ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF SAMIRA SHACKLE'S KARACHI VICE (2021)

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Abstract

This research explores the intricate correlation between industrialization and the risks confronted by contemporary society. It examines environmental catastrophes as an outcome of advanced technology and the global community through the analytical reading of *Karachi Vice* by Samira Shackle (2021). This research is grounded in the theoretical framework of global risk society that was primarily proposed by Ulrich Beck (1992) and was further explored by Anthony Giddens (1990). It examines how globalization and industrialization have exposed society to deadly, worldwide risks. Though globalization allows easy access to people through goods and ideas across borders, its hazards are nonetheless globally disseminated. These risks are the aftermath of industrialization and are mainly manmade rather than natural. Environmental deterioration is one of the risks that arise from intricate and interrelated mechanisms, directly being caused by a single, identifiable source. These risks, which included environmental deterioration, technological catastrophes, and the dangers associated with the production and consumption of goods, were closely linked to the industrial processes themselves. The hazards of the risky society are no longer confined to local boundaries; instead, they have a global impact. Owing to its boomerang effect, no nation can escape from them no matter how technologically advanced it is. This study investigates Shackle's dystopian depiction of Karachi in *Karachi Vice* (2021) as a microcosm of the global risk society since it is a metropolitan city and a hub of economic activities and global risks. Environmental degradation has escalated the risk factors in contemporary society due to industrialization, entrenched in globalization.
Keywords: Society, Environmental, degradation, Globalization, Industrialization,

Introduction

Globalization and industrialization are interdependent and shared global risks in contemporary society. These risks include environmental deterioration, technological catastrophes, and the dangers associated with the production and consumption of goods. They are closely linked to the industrial processes themselves. These risks, which are caused by human activity, demonstrate the increasing divergence between conventional risk and contemporary, industrial risk. During the period when many Western societies were making the shift from industrial to post-industrial economies, the concept of risk society emerged into existence. (Ahmed, Zamna, Hamna, 2023), Risks related to technology, the environment, and the interconnectedness of economies are becoming more complex and global, displacing traditional industrial risks like workplace accidents. Risk society and globalization are interrelated concepts that describe the complex dynamics of contemporary society. The primary goal of this research is to provide nuanced insight into the broader discussion on risk society and its implications for modern societies by examining how industrialization affects the creation, enhancement, and management of risks. (Amna, Mubasher, Hafza, 2024), Since industrialization has many facets, including social, technological, and economic aspects, it is important to look closely at how industrialization affects the range of risks that society faces. Through an examination of the complex relationships that exist between industrial processes and the vulnerabilities they create; this study seeks to provide a more in-depth understanding of the risk society paradigm. Ulrich Beck (1992) in his *Risk Society; Towards a New Modernity* introduced the idea of risk society. According to him, as societies developed through industrialization, they experienced manufactured risks, and they took the place of traditional forms of risk like famines and plagues. These contemporary risks are distinguished by their unpredictable nature and potential for worldwide consequences. They serve as the foundation of the "risk society,"(Beck, 1992) as defined by Beck, which reinterprets the nature of risks in the contemporary era. He defines it as an accumulation of various risks like environmental catastrophe, economic shortages, terrorist and political risks. (Soomro, Shayan, 2023), According to him, risk society is a product of industrialization, and the risks are also manufactured thus different from past traditional risks which were most of the time natural calamities. In his introduction to the concept of "manufactured uncertainty," Beck emphasizes how human behavior and technological advancements create a great deal of risk in today's world. He argues that these recently discovered risks cannot be adequately addressed by conventional risk assessment models. *Karachi Vice* by Samira (2021) paints the dystopic picture of Karachi, a metropolis of Pakistan, an instance of any developing region being vulnerable to global risks. The book depicts the social fabric, addressing issues of corruption and inequality and the continuous struggle of the ordinary citizens of Karachi city. Throughout the book, the author weaves together personal stories, interviews, and extensive research to create a rich tapestry that depicts the human experience in Karachi.

Problem Statement

This study contends how industrialization is affecting society by exploring its impacts on society and the various risks it has given birth to. It argues how environmental catastrophes, have a great interplay with industrialization as these risks are mainly man-made rather than natural and are global. The study focuses on Shackle's *Karachi Vice* (2021) for its investigation. The main objective of the study is to trace the risks engendered by globalization, that are a threat to contemporary society. We see how these risks

are interconnected and cause instability in the overall structure of society. The chosen text helps to achieve this aim as it significantly presents a dystopian global society full of dangers and risks through a representative that is Karachi city.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the correlation between environmental catastrophes and industrialization in modern society
2. To analyze the effects of environmental deterioration on society through Shackle's *Karachi Vice*

Research Questions

1. How does industrialization correlate with environmental catastrophe in contemporary society?
2. What are the effects of environmental deterioration on society described in Shackle's Karachi Vice?

Significance of the Research

This research is quite significant as it sheds light on the critical issues that contemporary society is facing currently. Through analyzing how these risks interact, the study aims to shed light on the intricate relationship between environmental deterioration and industrialization. It has extensively researched the ways environmental vulnerabilities, caused by industrialization and climate change, exacerbate economic disparities and foster social instability. Understanding these interconnected challenges is critical for developing a comprehensive understanding of the complex problems confronting modern society. This awareness is necessary to promote a thorough comprehension of the intricate problems at hand, opening the door for more research and viable paths toward societal adaptability and resilience.

Research Methodology

This research is based on the method of textual analysis and uses the theoretical framework of Ulrich Beck's (1992) & Anthony Giddens's (1990) Global Risk Society. The research takes a qualitative approach. Being explanatory, it aims to investigate the correlation between industrialization and risk society. Grounded in risk society theory, it analyzes the primary text critically and highlights the various hazards such as terrorism, unsettling political intrigues, and economic volatility. It uses the textual analysis method. The textbook of the contemporary writer has been used as a primary resource. As a secondary resource, it uses research articles, critical theory, and other scholarly writings relevant to the topic for further analysis. This research method allows for a rich understanding of the author's intentions as well as a nuanced examination of the narrative's relevance to real-world contexts.

Literature review

Rasmi Pantaik (2018) in her article "Impact of Industrialization on Environment and Sustainable Solutions – Reflections from a South Indian Region" also shows the deadliest side effects of industrialization particularly on the environment. She takes Puducherry, a place located in South India, and shows how industrialization has affected the basic support system of life, water, air, and flora and fauna. The rapid growth of the industry has resulted in a significant rise in the production of different hazardous wastes, the release of industrial effluents, and pollutants that are poisoning groundwater supplies. Due to the industrial-friendly climate environment, the area has been turned into different pollution zones. In the article "Economic Growth, Industrialization, and the Environment", Cherniwchan (2012) investigates the link between economic development, industrial activities, and environmental outcomes. The study investigates how different levels of economic growth and industrialization affect environmental sustainability, focusing on the trade-offs and synergies between economic growth and environmental degradation. In this context, the shift from agricultural to industrial production as an economy grows, known as industrialization, causes great changes in

pollution levels during the transition to a balanced growth path. Development starts with rapid economic growth as capital accumulates, which increases emissions in two ways. (Aslam, Khan, et. al. 2023), Growth leads to increased output, which makes emissions rise. As capital becomes more abundant, the composition of output shifts toward pollution-intensive industrial production, resulting in even higher pollution emissions. At the same time, improvements in production techniques result from ongoing technological progress in reduction work to reduce emissions. In "Living in the World Risk Society", Beck (2006) expands on his risk society theory by investigating how globalization and modern society's interconnectedness contribute to the emergence of a global risk society. He talks about how the world's hazards, such as environmental disasters, unstable economies, and technological breakthroughs, affect people's experiences and perceptions. Beck investigates how international risks cut across national boundaries and poses questions to accepted ideas about the structure and leadership of society. In *Ecological Risks and Disasters - New Experiences in China and Europe* (2008), the experiences in China and Europe are compared and a thorough examination of ecological risks and disasters is provided. (Rai, Syed, 2023), This anthology of essays explores the intricate interactions that exist between environmental issues, the actions of humans, and the risks that have developed because of these areas. The study advances our understanding of how societies deal with ecological threats, such as natural disasters and industrial accidents, and the effects on human populations and the environment. Through the analysis of cases from two very different geographic and cultural contexts, the editors were able to provide light on the various ways that different societies perceive, handle, and react to ecological risks. In an article in Dawn, Wara Khan (2023) reports on the risk situation in Karachi city, "While

official figures indicate that over 21,000 cases of street, crime took place in the first three months of 2023, the actual figure appears to be way higher than the reported one as a large number of victims were either denied registration of FIRs or they chose not to approach law enforcers due to lack of trust in them." (Khan, 2023, p. 6). This risky situation has made the day-to-day life of Karachiite's very difficult. It has affected their social, economic, and personal life. Being a hub of industrial and economic activities, Karachi is more vulnerable to risks.

Materials and Methods

The idea of a 'global risk society' was first propounded by German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) in his foundational work *Risk Society; Towards a New Modernity* in the late 20th century in response to the constantly changing nature of hazards and unpredictability in post-industrial societies. Beck (1992) explains risk society as "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself". The way that risks evolve in the context of industrialization is highlighted by Beck's theory of the Risk Society. He contends that traditional, natural risks have given way to manufactured, globalized risks because of industrialization. These manufactured risks, which include financial crises, technological mishaps, and environmental deterioration, are essentially unpredictable and frequently result from human activity connected to industrialization. Beck highlights how these threats are global in scope, cutting across national boundaries and upending preconceived ideas of sovereignty. His idea of "reflexive modernization" emphasizes how society must constantly change and consider the unforeseen effects of industrialization. The record of the distribution of risk demonstrates that, like riches, risks follow the pattern of class, but in the opposite direction; risk accumulates at the bottom while wealth does at the top. In that sense, risks appear to

strengthen class society rather than eliminate it. Unfortunately, poverty attracts a lot of risks. In contrast, those who are wealthy (in terms of income, influence, or education) can buy security and risk-free living. But then Beck (1992) also argues that older class structures that were primarily based on the accumulation of wealth decline in today's high-risk society in which people hold social risk positions that are attained through risk aversion. "In some of their dimensions these follow the inequalities of class and strata positions, but they bring a fundamentally different distribution logic into play"(Beck 1992). According to Beck, there is a "boomerang effect" associated with common risks, indicating that those who create them will also be subjected to them. This argument might seem to simplify because wealthy people may find it simpler to reduce risk by, for instance, purchasing bottled water. Beck still has claimed that knowledge, not wealth, is what causes the distribution of this type of risk. The wealthy person may have resources at their disposal that allow them to avoid risk, but if they were ignorant of the risk, they would not even have the option to do so. Risks, however, do not just affect people from a particular social class or location; they can affect anyone, regardless of social class; nobody is immune to risk. Risks are now transnational, affect all generations, and transcend national boundaries. Beck also applied his theory of risk distribution based on class to nation-states. Poor countries are more vulnerable to risks than rich ones. Therefore, while wealthy nations can keep many risks as far away as possible, poor nations continually confront the effects of risk. Beck (1992) also explains how risky society is also much preoccupied with the future. Naturally, risks do not completely exhaust themselves in the effects and harms that have already been done. The possibility of risks must be distinguished from the already destructive consequences. Risks are essentially a future component in this second sense. The unpredictability and unforeseeable outcomes associated with contemporary risks contribute to their status as future components, discussing a nuanced understanding of the evolving consequences over time. Giddens (2008) in his work *The Politics of Climate Change* highlights the necessity of striking a balance between environmental sustainability and economic development. He contends that cutting-edge legislation and scientific developments can accomplish both environmental preservation and economic growth. Giddens promotes a "greening of the economy," in which environmental issues are considered when making important decisions on the political and economic fronts.

Discussion and Analysis

Samira Shackle's exploration of Karachi's environmental landscape, documented in *Karachi Vice* (2021), reveals the city's complex web of issues. The rapid pace of development has created an imbalance in which the desire for progress threatens the delicate ecological balance that sustains Karachi. The contrast between modernization and ecological well-being is very clear. Karachi is dealing with the outcomes of its industrialism, including air and water pollution, the loss of greenery, and waste management issues. The city's once-pristine natural surroundings are giving way to concrete expanses, and the result of this shift can be felt not only in the environment but also in the health and well-being of its residents. Shackle's narrative delves into Karachi's environmental dichotomy, shedding light on the complex interplay of growth and conservation. The book delves into the maze of policies, practices, and societal attitudes that contribute to this environmental dilemma. *Karachi Vice* is a profound investigation that challenges readers to confront the realities of a city at a crossroads. The stories within its pages invite reflection on the trajectory of progress and the need to protect the environment. As Karachi struggles with the consequences of its ascent, the story invites reflection on the delicate balance of progress and the ecological

resilience required to sustain the thriving metropolis. At the heart of Karachi's environmental problems was the pervasive issue of air pollution. The city's streets were clogged with a massive, often antiquated fleet of vehicles that emitted a cocktail of pollutants into the atmosphere. Unchecked vehicular emissions, which contain particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides, contribute significantly to the city's deteriorating air quality. The impact was not limited to the immediate vicinity of roads, but spread throughout the urban landscape, affecting the health of millions of people. Furthermore, the extending industrial complexes that defined Karachi's economic prowess added to the air pollution crisis. Many factories ran without appropriate pollution control measurements, releasing a wide range of chemicals into the atmosphere. The accumulated impact of vehicular and industrial emissions not only obscured Karachi's skyline but also posed significant health threats, with respiratory problems becoming more common among its residents. "Karachi is polluted and violent in many ways a difficult place to live or even to exist" (Shackle, 2021, p.17). Shackle describes that Karachi's water supply was another major concern, with both neglected wastewater and industrial waste contributing to widespread contamination and environmental issues. The city's inadequate sanitation infrastructure allowed sewage that had not been treated to flow into rivers and, eventually, the Arabian Sea. "Vast areas of Karachi have no proper sewerage system, no connection to the mains water supply or electricity" (Shackle, 2021, p.16). This endangered not only marine ecosystems but also the public's access to safe drinking water. Industrial activities, which were the foundation of Karachi's economic landscape, frequently discharged ignored or poorly treated wastewater into water bodies. These effluents contained a cocktail of chemicals and pollutants that degraded the quality of water resources. The combination of untreated sewage and industrial discharges had painted a bleak picture of Karachi's water security, necessitating immediate action and comprehensive solutions. The study exhibits the problems with waste management in Karachi that reflect the challenges of a changing urban environment. In Siraj's story, we see every day, the city generated massive amounts of solid waste, and a lack of disposal infrastructure led to open dumping grounds. Different people use different ways to dispose of human waste. As there was no central system, some people had concrete sewage tanks underneath their houses. Others had tanks with permeable walls that let the waste seep into the earth around it. Still, some people used a bucket system, where people relived themselves in a pot that could be passed through the bathroom to a ledge outside. Every day someone would empty all the pots in that area. (Shackle, 2021, p.64) The negative effects of such practices were far-reaching, ranging from soil deterioration to air pollution caused by the uncontrolled combustion of waste. Plastic pollution caused a waste management crisis, as single-use plastics dominate the urban landscape. The lack of proper plastic waste disposal mechanisms caused it to accumulate in water bodies, contributing to environmental degeneration. As a coastal megacity, Karachi is vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The increasing incidence of extreme weather events, such as heat waves and heavy rains, disrupted daily life and put a strain on the city's infrastructure. Rising sea levels made low-lying areas more vulnerable to flooding and invasion of salinity into freshwater sources. Adapting to climate change necessitated a comprehensive approach that included climate-resilient urban development, infrastructure development, and participation by communities. Karachi faced the dual challenge of rapid urbanization and climate-induced vulnerabilities, emphasizing the need for long-term solutions. The rapid expansion of Karachi's urban areas has resulted

in fewer green spaces. Natural habitats were being replaced by built-up areas, resulting in the loss of trees and open space. The reduction in green cover hurt the city's environment, affecting air quality, biodiversity, and residents' overall well-being. "The constant construction, as people built their homes on any spare inch of soil, meant that piles of rubble and dust were a semi-permanent feature of the landscape" (Shackle, 2021, p.59). Green spaces could play an important role in reducing the urban heat island effect, providing habitat for biodiversity, and providing recreational opportunities for residents. The loss of these spaces was more than just an aesthetic concern; it had a direct impact on the population's physical and mental health. These Green spaces are a "refuge in nature to experience the unpolluted and pristine world" (Zeeshan, 2019, p.15). Preserving and expanding urban greenery was critical to a sustainable and livable Karachi. Karachi's rapid urban and industrial expansion posed a significant threat to biodiversity. Natural habitats were destroyed to make way for infrastructure development, which disrupted ecosystems and reduced plant and animal diversity. Biodiversity loss has far-reaching consequences that affect ecosystem services, pollination processes, and overall environmental health. Balancing urban development and biodiversity conservation was critical to Karachi's ecological balance. The environmental challenges in Karachi were not detached issues but had far-reaching socioeconomic consequences. The health burden caused by air and water pollution puts a strain on healthcare systems, reducing residents' quality of life. Respiratory diseases, waterborne illnesses, and the long-term health consequences of exposure to environmental pollutants all contributed to a complex web of public health issues. "Jannat's elderly aunt Amina had hepatitis, the same disease that had killed Jannat's father" (Shackle, 2021, p.193). Poor people cannot afford the expenditures of medical and eventually die. Furthermore,

environmental issues in Karachi were having an economic impact. The costs of healthcare, infrastructure damage from severe weather, and productivity loss due to environmental degradation placed a financial burden on both the government and the private sector. The people were "too poor to afford medical facilities" (Shackle, 2021, p.172). The environmental deterioration was increased due to the construction activities as they had a significant impact on air pollution due to the different procedures and materials used. Excavation, demolition, and material transportation all generated dust and particulate matter, which became airborne particles, particularly on roads that were not paved and construction sites. Heavy construction machinery, such as bulldozers and excavators, were typically powered by fossil fuels, emitting pollutants such as nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds into the atmosphere. Construction materials, such as cement and concrete, are manufactured using high-energy processes that release pollutants, with cement production releasing significant amounts of carbon dioxide. (Bridge, Horey, et. al. 2023), Furthermore, the transportation of construction materials to and from the site involved a fleet of vehicles that emitted pollutants, contributing to nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and other contaminants. Construction operations caused high levels of noise, which affected both the immediate environment and nearby residents. (Soomro, Shayan. 2023), Heavy machines and tools, such as excavators, jackhammers, and pile drivers, generated a lot of noise during construction. As Jannat described they could not sleep well while the heavy machines emitted high noise in the construction of Bahria Town. "By night the village was usually blanketed in a silence so thick it was almost tangible, punctured only by the wailing of jackals or the buzzing of mosquitoes. The Bahria Town construction team ran the heavy machinery at night so that

it wouldn't fail under the blaring sun. Jannat did not know what the machines did, but the distant chugging, beeping, and whirring often kept her awake". (Shackle, 2021, p.193). Construction vehicle traffic, including continuous shipments and waste removal, contributed to overall noise levels at construction sites. Demolition activities, which involved the tearing down of structures, generated fierce and often prolonged noise, as did drilling and foundation work, which were necessary components of construction. Construction workers contributed to noise pollution by using loud tools and equipment like power saws and drills, as well as communicating in noisy environments, which often involved shouting. Air and noise pollution from construction activities had far-reaching consequences for health, the environment, and community well-being. Prolonged exposure to air pollutants from construction sites caused respiratory issues, exacerbated allergies, and other health problems. "The doctor had told Jannat that her daughter had allergies and should not play in dust but: what was to do? Their whole village was built on dust" (Shackle, 2021, p.192). Noise pollution has been linked to increased stress, hearing loss, sleep disturbances, and negative effects on mental health. Environmental consequences included a contribution to overall urban air quality degradation, and excessive noise disrupted local ecosystems, affecting wildlife and changing animal behavior patterns. Furthermore, construction-related air and noise pollution caused community dissatisfaction and health concerns, straining community relationships and affecting an area's overall livability. Addressing these issues requires the implementation of best practices, advanced technologies, and adherence to environmental regulations.

Conclusion

This research underscored the environmental risks associated with industrialization in the context of the global risk society, drawing on Shackle's insights from *Karachi Vice (*2021). By exploring the intersection of local challenges and global implications, the study instigates the complexities of managing environmental risks in modern urban settings. The conclusion of the present study emerges from the intricate exploration of Karachi's socioeconomic tapestry within the dynamic framework of risk society and industrialization, as effectively unfolded in Samira Shackle's *Karachi Vice* (2021), revealing a web of interconnected challenges shaping the city's trajectory. The research objectives sought to unravel the threads of environmental degradation and the intertwined risks, all of which are dynamically exacerbated by the relentless march of industrialization. We see how Karachi, a symbol of global urban complexities, stands at the crossroads of progress and risk, providing insights that go far beyond its geographical boundaries. The current investigation concludes that the adverse environmental effects of rapid industrialization in Karachi are emblematic of a worldwide problem. It has analyzed how the unchecked expansion of industries has resulted in air and water pollution, soil degradation, and depletion of natural resources. The consequences are not limited to the immediate surroundings, but extend across ecosystems, affecting biodiversity and the delicate balance of nature. Karachi faces several environmental challenges, including flooding, heat waves, and water scarcity. The city's geographical location, combined with climate change effects, exacerbates environmental degradation due to industrialization.

Recommendations

The findings of the research exhibit that the experience of Karachi can help global policymakers navigate the complex interplay of industrialization and the pursuit of stability. The heightened environmental deterioration reflects larger patterns in the risk society and offers potential pathways toward resilience

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and sustainability. Environmental degradation is a matter of concern throughout the world now.

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