



Graduate Institute of Development Studies
Lahore School of Economics
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Preface

Female work and employment is essential in shaping measures of development and inequality. In terms of female labour force participation, substantial developments in the attitudes towards women in employment have taken place in Pakistan. This paper scrutinises the patterns of women's work and employment in Lahore, Pakistan. Fieldwork based on interviews was carried out over several weeks over the May-August 2020 period in two contrasting income neighbourhoods. The findings of this research paper are based on the real-life stories, experiences and mindsets of women aged 21 to 45 who are currently residing in these neighbourhoods as evidence to support the claims made. Prominent emerging themes are highlighted and analysed which determine female participation in the workforce: domestic responsibilities, education and skills, the working environment and the future for women in employment. These are further analysed through class and age differences conveying differences in opinion.

Supporting the literature present in this paper, the findings show women's participation in the workforce to be exceedingly variable, mainly that married women are less likely to participate in paid employment due to domestic responsibilities and child-care. On the other hand, an increase in the labour force participation is positively linked to increased schooling and higher education. This research paper further analyses family social status, financial income and characteristics that lead to decisions of female in employment.

This research paper makes a valuable contribution to the literature on female empowerment and development by identifying the enabling factors as well as the barriers and attitudinal blockades towards female labour force participation in Pakistan.

Dr Rashid Amjad

Director

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1. Introduction

Pakistan, a developing country in South Asia, has been undergoing accelerated economic change. Like other countries in the region, governments are trying hard to create jobs for their increasing population and sustainability purposes. Nevertheless, women are being barred from economic sector participation as gender discrimination continues to persist, with women dominantly partaking in unpaid work. For inclusive growth and development, Pakistan needs to magnify productive employment for women and also taper the obstructions against women regarding employment (Morales et al. 2020).

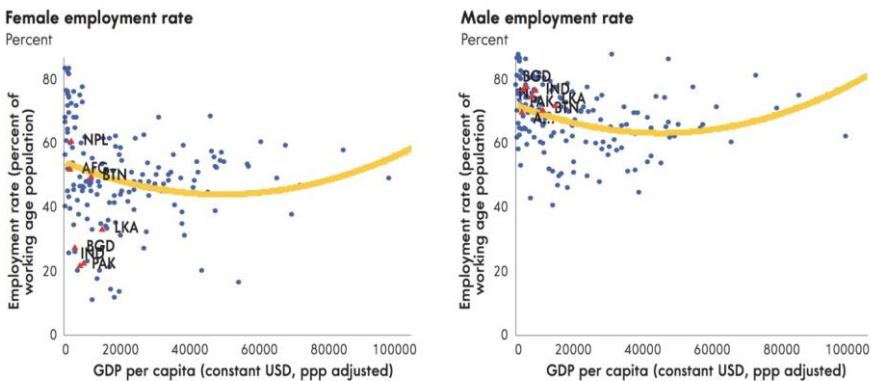
The main aim of this research is to get a deeper and more sound understanding of female work and employment contingent on household attitudes, across two neighbourhoods in Lahore, Pakistan. Extensive research on women from different socio-economic groups in Pakistan, specifically within individual provinces, is lacking, even though female empowerment and their rights are now viewed as more essential and consequential than ever before. This has been due to contemporary and recent social movements, and changes that have highlighted and shed light upon the many issues women have to face in developing countries, such as Pakistan, including in domestic spaces.

If the labour force sees an increase in the number of women, the country sees an automatic betterment in its socio-economic status. A decrease in gender inequality, advances in technology, lower birth rate and structural changes are seen as some distinct factors that help women participate in the economic sector (Greenwood et al. 2005; Fogli et al. 2002). South Asian and Latin American economies have seen a steady rise in the employment of females in the workspace. However, it is vital to look at Pakistan as a case study as it has the second-lowest female labour-force participation rate in South Asia periods (Ejaz, 2011; World Bank, 2018).

It is central to look at how to increase the participation of women in the workforce as the economic returns are substantial. Women in employment and earning their own money helps them stand on their feet and gives them a "voice" as well as social/personal respect. Children of the household have better health and education choices, and the mother's engagement in society is improved. Comprehensively evaluating statistics regarding female work and employment in South Asia, let alone, Pakistan is problematic due to the data confines. The idea of "work" is perplexing as many types of "work" activities may be "grey areas", which provides a stark contrast to men (Morales et al. 2020).

Even though the status of women has potentially seen slight improvements over the years; women in Pakistan tend to have low representation in political structures and are inclined to jobs with low salaries. At home, women are taking part in 'unpaid work' as they are the sole care-takers of their families/parents/in-laws without any recognition; therefore giving them an inferior status as compared to men (Akram, 2017). Figure 1 shows that female labour force participation in rural areas is higher than in urban areas due to the larger number of women working in agriculture. Therefore according to the Labour Force Survey of Pakistan (2018), in Punjab, only 13.5 per cent of females are in urban employment.

Figure 1: Female Vs Male Employment Rates in South Asia



Source: (*South Asia Economic Focus, Jobless Growth? Fall 2018; Najeeb et al. 2020*).

Pakistan remains a male-dominated and patriarchal country, continuing with prevalent discrimination practices against women (UNICEF, 2006). Most parts of Pakistan see women not being able to decide their marriage choices either, denying them of their fundamental human rights (Madhani, 2007).

Recently, the “Aurat March” in Pakistan has become a broad movement, where women protest to demand better laws to protect females, raise awareness and change attitudes towards women. The 2020 protest saw 'economic justice' for women as its significant demand. Nevertheless, conservative and right-wing groups still believe in the "chadar aur char diwari" (veiled and within the constraints of her house) thinking this march goes against the idea of Islam and is seen as provocative (Asher, 2020).

A report based on '*Ending Poverty in South Asia 2021*' conducted by the World Bank (2021) concluded that the female labour force participation (FLFP) in Pakistan was at 15.47 per cent (overall) and 21.48 per cent (10 yrs. and above) in 2018/19, (Pakistan Labour Force Survey Report, 2019). The World Bank team further investigated that educated women struggled to enter and stay in the workforce and women with low levels of education faced even more limitations in Pakistan. These limitations were highlighted by “gaps in their aspirations and lack of knowledge regarding opportunities”. Numerous women drop out of schools due to safety concerns or financial constraints, while others fear resistance from family and their community if they took part in jobs outside their home. Working women were reported to be struggling with low wages and burden of household responsibilities not letting them reach their full potential. To defend the ‘honor and mind the demeanour’ of women, men traditionally restrict women from leaving the home un-chaperoned, therefore, women tend to seek work at home. These attitudes are deeply embedded in shaping Pakistan’s gender inequality, often “espoused by women themselves” (Redaelli and Rahman, 2021). However, all women interviewed in the World Bank (2021) study expressed the desire to support their daughters’ ambitions to complete schooling and take part in paid work (Redaelli and Rahman, 2021). Further, the lack of information on jobs and the job market additionally brings the FLFP down.

This study is an attempt to analyse the issues and also if any advantages that females are facing within different households relating to internal/domestic or external factors for economic

participation/employment. It scrutinises the different attitudinal behaviours in the different households that support women or otherwise prevent them from taking part in employment, or have their own choices. Are women making the conscious choice to work themselves or is someone else within their household/family making the decisions for them? This answer lies within the distinct meaning of 'work' and what they hope to gain out of 'work' within each different household. It is important to note that there is no straightforward way of defining 'work', as it is very personal to each person, especially in the context of this study. The core of this study is the critical analysis of the relationship between women and their household characteristics/educational background concerning work and employment, further leading to female empowerment.

At the start the study aims to identify what 'working' or taking part in 'employment' means to the different women. Secondly, it works to illustrate the personal experiences, voices, and stances of women in high-income households (residing in *Defence*¹) vs women residing in a low-income neighbourhood (A tiny village known as *Charrar* inside Lahore's superior real estate, gleaming residential community: *Defence*) in relation to various aspects (work, marriage, employment, freedom). These experiences should highlight the significance of the aggravating dynamics internally or externally that has kept Pakistan with meagre female workforce participation. Lastly, it is essential to look at feminist literature to analyse the importance of female empowerment in Pakistan for a successful socio-economic environment.

2. Literature Review

This section provides a review of the literature of female work and employment, both specific to Pakistan as well as globally.

2.1. Female Work and Employment – International Studies

Academics such as Cain and Dooley (1976), Becker (1965), Berndt (1990) and Mincer (1962) have highlighted key issues that females have faced in the labour-market. Becker (1965) introduced the traditional theory of *utility maximisation*, developing a theoretical model of 'time allocation' (Naqvi and Shehnaz, 2002). Becker's (1965) theory discusses how different households can be seen as 'producers' and 'consumers' at

the same time. Commodities are created in homes when inputs of goods and time are shared. This would mean that an escalation in the household income would, therefore, encourage a deterioration in the extent of 'time' that was being used on 'consumption' actions and a surge in 'market production' as 'time' would become more costly (Naqvi and Shehnaz, 2002). Home production/consumption and market production become interlinked through the 'reallocation of time' that permits the reorganisation of commodities and merchandise (Becker, 1965). The reason why academics prefer Becker's (1965) theory as it successfully analyses how time affects fertility, well-being and location, establishing a basis for the 'household production model' (Ejaz, 2011). His theory and models have been extended by other academics to include more specific issues such as the "abilities of husband and wife, decisions regarding human capital accumulation, the consumption of market goods, and leisure" (ibid).

Furthermore, Mincer (1962) discusses labour supply concerning lifetime variables through statistical analysis. This was done through the relationship of female employment in her lifetime vs hours of work. Mincer's (1962) study resulted in no correlation found between family income and the wife's requirements for leisureliness. The results concluded that the likelihood of labour force involvement was contrariwise to lifespan affluence quotas.

Berndt (1990) further discusses issues using a neoclassical model of labour that is essential to decisions that are personal to individuals made at home concerning women's employment or participation in the labour force. The study concluded that an intensification in income, non-labour-oriented income, likings and expenses being the constant would see a growth in the value of time demanding events and also probable to effect in amplified market time hours and regression in leisureliness. Berndt's (1991) study found that employment of women varies by age and from the 1960s to the 1980s the number of women employed has increased significantly. The neoclassical model used by Berndt (1990 and 1991) in his studies introduces the idea of the "discouraged worker" incorporating domestic dynamics. The issue surrounding the 'discouraged worker hypothesis' deliberates those females that are married or have children are often discriminated against by employers or companies as they feel that they might quit their job or not give it their undivided attention. Women are seen to concentrate more

domestically once they are married, which tends to be a significant factor in the decrease in female employment levels (Ejaz, 2011).

Bradbury and Katz (2005) discuss how well-educated women with children/families contribute massively to the decline in female labour force participation/employment. They find that unobserved and unpredictable factors contribute towards a decline in the participation of women. They further successfully identify characteristics that have been previously unobserved by academics such as the advancement in technology for homes (vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, washing machine/dryers) which has also provided women with higher authority over childbearing decisions (more education + wider availability of family planning/contraception), yet these factors have not brought a significant positive change in female employment trends in South Asia.

Linking to Bradbury and Katz (2005) study, Greenwood et al. (2005) discussed how the technological revolution "introduced labour-saving consumer durables" (vacuum, frozen foods, pret clothing). Greenwood et al. (2005) base their study on the theory of the 'Beckerian model' associated with household production, which has helped 'liberate' females through technology. Overall, the model advocates that the occurrence of this innovation in durable technological possessions escalates the flexibility of females in employment. Therefore, a positive transformation can be seen as prospects for women in the economic sector have increased vastly and the mindsets towards a 'working-woman' are more progressive and optimistic than ever before – giving them an additional motivation to partake in economic undertakings.

A study in Korea (2004) negated all preliminary studies, as it suggested that women living with the husband's parents tend to have a higher possibility of being employed as their children can be looked after by the grandparents. Additionally, the study suggested that the husbands "birth order" determines whether he is going to live with his parents or not, specifically in Korea. (Ejaz, 2011) In Korea, women with children have been seen to be out of economic employment, decreasing the labour force participation by 27.5 per cent. (Chun and Oh, 2002) This they stated is due to the preference of sons in Korean where the number of children in a family is dependent on the gender of the first and second child. Lee et al. (2008) study of Korean married women in employment brings in

"demand-side factors" for married women in employment and "supply-side factors" for married women not in employment.

A study in Kuwait (1996) found that women's education and wage rate have an affirmative correspondence with women in employment. However, dynamics such as the number of offspring, marital status and age of women have an antagonistic relationship with women in employment (Aly and Quisi, 1996). On the other hand, Morocco can be used as an example a bit contrary to the Korean sample. In reference to Assaad and Zouari's (2003) study, in Morocco, marriage is not a significant determinant of women being/not being in employment, even though it might cause restrictions for women to participate in paid work for the private economic sector. Fertility is dependent on personal household decisions concerning family-planning methods, contraception, and vicinity to doctors. Level of education of a woman, as well as her parents' education (pre-dominantly father), is imperative as it proliferates the likelihood of her wanting to be employed. For married women, if their children are in school, this could be a drawback for a full-time career. (Assaad and Zouari, 2003).

2.2. Female Work and Employment – A Pakistani Perspective

In reference to Pakistan, women are usually drawn to supply-side factors, such as care-taking activities (household obligations), cultural boundaries and low levels of education. However, for the lower-middle class and more deprived sections of society, women are obligated to take part in employment due to dire necessity and increasing expenses (Kazi et al. 1991). Hafeez's (1984) study revealed that the dominant sector of women who were employed alleged that they were working for financial prerequisite. The basic idea of a patriarchal society is that the male provides for his female relatives; however, with economic burdens aggregating this idea is being superseded (Visaria, 1980). Kazi and Raza's (1989) study in Karachi concluded that homes which were being run by women are part of the most impoverished strata of society. As a result, this shows the 'lower earning capacity of women' in contrast to men.

Kazi et al. (1991) highlight the fact that the role of women in Pakistani society is more as a "reproductive role" that acts as a catalyst to them staying at home for domestic care. However, as mentioned above, in many cases, with increasing expenses, in many households, women also

need to work for economic survival. A study in Karachi depicted those women from lower-income communities tend to start working dominantly after having several children. In these cases, a high fertility rate encourages employment or makes it obligatory in the sense that these women are forced to enter the labour market due to the additional household expenditure.

Sadaquat and Sheikh's (2011) study depicts the reasons why women are not an equal or dominant part of the labour workforce in Pakistan; discussing reasons relating to traditions, cultural values, religion, colonial belief, and this "social institution" which has been established in the country constraining women to be a part of the economic sector. Therefore, women are not given equal opportunities in the economic sector and face "market discrimination" with lower status than their counterparts, men and lower wages (Ashraf and Ali, 2018) Why is this the case? Because women are seen to be playing the double role of a homemaker and workplace which results in low productivity, poorer salary, and an uncertain working environment in the informal sector. Their study also provides evidence regarding higher male employment in both rural and urban areas of Pakistan (Ashraf and Ali, 2018).

Rehman and Naoroze's (2007) report showed Pakistan to rank at 147 for its Gender Development Index. Gender inequality in Pakistan is deeply entrenched to where judicial laws are infringed for procuring women's rights (Ashraf and Ali, 2018). Women tend to be dominated by men in all spheres of life, giving them full control over their lives (Madhani, 2007). The annual growth rate for females working in the labour force increased to 15.9 per cent in 2003-04 and further 18.9 per cent during 2005-06 (Ashraf and Ali, 2018).

Ashraf and Ali's (2018) study on Pakistan predicted that education increases the level of understanding, knowledge, self-confidence and awareness about their rights. Malik and Courtney's (2010) study on Pakistan also found that women taking part in higher education had a higher chance of empowerment and therefore had a constructive effect on other lifestyle practices resulting in affirmative changes. Chaudhary et al. (2012) work denotes how women's awareness regarding their fundamental rights and their economic and social development are supportive factors regarding their empowerment.

Natile (2020, cited in Jafri 2020) discusses how “gender has become a component of the conditional opportunities designed for countries in the Global South to align themselves with Western societies”. Developing countries do this in particular by 'financial inclusion'. In post-colonialist countries, like Pakistan, masculine control and dominance have been engrained for several years, making the men the sole breadwinners of the family. Therefore, for women this idea of being 'subservient' to their husbands and having an inferior status to men in society is from colonial times and novelties; through the 'property rights law, governance of wage economy and formation of customary law'. In post-colonial countries, women are ostracised from economic and political sectors through economic segregation and other forms of injustices, keeping the relic of colonial supremacy alive.

Ejaz (2007) used the probit and logit models to determine female labour force participation aged 15 to 49. The study resulted in depicting an increase in female employment with high educational attainment, older age and depending on marital status. A female who has access to a car and belongs to a 'nuclear family' has a higher chance to be in paid employment than a female who has more children, and a greater obtainability of home applications. In contradiction to Shah et al. (1976) results, Ejaz's (2007) study portrays females to be in employment if the domestic burden they endure is reduced and their education is facilitated.

The literature mentioned above gives an in-depth understanding of the innumerable economic and sociological dynamics that affect women's employment practices. Literature specific to class-based Pakistani female work and employment is limited, and many elements are still overlooked in relation to women empowerment, fertility, family social standings and structures. This study, therefore, hopes to add to existing literature relating to female decisions by building on these previous studies.

3. Methodology

This study has been based upon empirical research constructed by semi-structured interviews to allow flexibility by a snowball sampling method in Lahore, Pakistan. Lahore remains the cultural 'heart' of Pakistan and one of the very few cities in the world, which takes immense pride in its omnipresent lifestyle. Not just a business, industrial and political centre,

but it is the principal fortress of education and culture in Pakistan (Hussain and Mayo, 2011).

The open-ended interviews were conducted with women of different segments of society (affluent neighbourhood vs lower-income neighbourhood) within two localities in Lahore. This helps to understand and present the differences in a society in regard to opportunities, opinions and personal attributes/feelings. The age group sample chosen for this study was from 21 years of age to 45 years of age. This broad age group sample was chosen as opportunities, liberties, statuses are dominantly different for women in Pakistan over-time, adding to the authenticity of the results. Additionally, the change in opinion from the upper bracket (above 35 yrs.) to the millennials (26-35 yrs.) to Generation Z (18-25 yrs.) is significant to note.

In all 16 women, eight from the upper class neighbourhood (U Block, DHA Phase 2) and eight from the low income village (*Charrar Pind*) were interviewed via zoom call or skype due to the COVID-19 social distancing/lockdown circumstances in Lahore. Four participants in *Charrar Pind* did not have access to Wi-Fi connections; therefore, a regular phone call was arranged for their ease. Participants were asked to share their personal experiences and stories regarding their education, careers, marriage, as well as any struggles they faced, or they feel girls in their community face regarding employment or education. Their perceptions and experiences provided an in-depth understanding and meaning in the everyday issues faced by females of different societal classes in Lahore. The questions addressed their educational/socio-economic background, the meaning of education in their homes, the importance of work in their home (paid or unpaid), marital status, their views on marriage/employment/workplaces, what 'work' means explicitly to them and what they hope to gain out of it, etc. All participants that took part in the interviews were connected through personal networks and acquaintances.

Figure 2: Map of Lahore; Arrow showing the location of U Block and Charrar Pind. (Google Maps, 2020)

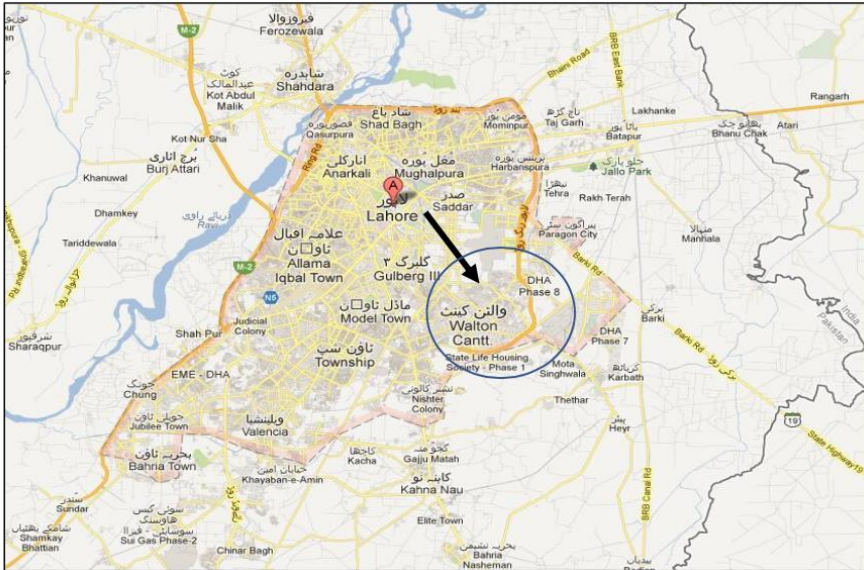
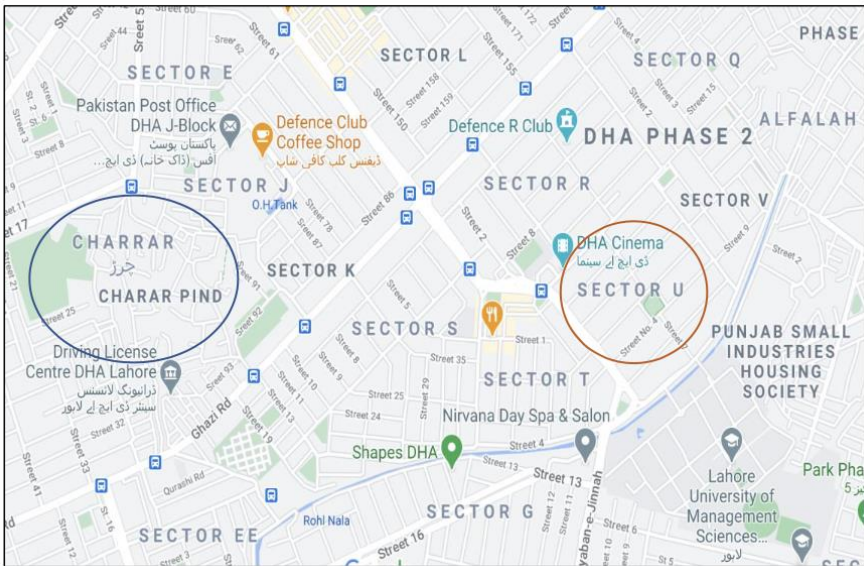


Figure 3: Map of DHA; Circles showing U Block and Pind Charrar Pind vicinities. (Google Maps, 2020)



It is hard to obtain income data in Pakistan; however, various characteristics are considered when defining the different income socio-economic groups. The lower-income groups that are commonly known as the "*working poor*" make up around 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the Pakistani population. These families run on less than PKR 30,000/month (GBP 140²) and live from one pay-check to the next pay-check without any savings, making up the most significant division of society. Middle-income households make up to 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the Pakistani population, with an income of around PKR 50,000/month (GBP 254). The middle-income strata have characteristics where the children go to school, the family owns a motorbike or an old small car, and medical care is affordable for minor illnesses (Kamal, 2020). The higher income, visibly privileged group belongs to a 5 per cent minority in Pakistan earning around PKR 642,000 to PKR 800,000/month approximately as well as side businesses, offshore properties and extensive land at home. This 5 per cent belongs to politicians, businessmen, landowners, industrialists, professionals (doctors/lawyers/bankers), senior bureaucrats – highly trained professionals with English medium and foreign higher educations, with luxuries within Pakistan as well as abroad (Kamal, 2020).

The community which this research took place in as seen in figure 2 & 3 is DHA (Defence Housing Authority). DHA proves itself to be a higher income community with modern and sophisticated homes housing the affluent of Punjab. The "*Charrar-DHA relationship is a microcosm of the kind of class hegemony one finds firmly entrenched in urban Punjab*" (Javed, 2015). *Charrar Pind* is home to around 2000 families, whereas DHA's affluent blocks host around 200 families (ibid). Buying land in U Block would cost anywhere between PKR 3.5 crores (GBP 139,000) to PKR 20+ crores (GBP 927,000) depending on the size of the estate. (Zameen.pk, 2020) On the other hand, inhabitants of *Charrar Pind* live in terraced shared housing usually on rent for several thousand rupees/month from DHA.

It would have been ideal also to interview additional women from the middle-income households and men from different statuses to enhance the results, but due to time and COVID-19 restraints, this has not been possible. Through snowball/convenience sampling, where usually a participant recommends who else can be interviewed in the same vicinity, further interviews were able to take place effortlessly. It can be

said that this research is gender-biased because it only takes into account female views and experiences.

4. Limitations and Ethical Concerns

The biggest challenge in this research was that all the interviews were not in person due to COVID-19 restraints. All the interviews took place during a very stressful and uncertain time. Many of the families interviewed had lost their dear ones from COVID, many their family members have lost their jobs and are living in trying and crucial times, which of course meant that their answers were different to what they would have been in a COVID free world. Furthermore, all the conversations were online dependent on Wi-Fi or otherwise phone calls (depending on Wi-Fi access), eliminating the traditional face-to-face interaction that has possibly resulted in less detailed and personal answers.

The interviews were undertaken in Urdu with the women from *Charrar Pind* and likewise in DHA unless the women preferred to answer in English. Keeping the interviews in Urdu made everyone more comfortable, and the experiences came out beautifully expediting better understanding. Translating the interviews from Urdu to English can be a minor challenge, as there are some words with deep meaning that can be lost through translation. There are some words in Urdu which are hard to translate. However, they have explicit meaning, there is so much more behind that word, as they are so profoundly culturally entrenched, that which when translated to English can certainly not have the same outcome. Such as 'barkat' (blessings) or 'izzat' (honour).

Additionally, as this study is specific to Lahore, this will give a sample of dominantly Punjabi families, rather than a mix of Sindhi/Baloch/Pathan, giving a biased sample. Due to time and COVID-19 constraints, it was not possible to travel around Pakistan to minimise the bias in the study keeping the study sample size small and potentially biased.

Ethical concerns regarding this study were privacy and confidentiality. All participants were emailed an information sheet and consent form before the interview. All participants had email access; however, for the uneducated ones, the interviewer read the forms out to them on call for their verbal consent – a limitation due to COVID-19.

5. Findings and Analysis

This research pre-dominantly analyses the personal experiences of the women regarding different factors such as domestic responsibilities, education and skill, the working environment and the future for working women. Further, it is discussed how these elements have affected their career or life choices since the primary research literature, stipulates rich indication regarding female participation in the economic sector with high literacy.

Additionally, this section will also discuss the changes in mindset in the homes from the elder women interviewed to the younger women and the difference in opinion through class difference. As we are living through this dynamic digital age, women are trying to empower themselves more than ever before. They are trying their level best to keep their goals as their priority and marriage second. The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed a few similarities and differences in both the different neighbourhoods.

5.1. Domestic Responsibilities

5.1.1. Class Difference (Higher Income)

Dominantly, most women in both the higher and lower income neighbourhoods, believed that domestic responsibilities are essential and need to be a woman's priority. Most women interviewed believed that for a prosperous future and a successful marriage, taking charge and being efficacious in the domestic responsibilities at home is the most important "job", even though it is "unpaid". Maximum women believed that for Pakistani women, domestic work is an unsaid obligation that has to be fulfilled, no matter which social class one belongs to. For women living in joint families, taking care of their in-laws was also a domestic priority. However, they did feel, that they do have a higher chance to work and also to spend more time outside the house as the domestic duties are distributed amongst the daughter-in-law's and the children can be left with the grandparents if need be.

Additionally, most women in U Block had the perception that if their husband earns enough, that should be sufficient, and they should not need to work and put themselves out in the notorious Punjabi working

environment. Older higher-income household women stressed the importance of a healthy upbringing of their children by being a stay-at-home mother and then once the children go abroad for university they may take up some jobs to pass their time; whether that is at an NGO, voluntary work or home-based businesses. Younger higher-income household women had a more open-minded approach to working and stressed the idea of being "independent" and having their own money to spend in their way without any "guilt". These women did believe in careers and full-time jobs before marriage, but after marriage, some said they would still want to work part-time, but most said depending on the husband's income they will adjust accordingly. An interesting observation was that the younger higher-income household women did not categorically have a specific age that they need to get married.

Nevertheless, more, they believed in finding the "right person at the right time", whether that is in their early 20's or late 20's. These opinions are in stark contrast to most of the older women who were (mostly arranged marriage) married in their late teens or early twenties and started families too early into their marriages. Dominantly, these younger girls believed that as the mindset of the younger generation females in Pakistan is shifting and becoming more westernised and exposed, particularly, the men (same age) are still finding it hard to open to western/modern values when it comes to their wives or sisters due to the embedded male- dominance and patriarchal culture. Therefore, many of these girls are finding it hard to get married to someone like-minded, making them concentrate on their careers for longer than they had previously expected.

In the higher income neighbourhood, married women believed that they need to concentrate on their children's upbringing, which is a "full-time job". Moreover, they all made the conscious effort to say that they all are "stay-at-home-mothers" as their own choice, as they believe that family should be one's number one priority. Three married women gave examples of other women working full-time that faced issues in their marital lives, no time for in-laws, neglecting their children and therefore "breaking the bonds of a household which are upheld by mothers". What they did believe in, however, is that a woman should start working part-time even if it is volunteer work or NGO's when her children grow up or flee the nest, she should never sit idle.

5.1.2. Class Difference (Lower Income)

The women in the lower income neighbourhood had a more traditional approach towards marriage. However, most of them expressed the need to work due to financial burdens and increasing prices, primarily due to COVID. Some women from the low-income households mentioned how their husbands had lost their jobs during COVID (riders for Food-Panda, which is the Pakistani version of Uber-Eats/Deliveroo). Meanwhile, the women were the sole breadwinners for the households, by working at higher-income households as cleaners, chefs, child minders. Prevalently, all the women in *Charrar Pind* lived in joint family systems; therefore, they felt that their children were being cared for by elders when they are leaving their homes to work. Women with more than two children expressed the need to work due to financial burdens; however, women with children less than two signified the importance to stay at home and the importance of domestic duties.

In terms of marriage, the women of *Charrar Pind*, both young and old believed they do not have much say and it depends/depended on their parents whom they believe(d) is the right match for them. Therefore, single women from this area believed that they would love to work after marriage, for their own money, depending on their husbands and in-laws will. The likelihood of the husband agreeing to his wife working after marriage in this part of society is extremely low, which completely depends on his salary and financial burdens.

Interview results revealed that in both the higher and lower-income neighbourhoods there is a severe conflict between women's reproductive vs productive rules, therefore proving to be a critical reason why dominantly women "choose" to stay at home. Women in *Charrar Pind* who were working in people's homes as domestic staff agreed to the fact that they were taking part in employment because it is crucial to their economic survival. They believed that the husband's pay is not enough for the survival of the household due to a high number of children and the increase in prices for food and education. It was said that it is more critical to enhancing family income than staying at home and taking care of the children. Women in the same society, with 1-2 children took pride in staying at home and taking part in the domestic duties. They believed that staying at home and catering to your husband, children and in-laws needs are of utmost importance and fundamental to

a happy and most importantly "blessed" lifestyle. All of the women in both societies believed that even though domestic work in unpaid work is as important as paid work and sometimes even more critical.

Younger girls in both the higher and lower-income neighbourhoods thought concentrating on their education and careers is paramount, but marriage is equally important. Dominantly, the girls below the age of 29 believed that they want to continue their careers after marriage, even if its part-time or taking maternity leave when needed. The most repetitive reason given in most of the interviews was the need to be independent and have one's own money rather than relying on someone else. Thus, showing how traditional and cultural practices of women's roles appropriateness are changing. Nonetheless, they are so deeply entrenched in a Pakistani woman's life that they are hard to adhere from entirely. When asked about whether the Pakistani culture or their religion is a strong influence when it comes to men being the sole breadwinners for the families and women taking part in unpaid domestic work, participants agreed with this claim, proposing that culture and religion are heavily intertwined in Punjab especially Lahore, proving it to be a city in Pakistan which is more traditional in its mindset in contrast to a more metropolitan city like Karachi.

The interview findings agree with the literature in relation to the importance of domestic work and the prominent culture of stay-at-home mothers in Pakistan. Kazi et al. (1991) work symbolises the idea of women in Pakistan staying at home as it is seen to be their "reproductive role" to look after their families and in-laws. Sadaquat and Sheikh's (2011) study, summarised the higher income mindset correctly indicating that the country has an inbuilt "social institution" which stops women from contributing to the economic sector let alone traditional, cultural, religious and colonial principles. The colonial mindset of women being subservient to their husbands; therefore, masculine control and dominance over women is engrained within the society (Natile, 2020 cited in Jafri, 2020).

In contrast to DHA, *Charrar Pind* had more traditional-minded women as they were coming from less educated backgrounds resulting in limited awareness about their rights. Women here had more of a religious and cultural mindset where they believed following the traditional values the parents have taught and been through themselves

need to be followed. Moreover, the repetitiveness of husband's salary bringing the 'blessings' in the house, is a perfect portrayal of the patriarchal/misogynistic mindset in the community. Women here, choose to be subservient and enjoy it because they have not seen or ever experienced a better life. In most cases they do not have the option of staying-at-home and employment is critical to the economic survival of the household. These points agree with the literature, as Kazi et al. (1991) study discusses the lower strata of women in Karachi who take up paid work after their family size is increased or out of dismal necessity. In these cases, it is essential for women to enhance family income and then taking care of children is secondary. Thus, women from these communities are obligated to enter the labour market because of their further domestic expenses. Accordingly, high fertility stimulates employment rates for the lower strata.

Hafeez's (1984) work depicted that many women participating in the labour force were due to financial need. Therefore, a lot of the women who are in employment are from households where women never worked before. There are exceptions where the women in these poorer neighbourhoods are earning more than their husbands by working as helpers/babysitters/ cooks at people's homes which provides evidence to changing socio-cultural norms of female-headed households. The dismal economic burdens are superseding the traditional outlook of the patriarchal structure that the males need to provide for the entire family – yet, still significantly less in Pakistan (Kazi et al. 1991; Visaria, 1980). None of the women interviewed in *Charrar Pind* said they had female-headed households until their husbands lost their jobs due to COVID. Kazi and Raza (1989) report insinuated that female-headed households are unidentified in Pakistan. Nonetheless, research in Karachi showed these homes belong to the neediest strata of society, where the husbands have either left, turned to drugs or are unable to work. Hence, the lower financial standing of female-controlled households symbolises the inferior earning capacity and opportunities for women in correlation to that of men (Kazi et al. 1991). Overall, to enable more women to join the labour force by choice rather than obligations, the government needs to implement population control strategies. In an Islamic country, there is a lot of segregation related to birth control and family planning/contraceptive measures, which the government will have to change. Furthermore, maternity and paternity leaves, that are important in the western world need to be practised here. The government further

needs to set laws regarding fixed working hours that should be strictly enforced and executed for all employees. It is of standard practice in Pakistan for employers to manipulate working hours; therefore, if the father is working 12+ hours in a day, then it would be difficult for the mother to work and leave the children unaccompanied. This is in agreement to the study in Korea (2004), depicting women living with their in-laws or in close proximity to their parents have a higher possibility to be employed as their children can be looked after.

5.2. Education and Skills

5.2.1. Age Difference (Higher income)

The findings further revealed that most women thought that higher education is linked to better jobs and improved opportunities. In both the higher and lower income neighbourhoods, women stressed the importance of education, not just for their sons but also for their daughters. Higher-income household women emphasised the prominence of studying in top universities abroad and gaining a bachelors as well as a master's degree to increase the chances for better employability, not just in Pakistan but worldwide. Women from these homes also disclosed how education is now a status symbol and contingent on the private school, and university one's children or themselves go to carry an extraordinary reputation in society and the people one socialises with. From the children to the parents, to the grandparents and also the great-grandparents, all were well-educated from these higher-income households which pre-dominantly did not result in employment for the women; their education was more a means of gaining knowledge and exposure. Nonetheless, the younger women interviewed had a passion and a mindset of not needing a man to depend on and having their own bank-balance. Nevertheless, their post-marriage domestic responsibilities cloud their path to a career-oriented life.

For the higher income neighbourhood that is precisely what the findings resulted in. All the women answered that education is the key to empowerment and to be financially independent. Education in this community was seen to be of utmost priority and bringing with it an admired and respected image within the high-income society. Women who themselves, or with children who were studying abroad in top UK or US universities felt they have the edge over many in society. The

higher one educates themselves, the better it is for her "image", regardless of if she is in employment, after that prestigious degree or not. Education in these homes has been coming from several generations which have enabled most of the families to reach where they are, financially and socially. Notably, the younger women interviewed in U Block were seen to be pursuing unconventional new subjects at university levels such as media, public policy, sociology and journalism. This is interpreted as a positive sign, as parents have now opened up to not just their daughters studying abroad by themselves but also subjects that they are personally interested in rather than traditional subjects for women such as medicine, art, business and engineering.

The interview findings from U Block, depicted women in higher-income households gaining premium education, which could further help them in having good careers. Mothers from the higher-income households did have to contradict statements as they did want the "best for our daughters. The best of educations, attainments and culturally aware splendid experiences" (Participant Z, 44 years). However, at the same time, the double-standards were essential to note. "I would not want my daughter to become "too" independent. You know our society! It would be hard for any boy to accept such an independent girl" (Participant Z, 44 years). It is essential to identify and reflect upon the deep indoctrination of women here, that are born into thinking that themselves and their future generations need to in some way, be subservient, compliant and timid in front of the male presence in their households, depicting a prime example of a patriarchal society. These points again are in favour of the literature. Sadaquat and Sheikh's (2011) study discussed the presence of colonial beliefs and a "social institution" which has been rooted in the society, limiting women to be a part of the economic sector, evidently conveyed by Participant Z.

Younger women from the higher income-households came across as more westernised, educated about their rights, beliefs, and standings than any of the other women interviewed. All of them were gaining currently or had gained bachelors or master's degrees. One of the participants (mentioned above) stated how she would like to do a PhD degree and complete it after she gets married. Evidence regarding full-time employment after marriage for higher income household women, in their mid-twenties, remains minimal. Moreover, these women voiced their concerns on how the "colonial" mindset in Pakistan, limits them to

secure their preferred jobs if they did their higher education from Pakistan. They did feel that students who study from abroad are given partiality over the local students and also seen to be of a higher status. Ashraf and Ali's (2018) study, already gives an insight to women facing "market discrimination" and are offered roles which have lower wages and positions than men. The younger interviewees also underlined how poor working environments, workplace harassment and other security issues further limit them from working in proper waged jobs in Lahore.

An interviewee who hoped to be a barrister voiced her concern regarding the toxic male dominated environment of law, not just in Lahore but all of Pakistan, which would limit her future in becoming a successful career-oriented woman as she felt her future husband would not be content with her employed in a male-dominated atmosphere. However, an interviewee who works as a part-time professor at a prestigious higher education institution (Participant S, 37 years) believed her profession is ideal for married females. She felt her way of working parttime helps her to "keep sane", but at the same time, she has enough time to spend with her children and family. An essential point she mentioned that is parallel to the literature study of Korea (2004) was that she has the "comfort of a job" because she has the "comfort of my mother-in-law taking care of my two daughters if I have to teach an evening class - my parents also do not live too far away in-case my mother-in-law is busy" (Participant S, 37 years). Hence, depending on the family household structure and the proximity of relatives nearby, female employment rates can be increased.

A reflection on the higher-income household women regarding their education and skills is that most of these women are not career-oriented since they already have all the resources and the comfort that they would get if they were working. In Pakistan, culturally parents have full responsibility for their children – therefore children never 'flee the nest' until they are married or working abroad. The education that is earned by the higher-income household women is more to gain exposure and experienced understanding. Therefore, dominantly, they lean to stay in their comfort zones, rather than pushing their precincts and complementing to the financial quarter - as they already have all they materially need. Additionally, in these cases in Lahore, the parents do not push the daughters either to take part in demanding full-time jobs. Hence the young women lack motivation and incentive. Likewise, with

staff in their homes that do all their domestic work, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry as well as possessing luxury cars with chauffeurs, they do not feel the need for financial independence. However, times are undeniably changing. Women from these privileged homes are resorting to other ways of earning bank-balance rather than taking up employment in conventional male dominated firms, companies, or banks. This is being done by starting small businesses, such as salons, home-based boutiques, bakeries, home-based catering, and other small productions. Designing clothes and running boutiques is becoming increasingly popular amongst women of all classes in Pakistan. During COVID, Pakistan has seen an enterprise boom, with many women starting home-based businesses. Also, with cumulative use of social media, there are hundreds of younger women who are taking part in Instagram/TikTok influencers or earning money by YouTube videos. There are certainly anomalies of efficacious permanent career oriented women, who have the desire to be liberated even though they come from wealthy families. Nevertheless, they were not a part of the interviews conducted.

5.2.2. Age Difference (Lower Income)

The women of *Charrar Pind* strongly believed that education is the pathway to a prosperous and successful future. Older women who were uneducated strongly believed that education for their sons and daughters is of paramount importance, and if they had a chance to reverse life and study, they would. Many older women in *Charrar Pind* remain uneducated as they all came from lower-income households where education was preferred for the sons than the daughters, in their time, if, the sons were educated at all. Furthermore, uneducated women from *Charrar Pind* conveyed how they got married by sixteen to eighteen years of age to someone of their parent's choice. Their childhood and early teens were spent taking care of their younger siblings or the house, while the parents were at their jobs at higher-income households. These women also denoted how jobs for the uneducated are limited to working as helpers, babysitters or cleaners that can be very problematic and troublesome, as some employers harass their staff, make them work for longer hours than expected, and the pay is meagre for the amount of work that is put in.

Women from the lower income neighbourhood desire to stay at home and carry out domestic responsibilities; therefore, wanting their daughters to be educated for a better life than what they have endured. Younger women in *Charrar Pind* who are currently studying or newly graduated expressed how education has been a life-changing experience for them, and they feel they have leverage over most people in their community especially with their employment opportunities in comparison to the generation before them. Most of the younger girls felt they are now living their parent's dreams and earning money that their mothers could have never, due to the education prospects. Women in the lower income neighbourhood also underlined the importance of education for both their sons and daughters even if they were not able to gain literacy themselves due to financial reasons. All the women interviewed stressed how it is of vital importance for all their children to be knowledgeable and thoroughly educated in this competitive world, by learning skills that will result in a prosperous future. Dominantly, the women believed that they want better futures for their children and do not want them to end up as the parents did.

In this digital age of the internet, social media and technological innovations, all the interviewees in both the neighbourhoods accentuated the prominence of education for both sexes. One would expect the meaning of education to be different in the different strata of society, with the higher-income community leaning more towards empowerment by education, and the lower-income community leaning more towards the education of Islam and Islamic teachings.

The findings from the lower-income households indicated that older women tend to be less educated because of financial constraints; a minimal amount of women had completed their A-levels but most not been able to reach their bachelors due to marriage. The results illustrate that a stigma exists culturally in lower-income communities regarding sons getting an education since they will be the breadwinners for the family, consequently leaving women out due to their reproductive role.

Rehman and Naoroze's (2007) study discusses gender discrimination to be deeply implanted in the system where judicial laws are also breached regarding women's rights. The government needs to bring in awareness and strict measures for girls to go to school by enhancing security measures, providing safe female-run transport to from school and/or

giving incentives to the parents (minimal amount of cash per month). Quresh's (2020) work for the World Bank discusses how the World Bank and UN are helping the Pakistani government to implement strategies and acquire agendas that will incite "supportive working environments" for women in employment. These would include safe transportation, child-care provision, and anti-sexual harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, to encourage girls to return to school during COVID-19, the World Bank is launching an awareness campaign in Pakistan that will use online mediums including radio, TV's and mobile messages connected with interactive community sessions.

These findings problematise the domestic staff culture in Pakistan, which humiliates these women as most of them discuss that the reason they do not want to work is because of the suffering they face as being maids in higher-income households. The employers tend to demean their workers and manipulate them into working rigorous hours and jobs, as well as harassing or having abusive behaviour. The government, therefore, as mentioned before, needs to investigate strict laws regarding domestic helpers, workplace hours, and also child-labour. Women from low-income households, who are taking part in employment, are not content and do not feel liberated. They feel burdened and considerably worse than the women who are not employed from their community, exposing the harsh realities of their workplace.

Younger women from this neighbourhood proved to be completing their higher education and trying hard for a better future than what they saw of their parents. Nevertheless, their parent's traditional influence remained strong, and they knew that their parents expect them to be married before the age of 25. The younger women felt that due to them studying from public *Urdu-medium* schools and universities, they remain the underdogs when it comes to opportunities in the economic sector. The women studying commerce or economics believed that it would be an accomplishment for them if they work in school/college or more prominent firms' administrations or become managers for top designers. They did feel that if the salary they may be given for their future jobs is more than PKR30,000 (GBP 140), they would try to convince their future husbands if they can keep working. The younger women further also mentioned the importance of two salaries in one house to have a more comfortable standard of living, rather than worrying about money. Dominantly, the younger women did feel that

their husbands would not allow them to work in male-dominated environments, but if it was a beauty salon or for a designer or other work in an all-female environment, it would not be much of a problem – as long as the children are being taken care of and there is adequate transport to and from the place of work. This is correlated to Shah's (1986) work that demonstrated the characteristic of "segregation" remaining an obstacle to women in employment.

Moreover, most of the women interviewed believed that if they have their mother-in-law taking care of their children at home, they will feel much more comfortable and want to work rather than staying at home. This is in contradiction of the findings of Kabeer's (2011) analysis that found women in a joint family have less control over their lives than a nuclear family, declining their probabilities to work for the economic sector. How come these women have more awareness of their fundamental rights and economic/social development? The reason behind this is their eagerness to educate themselves well, and the desire to gain more knowledge than the previous generation as they expect a more fruitful outcome, also through the spread of social media and apps like WhatsApp. These points are relative to Chaudhry et al. (2012) work which discusses these supportive factors being a sign of women empowerment.

In terms of the pandemic, the unconstructive economic impact that women are facing is not just for paid work but also the burden for unpaid work has increased during COVID-19 with surplus long-term damaging repercussions for female educational outcomes in Pakistan. As schools have been shut in Pakistan since March 2020, the women carry the additional burden of tutoring children at home and family-care directly impacting females of all ages. Tariq's (2020) work, describes this as "exacerbated time-poverty" as Pakistani women now have less time to spend on their daily health, let alone economic skills and growth. With Pakistani women already spending an average of 10.5 times more work on unpaid domestic care than their male counterparts, with the school closures due to the pandemic, females who already face pressures to drop out of school, might not be able to return. As domestic demands escalate for women during the pandemic, amplified pressure to drop out of school to take care of the siblings, while the parents are working will broaden the gap between female to male ratio of school enrolment, resulting in severe, longstanding effects on women contributing to the labour force.

5.3. The Work Environment (Higher Income)

Lastly, the results showed that women from both the different communities were apprehensive and anxious regarding the problems that are related to women in employment currently and their future. Women from higher-income households spoke about the lack of opportunities for women in higher-income fields, especially politics, law and banking. Dominantly, women believed that specifically in Lahore, there is a lot of workplace harassment and gender discrimination faced by the female employees that stops them from working. All working women that were interviewed said that they do not feel comfortable in their work environment if they are not wearing a "dupatta" (long scarf). Interviewees remarked how men are given priority and more respect, therefore, they dominate important employment roles in Pakistan that can also be seen in the current government of Imran Khan. Older women believed that it is better and more comfortable for women to start home-based businesses, or businesses such as beauty salons, designers, restaurants etc. rather than working corporate jobs where they would be in a male-dominated environment. Furthermore, they remarked that they would feel apprehensive and uncertain if their daughter(s) took up a job in such sectors and would ask her to look at alternatives, as it would not be healthy and safe to be around so many men. Additionally, higher-income household elder women also remarked how working at a multinational company would be better for girls and would comparatively have a safer working environment in comparison to local companies that were in general more traditional.

Younger girls from U Block also spoke about the prevalence of workplace harassment, especially in Lahore based companies and firms. Younger girls were quick in blaming the government with its confusing, Islamic yet westernised behaviour, segregated schools including top private schools and cultural aspects which 'ruin' the safe and healthy upbringing of Pakistani males, resulting in misogynistic and patriarchal behaviour. With segregation in many aspects of society, in workplace environments, harassment is common. Many younger women did believe that due to motherly and emotional instincts of women, they are proved unfit for specific roles; therefore, the need to adopt masculine qualities is essential. Younger girls that had more awareness than the older women regarding the labour market also remarked how companies are very slowly changing in Pakistan as they have started recognising rights for women

and the discrimination they face. They also felt with movements like '#MeToo' and the 'Aurat March', Pakistan is taking a few steps ahead with raising awareness about the rights for women and their empowerment. It was interesting that these women believed that if they were to get a better job, or wanted a better working environment in another city such as Islamabad or Karachi, they would not be allowed by their family to move by themselves, as it is "unsafe" for a woman to live alone here. However, if it were their brother, he would be obligated to take the job and transfer himself, as in the future he has to "raise his family", unlike his sister. Therefore, their employment opportunities were again restricted to the city they are currently living in, bringing in issues such as security and gender-inequality.

5.3.1. *The Work Environment (Lower Income)*

Women of *Charrar Pind* spoke more about culture, security and transport issues that are faced by women in the labour workforce. Dominantly, both elder and younger women believed that women are expected to stay at home for domestic responsibilities, and the women who work outside often have other family members and future marriage prospects question their character. They remarked that parents usually feel that outsiders will talk ill about their daughters or cause harm to them, as if they are working outside these women must be "open" as they are exposed to all kinds of notorious people and deeds. Older women from *Charrar Pind* expressed their concern with their daughters working for long hours and the danger of them coming home alone after sunset meant that they are exposing themselves to uneducated and dangerous men that may be the reason of sexual/mental harassment or even rape. Older women also articulated their alarm, that when their daughters are working in companies, institutions or hospitals with a lot of male co-workers, the culture of having a "boyfriend" or an "affair" might start, which they do not want their daughter to be involved in as such unlawful relationships are prohibited in Islam. These women reiterated how their opinions and the females around them are in much better positions than the females in the villages of Pakistan, who sometimes are not even treated like human beings. For future prospects, many women yearned that they would be grateful and fortunate if the security situation for females improves in Lahore, so that their daughters and daughters-in-law can earn their own money without any of these external constraints.

Younger girls from *Charrar Pind* spoke of related concerns correlated with the older women's opinions, though, they appeared much more distraught regarding the restrictions they face from taking part in the workforce. The younger women felt that it is a privilege to be a male in Pakistan and almost a sin to be a female – considering the number of concerns that women face in this country. Women from low-income households also voiced their fretfulness concerning educated, high-income families manipulating them in unethical ways and the commonness of female child-labour. Nevertheless, the younger women did feel that now their husbands are more open to them working part-time, as long as their children are being looked after by the grandparents or aunts at home as two salaries help ease the financial burden due to inflation.

5.3.2. Working Women (Higher Income)

Women who were taking part in the economic sector through home-based businesses (bakers or boutique) or working as professors/teachers and/or in multi-national companies had a slightly different mindset in comparison to the women who were homemakers. They were not working for financial necessity, but more to keep themselves active and their mind occupied towards a goal; the money was a bonus for them. These workingwomen did feel that their career is equally important as the upbringing of their children, and they try to work in shifts where the children are at school or taking part in extra-curricular activities. Their ideas towards education and marriage were remarkably similar to women out-of-work; however, their mindset towards domestic responsibilities was slightly different. The career women felt most of their domestic work is managed by the staff in their house, so the critical part of being at home is spending time with children and their husbands, rather than cooking/cleaning/laundry which they manage efficiently. At work, they felt they had adapted themselves to more egalitarian personalities and in reality they are more ambitious and successful than homemakers. The women commented that they are role models for the upcoming generations, as they develop their lives against a cultural backdrop that has continually undermined women from working outside the home.

Moreover, they felt that their children had been raised with a more exposed and a hard-working mindset in comparison to other children. All of them mentioned how their career-oriented approach would not have been promising without their husband and in-laws' support. The

part where most of them felt that they are missing out on is socialising within society, which homemakers can easily manage. Additionally, they did feel that there are several issues regarding women in the workplace, male-dominant working environments, lack of opportunities and the "mindset" behind women working after they have children.

5.3.3. Working Women (Lower Income)

Dominantly, working women from *Charrar Pind* are a part of the informal work sector, where they work at higher-income households as domestic workers. Some of them were also working at private schools within DHA as cleaners or helpers for younger year groups to manage their financial burdens. Most working women spoke unconstructively about jobs in the informal sector as they are given low pay, working-hours are not fixed, so they tend to work overtime and manipulation, and verbal harassment by employers is common. Therefore, they commented on the significance of education and securing professional jobs with higher pay.

5.4. Future for Women in Employment (Higher Income)

Lastly, the interviewees were asked questions relating to the future for women in the economic sector, how women in the workplace can make their mark and how this is changing over time. Women from both the neighbourhoods answered these questions in an extremely positive manner, predicting the future for Pakistani women to be much more liberated than before. Nevertheless, the interviewees in both the neighbourhoods did identify critical issues that women would face by taking part in the labour force if the government does not improve working environments significantly.

Older and younger interviewees from the higher income neighbourhood were quick to identify advances in the working society, especially in mindsets. Dominantly, women from this neighbourhood believed that parents are changing their thinking for a more open-minded approach towards their daughter's careers. In previous generations, dominantly, parents would not allow their daughters to take part in modelling or acting, however now, with the spread of social media, numerous young girls from higher-income households are taking part in modelling campaigns and adverts, and this is being appreciated by society rather

than looked down upon. Some women did feel that they would like their daughters to have specific economic skills, in case they ever need to go back to work in the future; they are able to earn fair salaries. They believed that women if not so much economically, but socially are now empowering themselves and “making moves”. The conversation of women's human rights, personal health, employment etc. is now open and being discussed on large platforms through the help of social media - as women are now more aware than ever before of what they deserve.

Further, these points were backed up by conversations about the different movements and protests that have been taking place in Lahore and Karachi to spread more mindfulness about women's entitlements. Both, elder and younger women felt that times are changing rapidly in terms of “westernisation of thoughts” in younger women, however, dominantly, younger men are still trapped in many patriarchal practices, chiefly in Lahore. Nevertheless, the women did feel that political and economic openings for women are still exceedingly low and will take much time to develop principally with gender-inequality and as Pakistan depends more on social-standing positions rather than merit. Solely, mothers who were interviewed had strong opinions that their daughters should always have “strong degrees to fall back on”, no matter if they are working or not.

The interviews in the higher income neighbourhood depicted women talking about jobs acceptances and opportunities based on social standings. For an equal and better future, provincial governments will need to start accepting people for jobs by merit rather than through contacts. Even though all these women came from well-known higher-income households, they did understand the implications and the unfortunate circumstances people without a social standing face and demanded equality for a prosperous future. With higher-income household younger women becoming more westernised in their approach and an alteration being seen in their cultural behaviour – Ibrazi's (1993) study can be taken into account, where women who were in 'purdah'¹ Had a lower chance of working than women without – now, we see changes in this temperament, with more women putting themselves out to work.

¹ Segregation; can also be physical such as the *Hijab & Niqab*.

Moreover, with additional women going abroad to study in high-quality universities, (with transportation links across the world becoming easily accessible and being connected with your family 24/7 through the internet) associating with the Chishti et al. (1989) study, there is a positive correlation in employment positions, expected earnings and the level of education for Pakistan's future. However, this could turn into a 'brain drain' for Pakistan, as exceptionally educated women with the means to live abroad would apply for jobs internationally for increased exposure, experience and wages rather than returning home. This nonetheless, would leave the surplus of local students with more significant opportunities and local competition for the economic sector.

5.4.1. Future for Women in Employment (Lower Income)

On the contrary, women of *Charrar Pind* had a more logistical approach regarding the future of women in employment. Dominantly, both older and younger women, discussed the issues that women have to face while they are working. They firmly believed if the issues regarding workplace harassment, security (in terms of travelling alone or at night-time), logistical issues concerning travel, the dominance of notorious men in working environments, respect, working hours and exploitation are addressed, many women would contentedly join the labour force for additional money. Most young and some older women also considered that with women working in the future, it would save them from mental health issues and other domestic/family politics as her mind will remain "fresh" and she will become more "confident" about herself. Lastly, all the women felt that education has now become a priority in their community, and all the young girls and women are eager to study for a profitable prospect. Hence, dominantly, they all were optimistic about the future for working women, given that the government stringently tackles the concerns that are encountered by women daily.

The answers from *Charrar Pind* also anticipated a positive future for women in employment. Dominantly, women from here believed that education and awareness regarding women's rights need to be embedded in their society from early ages to prevent discrimination against women in the future. Moreover, most interviewees depicted that parent's education is a prime factor in women's education and employment. Thus, in the future, more women will be taking part in the labour force as now education is being taken seriously in contrast to the

previous generation. Asaad and Zouari's (2003) scholarship, examines the importance of parent's education level, significantly the fathers, being imperative as it increases the chances of the daughters taking part in the economic sector.

In addition, COVID-19 has caused economic uncertainty – informal professions that relate predominantly to women in employment, have been the first ones to suffer. Quresh's (2020) study shows that over a quarter of Pakistani women have undergone suspension or been fired from their jobs in numerous sectors due to the pandemic. With schools shut, women are now carrying the dominant load of domestic responsibilities, further lessening their economic opportunities. Despite the easing of lockdowns, researchers believe that the pandemic will have an enduring impact on women's employment and domestic lives, with a UN study forewarning that COVID-19 has the potential to “dilute decades of advancement on gender equality” (Savage, 2020).

6. Conclusion

This research study is aimed to identify the determinants behind female employment within two contrasting income neighbourhoods in Lahore, Pakistan. Given that Pakistani female participation in the economic sector is relatively low, the explicit and implicit characteristics affecting this are discussed. By undertaking interviews through snowball/convenience sampling, several prominent themes emerged between the answers that are further discussed and analysed through the help of existing literature.

The study supports earlier research such as Ejaz (2011) which showed that women's workforce participation in Pakistan is highly variable, mainly that married women are less likely to participate in the labour force in comparison to unmarried women due to domestic responsibilities and child-care, and that a rise in labour force participation is positively linked to increased schooling. Furthermore, this research also sheds light on the family's social standing and financial income, education and family characteristics that leads to contributions to the decision of females in employment.

Findings of the study indicate that women from higher-income households tend to acquire high-level university education, and those

who have chosen to take part in employment have secured professional jobs. Nevertheless, access to a prestigious education and skilled jobs depends on socio-economic status, and most privileged women are gaining high levels of education for experience and knowledge rather than aiming for long-term full-time careers. The women who are taking part in employment though saw the need to be financially and mentally independent rather than relying on someone else, displaying a gentle change in conservative female role appropriateness. Yet, the low number of women partaking in the labour force is low due to the dire opportunities, small demand for women in professional-modern-jobs and attitudinal blockades by which women are seen to be more suitable for their reproduction role.

On the other hand, women who are uneducated or have low levels of education, from the lower income households are heavily involved in the labour market taking part in low-paid, unskilled jobs in the informal sector due to financial burdens. Supply-side factors such as domestic work, cultural restraints and low levels of education put these women in detrimental situations. With these women remaining in the informal sector with no sense of employment security is overall seen to be the deliberate outcome of exploiting a cheap labour force which the middle-income and higher-income households thrive upon. Although times have slowly begun to change for women in employment, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought these changes to a halt.

By using a qualitative methodology to explore attitudes, this research has sought to supplement previous studies which have taken a quantitative approach to study disparities in women's work and employment. In doing so, the paper contributes to the literature on gender and employment. Health and safety concerns around Covid-19 restricted this research project, however, hopefully enough material is present that future research projects can build upon.

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