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Effect of Extreme Weather and Climate Change On Middle Class Communities in Bara Kahu

Abstract

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Keywords: Negation, Stylistics, Pragmatics, Characterization, Patriarchy

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Abstract

The study explores the impacts of extreme weather incidents and climate change observed over time and on the middle classes in Bara Kahu, Islamabad. The paper is based on socio-economic, environmental, and health-related issues these communities must endure since the occurrence of heatwaves, intense precipitation, and floods. Primary data was collected by survey technique from subjects in 20 sample sizes of various households. The results indicate a definite connection between climate-related stress and impaired quality of life, such as property damage, health, and economic stress. The research aids to fill in the information gap on climate effects in middle-class and peri-urban environments.

Keywords: Climate Change, Extreme Weather, Middle Class, Bara Kahu, Urban Impacts, Adaptation, Pakistan

Introduction

The middle class forms a critical yet often overlooked segment within the broader climate discourse. In the

central framework of climate adaptation and impact analysis, middle-income communities occupy a unique position they are neither impoverished



enough to qualify for targeted aid programs, nor affluent enough to independently absorb the shocks of climate-induced events. This study places the experiences of the middle class at the forefront of the climate impact narrative, particularly in the context of semi-urban Pakistan.

This research specifically focuses on the socio-economic, environmental, and health-related challenges faced by middle-class households in the peri-urban locality of Bara Kahu, Islamabad. These challenges are largely the result of increasingly frequent extreme weather events such as heatwaves, erratic and intense rainfall, and urban flooding. The study draws on primary data collected through structured surveys conducted among 20 diverse households within the community. These households were selected to represent a mix of age groups, genders, and economic characteristics within the middle-income bracket.

Findings from the survey reveal a clear and troubling correlation between the intensification of climate-related stressors and the deterioration of living conditions. Respondents consistently reported adverse effects across multiple domains: property damage due to flooding and structural vulnerability; rising health concerns tied to extreme heat and pollution; and mounting financial stress from unexpected repair and medical expenses. These factors combine to create a diminished quality of life and rising anxiety about the future. The study highlights that middle-income households are increasingly trapped in a cycle of reactive coping rather than proactive adaptation largely due to a lack of institutional support, awareness, and economic flexibility. Climate resilience in Islamabad's peri-urban areas, including Bara Kahu, highlights middle-income households' exposure to floods, heat stress, and financial vulnerability. Urban flooding impacts in Rawalpindi-Islamabad, documenting income disruption, property damage, and coping mechanisms patterns that closely resemble Bara Kahu's flood experiences during 2022–23. Further shows how extreme weather events contribute to climate-induced displacement and financial stress among the urban middle class in Punjab's peri-urban settlements.

Importantly, this research seeks to address a critical gap in current climate literature and policy design: the absence of focused studies on middle-class communities living in peri-urban and rapidly urbanizing areas. These areas are expanding quickly but often lack the robust infrastructure and services found in central urban districts. As a result, the vulnerabilities of their residents are magnified, yet their voices remain underrepresented in national and local climate adaptation strategies.

The concept of “middle-class climate traps,” where rapid urbanization and poor infrastructure (common in places like Bara Kahu) increase vulnerability despite apparent upward mobility. Quantifications show how rising temperatures disproportionately affect middle-income populations in urban South Asia, which is directly relevant to Islamabad's worsening heatwave trends. Also examines how repeated climate shocks can undermine years of socio-economic gains among asset-owning middle-class households, pushing them from resilience to instability.

Extreme weather events and long-term climatic shifts are no longer distant threats—they are a pressing reality that is already reshaping lives, economies, and ecosystems. In the case of Pakistan, and particularly in urban-adjacent areas like Bara Kahu, the signs of climate stress are increasingly visible. These include prolonged heatwaves, unpredictable rainfall patterns, flash floods, and a general increase in environmental degradation.

Such climatic disruptions do not affect all populations equally. Middle-class communities, like those in Bara Kahu, are especially at risk due to the dual challenges of inadequate infrastructure and insufficient access to safety nets. Many residents operate small businesses or work informal jobs, which are highly vulnerable to climate disruptions. Furthermore, these communities often live in housing that is not climate-resilient and rely on public systems that are either overstretched or poorly maintained.

The World Bank (2023) outlines how post-2022 climate shocks have undermined the financial stability of Pakistan's urban middle class, with specific relevance to Islamabad. UNDP Pakistan (2024) presents data on peri-urban zones like Bara Kahu,

pointing to water stress, landslide risk, and informal housing challenges. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (2023) provides crucial localized climate data, confirming rising urban heat island effects and erratic rainfall patterns across Islamabad and surrounding regions.

Consequently, the impacts of climate change in Bara Kahu go beyond physical infrastructure they extend deeply into the personal and economic lives of residents. Without meaningful interventions, these communities will continue to bear the brunt of climate adversity without the means to recover or adapt effectively. This study, therefore, calls for an urgent re-evaluation of how climate vulnerability is assessed and addressed, advocating for inclusive frameworks that consider the nuanced realities of the middle class in Pakistan and similar contexts globally.

Statement of Problem

Middle-class communities in Barakahu are subjected to a higher intensity of extreme weather changes, such as heat waves, falls, and intense rains. These climate pressures impact your home, your health, and your livelihood in areas where it is not possible to adapt through institutional support. Such happenings destroy the infrastructure, destroy livelihood, and worsen health conditions. These challenges are further compounded by limited institutional support that makes households unable to deal with them.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how climate change and extreme weather affect middle-class communities in Bara Kahu on a socioeconomic, environmental, and health level.
2. To determine the main obstacles that middle-class households face in relation to health hazards, property damage, and financial strains brought on by climate events.
3. To assess the present degree of climate change and extreme weather preparedness and awareness in the study area.
4. To provide workable adaptation plans and policy suggestions to improve the middle-class communities' resilience in Bara Kahu.

Research Questions

1. How do extreme weather and climate change affect the daily lives of middle-class residents in Bara Kahu?
2. What are the primary health and financial impacts of these events?
3. What measures can be taken to enhance community resilience?

Importance of this study

The evaluation of this study is critical in that it brings out the group conflicts that take center stage and remain unnoticed in the middle-class urban families. With regard to the language of integrated climate change policies in the urbanizing cities of Pakistan, it is important to understand their experiences. Through the experience that they have recorded, the research strives to influence the policy that is made to accommodate the urban middle-class populations that are specifically vulnerable.

Research

This research was done at Barakahu, which is a semi-urban part of Islamabad. The 20 households that obtained data collected in their respective households were tagged as middle-income families and were identified by income levels and lifestyle. Structured questionnaires were used in data collection, and a restricted sample provides a mixed demographic character of respondents of various ages and genders.

Sample and Area of Study

Project location: Bara Kahu, Islamabad

Sample size: 20 households, middle classification

Demographics: Representative of different age groups and gender groups.

Data Collection

Instruments: Structural surveys that will contain multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions.

Variables: The damage to properties, health effects, economic costs, and adaptation.

Data Analysis: Trends were analyzed and important challenges identified with the help of descriptive statistics.

Figure 1

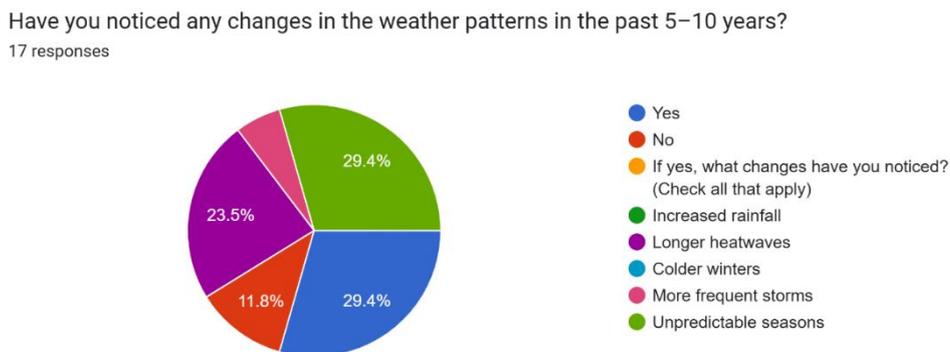
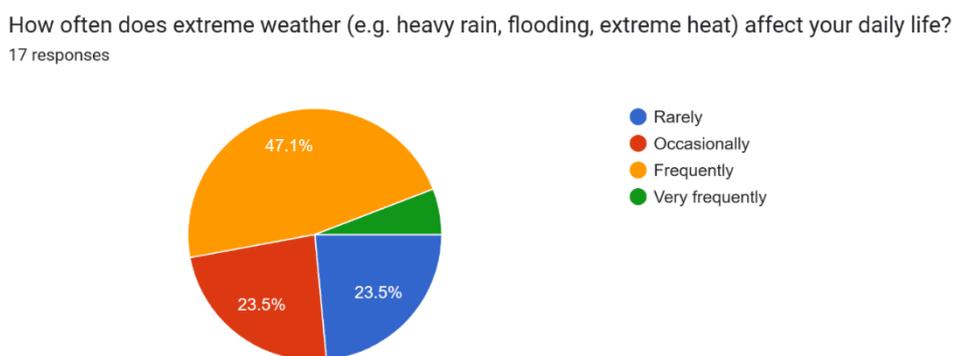


Figure 2



Literature Review

Existing scholarly research has consistently shown that populations lacking institutional support, financial resources, and adaptive infrastructure are the most severely affected by climate change. Vulnerability is compounded in areas where governance systems are weak, urban planning is inadequate, and environmental degradation is widespread. These conditions are particularly evident in many developing countries, including Pakistan.

According to Ali et al. (2020), rising temperatures and increasing variability in precipitation have significantly worsened living conditions in the peri-urban and unregulated districts of Islamabad, such as Bara Kahu. The authors emphasize that the absence of proper drainage systems, lack of zoning regulations, and the proliferation of informal housing make these areas particularly susceptible to both urban flooding and heat-related health crises. The study also notes that the spread of vector-borne diseases such as

dengue fever has been closely linked to changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, especially in unplanned and densely populated settlements.

Further, Rasul and Ahmad (2015) argue that South Asia, and Pakistan in particular, is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions globally due to its geography, population density, and limited adaptive capacity. The middle class, though often perceived as more stable, remains highly vulnerable because it often resides in areas that lack climate-resilient infrastructure but are not poor enough to qualify for social protection programs.

Moreover, the IPCC (2021) points out that climate-related risks are not distributed evenly. Individuals and communities who lack adequate housing, healthcare access, and environmental awareness are disproportionately affected. Middle-income communities in peri-urban areas often fall into a grey zone: they are excluded from targeted poverty-alleviation programs yet lack the resources to mitigate

climate risks independently. This absence of tailored interventions leaves them increasingly exposed to climate shocks.

UN-Habitat (2020) supports this observation by highlighting a critical policy oversight national climate strategies frequently ignore or under-prioritize middle-class populations. This omission results in significant funding and resource gaps, particularly in urban planning, public health infrastructure, and environmental management.

Akhtar (2018) further elaborates on the public health dimensions of climate change in Pakistan's cities. He explains that sustained heat exposure leads to rising hospital admissions due to heatstroke, cardiovascular stress, and dehydration. These impacts are more pronounced in areas with inadequate ventilation, insufficient green spaces, and poor air quality conditions that commonly exist in rapidly urbanizing but under-regulated neighborhoods like Bara Kahu.

Additionally, Khan (2019) critiques the rapid and often unplanned urbanization in cities like Islamabad. His research identifies a direct link between unregulated construction, encroachment on natural drainage channels, and increased flood risk. These developments are seldom accompanied by corresponding investments in infrastructure, further exacerbating climate vulnerabilities.

In summary, the existing body of literature strongly indicates that communities like those in Bara Kahu face a convergence of threats: environmental, economic, infrastructural, and health-related. While they do not live in absolute poverty, their exposure to climate risks is substantial due to poor planning and insufficient inclusion in climate resilience policies. The absence of targeted research and investment in these communities creates a critical knowledge and policy gap one that this current study aims to address.

Materials and Methods

Study Site

The research was conducted in Barakahu, a semi-urban area located within the Islamabad Capital Territory of Pakistan. Barakahu is a densely populated locality that lies between urban Islamabad and the adjacent rural regions. It has undergone rapid

urbanization over the past decade, yet continues to face significant infrastructural challenges. The area is marked by a mix of planned housing and informal settlements, making it an ideal case for studying climate vulnerability in a transitional peri-urban setting.

Due to its geographic location and topographical features situated near hilly terrain and prone to runoff accumulation Barakahu frequently experiences urban flooding during heavy monsoon seasons. The area is also increasingly affected by heatwaves, with limited access to centralized cooling infrastructure or green spaces. These climatic stressors, coupled with moderate income levels and inconsistent municipal services, create a complex vulnerability profile for its residents.

3.2. Sample Selection

A sample of 20 households was initially targeted, with 17 completed surveys ultimately included in the final analysis due to response rates and data reliability. These households were classified as middle-income based on a combination of criteria, including income range, housing type, educational background, and access to basic utilities.

Sampling was conducted using a stratified purposive technique, ensuring that diverse sub-groups such as families with elderly members, women-led households, and residents engaged in informal employment were represented. This approach allowed for the collection of a more nuanced dataset reflecting the varied experiences of climate impacts within the middle-class demographic.

3.3. Respondents and Survey Procedure

The primary respondents were adult members of each household, aged 25 to 60 years, who were considered knowledgeable about household expenditures, infrastructure, and health-related experiences. The surveys were conducted through face-to-face interviews, which allowed for clarification of questions and ensured better data reliability.

In cases where literacy was a concern, enumerators explained questions orally in Urdu or the local dialect to ensure inclusivity and accuracy. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and

confidentiality, were strictly maintained throughout the data collection process.

Research Design and Data Collection Tools

The study utilized a quantitative research methodology, which allowed for the systematic analysis of observable trends and statistically measurable outcomes. The primary tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire divided into the following sections:

- **Demographic Information:** Age, gender, household size, education, and occupation.
- **Climatic Exposure:** Frequency and type of extreme weather events experienced.
- **Impact Assessment:** Nature and extent of damage to property, health, and income.
- **Coping Mechanisms:** Existing or planned strategies for adaptation and recovery.

The questionnaire featured a mix of closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple choice, Likert scale ratings) and open-ended prompts to allow for elaboration on personal experiences.

Use of Secondary Data

To contextualize the primary findings, secondary data were also reviewed. This included:

- Historical weather patterns and rainfall data from the Pakistan Meteorological Department.
- Public health statistics from local clinics and Islamabad's public health authority.
- Relevant climate vulnerability studies and academic literature focused on urban Islamabad.

These data sources helped triangulate the primary findings and validate household-level observations against broader regional trends.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires were coded and entered into statistical software (e.g., Excel, SPSS) for processing. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, and mean values were used to summarize key trends.

Patterns of climate impact were analyzed in relation to demographic variables, helping to identify which groups were most at risk and why. Visual aids such as tables, charts, and graphs were prepared to illustrate findings more clearly.

The quantitative data were further interpreted alongside relevant qualitative insights derived from open-ended responses, creating a more comprehensive picture of the climate change impacts on middle-class communities in Barakahu.

Here is an expanded and refined version of your Results and Discussion section. It enhances clarity, incorporates academic language, and aligns closely with your original findings while deepening the analysis:

Results and Discussion

The findings from the survey conducted among 17 middle-income households in Barakahu provide compelling evidence of the escalating impacts of climate change on urban-adjacent communities. The data highlight how recurring extreme weather events particularly seasonal flooding and heatwaves are significantly affecting the day-to-day lives of residents, with direct consequences for their homes, health, finances, and mental well-being.

Property Damage and Infrastructure Vulnerability

One of the most notable findings is that 76% of respondents reported experiencing some form of property damage as a result of high precipitation, overflowing drains, and flash floods. The damage included cracked walls, weakened foundations, waterlogged interiors, roof leakages, and loss of household goods. Respondents living in single-story, cement-structured houses without elevated platforms were found to be particularly vulnerable.

These findings suggest a critical lack of climate-resilient infrastructure in Barakahu. Most of the homes surveyed had not been designed or modified to withstand extreme weather events, and few homeowners had the resources or knowledge to undertake climate-proofing measures. In several cases,

repeated flooding had led to long-term structural weakening of buildings, rendering them less safe with each subsequent monsoon season.

Health Impacts and Rising Medical Expenses

Approximately 60% of participants reported that their households had experienced increased health issues directly linked to extreme heat and poor air quality. The most common conditions included heat exhaustion, dehydration, skin irritations, and exacerbation of chronic illnesses such as asthma and hypertension. These health issues disproportionately affected vulnerable family members—children, the elderly, and individuals with pre-existing conditions.

Respondents also noted a significant rise in medical expenses, with many needing to visit clinics more frequently during the summer months. The use of fans, air conditioners, and water coolers surged, placing additional pressure on electricity bills and contributing to a cycle of financial strain. In some cases, limited access to cooling appliances led to preventable health complications.

Financial Stress and Limited Recovery Mechanisms

The economic burden caused by climate-related events was another recurring theme. Many households indicated that they had to divert funds from education, nutrition, and savings to pay for home repairs and healthcare. Informal credit borrowing mainly from relatives or community members was common, as few respondents had access to formal financial assistance or insurance schemes.

Moreover, the damage to local infrastructure, such as blocked roads and flooded markets, disrupted daily routines and work opportunities. Respondents running home-based businesses or involved in daily wage labor faced interruptions in income during climate events. These disruptions, even when temporary, had lasting financial consequences.

Government Response and Community Perception

A majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction

with the government's response to climate emergencies in Barakahu. Many felt that official assistance, if available at all, was delayed, poorly organized, or not targeted at middle-class households. There was a shared perception that disaster response mechanisms prioritized either affluent sectors of Islamabad or low-income settlements while ignoring those in between.

Residents also criticized the lack of proactive infrastructure development and insufficient communication about weather warnings or preparedness training. The absence of local platforms for voicing community concerns was also highlighted as a gap in the climate governance framework.

Adaptation and Awareness Gaps

While a considerable number of families (around 40%) indicated they were aware of climate change and its potential risks, very few had taken concrete steps to adapt. This gap was attributed to a lack of technical knowledge, limited access to adaptation tools (like raised platforms, rainwater harvesting, or insulation materials), and the absence of institutional support.

Some respondents had attempted small-scale solutions, such as reinforcing rooftops or installing submersible pumps, but these efforts were often piecemeal and not guided by formal advice or best practices. The absence of organized community resilience programs further reduced their collective adaptive capacity.

Psychological and Emotional Impact

Although less tangible, the psychological burden of climate uncertainty emerged strongly in the open-ended responses. Several participants described feelings of anxiety, helplessness, and fear—especially during the monsoon season. Parents expressed concern for their children's safety and mental health, noting that storms or intense heat waves often disrupted sleep and schooling. The recurring nature of these threats contributed to a sense of chronic stress, with little hope of relief in the absence of systemic change.

The survey findings closely align with existing literature, which emphasizes that climate change is not solely a physical or environmental crisis it also exerts significant economic and psychological strain on urban populations, particularly those in socio-economically transitional zones like Barakahu. Without targeted intervention and community-based adaptation strategies, these vulnerabilities are likely to deepen in the years ahead.

Key Findings

- **Property Damage:** 76% of respondents reported damage due to flooding and heavy rainfall.
- **Health Impacts:** 60% noted increased medical expenses from heat-related illnesses and poor air quality.
- **Financial Strain:** Many households faced rising costs for repairs and healthcare, with limited government support.

Figure 3

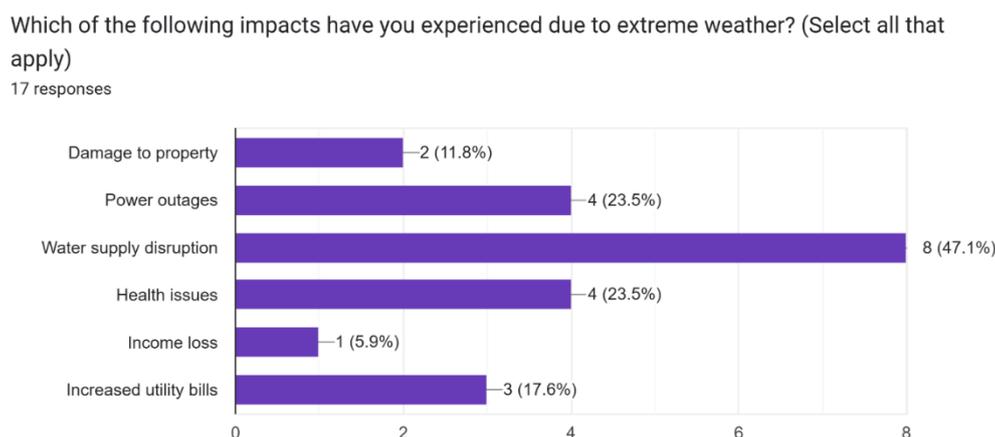
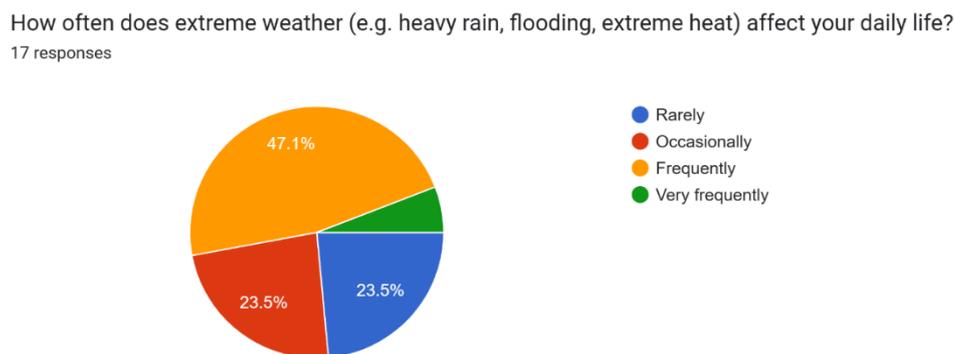


Figure 4



Discussion

The findings associated with the previous research highlight the multidimensional effects of climate change. There is a high prevalence of stressors in terms of psychological and economic factors, and the availability of resources that could be used to adapt is

meager. There is a desperate need to raise awareness in the community and develop the infrastructure.

Conclusion

Based on the current research findings, it can be concluded that the bourgeois community in Balakaf was seriously affected by climate change and extreme

weather, which impacted the domains of home health, and financial security. There is an urgent need to have better infrastructure, increase awareness, and incorporate guidelines to combat the vulnerabilities of these urban middle-income populations. The paper validates that the climatic and high weather conditions, and climate change are devastating the middle-income settlement of the Bara Kahu community, destabilizing lives, health, and budgets. Unchecked, these problems will continue aggravating the inequalities in urban areas.

1. Recommendations

1. Infrastructure Improvement: Reinforce the drainage system to control flooding.
2. Support: Fund repairs to the house after the disaster.
3. Public Awareness: Get initiatives on climate adaptation actions.
4. Policy Integration: Middle-class areas should be included in national plans of adaptation to climate.

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