

Final report

Women's
mobility, agency,
and labour force
participation in
the megacity of
Karachi

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Section 1. Introduction

One important precept of economic growth is the creation of full employment. Even though South Asia has witnessed robust economic growth in the last three decades, growth in employment has remained below par compared to other regions, largely attributed to persistently low female employment and participation rates (Nayar et al 2012). Female youth labour force participation (LFP) rates in South Asia dropped from 32.5% in 1991 to 22.6% in 2014 (ILO, 2015)¹. And within the region, Pakistan has the lowest female labour-force participation (henceforth, LFP) rates² and urban areas perform especially poorly³.

There is a vast array of literature that attributes a number of policy relevant explanations for low LFP in urban areas of developing countries – human capital constraints, lack of urban transport, labour market discrimination and the care economy. This study takes a somewhat different vantage point in addressing the low LFP phenomenon by focusing on migration, the manner in which the actual and perceived threat of violence that shapes harassment shapes women’s agency, their mobility and determines women’s access to the market, economic opportunities and the public sphere, in an urban South Asian context. It explores how women’s mobility and agency is interlinked, determined or changed by distinct norms pertaining to patriarchy within their communities, geographic and spatial anxieties due to migrant status and histories of ethno-political conflict within the city. This study does not exclude the more conventional explanations mentioned earlier but endogenizes them through our chosen exploratory route.

We have conducted this study in the city of Karachi. Karachi is Pakistan’s main economic hub and the country’s sole mega-city. According to the recent census, the city’s population is estimated to be 14.9 million (Housing and Population Census 2017). Karachi contributes 12% to 15% of Pakistan’s GDP (World Bank 2018), which demonstrates the city’s economic importance within the national context. Due to several waves of mass migrations since the Partition of 1947, Karachi is also the most ethnically heterogeneous city in the country. In terms of women’s mobility in Karachi, this could imply that patriarchal mores, underpinned by class and ethnic understandings, translate into similar but also diverse implications for new and old migrant women in the city, who hail from different communities across the country. However, little research has been done in the past to document these range of complexities and spatial anxieties pertaining to ethnicity and migration, and their shaping of women’s experiences in a multitude of ways in the city. Yet it is crucial to recognize and disentangle them for a nuanced understanding of women’s

¹ Comparative figure across South Asia are unavailable in the Pakistan labor-force survey. m

² 57% in Bangladesh (Chaudhary and Verick 2014), 29% in India (Chaudhary and Verick 2014), and 22% in Pakistan (PLFPS 2015)

³ 10% for urban areas in Pakistan in 2015 (LFS 2015), as compared to 15.5% for urban areas in India in 2011 (Chaudhary and Verick 2014) and 14.7% for Bangladesh in 2016 (QLFS 2017)

constraints - such as choices and agency to participate in the labour force. The contours of women's agency and mobility pertaining to all of these can be assumed to vary significantly across the city, and any social policy design for the city, in terms of women's employment, will have to be nuanced and cognizant of this diversity. Exploring and documenting these contours and diversity of experiences is the primary motivation for this research.

This study is designed as a qualitative exploration in three distinct working-class communities in Karachi; Lyari, Baldia and Korangi. The three urban sites capture cross-sections of ethnic diversity and density along with histories of migration and political conflict. Lyari is one the oldest settlements and houses a concentration of Baloch and Katchi communities. Baldia is a pre-dominantly Pashtun community. Korangi is an ethnically heterogeneous neighborhood with concentrations of Sindhi and Urdu-speaking populations. The sample for the study attempts to capture age, ethnicities and varying migration statuses within these communities.

This study is divided into six sections. Section two reviews the literature pertaining to analytical frameworks utilized to understand women's LFP in the past and summarizes findings from past studies which distinguish factors across ethnicity and mobility. It goes on to summarize findings from previous research on Karachi in terms of women's agency, mobility and migration. Section 3 posits our research questions and details the methodology of our study. Section 4 distills findings from across the three sites, by segregating them in terms of summarizing women's experiences with LFP and then contextualizing these in terms of their experiences with everyday hindrances to their mobility and agency. Section 5 attempts to compare and contrast these findings and section 6 suggests recommendations for social policy regarding women's LFP in Karachi.

Section 2. Conceptual framework and Literature review

2.1 Analytical frameworks for Women's Labor-force Participation

The relationship between growth and economic development with women's LFP is a heavily debated issue in the literature on developing countries. It is widely assumed that along with creating economic growth, women's status, generally, is enhanced through women's LFP.

Historically, the framework for analysing women's labour force participation has been developed largely through gendered theories of work and division of labour. Scholars have reconstructed the concept of work by making the distinction between productive labour and reproductive labour. While there is extensive evidence pointing to the positive impact of paid work on women's position within family and community, gender theorists argue that productive labour is built upon the often unpaid and invisible work traditionally undertaken by women (Hartmann, 1976: 167-168). Reproductive work is described as being 'aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain

existing life and to reproduce the next generation' (Duffy, 2007: 315-316). While women are increasingly entering avenues of remunerative work, the burden of domestic and reproductive work continues to lie with women and simply shifts onto the most vulnerable women. In her study of global cities, Sassen notes that in households in which women work in high-paying jobs and forego household work, the burden of reproductive responsibility is shifted onto poor, often migrant, women, thus continuing to uphold a gendered (as well as a racialised and economically imbalanced) division of labour (Sassen, 2002: 257-260). Kabeer similarly explains that 'women's participation [in the labour market] is complicated by their socially assigned responsibility, often reinforced by affective motivations, for the unpaid or "non-commodified" work of reproduction within the home' (2013: 65).

2.2 Global and Historical Trends

Due to the productive and reproductive labor binary, women are less attached than men to LFP in most economies. The literature on patterns of women's LFP in Western societies suggest that due to a gradual reduction of women's employment in traditional sectors such as agriculture and petty trade, participation declines in early stages of economic development. This reduction is not initially compensated for by new opportunities for women to work in service and white-collar occupations. Thus, historical investigation of the Western world indicates the withdrawal of women from 'productive' work as early modernization proceeded. (Haghighat, 2002)

An examination of statistical evidence from 136 countries in the early 1980s, supports the view that during the transformation from an agrarian subsistence economy, the participation of women in the labor force initially decreases and picks up later after a critical level of development has been achieved. Education is seen as a potential booster of the officially recorded female labor supply in developing countries (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos, 1989).

Several explanations are typically noted for this withdrawal. These include the 'wealth effect' i.e. the growth of the middle-class status where improvement of earnings of male breadwinners makes one source of income sufficient to support a family. Another is proximity and separation of workplace and home, since location of women changes from the home domain in agriculture to the outside of the home in a different location (e.g. as an office or a factory setting). This separation is usually accompanied by rigid fixed workweek hours. These limitations therefore result in the reduction of female employment outside of the home, due to household and child-rearing responsibilities (Haghighat, 2002).

2.3 Urbanization and Role of Migration and Ethnicity

With respect to urbanization and women's LFP, the vantage of ethnicity and related community norms utilized as analytical lens by researchers has been limited.

However, interestingly enough, in the studies that have employed it as one, ethnicity was the main factor in determining women's LFP, when controlled for it.

Reimer (1985) notes that "differences among ethnic subcultures may affect the labor supply of women more than they influence many other types of behavior. Ethnic groups are distinguished by, among other things views about male and female roles in the family and about wives and mothers working outside the home, as well as the value placed on children, family size, household composition, and the education of women. These cultural differences may give rise to systematic differences in utility functions that lead to systematic differences in behavior by women in different ethnic or nativity groups who face the same constraints or opportunity set."

Khattab (2002) using data from the 1995 Israeli population census, examined the labour market participation pattern of three groups of women in Israel: the Muslim-Arabs, the Christian-Arabs and the Druze-Arabs. It was found that the participation of Arab women in the Israeli labour market is determined primarily by their ethnic and religious affiliation, education (particularly post-secondary and academic education), marital status and age.

Even after adjusting for differences such as age, children's education, location, other family income, and wages, most studies of black-white differences in female labor supply in the US have found that black women have higher LFP rates than white women (Reimer 1985, Killingworth, 1983 and Wallace 1982). Explanations such as "blacks' greater marital instability their extended-family households, black husbands' lower wages and less stable employment" have proved inadequate (Reimer 1985). Reimer (1985) notes that black wives' higher labor force participation "is in large part a cultural difference, rooted in the historical experience of blacks in America and not explainable by current conditions alone. "

Furthermore, she notes that ethnic differences in attitude are presumably more pronounced in the first generation of immigrants than in their descendants, indicating that the migrant status of ethnic communities may shape the LFP for the women from those communities.

2.4 Women's Labor Force Participation, Urbanization and Migration in Karachi

Pakistan's urbanisation rate is the highest in South Asia, with over half the country's population living in urban centres in 2005 (Anwar et al, 2016: 11). Yet its female LFP rates are one of the lowest in the world.⁴ According to the last Pakistan Time Use Survey, both married women working outside the house and married women not working outside the home spend the same amount of time (30 hours a week) in unpaid domestic labour (TUS 2007), indicating that the burden of reproductive

⁴ 14.5 crude% for women compared to 48.3 crude% for men (LFS 2018)

labour remains unabated and continues to fall on women irrespective of LFP status. Data from the latest Economic and Social Wellbeing of Women Survey in Punjab shows that a married woman spends 20% of her time doing unpaid domestic work, which is almost twice that of a never married woman (ESWWSP 2018). The survey also suggests that married women are more likely to work outside the home⁵, indicating that a change in marital status can perhaps mean less vulnerability pertaining to risks of clan pollution.

Karachi is the most ethnically heterogeneous city in Pakistan, mainly because of several waves of mass migrations since Partition.⁶ Although most migrant families make the rural-to-urban move for prospects of better livelihoods, women's LFP in urban areas has overall been curiously lower compared to the country's rural areas.⁷ The lack of women's role in the labor force in an urban context is evident in the reasons cited for their rural-to-urban migration. While men pre-dominantly cite 'for work,' women who migrate cite reasons such as 'moving for marriage', 'with parents' or 'with spouse'.⁸ In a diverse city with high rates of rural-urban migration, these results indicate that many women migrating to Karachi to fulfil their household duties for their parents or husbands who are working.

A significant obstacle to women's participation in the workforce is the enforcement of 'purdah', which 'in urban areas... is linked more closely with social prestige and male domination over women' (Khan, 2007: 8). Norms pertaining to 'purdah', or the practice of gender segregation and veiling outside the home, are largely responsible for the overwhelming concentration of women doing home-based work in the informal sector. This control of women's movement to maintain a social standing is also demonstrated in the regularisation of unplanned settlements in Karachi. In a study, a Pashtun migrant explained with regards to the regularisation of the Kausar Niazi Colony that he would not allow womenfolk to migrate to a non-regularised settlement. This statement came in contrast to a rival of his, who would organise the marriages of women from different marginalised tribes in order to 'expand and consolidate the settlement' (Gazdar and Mallah, 2011). Further, women's role in the reproduction of a community is shown in the communities' usage of women's 'purdah' as a form of physical resistance, using women's presence in homes as a way to resist eviction. Because 'seclusion [is] seen as a marker of high status', ethnic reputations rested on women's movement (Gazdar and Mallah, 2011).

These examples show the use of women as socially important figures in the construction and reproduction of society; women are directly linked to collective identity of kinship groups and the materialisation of that identity through regularisation of settlements. This is relevant to women's LFP because women's

⁵ 43.6% for married women as compared to 36.2%%for unmarried women (ESWWSP 2018)

⁶ See Gazdar (2003b) for more details.

⁷ According to the 2017-18 Labour Force Survey, the urban participation for women in the labor force stands at 8.4% for urban women compared to 218%%for rural women.

⁸ In the 2017-18 Labor Force Survey 58.6%%women cited marriage as the reason for their migration, and 18.8% cited 'with spouse'.

socially constituted role seems to place high value on seclusion as a social marker, thus making working outside the home an activity that would diminish the reputation of any given social group. As mentioned above, the sectors that women do enter tend to be informal, in part because much of Karachi's economy is informal⁹. This provides its own issues for women as employment in the informal economy leads to unstable incomes and result in women, an already vulnerable population, becoming more economically and socially vulnerable (Anwar et al, 2016: 11).

While the pervasiveness of domestic violence has been an extensive focus of studies on women in Karachi, the implications on their agency in the public domain has been a neglected subject in the context of Karachi.¹⁰ Anwar et al (2016) study on gender and urban violence in Pakistan did attempt to encapsulate findings related to violence across public and private domains, however violence in the public domain was indirectly defined via access to services and vulnerability profiles of households rather than measuring it via women's LFP. In a recent study in Karachi's Lyari, Sultanabad and Korangi areas' to examine LFP and its linkages with violence some female respondents spoke of patriarchal norms and structures of their communities, in which they were able to work and enjoy more autonomy in their villages rather than the city (Sayeed et al. 2016b). Reasons cited included concern that the city's *mahol* (environment) was "not right". Yet for women from Pashtun clans and communities, originating from the more traditionally conservative north-west of the country, access remained stagnant, relative to the comparatively stricter norms and customs of their villages.

In an urban context, private-public gradations (Gazdar, 2003a) can perhaps become more pronounced when communities feel under threat, since familial proximity or space may shrink. Sayeed et al. (2016b) found public space access and anxieties for women varied for all three sites and there was indication that this had to do with the ethnic configuration of those communities and the migrant status of its members. Therefore 'purdah' norms, relative to region, are perhaps temporarily emboldened due to rural-urban migration, "forcing women to remain indoors in a strange city both as a way to enhance a family's status in a new environment and also to avoid contact with strange men outside their kinship group" (Khan 2007). An explanation for the comparatively lower urban figure is thus, a tense relationship with urbanization and the stress that strong normative patriarchal structures face in a metropolitan context. Potential for violence, especially violence at home, can become more pronounced - from structural to perhaps more overt violence - due to resurgent patriarchy in the face of pressure for greater integration with local

⁹ Estimated to be between 20 and 91% of the formal economy (Sayeed et al 2016b).

¹⁰ Anwar et al (2016) found 48.6% of women experienced violence within the household in select localities of Karachi and Islamabad. Figures for intimate partner violence range from 40-80% in urban Karachi (Ali et al 2011, Fikree et al 2004, Fikree et al 2005, Qureshi et al 2000, Ali and Gavino 2007).

economy, as the exposure to powerful urban market forces erode ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Relatedly the older wave of migrants problematizes the more recent waves due to the city's conflictive identity politics, which has its own set of repercussions for women and their relationship with the city, pertaining to issues of class and "respectability" as much as gender. In the urban formal sector, these norms explain the overwhelming concentration of women in the "respectable lines of teaching and medicine as well as the low social status of sales and secretarial jobs that involve contact with men at a personal level" (Kazi 1999). Phadke (2013) in her research on urban India notes how the pretext of safety against violence and harassment, especially in the public domain, often becomes a means of patriarchal control for women. Newer migrant men are stereotyped as perpetrators of violence against women in Mumbai.¹¹ Further, this narrative is perpetuated by the wide reportage of any sexual assault that involves lower class men attacking middle class women. The focus on the threat of 'outsiders' as potential harassers and perpetrators, lays the blame on the bodies of migrants who are seen to invade and occupy spaces. Rather than safety, what is instead gained is a more restrictive language of respectability and territoriality for women (Arondekar 2012).

While extensive in-depth research has been carried out to chart and document migration trends (Gazdar 2003b) and conflict (Gayer 2014) across ethnicity in Karachi, their consequences for women's mobility and access to public sphere vis-à-vis women's LFP, using a systematically comparative approach, remain largely unmapped. This study seeks to build on the literature in this regard, using three ethnically purposive sites in Karachi and comparatively measuring women's agency, mobility and LFP across them.

Section 3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This study posits four over-arching research questions that it attempts to address:

1. What are the constraints and proximate reasons for low female LFP in Karachi?
2. How does urban migration to Karachi impact agency and mobility of women from different regions in Pakistan? What are the factors associated with migration that impact restrictions on women's LFP in the urban context?
3. How do structures of patriarchy within ethnic groups and communities (homogenous or heterogeneous) transform as they re-settle in Karachi shape and impact their female members' mobility and agency? And is this different from environments where they migrate from?

¹¹ As protests raged in response to the 2012 Delhi bus rape, prime minister, Manmohan Singh urged the police to increase surveillance of "footloose" migrants (Phadke 2013).

- a. What is the degree to which change takes place, if at all, and what is the pace of that change (static or dynamic patriarchy)?
4. Old migrants versus new: Are norms associated with mobility and threats of violence subject to change, depending on whether members of a community are first- or second-generation migrants? How does age factor in employment for women?

3.2. Site Selection

In order to seek answers to the above questions, three working class localities in Karachi were purposively selected for qualitative field research based on prior information on their ethnic composition from recce field visits and interactions with resource persons of the area. Lyari is one of the oldest working-class neighborhoods in the city and home to the Baloch and Katchi ethnic groups. Baldia is a low-income Pashtun locality, comprising of new and old migrants. To capture a more heterogeneous mix of Sindhi, Urdu speaking and Saraiki/Punjabi communities, the Korangi area was chosen.

Interviews in Lyari were conducted in Union Councils (UCs) numbered 11 and 14. Up until 2014, both UCs, have been sites severely affected by conflict and violence. UC 14 had a predominantly Baloch population, while UC-11 comprises largely of ethnic Katchhi and Memon populations.

Baldia is in district West of Karachi and is one of the poorest localities in the city. Interviews were conducted in Baldia's UC 6 and 26. UC 6 seemed to be more settled and developed, as compared to UC-26, which is one of the poorest localities within Karachi. Due to cheaper housing compared to elsewhere in the city, recent Pashtun migrants, especially internally displaced persons (IDPs)¹² are prevalent here. The area has a predominantly Pushto speaking population with Hindko-speakers being the second largest ethnicity. The area also houses few extremely destitute Punjabi, Seraiki and Sindhi speaking households, who have moved here because of cheaper housing.

Fieldwork in Korangi was primarily carried out in UC 33, which consisted of old-settled Muhajir¹³ populations. Some interviews were also conducted in UC 25, to specifically capture narratives from recent Sindhi migrants. The area also has considerable number of Bengali, Balochi and Urdu-speaking residents.

¹² IDPS are recent migrants, often refugees, displaced as a result of the recent military operation in the conflict prone Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the northwest region of Pakistan.

¹³ 'Muhajir' is the colloquial term used for those who migrated from present day India at the time of Partition of British India in 1947 and soon after. The mother tongue of a large proportion of these migrants was Urdu,

3.3 Sample Size and Research Instruments

This study is designed as a qualitative exploration. The sample for the study attempts to capture age, ethnicities and varying migration statuses within these communities.

We conducted 10 in-depth Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with women, stratified across age, ethnicity, employment and marital status at each of the three fieldwork sites. A semi-structured qualitative guide was developed and used which raised discussion points concerning their migrant status, life history, educational and employment history, and experiences of agency and mobility in the city and elsewhere – especially pertaining to ethnic conflict. These were complimented with one male KII at each site as well, to scope political and ethnic histories at each site. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGD) -a female and a male one- were also conducted at each site for triangulation of perceptions, expectations and experiences, for a total of 39 interactions. Relevant findings gathered from in-depth responses from previous research on labour market patterns at the same sites have also been incorporated to buttress findings.

Section 4. Political/Historical Context and Findings

4.1 Lyari

4.1.1 Political Relevance, Ethnic Composition and Migrant Status

Lyari is considered to be one of the oldest and most densely populated neighborhoods of Karachi. It pre-dominantly consists of Baloch and Katchi populations that have long assimilated here. It has been the site of severe ethno-linguistic conflict and violence up until 2014, which posed significant disruptions in everyday lives of its residents. Comparatively, the area's access to basic civic facilities is much better than that of other areas of comparable incomes. Paved roads, educational facilities, and a proper sewerage system are available to Lyari's residents. However, electricity, gas and water supplies remain intermittent. The Pakistan's Peoples Party (PPP)¹⁴ also gave government jobs to the people of Lyari during its stints in power. However, this seemingly symbiotic relationship has become strained overtime, as a result of violence and conflict that has ensued in the locality for close to a decade.

The levels of literacy in the area, for both men and women, were observed to be higher than the other two sites. The areas were also found to be better off when it comes to the number of government schools, colleges and universities for both boys

¹⁴ Since its emergence in 1967, the PPP has been a major and influential political force in the country. Its centre of power lies in the southern province of [Sindh](#).

and girls. Most people of the area are employed in some capacity with the government or work as labourers in the nearby markets. Some men and women work in factories in the city's industrial areas. The overall infrastructural situation of the area is much better than the other two sites with access to roads, sewerage system and water. The area is accessible through buses, mini-buses and *chingchis*¹⁵, although some informants claimed that the bus routes have become limited post-conflict, which in turn results in considerable over-crowding on the remaining ones and that often rickshaws and taxis in other parts of Karachi do not wish to travel to Lyari.

4.1.2 Forms of Women's LFP and Trends Overtime

In Lyari, the jobs predominantly held by young and educated women are low-paying teaching jobs at local private schools because they are a walking distance from their homes, and many struggle with family restrictions on their mobility. Most Baloch women we interviewed preferred to work and complete their education. More than half of the young women we interviewed in our sample held or aspired to hold undergraduate degrees and had at the least completed their matriculation or intermediate exams. Barriers, which predominantly prevent them from progressing, are issues of income rather than restrictive normative structures.

Women usually quit employment after marriage when care responsibilities at home increase but continue doing work if minimum household expenses are not being met. One mother reported that she continued teaching, because her husband's salary could only pay for one daughter's school fees. She did the job so that her other daughter would not miss out on schooling. The respondents reported salary at local private schools to be as low as PKR 800 to 1500 (~ USD 6 to 11) for Inter or Matric completed teachers. Starting salary was reported as PKR 3000 (~USD 22) for those who had completed their Bachelors and was raised to PKR 4000 to 6000 (~USD 29 to 43) per month given the teachers continue their positions for a few years. Nearly all of our respondents had high preferences for government jobs, which were better paid and less demanding, but were hard to obtain because they required a source or reference.

Many women, especially older and uneducated ones, noted entering the work-force out of necessity, blaming the wide prevalence of drugs and narcotics for making their husbands and sons idle. Often, they would frame this as the worst impediment in terms of their agency - even though it counterintuitively forced them to work out of necessity. A woman who had taken up work as a polio worker, mentioned the need for social safety nets for women with young children, for whom desertion by husbands creates a very pronounced and often unmanageable double burden of

¹⁵ A chingchi is a motorcycle-rickshaw; it has the front of a motorcycle and the back of a rickshaw. Depending on the variant it can seat 4-12 people

remunerative labour and reproductive labour. Many older women become vendors for food items on street corners or outside their house, which is not commonplace otherwise in the city and indicates an interplay of distinct cultural norms and/or old-migrant status.

Cleaning jobs are not considered a respectable occupation. Women, especially older ones did these jobs because of poverty, not as a preference. Preference was for respectable, gendered, occupations like teaching and nursing, or becoming a doctor when pursuing higher education for a white-collar profession. One of our respondents said that she was teaching so that her uneducated mother did not have to do a cleaning job to support the family, even though she preferred not to work entirely and planned on quitting after getting married. Some women who did get jobs at offices, mostly outside of Lyari, often left, or were discouraged by elders from pursuing those jobs because 'the environment there is not good' which often denotes to feeling uncomfortable in a male-dominated environment. Culturally, elder household members prefer environments that are female-dominated, have a close proximity to home and where there is a minimum mixing of genders.

4.1.3 Constraints to Mobility, Agency and LFP

Contours pertaining to agency and mobility within Lyari were different for Baloch and Katchi women. The extent of mobility and the relative lack of restrictions described by some of the Balochi women around issues of respectability and safety, strictly in a comparative sense with other localities in Karachi, were surprising for us to learn. In terms of mobility, our female Balochi respondents within Lyari did not report restrictions on mobility from patriarchal figures in the household or street harassment by strangers to the same degree as in other sites where this study was conducted. One respondent who works as a teacher noted that her community respected her a lot for her job, and that when she is walking to work, men actively move out of her way. This demonstrates a positive disposition towards women's work from within the community. In contrast to Balochi women, Katchi women seemed to have less mobility and agency and thus seemed more apprehensive during the interviews.

In terms of hindrance to employment, an issue most women noted was labor-market discrimination pertaining to ethnicity rather than gender. Nearly all of our respondents complained about rampant racism in the rest of the city against Lyari residents and its adverse effects on their employability. Being Baloch in addition to being a Lyari resident compounded the problem.

The notion of '*shaoor*' (awareness of the world) and how working outside the home enabled that for women and the realization that it was important for self-development and confidence, often came up in conversations with women in Lyari and is an important indicator regarding improved perceptions of agency and mobility for women. A respondent who was an educated mother wanted to ensure

that her daughters also completed their education, and noted it was equally important for her sons and daughters to obtain a degree.

Information regarding jobs for women usually came through forwarded text messages or by friends or cousins doing similar jobs. Owning a phone in this regard is useful for information and most young women did own a phone. Having a phone also facilitated keeping in touch with the opposite gender and is thus also relevant in terms of agency to enable choosing one's own marriage partner.

The notion of clan pollution still seemed to be prevalent amongst our respondents. Most Baloch women said they preferred their children married other Balochis, even if they choose their own partners. The same held through for Katchi families. We came across one example of a cross-Katchi-Baloch marriage, and the respondent described facing strong objections and resistance from both families.

4.2 Baldia

4.2.1 Political Relevance, Ethnic Composition and Migrant Status

Baldia Town is located in district West on the outskirts of Karachi. The area saw a large influx of Pashtun migrants first in 1965. Since then there have been several waves of migration in the area; the most significant being the recent influx of IDPs as a result of a military-led operations in the region.

The levels of literacy in the area, for both men and women, were observed to be much lower than the other two sites. In terms of infrastructure also, the area was the least developed, compared to other research sites, with virtually no paved roads or proper sewerage. The provision of television cables and formal electricity connections were described as recent. Most men work as industrial labourers in nearby markets. Due to the areas distance from the city center, residents mentioned the town tends to remain unaffected from any major political upheaval. Baldia is one of the most impoverished areas and most residents in the area tend to live here because housing rental costs are lower than other more central parts of Karachi.

The associational patterns in Baldia are different from the other two sites as politics and ethnicity have a smaller role. This is because of a largely homogenous Pushtun migrant population. People by and large associate themselves with people from the same clans and villages in KPK and FATA. Recently, however, traditional associational patterns have been slightly affected with the arrival of new migrants (non-Pushtun and IDPs), which poses interesting challenges for women and their mobility. Several of the older migrants have now been in the area for over three generations, which has increased the relevance of political actors that transcend village-based associations. Yet, many still do maintain their connections with family in their respective native village and frequently make visits, despite the distance from Karachi. Arrival of relatives in search of work is commonplace and close relatives still act as an informal source of social protection and dispute resolution.

4.2.2 Forms of Women's LFP and Trends Overtime

Women in Baldia reported far greater impediments to their mobility and thus ability to work. Paid work for women was not considered a norm and there were very few examples of women engaging in paid work, despite the obvious need for income and pervasive poverty of the area. Of the ten women interviewed, only two reported working out of which only one left the house for her job.

Nazia, 50, who was particularly destitute and had five children from her first marriage and another three from her second, opted to work to provide for her children due to a lack of support from her husband. After her first husband passed away, she undertook a cleaning job but soon after got married a second time, succumbing to pressure from the community and its gossip. She later regretted this decision as the second husband was unsupportive and she had to look after an additional three children along with working to earn a living. Her situation is symptomatic of a difficult double burden of labour and reproductive labour.

While strict norms regarding women's work have remained rigid overtime, many respondents described that norms for women's education were gradually changing and most families now educated their girls up until 5th or 8th grade (primary and middle) and sometimes even till matriculation (higher), not customary before. They added this was needed to keep up with the times and create *shaoor*. However, the pace of this change was observed to be much slower than the other two sites, despite the prevalence of older migrants. One respondent mentioned how her daughter demanded in permission to work to put her education to use, but her father refused. In another case, where a young mother indicated aspirations for her female toddler to get educated, her mother-in-law did not permit it as it was considered neither customary nor affordable for the family. When probed about enrolling in government schools, she said the '*mahol*' (environment) *was not right, her main concern being non-segregation in classrooms that could facilitate or enable their daughter to potentially pick her own partner*. On the whole, however it was observed that trends around education were changing, while those around paid work remained rigid. Variations across castes and kinship groups were observed, along with migrant status, whereby the Bunair and Yusufzai women experienced the least restrictions comparatively and the Afghani, Mehsud, Swati or the Syed women, also often recent migrants, faced more.

4.2.3 Constraints to Mobility, Agency and LFP

Within Baldia, complete relegation of the private sphere to women and the public sphere to men was highly evident. In contrast to Lyari, women in Baldia faced greater restrictions in their mobility. Hardly any of the female respondents were allowed to venture outside of the home. One woman described how her husband

expressed anger at her for merely standing in the doorway of her house. The pronounced public-private divide in an urban context, points to norms being carried over in a context where space shrinks. One respondent mentioned that mobility for women shrinks in urban areas because homes are smaller compared to compounds in rural areas and not necessarily because the public sphere is more accessible in rural areas. Migration status also shaped perceptions of mobility, where new-migrant women often described shrinking mobility in the city and/or after marriage. In contrast women from older-migrant families, tended to prefer life in the city compared to the village. One respondent mentioned she was not eager to visit her husband's village for fear of being made to stay there by her in-laws.

A respondent that had spent time in a non-Pashtun dominated area in Lahore, preferred Lahore to Karachi. According to her, she enjoys more mobility there because the environment is better as there is more 'shaor'. In terms of a specific example she mentioned that her sitting with her male cousin on the bed, as she was while giving the interview, would be considered problematic by people in this neighborhood whereas this was not the case in Lahore. Another mentioned how her husband refused to take her to the dentist when her tooth was aching, because he did not want her to have any physical contact with him.

Women walk to schools or to the market within the community, but their walking is marked with a high sense of purpose and awareness, and the expectation is to exit as soon as possible from the space. Public space is under constant surveillance by men, and as such harassment is not an issue. While in this relative sense it is a 'safe' area, because the men's watchdog role creates an insular framework based on self-preserving, male-dominated communal goals. However, this framework does not challenge underlying notions of respectability associated with women due to Pashtun cultural norms by any measure or the right to access public space by women.

Anxiety regarding clan pollution in the urban context, as indicated from fears regarding school enrollment, is also a major underlying reason for greater restricted mobility for women, that restricts their access to opportunities. However, respondents mentioned that norms surrounding this were also changing; where earlier it was unheard of to have inter-clan marriages, it was now okay to do so as long as the family was Pashtun. Some respondents mentioned examples of one or two instances where inter-ethnicity marriages had taken place but was still relatively rare. We came across no examples of love marriages, which indicated strong patriarchal control over women and their decision-making in contrast to the other two sites. As such there was limited use of technology and cell phones by women. Some women in the FGD mentioned they kept phones, but these were not smart phones. One young respondent mentioned she opted not to keep a phone, even though she was permitted to do so by her husband, for fears that it may arouse unnecessary suspicion.

In terms of associational patterns and impact on mobility, the arrival of IDPs and newer migrants from FATA has created fissures. Respondents mentioned that newer migrants tend to keep to themselves and do not mingle with their neighbors. As such their women face greater restrictions. Additionally, the respondents indicated their bias towards them; as one respondent stated they are regressive, unclean and violent. Some women mentioned they did not send their children outdoors to play for fear of getting in a fight with children from newer migrant households and the situation exacerbating as their families often held weapons.

4.3 Korangi

4.3.1 Political Relevance, Ethnic Composition and Migrant Status

Korangi is an industrial area located with the status of a district (formerly Karachi East). Due to its proximity to the industries, most people of the area are employed by garment and leather factories. Educational attainment in the area is low considering children as young as 10 work as helpers in leather factories, with only some continuing their education at the same time. The area is multi-ethnic and witnessed phases of ethno-political violence until 2014. Both hard and soft drugs were common in the area with reports of addiction in children of very young age. Since the area consists of a mix of new and old migrants as well as members of different ethnicities, associations in the area were very weak compared to Baldia and Lyari. Despite most residents of the area being employed in nearby factories, evidence of collective action for wages and labour rights is absent. Members of Afghan and Bengali communities face immense difficulties in getting their Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) made. The situation negatively impacts educational attainment as well as employment, severely restricting their pathways towards economic and social mobility.

4.3.2 Forms of Women's LFP and Trends overtime

In terms of employment, majority of women had low-paying private school teaching jobs. Those with income issues took better paying but far more demanding, company or factory jobs. Working in the nearby garment factories was common. Older uneducated women usually took up work as cleaners in other households but, like elsewhere, this was not considered respectful. Likewise, factory or company work was also discouraged because of the mixed gender environment. One respondent mentioned that she had been working at a garment's factory prior to and after her marriage due to financial need, even though she had a special-needs daughter to look after. After marriage she mentioned consulting her in-laws before beginning work again even though she had no restrictions to work when she was unmarried. Conversely, some young FGD participants mentioned factory work being taken up, not because it was a necessity but because it had become increasingly 'fashionable' to do so.

The transport facility offered by companies eases commute for women in the area. However, distance that has to be covered on foot, to and from the drop off point remains a challenge due to the risk of sexual harassment.

Though the salary in factories is relatively better (~PKR 12,000 (USD 90)) than the private school teaching jobs, the job environment was described as “dangerous” by one of the respondents due to hostility exercised by the managers. The respondents mentioned that compared to the work demanded, this pay seemed low, and that workers were frequently mistreated and degraded for making small mistakes and often threatened with firing. The only reason she continued doing the job was out of financial necessity, and though her in-laws made her quit after marriage, the respondent was happy to do so.

Conversely, some of the private school teachers mentioned strong job satisfaction even though the pay was much lower. A respondent said that she did her job out of passion and was inspired to do so because she had excellent teachers when she was younger. Another mentioned that she continued her teaching job despite better offers by other schools because she felt attached to the kids and the kids had a genuine need for good teachers. The other reasons cited for preferring teaching jobs were similar to those observed in Lyari; such as not being able to take up full-time employment or jobs outside of the area owing to care obligations at home.

With the exception of certain Sindhi families, most women were encouraged to complete their education and aspired to be doctors. Many respondents had aspirations of becoming doctors and stated being encouraged by their parents but were usually unable to complete their education due to financial constraints. However, some women, particularly from new migrant Sindhi families, were not allowed to work at all and others were prevented from doing so after marriage. A respondent noted that she didn't work because her husband feared other relatives would talk and create a reputational problem for them. She further mentioned that despite the financial need, she was still prevented from working. Her husband supports his mother, three sisters and his wife on an income of PKR 15,000 (~USD 100) per month. The father-in-law perished in a road accident, thus her husband is the sole-breadwinner. She had high aspirations to work and said that if she were able to, her household's income would improve.

Like Lyari and Baldia, a lot of women alluded to 'shaor' as the main value of their education and work experience. One respondent mentioned:

“If I had to choose between home-based work and going outside to do a job, I would prefer going out to do a job – because that is how you learn about the world and get awareness. With teaching I learned less. Sitting at home you don't understand anything about the world and remain ignorant.”

Those women who quit working after marriage missed their sense of mobility and agency the most. It also enabled them to form crucial networks for future

employment. Thus, the notion of education and work-experience enabling confidence in the women, beyond causal financial empowerment was evident.

4.3.3 Constraints to Mobility, Agency and LFP

Similar to the other two sites, aspects pertaining to women's mobility and agency differed across ethnicities. Due to the ethnically stratified nature of the locality, the picture for Korangi is not only a lot more diverse compared to the other two localities, but the very impact of the diversity has played a unique role in shaping women's access and participation.

Due to Korangi's diverse ethnic heterogeneity there seemed to be less community ownership of public space compared to other sites. The environment is not as actively, or rather, vigilantly surveilled by men for safety, unlike in Baldia. As a result, sexual harassment was reported to a greater degree by women compared to in the other two sites. Sindhi women complained about relatively more restrictions at home as compared to other ethnicities. Even though they claimed enjoying more autonomy in their villages, it seems on one hand socio-cultural patriarchal notions come under more duress in the city, after migration while on the other they reported less extended community vigilance of their mobility, as movement in the city offers greater anonymity. However, they hardly venture outside unaccompanied in the city.

One of our respondents who migrated to Karachi after marriage was not allowed to work, even though she was permitted to do so in her native town.

"I once got a duty for in health work in Larkana and held that job for some time. But then I left because I could not balance it with education. Here in Karachi after marriage I am not permitted to work. I once tried talking to my husband, but he said no. He said the mahol (environment) is not right."

The husband's anxieties and mistrust with regards to the city and consequent emboldening of patriarchal control are evident in his rationale for her not letting her work in Karachi.

Others mentioned that public spaces are not safe in Korangi, and women feel anxious about accessing it as there are too many young men loitering on the streets, due to unemployment, indulgence in drugs and gaming arcades or restaurants playing pornographic movies. One respondent narrated her experience with sexual harassment while on her way home on foot one evening from the drop-off point of her transport, provided by the company where she worked. She further complained about how, as a result of harassers, women's mobility fundamentally gets impacted double-fold, since their families place greater restrictions on them as a precaution.

As an industrial area, the non-segregated environment at the factories facilitates inter-mingling across genders, and thus love-marriages are more common. A good

number of respondents reported having met their spouses at the workplace. However, in contrast to Lyari, young couples face a lot more opposition from the elders largely because these would potentially end up into marriages across ethnic lines due to the diverse ethnic make-up of Korangi. Some also resorted to eloping and marrying without parental approval.

The ability to own and communicate through mobile phones has been an important tool in terms of negotiating agency and enables greater decision-making and agency in being able to choose their partners. Resultantly, clan-pollution, especially inter-ethnically—unlike Lyari or Baldia—is no longer a major concern, especially for long-settled older migrant families. For newer migrants, particularly Sindhis, clan-pollution staunchly persists, and perhaps even temporarily emboldens after migration.

Women's experiences in Korangi were not as homogenous as the other two localities and provide important insight on how urbanization and subsequent blurring of ethnic delineations perhaps lead to lesser community ownership and unity, and what the implications of these are on their agency.

Section 5. Contrast of Women's Mobility, Agency and LFP Across Sites

Proximate constraints and reasons for low urban LFP for women were thematically consistent and seemed to largely adhere to the trajectory conceptualized. All three sites are at different points of the continuum with regards to the time since migration. As such the hypothesis (Haghighat 2002) of women's initial withdrawal from the workforce as modernization proceeds, potentially because of improved income of the male provider and issues such as proximity and separation of workplace from home domain, seemed to largely hold true.

In Lyari, which is an old-migrant neighbourhood and thus the furthest ahead in its trajectory, there was a clear preference and demand for white-collar professions by young women who were educated and were increasingly accessing them. The case was similar in the case of Mohajir women of Korangi. New migrant Sindhis in Korangi however are located lower in this trajectory. The increased restrictions they face after migration, are indicative of an inverse relationship with mobility and respectability, at least initially, and a temporary emboldening of patriarchal control for women.

Interestingly, the hypothesis does not seem to adequately apply to Pashtun women of Baldia; women's LFP was severely restricted in both old and new migrant women, and thus their point in the continuum in terms of migration did not really matter. Ethnicity and normative patriarchal arrangements, as an end in themselves, seemed to offer a better explanation. Furthermore, in terms of Lyari, the hypothesis does not completely explain the differences in women's experiences of mobility and LFP faced by Kachhi and Baloch women, despite being at similar points in terms of the migration continuum, again pointing to broader interplay of ethnic differences.

The explanation immediately proffered “riwaaaj nahin hai” i.e. it is not customary for women to work was common to respondents in Baldia, as opposed to Lyari or Korangi where explanations regarding barriers were situational and mostly alluded to the double burden of reproductive labour. This striking difference points to a need to be attentive to and factor in ethno-political arrangements and histories of conflict and their resultant spatial anxieties with regards to women’s agency, mobility and LFP in a complex, highly stratified urban setting.

It is also interesting to note that despite Baldia being the poorest and most economically vulnerable of the three sites, women were still not mobilized to enter the work-force. This is unlike Korangi and Lyari where older women in particular did end up taking jobs in the informal sector, even when there was little preference for them, which is in line with the hypothesis that rising inequality and income disparity has meant that working class and low-income women have had to take on the role of providers and to step out of the home.

Nevertheless, the notion of *shaoor* or awareness gained about the world through the continuation of education and through paid work outside the home was mentioned at all three sites and showed that beyond economic merits there was an evolved understanding of how LFP can be a route towards empowerment and upward mobility for women, and how increasingly this was valued by society.

However, clan pollution—the risk of which is emboldened in a heterogeneous urban context—remains at the crux of the issue, which is an important phenomenon emerging from of this study. Respondents in Baldia, where inter-ethnic and love marriages are rare, again in contrast to Korangi and Baldia, conveyed this anxiety after much probing with regards to reasons why young girls are usually made to quit their education when they reach menstruating age. Other reasons offered were how an investment in girls’ education does not yield economic benefits to her family, since she will eventually be married off.

Intergenerational change in this regard, particularly in relation to the notion of ‘shaoor’, is important for women’s improved mobility and agency and thus LFP overtime. While it is largely an aspiration for women in Baldia, due to rigidity in terms of urban integration and threats of clan pollution; women in Lyari and Korangi cite this as a valuable byproduct of LFP and education. Nevertheless, despite the rigidity and resistance in Baldia, norms around education for women have changed overtime, even if at a piecemeal rate, since now it is common for them to be enrolled up until onset of puberty, whereas many older women mentioned how this was not an option for them when they were young.

Women’s access to the public sphere and their negotiation with public space also differed for all three sites, even though all three are localities within the same city. Lyari—an old migrant but relatively homogenous—site seemed to be the most yielding in terms of women’s access to public space. In contrast, Baldia while not

unsafe in terms of harassment is under constant surveillance by men and outsiders are treated with suspicion. While in this relative sense it is a 'safe' area, because the men's watchdog role creates an insular framework based on self-preserving, male dominated communal goals. However, this framework does not challenge the underlying notions of respectability associated with women due to Pashtun cultural norms by any measure or the right to access public space by women. Both Lyari and Baldia represent ownership of public space as a result of community homogeneity, with very conflicting consequences for women. Harassment as an impediment to women's mobility was by far most commonly reported in Korangi. Due to Korangi's ethnic heterogeneity and old migrant status there seems to be less community ownership of public space compared to other sites, and thus less vigilance and surveillance for safety, unlike Baldia.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The degree of autonomy and patriarchal mores varied significantly across each locality and can be traced to socio-cultural values specific and pre-dominant to each. In Lyari, women seemed to enjoy greater degrees of agency and mobility, which was in complete contrast with the Pashtun-dominated Baldia. Women's experiences in Korangi were not as homogenous as the other two localities and provide important insight on how urbanization – including the vantage of migration - and subsequent blurring of ethnic delineations perhaps lead to lesser community ownership and unity and point to interesting implications in terms of women's agency.

The study shows that there is strong indication that patriarchal arrangements relative to ethno-political and migrant status as well as cultural notions of respectability, determine the extent of women's participation in the labor market. The relegation of women's labor force participation only to certain acceptable occupations or by keeping women at home entirely, unquestioningly indicate that gender norms play a role in shaping women's labor force participation in Pakistan. In an urban context, mobility is complicated by distinct norms pertaining to patriarchy within their communities, geographic and spatial anxieties due to migrant status, and histories of conflict within the city. Our findings suggest a differentiated employment strategy concerning women's labor-force participation is required, underpinned by social-policy that is context-specific to communities within Karachi.

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Section 7. Annexure

Annex 1

Individual In-depth Guidelines (Qualitative) **Project: IGC Women's Mobility** **Collective for Social Science Research 2018**

I am _____ from Collective for Social Science Research and we are doing a research study on women's mobility, labour force participation and access to public space. We wanted to request some of your time today to conduct an interview with you.

Today, you will be our advisors. As our advisors, you are the experts! We are here to listen to your thoughts and opinions so that we can work towards informing and advocating for policy based on your responses. There are no wrong answers and no answers that we "want" to hear--we just want to hear what you think.

If okay, we will be recording your answers so that we remember everything that was discussed. All responses will be kept anonymous and answers utilized will not breach confidentiality. Again to emphasize, there are no right or wrong answers so please don't let that influence your candid responses.

Date _____ Start Time _____ End Time _____
Moderator's Name _____ Note taker/translator's Name _____
Language in which interview conducted _____
Urdu=1; Punjabi=2; Sindhi=3; Pushto=4; Balochi=5; Other= 6
District Name _____ Town _____ Union Council _____
Charge Circle Name _____
Cluster Name _____

Respondent's Information

Name	
Sex	
Age	
Ethnicity/Caste/Kinship group (zaat)	
Language	
Religion/Sect	
Marital status	
Occupation	

Spouse's Occupation	
Contact (Cell, email)	
Residence	
Education (years)	
Years in Mohalla	
Family members/siblings	

Migrant Status and LFP

Were you born in Karachi?

If yes:

Do you still have ties with your ancestral village, if out of city?

What do you think about life/idea of living there?

What does your day-to-day life look like? What kinds of work (paid/unpaid) do you engage in?

Do/did you work in the city? Why? Why not?

Have you ever been involved in paid work?

- i. What kind? Inside or outside the home? How long have you been doing it?
- ii. How much do you earn? Are you satisfied with earning?
- iii. How did you get the job or earning activity?
- iv. If away from home, what is the workplace environment like? How far is it away? Mode of transport?
- v. Do you prefer working at home or outside?

If engaging in paid work at home, why are you working at home?

If engaging in paid work at home, what keeps you at home?

- i. Lack of jobs in the relevant industry
- ii. Reputational and respectability issues around taking a job outside
- iii. Husband/Guardian does not give me permission
- iv. Children/Care obligations at home

Why did you choose this/previous occupation?

Are there newer migrants in your area? What do you think of them?

If no:

Where did you move from? When? Why?

What was that like? How has living in the city been compared to life outside of it?

Do you find life better here or there? How or how not?

What does your day-to-day life look like? What kinds of work (paid/unpaid) do you engage in?

Do/did you work in the city? Why? Why not?

Have you ever been involved in paid work?

- I. What kind? Inside or outside the home? How long have you been doing it?
- II. How much do you earn? Are you satisfied with earning?
- III. How did you get the job or earning activity?
- IV. If away from home, what is the workplace environment like? How far is it away? Mode of transport?
- V. Do you prefer working at home or outside?

If engaging in paid work at home, why are you working at home?

If engaging in paid work at home, what keeps you at home?

- I. Lack of jobs in the relevant industry
- II. Reputational and respectability issues around taking a job outside
- III. Husband/Guardian does not give me permission
- IV. Children/Care obligations at home

Did you work in the village? Why? Why not? What was the environment like?

Do/did you work in the city? Why? Why not? What was the environment like?

Why did you choose this/previous occupation?

Agency/Mobility

Who has made major decisions in your life and how? (About marriage, schooling, work)

Were these decisions the outcomes you wanted for yourself? What would you rather have done?

Did you cast a vote in the elections? Why? Why not?

Do you own a phone? Why or why not?

How did you meet your husband? (if married)?

How often do you leave the home? When or Why?

Did this change after marriage?

What do you do for recreation?

Are you involved in any youth organizations, clubs, teams, groups or other organization (probe including political, religious group)? If yes: what types? How active are you?

Are there any political/religious/neighborhood organizations that you or your family is part of? If yes, why?

Public Space

How is your access to public space in your neighborhood and/or community?

How is your access to public space outside of your community and/or neighborhood?

Are you accompanied by anyone?

How frequently do you use public transport?

What are some of the issues that you face?

Annex 2

FGD Qualitative Guidelines

Project: IGC Women’s Mobility

Collective for Social Science Research 2018

Date_____ Start Time _____ End Time_____

Moderator’s Name _____ Note taker/translator’s Name_____

Language in which interview conducted_____

Urdu=1; Punjabi=2; Sindhi=3; Pushto=4; Balochi=5; Other= 6

District Name _____ Town _____ Union Council_____

Mohalla/Village_____

List of Participants

Sr. No	Name	Sex	Ethnicity	Age	Education	Married (Yes=1 No=2)	Employed (Yes=1 No=2)

- What are the main sources of employment/income in your community/area/illaqa?
- What is your opinion on women working in the city? Should they or shouldn't they?
- Do the women in your community work? Has this changed overtime?
- Have trends related to marriage changed? (love marriage, cross-ethnicity)
- Have trends related to education for girls changed?
- What do women do for recreation in this community? Have trends related to that changed for women?
- Are the above different across ethnicities sects/religion/caste/income group residing in this community?
- What have been the patterns of migration like overtime for this community? Has this shaped conflict in the city?
- What did this mean for women’s access to public space?
- What has been the law and order situation been like in your area?

Male FGD (additional)

- Does your family live with you? Why? Why not?
- When you moved did you bring your wife and children with you? Why or Why not?

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