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Mobility Justice, Phenomenology and Gender: A Case from Karachi

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Abstract

Karachi is considered the economic hub of Pakistan, but it lacks a systematized public transport service. Although the demand-supply gap in the transport sector and the poor quality of this deregulated service affects everyone, it wreaks havoc for women, manifesting in the form of social exclusion. Men can benefit from alternative, (and sometimes cheaper) private modes of transport such as motorbikes, which are socially discouraged for women, making them dependent on their male counterparts. Despite the seriousness of this issue, there is little literature showing how women are differentially deprived of their agency due to gender disparity in society. To better understand this issue, the aim of this paper is to study the cultural foundations of transport poverty to assess their impact on women's life opportunities. For this purpose, the experiences of women while using public transport have been analysed. The study has identified a variety of reasons why women curtail their mobility. It concludes that the social exclusion of women motivates a greater concern for their freedom of movement and that their needs be adequately reflected in transportation policies.

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Introduction and Aim

Phenomenology has a long history of advancing philosophical thought as well as fostering research methods. It contrasts with positivist scientific and epistemological rationality, and it has the potential to bring participants' voices to the fore to understand their daily realities and experiences related to a phenomenon.¹ The aim here is to discuss the relevance of phenomenological inquiry for understanding the often-ignored gender-related aspects in transport studies. This approach can be helpful in gaining new insights in the light of primary data and existing literature for devising improved ways to help understand how individual identity shapes accessibility to goods and resources.

Although mobilities research maintains a strong interest in human interactions with space, the links between gender-related identity and social exclusion are poorly studied and addressed in the current scholarship.² This reason is why one can observe that the mobility issues are often dealt with 'technical rationality in justifying decisions to support and promote a car-based culture.'³ The current research is interested in the inter-subjective production of self for understanding how gender can claim power and influence the production of mobility. Through taking the case of Karachi, one of the largest and economically productive cities of Pakistan, it will be seen how gender identity can itself prevent individuals from being socially included, which can help contribute to the understanding of gender transport poverty in Pakistan. This has been achieved through an in-depth study of the everyday mobility of young working-women in Karachi. Moreover, in order to understand gender differences and to get a clearer picture of the lived experiences of women, it was essential to engage with men, too. Hence, the findings will be shared here in the form of gender-based comparison using indicators such as expenditure on transport and threats faced on transport and decision-making for journeys.

Gender and Phenomenological Analysis

The philosophical tradition of phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1931) and was taken forward by Martin Heidegger (1996), and many others. It emerged out of the need to examine the nature of the world as experienced, against the conventional

¹ Wilson, Anthea. 'A guide to phenomenological research.' *Nursing Standard*. Vol. 29 no. 34 (2015): 39

² Sarah J. Mahler and Patricia R. Pessar, 'Gendered Geographies of Power: Analyzing Gender across Transnational Spaces', *Identities*, 7.4 (2001)

³ Priya Uteng and Karen Lucas, *Urban Mobilities in the Global South*, (New York: Routledge 2018),13

scientific forms of discovery⁴. Phenomenology assumes that knowledge is rooted in human experience⁵ and that there is an essence in shared experiences of people.⁶ This can be useful in extracting the ‘underlying meaning of the experience,’⁷ which makes phenomenology useful for studying everyday human experiences to recognize the meaning behind them.

Beside the philosophical basis, the methodological perspective of phenomenology is also noteworthy. As a method of inquiry, phenomenology is particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. It is relative, subjective and in research is constructed through an interaction between the participant (co-producer) and researcher (interpreter). Oksala (2006) uses Husserl’s conception of intersubjectivity in phenomenology to help understand its relevance to gender. Intersubjective readings of phenomenology are particularly useful when it comes to the study of gender, which is why it can be useful for understanding social phenomena.⁸ Hence this approach can uncover how human experiences and bodies are assigned specific gendered meanings through intersubjectively structured practices of normality. In this way, the phenomenological emphasis can question why bodies are being tied to conventionality, and how the cultural normative structures often prevent alternative ways of gender construction.⁹ These views are resonant with the position of post-structuralist gender theorist, Judith Butler, who has emphasized the social construction of gender that forms and normalizes maleness and femaleness in a context through ‘deeply entrenched or sedimented expectations of gendered existence.’¹⁰ This view helps to criticize the myth that gender is natural and helps underscore its power dimension. Gender is not only socially constructed, but the discourses of gender normativity are aimed at gaining and preserving power and cannot be treated as

⁴ Johanna Oksala, ‘A Phenomenology of Gender.’ *Continental Philosophy Review*, 39 no.3 (2006).

⁵ Maggi Savin-Baden, and Claire Howell Major, *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. (London: Routledge, 2013), 223

⁶ Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman. *Designing qualitative research*. (Chicago: Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 1995), 82

⁷ Creswell, J. W, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 1998), 52

⁸ Oksala, ‘A Phenomenology of Gender.’

⁹ Ibid, 240

¹⁰ Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’, *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988): 524

universal norms¹¹ (Butler 1990). Hence, looking at the human experience using this approach, one can see the subjectivity and question the construction of norms that surround gender.¹²

Depending on the positions held by the individuals in the gender-power hierarchy, they have different access to mobility resources, which affects their ability to access socio-economic capital.¹³ This negotiation of power also is linked to transport and requires 're-conceptualizing mobility and infrastructures as sites of (potential) meaningful interaction, pleasure, and cultural production.'¹⁴ This view recognizes that just as gender is socially constructed, mobility is socially produced and unevenly distributed along ethnic, class, gender and religious lines.¹⁵ This understanding not only allows us to conceptualize mobility differently, but it can also help to see how gender and mobility can influence each other.

There is a clear relation between mobility and access to resources, since mobility empowers 'individuals to establish the contacts they wish for without spatial or temporal bounds...the person who is not mobile is a loser'.¹⁶ This approach helps understand how 'mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power. Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship'.¹⁷ Thus, parallel with the intersubjective phenomenological tradition, there is an acceptance among gender theorists that gender division in public and private spaces and the politics of movement are aimed to enact power in disguise of normality.¹⁸ In the same vein, forced immobility might not be caused due to the lack of transport but because of the attitudes prevailing

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1990)

¹² *Ibid*, 12

¹³ Vincent Kaufmann, *Re-thinking mobility*. (Ashgate, Burlington, 2002).

¹⁴ Oleb Jensen, 'Flows of meaning, cultures of movements—Urban mobility as meaningful everyday life practice'. *Mobilities* 4.1 (2009): 139

¹⁵ Nausheen H Anwar, 'Planning Karachi's Urban Futures. Asia Research Institute,' *Working Paper Series* No. 203, (National University Singapore 2013): 15

¹⁶ Vincent Kaufmann and Bertrand Montulet. Between social and spatial mobilities: The issue of social fluidity. In *Tracing Mobilities: Towards a Cosmopolitan Perspective*, eds. Weert Canzler, Vincent Kaufmann, Sven Kesselring. (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 53

¹⁷ Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*. (London: Routledge, 2004), 49

¹⁸ Ruth, Gavison, 'Feminism and the Public/Private Distinction'. *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (1992)

in such a context, where ‘masculinity is often coded as mobile and femininity as static. Men are expected to move easily between the public and private, and women’s mobility may be interpreted as transgression.’¹⁹

An important stance or position aligned with this social constructionist approach, which can influence data interpretation, is the relationship between gender and bodily experience of mobility, understood through a gender-focused analysis. Gender analysis recognizes that power structures influence the content, method and epistemology behind all psychological knowledge.²⁰ A gender analysis does not simply examine women as subjects of scholarship but also explores ways in which gender is an organizing structure of power relations. The phenomenological approach, when employed in gender analysis, helps engage with human experiences. As Butler (1988) puts it, ‘phenomenology shares with feminist analysis a promise to be based on lived experience, and in revealing the way in which the world is produced through the constituting acts of subjective experience.’²¹ Hence phenomenology can help discover how human experiences are gendered and learnt through social constructs, and are not determined by some internal essence which must express itself in a particular way.

Application of Phenomenology

Understanding the lived experiences of individuals through phenomenology can help reconsider or challenge the existing theoretical assumptions surrounding a phenomenon.²² It helps elucidate the deeper human aspects of a phenomenon which can provide a more sympathetic understanding for both theoretical and practical advancements. According to Simms and Stawarska (2000), phenomenology can strengthen feminist research by questioning ‘gendered experience and sexual differences within its field of study.’²³ Feminist phenomenology is a school of thought which empowers the respondent’s voices and offers a critical understanding of their lived

¹⁹ Nausheen H Anwar, Danish Mustafa, Amiera Sawas and Sharmeen Malik, *Gender and violence in urban Pakistan* (Karachi: IBA, 2016): 79

²⁰ Eva Magnusson and Jeanne Marecek, *Gender and culture in psychology: Theories and practices*. (Cambridge, UK: 2012).

²¹ Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’, 522

²² Wilson. ‘A guide to phenomenological research’. *Nursing Standard*.

²³ Eva-Maria Simms & Beata Stawarska, ‘Introduction: concepts and methods in interdisciplinary feminist phenomenology’. Janus Head: *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2013): 6

experiences. Methodological and philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology can be useful for the current research, to understand the meanings given by people to their daily-life mobility experiences.

The phenomenological approach can be helpful to understand the social barriers to women's mobility since it can help recognize the role of power structures on their daily movement. For Doughty and Murray (2016), everyday mobility practices can be studied as 'social texts' in order to understand the power dynamics that shape mobility experiences and everyday discourses of mobility.²⁴ This requires going beyond the physical infrastructure of transport in order to see how other social structures or discourses, such as how gender norms define or shape people's mobility patterns.²⁵ Thus, phenomenology can be useful in engaging with the perceptions of marginalized groups, which are often undermined in transport research. As previously mentioned, the current approach will help understand the phenomenon of transport-poverty, and, for this purpose, the current research entails interviewing both men and women to compare their daily mobility experiences. The interplay between socially constructed gender and relational mobility in the current research can thus compliment the experiential aspects of phenomenology.

The relatively new genre of phenomenological organizational research makes use of purposive samples in order to ascertain that the participants who are recruited are aware of or have lived a phenomenon.²⁶ A total number of 18 women and 10 men were interviewed. A set of semi-structured interview questions were laid down in the form of a discussion guide, asking the respondents about:

- Their experiences of commuting of travelling on public transport
- What they enjoy and what they don't enjoy during their journeys
- What preparations do they need to make before travelling on public transport?
- How do they make decisions related to their journeys and what is the impact of this process on their abilities to avail opportunities?

²⁴ Lesley Murray & Karolina Doughty. "Interdependent, imagined, and embodied mobilities in mobile social space: Disruptions in 'normality', 'habit' and 'routine,'" *Journal of Transport Geography*, Elsevier, vol. 55: C (2016): 311.

²⁵ Tim Creswell, 'the production of Mobilities.' *New Formations*, 43 (2001): 11-25

²⁶ Michael J. Gill, "The possibilities of phenomenology for organizational research." *Organizational Research Methods*, 17, no.2 (2014): 21

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to acquire “descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena.”²⁷ Hence although the key questions helped to define areas to be explored, there was also room for the interviewer and interviewee to diverge resulting into discovering new themes. A consent form and participant information sheet were read and signed by all the respondents. Besides ensuring flexibility, the interviews were held in Urdu for ensuring that the respondents are at ease with sharing their experiences. Five of the research respondents were approached for verifying the translated versions of their interview correspondence. They validated that the responses shared by them were correctly translated and reflected the essence of their everyday realities. Most of the female respondents were aged between 20 and 35 years and most of them were employed (as shown in table 1).

The respondents belonged to a variety of professions and locations within Karachi, which helped in understanding the impact of these factors on their responses. Four of the total 18 women and 2 of the male respondents were married, while the majority of them were single and living with their parents.

Reporting the Findings: Civic Rights Versus Public Morality

A thematic analysis (using NVIVO for coding) was carried out to explore their experiences of being on public transport. This analysis started with coding the interviews, followed by organizing and classifying the data into meaningful parts or categories/ themes, which are ‘broad units of information that consists of several codes’.²⁸ After consistently recognizing the themes, or what Boyatzis (1998) calls sensing themes, they were reorganized in a way that helped make sense of the phenomenon.²⁹ The analysis was then used to cluster the relevant themes together, i.e. conceptual clustering where the themes were organized in a hierarchy. The research was able to identify latent themes (such as the reasons behind worries/ preparations for journeys) aligned with the epistemological framework of the research.

²⁷ Svend Brinkmann & Steinar Kvale. Ethics in qualitative psychological research. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Eds. Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton-Rogers (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), 3

²⁸ John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. (Sage Publications, 2013), 186

²⁹ Richard Boyatzis, *Thematic analysis and code development: Transforming qualitative information*. (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998)

Participants' ID	Age	Gender	Location	Most frequent mode of transport	Profession
F1	34	Female	Nazimabad	Private van services, personal car and ride-hailing service	School teacher
F2	20	Female	Gulshan	Rickshaws	Student/part-time tutor
F3	30	Female	Garden	Car or cab	Teacher
F4	30	Female	Cantt station	Buses and van	Nurse
F5	24	Female	PECHS	Bus and rickshaw	Banker
F6	27	Female	Liaquatabad	Rickshaws	Teacher
Participants' ID	Age	Gender	Location	Most frequent mode of transport	Profession
F7	26	Female	FB Area	Van, bus and rickshaw	Doctor
F8	23	Female	Surjani	Buses	Student/ intern
F9	29	Female	Clifton	Personal car	Pre-school teacher/ trainer
F10	29	Female	Purani sabzi mandi	Bus and rickshaw	Junior Makeup artist
F11	25	Female	Garden	Public transport, van, ride-hailing service	Editor
F12	32	Female	Nazimabad	Bus/rickshaw/taxi and ride-hailing service	Journalist
F13	30	Female	Quaidabad	Bus	Receptionist
F14	26	Female	Johar	Public transport, ride-hailing service and van	HR officer
F15	26	Female	Saddar	Private transport, ride-hailing service	Architect
F16	35	Female	Garden	Personal bike	Part-time job
F17	30	Female	FB Area	Bus and rickshaw	Engineer
F18	24	Female	Shah Faisal colony	Bus	Intern
M1	25	Male	PECHS	Rickshaw and bus	Student/ part-time tutor
M2	32	Male	Nazimabad	Coach	Banker
M3	27	Male	Garden	Rickshaws	NGO worker
M4	25	Male	Pakistan Quarters	Buses and coaches	Banker
M5	26	Male	Kharadar	Bus and rickshaw	Accountant
M6	28	Male	Lasbella	E-bikes using ride-hailing service	Government employee
M7	25	Male	Johar	Rickshaw, bus and bike	Marketing agent
M8	20	Male	Golimar	Bus and Qingqi	Student
M9	26	Male	Karimabad	Bus and bike	Teacher
M10	21	Male	Garden	University van	Intern

Table 1: Profile of participants

Conducting interviews revealed the mobility patterns as well as the reasons and trends that influence these patterns. Beside buses, the three-wheeler rickshaws were also popular both among men and women. Women mostly depended on either public transport or ride-hailing services for their journeys, and rarely owned personal vehicles. From the total 18 women, 12 women shared negative comments based on their bad experiences with public transport in Karachi and might stop using public transport in the future. As shown in Fig. 1, four of the total 18 or 22.23% women had stopped using public transport due to the problems associated with it. The remaining two were neutral.

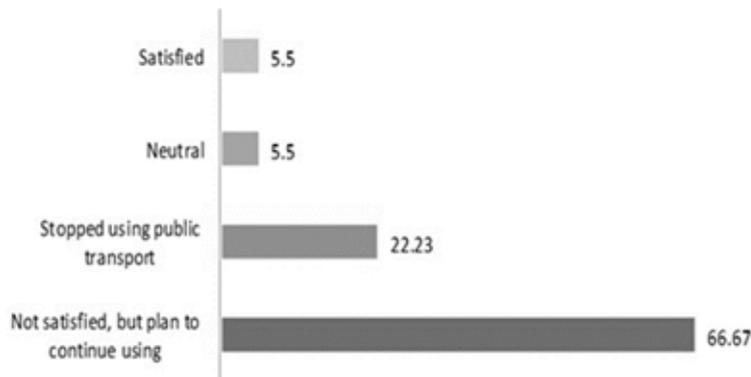


Figure 1: Satisfaction level of women with public transport

Unlike women, many of the male respondents preferred to use motorbikes since they offer a cheap and time-saving mode of travel, and three of them have shifted to motorbikes or other automobiles. It was found that most of them consider motorbikes as a viable option, since getting stuck in traffic was common on public transport. Hence almost 60% of the men expressed a lack of satisfaction with the current public transport. Similarly, many women also expressed the desire to use motorbikes if they are made socially acceptable for them, too.

Concept of Self/Gender Norms

In Karachi, the provision of separate compartments and entrances in public buses for men and women ensures gender segregation. However, out of the total 25 seats, only 7 are being allocated for women. Women are thus more disadvantaged when it comes to the availability of seating since ‘both sexes have a similar share of public transport trips (4%)’³⁰

³⁰ Muhammad Adeel, ‘Gender inequality in mobility and mode choice in Pakistan’. *Transportation*, 44 no.6 (2016): 7

Hence a young female university student who works part-time as well, shared:

Gender is something which makes me suffer a lot. Our society does not respect women, and this is very visible in our use of transport. In our buses, women get very limited seats although many of them are depending on it and they have to stay standing near the gates which is very unsafe. This is so severe that when I am walking on a pedestrian bridge, I know that men will touch me while walking even when there is a lot of space to walk. So now I feel psychologically stressed and extra conscious. It really takes a lot of opportunities from me... There is always a fear in the back of my mind.

It is generally culturally accepted that women should cover themselves from head to toe when on public transport and lower their gaze to avoid contact with men. A young woman shared that, "We are taught not to be agile or vocal about the injustice from our childhood, which reinforces the patriarchal attitudes and make them rule our lives. If society thinks women should dress in a certain way or behave in a particular way you cannot question it." Hence culture significantly impacts transport patterns and access to opportunities. Another female respondent believed that, "when it comes to women, there is a mindset which equates decency with coming home early. This is what I face myself too and do not like at all. Being a woman living in Pakistan, we have to abide by many restrictions."

Mostly, the challenges faced by unmarried women were somewhat different from the challenges that married women faced. Those women who were living with their parents needed to seek permission before taking most of their journeys, and they were also required to keep in touch with a family member in case they were running late. Additionally, they are further looked down upon since employment is deemed to exploit women's character.³¹ Hence, single women have a limited geographical scope, which poses barriers in their career advancement. An unmarried working woman shared that she has been looking for jobs for about a year, and managed to convince her family to allow her to work by ensuring proximity to home shared this insight into her situation:

I was not given permission to work although I was being offered a better job in Clifton. They (parents) said that it's very hard and expensive for a girl to work far from home and cannot allow me to travel so far on my own every day. Whenever I face discrimination because of gender, it makes me feel angry. It leaves me with this frustrated feeling of helplessness. I know it is not right, and fair but I can't fix it.

³¹ Shahla Haeri, *No shame for the sun: Lives of professional Pakistani women*. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press 2002).

Such unjustified attitudes caused a lot of trouble for her to exercise control over her life, and she had to settle for a mediocre job close to home, even if her credentials could guarantee better employment options that were not in close proximity. In contrast, married women were relatively more independent. However, these women were facing comparatively higher time constraints due to the gender roles. F10 is a 29-years old make-up artist who is married and has a child. She lives with her husband and his parents. Having a child in her case also resulted into her undertaking multipurpose journeys, and this condition led to different mobility patterns, although it did not impact her spatial range since she continued to work at a location which was quite far from her home. She related that travelling on public buses is the only option due to the distance that she has to cover every day to get to her work. Her residence was about 14 kms away from where she works, and it takes her about 50-60 mins to get there on buses. Sometimes she takes rickshaws, too, although they charge her six times more than buses. She shared:

At work our uniform is [a] black shirt with a pair of jeans or pants. However, for travelling in public transport I prefer to cover myself in a burqa as this dressing is not considered respectable... I don't like the attitude of men towards women. They make it really difficult for us to be independent travelers.

Her work routine requires her to stay late at the salon, sometimes till 9pm, although for her returning home during late hours is even more difficult. She further added:

It's difficult for me to come from work late at night, which is usually fine for men. In our society working-women are not considered respectable. So, whenever I have to travel during late hours, I have so many things to consider about my journey. Also, sometimes I hide my profession from people and tell my neighbors that I go out to give tuitions... Our society is very brutal when it comes to judging women.

Both of these behavioral changes, i.e. telling lies and hiding clothes, reflect the need on her part to appear acceptable in the society, since otherwise her work/dressing might be considered deviant. Although these adjustments help her to survive, but indicate that for women, their work and dressing are taken as measures for their character. The responses from the male respondents showed that they were aware of the unmet mobility needs of women, including their dependency on their families and the need of physical segregation. They believed that the problems such as asking permission from the elders of family or having to balance work and household responsibilities was only applicable for women. They were also conscious about the harassment perpetuated by men on women due to which they sometimes have to depend on their male counterparts. One of the male respondents shared:

Everything is insensitive here when it comes to transport. Attitudes of bus drivers are particularly bad, like when women are trying to enter the moving bus, the driver doesn't care and once I also saw a pregnant lady who fainted due to the congestion in the bus. Young girls should not prefer to take buses as people are very bad and even my sister, she takes rickshaws every day.

Likewise, most of the responses show that the awareness displayed by men was quite limited and did not recognize that women desired more acceptance of their presence in public spaces and not just the gender seclusion. Another gender-based difference in the society was related to the attitudes faced by women in their families. Men are not questioned by their families and may take the relative ease of their mobility for granted. M4 who is a banker and mostly uses public buses for his daily journeys shared that, "my family has given me all the liberty, as they want me to be independent. Mostly I travel by myself but when we plan to go out with friends, one of my friends who has a bike, picks me up."

A young female banker (F5) who was mostly dependent on rickshaw and bus, shared the unjustified gender discrimination that she experiences in her family. She narrated that, "I try to convince them by giving examples of my friends. Gender bias surely is a big hurdle for me as my brothers never have to go through what I have to face every day." Hence although none of the male respondents spoke about culture unacceptance towards their mobilities, women expressed a sense of disadvantage due to their gender in terms of the use of transport as well as the social stigmatization of their movement. They usually find it difficult to raise their voices against the injustice, since women were taught to behave in a socially acceptable way, even if they have to let go of their opportunities.

Limited Agency/Decision-Making Regarding Trips

Eastern societies are considerably complex due to their traditional cultures which has implications for women's mobility as well as the opportunities available to them.³² Lower mobility and employment rates for women are indicative of the dominance of men in Pakistani culture.³³ Although decision-making can foster power and confidence related to mobility, it was quite common for both single and married ladies to feel questioned about their choices. A young workingwoman shared:

³² Ghazala Kausar and Dania Anwar, 'Stress in Pakistani working women.' *Journal of Culture, Society and Development* no. 5, (2015): 58

³³ Haeri, *No shame for the sun*.

Mostly I try to justify the purpose of my journey. I think gender related attitudes are very strong in my family and they always think that being a girl, I can easily run into trouble. The most important factor for me is to take permission from my family. They don't allow me to hang out with friends so mostly it's a no from them.

Female respondents expressed their frustration about how they had to adjust their lives with restricted, constrained, and strained mobility due to the socially constructed notions of gender. Depriving women in such a way can also indicate the amount of struggle they have to undertake in order to exercise control over their own lives. Thus, although working-women had control over their incomes, they still had to seek permission from their families, unlike men. Their ability to make mobility-related decisions is dictated to a large extent by the stereotypical gender norms, which requires them to avoid leisure journeys since these are not considered purposeful for women. A female respondent (F13), who works as a receptionist shared that, "My family is very traditional in terms of going out for meeting friends or other similar journeys. Elders prefer us to stay more at home due to their own insecurities and concerns."

In another case of a 30 years old nurse, it was also important to keep the parents informed as she shared that, "usually if I am going to the hospital at night, my father accompanies me to take a rickshaw and talk to the driver. This way he feels satisfied that I will be safe and once I reach the hospital, I inform him too." However, not only the physical mobility of people is directly linked to their social mobility, but it also offers them the right to the city.³⁴ Travel to work does not merely exhibit the need and desire of women to earn, but also to claim ownership of the urban spaces such as markets and commercial avenues.³⁵ As female student shared that, "Since the time I have started working I feel a little more independent. The most difficult thing is finding a job near home so that the family does not create an issue."

A young female professional shared a similar experience and according to her, "whenever I ask my father or brothers to take me somewhere, the answer is 'we don't have time' or 'we are not your drivers'. If I try to argue, they start questioning why I want to go outside." Such cases show that for most of the single women, their participation in social activities as well as civic lives, is compromised, and they tend to bear the physical barriers due to the gender expectations. Sometimes their earnings help them to improve their mobility.

³⁴ Kaufmann and Montulet, *Between social and spatial mobilities: The issue of social fluidity* (2008)

³⁵ Caren Levy, Travel choice reframed: "deep distribution" and gender in urban transport. *Environment and Urbanization* 25.1 (2013).

However, the liberty to choose a mode of transport as well as the decision to be mobile remains limited. As a result, women rarely claim space but are caught and confined in it. Hence, it was interesting to identify how the intersection of gender and transport comes into play when the theme of personal freedom arises.

Need for Safety Measures

The responses from interviews exhibited that not only are public spaces highly masculinized in many ways, such as men frequenting the roadside cafes or occupying the pavements, but women's economic options are severely affected by an ideological connection between their purity and movement. The responses from the interviewees helped to analyze the safety perceptions of men and women when it comes to transport and how these make them additionally vulnerable. Many times, womanhood constituted a risk due to the disrespect shown by people to working-women and resulted in women having to curtail their mobility due to the potential annoyances and dangers incurred during travel. Nearly 80% women as opposed to 35% men felt unsafe on buses and are afraid to be raped. A large number of women complained that long waits on the roadside for buses also left them exposed to more harassment as related by a female respondent, "Out of 100 times, 95 times I have faced harassment." This sexual harassment was mainly in the form of being 'eve teased'³⁶ by other road users.

Harassment inhibits the movement of women and provides justification for the claim that there are gender-related restrictions from the families on their mobility. A young female respondent shared a recent incident which happened to her when she was walking on the street with her mother in a market, "A guy on a bike came very close to me and felt my body from behind. I started shouting while he just drove off. After this incident, my parents have been even more strict." Hence, instead of making the streets safer for women, they have been directed to avoid trips on public transport which create inconvenience for women in their daily tasks. As a result, women considered rickshaws safer for travelling during evening or late hours, around 50% women felt unsafe at night as opposed to 24.5% men. For most women, their choice of transport mode depends mainly on their safety perceptions, which makes them bear additional costs, too. Hence, on average, 24% women were spending about one-third of their monthly incomes on rickshaw journeys, while less than 10% men were spending similar amounts, even when they belonged to the same income bracket. Moreover, they also shared that since the fares for rickshaw trips are arbitrarily decided, and the drivers tend to demand more money from women than men.

³⁶ Mangai Natarajan, Rapid assessment of "eve teasing" (sexual harassment) of young women during the commute to college In India. *Crime Science*. (2016): 1

Although harassment on public transport is not a new topic, the existing literature has failed to emphasize the different ways it can become a source of transport poverty. The unsafe and unreliable transport was not only making women spend more, but also resulted in making women dependent on their male counterparts. Women's travel to work thus remains dependent on others. A female respondent shared that, "I think I have to be dependent on others sometimes, which I don't like but the way we have been brought up, makes us think that we are vulnerable."

Therefore, structural and cultural constraints impose disproportionate immobility on women who want to navigate the public spaces, and this can be encountered by questioning the spatial division of public and private spaces. Their lived realities show that women feel threatened on public transport as well as on bus stops, etc. The patriarchal alienation of women in public spaces creates unacceptance towards their movement and makes women prone to facing harassment.

Overview of Results and Discussion

The current study uses the case of middle-class population in Karachi to see how gender analysis allows studying the various ways that urban space implicates the asymmetrical power relations between men and women. It was found that there are objective/structural problems with transport, such as unreliable bus service, lack of mass transit and poorly designed vehicles, but these are experienced subjectively based on the identities of people. Claims of high difficulty with transport are linked with gender, and, as discussed, women were making more complicated journeys from work to home and vice-versa as compared to men. The problem of inadequate transport can affect both sexes but is particularly more acute for women because of the social attitude that can men can go anywhere. This reality is because, for men, the smaller size of motorbikes allowed greater flexibility, and they were able to find ways to reach their destinations in less time even during highly congested traffic.

Another major finding is that the gender identities of women are shaped by the liberty offered to them from their families. Their freedom of choice when it comes to the frequency and purpose of their trips was often questioned by their family members, especially when it comes to non-work journeys, categorizing these trips as purposeless. Hence, it was commonplace for women to face more severe restrictions and not been granted permission for non-work journeys. As a result, they either tried to avoid such journeys or remained dependent on others for these trips. Furthermore, the gender discourses are constructed in a way that makes use of harassment cases for discouraging women to feel independent from their families. As a result, there was

a clear acceptance among women about being questioned by their families for their daily journeys.

Another important factor that makes the travel characteristics of women different from men is that they prioritize their personal safety. There was a sense of acceptance among respondents about the need to be cautious for women about their safety while travelling on public transport. Women have also accepted that they have to curtail some opportunities for reasons beyond the lack of transport, such as the risks induced by their gendered identities, and this makes them seek permission or remain indoor. What is more, gender norms impacted the way that women can make decisions about their mobility, which translates into their use of transport. Their decisions about participation are bound with the need to feel safe during their trips. Therefore, they prefer privately hired and door-to-door service. The understanding of these safety perceptions helped to see how women viewed themselves and how they are viewed in the society.

As seen above, personal liberty is particularly crucial for women, and it has a greater impact on their mobility. This notion suggests that transport improvements cannot be limited to technocratic approaches and requires more nuanced understanding of the barriers that can make one socially excluded. The gender specific travel experiences of women display the relevance of engaging with cultural peculiarities to understand transport poverty issues and the need of expanding the scope of transport studies. Adopting a gender lens can be useful in understanding dominate behavior and power hierarchy in a context and it can thus be useful to go beyond the mobility and accessibility measures and incorporate agency-based measures in encountering the transport-related social exclusion.

Conclusion

Studying gender-related issues with transport using a phenomenological strand of philosophy, as well as its methodological inferences, can bring gender-specified agency into view. This approach helped recognize the role of identity in the ability of people to make sense and give meaning to their experiences. Likewise, it helped immerse with the subjective experiences of women to see how their agency to be mobile is linked with their gender identities, as shaped by social norms. It has been found that the choices men and women make about transport do not necessarily reflect economic status, access to cars, or a particular feature of the transport system. However, the choices occur within a normative framework, which has to be included in the models and studies on transport-related theories and practices to ensure that the research has impact in Pakistan and other countries where gender transport poverty casts a shadow over the lives of all

women. Hence, to assess or measure transport-related social exclusion, one needs to identify all the barriers that can inhibit an individual's participation including both the lack of suitable transport as well as the lack of agency.

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