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Development-induced Displacement and Dispossession: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Construction of Dadhocha Dam in Rawalpindi

Arfa Saleem

Arslan Waheed

May 2024

School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S3H)
National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)
Sector H-12, Islamabad, Pakistan

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Arfa Saleem

Graduate, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, NUST
E-mail: arfa.mds21s3h@student.nust.edu.pk

Arslan Waheed

Assistant Professor, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, NUST
E-mail: arslanwaheed.s3h@s3h.nust.edu.pk

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School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S3H)
National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)
Sector H-12, Islamabad, Pakistan

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List of Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MDG	Million Gallons per Day
SDO	Small Dams Organization

Abstract

Construction of hydraulic infrastructure is often regarded as an epitome of development whereby its *raison d'être* is based on various rationalities. Though propagated as apolitical interventions infused with scientific rationality and technocratic supremacy, mega infrastructures cannot be regarded as value free as post-development scholars argue. This study of Dadhocha Dam in Rawalpindi, Pakistan aims at inquiring these dominant rationalities that propagate dam construction while legitimizing the displacement and dispossession of affectees of Malikpur. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis as theoretical and analytical framework, this research views the development-displacement nexus as a contested terrain and problematizes it by examining both the dominant/state and the marginalized/affectee discourses embedded in it. The discourses, taken as data, are collected through qualitative interviews of state, represented by the Small Dams Organization and the affectees of Malikpur and official documents including PC-1 and regulations. Through critical analysis, the research argues that the Dadhocha Dam and the ensuing dispossession and displacement of the Malikpur residents is legitimized by state through discursive strategies of rationalization, authorization, practical argumentation and blame avoidance. These strategies, while marginalizing the affectees' discourse, also determine implications on their livelihoods in the form of exploitation and impoverishment risks. This juxtaposition of the discourses and their socio-material manifestation reveals power asymmetry in development projects, and mainstream policy processes at a broader level. By providing a critique of the normative public policy discourse in Pakistan, this study contributes in democratizing the development discourse and highlighting institutional obstacles in achieving inclusive development, which can be reformed for social justice.

Keywords: Development-induced Displacement, Hydraulic Infrastructure, Land Acquisition, Compensation, Critical Discourse

1. Introduction

Some people have left out of fear, some of us remain. We will build barriers if we have to until we get justice (Ariz, affectee, Malikpur, 15th May, 2023).

Remaining in a perpetual state of waiting for an inevitable destruction of livelihood is a form of powerlessness. At its backdrop is the construction of the Dadhocha Dam in Rawalpindi, for which the land of Malikpur, among other villages, is being acquired. The land acquisition was initiated by the Small Dams Organization (SDO) in 2011, after which the process fell quiescent until 2020. After almost 10 years of silence, an urgency was issued to resume the dam construction. While the years preceding urgency created conditions of uncertainty and exploitation, the recommencement of acquisition procedures has thrown the affectees in a legal struggle to claim fair compensation for their land.

Displacement for them is inevitable, since the *raison d'etre* for the dam is built on the hegemonic developmentalist discourse deeply rooted in colonial practices. The concept of development which perpetuated post World War II with US victory came with its own lexical baggage and manifested in the form of development programs comprising mega-structures, fiscal restructuring and socio-economic reforms (Esteva, 2010). These were undertaken in Asia, Latin America and Africa by international financial institutions, most prominently the World Bank, along with regional institutes like the Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank during the years of 1950s to 1980s (Zaman et al., 2022). Embedded in the hyperbolized illustration of modernization, these projects guaranteed a promising trajectory towards economic growth. While regimes in the Global South embraced and implemented these programs, it came at the cost of marginalizing those who had already existed on the sideline (Terminski, 2015). Development became an oxymoron, where the prominent towering infrastructures, expansive highways and urbanized housing stood in stark contrast with destruction of traditional homes, ways of living and cultural and social ties (Oliver-Smith, 2006; Uvin, 2010). For this reason, Sachs (2010) depicts a cannibalistic nature of economic growth, where the cost of development is shifted to communities and nature, causing dispossession, displacement, and a growing polarization in the society. Development proponents condone it as a necessary price to pay for the greater good, but many critics ask the essential question: development for whom?

'Public Purpose' is the term invoked to validate development projects, and it is the most prominent feature in the colonial land acquisition laws enacted in South Asia (Saxena, 2008). The Land Acquisition Act 1894, although amended with its own variations over time by India, Pakistan and

Bangladesh, retains its colonial features. Being non-specific in terminology, it gives immense powers to the state to seize land and discredit land ownership over an issuance of one notification (Ahmed, 2022; Sarkar, 2007). In order to claim rights on the land to acquire compensation in exchange for their homes, people have to go through extensive, yet often exploitative bureaucratic procedures in their already vulnerable state of depleting time and resources. They are often reliant on documentation which could be easily invalidated by administrative systems (Tassadiq, 2022). While fighting for their rights, they are often discursively othered, criminalized and trivialized in the process, which largely delegitimizes their struggle and consequently pushes them into peripheries. These processes have been prevalent since the initiation of top-down development programs in Pakistan ever since its inception in 1947.

The era of development enveloped Pakistan all the same in the 1960s, when Ayub Khan launched extensive development programs to harness economic growth (Houston, 2017; Weiss, 1999). Megaprojects like construction of dams and building modern cities like Islamabad were central to the policies and were delineated as harbingers of socio-economic progress (Akhter, 2015; Gardezi & Mumtaz, 2005). Even though an economic growth rate, purported to be the main indicator of development, was projected to be at 6%, moving to 10% in the 1970s, however, as a consequence of neo-liberal capitalism, the inequalities increased considerably (Abbasi, 2021; Gardezi & Mumtaz, 2005; LaPorte, 1969). In the name of so-called nation building, colonial legacies were reconstituted at the expense of displacement, creation of internal peripheries, material deprivation and aggravation of social stratification (Abbasi, 2021; Akhter, 2022; Jamali, 2014). For instance, more than 0.3 million people were displaced by major dams of Mangla, Tarbela and Ghazi Brotha alone without sufficient compensation or effective resettlement plans (Haq & Haq, 2022). Construction of Islamabad and modernization of Karachi resulted in the displacement of a large number of people, while grand highways like Lyari Expressway led to demolition of 25000 residential households (for details see: Anwar et al., 2021; Daechsel, 2013; Hull, 2008).

Abbasi (2021) in her critique of Pakistan's Vision 2025 contends that current development in Pakistan follows the same historical trajectory since Ayub's era, which is based on dominant development ideology, while it normalizes the destitution of people who pay the cost of such modernization endeavors. Several recent infrastructural projects depict the similar dichotomy of development and impoverishment, for instance, the ghettoization of Gwadar under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with the violence of displacement and loss of rights to the sea (Ebrahim, 2017; Jamali, 2014). Similarly, Tassadiq (2022) explores the citizen-subject, where people's right to

land and housing is undermined in the light of construction of Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT), where their social and material relationship to the city is mediated through colonial legal and bureaucratic practices, causing dispossession and displacement. Any act of resistance and voices to seek social justice are suppressed or muted through normalization of racialized peripheries, justified on the basis of necessity, or validated in terms of future visions of national prosperity (Abbasi, 2021; Akhter, 2022; Jamali, 2014).

Dadhocha Dam, the study of this research, in its rational, planning, and execution is no exception to the centuries old practices of land acquisition and developmentalist authoritarianism. The Small Dams Organization, the main institute under this research, has similar mechanisms to acquire land. Borrowing heavily from the western discourse, the Dadhocha Dam is founded upon technocratic and scientific knowledge, which, when put to paper in the name of planning and policy, bestows it with institutional, bureaucratic and procedural legitimization. Dadhocha Dam is envisioned to resolve the grave water shortage that Rawalpindi and Islamabad will inevitably face. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report delineates the proposed location of the dam as ideal and validates it through expert feasibility studies. This need-based human rights and technocratic discourse lays grounds for 'justified' land acquisition for the dam construction, which will displace approximately 218 households and 1064 people.

Contextualizing the preceding debate within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an imperative question can be formulated: why, despite the stark binaries of growth and impoverishment, the development-displacement nexus remains largely uncontested? To arrive at a comprehensive answer, problematization of this nexus is required.

According to Foucault (1984, 1972), discourse strives to stabilize meanings, and thus shape and control broader orders and structures. Its constitutive character naturalizes what is actually socially constitutive (Diaz-Bone et al., 2008). Problematization then dismantles what appears to be a fact, but is in actuality a historically constructed fixed meaning (Foucault, 1984). Accordingly, Fairclough's (2013, 1992) conceptualization of problematization presents discourse as a part of the social process, sharing a dialectical relationship with material reality, or social actions, which is held together by power relations in a society. Through normative and explanatory critique, this dialectical relationship is problematized by exploring and uncovering how and why these power relations exist in discursive and non-discursive aspects, and how/why they materialize the social reality comprising structures, practices and events (Fairclough, 2015, 2013, 1992). In this way, the hegemonic development discourse can be said to be an attempt to freeze a particular modernist outlook which permeates all

spheres as commonsensical and naturalistic, creating a discursive closure which precludes alternative discourses through power relations. In this particular context, the development-displacement nexus is presented as normative, which purports a particular development idea as essential, and legitimizes the displacement and dispossession of people.

Akor (2015, p. 1) emphasizes the need to problematize the development discourses, in order to not only bring into question the readily accepted notions constructed by ‘development experts’ but extend the capacity of decision-making to people for whom the development is said to be. Moreover, by studying the developmental discourses and practices, it will bring forth the strategies used that make development a contested terrain, provides a comprehensive understanding of policy-making and institutional frameworks and delineates construction of political imaginaries within mega projects (for details see Coticchia & Di Giulio, 2023; Esposito & Terlizzi, 2023; Rek-Wozniak, 2023; Tinti, 2023).

Thus, the study of Dadhocha Dam problematizes the development-displacement nexus in Pakistan by juxtaposing the state and affectee discourses to explore legitimization of dam construction and displacement/dispossession and reveal the overarching power structures, practices and events which constitute the socio-material reality for the affectees. A detailed explanation of the study area is as follows:

1.2. Dadhocha Dam and the Peripheries: The Small Dams Organization vs. the Village of Malikpur

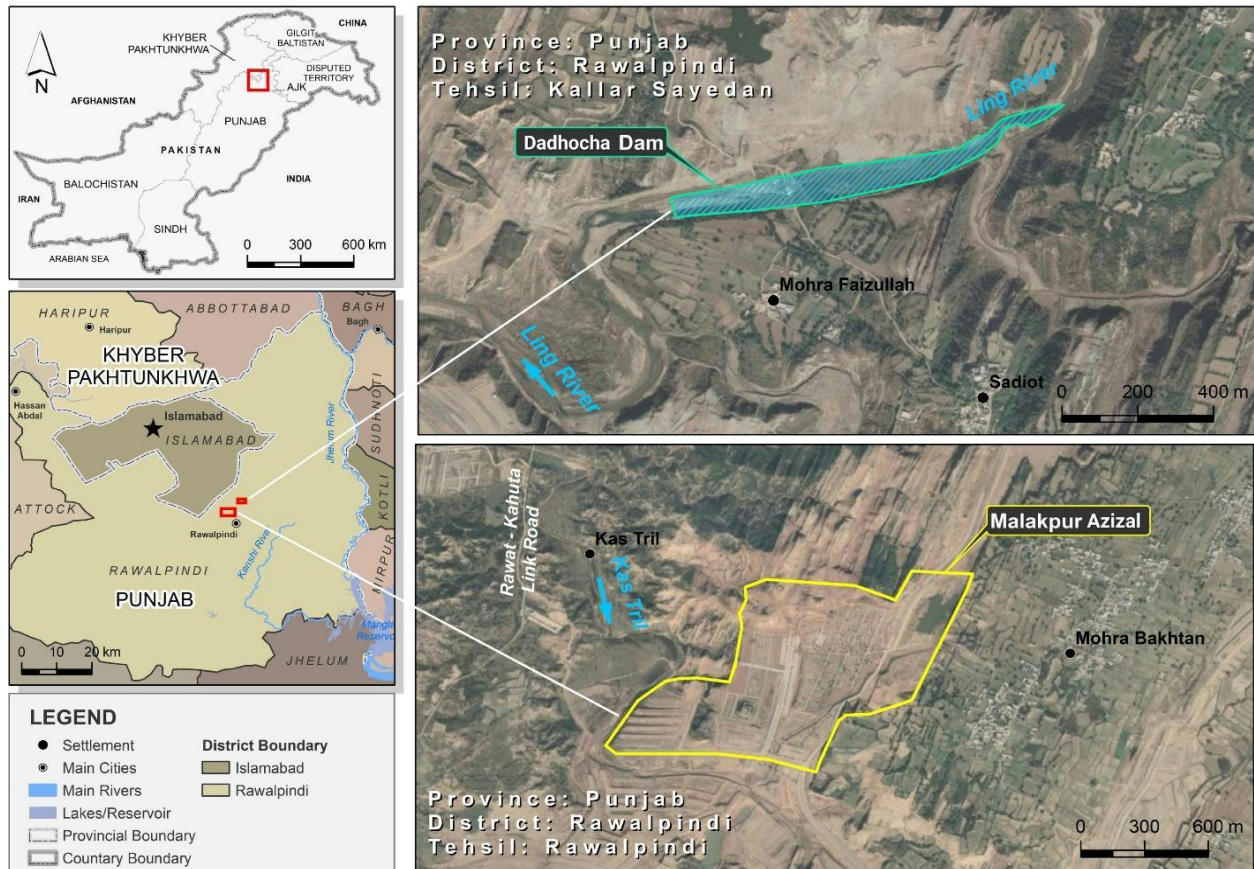
Designed by the Punjab Planning Commission and executed by the Small Dams Organization, Dadhocha Dam is projected to fulfill 35 million gallons per day out (MDG) of 60-65 MGD water requirements of Rawalpindi. Falling under the administration of Punjab Irrigation Department, the Small Dams Organization was formed in 1973 to undertake development of Barani Areas in Potohar plateau and so far, 57 small dams have been constructed since 1962. Its main activities include feasibility studies, construction, operation and maintenance of small dams (Punjab Irrigation Department, 2023). The Small Dams Organization is set to complete the Dadhocha Dam project with a budget of 6833.158 million within 3 years (PC-1, 2018).

Dadhocha Dam is proposed to be located about 25 km from the Rawalpindi City, 8 km from Rawat on the Ling River, with 123 feet height, 737 feet length and a storage capacity of 60,000 acre-ft, under the administrative control of District Rawalpindi (PC-1, 2018) (Figure 1). Falling in its pond area/reservoir are two large villages in the Rawalpindi Tehsil i.e. Khanpur and Bherwala, also known as Malikpur Azizal and one village in Kallar Syedan namely Kund. Smaller villages include Saidhot,

Thalla and Bhaun. Most of the people in the villages earn their livelihoods through agricultural farming of wheat and maize on their lands. They also have small-scale businesses like grocery shops. Other facilities accessible to them are dispensaries and medical stores, along with 3 primary schools (PC-1, 2018). These villages will be submerged completely due to the dam, displacing approximately 1064 people and their livelihood.

For this research, state-society binary is understood in the roles of the Small Dams Organization which is assigned with the responsibility of planning and executing the development, i.e., Dadhocha Dam. On the other hand lies people to whom development is directed as a public good and inevitable path to glory and progress, i.e. The residents of Malikpur Azizal who experience socio-materiality of development, and refer to themselves as ‘affectees of development’.

Figure 1. Location of the Dadhocha Dam



(Source: GIS Maps).

1.3. Construction of Research Objectives and Questions of the Study

Development as a discourse, and as a material process are intertwined in a way that the ideas perpetuated regarding development come from dominant institutions, and these very institutions hold the power to mobilize resources to materialize their vision into reality. The semantics of development and what it actualizes is depersonalized and dehumanized, where the prevalence of hegemonic discourses project a reality in which the underrepresented discourses appear to not exist. These are manifested in the social process as institutional practices which marginalize other discourses to ensure the continuation of power hierarchies in order to maintain and sustain the authoritative structures. The way such discourses are operationalized into practice also shapes the reality of those whose voices are muted.

Dam construction, a mega-structure illustrating the epitome of development with its grandeur image and promises to become a panacea for socio-economic obstacles, is readily endorsed and implemented in state policies. Yet it constructs a very different truth for those on whose land the dam is built. Following are the research objectives and research questions that guide this research:

1.3.1. Research Objectives

1. To investigate the power-hierarchies in the realizing the dream of development while constructing the Dadhocha Dam
2. To understand socio-material struggles, appropriations, and contestations in the process of development of Dadhocha Dam

1.3.2. Research Questions

To achieve the above-mentioned research objectives, following are the guiding research questions:

1. How do power-hierarchies play out in the event of the planning and construction of Dadhocha Dam in both discursive and non-discursive aspects?
2. How the socio-material reality of the displaced population counteracts with the dominant discourses of planning and construction of Dadhocha Dam as an inevitable step towards development?

2. Conceptual Framework

The epistemological foundations of this study are grounded in the critical work on discourse, which is underpinned by the concept of institutional social power (Dijk, 1989). Power enables the production of knowledge, which allows serious truth claims to be made about objects through discursive practices within which they are constituted (Foucault, 1977). These truth claims thus, materialize the very realities they describe, via the performative power of discourse (Fairclough, 2003). This means that objects can be characterized as both material and semiotic and are connected through a dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 2013). Considering that, discourse is taken to be a meaning-making activity and a part of the social process (Fairclough 2013, 2003). Thus, Fairclough (1992), proposes that discourse is a form of social practice rather than an individual activity. This makes discourse a mode of action, which thereby establishes a relationship between discourse and social structures. This dialectical relation implies that on one hand social structures shape and constrain discourse at all levels e.g. societal relations by class, institutions like education and law, or conventions or norms etc. On the other hand, drawing on Foucault's (1979, 1978, 1972) concept of discursive formation of objects, discourse is taken as socially constitutive, not only in representation but also signification of the world (Fairclough, 1992). It constructs and constitutes social identities, social relationships, knowledge and beliefs systems, and the wider social structures (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Thus, discourse and society are not independent entities, rather, they have an internal and dialectical relation (Fairclough, 2015). The relationship is such that while each internalizes the other, they are not reducible to each other (Harvey, 1996). This signifies that social institutions, power, relations, cultural values and beliefs are partially semiotic, enabling the key question that CDA poses: what is the nature of relationship which ties semiotic and other elements? (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

Fairclough (2013, 2009, 1992) establishes the dialectical relationship by considering semiosis as an element of social process, the social process comprising three levels of social reality: social structures, practices and events. Social practices are networks constituted by social institutions, fields and organizations, and they play an intermediary role between abstract social structures and concrete social events. The semiotic aspect of networks of social practices is known as orders of discourse and its elements i.e. genre, discourse and style, are not only semiotic but cut across both discursive and non-discursive i.e. other social elements. Genres relate to other social elements in terms of semiotic means of action e.g. interviews, editorials and advertisements etc. Discourses construe and represent

aspects of the world that different social actors identify with. Styles constitute identities or ways of being semiotically. In this case, multiple structures are inextricably intertwined that include economic, development, political and legal structures through which the event i.e. displacement of Malikpur residents takes place due to Dadhocha Dam. The relationship between them is mediated by social practices of bureaucratic, developmental and legal institutions of Punjab, as well as informal institutions of land transfers at local level. The order of discourse then is made up by policy texts such as feasibility and environmental studies, regulations under the Land Acquisition Act 1894 and official and affectees narratives in the form of Genres. The social groups in this case i.e. government officials represent the development discourse embedded in colonial, hegemonic discourses while the affectees represent the peripheral discourses. Within these discourses, the social groups identify in particular ways of being i.e. sub-divisional officers, field officials, community leaders etc.

The social process consists of social practices that are tied to specific historical contexts within which knowledge is constructed (Fairclough, 2003; Keller, 2005). When meaning is stabilized through these social practices, it represents power dynamics in social relations (Foucault, 1972). Relationship of power is established in relations between individuals or groups: “a mode of action upon actions” (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). Power relations, then, are not reconstituted 'above' the society, rather, deeply embedded into it (Foucault, 1982). These are diffused in the society in the form of domination structures across diverse practices e.g. capitalism, patriarchy, racism, colonization etc. (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). However, modern power is concealed as truth and knowledge, having been normalized, 'progressively governmentalized' through rationalization and centralization, in the form of state institutions (Foucault, 1982). This governmental rationality is based on scientific processes, which is problematized by Foucault (1982).

Escobar (1984) contextualizes problematization, 'technification' and institutionalization in development discourses, whereby such procedures enable deployment of development strategies in discursive spaces. Foregrounded in the post-World War II, the US-led development discourses problematized the South as 'underdeveloped', purporting development as indisputably better to legitimize interventions for the 'greater good' (Rist, 2010; Esteva, 2010). Accordingly, hydraulic infrastructures have represented the epitome of western development, and have been embraced by the leaders of post-colonial nations in the South as symbols of modern prosperity and progress (McCully, 2001). Thus, the western origins of hydraulic structures perpetuate a hegemonic ontology of water (Flaminio, 2021), effectively building dam regimes upon such water governance discourses that subjugate other knowledge systems (Boelens et al., 2019). These discourses are technified and

institutionalized to represent 'lawful' practices i.e. EIA, built on techno-scientific knowledge, and synthesized with discourses of blanket nationalism, survivalist or human rights notions to gain legitimacy (Abbink, 2012; Bingham, 2010; Fearnside, 2006; Menga, 2015). Further, socio-spatial marginalized populations are delineated as a temporal problem, which justify infrastructural interventions and thus, establish internal peripheries (Akhter, 2022). Accordingly, economic growth becomes cannibalistic as communities bear the cost of development through dispossession, displacement, and societal polarization (Sachs, 2010). Terminski (2015) highlights some of the most glaring examples of hydraulic-structures and displacement nexus as the Three Gorges Dam in China, the Sardar Sarovar Project in India and Aswan, Kariba and Akosombo Dams in Africa. In China over 10 million people have been displaced solely due to dam construction, in India between 21-41 million, and over 400,000 in Africa (Terminski, 2015). Currently, there are no accurate global figures on the scale of Development-Induced Displacement. An estimate of 100 million people during the 1990s has been suggested by the World Bank (1994) to have been displaced by modernization and development projects in the 1990s. It has increased to 15 million annually between 2001- 2010 (Cernea, 2008). In the decade of 2011-2020, Cernea and Maldonado (2018) report approximately 20 million/per year displacements.

The development trajectory of Pakistan was similar to the numerous other countries in the Global South, where industrial growth harnessed through mega projects was based on international expertise and loans (Anwar, 2014). Called the Golden Age of development, it reflected Ayub Khan's military regime which aimed to legitimize and consolidate the leadership by harnessing the ideology of technocratic knowledge- a Gramscian 'developmentalist passive revolution' (Akhter, 2015; Houston, 2017; Weiss, 1999).

Houston (2017) argues that technocratic knowledge played a central role in Pakistan's developmental discourse and thus, the decision-making. He analyzes the report of the World Bank in 1968 which used technocratic suggestions to mobilize dams as development in Pakistan. He draws similarities between the approach to dams in Pakistan and development projects in Lesotho, a case studied by Ferguson (1994) to reveal the premise of governmentality in development discourse that views state as a machine to achieve growth through apolitical development programs. Moreover, hydraulic bureaucracies have often been built on water scarcity discourse to legitimize megastructures, and Pakistan national water policy is reflective of that (Arfan et al., 2020). Accordingly, the water development program for Ayub was central to Pakistan's infrastructure modernization (Akhter, 2022).

Around 150 dams have been made in Pakistan, due to which an estimated number of 300,000 people have been displaced (Yuefang et al., 2021). The major dams Mangla (1965) and Tarbela (1976) displaced approximately 177000 people (Haq & Haq, 2022). Despite having comparatively better developed plans, the future projects of Mangla Rising and Ghazi Barotha still had insufficient provisions to ensure satisfactory restoration of livelihoods (Haq & Haq, 2022). Along with inadequate and delayed compensation, Mangla affectees were relocated without an integration plan which led them to move back near their inundated lands (Waqar, 2014; Kayani, 2012). Similar situations of landlessness and social disarticulation were also faced by affectees of Tarbela dam (Kamran, 2019; Azher, 2013). Naheed et al (2017) observe in their study of hydropower projects that effective EIA is essential in mitigation of adverse impacts, however, in Pakistan EIA varies in paper and practice. They highlight that practical implementation is flawed and grievances occur with mismanagement and limited incorporation of public concern and participation in the process. The processes of land acquisition are also laden with favoritism and corruption, where land is mismeasured and records are unofficially changed, as Sabir and Torre (2017) highlight in their study of Diamer Bhasha Dam.

Similar to some other South Asian countries, the main tool used for land acquisition in Pakistan is the Land Acquisition Act 1894. According to Sheikh (2005), although the act has been amended and modified over a period by federal and provincial governments, its essence remains the same. He further points out that the act gives coercive powers to the state that are often used arbitrarily to acquire land and determine compensation rates. For instance, section 17 of the act enables land to be acquired within 48 hours notice in cases of urgency which is left to the discretion of the authority to be defined (Afzal, 2023; Ahmed, 2022). Moreover, the act only outlines compensation rate procedures while precluding any provision on resettlement and social and psychological impacts on the affectees. Even the given provisions are forgone by the authorities (Ahmed, 2022). While there is lack of inclusive participation, where the affectees are kept out of the loop, they are also deprived of fair compensation (Afzal, 2023). The act requires compensation to be given at market rates. However, affectees are usually compensated on DC rates, which is lower than the actual price of the acquired land (Sheikh, 2005).

Documents play a major role in land acquisition and compensation claims with respect to measurement of land and ownership. Claims on land are invalidated based on documents, Tassadiq (2022) notes, when land acquisition is administered by relying on revenue documents only. This depersonalization reduces the matter of dispossession to a techno-bureaucratic process (Tassadiq, 2022). Considering the loopholes in procedures, underhand dealings also take place by revenue

officials, while malpractices resulting in discriminatory benefits distributed among some parties also emerge (Sheikh, 2005). Hull (2012, p. 261) notes that the bureaucrats invested in a “political economy of paper” have been against database adoption in Pakistani bureaucracies. The colonial, oppressive act in itself, non-implementation of the procedures, and ambiguity and uncertainty around such processes, have opened up numerous court cases which are not only time-consuming, but worsen the impact of dispossession and displacement on the affectees.

The megaprojects and displacement nexus continues in South Asia as the development trajectory embraces the dominant structures and practices embedded in high-modernist ideology. These are drawn from post-World War II western ideas of development, as well as colonial regulations which permeate the post-colonial South. This research attempts to build upon the existing critical discourse literature on development policies and extend the framework towards Pakistan, where the critique on dialectical relation in discourse remains understudied. It problematizes the development-displacement nexus in Pakistan through the study of Dadhocha Dam. By applying the theorization and methodology of critical discourse to hydraulic infrastructure development and the ensuing displacement/dispossession, this research draws attention towards power hierarchies which hold the ideological structures, policy regimes and institutional practices in Pakistan. Thus, this study contributes in developing a comprehensive understanding of how and why technocratic water regimes in Pakistan have sustained since the 1960s, and how that shapes the socio-material reality of marginalized populations. The next section explores critical discourse analysis as a methodological and analytical tool to guide the investigation of power-hierarchies in the planning and development of the Dadhocha Dam.

3. Methodology and Analytical Tools

3.1. Fairclough’s Methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (2009) delineates a general methodology for critical discourse analysis while asserting that specificity of the method is contingent upon theorizing of the object of research. The object in question would be constructed by identifying and theorizing the semiotic aspect of a social wrong. Although what constitutes a social wrong is arguable, it is generally taken as aspects of social order that are inimical to humans. This study presents development-induced displacement and its various processes as social wrong. These processes are built on oppressive colonial regulations and thus also constitute human rights violations.

The social wrong is placed within the social order and the dialectical relationship is then analyzed through relevant texts i.e. written texts, conversations, interviews or multimodal texts. The textual analysis includes linguistic and interdiscursive analysis that establishes relations between the semiotic and other elements. Interdiscursive analysis connects linguistic analysis with social structures, practices and events by articulating how configurations of genres, discourses and styles in a text constitute a specific event, and how that event stabilizes networks of social practices (orders of discourse), which is then connected to the wider social structures (Fairclough 2015, 2013, 2009, 1992). The semiotic aspect and other elements of this study is taken as documents (PC-1, Official notifications, LAA etc), along with interviews from the affectees of Malikpur and the officials of Small Dams Organization. These are dialectically connected to the events of acquisition of land to construct the Dadhocha Dam, displacement of the residents of Malikpur and court processes to pursue fair compensation. The Dadhocha Dam event emanates from wider social structures of international development and international organizations with curated programs, political regimes and colonial structures. These structures are connected to the Dadhocha event through scientific and technocratic institutions, bureaucratic administration and legislative systems.

This framework is also used to analyze the third stage which explores whether the social wrong is embedded in ideological discourses that sustain power relations which maintain the social order (Fairclough, 2009). The power relations in this case draw upon the dominant western discourses of scientific knowledge, ideologies of modernization and development and nationalistic outlook.

Finally, the analysis would identify possible ways of overcoming the obstacles that keep the social wrong from being addressed within dialectical relations (Fairclough, 2009). While the conclusion of this study will touch upon the way forward, the focus of the study will be on textual analysis of the power relations in the events of Dadhocha Dam.

The data is based on field research conducted from February 2023 to October 2023 which includes collecting official documents, and interviews from the state officials i.e. members of Small Dams Organization, and the affectees of Malikpur. Seidman (2006, p. 8) considers in-depth interviewing as the “basic mode of inquiry” for understanding meaning and context behind observed behaviors and institutional practices. For this study, semi-structured, responsive interviews were conducted, since the research question required a conversational flexibility to follow up on new information while remaining focused on the topic (Blandford, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In this way, the interviewer is more visible in the process of knowledge-production (Brinkmann, 2018). Moreover, while conducting the interviews, ethical guidelines and considerations were strictly

followed. In both cases of affectees, and government officials, consent for notetaking and audio-recording (where permitted) was acquired. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the officials and affectees.

Documents, when combined with interviews, contextualize information, create depth and equips the researcher with awareness of the relevant information and terminologies (Flick, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Flick (2014), documents must be selected purposely in accordance with the research question and design. He highlights that documents may be connected to other documents intertextually and are essential in constructing social realities, thus it is important to take them into account. For instance, in this research, the document which justifies the creation of the Dadhocha Dam i.e., PC-1, enables the notifications under Land Acquisition Act 1894 which in turn displaces the residents of Malikpur.

3.2. Discursive and Counter Strategies as Analytical Tools

The discursive strategies majorly employed by the state in public policies include practical argumentation, legitimization, discursive closure and blame avoidance. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) integrate the CDA with ‘practical argumentation’ analysis, considering it a nexus or ‘interdependency of semiosis and structuration’. Policies are characterized as having a ‘problem-solution’ relation. Policies when viewed with the lens of practical argumentation are constructed such that present circumstances or current situation is represented and problematized in a specific manner. The goals or intended future alternative is construed in accordance with the central concerns and values. The means-goals condition follows along with the claim, which advocates a particular course of action to deal with the existing problem and reach the desired solution aligned with the values.

Further, Leeuwen (2008) discusses major categories of legitimation such as authorization, moral evaluation and rationalization. Authorization is the legitimation acquired by referring to an institution which has authority vested in it i.e. authority/topos of law, custom, tradition or person. Moral evaluation pertains to legitimation by values embedded in the system. Rationalization rests upon truth or validity claims, or ‘differentiated bodies of knowledge’, which are used for legitimation of institutional practices.

Defensive strategies are also used to deflect or avoid blame when these actions are called into question. Hood (2011) sees blame avoidance as a political and bureaucratic imperative, which also permeates administrative structures. Hansson (2015) regards blame avoidance as a dominant theme in government communication. He argues that blame avoidance has greater implication in

society, for instance, legitimization or empowerment of certain actors while disempowering others. It can be achieved discursively through group polarization, involving positive-self presentation and negative-other presentation, as well as by exploiting vulnerabilities of the other group e.g. emotions, knowledge asymmetry or lower status (Dijk, 2006; Wodak, 2006).

Blame avoidance also hinders which policy issues are talked about and how (Hansson, 2015). The prevention of alternatives by way of defining a problem is called discursive closure (Hajer, 1995). It is a strategic omission or inclusion in discourse which leads to mobilization of bias (Hajer, 1995), a structure of argumentation in policy-making process to cater to certain demands while organizing other issues out of it (Howarth, 2010).

Conversely, affectees in this study rely on human rights violation discourses to manifest resistance by highlighting defective legislative processes and abuse of law in procedural matters of land acquisition and displacement (Oliver-Smith, 2006; Terminski, 2012). Further, they bring forth shortcomings in development plans i.e. exclusion from formal participation in decision-making and experiencing impoverishment risks with the lack of effective assessment, evaluation and implementation methods (Cernea, 2000; Oliver-Smith, 2006). Formal channels in the form of court petitions are also pursued to acquire fair compensation for their land.

4. Analysis

This section will analyze the discursive and non-discursive practices which construct the event of Dadhocha Dam. The events will be divided into 3 subsections as follows: The first section will deconstruct the rationale of Dadhocha given in the policy document PC-1. It will use Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) practical argumentation to highlight the problem-solution premise that primarily builds on technocratic and scientific rationalization for legitimization of the dam construction. The second section will identify the discursive strategies used by the state to justify displacement of the affectees in execution of the dam. The major arguments legitimize the displacement of people on need-based and technocratic rationale, presenting the purpose of dam 'for the greater good'. It goes on to validate the 'sacrifice' of 'a few' people for national survival, and finally, to dispossess people of their homes by discursive othering and legal authorization. The third section is built on the analysis of urgency and compensation rates ensuing the issuance of the Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act 1894 (LAA). It juxtaposes the discourse of the affectees and the state to reveal the power hierarchies in actualization of discursive practices which manifest as a material reality for the affectees. This includes the implementation of repressive colonial regulations to achieve discursive closure by muting

the voices of affectees and justification of exploitative, standardized bureaucratic practices by drawing on various blame deflecting topoi.

4.1. Legitimization of Dadhocha Dam: The Only Solution to a Grave Problem

The idea of the Dadhocha Dam was conceived in 2002, according to the PC-1, in order to meet the drinking water requirements of Rawalpindi city. The *raison d'etre* for the dam is formulated as:

Drinking water supply in Pakistan faces many challenges such as shortage during drought period. According to the National Drinking Water Supply Policy (NDWP) of 2009, the goal is to provide universal access to drinking water in an equitable, efficient and sustainable manner by the year 2025. Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) has extensively debated on Rawalpindi Water Vision 2030 (Construction of Dadhocha Dam, Report, PC-1, 2018, p. 4)

The concept of Dadhocha is constructed around practical argumentation. The report establishes water shortage as the current situation. ‘Water shortage’, when juxtaposed with provision of ‘universal access’ in the national policy, problematizes it by deeming it incompatible with the policy goal. To achieve legitimacy, a moralistic element must be embedded in the construction of purpose. ‘Universal access’, ‘equitable’ and ‘efficient’ are phrases commonly found in human rights discourse that provide a moral legitimacy to the purpose of the policy and its *modus operandi*. These words represent fair, non-exploitative distribution of resources through effective means. The rights-based discourse becomes rhetorical when development projects are postulated as being constitutive of human rights, enabling perpetuation of the status quo (Uvin, 2010). ‘Sustainable’ then, is a composite of rights-based and scientific discourse, which characterizes the policy as irrefutable. Moreover, given its abstract and adaptable quality, the mobilization of the term becomes ideal for the policy to be readily endorsed. This scientific and rights-based construction of irrefutability is further reinforced by calling out ‘water experts’ as the sole architect of the intervention:

Water Experts are generally of the view that severe water shortage in Rawal Dam is anticipated, the existing major source of drinking water supply to twin cities of Rawalpindi/Islamabad. As such, there is an

immediate need to construct small dams on the Soan and Ling Rivers. The construction of small dams is a step towards revolution in water sector development and to match water needs in the barani areas of the country (Construction of Dadhocha Dam, Report, PC-1, 2018, p. 4)

Besides being built on scientific and right-based claims, ‘sustainable development’ is reinforced through global institutionalization, signifying it as an expert legitimacy. The prediction of water shortage by Sustainable Development Policy Institute, anchors the problem to expert authorization, while remaining simultaneously obscure. Since the anticipation of water shortage is given by ‘water experts’, it gives the predictory statement a factual overlay. This indistinctiveness between statements of fact and prediction not only has the performative power to materialize what is being described but reveals who holds the social power to make truth claims about the future (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001; Fairclough, 2003).

Subsequently, resolution of water shortage is claimed to be contingent upon construction of small dams. ‘Immediate need’ connotes a time constraint with undertones that any hindrances to the proposed solution i.e. dam construction would be dire. Another futuristic truth claim is made: “construction of small dams *is* [emphasis added] a step towards revolution”. The small dams, thus, are not only being presented as a solution to a problem, but their tendency to bring drastic change to the water sector is made definitive.

After constructing the policy claims around the practical argumentation of problematizing water shortage and proposing dam construction as the only solution, the report effectively represents the specified location- Pothohar Plateau- as the most suitable one for the construction of the Dadhocha Dam:

In general, the land of Pothohar Plateau is broken and uneven. The average runoff is about 45 inches. Here in Pothohar area two third of the total annual rainfall is received during the three monsoon months of summer i.e. July, August and September, while the remaining nine months are almost dry. Moreover, the delayed monsoon and erratic winter rainfall which is a common feature that makes the availability of water very uncertain. On the other hand, the topography of the hilly areas with steep ground slopes helps the rainwater to form into numerous streams running at high velocities, in result eroding the

fertile agricultural barani land. This drought cycle is frequent. Consequently, the only solution is to build dams, to conserve the rain runoff for agriculture and sustainable water supply for domestic water utilization (Construction of Dadhocha Dam, Report, PC-1, 2018, p. 4)

Pothohar Plateau is framed as an aggravation to the water shortage. The report problematizes the natural terrain by delineating it as “broken and uneven”. This problematization is legitimized in two ways: (1) It uses evaluation by implying that this state of topography is undesirable, which needs to be fixed or restored to a desirable state; (2) the undesirable state is rationalized by referring to the meteorological patterns that are made definitive by using phrases like “is received”, “is a common feature”. The topography is then described in a manner that is seemingly incompatible with these patterns, thus contributing to water shortage. The conjunction of discursive simplification and technification denatures the plateau, allowing its administrative reordering and thus, control over its terrain. This problem definition enables a discursive closure, leaving no room for alternatives but the construction of small dams, as indicated explicitly through “only solution”.

Conclusively, Dadhocha Dam is legitimized by presenting it as the only solution to the problem of water shortage in Rawalpindi: “To overcome this grave problem, Dadhocha dam has been identified since 2002” (Construction of Dadhocha Dam, Report, PC-1, 2018, p. 5). Thus, the validity of the problem rests upon truth claims made by institutional experts and its solution is anchored to the achievement of morally purposeful policy goals, as revealed in the report analysis.

4.2. Displacement: A Matter of Survival for Most at the Cost of a Few

The construction of the Dadhocha Dam will result in the displacement of a significant number of people. The word ‘displacement’ was absent from the EIA report. Upon asking whether displacement and its consequences were factored in the criteria for choosing the Dadhocha’s location, almost all of the officials expressed that the only priority is the purpose of the dam and its feasibility. They repeatedly referred to the techno-scientific information provided in the PC-1 and the EIA report, assigning a depoliticized element to institutional decisions. An official remarked:

Once that is approved from above, we dont see who comes in between.
It's only the design of the dam that is considered. Not the people. We

have to see for ourselves what is required. People don't know anything (Tarshauf, official, interview, 5th June 2023).

The official not only emphasizes the technical preference in decision-making but renders it unquestionable by giving it authoritarian legitimacy i.e. “approved from above”. The same criteria validate displacement and leaves it incontestable. “Who comes in between” in this specific cultural context means getting caught in the crossfire, or bearing the brunt of a decision that does not involve or benefit that specific person. This indicates the affectees’ powerlessness at two levels: (1) it effectively neutralizes their agency by removing them as stakeholders in the dam construction while simultaneously (2) confirming their status as being affected by the project but presenting them as dispensable. Moreover, the notion of “between” portrays affectees as ‘in the way’ of the dam, instead of the dam disrupting the lives of the affectees. “See for ourselves” and “people don't know anything” further validates the authoritarian decision by indicating a knowledge/expertise asymmetry between the affectees and the decision-makers, whereby the technical criteria are used to rationalize both i.e. what is needed and the displacement that comes with it.

While technification of megaprojects provides rationale for their implementation, it is also used to place individuals in comparative positions. Camargo (2009) describes statistics as means of individualization, where the individuals view themselves ‘vis-à-vis others’ instead of in their ‘individualities’. He sees this as a formulation of a truth claim, an exercise of power, which is harnessed by ‘intelligences’ to reach agreements on matters. Such individualization is evident in the following statement:

It is a matter of survival for Rawalpindi, people cannot survive without water. We will have to make Dadhocha. There are no other sites. Besides, if 100 people are being displaced to benefit 10 lac people, so what? Where there is larger public interest, there will be displacement (Mirman, official, interview, 29th April 2023).

The benefit of 10 lac people is made to be contingent upon the displacement of a 100 people. “So what” makes the displacement inconsequential in the name of “larger public interest”, which, along with ‘benefit’ invokes moral purpose in terms of ‘collective good’. What follows is a conditional premise: “where there is, there will be”, that naturalizes displacement as a logical order of things where the public interest is concerned.

There were various times when the affectees were referred to as non-locals by the officials. The term non-local in this context discursively dispossesses and displaces people by implying that the affectees are occupiers or others, they are not indigenous to the land on which they are living. One of the affectees complained:

They come to us and call us *muhajirs* (immigrants). I was born here and now I am 88, and my forefathers have been buried here for generations. Did people not migrate for the love of this country? Is that a sin, being a muhajir? (Abrams, affectee, interview, 30th April 2023).

The same notion of foreignness or an external malignant substance is implied by another official:

If there is a problem, a doctor will perform surgery on you. He will cut you up for a major benefit so you will have to pay a small sacrifice for that. That is how dams are (Hausat, official, interview, 5th May 2023)

Here, people are characterized as something to be operated on, an infected part that needs to be ‘cut’ to save the rest of the body. Instead of being the ones getting affected by the dam construction, they are made to become a part of the problem that needs to be resolved i.e. displacement of affectees is a necessity, instead of a consequence of dam construction. Displacement thus becomes a means to an end for achieving a greater good, as indicated by “major benefit”. It further trivializes the displacement by using the term ‘small’. This process is then delineated as natural i.e. “That is how dams are”, giving it a matter-of-fact character.

While talking about land acquisition which resultantly displaces people, an official reasoned:

The first thing written in Douie’s Settlement Manual is that all land belongs to God. The second owner is the State of Pakistan, then its Punjab and finally the Pindi district. People are temporary owners. Where did this concept of people’s land ownership come from anyway? It is very recent (Tarshauf, official, interview, 5th June 2023).

The reference to a colonial document “Douie Settlement Manual” (or Punjab Settlement Manual, 1930) iterates dynamics of power in land ownership, whereby being in the authoritarian

position allows the state to create the confines of land possession and render the affectees as peripheries. “Temporary owners” reflects the irony of dispossession, given that people had never possessed their land in the first place. Their discourse is delegitimized further when the source of their claim is questioned. By calling the concept “recent” the official indirectly accords validity of any ownership claim to colonial regulations. Unsurprisingly, the main instrument to induce and legitimize displacement in South Asia is a colonial law called the Land Acquisition Act 1894. Its authorization rests on the legal basis of Eminent Domain (*terra nullius*- Nobody’s land), while the acquisition of land for ‘public purpose’ gives it a moral legitimacy. As observed, these notions were reflected and reinforced in the aforementioned statements of the officials to justify the construction of Dadhocha Dam and in turn, the subsequent displacement.

The following section will discuss the Land Acquisition Act 1894 that was invoked by the Punjab Government to acquire land for the affectees.

4.3. Setting Displacement in Motion: Land Acquisition and Powerlessness of the Affectees

This section is constructed on the analysis of urgency and compensation rates ensuing the issuance of Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act 1894 (LAA). Two events had materialized when the process resumed in 2020 i.e. (1) the issuance of section 17(4)(6) of LAA 1894, which invokes urgency by allowing the government to acquire and possess land within 48 hours; (2) According to the LAA 1894, the compensation rates given to affectees for land acquisition are based on market rates of the year in which section 4 is issued. An addendum was issued in 2020 as an extension of the 2010 section 4 notice, which enabled the government to compensate affectees based on 2010 rates, instead of 2020 rates. Thus, the affectees filed a petition against the 2020 notice in high court on the basis of unfair compensation.

4.3.1. Section 17(4)(6): Muting the Voices of Affectees through Urgency

As mentioned above, section 17(4)(6) of LAA 1894 allows the state to acquire and possess land for public purposes within 48 hours by invoking urgency. It also enables the state to waive off Section 5 and 5A of the act, which allows affectees to object to the land acquisition within 30 days of issuance of section 4. The rationale for implementing urgency was asked by the state officials, presented as follows:

That is because there were delays before at the government's end... Now that it has been approved... Money submitted... It's like if a train is late, we shouldn't delay it any further... What happened before, happened, and now the Supreme Court has even approved... we wanted to do it in the first place anyway... It was delayed because of other things, courts, people etc. (Sabsire, official, interview, 16th May 2023).

The question about urgency is addressed evasively which keeps the organization away from enactment and impacts of the decision. The delay and its consequences are watered down by plugging in the analogy of 'train is late'. This is commonly used in Pakistan to allude to problematic practices which are posed as normative in order to deflect or trivialize its effects. In this specific context, it reflects the pervasive, yet normalized delays in governmental and bureaucratic procedures. These are expected as common parts of the standardized practices rather than seen as anomalies. The blame of the delay is deflected "we wanted to do it in the first place" and then shifted to people "because of other things, courts, people."

During the interviews, it was revealed by the affectees that the delay had serious consequences on them, as they remained in a state of panic for almost 10 years over the anticipation of displacement and found themselves to be vulnerable to exploitation of their land by property dealers. As a result, many of them sold their land at a lesser value and left their homes. However, the official saying "what happened before, happened" creates a discursive closure by framing the delay and its effects as confined to the past, instead of having a continuous long-term impact. It also signifies arbitrariness in which accountability is virtually made impossible. It also conceals the loci of power, hence, responsibility. This reduces the significance of the delay, and resultantly, mutes the grievances of the affectees and obstructs their approach to seeking remedial measures. It manifests in non-discursive practice when urgency allows section 5 to be waived off, the very section that provides the affectees right to object. An official justifies it as follows:

We waive it off because we don't have time to listen to people's objections... It's because the project is a bit... Of public importance you know... So, it was something of an emergency... We waive it off in these processes. (Diaods, official, interview, 5th June, 2023).

Diaods's statement reflects Harvey's (1994) conceptualization of time as a social construct, whereby the determination of time emanates from power structures that is effectively naturalized to purport time as apolitical. The official exploits the notion of time to render the people's right to objection as inconsequential. He validates his claim by invoking the greater good rationale of "public importance". The syntax of his assertion is also of due consideration here. "We waive it off/in these processes" at the start and end of the statement is stated in a present tense, indicating the withdrawal of section 5 as a standard practice. However, the following sentence connects the rationale of time to 'the project' in question, presenting it as a perfectly logical mode of action- an exception due to 'emergency' in this case. Thus, the manifestation of power through time takes the form of a regulation, enabling the state to form a temporal truth claim through topos of law. An affectees noted:

They have been delaying it for so long. What's the emergency now?
Upar wala said there's water shortage, now suddenly there's water shortage. Has there not been a water shortage for a while now? (Rakim, affectee, interview, 28th, April, 2023).

His question reveals the affectee's awareness of the state's contradictory discourse, the authoritarian tones and the consequences the urgency carries. The water shortage, the *raison d'etre* for the dam, has been reiterated in the state's official discourse. When tied to a time constraint 'emergency' as in the previous statement, it legitimizes not only displacement but dispossession without due process. 'Upar wala', literally translates to 'one from above' which is used to refer to someone in the place of authority. While not denying the existence of water shortage, he questions the validity of a need-based emergency which is based on authoritarian rationale. It's a contradiction based on a social construction of time and space, how the meaning of time is controlled by power. This is especially frustrating for the affectees when they have been caught in a perpetual limbo of almost 10 years silence by the state, and yet their rights have been taken away by invoking a shortage of time.

The following remarks by various officials reveal a larger picture of where the affectees are positioned within the development projects, and how their voices are muted legally, eventually depriving them of their rights. Considering the matter of time constraint, the officials were asked that the dam construction is still being delayed due to litigations regarding fair compensation, so why don't they listen to the objections beforehand.

If we start listening to them, there will not even be a section 4. Nothing can be made in Pakistan then (Mirman, official, interview, 29th April, 2023).

The official uses a conditional clause 'if' to establish a causal relation between the dispensation of rights 'listening', as directly contradictory to development, signified by 'section 4', which is used to initiate land acquisition i.e. If people are given due process, it will obstruct developmental projects. It reifies the technocratic discourse that illustrates mega-structures as integral to the modernist developmental outlook i.e. nothing can be 'made' in Pakistan then. Thus, whether it is the physical agency of people, a matter of their emotions and cultural preservation, seeking of fair livelihood or voicing their concerns through standardized procedures, they are always described as obstacles to 'progress'.

4.3.2. Deprivation of Affectee Rights to Fair Compensation

The issuance of addendum in 2020 on 2010 section 4 notification enables the state to compensate affectees on 2010 rates. The state also initiated the construction of the dam without giving due compensation to the affectees. In order to get fair compensation and stay order on the construction processes, the affectees filed a petition in the High Court, as Zawan stated:

The high court ruled in our favour, asked them to issue a fresh notice for land acquisition. You see over there? [points to construction work], they started to construct the spillway without the new notice. How can they just start the work without acquiring land and giving us proper compensation first? So, I went to the court and got the stay order. (Zawan, affectee, interview, 21st May 2023).

The LAA (1894) lays down the procedure to decide compensation rates on the basis of the market rate. While discussing compensation rate issue during an interview, an official explained:

We don't do it at market rate... We see the rate at which property/land etc has been sold in the past 5 years... You know how you make an entry on a register... Say the property is sold at 50 lacs... We have them write it as 30 lacs, to avoid tax. It's a practice you know. Then we take

its average, and the district pricing committee decides and confirms the rates (Narlsan, official, interview, 20th May, 2023).

Additionally:

Yes, it's true. We can't add an addendum on 2010 notice, but we did it because if we give them new rates, the cost will double. That would have been a question in itself, why did the cost of this project increase so much. (Mirman, official, interview, 29th April, 2023).

In both the statements, the unfair rate of compensation is authorized with the selective use of regulation, to enable certain actions, while bypassing other requirements of the act. The decision-making is navigated on the basis of the state's interest i.e. the 'truth' becomes a rule that can be bent. This means that where necessary, authoritarian claims, purported to be set in stone, are modified to achieve certain ends. Where the law requires compensation to be given on market rates, it's a 'practice' to give it on DC rates, which results in land being sold at a lesser value. In most land acquisition cases then, affectees already get lower rates than prescribed by the act. However, in this case, a conditional causal relation is established again, where if compensation is given at current rates, the cost of the project will 'double' or "increase so much". It is interesting to note that a particular discursive closure has taken place, where the emphasis is only put on compensation as a contributing factor to the cost inflation to justify lesser rates. Yet, other factors are disregarded such as the delay of 10 years resulting in an increase in construction and contractor costs etc. Bending these rules becomes a truth in itself whereby "making an entry in the register" and issuing addendum on 2010 notice shapes the reality of the affectees i.e. whatever number is written on paper actualizes the terms of their livelihood. Thus, by invoking topos of finance, economic decisions of the state take precedence over affectees, since affectees livelihood in terms of compensation is expendable. In a way, the sacrificial undertones permeate all spheres where affectees are concerned, whether it is the displacement for the 'greater good' or their right to fair compensation withdrawn to save cost on the project.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

5.1. Conclusion

If they make the dam, we will get displaced. Obviously a person who has been living here all their life, they are attached to their land... We

are all one family over here. If they give us a place. Like a model town like they did in the Ghazi Brotha Project. We can all go there... We will sacrifice our land... We can't ask for resettlement right now. We will add it as a reference after we are done with the compensation writs. (Zawan, affectee, interview, 15th May, 2023).

Conversely:

The patriotism and sacrifices of the local population, especially the residents of Barwala, including Azari Sehal, Malikpur Azizal and Khanpur areas are commendable” (Liaquat Ali Chattha, Rawalpindi Division Commissioner, Dawn News, 9th October, 2023).

These statements continue to reveal the stark contrast in the reality perpetuated by the state, and how it manifests for the affectees. The hegemonic discourse prevails by portraying affectees as docile in the face of displacement, while simultaneously overshadowing the struggles of the affectees with the very same notion of a readily accepted self-sacrifice in the name of patriotism. The dam construction resumes, yet the conditions of the affectees remain the same as the perpetual wait for fair compensation continues. They are likely to be displaced without a secure livelihood, neither in the form of sustainable cash payments nor by way of relocation, as the Punjab government does not provide for a resettlement plan, despite its mention in the Dadhocha Dam EIA report. All of the processes are essentially “*kaghazī*” - on paper- as described by one of the officials. Being built on paper is the very practice that allows policy institutions to create the thin lines- loopholes which can be maneuvered around when necessary and converted into truths for people subjected to them.

Where regulations are used to enable and mobilize state-led endeavors, they are demarcated precisely to achieve a discursive closure which keeps out ‘others’ discourses. The oppressive power of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 is availed by the state to expropriate land for ‘public purpose’ without addressing the dispossession. It is implemented selectively by wilful exclusion of provisions specified to bring the affectees relief at some level i.e. right to objects and fair compensation. The topos of law for state purpose trumps the topos of law for people since the law enacted by the state represents a bigger cause, a higher purpose, a nationalist ideology and a matter of survival. Those who contest it are depicted as being against all the values one must endorse and embody as citizens of that state. By this logic, the affectees, asking for their right to have a sustainable livelihood are instantly criminalized as anti-state.

Displacement is thus rendered inconsequential by naturalizing it as a normative and necessary process of nation-building. What represents a modern nation emanates from the western development ideas of urbanization and construction of mega-structures embedded in discourses of technocratic and scientific knowledge. The actualization of these discursive practices ensures control over natural resources, the peripheries, and regime consolidation.

Post-colonial Pakistan retains its colonial residues by embodying social institutions structured on power hierarchies. By embracing what Nehru termed as a ‘disease of gigantism in India’ (cited in McCully, 2001), Pakistan embarked on developing hydraulic structures under the regime of Ayub Khan in the 1960s, enacted as apolitical tools by the state machinery. In pursuit of power consolidation, dispossession and forced evictions without due process have become common-place. People on whose lands these monuments are built are essentially powerless in the face of pervasive bureaucratic practices which carry on the colonial legacies to maintain the dominant discourse and material practices.

In line with the scholarship of discourse studies, it is important to acknowledge that discourse on an object of research has multiple dimensions whose analysis or interpretation is contingent upon the specific conceptualizations or argumentations of a theory and methodology. Thus, depending on the purpose of the research, a discourse territory must be demarcated. Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to problematize the existing dialectical relations in the social process, and thus this study problematizes the normative nexus of development and displacement/dispossession. It does not argue for or against the merits of dams/hydraulic structures, but presents dam construction as a widely accepted practice in development through which displacement is normalized and trivialized. Through normative and explanatory critique, the discourse on hydraulic structures is arguably a polarized and contested space. The proponents of dams utilize techno-scientific knowledge embedded in need-based, human rights discourses, for instance, advocating dams as a sustainable solution for water conservation and a source for renewable energy, possibly contributing to reduction in carbon emissions (Ali et al., 2020; Bagher et al., 2015; Bayazit, 2021; Mohamud & Elkiran, 2023; Severini, 2023). Moreover, dams are delineated as a revenue-generating venture, seeking to harness development opportunities concerning tourism and employment (Kirmani et al., 2021; Naranjo & Castillo, 2021). Conversely, the critical stream of research shifts the focus towards implications of dams, for instance, acceleration of natural environment and terrains through administrative reordering, destruction of ecosystems, such as imbalances in aquatic life, disruption in river flows, impact on flora and fauna and increasing deforestation (Ali et al., 2020; Bagher et al., 2015; Barbarossa et al., 2020;

Koç, 2022; Luorio, 2023). Further, dams are not only expensive, high-maintenance and time-consuming to build, but inefficient institutional practices increase the cost of projects (Luorio, 2023; Perera et al., 2021). They also result in displacement and dispossession of people from their homes thus undermining attempts for sustainable development. However, these implications are often ‘addressed’ particularly through EIA and PC-1 (Bingham, 2010; Fearnside, 2006; Ijabadeniyi & Vanclay, 2020; Naheed et al., 2017). Thus, placed in this wider debate, this research notes that dam merits constitute the dominant development discourses, and by problematizing these discourses, it highlights that through access to power, the implications of dams are discursively engineered through various strategies to stabilize and maintain the development regime, while marginalizing other discourses.

5.2. Policy Implications

Through the theoretical and methodological framework of critical discourse analysis, the findings of this research highlight the significance of problematizing dominant development discourses in Pakistan to identify shortcomings in normative, standardized and institutionalized policy practices which materialize the socio-material reality for the marginalized population. This is elaborated in accordance with Fairclough’s elements of social process i.e. social structures, practices and events, as follows:

While numerous studies (Azhar, 2013; Haq & Haq, 2022; Kamran, 2019; Kayani, 2012; Naheed et al., 2017; Waqar, 2014; Yuefang et al., 2021) have highlighted the displacement caused by dams in Pakistan, and possible risks that the affectees face, this research contributes in identifying and problematizes the normative ideas emanating from larger structures that enable the displacement and dispossession through dams. Specifically, the *raison detre* for Dadhocha Dam is built on the widely accepted values advocated by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) i.e. equitable, efficient, sustainable and universal access to water. However, this research, through textual analysis contends that while these ideas are predominantly utilized in policies to represent a positive outlook of national goals and purpose of hydraulic structures, they effectively manage to marginalize the discourses of people who do not benefit equally from such policies, and thus undercut substantial progress towards achieving SDGs. In particular, while the construction of the Dadhocha Dam is purported to resolve the water shortage in Rawalpindi and Islamabad (SDG-6), simultaneously, it will aggravate inequality instead of eradicating poverty (SDG-1), since displacement and dispossession of the people of Malikpur (including other villages), will expose them to impoverishment risks, while it

disproportionately benefits others. Not only this but the vision to ‘make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ (SDG-11), is undermined when displacement and dispossession leaves the affectees homeless and landless. At a policy-making level, there needs to be an alignment of ideas, goals and materialization of the policies at a practical level, where the SDGs and the underlying goals of Pakistan are interconnected and streamlined.

At an institutional level, this research finds that the standardized practices are commonly referred to by the state to portray the administrative processes of land acquisition as being ‘by the book’ and so legitimate despite their various consequences. However, affectees’ discourse highlights that instead of these practices ensuring a democratic procedure rooted in dispensation of rights, it creates grounds for exploitation of the affectees. This not only requires a need for the standardized processes to be performed with utmost efficiency, but a third-party monitoring and evaluation in hydraulic projects also need to be incorporated at an institutional level to maintain a streamlined accountability procedure. This will not only democratize the land acquisition process by ensuring minimum financial and psychological cost to the affectees, but also result in effective utilization of state funds.

At the concrete event level i.e. construction of the Dadhocha Dam, the research illustrates the struggle of the affectees of Malikpur to have their demands fulfilled. As observed above, the materialization of this reality emanates from the structures and the institutional practice. Once structural and institutional level changes are made, the concrete events will materialize accordingly. It is imperative to ensure that with the construction of any hydraulic structure, or development project which induces displacement and dispossession, comes with a comprehensive framework for resettlement policies, restoration of sustainable livelihoods which not only compensate for the financial cost, but also take into consideration social and psychological cost of displacement and dispossession.

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