

Disaster Management in Pakistan: Challenges & Way Forward.

• Outline:-

1:- Introduction:-

- Attention grabber

Natural disasters do not become catastrophes because of nature alone, But because of human neglect and institutional failure.

- Thesis statement.

Natural disasters are inevitable and often beyond human control, but their devastating impact can be minimized through effective preparedness, resilience building, and coordinated national responses.

Major Disasters in Pakistan.

2. Understanding Disaster Management.

3. Major Disasters in Pakistan.

4. Current Framework of Disaster Management in Pakistan.

5. Challenges in effective Disaster Management.

(5.1) Institutional weaknesses.

(5.2) Lack of coordination and preparedness

(5.3) Poor infrastructure and planning

(5.4) Public unawareness.

(5.5) Climate change impacts.

(5.6) Limited financial and technical resources.

3- Major Disasters in Pakistan:-

(3.1) Earthquakes (notably in 2005 and 2022)

(3.2) Floods (especially the catastrophic floods of 2010 and 2022, 2025).

(3.3) Droughts (in Sindh and Balochistan).

(3.4) Man-made disasters, such as industrial accidents and urban fires.

(3.5) Heatwaves in (Sindh and southern Punjab).

4.- Current Framework of Disaster Management in Pakistan

(4.1) (NDMA) at the federal level

(4.2) Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs)

(4.3) District Disaster Management Units (DDMUs).

(4.4) National Disaster Management Ordinance (2006).

6.- Way Forward.

Strengthening Disaster Resilience.

(6.1) Institutional reforms and capacity Building.

(6.2) Modern early warning and forecasting systems.

(6.3) Climate - Adaptive infrastructure

(6.4) Education and Awareness.

(6.5) International cooperation and funding

7.- Conclusion.

Disasters in Pakistan are not merely acts of nature; they are often the result of human negligence and weak governance.

The Essay.

"We cannot stop natural disasters, but we can arm ourselves with knowledge: So many lives would not have to be lost if there was enough disaster preparedness."

of human life, but in recent years, their frequency and intensity have increased across the world. Whether it is an earthquake, flood, drought, or heatwave, no country remains untouched. Pakistan, because of its geographical location, varied climate, and weak infrastructure, faces disasters almost every year. These disasters bring great suffering to people, destroy property, and slow down the country's development. Effective disaster management, therefore, has become not only a humanitarian need but also a matter of national security and economic stability. While Pakistan has made some progress since the 2005 earthquake, many challenges still remain in preparing for and responding to disasters. With stronger institutions, better planning, and community awareness, the country can move towards a safer and more resilient future.

Pakistan has faced many natural and man made - disaster over the years.

The earthquake of 2005 in northern Pakistan was one of the most devastating events in the country's history.

More than 80,000 people lost their lives, and millions were left homeless.

In 2010, the super floods affected almost 20 million people and destroyed infrastructure worth billions of dollars. Again in 2022, Pakistan suffered from catastrophic floods caused by unusual monsoon rains, affecting one-third of the country and displacing around 33 million people.

The world Bank estimated the damage at more than 30 billion dollars. Besides these, Pakistan also experiences droughts in Sindh and Balochistan, glacial lake outburst floods in northern areas, heatwaves in Karachi and Southern Punjab, and cyclones near coastal regions, these disasters are becoming more frequent.

because of climate change, deforestation, and weak planning.

To respond to such challenges, Pakistan established a proper institutional framework after the 2005 earthquake. The government created the national Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the national Disaster Management Ordinance of 2006. Later, the framework expanded to include provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) and district ^{Disaster} Management Units (DPMUs).

These institutions are responsible for preparing disaster management plans, coordinating rescue and relief operations, and ensuring public safety.

The national Disaster Risk Management Framework (NDRMF) also provides guidelines for prevention and recovery. Along with government institutions, the Pakistan Army, NGOs, and international organizations like UNDP and the Red Crescent Society also play important

roles in relief efforts. However, despite these structures, the system often fails to perform efficiently due to weak coordination, limited resources, and lack of proactive planning.

There are several challenges that limit effective disaster management in Pakistan. One of the main problems is weak institutional coordination. NDMA, PDMA's, and district administrations often work in isolation and lack clear lines of authority. During emergencies, this confusion causes delays in rescue and relief operations. Bureaucratic red tape and political interference further slow decision-making. Another major issue is poor urban and infrastructure planning. Cities like Karachi and Lahore have grown rapidly without proper drainage, waste management, or building regulations. Encroachments on floodplains and river banks increase the risk of flooding every year. Similarly, in northern Pakistan, buildings often ignore seismic

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safety standards, making them vulnerable to earthquakes.

Inadequate early warning systems also make Pakistan more exposed to disasters. Although the Pakistan Meteorological Department provides forecasts, they are often late or not properly communicated to local communities. Many rural areas lack access to modern communication systems, so people remain unaware of upcoming risks. During the 2022 floods, for example, many families were trapped because they did not receive warnings in time. Financial constraints are another serious problem. The national budget for disaster management is less than 0.5% of GDP, which is insufficient for large-scale preparedness and response. The country often depends on foreign aid after disasters, which delays recovery and creates long-term dependency. Public awareness and education are also missing links in Pakistan's

disaster management chain. Most people are unaware of how to act during emergencies such as earthquakes or floods. Schools, workplaces, and communities rarely conduct drills or training programs. As a result, panic spreads quickly when disasters strike. Climate change further intensifies these vulnerabilities. Pakistan ranks among the top ten countries most affected by climate change, according to the Global Climate Change, according to the Risk Index 2023. Rapid glacial melting, irregular monsoon patterns and rising sea levels all increase the frequency of floods and droughts. Environmental negligence, such as deforestation and unregulated construction, adds to the crises. Political instability and lack of policy continuity also weaken the overall systems, as every new government tends to start fresh instead of improving ongoing programs.

The impact of these disasters on Pakistan's society and economy is massive. Thousands of people lose their lives every year and millions become displaced. Agriculture the backbone of Pakistan's economy suffers the most, as floods and draughts destroy crops and livestock. Infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals is damaged, and rebuilding requires years and billions of rupees. The education sector also faces setbacks, as thousands of schools are destroyed or converted into shelters. Health crises follow disasters, with outbreaks of diseases like cholera and malaria. The psychological impact is equally serious - loss of homes and loved ones causes deep trauma and hopelessness among survivors.

Pakistan's history provides several lessons from past disasters. The 2005 earthquake revealed how unprepared the country was for natural calamities but also encouraged

institutional reform. It led to the creation of NDMA and other management bodies. The 2010 floods highlighted the weaknesses of governance, poor coordination, and dependence on international donors.

The 2022 floods demonstrated the increasing impact of climate adaptation strategies. Each of these disasters has been a painful reminder of how lack of preparation can turn a natural hazard into a national tragedy.

To move forward, Pakistan must focus on strengthening its institutional framework. NDMA and PDMA's should be given greater autonomy, technical capacity, and financial resources. Disaster management must be decentralized so that district-level committees can respond faster and more effectively. Coordination between government agencies, armed forces, and NGOs should be improved through joint planning and communication systems.

Alongside institutional reforms, Pakistan needs to integrate climate change adaptation into all levels of national planning. The national Climate change policy (2021) must be fully implemented, and all development projects should include disaster risk reduction measures.

In conclusion, Pakistan's experience with disasters shows that while nature cannot be controlled, its impacts can be ~~certainly~~ be reduced through preparedness and responsibilities. The country's vulnerability arises not only from its geography but also from weak institutions, poor planning and lack of awareness. Yet the path forward is clear: stronger institutions, better coordination, modern technology, and climate-resilient infrastructure can transform Pakistan's disaster management systems. Community participation, education, and faith-based awareness will strengthen this effort further.