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## Unveiling the Dynamics of Climate Activism: An Analysis of Youth Movements in Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

Pakistan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change - this calls for immediate and effective environmental action. The youth of the country are playing significant role in environmental activism, taking active part in environmental movements and initiatives. This study aims to assess the youth-lead environmental advocacy in Pakistan. Using survey-based technique, qualitative research was conducted, and statistical and thematic analysis tools were used to analyze the collected data. The study highlights the role of young climate advocates and the strategies used by them to get their voices heard. They do, however, face certain challenges that hinder their effectiveness as change agents. It is noted that if these young environmental champions are supported by the government and the institutes, and their inclusion in policymaking is ensured, they can be the leaders of climate activism and the driving forces of environmental action. It is anticipated that this research will make a meaningful contribution to environmental advocacy in Pakistan. Drawing on its findings, the government, policymakers as well as organizations can harness the potential of youth to foster positive change in environmental landscape of the country. Moreover, it will serve as a data baseline for students, activists, young leaders, policymakers and environmentalists.

**Keywords:** Environmental advocacy, Youth movements, Climate change, young leaders, Climate Activism

### INTRODUCTION

With the world facing unprecedented environmental challenges, the young people are being disproportionately affected by the intensifying climate crisis (Hickman et al., 2021). While they are cognizant of the risks of climate change, they are also well-aware of their potential and ability to take action. (Narksompong and Limjirakan, 2015). Globally, the youth have become key players and active advocates of climate justice. This advocacy has influenced policy debates at both national and global levels.

Owing to climate change, Pakistan is faced with extreme environmental stresses –



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heatwaves, water scarcity, floods, droughts, pollution, resource depletion – all leading to detrimental impacts on lives, livelihoods, biodiversity, food security and economy. If they are not paid heed to, devastating consequences are expected. Pakistan has been consistently ranked among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. The country's 68 percent population comprises of young people, so the youth can certainly not be left unheard. (UNDP, 2021). They are the active advocates of a green, climate-resilient and sustainable future. The youth-lead environmental organizations are a driving force for climate action. Their movements for climate justice, campaigning and effective use of technology and digital tools for awareness are notable. Besides, they are making efforts at local and national levels for community engagement and educating people about the critical importance of environmental conservation. Such initiatives validate their abilities and potential to be the drivers of change. Additionally, youth-lead movements have contributed to shaping policies regarding climate change. Through these efforts, young activists aim to influence the policymakers and promote in general public, a sense of responsibility towards environmental conservation.

Although young people are increasingly and actively demanding climate justice, they are confronted with financial, technological and logistical challenges hindering their meaningful inclusion in climate action. Considering their role as influencers and change agents, the youth must be empowered, their role in policymaking must be recognized and their initiatives must be supported. Their ideas and concerns must be heard and incorporated in climate policies. To enhance their potential and capitalize on their abilities, they must be offered full support with financial resources, technological assistance and guidance. Meaningful inclusion of youth must be at the heart of climate action. Furthermore, young activists, innovators, researchers and entrepreneurs must be encouraged to bring innovative solutions. Encouraging, mobilizing and supporting young people to take action against climate crisis is crucial for cooler, greener Pakistan and sustainable future.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The literature on environmental advocacy and youth movements in Pakistan represents a multifaceted landscape shaped by social and cultural influences, economic considerations and global trends. It offers insight into the youth-led environmental stewardship and challenges faced by the youth.

Khan and Khan (2019) emphasize the need of concerted efforts to address environmental challenges. Ahmed (2018) and Malik et al. (2020) have traced the origins of youth-led environmental activism in Pakistan and its progress over time. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) highlight in their studies how the young people bring innovation and a sense of urgency to the environmental action. Research by Martinex Soto et al. (2020) highlights how the involvement of youth in environmental movements leads to sustainable outcomes by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Ahmed and Khan (2018) delve into the participation of women activists and challenges faced by them. Research by Khan and Haq (2019) and Qureshi (2021) analyzes the influence of international movements on the engagement of Pakistani youth in environmental causes. Studies by Nisar and Iqbal (2018) focus on the effect of environmental education on the behaviour and attitude of youth. The work of Rasheed and Zaman (2018) sheds light on the role of universities in nurturing environmental stewardship and shaping opinions of future leaders. The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) offer insights into the perspectives and aspirations of youth regarding environment, biodiversity and sustainability (GYBN, 2021). Research by Wang et al. (2019) helps in assessing the effectiveness of environmental policies. Malik et al.



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(2020) explores the use of art, technology and other innovative strategies to augment the effectiveness of youth environmental action. Hussain and Ali (2019) underscore the role of mass media in public awareness and influencing policy decisions. Zaidi (2021) argues that social media is an important mobilization tool that helps young activists to advocate for environmental action and sustainable policies. The work of NGOs demonstrates that working collaboratively with different networks and organizations can enhance the impact of youth-led environmental movements (WWF Pakistan, 2021; Greenpeace, 2022). The work of Siddiqui et al. (2017) and Farooq (2022) provides an understanding of the challenges and issues that hamper the effectiveness of such movements. Young activists face societal, political and technological challenges, which need to be overcome for sustained advocacy efforts (Focus group discussions with youth activists, 2023). Iqbal et al. (2022) outline policy frameworks and measures to reinforce the youth movements in Pakistan. The interconnection of politics, environmental policies and youth activism is investigated by Malik (2018) and Khan et al. (2021), emphasizing how the success of youth-led environmental movements is affected by political landscape. Ali and Butt (2018) and Qamar et al. (2017) examine how political will is related to the success of environmental policies and effective environmental governance. Akhtar and Ali (2017) delve into the economic dimensions of environmental action, sustainable practices and green technologies. The research of Ahmed et al. (2021) provides understanding of the economic benefits of adopting sustainable practices. The nexus of culture, religion and environmental advocacy is explored by Usmani (2019) and Ahmed et al. (2021). Ali et al. (2019) and Naeem (2020) draw parallels of environmental movements in Pakistan with those in India and Europe, examining the differences, challenges and strategies. Overall, the published work provides understanding of various aspects of youth-led environmental advocacy. These studies are not only academically significant but also provide useful insights for the decision makers, activists and the general public.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

To begin the study, secondary literature on youth environmental activism in Pakistan, such as web blogs, media reports, articles, and research papers, was consulted.

A questionnaire was designed for systematic data collection and subsequent analysis in the next part. It consisted of well-structured, clear, and concise questions that directly aligned with our research objectives and covered the themes, viz. involvement in environmental movements, strategies and impact, and suggestions and recommendations. There were both open-ended and close-ended questions. The questionnaire also collected information on gender, age and location.

The questionnaire was refined after pilot testing, and then disseminated online for responses. The respondents were predominantly young people associated with various environmental organizations and engaged in environmental movements. Ethical considerations were taken care of and the respondents were kept anonymous.

The data produced was analyzed through statistical and thematic analysis tools and presented in the form of tables and graphs. In order to investigate the differences in the responses for both males and females, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed. All the graphs and figures have been prepared using Origin Pro 2022.

### **Research Objectives:**

- i. To evaluate the youth-led environmental advocacy in Pakistan.
- ii. To assess the experiences and perceptions of young leaders engaged in environmental movements.



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- iii. To analyze the impact of youth environmental activism.
- iv. To investigate the challenges that hamper the effectiveness of youth-led movements.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Individuals belonging to different age groups responded to the survey/questionnaire that comprised questions on various themes related to environmental advocacy and youth activism.

#### Section 1 (Demographics)

Cross-tabulation of gender vs age groups was conducted to have a quick look of the number of females and males responding to the survey. The gender composition of our sample is noteworthy as it provides valuable insights into the demographics of the participants of our study. The cross tabulation for demographic composition is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Summary of age distribution of the respondents

| <b>Gender of the respondents * Age of the respondent's Crosstabulation</b> |        |                                   |                        |       |       |       |              |        |
|--|--------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|--------|
|  |        |                                   | Age of the respondents |       |       |       |              | Total  |
|  |        |                                   | Under 18               | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45 and above |        |
| Gender of the respondents  | Female | Count                             | 4                      | 68    | 26    | 3     | 0            | 101    |
|  |        | % within Gender of the respondent | 4.0%                   | 67.3% | 25.7% | 3.0%  | 0.0%         | 100.0% |
|  |        | % within Age of the respondent    | 80.0%                  | 72.3% | 60.5% | 75.0% | 0.0%         | 68.7%  |
|  |        | % of Total                        | 2.7%                   | 46.3% | 17.7% | 2.0%  | 0.0%         | 68.7%  |
|  | Male   | Count                             | 1                      | 26    | 17    | 1     | 1            | 46     |
|  |        | % within Gender of the respondent | 2.2%                   | 56.5% | 37.0% | 2.2%  | 2.2%         | 100.0% |
|  |        | % within Age of the respondent    | 20.0%                  | 27.7% | 39.5% | 25.0% | 100.0%       | 31.3%  |



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|       |                                   |            |        |        |        |        |        |       |
|-------|-----------------------------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
|       |                                   | ent        |        |        |        |        |        |       |
|       |                                   | % of Total | 0.7%   | 17.7%  | 11.6%  | 0.7%   | 0.7%   | 31.3% |
| Total | Count                             | 5          | 94     | 43     | 4      | 1      | 147    |       |
|       | % within Gender of the respondent | 3.4%       | 63.9%  | 29.3%  | 2.7%   | 0.7%   | 100.0% |       |
|       | % within Age of the respondent    | 100.0%     | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |       |
|       | % of Total                        | 3.4%       | 63.9%  | 29.3%  | 2.7%   | 0.7%   | 100.0% |       |

Moreover, the demographics of the respondents have shown that less than half of them have affiliation with organizations, active for protection of the environment (Figure 2).

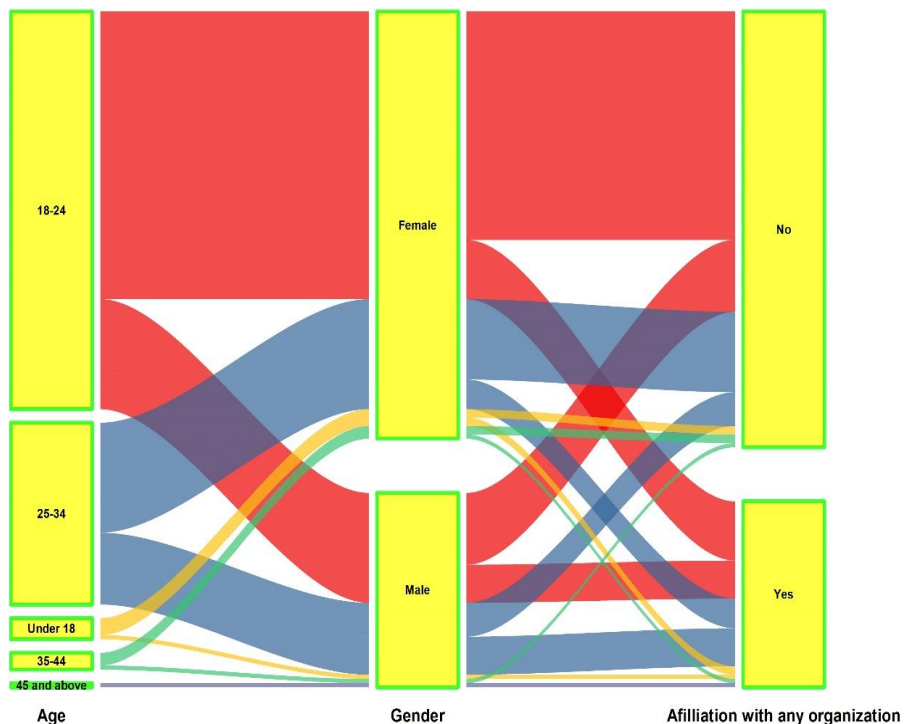


Figure 1 Sankey diagram showing the affiliation with organizations

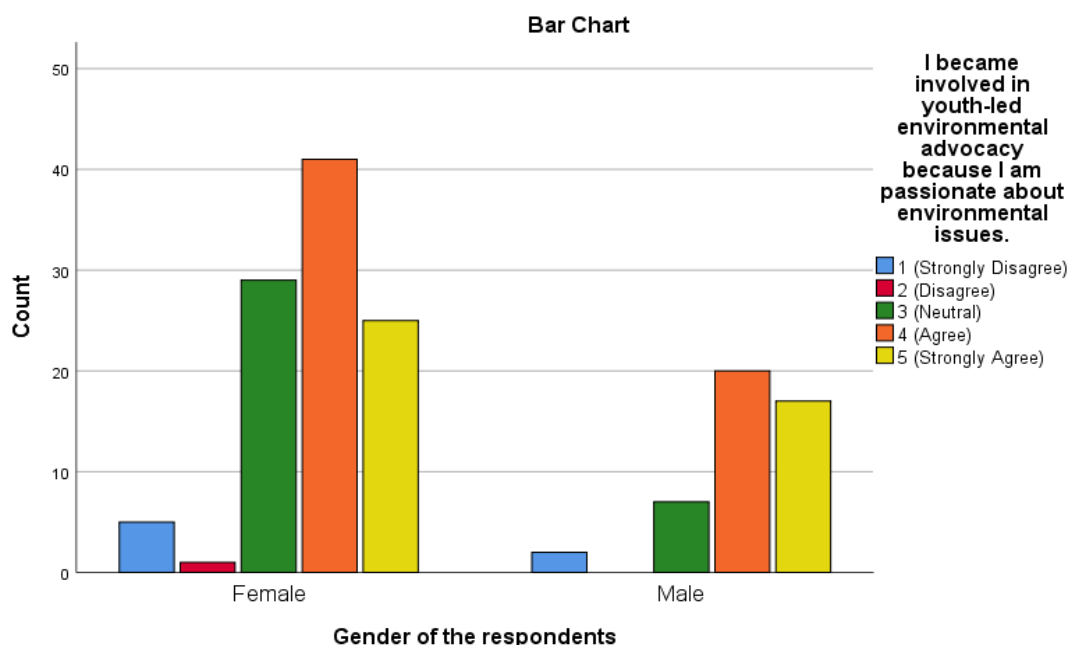
**Section 2 (Involvement in Environmental Movements)**

Pakistan's youth exhibit a commendable degree of awareness regarding climate change and



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the need to protect the environment. Youth participation in environmental movements was examined through a survey-based research project, as shown in Figure 2. The results indicate a noteworthy level of involvement from both sexes: 42% of female respondents agreed, and 25% strongly agreed. On the other hand, although to a slightly lesser degree, male involvement was also apparent, with 18% strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing. These figures debunk the myth that women are only passive victims of climate change and highlight their active participation in environmental advocacy and action. Rather, women take centre stage as leaders and important contributors to environmental causes, upending conventional wisdom about gender roles in environmental activism and highlighting a shared responsibility for solving environmental issues. In addition, it's a progressive outcome that less than 10 percent of males (2%) and females (6%) strongly disagree with their involvement in environmental advocacy.



**Section 3 (Strategies and Impact)**

The results of the study highlight that social media campaigns are effective instruments for raising awareness about environmental issues as well as for mobilizing the youth and amplifying their voices to draw attention towards the environmental problems . Street protests and demonstrations are impactful means of environmental advocacy. Furthermore, educational programs, workshops and inter-organizational collaborations enhance the impact of youth-led ecological movements.

For investigating the effectiveness of various strategies, a total score was calculated from the questions in section 3. The higher score indicates that the techniques are effective.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of environmental advocacy, an effectiveness score has been calculate based on various related questions. The minimum score was zero and maximum was 5; whereas, the mean score was calculated to be 3.56 depicting the high effectiveness of strategies used by youth on practical grounds. The summary of descriptive stat for this section is given in the table.

Table 2. Score explaining the effectiveness of strategies



| Effectiveness score |          |
|---------------------|----------|
|                     | 3.65986  |
| Mean                | 4        |
|                     | 0.11803  |
| Standard Error      | 1        |
| Median              | 4        |
| Mode                | 5        |
|                     | 1.43104  |
| Standard Deviation  | 8        |
|                     | 2.04789  |
| Sample Variance     | 9        |
|                     | 0.99395  |
| Kurtosis            | 2        |
| Skewness            | -1.25842 |
| Range               | 5        |
| Minimum             | 0        |
| Maximum             | 5        |
| Sum                 | 538      |
| Count               | 147      |

Moreover, to check the perspectives about the strategies, one way Anova Anova are given in table Table 3. Analysis of investigating the scores

difference between the effectiveness of the was calculated. Results of 3. variance (ANOVA) significant differences in

| ANOVA           |                |    |             |      |      |
|-----------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Strategic score |                |    |             |      |      |
|                 | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F    | Sig. |
| Between Groups  | 5.060          | 1  | 5.060       | 2.49 | .11  |
| Within Groups   | 293.933        | 14 | 2.027       | 6    | 6    |
| Total           | 298.993        | 14 |             |      |      |
|                 |                | 6  |             |      |      |

The results clearly demonstrate no difference ( $p = 0.116$ ) in the score given to males and females, which points out that both men and women believe that these strategies are effective. A similar behavior was seen when ANOVA was between different age groups and the score was calculated.

Of all the participants, 119 (79 females and 40 males) agreed with the proposition that the effectiveness of youth-led environmental movements can be enhanced if support from the authorities and policymakers is increased. 28 respondents, however, showed disagreement. From this result, it can be inferred that there is still a considerable gap between the seriousness of the policymakers and these movements; these movements can be made more profitable if they take responsibility and play their part in environmental action. The efforts of young activists are likely to be more successful if supported by political commitment. In this way, young environmental activists demand action from lawmakers.

In this way, our research objective of assessing the experiences and perspectives of young leaders was achieved.



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The results of the current study also identify issues and challenges faced by activists while advocating environmental movements. In spite of the enthusiasm they show, multiple challenges hamper the effectiveness of their environmental initiatives and movements. Technological and financial resource constraints, political influence and minimal environmental education were underscored as significant issues.

This shows that we were able to achieve our fourth objective -- to investigate the challenges that hamper the effectiveness of youth-led movements.

Overall, the research successfully evaluated the youth-led environmental advocacy in Pakistan, providing valuable insights into the perspectives of youth, their experiences and challenges. However, the objective of analyzing the impact of youth-led activism was not clearly accomplished. The assessment of qualitative impact of environmental activism is subjective and depends on context, thus hard to generalize. Quantitative measurement of outcomes was impeded by lack of robust data.

### **CONCLUSION:**

With the intensifying global environmental challenges, the role of youth in environmental advocacy is becoming increasingly important. Young activists are driving forces of environmental action in Pakistan, as they are actively leading and engaging in various environmental movements and initiatives. Women, who are often seen only as victims of climate change, are also effectively playing their part. The youth are using social media to mobilize masses, organizing demonstrations and collaborating with other organizations to aware people and amplify their voices advocating for policy reform. However, certain challenges like resource constraints, political inertia, lack of education and socio-economic disparities hinder the efficacy and success of youth movements. In addressing the climate crisis, it is imperative for Pakistan to tackle these issues and empower the youth – their voices must be heard and valued, and their perspective needs to be included in environmental decision-making. The leadership and meaningful participation of young people in environmental action and policymaking can help foster positive change in environmental landscape of Pakistan.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Ensuring the inclusion of Pakistani youth in environmental action and policymaking, and enhancing the effectiveness of youth movements needs a multi-faceted approach that integrates education, environmental governance, international collaboration, technology and economy.

Youth are the future of Pakistan; harnessing their energy and potential is of paramount importance. They must be equipped with the skills needed for impactful advocacy in political spheres. Policymakers should collaborate with youth-led environmental movements to ensure the participation of youth in environmental decision-making. Their concerns and perspectives must be acknowledged and addressed in climate policy. Young activists and researchers must be encouraged to bring innovative solutions, and supported through financial and technological assistance. Mentorship and incentives must be provided to young eco-entrepreneurs. Youth ambassadors must be appointed in different regions to connect with local communities and promote activism. Collaborations with international organizations must be facilitated to give Pakistani youth the exposure to global perspectives and practices.

By adopting these recommendations, Pakistan can foster an influential generation of environmentally aware and active youth, making significant contribution to efforts addressing climate crisis.



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## LIMITATIONS:

This study, however, is subject to certain limitations that could be addressed in future research. It is limited to the urban youth only and does not include the standpoint of rural youth and the challenges faced by them. The second limitation concerns the data collected as it is from limited number of environmental organizations in major cities of Pakistan. The research survey comprised of limited number of questions addressing specific aspects. Furthermore, the research was conducted within a limited timeframe, so it does not capture long-term trends and changes in youth perspectives and involvement in environmental movements. Lastly, the data collected was primarily qualitative, affecting the richness of results.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the findings of the research are valid and reliable.

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