The Socio-economic Impact of Neglecting Cultural Heritage Preservation in Pakistan: A Call for Effective Government Policies

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Abstract: The neglect of cultural heritage preservation in Pakistan has long-term socio-economic consequences, including an underdeveloped tourism sector, ethnic tensions and inequality, and a decline in the quality of life of many communities. Though the country has a rich and diverse cultural landscape, comprising remains of ancient civilisations and cultural sites of various ethnic and religious groups, outdated and inadequate government policies like the Antiquities Act of 1975 fail to protect these or develop them for the tourist sector. Instead, minority groups like the Kalasha tribe and Afghan refugees face discrimination, while security threats and the lack of development prevent any real growth in tourism. Cultural heritage is strongly interlinked to many other fundamental aspects of the country's socio-economic landscape, and the interplay between them sheds light upon the need for immediate policy reforms to help preserve the country's cultural heritage, increase tourism, promote equality, and enhance the quality of life of various groups.

Keywords: Cultural, Heritage, Pakistan, Legislation, Policy, Tourism, Ethnic, Tensions.

1. Introduction

On a night of terror in September 2009, the Kalashadur Museum, a symbol of the cultural heritage of the Kalasha people of northern Pakistan, made news headlines for all the wrong reasons. The Taliban stormed the museum in Bumburet Valley, killing its guard and kidnapping Athanasious Lerounis, a volunteer who had a great passion for preserving the Kalasha culture and set up the ethnological museum (Ali, Chawla, & Shabbir, 2020). The museum is a representation of the Kalasha tribe's rich culture, as well as a culmination of efforts to preserve the culture of the Kalasha tribe that had to be taken by the private sector due to the lack of government policies regarding cultural preservation. This act of terror, however, wiped out these efforts in one night, highlighting the vulnerability of Pakistani cultural heritage to extremism and neglect. The attack was not just an act of terror, however, but an example of the targeted attacks certain groups face regarding their heritage, with their cultures and their monuments and artifacts under threat.

Pakistan's cultural landscape is quite diverse and unique, comprising numerous cultures, languages, traditions, religions and historical sites. However, this cultural preservation is often stunted by extremism, neglect and a lack of government effort. The absence of preservation efforts has left many cultures and their historical sites and monuments in danger, with attacks and acts of terror that also have deep-rooted and significant cultural impacts. From ancient Buddhist monuments to minority groups like the Kalasha tribe, Pakistan's cultural heritage is under threat. Cultural neglect, in addition to degrading the historical narrative, also has socio-economic impacts on society, affecting tourism, social equality, and the quality of life for many communities, which are all inter-linked.

The most important role to be played in the matter of cultural preservation is that of the government. In Pakistan, however, this role is largely unfulfilled. Policies that have been made to help preserve cultural sites, like the Antiquities Act of 1975, are rarely implemented. This has various negative socio-economic impacts on the country, leading to problems ranging from lack of tourism to rising ethnic tensions. The attack on the Kalashadur Museum is just one of many examples displaying how the lack of preservation and protective policies can harm cultural heritage and exacerbate the marginalization of minority communities. Events like this, which are quite frequent in the country, shed light on the importance of cultural heritage preservation and underscore the immediate need for government intervention.

Research Question: How has the absence of cultural heritage preservation policies had a socio-economic impact in Pakistan on local and international tourism, cultural and social inequality, and quality of life and what has been the role of the government?

This paper aims to explore the socio-economic impact of Pakistan's neglect when it comes to cultural heritage preservation, looking at how this neglect has affected tourism, inequality, and overall quality of life. By exploring specific cases like the Kalasha tribe and examining government policies like the Antiquities Act, this paper tried to discover the main reasons for the poor state of cultural preservation in Pakistan today. In the end, this paper calls for an immediate reform of current policies and the introduction of newer and more effective legislation to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the many communities in Pakistan.

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2. Methods

This study is a literature review. It will review around 15 papers published in academic journals from history, anthropology, and cultural preservation studies, as well as a few articles on the topic. Keywords and phrases include cultural heritage, tourism, government policies, infrastructure, Pakistani tribal areas, cultural tensions, socio-economic inequality, etc.

A. Tourism's Potential and Challenges

The paper, 'Impacts of Cultural Tourism in Pakistan' finds that culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relationship, with culture being an element of tourism that creates distinctiveness in a world with increasing globalization (Hayat, Asif, & Riaz, 2021). The diverse cultural heritage in Pakistan has the potential to attract many tourists to the country. Pakistan contains centuries old cultural sites of ancient civilisations. From the Indus Valley Civilisation to Gandhara to the architecture of the Mughal Empire, the country is historically very rich in cultural heritage. These sites have the potential to attract international tourists looking seeking to explore Pakistan's rich history, culture, and archaeology.

In 2015, however, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to Pakistan's GDP was US$328.3, 2.8% of the GDP, which is much lower than its potential when compared to similar countries like India or Sri Lanka Cultural (Travel and tourism competitiveness report, 2017, as cited by Kalhoro & Abbas, 2022). For reference, around 33.82 billion USD was brought into South Asia from international tourism. However, India (69%), Sri Lanka (10%), and Maldives each had a higher percentage of contribution than Pakistan (Rahman, Farooq, Haleem, Shah, & El-Gohary, 2023). In 2018, travel and tourism contributed PKR 2,349 billion to Pakistan's GDP, a number expected to grow by 5.8% (WTTC, 2018, as cited by Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). In 2019, the tourism industry in Pakistan contributed 5.9% to the national GDP, amounting to around USD 992 million. The industry supported the creation of 4 million jobs (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). The tourism industry has the potential to make great contributions to Pakistan's GDP and to provide employment. Tourism also has a positive economic impact on local communities. Many rural and underdeveloped regions depend on tourists for economic survival in certain seasons. This is particularly true in northern Pakistan, which is less commercialised, and where locals may rely on tourism for employment in hospitality, transportation, or tourist guide services. Pakistan has a lot of untapped potential for growth in this sector. There are many unexplored sites here that, with a little development, could potentially become great tourist attractions. The earliest Buddhist sites in Pakistan date from between 300 BC and 200 AD. Sirkap, Jindal Temple, and Jaulian Monastery are some of Pakistan's most well- known Buddhist landmarks dating from 200–600 AD. Pakistan has several temples that are revered by Sikhs. One of the most well-known and revered religious landmarks in Pakistan is the tomb of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, which is also the largest (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). Moreover, Guru Nanak's worship places such as Gurdwaras at Nankana Sahib and Hasanabdal can attract tourists of the Sikh community from all over the world (Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018)

However, the underdevelopment of facilities at these religious and cultural sites limits potential economic gains. If developed further, religious and cultural heritage tourism could bring more visitors from neighbouring countries such as India and the Sikh diaspora. This lack of development is holding back a significant source of international revenue and cultural exchange. Thus, there is enormous potential for Sikh pilgrimage tourism which Pakistan has never completely explored or developed. Currently there is a lack of international tourists on a large scale because of many issues. Despite having numerous cultural tourism prospects, Pakistan's tourism industry has suffered from security concerns related to terrorism and insurgency. These issues have led to adverse travel advisories from countries worldwide, deterring international tourists from visiting Pakistan's cultural heritage sites. There is a perception of a genuine risk and major safety concerns: Terrorism and security issues since 9/11 have severely impacted Pakistan's image, leading to a sharp decline in international visitors. Post 2001, Pakistan was placed on global travel advisories as a high-risk country for terrorism and saw a significant decrease in foreign visitors.

Nestled amongst the mountainous terrain of Chitral in Northern Pakistan lives a remote indigenous tribe known as the Kalasha. This Indo-Aryan civilization is unique because of its isolated location which has allowed it to preserve its centuries old traditional way of life. This offers Pakistan a unique opportunity to promote a cultural tourist destination. However, because of their proximity to the Afghan border, international tourists are often discouraged from visiting due to safety concerns. Other cultural sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, like Swat and Swat which are awarded UNESCO World Heritage status also remain underdeveloped due to the region's history of militancy. Pakistan has failed to move up in terms of its tourism competitiveness as can be seen by the fact that in 2019 it ranked 121st in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index published by World Economic Forum's (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). Tourism in Pakistan, already suffering from terrorist threats, combined with lack of roads and infrastructure received a further blow due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistan's tourism revenue decreased by 23% from USD 992 million to USD 765 million (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022).

The northern region of Pakistan intersects with three of the largest mountain ranges in the world; Hindu-Kush, Karakorams and the Himalayas. This offers immense opportunities for adventure tourism like trekking and mountaineering. The regions of Gilgit-Baltistan, Hunza, Swat, and Chitral are home to breathtaking landscapes, glaciers, valleys and rich heritage sites. These areas draw, both local and international tourists due to their scenic beauty and the presence of ancient civilizations. However, the lack of infrastructure such as roads, air corridors, hotels, and modern facilities hinders its tourism potential. The Swat Valley serves as a prime example for its lost potential. Once referred to as the 'Switzerland of Asia,' this beautiful valley in the northwestern province of Pakistan was once a significant draw for adventure and cultural tourism. The valley

has outdoor sports like skiing, hiking and camping. Swat also has historically important shrines, archaeological sites and ruins dating back to the Buddhist era. Butkara Stupa, Saidu Sharif Museum and Udegram Buddhist Monastery are some of the famous relics of the ancient Gandhara civilization that can be found in the Swat Valley. This destination, which combines scenic beauty with a rich multi-cultural history, can be a tourist magnet for adventure, nature and heritage lovers. Unfortunately, its tourism was collateral damage in the war against terror. The Taliban takeover of Swat and the multiple military operations to retake the land since 2007 to present day have had many adverse consequences for tourism. An atmosphere of fear prevailed even after the area was flushed of its militant population (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). Ineffective management and maintenance of the area's tourism infrastructure by the government caused a decline in tourists. Prior to terrorism-related disruptions, Swat Valley used to attract tourists in the thousands, but after Taliban presence in the region, it has struggled to regain its former popularity. This scenic destination, which is rich in multiple lakes, rivers and valleys, faces severe infrastructural challenges, including poor road networks, lack of proper accommodations, and intermittent electricity supply. These issues reduce the potential for both cultural and adventure tourism.

The Gandhara region, covering parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Northern Punjab, holds significant importance for Buddhist heritage tourism. Despite this rich cultural landscape, the Gandhara region's sites remain underdeveloped and poorly marketed internationally due to security concerns and lack of government attention. Taxila, located in Rawalpindi district of Punjab, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. It contains the remains of four early archaeological sites and multiple Buddhist monasteries. Despite being a UNESCO site, it struggles to maintain international appeal because of insufficient facilities, lack of guided tours, and poor international promotion. Taxila is protected by The Antiquities Act of 1975 passed by the government. Since the 18th Amendment was passed, the provincial governments of KPK and Punjab have joint administrative authority over the Gandhara sites in this region. (UNESCO, 2024) There are few guidelines for managing visitors and due to lack of management, sites like Taxila tend to suffer overcrowding and environmental degradation. Safety concerns and lack of investment in infrastructure keep international tourism low.

The southern and coastal regions of Pakistan include the bustling mega-city of Karachi and Gwadar, where one of the world's largest deep-water ports is currently under construction. This region, which is adjacent to the Arabian Sea, has a lot of potential for beaches and recreational activities. Further inland, Sind has the Thar desert where adventure tourism and safaris could be developed. Despite the multiple opportunities these areas of Sindh and Balochistan remain largely underdeveloped for tourism development due to political ineptitude. Compared to the north, these areas are neglected with a lack of basic amenities, roads and railway infrastructure. Safety concerns also limit tourist activities here.

Makli Necropolis, a UNESCO World Heritage site in Sindh, has historical and cultural significance but sees very limited international tourism due to poor preservation and promotion efforts by the provincial government. Southern Pakistan's tourism faces multiple challenges. Lack of government investment has led to inadequate infrastructure, lack of hotels, electricity. The government seems to lack the will to promote these coastal regions as tourist destinations (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). Climate change has added to these woes. In 1994, efforts to preserve Mohenjo-Daro were disrupted by flooding, causing further damage to the site's bricks, already affected by salinity. Urbanization and lack of visitor management control also carries risks. In 2014 during the Sindh Festival, inadequate risk management at the site of the activities in Mohenjo-Daro endangered the ancient site (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022).

B. *Ethnic Tensions, Social Inequality and Neglect*

Since its inception in 1947, Pakistan has been plagued ethnic tensions. A new, ethnically diverse nation was forged from a mix of ethnic and linguistic groups such as Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, Muhajirs (immigrants), Bengalis, Baloch people and more. Nationalist sentiment was based more on religious unity than linguistic and cultural commonality. The sudden amalgamation of all these groups into sharing one national identity created various ethnic conflicts and led to eventual disparities in representation and distribution of resources (Majeed, 2010). Ethnic tensions have also historically been exploited by politicians. Delving into the history of ethnic tensions in Pakistan, the most significant conflict that comes to light is the one between East and West Pakistan. In 1947 Pakistan was created as 2 geographically separated regions, separated by a large piece of Indian territory. West Pakistan was allocated more resources and had higher political representation even though Bengalis comprised 56% of the population. Moreover, grievances of East Pakistan increased when Urdu was made the national language rather than Bengali despite the fact that Bengali speakers were in the majority. Political tensions between East and West Pakistan worsened under the rule of General Ayub Khan in the 1960's, when the economic inequality became too obvious to be ignored. Twenty-two families, all from West Pakistan, controlled around two-thirds of Pakistan's industrial assets. By the late 1960s, 80% of Pakistan's banking sector and 70% of its insurance companies were concentrated in West Pakistan. East Pakistan became increasingly alienated as it received significantly fewer resources despite its economic importance. The Bhola cyclone of 1970 further highlighted this inequality, as the central government's slow response to the disaster inflamed existing grievances. This economic imbalance was one of the core grievances that led to the 1971 war and the creation of Bangladesh (Majeed, 2010).

Even after the cessation of East Pakistan, the discriminatory policies within Pakistan did not subside. Even the remote and isolated Kalasha tribe in Chitral was unable to dodge the repercussions. The Kalasha tribe is a small religious minority group faces systemic social and cultural inequality. For

decades, the tribe has faced increasing marginalization from the state, stemming from their distinct religious and ethnic identity as one of the last pagan communities in the country. The Kalasha people lived in relative isolation until the 1970s, when some roads were built, introducing them to the broader Pakistani society. Despite this, they have remained marginalized, with little governmental or societal support to preserve their unique identity. Unlike more prominent ethnic groups in Pakistan, the Kalasha people receive minimal government support for preserving their culture. Their valleys are underdeveloped, with limited infrastructure, educational facilities, and health services. Although one school was established in 1991 for their community, it took decades for the government to invest in basic educational facilities for the entire community. Teachers from the Kalasha community were only hired after 1991, highlighting the lack of educational resources available to them (Ali, Chawla, & Shabbir, 2020).

In addition to the inadequate support for infrastructure and urban development, ethnic communities like the Kalash suffer from political instability in Pakistan. Political figures often use religious rhetoric to garner support and gain political mileage, thereby marginalizing ethnic minorities like the Kalasha even further. General Zia-ul-Haq who ruled Pakistan from 1977 till his death in 1988 made Islamization the cornerstone of his domestic policy. Under this policy, the Kalash faced increasing pressure to convert to Islam. The systematic Islamization policies of the state targeted their religious freedom with forced conversions to promote religious homogenization. During the 1980s, persecution increased, and some Kalasha families were forced to convert to Islam after being pressured by Islamic missionary groups.

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan was at the forefront of the proxy war of the Cold War conflict. The Kalasha's land and resources were neglected, while the government focused on militarizing the region due to its proximity to Afghanistan. Afghan refugees fleeing the Soviet Afghan war migrated to Chitral changing the entire demographics of the region. The Afghans refugees, who were primarily Pashtun, forcibly took over forests and pastures essential to Kalasha livelihoods. They seized approximately 70% of Kalasha land. Land seizure by fleeing Afghan refugees directly threatened the economy of the indigenous tribe in Chitral valley as the livelihood of the Kalash valley is primarily based on agro-pastoral activities. For the Kalasha people, livestock and access to fertile pastureland is crucial not only for economic survival but for maintaining the Kalasha cultural and religious practices (Ali, Chawla, & Shabbir, 2020). This economic pressure further marginalized the Kalasha and contributed to the erosion of their culture.

The post-9/11 era has witnessed an increase in violence in Chitral due to its proximity to the Durand Line (the Afghan-Pakistan border), with multiple raids from Afghan Taliban militants into Kalasha territory. In 2012, Afghan militants kidnapped 700 goats and killed a young Kalasha herdsman. This created fear and anxiety within the Kalasha community and led to the cancellation of one of their major festivals, Uchaw. In another incident in 2016, two Kalasha herdsmen were killed, and 300 goats were stolen by Afghan militants (Ali, Chawla, & Shabbir, 2020). Such attacks adversely affected the Kalasha's livelihood and their cultural practices which are cantered around livestock sacrifices. In addition, such acts of violence against a relatively remote and defenceless tribe pushes them deeper into isolation. The Kalasha people have been socially, economically, and politically marginalized, with limited government recognition or protection of their cultural identity. The blatant disregard of Kalasha culture by the state is coupled with religious intolerance completely ignored by the state. The religious extremism that began to take root in the country since Zia's regime has disproportionately affected minority groups like the Kalasha who have been branded as "infidels" by groups such as the Taliban. In 2014, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) threatened the Kalasha people with genocide unless they converted to Islam, intensifying the community's sense of vulnerability. The government has not adequately protected the Kalash from external threats, leading to severe economic losses and cultural erosion for this small ethno-religious group. In September 20203, the TTP (Pakistani Taliban) tried to take over territory in this extremely fertile valley. A 6-day battle ensued between the Pakistani security forces and the terrorists. This time the security forces were able to repel the attack, but it indicates the vulnerability and dangers the small community has to face. Foreign tourists were banned from entering the Chitral district, having an adverse effect on the tourism industry that the Kalash have learnt to depend upon over the years. The Kalasha's vulnerability has led to growing resentment among the community. The community perceives itself as persecuted and neglected by the state. They see their unique culture at risk of extinction. The total population of the Kalash tribe now stands at just 3000 (Amir, 2023).

Various larger ethnic groups have also felt ignored and abandoned by the state. Over the decades, grievances similar to those of the Kalasha have been expressed by larger ethnic communities such as Baloch, Sindhi, and Pashtun groups. The Baloch and Sindhis feel disconnected from the national identity due to the central government's policies, which prioritize Urdu and the Punjabi culture, leading to immense cultural erosion of the other ethno-linguistic groups in the country. The prolonged neglect of ethnic identities has been worse during the multiple military rules in the country. Successive military regimes have failed to address ethnic grievances. The Ayub and Zia eras are especially noted for deepening ethnic divides through unequal resource distribution and political manipulation. General Zia-ul-Haq manipulated ethnic divisions for political mileage. To counter the influence of Sindhi nationalists, Zia exacerbated ethnic strife by supporting the Urdu-speaking community in Sindh during the debate about language in the province. The Jeay Sindh movement, founded by G.M. Syed advocated for the protection and promotion of Sindhi culture and language, which was perceived as being under threat from the economically dominant Urdu speaking population in Sindh's urban centers like Karachi. Thanks to the efforts of Sindi nationalists, the Sindh Assembly passed a bill declaring Sindhi the official language of the province in 1972. This triggered language riots between Sindhis, who were indigenous to the province and

Mohajirs (Urdu speaking immigrants from 1947 Partition and their descendants), in Karachi and Hyderabad. The conflict reflected the broader ethnic tensions in Sindh, where Mohajirs dominated economic life but were resented by the Sindhi population, who felt displaced in their own province. The Sindh language riots clearly illustrate how ethnic tension can escalate into violence (Majeed, 2010).

A key reason for ethnic conflict and provincial rivalries is the unequal distribution of economic resources. Pakistan historically had 4 provinces, but the federal governments have consistently neglected the smaller ethnic groups, with resources funnelled disproportionately to Punjab. This has exacerbated ethnic tensions especially in Sindh and Balochistan. The NFC Award (National Finance Commission), which allocates federal resources to provinces, has been a point of contention, with Sindh often claiming that it receives less than its fair share (Majeed, 2010). The Baloch people feel that their province is the most culturally marginalized. Baloch's distinct language, customs, and identity are rarely acknowledged by the central government. Despite being rich in resources, it is the poorest province in the nation. During the One Unit scheme which lasted from 1955-1970, Balochistan's distinct identity was subsumed under a larger administrative unit. This meant that Balochis were not free to express their ethnic and cultural identity politically. Balochistan's Antiquities Act (2014) was the first provincial law focused on heritage preservation since independence. This indicates the failure of the state in recognizing the region's cultural needs. (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022). Chronic neglect leads to resentment often followed by assertion of identity, often through violence. Decades of neglect bred distrust towards the central government and fuelled a movement for Baloch nationalism. Insurgents began carrying out violent attacks against the armed forces of the country and public infrastructure to showcase their resentment and demand greater cultural and political autonomy.

Other ethnic groups that also feel marginalized have also tried asserting their identities more forcefully. The Sindhi resentment of Mohajir dominance in urban centers has frequently turned violent. The 1988 Hyderabad massacre, in which hundreds of Sindhis were killed by armed Mohajirs, is one example of how ethnic tensions in Sindh have led to bloodshed. More recently the Pashtuns in the North-West region of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have been voicing their discontent through political violence. Located at the border with Afghanistan, this region has been the victim of attacks from Taliban, Pakistan military counter-offensives and US military drone strikes. The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), which emerged in 2018, is a social movement for the rights of the Pashun people that has serious grievances about the Pakistan military's heavy-handed operations in the tribal areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Pashtun feel ignored by a dominantly Punjabi central government. The PTM calls for an end to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, which have targeted Pashtuns in the name of counterterrorism. The most recent examples of violent conflict sparked by ethnic tensions can be demonstrated by the Baloch Insurgency.

Beginning in 2004, the Baloch have staged multiple uprisings, demanding greater political autonomy and a larger share of the province's natural resources. The central government's response has been heavily militarized, leading to accusations of human rights abuses, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported that between 2005 and 2012, 1,200 Baloch activists became missing persons. The central government's heavy-handed military response has worsened the conflict. Rather than addressing the Baloch grievances of political exclusion and economic deprivation, the state has sent in the military to deal with the insurgency. Consistent historical neglect towards ethnic diversity, political representation and resource allocation has deepened resentment toward the central government fuelling insurgencies across Western parts of Pakistan. The rise of separatist movements like the Balochistan Liberation Army that conducted a terrorist attack that killed over 52 people on August 25, 2024, are just one of many examples of the consequences of decades of mistrust. Thus, the various ethnic tensions that exist in Pakistan are deep-rooted and highlight the strong need for cultural preservation policies that will reduce disparities and feelings of neglect by helping to preserve the culture of marginalized communities.

C. The Impact of Cultural Preservation on Quality of Life

The neglect of cultural heritage in Pakistan has great impacts on the quality of life of local populations, widening the already existing socio-economic, educational, and cultural disparities. The lack of cultural heritage preservation in Pakistan, among marginalized communities in particular, has led to major losses of cultural identity. Certain groups find it difficult to maintain their cultural values and traditions due to the lack of preservation efforts. A survey in 'Revitalizing Cultural Heritage: Museums' Dynamic Role in Raising Awareness in Pakistan' (Raza, Moroojo, Shaikh, Pergen, & Saeed 2023) showed that 34% of visitors could not recognize key heritage sites in Sindh, largely due to lack of sufficient promotion, preservation, and upkeep. This neglect has long-lasting effects. This builds up feelings of resentment in such neglected communities. The study 'Cultural tourism and wellbeing of local citizens: Examining the mediating role of cultural conservation in Northern Pakistan' (Baig, Shabbnum, & Arslan 2022) finds that cultural tourism tends to improve the host community's wellbeing and cultural conservation can partially mediate the relationship between cultural tourism and wellbeing. However, Pakistani legislation lacks significant policies backing cultural conservation. This leads locals to have a lack of connection to their cultural roots and identities, which can be seen in the lack of inclusion of cultural education and its aspects, such as archaeology, in the school curriculum. Thus, the future generation is growing more and more disconnected from their unique identities.

Some cultures face discrimination, which can deter quality of life. Afghan refugees are one group in Pakistan that face great discrimination, which can make daily life very difficult for them. Though the government had issued them Proof of Registration (PoR cards), they expired in 2015, and ever since,

they are asked to verify their identities at various checkpoints throughout the country and are often exploited for bribes (Malik, Lyndon, & Wong, 2018). Their lack of proper documentation is exploited, and they face great difficulties getting employment, education, healthcare and many other necessities. They face discrimination and find it difficult to maintain their cultural heritage in such a hostile environment, which leads to a lack of connection to national identity and build-up of resentment, deterring their quality of life,

There is a significant economic gap between Pakistanis living in the north and the south, and these differences shed light upon how closely integrated cultural preservation is to economic success and quality of life. In regions like Gilgit-Baltistan and Hunza, there have been both public and private sector efforts to preserve important cultural landmarks such as the famous Altit and Baltit Forts. These create economic opportunities through tourism, which help create jobs, stabilize the economy, and lead to improved infrastructure developments. The paper 'Exploring the interplay of tourism impacts, quality of life, and community engagement in developing sustainable nature-based tourism in Pakistan' (Baig, Ali, & Khan, 2024) finds that increased cultural preservation tactics such as the ones used in northern Pakistan lead to community involvement, which leads to an increased perception of economic benefits and appreciation for culture (Murphy, 1988; Gursoy et al., 2002; Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2012, as cited by Baig, Ali, & Khan, 2024). In Hunza, for example, the tourism industry has played a major role in improving the quality of life, providing job opportunities and stable sources of income (Khan, Masood, & Khan, 2020). The same can be said about Swat. Cultural preservation can lead to increased tourism, which can greatly increase quality of life. The paper 'Impact of Tourism on the Lifestyle of Local Community in the Swat Valley' (Kalhoro & Abbas 2022) carried out semi-structured in District Swat and found that despite being criticized for its negative impacts, tourism also has multiplier effects (Cooper, et al, 1993, as cited by Kalhoro & Abbas, 2022), which include foreign direct investment, job opportunities for locals, increased entrepreneurship, and local and regional development.

However, in southern regions like Sindh, cultural sites such as the Makli Necropolis still face neglect. The lack of public and private sector support has halted the growth of a tourism industry that could help provide much-needed economic stabilization in the area. Instead, however, poverty and unemployment prevail, leading to a lower standard of living as compared to northern regions that reap the benefits of tourist attraction. Thus, the poor economic conditions of southern regions like Thatta can be attributed to the lack of preservation of its existing cultural sites that have great potential to attract tourists, but remains largely unfulfilled (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022).

The absence of educational initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage has had a detrimental effect on cultural knowledge, particularly in marginalized groups. The Antiquities Act of 1975, which governs the preservation of physical heritage sites, fails to address the educational aspect of cultural preservation. As a result, younger generations,

especially in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are growing increasingly disconnected from their own history and culture (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022). In Balochistan, where access to cultural education is severely limited, the generational loss of cultural knowledge is particularly concerning. Schools in the region rarely offer programs on local history or cultural heritage, leaving students unaware of their rich cultural backgrounds. The Kalasha people also face challenges in preserving their cultural practices, with only one school established for Kalasha children, and little to no government support for cultural education (Ali & Rehman, 2001, as cited by Ali, Chawla, & Shabbir, 2020).

D. Argument: The Role of the Government in Neglecting Cultural Heritage Preservation

A major reason behind cultural heritage neglect is lack of government funding. Though there are cultural heritage preservation policies like Antiquities Act of 1975 most of them are from colonial times and so outdated, and rarely implemented. This means that institutions like the Pakistan Archaeology Department, the Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP) and the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) are left with lack of funding and are therefore not as effective as they should be. The Antiquities Act needs immediate amendments with regard to matters such as illegal encroachment, constructions, and excavations (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022) These insufficient policies and lack of funding leave important historical sites such as remains of the Indus Valley Civilization under threat of deterioration, facing lack of restoration opportunities. These major policy gaps serve as a great hindrance to international travel and tourism is major policy gaps. After the 18th Amendment in 2010, tourism became a provincial subject, but no cohesive policy exists at the provincial level. For instance, only Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has formulated a provincial tourism policy. Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan have yet to develop comprehensive frameworks (Tasneem, Khawar, & Hayat, 2022). Moreover, cultural heritage preservation agencies like the Federal Archaeology Department fail to collaborate efficiently with tourism development bodies like PTDC, which stunts the effective promotion of cultural heritage as a tourism resource. This lack of effective cooperation can be seen by looking at the current state of the nation's heritage sites. There are more unprotected sites than protected, and even for the heritage sites, there are no specific laws made for national and world heritage sites (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022).

Tourism also faces an obstacle in the form of poor infrastructure. Damaged roads, old hotels, and unreliable service in areas of potential tourist attraction means the tourism sector is unable to expand. The political turbulence in Pakistan has led to inconsistent policies, and so long-term cultural preservation strategies have not been formed. The 18th Amendment, which devolved heritage management to the provinces, left many provinces without the resources or expertise needed to effectively manage their cultural assets. In Sindh, for example, UNESCO World Heritage sites like

Mohenjo-Daro are neglected, despite their international importance (Khan, Nuti, Monti, & Micheli, 2022). Political leaders have historically prioritized short-term economic or political gains over cultural preservation, diverting resources to other crises or urban centers. This lack of political will continues to prevent the development of cohesive and sustainable cultural heritage policies.

3. Conclusion: A Call for Effective Government Policies

This paper has explored the socio-economic implications of the lack of cultural heritage preservation in Pakistan, going into depth regarding its effects on tourism, ethnic tensions, and quality of life, and examining the role of the government. Old and ineffective government policies such as the Antiquities Act of 1975, along with the resulting lack of government investment, have led to the deterioration of historically and culturally significant sites. The neglect of cultural heritage preservation serves as a huge obstacle that needs to be overcome for Pakistan to reach its true tourism potential, particularly in the north, where regions like Hunza have much of the success that they do due to limited but existing preservation efforts. In the south, on the other hand, regions like Sindh remain neglected. This disproportion, along with the marginalization of minority cultures, like the Kalasha and the Afghan people, widens the already present socio-economic disparity.

This paper calls for the government to update its outdated policies regarding cultural heritage. If the new policies can find ways to mitigate the security threats, tourism in Pakistan could grow considerably. A little bit more focus on preserving the heritage of minority groups can also help cool ethnic tensions, while emphasising development of the southern regions of Pakistan, along with possibly kickstarting tourism in the region, could reduce its socio-economic disparity with the rest of the country and diminish feelings of neglect and resentment. If implemented, these policies could have profound socio-economic benefits on the country and bring about substantial improvements in the overall quality of life of its citizens. Thus, a large-scale reform of government policy on the matter could turn cultural heritage from a neglected asset with great unused potential to a catalyst for socio-economic development in Pakistan.

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