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## Role of Marginalized Women in Shaping Environmental Activism in Sindh: A Case Study of Jogi and Bagri Communities

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the role of marginalized women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in environmental activism. Amid environmental challenges, this study tries to comprehend the contributions and effects of marginalized women belonging to the Jogi and Bagri communities that are frequently overlooked in dominant environmental discourses in Sindh. The study tries to understand the narratives and opinions of marginalized women from the Jogi and Bagri communities by comprehending environmental action through qualitative research methodologies that include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. This research venture is an interdisciplinary work. The work focuses on political science, environmental sociology, and community development fields of studies. The study aims to highlight the issue of environmental injustices and relevant aspects that inspire underprivileged women of backward communities to engage in environmental activism. The findings of this research venture provide a comprehensive analysis of contemporary information regarding the environmental activism led by women of the downtrodden class in the district of Khairpur, Sindh. The paper concludes that women from marginalized communities, such as the Jogi and Bagri communities in district Khairpur, Sindh, are involved in the promotion of sustainable and just environmental policies.

**Key Words:** Marginalized Women, Environmental Activism, Sindh

### Introduction

The deterioration of the environment and the increase of climate change is a global phenomenon. The growth of environmental degradation has become a concern of world leaders, particularly of the low emitter nations like Pakistan, where natural hazards and disasters are rampant, causing massive economic and human losses. The growing pace of environmental deterioration is becoming increasingly critical to acknowledge and enhance the role of underprivileged populations – particularly women- in global environmental advocacy (Petersen, 2009).

Women of marginalized communities at the forefront of their respective communities often face challenges such as discrimination in decision-making, mobilization of resources, and coordinating with community-based organizations in the process of maintaining sustainable environmental activities at local levels. However, the process is led by women's local-level mobilization and activities for environmental degradation and mitigation (Clark, 1996). Additionally, when it comes to environmental resilience, women from underprivileged areas frequently display extraordinary flexibility because they find themselves in the position to adapt to changes in weather patterns, shifts in agricultural activities, and water scarcity (Harper, 2017).

The studies (Richardson, 2011; Tindall, 2003) suggest that women in African and Asian societies – particularly from minority communities – have been active in preserving natural ecology and communities through the implementation of traditional methods in informal economic and agricultural sectors. For

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instance, the use of renewable energy sources for cooking and planting environmental plants in homes and agricultural fields are just a few mentions. Similarly, the studies of (Asif, 2003; Ajani, 2021) provide a dynamic look at the preservation of the environment in Sindh by marginalized communities like the untouchables, including Bagri and Meghwar communities in Thar and other places in Sindh. For (Evans, 2014), women working as social and political activists for environmental protection at the grass root levels from the destitute communities can be mobilized at the mainstreaming for they understand the severity and repercussions of damages caused by floods, droughts, warming, and heatwaves.

In addition, the province of Sindh is home to different casts, creeds, and tribes, which make it a diverse place in Pakistan. The empowerment of women from mainstreaming to grass root levels in different fields has been hailed internationally. For instance, Sindhiyani Tehreek is one of the many female political and social activist groups working to promote the voices of women at grass-rooted levels (Hussain, 2020). Similarly, the Aurat Foundation, Sindhi Women's Organization (SWO), and Sindh Rural Development Society (SRDS) are just a few mentions working to promote women empowerment in various fields. With the help of these organizations, marginalized women of destitute communities such as the Jogi and Bagri communities in district Khairpur have gradually established initiatives for the maintenance of a sustainable environment in Sindh (Sethi, 2018).

The Jogi and Bagri are two different underprivileged communities who have lived in the district of Khairpur for centuries. The Jogi community is a Muslim community, while the Bagri community is Hindu. These communities have been the native people of Sindh in Pakistan and Rajasthan in India. However, there are similarities in their lifestyle. For instance, these communities mostly live in the countryside with close-knit social structures. The occupations of these communities include working in informal economic sectors – mostly by women – and their lifestyle is mostly nomadic. Additionally, the beginning is a common element in these communities. The Jogi communities have their separate clothing patterns, folk music, and dance with other occupations such as story-telling and folk music. At the same time, the people of the Bagri community are deeply involved in informal economic sectors throughout Sindh. The women of these communities actively participate in economic, social, and political fields at local levels. Therefore, for decades, women belonging to these destitute communities have been playing a dynamic role in keeping and passing the traditional ecological knowledge for the preservation of a sustainable environment to the next generations.

To sum up, this research enterprise designates insolvent women from two indigenous hand-to-mouth communities living in the district of Khairpur for centuries. These downgraded communities include the Jogi and the Bagri communities. The history of these people dates to ancient civilizations in Sindh. However, due to a lack of education and traditional patterns of living, these communities could not develop their social status. Though they are straitened, their traditional work and environmental advocacy through traditional mechanisms set the foundations for this research. Hence, as an initial step, this study situates itself within the larger context of environmental justice, recognizing that effective environmental action must confront systemic disparities. The study aims to contribute not just to the scholarly knowledge of environmental activism in Sindh but also to inform more inclusive and equitable policies and practices by recognizing the agency and resilience of underprivileged people. It strives to build a narrative that recognizes and acclaims the vital contribution of spared women in Sindh's quest for a sustainable and just environmental future.

## Literature Review

Understanding the complex relationship between downgraded populations like women from underprivileged communities and their environmental action in Sindh necessitates a careful examination of existing literature from environmental studies, social sciences, and political science. The study provides a list of unaddressed risks associated with women of marginalized communities on their path to maintaining a sustainable environment in their respective regions in Sindh. Therefore, challenges faced by women climate activists in the countryside of Sindh are still unaddressed, which hurdles their social and political activism for climate change mitigation and adaptation. To address research gaps and broaden the scope of this research, existing academic literature is reviewed in the following manner.

## **Marginalized Communities and Environmental Activism**

The role of marginalized communities in climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives is a global phenomenon. The underprivileged communities in Asia and Africa play a dynamic role in addressing environmental challenges to their livelihood and the use of traditional ecological measures to maintain a sustainable environment. For instance, (Hussain, [2020](#)) examines the worth of women in marginalized communities in preserving natural resources and fighting against environment-threatening actions and schemes throughout Pakistan – particularly in Balochistan and Sindh provinces. His work recommends a shift from a top-down strategy to the acknowledgment of the role of marginalized women and communities as agencies to mitigate the effects of climate change at grassroots levels through initiating social campaigns.

## **Financial Aid and Social Networks for Environmental Activism**

The research produced by (Qureshi, [2020](#)) examines that financial assistance and arranging social networks are the basic pillars of strengthening and ameliorating awareness about environmental degradation and mechanisms to preserve it with the help of marginalized women from poor communities in Pakistan – particularly in Sindh. The social capital and networks, as (Putnam, [2001](#); Pretty, [2003](#)) write, can facilitate collective actions to protect the environment in the region. Therefore, facilitating marginalized communities – particularly women in Sindh, can harness good environmental results in the future.

## **Environmental Governance and Unrecognized Women**

This idea implies that environmental governance should be formulated separately that could legislate and implement an inclusive decision-making process. Most often, in marginalized areas of the third world like Pakistan, the voices of underprivileged communities and women are not given due importance in decision-making based on climate change. As (Aziz, [2003](#); Mustafa, [2014](#)) wrote, Sindh is one of the four provinces in Pakistan where under-representation of the destitute communities and women in environmental governance is a common practice. Similarly, in the remote areas of Sindh, destitute women from the backward communities in Sindh can also contribute to environmental governance. For instance, there are women in the Sindh Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan serving as senators and legislators belonging to marginalized communities in Sindh can promote this pressing need and awareness among the politicians and government officials to ensure the participation of destitute women in environmental governance (Aziz, [2003](#); Mustafa, [2014](#)).

## **Challenges Faced by Marginalized Women**

The findings of scholars such as (Ali, [2013](#); Ahmed [2019](#)) address a list of challenges faced by marginalized women and their communities in initiating and extending environmental activism in Pakistan – particularly in Sindh. The challenges range from limited access to resources and historical injustices to underrepresentation in the country's political system. According to (Ali, [2013](#); Ahmed, [2019](#)), women of marginalized communities in Sindh have also encountered these challenges – particularly women living in the countryside. Finally, (Ali, [2013](#); Ahmed, [2019](#)) suggested that to develop a strategy to address the issues linked with environmental degradation and activism, comprehending these challenges is necessary. Doing so will help bring impoverished women into the interplay of environmental governance.

## **Method and Material**

### **Method**

Since the nature of the study is descriptive, the study has employed the qualitative research method to conduct the interviews and analyze the primary and secondary data. A qualitative research method was implemented to understand the experiences and environmental activism of women in the Khairpur district. Therefore, in-depth interviews were conducted with female participants of the Jogi and Bagri communities in the Khairpur district.



## Sampling Strategy

### Purposive Sampling

The purposive sampling method is employed to select samples for the conduct of interviews. Specific participants were selected from those deeply involved in the field of environmental activism, and their experiences and relevancy to the objectives of this study were also taken into consideration. This sampling method was employed to conduct the in-depth exploration of the research statement and questions.

### Size of Sample

The study selected only 60 samples from both communities; thirty female participants were selected from each community to address the experiences, narratives, and ideas of political and social activism of these communities in addressing climate change in Sindh.

### Sample Age

The age for the conduct of interviews is based on the criteria of experience. The age of the samples is selected from 30 years to 60 years.

## Data Collection Methods

### In-depth Interviews

The In-depth interviews are conducted with key female informants from each selected community, including community leaders, activists, and individuals actively involved in environmental initiatives. These semi-structured interviews have allowed for a deep examination of personal experiences, motivations, and challenges.

### Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were organized within each community to facilitate group interactions and gather collective perspectives on environmental challenges and activism. These discussions aimed to uncover shared experiences, community dynamics, and the collective agency within the group.

### Participant Observation

Engaging in participant observation involved immersing the researcher in the community and attending environmental events, meetings, and activities. This method provided a firsthand understanding of the community's environmental activism, allowing for the observation of interpersonal dynamics and the context in which activism unfolds. Therefore, during the group discussion and interviews, observations of female participants were noted and added to the research.

## Method of Data Analysis

### Thematic Analysis

The analysis of data requires a particular method to take out the results. Thematic data analysis was used to analyze primary and secondary sources of data. Themes and coding schemes were also prepared to assimilate and scrutinize the interviews.

### Case Studies

This research aims to address the environmental activism of women from marginalized communities. Two ostracized communities of district Khairpur, the Jogi and Bagri communities, were selected as a case study for this research study. The Jogi and Bagri communities of district Khairpur are best known for their contribution to the promotion and preservation of the environment using sustainable patterns of cropping, planting, and farming. However, the role of these communities in environmental governance is the focus of this study. Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate the environmental activism initiated by women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in the district of Khairpur Mirs.

## **Research Ethics**

This study was conducted purely under the direction of research ethics. The participants were informed of an informed consent letter, the option of withdrawal from opinion, and keeping anonymity.

## **Consent Letter**

The participants were informed of the informed consent letter before the interviews were conducted. The letter included a brief introduction of the topic and options for withdrawal, time, and anonymity for participants.

## **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The participants were facilitated with the option of anonymity and confidentiality so that they could freely share their experiences on the topic. The names and other related information of participants have been kept confidential.

## **Discussions and Findings**

The study employed thematic analysis to investigate the varied roles of women from marginalized communities in fostering environmental activism in Sindh. The community interviews were analyzed through themes and coding schemes. The interviews were conducted with women activists of marginalized communities like the Jogi and Bagri communities living in the District Khairpur, Sindh. The results of the study are discussed below in detail:

### **The Environmentalism of Subaltern Women in Sindh**

The findings of the study show that the environmental activism led by the destitute women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in district Khairpur has a mammoth impact on the environmental governance in Sindh. The participation of women in local and provincial governance through political parties such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is no less than shapes environmental activism and contributes uniquely to the discourse of environmental justice, sustainability, and community resilience in district Khairpur. The initiatives taken by these underprivileged women are also encompassed by various aspects that together emphasize the agency and influence of women of these communities in the pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable environmental future. Therefore, environmental activism at local levels led by these women can harness better results in the future if these movements receive mainstreaming support for the maintenance of a sustainable and pollution-free environment in the region.

### **Traditional Knowledge and Leadership**

The study found that traditional knowledge about environmental preservation and the role of women as leaders in these communities often results in the protection of ecological sustainability. Women in Sindh possess traditional ecological knowledge of climate change and its mitigation and adaptation. When it comes to the local level movements on environmental degradation, they appear to be at the forefront by adopting traditional environmental methods and practices. For instance, in the desert regions of district Khairpur, women of the Jogi and Bagri communities work as environmental activists by implementing water conservation methods, pollution-free use of land, use of renewable energy sources, and sustainable cropping and planting sacred trees. Therefore, the study found women in destitute communities play a dynamic and leading role in preserving the environment and protecting the communities.

### **Susceptibility and Flexibility**

The study also found that the marginalized communities in district Khairpur – particularly women bear the brunt of the deteriorating environment and have become highly prone to the vulnerability of the changing climate. For instance, the rampant occurrence of floods, droughts, heavy rainfall, environmental pollution, and heat strokes have made life very difficult for these communities. In the face of vulnerability and environmental challenges, the resilience and adaptability of women in these communities are





remarkable, for they adopt traditional mechanisms to overcome these challenges and preserve a sustainable ecological order.

### Social Mobility and Awareness

The struggle of women in these communities – as highlighted in the findings – is inspiring, for they are the voice of environmental justice in the region. The study found that women of these communities engage themselves in the local NGOs and public sectors to raise their concerns for the mitigation and adaptation measures, hold environment polluters responsible, and address discriminatory policies in the region. They incorporate different cultural and traditional techniques to address their environmental activism. For instance, the use of art, music, traditional customs, and storytelling are among the common methods of awareness and activism employed by women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in district Khairpur. As a result, this mechanism ensures effective public awareness and discourses for the degradation of the environment and its sustainability among the masses at local levels.

### Challenges and Recommendations

The study found that the remarkable contribution of the Jogi and Bagri women is coupled with various challenges that hinder their process of creating a sustainable environment in the region. The challenges include the dearth of proper education for the women of marginalized communities in district Khairpur. The prevalence of male dominance and the patriarchal institutions prevent the education and political activism of women at local levels. Additionally, awareness about environmental degradation among the members of communities and the lack of measures for the mitigation and adaptation mechanisms at the local level also hinder the participation of women in these underprivileged communities. Moreover, the inadequate financial support for these women also prevents the emergence of movements on sustainable ecological protection. Finally, the underrepresentation or the small representation of women belonging to the Jogi and Bagri communities in district Khairpur in legislative bodies is one of the biggest challenges leading to the death of seriousness and eagerness of movements on the conservation of the environment.

With challenges comes opportunities. After the scrutiny of challenges faced by women of the Jogi and Bagri communities on their way to environmental activism, the study recommends some doable suggestions that can harness virtuous results in the future. First, there is a dire need for acceptance of the role of women's activism in the preservation of a sustainable ecology and environment. Second, women of marginalized communities should also be involved in the decision-making processes and implementation mechanisms so that modern and traditional measures can collectively be employed for the sustainability of the environment in the region. Third, national and international NGOs should involve women from destitute communities like the Jogi and Bagri. Doing so will ensure maximum participation of women in environmental safeguarding, thereby strengthening mitigation and adaptation processes in the region. Finally, there is a need for the amalgamation of modern tools and traditional applications for the preservation of environmental sustainability, which requires the participation of women of marginalized communities at mainstreaming levels.

### Conclusion

To conclude, this research venture attempts to address the multifaceted connection between women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in the district of Khairpur and the environmental initiatives and movements throughout the province of Sindh. The study tries to address the hidden potential of marginalized women of the Jogi and Bagri communities by expressing their experiences, stories, and contributions towards maintaining a sustainable environment, and the obstacles – such as socio-economic position, the influence of ethnic and religious politics – they encounter while providing services to the community for shaping a sustainable environment. The environmental advocacy led by women of marginalized communities in Sindh is an important course of action. However, it is unaddressed and overlooked in the region's fight for environmental sustainability. Though women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in district Khairpur encounter various economic and political challenges, their spirit to preserve and protect their families, communities, and environment is the evidence that makes them a symbol of strength. Since the rich landscape of Sindh provides a background for multidimensional opportunities – both ecologically

and culturally – the initiatives taken by underprivileged women of the Jogi and Bagri communities in Khairpur can harness good results for the creation of awareness to initiate a sustainable climate in the country.

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