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A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF FLOOD DISPLACEMENT ON VICTIMS' SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN DISTRICT BUNER, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The harsh reality of the climate change induced disasters is that Pakistan is now more vulnerable to such events, and the recurring flooding has not only displaced massive numbers of people but also affected their livelihood and mental health as well. Although the physical and economic impacts of floods are well documented, the socio-psychological experience of those who are displaced is rather under-studied especially in culturally different communities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This study highlights the socio-psychological experiences of the people of District Buner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, who have been displaced by the monsoon floods of 2025, focusing particularly on psychological well-being, social relationships, identity and coping. The qualitative, phenomenological design was used, and 15 adults who became displaced as a result of the 2025 floods were interviewed using in-depth semi-structured interview. Data were analysed thematically in order to elicit similarities and differences in what participants experienced and to look for common themes in their stories. Four themes arose: Pervasive Psychological Distress, Shattered Social Fabric, Existential Crisis and Loss of Identity, and Coping Mechanisms and Resilience. Displacement caused anxiety, fear, grief, insecurity, and emotional distress, and affected family and community networks, which reduced existing social supports. Participants' sense of identity, dignity, belonging and purpose were also impacted as a result of the loss of their homes, livelihoods and familiar environment. Participants' resilience in the face of these difficulties was manifested in their family support, community solidarity, religious beliefs, social networks and coping strategies. The results suggest that flood displacement is not only a physical and economic crisis but also a socio-psychological experience which can affect individuals' well-being, social relationships, sense of self and community. The study suggests the inclusion of culturally relevant psychosocial assistance in disaster management and post-disaster recovery policies, as well as the reinforcement of community-based resilience programs to foster the long-term recovery and

health of the people who have been displaced due to the floods.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has emerged as one of the major environmental and social challenges of the twenty-first century. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, glacier and snowmelt, and increasing extreme weather events have heightened the risk of floods and other climate-related disasters, particularly in developing countries. The effects of such disasters extend beyond physical destruction and economic losses, affecting health, livelihoods, social relationships, psychological well-being, and people's connection with their communities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) recognizes displacement and migration as important social consequences of climate-related hazards and emphasizes that disaster-related losses can have long-term implications for mental health, social networks, livelihoods, and community well-being.

Pakistan is particularly vulnerable to climate-related hazards because of its geographical location, dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods, rapid population growth, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. The devastating floods of 2022 demonstrated the scale of this vulnerability. The impact was widespread, about 33 million people affected, displacement of over 8 million people, destruction of houses, agricultural land, infrastructure, livestock and livelihoods (Government of Pakistan et al., 2022). The disaster had a negative impact in several provinces, among them Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) where heavy rains and floods took a heavy toll in terms of losses and displacement. The impact was far reaching, as impacted households struggled with issues of livelihood recovery, food security, health, income, and housing. While physical and economic impacts have been sufficiently discussed, psychosocial effects of displacement have been less overtly discussed. Displacement can interfere with family life, social interactions, jobs, and their ability to participate in their community, and affect how they feel safe and belong. People who become homeless and lose their jobs and income will have feelings of grief, anxiety, stress, uncertainty, frustration and helplessness. The correlation between displacement, livelihood insecurity, and mental health issues has been recently discussed in Pakistan, focusing on the lack of psychosocial support among affected communities (Akram & Mushtaq, 2024; Shah et al., 2025).

The cultural and social dimension also affects the social and psychosocial experience of displacement. District Buner offers a valuable context for the discussion of these aspects as family, kinship and community relationships as well as cultural values and attachment to land are important aspects of social life. In a community where identity is linked to livelihood and family, and place, displacement can have repercussions beyond the psychological effects. Living apart from family and neighbours, lack of community support, loss of livelihood, and reliance on outside support can have an impact on dignity, social status, identity and belonging. Displaced people's conceptions and reactions to their experiences can also be shaped by cultural norms and values surrounding family duties and social roles. One of the other aspects is the disturbance of people's connection with their natural surroundings. Rural communities often depend on agriculture, livestock, forests, water resources, and locally developed knowledge concerning weather, land, and natural-resource management. Such knowledge is accumulated across generations and is closely connected with livelihoods and cultural practices. When people are forced to leave their homes and agricultural land, they may lose not only economic resources but also opportunities to maintain and transmit place-based knowledge and practices. Climate-related displacement can therefore involve material, psychological, social, and cultural forms of loss that may not be adequately captured by conventional disaster assessments (IPCC, 2022).

Social relationships can also influence how displaced individuals cope with disaster. Family members, relatives, neighbors, community

leaders, religious institutions, and informal networks may provide emotional, financial, and practical support. Research on flood-affected communities in Pakistan suggests that social capital and community support can contribute to disaster coping and recovery, although access to these resources varies among households (Akbar et al., 2022). Although there has been a growing body of research to understand the economic, environmental and physical impacts of flooding in Pakistan, local-level qualitative studies that explore the day-to-day psychosocial experiences of people affected by flooding are relatively sparse. There is especially little known about the impacts of displacement on psychological health, social relationships, cultural identity and dignity, sense of belonging, livelihood practices and relations with nature in District Buner. For this reason, the present study endeavors to investigate the experiences of the people who were forced to leave their homes due to the floods in 2025 occurred in District Buner, KP, qualitatively. It centres on psychological distress, shifts in social relations, issues of cultural identity, sense of belonging, disruption of livelihoods, attachment to place and coping. The study focuses on the experiences of those impacted by the displacement and seeks to offer a culturally informed understanding of the human impacts of the displacement and to inform disaster-response and recovery strategies that go beyond physical and economic reconstruction to include psychological, social, cultural and community resilience.

Literature Review

Displacement due to disasters is a social, psychological and humanitarian issue that has been growing due to the impact of climate change and extreme weather events more and more frequently. The impact of floods can be far reaching beyond the loss of homes, infrastructure and livelihoods. Climate-related hazards are cited as significant forces behind involuntary migration and displacement by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022), and climate change has been found to have adverse impacts on mental health and well-being. The impacts of these are not uniform, but instead are influenced by socioeconomic factors, social support, available resources, and individual and community resiliency. Displacement therefore should not be viewed only as a physical relocation from one area to another, but as a process that may affect social relations, livelihoods, cultural ties and psychological health and wellbeing.

The 2022 floods in Pakistan (PK) are a testament to the size and complexity of disaster-induced displacement. The Department of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (DoDMA) of the Government of Pakistan reported 33 million people affected by floods and extensive damage to house, infrastructure, agriculture and livelihoods during the Pakistan Floods 2022 Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PFPNA) (Government of Pakistan et al., 2022). The assessment also highlighted the significant impact of the disaster on the economy and society. While much of the initial response was directed towards meeting immediate humanitarian needs, the psychosocial impacts of displacement need to be sustained. The loss of homes and livelihoods for displaced people may also be accompanied by uncertainty, insecurity, fear, loss of social networks and challenges to reconstruction in everyday life.

Psychosocial impacts of displacement caused by flood

Psychological distress is one of the most significant impacts of being displaced due to a disaster. Flood survivors may experience fear, anxiety, sadness, grief, insecurity, sleep disturbances, and uncertainty about the future. Akram and Mushtaq (2024), in their review of the effects of floods and displacement in Pakistan, emphasize that climate-related flooding can produce significant psychological consequences through forced relocation, unemployment, disruption of communities, and loss of livelihoods. Their analysis highlights the tendency of disaster responses to prioritize physical reconstruction while giving

comparatively less attention to psychological well-being.

The psychological consequences of displacement may continue after the immediate floodwaters have receded. Individuals who have lost homes, possessions, livestock, employment, or family resources may continue to experience insecurity because their previous living conditions cannot easily be restored. The experience of displacement can therefore transform an immediate disaster into a prolonged period of uncertainty. Recent research in Pakistan has also documented continuing fear and anxiety among flood-affected rural populations. Ali et al. (2025) report that some rural communities affected by climate-induced floods developed a continuing fear of rainfall because rain became associated with the possibility of another disaster. They found that psychological impacts can last beyond the immediate crisis situation and that psychological needs are not always met in the disaster impacted rural population. The link between displacement and mental health is of special interest because displacement can deprive people of their known social and cultural settings, which are critical to their mental health. Losing a home is losing more than just a house or apartment; the loss of a home can be a loss of security, privacy, memories, belongings, and a familiar social environment. The concept of psychological distress can be seen as an outcome of several interrelated losses instead of a stand-alone mental health issue.

Disturbance of social relationships and social capital

Social relations and community cohesion can also be significantly impacted by a displacement due to flooding. The social networks offer emotional support, information, material support and a sense of belonging during crisis. Hence, social capital is a significant resource in the disaster recovery process. The study conducted by Akbar et al. (2022) on flood survivors in South Punjab showed that social capital was correlated with the socioeconomic factors such as education, occupation, land holding, income and home stability. Their results show that social support and community networks are not equally available to disaster survivors.

The fragmentation of social networks such as family, neighbours, friends and community members may result from displacement. This disruption can limit access to informal support networks that are typically there to aid people in dealing with hardship. The qualitative study conducted by Akbar et al. (2024) on the survivors of the flood disaster in Muzaffargarh in 2010 also bears significance for post-flood relocation in the context of social relationships. The study revealed that reductions in social capital, place attachment, reduction in livelihood support and rising living expenses affected the decisions of the survivors to return to their places of origin. The researchers also uncovered the social and psychological expenses of relocation, such as homesickness, nostalgia, and loss of social network. The results are especially relevant for the current study when they are understood in the context of the fact that the effects of relocation go beyond the provision of shelter. A new house can offer shelter from environmental dangers however at the same time reduce social contacts and disturb the social routines of life in the community. Therefore, both physical conditions and social integration must be taken care of in order to achieve a successful recovery.

Loss of Home, Place Attachment, and Identity

Home has social and emotional connotations, in addition to physical ones. It is a place where people form memories, relationships, routines, identities and a sense of belonging. Flooding, therefore, can have a strong personal and social impact when the homes are destroyed or lost. In turn, Akbar et al. (2024) show that place attachment was a key determinant for flood survivors' post-flood return to their home communities. They also put forward evidence that social, cultural, economic and emotional aspects of the relationship between people and places might account for their preference to return to familiar places.

Identity and belonging may thus be impacted by displacement. People living away from their familiar environment and community can feel the gap between their past and present lives. Temporary or unfamiliar environments can make the daily routines, social roles, social relations, and livelihood activities challenging. Changes to the familiar environment can then have an impact on one's sense of identity and place in the family and wider community. This dimension is particularly significant in rural communities where the connection with land and place could be strongly linked to livelihoods, family histories, social relations and community identity. Flood displacement can break these connections and add an existential element of loss. It is not, however, only property that is being destroyed: it can also be the sense of belonging, dignity, security and purpose in life.

Disruption of livelihoods and socio-economic insecurity

Psycho-social impacts of flood displacement strongly linked with livelihood disruption. Extensive loss of agricultural land, housing, infrastructure, livestock, and livelihood resources in Pakistan due to the flood of 2022 (Government of Pakistan et al., 2022). When farming activities are lost or jobs are not found, the poor rural household may experience a sustained financial insecurity. Psychological stress can, in turn, make social recovery more difficult, and economic hardship can exacerbate that stress. The connection between the SE status and disaster recovery is also seen in the studies of Akbar et al. (2022). They discovered that there were varied social capital resources across socioeconomic factors, meaning that social capital resources may be stronger for those with higher socioeconomic status. This indicates that there is social differentiation in disaster effects. Individuals and households with limited resources may face greater difficulties in rebuilding their livelihoods and restoring their previous social position. Therefore, flood displacement should be examined through an interconnected framework in which economic loss, social disruption, and psychological distress reinforce one another. Loss of livelihood may generate financial anxiety; financial insecurity may increase family stress; and weakened social networks may reduce the resources available for coping with these difficulties.

Gender and Differential Experiences of Displacement

Disaster displacement does not affect all individuals in the same way. Gender, socioeconomic position, age, family responsibilities, and access to resources can influence people's experiences of disaster and recovery. Recent qualitative research among women affected by the 2022 floods in Punjab found that women experienced significant psychological challenges following flooding and displacement, while resilience and recovery were supported by family relationships, religious beliefs, and individual coping resources (Ahmad et al., 2025). Women may experience additional difficulties when displacement disrupts household responsibilities, privacy, social networks, and access to resources. At the same time, men may experience stress when disaster-related economic losses interfere with their occupational and family responsibilities. The presence of gender roles and their interaction with particular social and economic factors must be taken into account, not assuming that all men or women are displaced in the same way. This problem needs special focus in the context of communities in KP. The meaning and reactions to displacement can be influenced by cultural norms and practices around family roles and responsibilities, social relations, livelihoods and community participation. The present study, then, also takes into account the experiences of the individual in their social and cultural context, rather than psychological distress as a distinct individual phenomenon.

Self-regulation, resilience and social support

While disaster displacement entails significant challenges, people are not just "victims. People and communities respond to loss in a variety of

ways that enables them to cope and rebuild their lives. Resilience can be the strength of the individual, support of family, religious beliefs, social relationships, community cohesion and a focus on rebuilding livelihoods. According to Ahmad et al. (2025), the women involved in the 2022 floods in Punjab adopted several coping strategies and exhibited resilience in the aftermath of the floods. They found that psychological resilience, religious beliefs and social support play significant roles in recovery.

Likewise, Akbar et al. (2022) show the significance of social capital among the survivors of floods. During the recovery process, the community can offer resources through community cohesion, trust, social support, and community leadership. These findings suggest that resilience should not be understood solely as an individual psychological characteristic. It may also be a group process with involvement from family, community and social institutions. Recent studies on the mental health and psychosocial support of rural communities in Pakistan in the context of floods further highlight the need for "community-based mental health and psychosocial support. Ali et al. (2025) suggest that there is a need to incorporate mental health services into disaster responses, especially for remote rural communities where mental health care may be scarce. Their work emphasizes the importance of culturally and locally available psychosocial support.

Mental Health and Disaster Management

There is a growing number of literature that emphasises the need to focus on psychological and social effects as well as physical reconstruction in a disaster management. The conventional disaster responses usually focus on food, shelter, water, medical treatment and infrastructure. While these interventions are necessary, the "ripples of displacement" show the need for more comprehensive psychosocial recovery measures. The mental health impacts of displacement due to flooding need to be given more attention in climate and disaster responses, as noted by Akram and Mushtaq (2024).

Likewise, Ali et al. (2025) highlights the need to work on embedding mental health and psychosocial support into the disaster-management system. In rural areas, community-based approaches may be especially relevant because they can be more likely to make service delivery available and accessible in the community, and make use of existing networks of trust and social supports. Based on literature, psychological first aid, providing access to mental health services, community support mechanisms, livelihood rehabilitation, restoring social networks, and culturally appropriate interventions are suggested to be included in effective disaster recovery. Recovery is not a one-off event, but a long-term social process, which should not be confined to restoring damaged houses and infrastructure.

Methodology

The qualitative phenomenological research design was used to explore the lived socio-psychological experiences of the people who were displaced due to the 2025 monsoon floods in the District Buner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The phenomenology approach aims to gain a profound understanding of the meaning and essence of an experience from the point of view of people who have lived it in a specific way in relation to a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This was deemed to be an appropriate method to evaluate the complex and multifaceted impacts of displacement during floods on psychological health, social relations, identity, sense of belonging and coping. The sample of 15 adult participants (8 men and 7 women) was selected using purposive sampling in District Buner from temporary displacement camps and host communities. The inclusion criteria for the participants were: (a) age range 25-60 years, (b) first-hand experience of being displaced due to the flood of 2025, and (c) willingness to participate and share their experiences voluntarily. They were drawn from different socioeconomic and occupational groups. The data was collected with semi-structured of open-ended questions. The focus of the interviews was

on experiences of psychological distress, changes in family and community relationships, loss of home and livelihood, identity and belonging, and coping strategies. Interviews were in Pashto to give participants the opportunity to express their experience comfortably and took around 45–60 minutes in total. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and then translated into English for analysis with the participants' consent, keeping the meaning and expressions as they were in the original language. Thematic analysis is performed according to six-phase process recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) from which the data was analyzed. The themes that emerged from the participants' stories were Pervasive Psychological Distress, Shattered Social Fabric, Existential Crisis and Loss of Identity, and Coping Mechanisms and Resilience. The ethical standards have been observed during the process of research. All participants were provided with informed consent, they were told why they would be taking part in the study, that they would be taking part voluntarily and that they could stop at any time without having to give a reason. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by using pseudonyms and by omitting identifying information from the transcripts and from the research report.

Results and Analysis

The in-depth interviews were analyzed using the four major themes that came out of the data: socio-psychological experiences of the participants from District Buner due to the 2025 monsoon floods. The themes capture the psychological, social, cultural and personal implications of displacement that can stem from a flood. The stories shared by participants reveal that displacement impacted not only on the physical conditions of their lives, but also on their emotional health, relationships within their families and communities, identity and sense of belonging, and how they manage their daily lives.

Theme 1: Common Psychological Difficulties

Sudden loss, uncertainty, fear and disruption of normal routines may be the experience of individuals as a result of disaster induced displacement. Loss of home and livelihood and the instability of temporary housing can still place an emotional strain on people. In the present study, psychological distress was reported as one of the most immediate and lasting impacts of displacement. They reported feelings of fear, loss, sadness, hopelessness, insecurity, trouble sleeping and frequent memories of the flood. The participants spoke of the emotions they endured due to the loss of their homes, livelihoods, belongings and surroundings. Some of the participants described how memories of the flood were still present in their everyday life after they had relocated to safer areas. A farmer, including Ahmed, 45 ages, who is a farmer, continued to be distressed.

I can't sleep, whenever I close my eyes, I see the water coming. We lost our house, everything and what we've created over the years. Now, when it rains, I get scared again it will be happening again. I'm alive but it feels like our whole lives have been washed away.

His story is an example of how the disaster continues to cause emotional distress and how it is hard to regain a sense of normalcy after being displaced.

Likewise, Fatima, who has four children, described the emotional strain she felt:

"Sometimes I'm not feeling good about anything. Even when I'm around my family I feel alone in my house. I'm trying to be strong now, but sometimes I feel like I don't have a single bit of strength left."

Her story has a sadness and emotional fatigue but also depicts her efforts to hide her emotional pain from her kids. In general, the responses from the participants suggest that displacement was not only a process of moving, but a persistent threat of loss, loss of livelihood, lack of security, and emotional turmoil.

Theme 2: Shattered Social Fabric

Social connections and community networks offer emotional, material and practical support, especially in time of crisis. Interactions with

family, neighbours, friends and community elders can create a strong sense of belonging and collective security in rural communities. But, flood displacement can affect these existing connections by breaking up families and neighbourhoods, and the loss of familiar places. The weakening of community ties and loss of key social places after displacement was a theme that emerged repeatedly in this study. Participants described how they had seen that displacement had torn their families, neighbours and communities apart and affected the informal support systems that they had relied on for emotional and practical help. Loss of community space also had an impact on a sense of loss. Malik, who is a senior in the community, stated:

Before, our village was like one family, we assisted each other in good times and in bad times, but now we are scattered and each is trying to reconstruct his or her own life; our community is broken now – we did not have anything to unite us anymore, the hujra, where we used to sit together and discuss community affairs is no longer there.

His comment highlights the importance of the hujra, and other communal spaces in promoting social interaction, the sense of community and collective identity. Displacement caused some difficulties in the household relationship and financial insecurity caused by a loss of livelihoods. A young bride, Rukhsana, spoke about the changes she experienced in her married life:

My husband is always angry because he cannot support the family, we don't really have much of an argument anymore, we don't care about anything that would have worried us before the flood, he feels helpless, that he can't provide for his family, I am stressed and worried too because before the flood we were in a good relationship.

The rising tension in the households was linked to the economic insecurity and disruption of traditional family roles that her account paints. Therefore, displacement did not only impact individuals, but also family relationships, community networks and pre-existing social interaction.

Theme 3: Existential Crisis and Loss of Identity

Home, occupation, family history, land and community life can be very associated to a person's identity. Thus, losing these components because of a disaster can leave not only a material loss, but also emotional. The displacement can upset people's sense of dignity, independence, belonging, and social identity. One of the specific features that participants mentioned were the significance of home and livelihood in their sense of identity and social status in the family and community. Participants' perceptions of dignity, independence, usefulness and self-worth were impaired with the destruction of economic resources. This experience has been encapsulated in these words by Gul Nawaz, a former shopkeeper:

"Without my shop I am nothing, I used to support my family and stand on my own, but now I have to rely on others for even my family's basic needs. I feel bad when I am unable to provide for my wife and children. I feel like I am a burden in someone else's house."

His story highlights the impact on his identity and sense of value, as well as his economic difficulties, due to the loss of his livelihood. Participants also connected their homes to family histories, memories and feeling at home. Salma, an old woman, spoke about the deep meaning of her loss of her homeland:

My children were born there, we lived there for so many years and each corner had a memory, and now the house is gone, and our memories are lost in the mud, we have lost more than a house, we have lost the place that connected us to our past, now we have no roots.

The loss of the house was not just a loss of property, it was a loss of memories, family history, attachment to place and a sense of belonging, as indicated by her account. The results accordingly imply that the experience of displacement during floods resulted in an existential loss; participants were challenged to sustain the continuity of their previous experiences and lives in the context of displacement.

Theme 4 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

While displacement as a consequence of disaster may create significant psychological and social challenges, people and communities also develop coping mechanisms to deal with disaster and to hold onto hope. Coping can include one's beliefs, family and social support, religious faith, and attempts to resume normal functioning. Resilience in this sense does not mean the absence of distress, it means that people can go on, adjust to hard times, and keep their hope despite great loss. In the context of this study, several sources of strength emerged as factors that contributed to the participants' coping with the aftermath of displacement.

One of the main sources of emotional support were religious beliefs for many of the participants. Expressions such as.

This is the will of Allah [God] and we have no control over it. We have lost our homes and all we had, but we must accept it and be patient with Him. Sometimes, this helps us to go through the situation and move forward in our lives.

The significance of religious belief to the participants seemed to be that it offered them emotional comfort, patience and strength in the face of uncertainty. Faith and family and community support were also significant to coping. There was a strong need amongst the participants to go back to their families and communities and to help restore their homes and livelihoods. One participant stated:

"As long as we get our homes rebuilt, I think we'll be fine. We've been through a lot, but we have a chance to rebuild our lives if we help each other and work together as a community.

Social solidarity and place attachment is expressed as a way to capture the participants' coping processes of collective recovery and social solidarity. They had a sense of place and meaning due to their sense of community. Overall, the experiences of the participants show how important it is to cope not only with their personal resources, but also through religious values, as well as family and community solidarity and hope for the future.

Discussion

The results of this study show that displacement caused by the flood in the District of Buner was not just a physical displacement, but a multidimensional phenomenon impacting on psychological health, social networks, identity, livelihood and sense of belonging. They talked about fear, loss, sadness, hopelessness, uncertainty, lack of sleep and ongoing emotional reactions and pain associated with displacement, loss of property, loss of jobs and familiar surroundings. The results align with earlier studies revealing that displacement can result in profound mental health outcomes in Pakistan as a consequence of the floods (Akram & Mushtaq, 2024; Ali et al., 2025). The results also showed that psychological distress was strongly related to the losses in the material and social dimensions of the displaced households, suggesting that psychological health needs should be regarded in the context of people's socioeconomic conditions in the aftermath of disaster.The disruption of family and community relationships was another important finding. The participants spoke of separation from neighbours and family members, destruction of community spaces, a decline in social networks, and heightened tensions in the home. The results of this study are consistent with the previous studies that have highlighted the role of social capital and community networks in the recovery process of disaster (Akbar et al., 2022). Loss of social capital, social networks, place attachment, nostalgia and homesickness are also seen to be significant consequences of displacement in post-disaster studies in Pakistan (Akbar et al., 2024). These findings suggest that displacement can undermine key sources of emotional and practical support that aid in recovery, thus increasing the difficulty of the recovery process.The study also reveals that the loss of homes and livelihoods had an impact on subjects' sense of identity, sense of dignity, sense of purpose, sense of belonging. Some participants made a strong connection to occupation and self-worth, and to ancestral homes and family history, memories and social belonging. This discovery

challenges the definition of disaster loss to only include economic losses and highlights the need for social and emotional attachments to places and livelihoods to be taken into account when recovering from disaster. Disruption of the traditional gender roles in the labor market also led to uncertainty and a loss of purpose among some of the respondents. There was much that participants were able to do to cope even in these challenging times, including religious belief, support from family, community and the hope for a new life. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Ahmad et al. (2025) which found religious beliefs, psychological resilience and social support to be significant sources of resilience to 2022 flood in the context of women living in Punjab. Religious faith seemed to offer the participants meanings and emotional acceptance, and the hope of returning and rebuilding together offered motivation for recovery in the present study. These findings indicate that resilience can be viewed as a process that is facilitated by families, communities, cultural values and social networks as well as an individual ability.

The study suggest that successful flood recovery will need more than just the physical rebuild and financial support. Culturally responsive mental health and psychosocial support, livelihood rehabilitation, and community-based recovery programs are essential components of disaster-management programs. Mentally ill persons can be supported in the work place through the use of trusted community structures (where appropriate) and professional referral systems. The results also indicate that social network rehabilitation and livelihoods recovery could be a part of psychological recovery. The qualitative design and size of the sample does not allow for the results of the study to be statistically generalized to all flood-displaced populations. They do, however, give some insight into the psychological, social and cultural aspects of the displacement of people during floods in District Buner and how these factors are interrelated.

Conclusion

In this study, it can be concluded that the consequences of the flood displacement in District Buner were not only the loss of houses and material resources, but also various other consequences. Participants reported experiencing psychological distress, disruptions to family and community relationships, losses in livelihood and diminished identity and belonging. The results illustrate that displacement is a physical, economic and also a social/psychological experience. Despite the difficulties, religious beliefs, family support, community cohesion, and hope for reconstruction proved to be significant factors of coping and resilience. The study thus emphasizes the importance of a disaster-recovery strategy that is not only physical, but also psychosocial and livelihood based, and based on community participation. The findings are specific to the context as the design is qualitative and the sample is limited, however, it is an opportunity to gain insight into the lived experiences of the people who were displaced due to the flooding in the District of Buner.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following policy level recommendations are made to boost disaster preparedness, response and long term recovery in the flood affected communities:

1. **Institutionalize Psychosocial Support:** NDMA and PDMA have to incorporate psychosocial support and mental health services formally in disaster-management policies, emergency response plans and post-disaster recovery programs.

2. Provide Community Based Mental Health Services: Provincial government to provide sustainable psychosocial and mental health services in vulnerable rural areas (Buner) including community based workers, referrals and mobile mental health teams.

3. **Livelihood Rehabilitation:** Livelihood rehabilitation programs to involve agricultural assistance, job creation, small business support and skills development to rehabilitate livelihoods. Economic security and psychological recovery are two areas in which livelihoods restoration can help.

4. Provide Long-Term Monitoring and Evaluation: Assistance post disaster should not only address the immediate emergency situation, but should also involve monitoring psychological, social and economic conditions of displaced populations for several years after the disaster.

5. Improve Risk Reduction and Preparedness: Provincial and district government should increase the efforts to strengthen early-warning systems, preparedness of communities for disaster, evacuation planning and public awareness building in flood prone areas to reduce displacement in the future and the associated social and psychological impacts.

Policy Monitoring Framework

NDMA and PDMA should develop a district-level monitoring framework with annual targets and public reporting to account the progress, at least. Indicators should be broken down by sex, age, disability, location and socioeconomic status where possible. Independent assessments by universities and research institutions can also be used to determine the effectiveness of interventions, for example in psychological wellbeing, livelihood recovery, social cohesion and community resilience. Disasters policy needs to be shifted from the relief-centric approach to a comprehensive recovery policy that includes not only the physical recovery but also the psychosocial, livelihood, social cohesion and community involvement aspects along with long-term monitoring. Measurable indicators can also be used to support the delivery and evaluation of recovery programmes for their scope, duration and success.

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