason was the initiation of a treason case against the retired General Musharraf (PILDAT, 2015). Therefore, the military relied on the opposition parties to remove the Prime Minister Nawaz (Siddiq, 2007). The protests of opposition created an apprehension of a military coup, but the army chief intervened to mediate between the government and opposition (Boone, 2014). This intervention was to pressure the government to loosen its independent control on policies (Fair, 2017). In the National Assembly, Nawaz denied the allegations that he had approached the Army Chief to seek any help for resolving the dispute with demonstrators. But the military negated the Prime Minister's claim. Therefore, the opposition leaders took the matter to the court by filing a case titled as I.K. Khakwani etc v. Nawaz Sharif etc. (2014), alleging that the Prime Minister had become disqualified from his office as he had told a lie to defame the military. Ultimately, the apex court dismissed the case on the grounds of the absence of evidence and the lack of the court's jurisdiction to interfere in the parliamentary processes.

Ordinarily, the ruling parties with majority seats are considered a threat to the vested interests of the powerful unelected elites. Therefore, these elites historically manoeuvred, on different occasions, to destabilise the civilian governments by employing different means, including political protests & sit-ins, horse-trading, military coups and court cases. This case is one such example of an attempt to destabilise the civilian regime. The opposition parties' leaders, who were the petitioners in these

cases, argued their case primarily on the two grounds. Firstly, the Prime Minister's statement about the Army Chief amounted to an act of defaming the army, which is an institution of the state's security. Secondly, he became ineligible for his office under Article 62(1)(f) of the constitution because of his false statement. The first ground relates to the concerns of the state's security and necessity, whereas the second ground relates to the enforcement of the state's security by removing the Prime Minister through the moral assessment mechanism provided under Article 62(1)(f). Nelson (2021) has criticised this clause by declaring it an undemocratic tool which had been devised by General Zia's regime to control the dissident parliamentarians.

Ultimately, the court dismissed the petition on the ground that the requirements of Article 62(1)(f) for a parliamentarian, of being "truthful" and "honest", are vague and include a wide range of things. However, the court didn't scrutinise the validity of Article 62(1)(f) under the touchstone of fundamental features of the constitution, including democratic governance. The dismissal of the case, without striking down Article 62(1)(f), implies the fact that the court saved the civilian government for the time being through this quick-fix verdict; but, the court was not ready to quit its powers available under Article 62(1)(f) which could be used in future. However, the observance of judicial restraint by the Supreme Court in this case indirectly beckoned its cold-shouldered refusal to support the undemocratic forces during the ongoing tussle between the civilian government and the military establishment. In this way, the court, being an important key political player, wisely used the option of judicial restraint. Its refusal to remove the prime minister or interfere in the parliament's jurisdiction, resulted in the continuity of elected government. Hence, the supreme court, by acting as a democratic consolidator, duly fulfilled the "willingness" which is required, under the democratic consolidation theory, to consolidate the democracy, thus positively impacting the democratic development.

6.4 Panama Scandal Case (2017)

This case sprouted from the corruption allegations against Prime Minister Nawaz, after his name was disclosed in the leaked papers about offshore assets. The opposition leaders approached the apex court, by filing the case, titled "I.K. v. Nawaz etc." (2017), seeking the declaration about the Prime Minister's disqualification, whereon the majority decision directed an inquiry through a "Joint Investigation Team" (JIT) comprising of members including the officers from intelligence agencies. The JIT submitted its report before the implementation bench of the court confirming the allegations of money transfers to offshore destinations. Consequently, in the verdict "I.K. v. Nawaz & others" (2017), the bench disqualified the Prime Minister on the ground of nondisclosure of receivable income in his nomination papers submitted for participating in the elections. This decision enforced a constitutional Clause 62(1)(f), requiring the parliamentarians to be truthful & honest, which had been introduced by former dictator General Zia to constrain the parliamentarians (Nelson, 2021).

Due to undemocratic aspects, the Panama Scandal Case (2017) demonstrated the lack of judicial "willingness" towards maintaining democracy. For example, firstly, the issue of the qualification of the prime minister fell into the functional domain of the parliament itself, but the judicial declaration of disqualification, instead of referring the matter to the parliament, downsized the constitutional role of the parliament. Further, the inquiry into the Prime Minister's moral character amounted to an outreach into the domain of politics, consolidating the judicial authority over the parliament (Munir, 2022). Secondly, Clause 62(1)(f) was a dictatorial legacy of Zia's regime, which had been enacted to constrain and control the parliamentarians under the thumb of the military establishment. However, instead of striking down such authoritarian clause, the verdict enforced it, thereby thinning the sovereignty of the parliament and the independence of its parliamentarians, and thus, aligning with the traditional military's narrative about incompetence and untrustworthiness of the elected parliamentarians. Resultantly, the elected Prime Minister could not complete the full period of his office like past Prime Ministers (Jamal, 2017). Thirdly, the disqualification of the prime minister gave a shock to the ruling political party, as it not only reduced the control and legitimacy of the civilian government but also lowered the public trust in the ruling party, causing political instability.

The democratic consolidation theory requires the “willingness” of all key political players of a state for the consolidation of democracy. The verdict enhanced the judicial role in politics and demonstrated the insistence on the executive’s compliance with judicial orders, without considering its effects on the political and democratic situation of the country. But, the three aspects of this verdict, such as (1) the judicial interference into internal affairs of the parliament, (2) the reliance over clause 62(1)(f) which had been enacted by a past dictator to control the parliament, and (3) the resultant political instability demonstrated lack of judicial “willingness” as required under the democratic consolidation theory for the consolidation of democracy. Rather, this verdict exemplified an insistence on judicial accountability of parliamentarians, instead of prioritising the substantial democratic representation. Hence, this decision demonstrated a lack of judicial “willingness” as required under the democratic consolidation theory.

6.5 Senate’s Secret Ballot case (2021)

This case revolved around the issue of horse-trading through secret ballots. Although the Pakistani constitution provides the secret balloting for senatorial elections (Begum, 2022), this method has often been misused in Pakistan for seeking legislators’ votes against their parties (Khan, 2021). The PTI’s elected government had concerns about potential horse trading during senatorial elections. Therefore, the president filed a reference, known as Reference No. 1 (2021), in the apex court seeking advice about the conduct of elections of the Chairman Senate through the open balloting. But the court opined in favour of the secret balloting because of the constitutional requirement. This verdict manifested legalism due to strict adherence to the constitutional provisions, without considering the issue of horse trading. Ultimately, the ruling party PTI, which had a majority of seats in the lower house, became a minority in the Senate. Such a defeat gave a major loss to the PTI, leading to political instability (Nasir, 2021). Such a defeat was exceptional, because ordinarily the ruling parties secured a majority position in the Senate in past (Janjua, 2021). The Prime Minister alleged that this defeat was due to horse-trading of PTI’s members, which lowered the party’s credibility (Wolf, 2021). Resultantly, he called the lower house’s PTI parliamentarians for a vote of confidence, which he won by votes above the requisite numbers (Hashim, 2021c).

Traditionally, when a ruling party in Pakistan becomes very popular and strong, its popularity is viewed against the interests of the military establishment, particularly due to their increasing competition for control over resources and policymaking in the fields of defence and foreign policy. The opposition parties often try to take advantage of such a situation to destabilise the ruling party’s government. For example, policymaking disputes between civilian government and military existed during Prime Minister Nawaz, when the opposition parties launched public protests for his disqualification and also approached the judiciary seeking a declaration of the disqualification of the prime minister. Similarly, the tension arose between the civilian government and military establishment during PM Imran Khan’s regime. Therefore, the civilian government had to face severe opposition from the opposition parties. During such circumstances, the Prime Minister had apprehension of horse-trading in Senate’s Elections which could weaken the ruling party’s standing in the upper house. Therefore, his party demanded open balloting for conduct of Senate’s election, in order to avoid any backdoor conspiracy.

Considering the traditional instances of horse-trading, the re-evaluation of the secret balloting system and its efficacy in Pakistani context, through judicial scrutiny, was the need of the hour. But, the court upheld the secret balloting while relying on the existing constitutional clauses, instead of re-evaluating the validity these clauses on the touchstone of the basic features of the constitution including the democracy. Therefore, this verdict exemplified legalism & proceduralism due to its reliance on the text of clauses, instead of assessing whether these clauses commensurate with the democratic principle of the constitution. This procedural approach shows the restrained judicial behaviour indifferent to the question of substantial democracy and issue of horse-trading. Therefore, such kind of judicial restraint or silence, during the time when the interference of the judiciary became necessary, amounted to the lack of “willingness” to consolidate democracy, as required by the democratic consolidation theory, and resultantly, the political dispute increased over the issue of horse

trading and the ruling party became minority party in the upper house. Due to its consequences of causing political instability and weakening the ruling party, this verdict negatively impacted the democratic development in the country.

7. Findings

The findings of this study are as follows:

1. The judiciary became one of the key political actors in the state, due to its engagement in the resolution of these political disputes. The decisions in the PCO Judges Case (2009) and the Military's Defamation Case (2014) demonstrated the judicial "willingness" towards democratic consolidation, as the former verdict liberalised the parliament by breaking the undemocratic constitutional obstacles, while the latter verdict refused to destabilise the civilian government, hence these decisions fulfilled the "willingness" requirement of the democratic consolidation theory, by prioritising democracy and substantial democratic representation over undemocratic excuse of necessity. However, the decisions in the Gilani Contempt Case (2012), the Panama Scandal Case (2017) and the Senate's Secret Ballot case (2021) caused political loss to ruling parties PPP, PMLN and PTI, respectively, by prioritising compliance, accountability and procedural adherence, respectively, over political stability, substantial democratic representation, hence demonstrating the lack of "willingness" for democratic consolidation. Resultantly, the case study of these verdicts reveals that the Supreme Court, in the PCO Judges Case (2009) and the Military's Defamation Case (2014), played positive consolidator role towards the democratic development in Pakistan, whereas it played negative role towards democratic development in Gilani Contempt Case (2012), the Panama Scandal Case (2017) and the Senate's Secret Ballot case (2021) which ultimately harmed the democracy in Pakistan.
2. The pro-democratic role of the Supreme Court in the PCO Judges Case (2009) and the Military's Defamation Case (2014) and its negative role towards democratic development in the Gilani Contempt Case (2012), the Panama Scandal Case (2017) and the Senate's Secret Ballot case (2021) highlight the changing trajectory of judicial behaviour towards democracy. Hence, the Supreme Court's role didn't remain consistent towards democratic development during 2009-2021.

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that the Supreme Court, in the PCO Judges Case (2009) and the Military's Defamation Case (2014), played positive consolidator role towards the democratic development in Pakistan, whereas it played negative role towards democratic development in Gilani Contempt Case (2012), the Panama Scandal Case (2017) and the Senate's Secret Ballot case (2021) which ultimately harmed the democracy in Pakistan. With such a changing trajectory of mixed judicial behaviour towards democracy, the Supreme Court didn't play a consistent role towards democratic development during 2009-2021, meaning thereby the Supreme Court, being one of the key political players of the state, didn't always consistently fulfil the institutional "willingness" requirement of the democratic consolidation theory during 2009-2021 due to changes in its institutional "willingness" towards democratic development over this period.

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Impact of Triple-A Capabilities on Environmental Performance:
Implications for Public Policy

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: June 1, 2025 Revised: June 29, 2025 Accepted: June 29, 2025	Triple-A Capabilities—comprising “Agility, Adaptability, and Alignment”—are recognized as essential for enhancing “supply chain performance” globally. Existing literature highlights the need for further investigation of the link between “Triple-A Capabilities” and “Environmental Performance”, especially within the context of developing nations. Accordingly, this research examines the relationship between these capabilities and “Environmental Performance” in Pakistan's pesticide industry. A quantitative approach was adopted under the positivist research paradigm. Initially, a review of existing literature helped to develop a conceptual framework to understand the interplay between “Triple-A Capabilities” and “Environmental Performance”. Subsequently, empirical data were gathered through an online structured questionnaire to test the proposed conceptual framework. The analysis was carried out using SmartPLS 4.0. Findings revealed a significant positive effect between “Triple-A Capabilities” and “Environmental Performance”. From a public policy perspective, it is recommended that government agencies promote the integration of Triple-A Capabilities through targeted supply chain training programs and regulatory incentives. Additionally, environmental compliance frameworks should be revised to encourage agility, adaptability, and alignment in operations. Future studies should be conducted across different countries and industrial sectors to increase the generalizability of the findings of current study.
Keywords <i>Triple-A Capabilities</i> <i>Environmental Performance</i> <i>Pesticide Firms</i> <i>Public Policy</i> <i>Pakistan</i>	

1. Introduction

In recent years, environmental change has become an important issue for under developing countries as well as for emerging nations. South Asia, in particular, has gone through an increasing susceptibility to natural disasters due to the negative impacts of “environmental change”. Pakistan is situated in a region where the consequences of environmental change are being felt intensely and Pakistan has been adversely affected due to negative impacts of environmental change. The resultant environmental calamity has had broad negative impacts on the “economy, society, and environment” of Pakistan (Salik et al., 2023). Statistics show that the 2010 and 2012 floods in Pakistan caused loss of homes, injuries, and fatalities for over 20 million people in Pakistan which had devastating

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consequences for the people of Pakistan. Moreover, lengthy periods of heatwaves in Pakistan, where temperatures often exceed 38°C yearly, may result in significant human health issues. Between 1997 and 2015, Pakistan gone through an average of seven heatwaves every year, with a rising trend (Ahsan, 2022; Salik et al., 2023).

Environmental changes in Pakistan have brought about various impacts, influencing the country's ecology, economy, and society. Particularly, changes in climate patterns have resulted in more frequent and “extreme weather” issues like: “floods and droughts” etc. These variations pose a noteworthy threat to the agricultural sector, which is a foundation of Pakistan's economy and the source of revenue of many people of Pakistan. The melting glaciers in the northern regions also contribute to an increased risk of floods, endangering people living there. Biodiversity loss is another consequence, which affects ecosystems and reduces the adaptability of various species. Furthermore, water shortage complexes existing challenges, particularly because of Pakistan's dependence on the Indus River system (Ahsan, 2022; Salik et al., 2023). The impacts of worldwide “climate change” are already visible in Pakistan, with a growing incidence of droughts, floods, unpredictable weather patterns, shifts in agricultural practices, reduced availability of fresh water, and biodiversity loss. Addressing “climate change” involves both “mitigation and adaptation strategies”, and the crucial urgency for the country is to aggressively prepare for familiarising to these “environmental changes” (Pakistan, 2023).

The three dimensions of supply chain, namely “agility, adaptability, and alignment”, are equally important. Lee (2004) given the term “Triple-A,” which refers to these three words “agility, adaptability, and alignment”. Moreover, Dwayne Whitten et al. (2012) conducted empirical research and found that the According to (Lee, 2004), having “Triple-A capabilities (agility, adaptability, and alignment)” can significantly improve environmental performance.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Triple-A Capabilities

Although having an efficient and profitable supply chain is crucial for businesses, it is not sufficient to ensure sustainable competitive advantage. To achieve long-term success, supply chains must also possess flexibility, adaptability, and alignment with the organization's strategic goals. This necessitates the ability of companies to promptly react to market shifts, adjust their supply chain to meet evolving customer requirements, and ensure that the supply chain is completely integrated with their overall business strategy. Through achieving these objectives, companies can not only achieve short-term success but also ensure their long-term viability in a dynamic market (Lee, 2004). The supply chain's three dimensions, namely “agility, adaptability, and alignment”, are equally essential. Lee (2004) introduced the term “Triple-A,” which refers to these three A-letter words. Meanwhile, Dwayne Whitten et al. (2012) conducted empirical research and found that the “Triple-A capabilities” have a considerable positive impact on “environmental performance”. Lee (2004) asserted that the capability of the entire supply chain to react to changing customer demands, adapt to shifting market and economic conditions, and harmonize “production, marketing, and financial strategies throughout the supply chain” is essential for the success of each organization within the “supply chain”. To enhance the supply chain and organizational performance, Lee suggested creating a supply chain that is agile, adaptable, and aligned, which he coined as the Triple-A supply chain. Through his consulting experience with various companies, Lee contended that attaining the Triple-A capabilities can lead to improved supply chain performance.

2.2 Agility

Agility refers to an organization's capability to respond speedily to market changes, both inside the organization and in conjunction with its main suppliers and customers. This involves being able to quickly adapt the supply chain to meet changing customer demands

and market fluctuations while ensuring that the supply chain remains aligned with the overall business strategy (Braunscheidel & Suresh, 2009). When there are unexpected disruptions, such as natural disasters, supplier bankruptcy, or sudden changes in customer demand, the agility of the supply chain becomes crucial. The ability to quickly respond and adapt to these disruptions can help mitigate the impact on the organization's operations and minimize the risk of losing customers or market share. Agile firms can face such a situation and successfully meet the changing supply and demand.

Agility can be increased in the supply chain by adopting the following principles (Lee, 2004):

- i. There should be a match between real-time movement of supply and demand figures;
- ii. There should be good relationship with all vendors for co-operation;
- iii. It is recommended to design products that are flexible and to establish standardized processes that allow for postponement. Postponement refers to the practice of customizing a product until it is at its final stage in the supply chain network (Feitzinger & Lee, 1997);
- iv. Firms should maintain reasonable stock of low-cost, non-bulky but important items to escape the unfavourable situation, which may become a bottleneck;
- v. Firms should concentrate to ensure the dependable logistics system or supply chain partners; and,
- vi. Firms should formulate emergency procedures with the help of a risk management team.

Agility refers to the ability of an organization to quickly adapt to changes and respond to market demands and opportunities. Environmental performance, as mentioned earlier, refers to the entity's performance in terms of environmental sustainability and reducing its environmental impact.

A company with high agility may not necessarily have good environmental performance, but it can use its agility to quickly adapt to new regulations and customer demands for environmentally friendly products and practices. On the other hand, a company with poor environmental performance may struggle to respond to market pressure for sustainability, potentially impacting its long-term viability and competitiveness.

There can be a relationship between agility and financial performance, as an agile organization may be better equipped to quickly adjust to changes in the market and capitalize on new opportunities, leading to improved financial performance. However, other factors such as market conditions, competition, and overall strategy also play a significant role in a company's financial performance.

2.3 Adaptability

Adaptability is defined as an organizations' success in reacting to a dynamic environment where conditions are changing on a continuous basis (Walker Jr & Ruekert, 1987). While agility is to respond to short-term change, adaptability is a long-term fundamental adjustment to react against a structural change in the "market environment" or revised strategies. Adaptable organizations can identify patterns and trends, and restructure a whole supply chain base promptly. Adaptability can be promoted in the supply chain by taking the following principles into consideration (Lee, 2004):

- i. Identify new markets or suppliers by focusing on global economies;
- ii. Recognize demands of not only immediate customers but also end consumers;
- iii. Find new suppliers and logistics partners that supplement existing ones through intermediaries;
- iv. Ensure flexibility in product design; and,

- v. Track that at which stage the product is from the perspective of the product and technology life cycle.

Adaptability refers to the ability of a system or entity to adjust and respond to changing conditions and circumstances. Environmental performance refers to how well an entity performs in terms of reducing its environmental impact and promoting sustainability. Adaptability can be important for an entity's environmental performance as it allows it to respond to changing regulations and societal demands for more sustainable practices, as well as changes in the natural environment that may impact its operations. An entity that is adaptable is better positioned to maintain good environmental performance over time (Lee, 2004).

There is a relationship between adaptability and financial performance, as organizations that are able to adapt to changes are often more likely to maintain or improve their financial performance. An organization that is not adaptable may struggle to keep up with changes in the market and face declining financial performance (Lee, 2004).

2.4 Alignment

Alignment in the supply chain context means pulling interest of all organizations in the supply chain to the same direction (Narayanan & Raman, 2004). Prioritizing its own interests will cause an increase in the overall cost of the supply chain (Lee, 2004). Misalignment induces deteriorated performance of the supply chain due to excessive inventory, stock-outs, and inaccurate forecast (Narayanan & Raman, 2004). Alignment in the supply chain can be enhanced by taking the following principles into consideration (Lee, 2004):

- i. Interchange “information and knowledge” with suppliers and customers actively
- ii. Define clear roles and responsibilities of each partner in the “supply chain”
- iii. Divide risks, costs, and incentives equally among partners in the entire “supply chain”

Information and knowledge sharing is important to prevent misalignment (Narayanan & Raman, 2004). Lack of communication and distrust among supply chain partners is a barrier to successful implementation of alignment (Matthyssens & Vandenbempt, 2008). Well-defined roles, activities, and responsibilities must be shared among all chain partners (Petersen et al., 2005). Alignment in incentives will assurance mutual gains to supply chain partners (Simatupang & Sridharan, 2002).

Alignment in the context of environmental performance refers to the degree to which an entity's actions, policies, and strategies are consistent with environmental sustainability goals and values. Environmental performance refers to how well an entity performs in terms of reducing its environmental impact and promoting sustainability. Alignment with environmental sustainability goals can contribute to better environmental performance, but the two are not synonymous. An entity can have high environmental performance but may not be fully aligned with environmental sustainability goals, or vice versa (Lee, 2004).

Alignment refers to the consistency or congruence between different elements, such as objectives, strategies, processes, etc. In the context of finance, alignment refers to the relationship between an organization's financial goals and its overall strategy (Lee, 2004).

2.5 Triple-A Capabilities and Environmental Performance

Lee (2004) proposed the concept of a “Triple-A supply chain”, which includes “agility, adaptability, and alignment” as essential components to improve both supply chain and overall organizational performance. The author drew on his consulting experience with several companies to argue that implementing Triple-A capabilities could result in better environmental performance. Lee emphasized that establishing an agile, adaptable, and aligned supply chain is critical for organizations to quickly and efficiently respond to changing market conditions and customer demands while aligning their production, marketing, and financial strategies.

Dwayne Whitten et al. (2012) carried out an empirical investigation and found that there is data to corroborate the concept that executing “Triple-A capabilities”, such as “agility, adaptability, and alignment”, has a noteworthy and favorable influence on environmental performance.

The success of a modern supply chain depends on its ability to demonstrate the triple-A characteristics of agility, adaptability, and alignment (Feyissa & Sharma, 2016). The authors also found a strong relationship between the triple-A characteristics of supply chains and environmental performance. The study further highlights the significance of establishing a supply chain that is agile, adaptable, and aligned to enhance environmental performance.

In the light of literature stated above, “conceptual framework (Figure 1)” of current study is as under:

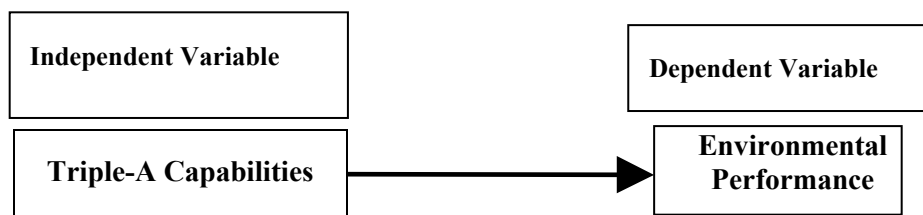


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

As depicted in Figure 1, following research hypothesis was proposed:

H₁: Triple-A capabilities have significant positive effect on environmental performance.

3. Research Methodology

A quantitative approach was adopted under the positivist research paradigm. Initially, a review of existing literature helped to develop a conceptual framework to understand the interplay between “Triple-A Capabilities” and “Environmental Performance”. Subsequently, empirical data were gathered through an online structured questionnaire to test the proposed conceptual framework. The analysis was carried out using SmartPLS 4.0. Fifty two, corporate level pesticide firms, are working in Pakistan. Correspondence email addresses were obtained from Pakistan Crop Protection Association (PCPA) website (PCPA, 2023). Emails were sent to corporate level pesticide firms containing Google Form link. It was requested through email to share the email and data collection link with the senior level managers of their own firm and with the senior level managers of other pesticide firms. Google form link was also shared with the help of WhatsApp with the “senior managers of pesticide firms of district Multan, Pakistan” after paying personal visits. It was requested to share the data collection link in pesticide industry managers WhatsApp groups. Two sampling techniques were used in this study i.e. (1) Purposive sampling, and (2) Convenience sampling. It was revealed in personal visits that every firm has, on average, 40 members in their middle and top-level management, hence the target population of this study was 2080 managers. Out of 2080 managers 343 of them responded to the survey questionnaire. Therefore, the response rate was 16.49%. Informed consent was taken and confidentiality of the identity of the respondents was assured.

4. Results and Discussions

Results regarding “Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, alignment)” and “Environmental Performance” are given below:

Table 1. Latent Variable Correlations

"Variables"	EP	TAC
EP	1.000	0.633
TAC	0.633	1.000

“Table 1 shows the Latent Variable Correlations of each variable”. All measures of “Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, and alignment) are found to be highly correlated with Environmental Performance, which means that Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, and alignment)” are having a “strong relationship” with “Environmental Performance”. So, current study findings are consistent with the findings of (Whitten et al., 2012; Feyissa & Sharma, 2016).

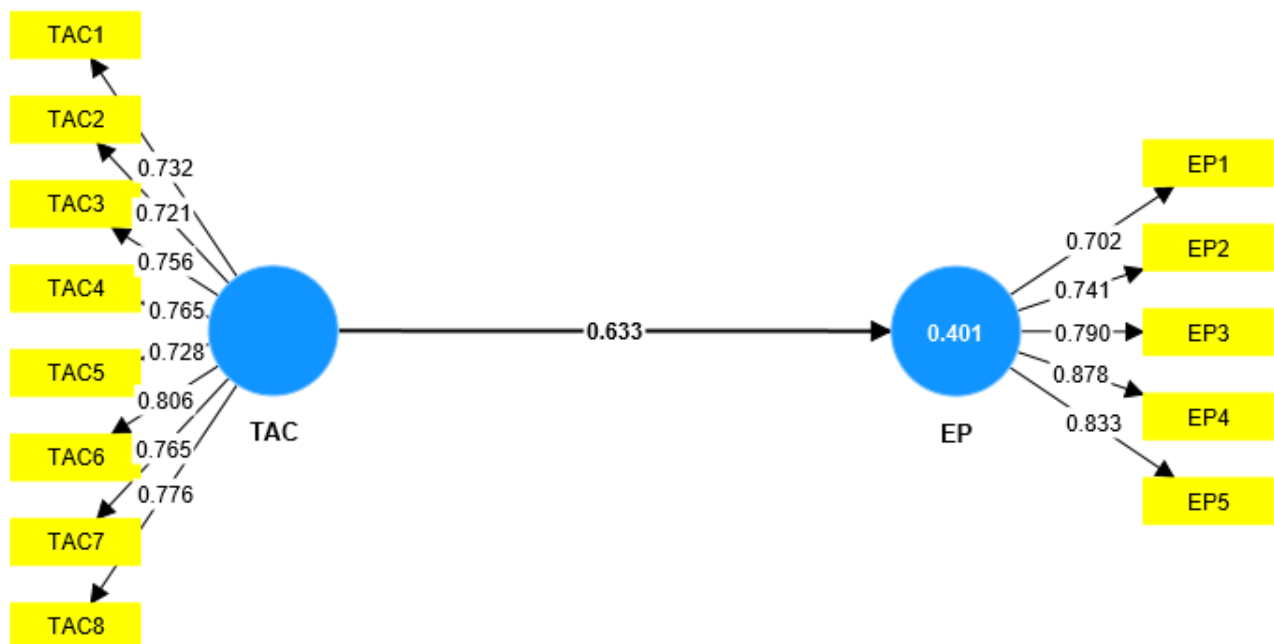


Figure 2. “PLS Algorithm” Results for “Triple-A Capabilities” and “Environmental Performance”

Figure 2 displays the “PLS Algorithm Results” of the “Triple-A (agility, adaptability, alignment)” and “Environmental Performance” with the “outer loadings of the each of the measure > 0.70” and showing the “Path coefficients (β) value of the relationship”.

“Construct (variable) and indicators (measures) reliability is described through the computations of Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability”, whereas “convergent validity is described through the computations of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)” and “discriminant validity” is described through “Fornell-Larcker Criterion” which are given in “Table 2 to Table 3”.

Table 2. Quality Criteria for “Triple-A Capabilities” (TAC) and “Environmental Performance” (EP)

“Variables”	“Measure”	“Measure’s Outer Loading”	“Cronbach’s Alpha”	“Composite Reliability”	“AVE”
“TAC”	“TAC1”	0.732	0.893	0.896	0.572
	“TAC2”	0.721			
	“TAC3”	0.756			
	“TAC4”	0.765			
	“TAC5”	0.728			
	“TAC6”	0.806			
	“TAC7”	0.765			
	“TAC8”	0.776			
EP	EP1	0.702	0.849	0.856	0.626
	EP2	0.741			
	EP3	0.790			
	EP4	0.878			
	EP5	0.833			

“Table 2” shows “Quality Criteria for Measures Assessments”. As a “rule of thumb all outer loadings for all measures (indicators) should be more than 0.70”, “Cronbach’s Alpha values should be more than “0.70”, “composite reliability should also be more than 0.70”, whereas all values of “AVE (convergent validity) should be more than 0.50” “(Hair Jr et al., 2019).” It is obvious from “Table 2” that results were as per well-known criteria for checking the “reliability and validity”; so, the results were “reliable as well as valid”.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	EP	TAC
EP	0.791	
TAC	0.633	0.757

“Discriminant validity” was measured through the “Fornell-Larcker Criterion” with the help of a “rule of thumb (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)” which stated that the “square root of average variance extracted of each variable must be greater than the correlation value of the other variables used in the same study”. Table 3 shows “the square root values of average variance extracted of all variables” (shown in bold font), were higher than the “correlation values” of the other variables used in this study, hence discriminant validity of both variables of this study was established.

Table 4. Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

“Indicators (Measures)”	“VIF”
TAC1	1.883
TAC2	1.656
TAC3	1.896
TAC4	1.987
TAC5	1.772
TAC6	2.249
TAC7	1.894
TAC8	1.935
EP1	1.493

EP2	1.574
EP3	1.860
EP4	2.897
EP5	2.406

Table 4 demonstrates the “Collinearity Statistics (VIF) values of all measures”. A “rule of thumb” states that the “VIF values should be lessor than 3.00” (Hair et al., 2011; Hair Jr et al., 2019). It is obvious from Table 4 that all vales are less than 3.00, so, there was no issue of “multicollinearity in terms of Triple-A Capabilities and Environmental Performance”, and further analysis was conducted using “PLS-SEM”.

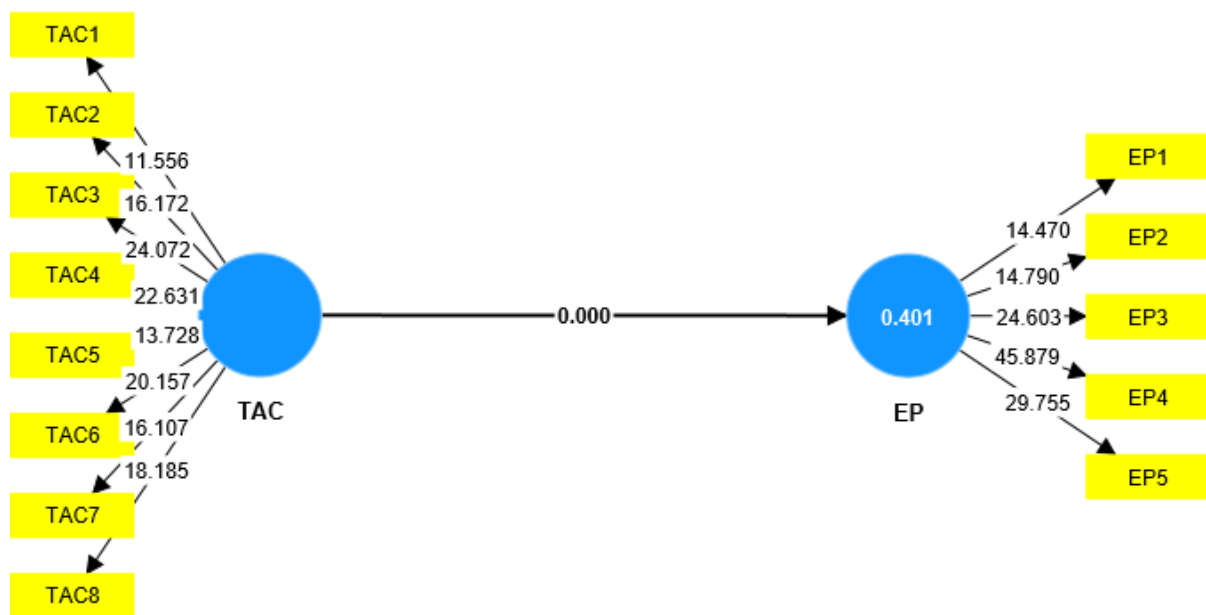


Figure 3. “Bootstrapping Results” for “Triple-A Capabilities” and “Environmental Performance”

Five thousand should be the minimum number of bootstrap samples (Hair et al., 2011), consequently, the “bootstrapping was done using 5,000 samples”. “Figure 3, Bootstrapping Results for Triple-A capabilities and Environmental Performance, shows the results for t-values”. As a “rule of thumb”, the “t-values should be > 1.96 ” (Joe F Hair et al., 2011). Figure 3 depicts that all “t-values” were > 1.96 .

Table 5. Outer Loadings

"Path"	"Original Sample (O)"	"Sample Mean (M)"	"Standard Deviation (STDEV)"	"T-Statistics"	"P-Values"
TAC1 <- TAC	0.732	0.724	0.063	11.556	"0.000"
TAC2 <- TAC	0.721	0.721	0.045	16.172	"0.000"
TAC3 <- TAC	0.756	0.757	0.031	24.072	"0.000"
TAC4 <- TAC	0.765	0.766	0.034	22.631	"0.000"
TAC5 <- TAC	0.728	0.721	0.053	13.728	"0.000"
TAC6 <- TAC	0.806	0.802	0.040	20.157	"0.000"
TAC7 <- TAC	0.765	0.759	0.048	16.107	"0.000"
TAC8 <- TAC	0.776	0.772	0.043	18.185	"0.000"
EP1 <- EP	0.702	0.698	0.049	14.470	"0.000"
EP2 <- EP	0.741	0.737	0.050	14.790	"0.000"
EP3 <- EP	0.790	0.788	0.032	24.603	"0.000"
EP4 <- EP	0.878	0.877	0.019	45.879	"0.000"
EP5 <- EP	0.833	0.832	0.028	29.755	"0.000"

"Table 5 shows the Outer Loadings of each measure", where "t-values were > 1.96 and p-values were < 0.05 , hence all measures are statistically significant (Joe F Hair et al., 2011)".

Table 6. R-square and f-square

"Dependent Variable"	" R-square"	" f-square"
EP	0.401	0.669

"Table 6 shows the results of R^2 and f^2 for Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, alignment)" and Environmental Performance. R^2 and f^2 are calculated to check the "adequacy of the model". To measure and evaluate the "structural model", the "coefficient of determination (R^2)" is used. R^2 values of "0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 for dependent variables are considered as substantial, moderate or weak". R^2 value shows the variance in dependent variable due to the influence of independent variables. The results show that Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, alignment) and Environmental Performance have $R^2 = 0.401$ and $f^2 = 0.669$. Cohen (1988) defined f^2 as a measure of effect size: An f^2 value of 0.02 to 0.14 is considered as having small effect size. An f^2 value of 0.15 to 0.34 is considered as having medium effect size. An f^2 value of 0.35 or higher is considered as having large effect size.

Effect Size (Q^2)

Table 7. Latent Variable Coefficient Q^2

"Endogenous Variable"	"SSO"	"SSE"	" Q^2 (1-SSE/SSO)"
"Environmental Performance" (Dependent Variable)	1715.00	1296.76	0.244

The effect size (Q^2) in the current study is presented below in Figure 4 and Table 7. The outcomes suggest a significant effect between exogenous and endogenous variables. As Q^2 value is > 0 , it implies that the model is a suitable fit and has predictive relevance.

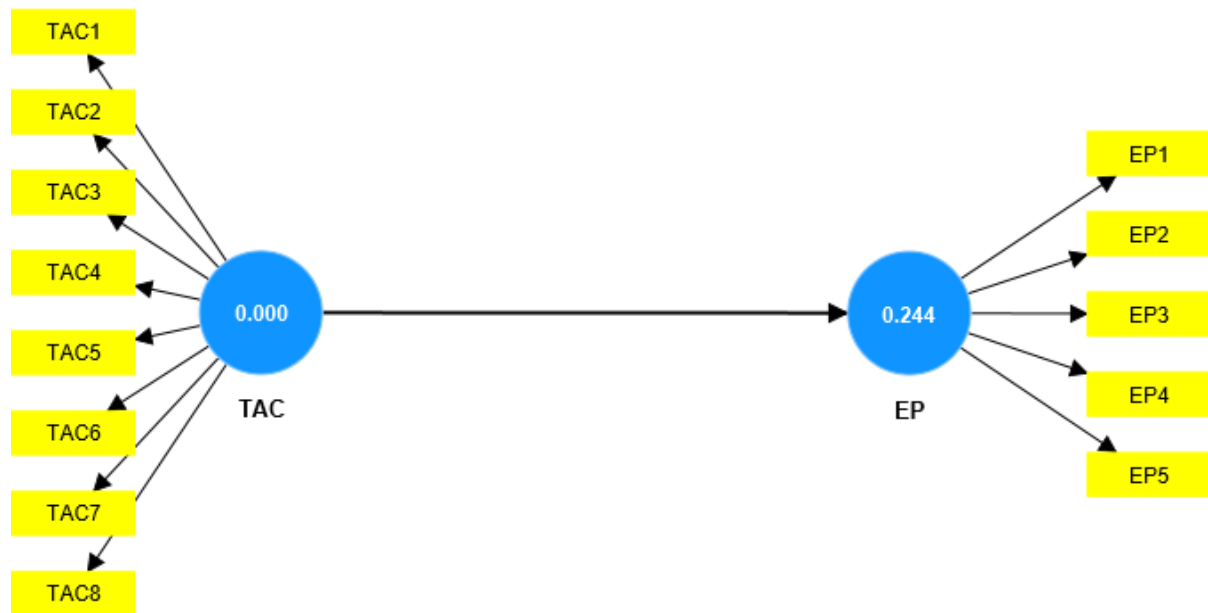


Figure 4. Structural Model: Blindfolding

Table 8. Hypotheses Testing Results and Decision

"Hypothesis"	"Path / Relationship"	"Original Sample (O)"	"Sample Mean (M)"	"Standard Deviation (STDEV"	"T- Statistics"	"P- Value"	"Decision"
H ₁	TAC -> EP	0.633	0.634	0.067	9.487	0.000	"Supported"

"Critical value for $t > 1.96$, and P-Value (significance value) is < 0.05 "

"Table 8 shows the Hypotheses Testing Results and Final Decision for Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, alignment) and Environmental Performance". Results for **H₁** (TAC -> EP) indicate a "path coefficient" (β) = 0.633, "T-Statistics" = 9.487, and "P-Value" = 0.000. Therefore, our H₁ is supported with "T-Statistics > 1.96 and P-Value < 0.05 " (Joe F Hair et al., 2011; Joseph F Hair et al., 2019). "Hence, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, alignment) and Environmental Performance". Study findings are consistent with the findings of (Dwayne Whitten et al., 2012; Feyissa & Sharma, 2016).

5. Conclusion

The quantifiable data findings showed that “Triple-A Capabilities (agility, adaptability, alignment)” have “statistically significant” effect on Environmental Performance in the pesticide sector of Pakistan. It shows that “pesticide sector of Pakistan” is practicing Triple-A Capabilities. Based on the study findings, it is recommended that “Triple-A capabilities” should be observed and given attention for better Environmental Performance.

From a public policy perspective, it is recommended that government agencies promote capacity building for agility through workshops on rapid response and risk management. This can be achieved by training manufacturers, distributors, and logistics personnel to handle supply chain disruptions caused by climate change, policy shifts, or market fluctuations. Adaptability-oriented training should also be provided, focusing on sustainable alternatives and green practices. This involves educating producers on the use of alternative raw materials, biodegradable pesticides, and adaptive farming inputs. Alignment-focused training should be offered through collaborative supply chain management programs. This can be done by promoting initiatives that help firms better align their goals with those of suppliers, farmers, and regulators.

The government should provide various financial incentives to pesticide firms that are working to improve their environmental performance by adopting sustainable practices. For instance, green subsidies could include tax breaks or grants for companies that implement environmentally friendly supply chain practices. Additionally, performance-based incentives such as rewards for measurable improvements in emission reductions, waste management, and eco-friendly product innovation should also be considered. Regulatory incentives should be offered as well, including faster approval processes for companies that meet environmental benchmarks and public recognition through environmental certifications for compliant firms. Moreover, the government should encourage large buyers to prioritize sourcing from environmentally responsible pesticide manufacturers.

Future studies may focus on longitudinal data to provide insight into the sustainability and effectiveness of these capabilities over time. Moreover, future studies may be conducted across different countries and industrial sectors to increase the generalizability of the findings of current study.

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