

Fatalistic: The Land of Sufi and Allah *Jey Likhay Khay*

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ABSTRACT

Flood has been noted as one of the major natural disaster contributors in the world causing huge suffering to human beings. Majority of flood victims link natural disaster to an act of God, whereas God is punishing human beings because of sins committed by individuals. However, Pakistani society, which is deeply intertwined with religion, hence, its flood related narratives must have impact on its flood experiences. Since present research participants are *Kacha* farmers from Sindh, province of Pakistan and they are prone to flooding. Thus, present research investigated flood narratives impacted by religious beliefs. This research study employed qualitative research methodology and recorded flood narratives of 31 research participants. This research design is appropriated for current research and subsequently a thematic analysis was performed. The key finding noted that *Kacha* farmers strongly believe in Sufism, hence they supposed that they are protected by Sufi saints, whose tombs are near flood site. Moreover, they also viewed that floods are God's wrath upon those individuals who have committed sins and must be punished. These flood narratives contradict with modern flood hazard management practices in the developed countries who firmly argue that any flood disaster is subjected to human act and thus concerned people are accountable. This is sharp contrast with the present finding where *Kacha* farmers link natural disasters to act of God thus, all related officials and individuals absolve themselves from accountability about flood related management decisions.

KEYWORDS: Floods, *Kacha* Farmers, Religion, Sindh, Sufiism.

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INTRODUCTION

Flood perils are one of many serious challenges for humankind on earth. Humans are fighting with floods with inception of civilization till this date. Similarly, scholars in the past noted that for hundred years, floods contributed to one of the major natural disasters causing around this world (Adikari&Yoshitani, 2009). In addition, Asian Development Bank (ADB), stated that floods attributed 84% of all calamity-related deaths between the year 2000 to 2005 and 65% of calamity-related to monetary deprivation between 1992 and 2001 (ADB, 2009). Globally, flood was responsible for extensive losses and killed 6.9 million people causing hardships to 3.6 billion citizens from the year 1900 to 2012 (Ali, 2013).

Moreover, majority of floods in the developing countries are victims of riverine floods and are linked to agriculture segment. Consequently, farmers are worse affected by floods. Agriculture of Pakistan is the pillar of economy. Agriculture's contribute in Pakistan's economy is 21% in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generating employment for 24 million individuals, hence, 47% of the total labour force of the

country is employed by this sector (Spielman, Malik, Dorosh& Ahmad, 2016). Conversely, 63% of the Pakistan's population resides in rural area and relate to agriculture directly or indirectly for their livelihood (Spielman et al., 2016).

Pakistan has many large rivers; hence the country is susceptible to natural catastrophe like, floods. Floods are not a recent problem in Pakistan, and their occurrences is frequent, thus these flood disasters are probably to continue for many years. Floods in Pakistan killed almost 2000 people in the year, 2010, with heavy losses of 450,000 livestock, and 2.2 million hectares of crop distressing 20 million people that caused large-scale sufferings (Disaster Emergency Committee, 2014).

Brief History of Flood in Pakistan

The data in Table 1 shows the people impacted by floods in Pakistan. Majority of floods are connected to riverine floods in Pakistan (Aslam, 2018). Moreover, the Indus River is one of the major irrigation sources to cultivate the major agricultural land in the country. Therefore, major portion of population rely for their livelihoods on agriculture, thus inevitability making them suspect to flood hazards.

Table 1: History of Floods in Pakistan by Federal Flood Commission (FFC)

Serial No.	Year	Direct losses (US\$ million) @1US\$-PKR 86	Lost Lives	Affected villages	Flooded area (Sq-km)
1	1950	488	2,190	10,000	17,920
2	1955	378	679	6,945	20,480
3	1956	318	160	11,609	74,406
4	1957	301	83	4,498	16,003
5	1959	234	88	3,902	10,424
6	1973	5134	474	9,719	41,472
7	1975	684	126	8,628	34,931
8	1976	3485	425	18,390	81,920
9	1977	338	848	2,185	4,657
10	1978	2227	393	9,199	30,597
11	1981	299	82	2,071	4,191

12	1983	135	39	643	1,882
13	1984	75	42	251	1,093
14	1988	858	508	100	6,144
15	1992	3010	1,008	13,208	38,758
16	1994	843	431	1,622	5,568
17	1995	376	591	6,852	16,686
18	2010	10,000 @ 1US\$-PKR 86	1,985	17,553	160,000
19	2011	3730* @ 1US\$-PKR 94	516	38,700	27,581
20	2012	2640** @ 1US\$-PKR 95	571	14,159	4,746
21	2013	2,000^ @ 1US\$-PKR 98	333	8,297	4,483
22	2014	440^^ @ 1US\$-PKR 100.89	367	4,065	9,779
23	2015	170# @ 1US\$-PKR 105	238	4,634	2,877
24	2016	6# @ 1US\$-PKR 104.81	153	45	-
25	2017	-	172	-	-
26	2018	-	88	-	-
Total		38,171	12,418	197,275	616,598

*Economic Survey of Pakistan 2011-12,

**NDMA, ^Thomson Reuters Foundation,

^^Economic Survey of Pakistan 2014-2015, #Based on Press Information Department (PIDs) & Fair Labour Association (FLA) reports related to irrigation, drainages & flood protection infrastructure only. **Source:** FFC (2018)

Floods in Sindh: The Case of Mighty River Indus

Indus River is more than 3,000-km long approximately, originating from Mountains of Western Tibet near Lake Mansarovar, China, going through India and passing through major portion of

Pakistan before ending finally in the Arabian Sea, and claimed as one of the biggest rivers in Asia (Kazi, 2014). Indus river goes through various countries, however, 65% of the Indus Basin, lies in Pakistan covering approximately 75% area of the region (Kazi, 2014). River Indus length in Pakistan is 2,735 and were also joined by other tributaries including, the Beas, Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab, Jhelum Rivers and western tributary Kabul River (see Figure 1) (Kazi, 2014). The upper area of Indus river is situated in Punjab province of Pakistan, and lower part of River Indus lies in Sindh province of Pakistan.

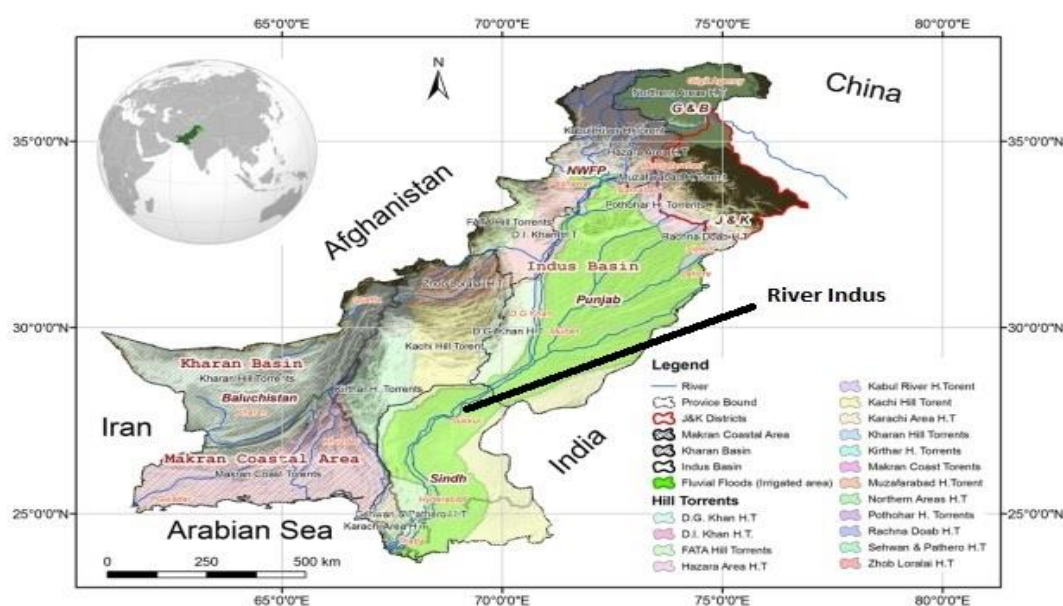
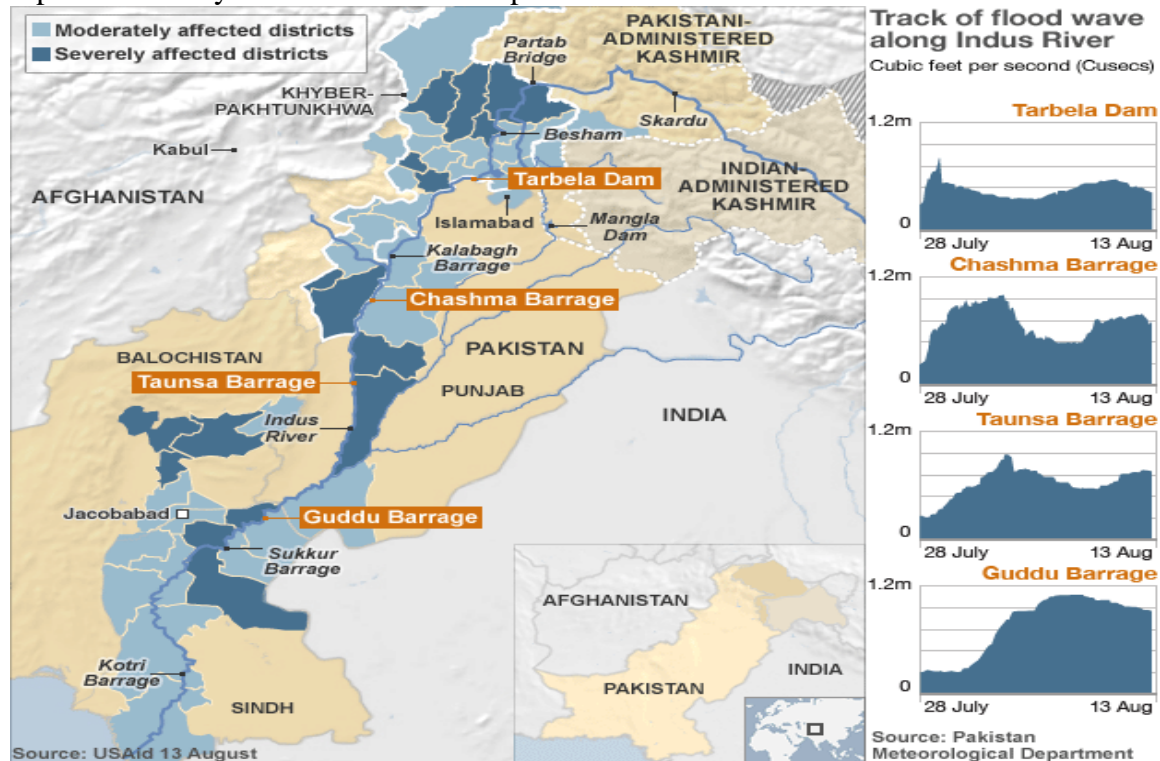


Figure 1: Map of Indus Basin River System in Pakistan (Kazi, 2014)

The 2010 riverine flood was in the history of Pakistan (see Figure 2 and affected area visible from the map) unprecedented after a period of 80 years and devastated impact

on all provinces of Pakistan, but its Sindh province was much destroyed (Kazi, 2014).

**Figure 2:** Flood Affected Area of Pakistan Till August 13, 2010

Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as cited on British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC, 2018)

Sindh, province of Pakistan is topographically in disadvantage position and was also one of the regions severely distressed by floods. When flood water enters in Sindh province, river Indus is one and only exit point for this flood water to Arabian Sea making area prone to floods. Moreover, *Kacha* areas are topographically at lower altitudes than river channel, thus flooding water will not return into it again. As a result, water flooding the area for days and water can only be pumped out back into the river channel, or it is naturally dried out. Hence, water surge in river Indus is furious and has disastrous consequences for *Kacha* area of Sindh (Kazi, 2014).

The floodplain area is commonly referred in the local Sindhi language is

'*Kacha*', the floodplain is adjacent to both sides of River Indus channel. The *Kacha* area in Sindh is stretched 8500 km approximately on both sides of the channel and river is contained by flood protection embankments or locally referred as *Bund* (Kazi, 2014). River Indus water is one of the important resources for livelihoods and drinking purpose for people of Sindh, whereas here mostly depend on agriculture (Kazi, 2014). Consequently, flood in River Indus directly affects livelihoods for people in the area (Mavhuraet, Collins & Manatsa, 2013). *Kacha* area is used for agriculture purpose, though some areas are restricted for the forest, however, these forests are now illegally exploited for agricultural purpose by locals.

Throughout history, humans have always linked mischief or sins committed by individuals which are the cause of natural disasters. The flood is also one of the natural disasters believed by many individuals as act of God (linked to sins of humans) in many developing countries or even the developed society. Hence, nexus between natural calamities to mischief of humans is widely recognized in the deeply religious society, and Pakistani society is no exception. Moreover, in Pakistan, commonly *Sufi* brand of religions is practiced in the rural society. The connection of Sufi tradition has huge impact on perception of natural disasters (Harifuddin, 2017). Thus, flood perception of rural area people is vital in order to understand their views in the backdrop of the religious society.

Problem Statement

The Pakistani government believes that the year, 2014 flood caused worth US\$ 0.44 billion losses alone in 2014 (GOP, 2015). Majority of flood victims connected to rural areas and are linked to agriculture sector (Dawn, 2015). What is very surprising that most of these communities chose to live in a very hostile environment of floods and continued to be victims of many floods in the past and yet communities themselves and government failed to offer effective flood hazard management resolutions for them. More importantly, *Kacha* farmers are the first and prime victims to bear the brunt of floods and are also less prepared to cope up with the situation. Hence, this large portion of population of the country is subjected to flood hazards to existing and emerging realities since these population live in the flood-know area. Moreover, the severity of Mother Nature is on the rise in this flood prone area.

Majority of flood victims belong to rural area or here, rather *Kacha* area farmers. These farmers are still living in the medieval era and are deeply religious and superstitious in nature. These religious thoughts are very much occupied by the

decisions in the day to day affairs of these *Kacha* farmers. Moreover, as explained earlier that in the rural area of Sindh, citizens are more religiously closed to *Sufi* section of Islam, hence, their worldview of floods or daily life affairs are linked to *Sufi* tradition. The perception about their happiness and sorrows are viewed through the lens of *Sufi* custom (Harifuddin, 2017). Therefore, it is important to learn *Kacha* farmers' perceptions of flood in the context of *Sufi* tradition as how intensively they are interconnected to religious opinions in the flood discernment. Hence, it is significant to discover how religion plays role in Sindh's *Kacha* farmers development of flood hazard perception?

These above mentioned research questions will shed important light as how religious school of thought play imperative role in the development and context of flood hazard. Moreover, ultimately these perceptions play role in decision making related flood hazard safety or flood hazard management challenges at larger scale for self and community.

Research Questions

In order to investigate *Kacha* farmers' flood opinions affected with respect to religious background of Sufi sect, (most common faction practiced in the rural area of Sindh, Pakistan), the following questions were confronted in this research. How religion plays role in Sindh's *Kacha* farmers' development of flood hazard perception?

Research Objectives

The purpose of the present field investigation is to examine the voices of *Kacha* farmers (end users) about flood hazard through religious lens about nature of flood hazards and to what extent these religious perspectives are conceived by farmers on flood hazard decision making process.

1. To examine the narratives of *Kacha* farmers regarding their voices about flood encounters through religious lens.

2. To appraise religious factor in flood hazard management endeavours of *Kacha* farmers.

Literature Review

Ever since civilisation originated, human beings intended to know about their existence on the earth and master of the world. Mankind to answer these existence queries, sought refuge in the religion and found solutions through God. The earlier civilisation or certain human beings till today linked all their problems and challenges in life connected to sins committed by themselves as punishment of God. The more religious society, the stronger is the belief that from everyday fortune is linked how they follow their respective religions. The sturdy inherit belief that religion or God protect individuals from the mischief if he is loyal follower. Hence, many studies salience works are available on natural hazards and disasters which highlight the connection between these two realities (e.g., Bentzen, 2013; Gaillard & Texier, 2010; Chester, 1998). These mentioned studies apprehend that people do not take steps to safeguard themselves from natural hazards because they assume that these calamities are creator's extremes to mankind. People evaluate their advantages and disadvantages of day-day life with religion on long-term bases rather judging their losses or benefits to cope up from natural disasters (Gaillard & Texier, 2010).

Similarly, Bentzen, (2013) examined that the level of religiosity was much seen higher among uneducated or people with low income. However, the impact of religion was same on both educated and less educated participants taken for the study. It is because people in this research connected earthquake in their region with religious and emotional handling of the situation by naming catastrophes as disconnection from God. During natural tragedies people tend to associate themselves to God as they believed it as sacred foundation who will undo all their miseries by uprising them

once again in their livelihoods (Islam, 2012).

The reason can be their escape from the distresses felt by them in the time of misfortunes initiated from God's upheavals. However, religion and disaster cannot be separated from each other which is observed since many centuries. Mankind discovers an active and quick healing from God and religion which urges them to be at peace with earthquake and get closer to God (O'Mathúna, 2018).

Research Methodology

The current research employs qualitative research design as suited for present research objectives. The reason for choosing qualitative research method is that intention of this investigation about the voices and flood narratives of *Kacha* farmers which can best represented only through qualitative methodology. The qualitative inquiry is primarily an informative practice that unfolds the understanding of various themes, views and opinions profoundly by projecting into issues (Jamshed, 2014). The existing research investigation was also approached in the real settings pertaining *Kachafarmers*, setting the environment for them to communicate on the topic to gather their opinions. Therefore, semi-structured in-depth interviews of 31 research participants were purposed for this research inquiry to know their side of stories and involvement in flood hazard endeavours. Since qualitative research sampling demands that once information from participant reaches at saturation point then researchers should discontinue the interviews as no new information may not yielded from the research participants. Furthermore, interview guide was generated by researcher himself. The current research study aims to examine the findings with the help of themes.

The Study Duration and Research Site

The data was collected from the year 2016 to 2017 from the research site of Unnarpur, district Jamshoro, Sindh,

Pakistan. The research site is known *Kacha* area of Sindh province of Pakistan.

Some Important Operational Definitions

Following are the operational meanings of the terminologies used in present research study.

***Kacha* Farmers**

A farmer in this existing project means he, who lives and breaks down into small farmers having land holdings or landless farmers. However, in this research, *Kacha* farmers were categorised as male farmers with land or landless and feudal lords were not considered.

Wadero

The *Wadero* in the agrarian social group is a male influential feudal lord and is powerful political entity with huge agricultural land i.e. more than 100 acres (Hussain et al., 2013). In the view of above narration by Hussain et al. (2013), it is operationalised that a male political influential entity having greater agricultural land (i.e., above 100 acres) in the *Kacha* area is *Wadero*.

Findings

Mainly, the most serious standard in flood hazard research is addressing flood victims' experiences regarding origins and duties in their flooded regions. This is because fundamentally it will embrace the liability to government or people accountable for flood dangers.

Data is generated around three sub-sections for the reasoning and accountability of floods in *Kacha* area. These sub-themes open spheres of fatalistic and its linkage regarding flood hazard perception. *Kacha* farmers' depressed belief system about flood cause and accountability sometimes are hacked by government players to run away from the liability of protection for the public. Furthermore, *Kacha* farmers' rigid religious perceptions of flood hazard resulted largely in unaccountability of officials about their actions.

The Realm of Mysticism (Sufi) and Allah's Will

Religion is an important aspect in Pakistani lives on daily basis. Historically, a powerful connection between human calamity and natural adversity incidents with religion is observed from many years. Sindh society in Pakistan has concrete association with *Sufi* custom (Charan, Wang & Yao, 2018), and by virtue fortified relation to Sufism (an Islamic tradition being adopted by Brahvi sect) pattern, thus translating association with floods or other natural catastrophes. The research site is the territory where popular sub-continent's Sufi Saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar tomb is in the Sehwan city of district Dadu. *Kacha* farmers have firm faith in the *Sufi* divinity Lal Shahbaz Qalandar that his blessings will safeguard their region from floods, a standard instance of misanthropic practice. However, mostly farmers uttered that if they perform sins, Allah and Qalandar will penalise them through *Makafaat-e-Amal* (Sindhi proverb: as you sow so you reap).

Our older generation has a belief that Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar evoke us so we will never be flooded. This is *Qalandar Ji Nagri* (Land of Qalandar). Floods in the area are results of not respecting our Sufi saints. People are committing sins and consequently receiving the wrath of Allah is *Makafaat-e-Amal* (the consequence of actions) in the shape of *Quadrati Aafatoon* (Natural Disasters) (*Kacha* Farmer, 3).

Kacha farmers' faith in sacred involvement has a larger portrayal in the formation of *Kacha* farmers' faith realm regarding floods. One can observe *Kacha* farmers' desperate article of faith in the local *Sufi* divinities as they consider that these *Sufi* saints will secure them if these farmers honour them.

***Khairat*: Charity as Flood Protection Measure**

This resolute religious view has framed *Kacha* farmers' step-down acts, and mostly in flooding season, farmers pray for *Khair* (sympathy) floods on Friday prayers or perform *Khairat* (charity free meals). This practice is accomplished during flooding period since numerous generations. But *Kacha* farmers also articulated that those who do not appreciate God's mercy must undergo difficulties and certainly, there will be floods, therefore, they should take repercussions for it.

Allah KhairKando (God will mercy upon us), *KahreeyMautEendi* (hopeful for the harmless flood), therefore Allah will protect from these upheavals. We always hold large prayer meetings before and after the season, asking Allah for mercy, and this has been happening for a long time. But those who fail to offer merciful prayers or not remember God's gift to human beings, these people usually must face mischief (*KachaFarmer*, 4).

Thanks to Allah and efforts of *Naujawan* (youngsters), our area was not flooded during both floods.... (*KachaFarmer*, 6).

Religion has an immense effect on *Kacha* farmers which can be utilised for community well-being, in order to provide the assurance in ruling out this disruption from the religious keenness, thus it can bring both positive and negative guidance. On the positive aspect, this can lead them into coordination among communities resulting in solution through united flood mitigation measures.

God's Wrath for *KaroKartoat*: Floods are consequences of Human Beings Sins

Kachafarmers' narrations stated beneath mentions that flood is God's teaching and God gives them an opportunity for uniting in flood relief. Hence, *Kacha* farmers consider that this is

a chance for the society to forget their differences and be together to deal with flood hazards.

God punish us because we are not united and whenever there is flood, these communities do not leave differences to be a team and we fight during floods but sir, if we do not commit sin, then why would flood be happening (*KachaFarmer*, 25)

Saen Allah JeyLikhayKhayAsan Cha TaaKaraySaghaoun (Sir what is decided by God, human cannot change), so we cannot stop floods, and what measures to take, even we take it but cannot change destiny (*KachaFarmer*, 24).

Saen Agha Siraj DurraniShaib (a prominent politician and speaker of the provincial assembly of Sindh) has rightly said that we in Sindh are protected because of Sufi Saints. I think he is right that we are protected due to *Barkatoon* (blessings) of Sufi Saints (*Kacha Farmer*, 11).

Deputy Commissioner (DC) *Shaib* and NDMA officer once said that floods are the result of *Kara Kartoat* (sins) and not following the teachings of Islam. I cannot agree more with him, as some people involve in *Ghair Shariah* and immoral (Un-Islamic) things and *Allah Je Kavar* (God's wrath) on the whole area with *QudratiAftatoon* (natural hazards). So we must follow Islam teachings and stop making sins so that we can escape from these *QudratiAftatoon* (*Kacha Farmer*, 15).

Nevertheless, Pakistani officials in order to escape their responsibilities from flood catastrophe rapidly associated it to *Allah Ju Gusu* (God's anger), hence

constituting religious linkage converted to flood sufferers' wrath. These politicians and government representatives proposed that floods are due to the misdeeds of the communities. Therefore, this fatalistic related penalty of God's embed among flood sufferers has everlasting outcomes. The relationship of floods with Gods' denouncement can affect in lifeworld's carelessness that does not grasp system responsible nor allow lifeworld to perceive and take safety actions. Thus, *Kacha* farmers find themselves as powerless where they accept that nothing can change their destiny which is written by God so there is no point to discuss it in present or future. The institution has inhabited the lifeworld by associating floods to bleak orientation, thus misusing these emotions to avoid public accountability of system's negligence to render protection from floods. Therefore, constitution of the lifeworld by the system and influential players has made flood victims to perceive flood disasters either as their fate or anger of God.

Therefore, it is not astonishing that developing nations and in the existing research location, people have hard fatalistic frame of mind which is constituted of controlling opinions on natural disasters. Hence, keeping in view the flood as an act of God or written fate and thus, inevitably flood victims cannot evade themselves from mother nature's anger. Above communication highlights that gloomy faith system is pervasive among *Kacha* farmers, thereby justify fixing the responsibility of floods' devilry and holding responsible for flooding incidents to fate or God's will.

Study Implications

The present investigation was to record the narratives of *Kacha* farmers about flood hazard and overall flood hazard management in the *Kacha* area. Since, Pakistan is profoundly a religious country, hence religious thoughts dominated in the narratives and perceptions about flood hazards. Thus, research yield important

information, how religious thoughts impact on flood hazard decision making in the flood hazard management. Moreover, this research has important knowledge, which can be helpful for academia as well as for policy makers to design better flood hazard management endeavours in the *Kacha* area. The policy makers must note that *Kacha* area population is religious hence this information utilised to develop effective flood hazard management endeavours which is critical for safety of population in the area.

Future Study

The future studies must explore urban population centre near flood prone area or river so that important insights can be learned from their flood hazard threat perceptions. Since current research was only limited to *Kacha* farmers, hence future studies should be carried on the diverse sets of population including female population.

CONCLUSION

This research safely concluded that *Kacha* farmers' flood narratives are raptly hijacked by religious inputs, hence all flood hazard threat perceptions and flood hazard management decisions are taken in the light of religious frame of mind. Moreover, since in Pakistan most predominated religion is Islam hence, naturally *Kacha* farmers were Muslims, particularly associated to *Sufism* school of thought. Thus, provided important information about their orientation towards flood hazard perceptions, for example, some *Kacha* farmers are not intimidated from any future or imminent flood hazard threats. Since the tomb of Hazarat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (a popular Sufi Saint) is situated in their area, so *Kacha* farmers viewed that this tomb will protect them from any mischief.

Moreover, *Kacha* farmers, powerfully apprehended that flood hazards or natural disasters are consequences of personal sins and crimes committed by individuals, therefore its God's punishment to them. Such opinions escape

policy decision makers from any accountability and flood hazard disasters. The academia in the flood hazard management research do not agree with this notion, hence, policy makers may work to instill the self-responsibility among *Kacha* farmers to make right choices in the flood hazard management decisions and also correct orientation of flood hazard threat perception.

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