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Rethinking our Lifestyles to Combat Environmental Challenges: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy

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Abstract

Recent floods and other natural disasters have impacted quite badly on the economic condition and living standards of Pakistan. This study examines Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy 2021 to see if it promotes ecologically friendly lifestyles. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the discursive methods and presumptions behind sustainable living promotion. The study shows how language affects policy and behavior. The CDA's theoretical framework—description, interpretation, and explanation—examined the National Climate Change Policy. The study found that neoliberalism, which promotes market-based environmental solutions, strongly influences policy. The study offers policy insights and recommendations to strengthen Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy's promotion of sustainable living.

Keywords:

Sustainable Living, Critical Discourse Analysis, National Climate Change Policy, Neoliberalism, Environmental Policy

Introduction

Dealing with numerous challenges including environmental issues and climate change and a few others simultaneously, Pakistan has considered making a National Climate Change Policy with the goal of rethinking lifestyles and combating these difficulties. The National Climate Change Policy was first designed in 2012 and later on in October, 2021, it was updated. The current study is an attempt to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the policy to analyze the underlying assumptions and discursive strategies utilized in the document.

Background of the Study:

As a developing country, Pakistan is facing significant environmental challenges. Climate change has hit the nation in a dangerous way with having serious consequences for the country, including recent fluids, earthquakes, rising temperatures, melting glaciers, changing weather patterns, and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. These challenges have the potential to impact the economy, health, and security of the country.

To counter these threats, Pakistan implemented a national policy in 2012. The policy's stated objective was to reduce global warming by encouraging more eco-friendly lifestyles and some other measures were also there. It was revised in October 2021, to accelerate the efforts to

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combat climate change. It tried fortified the communities against the effects of extreme weather by guaranteeing environmental sustainability.

The revised policy (2021) emphasized on low-carbon economy, sustainable agriculture and forestry, biodiversity conservation, and waste management.

To make this policy more effective, the responsibility was given to people, organizations and enterprises. It involved the people from every sphere of life including women, young people and underrepresented groups in the way of transition to the sustainable future. The main goal was to raise awareness and capacity building initiatives.

Statement of the Problem

Climate change demands an immediate and emergency attention as it is getting out of control with the unprecedented weather patterns and recent floods in Pakistan. So, the remedial measures are necessary. Though the development of National Climate Change Policy was a good step yet its effectiveness is still uncertain. To question the effectiveness of the National Climate Change Policy, one may suggest remedies in the document. Therefore, the researcher is aimed at to fill this gap by utilizing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as methodology for current study to examine the policy's discursive tactics and underlying suppositions. The study has been conducted to investigate the capacity of the policy to cope up with the environmental challenges, especially climate change by illuminating how policy affects individual and group behavior.

Research Objectives

The current study is aimed at:

1. To critically analyze Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy through a CDA lens, exploring the discursive strategies and underlying assumptions that impact the policy's potential to promote sustainable living practices.
2. To investigate the influence of dominant social and cultural norms on individual and collective behavior towards environmentally-friendly practices in Pakistan, and to evaluate the potential for policy to challenge or reinforce these norms in promoting sustainable lifestyles.
3. To provide policy insights and recommendations that can enhance the effectiveness of Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy in promoting sustainable living practices and contribute to a broader understanding of the role of policy in facilitating a transition towards a more sustainable society.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are following:

1. How does the language and discourse used in Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy impact its potential to promote sustainable living practices? What underlying assumptions and discursive strategies are present in the policy that may either reinforce or challenge dominant social and cultural norms related to consumption, energy use, and waste management?
2. What are the dominant social and cultural norms that influence individual and collective behavior towards environmentally-friendly practices in Pakistan? How can policy challenge or reinforce these norms in promoting sustainable lifestyles, and what are the potential implications of doing so?

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3. What policy recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy in promoting sustainable living practices?

Significance/Rationale of the Study

In the emergency situation, where the country is facing numerous challenges at the environmental front, this study is motivated to confront these severe environmental concerns. Although policy has the potential to shape sustainable living practices yet its impacts on Pakistan are uncertain. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to assess the possible influence of Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy on promoting sustainable living practices. The study used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to reveal underlying assumptions, power dynamics, and discursive techniques that influence policy efficacy. This framework has been utilized to provide insights and recommendations to improve the policy's efficacy in promoting sustainable living behaviors. The suggestions of current study have the potential to start a larger discussion about appropriate policy measures to combat environmental challenges.

Literature Review

Climate change is posing environmental challenges to the country, impacting multiple sectors, as noted by Tasleem Chaudhry (2022). The effect of climate change on agriculture is a significant apprehension, given its status as a leading contributor to Pakistan's economy (Khan, Bin, & Hassan, 2019). According to Khan, Bin, and Hassan (2019), the escalation of atmospheric carbon dioxide emissions in Pakistan is resulting in climate change, global warming, and environmental degradation. The escalating apprehension regarding the influence of climate change on human health is noteworthy, particularly in developing nations such as Pakistan, where water-related consequences, including water scarcity and severe floods and storms, are on the rise (Ahmed et al., 2016). Pham et al. (2014) has described the potential effects of climate change those are expected to disproportionately impact the impoverished population of Pakistan.

The National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan endeavors to address the aforementioned environmental predicaments by reassessing lifestyles and embracing sustainable practices (Abdul & Yu, 2020). Notwithstanding, Pakistani companies seem to be implementing a strategy of cautious observation, prioritizing endeavors that yield favorable financial outcomes, while concurrently striving to enhance their energy efficiency or emissions intensity in relation to their production or turnover (Abdul & Yu, 2020).

Being an agricultural country, the economy of Pakistan is heavily dependent upon the agricultural sector. According to Khan, Bin, and Hassan (2019), climate change is having a significant impact on the agricultural sector in the country, potentially contributing to a decline in agricultural exports. Strategies aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture have been incorporated into the National Climate Change Policy. Karpagam, Jebaraj, and Rajeswari (2016) have proposed an assessment that involves the development of crops with the ability to endure drought conditions. Currently, the country is exploring the implementation of sustainable energy sources as well as environmentally conscious technologies. This strategy is helpful to tackle ecological concerns. According to Usman et al. (2022), the National Climate Change Policy integrates tactics intended to promote the uptake of renewable and nuclear energy, in addition to the deployment of eco-friendly technologies.

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The process of urbanization is a prevalent occurrence in contemporary society, and Pakistan is not an outlier in this regard. The adverse effects of climate change, unregulated urban expansion, inadequate housing, and a dearth of fundamental amenities have resulted in significant social, economic, and physical challenges for the urban populace of Pakistan. Abdul and Yu (2020) have reported that the National Climate Change Policy comprises strategies to encourage resilient urbanization, which entail the creation of green spaces and enhancement of public transportation. The process of formulating policies related to the environment. Pakistan has implemented a variety of environmental policies in order to address its environmental issues. Notwithstanding, there exist apprehensions regarding the efficacy of aforementioned policies in attaining their intended goals. Hussain and Sabri (2014) assert that the National Climate Change Policy endeavors to tackle these apprehensions and foster sustainable economic development.

Behrens (1997) posits that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an established tradition that offers both conceptual and computational tools to uncover patterns that facilitate the development and refinement of hypotheses. The utilization of CDA proves to be advantageous in the comprehensive examination of underlying connotations within a designated social framework, as stated by Qian, Wei, and Law (2018). The discourse analysis of Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy can be facilitated through the utilization of CDA, which can aid in examining the implementation strategies and the discourse surrounding the policy. Agriculture is a key focal point in the National Climate Change Policy. The policy incorporates strategies aimed at fostering sustainable agriculture, such as the advancement of crops that are capable of withstanding drought conditions. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be employed to examine the discourse pertaining to these measures and the modalities through which they are being executed (Rogers et al., 2005). An instance of utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis involves examining the communication methods employed to convey the policy to farmers, as well as the corresponding reactions of farmers to the policy.

Renewable energy and environmental technologies constitute an additional domain of emphasis within the National Climate Change Policy. The policy incorporates provisions aimed at fostering the implementation of renewable and nuclear energy sources, alongside the adoption of technologies related to the environment (Takahashi & Meisner, 2013). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be employed to examine the discourse pertaining to these measures and the modalities through which they are being executed. An instance of utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis involves the examination of the communication strategies employed to disseminate a policy to the public, as well as the corresponding reactions of the public to the policy.

The utilization of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proves to be a valuable instrument in examining the discourse encompassing the National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan. Through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is possible to gain valuable insights into the implementation of a policy and the responses of various stakeholders. This can be achieved by examining the discourse pertaining to specific measures within the policy, as well as the broader discourse surrounding the policy as a whole. Additional investigation utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is necessary to assess the effects of the National Climate Change Policy and other environmental policies in Pakistan.

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Methodology

This study aimed at to analyze Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy using the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the research methodology.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of the current study is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as proposed by Tushnet (2005). The scholarly community has acknowledged the widespread recognition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) due to its capacity to provide conceptual and computational instruments that assist in detecting patterns. This, in turn, enables the formulation and enhancement of hypotheses. The methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is demonstrated to be highly beneficial in conducting a comprehensive examination of the implicit meanings within a specific social context. The implementation strategies and discourse associated with Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy can be analyzed through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Bulkeley (2000) posits that the CDA model is comprised of three distinct stages, specifically description, interpretation, and explanation.

During the description stage, the primary focus is on delineating the fundamental characteristics of the discourse pertaining to Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy. This entails the identification of primary stakeholders, linguistic nuances, and implicit beliefs and principles. The policy discourse may entail a concentration on the advancement of sustainable lifestyles, mitigation of carbon emissions, and augmentation of the utilization of renewable energy sources.

The stage of interpretation entails the examination and analysis of the significance of the discourse pertaining to the National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan. The task at hand involves the identification of the fundamental power dynamics, ideologies, and discursive tactics. An instance of this can be observed in the discussion pertaining to the policy, where a neoliberal perspective is evident, prioritizing market-driven approaches to address ecological issues (Vieira, 2020).

The phase of explanation concerns the clarification of the societal and political implications of the discourse. This pertains to the acknowledgement of the impact of discourse on the shaping and formation of societal norms, values, and conduct. Brookes (2021) posits that the discourse surrounding the policy possesses the capacity to impact the manner in which individuals and entities conceptualize their obligation to promote sustainable lifestyles and tackle ecological concerns.

Utilizing the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, the present study posits a theoretical framework to inspect the National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan with respect to its emphasis on fostering sustainable lifestyles. The framework presented offers a comprehensive viewpoint regarding policy, which considers the intricate interrelationships among individual, organizational, and environmental elements.

Analysis and Interpretation

The phenomenon of climate change presents a worldwide predicament that carries significant ramifications for the natural world, financial systems, and human communities. Pakistan, akin to other developing nations, exhibits heightened susceptibility to the ramifications of climate change, owing to its geographic placement and economic reliance on agriculture and natural

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resources. Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy addresses this challenge by outlining the country's climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy. This paper employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the discourse pertaining to Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy. The analytical process is structured into three distinct phases, namely, depiction, elucidation, and justification.

The initial phase of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) involves the identification of the primary characteristics of the discourse pertaining to the policy. The National Climate Change Policy 2021 of Pakistan is a comprehensive document that delineates the country's approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. The policy is centered on various crucial domains, such as sustainable energy, forestry, agriculture, and water resource administration. The statement underscores the significance of global coordination and partnership in addressing the issue of climate change.

The policy lists state, non-governmental, business and individual stakeholders. It emphasizes the need for a multi-stakeholder climate change policy and encourages all stakeholders to implement it.

It also emphasizes sustainability and carbon reduction. The declaration acknowledges individuals and organizations that promote sustainable activities and promotes a circular economy concept.

Description Stage:

The National Climate Change Policy 2021 of Pakistan is a comprehensive manuscript that delineates the nation's approach towards alleviating and adjusting to the impacts of climate change. The policy prioritizes various crucial domains, such as sustainable energy, forestry, agriculture, and water resource administration. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of global partnership and coordination in addressing the issue of climate change. The policy's language exhibits a notable emphasis on the advancement of sustainable lifestyles and the mitigation of carbon emissions. The aforementioned policy acknowledges the significance of sustainable development and underscores the imperative of shifting towards an economy with reduced carbon emissions.

The policy delineates various pivotal stakeholders, comprising the state, non-governmental organizations, corporate bodies, and persons. The statement highlights the necessity of a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders in tackling the issue of climate change. It further advocates for the proactive involvement of all parties in executing the policy. The policy's prioritization of multi-stakeholder engagement represents a favorable advancement in guaranteeing the involvement of all pertinent parties in tackling climate change.

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Interpretation Stage:

In this stage, the analysis of the significance of policy's discourse was conducted that encompasses the policy. To address ecological predicaments, the discussion pertaining to Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy exhibits a neoliberal perspective that prioritizes market-oriented approaches. It emphasizes the implication of involving the private sector in advancing sustainable practices and advocates for the implementation of a market-oriented strategy to tackle the issue of climate change.

The aforementioned discussion is manifested in the policy's prioritization of collaborations between the public and private sectors, as well as the implementation of market-oriented strategies like carbon trading and emissions pricing to encourage the adoption of sustainable behaviors. Although these methods have demonstrated efficacy in encouraging sustainable behaviors, they also elicit inquiries regarding the state's responsibility in overseeing and managing environmental consequences.

Explanation/Social Stage:

During the explanation phase, the scholar has investigated the societal and governmental ramifications of the dialogue encompassing Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy. The discussion pertaining to the policy possesses the capacity to influence societal conventions, principles, and behaviors concerning the advancement of sustainable development and safeguarding of the environment. The prioritization of private sector involvement and adoption of market-oriented approaches could potentially influence the perspectives of individuals and entities regarding their responsibility in advancing sustainable practices. The policy's focus on both individual and organizational action could potentially foster a heightened sense of personal accountability towards mitigating climate change. Simultaneously, the prioritization of market-oriented resolutions could potentially strengthen pre-existing power dynamics and disparities. The private sector's potential to exert a greater influence on the trajectory of environmental policy may result in the marginalization of civil society organizations and underprivileged communities.

The discussion regarding Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy exhibits a conflict between the principles of neo-liberalism and the concept of collective action. The policy underscores the significance of both individual and organizational measures, while also acknowledging the necessity of global collaboration and joint efforts in tackling the worldwide issue of climate change. The policy's prioritization of market-based solutions prompts inquiries regarding the state's involvement in overseeing and managing environmental consequences, while also reinforcing established power dynamics and disparities.

Conclusion:

The present study employs the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to examine Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy 2021. The analysis sheds light on the policy's salient features, underlying assumptions, and potential implications. Ultimately, the study concludes that the CDA framework provides valuable insights into the policy's discourse. The policy prioritizes the achievement of sustainable development and the adoption of a low-carbon economy, while simultaneously recognizing the significance of private sector involvement and market-driven

resolutions. The focus on neo-liberalism prompts inquiries regarding the state's function in overseeing and managing environmental consequences, while also strengthening established power dynamics and disparities.

Findings:

The research emphasizes the significance of embracing a comprehensive outlook regarding climate change policy that considers the intricate interplay among individual, organizational, and environmental elements. The National Climate Change Policy 2021 of Pakistan highlights the significance of a collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders in tackling climate change. It acknowledges the crucial role of both individual and organizational efforts in this regard. The policy's prioritization of market-based solutions prompts inquiries into the state's function in overseeing and managing environmental consequences, and reinforces pre-existing power dynamics and disparities.

Recommendations:

The analysis yields some of the following recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders implementing Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy 2021:

1. Balance private sector engagement and state regulation: Private sector engagement promotes sustainable practices, but it must be balanced with state regulation to protect environmental outcomes.
2. Increase civil society and marginalized community participation: The policy dialogue should include more voices from these groups to ensure their issues and opinions are considered.
3. Encourage personal responsibility for climate change: While the policy emphasizes collective action, it is equally necessary to encourage personal responsibility for climate change among individuals and organizations.
4. Strengthen international cooperation and collective action: To make significant climate change progress, the policy should emphasize international cooperation and collective action.

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