



The Gendered Politics Of Climate Change: How Patriarchal Power Structures Shape Environmental Degradation

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Abstract

This study examines the connection between patriarchy, power relations and climate change. It states that the problem of climate change and degradation of the environment is not a purely scientific and technical problem but goes far back into social and political inequalities. The ghost of capitalist Europe, by relying on green political theory and ecofeminist thought, shows how the patriarchal power structure in society aggravates environment crisis through centralization of decision-making power, marginalization of women and constructions of unsustainable models of development. In a qualitative case study approach characterized by a set of in-depth interviews, the paper puts forward the exact accounts of a group of people who work in environmental and academic fields in Pakistan. The data indicate that environmental degradation is organically connected with inequality in gender relations and power structure, making it necessary to introduce inclusive and gender-sensitive climate policies. This paper is part of the literature that continues to highlight the importance of taking care of structural inequalities in the pursuit of environmental justice and sustainability.

Keywords: Climate Change, Patriarchy, Power Structures, Inequality, Environmental Degradation, Ecofeminism, Green Political Theory.



Introduction

Climate change is not a secret that it is one of the most acute and complicated problems that modern world faces (Calvin et al., 2023). The implications of it are far-reaching, both in terms of global environmental sustainability as well as global social justice, human development and economic stability (Simonis, 2017). The scientific community has already solidified that anthropogenic processes, in particular, after the industrial revolution, are the main factors of climate change (Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (Ipcc), 2023). These actions are fossil fuel burning, deforestation, industrialization, and mass consumerism, which facilitates the increase of greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbation of the greenhouse effect (Steffen et al., 2015).

Simultaneously the number of literatures on the interaction between environmental degradation and systems of social inequality is increasing. Environment things are booming, ecofeminist texts, and political ecology are all placing particular emphasis on the influence of power inequalities (especially those relating to gender, class, and race) on the causes and outcomes of an ecological crisis (Gaard, 2015). This perspective emphasizes that environmental outcomes are not merely ecological or technical problems but are deeply political, reflecting broader societal structures (Pulido, 2016).

Nonetheless, in the above-mentioned interdisciplinary trend there has been a conspicuous lack in directly investigating the role played by the power structures of patriarchy as active elements in the process of environmental degradation (Salleh, 2017). Some feminist approaches to environmentalism (mostly feminist environmentalism and ecofeminism) have offered useful insights, but mainstream climate literature has frequently relegated gender to a subordinate status (Resurrección, 2013). Discriminatory systems like patriarchy are often undermined to be the main engines of non-sustainability and disproportionate vulnerability to the effects of climate change (Whyte, 2014). The studies that are currently available are largely focused on mitigation and adaptation measures without making reference to systemic inequalities that are reproduced through recourses of male-dominated governance and capitalism development patterns and their contributions to ecological degradation (Bossert et al., 2024).

This gap necessitates a critical examination of how patriarchy functions not only as a social and cultural force but also as an environmental one structuring access to resources, shaping environmental policies, and influencing who gets to participate in climate decision-making.

The present study addresses this overlooked dimension by investigating how patriarchal power structures contribute to climate change and environmental degradation. Drawing from Green Political Theory and ecofeminist perspectives, the research aims to analyse how systems of male dominance influence both the environmental crisis and the unequal distribution of its burdens (Denning, 2019). The core research question guiding this inquiry is: *Do power structures particularly patriarchy create global environmental crises?* Sub-questions explore the connections between patriarchy, social inequality, and environmental decision-making (Ekowati et al., 2023).

This study adopts a qualitative case study design and utilizes thematic analysis of expert interviews from academic and environmental professionals in Pakistan to uncover how patriarchal ideologies shape ecological realities. By centring voices often excluded from environmental governance, the research contributes a gender-aware critique of dominant climate discourse.



The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on climate change, inequality, and patriarchy. Section 3 outlines the theoretical framework, focusing on Green Political Theory and ecofeminist thought. Section 4 describes the research design, sampling strategy, and data analysis approach. Section 5 presents the major themes derived from the data, while Section 6 discusses the findings considering existing theories. Finally, Sections 7 and 8 offer the conclusion and practical recommendations for gender-inclusive climate action.

Literature Review

Human-Induced Climate Change: Scientific Consensus

There is overwhelming agreement among scientists that climate change is real, accelerating, and largely driven by human activity (Cook et al., 2013; Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (Ipcc), 2023). Human actions particularly the combustion of fossil fuels, deforestation, industrial waste, and large-scale agriculture have disrupted the earth's natural greenhouse gas balance, leading to rising global temperatures, melting ice caps, ocean acidification, and extreme weather patterns (UNEP, 2022). The average global temperature has increased by over 1.1°C since the pre-industrial era, with each of the last four decades being successively warmer (Masson-Delmotte & Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023).

Empirical data from carbon isotope studies confirms the anthropogenic origin of rising CO₂ levels in the atmosphere, pointing specifically to fossil fuel use as the primary culprit (Di Martino et al., 2024). These environmental changes affect food security, biodiversity, human health, and water access, posing a growing threat to global livelihoods particularly in developing countries like Pakistan (Abbas et al., 2025).

Climate Change and Structural Inequality

Climate change does not affect all people equally. Structural inequalities determine which communities are most vulnerable and least equipped to respond to environmental disruptions (Malik et al., 2012; Ngcamu, 2023). (Zahnow et al., 2025) argue that social systems marked by class, race, and gender disparities disproportionately expose marginalized groups to environmental harm while excluding them from decision-making processes.

Poor and marginalized populations such as those in the Global South, Indigenous communities, and women contribute least to climate change but face the most severe consequences (Brown et al., 2024). Their limited access to political power, economic resources, healthcare, and environmental protections makes adaptation harder and suffering more acute. For instance, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, a significantly higher number of women perished compared to men due to pre-existing gender roles that restricted their mobility and survival training (Oxfam International).

Gender and Climate Change: The Overlooked Link

Although a growing body of literature now examines gender and climate change, much of the mainstream environmental policy discourse remains gender-blind (Alston, 2014). Feminist scholars and ecofeminists have long emphasized that environmental degradation and gender inequality are deeply intertwined (Chinsya, 2024).

Ecofeminism, as articulated by theorists such as (Batool, 2023), posits that the same patriarchal systems that dominate women also exploit nature. This dual domination arises from capitalist, patriarchal logics that prioritize control, extraction, and commodification over sustainability, nurturing, and cooperation (Calidori et al., 2024). As women are



disproportionately responsible for tasks such as food production, water collection, and caregiving, they are also more vulnerable to the climate-related degradation of these resources (Carr et al., 2024).

Recent research shows that female-headed households are more likely to reside in environmentally degraded areas and experience higher levels of energy poverty, food insecurity, and health risks due to environmental hazards (Lesala et al., 2024). Nevertheless, climate mitigation strategies often fail to account for these gender-specific impacts, leading to policies that reinforce rather than challenge structural inequities (Rainard et al., 2023).

Power Structures, Hierarchy, and Environmental Governance

The climate crisis is fundamentally political. Scholars of Green Political Theory argue that power structures particularly those embedded in capitalist, statist, and patriarchal institutions systematically fuel environmental degradation (Barry, 2012; Dobson & Eckersley, 2006). These structures prioritize economic growth and geopolitical dominance over ecological sustainability.

Hierarchy, as a social mechanism of dominance and obedience, plays a key role in shaping environmental policies and practices (Hornung, 2022). When power is concentrated in the hands of elite actors often male, affluent, and politically connected it leads to decisions that prioritize short-term profit over long-term ecological balance (Koch et al., 2024). Industrial capitalism, for instance, encourages the excessive consumption of resources, incentivizes carbon-intensive industries, and resists regulations that limit environmental harm (Green & Healy, 2022).

In most nation-states, particularly in developing regions, male dominance within political, bureaucratic, and corporate spheres reinforces the status quo of unsustainable development. As (Das, 2023) argues, mainstream environmentalism fails to address the root cause of ecological harm because it works within the very structures such as centralized governance and market capitalism that perpetuate it.

Patriarchy as an Environmental Actor

Patriarchy, often viewed solely as a social or cultural force, also functions as an environmental actor. It affects how resources are used, who makes decisions, and whose knowledge is valued (Salleh, 2017). The male-dominated institutions of power and policy frequently overlook or minimize the contributions and concerns of women, particularly in environmental planning and disaster response (Cocina-Díaz et al., 2025).

This exclusion has material consequences. Women's knowledge of sustainable agriculture, community-based water management, and resilience strategies is often ignored in formal governance systems. Moreover, climate funding, resource allocation, and institutional support rarely reach grassroots women's organizations, despite their frontline roles in environmental management (Jannat & Kusakabe, 2024).

Patriarchal norms also influence daily consumption and waste behaviours. Studies have shown that men typically consume more fossil-fuel-intensive goods (e.g., cars, meat, air travel), while women are more likely to use public transport and adopt energy-saving practices (Hamilton & Jenkins, 2000). However, environmental policies tend to target household-level change without acknowledging gendered patterns of behaviour, power, and responsibility.



Environmental Justice and Procedural Equity

Environmental justice is not only about equitable outcomes but also about equitable processes. Procedural justice refers to the right of all people regardless of gender, class, or ethnicity to participate meaningfully in environmental decision-making (Schlosberg, 2004). However, current governance frameworks often limit participation to elite actors, leaving marginalized communities with little influence over policies that directly affect them.

Women, particularly in the Global South, are rarely included in national climate delegations, policy design committees, or disaster management authorities (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). As a result, climate strategies frequently ignore gender-specific risks and exclude localized, sustainable practices rooted in lived experiences. This lack of inclusion weakens policy effectiveness and perpetuates environmental injustice (Terry, 2009).

Even well-intended climate interventions can exacerbate existing disparities if they are not designed inclusively. For example, carbon pricing schemes or land-use regulations may disproportionately impact low-income women, farmers, and Indigenous peoples if their social and economic positions are not taken into account during policy formulation (Ribot, 2014).

The Need for Intersectional Environmentalism

The new theory demands an interjective ideology in terms of addressing environmental problems-one which reflects upon interjective systems of oppression like patriarchy, capitalism, racism and colonialism (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014; Whyte, 2018). The intersectional environmentalism opposes blanket solutions and requires policies that consider the social realities. It also underlines the necessity of local and Indigenous and feminist knowledges contributing to the worldwide climate governance (Temper & Del Bene, 2016).

This will especially be useful in Pakistan and other developing nations where environmental degradation is further aggravated by poverty, gender inequality and lack of instability of institutions. Other models of ecological stewardship have been inspired by grassroots movements organised by women, youth and Indigenous peoples and while they have been demonstrated, they are under-supported and under-researched.

Theoretical Framework

In this research, the interdisciplinary theoretical framework is adopted as the combination of Green Political Theory and Ecofeminist Thought are used to examine the role of patriarchal power structure to climate change and environmental degradation. These theoretical frameworks introduce vital concepts with which the connection between environmental destruction and social hierarchies, particularly those of gender, can be approached in a strictly analytical manner.

Green Political Theory

The Birth of Green Political Theory The development of the Green Political Theory can be viewed as a reaction to perceived failures of major political ideologies: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism to intervene in environmental crises (Dobson, 2007). It critiques anthropocentric theories of development and governance and states that ecological sustainability should be the norm in the political organization and policymaking (Wall, 1999). It is based on ecological ethics and argues that, in order to achieve any difference, systemic changes are needed instead of small reforms.



The environmental crisis is not considered as an isolated phenomenon in green theory but is seen as a result of the power structures inherent in contemporary society and the primary focus of the green theory is placed on the structures of capitalism, statism and patriarchy (Löfbrand et al., 2009). It can ask questions about the way these institutions advance near-term gain, resource exploitation, and technological supremacy, which tend to ignore long-term ecological than may be (Laruffa, 2025). In such a view, climate crisis itself is the creation of political, economic structures that think short-term, following growth in preference to sustainability.

Specific of interest is the notion of eco-centrism, within the normative bend of green theory, which opposes the hierarchical divide between humans and nature (Milstein et al., 2023). It assumes that living things, ecosystems, and any natural processes possess inherent value, and this value does not depend on their usefulness to human beings (Kopnina et al., 2017). This is a marked opposite of mainstream paradigms which see nature as a resource to be owned, controlled and exploited, a mentality that is fully enshrined in both capitalistic and patriarchal thought (Okereke, 2008).

Green political theorists also emphasize the structural power of capital in the volume of state actions and the condition of the environment. It is also viewed that the state is not a neutral operator, but a factor that fosters capital accumulation and puts more initiative on industrial and economic growth rather than on ecology (Battistoni, 2023). The legislative ability of the state to preserve its economic growth is linked with the legitimacy of the state whose excess nature tends to contradict the preservation of the environment (Paterson, 2010).

This framework is useful to elaborate climate change into more than an environmental or scientific challenge; it is a political issue that is based on institutionalized power imbalance.

Ecofeminist Thought

Ecofeminism provides an additional and gendered approach to the theory of Green Politics noting a critical inspection of how the structures of oppression, especially patriarchy oppress women as well as the environment at the same time (Parveen et al., 2024). It questions the very long-lived dualistic reasoning linking men with rationality, manners and order and women with nature, powerlessness and affection. Such dichotomy, the ecofeminist thinking of scholars argue, it is not just a metaphor but also the ideology behind oppression of women and plundering of the natural world (Siegel, 2024).

Ecofeminist theory maintains that patriarchy is not a coincidental companion to environmental degradation it is a principal driver of it (Gaard, 2015; Salleh, 2017). This influence manifests in several interrelated ways. First, women are frequently excluded from formal environmental decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; UNEP, 2022). Their exclusion results in environmental policies that often fail to reflect the needs, knowledge, and experiences of half the population, particularly those most impacted by ecological disruption. Second, ecofeminists argue that feminine-coded knowledge systems such as Indigenous ecological practices, community-based sustainability models, and caregiving approaches to resource use are routinely devalued or rendered invisible within technocratic, male-dominated environmental discourse (TallBear, 2019). Third, both women and nature are subjected to commodification under extractive capitalist logics, which view them as passive resources to be controlled, exploited, and profited from (Salleh, 2017). This logic is reflected in



development models that prioritize industrial expansion and consumerism while undermining ecological balance and social equity.

Ecofeminism, therefore, not only critiques the intertwined structures of patriarchy and environmental harm but also proposes alternative models of human–nature relations based on care, cooperation, sustainability, and interdependence (Gaard, 2015; Salleh, 2017). These models reject domination in favour of relational ethics, arguing for systemic change that links gender justice with environmental sustainability.

In the past gender aspects were not considered by environmental movements just as environmental concerns lacked attention in some feminist movements. Ecofeminism closes this loophole by claiming that dealing with either field means dealing with these two sides at the same time (UNEP, 2022).

Ecofeminism embraces the demand to abolish the oppressive system because the movement connects the struggle toward gender justice, environmental justice, anti racism, and anti-capitalism (Shiva, 1988). It demands a fundamental redesigning of development, achievement and worthiness, as far as rivalry and taking advantage are concerned to teamwork, consideration and reliance on one another (Mellor, 2000; Shiva, 1988). The ethics of ecofeminism focus on sustainability, reciprocity and relationality in contrast to the ethic of domination which is patriarchal (Cuomo, 2002; Gaard, 2015).

Moreover, ecofeminism brings the idea of intersectional environmentalism, as the effects of the environmental disaster are not evenly spread. The risk level and environmental unprotection is more disproportionately high in women of colour, Native people, and poor women compared with other segments of society, and thus their absence in the governance process is a significant problem of justice (TallBear, 2019; UNEP, 2022).

Synthesizing Green Theory and Ecofeminism

Both Green Political Theory and Ecofeminism do not hold the view that the ecological crises can be addressed in the framework of the existing political and economic systems. They promote structural change in which sustainability and justice are not supplementary, they are the core objectives (Dobson, 2007; Mellor, 2000). Whereas green theory is often critical of economic and state-centred theories of development, ecofeminism brings gendered and intersectional dimension to the question, which explains how patriarchy in particular influences environmental outcomes (Gaard, 2015; MacGregor, 2010).

These theories are leveraged to position patriarchy as more than a social ideology in this study, and as an institutional force that influences policy formulation, the production of knowledge as well as the allocation of environmental abuse. It holds that male-dominated institutions: governments, corporations and scientific institutions favour maintaining systems of control which reflect the exploitation of nature (MacGregor, 2010).

This study incorporates these frameworks, thereby making patriarchal power systems the main culprit of the climate crisis, instead of minor cultural aspects. This method will permit more emphatic criticism of climate injustice and will boost the design of the inclusive, gender-sensitive climate frameworks.

Methodology

Design of Research

The qualitative case study design has been taken in this study, as it is appropriate in examining an elaborate social phenomenon like the relationship between power-wielding systems of patriarchy and environmental degradation. A case study approach allows the researcher to analyse a practical problem in its contextual parameters and provide a



detailed and sophisticated insight into the causation of the relationship between patriarchy and climate change (Hollweck, 2015). The qualitative type of the research matches the intention of the research to investigate subjective experiences, perceptions, and institutional dynamics; instead of generalizing the results in a statistical manner.

This is an explorative and a descriptive inquiry. It is also exploratory because it studies something under-theorized and under-researched, namely, how patriarchal power systems contribute to environmental degradation (Sengar & Shah, 2024). It is descriptive in that it tries to do an exploration to capture and examine the lives and the views of professionals active in the process of environmental work in Pakistan.

Research Paradigm and Approach

The critical-interpretivist paradigm informs the study, along with the acknowledge that social reality is constructed in relationship to historical, cultural, and political contexts. The paradigm is especially applicable in viewing power structures and hierarchies of society. It enables the researcher to explore how the powerful ideologies, like patriarchy, influence individuals and institutional practice of climate governance.

An inductive methodological approach is utilized when investigating the impressions and experience of a given participant in the interpretation of the role of patriarchal institutions in the environmental consequences. This method assists in revealing the hidden meanings and issues in the narratives of the participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Population and Sampling method and Individuals

Within the framework of the current study, the purposive sampling approach was used and limited to a group of individuals with a relevant background knowledge and practical experience in the domains of environmental governance, climatic research, or environmental policy handling on a national level. The purposive sampling technique is known to be among the essential aspects of investigative inquiry in qualitative studies because of its capacity to reveal a rich description of information about a stated phenomenon within the context of those who possess special knowledge of the phenomenon in question (Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria used to select the participants were actively engaged in environmental policy, research or advocacy, presented with a range of perspectives like the gender factor, being ready to engage in free meaningful debate of climate change and sociopolitical power structures.

Over the course of the project, a pool of contact individuals (10 to 15) has been narrowed to six participants who agreed to participate in the research. Different university professors, environmental researchers as well as mid- to senior-level officials of the environmental protection departments have been covered in the sample. By ensnaring the representatives of both academic and governmental institutions, the research ensured the access to a variety of opinions shaped by the experience in policy making and the theoretical background. This was how the sample was constituted so as to gain a more in-depth comprehension of the intersection of patriarchal structures and climate governance in Pakistan in a context where gender roles and the constitution of state institutions are centrally intertwined (Crenshaw, 1991).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Education Department	/ Area Living	of Work Profession	Status	/
Muhammad Uzair	36	Ph.D.	Gender	Urban	Research	



Pseudonym	Age	Education Department	/ Area Living	of Work Profession	Status	/
		Studies		Assistant, Environment Protection Dept.		
Dr. M. Waqar	35	Ph.D. Environmental Science	Urban	Professor, Punjab University		
Dr. Rizwan Aziz	35	Ph.D. Civil Engineering	Rural	Assistant Professor, Punjab University		
Dr. Fareeha	40	Ph.D. Chemistry	Urban	Assistant Director, Environment Protection Dept.		
Dr. M. Arshad	40	Ph.D. Chemistry	Urban	Deputy Director, Environment Protection Dept.		
Ramna Mumtaz	30	Student (Postgraduate)	Rural	Research Assistant, Environment Protection Dept.		

Data Collection

The study employed semi-structured and in-depth interviews to collect empirical data due to their suitability in exploratory studies that aim at figuring out a complex social reality basing on the narratives of the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews offer a compromise between guided questions and open interviewing style as the researcher may submit more questions to the most discovered themes and meanwhile use a consistent approach between interviews. This format allowed individuals to put it in their own words, regarding their views on patriarchy, power structure, climate policy and gendered exclusion.

All interviews took between 45-60 minutes, and they were in agreeable and safe areas, for easy accessibility as well as confidentiality. The participants deemed consent before the interviews and gave permission to audio recording all the conversations. Audio recordings later resulted in verbatim transcriptions, which maintained the authenticity and integrity of responses of the participants. Besides audio recordings, the researcher also kept field notes to document the non-verbal information, contextual information, and other initial thoughts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The interview protocol was to cover some thematic areas. Questions encouraged the participants to submit their interpretation of power arrangement and patriarchy, consider how the patriarchal standards can affect the amendment of the environmental policies, and examine the visibility and activity of women and other discriminated groups in the management of the environment. Also, the participants were encouraged to come up with feasible ideas on how to increase inclusivity and equity in the design of climate policy. These zones were in conjunction with the core research question of the study and contributed towards the conceptual consistency during the data collection process.



Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data by adhering the six-phase model published by Braun & Clarke (2006). This approach was chosen because of theoretical flexibility and its ability to define, analyse and interpret patterns of meanings in qualitative data. This initial phase of analysis entailed becoming acquainted with data by means of deep reading transcripts and field notes. Then, the researcher created initial codes by determining words or phrases that were repeated, ideas, or feelings between interviews. The coded categories were later grouped into emerging themes, and such themes were read and reread in the process of adjusting and refining until they were internally diverse and conceptually clear.

After agreement there was the definition and naming of each of the themes to get a clear message as well as its importance as per the research questions. The last stage was drawing a consistent narrative that would interlock the themes with the theoretical framework and others on ecofeminism, climate justice, and political ecology. This step-by-step proceeding allowed the interpretation to be transparent, replicable and deep.

To organize and analyse the huge amount of qualitative data, the research employed NVivo qualitative analysis software. NVivo assisted in the effective coding and retrieval of information, the visualization of data, to enable the researcher to adopt a relationship between codes, observe and determine any co-occurring patterns and the development of themes across periods (Zamawe, 2015). Thematic analysis was in general an effective but loose method of understanding the experience of the participants with regard to the main aim of the study, that was to comprehend how patriarchal systems influence environmental degradation and climate governance.

Ethical Considerations

This study acquired ethical standards of qualitative research. All participants gave their informed consent that was followed by explaining about the reason of the study and what exactly it included and was voluntary. The participants were guaranteed of confidentiality and their right to leave any time without reprimand. Anonymisation of data was done and data stored in a place where privacy was given (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023).

Ethical approval was taken in the Department of Gender Studies, University of the Punjab before collecting data. Position of the researcher as a gender studies scholar was revealed and a reflexive stance was also taken all through the process to reduce bias.

Study Limitations

As much as this research generated very meaningful insights, there are a number of limitations that should be noted. To begin with, the sample size was quite small as there were limited availability and access of the participants in the targeted population. Even though the quality data allowed provisions of depth and context-specific knowledge, results cannot be generalized to a broader population. Second, due to the sensitivity of the subject matter (especially the debate on power and patriarchy at work and within organizations), some participants might have observed self restraint or might have held back their opinions, which could have inhibited the disclosure to a certain extent. Finally, the research was both geographically and contextually constrained in Pakistan which confines the findings to be used in other countries or regions where the constitution of patriarchy and environmental governing can be different. Nevertheless, these restrictions do not compromise the worth of the study. Rather, they emphasize how much additional research are required in different settings and among various populations. Finally, the



given research achieves a significant contribution to the scientific environment under the conditions of Global South country to how deeply established power structure affects the discourse of environment-related matters and decision-making practices.

Discussion

This paper proceeded to look at how the existence of patriarchal power structures influences climate change and environmental degradation. The results were as follows: the patriarchal structures in terms of male-centred decision-making, institutional exodus, and cultural practices that are so prevalent in most societies, have a direct impact on the outcomes of the environmental policies and contribute to ecological crises (MacGregor, 2010). According to interviews, the area of climate governance in Pakistan is highly dominated by masculine power and, therefore, excludes other voices especially that of women.

The participants confirmed that the patriarchal influence determines resource distribution, voices in the environmental discussions and those environments whose understanding will be listened to in developing environmental solutions. Although some respondents (minority) saw climate governance as gender-free, the rest have noticed the structural difference that is propagated in environmental matters of decision-making. This proves the main argument that climate change should be negotiated as not only ecological phenomenon but also a social and political crisis being rooted in the patriarchal power (Djouidi et al., 2016).

The study supports and expounds the claims put across in both Green Political Theory and Ecofeminist Thought. The green theory positions environmental degradation as a political framework that is embedded in a hierarchy system, namely the state, capitalist, and patriarchal in nature that entail prioritizing profit and domination over sustainability (Barry, 2012; Salleh, 2017). The actions of participants such as focus on male-dominated policy arenas, and critique of exclusive governance have been in line with this theoretical stand. The belief that powerful people, who are mostly men, will create environmental legislation in a way that favours them goes along with the observation that environmental degradation is the product of established systems of inequity.

More than that, ecofeminism could help to comprehend gendered environmental degradation. Observations by the participants on how women are mostly left out of making policymakers though they are better placed in relation to environmental management in real life are direct indications of claims by ecofeminists (Gaard, 2015). Patriarchy and capitalism, according to the opinions of such thinkers as Shiva (1988), complement each other in order to exploit both nature and women. This was present in how the participants shared the experience of the undervaluation of female voices, the lack of equivalent responsibilities during climate crises (e.g., the collection of water, displacements) and how inclusive policies use female lived experiences as the central ones.

Interestingly, not all participants viewed patriarchy as relevant. One respondent rejected its existence within her own institutional context. This reflects the contingent nature of patriarchal experience, suggesting that while systems of male dominance are widespread, their visibility and impact vary depending on context, power position, and personal ideology. This finding echo intersectional literature (Crenshaw, 1991), which warns against homogenizing women's experiences without considering race, class, or institutional roles.



Another key insight is the emphasis on collective responsibility, which shifts the focus from gender-blaming to cooperation. While patriarchy was identified as a structural driver of exclusion, respondents across gender agreed that environmental protection should involve everyone. However, this egalitarian view must be balanced with the understanding that equity does not imply equality of condition those disproportionately affected by climate change, including women, require differentiated policies to address systemic disadvantage (Rao et al., 2019).

The implications of these findings are both profound and far-reaching. First, there is a pressing need to transition from hierarchical models of policymaking to more inclusive governance frameworks that actively incorporate women's voices at all levels of environmental decision-making. The exclusion of half the population from climate dialogues not only undermines democratic legitimacy but also weakens the effectiveness of policies meant to serve diverse communities. Second, the study affirms that climate justice is inherently linked to gender justice not only in terms of equitable outcomes, but also in the procedural fairness of planning, governance, and implementation. Addressing the climate crisis requires dismantling institutional and cultural barriers that prevent women and marginalized groups from fully participating in environmental governance. Finally, the research underscores the need to pluralize knowledge systems by recognizing and integrating local, Indigenous, and gendered ways of knowing alongside dominant technical and economic paradigms. Such epistemological inclusivity is essential for developing contextually relevant, socially just, and ecologically sound climate responses.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that current environmental discourse in Pakistan remains constrained by patriarchal norms, despite international frameworks such as the UNFCCC urging inclusive governance. Bridging the gap between policy rhetoric and practice remains an urgent challenge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While this research offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The sample size was small (six participants), limiting generalizability. The sensitivity of the topic may have inhibited some participants from sharing openly about institutional gender dynamics. Additionally, the scope was limited to Pakistan, a Global South context, which may differ from experiences in other regions. Nonetheless, the findings are indicative of broader patterns observed in feminist environmental research and point to practical directions.

Conclusion

The work investigated the connection between patriarchal power hierarchies and the degradation of the environment through a qualitative study to explore the role that gendered systems of power have on climate policymaking, resource accessibility and environmental decision-making. The results ensured that patriarchy as a form of control over institutional realms, policy discourse, and social norms, greatly impacts the course outcome relating to environmental governance in Pakistan.

The study proved that not only patriarchal structures exclude the contribution of women to environmental decision-making but also support the unsustainable patterns of development that consider industrial growth and economic dominance more essential than the health of nature. Using Green Political Theory and Ecofeminist Thought, the paper placed the environmental degradation into a general critique of power, which connects capitalist, statist and patriarchal organizations as mutual drivers of the climate crisis.



By performing thematic analysis on expert interviews, six significant themes came out, which were the nature of power structure, how these structures determine policies and reinforce social imbalances and the overall responsibility that will enable everybody to manage the environment effectively. Although some members of this gathering argued with the importance of patriarchy, most members spoke about the necessary conclusions of an inclusive and fair governance of climate.

The study contributes three important things:

1. It has managed to replace climate change as a social justice concern which cannot be delinked with gender and power.
2. It questions the neutrality of the current approaches to environmental governance by exposing their patriarchal backbones.
3. It advocates a radical, not tokenistic, female and anti-excluded inclusion in environmental policy.

Finally, this paper confirms that social equity cannot be taken out of ecological sustainability. To work towards solving the climate crisis, it is necessary to break down the hierarchical order of things that concentrate power and preserve unequal relationships. The liveable and just future calls not just to reduce the emissions but to reimagine the systems (political, cultural, and social) that led to the crisis in the first place.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, several actionable recommendations are proposed to promote environmental justice through more equitable and inclusive governance practices. First, it is essential to promote gender-inclusive climate policymaking by ensuring that women are meaningfully represented in environmental decision-making bodies at both national and local levels. This inclusion should not be symbolic and also must translate into real influence in matter of policies, programs, and funding priorities.

Second, grass-roots knowledge, especially the women in the rural and Indigenous communities should be identified and included in the national adaptation and mitigation plans. Such communities have important practical knowledge referring to local ecosystems, sustainable resource methods, and practices of building resilience, which the top-down, technocratic models frequently do not have taken into account.

Third, it is time to reform curricula in environmental education and professional training to include critical reflection into the processes of gender and power relations. Establishing a sense of the backlash effects of patriarchal systems across the spectrum of ecological destruction and institutional action-taking is a critical step in instilling the next generation of inclusive climate management, policymakers, and investigative thinkers.

Lastly, the environmental institutions also need to present orderly accountability mechanism to observe and overcome the policies or programs that reinstate gender- or class-inclusive marginalization. This will involve establishing quantitative equity goals, undertaking periodic audits and platforms where the marginalized groups can raise issues and shape change.

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