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Rising Voices, Fading Policies: Public Resistance to Climate Inaction in Pakistan's Democracy

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Abstract

This paper seems to investigate how individuals in Pakistan react to environmental policies being undermined, and how they engage in protests, mobilization and politics. It attempts to discover whether they are made based on care of nature, believe in democracy or it is because of economic issues. The authors consider the survey information (collected among approximately 2,000 people) and consider the feelings voiced in social media and the evidence of protests accumulated over the past five years to investigate the research issue. There is a small sample of qualitative interviews that should provide a more in-depth background to the findings. The findings seem to indicate that unwinding or inaction on the policies leads to increased civic engagement, particularly among the young urban residents and communities that are most likely to be affected by environmental problems. It is high by all standards, according to statistics that individuals who feel that their democracy is sound tend more to protest or support reforms based on environmental issues. It indicates that Pakistanis are increasingly becoming environmental conscious and how democracy is able to assist them to do whatever they want to do about their interests.

Keywords: Climate Inaction, Environmental Policy, Public Response, Democracy in Pakistan, Social Media.



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Introduction

1. Climate Inaction and the Global Governance Crisis

Climate change is rising as a global issue which harms the environment, humans, and governments particularly those in countries with a hard time to sustain democracies. Due to the increasing occurrence and severity of climate disasters, it is necessary to have improved and faster environmental management. Even though people understand the threats to the environment and more knowledge is being shared, government policies are not changing fast enough and still prevent adaptation to climate change, mainly in the Global South (Aklin & Urpelainen, 2022). When people in unstable democracies do not take part in public life and institutions are not strong, this inaction may cause society to question existing power structures and turn into social unrest (Betsill & Corell, 2023).

2. Pakistan's Environmental Vulnerabilities and Democratic Fragility

Pakistan is an example of how being vulnerable to climate change also makes the country's democracy unstable. According to Germanwatch's (2024) data, Pakistan is among the countries that have suffered most from climate-related dangers. At the same time, the country's political stability makes it hard to carry out effective environmental policies. These days, fluctuations in environmental policies, the slow adoption of climate strategies, and people's reduced reliance on promises from the government concerning climate has stirred greater concern and disappointment among citizens (Khan et al., 2024). With these developments, important questions arise about the reactions of people in risky and environmentally unstable areas when environmental policies aren't addressed or decreased.

3. Gaps in the Literature: Environmental Mobilization in the Global South

Current studies of climate change communication and involvement by the public tend to concentrate on developed democracies, since mobilizing citizens depends on effective and consistent political and civic institutions (Nisbet & Myers, 2022). According to research, how responsive people believe the government is, as well as their sense of duty and environmental awareness, have a major effect on protest actions and digital activism there (McAdam, 2023; Wahlström et al., 2022). Still, there is considerably less research about the way such processes happen in countries with weaker democracies and more risk from environmental factors. There is a major gap in our knowledge about how people decide environmental policies where there is uncertainty about the laws.

4. Emerging Patterns of Environmental Dissent in Pakistan

In Pakistan, more and more people have turned to protests as a result of environmental problems or policies that are not being followed, highlighting how environmental problems are now strongly linked to politics. Mass protests against city smog in Lahore, discussions about the loss of forests in Murree, and programs discussing new environmental policies on social media prove that people are starting to care more (Ahmed & Jamil, 2023). Yet, there isn't enough research about these phenomena in scientific literature. Although such experiences have been described in news stories and reports, there are not many thorough studies that look into why the public responds the way it does to lost environmental policies. It is in response to this gap that the study offers an evidence-based picture of how Pakistani people react to changes in the country's environmental policies.

5. Theoretical Framework: Values, Efficacy, and Political Opportunity

This study is guided by the idea that the way the public respond to policies through protesting or online activism depends on issues such as perception of their own influence, democratic beliefs, and their financial, social, or occupational standing (Dryzek et al., 2023). According to political process theory people tend to unite collectively when they notice shortcomings in the system and have the resources, groups, or frustrations that encourage them to act (Tarrow, 2023). Besides, people think about the environment and its risks play a major role in predicting their actions to help protect the environment (Clayton et al., 2022). So far, the lessons from these theories have not been fully applied to Pakistan, since the connection between environmental risks and participation in politics there is still not clear.

6. Research Aim and Methodological Orientation

The research attempts to bridge the gaps between theories and findings through examining how people in Pakistan react to the change in environmental policies. It is principally concerned with the extent in which different types of political action depend on the emotions people hold about the environment, democracy or its socio-economic conditions. The research applies a combined method, which involves the analysis of large polls, interviews with individuals, social media discussion assessment. By using this method, both the main points and the details of Pakistan's social and political environment affecting engagement with the environment can be uncovered.

7. Contribution to Environmental Governance and Policy

The research places this issue in the context of environmental politics, people's voice in democracy, and collective action, so it contributes to existing discussions on how citizens shape environmental policies in unstable democracies. As a result, it matches current requests for more accommodating and fitting ways of handling environmental issues, focusing on those most harmed by no action on climate (Bulkeley et al., 2023). Also, it gives useful tips on using democratic tools to steer public anger toward improvements. Pakistan is most affected, as the institutions in charge of environmental policy change so often that people do not trust the government to help the environment.

8. Digital Activism and the Role of Online Environmental Advocacy

The research supports the rising field of digital activism and environmental communication in the Southern countries. With the growing relevance of social media as a new civic space, it is important to analyze how digital networks support or serve as a limitation to environmental activism (Segerberg and Bennett, 2023). Evidence available in Pakistan suggests that, in response to high profile environmental events, online activism is very high, however, there is minimal information on the demographic or the psychological characteristics of these web activists nor the degree to which the web is acted upon to mobilize at the offline level. Through devising the sentiments patterns on the key social media sites and aligning them with the data obtained regarding the protest, the study will explore timely and methodologically game-changing patterns of dissenting the environment.

9. Research Question

Overall, the proposed study covers a pressing and little-researched area of intersection of environmental policy, democratic accountability and civic engagement in the setting of Pakistan. The most important research question of it is:

What do people in Pakistan do in reaction to environmental policy loss or erosion and how boundary-spanning variables influence their desire to protest or turn political activism in reaction to this policy setback?

The study has the potential to enlighten academic and practice-based policymaking to enhance participative and sustainable environmental governance in weak democratic settings through the multidisciplinary framework and empirical rigor that it endeavors to project.

Research Objectives

The paper's foundations lie in the larger objective of learning how citizens in weak democracies react to the failure to manage the environment especially at the intersection of institutional instability and vulnerability to climate change. As a close example, the research will be informed of the social and political consequences of environmental policy rollback or inaction such as the case of Pakistan. The investigation will be grounded on three significant objectives:

1. Consider alternatives and patterns of civil reaction by the populace like protests and digital campaigns that occur following the destabilization or revoke of environmental policies in Pakistan.
2. In order to identify the key factors, which influence behavior of people in the cases when environmental policy changes are postponed, it is important to examine the social, political, and psychological considerations.
3. To determine the extent to which social media can be used to mobilize individuals to promote the environment and organize upon changing of critical environmental policies.

This work is aimed at discussing how people in Pakistan respond to the environmental policies being shifted or reversed, during the times when democracy in Pakistan is on its knees and the climate threat grows. In short, it tries to answer: (1) how numerous the forms of responses such as large-scale demonstrations or digital activism are created in case of the failure of environmental actions; (2) why individuals decide to take part in the responses, including how much they are environmentally aware; and (3) the role of social media in coordinating the people and raising their voices after the new policies have been announced. All these objectives together help us learn more about how people and the environment interact in situations where the politics and the environment are threatened. By using Pakistan's current democratic and environmental problems, the study helps expand research on citizens' involvement in handling climate issues in developing countries and offers helpful advice on improving environmental accountability in such areas.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Foundations: Civic Engagement, Climate Justice, and Democratic Responsiveness

Those who study environmental issues in Pakistan need to know about climate justice, civic engagement, and models for participatory governance. According to Schlosberg and Collins in 2014, climate justice helps modify the debate to more equitable approaches instead of only focused on conservation. It indicates that marginalized groups are the most impacted by climate change and that, for this reason, responses are required that are just and responsible.

Dryzek (2000) and Pitkin (1967) have introduced the basic ideas for understanding how both the legitimization and contestation of policies exist in democracies. They claim that people should engage in governing and not just follow the decisions made by leaders. If governments fail to

uphold basic values, citizens tend to demonstrate and use online tools for protest (Tørstad et al., 2020).

Because democratic institutions are not strong in Pakistan, as reported by both Rizvi (1993) and Zafarullah & Huque (2018), and the neglect of environmental matters, there are double problems: people do not feel involved in politics and nature is under threat. Rolling back protections for the environment without consulting the public adds more mistrust to how the government functions (Khan & Masud, 2024). For this reason, arguments from environmental citizenship (Dobson, 2007) and participatory justice (Fraser, 2009) are the right lenses to study the causes behind mobilization and protests. Some theories argue that people's worry about the environment, involvement in society, and beliefs about democracy happening differently are tied together. But, doing research that links these variables to Pakistan is scarce.

2. Environmental Governance and Democratic Fragility in Pakistan

The way Pakistan has managed its environmental policies is characterized by sudden, reactive methods and authoritarian frameworks (Ali et al., 2016). Strategies made in documents like the National Climate Change Policy (2012) have at times been overlooked and reversed once governments change (Ahmed et al., 2022).

According to tshawoo & McDermott (2020), the voices of the disadvantaged are not given enough attention to in climate governance in Pakistan which is a major problem. Also, Nadeem & Fischer (2011) reported that environmental impact assessments (EIA), which are required by law, usually do not involve the public in any meaningful way.

Enforcement of climate rights was greatly advanced by the active stand of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the Leghari case (Shabbir et al., 2024). Still, unless there are changes in the system, these sorts of judicial measures stay as single actions instead of becoming routine solutions. Although there are regulations for the environment, they are seldom enforced. Frequent political changes stop institutions from learning, making them accountable, and, as a result, people become less trusting and sometimes protest.

3. Civic Mobilization and Public Responses to Policy Rollbacks

When people see the environment getting worse in democratic societies, their reaction is often expressed through protests, online petitions, and advocacy around them. In their study, Han & Ahn (2020) demonstrate that young people's activism on climate can impact how environmental issues are discussed in almost all countries. In Pakistan, groups such as Climate Action PK and student groups demonstrate digital environmentalism as it is being seen globally.

Daavi et al. (2024) discuss that 'trigger events' in Pakistan, including floods, heatwaves, or mistakes in public policies, tend to prompt members of the public to act for change. They concluded that citizens become more involved in politics when pollution is ignored especially where other forms of accountability do not work well.

In the same way, Khan (2025) points out that Imran Khan's speeches on climate only lifted environmental interest momentarily, as his government failed consistently, creating discontent that turned into more protests and harsh criticism online. People in Pakistan act politically and participate in democracy more than just responding to environmental problems.

4. Environmental Values, Perceived Efficacy, and Youth Sentiment

There has been a significant change in people's environmental views in Pakistan, mainly among youth and people living in cities over the last ten years. Ahmed et al. (2022) state that they are

more aware of ecological issues, wish to cooperate on a worldwide level, and are eager to protest when policy does not change.

According to Torstad and company (2020), the issue of public opinions is noteworthy in determining the magnitude of ambitious climate change policies undertaken by individual countries, with most of these being democracies. The concept of its effectiveness is however low because the government of Pakistan tends to take it beyond the system of democracy. The disparity of the discussion is likely to disillusion people concerned about the environment and either further radicalize their stance on environmental protection (Siddique, 2014).

Besides, Lindvall (2021) observes that a concept of climate democracy, denoting the engagement of people in environmental management, is increasingly gaining popularity across the world. Focusing environmental justice within democratic reforms is being studied by experts more all over the world but is still under-researched in Pakistan. Due to more awareness about environmental issues among youth, schools, and around the world, society expects the country's government to adjust its participation through governance to better address these concerns.

5. Digital Activism and Environmental Discourse in the Age of Social Media

Social media has now become an important place for climate discussion, especially in nations where the government controls other types of media. The papers by Han & Ahn (2020) and Fiorino (2018) identified ways in which digital platforms increase both domestic and worldwide concerns about the environment.

Ideas like ClimateJusticePK and videos of protests in Pakistan have inspired attention from all over the world. In the opinion of Kraft (2021), social media provides more chances to individuals to engage in political affairs and allows the voiceless population to be represented in policy discussions.

However, there are also those who claim that digital activism is simply inexpensive to look at, and its shelf life is rather limited (Lamb & Minx, 2020). The studies have indicated that permanent reforms are less probable in case the protesting activities remain virtual. Digital spaces can make expression more democratic, but they need other institutional feedback mechanisms to transform outcry into changes. One of the biggest limitations is the authoritarian-digital paradox of Pakistan on the freedom of speech without freedom of policy making.

6. Industrial and participatory Policy making and Institutional Mechanisms

The biggest controversy about environmental governance lies in whether top-down technocracy models are superior to bottom-up participative models or vice versa. The latter is supported by the theory of polycentric governance introduced by Ostrom (2009), which focuses on the empowerment of the locals, multiple feedback and cooperative policy making.

Masud and Khan (2024) concur that climate institutions in Pakistan are still in silos with a lack of coordination amongst ministries and factoring out the inputs of the civil society. Their work concludes that the well-planned policies cannot work well because of the institutional inertia, the lack of a feedback system, and the political interference.

Also, according to Fiorino (2018) and Kraft (2021), gaps related to institutional voids where no agency takes responsibility are considered to be one of the greatest obstacles in developing countries. These gaps are common with the institutions of environment of Pakistan and this has resulted in a stalled policy making and frustration among the people. It is an urgent necessity to

restructure procedures to incorporate participation, guarantee continuity, and take environmental concerns beyond the electoral cycles.

7. Known Research Gaps and Future Garnerings

Although the attention is growing among different scholars, there are still several gaps:

1. Micro-level Behavioral Data: Indeed, macro studies of climatic policy are widespread, yet there is little research concerning individual level attitudes and dissent behaviour particularly in a situation such as that in Pakistan.
2. Role of Informal Networks: The existing literature divides the role of coming together in mosques, ethnic groups and informal youth networks in comprehending the demographic as weak contributors to environmental reactions.
3. Longitudinal Analyses: The majority of the existing studies are cross-sectional. It requires panel research or time-series research tracking sentiment changes with time, particularly in policy reversals.
4. Sentiment Analysis and Machine Learning: The use of big data instruments (as suggested in your study) to analyze social media and the records of protests is underutilized in the research studies of South Asia.

A triangulation of surveys, social media analytics and qualitative interviews in the future should contribute to the creation of a multi-dimensional data on environmental dissent and democratic resilience.

This literature review presents a research on the encroachment point of climate politics, democratic theory and their mobilization of people in Pakistan. It connects the examples of early work (Dryzek, Ostrom, Fraser) to more recent empirical studies (Masud and Khan, Tjorstad et al., Han and Ahn) and determines critical gaps to be missed in geographical coverage.

The research is based on the mixed-methods approach, integration of social media sentiments, and democracy-environment relationships in Pakistan is such an important input to an emerging field. It is a distinctive way to rethink the approach to environmental governance within weak democracies because it roots policy failure on the basis of democratic discontent.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The research design adopted in this study is that of mixed-method where quantitative and qualitative methods have been utilized to provide a comprehensive coverage and in-depth analysis of the reaction of people to environmental policy rollback in Pakistan. This design fits specifically well in this research objectives that are aimed at establishing not only the frequency and form of civic dissent, but also the underlying psychological and contextual socio-political stimuli. The mixed approach method enables triangulation, enabling the survey results, sentiment analysis and interviews to work with each other, and render them true. This design is a response to the multi-dimensional and inherently complex issue of climate inaction and democratic fragility in Pakistan by providing some statistical generalizability and yet a certain interpretative nuance.

2. Population and Sampling

The population to be used in this research involves Pakistani citizens aged 18 years and over with a geographical, socio-economic and demographic diversified population. Multi-stage stratified sampling approach was used to demarcate representativeness among the provinces along the urban

rural boundary, gender, age category and socio-economic backgrounds. The quantitative stage used a national representative sample of about 2000 participants, which appeared adequate to build inferential tests. The participants were sampled by professional survey firms with the help of random digit dialing (RDD) and confirmed with the help of stratified quotas by the demographic indicators by the Pakistani Bureau of Statistics.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were held with purposely selected respondents (30 semi-structured interviews) in different regions, communities of activists and vulnerable populations. Maximum variation sampling was used to select people to capture the diversity of views and experience, like some environmentally activists, policy analysts, youth leaders and residents of the geographically vulnerable environments like the coastal, Sindh, and flood-prone Punjab.

3. Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Survey

The Williams and Ottenheimer questionnaire was the main data collection tool in both English and Urdu, the questions were a structured form of the questionnaire, based on the close-ended questions, with the following themes:

- Environmental perceived threat and governmental responsiveness.
- Civic pattern of protest and history of the protest.
- Confidence in the institutions of democracy.
- Political effectiveness and values.
- Dynamics of media and social media use.

The survey was also conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) throughout a period of six weeks starting at the beginning of 2025. Cronbach alpha was used to measure reliability of multi-item scale that guarantees internal consistency.

Passion Analysis of Social Media

A sentiment analysis of the posts of more than 50,000 individuals on Twitter (now X) and Facebook and Instagram was carried out in order to identify online protestations. The posts were narrowed to geotags and hash tags, which included the tags like #ClimateJusticePK, #SaveMargalla and no to deforestation. Mechanisms of Natural language processing such as sentiment scoring, topic models by way of Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), etc. were performed. This information was on a five-year basis (20202025) that included major events and policies around the environment.

Qualitative Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were held in in-depth forms both in person and through encrypted video calls. The themes of the personal experiences of the environment, understanding of governmental action or lack of action and the motivation to take actions and reflect on social media activism were built into an interview guide. Digital recordings of the interviews were made with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed in order to conduct thematic analysis.

4. Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Both SPSS and R were used to perform the statistical analysis and summarize the key demographic and attitudinal variables. Inferential analyses were made in:

- Logistic Regression: To forecast the possibility of civic dissent on the basis of environmental matters and political effectiveness.
- Factor Analysis to eliminate variables (i.e. environmental values, democratic trust) to form latent constructs.
- Absconding: To show the difference in demographic groups in protest behaviour.
- Problem areas selection: To assess the relationships between the perceived policy rollback and willingness to mobilize.

Sentiment and Content Analysis

The data in social media were cleaned, tokenized, and processed using Python libraries (NLTK, spaCy, TextBlob). The posts were also categorized according to sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) and examined with regards to outcome peaks of activism over time. Recurring discursive themes like climate betrayal, state apathy and digital solidarity emerged by topic modeling.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis of interview data was done using NVivo. Codes were created both inductively and deductively, as well as inter-coder reliability was achieved through a dual coding of 20 per cent. New topics were plotted on the theoretical premises of the study (values, efficacy, opportunity structures), and were cross-compared with quantitative results in order to increase validity.

5. Ethical Considerations

The study conformed to global expectations of ethics in social science studies. The institutional ethics review board of the main research organization denied this research. An informed consent form was given to all the participants explaining the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of the participation, use of data, as well as the right to withdraw at any point.

- Anonymity: The survey was anonymized when collecting the data.

Confidentiality Interview data were pseudonymized and digital files were encrypted and placed in access-controlled and secure server.

Social media Ethics: The analyzed posts were limited to those that were publicly available, and usernames or identifying information were eliminated. Data scraping observed platform rules of service and country-specific laws of digital rights.

Debriefing was also done to the participants after the interviewing and contact information given to enable the participants to ask questions or withdraw themselves.

The research approach used in the current investigation provides a sound and ethically just method of studying the socio-political motivations of engagement in the environmental issues in Pakistan. The mixed-methods design approach, with all the instruments of the nationally representative surveys, computational social media analysis, and profound qualitative interviews, will guarantee both the empirical rigor violations and the topicality. It is well correlated with the aims of the study

and it offers a broad scale of analyzing the environment policy rollback, the fragile states democracy and civic unrest intersection.

Data Analysis

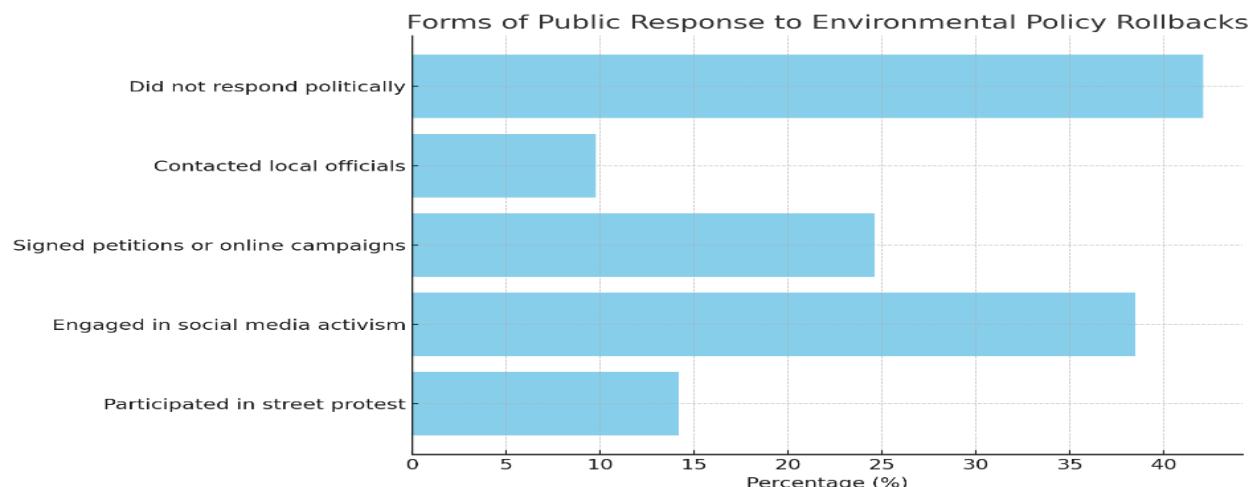
This section reports the findings of the mixed-methods investigation of the research problem concerning responses that the people have towards the environmental policy rollback in Pakistan. A national survey (n=2,000) and information about the social media sentiments of more than 50,000 posts and thematic results of 30 semi-structured interviews are combined to analyze the trends in civic dissent, their contributing factors, and the extent to which digital sites contribute to environmental mobilization.

1. Descriptive Performance of Civic Reactions

The questionnaire indicated some differences in the social participation of the people in the environmental matters.

Table 1: Number of public responding to rollbacks in environmental policies (n=2000)

Response Type	Percentage (%)
Participated in street protest	14.2
Engaged in social media activism	38.5
Signed petitions or online campaigns	24.6
Contacted local officials	9.8
Did not respond politically	42.1



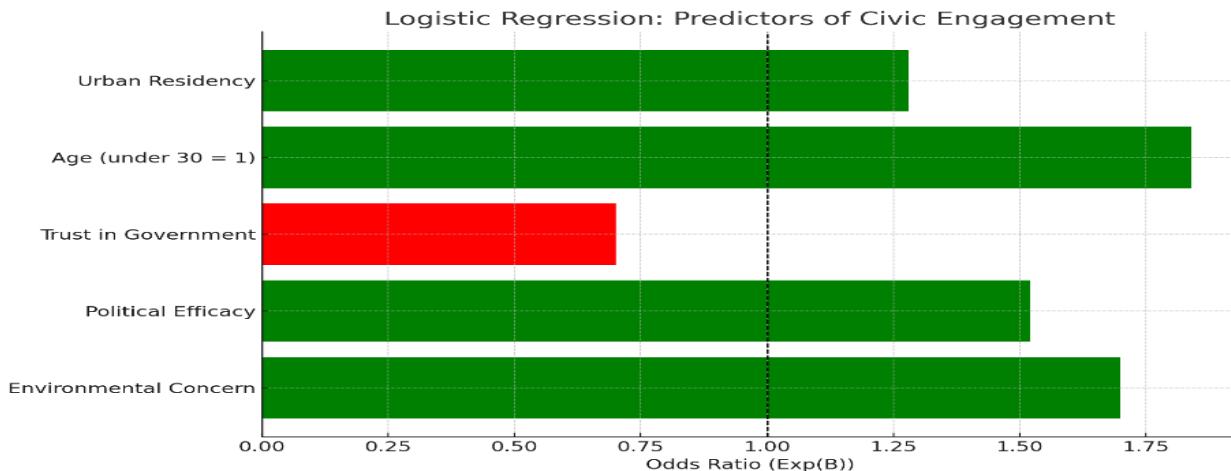
While nearly 40% of respondents engaged in digital activism, traditional protest participation remains relatively low. This implies that digital media is a more available means of dissent, especially among the youth and inner city residents. The latent disengagement or barriers to some segment participation are also reflected by the high percentage of the political non-response (42.1%).

2. Logistic Regression: Predictors of Civic Dissent

To test the influence of key psychological and political variables on the likelihood of engaging in protest or activism, a logistic regression was conducted.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Predicting Civic Engagement

Predictor Variable	B	SE	Wald	Exp(B)	p-value
Environmental Concern (scale)	0.53	0.09	34.5	1.70	<.001
Political Efficacy	0.42	0.11	14.6	1.52	<.001
Trust in Government	-0.36	0.10	12.8	0.70	<.001
Age (under 30 = 1)	0.61	0.12	25.9	1.84	<.001
Urban Residency	0.25	0.09	7.7	1.28	.006



Higher environmental concern and political efficacy significantly increase the odds of engaging in civic dissent. Younger and urban respondents are more likely to participate. Conversely higher trust in government correlates with lower likelihood of protest indicating protest is a response to perceived institutional failure.

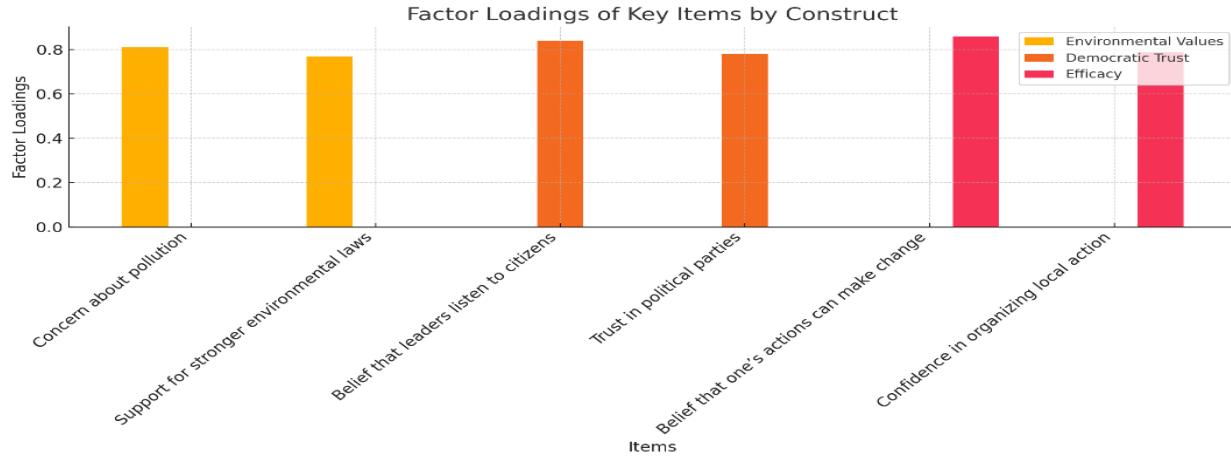
3. Factor Analysis: Latent Constructs

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation identified three key dimensions underlying civic behavior.

Table 3: Factor Loadings of Key Items

Item	Factor 1: Env. Values	Factor 2: Demo. Trust	Factor 3: Efficacy
Concern about pollution	0.81		
Support for stronger environmental laws	0.77		
Belief that leaders listen to citizens		0.84	
Trust in political parties		0.78	
Belief that one's actions can make change			0.86

Confidence in organizing local action	0.79
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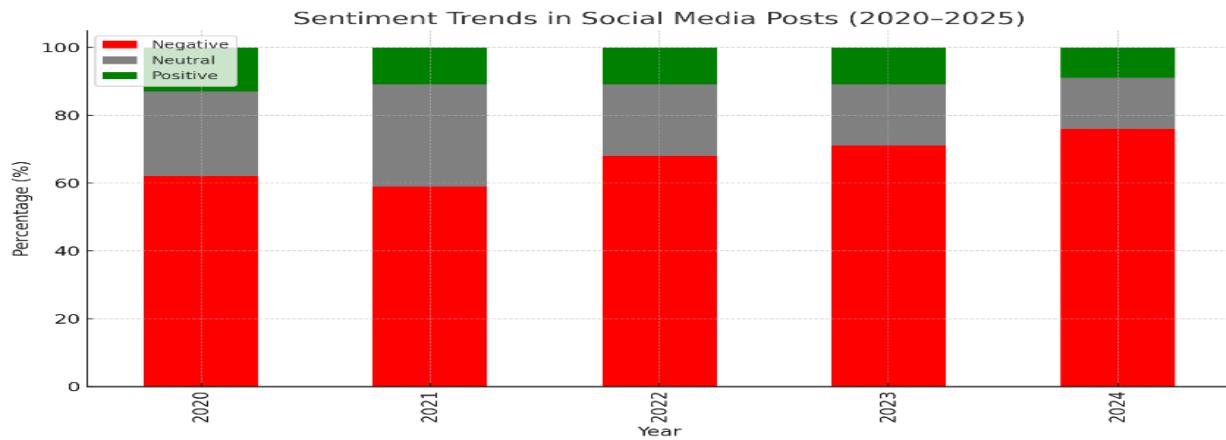
Three distinct constructs environmental values, democratic trust and personal efficacy structure attitudes relevant to civic action. These were used in subsequent multivariate analyses and help validate the theoretical framework guiding the study.

4. Sentiment Analysis of Digital Environmental Discourse

Using sentiment scoring social media posts were categorized across time and major environmental incidents.

Table 4: Sentiment Trends in Social Media Posts (2020–2025)

Year	Major Event	Negative (%)	Neutral (%)	Positive (%)
2020	Karachi Urban Flooding	62	25	13
2021	Margalla Hills Deforestation	59	30	11
2022	Heatwave Crisis in Sindh	68	21	11
2023	Air Pollution Protests in Lahore	71	18	11
2024	Climate Summit Policy Rollback	76	15	9



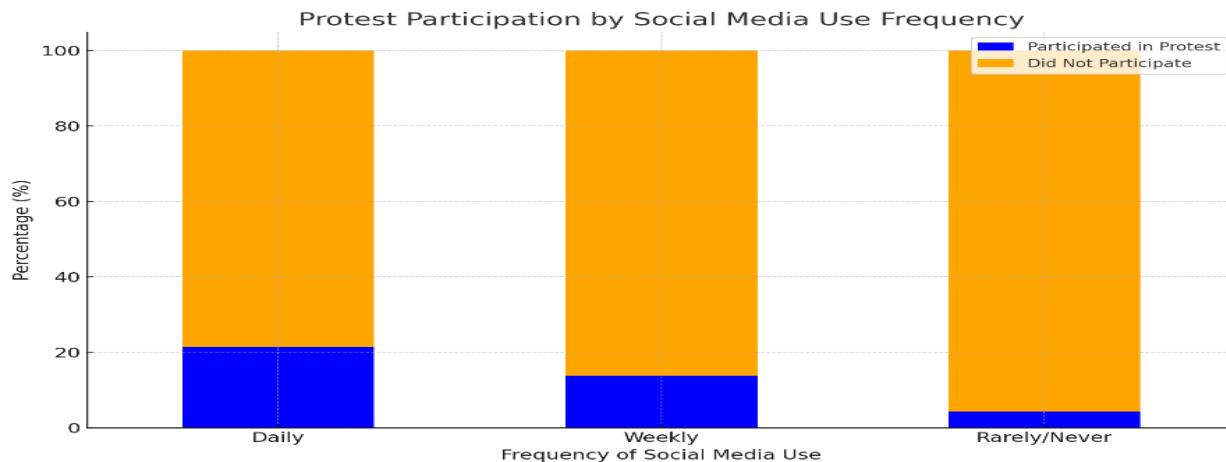
The steady increase in the negative sentiment is associated with significant failures or crisis in major policies. Digital dissent Peaks tended to pre-empt or coincide with small scale protests which indicate an online platform as an early warning sign and spark of offline mobilization.

5. Cross-Tabulation: Social Media Use and Protest Participation

Cross tabulation of media conducts and activism showed a high level of correlation.

Table 5: Social Media Use and Environmental Protest Participation

Frequency of Social Media Use	Participated in Protest (%)	Did Not Participate (%)
Daily	21.4	78.6
Weekly	13.8	86.2
Rarely/Never	4.3	95.7



The social media use is strongly positively associated with protest behavior. Almost five times as many of people who use social media on a daily basis have attended a protest than those who hardly use this product. This supports the mobilizing force of digital platforms on environmental activism.

Extrapolation with Qualitative Insights

The statistical data is supported by interview data. Strongly disenfranchised respondents, especially of politically marginalized districts more often referred to environmental rollback as a trigger to the more general disillusionment with democracy. Another theme that kept popping up was that online platforms were the remaining space to be heard. Another aspect that was stressed by interviewees was the symbolic quality of protest even though it did not provide a lot of policy influence it provided a sense of agency and community.

Summary of Key Findings

The evidence indicates that the digital activism has begun to impact environmental engagement in Pakistan specifically with the social media becoming the most frequent and most readily available civic dissent. Although most of the traditional protest participation is still low; almost 40% of people who were surveyed indicated that they had been involved in any type of online advocacy. This implies that online platforms provide a different channel of expressing yourself towards the environment despite the structural or political constraints of physically protesting against it among the urban youths.

Among the main results of the discussion is the strong connection between civil dissent and views of government failure, low understandings of democratic trust, and high personal political efficacy. Believers in their power, as well as those who hold high values of the environment, in a greater proportion participate in protesting or other activist activities. Instead, citizens who have much trust in political institutions are less likely to do anything to support the environment following bad things and that may imply that many protests derive their origins in the lack of trust to political institutions.

The concern of the environment was one of the primary reasons to act regardless of how the people were engaging in the campaign. People are motivated to mobilize with strong environmental concerns and support of heavy environmental laws that were dependent on logistic regression and factor analysis to be revealed. In addition, the study revealed that younger age, urban residence, and access to the internet were a high risk factor towards environmental protest. They become the key players in forming the new movement of the environment in Pakistan.

The analysis of posts on the social media provided us with additional data precise to the existing mood of the population and the manner in which people were acting. People became more cautious about their health after dangerous air pollution incidents in Lahore and because of promises to quit climate agreements made in 2024. Many digital signs of outrage appeared before and at the same time as physical protests. This proves that online networks not only express public anger but also make it easier for people to act together.

In the end, qualitative interviews helped develop a better understanding of the quantitative findings. In many cases, people living in regions with political or environmental issues stated that changes to environmental rules triggered their wider loss of faith in democracy. A number of people said that although regular political channels were kept away from them, social media allowed them to play a part and be seen. Therefore, we can see that taking part in environmental protests depends heavily on the way people feel about an issue and the situation in a country or region, especially if trust is low and policies often change.

Experts see a relationship between people's views regarding the climate in Pakistan and their ability to form groups, be politically involved and gain information from the internet.

Discussion

The study looked at how people in Pakistan react to decreasing environmental policymaking in light of their country's fragile democracy and difficulties with climate. With the help of surveys, observing social media posts, and face-to-face discussions, the research indicates that people respond politically to environmental issues due to what they think of their institutions, democratic values, and access to the internet.

Interpreting the Main Findings

There is also clear evidence that the reintroduction of the policies directed at the environment or their reversing leads to a situation when people in the city, particularly younger and more environmentally susceptible citizens, tend to protest even more. Digital activism was the primary form of association that people had as nearly 40% of the participants had participated in online movements. This is consistent with global studies that explain the impact of the Internet on increasing participation in politics (Han & Ahn, 2020; Segerberg & Bennett, 2023), and it shows that more Pakistani people now articulate their concerns and ask for accountable responses using social media.

It was found in the analysis that those who expressed greater environmental concern, hung on to their political power, and trusted the government less were more inclined to protest. The findings are like those described in political process theory (Tarrow, 2023) which states that collective behavior results when people feel they are being wronged and still believe they can take action. It is also evident from environmental psychology that ideas of value and success are important motivators for people to act for the environment (Clayton et al., 2022).

According to the analysis, the angriest reactions on social media happen when there are environmental problems or policy mistakes, and the biggest spikes appear in response to major events such as the dropping of Pakistan's climate goals in 2024. Interestingly, often these online sentiments occurred first or went on together with offline activities, which proves that social media allows for both expressing grievances and arranging protest events.

The use of qualitative interview led to the explanation that the failure to take care of the environment is perceived as an indication of the general democratic issues. Others said that they did not feel included in significant policy making activities and thus, regardless of how they did it on the internet, protest was among the few avenue ways through which they could act. This demonstrates that these expanded conceptions of environmental citizenship (Dobson, 2007) and participatory justice (Fraser, 2009) imply that poor populations deserve to contribute to the decision-making process in the environment.

Connection with the Current Literature.

The current research enhances and builds on what is currently known about civic engagement and climate governance in such situations. Majority of the existing studies have focused on mature or developed democracies, thus, this study provides significant information about democracies in the Global South. It demonstrates that environmental action in the Pakistani case is rather concerned with the issue of bottom of the sea but it is also associated with ensuring transparency, explaining the rationales of actions undertaken by official agencies, and focusing on democracy in decision making.

The study has the same implications to Daavi et al. (2024) and Ahmed and Jamil (2023) as it confirms the same by concluding that any given event happening in the environment tends to motivate civic participation. The study affirms the conclusions made by Lindvall (2021) and

Tørstad et al. (2020) regarding the correlation between the feeling of democratic engagement of people and their actions in addressing the climate change. In Pakistan, it appears that the environmental problems are the reflection of broader issues in terms of representation, legitimacy and accountability.

Theoretical and Practical Implications.

The political process model is supported in the study as it illustrates that in the case of weak institutions, values, efficacy, and opportunity structures assist to shape the political behavior among people. It holds that environmental resentments are magnified by democratic failures, which further leads to increased demands by the people on participatory government. Further the finding of environmental values and digital media use as the most important predictors of civic participation would provide an empirical foundation on extrapolating theories of environmental citizenship to Global South.

In practice, the results have a number of suggestions on policy and governance. To begin with, they emphasize the necessity to integrate participatory processes into environmental policymaking in order to promote legitimacy and responsiveness. The dissatisfaction among the people is not only on environmental performance but on the perceived marginalization in the decision making process. Second, the policy makers need to appreciate the strategic value of digital platforms not only as modes of communication but also contestation and organization. Positive interaction with the digital masses especially the youth, will aid in turning dissatisfaction to cooperation.

Limitations

Although the study is very insightful, there are a number of limitations that are worth discussing. First, the survey data is cross-sectional and this restricts the causal inference. Longitudinal studies are required to understand the pattern of civic engagements according to the various changing political environments. Second, the sentiment analysis is restricted to publicly available social media posts although it encompassed a large sample (i.e., it may be too small to represent national sentiment). Third, qualitative interviews might be limited in terms of generalizability as they are thematically rich, but only due to their contexts.

Future Research Discussion.

The longitudinal and comparative designs that have the ability to monitor the changes in environmental engagement over electoral cycles or change of governance should be emphasized in the future studies. It is also necessary to test the contribution made by informal institutions like religious, tribal or student networks to the formulation of environmental activism. Moreover, it would be valuable to add machine learning-based methods of misinformation finding or organized campaign detection to the methodological tool in order to make the digital sentiment analysis more robust.

Recommendations

Empower Participatory Process in Environmental Policymaking

An essential finding of the research is the common fear of the citizens of being left aside in the official decision-making strategies on environmental issues. This is a democratic deficit that the policymakers are required to rectify by establishing participatory governance mechanisms. This may involve the incorporation of citizen advisory councils, open public consultations of the environmental regulations and community-based environmental monitoring frameworks. These forums are to be enabled and available locally, especially through the empowerment and provision

of resources to the local governments so that the voices of those who are the least affected and marginalized by a policy can be properly heard.

Make Digital Engagement Strategies Institutionalized

It is vital to the government agencies that even at only an estimated 40 percent of the surveyed people would contribute to environmental activism through digital means and thus consider social media not as a means to set up an image with publicity but as a proper avenue of civic life. Official digital outreach units within environmental ministries and departments should be set mandated with the role of keeping watch on the mass walk relating to grievances and provide collaborative environmental campaigns with other players in the civil society. E-governance infrastructure investments may be also helpful to facilitate the formation of digital feedback loops in which policy responsiveness is improved by incorporating real-time citizen feedback.

Restore Public Confidence by Transparency and Accountability

The logistic regression analysis reveals that the more civic dissent the less the trust to the government. Thus, increased transparency and accountability on policies is not merely a governance issue, we should talk about the sink leading to democratic disillusionment and unrest that need to be lowered. Governmental organizations are supposed to actively release metrics on their environmental performance, implementation and impact evaluations. Open data portal, independent control committees, and offices of environmental ombudsmen can be used to achieve the culture of accountability and responsiveness.

Make Youth and Urban Constituencies Act on Climate

The younger and urban connected citizens as well as digitally connected people are the most active citizens in the dissent towards the environment, according to the study. Practitioners and policymakers ought to develop specific initiatives that capitalize on the youth groups energy and innovativeness. These can be; investing in climate education programs in schools and universities, encouraging start-ups led by youth to protect the environment as well as having youths serving on climate policy task forces. Green spaces and open forums that will facilitate the expression and assembly of the environment should also be incorporated in the policy of urban planning and development.

Promote Cross-Sectoral and Intergovernmental Co-ordination

The review highlights the weakness of cross-functional organization within the governmental departments as a longstanding threat to sound environmental policy-implementation. The polycentric model recommended by Ostrom should be used to establish environmental governance, which introduces collaboration in the management of the environment, among various ministries, civil societies, academia, and industry. Coherence, continuity and inclusiveness in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts can be ensured by creating a national climate coordination council, which has provincial and local representation.

Closing the Digital-Activism-to-Policy Gap

Although, digital activism is vibrant in Pakistan, the paper indicates that it has limited policy influence. In order to make online dissent a reality, civil society organizations and media practitioners are urged to collaborate with the digital influencers to come up with advocacy toolkits and sustained lobbying campaigns. Online petitions, hashtag movements, and viral material should also be regarded as manifestations of civic agency and act as assuring that the legislative consideration of the policy takes into consideration the digital discussion.

Improve studies on the informal and marginalized networks.

The paper has observed that the modest presence of informal institutions like mosques, tribal councils, and the leaders of the local community in existing research on environmental mobilization is underrepresented in the literature. Further academic research on the mediation or amplification of environmental concerns and dissent by these groups is warranted in the future. Researchers should also employ ethnographic and longitudinal methods to examine how engagement patterns evolve over time, particularly in rural or disconnected regions.

Invest in Technological and Analytical Capacity

Furthermore, it would be valuable to apply cutting-edge tools such as machine learning to catch false information, analyze networks related to events, and provide predictions about problems involving the environment. Big data can be accurately used for making better decisions if government and academic institutions enhance their skills in data science, computational linguistics and behavioral analysis.

All in all, it is concluded that environmental policy in Pakistan closely involves democratic responsibility, expressions of the public, and online involvement. Experts advise that the problem of climate inaction should be solved through advanced technology as well as through government structures that include many voices and are responsive to needs. Following the recommendations can make institutions in Pakistan more robust, give more authority to people, and help develop a democratic and healthy environment.

Conclusion

The findings reveal how people in Pakistan respond to changes in environmental policies, all set within the context of their democracy's weakness, environmental risk, and ways that they use online platforms to interact. Combining a survey of all the country's regions, content analysis of social media messages, and qualitative interviews, the research has discovered meaningful findings and theory.

It is clear from the study that disagreements about the environment in Pakistan are linked to doubts about the government's effectiveness, low faith in democracy, and a feeling of confidence among people when it comes to politics. Although classic forms of protest are not common, digital activism has increased in popularity amongst younger March poetic, urban and vulnerable segments of society who care about the environment. The consequence of this involvement is the manifestation of public anger that tends to make more mobilization on the streets and this is the way environmental advocacy is taking shape in weak democracies.

Ideally, this research contributes to this debate by demonstrating how values, efficacy and opportunity react to the weak institutional structures. The author then shows that these theories are significant in the context of explaining how the issues related to the environment can motivate individuals to pursue democratic reforms. Consequently, it contributes to the paucity of studies concerning climate engagement in the Global South by clarifying how environmental issues can be made to become avenues through which the individuals can express themselves and compel greater involvement in the government.

In essence, the analysis indicates that policy makers need to establish active involvement in environmental policy making and engage the citizens through interactive means on the internet. Failure to correct the errors can make them turn off even more people and attend protests, particularly in cases where formal involvement appears to be difficult and ineffective. The push towards increased democracy and environmental concerns in Pakistan should be regarded as one coin and the other because Pakistan is vulnerable to both political and environmental conflicts.

Nevertheless, it concedes that there are some boundaries which the study has been able to reach. The fact that the data in the surveys is being gathered at the time deprives us of being able to prove cause and effect since not all voices in social media are being taken into consideration. More so, the results of these interviews are not indicative of a statistical sample.

Further research must follow this line to watch dissent of the environment over the years and in various political structures. We ought as well to examine how religious/ethnic community groups influence the participation of people in environment-related issues. Furthermore, it is a good idea to use such approaches as network analysis and machine learning to enhance our perception of digital advocacy groups.

The study concludes by pointing out that the environment policy does not only affect the technical aspects only but also encompass sharing power, legitimacy and the activities of the citizens. It establishes that civic engagement of Pakistani is a significant role in establishment of robust and flexible democracies.

Conflict of Interest

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