

## METAPHORICAL FRAMING OF 2025 PAKISTAN'S FLOODS: AN ECO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

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### Abstract

*This study examines the metaphorical representation of 2025 Pakistan floods in newspaper editorials. It applies the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Eco-linguistics perspective as the theoretical framework. The 2025 floods affected more than two million people in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Media language strongly influences how people understand environmental crises, but metaphor use in Pakistani flood coverage has received little attention. Pakistan produces less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet it is among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. This study used a Qualitative Research method to analyze 68 metaphors collected from six editorials. The editorials were published in Al-Jazeera, BBC News, and Dawn between August and September 2025. Six main conceptual metaphor categories were identified. That included: war and conflict, health and medicine, animate forces, objects, structures, and space, and justice. War metaphors were the most common. They present floods as enemies and promote emergency responses instead of long-term prevention. Medical metaphors explain infrastructure and governance issues as more of an illness concealing policy failures and poor accountability. Among the most significant discoveries was that all the metaphors did not assign any agency to the communities that were affected by the floods. Justice metaphors emerged infrequently, and the ones that occurred were mostly those of international media. Government voices use them diplomatically, and local media addresses the issue of state responsibility and not global inequality. Comparisons between media houses indicate that changes in metaphors vary depending on the audience and intent. These metaphors narrate destructive tales as far as eco-linguistics is concerned. They naturalize and make vulnerability appear as if it is inevitable. They disregard the community involvement, prevention, and change in the long term. The study argues for alternative metaphors that support local action, justice, and democratic climate governance.*

**Keywords:** Disaster framing, Pakistan floods, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Media Discourse, Environmental Crisis, Infrastructure Failure, Governance Issues

### Introduction

The climate challenge is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, globally. Its most serious effects appear in the developing and underdeveloped countries. Pakistan, being a developing country illustrates this imbalance clearly. Although, it produces less than one percent of global greenhouse emissions, it still ranks among the most climate-vulnerable countries worldwide (Eckstein, Künzel, & Schäfer, 2021; Kreft et al., 2017). The 2025 floods affected millions of people, and many communities in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were displaced. The incidents reveal that climate disasters are closely linked with media coverage and the general understanding. It is important to note that serious academic research is necessary (Rahman et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2013).

The media coverage of environmental crises contributes significantly to the perception on the part of the people (Anderson, 2014; Boykoff and Boykoff, 2007). Newspaper editorials are important since they explain and do not merely report the facts. Being narrated by journalists, these texts transform disasters of climate into a discourse affecting policy-makers, priorities of funding, and people's actions (Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). The metaphors outlined in editorials are not only a description of floods. They define the perception of risk, blame, and shape what forms of solutions to the problem in the future can be imagined to be possible (Jasanoff, 2010; Weingart, Engels, and Pansegrau, 2000).

Metaphors are important thinking mechanisms that enable individuals to comprehend new concepts using already known concepts (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Kovecses, 2002). With metaphors, people find it easy to comprehend the scientific information in the environmental discourse. They also establish an emotional appeal, provide reasons, and give people the way they should act in response to climate threats (Larson, 2011; Nerlich, Koteyko, and Brown, 2010). Nevertheless, metaphors are not the full description of the situation. They emphasize some things and conceal others. This has an impact on the way of environmental issue interpretation and the choices of the acceptable or needed solution (Larson, 2011; Nerlich, Koteyko, and Brown, 2010).

The use of metaphors in the Western discourse of climate has been widely analyzed by researchers. Common metaphors include war, medicine, journeys, and economics which shape how the public understands environmental issues (Hulme, 2009; O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Romaine, 1996). Military metaphors emphasize fighting climate change, which can lead to urgency. It also creates fear or supports the authoritarian measures (Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2017; Skrimshire, 2014). Medical metaphors depict environmental problems as planetary illness. It encourages action while potentially hiding the complex social issues (Brown, Crawford, & Hinson, 2015; Koteyko, Brown, & Crawford, 2008). Most research focuses on high-emission countries in Global North. This means we know less about how the climate-vulnerable countries in the Global South use metaphors. In such contexts, limited political power and resources influence climate discourse (Dayrell, 2019; Paschen & Ison, 2014).

Pakistan's environmental vulnerability comes from several other factors. One of these major factors includes the melting of glaciers in the Hindu-Kush Himalaya that eventually creates flood risks. Monsoon rainfall is more intense and unpredictable due to climate change. Rapid urban growth exposes more people to floods. Deforestation reduces the land's natural ability to hold water and drainage systems in major cities are often insufficient (Ali et al., 2019; Gaurav, Sinha, & Panda, 2017). The 2010 floods affected 20 million people and caused over \$10 billion in damage. In 2022, floods over one-third of the country were underwater and 33 million people were displaced (Haq et al., 2012; Mahmood & Jia, 2016). The 2025 floods show that the problem and destruction continue. However, research on Pakistani media coverage of floods, especially the language and metaphors, is limited.

Most studies of Pakistan have used content analysis for research purposes on the flood crisis. Studies analyze coverage frequency, source variety, and recurring themes (Iqbal, Khalid, & Zafar, 2014; Shahid & Khan, 2020). This approach is useful but cannot reveal the deeper meanings and ideologies in metaphorical language. Only a few qualitative studies look at environmental discourse in Pakistan. They mainly study floods between 2010 and 2022 and use only one approach, such as semiotics or discourse analysis. No research combines Conceptual Metaphor Theory along with Eco-linguistic evaluation (Habib & Zahra, 2024; Nasir, Habib, & Yousaf, 2022).

### **Statement of Problem**

Pakistan faces extreme climate risks and repeated floods, yet research on how metaphors in media shape flood discourse is still very limited. Millions of people were displaced in 2025 floods, but very less is known about how language influences public understanding, policy decisions, and response options. Most of the research concentrates on the previous floods or utilizes techniques that are incapable of revealing the intellectual and ideological strength of metaphors. This is a gap with actual implications. When media metaphors create a powerless community, they discuss governance failures as normal occurrences. They restrain the efforts of Pakistan to come up with just, effective, and democratic climate adaptation measures. Three major problems arise due to the absence of such research. To begin with, without a clear understanding of dominant metaphors, climate actors will be unable to employ other framing to foster long-term change. Second, responsibility is minimized when floods are termed as natural catastrophes as opposed to policy failures attributed to climate change. Third, the lack of community voices in the discussion further marginalizes them in making decisions

on climate issues. The issue is connected to the wider debates of climate communication and environmental justice in the Global South. To respond to these, it would involve qualitative research with a good theoretical foundation. It aids in exposing the influence of language in forming meaning and whether it promotes justice, public involvement, and sustainability.

### **Significance of the Study**

The research fills a definite gap in the research of Pakistani media since it utilizes both the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the Eco-linguistics approach. This integrated theoretical approach enables one to study the language in detail in comparison to previous research, which relied on one theoretical approach. The analysis is also structured in a way to find and analyze metaphors. The findings support better climate communication. The study describes which metaphors dominate in media coverage, mainly newspaper editorials. It offers alternative ways to describe climate events. These alternatives promote community participation and prevention. The research also shows how media discourse can reinforce or challenge global inequality.

### **Literature Review**

Over the past 20 years, linguistics, media studies, and discourse analysis have paid more attention to the study of language in connection to environmental challenges. The catastrophic effects of Ecological disasters, including hurricanes, floods, and droughts has brought attention to the public to the important role that media discourse plays in influencing public opinions, policy discussions, and national resilience (Carvalho, 2007; Nerlich & Jaspal, 2012). As cognitive and discursive tools, metaphors are particularly important in environmental communication because they provide an emotional, persuasive, and understandable framework for complicated phenomena (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008). This study examines current research in the fields of conceptual metaphor theory, Eco-linguistics, disaster and climate communication, and media discourse in South Asia and Pakistan.

### **Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Disaster Framing**

The foundation of metaphor is found in Lakoff's and Johnson's (1980) foundational work *Metaphors We Live By*, which argued that metaphors are a fundamental structure that influences human thought rather than just stylistic devices. Kövecses (2002, 2010) further elaborations showed how ideas from a domain, like everyday language or specific fields, are connected to another domain through consistent patterns. War, illness, and travel metaphors are frequently used in disaster discourse (Charteris-Black, 2004; Musloff, 2016). Metaphors about the environment can see climate change as an enemy (Nerlich, 2010) or flood as a "deluge" that destroys human dwellings (Semino, 2008). When it comes to Pakistan's floods, these conceptual frameworks help explain how news editorials might use ideas like nature's wrath, human negligence, or political corruption to show what's happening and who is to blame.

Metaphors in climate and catastrophe communication have been studied extensively. Semino (2008) identified how climate change is described in UK newspapers, showing how these metaphors help create a sense of urgency and responsibility. According to Nerlich and Jaspal (2012) climate metaphors are used to shape identities and policy stances. Musloff (2016) identified how metaphors play a key role in defending policy responses, particularly during the time of crisis. Hellsten and Nerlich recorded metaphors framing "natural disasters as punishment" in 2010 connecting these ideas to wider cultural beliefs and the way in which climate issues are discussed. Globally, studies indicates that metaphors play a role in shaping risk perception (Flusberg, Matlock, & Thibodeau, 2017) and public efforts to lessen the effects of climate change (Atanasova & Koteyko, 2017). However, fewer studies have examined disaster in editorial discourses in developing countries where people are more at risk.

### **Eco-linguistics and Environmental Narratives**

Eco-linguistics explore the ways in which language both reflects and creates human relationship

with nature (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Stibbe, 2015, 2021). Stibbe (2015) presented the idea of “stories we live by”, emphasizing how repeated language patterns create and reinforce environmental values. Eco-linguistic research often identifies harmful narratives, such as showing environment as something to be exploited alongside, positive narratives such as showing humans as protectors of environmental systems.

The foundational idea connecting discourse and ecology was initially presented by Harré, Brockmeier, & Mühlhäusler (1999). Current Eco-linguistic studies have focused on examining the ways in which environmental concerns are portrayed within media and policy documents (Alexander, 2017; Bang & Døør, 2007). In Pakistan, Eco-linguistics still remains a developing area of research (Habib & Zahra, 2024; Nasir, Habib, & Yousaf, 2022). Floods are a particularly rich subject for analysis because they bring together elements of natural events, human exposure, and political accountability.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis and Media Representation**

The methodological tools offered by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allow one to investigate the ways in which media discourse constructs power, ideology, and inequality (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998). When applied to disaster reporting, CDA shows how government and organizations portray disasters as either “acts of god” or “failures of governance” (Carvalho, 2007; Olausson, 2009). Fairclough (2003) emphasized framing strategies in editorials as sites of ideological struggle. Van Dijk (2006) emphasized how elites manipulate public opinion through speech, frequently shifting the blame in crisis narratives. Similarly, editorials on Pakistan’s floods shape ideas about responsibility. They connect the disaster to climate and governance problems.

### **South Asian Studies**

South Asian researchers have been increasingly looking at how climate change, disasters, and media are connected. In an editorial, Ali (2001) examined the 2010 floods and emphasized the government’s responsibility. Jamil (2020) investigated catastrophe reporting and media ethics in Pakistan. Sadiq, Alam and Rehman (2025) carried out an eco-linguistic analysis on environmental discourse in Pakistani media. Habib and Zahra (2024) specifically identified the use of metaphors to describe floods in Pakistani print media. Shaheen and Ali (2024) analyzed the semiotic framing of environmental issues in newspapers. They found that the Pakistani media depend highly on metaphors while doing environmental coverage. However, their study also highlights the lack of Eco-linguistic research on newspaper editorials on environmental discourse.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Most of the existing research focuses on the 2010 floods. There is very less or almost no research that focuses on 2025 floods in Pakistan. Therefore, Eco-linguistic analysis of the newspaper editorials remain largely unexplored. Existing studies mostly analyzes past flood events or wider environmental issues rather than the latest disaster. Although social impacts and government response was also explored on the 2022 floods (Adnan & Hamid, 2023), but they do not analyze the metaphorical framing in newspaper editorials. Similarly, the comparative analysis of media coverage from 2010 to 2017 discuss droughts but do not address the 2025 flood crisis.

Despite the fact that numerous recent studies have investigated discussions on environmental topic in media from Eco-linguistic perspectives, gaps remain in literature. Habib and Zahra (2024) analyzed the representation of floods in Pakistani newspapers employing the semiotic and Eco-linguistic perspectives. However, there is a noticeable gap in existing research that combine Conceptual metaphor theory, and Stibbe’s Eco-linguistic analysis to examine media content related to environmental disasters. Most previous research tends to focus on just one theoretical framework, either metaphor theory, discourse analysis or semiotics instead of integrating all three to investigate how metaphors influence ideology, agency and Eco-linguistic understanding. This shows a gap in literature and points to the need for a combined approach using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and

Eco-linguistic analysis to study how editorials present floods in ways that influence accountability, sustainability, and public perception.

Globally, the use of metaphor analysis in discussions about disasters and the environment is relatively common (as seen in studies examining climate change or pandemic-related metaphors in media) but within Pakistan, especially in newspaper editorials, about floods there is a limited application of these methods. For instance, *Natural Disasters in Pakistan and Media Coverage: A Comparative Study of Pakistani English and Urdu Newspaper (2010–2017)* uses content analysis to compare coverage frequency but it does not thoroughly investigate the metaphorical or ideological perspective present in the articles themselves. Furthermore, disaster metaphors have been explored in various international contexts however, there remains a lack in research specifically focused on Pakistani newspaper editorials, which significantly influence the public opinions. Consequently, a gap exists in understanding the particular ways in which language is used (especially through metaphors) in Pakistani newspaper coverage of floods has not been adequately studied.

Most of the studies tend to be methodologically based on content analysis, surveys, or quantitative measures, as opposed to deep qualitative, metaphor-focused, or Eco-linguistic discourse analytic, studies. Even though these techniques are useful in establishing patterns of media coverage, in many instances, they do not take into account the mental and cognitive structures that influence the language to present environmental problems. Although the preceding studies have helped in comprehending the reporting of disasters in the media, the studies mainly use content or thematic analysis. It is necessary to conduct a detailed qualitative investigation of metaphors grounded in both Eco-linguistic and discourse analysis, to reveal the ways in which editorials construct ecological and ideological interpretations.

The academic works that have been reviewed highlights how metaphors significantly influence the people understanding of catastrophes and shifting weather patterns around the world. The fields of Eco-linguistic and Critical discourse analysis provide related perspectives for revealing fundamental ideologies and ecological consequences that are an integral part of these metaphors. Nevertheless, there remain noticeable absences in chronological, theoretical, contextual and methodological domains, specifically concerning the 2025 flood event in Pakistan. This research uses a qualitative Eco-linguistic approach to examine metaphors in newspaper editorials. It aims to fill existing gaps in Pakistani climate communication studies and global Eco-linguistic scholarship.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Eco-linguistics perspectives. Both frameworks offer a clear perspective to examine how Pakistani newspaper editorials describe the 2025 floods through language. They show that how metaphors in newspaper editorials shape ecological messages and highlight certain issues. It sees metaphor as a cognitive tool and as a way of creating environmental narratives. Moreover, they provide useful tools for exploring how language influences public views about environmental crisis such as 2025 floods in Pakistan. In environmental reporting, metaphors help make natural events sound easier for people to understand. For instance, floods can be described using the metaphors of war, health, body or justice. Such metaphors make scientific details easy to understand and influence how readers interpret causes and assign blame.

The Conceptual Theory (CMT) was developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). It explains that metaphors are not just decorative language. Instead, the metaphors are the fundamental tools that helps people to understand abstract ideas by linking them to concrete experiences. In this framework, the familiar experience is known as source domain and the abstract idea known as target domain. These cognitive links are part of everyday thinking process that influence how people perceive events and explain them. By using CMT in this study researcher analyze metaphors to uncover the conceptual patterns journalists use to depict the disaster. It exposes cognitive structures that influence public's understanding of climate related risks and vulnerabilities.

Stibbe (2015) points out that Eco-linguistics studies the connection between language and ecological health. It examines how language decisions are able to mirror or affect the story that informs humans and their surrounding interaction. Eco-linguistics is not only about the study of forms of language, but also the impact of language. It takes into account specific methods of promoting environmental accountability and sustainability. The Eco-linguistic analysis of Stibbe can be quite applicable to this study since the floods in 2025 are ecological events which involved social and environmental influence. This is particularly essential in Pakistan, where frequent floods occur both due to natural factors and due to governance problems.

Whereas CMT demonstrates the mental constructs underlying metaphor, Eco-linguistics demonstrates why the constructs should be important in ecological consciousness. On one side, CMT describes how metaphors are framed conceptually, while on the other hand, Eco-linguistics helps to assess the environmental meaning and implications of these frames. These frameworks reveal how language shape public perception and social action during the environmental crises. Further, it helps the study to examine the cognitive, ideological and ecological aspects of media metaphors. The study offers a comprehensive view of how language shapes environmental understanding.

### **Methodology**

This study uses a Qualitative research approach to explore how language represent disasters in media. It is appropriate as it allows an in-depth study of how metaphors frame events and convey meaning. It allows researcher to examine ecological realities, assign responsibility and influence public perception of the 2025 Pakistani floods.

### **Target Population**

The target population consisted of newspaper editorials on Pakistan floods 2025. It included both national and international recognized newspapers. Editorials are selected because they are interpretive, opinion driven text that where language is carefully used to shape public understanding and influence policy debates. The selected newspapers have credible reputation and wide readerships. This makes them appropriate for examining metaphorical and ecological representations.

### **Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the newspaper editorials. The editorials that provide detailed coverage of 2025 floods were selected. The editorials were written between August and September 2025. Total six editorials were chosen, with two editorials each from Dawn, BBC news and Al-Jazeera. These sources were selected to reflect a variety of linguistic, cultural and ideological perspectives. This sampling ensures that the selected texts are relevant to the objectives of the study. Furthermore, it is also suitable for in-depth qualitative analysis.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

For data collection a detailed textual analysis of the six selected editorials was done. Each editorial was read several times to identify metaphor that were related to floods 2025. The metaphors were then extracted and compiled into a corpus of 68 items. The study focused on the meaning, structure and context of each metaphor. Moreover, it analyzed both clear and implied expressions of metaphors. This approach ensures accurate description of how the editorials portray floods while maintaining the original meaning of the text.

### **Data Analysis**

The study analyzed 6 newspaper editorials that were published between August and September 2025. From these editorials two each from Al-Jazeera, BBC and Dawn News were selected and 68 conceptual metaphors about Pakistan's flood crises were collected. The metaphors were then analyzed using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Eco-linguistic perspectives to examined how language explains environmental disasters. The analysis revealed three key metaphorical patterns that were used to describe the 2025 floods in Pakistan in newspaper editorials.

**Metaphors Distribution Across Sources**

Article No.:	Source	Article Title	Publication Date	Total Metaphors (n)
1.	Al-Jazeera	“Crisis of Justice” as Floods Devastate: Pakistan’s Climate Change Minister	September 19, 2025	9
2.	Al-Jazeera	Two Million Impacted as Pakistan’s Punjab Faces Worst Floods in its History.	August 31, 2025	10
3.	BBC News	More Than Two Million People Evacuated from Deadly Floods in Pakistan	September 12, 2025	10
4.	BBC News	Monsoon Rains Happen Every year. So Why Do So Many Die in Pakistan.	August 25, 2025	19
5.	Dawn	Flood Lessons	August 22, 2025	9
6.	Dawn	Floods Badly Damage Infrastructure in KP	August 16, 2025	11

**Table 1**

**Floods as Violent Agent**

In editorials floods were often described as violent and aggressive forces. This is evident in metaphors like “floods sweep the country’s eastern region” (BBC News), “the floods have destroyed the large swathes of farms and houses” (BBC News) and “we cannot fight it, we cannot stop it” (AL-Jazeera). Furthermore, the war-like framing also shapes the way relief efforts are described. This can be seen in metaphors like “UN allocated \$5m to support Pakistan’s flood response” (BBC News) and the government action is described as “deployed additional workforce... and heavy machinery” (Dawn News). This framing portrays floods as enemies that attack. The use of words like “fight,” “stop,” and defend places Pakistan in a reactive role. It highlights emergency actions rather than long-term planning and climate resilience. Moreover, it encourages defensive thinking and emergency response.

**Floods as Historical Milestones**

The editorials also frame floods as major historical events and also as the one that return over time. For example, a metaphor describes "Pakistan's eastern Punjab province is dealing with the biggest flood in its history, (Al-Jazeera)" while in another "history is repeating itself (BBC News)." This creates a contrast. The floods are described as something new and huge, but also as something that keeps happening. This suggests that although the situation is serious, but still the country has not learned from the past disasters or taken strong long-term preventive action.

**Floods as Material Destroyers**

Floods are also described as forces that destroys or erase material life. For instance, "ferocious flooding in 2022 wiped out huge swathes of crops, (Al-Jazeera)" and "livelihoods vanish (BBC News)." Also, another stronger example "thousands of years of civilization were literally washed away—mosques, temples, schools, hospitals, old buildings and monuments (Al-Jazeera)." This personification reflects floods as destroyers focusing on damage and loss. It makes floods look like active attackers, while the

real long-term problems and weak systems behind the damage are not discussed.

### **Conceptual Categories in Flood Framing**

Below are the conceptual categories that were found during the metaphorical analysis of the newspaper editorials.

#### **War/Violence/Conflict Metaphors**

The war, conflict and violence metaphors appear more often than any other type in the corpus. These metaphors use military ideas to describe floods, climate events and response of government. Pakistan is described as being "the front lines of climate vulnerability (DAWN)" and people say, "we cannot fight it, we cannot stop it (Al-Jazeera)." Whereas, the government response is described like the military operations "declared an emergency... rescue operations... deployed additional workforce (DAWN)." As, these metaphors are common, climate disasters are portrayed as security threats that need fast emergency action. This shifts the attention from the fact that climate changes are long-term issues that require deep structural change. Past studies also show that this kind of military language strengthens centralized control and reduces focus on community adaptation (Lakoff, 2010; Hulme, 2009).

#### **Body/Health/Medical Metaphors**

The body, health, and medical metaphors are also used to describe the economy, environment, infrastructure and governance. For example, Pakistan's "agricultural economy... the backbone of our GDP" (Al-Jazeera) describes that the economy is a body metaphor. Environmental damage is framed by the medical language, as in "our flowing waters... are now largely poisoned (Al-Jazeera)." Problems in infrastructure are also expressed as physical failures: "crumbling infrastructure", "traffic remained paralysed", and "tripping of 41 feeders... complete suspension of electricity transmission" (DAWN). This type of medical framing presents the decline of systems as something natural and unavoidable. Instead of, being a result of some policy failures, mismanagement, or years of insufficient investment in climate-resilient systems. However, the body metaphors are also used in positive ways such as call for "rehabilitation work" (BBC News) which shows possibility for repair, recovery and future improvement.

#### **Animate Agent/Force Metaphors**

This category presents climate processes and weather events as they were living beings that act with purpose. Phrases like "climate change has worsened floods in Pakistan" (BBC News) and "global warming has worsened monsoon rains this year in Pakistan" (Al-Jazeera) show climate change as an active force that deliberately causes harm. Furthermore, weather events are also given human like actions as in "unpredictable monsoons unleash heavy rains" (Dawn) and "rivers burst their banks" (BBC News). This type of language use can hide the fact that human activity drives climate change. It also shifts attention from the country systems, and industries responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. The metaphors portray country as a passive victim, by framing climate as an independent force. This makes it more difficult to recognize the one that should be held responsible.

#### **Object/Material Metaphors**

These metaphors describe the physical and concrete effects of floods in Pakistan. They frame civilization as "an object that can be washed away" (Al-Jazeera). The environment is framed as something that can be used up or damaged "a consumable object" (Al-Jazeera). Economic stability is treated as a material thing in phrases like "livelihoods vanish" (BBC News). Even laws are materialized as objects that people simply get ignored by people "Laws go ignored (BBC News)." By using concrete things to describe abstract ideas helps readers to understand complex issues such as environmental damage and economic insecurity. However, this process can also hide the deeper, interconnected systems that create and worsen vulnerability.

### Structural/Spatial Metaphors

Structural and spatial metaphors shape power, inequality and governance by placing them in familiar spatial patterns. Governance is seen as a “top-down system” (BBC News), in which upward direction reflects authority and while the downward direction reflects weakness or dependence. Poverty is also framed through spatial terms such as people “live below the poverty line” (BBC News) and need a “poverty escape ladder” (BBC News). This explains poverty as a lower physical level that people must climb out of. The country is further portrayed as a container, such as, “cross-border flooding after India released water... into Pakistan’s low-lying regions” (Al-Jazeera). These vertical and container metaphors make power gaps and geographic vulnerability appear more natural, even though they are from complex social structure and unequal development.

### Moral/Justice Metaphors

This category is quantitatively least frequent; however, moral and justice metaphors carry significant ideological meaning. Pakistan’s climate change the Minister explicitly re-frames the crisis: “I don’t view this as a crisis of climate. I view it as a crisis of justice” (Al-Jazeera). The international funding system is depicted as marked by “lopsided allocation” (Al-Jazeera), producing “not a funding gap, it’s a moral gap” (Al-Jazeera). This framing is further described in most forceful expression in the claim that, “Pakistan is paying a big price for ‘international sins’” (BBC News). This describes climate changes as moral wrongdoing and Pakistan is portrayed as suffering unjust consequences. These metaphors describe the importance of climate justice discourse in political context. While on the other hand, it is still limited within the mainstream reporting on floods. This highlights the immediate damage and relief efforts instead of deeper global inequalities shaping climate vulnerability.

**Metaphorical categories of Metaphors**

Metaphor Category	Al-Jazeera (n)	BBC News (n)	Dawn (n)	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
War/Violence/Conflict	5	7	6	18	26.5%
Body/Health/Medical	3	4	7	14	20.6%
Animate Agent/Force	3	5	4	12	17.6%
Object/Material	4	5	2	11	16.2%
Structural/Spatial	1	5	1	7	10.3%
Moral/Justice	3	3	0	6	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2

### Highlighting the Climate Issues and Social Injustices

The metaphorical framing of floods 2025 in Pakistan highlights different but also interconnected discursive strategies. These strategies highlight climate issues and social injustices.

#### Climate Inequality as Moral Injustice

The climate change is not only seen as an environmental issue but also also an ethical and moral problem that questions global inequality. It is evident in the Pakistan’s climate change Minister statement as, "I don't view this as a crisis of climate. I view it as a crisis of justice" (Al-Jazeera). This explicit rejection of climate narratives challenges the dominant adaptation paradigm. It stresses building resilience in vulnerable countries rather than confronting the historical emissions of the industrial state.

Moreover, the economic metaphors of debt and payment construct a narrative of moral accountability. It can be seen in, “Pakistan is paying a big price for ‘international sins’” (BBC News). In this framing, ideas of economic exchange and religious wrongdoing are mapped onto climate responsibility. The shift from financial to ethical language re-frame resource shortages as failures of justice. This calls for recognition of fairness rather than only technical adjustments.

### **Vulnerability as Structural Condition**

The vulnerability frame uses the body, spatial and structural metaphors to describe Pakistan's vulnerability as both natural and socially produced. It is also rooted in geographic conditions but also due to the governance failures. For instance, "Pakistan's geography makes it extremely vulnerable to climate change" (BBC News), and another "glaciers in the north are melting in fragile valleys" (Dawn). It suggests that the exposure results from fixed physical conditions rather than social or political choices. It creates a balance between internal shortcomings and external factors. This dual framing supports argument that for international climate assistance while also signaling the need for internal reforms.

### **Permanence and Repetition in Narratives**

In metaphors a clear contradiction is seen in the ways the floods are understood by the people. They are seen as permanent changes and also as repeated events. "These are not seasonal aberrations. They are our permanent new reality" (Dawn). The phrase suggests two ideas: it is "permanent," meaning it will not go away, and it is "new," meaning it still feels unfamiliar. Some other metaphors also highlight floods as repetitive events. In, "history is repeating itself" (BBC News), shows that the floods return in cycles. Both these ideas work together for specific different purposes. The "new normal" frame creates urgency for long-term, structural policy changes. The "repeating history" frame stresses the need for immediate action and criticizes the government for not learning from past disasters. Both frames help justify emergency aid as well as long-term climate adaptation.

### **Key Findings**

The metaphors analysis using Conceptual Metaphor Theory framework and Eco-linguistic perspectives was done to determine how language presents environmental disasters, assigns blame and influences public understanding. The findings show that how consistent patterns in metaphor use highlight deeper ideas about climate vulnerability, government action and global responsibility.

This section presents the finding by themes, explaining how the floods are conceptualized. It further describes how the actors are portrayed as responsible or powerless and what ecological meanings appear through metaphorical choices. Table 2 presents the frequency of conceptual metaphor categories identified across the six selected editorials. The most frequent framing portrays floods as a *natural disaster or attacking force*, accounting for approximately 28 percent of all metaphorical expressions. This suggests that the flood is linguistically conceptualized as an uncontrollable external enemy.

The second category i.e. climate change emphasizes ecological responsibility and global injustices in relation to climate change. Economic and body metaphors link ecological destruction with country's vulnerability. The metaphors for infrastructure and governance expose government accountability. Overall, these trends in metaphors reveal a widespread narrative of moral urgency and vulnerability from eco-linguistic perspective on the floods in Pakistan 2025.

### **Climate change framed as War**

War and violence metaphors make up to 26.5% of all identified metaphors emerging as the strongest pattern in how the floods are discussed in editorials. This pattern portrays floods not just as environmental problems but also as the enemies that should be fought. It encourages an emergency response rather than long-term climate preparation and planning. It positions the government and public in a reactive role, instead of waiting for crisis to happen and then responding. By describing the climate change as violent enemy the discourse overshadow the importance for sustainable environmental management and deeper ecological reforms.

### **Governance failure framed as natural illness**

Health, body, and medical metaphors comprise the second most common category that make up to 20.6% of all metaphors. These metaphors describe the infrastructure failure and governance as the natural illness instead of the result of the wrong policy choices. It explains the poor planning or lack

of investment as something unavoidable. By presenting infrastructure weakness as illness it shifts attention from the state's responsibility to maintain and upgrade system. It makes the crisis look simply as something natural that can happen instead of something that can be prevented. However, the use of the "rehabilitation work" (BBC News) implies that with things can be under control if timely action is taken.

### **Natural Forces as Actors**

These types of metaphorical framing portray weather as a living agent (17.6%) that give the impression that natural forces act with intention. Through expressions like monsoons "unleash" rain (Dawn) or rivers "burst" their banks (BBC News) the weather is framed as if it chooses to attack communities. It also creates ambiguity by recognizing climate effects while avoiding the clear blame.

### **Vertical Metaphors of Inequality**

These metaphors use ideas like height and container to explain power and social class. When a system is described as "the top-down" (BBC News) it makes the hierarchy look natural and expected. Poverty metaphors such as "below the poverty line" or "poverty escape ladder" (BBC News) describes being poor as being physically weak. It reflects that poverty is an individual struggle rather than a wider social problem. Container metaphors such as India "releasing water into Pakistan's low-lying regions" (Al-Jazeera) show Pakistan as naturally weak. It can distract attention from local failures in drainage and water planning.

### **Justice Framing in Global vs. Domestic Media**

Justice-related metaphors are least frequent 8.8% but they show a clear pattern. Although, BBC and Al-Jazeera editorials both show these metaphors but the more direct ones are present only in Al-Jazeera. That are quoted from the government ministers. The expression "Pakistan is paying a big price for 'international sins'" (BBC News) links economic harm to the moral guilt. While the shift from "funding gap" to "moral gap" (Al-Jazeera) positions climate finance as restitution. Their absence in Dawn editorials suggest that these arguments work better for the global media rather than the Pakistani readers. In which, the audiences, focus more on the governance shortcomings rather than the global inequality.

### **Media Disparities in Climate Justice Representation**

An important finding of the study is the absence of the metaphors that provide autonomy to the communities. Across all the 68 metaphors, people are only portrayed as the victims through ideas like the "200 deaths," "two million displaced" or as "passive observers." Even the phrase "embracing our vulnerability" (Al-Jazeera) emphasizes acceptance rather than action. No metaphors acknowledge local adaptation knowledge, community warning systems or traditional flood management practices. This systematic omission reinforces top-down approaches to disaster governance and marginalizes participatory approaches. From an Eco-linguistic perspective (Stibbe, 2015) this forms a "destructive story" framing the affected communities as dependent victims rather than actors that are capable of action.

### **Source Specific Framing Strategies in Climate Discourse**

There are clear differences in metaphor use and patterns across the publication sources. Al-Jazeera (42.6%) highlights the justice focused metaphors and also quotes from the government officials. It focuses on international readers concerned with climate inequalities. BBC News (33.8%) shows a balanced mix of metaphor categories including the war, body and structural metaphors. It addresses the global audiences interested in both humanitarian issues and governance challenges. Dawn (23.5%) focuses greatly on body and health metaphors. It highlights the infrastructure problems related for Pakistani audiences evaluating the government performance. These differences demonstrate that the climate discourse is carefully adapted to audience expectations and institutional priorities. It does not represent a single national perspective but rather reflect the strategic choices of each publication source.

This research reveals that the metaphorical framing describes Pakistan's flood vulnerability through three connected levels. Floods are framed as the climate injustice at global level. While, at national level they highlight weakness in governance. This multi level framing supports demand for global climate funding, policy reform and humanitarian assistance. However, the community participation is completely absent. Communities are just shown as victims rather than decision-makers.

From the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor theory, these metaphors explain how floods are understood and explained. From an Eco-linguistic perspective, they act as "stories we live by" that limit democratic participation and ecological change. These findings suggest the need for alternative metaphorical framing that promote preventive action. Moreover, they should strengthen international climate justice claims and domestic accountability.

### **Discussion**

This section explains how the research findings connect to the established scholarly frameworks in a broader context. It examines how the metaphors used in Pakistani flood editorials contribute to the understanding of climate discourse. They also influence environmental communication and media representation in climate-vulnerable societies. The overall patterns reveal how public understanding, policy choices, and responsibility are reflected through cognitive structures, ideological views and ecological narratives.

#### **The Climate as Conflict**

In the analysis, the idea of the climate as a conflict appears frequently in the data. The floods are described as sudden and devastating events. This framing creates a sense of urgency. Portraying disasters as isolated shocks can conceal fundamental issues. Problems like ecological change and administrative failures remain hidden. Cognitively this shows how we use what we know to understand difficult things. The framing also promotes quick reactions. It favors emergency relief instead of long-term planning sustainability and climate adaptation. Environmental reports, as well, tend to prioritize crisis narratives over structural analyses (Hulme, 2009; Carvalho, 2007).

#### **Language and the legitimization of Institutional failure**

Metaphors that describe infrastructure and administrative breakdown present the failure as a natural condition instead of the result of human decisions. When systems are explained through images of physical collapse or bodily dysfunction, responsibility becomes unclear. This type of language use suggests inevitability and downplays the role of policy planning and institutional choices. Discourse studies also support this idea, showing that metaphors can make social problems appear natural and unavoidable (Fairclough, 2003). From an Eco-linguistic perspective, this language usage weakens accountability and makes it harder to question development practices that increase vulnerability. However, mentions of repair and recovery suggest that action can still be taken, yet these solutions are given less importance.

#### **Shifting Responsibility to Natural Processes**

Natural events are frequently presented as if they act on their own. Floods, rivers and climate changes are described as autonomous actors. This description diminishes human responsibility. Human participation look passive or distant. In reality, human actions have direct involvement that require recognition. Eco-linguistic research suggests this kind of language may hide the connections between human conduct and environmental degradation (Stibbe 2015). Framing natural forces as an independent makes it harder to see how administration, greenhouse gases and spatial planning shape disasters.

#### **Structural Inequality in Environmental Discourse**

Metaphors about structure and space shape how people view inequality and risk. This framing impacts how these issues are perceived. The Representation of Vertical hierarchies and container-like imagery depict poverty, governance and exposure. These construction indicate that the community roles are permanent. Framing inequality as static normalizes it. From, a critical discourse perspective,

metaphors help maintain existing power relations (Van Dijk, 2006). Eco-linguistically, these metaphors reduce the perceived capacity of communities to act. It also limits the possibilities for ecological resilience or social change.

### **Justice Narrative and Media Representation**

Although justice-related metaphors are not frequent, but they hold significant ideological importance. They portray environmental damage as an ethical concern that is linked to global inequality. These metaphors appear in international newspapers. This reflects the influence of audience preferences and institutional agendas in newsreports. Studies in media discourse suggest that world-wide publications tend to highlight responsibilities across countries. Meanwhile, the local publications focus on domestic administration failures (Carvalho, 2007). The limited use of justice metaphors in domestic newspaper reduces their influence on public discussion about climate issues in Pakistan.

### **Marginalization of Community Agency**

In the editorials, regional communities are described as passive victims of floods. The texts there are no metaphors related to community knowledge, adjustments or group actions. This pattern reinforces the top-down disaster control. From an Eco-linguistic perspective, such framing creates a narrative problem. It limits the community participation and hides the effectiveness of community-led efforts. Stibbe's (2015) idea of "stories we live by" demonstrate that how consistent discourse patterns shape expectations during the environmental crisis.

### **Combining Cognitive Theory with Eco-linguistics**

Using both Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Eco-linguistics provide a detailed study of texts. CMT explains how people understand events through every ideas. eco-linguistics shows how these metaphors shape ethical and environmental understanding. together, they reveal that common metaphors focus on crisis, destruction and vulnerability. that also ignores the long-term planning, protection and shared responsibility. This emphasizes the need for new metaphors that promote sustainability and participatory environmental governance.

### **Limitations**

This study examines metaphors that are used to describe Pakistan's 2025 floods. It studied 68 metaphors from six editorials published between August and September 2025. The data-set allowed detailed qualitative analysis using Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Eco-linguistic perspective. However, it reflects only a specific part of floods related media discourse. The study focused on Al-Jazeera, BBC News and Dawn during the crisis period, when media impact is greatest. The research ensured attention to powerful media voices. However, Urdu and regional media rely on different metaphor shaped by different cultural and religious traditions. Research on multiple languages will help determine if these results apply beyond English media. moreover, editorials were chosen because they mostly use metaphors to convey meaning. Future studies could examine other media, such as news reports, television, radio and social media. These platforms may provide a broader range of metaphor use, especially from no elite groups.

The August-September time frame reflects crisis period reporting. Longitudinal research could examine the metaphor use before, during and after the disaster period. Comparing floods from different years would reveal subtle and changing metaphor patterns. The study used a systematic and clear method, that allow others to replicate it. Although, interpretation is subjective, the strong theoretical base supports further research. These limitations create opportunities for future studies across languages, time-frames and media types.

### **Recommendations for future studies**

There are several ways in which future studies can develop this study further. Studies comparing floods coverage in South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri-Lanka can test whether the findings reflect regional trends or national features. They can also see how political roles shape climate language by comparing climate-vulnerable and climate-polluting nations. To check whether the

English language findings are applicable to broader context studies can do research on multi-lingual media. Studies can also be performed across different platforms such as social media and television can reveal how metaphors shifts across platforms. Long-term analysis of comparing floods in 2010, 2022 and 2025 can identify the changing patterns. It explains which patterns remain stable and which are changed over time. Furthermore, research on affected communities can give a voice to people often ignored in mainstream media. Experimental studies can show how different framing shapes public response. Together, these strategies can help create more inclusive climate communication.

### Conclusion

Language plays a powerful role in shaping and understanding the environmental crisis. This study describes that the newspaper editorials of Pakistan's 2025 flood does more than just reporting the damage. It shapes ideas about the vulnerability, responsibility and possible solutions. The analysis of 68 metaphors from the newspaper editorials taken from Al-Jazeera, BBC News, and Dawn highlights the strong use of war and medical metaphors. Floods are described as the enemies whereas, infrastructure damage as illness. This type of language use encourages emergency actions rather than long-term planning. It also hides the role of government decisions and policy failures in producing disaster conditions. The study also finds that the communities are completely absent from agency. Flood affected people are portrayed as the victims or helpless observers. The international media ensure the use of justice metaphors that is often missing in local media. This shows that the climate justice language is primarily used for diplomatic purposes, not for local public engagement.

The study highlights that metaphor use of climate-vulnerable countries is different from that of climate-responsible nations. The combined theoretical framework allows the analysis of language, power and ecology together. Future research may incorporate multi-lingual, social media, comparative analysis and longitudinal methods to expand the research. It could allow a detailed understanding of climate communication, in context marked by environmental risk and social inequality. Ultimately, disaster metaphors influence how people understand climate change, what solutions are needed and which voices are heard.

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