

Climate Change, Disaster, and Gender in India: A Thematic Analysis

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine the interplay of climate change, disaster, and gender in India. It employs a thematic analysis of 21 news articles, editorials and secondary literature published between 2023 and 2025. The analysis identifies seven interconnected themes: Economic Vulnerability, Disproportionate Vulnerability, Menstrual Hygiene and general Public Health, Food Security, Women's Leadership, Cultural Norms and Gender-Based Violence. The findings of this study reveal that consequent structural inequalities like unequal access to resources, gendered based labor roles, and derogatory cultural norms exaggerates women's ruthless exposure to environmental hazards, while also highlighting women's agency through grassroots and institutional adaptation strategies. The study emphasizes on the need for gender-responsive climate policies integrating factors like health, economic resilience, and protection from gender-based violence. The findings contribute to the rising discourse on gendered climate impacts, with implications for sustainable development and environmental psychology.

Keywords: Gender, Climate Change, Disaster, Thematic Analysis, Archival Study

Introduction

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations across the Globe. Its impacts are unequal and intersect with the existing socio-economic inequalities thereby producing differentiated consequences for men and women. Notably, women often face heightened exposure to environmental hazards due to systemic marginalization, divisions of labour, and unequal availability of resources. These inequalities not only shape women's vulnerability to climate-induced disasters but also restrict their adaptive capacities in the aftermath.

Understanding this relationship requires a theoretical grounding that transcends beyond a gender-neutral lens of climate impacts. From a Social Vulnerability Theory perspective, vulnerability is not only determined by the magnitude of the disaster but by the pre-existing social conditions like power hierarchies, poverty, and exclusion. In the Indian context, women's limited mobility, poor accessibility of healthcare, and reliance on informal labour markets aggravate their vulnerabilities during disasters consequently underscoring how climate events strengthen entrenched disparities. This framing emphasizes that women's disproportionate suffering is not incidental but is deeply rooted in structural vulnerability.

Similarly, Ecofeminism Theory argues that the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are the outcomes of patriarchal systems. It provides a framework for analysing how climate change disproportionately affects women while also acknowledging their role as catalysts of ecological custodianship and collective resilience. Women often spearhead disaster response at the grassroots level but are portrayed merely as passive victims of environmental disasters.

Further insight is provided by Intersectionality Theory which proposes that gender cannot be understood in isolation but must be evaluated in conjunction with age, caste, class, disability, and other social parameters. It is further believed that women's experiences during climate disasters in India are not homogenous, for example while urban slum dwellers may struggle with water shortage and rural agricultural women confront food insecurity due to erratic rainfall. Intersectionality therefore complicates the narrative by illustrating that vulnerability is layered and multidimensional, necessitating differentiated policy responses.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives foreground the complex relationship between climate change, disaster, and gender. They emphasize that women's vulnerability is shaped by both structural inequities and socio-cultural dynamics, while also acknowledging their resilience and leadership in coping with crises. This paper, drawing on thematic analysis of newspaper reports, engages with these frameworks to unpack how climate change and disasters are experienced through a gendered lens in India.

Literature Review

According to a report published in *The Hindu* (2024, July), extreme heat is as a major concern under the umbrella term - climate change and has its disproportionate impact on women. This is due to embedded gender roles and limited access to resources. It highlights the vulnerability of women, especially those in rural or informal occupations are more prone to heat-related stress. This article further explains that unpaid caregiving responsibilities in combination with poor access to cooling infrastructure also exacerbates women's exposure during heat waves. Moreover, societal norms often limit women's mobility and ability to seek support or refuge during extreme heat consequently leading to increased health risks.

Climate change has been found as a reason that widens the existing gender-based economic disparities, especially in rural settings. This is strongly emphasized in a report was covered by *The New Indian Express* (2024, March). Further a UN analysis reveals that female led homes in India experience greater income loss due to climate-related hazards such as heat waves and floods when compared to male headed families. This inequality is attributed to structural economic inequalities, including limited land ownership, reduced access to credit, and lower participation in climate-resilient occupations among women. The report highlights the relationship between environmental stressors and gender, reflecting environmental psychology's emphasis on ways in which socio-economic structures mediate individual level responses to ecological disruptions.

A newspaper report by *The Hindu* (2023, March) underscores the work of Supriya Sahu, a prominent policymaker in Tamil Nadu. Recently, it has been highly documented that women's leadership in climate governance is a critical factor in building inclusive and effective

adaptation strategies. She has enthusiastically integrated gender perspectives into the state's climate adaptation initiatives and acknowledged gendered experiences thereby fostering collective resilience. Her approach involves engaging women at different levels of planning and implementation thereby ensuring that policies are sensitive to the specific vulnerabilities and capacities of women in disaster struck communities. She illustrated the importance of inclusive leadership and ways in which it can reshape institutional responses to climate change.

The relationship between climate hazards and public health reveals pronounced vulnerabilities for women and children in India. A study reported in *The Hindu* (2024, May) brings out that climate-induced events such as floods, heat waves, and droughts are strongly linked to the increasing cases of malnutrition, early pregnancies and under nutrition, specifically among female and child populations across the several states of India. These findings bring to the light how environmental degradation amplifies the existing social and physiological disadvantages in low-income communities. The study shows how chronic exposure to environmental stress interacts with developmental and reproductive health and further magnifies the psychological strain and systemic inequality. These insights stress the need for gender- and age-sensitive policies/practices in climate risk assessments and adaptation planning.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), was reported in *The Hindu* (2024, May), highlights a concerning overlap between climate hotspots and areas with high rates of teenage pregnancy as well as violence against women. Recent evidence portrays that climate change not only escalates environmental disasters but also sharpens the existing social vulnerabilities especially for children and women. This correlation proposes that environmental stressors exacerbate gender-based risks, both at physical and psychological parameters. Such findings highlight the compounded effects of ecological degradation and socio-cultural dynamics where women and children are often the most affected due to systemic disparities in access to support systems, protection and autonomy. These patterns demands integrative and gender-responsive frameworks in climate resilience and disaster response planning.

The gendered impact of climate change is highly illustrious in patterns of social and health inequality. *The Hindu* (2024, April) highlights that climate change harms women largely due to the existing socio-economic inequities such as gendered labor divisions, poverty and unequal access to resources. The article points to the clear links between ecological pressures, rising rates of under nutrition and gender-based violence especially in vulnerable regions. These outcomes are consistent with environmental psychology's focus on how systemic inequalities shape individual and community-level adaptability. The interplay of gender injustice and environmental degradation not only worsens physical susceptibility but also contributes to long-term psychological strain and reduced coping capacity among women.

Incorporating gender approaches into climate policy is essential for equitable and effective adjustment strategies. In a convincing editorial in *The Hindu* (2023, July) emphasizes the urgency of acknowledging women's roles and burdens in the context of climate change. It highlights their disproportionate responsibility for labor-intensive tasks like agricultural work and water collection. As climate conditions deteriorates, these burdens amplifies, leading to psychosocial stress for women, increased physical exhaustion and poverty. Such findings

highlight the importance of evaluating how gender based labor divisions intersect with environmental stressors to influence coping mechanisms, well-being, and decision-making power. The article emphasizes on inclusive climate governance that reflects women's lived experiences as well as contributes to environmental sustainability.

Climate disasters exacerbate existing gender-specific health challenges, particularly around menstrual hygiene—a topic often overlooked in mainstream climate discourse. *The Indian Express* (2023, May) explores the impact of disasters such as Cyclone Amphan on women's access to menstrual hygiene resources. The article reports widespread disruptions in access to sanitary products and safe sanitation facilities during and after the disaster, resulting in infections, discomfort, and long-term reproductive health complications. These challenges disproportionately affect women in low-income and rural communities. From the lens of environmental psychology, this underscores how climate-induced displacement and infrastructural breakdown amplify bodily and psychological vulnerability in gendered ways. Addressing menstrual health in disaster contexts is therefore crucial for ensuring dignity, well-being, and equity in climate resilience planning.

Extreme heat events, intensified by climate change, pose severe health and livelihood challenges, especially for women in informal sectors. *Telegraph India* (2024, June) reports on how rising temperatures in Delhi disproportionately affect women street vendors—exposing them to physical exhaustion, disrupted menstrual cycles, and significant economic loss due to reduced working hours and customer footfall. These women often lack access to adequate shelter, rest, or sanitation facilities, compounding the physiological and psychological toll. From an environmental psychology perspective, this case illustrates how environmental stressors interact with gendered economic precarity and occupational vulnerability, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive urban climate adaptation measures that protect the health, dignity, and income stability of women working in public spaces.

Women are not only vulnerable to climate impacts but are also central to driving grassroots innovations in climate adaptation. *The Hindu* (2024, March) celebrates several women-led climate initiatives across India, such as the implementation of solar-powered irrigation systems and the establishment of millet cafés that promote sustainable agriculture and nutrition. These examples highlight women's proactive roles in addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges in their communities. From an environmental psychology standpoint, such interventions illustrate how empowerment, local knowledge, and community engagement foster psychological resilience and collective agency in the face of ecological adversity. Recognizing and supporting women's leadership is thus essential for inclusive and culturally grounded climate solutions.

Gendered roles and cultural expectations significantly shape vulnerability to climate-related disasters. *The Hindu* (2023, October) discusses how women disproportionately bear the brunt of extreme weather events in India due to their caregiving responsibilities and mobility constraints during emergencies. The article draws attention to practical challenges—such as the difficulty of fleeing quickly while wearing traditional clothing like saris—that hinder timely evacuation and increase physical risk. These observations align with environmental psychology's emphasis on the role of cultural norms and identity in influencing risk perception,

preparedness, and response behaviour. Understanding such gender-specific barriers is critical for designing inclusive disaster management policies that address both physical safety and socio-cultural realities.

Climate-induced disasters frequently disrupt access to basic hygiene infrastructure, with significant implications for women's health. *The Indian Express* (2023, May) reports on how Cyclone Amphan severely impacted menstrual hygiene management among displaced women in relief camps. The article highlights how inadequate access to sanitary products, privacy, and clean water led to increased risks of infection and long-term reproductive health issues. These disruptions were particularly severe for women and girls in rural and economically marginalized communities. From an environmental psychology perspective, this case underscores how environmental and infrastructural breakdowns intersect with social taboos and bodily autonomy, amplifying both physical and psychological vulnerability. Addressing such gendered health inequities is vital for developing inclusive climate adaptation and disaster response frameworks.

The compounding effects of climate hazards on vulnerable populations, especially women and children, are gaining increasing empirical support. *The Hindu* (2024, May) reports on a comprehensive study linking climate-related events—such as floods and prolonged heat waves—to heightened levels of malnutrition, early pregnancy, and under nutrition across several high-risk districts in India. These outcomes illustrate how climate stress exacerbates socio-economic and health-related vulnerabilities among those already marginalized. In the framework of environmental psychology, such intersections between environmental disruption and developmental risk highlight the systemic nature of stress exposure and its consequences on psychological and physical well-being. These findings support the call for gender- and age-sensitive policy frameworks that integrate environmental, nutritional, and psychosocial dimensions of climate resilience.

Climate change not only intensifies environmental degradation but also deepens existing social inequalities, particularly through gender-based violence. *The Hindu BusinessLine* (2023, November) reports on the Marathwada region of India, where prolonged drought has led to rising rates of child marriage and violence against women. The scarcity of resources such as food and water increases household stress, often translating into physical and psychological harm for women and girls. These findings echo environmental psychology's emphasis on the indirect social consequences of ecological stressors—where climate-induced scarcity exacerbates patriarchal control, limits autonomy, and triggers survival-based decisions like early marriage. Addressing such climate-linked gender violence demands integrated approaches that fuse environmental, psychological, and gender justice frameworks in climate adaptation policy.

Gendered health impacts of climate change are increasingly visible in India's intensifying heat waves. *Hindustan Times* (2025) emphasizes that women are disproportionately affected by extreme heat due to a combination of physiological risks—such as heat-induced miscarriages—and structural factors including caregiving burdens and physically demanding work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). These overlapping stressors contribute to both physical exhaustion and mental health strain,

particularly among rural and economically disadvantaged women. From an environmental psychology perspective, this underscores the interaction between environmental stress, gendered labour roles, and psychosocial well-being. The article advocates for gender-specific public health strategies and work conditions that acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities women face under climate stress.

Women's leadership is increasingly recognized as essential for effective and inclusive climate governance, particularly in the Global South. *The Hindu* (2023, September) emphasizes that gender parity in climate decision-making is critical not only for equity but also for resilience. The article argues that women bring unique perspectives rooted in lived experience, caregiving roles, and community knowledge—qualities that enhance the design and implementation of adaptation strategies. Moreover, it highlights that gendered vulnerabilities in emerging economies—such as reduced access to resources, education, and political representation—necessitate a structural shift toward inclusive leadership. Environmental psychology supports this approach by emphasizing agency, empowerment, and the psychological benefits of participatory governance in fostering community-level resilience to climate change.

Climate change increasingly threatens progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to health, gender equality, economic development, and food security. *The Hindu* (2023, August) reports on findings that underscore how climate shocks—such as floods, droughts, and heat waves—amplify gender-based inequalities and intensify food insecurity across vulnerable regions. The article highlights how these cascading effects are especially severe in low-income communities where women already face structural disadvantages in access to resources, education, and decision-making power. From an environmental psychology perspective, this intersectionality reflects the cumulative burden of ecological stress on social systems, well-being, and equity. It reinforces the need for integrative policies that embed gender justice and environmental sustainability into development planning.

Disaster induced displacement can immensely deteriorate women's access to menstrual hygiene thus sharpening the gendered health vulnerabilities. The report in *Frontline* (*The Hindu*, 2023, May) examines how Cyclone Amphan exposed critical gaps in menstrual health management among women living in temporary shelters. The article highlights how inadequate sanitation, lack of menstrual products, and absence of privacy led to infections, psychological discomfort, and broader reproductive health concerns. These challenges reflect a persistent neglect of women's specific physiological needs in disaster planning. From an environmental psychology perspective, the case underscores how bodily autonomy, dignity, and well-being are shaped by environmental disruptions and institutional oversight. Incorporating menstrual hygiene into climate resilience and emergency response frameworks is therefore essential for advancing gender equity in disaster management.

Economic instability remains a prominent feature of how rural women experience the aftermath of climate change. The *TOI Voices Blog* (2024, July) reports the lived experiences of rural women in India who are severely impacted by the declining agricultural productivity, unpredictable weather patterns and rising temperatures as all of these factors contribute to the disappearing household incomes. The article highlights that women are often the primary

caregivers and contributors to informal rural economies thereby faces compounded stress. This is further aggravated due to limited access to land ownership, credit and climate-tolerant resources. These findings exhibit the relationship between environmental degradation, emotional strain and socio-economic stressors, emphasizing how climate induced stress not only affects their livelihoods but also disturbs the psychological well-being and adaptive capacity among women.

The Hindu (2024, March) contends that grassroot level women-led initiatives are playing an increasingly important role in climate adaptation across vulnerable communities. It highlights several innovative strategies led by women including the implementation of solar-powered irrigation systems and the successful establishment of community kitchens. These interventions not only deal with immediate environmental challenges but also strengthens social cohesion, food security and energy efficiency. Such interventions reflect the leadership abilities and agency of women in climate governance especially at the local level thus challenging the narratives that frame them only as the victims of environmental change. These examples strengthens the role of empowerment, community participation, and localized knowledge in strengthening psychological resilience and adaptive capacity in the face of ecological stress.

Rationale

Climate change and disasters unequally affect women due to the pre-existing structural inequalities such as limited access to resources, gender based labor divisions and rooted cultural norms. In the Indian context, these vulnerabilities and susceptibilities are increased by issues of economic instability, public health hazards, food shortage, and gender violence. While global literature has acknowledged the gendered nature of climate impacts, empirical research in India remains under represented. This study attempts to addresses this gap through a thematic analysis of recent news reports and secondary sources thus summarizing both the deepened vulnerabilities faced by women and their adaptive agency in the time of disasters. The findings highlights the need for gender-inclusive climate policies that combine economic resilience, health, and protection from violence, consequently contributing to discussions on sustainable development.

Research Methodology

Method

This study employs an archival qualitative design, relying on secondary data from published newspapers, literatures and documents. Archival data are specifically suitable for assessing ways in which socio-environmental issues are gender coded, constructed and represented. The literature consists of 20 publicly available reports, news articles, and opinion sections which were published from 2023 to 2025 in reputed Indian national newspapers. The sources includes *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu Business Line*, *Telegraph India*, and the *TOI Voices Blog*. These sources were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research topic, coverage of wide geographical regions in India. Inclusion of gendered outlook on climate impacts was also an important factor in the selection of the source. Emphasis is laid on perpetual patterns of vulnerability and resilience to climate disasters and thematic analysis

was employed as it permits for the identification and interpretation of inert meanings across textual sources. After completing the first three stages (familiarization, generating initial codes and searching for themes), themes were further reviewed recurrently to protect internal symmetry and external diversity. Thereafter they were defined and reported in the finding and discussion of the study. The six-phase framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006) from familiarization to theme refinement corroborates a systematic and rigorous analytical process. This mix of archival research with thematic analysis is highly relevant for recording the underlining record of climate change, gender, and disaster as they emerge in existing knowledge and discourse.

Sample

Inclusion Criteria

The literature vividly discussing climate change and gendered impacts in India were only included.

Articles had to address at least one of the following factors: women health, public health, gender-based violence, menstrual hygiene, economic insecurity, women's leadership and food security in the context of climate change or disasters.

Exclusion Criteria

Sources lacking gender-specific analysis or contextual detail were excluded.

Regional newspapers were not referred.

The selected newspapers are reputed national dailies with wide geographical reach, desired editorial capacity and have consistently reported on climate change and disaster. Further emphasis was laid on ways in which it impacted the lives of women. Analysis was facilitated by the combination of general news from newspaper like *Hindustan Times* and opinion sections from newspapers like *The Hindu*. Further concrete efforts were made to avoid any personal and selection biases as the inclusion criteria was pre-defined and several sources were referred to avoid reliance on any particular outlet.

Analytical Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using the six-phase thematic analysis framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), ensuring systematic rigor and interpretive transparency. The process commenced with familiarization, involving repeated readings of the selected sources to immerse in the material and identify preliminary patterns. In the second phase, initial codes were generated by extracting meaningful textual units that highlighted women's vulnerability, resilience, and agency in climate contexts. These codes were then clustered into preliminary themes that captured recurring narratives.

The next stage involved reviewing and refining themes through iterative comparison across the data and existing scholarship to safeguard both internal coherence and external heterogeneity. Thereafter, the themes were defined, named, and finalized, each reflecting a distinct dimension of women's lived experiences in climate-disaster contexts. The final phase consisted of reporting, wherein the themes were systematically presented in the results and elaborated in the discussion section.

This structured analytic procedure, coupled with the archival qualitative design, provides a robust methodological foundation for uncovering how women's vulnerabilities and resilience are constructed, represented, and negotiated within climate change and disaster discourses in India.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted primarily on secondary data obtained from openly/publicly available sources. No primary data involving human participants were collected. All materials used in the completion of the study have been appropriately cited and credited to their original sources to ensure academic honesty.

Result

Thematic Analysis Report

The thematic analysis of the mentioned news articles have identified seven key themes which reflects the gendered dimensions of climate change and disasters in India. Each theme illustrates how environmental stress interacts with socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors to shape women's vulnerabilities and resilience.

Extract from Newspaper Article	Initial Code	Theme
"Women workers in the informal sector were the first to lose employment during extreme heat waves." (<i>The Hindu</i> , 2024, July)	Job loss in informal sector	Economic Insecurity
"Women faced mobility restrictions during floods, preventing them from reaching relief camps." (<i>Indian Express</i> , 2023, Oct)	Restricted mobility	Disproportionate Vulnerability
"Pregnant women struggled to access hospitals as cyclone-hit regions disrupted health infrastructure." (<i>Hindustan Times</i> , 2023, Nov)	Lack of maternal health facilities	Public Health
"During Cyclone Amphan, women lacked access to menstrual hygiene products, worsening health conditions." (<i>Frontline</i> , 2023, May)	Absence of menstrual products	Menstrual Hygiene
"Erratic rainfall led to reduced food availability, with women eating less to prioritize family members." (<i>The Telegraph India</i> , 2024, Aug)	Skipping meals for family	Food Security
"Women in Odisha led community-based disaster response groups, showcasing leadership in crisis." (<i>The Hindu Business Line</i> , 2024, Jan)	Women as community leaders	Leadership

“Incidents of gender-based violence rose in cyclone shelters, where women lacked privacy and security.” (<i>The Hindu</i> , 2023, Dec)	GBV in disaster shelters	Gender-Based Violence (GBV)
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Disproportionate Vulnerability to Climate Stressors

It is found that women in rural and informal sectors in India face intensified exposure to extreme heat due to unpaid caregiving roles, poor access to cooling infrastructure, and restrictions on mobility during heat waves (The Hindu, 2024, July). Cultural norms, such as wearing traditional attire like saris, further hinder timely evacuation during emergencies, thereby increasing physical risk (The Hindu, 2023, October). These realities align with environmental psychology’s concept of differential exposure, which emphasizes how structural inequalities and cultural constraints jointly shape vulnerability to environmental hazards.

Climate Change as a Driver of Economic Insecurity

The economic consequences of climate change are particularly severe for rural women especially whose livelihoods depend on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. Deteriorating agricultural productivity, rising heat have and unpredictable weather contributed to shrinking household incomes (TOI Voices Blog, 2024, July). In the same line Telegraph India (2024) reports that “rising temperatures in Delhi have drastically reduced working hours and customer footfall for women street vendors thus affecting household income. A United Nations analysis reported in The New Indian Express (2024, March) found that female led households suffer greater income losses than male-headed households during floods and heat waves. This is due to systemic structural and societal barriers such as limited land ownership, reduced access to credit, and lower participation in climate-resilient occupations thus exacerbating the vulnerabilities of the women.

Public Health, Reproductive Well- Being and Menstrual Hygiene Challenges

Climate-induced disasters disrupt access to essential health resources, with menstrual hygiene being a critical but often neglected issue. Following the catastrophes created by Cyclone Amphan the displaced women experienced scarcity of sanitary products. It further lead to infections and long-term reproductive health risks (Frontline, 2023, May). In the same line, extreme heat has been linked to reproductive health concerns such as heat-induced miscarriages among rural women working under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Similarly, extreme heat has been linked to reproductive health issues as reported in Hindustan Times (2025) that heat waves potentially leads to reproductive risks particularly for women engaged in any physically demanding or challenging work. These examples illustrate how physiological vulnerabilities intersect with gendered labour divisions to shape women’s health outcomes.

Climate Change and Gender-Based Violence

Environmental stressors aggravates gender-based violence, particularly in resource-scant areas. This is explicit in a report on the prolonged drought in Marathwada which has been linked to

rising rates of child marriage and violence against women, as households survive with resource insufficiency (The Hindu Business Line, 2023, November). In the same line, a study commissioned by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2024, May) finds that climate or disaster prone areas often overlap with areas of high teenage pregnancy and violence against women. These findings underscored the interplay of environmental stress and socio-cultural susceptibility. These findings further shows that disasters sharpens the pre-existing patriarchal pressures thus making women more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and coercion. Acknowledging these findings require policies that accepts gender based violence as a climate-related risk

Women's Leadership and Climate Governance

Women play a pivotal role in shaping inclusive climate adaptation strategies. At the institutional level, policymakers like Supriya Sahu in Tamil Nadu have integrated gender perspectives into climate initiatives, engaging women at all levels of planning (The Hindu, 2023, March). At the grassroots level, women-led projects such as solar-powered irrigation systems and community kitchens have enhanced food security, energy efficiency, and social cohesion (The Hindu, 2024, March). These initiatives demonstrate how agency, empowerment, and local knowledge foster resilience.

Food Security, Malnutrition, and Climate Stress

Climate change worsens food insecurity and malnutrition, disproportionately affecting women and children in disaster struck regions. Disasters such as droughts, floods, and heat waves have been related to early pregnancy and malnutrition in high-risk districts (The Hindu, 2024, May). The cascading impact of climate induced hazards on food systems amplifies the existing inequalities, worsening women's adaptive capacity to secure nutritious food for their households (The Hindu, 2023, August).

Cultural Norms, Mobility, and Safety

Women's vulnerability during disasters are shaped significantly by the existing cultural practices. The Hindu (2023) reports that traditional clothing such as saris can obstructs timely evacuation during catastrophes and emergencies and mobility restrictions limit women's access to necessary resources during heat waves (The Hindu, 2024). These social limitations amplify environmental risks, convincing that vulnerability is not purely physical but socially created. Disaster mitigation strategies must therefore consider cultural norms that constricts women's agency, autonomy and movement.

Discussion

The present study highlights that climate change in India imposes gender-differentiated impacts where women experiences heightened and coterminous vulnerabilities (The Hindu, 2024, July 5). These vulnerabilities are not merely outcomes of environmental change but are mediated by deep rooted social structures. It includes disproportionate access to key resources, gendered divisions of labor and stringent cultural practices (The Hindu, 2023, October 8). This is in line with broader scholarship in environmental psychology which underlines the role of social systems in shaping adaptive capacities (Clayton, 2020). Reports in *The Hindu* (2023,

October; 2024, July) talks about how extreme heat and mobility limitations during disasters sharpens risks for women, demonstrating the ways in which socio-cultural norms interact with environmental stress.

Economic volatility emerged as a recurrent theme especially among rural women whose mode of livings are linked to agriculture and informal labour markets. As climate disturbances reduce agricultural outputs and destabilize informal employment, income inequalities between male - and female led households sharpens thus reflecting the gendered nature of economic marginalization (*The New Indian Express*, 2024, March; TOI Voices Blog, 2024, July). These findings are in line with international evidences stating that climate shocks escalates existing disparities in labour force participation and access to basic resources (Alston, 2014; Rao et al., 2020). This is also proposed by the Social Vulnerability Theory which contends that climate induced disasters have the potential to magnify the existing economic gap, subsequently hindering the access to quality healthcare.

Public health perspectives further reveals critical neglected areas in climate adaptation policies. As documented during Cyclone Amphan, disruptions to women hygiene especially menstrual hygiene management shows consistent neglect of women's health needs (*Frontline*, 2023, May; *The Indian Express*, 2023). In addition to physical health outcomes, such neglect weakens psychosocial resilience and dignity thus encouraging calls for gender- sensitive disaster planning (Dasgupta et al., 2021).

Another prominent finding is the subsequent rise of violence against women in climate-stressed regions (Intersectionality Theory). Reports of incidents like child marriage during drought conditions (*The Hindu Business Line*, 2023, November) illustrates ways in which resource scarcity can strengthen the patriarchal control. Such outcomes are in line with global research linking environmental stressors to the intensification of intimate partner violence, child marriage, and other forms of gender-based tragedies (Le Masson, 2019).

At the same time, the study reveals that women are not solely passive victims of climate stress but are also active agents of climate adaptation. This is evident from the work of women, such as Supriya Sahu who wanted to integrate policy measures to be inclusive. Her work on climate governance initiatives in Tamil Nadu, and community-driven models like millet cafés (*The Hindu*, 2023, March; 2024, March), demonstrate how inclusive approaches strengthen resilience. These examples support the argument that women's leadership fosters more equitable and sustainable adaptation strategies (Djouidi et al., 2016).

Similarly, the findings also draws explanation from the Eco Feminist Theory, particularly in how patriarchal societal structures worsens women's exposure to climate hazards and on the other hand underestimates their role in community resilience. The emergence of Leadership as a theme proposes women's agency in the context of disasters thus challenging the dominant narrative of inaction that Eco feminists critique.

Overall, the findings concludes that climate change in India must be assessed through the interaction of environmental and gendered dimensions. This study documents vulnerabilities as well as agency, hence contributes to the growing recognition that effective adaptation

mandates gender-responsive policies. Integrating women's perspectives in climate governance can both reduce systemic disparities and strengthen the collective resilience of communities.

Conclusion

This study underscores that climate change in India constitutes not only an environmental challenge but also a social justice challenge. Women's disproportionate susceptibility arises from the convergence of environmental hazards, culturally embedded constraints and socio-economic inequities. Similarly, the findings emphasize about leadership, women's agency and innovative capacity in climate adaptation. This demonstrates their critical role in fostering resilience and sustainable community responses. Incorporating gender perspectives into climate discussion is therefore important to achieve environmentally effective and socially equitable outcomes.

Implications

Incorporating the gender perspectives in all the levels of climate governance to ensure equal participation in planning and decision-making.

Integrate protections against gender-based violence into climate adaptation policies thereby addressing the existing socio-cultural risks.

Addressing menstrual hygiene and reproductive health in disaster management frameworks.

Limitations

Though this study attempts to provide key insights into the confluence of climate change, disasters and gender, few explicit limitations should be recognized: -

The study focuses on data secondary data and is a qualitative study hence statistical generalization is not possible.

The newspaper selected where only National Dailies therefore regional experiences may be under-represented.

The dataset (2023–2025) may not fully reflect long-term trends or emerging climate-related difficulties.

Geographical focus is limited to regions covered by the selected sources hence probably excluding some critical insights from less-reported areas.

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