

**CLIMATE DISASTERS, GOVERNANCE
FAILURE, AND THE RISK OF VIOLENT
EXTREMISM: A STUDY OF
MUZAFFARGARH DISTRICT POST 2022
FLOODS**



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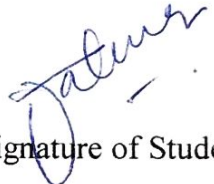
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I, **Fatima Tu Zahra**, hereby state that my MPhil thesis titled **Climate Disasters, Governance Failure, and the Risk of Violent Extremism: A Study of Muzaffargarh District Post 2022 Floods** is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for taking any degree from Pakistan Institute of Development Economics or anywhere else in the country/world. At any time if my statement is found to be incorrect even after my Graduation the university has the right to withdraw my MPhil degree.

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ABSTRACT

Climate disasters have led to large scale destruction, disruption, and mass displacements in Pakistan. These disasters have emerged as a threat to the socioeconomic stability of the displaced persons, exploiting their vulnerabilities thereby providing fertile ground to the agencies that promote violent extremism. This study aims to explore the link between climate disasters, displacement, governance failure and the increasing risk of violent extremism. The study primarily focuses on the Muzaffargarh district, following the 2022 floods. Qualitative explanatory design has been utilized to understand the effects and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Data collection was carried out using qualitative key informant interviews and the focus group discussions. Findings of the research reveal that the vulnerability to joining violent extremist groups is significantly increased, when the socioeconomic vulnerabilities rise and trust in the government to provide support in the event of a disaster reduce among the displaced persons. The study underscores the critical need to integrate disaster recovery efforts with livelihood restoration, loans, subsidies and insurance for farmers, psychological support, and trust building in the government, which can be achieved by providing necessary aid and support to the affected, thereby preventing exploitation and the risk of recruitment by extremist organizations.

Keywords: Climate-induced disasters, displacement, climate-induced migration, socio-economic vulnerabilities, violent extremism, Exploitation, Governance failure.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Climate change is a global phenomenon, with far-reaching impacts extending beyond environmental degradation. Weather events, such as floods, droughts, and wildfires, have had adverse effects on the entire world, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America (Parmesan et al., 2023). The occurrence of natural disasters has increased sharply from previous years. For instance, the number of earthquakes, storms, and wildfires in 2023 and 2024 was significantly higher than the average recorded from 2003 to 2022 (CRED, 2024). Hence, climate change is the most pressing issue the world is facing today, not only responsible for the deterioration of the environment and natural resource depletion, but also making the communities living at these critical sites prone to the indirect dangers of climate change in the form of displacement, conflict, and extremism (Eboreime et al., 2025). The World Meteorological Organization (2025) has declared 2024 as the warmest year, while also confirming that 2015 to 2024 were the warmest 10 years, leading to significant climatic effects, including glacier melting, rise in sea level, and weather events that have impacted the economies across the globe (Nullis, 2025).

Due to extreme weather events, communities are forced to migrate in the event of disaster, primarily floods, storms, and wildfires, and the number of these displacements has been significantly increasing during the last few years. Pakistan is ranked the 5th most climate-vulnerable nation in the world by the Global Climate Risk Index, making it highly susceptible to severe weather conditions that can lead to disasters such as floods, heatwaves, droughts, extreme hot and cold waves, and wildfires. These disasters could exacerbate socioeconomic vulnerabilities, potentially resulting in internal displacement. . Moreover, for a developing country like Pakistan, with limited infrastructure available to cope with the disaster, the question is not the occurrence, but how these recurring climate shocks interact with governance failure and weak institutional capacity for service delivery, as well as the existing multidimensional inequalities that can exacerbate vulnerabilities

Climate change is not only responsible for loss of life and intensifying poverty, but also brings loss to the global economy. During 1999 to 2018, around 495,000 lost their lives with over USD\$3.5

trillion losses to the economy owing to 12,000 extreme weather events (Eckstein et al., 2019). Research shows that climate change in the Global South have adversely affected the population, especially the vulnerable segments like women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Preexisting socioeconomic and political inequalities exacerbate these vulnerabilities. The lack of support from institutions to adapt or mitigate adverse effects of disaster that further worsens the condition (Ngcamu, 2023). This multidimensional effect of climate change not only involves economic costs but also human costs due to climate hazards. The absence of effective state machinery, institutional support, and safety nets has consequences during and post disaster period making the governance dimension inseparable from the climate change, displacement and vulnerability debate. These inequalities and governance gaps have lead to climate-security problem leading to humanitarian crisis globally.

Consequently, Climate disasters have resulted in humanitarian emergencies around the world, leading to mass migration and displacement. The impact has been particularly severe in the global south region due to the increased intensity of these events. The research primarily highlights three stressors, including water stress, drought, high temperature, floods, and increasing sea level, which can lead to internal and external migration by disrupting the livelihood of the communities, creating significant implications and concern for security, economic development, and social justice (Almulhim et al., 2024). Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre highlighted the urgency of the matter, revealing that the number of internally displaced persons has been increasing significantly since 2008, with 318 million persons displaced owing to climate-induced disasters during 2008-2021 (IDMC, 2024). The above-stated facts not only convey the scale of climate-induced displacement but also highlight a critical gap in the lack of adaptive capacity among communities and how easily their weaknesses are exploited by actors seeking to destabilize society

For this research, climate-induced displacement refers to the forced, either temporary or permanent, migration of individuals or households due to climate disaster that not only undermines their living conditions but also alters economic conditions and livelihood opportunities (Choudhury & Shahi 2024). While Violent extremism is defined as the strategic exploitation and manipulation of displaced populations by the hands of extremist groups, using monetary aid or non monetary aid as a strategic exploitation tool (Bak et al., 2019; Striegher, 2015). This relationship between climate-induced migration and violent extremism has been studied in the conflict-prone regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and some Middle Eastern countries; however, limited exploration has been done in Pakistan's context.

Data from credible sources revealed that climate-induced disasters have been responsible for displacing millions of Pakistanis. According to the ‘Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre’, 24.2 million individuals have been displaced as a result of climate disasters since 2008. Likewise, Pakistan Economic Survey (2023), section “Floods 2022 Impact Assessment Report”, reported that the devastating floods of 2022 alone affected 33 million individuals while displacing 8.2 million individuals, particularly in southern Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan. The estimated losses resulting from the 2022 floods provided by the report are projected to be around \$14.9 billion US dollars and a 15.2 billion dollar GDP loss (Government of Pakistan, 2023). Furthermore, based on the World Bank’s projections, climate-induced disasters, if left unchecked, can lead to an economic slowdown and a reduction in the GDP of Pakistan by 18 to 20 percent by 2050 (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, another report informed that around 1.2 million climate-induced migrants were still displaced at the end of 2023 (GRID, 2024) and were living in a perilous state, multiplying their socioeconomic vulnerabilities and exacerbating the risk of violent extremism and extremist recruitment. The situation is worsened by the lack of support from the government institutions, breeding an atmosphere for displaced individuals, especially the unemployed youth, men, and other marginalized groups, who are more susceptible to extremist recruitment and are an easy target for extremist groups for exploitation and recruitment (Lazarus, 2023). This shows that the disasters in Pakistan are not only natural events but catalysts that interact with the economic vulnerabilities and weak governance, which are the conditions that the extremist groups exploit for their agendas.

The disasters may also have an increased effect on criminal activity in the areas, not generalizing that all crimes are committed by the disaster-affected. However, the number of crimes or total crime during the flood year is seen to increase, which later decreases in the following year. For instance, a study examining criminal activity, primarily looting, during the Tsunami and the Bushfire revealed a significant increase in criminal activity after the disaster (Gaherity & Birch, 2022). Another study reinforced that the natural disasters, such as tsunamis, brought out the best and the worst in people. This shows that, after the tsunami, looters, including the victims of the tsunami, looted wherever they got the opportunity (Teh, 2008). The above discussion shows how the climate induced displacement not only worsens the socioeconomic condition of the communities but also fosters conditions that can lead to criminal and deviant behaviour, making them vulnerable to extremist recruitment. The literature suggests that communities face dual vulnerability during and post-disaster periods. The immediate pressure for financial stability can

lead to deviant behavior, along with the long-term decline in socioeconomic conditions that heightens susceptibility to extremist organizations.

Extremism is considered an ideological concept only, while violent extremism includes the use or support of violence and may be caused by individual, social or governance level. Allan et al. (2015) and Kruglanski (2018) argue that, at the individual or social/group level, ideological and psychological factors may act as pull factors; however, negligence by institutions and a governance deficit serve as powerful push factors that push individuals toward violent extremist influence and the adoption of violent extremist ideology. In the governance context, in fragile governance, the inability of the state to provide basic services, security, and protection adds to existing vulnerabilities. It creates an institutional vacuum, easily exploited by non-state actors and extremist organisations to advance their agendas (UNDP, 2016). The literary evidence shows that climate change exacerbates the preexisting vulnerabilities, when coupled with governance failure, a lack of trust in government, and psychological stress from the losses they suffered, may make them vulnerable to extremist organizations that may extend a helping hand to them in times of need. However, the explicit link between climate, displacement, and the governance failure remains underexplored in Pakistan. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the the effects of climate disasters, climate-induced migration and governance failure that may fuel violent extremism in Pakistan.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In Pakistan, due to recurring climate-induced disasters and widespread displacements, the issue of climate-induced migration and its socioeconomic consequences is of paramount importance. These disasters have resulted in forced migrations, leading to both temporary and permanent displacement. The most concerning issue resulting from disasters is the disruption and decreased agricultural productivity of land, loss of income, and increased socioeconomic vulnerabilities, which have forced communities to settle in temporary camps or, in some cases, permanently migrate to urban and suburban areas with limited services and infrastructure for living. These communities already lack access to basic services like clean water, sanitation and healthcare. In an event of disaster, when the government fails to cater to their needs and provide assistance, the feeling of alienation and abandonment in the communities paves the way for them to resort to criminal activity and behaviour for earning a living. Extremist organizations exploit these governance gaps and capitalize on the vulnerabilities of the displaced thus leading to increase in their

influence through spread of ideology and making these vulnerable, marginalized communities more susceptible and easy targets for recruitment (Vitel, 2015).

Pakistan faced one of the most devastating floods in 2022. District Muzaffargarh, among many others, was severely affected by the 2022 floods and experienced large-scale displacement, which deepened the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of the disaster-hit communities. According to statistics from IDMC (2023), around 10,000 people were displaced from Muzaffargarh due to the floods. The pre-existing vulnerabilities when coupled with a weak governance structure and uneven service delivery, create fertile ground for exploitation in the post-disaster period. Therefore, this research is designed to understand how the disaster-induced displacement interacts with the governance failure, exacerbating the socioeconomic vulnerabilities and heightening susceptibility to extremist violence and recruitment. The link between migration and extremism in conflict-prone areas has been well studied; however, the relation between climate-induced migration, governance failure and violent extremism remains comparatively under explored. This study examines the nexus between climate disasters, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, displacement, governance failure and vulnerability to extremist recruitment, thereby bridging a critical knowledge gap in this field of study.

1.3 Research Problem

UN-Habitat ranked Pakistan as the 5th most vulnerable country to climate change. The frequency of disasters has significantly increased over the last decade, manifesting as floods, droughts, and heatwaves, forcing millions of individuals to migrate to safer areas. These displacements have been both temporary and permanent, and have predominantly affected the poor, whose vulnerabilities were exacerbated owing to loss of income, domestic animals, cattle and livestock, crop loss and ultimately resulting in a decline in the productivity of their agricultural land. The displaced individuals often migrate to the suburban areas where they lack access to basic services like sanitation, shelter, and water, creating an environment conducive to exploitation by extremist groups. The research aims to explore how climate-induced migration increases susceptibility to violent extremism by examining the effects of income level, poverty, education, lack of government support, and assistance. It also aims to address how increased trust in the government can reduce violent extremism. The research also aims to give policy recommendations based on the choice of displaced persons that they prefer as a source of support in case of disaster.

1.3.1 Gap Identification

The research area under study is primarily underexplored, especially in the unique socioeconomic context of Pakistan. Limited literature is available on the nexus between climate-induced migration and violent extremism, and the available research has been done in conflict-prone areas of Africa (Bourekba, 2021; Buhaug & Von Uexkull, 2021; Demuynck, 2022; Regan & Young, 2022; Schon & Nemeth, 2022), but minimal research exists in Pakistan. There exists a significant literature and policy gap in the special context of Pakistan that addresses the connection between climate-induced migration and violent extremism. The Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 claims that by the end of 2023, 1.2 million people migrated due to the 2022 floods, remain displaced, and are living in precarious conditions with limited access to basic necessities like inadequate housing and water, exposing them to health risks as well as insecurity. So with the increasing number of disasters and displacements, it is crucial to study the effects in this specific context.

The consequences of climate-induced migration are intensifying, while the void in our policy framework remains unaddressed. Despite the Climate Change Policy (2021), National Disaster and Risk Reduction Policy (2013), addressing the disaster response, mitigation, and adaptation strategies, fail to explicitly recognize the socioeconomic risks of climate disasters and induced displacement. The National Action Plan (NAP) on Counter-Terrorism (2014), and National policy for Prevention of Violent Extremism (2024) also overlooks the link between displacement and extremist recruitment, leaving a major blindspot in Pakistan's climate adaptation and counter-terrorism policies. The research is designed to address this critical knowledge gap by providing evidence and actionable insights on how vulnerabilities created by climate-induced migration can translate into a heightened risk of violent extremism in Pakistan, while also presenting evidence for policymakers for an effective policy response in the future.

1.3.2 Research Questions

1. How does climate-induced migration increase susceptibility to violent extremism?
 - 1-A. How do poverty, education, and income level impact susceptibility to violent extremism?
 - 1-B. How does the lack of government support and assistance increase vulnerability to violent extremism?

- 1-C. How can an increase in trust in government reduce vulnerability to extremism?
2. How do climate displaced people respond to different support options like cash transfer, job programs, rebuilding projects, and education opportunities?

1.3.3 Objective of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objective.

- Understanding the impact of climate-induced displacement on violent extremism among vulnerable communities
- Explore the potential policy adaptation choices the government has to offer and what the displaced communities prefer from the given choices

1.4 Policy Relevance

The research focuses on climate-induced migration, governance failure and violent extremism, which together have a significant impact on the country's peace and security situation. The research contributes to filling the literature gap, particularly in the context of Pakistan, while also offering essential policy insights drawn to inform future research and policy in this arena. It also highlights the need of proper government protocol and support, which could not only help displaced communities to adapt better but also provide a safe and secure environment for them so that any extremist organization cannot influence them. Despite many available policies like the Climate Change Policy (2018, 2021), National Disaster and Risk Reduction Policy, and National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy (2024) while address the disaster response, mitigation, and adaptation strategies, preventions of violent extremism however failed to explicitly recognize the socioeconomic and security risks of climate-induced migration, and clear mechanism for the secure relocation of the communities, leaving a blind spot in Pakistan's climate adaptation and counter-extremism policies, which this study seeks to highlight.

For instance the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) (2021) mentions livelihood diversification and strategies to curb urban-to-rural migration; yet, lacks precise mechanisms and relocation plans for climate-displaced communities. The policy lacks clarity and clear action plan to achieve the goals outlined in the policy document. Likewise, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy

(2013) focuses on institutional structures for preparedness and response, yet implementation remains a dream, with limited social reintegration and livelihood restoration plans. Clear contingency plans for disaster risk reduction and preparedness are also missing. The National Internal Security Policy (2018–2023), though, mentions violent extremism, but synonymously uses the terms extremism and terrorism. National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy (2024) defines violent extremism but does not clearly establish climate stress and displacement as direct and vulnerability factors. The disorganised and fragmented approach in the climate change policies and frameworks has left the climate-struck displaced communities in an institutional vacuum, where inadequate coordination between disaster, displacement, governance and security frameworks increases the vulnerability to violent extremism and recruitment.

Additionally, the research also indicates better resource allocation strategies that prioritize the socioeconomic needs of the displaced individuals, ensuring that their needs are met before they become a potential source of instability and prevent them from becoming a target for extremist groups. The study aims to bridge this gap by providing evidence-based insights for future policies to address the direct and indirect consequences of climate disasters and induced displacement. The results of this research will help policymakers better understand the intricate climate-extremism nexus, thereby helping them develop more effective overarching policies in the future.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Climate Change and Migration

Climate change is the most alarming global issue and the most significant challenge the world is facing today. It is affecting the whole world, affecting all cultures, societies, and geographies. Extreme weather conditions, heatwaves, floods, storms, drought, forest fires, and unpredictable weather conditions are some of the direct effects of climate change (Nashier & Lakra, 2020). While highlighting the impact of disasters and urgency of the matter, Chitengi (2023) argued that disasters are forcing people to migrate from rural to suburban and urban centres, creating significant socioeconomic implications for the entire country. With no support and recognition from the government and international organizations, there is an urgent need to develop a mechanism that not only acknowledges their hardships but also safeguards their rights and ensures the protection and well-being of the climate-displaced persons. In agreement with this, another study done in Bangladesh, while explaining the link between resource scarcity and conflicts indicated climate change as the primary driver of internal and external migration, exacerbating their socioeconomic vulnerabilities straining the resources and increasing competition in the receiving regions that could lead to increased risk of conflict (Sakapaji, 2023).

The long-term effects of climate change on migration in South Asia show that the slow onset of climate disasters, including desertification, rising sea level, air pollution, rainfall pattern, and biodiversity loss are exacerbated by the climate change, leading to forced migration of millions of people within their home countries increasing existing social and economic inequalities and threatening human security (Saha, 2023). These studies demonstrate that migration is not merely a social phenomenon but has far-reaching implications for equity and security; positioning climate change as both a humanitarian and a security concern.

2.2 Migration and Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

Climate-induced disasters often lead to displacement, pushing the victims into a cycle of poverty and marginalization. According to the IDMC report, 24.2 million individuals have been displaced as a result

of climate disasters since 2008 (IDMC, 2024). Furthermore, Pakistan Economic Survey (2022-23) also reported that the devastating floods of 2022 alone affected 33 million individuals while displacing 8.2 million individuals, particularly in southern Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan. Similarly, another report informed that around 1.2 million climate-induced migrants were still displaced in Pakistan at the end of 2023 (IDMC, 2024) and were living in a perilous state, multiplying their socioeconomic vulnerabilities and exacerbating the risk of violent extremism and extremist recruitment. This shows that climate induced disasters not only have devastating effects on the environment but also affect the individual and national income.

A research study exploring the effect of environmental change leading to climate-induced disasters on migration presented a framework for drivers of migration, including economic, political, social, demographic, and environmental factors. Indicating that environmental change can directly or indirectly effect the migration decision. Directly by increased hazardousness of the site that prompt them to migrate and indirectly through economic and political drivers, impacting their livelihood and by increasing conflict over limited resources that pushes them to migrate leading to exacerbating poverty and marginalization in the host communities (Black, et al., 2011). Another study affirms the above finding while also adding that the along with the other push factors of migration like better livelihood, slow and sudden onset of environmental events like droughts and floods respectively, forces people to relocate as it becomes a necessity for survival, even if their adaptive capacity does not allow it, and when coupled with other stressors like poverty and low level of economic development can exacerbate the situation (Warner et al, 2010). This shows that the decision to migrate is not voluntary but rather forced, by the structural inequalities that the communities face after disaster.

According to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022), climate change is a contributing factor to the humanitarian crisis, exacerbating vulnerability through climate disasters and hazards that drive populations to migrate from hazardous or disaster-prone regions. It also reported that the climate-induced flood and drought have led to acute food shortages and malnutrition in the African region, while also indirectly contributing to increasing the violent conflicts in the region, predicting that higher global warming and extreme weather events will increase the vulnerability, which may exacerbate the intrastate violent conflicts in the region (Pörtner et al., 2022). Another study investigating the effect of climate-induced stressors, including floods, droughts, and extreme temperatures, revealed that these phenomena contribute to increasing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. It

indicated that climate-induced stressors exacerbate socioeconomic challenges, including poverty, competition for scarce resources, and gender disparity in host communities, while highlighting the inadequacy of existing policies and the urgent need for a comprehensive policy addressing the nexus between climate-induced disasters and migration (Vighio, 2024).

Climate disasters also have an impact on social structure and mobility. For instance, a study on social mobility of the climate-induced migrants in the coastal regions of Bangladesh revealed that socioeconomic condition of the migrants deteriorating and are facing food insecurity, poor housing, gender discrimination, inequalities in access to property and job and identity crisis that not only created disharmony in the society but have also shifted the social class of the migrants from middle class in rural setting to lower class in the urban centres presenting the downward social mobility trend (Sams, 2019). The issue is of paramount importance as due to recurring floods and disasters, the agricultural productivity of land decreases, pushing the farmers to move to suburban areas, where there is no service provision by the government, deteriorating living conditions with sanitation and water issues giving breeding ground to the diseases, but also to crime and susceptibility to join extremist groups.

The most significant factor contributing to the loss of livelihood is climate-induced disasters, such as floods and droughts, which frequently result in economic losses, including the loss of livestock, businesses (shops, poultry sheds, kiosks, etc.), and jobs due to destruction, thereby contributing to displacement and migration. However, it was also revealed that the permanent migration was most common among the landless residents. At the same time, landowners return to the aftermath of floods, which potentially provides them with an alternative source of livelihood. However, they may also increase their challenges by exacerbating poverty, food insecurity, and social oppression in the host communities (Salik K. et al., 2023). Showing the unequal effect of disaster on the communities, based on different socioeconomic conditions and adaptive capacity of the communities.

2.3 Climate Induced Disasters and Psychological Trauma

Climate change is now being recognized as an existential crisis for humanity. It has profound impacts on humans across all spheres of life, whether economic, social, political, or environmental (Gunasiri et al., 2024). Recently, Climate change have increasingly been associated with psychological trauma and have attained significant attention. When a disaster strikes, it results in the loss of human life, means of livelihood and income, homes and shelter, livestock, and dislocation, but also brings trauma

from the loss. So, the Impacts of climate change extend beyond material loss; the experience of disaster and displacement itself are profound and has indirect yet significant effects on psychological wellbeing of individuals and overall societal stability (Corvalán et al., 2022). Ansari & Kar (2024) also support this claim and indicate that the climate-induced disaster have a significant impact on psychological wellbeing. In the absence of government assistance and support, psychological trauma can lead to deviant behavior and increased susceptibility to violent extremism. This indirect yet multifaceted effect of climate change in the form of deterioration in mental wellness, warrants a comprehensive analysis and research.

The complex relationship between the climate and mental well being highlights how in the absence of governance structures and failure to deliver, the climate stressors can indirectly destabilize the communities, , make the communities fragile and more sensitive and provide the fertile grounds for violent extremist organizations (Riaz et al., 2023). It is imperative to understand these indirect pathways to violent extremism, which are often overlooked and considered unimportant. Multisectoral interventions are essential to address this situation, so that the communities not only receive aid and other services promptly but also get psychosocial support to mitigate the long-term effects of climate change associated with trauma which may later threaten the very fabric of the society (Vergunst et al., 2023).

2.4 Violent Extremism and Its Link to Socioeconomic Conditions

Extremism is a complex concept that describes the beliefs, actions, or ideologies of individuals or groups that deviate from socially accepted norms. There is no single, universally accepted definition of extremism, as the meaning of ‘extremism’ shifts depending on context, background, and perspective. Often, the term extremism is used interchangeably for terrorism and radicalism, which is incorrect. We can deduce that all terrorists are extremists; however, the reverse can not be assumed. According to Gutmann (2007), the concept of extremism can be regarded as the “single mindedness” and “absolute certainty” from the point of view of an individual, without engaging in rational debate about alternative perspectives. In her view, extremism is not about violence but a rigid ideological stance and comes under the constitutional right to free speech unless it directly harms others. Similarly, Hassan et al. (2023) see extremism as an ideological rather than a behavioural phenomenon and define “Extremism” as a radical position of an individual or a group that aims to change or challenge the status quo, on political or non-political subjects, which can be both positive and negative. However, Kruglanski et al. (2017) conceptualize extremism from a psychological perspective, viewing it as deviance from normal behaviour

or societal norms, which may be motivated by unfulfilled basic human needs. These individuals, when subjected to feelings of injustice, humiliation and abandonment, find extremist ideologies appealing and a means of fulfilment, which may convert non-violent extremism into violent extremism. These varied perspectives on extremism show that it is not only a behavioural phenomenon but a rational, ideological, and motivational one that, under certain conditions, can evolve into a violent form of extremism.

Violent extremism (VE), like extremism, has no universally accepted definition. Researchers across different arenas have defined violent extremism according to the specific academic, policy and institutional context. For instance, Bak (2019) defines violent extremism as the use or advocacy of violence to propagate or achieve a political, ideological or religious agenda. Likewise Schmid (2013) defines VE as deviant behaviour motivated by ideological hostility, aimed at achieving a political or social objective through violent means. These definitions go beyond the ideological beliefs or just a rhetoric as given by non-violent extremism and explicitly mention the use of violence as a tool to achieve the objective. Violent extremism is sometimes incorrectly assumed to be exclusive to religious or Islamist groups, as Hindu nationalists have also been seen to promote violent extremism in India, negating the rhetoric that it is only exclusive to Islamist groups (Curry, 2016). UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015) also reinstated that the concept of violence is not exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. Clarifying the context-dependent nature of violent extremism and non-exclusivity to any belief or thought.

From an institutional perspective, the Australian Attorney-General Department's Resilient Communities website defines violent extremism as "The ideologies and actions of people who use violence or support or advocate the use of violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. The Australian government's strategies aim to counter all forms of violent extremism, including terrorism, other forms of politically motivated violence and some forms of communal violence" (Attorney-General's Department, 2011; Striegler, 2015). Similarly, Pakistan's National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy (2024) defines it in a vaguely similar way by stating "violent extremism (VE) refers to the vocal or active promotion, engagement, preparation, or otherwise support for violence to further ideological, political, social, economic or personal objectives in contradiction to the constitutional framework of Pakistan and its statutes." The above discussion makes it apparent that despite varying definitions across academic and institutional arena, violence is the means to advance the ideological or religious objectives of organizations in violent extremism.

Ranstorp & Hyllengren (2013) identified the factors that alone or in combination may lead to violent extremism and joining violent extremist groups spanning from the individual, group and societal levels. From their perspective, at the individual level, psychological factors, Trauma response, Social factors or social media may make individuals more susceptible to VE. At the group level, dimensions include ideological and religious ideologies, identity issues, sense of belonging, culture, grooming, and group dynamics, which may lead to VE. At the societal level, political factors, polarization, and identity dynamics may contribute to leaning towards violent extremism. Kruglanski (2018) also identified three drivers of VE: need, narrative, and network—a notion similar to that given earlier. The need stands at the individual level: a desire to matter and have an aim in life, a narrative that justifies the means to pursue this cause, and a network that subscribes to a dominant narrative to become relevant and morally acceptable. Likewise, Allan et al. (2015) identified three factors at the micro, meso, and macro levels and presented a “theoretical model of drivers of violent extremism”. At the micro level, ideological factors act as pull factors for VE; at the meso level, social and cultural factors, including religion, ethnicity, or group identity, act as pull factors; while at the macro level, governance failure or political factors act as push factors for individuals towards violent extremism. The political factors at the macro level are the most significant, as the failure of the state to protect and provide basic needs and services leads to inequality and feelings of abandonment among the population, creating a vacuum that allows other non-state actors to exploit the vulnerabilities of population (UNDP, 2016)

Growing evidence shows that the impacts of Climate change extend beyond environmental degradation, now affecting the well-being and livelihood, increasing the vulnerability of the affected population, which may increase the risk of conflict and violent extremism. Climate change, being the pressing issue of the world, is not only responsible for the deterioration of the environment and resource depletion but is also making the communities living at these critical sites prone to the indirect dangers of climate change in the form of displacement, conflict, and extremism. Many studies back this theoretical statement. For instance, a study by Romm (2022) states that climate change may not be the direct cause of violent extremism. However, it is an essential factor that acts as a destabilizing force, giving a breeding ground for violent extremist organizations. Populations with limited adaptive capacity when exposed to climate change and climate-induced disasters hampering their livelihood may resort to illicit activities to generate income for their sustenance, becoming an easy target for violent extremist organizations (Romm, 2022). The effect is further affirmed by another study stating that climate-induced disasters lead to the

displacement of people to other regions, where they are likely to compete for scarce resources that may contribute to rising conflicts. With climate change acting as a threat multiplier, it indirectly increases the risk of violent conflict in the form of intrastate conflicts by amplifying the effects of poverty and economic vulnerability (Vitel, 2015). This above discussion shows that violent extremism is an indirect effect of climate change disasters, triggered by the pre existing socioeconomic conditions, poverty and governance failure that magnify the grievances of the displaced communities.

A research highlighted the phenomenon suggesting that the nexus is more apparent in the regions where the population is dependent and reliant on the resource dependent income like agriculture that is destroyed as a result of disaster, research suggests that decrease in the income opportunities and increased livelihood insecurity increases the risk of violent extremism and extremist recruitment as the opportunity cost of joining extremist group is lowered in the affected areas as opposed to the other areas. This threat significantly amplifies in a weak or failed state where state authority is compromised. It should also be noted that many studies disregard the notion of the wealth of a country; however, some studies see poverty as an important factor in extremist and violent extremist recruitment. (Dal Bó & Dal Bó, 2011; Graff, 2010; Nordqvist & Krampe, 2018). This is particularly relevant in the Pakistani context, as the flooded areas are usually the agriculture intensive, with the populations solely relying on the income from their produce. The disaster comes not only as a natural shock but also destroying their financial capability, which directly ties livelihood and income to violent extremism.

The extremist groups generally show an opportunistic behaviour as their recruitment tactic to exploit the vulnerabilities of the victims. For example, in Pakistan, after extreme floods in Sindh, a militant organization provided aid and assistance to the locals in Sindh, after which increased support for the Islamist group was seen; however, more strengthened support was seen in circles where the group already had a stronghold or a weaker state (Ahmad, 2018; Shah, 2010). A new climate-related factor contributing to violent extremism, beyond displacement, tactical considerations by armed groups, and the impact on livelihoods. It introduced the concept of exploitation by elites, and says that after the disaster the the influential elites take advantage of their position by controlling the aid distribution and deciding the beneficiaries of the aid and favouring their own supporters in on ongoing conflicts, this could lead to increased risk of conflict in the absence of proper regulation by the government (Nordqvist & Krampe, 2018). Hence, extremist recruitment can not be solely taken as a result of ideological alignment but also a form of service delivery from the VE organizations, contingent upon the support for the future.

2.5 Climate Disasters, Governance Failure and Disaster Capitalism

In the event of a disaster, the government's role is to address the calamity, manage the losses, and support the affected communities. The literature also emphasizes the government's crucial role in mitigating the impacts of climate disasters and preserving social harmony. (Franzke et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2018). However, when met with no preparedness and a lack of service delivery, not only do the affected communities feel abandoned, but an institutional vacuum is also created that is easily exploitable by extremist organizations. Drago and Leogrande (2024) studied the impact of inclusive governance. They concluded that preparedness and proactive measures in the event of a disaster are essential for maintaining resilience in fragile communities that may be susceptible to the long-term effects of climate change. On the contrary, fragile regions with already weak government infrastructure and institutions exist, and are more vulnerable to conflict and social unrest when faced with disasters (Dahm et al., 2023; Scheffran et al., 2012). This closely aligns with the concept of Fragile States, which positions inability of state to provide security and public goods central to the breakdown of governance and social unrest among the population (Rotberg, 2003).

From theoretical perspective, governance, good governance and fragile states, the efficiency of the state to respond in an event of disaster reflects how the legitimacy of state institutions will prevail in these communities. The ideal governance concept, called as good governance build on state legitimacy, transparency, responsiveness, and effectiveness as its core principles and failing to uphold these principles erodes the public's trust on the government (Yu, 2018). In the event of a disaster, affected populations lose faith in their institutions, due to a sense of abandonment in the absence of government support, creating a vacuum easily exploitable by the non state actors and extremist organizations. Governance failure, especially in the developing states, where socio-economic vulnerabilities, pervasive poverty, and instability already exist, climate disasters act as an agents to destabilize institutions and exacerbate government deficits, thereby amplifying vulnerabilities. (Makki et al., 2024). A closely related concept "governance deficit" posits that the deviation from the standard practices of good governance principles such as mentioned above, lead to failed institutions, which may further lead to governance failure (Ugbor-Kalu & Kalu, 2020). This deficit is often manifested in the form of corruption, lack of accountability, and weak institutions leading to distrust among the population.

Bates (2008) regards the inability of government to provide basic public goods to advance economic development of the public as governance failure. In African countries, particularly in Nigeria, the governance failure has been manifested in the form of corruption, poor public good delivery, and rule of law which not only eroded trust in government institutions but also fostered inequality and negative sentiments about government among the citizens (Lazarus, 2023). This not only intensifies the grievances of the citizens but also creates an exploitable void for the alternative actors to assert the authority in the fragile communities. In a country like Pakistan, with prevailing poverty, inequality, power imbalance, political instability, and unemployment, climate stressors act as agents that heighten the vulnerability to conflict. The same thought is shared by Sharifi et al., (2021), where he mentions that the fragile regions, with already existing socio economic vulnerabilities when faced with climate disaster, the affect is amplified and may even lead to conflict. Furthermore, as per the earlier literature presented, it is evident that disaster in the conflict prone area amplifies the affects leading to more competition and conflict, which tests the government authority to control, legitimacy to restrain and capacity to deal with climate and conflict (Petrova & Rosvold, 2023). Under these circumstances, a government's failure to provide required services or respond sufficiently to disasters can erode people's trust, possibly resulting in social unrest and diminished legitimacy (Pereira et al., 2021).

This phenomenon can be understood by the concept introduced by Klein (2007), called "Disaster Capitalism". These concepts revolve around the exploitation of the masses in times of crisis, such as climate disasters, by political elites or non-state groups that capitalize on victims' vulnerabilities to gain personal benefit. In the same way, communities where weak institutions fail to operate and provide services offer opportunities for political and non-state actors, as well as extremist organizations, to advance their personal agendas. In the post-disaster period, during recovery phases when aid and relief distribution is politicized, leading to unequal outcomes for victims, this creates exclusion and marginalization. In Pakistan, the dynamics after the disaster and during the recovery phases are highly politicized; aid and resources are often controlled by political networks, leading to a governance deficit and the erosion of public trust. The governance deficit, or the vacuum, is filled by non-state actors who, in the guise of service delivery, gather in support of communities to gain influence in disaster-stricken regions.

2.6 Global Context of Climate Change and Violent Extremism

Climate induced migration and violent extremism is a common and well studied phenomenon in the African, Sahil region. Ample case studies and literature is available in context of Sahil region, Nigeria, Kenya and Yemen. For instance, Reuveny (2007), in his paper 'Climate-induced migration and its link to violent conflict,' explains the critical link between migration and conflict, stating that in developing and underdeveloped countries, people do not get a chance to adapt to the environmental changes and have to migrate, leading to conflict in the receiving areas. He also claims that the intensity of the conflict, induced by climate driven migration, has the potential to become an inter or intrastate war, which may be worsened by the ethnic or religious tensions in the host communities over scarce resources. This critical link has been extensively explored in the Sub-Saharan and North African region. Many studies revealed that climate change has emerged as a major driver of migration, leading to increased food insecurities, socioeconomic inequality, and acts of terrorism and extremism in Ethiopia, Kenya, and other countries. (Filho et al., 2023; Bourekba, 2021; Regan & Young, 2022).

A study conducted in Yemen provides evidence that Yemen is already experiencing climate-induced resource scarcity, which has been exacerbated by migration, further intensifying the effects of ongoing conflict in the affected regions. Owing to climate-induced disasters, over 300,000 individuals lost their homes and source of livelihood, that have worsened the already existing conflict between IDPs and the host communities (Civic, 2022). Research across the African Sahel region and the Middle East has confirmed that climate change has intensified the preexisting social, political, and economic vulnerabilities, acting as a threat multiplier and contributing to the intensification of violent extremism and conflict in the region. For instance, Mamshai (2023) argued that growing water scarcity, environmental degradation, and drought have endangered human security in Iraq and have led to large-scale displacements and increasing conflict, giving fertile ground to the extremist groups to exploit and recruit the vulnerable, escalating susceptibility to violence. The impacts of climate change have been increasing rapidly due to years of conflict. During the 2010 drought, people who had been displaced from their homes and farmers became so vulnerable and desperate that they even joined terrorist organizations such as ISIS to earn and complete their basic needs. Iraq's example reveals that environmental stresses such as lack of resources, poor governance, and mass displacement increase tensions among the masses and bring social conflict. This encourages extremist organizations to exploit desperate and miserable communities and join violent organizations (Jaff, 2023).

Similarly, Somalia, already dealing with resource shortages, conflict, poor governance; climate change worsened the situation and harmed farmers and further contributed to instability in the country. Regan and Young's (2022) shows that terrorist attacks are likely to increase when rainfall decreases and greenhouse gas emissions increase demonstrating that the reduced agricultural production owing to climate change also affects political problems and overall society. When people are deprived of resources, the blame is shifted to the government, fuel tensions which are exploited by the organizations like A-Shabaab, when than take advantage of people's misery. This research highlights the link between climate and violent extremism is indirect, climate change though does not cause terrorism, however worsens already existing problems, and acts as a threat multiplier, exploiting people to join their organization and indirectly leading to instability in the society.

The relationship between climate change and social conflict becomes clearer in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin in Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, declining environmental conditions converge with poverty, resource scarcity, and poor administration. Griffin (2020) showed that since the 1960s, severe widespread instability and crisis have been caused by a deadly 90% decline in Lake Chad's surface area. The spatial analysis he conducted showed a strong connection between extremist groups and environmental stress. It showed that armed groups take over ungoverned areas and abuse the vulnerable people's desperation for the expansion of their control. Bressler (2020) noted that Northeastern Nigeria's repeated droughts exacerbated Boko Haram's conflict by destroying crops and livestock, forcing people to displace, and weakening governance, which facilitated easy recruitment into Boko Haram and, in turn, further increased conflict. Akogwu et al. (2020) add that Boko Haram directly recruits downtrodden and miserable people who have faced such hideous circumstances as explained. So it is a kind of mutualistic relationship. These studies show that disruptions in environmental conditions also deteriorate social and political conditions, thereby supporting the idea that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier".

In Nigeria, Suleiman and Uche (2021) revealed that the shortage of grazing land and water has intensified the competition for natural resources. Herders often encroach on farmers' land in search of pasture, leading to disputes between the two groups. These clashes initially seemed insignificant and small, but now have become deadlier than Boko Haram. The research shows that this is due to the government's incapacity and resource shortages. The tensions are, of course, worsened by the state's failure to intervene amid a population explosion. Collectively, these studies from two regions, the Middle East and Africa, strongly support the claim that climate change causes serious social conflict and pressure, and

exacerbates existing weaknesses and insecurities. This gives extremist groups a chance to flourish. Environmental stress severely deteriorates livelihood, weakens the trust in government, and causes a severe desperation and hopelessness among the masses, which extremist groups exploit to expand their control and ideology (Rüttinger et al., 2015). The above discussion aligns closely with the vulnerability theory and threat multiplier effect, which holds that some groups are at greater risk than others due to uneven exposure to climate change impacts and fragile institutions, an indirectly lead people to get trapped by the hands of extremism organization exploiting the vacuume created by the ineffectiveness of the government.

2.7 Pakistan's Climate Vulnerability and Displacement Trends

Pakistan is among the top five countries most affected by climate change, yet it contributes less than one percent of the global emissions. Over the last two decades, Pakistan has experienced some of the most devastating floods, including those of 2010, 2022, and the most recent 2025 floods. These floods not only lead to the destruction of infrastructure, crops, loss of life, and cattle, but also cause large-scale displacements. The A study highlighting the severity of climate-induced challenges noted that in 2023, Jacobabad in Pakistan recorded a temperature of 51 °C, while receiving 500 times more rainfall than average in the Shikarpur and Qambar districts, leading to devastating floods. The country is experiencing record-high temperatures and extreme weather patterns, affecting 33 million people and causing economic losses of \$ 2.3 billion due to crop damage, which in turn is slowing the growth rate to 2.3 percent for the year 2023 (Shehzad, 2023).

The primary driver of the devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 was found to be extreme precipitation, with glacial melt as the secondary cause. While also predicting that extreme precipitation is projected to increase due to a warmer climate, this highlights the urgent need for adaptation and mitigation strategies (Nanditha et al., 2023). Furthermore, a study done to gauge the impact of climate change and climate-induced migration on human security after the devastating floods of 2022, that focused on the Rajanpur and Taunsa Sharif region in southern Punjab, concludes that the effects of the climate-induced migration are multidimensional, exacerbating the social, economic and political challenges that give rise to conflicts, displacement and diminishing wellbeing of the affected population (Hashm, 2023).

A study by Ahsan Kamal (2023) delves into the climate vulnerability in Pakistan, stating that historical as well as socioeconomic dimensions of displacement should be considered while analysing the

climate-migration nexus in Pakistan. He agrees that climate change is the reason behind the intense floods and water scarcity issues, but also indicates that the inefficient water management system and rigid practices intensify the vulnerability of the population, driving migration. Another authors bases his argues that event of migration is closely linked to the slow onset environmental degradation, compounding the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that trigger forced migration towards the urban centres for safety (Twinomuhangi et al., 2023). This shows that the climate induced migration, governance weaknesses and resource management are interlinked and their effect on vulnerability on violent extremism cannot be understood separately.

Nouman and Shams (2024) presented an alternative view, considering climate-induced migration as an adaptive strategy rather than an emergency response, which may present economic opportunities, allowing them to diversify their resources. The study, however, acknowledges that, due to a lack of support from institutions, climate-induced migrants not only face socioeconomic challenges but are also vulnerable to exploitation that may, in the long term, lead to conflict in the host communities (Nouman & Shams, 2024). Salik et al. (2020) reaffirm the findings of the above study. He agrees that climate-induced migration increases the vulnerabilities of the migrants at the destination sites, but also claims that it improves the income of migrant families. This difference was observed due to their engagement in the informal sector, as well as the contribution of women to family income, resulting in reduced income volatility, which may reduce vulnerabilities.

In Pakistan, climate change remains a low-priority subject for the governments, while violent conflict, poverty, and hunger are prioritized. Despite several climate change policies, little progress was made due to a lack of will and institutional delays. A qualitative study analyzing stakeholder perception and impact on adaptation strategies found that climate change is a low-priority subject for the governments in Pakistan (Bott, 2016). The same thought process is reflected in national policies, with inadequate attention to the climate-induced migration, significantly hampers the country's climate adaptation process. Findings from a study conducted in Muzaffargarh and Tharparkar districts revealed that people have limited adaptation capabilities to face climate-related disasters(Saeed et al., 2016). The absence of adequate infrastructure and lack of government support have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of migrant communities.

Furthermore, the disaster lead to destabilized income and employment, with no jobs and a source of income, the displaced individuals resort to loans and fall into a debt trap, further intensifying their situation. The study also indicates that rural communities are the most vulnerable and least prepared to cope with floods and droughts due to limited training and knowledge, making them particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate disasters (Saeed et al., 2016). This above discussion of literature illustrate that how not because of the disaster, but due to the absence of state machinery and lack of preparedness, the vulnerabilities of climate-displaced migrants are exacerbated, deepening the risks they already face, making them more susceptible to violent extremism.

The study how climate-induced migration exacerbates the risk of violent extremism, revealed that the climate-induced internal migration exacerbates the existing conflicts and terrorism in the KPK and Baluchistan and can potentially lead to significant financial losses as well as strengthen the extremist groups (Saad et al., 2024). Similarly, another study on the critical nexus between climate and conflict in Baluchistan, agrees to the above findings, states that climate has exacerbated the already conflict-prone region, and due to recurring disasters like floods in 2022, the situation has been exacerbated. The vulnerabilities in the region are further multiplied by the weak institutional setup, socioeconomic disparities, and political inequalities. The existing literature in Pakistani contexts either talks about the causal links of socio economic conditions or provide descriptive analysis of of the displaced individuals. However the impact of governance, state failure especially in case of climate disaster is largely underexplored. This study fills this gap from the theoretical lense of the disaster capitalism.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The study is guided by a multilayered conceptual framework that utilizes vulnerability theory and the Threat Multiplier Effect to understand how climate-induced displacement indirectly increases susceptibility to violent extremism and extremist recruitment.

2.8.1 Vulnerability Theory

Climate-induced disasters have a distinct impact on each community, resulting in unique responses. The phenomenon is explained by Zakour & Gillespie's Vulnerability Theory, which posits that a community's response is not uniform, leading to an uneven outcome. Instead, it is due to different underlying conditions, including social, economic, political, and environmental factors.

Vulnerability in this study's context is conceptualized as the harm shaped by existing liabilities, including poverty, marginalization, and governance. These structural inequalities become the root causes of why some populations are forced to migrate as a result of disaster (Zakour & Gillespi, 2013). As a result, these vulnerabilities often lead to displacement of these poor communities that are not able to cope or adapt to the climate-induced disasters. Ferrarese (2016) builds on the same idea, adding that vulnerability is not a condition of mere weaknesses or physical fragility or exposure to harm, but a political and social problem, where the communities or individuals lack institutional support, making communities prone to radicalization and displacement.

Thomas et al. (2018) also reinforce this concept and states that the disasters have unequal effects on different groups which are influenced by pre-existing historical, socioeconomic, and political factors. These pre-existing factors predict how the communities respond and adapt to climate induced disasters. This highlights that the level of vulnerability of the displaced persons does not solely depends on and determined by natural disasters, but rather is influenced by preexisting power inequalities, poverty, and social standing within communities (Ahmed, 2024). In the event of a disaster, these vulnerabilities are intensified due to the inequalities faced by the affected communities, along with inefficient recovery efforts by the government, perpetuate a vicious cycle of intensified vulnerabilities (Carvalho & Spataru, 2023).

The role of government in disaster cases is of paramount importance, as it can either lessen or intensify vulnerabilities based on how the community receives the assistance. The aid is often given based on social status, resulting in some sections of the community receiving assistance while others are marginalized during the aid distribution (Watts & Bohle, 1993). This led to distorted trust in government institutions due to non-service delivery, creating a vacuum due to governance deficit, which the violent extremist organisations can easily exploit. When institutions are unable to perform up to their ideals, in this way, not only socioeconomic vulnerabilities but also the vulnerabilities created by unequal treatment by institutions multiply, leaving communities more vulnerable and susceptible to falling for extremist organisations' agendas.

Here the governance failure refer to the institutional failure to perform, and provide basic services to the citizens, and inability to respond effectively in state of crisis such as climate disaster. This inability or failure, often called as governance deficit is manifested in the form of gap between actual performance

and ideal governance standards (Ugbor-Kalu & Kalu, 2020; Norris 2011). The weak governance structure and poor service delivery increases the sense of abandonment and frustration in the government and institutions, creating vacume that are exploited by non state actors in guise of offering welfare, aid, or sense of belonging to the affected population.

2.8.2 Threat Multiplier Effect

CNA Military Advisory Board coined the term “Threat Multiplier” in 2007, stating "climate change 'acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world. It views the threat multiplier effect not as a direct cause of extremism and radicalization, but as an agent that indirectly intensifies the effect of displacement, increasing the likelihood of violent extremism (The CNA Corporation, 2007). The threat multiplier is a condition that intensifies existing vulnerabilities, meaning that if poverty is a prevalent issue in a community, climate-induced disasters will act as a catalyst, not only adding another problem, such as floods or water scarcity, but also compounding the effect of already existing poverty. Climate-induced disaster and displacement affects the communities by heightening the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that can act as a threat multiplier, leading to deepening socioeconomic vulnerabilities, making the displaced individuals highly susceptible to extremist recruitment and violent extremism (Neef et al.,2024). This Highlights that the climate disasters and displacement do not directly cause extremism but rather act as a "threat multiplier," deepening the socio-economic vulnerabilities that the extremist organization can easily exploit. The displaced communities face higher socioeconomic vulnerabilities due to loss of livelihood, forgone employment, shelter scarcity, food, and clean water.

Climate-induced disasters are not only responsible for the deterioration of the environment and natural resource depletion but also make the communities living at these critical sites prone to the indirect dangers of climate change in the form of displacement, conflict, and extremism (UNICRI & UNOWAS, 2024). When the pre-existing vulnerabilities are intensified by displacement, the risks of climate change multiply, making Threat Multiplier crucial subject to study in context of Pakistan. The scope of 'Threat multiplier effect' goes beyond climate change; however, for this study, it is used to explain how climate change acts as an intensifying force that amplifies the pre-existing threats, contributing to security risks (Mamshai, 2023; Goodman and Baudu 2023)

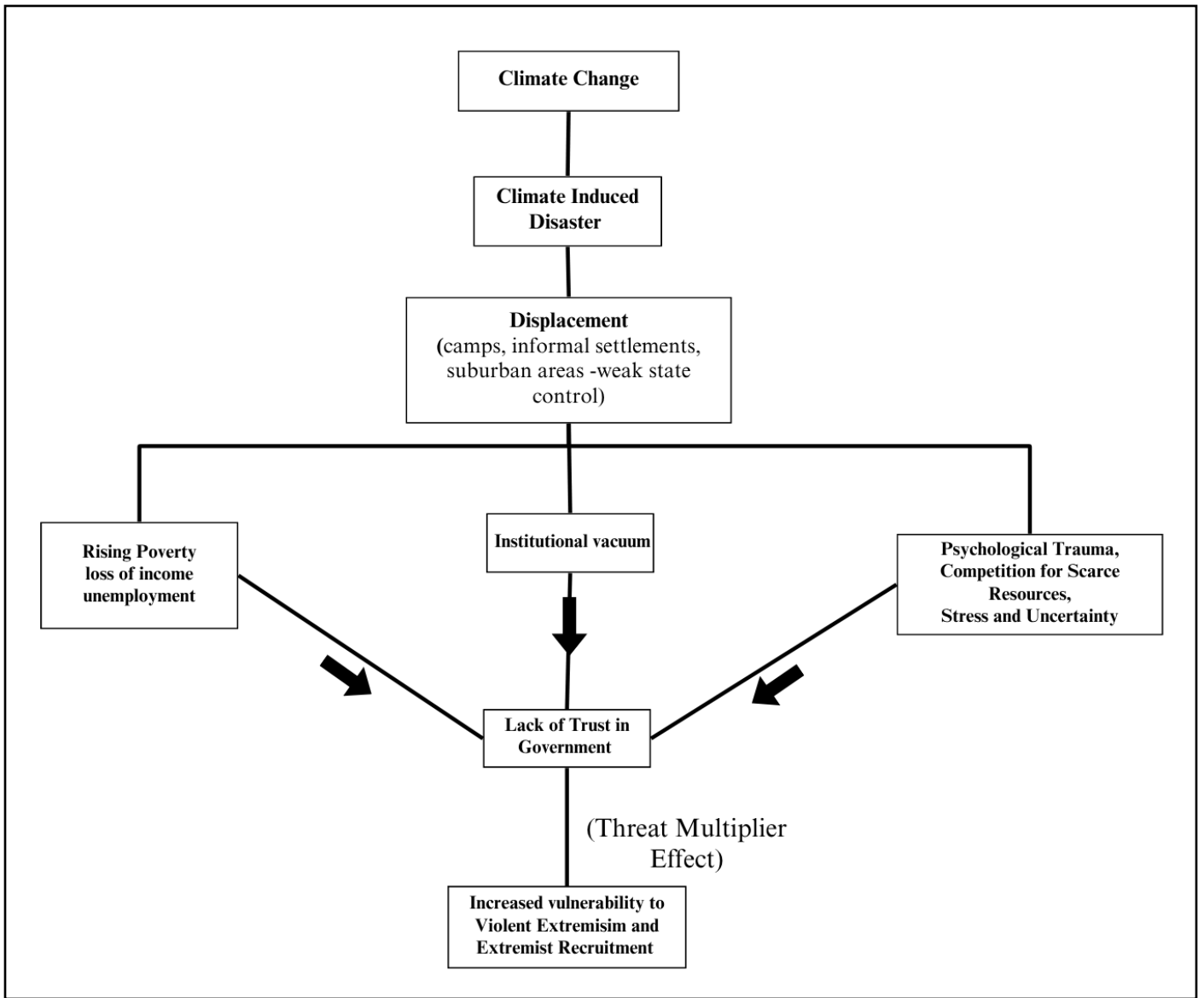
2.8.3 Operationalizing Theories

The framework begins with climate change triggering a disaster, such as a flood, which serves as the initial trigger and creates push factor for displacement. These push factors are explained in terms of Vulnerability theory, which tells why specific communities from the same area displace and face adverse effects as a result of climate-induced disasters, showing an uneven or unequal impact of a disaster. This outcome is shaped by factors such as poverty, weak infrastructure, and social insecurity. Following displacement, the climate affectees settle in camps, overcrowded settlements, or suburban areas where state control is weaker, with limited access to education, health, sanitation, and employment. The response of government to provide necessary aid and services in these areas in Pakistan is unsatisfactory and inefficient, often characterized by the politically determined distribution, leading to unequal distribution of resources. This lead to dissatisfaction, and distrust among the population. Here, the vulnerabilities are intensified due to economic instability, social identity, and psychological trauma due to scarce resources, institutional failure, and weak government support, creating a vacuum that increases the susceptibility to radical ideologies and exploitation by extremist groups (Britchenko, 2025).

The conceptual framework links how the climate disaster, and displacement exacerbate the already existing vulnerabilities of the and intensify the effects of socio economic stressors like poverty and unemployment. In post disaster period, the displaced communities face myriad of problems including psychological trauma, competition for scarce resources along with the pre existing poverty, due to the negligence by the government and limited aid and support from the institutions, the disaster displaced individuals become highly susceptible to extremist influence and recruitment. Threat Multiplier framework positions climate change as a factor that worsens the existing vulnerabilities of the displaced communities and lack of government support indirectly compounding the effect, that increases the likelihood of accepting violent extremist ideologies and joining these organizations. It gives a comprehensive account of how climate change can be a threat multiplier, worsening socioeconomic vulnerabilities by inducing the migration of communities, but also deepening the already existing social and economic tensions in communities, resulting in increasing poverty, social exclusion, and competition for limited resources, and exacerbating the existing tensions in the communities. This environment of stress and uncertainty may contribute to conflicts between communities and increase the vulnerability of individuals to the influence of violent extremist groups.

The conceptual framework uses vulnerability theory and the threat multiplier effect as a critical lens to examine how climate-induced disasters, in the absence of proper governance and institutional service delivery, may increase the risk of violent extremism. Here, the distrust in government due to governance deficit, act as an important determinant exacerbating the vulnerabilities of the community leading to social instability and increased risk of exploitation by the violent extremist organizations. Irrespective attitude of the institutions towards the need of people, lack of accountability and politicized distribution of resources lead to governance deficit, and distrust in institutions (Yu, 2018; Ugbor-Kalu & Kalu, 2020). This absence of effective institutions pushes affected communities into despair, leading them to seek support from alternative sources, such as organisations or agencies, to help them meet their basic needs. The gap created due to distrust allows the extremist organisation to act as a welfare organisation, providing them with aid, and empathising with them to provide a sense of belonging. Due to the fulfilment of the needs (Rotberg, 2003; Lazarus, 2023). Thus, climate-induced displacement not only increases socio-economic and psychological vulnerabilities but also intensifies the humanitarian crisis into a potential security concern in the absence of strong institutions (Klein, 2007).

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study



(Source: Author's own formulation)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

The research uses a qualitative explanatory design. The qualitative strategy was employed for an in-depth study of the problem. The rationale for using the qualitative approach for this study was to offer a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the vulnerability to violent extremism due to climate change, increasing poverty, governance failure and displacement (Braun & Clarke 2006). The interviews identified the factors increasing the vulnerability to violent extremism and the socioeconomic factors that further exacerbate the susceptibility of joining the violent extremist organizations, allowing an in-depth exploration and understanding of the problem. The data obtained from interviews provided the general experience of the displaced persons, while also providing the detailed and in-depth information about the experience of the respondents during and after the disaster, and gave an understanding of the challenges they face in case of a disaster. This methodology enabled us to capture the multifaceted nature of the climate-induced disasters, displacement, and challenges in the form of violent extremism, which, if relying on quantitative, would have been impossible to capture.

3.2 Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected by conducting key informant interviews and focus group discussion in the selected villages of the District Muzaffargarh. The interviews were conducted a year and a half after the 2022 floods, during June-July 2024. The timeline of the data collection helped capture the post disaster vulnerabilities and long-term socioeconomic and governance challenges that the communities faced after the floods. For qualitative primary data collection. A total of 30 KIIs were conducted with key stakeholders while 15 FGDs were conducted, with one FGD for men, one for women, and one mixed-gender group, involving 5 to 10 participants. These focus group discussions captured diverse perspectives on displacement experiences, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, and risks of extremist recruitment.

3.2.1 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and key informants to explore their views on the linkages between floods, displacement, government assistance, and violent extremism. The focus of these interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of how the disasters and displacement can lead to recruitment and radicalization of the affected individuals. These interviews also aimed to identify common trends in the disaster prone regions regarding the impact of ongoing disasters and extremist ideologies.

For the KIIs, an Interview Guide with the questions on different themes utilized. Key Informants (KIs) included community leaders such as Numberdars, Chauhdries, Unemployed youth, members of vulnerable communities, members of religious groups, and representatives from NGOs were interviewed to gain insights on the subject matter. These interviews aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in disaster-affected communities. A total of 30 KIIs were conducted across the selected villages. The respondents included both males and females.

Key informants interviewed included the following:

District and Villages	Respondents	No of KIIs
Muzaffargarh	Community Leaders (Numberdar, Wadeera)	5
(Jhugi Wala, Basti Shedi,	Unemployed youth (male and female)	5
Taleri, Basti Doaba,	Members of vulnerable communities (male and female)	5
Basti Sunakki, Jhoke	Members of religious groups	5
Fazlo Wali, and Basti	Civil society organizations	5
Bhuggi Wala)	University students (male and female)	5
Total of 30 KIIs		

(Source: Author's own formulation)

3.2.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were conducted to gather layered data across discussion-oriented themes, including collective action, agency, coping mechanisms, community responses to flood shocks, and community development. Questions were prepared in advance to structure FGDs around the proposed objectives of the Study. Overall, 15 FGDs were conducted, with one FGD for men, one for women, and one mixed-gender group. The objective is to ensure comprehensive coverage of perspectives within the communities across the target villages of the district. Each FGD consisted of a facilitated discussion involving approximately 5 to 10 participants across different age groups, as given below:

District and Villages	Respondents	No of KIIs
Muzaffargarh (Jhugi Wala, Basti Shedi, Taleri, Basti Doaba, Basti Sunakki, Jhoke Fazlo Wali, and Basti Bhuggi Wala)	Male Youth and adults (aged 18 or above)	5
	Female Youth and adults (aged 18 or above)	5
	Mixed gender (age 18 or above)	5
Total 15 FGDs.		

(Source: Author's own formulation)

3.3 Sampling

For qualitative interviews, non-probability, convenience sampling was employed to select the participants of KIIs and FGDs. The flood-affected UCs of district Muzaffargarh, were identified first, and administrative data of the affected of the UCs of tehsil Muzaffargarh were obtained from NRSP. Using the UCs data, the villages and Bastis that faced floods and displacement were identified. The villages include Jhugi Wala, Basti Shedi, Taleri, Basti Doaba, Basti Sunakki, Jhoke Fazlo Wali, and Basti Bhuggi Wala. The respondents were then chosen randomly for the key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The interviews and FGDs of climate-displaced persons ensured that the insights gathered thoroughly capture the experiences of displaced persons only. Key informants, including Community Leaders (Numberdar, Wadeera), unemployed youth, members of vulnerable communities, Members of religious groups, civil society organizations, University students, and FGD participants with relevant

experience and knowledge, were selected to ensure that either the participants were directly affected by or were actively engaged with issues of climate-induced disasters or displacement.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to understand the relation between disaster, displacement, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, governance failure, and vulnerability to violent extremism in the event of disaster in Muzaffargarh, a questionnaire was developed and administered on the ground to the persons displaced by the floods in the district. A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was employed to collect data. The flood-affected tehsils of Muzaffargarh were identified first, and administrative data of the UCs, obtained from NRSP was used to identify the affected villages, from where the displaced persons or households were identified, and the KII and FGD were conducted.

KIIs and FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes such as extremist influence, marginalized Sections, socioeconomic aspects of displacement, flood induced migration, trust in Government versus NGOs and community response. The analysis identified the patterns and themes among the variables to inform concrete evidence-based policy recommendations that aim to mitigate the risk of extremism among displaced communities. Thematic analysis is guided by the vulnerability theory and threat multiplier effect. These theories served as an analytical lens to interpret the experiences of participants during and after disaster. the theories also helped explain how the existing social and economic vulnerabilities were intensified by the disaster, making them more susceptible to violent extremism and recruitment.

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized for analysing the key informant interviews and focus group discussions. It one of the most common tool for analysing the qualitative data and is used to identify patterns of themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, The total of 30 interviews and 15 FGDs were conducted. The UDCs included community leaders, lady health workers, unemployed youth, university students, social activists, religious leaders, and disabled persons. The objective was to analyse the linkage between climate-induced internal migration and violent extremism. I analysed the 30 interviews. All the participants were the victims of the 2022 floods that caused large-scale destruction in the districts of South Punjab. By used the six steps of thematic analysis as explained by Clark and Braun

(2006). All the 30 transcripts were read multiple times to familiarize myself with the data, wherein focusing on the answers of each of my 30 respondents. Recurring issues were identified, for example, displacement, lack, and provision of medicine by the government, community, as well as the welfare wings of militant organizations. I was also able to identify differences between the responses of community leaders, PWDs, unemployed youth, and others. Since all of them have different perspectives, I then organized the transcripts by participant groups, such as community leaders, PWDs, etc. The original transcripts were in Punjabi, in some cases Saraiki language, for which I had to translate them into English and then use them as my data. I ensured that the translations were accurate, given the context of the respondents. The interview was designed in parts; for example, the first six questions dealt with the way the participants perceived the impact of the flood and the way they experienced it. Question 7-19 focused on the linkage between displacement due to floods and violent extremism, wherein I delved deep into how welfare wings of militant organizations intervened and provided certain services. I used Nvivo ver. 10.1 to make codes and generate themes to carry out thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis was used as the method of analysis to analyse the data collected through interviews and Focus groups. Thematic analysis is the method of analysing qualitative data to identify themes, patterns, and interpret themes and subthemes within the data to extract the rich details essential to the study (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis was done following the six phases of thematic analysis given by Braun and Clark (2006). These phases as described by them are,

1. **Familiarizing with the data:** Reviewing the collected data (Familiarization), transcribing and translating data as required, and reading and rereading the data to grasp the initial ideas
2. **Generating initial codes:** initial coding for the interesting features in the data, and collecting data for each code
3. **Searching for themes:** collating codes to generate themes, and gathering data relevant to each theme
4. **Reviewing themes:** Reviewing the themes and checking if the themes work in relation to the codes and the entire data set.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** Clearly naming and defining the themes
6. **Producing the report:** selecting the excerpts from the data, analyzing them, and relating them to the literature and research questions.

Coding:

Keeping in view my research questions, I labelled different segments of the transcript; the coding was done arbitrarily, keeping in mind the intersection and linkage of climate-induced migration and violent extremism. I then created a codebook, defined the codes, and generated the main codes, including flood impacts, displacement effects, Government and NGO roles, violent extremism, gender and social exclusion, and mitigation strategies.

The following table shows my codes and respective subcodes,

Table 1 Codes and Subcodes

Codes	Sub Codes
Flood impacts	Loss of livelihood, vulnerable groups, and community displacement
Displacement effects	Social support system, rebuilding, economic shock, shelter, family disruptions
Government and NGO role	Effectiveness of the government , efficiency of the government, effectiveness of NGO, collaboration between government and NGO
Violent Extremism	Risks of extremism , recruitment, security challenges
Gender and social exclusion	Gender vulnerability, access to resources
Mitigation strategies	Community resilience , community, government and NGO partnership

3.5 Description of Study Site

This section features the characteristics of our study area, Muzaffargarh. The study focuses on the overall effect; however, for the collection of primary data, Muzaffargarh served as a data collection site, where KII, and FDGs were done to gain insights into the experiences and vulnerabilities of the flood-affected population. District Muzaffargarh is situated in southern Punjab, approximately at the center of Pakistan. The closest urban center to the district is Multan. The district is situated on the border of the

River Indus and the River Channeb. It covers approximately 8,249 km², and according to the 2023 census report, it has a population of 5,015,325 inhabitants. An overwhelming number of the population lives in rural areas, with the 2023 census reporting that 81% of the population inhabits rural areas and only 18% live in urban localities. More than half of the area, around 786738 acres, is cultivated. The land is fertile, and most of the rural population relies on farming for their livelihood. The city's economy is based on industries, agriculture, and livestock. However, since the district is located near the River Channab, the area is usually flooded during the monsoon season.

The socioeconomic figures of the district show that only 48 percent of the population is literate. Poverty in the district is rampant, with 56% of the population living below the poverty line, which has placed the district among the poorest districts of Punjab. The district, due to its critical situation in the flood risk zone, is prone to recurring floods that have repeatedly led to the destruction of infrastructure, crops, livelihood, schools, houses, and health facilities, displacing the communities. For instance, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 10,000 people were displaced owing to a climate disaster in 2014, making it a critical site of study. The reason for choosing this area is that it is prone to recurring climate-related disasters, particularly floods, which lead to climate-induced migration. This serves as a critical study site due to the population's high socioeconomic vulnerabilities and recurring climate disasters, making it a relevant site for understanding the impacts of disasters.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research followed strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection, respect, and rights of all the involved participants. The participants of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions provided informed consent. Written consent forms, translated into local languages, were used to obtain informed consent. Participants were thoroughly briefed on the study's aims, their voluntary involvement, and their freedom to omit answers or withdraw at any point. Personal identifiers were anonymized; however, names were used after their approval. To mitigate political and psychological risks, sensitive topics, especially those concerning extremism, were introduced hypothetically. If any issues arose, the inquiry was immediately paused or modified. Before conducting the KII and FGDs, discussions with local elders, religious figures, and village leaders were conducted to build community trust and obtain social consent for the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The 2022 floods in Pakistan were one of the most catastrophic and destructive multivariate shocks in the recent history of environmental disasters. These floods led to the large-scale displacement of communities, destroyed their livelihoods, and, as always, the already vulnerable groups were most affected. At the same time, environmental disasters lead to numerous problems, including loss of employment, shelter, and deprivation of basic health care, ultimately making it impossible to live a normal life. The current study adds to the literature by highlighting the linkage between the rise in violent extremism, the recruitment of youth and other marginalized groups by violent extremists, preying on their vulnerability, which is in fact a result of the environmental disaster. It was essential to capture the lived experiences of the flood-affected individuals in the given locale and see how they experienced the floods and how this disaster changed their entire lives. After following the whole process of the thematic analysis, and I came up with the following themes. Thematic chart is given below,

Table 2 Key Themes from Key Informat Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Themes	Description	Example
Extremist Influence	The floods led to destruction of poverty, means of livelihood, shelter, health and loss of loved ones. The extremist groups exploited these vulnerabilities through various means and used it as a recruitment strategy.	Un Employed Youth Nasrullah " <i>some (militant welfare organization) offered food but wanted loyalty</i> "
Marginalized Sections	Segments that are already vulnerable and their risks increased when faced with such a calamity, including women, children, minorities and persons with disability.	Salma Bibi " <i>disabled people were left out</i> "

Socioeconomic Aspects of Displacement	People were already employed and had sources of livelihood, but after the floods, livelihood sources were destroyed and poverty increased, which made them more exposed to extremist groups and ideologies.	NGO member, Muhammad Ismael <i>"youth with no jobs were approached by extremist groups"</i>
Flood Induced Migration	Because of the floods, people faced economic instability, lost their livelihoods, and their homes; hence, large-scale migration in camps and other adjoining areas occurred.	Teacher Abul said <i>"flood washed away our field"</i>
Trust in Government VS Ngos	Effectiveness of government intervention vs NGO integration, and how much did the people trust these two types of interventions.	Member of Civil society Organizations, Waris said <i>"NGOs helped quickly"</i>
Community Response	Communities demand education, restoration of livelihood sources and jobs.	University Student M Tahir <i>"Education helps us handle situations"</i>

4.2 Discussion of Themes

Theme 1: Extremist influence

Most of the respondents reported that the recruitment by extremist organizations was not open and visible. However, they were all in consensus that extremist organizations exploited their vulnerable state, which was worsened by the lack of proper government support. For example, Taj Bibi, an unemployed youth, said that

"There were certain groups that offered food in exchange for loyalty." This claim is further supported by a representative of a civil society organization, Waris, who also said, "Extremist groups used to come and offer food to the hungry people and in return demand support."

Literature on extremist recruitment supports the fact that such situations provide fertile grounds for terrorist recruitment since the affected communities are desperate to get help from anywhere. For instance, a study focusing on climate migration and violent extremism highlighted that climate change

may not be the direct cause, but it fosters an enabling environment for violent extremist organizations to mislead vulnerable communities that lack the adaptive capacity to adapt to the horrifying effects of disasters. Their inability to make a living after the disaster intensifies their existing vulnerabilities, which may make people resort to illegal activities or be pulled by extremist organizations (Romm, 2022).

A male responded in the FDG said,

"The extremist organizations target the poor and the helpless."

This opinion was shared by many others, for instance, Usman, who is an unemployed youth, said this in a very frustrating and sad tone *"youth with no jobs after the flood were approached by certain groups and were offered money in return."* appreciating the fact that the floods have devastated these regions, destroyed all or most of their sources of livelihood. It is quite understandable that extremist organizations would lure youth and other unemployed segments using financial incentives.

From the interviews, it appeared as if the primary target of the extremist organization was the youth, the people who were economically helpless and had no way to feed their families. The above statement is also fits on the conceptual framework, established for the study. The vulnerable groups were targeted by the non state actors, which asked them to join their groups and offered money in return. Showing how the displaced population is easily approached and coaxed into joining the groups. Some of the respondents were of the view that the recruits did not know what they were getting into, and were coerced by extremist organizations or blackmailed, as due to ignorance, they had handed over their important documents, ID cards to the recruiters who had taken them under the illusion of help. Waris Ali, a member of the Civil Service Organization, said,

"Some individuals handed over ID cards and other documents –under the guise of offering help would comfort people and take money before leaving."

From the interviews and FGDs, it appears that in the aftermath of the floods, the influence of the extremist organization propagating violent ideologies increased. Other than the direct help offered in the form of money and food, the security situation in the affected areas also led to a vacuum, which was exploited by extremist organizations. There was a clear consensus among the participants that criminal activity has increased in the area since the floods. For example, Wadera Ali Daad reported,

"There has been an increase in thefts; we can't go out at night because everything gets looted on the way. There have been thefts, it's not that there were none."

While Social Activist Rahim Bakhsh, depicting a similar incident, reported that;

"Theft was becoming rampant, as hungry people resorted to stealing to feed themselves...but we tried our best to keep our village safe from such people...For example, some people came to conduct a survey, and a polio worker supported them. The next day, the worker was abducted, and a large amount of money was taken from his family."

This shows that the security situation post-flood deteriorated, and many resorted to all sorts of criminal activity to do anything they could to help them survive. However, we cannot justify the acts, but the reason for resorting to these activities was the loss of livelihood, employment, and lack of support from the government. However, the participants of the FGDs were in consensus that we advise our youth and community to stay away from such people, which shows that the community was aware of the dangers of such recruitment by extremist organizations. Therefore, from the interviews and FGD responses, it can be inferred that, while on one hand, recruiters for violent extremist organizations did use money and other services in order to recruit people, their influence was limited and cannot be generalized to the entire community. However, this also does not mean that the efforts of these groups to prey on the vulnerabilities of the public are ignored. The risks of recruitment, as evident from the accounts of the respondents, are not logical, but rather out of economic necessity.

The views of the respondents, the stories they narrated, and the picture they presented have striking similarities with the concept of 'Disaster Capitalism' by Naomi Klein presented in her book *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Disaster Capitalism is a concept where, when an environmental calamity, a disaster, war, or anything that hits a community or society, brings in opportunities for groups who exploit that calamity for their economic and political objectives (Naomi, 2007). While the recruiters of violent extremist organizations offered help in times of need and money to those who had gone penniless, they exploited the weak points of the community, tried to get committed recruits, and left a bigger footprint on the area and the displaced community. The same sentiment was expressed by a female in FGD, while telling about the dangers of a vulnerable and already struggling population being influenced and pulled by the groups that promise them help and a better future. She said,

"People who are struggling with poverty, young people without jobs, or those who have lost their homes because of floods are more likely to be targeted by extremist groups. They feel helpless and may be drawn to groups that promise support or a better future."

However, the FGDs reveal a very striking positive attitude of the society in terms of its response to extremist recruitment. For instance, religious Leader Ghulam Muhammad said that, *"we advise our people to stay away from these trouble-making groups."* Furthermore, unemployed youth Muhammad Tahir was of the view that education is an excellent preventive measure against the strategy of these extremist organizations. While explaining his point, he explicitly said

"First and foremost...people need awareness and knowledge to navigate such situations. They should be informed about the risks of sharing their personal data with anyone who might misuse it. If someone suspects foul play.... it is essential that people question and verify intentions before sharing their information. Awareness is key to protecting oneself .Education is the most critical factor in this. With education, people can better understand situations and respond appropriately. It fosters awareness and empowers individuals to help others effectively. Education plays a pivotal role in dealing with any crisis and preparing communities to face future challenges."

This showed that the community was united and fully aware of the dangers of joining such organizations, given that respondents also focused on the fact that the members of the extremist organizations used either money, food, or, in some cases, shelter, which shows that interventions in these areas would block the roads or avenues for these extremist organizations.

These findings closely resonate with the vulnerability Theory perspective explained in the conceptual framework earlier. After the climate-induced disaster, the displaced communities face a myriad of challenges, including economic pressure, security challenges, and psychological stress. When coupled with the neglect and lack of support from the government, they become more susceptible to being influenced by violent extremists and non-state organisations. Which not only supports them but also listens to their voices, shows empathy and provides them a sense of belonging, naturally getting on their favour, making them susceptible to voluntary recruitment in these violent groups. The theme also aligns with the Threat Multiplier Effect, positioning climate change as a factor that exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and created favourable conditions for the extremist organisation to gain support by filling the vacuum left by institutional lags.

Theme 2: Marginalized Sections

The effects of climate-induced disasters and displacement are not uniform. Disasters, such as floods, cause widespread disruptions, including loss of shelter, income, and unemployment, affecting the entire community. However, the marginalized sections experience more severe effects. The interviews and FGDs predominantly agreed that the women, children, and marginalized sections, including PWDs and religious minorities, were more vulnerable to the impacts of displacement and flood. These groups are more affected because of the social and gender norms, health and safety risks, and, most of the time, economic dependency on the male members for survival. University Student Shazia Bagum ID 1520

“The community members who have been most affected are children, women, transgender individuals, and people with disabilities, because these groups are generally not as strong. The younger people are able to manage and survive, but these specific groups have been severely impacted.”

Many respondents were concerned about marginalized sections, as they are an easier target for recruitment by extremist organizations owing to a lack of support, limited mobility, discrimination, and limited access to resources. Marginalized sections often face discrimination during aid distribution, and when provided support, do not inquire who is giving it and for what purpose. They are desperate for any help they can get. Hanjo, a minority from the Maray-chah community, while explaining the help received by them, said,

“We consider anyone who came to help us as our saviour, no matter who they are. We are poor people, and the one who helps us, we do not care about anything else.”

From this excerpt, it can be inferred that the marginalized sectors were in desperate need of help and took whatever help they got from any group, winning the trust of these communities that perceived these groups as their saviors. According to the vulnerability theory,

From the interviews, it also appears that the negligence faced by the marginalized sections during inequitable aid distribution not only delayed the recovery of the marginalized sections but also reinforced the feeling of invisibility and neglect. A response received in FGD, where a female participant said that,

“The situation worsened when aid was delivered to feudal landlords, who restricted it to their close circles and ignored the poor. This injustice pushed the marginalized groups into even greater hardship and left them completely abandoned.”

This excerpt shows that the aid distribution was often based on loyalty or relationship; the community leaders responsible for the distribution of the aid favoured their close circles, pushing the marginalized sections further back in line for the support.

This theme also clearly resonates with the Vulnerability Theory and explains how, during the relief stage after the disaster, social marginalisation — primarily based on gender, status and relationships with power figures in the area, intensified vulnerabilities and reduced the adaptive capacity of marginalised groups. The differentiated treatment that the marginalised section received corroborates the statement given by vulnerability theory regarding the unequal outcomes of vulnerability after disaster, which are further amplified by psychological trauma, stress and institutional failure, which further agrees with Threat Multiplier Effect.

Sub theme 2.1: Gender based marginalization

Most respondents of the interviews and FGDs were of the opinion that among the marginalized sections, along with women and PWDs, transgender persons were the most vulnerable section and received little support after the floods, which makes them a prime target for recruitment. A community leader said,

“Women, transgender individuals, and minority groups face heightened risk of extremist violence due to social neglect after floods.” While another expressed the same sentiment in the FGDs, one of the respondents reiterated the same thought,

“During the floods, transgender men and women, as well as religious minority groups, faced significant financial, social, and economic losses... Transgender individuals faced difficulties in accessing aid, and the availability of shelter centers or other resources for them was limited. Religious minority groups also received less aid than needed and struggled to access their rights and necessary resources. Financial loss, social isolation, and economic hardship made their recovery even more difficult.”

The interviews also revealed that marginalized sections faced security challenges and discrimination post-flood during aid distribution. A female, while talking about this issue, said

“Women encountered significant challenges due to the destruction of their homes and limited access to basic necessities, with pregnant women and those caring for young children being particularly affected. Children were at high risk of diseases from contaminated water, and their education was disrupted as schools were either closed or destroyed. Older adults experienced health complications due to insufficient

medical care. People with disabilities were especially vulnerable, as they often struggled to evacuate on their own or access relief services. These groups were the most impacted due to their physical limitations, heightened health risks, and lack of immediate resources.”

Sub-theme 2.2: PWD based marginalization

The majority of the respondents of key informant interviews were concerned about the marginalized sections of the community, including women, children, PWDs, religious minorities, and transgender individuals, as they lack support during and post-flood period. A person with disability, Mukhtiar Hussain said,

“Mostly the disable persons faced many difficulties for the movement and getting something to eating.”

Rahim Bakhsh, a social activist, while talking about the lack of help received by the marginalized sections, specifically transgender and persons with disabilities, said,

“Transgender people and persons with disabilities were the most affected, and they needed the most help. I am not sure about the extent of the violence they faced, but no one has provided assistance to them. Their homes are still in ruins, and no one has come to help them yet.”

Theme 3: Socioeconomic Aspects of displacement

The 2022 flood led to massive displacement, resulting in economic instability. Moreover, due to the loss of loved ones, core members and caretakers of the family units, the flood impacted social and familial structures that created a space, which the violent extremist organization could exploit. In reference to this, a member of a civil society organization, Hashim, said,

“Displacement has a profound impact on social dynamics and social support networks often resulting in the loss of social ties, changes in gender roles, and social fragmentation. However, it can also lead to the creation of new support systems, fostering solidarity and resilience among displaced individuals. The degree to which social dynamics are affected depends on the context of the displacement, including the resources available, the support provided by external agencies, and the resilience of the affected communities. The upheaval caused by displacement, especially in the aftermath of natural disasters or conflict, disrupts established social structures, relationships, and community cohesion.”

Fakhar Nisa, while explaining the problems faced by displaced persons, said,

"Look, there were many problems. People became homeless, their livelihoods were lost, and we saw people dying. Children died, there were many deaths here, and women, who used to work in homes, were supporting their husbands. Now, their husbands have no jobs. Some took such huge loans that it became impossible to repay them. The money from the Benazir Income Support Program is considered a great help because without it, I do not know what would have happened. The unemployment of men has also made life extremely difficult for the women. Look at the condition of the children—schools are not functioning properly. When there is no home, how can there be schools?"

The socioeconomic impact of displacement is seen throughout the corpus. All respondents had reported disruption of their normal community life. Everything was shattered as if they had been transported to a new world. A quote from the respondent, Person with disability, Shehzoor Ali,

"Being forced to leave my home and move to another place was a monumental challenge. When I reached the new location, there was a house to shelter us, but the area lacked any infrastructure.... However, at that time, simply having a roof over our heads was a great relief. I decided it was best to stay there, even though the pain of leaving my home and familiar surroundings weighed heavily on my heart. The emotional toll of leaving my homeland was immense. I became deeply distressed, often feeling lost and overwhelmed by thoughts of how I would provide for my family. There were moments when I would look at my wife and children and break down in tears, questioning whether life was worth living under such circumstances. The despair was so intense that I occasionally wished for death rather than enduring such misery. Currently, our survival hinges entirely on the Benazir Income Support Program funds that my wife receives. It is our only means of sustenance. Unfortunately, I am unable to start any business or work due to our dire circumstances and my physical limitations. I believe the government should extend more assistance to people like us—those who are struggling to survive and rebuild their lives. Such support could enable us to live with dignity and provide for our families without depending solely on handouts."

As we can see from the above excerpt, due to displacement and economic plight that came with the disaster, the psychological trauma, along with the worsening financial conditions, worsened the effects. People were left helpless and without hope, relying on meagre cash transfers of the Benazir Income Support Programs. In such situations, people often went for loans or credit. However, since financial institutions did not cater to this segment, they took informal loans from other people at higher interest rates. As a result, their debt accumulated, and their financial situation worsened compared to before.

CSO Hashim said,

"As I previously mentioned, the livelihood of our village is primarily dependent on farming and agriculture. Our women also contribute by working in the fields alongside taking care of household chores and livestock. During this disaster, not only did we suffer losses to our crops and livestock, but our homes were also destroyed. The situation was so dire that our primary source of income vanished entirely, leaving us in a state of severe crisis. The devastation of our crops and the loss of livestock have put us in a position where we must borrow money to restart farming. However, the borrowing system here is extremely harsh. For every loan we take, we are required to pay nearly double the amount. For instance, if we borrow one lakh rupees, we have to pay an additional 25,000 rupees every month as interest. Farming and land are deeply connected to our livelihoods. Without being able to work on our lands, it is impossible for us to sustain ourselves. This has created a massive financial burden on us, and we are now drowning in debt. Unfortunately, we see no viable solution or alternative path to escape this crisis."

These excerpts narrate an unfortunate story of how the floods not only destroyed the economy of the affected areas but also destroyed the communal, familial relationships and devastated the whole community. This amplified the impact of already existing poverty, marginalization, and isolation that made these people a target group susceptible to the influence of violent extremist organizations. For example, during an FGD, a male respondent said the following: *"There is no work...we are starving"*. Another community member reflected that *"after displacement we lost all our connection"* in the mix gender FGD. There was a unanimous consensus that it is neither the ideology nor the people's desire to join these organizations that lead them down the wrong path, but rather poverty and unemployment. Literature also supports this connection and states that economic hardships are exacerbated by climate change in Africa, which has led to violent extremist recruitment (Mayhew et al., 2022). This also reflects that the community is aware of the recruitment process. However, the consensus was that poverty,

unemployment, economic, and social drivers are the key factors leading a person to be recruited. This was consistently observed in the answers of all the respondents of the study.

This theme identified the socioeconomic challenges of the climate-induced displaced persons, including loss of livelihood, death of cattle, destruction of farmlands, unemployment, and psychological trauma and stress from the experience, are central to the argument of the vulnerability theory. Showing that not only economic stressors but also other factors, when combined, deepen the frustration among displaced persons, further corroborating the threat multiplier effect.

Theme 4: Flood-induced Migration

In the 2022 floods, the entire rural life was dismantled entirely. Farmers lost their land, crops were destroyed, labourers lost their wages, houses were submerged, and livelihoods were lost. People moved to nearby urban centres, wherein the society, the economy, and sources of livelihood were all different, and what made things even more difficult was that they were internally displaced persons (IDPs). The significant effects of climate-induced displacement included the loss of livelihood, such as livestock and crops, loss of shelter that created housing insecurity, and disruption in community life. University student Muhammad Tahir ID 2142

"The damage was so extensive The damage caused was so severe that it's difficult to recover from. People lost everything, homes, crops, livestock, and their livelihoods. Diseases spread among both humans and animals, and people had nothing to eat. Unemployment had increased so much that people were starving. The government did provide cooked food rations, but the loss was so immense that it couldn't be fully compensated. We had never seen people in such dire conditions, and no one had ever witnessed such a destructive rainfall and devastation."

Another respondent, who also reported this, identified a new aspect that later emerged in other interviews as a health effect. Another respondent, Taj Bibi, who lost her livelihood owing to the disaster, said

"The circumstances were very bad, as you know: crops were destroyed, livestock died, and in addition, many people lost their homes. Due to homelessness, many people also became ill, and diseases spread rapidly. A large number of people were severely affected. The crops were ruined, unemployment increased, and livestock not only died but many also became sick. When our children and women were suffering, we had to think about their future. However, due to the situation, we were unable to protect them properly, and as a result, some of them even passed away. The flood had a profound impact on people's lives. The sudden arrival of water and heavy rain, especially the loss of animals, caused immense

distress. Animals are crucial for their livelihood, and their loss has made life even more difficult for these people."

Taj Bibi expressed in a very detailed manner. She acknowledged that the loss of livelihood, death of cattle, destruction of crops, and loss of shelter were some of the significant impacts leading to migration. Her insights also highlighted another aspect of health, which was consistent in the responses of many other respondents as well. When we probed into it, diseases turned out to be one of the most drastic effects of the 2022 floods. For instance, community leader Muhammad Ramzan said,

"The floods caused widespread health issues, including rashes, eye diseases, malnutrition, and a lack of adequate medication in the community."

Disabled person Ali Sher shared the same thought by saying,

"Major impacts included skin rashes, eye infections, malnutrition, and a severe shortage of necessary medical supplies."

Religious leader, Muhammad Iqbal, while explaining health problems and lack of necessary medicines and health care services, said,

"The community faced significant challenges such as outbreaks of malnutrition and limited access to medication."

While a Member of a Civil society organization, Muhammad Ismail shared his thoughts by responding similarly to many others,

"Floods led to health crises with rashes, eye diseases, and malnutrition becoming common, compounded by insufficient medical resources."

This shows that health deterioration and the spread of disease were rampant in the post-flood situation. This, while also being a cause of displacement, added agony to the troubles of the affectedees, especially when health costs are high and the provision of medicine by the government is far from enough. In a situation like this, if they are offered medicines, medical aid, or some financial aid by militant organizations, they become easy targets for violent extremist organizations for recruitment. As we could see in other interviews and here too, this spread of extremist ideology, the recruitment and loyalties of the

people towards them were a result of the vacuum that was created by the lack of support, and was supposed to be filled by the government, which was not well equipped to intervene as required. A study supporting this narrative says that the primary cause of displacement in Nigeria, other than climate, was socioeconomic status, access to water, and wealth, showing that the migration decision was greatly influenced by factors other than conflict and resource scarcity (Kamta et al., 2020). This theme identifies climate disasters and migration as a threat multiplier. The already disaster-stricken communities, with fragile socioeconomic backgrounds, faced with forced displacement, exacerbate their vulnerabilities and make them more vulnerable to exploitation by extremist groups as compared to others. The vulnerability theory holds that migration is forced, but it is not merely a reaction to disaster; it reveals a lack of adaptive capacity among these fragile communities living without institutional support.

Theme 5: Trust in Government vs NGOs

There was a stark difference of opinions relating to trust and the role of the government. It appeared that people expected the government to provide support, and their expectations from the government were quite high; however, the government did not meet those expectations. From the interview excerpt, it appears that people looked up to the government in this time of need and expected that the state would ensure shelter, rehabilitation, and restoration of livelihood sources and would ultimately bring them back to settle in their lands. Some of the responses about the government were harsh and strongly worded. A university Student, Nisha Ghafoor said,

“Compare to the government, NGOs work door-to-door, but the people of the government facilitate their people not the poor.”

Numberdar, Muhammad Ramzan, and PWD Ali Sher expressed the same thoughts about the government failing to meet their expectations, said respectively,

“NGOs were perceived as more worked door-to-door, unlike government efforts, which seemed to favor certain groups over the poor”

NGOs played a significant role by offering direct support to those in need, whereas government aid was perceived as biased towards specific groups. The respondents expected the government to respond to their needs; however, their feelings later changed to mistrust when the government did not help as

expected. The perception of mistrust and government inefficiencies stemmed from the belief that the government's actions were insufficient and aimed at furthering its personal political interests. Another respondent, showing deep resentment for the government, in a very frustrating, aggressive, and visibly angry tone said,

“I only want death for the people in charge. They are the reason why 30 million people had to suffer. They are the reason why so many lost their lives. It is the height of insanity and the height of treason to let them live. They have to pay for their crimes.”

This excerpt shows the frustration of the displaced flood-affected persons. When they did not receive the support they expected from their government, they felt abandoned. Psychological trauma from the disaster, along with anger for the government, when it did not provide help, puts them in a more vulnerable state, where the violent extremist groups can easily exploit their vulnerabilities. Literature also supports the idea that the level of trust in the government can both mitigate and compound vulnerability (Mackenzie, 2020). According to the respondents, NGOs were more effective in providing relief. For instance, NGOs adopted a grassroots approach, going door to door, whereas the government took a centralized approach, requiring people to visit centers for services. However, displacement, health impacts, and disabilities restricted access, and these proved to be a hindrance in reaching those government centres. Therefore, in comparison, some respondents praised NGOs. Like LHW Farzana said,

“NGOs have done great work and have earned the trust of the communities. Their timely intervention in providing essential aid such as food, medicine, shelter, and psychological support has been highly appreciated. They have played a critical role in filling gaps where government support may have been limited, and their efforts have brought tangible improvements to many displaced families. NGOs are often seen as more accessible and responsive, which has contributed to their credibility and trustworthiness in disaster relief efforts.”

It was evident from the interviews that the NGOs were praised for the speedy delivery and ease of access that the government organization did not offer. In most cases, NGOs supported the displaced persons on an equity-based approach, and therefore, were able to cater to some of the immediate needs of the flood-affected people. This might be one of the reasons some respondents trusted NGOs more.

However, across all KII and FGDs, whether it was the government or an NGO, there was a unanimous agreement that neither of these two entities was able to do all that was required or expected of them. The role to support, in some cases, was limited to areas designated for groups.

“NGOs were perceived as more effective because they work door-to-door, as opposed to government efforts that appear to favor certain groups over the poor.”

Many other respondents consistently reinforced this view. In this excerpt, respondents complained that the government’s efforts were not based on inclusion, but rather on connections with personnel or belonging to a particular community to get aid. This does not mean NGOs played their parts perfectly. The NGOs, understandably, were operating with cost constraints and could not deliver as effectively as they could have with adequate resources. Religious Leader, Ghulam Muhammad, while showing dissatisfaction said,

“In 2022, the NGO did not do anything significant in our area. They had done some work in the past, and people trusted them because they usually perform good work. However, their efforts are short-term. If they were to work consistently, they could achieve better and more lasting results.”

This theme shows the presence of both government and non-governmental organisations working to support disaster-stricken communities. However, it illustrates the lack of support from government bodies, aligning with the vulnerability theory, and highlights the governance deficit and the apparent dissatisfaction and distrust of the government. However, a few also criticise the NGOs; apparent loss of confidence in the state for aid and the dependence on NGOs and other organisations expose an extreme governance crisis and extreme dissatisfaction among communities, which now lean on these organisations for support. The threat multiplier mirrors this logic: NGOs now fill governance gaps, while non-state actors can exploit them and leverage the vulnerabilities of already distressed communities.

Theme 6: Community Response

The responses in the interviews and in the FGDs reflected the resilience of the community. Facing such devastation at such a large scale, losing an entire source of livelihood, when the house made of mud was taken from them; their only shelter was destroyed, and their loved ones were lost. It was heartening

to see the community stay together, help each other out, and not rely solely on external support from the government or NGOs. The community was the first responder, and a careful analysis reveals it as the most efficient intervention. A Religious Leader, Ghulam Muhammad, while explaining the relief efforts by the community, said,

“We worked for the community when the flood came. We helped people by announcing in the mosque to move to safer places and continuously motivated them to stay strong. Those whose homes were damaged took stay in the mosque. We arranged food and water for them, and local people would come to help as well. Until now, no help had reached us....We tried to help ourselves. During this time, the situation was such that everyone was in distress and looking for help.”

The community members who were also part of NGO efforts, the rescue office, or the government went an extra mile, not just responding as an official duty but also going out of their way to help their community. For example, Lady Health worker Farzana said,

“I am working with the health department. We set up medical camps during the floods, helped people with the food and medicine provided by our department, and also did whatever we could with our own assistance. We worked for women, children, the elderly, and differently-abled individuals. We evacuated them and relocated them to safe places. In 2022, there was heavy rainfall, and the floodwaters caused a lot of damage. After the flood, many diseases spread, so even after the flood, we continued to work for the people. We raised awareness about health and hygiene.”

It was not just the people who were either helping as part of their official duty by the government, or religious leaders, or community leaders who had to help the community. However, the common folk had volunteered and offered their services—individuals with no formal training in rescue but a strong motivation to assist communities in need. For instance, a young student, when asked, said the following.

“In 2022, when the flood occurred, I was a student. I worked as a volunteer with health workers to deliver medicine to people. I also went from house to house to administer polio drops to children. Along with other students, we collected some funds, which were used to buy milk for children and distribute it to those in need. When I helped the people in my village, the situation at that time was such that everyone was in distress and looking for help. So, I also tried to help people in my own way.”

The community showed an awareness and vigilance that serves as a safeguard against the rise, increase, infiltration, and violent extremist elements. They understood the dangers of extremist violence. In the FGD, conducted for males and females, a community leader said the following,

“Certain groups are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by extremist organizations due to social, psychological, and situational factors. Youth and adolescents are often targeted because they seek identity and belonging. At the same time, marginalized communities, such as the economically disadvantaged or socially isolated, may be drawn to promises of empowerment or community. Individuals facing personal crises, such as mental health struggles or identity issues, are also at risk, as are prison populations and recent immigrants who experience alienation or displacement. The internet has further amplified vulnerabilities, with echo chambers and anonymity fostering radicalization. By exploiting grievances, extremist groups can manipulate these demographics, making them prime targets for recruitment.”

When people use any aid or assistance for political purposes and deprive others of their rights, such behaviors lead to social inequality and injustice, which can push individuals towards extremism. Therefore, this indicates that the community was aware of these threats. Once people share this collective awareness, it becomes clear that the community recognizes the dangers, which makes it difficult for violent groups to operate, recruit, and infiltrate society. This shows the unanimous agreement in the community despite being neglected by the government. Yes, the violent extremists have tried to exploit, but the community was fully aware of the threat; therefore, the violent extremist organizations could not infiltrate or recruit on a large scale despite bringing aid during this calamity.

4.3 Discussion of Qualitative Findings

Whenever a calamity strikes, it destroys everything. A multivariate shock such as that of the 2022 floods brought with it complete destruction of families, shelters, sources of livelihood, and huge-scale displacements. Disasters, while on the one hand are calamities for the masses, on the other hand, provide opportunities for groups. This phenomenon is captured by the term disaster capitalism coined by Naomi Klein (2007) in her book "Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism". She explained the exploitative nature of groups, whether political or otherwise, when a disaster occurs; these groups exploit the affected to further their own goals. In this study, we conceptualize the climate disaster as an agent that intensifies existing vulnerabilities, leading to a heightened chance of affected individuals resorting to criminal activities and being influenced by extremist groups for recruitment (Aina & Ojo, 2025). This

indirect relationship between climate disasters and violent extremism has been the focus of interest for many researchers in recent times. As climate change and its effects intensify, disasters become more frequent, and the need to study the direct and indirect effects of climate change has become particularly relevant and urgent now, than ever before.

For this study, 30 interviews and 15 FGDs were conducted. The data were thematically analyzed using the analysis method of Braun & Clarke (2006). It was observed that the socioeconomic vulnerabilities that were increased by disaster-induced displacement did provide a space for violent extremist organizations to infiltrate and exploit the population, especially when the government is unable to provide relief services to the affected. Recent literature also backs this argument. A study conducted by UNICRI supports this claim and clearly says that climate change and violent extremism are linked through economic vulnerability, poverty, and food security, making the communities more receptive towards the claims and promises of extremist organizations in the fragile regions of Africa (UNICRI, 2022). The enticing promises of these organizations, combined with the uncertain conditions faced by their inhabitants, contribute to the success of their recruitment strategies.

However, various other factors contributed to the institutional space that the violent extremist organizations exploited. For instance, extremist groups exploited the absence of state machinery, attempting to lure potential recruits with financial aid, medical assistance, food, and, in some cases, shelter. The analysis reveals that the vacuum created by the government's inefficiency is reflected in various excerpts from the preceding chapters, where people express their frustration with the government, the institution they most look up to. If the government had reached the maximum number of affectedees, and had relocated them, and restored their livelihoods, the vacuum created by the disaster for violent extremist organizations would have vanished.

Another important finding is that the already vulnerable groups, such as women, children, PWDs, etc., were the most affected due to this calamity. Some had lost their sole breadwinners, while others lost cattle, livestock, and crops. Scientific literature and policy logic dictate that such a group should have been a priority for the government to support, and yet they were not. Therefore, this group was found to be most susceptible and vulnerable to extremist influence. Among them, the unemployed youth were a prime target of the violent organizations as revealed by the thematic analysis. Despite all these factors, the community's resilience and its awareness as a group were instrumental in stopping and blocking the

infiltration of the violent extremist organizations. The findings of the study are consistent with the theoretical framework given, which outlines a similar pattern by discussing vulnerability theory and the threat multiplier effect. It outlines that the displacement amplifies the vulnerabilities created by the disaster. When the vulnerable population suffering from the loss of shelter, unemployment, and psychological trauma experiences no institutional support, it creates an exploitable space or vacuum for the violent extremist organizations. The prevailing themes show that, in the event of a climate disaster, the vulnerability theory and the threat multiplier effect, in the presence of an institutional gap, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. The pre-existing vulnerabilities are not only intensified but also provide the optimal conditions and fertile ground for the extremist organisation to exploit this vacuum to influence, recruit and expand their agenda within these marginalised communities.

The study's findings align perfectly with the gap identified in Pakistan's climate and security frameworks. Policies such as the National Climate Change Policy (2021), the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (2013), the National Internal Security Policy (2018–2023) and the National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy (2024) acknowledge disaster response and resilience and mention counter-terrorism and violent extremism strategies that remain largely unpracticed. Not a single framework or policy in Pakistan addresses the critical intersection between climate disasters, displacement, and violent extremism. The findings underscore the critical need for integrated policy to target the climate-security nexus and protect communities from the harms and exploitation by anti-state groups while also making them resilient to climate disasters, thereby serving as a tool for fostering peace and stability in the region.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The research explores the effect of climate disasters, induced displacement that leads to exacerbating existing socioeconomic conditions of the affected population, and loss of trust in government due to failure to deliver in times of need, ultimately increasing the vulnerability to violent extremism. The population, which is already struggling and living hand to mouth, is displaced, forced to flee their homes, lose their livelihood, crops, and cattle, that is their source of income, and are forced to live in extreme conditions. The study employs a qualitative explanatory approach, where key informant interviews and focus group discussions were employed to collect the data. The data was collected from the climate-displaced individuals due to 2022 floods. The pattern of theme was seen in the key informant interviews conducted with the displaced persons, not only provided contextual depth to the study but also backed our conceptual framework. It revealed the pattern of how climate-induced disasters disrupt the lives of individuals, forcing them to flee their habitat, disrupting their livelihoods by destroying their agricultural lands and their livestock, fueling competition in the host communities over scarce resources, and psychological trauma that adds another layer of vulnerability, making these communities prone to exploitation by extremist organizations.

The results derived from qualitative themes effectively answered the research questions. Highlighting the effects of disasters that exacerbate socioeconomic vulnerabilities, which extremist organizations can later exploit to further their agenda. The findings revealed that the displaced population was facing numerous difficulties after the displacement, including increased poverty, financial instability, and psychological trauma, leading to depression, anxiety, and feelings of helplessness due to a lack of support from the government. Along with that, the loss or reduced income and declining trust in the government organizations, feeling abandoned by the government because of the little help they received, also showed a highly significant effect on vulnerability to violent extremism. When asked about the effectiveness of government response to climate-induced displacement and disaster, the majority showed eroded trust in government performance and underperformance in case of disaster.

A respondent of key informant interview (KII) said that government organizations favored certain groups and ignored the ones in need,

"Compare to the government, NGOs work door-to-door, but the people of the government facilitate their people not the poor."

"We did not receive any relief from the government. If the government had done its job properly, we wouldn't have faced these difficulties. The government has been inactive, and we have lost all hope. We are very disappointed with the lack of support."

Another one said,

"I only want death for the people in charge. They are the reason why 30 million people had to suffer. They are the reason why so many lost their lives. It is the height of insanity and the height of treason to let them live. They have to pay for their crimes."

This and many other excerpts in the previous section show that the effectiveness and support by government was not enough. The victims of the floods were frustrated and showed their discontent in the government institutions. While talking about the need and desperation for help, another respondent during an interview said

"We consider anyone who came to help us as our saviour, no matter who they are. We are poor people, and the one who helps us, we do not care about anything else."

When discussing the primary or significant loss they experienced due to floods, most respondents cited the loss of income and employment, as well as disruptions to health services. This indicates that struggling families in the pre-disaster period lost their sources of income as a result of the disaster, making them more vulnerable, and severely disrupting their lives in the post-disaster period. They also reported that the poverty level increased and financial stability worsened after the 2022 floods.

The respondents reiterated that they were in a miserable condition in post-disaster period, were left with nothing, and were struggling to live hand to mouth, during this time cash transfers through BISP were their only means of relief. This quote shows that how the financial stability worsened after the floods that deepened the despair and increased the reliance of affecteds on aid. As seen by this excerpt

".... There were moments when I would look at my wife and children and break down in tears, questioning whether life was worth living under such circumstances. The despair was so intense that I occasionally wished for death rather than enduring such misery. Currently, our survival hinges entirely on the Benazir Income Support Program funds that my wife receives. It is our only means of sustenance. Unfortunately, I am unable to start any business or work due to our dire circumstances and my physical limitations. I believe the government should extend more assistance to people like us—those who are struggling to survive and rebuild their lives. Such support could enable us to live with dignity and provide for our families without depending solely on handouts."

The above findings also support the vulnerability theory in the conceptual framework, proposing that poverty, socioeconomic vulnerability, and institutional gaps exacerbate the susceptibility to join violent extremist organisations. This also reaffirms the notion of threat multiplier, where climate change increases vulnerability, and other factors, like trauma and governance failure, indirectly intensify the risk of joining a violent extremist organisation. Many other respondents shared the same concern that increasing poverty and unemployment, as well as the erosion of trust in government, make vulnerable groups highly susceptible to exploitation by organizations, reiterating the concept. One said in an interview,

"People who are struggling with poverty, young people without jobs, or those who have lost their homes because of floods are more likely to be targeted by extremist groups. They feel helpless and may be drawn to groups that promise support or a better future."

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for integrated policies that go beyond the existing frameworks like the Climate Change Policy(2021) and Prevention of Violent extremism Policy (2024) currently operating in vacuum and address the socioeconomic needs of displaced persons, not only by targeting their economic welfare and introducing schemes that restore trust in government, but also by incorporating their preferences for the type of policy they would like the government to adopt to support them. Focusing on these can help reduce the vulnerabilities and risk of violent extremism in the climate-displaced communities. While the study focuses on the respondents from one district only, and may not fully capture all regional variations, however provides a solid base for the investigation across all the climate-affected regions in Pakistan. The intricate nexus between climate change, disasters, climate-induced migration, government failure, and vulnerability to violent extremism not only required driven

insights but also an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences that often stay untold behind the numbers, the very perspective this study sought to provide.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed based on the study's findings to combat violent extremism.

Prioritizing the Most Vulnerable Community

In the event of disaster, the women, children, transgender persons, disabled persons, and minorities must be prioritized for financial assistance and rehabilitation through targeted interventions like a rapid cash transfer program. Institutions, whether government or humanitarian organizations, should prioritize vulnerable groups in all phases of disaster response. In the event of a disaster, aid provided by extremist groups could lure the vulnerable groups by offering financial assistance and promising a better future, contingent upon their joining. The government should partner with local NGOs and community organizations to improve delivery and response, thereby minimizing service delivery and institutional delays in assistance. Furthermore, the government must develop policies to integrate climate adaptation and security strategies with strict monitoring to ensure that displaced communities receive immediate and necessary support to prevent exploitation of their vulnerabilities by violent extremist organizations.

Disaster Preparedness and Contingency Rehabilitation Planning

To minimize the adverse effects of disasters, the government should strengthen preparedness and planning, ensuring that if a disaster occurs, its impact is minimized. Early warning, disaster risk reduction system, and coordination among the National, Provincial Disaster Management Authorities, and local level departments should be practical and organized so that whenever a disaster like a flood may occur, the rehabilitation, safe shelter, food, security, and medicine of the displaced community can be managed in a timely and proper manner. The poor preparedness and delayed assistance by the government could heighten the desperation among the affected communities, which could lead to extremist recruitment. A well-developed contingency plan should be part of these systems to mitigate the adverse impact of disasters effectively and reduce the risk of extremist exploitation.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Building Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

The government should prioritize building climate-resilient infrastructure to support the rehabilitation of populations in disaster-affected areas, thereby mitigating the need for forced migration. A weather forecast system (such as one that issues warnings for heavy rainfall, floods, and droughts) should be efficient in enabling precautionary measures for better response and preparedness strategies. For this purpose, education, awareness about the threats, employment, and community engagement programs are needed to foster stability and resilience in the community. To improve governance and fill the institutional vacuum, the government must prioritize strengthening institutional capacity and response mechanisms by investing in a robust early warning system and resource allocation for emergency response efforts.

Crop Insurance for Farmers

Crop insurance may be introduced by the federal government for the farming community and encourage farmers through advocacy campaigns in each province. When a disaster, such as a flood or drought, occurs in any province, and the crops are destroyed, farmers may receive financial assistance in time for crop cultivation well before the start of the next cropping season. Such government policy will maintain sustainable consistency in agricultural activities, thereby avoiding crop failures, reducing agricultural production, and ensuring sustained farming income that alleviates anxiety among farmers and mitigates their vulnerability to extremism.

Provision of subsidized Loan Schemes for Farmers

The government should develop a comprehensive plan to introduce low-interest or subsidized loan schemes with easier payment plans for farmers, aimed at rehabilitation, crop cultivation, and land restoration for agricultural activities, to mitigate the effects of climate-induced disasters. Engagement and employment of the disaster-affected community, along with the restoration of farming activities, will protect them financially and shield them from the influence of extremist organizations.

Provision of Psychosocial Support

The disaster-affected migrants who suffered trauma are susceptible to being drawn into criminal activities by exploitative groups. As such, it is indispensable to provide psychosocial support in camps so that they can recover from trauma and can be protected from the influence of exploiting groups. As

discussed in the qualitative findings, the climate migrants suffer from trauma from disasters, which may lead to aggressive behavior, hopelessness, and depression when coupled with a lack of income, and could have devastating effects. So, the government should join hands with the NGOs to provide psychosocial support, along with medical support in the form of mobile mental health units, providing counseling in camps to help them recover from this trauma. The psychosocial support, when coupled with targeted support programs and financial cash transfer programs, will help build the confidence of the victims and enable them to stand on their own feet as soon as possible.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study offers valuable insights into climate disasters, displacement, governance failure, and violent extremism. However, contains some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in one district only, which limited the generalizability of the findings to other regions or Pakistan as a whole. Second, the data collection was deliberately conducted in June and July 2024, following almost two years of flooding. Although the data were collected from displaced individuals during floods, the bias in the responses may exist due to changes in household conditions over time. Thirdly, the literature review is predominantly reliant on African and international studies due to scarce availability of literature from Pakistan and south Asian countries. The study was predominantly focused on the perception of displaced individuals, so institutional perspective was not obtained and is missing in the research, however the future studies should incorporate the institutional perspective to yield robust findings and recommendations.

5.4 Scope for Future Research

The research attempts to examine the complex nexus between climate-induced disaster, displacement, governance failure, and susceptibility to violent extremism in the post-disaster period in Pakistan. The findings of the study contribute to filling the literature gap but also open avenues for future research that remain unexplored.

First, the current study faced several constraints, including time, cost, and access to disaster-affected communities. Data collection was a challenge; however, the findings do explain the vulnerability pathways towards extremism. For future research, a larger and more representative probability-based sample will be recommended to enhance the generalization of the results, as probability sampling will lead to better and robust conclusions than the non probability sampling used for this study. Future studies

should broaden their scope to conceptualize and measure vulnerability more effectively. This research focused on income, displacement, and trust in government; however, vulnerability is a multidimensional component, and the researcher should incorporate psychological, social, and political aspects to capture the complexity of susceptibility to violent extremism and extremist influence.

As there exists a knowledge gap in specific context of Pakistan, future research should consider the social hierarchies and inequalities in the form of caste and class systems. There exists a very strong caste system that is embedded in power relations and plays a crucial role in determining access to opportunities and resources. These inequalities in the form of a power and class system already exist, which makes these communities vulnerable. In the post-disaster period, the situation may worsen when the inequalities are amplified, leaving the marginalized group in a far worse state and more exposed to recruitment by extremist organizations. Hence, the research should be done to investigate how the caste system and gender dynamics influence the radicalization and extremism risk when coupled with the climate-induced shocks. The social and societal structure in Pakistan is also very strong and static. In an event of disaster, the marginalized communities face downward mobility in social structure, which reinforces the existing hierarchies. This shows that there is a need for comparative research to examine the community relations with respect to caste system before and after the disaster, and how downward mobility in the social structure affects vulnerability to violent extremism. Such research will delve deeper into the multifaceted area of study and will clarify whether these disasters only deepen the vulnerability or lead to new forms of exclusion.

To sum it all up, while this study makes a new contribution in the literature by linking the climate disaster with violent extremism and governance failure, it also underscores the need for broader and deeper research in this arena. By incorporating the larger sample, multidimensional vulnerability, caste and social structures, and power imbalance, future research can significantly strengthen both the theoretical understanding of the subject and policy responses at the intersection of climate security and counter-extremism.

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APPENDIX A

Key Informants Interviews (KIIs)

Questions

General Community Impact and Response

1. Could you describe your role or involvement in the community during and after the displacement?
2. What mechanism(s) does you/ your organization use to develop a sustainable solution, to uplifting target groups, in collaboration with federal/provincial governments, especially during migration?
3. From your perspective, what were the major impacts of the Climate-Induced migration on the community as a whole?
4. Which groups within the community were most affected by the Climate-Induced migration, and why?

Socioeconomic Impacts of Climate-Induced Displacement

5. How have the Climate-Induced migration impacted economic stability, particularly in terms of livelihood opportunities, housing, and access to services?
6. Have you observed any socioeconomic effects on displaced populations?
7. In your view, how has displacement affected social dynamics, or social support networks?

Community and Government Response

8. How would you assess the effectiveness of government response to Climate-Induced displacement, especially in terms of addressing both immediate needs and longer-term socioeconomic challenges?
9. What role did NGOs play in recovery efforts for displaced communities, and were they perceived as more effective or trustworthy than government agencies?
10. Have you noticed any changes in public perception toward government agencies and NGOs following the response?

Linkages between Displacement & Violent Extremism

11. Have you noticed any changes or increase in extremist activities or influences in the community following the displacement?
12. In your opinion, what are the primary factors that may contribute to an increased risk of violent extremism in communities affected by displacement?

13. Have any extremist groups approached displaced communities with offers of aid or support? If so, what has been the general response from the community?
14. How do you believe community members perceive extremist groups during crises – are they seen as potential helpers or threats?
15. How and why the risk of violent extremism increased for socially excluded groups like females, transgender and PWDs during and post-displacement?

Security and Vulnerability

16. Has the overall security situation in the area changed since the floods?
17. Are there specific groups within the community that you believe are more vulnerable to violence by extremist organizations post-displacement?
18. In your view, how do gender roles influence conflict dynamics, vulnerability to violence, or resilience to extremism within the community?

5. Recommendations

19. What steps could help to mitigate the risk of violent extremism in communities affected by Climate-Induced disaster and displacement?
20. How can the government, NGOs, and local communities collaborate to improve resilience against the violent extremism for displaced populations?
21. Would you like to share anything else regarding the impact of climate-induced displacement and its linkages to violent extremism.

APPENDIX B

Focused Group Discussions (FGDs)

General Experience with Displacement

1. Could you share your experience with displacement caused by climate-related factors (like droughts, heatwaves, or water scarcity) in your community?
2. Which groups within your community have been most affected by displacement? Why are these groups more vulnerable compared to others?

Socioeconomic Impacts of Displacement

3. How did the floods affect your livelihood, housing, and access to basic services (like healthcare and education)?
4. How has flood induced displacement affected your day-to-day life and economic stability?
5. What are the primary challenges you have faced since being displaced by the floods?
6. Have you noticed changes in social dynamics within your community after displacement? (e.g., breakdown of social networks, increased tension, etc.)

Community and Government Response

7. How effective were the government and NGOs in providing immediate aid and support during and after the displacement?
8. Do you think the government's response has been effective in addressing the socioeconomic and security challenges faced by displaced individuals?
9. Do you feel that NGOs and other organizations are more trustworthy and effective in your area?
10. Did the displacement change your perception of the government and its agencies? If so, how?
11. How has the community responded to the challenges posed by climate-induced displacement?

Linkages between Displacement & Violent Extremism

12. Have you noticed any changes in violent extremist activities in your community following the displacement? What changes did you observe?
13. In your opinion, what factors contribute to an increased risk of violent extremism in displaced communities?
14. Have any extremist groups offered aid or support to your community during or after the displacement? If so, what was your community's reaction?

15. How do you, as a community member, view extremist groups during times of crisis? Are they seen as potential helpers or threats?
16. What specific steps or measures can be taken to ensure that gender and socially excluded communities' considerations into violent extremism and climate mitigation activities?

Security and Vulnerability

17. Have there been any changes in the security situation in your area following the displacement?
18. Are there any specific groups or demographics that you believe are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by extremist organizations?
19. In your view, how do the underlying socioeconomic and political factors contribute to issues such as violent extremism, disaster vulnerability, and gender-based discrimination and social exclusion of marginalized groups in our community?
20. What are the gender dynamics around conflict and how do gender norms and realities drive violence /peace?
21. Can you share any examples or incidents where individuals or groups were targeted for recruitment by extremist organizations after being displaced by Climate-Induced disaster?

Recommendations

22. What steps do you think can be taken to mitigate the risk of both, natural disasters and the violent extremism in displaced communities?
23. How can the government, NGOs, and local communities work together to improve the resilience of displaced populations against the lure of violent extremism?

Closing

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about the impact of climate-induced displacement on your community and the potential linkages to violent extremism?
2. Do you have any additional suggestions for how to improve community response to disasters and prevent extremism?