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Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience in Pakistani Communities: A Study of the Impact of Climate Change on Livelihoods and Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impacts of climate change on rural and urban communities in Pakistan, evaluating adaptation strategies and resilience-building measures implemented at both household and community levels. Using a mixed-methods approach including surveys (n = 427) and statistical analysis of meteorological data from 1990-2023, this research identifies significant climate-related challenges facing Pakistani communities, including increased frequency of extreme weather events, water scarcity, and agricultural yield reductions. Findings reveal regional disparities in vulnerability, with rural communities experiencing more severe livelihood impacts but demonstrating stronger social cohesion in response. Quantitative analysis indicates that households implementing diversified livelihood strategies, particularly those combining traditional knowledge with modern adaptation techniques, demonstrate significantly greater resilience to climate shocks. Education level and access to climate information emerged as significant predictors of successful adaptation. Policy recommendations emphasize the need for targeted, context-specific interventions that build upon existing community strengths while addressing infrastructural and institutional weaknesses in Pakistan's climate response framework.

Keywords: climate adaptation, resilience, Pakistan, livelihood strategies, extreme weather events, community-based adaptation, vulnerability assessment, social capital.

1. Introduction

Climate change represents one of the most profound challenges facing humanity in the 21st century, with particularly severe implications for developing nations. Pakistan, ranked among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries according to the Global Climate Risk Index (Eckstein et al., 2021), faces significant threats from changing climate patterns. The country's geographical diversity, ranging from coastal areas to mountainous regions, exposes different communities to varied climate challenges including floods, droughts, heat waves, and glacial melt (Hussain et al., 2020).

Recent events underscore Pakistan's extreme vulnerability to climate change impacts. The catastrophic floods of 2022, which submerged one-third of the country and affected over 33 million people, highlighted the unprecedented scale of climate disasters facing the nation (NDMA, 2023). These events have exacerbated existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities and threaten to undermine development progress made in recent decades (Khan et al., 2022).

Despite growing recognition of Pakistan's climate vulnerability, there remains insufficient understanding of how different communities experience climate impacts and implement adaptation strategies. This research gap limits the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at building climate resilience at community levels (Ahmad & Afzal, 2021). Moreover, the complex interplay between traditional coping mechanisms and modern adaptation approaches requires further investigation to identify successful and sustainable approaches to climate resilience.

This study aims to address these knowledge gaps by examining climate impacts on livelihoods across different Pakistani communities and evaluating the effectiveness of various adaptation strategies. The research examines both household-level responses and community-based initiatives, with particular attention to how social, economic, and institutional factors influence adaptation outcomes.

The primary research questions guiding this study are:

1. How are climate change impacts affecting livelihoods in different Pakistani communities?
2. What adaptation strategies are being implemented at household and community levels?
3. What factors determine the effectiveness of these adaptation strategies?
4. How can successful adaptation approaches be scaled and integrated into national climate policy?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on climate adaptation in developing countries and provides empirical evidence to inform climate-resilient development policies in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Climate Change Vulnerability in Pakistan

Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change has been extensively documented in recent literature. Salik et al. (2019) identified multiple climate stressors affecting the country, including increased temperature variability, altered precipitation patterns, and rising sea levels along coastal areas. These changes have been linked to increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, with Pakistan experiencing an annual average of 3.2 disaster events during the period 1999-2018 (Eckstein et al., 2021).

Climate vulnerability in Pakistan is spatially diverse and influenced by both biophysical and socioeconomic factors. Ali and Erenstein (2017) found that Pakistan's arid and semi-arid regions face heightened vulnerability due to water scarcity and limited adaptive capacity, while Qaisrani et al. (2018) identified coastal communities as particularly at risk from sea-level rise and increasing cyclone activity. Urban areas face distinct challenges, with heat island effects exacerbating temperature extremes in cities like Karachi and Lahore (Sajjad et al., 2019).

Socioeconomic disparities significantly influence climate vulnerability. Research by Ullah et al. (2018) revealed that poverty, limited access to resources, and gender inequality amplify climate risks for marginalized populations. Furthermore, Ahmad et al. (2019) found that climate vulnerability in Pakistan has a strong rural-urban dimension, with rural communities more directly dependent on climate-sensitive natural resources for livelihoods.

2.2 Climate Impacts on Livelihoods

Climate change affects Pakistani livelihoods through multiple pathways. The agricultural sector, which employs approximately 42% of the labor force and contributes 19.2% to GDP (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2023), faces serious threats from changing climate conditions. Abid et al. (2019) documented declining agricultural productivity due to temperature increases, precipitation variability, and increased pest incidence. Their study of wheat farmers in Punjab found yield reductions of 8-10% attributable to climate factors over the past decade.

Beyond agriculture, climate change impacts extend to multiple livelihood domains. Ashraf et al. (2021) highlighted climate effects on water resources, with implications for drinking water access, sanitation, and hydropower generation. In coastal areas, Salik et al. (2021) documented declining fisheries yields and increased saltwater intrusion affecting livelihoods of fishing communities. The tourism sector, particularly in northern mountainous regions, faces disruptions from extreme weather events and glacial melt (Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021).

Khan and Salman (2020) examined the economic costs of climate impacts, estimating annual losses equivalent to 3.8% of GDP from climate-related disasters in Pakistan. These economic

impacts are unevenly distributed, with Hussain et al. (2018) finding that low-income households spend up to 25% of their income on climate-related expenses such as water purchasing during droughts and home repairs after flooding.

2.3 Adaptation Strategies and Resilience Building

Research on climate adaptation in Pakistan has identified diverse approaches at household and community levels. At the household level, Abid et al. (2020) documented agricultural adaptations including changing planting dates, adopting drought-resistant crop varieties, and diversifying income sources. Their study of 450 farming households found that 68% had implemented at least one adaptation measure, though effectiveness varied widely.

Migration represents another significant adaptation strategy. Saeed et al. (2018) described circular and seasonal migration patterns among rural households affected by climate stressors, while Ahmad and Afzal (2020) explored climate-induced rural-to-urban migration as both an adaptation strategy and a potential source of urban vulnerability.

Community-based adaptation initiatives have gained increasing attention. Shah et al. (2019) highlighted successful examples of community-managed irrigation systems in Gilgit-Baltistan, while Qasim et al. (2021) documented community-based early warning systems for flood management in Sindh province. Collective action approaches, including resource pooling and labor sharing, were identified by Malik et al. (2022) as significant contributors to community resilience in disaster-prone areas.

The effectiveness of adaptation efforts is influenced by multiple factors. Hussain et al. (2018) found that access to information, financial resources, and technological capacity significantly predicted successful adaptation among agricultural communities. Social capital emerged as a critical factor in several studies, with Ahmad and Afzal (2021) documenting how community networks facilitated knowledge sharing and resource pooling during climate emergencies.

Institutional support plays a crucial role in enabling adaptation. Ali et al. (2020) found that communities with stronger institutional linkages demonstrated greater adaptation capacity, while Malik et al. (2021) highlighted limitations of Pakistan's climate governance framework in supporting local adaptation initiatives.

2.4 Research Gaps

Despite growing literature on climate change impacts and adaptation in Pakistan, several research gaps persist. First, comparative studies examining adaptation across different ecological and socioeconomic contexts remain limited. Second, quantitative assessments of adaptation effectiveness are scarce, with most studies relying on qualitative or descriptive approaches. Third, the interaction between traditional coping mechanisms and modern adaptation approaches

requires further investigation. Finally, there is insufficient research on how successful local adaptation strategies can be scaled and institutionalized within national policy frameworks.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a comprehensive, quantitative assessment of climate impacts and adaptation strategies across diverse Pakistani communities, with particular attention to the factors determining adaptation effectiveness and potential for scaling successful approaches.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine climate impacts and adaptation strategies in Pakistani communities. A cross-sectional survey design was utilized to collect data from multiple regions, allowing for comparative analysis across different ecological and socioeconomic contexts. The research was conducted between January 2023 and September 2023.

3.2 Study Areas

Four distinct regions in Pakistan were selected to represent different climate vulnerability contexts:

1. Coastal areas of Sindh province (Thatta and Badin districts)
2. Arid regions of Punjab (Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan districts)
3. Flood-prone areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Charsadda and Nowshera districts)
4. Peri-urban areas around Karachi and Lahore

These regions were selected based on previous vulnerability assessments (Ahmad et al., 2020) and represent diverse ecological zones, livelihood systems, and climate hazard profiles. Within each region, communities were stratified based on socioeconomic indicators and randomly selected for inclusion in the study.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Household Surveys

Structured household surveys were administered to 427 households across the four study regions. The sample size was determined using power analysis with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Proportional allocation was used to determine sample sizes within each region, and systematic random sampling was employed to select households within communities.

The survey instrument collected data on household demographics, livelihood activities, climate impact experiences, adaptation strategies, and factors influencing adaptation decisions. The survey was pre-tested with 20 households and refined based on feedback. Trained local enumerators conducted the surveys in local languages.

3.3.2 Climate Data

Historical climate data for the study regions were obtained from the Pakistan Meteorological Department for the period 1990-2023. Variables included monthly precipitation, maximum and minimum temperatures, and frequency of extreme weather events. These data were used to quantify climate trends and anomalies affecting each study region.

3.3.3 Community Profiles

Community-level data were collected through key informant interviews with local officials, community leaders, and representatives of civil society organizations. These interviews gathered information on community characteristics, institutional arrangements, and collective adaptation initiatives.

3.4 Variables and Measurement

3.4.1 Dependent Variables

The primary dependent variables were:

1. **Climate Impact Index (CII)**: A composite index measuring the severity of climate impacts on household livelihoods, calculated based on reported impacts on income, assets, health, food security, and water access. The index was constructed using principal component analysis and normalized to a 0-100 scale.
2. **Adaptation Strategy Index (ASI)**: A measure of the extent and diversity of adaptation strategies implemented by households, calculated based on the number, type, and perceived effectiveness of adaptation measures. The index was constructed using weighted scores for different adaptation categories.
3. **Resilience Score**: A measure of household ability to maintain wellbeing despite climate shocks, calculated based on indicators of recovery time, asset preservation, and maintenance of essential functions after climate events.

3.4.2 Independent Variables

Key independent variables included:

1. **Household characteristics**: Age, education, and gender of household head; household size; dependency ratio; asset ownership; and income levels.

2. **Climate exposure**: Frequency and intensity of climate hazards affecting the household, quantified using reported experiences and meteorological data.
3. **Adaptive capacity factors**: Access to information, financial resources, technology, social networks, and institutional support.
4. **Community characteristics**: Population size, infrastructure quality, institutional presence, and social cohesion measures.

3.5 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27 and R version 4.1.2. Descriptive statistics were generated to characterize climate impacts and adaptation patterns across regions. Bivariate analyses examined relationships between dependent and independent variables, while multivariate techniques assessed the relative importance of different factors in explaining adaptation outcomes.

Specifically, the following analytical approaches were employed:

1. Multiple regression analysis to identify determinants of climate impact severity, adaptation strategy adoption, and resilience.
2. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare outcomes across different regions and socioeconomic groups.
3. Path analysis to examine direct and indirect relationships between adaptive capacity factors, adaptation strategies, and resilience outcomes.
4. Cluster analysis to identify typologies of adaptation approaches and their association with different household and community characteristics.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Peshawar. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with special attention to explaining the research purpose, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality measures. Data were anonymized during analysis, and community feedback sessions were conducted to share preliminary findings with participants.

4. Results

4.1 Climate Trends and Community Exposure

Analysis of meteorological data revealed significant climate changes across all study regions during the period 1990-2023. Mean annual temperatures showed an increasing trend of 0.3°C to 0.5°C per decade, with the most pronounced warming in arid regions of Punjab (0.48°C per decade). Precipitation patterns demonstrated increased variability rather than consistent

directional changes, with all regions experiencing more frequent extreme rainfall events compared to historical records.

Table 1 presents climate trends and exposure levels across the four study regions, highlighting regional differences in climate hazard profiles.

Table 1: Climate Trends and Exposure Levels Across Study Regions (1990-2023)

Region	Temperature Trend (°C/decade)	Precipitation Trend (%)	Dominant Climate Hazards	Exposure Index*
Coastal Sindh	+0.32	-2.8	Sea intrusion, cyclones, heavy rainfall	76.4
Arid Punjab	+0.48	-8.6	Drought, heat waves, water scarcity	81.2
Flood-prone KP	+0.35	+12.3	Riverine floods, flash floods, landslides	84.7
Peri-urban areas	+0.41	+3.6	Urban flooding, heat waves, water scarcity	62.8

*Exposure Index: Composite measure (0-100) based on frequency and intensity of climate hazards, calculated from meteorological data and reported experiences.

Community exposure to climate hazards varied significantly by region ($F = 42.6$, $p < 0.001$), with flood-prone areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showing the highest exposure index (84.7), followed by arid regions of Punjab (81.2). Peri-urban communities demonstrated relatively lower exposure (62.8), though they faced distinct challenges related to urban heat island effects and infrastructure-related vulnerabilities.

4.2 Climate Impacts on Livelihoods

Survey results revealed widespread and significant climate impacts on livelihoods across all study communities. Overall, 89.3% of respondents reported experiencing negative climate effects on their livelihood activities, with 42.6% characterizing these impacts as "severe" or "very severe." Climate impacts varied across livelihood categories and regions, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Climate Impact Severity by Livelihood Category and Region (Climate Impact Index, 0-100)

Livelihood Category	Coastal Sindh	Arid Punjab	Flood-prone KP	Peri-urban	Overall Mean
Agriculture-dependent	78.4	82.6	76.3	58.2	76.1
Fishing-dependent	83.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	83.2
Wage labor	64.5	68.7	72.4	53.8	64.9
Small business	59.3	63.4	68.5	46.7	58.2
Salaried employment	42.1	48.5	52.3	32.9	43.2
Mixed livelihoods	57.8	64.2	62.8	43.6	57.0
Regional Mean	68.4	71.3	72.1	46.2	65.5

Agriculture-dependent households reported the highest climate impact severity (mean CII = 76.1), with particularly severe impacts in arid regions of Punjab (CII = 82.6) where drought and water scarcity have significantly affected crop yields. Fishing-dependent households in coastal areas reported similarly high impacts (CII = 83.2), primarily due to changing fish migration patterns, sea intrusion, and cyclone disruptions. Households engaged in salaried employment demonstrated greater livelihood stability (CII = 43.2) across all regions.

Multiple regression analysis identified several factors significantly associated with climate impact severity ($R^2 = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Significant predictors included climate hazard exposure ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), natural resource dependency ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$), asset poverty ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), and infrastructural quality ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < 0.01$). Gender of household head was also significant, with female-headed households reporting higher impact severity ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$).

Specific livelihood impacts included reduced agricultural yields (reported by 79.3% of farming households), crop losses due to extreme weather (68.7%), livestock mortality (51.2%), reduced fishing catches (74.3% of fishing households), damage to productive assets (59.6%), and increased workloads, particularly for women (62.8%). Additionally, 47.3% of households reported climate-induced health impacts affecting labor productivity, while 39.8% experienced reduced access to markets during extreme weather events.

4.3 Adaptation Strategies and Their Determinants

Households implemented various adaptation strategies in response to climate impacts, with significant variation in strategy types and adoption rates across regions and socioeconomic groups. The mean Adaptation Strategy Index (ASI) across all households was 43.6 (on a scale of 0-100), indicating moderate adaptation levels overall. Table 3 presents adaptation strategy adoption rates by region.

Table 3: Adaptation Strategy Adoption by Region (Percentage of Households)

Adaptation Strategy	Coastal Sindh	Arid Punjab	Flood-prone KP	Peri-urban	Overall
Agricultural adjustments*	72.4	84.6	68.3	53.2	71.4
Water management	68.7	87.3	63.5	59.4	70.2
Livelihood diversification	56.3	63.8	74.2	48.7	60.8
Migration (seasonal/permanent)	42.5	52.3	38.6	24.3	39.7
Infrastructure modifications	48.7	32.6	63.2	42.1	46.8
Financial adaptations	37.6	44.5	51.8	43.2	44.3
Collective action initiatives	53.2	41.7	72.4	32.8	50.1
Mean ASI (0-100)	42.8	46.3	53.1	32.4	43.6

*Among agriculture-dependent households only

Agricultural adjustments were the most widely adopted strategies (71.4% of agriculture-dependent households), including changing planting dates, adopting drought-resistant crop varieties, adjusting irrigation practices, and diversifying crop selections. Water management strategies (70.2% overall) were particularly prevalent in arid regions of Punjab (87.3%), encompassing rainwater harvesting, water conservation techniques, and groundwater management.

Livelihood diversification was more common in flood-prone areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (74.2%), where households added non-farm income sources to reduce climate vulnerability. Collective action initiatives were also most prevalent in these areas (72.4%), including community-based early warning systems, shared labor arrangements, and collective infrastructure development.

Multiple regression analysis identified significant predictors of adaptation strategy adoption ($R^2 = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$). Education level emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), followed by access to climate information ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$), social capital ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$), asset ownership ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), and institutional support ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.01$). Interestingly, climate impact severity showed a curvilinear relationship with adaptation, with moderate impacts associated with higher adaptation levels than either low or extremely high impacts.

Cluster analysis identified four distinct adaptation typologies:

1. **Comprehensive adapters** (18.2% of households): Implemented diverse adaptation strategies across multiple domains, characterized by higher education, asset ownership, and institutional connections.
2. **Resource-constrained adapters** (31.6%): Focused on low-cost adaptations and collective approaches, characterized by limited assets but strong social networks.
3. **Reactive adapters** (29.3%): Implemented temporary or emergency adaptations after climate events, characterized by limited planning capacity and information access.
4. **Minimal adapters** (20.9%): Implemented few adaptation strategies despite climate exposure, characterized by multiple vulnerability factors including extreme poverty, social marginalization, and disability.

4.4 Resilience Outcomes and Success Factors

Resilience scores varied significantly across households (mean = 52.8, SD = 18.4), with 22.7% of households demonstrating high resilience (scores > 70), 42.3% moderate resilience (scores 40-70), and 35.0% low resilience (scores < 40). Table 4 presents mean resilience scores by region and adaptation typology.

Table 4: Mean Resilience Scores by Region and Adaptation Typology (0-100 scale)

Adaptation Typology	Coastal Sindh	Arid Punjab	Flood-prone KP	Peri-urban	Overall
Comprehensive adapters	73.6	75.2	78.4	72.1	75.3
Resource-constrained adapters	58.4	56.3	67.5	54.2	59.4
Reactive adapters	43.2	41.8	47.3	45.6	44.2
Minimal adapters	31.5	28.4	34.6	33.2	31.9
Regional Mean	51.4	49.8	58.7	49.6	52.8

Comprehensive adapters demonstrated the highest resilience scores across all regions (mean = 75.3), while minimal adapters showed consistently low resilience (mean = 31.9). Regional comparisons revealed that flood-prone communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exhibited higher average resilience (58.7) despite high exposure, potentially reflecting stronger social cohesion and collective adaptation approaches in these areas.

Path analysis revealed that adaptation strategies mediated the relationship between adaptive capacity factors and resilience outcomes, with direct effects from both capacity factors (standardized coefficient = 0.43) and adaptation strategies (standardized coefficient = 0.56) to resilience. The analysis confirmed that adaptation effectiveness, rather than simply the number of strategies adopted, was the critical determinant of resilience outcomes.

Qualitative findings highlighted several success factors associated with effective adaptation:

1. Integration of traditional knowledge with modern techniques, particularly in agricultural and water management adaptations.
2. Presence of local "adaptation champions" who demonstrated successful approaches and facilitated knowledge sharing.
3. Multi-stakeholder collaboration involving community organizations, local government, and non-governmental organizations.
4. Flexible and diversified livelihood systems capable of absorbing climate shocks.
5. Access to timely and locally relevant climate information.

Barriers to successful adaptation included institutional fragmentation, limited financial resources, land tenure insecurity, market access constraints, and social inequalities that limited adaptation options for marginalized groups.

5. Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence on climate impacts, adaptation strategies, and resilience outcomes across diverse Pakistani communities. The findings reveal both common patterns and significant contextual differences in how communities experience and respond to climate change.

5.1 Differential Vulnerability and Impacts

The significant variation in climate impacts across regions and livelihood groups aligns with previous research on differential vulnerability in Pakistan (Qaisrani et al., 2018; Salik et al., 2019). Our findings extend this literature by quantifying these differences and identifying specific factors that explain impact severity. The results confirm that climate vulnerability in

Pakistan has strong socioeconomic dimensions, with poverty, gender, and livelihood dependence on natural resources significantly influencing impact severity.

The high vulnerability of agriculture-dependent households corroborates findings from Abid et al. (2019) and Hussain et al. (2020), who documented substantial climate effects on Pakistan's agricultural sector. However, our regional comparison reveals important spatial variations in agricultural impacts, with arid regions experiencing more severe yield reductions than flood-prone areas where irrigation infrastructure partially mitigates drought effects.

The notable vulnerability of fishing communities in coastal areas represents an important finding, as this group has received relatively less attention in Pakistan's climate literature. The results align with emerging research on coastal vulnerabilities by Salik et al. (2021) while providing more detailed quantification of livelihood impacts in these communities.

5.2 Adaptation Patterns and Determinants

The observed patterns of adaptation strategy adoption demonstrate both continuity with traditional coping mechanisms and emergence of novel approaches in response to changing climate conditions. The prevalence of agricultural adjustments as the most common adaptation category reflects the central importance of farming in rural Pakistani livelihoods and aligns with findings from Ali et al. (2020) and Abid et al. (2020).

The identification of education and information access as key determinants of adaptation supports human capital theories of adaptation (Hussain et al., 2018; Ahmad & Afzal, 2021) and highlights the importance of knowledge-based interventions in building adaptive capacity. However, our findings on social capital's strong predictive relationship with adaptation suggest that collective dimensions of adaptation deserve greater attention in Pakistan's climate policy.

The curvilinear relationship between impact severity and adaptation levels represents a novel finding with important implications. It suggests that moderate climate stress may promote adaptive responses, while extreme impacts may overwhelm adaptive capacity, creating adaptation limits. This dynamic is particularly relevant for highly exposed regions experiencing increasingly severe climate hazards and should inform expectations about autonomous adaptation potential.

The four adaptation typologies identified through cluster analysis provide a useful framework for understanding diverse adaptation pathways. These typologies move beyond simplistic adapted/non-adapted dichotomies to recognize qualitatively different adaptation approaches shaped by household characteristics and contextual factors.

5.3 Resilience Outcomes and Success Factors

The significant variation in resilience outcomes across households and communities demonstrates that adaptation efforts are not uniformly effective. The higher resilience scores observed in flood-prone regions despite high exposure levels suggest that social and institutional factors may sometimes outweigh biophysical vulnerability in determining resilience outcomes.

The identified success factors, particularly the integration of traditional and modern knowledge systems, align with emerging literature on knowledge co-production in climate adaptation (Shah et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2022). This finding challenges technocratic approaches that privilege scientific knowledge over local understanding and supports more inclusive approaches to adaptation planning.

The importance of local "adaptation champions" and multi-stakeholder collaboration highlights social learning dimensions of successful adaptation. These factors echo findings from Abbas et al. (2021) on the role of social networks in diffusing adaptation innovations in Pakistani communities, suggesting potential leverage points for scaling successful approaches.

5.4 Policy Implications

These findings have several implications for climate policy in Pakistan. First, they underscore the need for targeted approaches that address specific vulnerabilities of different regions and livelihood groups, rather than one-size-fits-all adaptation prescriptions. Second, they suggest that building adaptive capacity requires attention to both material resources and knowledge systems, with education and information access representing key intervention points.

Third, the results highlight the importance of social capital and collective action in effective adaptation, suggesting that community-based approaches should be central to Pakistan's adaptation strategy. Finally, the identification of adaptation typologies provides a framework for tailoring support to different household circumstances, with particular attention needed for "minimal adapters" facing multiple barriers to adaptation.

5.5 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional nature of the survey data limits causal inferences about adaptation determinants and outcomes. Second, self-reported measures of climate impacts and adaptation may incorporate subjective biases, though triangulation with meteorological data strengthens confidence in the findings. Third, while the study includes diverse regions, it cannot claim full representativeness of Pakistan's highly varied geography and socioeconomic contexts. Finally, the focus on current adaptation practices may not fully capture emerging or potential future adaptation approaches.

6. Conclusion

This study provides comprehensive evidence on climate change impacts, adaptation strategies, and resilience outcomes in Pakistani communities. The findings reveal significant climate impacts across all study regions, with agriculture-dependent and fishing households experiencing particularly severe livelihood effects. Climate vulnerability demonstrates strong socioeconomic dimensions, with poverty, gender, and natural resource dependence emerging as key vulnerability factors.

Communities have implemented diverse adaptation strategies, with agricultural adjustments, water management, and livelihood diversification being most prevalent. Education, information access, social capital, and asset ownership emerged as significant predictors of adaptation strategy adoption. The study identified four distinct adaptation typologies—comprehensive adapters, resource-constrained adapters, reactive adapters, and minimal adapters—each associated with different household characteristics and resilience outcomes.

Resilience levels varied substantially across households and regions, with effectiveness of adaptation strategies, rather than simply their adoption, determining resilience outcomes. Success factors for effective adaptation included integration of traditional and modern knowledge, presence of local adaptation champions, multi-stakeholder collaboration, diversified livelihoods, and access to timely climate information.

These findings have important implications for climate policy in Pakistan. They suggest the need for targeted, context-specific adaptation interventions that build upon existing community strengths while addressing key barriers to adaptation. Investments in education, climate information systems, social capital formation, and institutional coordination represent promising approaches for enhancing climate resilience.

Future research should explore longitudinal dimensions of adaptation processes, investigating how adaptation strategies evolve over time and examining longer-term resilience outcomes. Additional research is also needed on scaling mechanisms for successful adaptation approaches and on the political economy factors that shape adaptation opportunities and constraints in Pakistan's diverse communities.

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