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# **Transport and Women's Social Exclusion in Urban Areas in Pakistan**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores women's everyday experiences of transport-related social exclusion, factors responsible for this, and how women negotiate restrictions on their mobility in urban areas of Pakistan. Although there is an emerging realization in the transport literature about the importance of studying social exclusion and marginaliation, little research has been carried out focusing on women's social exclusion in transport, especially with regards to urban areas in developing countries. The present study fills this research gap by analysing the case studies of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, in Pakistan. These cities have been selected to explore how the highly contrasted urban form of planned and unplanned cities, as well as socio-cultural norms and institutional arrangements, impacts on women's mobility and transport choices.

The theoretical framework combines rights-based and empowerment approaches to identify constraints and opportunities for change to women's mobility. The right-based and empowerment approaches have been selected over other theoretical lenses because they see women as active agents of change rather than portraying them as passive victims. In doing so, the emphasis is placed on rights, accountabilities, and structural injustices in society, which are imperative to study women's transport issue in developing country contexts. The design of the research is largely qualitative in nature, thus methods such as in-depth interviews, life stories, and structured observations have been used. Fifty-two in-depth interviews exploring the life stories of low-income women, business women, administrators and professional women in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, were particularly illuminating. Besides interviewing women as users of transport system, the viewpoints of males including drivers and conductors of public transport, and a range of stakeholders, were also considered.

Enriched by stories of the everyday experiences of women in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, the findings of this study highlight that women do face structural and social barriers to their mobility in the shape of: stereotypical norms about women's travel; negative attitudes of men about women in public spaces; difficulty in accessing walkways, bus stops, and public transport; safety and security concerns; and gender insensitive policies and projects. The findings also highlight that, despite these

problems, women are seen to be coming out of their homes and shattering stereotypes. Although few in numbers, these women can be regarded as success stories as far as women's empowerment through mobility is concerned. The present research develops new insights into women, gender and transport issues within cities of developing countries by finding that transport is a development issue where patriarchal attitudes, fear and safety concerns, and quality of transport service are highly relevant to women's capability to travel, yet there are cases in which women have been able to negotiate highly gendered power relations in order to gain greater freedom of movement.

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