

Understanding Post-earthquake Gender Susceptibility in Balakot Tehsil, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of structural vulnerability and violence, this study examines how the '2005 earthquake' in Pakistan affected the female gender. It aims to find out the unique experiences of the socio-cultural vulnerability of gender, which led them to migrate towards other places. It attempts to identify those factors which contributed to women's vulnerability. Qualitative research methods, such as key-informant and in-depth interviews, were used in this research. In-depth interviews were conducted by using a purposive sampling technique with thirty highly affected women of Balakot belonging to twenty-five households. The present study finds out six major themes, almost all dealing with a lack of privacy and females' private domain. These include: a) gendered migration; b) ethnicity; c) problems of toilet and bathing; d) problems for pregnant women; e) difficulty in looking after the family; and, f) forced sexual relations. Data collection from respondents of different ages, class, and caste helped us to understand the lived experiences of the women of Balakot. The study finds out that gendered vulnerability plays a very important role in making decisions to migrate. This study might influence governments to bring the required changes in their policies to serve the women population better during and after disasters.

Key words: Balakot, Earthquake 2005, Gender susceptibility, Gendered migration, Disaster Management

Introduction

Disaster is considered as a sudden accident or a natural catastrophe that causes severe damage or loss of life. It happens when a natural hazard impacts negatively on vulnerable people. Researchers on disasters, such

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as Dijkhorst and Vonhof¹ argue that hazard turns into a disaster when the vulnerability of people is high. People with meager access to resources are more susceptible. Impacts of disaster are subject to the vulnerability of the affected population. These impacts vary across variety of ethnicity, class, and gender. Generally, the term gender is used as synonymous with women, but it deals with the status and roles of both woman and man. The present research, however, deals with women's vulnerability during and after the earthquake of 2005. In many societies, gender disparity between males and females enhances the vulnerability of women, particularly in times of natural disasters. The study, therefore, explores females' unique experiences during and after the earthquake with themes of disaster, gender, migration, and vulnerability. The paper shows that the impacts of disasters in long duration reveal implications of deep-rooted vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups more vividly.

According to the United Nations Environment Program,² disasters have affected billions of people around the globe. Migration is one of the biggest impacts of natural disasters. Women's migration in natural calamities has been partially explained by the available literature. Decision about accommodation, lack of resources, gender susceptibility, and through several other ways, it can be related to natural calamities. Temporary or permanent migration is always considered the main survival strategy during any natural calamity. During and after the natural disaster, the majority of the people migrate voluntarily, because they usually are left with limited choices in the situation of any natural disaster.

Northern Pakistan faced an earthquake of 7.6 magnitudes on the morning of 8th October 2005. Tehsil Balakot in the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was the epicenter, thus it received the highest degree of destruction. The number of migrants among its dwellers was also very high. Outcomes of the disaster depended upon the socio-cultural vulnerability of these earthquake migrants. This disaster brought social, cultural, and psychological impacts on the lives of the affected women. The earthquake with its epicenter about 19 kilometers northeast of

¹ H.V. Dijkhorst, & S. Vonhof, *Gender and Humanitarian Aid: A Literature Review of Policy and Practice* (Department of Disaster Studies, Wageningen University, Netherlands, 2005).

² United Nations, *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (Geneva, 1993).

United Nations Environment Program, '*Climate Change 2018*,' <https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/climate-change>. Accessed 12 October 2020.

capital Islamabad brought devastation and resulted in 87,350 deaths in the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Pakistani administered Kashmir, as per official reports. This natural disaster posed extreme damage to peoples' lives and their possessions. Besides humans, cattle were also buried under the derbies of dilapidated houses. Areas closer to the epicenter, particularly Balakot Tehsil in Mansehra district of province KPK, were most horribly hit, resulting in severe damage to every kind of physical infrastructure, including mosques, hospitals, markets, power lines, houses, and other government offices. According to an estimate,³ nearly 3.2 million people lost their homes. EERI Special Earthquake Report in 2006⁴ indicated that nearly 138,000 were injured, and over 500,000 families were directly affected by this earthquake. Supplemented by aftershocks, heavy rains and great displacements, the impacts of this natural hazard were most distressing for the women of Balakot.

In this present study, women's vulnerability after natural disasters has been explained from females' own perspective in the light of critical and structural vulnerability framework. In the previous literature in the Pakistani context, the focus was not on the cultural and structural inequalities that add on and aggravate the post-disaster situation. There is a dearth of studies that evaluate the effectiveness of mainstreaming gender in disaster risk reduction at the operational and program levels. To fill this gap an ethnographic, critical and interpretive kind of study was conducted in a most affected village of Balakot Tehsil.

Review of literature

A bulk of literature is available on how bad effects of natural disaster is sociologically significant. Yumarni and associates⁵ found many dimensions of gender susceptibility within post-earthquake rebuilding at Yogyakarta province of Indonesia. They observed that patriarchal culture

³ Jennifer Parker Hamilton & Sarah J. Halvorson, 'The 2005 Kashmir Earthquake: A Perspective on Women's Experiences', *Mountain Research and Development*, 27: 4 (2007), 296–301.

⁴ EERI Special Earthquake Report (2006). Learning from Earthquakes The Kashmir Earthquake of October 8, 2005: Impacts in Pakistan. North West Frontier Province (NWFP) University of Engineering and Technology: EERI Special Earthquake Report, funded by EERI's Learning from Earthquakes Program, under National Science Foundation Grant CMS0131895.

⁵ Tri Yumarni, Dilanthi Amaratunga, Richard Haigh, 'Assessing Gender Vulnerability within Post-Earthquake Reconstruction: Case Study from Indonesia', *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 18 (2014), 763–71.

causes gender vulnerability along with the fragility of the gendered institutions. Evidence indicated that women in Nepal and other South Asian countries cannot show women's particular requirements to unfamiliar humanitarian workers during and after disasters or crises owing to socio-cultural taboos and norms, which increase their vulnerability to disaster risks.⁶ Hines⁷ has observed that women are victims of the patriarchal society as it is a taboo for a woman to go to a male doctor. The development process ignored specific woman's needs. Stress, abuse, rape and early marriages have weakened the status of women in these communities.

Rashid and Michaud⁸ explored the impacts of socio-cultural norms such as honor, shame, purity and pollution on health and hygiene. For females, maintaining space and privacy from male outsiders was very difficult during the disaster. They became extra vulnerable to sexual as well as mental harassment in relief camps because it was difficult for most of the girls to remain separated. Many girls were unable to sleep, bathe, keep themselves clean during menstruation or get access to latrines in suitable privacy. Duramy⁹ examined that after the Haitian earthquake poor conditions in the displacement camps increased gender-based abuse and violence. They found that dearth of sanitation and insecure shelters along with ubiquitous police patrolling put the females at risk. The death of members of family multiplied vulnerability to sexual violence and abuse. After disasters, shelter, water, sanitation, waste management, livelihoods, and particularly female workloads and gender-based violence require attention.¹⁰

⁶ Rajesh Dhungel and Ram Nath Ojha, 'Women's Empowerment for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Response in Nepal,' *Gender & Development*, 20:2 (2012), 309–21.

⁷ Revathi I. Hines, 'Natural Disasters and Gender Inequalities: The 2004 Tsunami and the Case of India,' *Race, Gender & Class*, 14: 1/2 (2007), 60–68.

⁸ Sabina Faiz Rashid, and Stephanie Michaud, 'Female adolescents and their sexuality: notions of honour, shame, purity and pollution during the floods' *Disasters*, 24:1 (2000), 54-70.

⁹ Benedetta Faedi Duramy, 'Women in the Aftermath of the Earthquake,' in *Gender and Violence in Haiti: Women's Path from Victims to Agents* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 137–52.

¹⁰ Maureen Fordham, 'Gender and Disasters', in *Encyclopedia of Environmental Health*, edited by J. O. Nriagu (Burlington: Elsevier, 2011), 834–38.

It is asserted by Gaillard, et al.¹¹ that western experiences constructed man-woman dichotomy, which often cannot grasp truths about non-Western varied gender minorities, as were noted in Indonesia, Philippines and Samoa, where weak genders exhibited peculiar arrangements of vulnerability allied with their lowered social positions. Hence it is suggested that locally-specific measures need to be taken to reduce the vulnerability of both genders.¹² It is difficult to differentiate, as certain groups are hit harder than others and that disasters are not the great levelers they are sometimes considered to be.¹³ Ray-Bennett and Nibedita¹⁴ documented experiences of women-headed households from diverse social castes in Orissa, India and suggested taking into consideration the composite interplay of class, caste, and gender along with structural causes, for effective disaster management and reduction of social vulnerability.

A study on violence against females after the tsunami in Sri Lanka examined that violence against women is exacerbated by the disaster because social inequalities and violence against females exist in societies in normal times.¹⁵ Juran¹⁶ suggested that pre-existing inequalities were amplified in times of disaster as the impacts of disasters were not equal for all but they varied by social constructs, such as caste, religion, socio-economic status and gender in post-tsunami Tamil Nadu, India. True¹⁷ argued that women's already low and unequal economic and social status determines the extent of their current vulnerability to

¹¹ J. C. Gaillard, Kristinne Sanz, Benigno C. Balgos, Soledad Natalia M. Dalisay, Andrew Gorman-Murray, Fagalua Smith, Vaito'a Toelupe, 'Beyond Men and Women: A Critical Perspective on Gender and Disaster,' *Disasters*, 41:3 (2017), 429-447, DOI: 10.1111/disa.12209

¹² Lisa Eklund & Siri Tellier, 'Gender and International Crisis Response: Do We Have the Data, and Does It Matter?' *Disasters*, 36:4(2012), 589-608.

¹³ Maureen Fordham, 'The Intersection of Gender and Social Class in Disaster: Balancing Resilience and Vulnerability,' *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 17:1 (1999), 15-36.

¹⁴ Nibedita Shankar Ray-Bennett, 'The Influence of Caste, Class, and Gender in Surviving Multiple Disasters: A Case Study from Orissa, India,' *Environmental Hazards*, 8:1 (2009), 5-22.

¹⁵ Sarah Fisher, 'Violence against Women and Natural Disasters: Findings from Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka' *Violence against Women*, 16:8 (2010), 902-18.

¹⁶ Luke Juran, 'The Gendered Nature of Disasters Women Survivors in Post-Tsunami Tamil Nadu,' *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 19:1 (2012), 1-29.

¹⁷ Jacqui True, 'Gendered Violence in Natural Disasters: Learning from New Orleans, Haiti and Christchurch,' *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 25:2 (2013), 78-89.

violence during and after the Christchurch earthquakes crisis. Reduction in women's vulnerability is impossible unless the root causes of this vulnerability are focused for reducing gender inequalities through removing unbalanced power relations between genders (Bradshaw, 2014).¹⁸ Literature showed that gendered dimensions of these disasters and vulnerabilities, especially inferior castes or ethnic groups are rarely covered in qualitative or ethnographic researches conducted by Bradshaw,¹⁹ Enarson, Fothergill, & Peek 2007,²⁰ Enarson & Pease, 2016,²¹ Fordham,²² Ginige, Amaratunga, & Haigh,²³ MacGregor,²⁴ 2017,²⁵ Rohr, Hemmati & Lambrou 2009).²⁶

Hamilton and Halvorson (2007)²⁷ proposed that females' pre-disaster vulnerability assessments, would ensure better access to

¹⁸ Sarah Bradshaw, 'Engendering Development and Disasters,' *Disasters*, 39: S1, (2014), S54– S75.

¹⁹ Sarah Bradshaw, *Gender, Development and Disasters* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

²⁰ Elaine Enarson, A. Fothergill, & L. Peek, 'Gender and Disaster: Foundations and Directions,' in R.R. Dynes, E.L. Quarantelli & H. Rodriguez (eds.), *Handbook of Disaster Research* (New York: Springer, 2007), 130-146.

²¹ Elaine Enarson & B. Pease (eds.), *Men, Masculinities and Disaster* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

²² Maureen Fordham (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality, and Disaster: The Routledge Handbook of Hazards and Risk Reduction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011).

²³ Kanchana Ginige, Dilanthi Amaratunga, and Richard Haigh, 'Tackling Women's Vulnerabilities through Integrating a Gender Perspective into Disaster Risk Reduction in the Built Environment,' *Procedia: Economics and Finance*, 18 (2014), 327–335. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(14\)00947-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(14)00947-2). Accessed 9 September 2018.

²⁴ Sherilyn MacGregor, 'A Strange Silence Still: The Need for Feminist Social Research on Climate Change', *The Sociological Review*, 57:2 (2010), 124–140.

²⁵ Sherilyn MacGregor (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 520.

²⁶ Ulrike Röhr, Minu Hemmati, and Yianna Lambrou, 'Towards Gender Equality in Climate Change Policy: Challenges and Perspectives for the Future,' in Elaine Enarson, & P. G. D. Chakrabarti (eds.), *Women, Gender and Disaster: Global Issues and Initiatives* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009), 289-303.

²⁷ Jennifer Parker Hamilton, & Sarah J. Halvorson, 'The 2005 Kashmir Earthquake: A Perspective on Women's Experiences,' *Mountain Research and Development*, 27: 4 (2007), 296-301.

resources and participation in relief, rehabilitation, and rebuilding efforts. Only a few development organizations addressed the issue of mainstreaming of women and gender sensitivity in pre- and post-disaster activities in Pakistan.²⁸ Irshad, Mumtaz, and Levay²⁹ found that years after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, women with spinal cord injuries got socially, emotionally and financially isolated whereas men received full social and emotional support. Parida³⁰ noticed an upsurge in women's mental stress in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand where the capacity to cope with flood disaster was not high.

Peacock and associates³¹ explained how Hurricane Andrew influenced and hit those who were unprepared; therefore, disasters should not be seen as mere natural but they inherently have social character. Krishnaraj³² found that women were more severely affected than men because of being more vulnerable than men in most societies from the impact of an earthquake, as was seen in Latur, India, and the impact of earthquake varied according to the degree of vulnerability of the social groups. Schroeder³³ revealed that gender constructs bring environmental implications as peasant and working-class women do bear the brunt of gender vulnerability and disproportionate risk in Hausaland due to the drought situation.

Women are predominantly susceptible to injurious implications of disasters. According to the United Nations, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center³⁴ women have to undergo violence owing to the negative impact of disasters. UN Declaration (1993) on the Elimination

²⁸ Muhammad Javeed Iqbal, M. N. Baig, Haleema Sadia, M. B. Khurshed, & Sadaf Saleem, 'Gender Mainstreaming into Community Based Disaster Risk Management,' *European Scientific Journal*, 9:32 (2013), 463-70.

²⁹ Humaira Irshad, Zubia Mumtaz, Adrienne Levay, 'Long-Term Gendered Consequences of Permanent Disabilities Caused by the 2005 Pakistan Earthquake,' *Disasters*, 36:3 (2012), 452-64.

³⁰ Pradeep Kumar Parida, 'Natural Disaster and Women's Mental Health,' *Social Change*. 45:2 (2015), 256-75.

³¹ Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin (eds.) *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disasters* (London: Routledge, 1997).

³² Maithreyi Krishnaraj, 'Gender Issues in Disaster Management: The Latur Earthquake,' *Gender, Technology and Development*, 1:3 (1997), 395-411.

³³ Richard Schroeder, 'Gender Vulnerability to Drought: A Case Study of the Hausa Social Environment,' Working Paper 58 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1987).

³⁴ United Nations Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, 2010.

of Violence against Women³⁵ stated that violence against women is ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.’ A less detectable form of violence is structural violence, which according to Galtung³⁶ is ‘built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.’ It is un-deliberated, systemic violence, no body’s fault, non-personal, or faceless. Farmer³⁷ observed the interconnection of disparities within a larger social matrix that marginalized social groups with less power and privileges owing to class, caste and gender. Unequal power relationships and structural inequities disturb participatory parity among social groups, therefore, counter social justice for every caste or gender (Fraser, 1996³⁸; Fraser, 2001³⁹). According to Aolain,⁴⁰ ‘women and girls become even more vulnerable to violence as social fabrics break down along with the collapse of political and legal structures in the wake of catastrophes.’ True (2013) observed an intensification in men’s violence against women during natural calamities. Valdés⁴¹ stated that the ‘magnitudes of disasters are partially influenced by the political-economic and socio-cultural contexts.. [hence] mainstreaming gender into disaster reduction policies and measures translate into identifying the ways in which women and men are positioned in society.’

³⁵ United Nations, *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, Geneva, Switzerland, 1993. United Nations Environment Program, ‘*Climate Change 2018*,’ <https://www.unenvironment.org/explortopics/climate-change>. Accessed 12 October 2020.

³⁶ Johan Galtung, ‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,’ *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3 (1969), 171.

³⁷ Farmer, *Pathologies of Power* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2004), 187.

³⁸ Nancy Fraser, *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation*, The Tanner lectures on human values, Stanford University, 1996.

³⁹ Nancy Fraser, ‘Recognition without Ethics?’ *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18:2–3 (2001), 21–42.

⁴⁰ Fionnuala Ni Aolain, ‘Women, Vulnerability, and Humanitarian Emergencies,’ *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 18:1 (2011), 12.

⁴¹ Helena Molin Valdes, ‘A Gender Perspective on Disaster Risk Reduction,’ in Elaine Enarson, & P. G. D. Chakrabarti (eds.), *Women, Gender and Disaster: Global Issues and Initiatives* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009), 19.

Much work has been done on females' vulnerability than the vulnerability of males during the hazards⁴². Such researches found that environmental stress affects women more than men because of the ground realities; for instance, subordinate and dependent status at home and in the community at large this vulnerability is connected with gender disparity, social roles, particularly as a career, lack of mobility and pre-disaster poverty. In South-Asia, this kind of disproportionate vulnerability of women has greatly been found. Their role as dependent or subordinate provides them with lower access to resources. Diverse experiences of life affect the vulnerability of individuals. This vulnerability is different in different conditions and situations of individuals. Gilson⁴³ believes that vulnerability is pervasive, worldwide, and common among socially weak entities. It is a kind of exposure that makes a person come in contact with a situation that is beyond his or her control. Neutral term of vulnerability relates it not only with women and but also as a situation fetched by factors of gender, class, and race. The vulnerability of women in natural calamities has led to observing the victimization of women, which focused on women as a vulnerable and discriminated group. The impacts of disasters include high mortality and socio-political issues affecting several people.

In explaining the impacts of the earthquake on women, Cannon⁴⁴ emphasized the concept of a disaster, which reflects in the affected location and its people. Disaster and components of the vulnerability of different groups of people have been found closely related. Cannon argued that vulnerability differs according to the 'initial condition' of a person- how well-fed he is what are his physical and mental health, mobility, and self-reliance. In the light of above listed issues and the ground realities, one would find the women of Balakot as being most vulnerable in the disaster of the 2005 earthquake.

This study contributes to gender-sensitive mitigation stratagems to thwart structural violence and vulnerability associated with a natural catastrophe. Drawing on anthropological and ethnographic data this paper focuses on women's susceptibility after the 2005 earthquake. Using the framework of structural violence this study presents women's

⁴² Terry Cannon, 'Gender and Climate Hazards in Bangladesh,' *Gender & Development*, 10:2 (2002), 45-50.

⁴³ Erinn Gilson, *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice* (Routledge, 2013).

⁴⁴ Terry Cannon, 'Gender and climate...'

unique experiences of vulnerabilities in society (Bloch, 1992⁴⁵; Farmer, 2004,⁴⁶ 2009;⁴⁷ Fraser, 1996,⁴⁸ Galtung, 1969⁴⁹).

Research methodology

Ethnographic and anthropological research was conducted in Balakot between July 2018 and January 2019. After a detailed observation of Balakot, Gharlat, a town of Balakot was selected for research study because it was completely destroyed in the earthquake of 2005, and even after twelve years of the earthquake, 70 percent of its population was living in the prefabricated shelters. Baseline information was gathered from the socioeconomic census of the Balakot area. Before starting the research, we built rapport with the sample community, took the people of Balakot in confidence, particularly the women of Gharlat were invited to independently participate in research. Three key informants were selected from Balakot to approach the women of affected households. Among these informants, there were two females and one male. All were famous among the people of Balakot and its town Gharlat due to their social work. Their presence and assistance in approaching most affected people of the earthquake proved beneficial during the fieldwork. A total of 25 households were selected with the help of purposive sampling, and 30 women of these households, who were highly affected by the earthquake incidence, were interviewed in detail.

Spending seven months in fieldwork, using qualitative methods of key-informants and in-depth interviews, helped in gathering detailed information regarding the impacts of the 2005 earthquake on women of Balakot. Thematic analysis for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data was done in step-by-step manner. We generated initial codes during and after the data collection among the earthquake-affected women of Gharlat. After searching for and reviewing themes, we defined and named these themes. Finally, we produced an explanatory report of the themes.

⁴⁵ Maurice Bloch, M. *Prey into Hunter: The politics of religious experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴⁶ Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of power*, 187.

⁴⁷ Paul Farmer, On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below. *Race/ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 3:1 (2009), 11-28.

⁴⁸ Nancy Fraser, *Social Justice...*

⁴⁹ Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3 (1969), 167-191.

Result and Discussion

Ethnographic data revealed several major themes that express socio-cultural vulnerabilities. Demographic features showed that most of the women belonged to the same caste, living in Balakot for many years, who migrated to other regions only because of the earthquake. The following themes, emerged after data analysis, are discussed below.

a. Toilet Problem (*bath roomy ko lrzi*)

The majority of females reported that toilets were small in number (only two) in the whole town. They were unable to go outside and use public toilets. One participant said:

‘On the second day of the earthquake, some of the male members dug out debris, put slabs of cement on them, and covered it with a tent. In this way, they arranged a temporary place for toilet. For a long time, that toilet remained under use’. (Rizwana, aged 56)

Seeing the problem of the toilet as the most serious issue, men of Gujjar and Swati caste sent their women to the relatives to nearby cities: Mansehra, Lahore, and Islamabad. Men stayed in Balakot to search their dead relatives and bury them in the graveyard with death rituals. Women of Kohastani and Awaan caste, however, faced difficulty in using toilets because of various reasons. One woman remarked:

‘Those days were very difficult as we did not have toilets. For males, it was not a problem as they were free to go anywhere, but for us, it was very problematic as it is considered body shame to go outside for urination and defecation’ (Allah ko mano ay us tay kuj vi ni thanda sa, us din ko pta chlya k bathroom tu bejhar kitna mushkil sa sary wasty. Mardan fir aay hi sochya k asan treemtan ko pej saton. Ta k oh khd tay lagan. (Parveen, aged 43)

The Kohastani and Awani women also faced the problem of unhygienic and poor toilets, particularly lack of gender-differentiated toilets, which challenged their feminine privacy.

‘On that day, we came to know about the importance of the bathroom. There were no separate toilets, whatever was there was in bad condition, but we managed somehow’. (Reshma, aged 38)

‘To go for using toilet use was a big problem for me, there was only one toilet which was dug out by neighbors from the debris, and the whole town was using it. It was easy for men to go outside in open places for urination, but for us, it was

not easy, although we kept going in groups for urination in open places.’ (Raheela, aged 35)

Both Raheela and Parveen mentioned gendered experiences faced by women. It is reflective of most of the responses from the respondents who felt a lack of gender-differentiated toilets, which created difficulty for women to stay in the area in the emergency phase. Ultimately they migrated to other places.

b. The risk for pregnant women (*Bemar tremat di mushklat*)

Pregnancy and childbirth are unique to women’s experiences. The women who were in the phase of pregnancy during the disaster of earthquake were in a highly risky condition. Without rest, food and care, their condition was hopeless. At the time of the earthquake, they were vulnerable to various threats. One respondent said:

‘Some of the women living with men in the tent were pregnant, sleeping on hard and cold surface, lack of food and clean water, life was terrible for them’. (Sadaf, aged 46)

Another woman explained this way:

‘It was cold and wet during the second week of the earthquake. My daughter-in-law was pregnant with her third child. Yes, it was difficult for her because she was in seven months of her pregnancy. All members of the family were worried about her because there was no place to move her. We were afraid of miscarriage’. (Musarat, aged 51)

After the earthquake situation was very challenging for pregnant women and their family members, particularly for those women and their families who were unable to move towards other cities. They were facing malnutrition and the absence of basic facilities of clean water, safety from cold weather, and facilities of toilets. Some women stated:

‘My daughter-in-law got injured during the earthquake, and we were not in a condition to take her to the hospital. Governmental and non-governmental health shelters came in the second week of the earthquake.’ (Uzma, aged 60)

‘I was six months pregnant with my first child. During the earthquake, my legs got injured. It was cold, and I could not save my pregnancy’. (Salma, aged 27)

‘I had 4 months of pregnancy. During the earthquake, I lost my mother and grandmother. Due to mental stress, I faced a miscarriage. I was treated in a shelter hospital service. The situation inside the shelter hospital was very awkward because there was no privacy as people came inside the tent without letting anyone know.’ (Hina aged, 41)

Pregnancy is a natural phase, which comes in the life cycle of women, but it was reported to be greatly affected by the disaster of Earthquake. Experiencing the bad circumstances in the earthquake disaster area, several families of Gujjar and Swati castes shifted their pregnant women to other localities. Their women faced sudden migration. Women of Kohastani and Awaan castes suffered all the bad circumstances of the post-earthquake situation.

c. Difficulty in bathing (*Nany ko larzan*): Women of Balakot, particularly of the most affected town of Gharlat, experienced gendered vulnerabilities in daily activities such as sleeping and taking a bath. Most of the women reported that after the earthquake, there were heavy rains, and due to cold their condition was terrible in temporary shelters. For many nights they were unable to sleep. For many days they could not take a bath because there was no facility to take a bath. Below are some statements.

‘We were facing problems with eating and sleeping. Bathing was not in our minds. For three weeks, I could not wash my face. During my stay in a temporary shelter for 62 days, I could not take a bath even for a single time. I took a bath when I migrated to the home of my father’s brother’s son.’ (Nida, aged 20)

‘Honestly speaking during a stay in temporary shelter, we were having scarcity of many facilities. I did not take a bath for 42 days. I could not even think about bathing in that situation.’ (Fozia, aged 22)

‘Men could bath in the middle of the road, but women could not. I did not take a bath for three weeks after the earthquake’. (Nida, aged 20)

‘Taking a comfortable sleep in temporary shelters is impossible. Taking a bath was another great problem for me and my daughter. My husband and sons used to go to the mosque for taking a bath.’ (Durdana, aged 45)

The women who are still living in shelters have been found suffering from the same problems they were facing in days soon after the earthquake.

‘I fetch water from a well and take a bath in the same shelter where I live. I face problem in sleeping because of small space inside the shelter as 7 family members are living with me in my shelter.’ (Rasheeda, aged 52)

‘Taking bath is a very serious problem for me and the female members of my family. There is a river nearby where

we live. We collectively go there at the time of sunset and take a bath'. (Salma, aged 27)

d. The pressure of taking care of the family (*Jundakan wasty lrzna*): After the earthquake, responsibilities of women for taking care of their family members increased. They had to take extra care of their sick members of family as compared with the time when they were living in their safe homes before the earthquake.

'I felt myself burdened as I had to take care of my three kids and one pregnant sister-in-law.' (Sadaf, 46)

'After the earthquake, I used to cook food in a public place, which was very difficult and unhygienic.' (Raheela, aged 35)

Most of the women reported an increase of demand on their physical labor. They had to collect woods for cooking food and fetch water for drinking and toilet needs. Three women stated in the following words:

'I daily fetch water from a well, which is located 1km away from my shelter'. (Raheela, aged 35)

'My mother-in-law and I daily collect wood for cooking foods'. (Rosheen, aged 28)

'My mother's responsibilities increased after the death of my father in the earthquake'. (Bushra, aged 18)

'At the time of the earthquake, I was out of the home. My all family members came under the debris of house material. It was a horrible time for me to be in senses and bring out all the dead bodies to bury them according to the religious burial rituals.' (Rukiya, aged 36)

Harassment and unwanted sexual relations (*Kuryoon ko tarnu ty phasana*): Several women shared their experience of harassment and unwanted sexual relations by men during the emergency phase. Some are given in the following lines.

'After the earthquake, since I was staying out in tents and these tents were pretty overcrowded, a man tried to take advantage of the situation'. (Iffat aged, 42)

'Us taay pta hi ky krady sy ny k assan treematn kol beh k dukh sukhi krady aan. Fir duk sukhi wich ky oaaya nal ghuch rayan kuryan. Assan ny mardan aay mahool dekhyia ty bardasht ni keta. Assan ko bejh satya.taldy Islamabady ko. [Translation: Many volunteers came to our tents for our mental counseling. But with time, they started harassing girls in the name of counseling. When our males noticed this

thing, they transferred us to other cities’]. (Durdana, aged 45)

Some of the workers of governmental and non-governmental organizations took advantage of aggrieved women. They used to sit with them for counseling but took personal advantages.

‘My sister was under a trauma after losing her three children and husband in the earthquake. A social worker during counseling tried to rape her’. (Fozia, aged 22)

‘I faced staring and touching by men while shifting in temporary shelters’. (Bushra aged, 18)

‘Sb tu wadi izzat hy peny izzat nai ty kuj wi nai’, [Translation: Honour and respect are above all things, and there is no compromise on it’]. (Sadia, aged 46)

Living in temporary shelters, women were most vulnerable to harassment and forced sexual relationships. This was a big factor among many other factors that compelled women to migrate to other cities.

e. Gendered migration (*Tldy tur gy*): This study also recorded some unique experiences of vulnerability of women associated with migration. One woman said:

‘When bird found dried lake and could not find water there, it moved there by saying if found water here I never left this place but my feelings of thirstiness urged me to move this place for search of water’. (Asmat, aged 57)

The earthquake brought an unlimited crisis for the dwellers of Balakot, which forced them to migrate, particularly women were more prone to these crises, hence most of them moved away than living in temporary shelters. Some such experiences are given below.

‘There were some volunteers who came to help us, but they were staring at me. My brother sent me to my relatives in Lahore’. (Nida, aged 20)

‘I had difficulty in sleeping outside, so I migrated to the home of my brother in Mansehra’. (Fizza, aged 32)

‘My sister-in-law and I were pregnant, and the situation after the earthquake was terrible so we migrated to Rawalpindi at the home of our mother’s sister.’ (Qurat, aged 29)

The results of this study revealed that the ‘2005 Earthquake’ destroyed all kinds of physical infrastructure of the community. Living in broken boundary walls and dilapidated houses was severely risky and dangerous. The sky was the only roof available soon after the crises but concurrent rain and cold weather aggravated the

hitherto vulnerabilities. Data analysis revealed that problems for women were more complex than that of males. In normal circumstances, the community females in the local context were supposed to observe veil (*purdah*) owing to cultural and religious customs and norms. The free movement of females was restricted and they faced problems related to water, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, shelter, water security, and physical safety. It was a great shame for females when they had to go outside for urination and defecation. It was against the honor and safety of females in local settings. They were therefore bound to go in groups for urination and defecation.

Besides, many pregnant women faced miscarriages owing to injuries and mental stress. The situation inside the shelter hospital was very awkward. Males could go to the community mosque for taking a bath while women had to collectively go to the river at the time of sunset to take a bath. Moreover, women's responsibilities after the death of male members had increased such as fetching water, collecting woods, along with household chores. The most disturbing factor was the harassment of girls in the name of counseling. When males noticed this they had to shift their females to other places, comparatively safer ones. Evidence⁵⁰ indicated that gender vulnerability varied by local socio-cultural factors; therefore, intervention programs in future need to be designed by keeping in view the localized gender-sensitivities.

Feeling several kinds of risks in Balakot, many poor and insecure women migrated to other cities. In addition, many people decided to migrate as female members of their families suffered cold weather and rainy nights under open sky following the earthquake. Several pregnant women faced nausea, vomiting, and thus went through miscarriages due to the unbearable condition of living. Males were busy in arranging tents and registration of their families in lists of the government and non-government help desks, leaving their pregnant women alone, which became disastrous for the health of these women. Several women were worried about the possibility of being exposed to sexual assaults. The only possible solution for women to get out of this situation was to migrate to other parts of the country.

But migration was not a very easy task for a significant portion of population of Balakot. Amongst the four major castes of

⁵⁰ S. Bhadra, 'Women in Disasters and Conflicts in India: Interventions in View of the Millennium Development Goals,' *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 8 : 2 (2017), 196–207.

Balakot (Gujjar, Swati, Kohastani, Awaan) only Gujjar and Swati were in a better economic position to shift their women in other cities of the country. Women of Kohastani and Awaan continued living in tented villages. They had suffered due to complex and grave challenges during the earthquake and are still living in fragile houses made by the government and NGOs. Efforts have been made by governmental and some NGOs, following the common objective of rehabilitation of the earthquake-hit community. These organizations have also been found working on the development and rebuilding of the residential areas, but the impacts of that earthquake on women proved long-lasting and damaging, particularly on their sociocultural life.

A previous study⁵¹ examined gender vulnerabilities created by floods in northern Bangladesh. He similarly found higher vulnerability to disasters among poor and disadvantaged women as compared to men owing to circumstances, which predispose them to the impacts of severe disaster. Women faced complications in finding suitable shelter, clean water, sanitation, hygiene, food, and fuel for cooking. Besides, girls were exposed to sexual harassment in relief camps. All these vulnerabilities together interjected women's qualification and adaptation capacities to reduce disaster risks.

The traumatized gendered body implies the tightness in space and place. Research findings of the 2005 earthquake have shown that women of Balakot are a socially vulnerable group, have disempowered position, and they faced gendered based discrimination in relief and rehabilitation period. The earliest studies on disaster and its impacts on women explored ways women were vulnerable to disasters. These reasons include their physical differences with men's gender roles in the household and patriarchal culture, where women depend on husbands for major decision-making processes.⁵² This relates to our study findings as women of Balakot are living in a patriarchal culture, and the impact of the disaster on women is different due to women's subordinate position. Above mentioned thematic result of this study can be divided into physiological, socio-cultural, and place vulnerabilities.

⁵¹ Abul Kalam Azad, Khondoker Mokaddem Hossain, and Mahbuba Nasreen, 'Flood Induced Vulnerabilities and Problems Encountered by Women in Northern Bangladesh,' *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 4:4 (2013), 190–9.

⁵² Edris Alam & Andrew E. Collins, 'Cyclone disaster vulnerability and response experiences in coastal Bangladesh.' *Disasters*, 34: 4 (2010), 931-54. Doi:10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01176.

According to the first cause, the physiology of men and women differ, which might affect their basic needs of toilet use, bathing, and pregnancy. However, according to Oxfam finding of the 2005 earthquake discussed the physiology of men and women in terms of self-rescue capacity like running, climbing, and swimming.⁵³ Social factors also play an important role to strengthen women vulnerability as it has been found in this study like the pressure of taking care of the family on women and gendered migration, women told that due to complex problem in relief and rehabilitation period in our specific living places males of our family decided to send us to other cities. The earliest studies of disaster corroborated social factors of vulnerability⁵⁴ as in discussing early 1960, Chinese famine mentioned accounts of men selecting daughter to let perish first owing to inadequate food. The physiology of women also plays an important role in terms of space/place vulnerability. Pregnant women, who are limited in their mobility and required obstetrical care which was not present in the Balakot disaster.

Social and cultural vulnerability discussed in previous research⁵⁵ similarly described the effects of the social division of labor as a source that increased the risk for women who resided at home taking care of family members. When a husband goes to work, a woman behind stays at home puts them at risk of death than men by the collapsed building. Scholars⁵⁶ also argued that women after a disaster were vulnerable to the incidence of sexual violence. Literature⁵⁷ similarly identified factors like gendered roles in households, social and cultural norms, and same-gendered discrimination as a cause of women's vulnerability in Nepal. Ethnicity was seen as significant. Particularly Kohistani and Awan caste women suffered great losses in this disaster. It is important to target the socially fabricated gendered customs to advance calamity response

⁵³ Oxfam International. *The Tsunami's Impact on Women*. Briefing Note, March 2005. Oxford: Oxfam International, 2005, www.preventionweb.net/files/1502_bn050326tsunamiwomen.pdf. Accessed 9 December 2018.

⁵⁴ Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: Mirror Books, 2005), 380.

⁵⁵ Eric Neumayer & Thomas Plumper, 'The gendered nature of natural disasters: The impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981-2002,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97:3 (2007), 551-566.

⁵⁶ Sarah Bradshaw, *Socio-economic Impacts of Natural Disasters; a Gendered analysis* (vol.32). (United Nations Publications, 2004).

⁵⁷ Kalpana Aryal, 'Women's Empowerment in Building Disaster Resilient Communities,' *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 20:1 (2014), 164-174.

determinations.⁵⁸ In much similar thread, as evidence shows that Philippines women could not express the experiences of physical and sexual violence owing to embarrassment and stigma.^{59,60}

Conclusion

This study investigated what socio-cultural constructions determined gender vulnerability after the '2005 earthquake.' Results of the study synthesis showed that women's difficulties in looking after families, problem-related with toilet and bathing for pregnant women, hygiene, and reproductive health care, maintaining veil and privacy, and more importantly forced sexual relations, and caste-oriented gendered migration as the most significant socio-cultural vulnerabilities. Western top-down approaches to understanding disaster risk reduction generally fail to address the needs of most marginalized castes and genders.^{61,62} However, the inequalities, violence and vulnerability approaches pay greater heed to the basic causes, as to how and why marginalized peoples are unable to access the resources, finding roots in politico-economic and socio-cultural structures.^{63,64,65} The earthquake disproportionately affected marginalized ethnic groups and women.^{66,67,68} There was a lack

⁵⁸ Elaine Enarson & Maureen Fordham, *Lines that Divide Ties that Bind: race, class, and gender in women's flood recovery in the US and UK, 2000*.

⁵⁹ Unaina Niaz, 'Women and Disasters,' in Prabha S. Chandra, Helen Herrman, Jane E. Fisher, Dr Marianne Kastrup, Unaiza Niaz, Marta Rondon, Ahmed Okasha (eds.), *Contemporary Topics in Women's Mental Health: Global Perspectives in a Changing Society* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 369–386.

⁶⁰ Huong Thu Nguyen, 'Gendered vulnerabilities in times of natural disasters: Male-to-Female violence in the Philippines in the aftermath of super typhoon Haiyan', *Violence against Women*, 25:4 (2019), 421-440.

⁶¹ Gregory Bankoff, 'Rendering the world unsafe: vulnerability as Western discourse,' *Disasters*, 25:1 (2001), 19–35.

⁶² J. C. Gaillard et al., 'Alternatives pour une réduction durable des risques de catastrophe,' *Human Geography*, 3:1 (2010), 66–88.

⁶³ Johan Galtung, 'Violence, peace, and peace research,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3 (1969), 167–191.

⁶⁴ Michael H. Glantz, 'Nine fallacies of natural disaster: the case of the Sahel,' in M. H. Glantz (ed.), *The Politics of Natural Disasters: The Case of the Sahel Drought* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 3–24.

⁶⁵ Ben Wisner, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon, and Ian Davis, 'The challenge of disasters and our approach,' *At risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 3-48.

⁶⁶ Elaine Enarson & Betty Hearn Morrow, *Women Will Rebuild: A Case Study of Feminist Response to Natural Disaster*. Paper presented at the 21st

of studies that appraise the usefulness of mainstreaming gender in disaster risk reduction at the practical levels. There is a need for further study in other similarly affected contexts. The study recommends how the general development practice and government policy during and after the emergency context ought to incorporate the social and cultural vulnerabilities while treating gender related interventions to effectively tackle the hazardous situation that has already based on structural inequities.

Annual Hazards Research and Applications Workshop, 7–10 July 1996, Denver.

⁶⁷ Helena Molin Valdes, 'A gender perspective on disaster risk reduction,' in Elaine Enarson, & P.G.D. Chakrabarti (eds.), *Women, Gender and Disaster.....*, 18-28.

⁶⁸ Brenda D. Phillips and Betty Hearn Morrow (eds.), *Women and Disasters: From Theory to Practice*. Xlibris,' 2008.