

Abstract

Ecosystems degradation is a global issue in today's world. The natural and man-made water bodies are facing serious challenges due to climate change and pressure of increasing populations. The natural resources play a vital role in sustainment and development of human populations. This study aims to assess the socio-economic impacts of degradation of an important natural ecosystem Manchar Lake on its inhabitants. Moreover, this study explores a number of social and economic factors that are affected.

Research plan comprised of four stages: Literature review, data collection, data analysis and interpretations and conclusions & recommendations. This research is qualitative in nature. For qualitative approach, unstructured verbal interviews were conducted from 30 respondents. Data was analyzed using Content Manifest Analysis to establish findings. The data analysis is divided into two periods of time. The Manchar Lake started degrading in 1995. Hence the variables are assessed in comparison between the time before and after the degradation period. These timelines are termed as pre-degradation and post degradation periods of time in data presentation.

The findings of this research revealed that degradation of Manchar Lake has affected the inhabitants in multidimensionality. The population not only has lost a secure livelihood but their living patterns have also transformed ultimately. This research has highlighted the both social and economic impacts on the inhabitants. Moreover both factors are divided into three categories. Employment, substantial businesses and natural resources are covered in economic impacts variable. Whereas, human health, migrations and culture are included in social impacts variable. Each factor was discussed thoroughly in the verbal interviews with respondents.

Findings reveal that Manchar Lake used to be rich with employment opportunities and supported the fisheries, agriculture, carpenters, handicrafts, and transportation businesses. Moreover, the lake used to be rich with natural grasses supporting the women entrepreneurship as these grasses were the core material for making baskets, rugs, mats and food items handled by women of Manchar. This research intends to put light on pre and post degradation socio-economic conditions on the fishermen community.