

Challenges of Women in Transport: A Case Study of Bus Hostesses in Pakistan



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled “**Challenges of Women in Transport: A Cases Study of Bus Hostesses in Pakistan.**” submitted by **Zilay Huma** is accepted in its present form by the PIDE School of Social Sciences, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad as satisfying the requirements for partial fulfillment of the degree in Master of Philosophy in Development Studies.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved mother, the late Syeda Batool Kazmi, who taught me love, empathy, compassion, and resilience, and to my kind father, Syed Ali Asghar Shah, who stands as the pillar of my strength.

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ABSTRACT

Bus hostesses provide passenger assistance, safety, and customer service during the journey playing a crucial role in the broader transportation industry. Pakistan's National Transport Policy 2018 recognized women as customers and users of the transport services neglecting their role and rights as workers in the industry. Working women, especially bus hostesses, are often seen as easy targets for harassment, aggression, and extreme social behaviors, highlighting the need for improved support and policies.

This qualitative study explores the personal and professional challenges bus hostesses face, which significantly affect their well-being and job satisfaction. The study investigates social norms and perceptions around bus hostesses' work, highlighting their challenges in a male-dominated sector. The study further explores career growth opportunities and long-term professional sustainability for bus hostesses, aiming to fill the knowledge gap about women's job experiences in Pakistan's transportation sector in service roles. The study explored the multiple challenges by applying the theory of emotional labor, Marxist feminism, and feminization labor theory employing semi-structured interviews with the 20 bus hostesses and their supervisors in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, belonging to distant areas. Results from bus hostesses' accounts reveal that they face significant challenges stemming from economic necessity and familial responsibilities. Many women choose this profession due to socio-economic reasons such as being the primary breadwinners, caring for parents and children, and lack of qualifications required to pursue other professional paths. Negative public/social attitudes towards bus hostesses lead to harassment, stereotyping, and emotional burnout impacting their psychological well-being, dignity, and self-respect. Lack of benefits, no work-life balance, no career progression opportunities, low pay, and poor living conditions in company hostels make this profession an unsustainable choice for them. Businesses frequently neglect their concerns and complaints in favor of passengers. Policy recommendations are for the government to implement inclusive policy reforms in bus companies to create secure, welcoming work environments for women staff, promoting gender equality, career sustainability, labor rights, and women's empowerment in the transportation sector.

Keywords: Bus hostesses, Transportation Sector, Challenges, Pakistan, Social Norms, Workplace Challenges, Career Sustainability, Harassment, Gender Equality, Emotional labor

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFS	Cluster of Fairness Characteristics
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
GrOW	The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women
GE-HF	Gender Equitable-Human Factors
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFPR	Labor Force Participation Rate
NRTC	National Transport Research Centre
NGPF	National Gender Policy Framework
R&I	Research and Innovation
SuM4ALL	Sustainable Mobility for All
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Women experience significant emotional exhaustion because of customer-related pressures such as verbal abuse and interactions with hostile customers. These unpleasant interactions not only increase emotional exhaustion but also hurt the job satisfaction and overall quality of life of female bus hostesses in Lahore, Pakistan. Customer stressors, particularly in public-facing service professions, present a difficult environment for women in the transportation sector, echoing broader issues of emotional labor and societal pressures that are widespread in male-dominated industries (Nawaz, 2018).

In Pakistan, securing a work environment for women and promoting equal opportunities for them continue to be enormous challenges despite substantial efforts made by both civil society and the government (Shaukat, 2014). Gender roles are shaped and reinforced by family ties that conform to the norms and values of society (Mian, 2016). But then again because of the power dynamics in our culture, the roles that are created for men and women are rarely neutral. While some of these relationships are privileged, others are not as much. These relationships also produce gender-dominated occupational identities. As a result, male-female relationships are stereotyped, which affects how both sexes behave and how they are seen (Hussain, 2016).

In Pakistan, women find it far more difficult to pursue careers than men do. Although many families are now aware that one individual can't earn enough money to sustain the family, working women claim that pressure to support women still exists. They ought to choose more traditional careers, like becoming teachers or doctors. According to working women, discrimination in the workplace can occur in a variety of contexts, including but not limited to pay and benefits, opportunities for advancement, job autonomy, coaching, and development

opportunities. Discrimination against women is evident in offices where men are in authority, even though circumstances may differ in the public and private sectors (Zaman, 2021).

Men and women have complex reasons for working, driven by various elements, including societal influences, cultural standards, and economic situations. The number of women joining the workforce has significantly increased globally over time. However, several institutional, social, cultural, and economic barriers continue to prevent women in Pakistan from participating in labor. Even if there have been advancements over time, there are still major problems. According to Summary Report 2023 on the National Status of Women in Pakistan by UN Women “Pakistan's female labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 21% is significantly lower than the global norm of 39%. At the national level, women's (15–64-year-olds) refined LFPR is quite low, at 26%, whereas men's is 84%. The LFPR of women has improved in the nation during the last 20 years, rising by 10 percentage points; nevertheless, the rate of advancement is stalling, and Pakistan is rated 145th out of 146 nations in the Gender Gap Index 2022 for economic participation and opportunity. Pakistan's Gender Gap Index 2022 ranking, places it 145th out of 146 countries. Most economically active women in Pakistan work in dangerous jobs. Contrary to 44% of males, over 70% of working women hold vulnerable professions where they are subject to unfavorable working conditions, such as excessive wage discrimination, a lack of work contracts and fair working conditions, and a lack of social security (Women, 2023). Whereas it can be difficult for Pakistani working women to balance their personal and professional responsibilities, the issue is made more complicated by the pervasive and openly practiced gender discrimination (Zafar, 2013).

There is a remarkable lack of scholarly research on women working in service roles in Pakistan's transportation sector. This gap highlights a larger issue, as academic research has mostly ignored the experiences of these women, who frequently work as bus hostesses,

ticketing personnel, and in other operational or customer-facing tasks. Despite Pakistan's unique socio-cultural environment, a comparative study of global studies uncovers startling similarities. Research from more industrialized countries, particularly those with well-established labor rights frameworks and a focus on gender equity, shows that women in male-dominated industries such as transportation confront surprisingly similar obstacles. These include workplace harassment, a lack of job stability, gender stereotyping, unequal pay, and limited opportunities for advancement. Global research also reveals that gendered expectations strongly influence service jobs in the transportation sector, with women frequently expected to undertake emotional work by remaining courteous, patient, and accommodating in the face of adversity. This is similar to the situation in Pakistan, where cultural norms compound the cost of emotional labor. For example, women working as bus hostesses must frequently maintain a cheery and patient manner in the face of harassment or terrible working conditions, a challenge reflected in international research on public transportation services. The comparative research of global and Pakistani contexts indicates that, despite differences in policy frameworks and socioeconomic realities, the basic issues remain persistent. Thus, evaluating global trends not only addresses a knowledge gap but also emphasizes the universal character of these difficulties, providing crucial insights into how gender-sensitive initiatives might be tailored to local contexts, such as Pakistan's transportation industry. There is no previous study specifically conducted on the challenges of bus hostesses in Pakistan however a strand of research touches on some different aspects of the transport sector in Pakistan. Like, a study posits a negative correlation between tension and job satisfaction among bus hostesses (Malik, 2011). Similarly, the customers may also be a source of tension for service workers and impact their health (Nawaz, 2018).

Globally, there is less than 20% female representation in the workforce, the global transport sector shows significant gender disparities (Fraszczyk, 2019). Extant literature recognizes that transport has been traditionally a male-dominated area, owing to various reasons. For instance, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality, the main issues concerning the gender gap in transport are employment rate, part-time work, unpaid care, family responsibilities, access to rights and assets (professions and decision-making positions), working conditions, hourly wages (gender pay gap), and the possibilities for economic independence, among others (Dorantes, 2019). Though previous attempts have been made for example, in an inherent male-dominated transportation industry in Portugal to equalize the gender divide. However, these efforts have fallen short. Existing literature to evaluate gender disparities in the field pinpoints the root reasons and suggests remedies for a more accepting society (Adorean, 2023). The study by Adorean (2023) indicates that women and men have different prospects, with women having less access to the labor market and less mobility. The study concludes that more work needs to go into creating gender-neutral employment laws and more precise gender equality metrics (Adorean, 2023).

Around 50% of women in male-dominated occupations experience sexual harassment, with factors such as lower rank, shorter tenure, physical work, job insecurity, and unfavorable relationships contributing to the issue (Riddle, 2023). A study reveals gender disparity in the transportation sector due to historical, social, political, and traditional gender perceptions of women as primary caregivers (Jiménez, 2020). The transportation sector has long been considered a "no place for women" as stated in the working paper "Promoting the employment women in the transport sector –obstacles and policy options" by Professor Peter Turnbull for the International Labour Office; Sectoral Activities Department (Turnbull, 2013).

Although gender is being considered more and more frequently in many fields, the transport industry lags far behind. It is crucial to investigate how gender might be included in transport and mobility policies (Duchène, 2011). Similarly, in Africa, women face constraints not only from the predominantly masculine affective atmosphere of the transport sector (which discourages some women worldwide) but also from hegemonic standards of femininity that are pervasive throughout the continent. These norms, which place significant care obligations on women while restricting their access to networks, capital, and skills, mold their perceptions of themselves and help push them into the periphery of the industry, where they are typically employed as porters, sex workers, or prepared food suppliers (Chakravarty, 2017).

Transportation jobs offer long-term career opportunities but are often filled by women, with some not qualifying as quality jobs. Workplace violence, a significant obstacle to these careers, not only inflicts pain on women but also reduces productivity, reduces competitiveness, and halts growth. This "push" element contributes to involuntary quits and low retention. (ILO, 2013). A 2017 study revealed that violence against women in the transport sector is prevalent in both underdeveloped and developed economies. A total of 911 women transports workers reported experiencing violence, with 25% believing it is a regular occurrence. Over 26% believe harassment is considered part of the job. The survey revealed verbal threats, intimidation, sexual harassment, and physical assault, often causing devastating effects (Pillinger, 2017). An article discusses the challenges faced by female workers in the bus sector, focusing on historical and contemporary data using case studies from New South Wales to illustrate the evolution of transport and advocates for collective action from employers, regulators, governments, and unions to facilitate inclusive changes (Mulley, 2022). Maria Charles and David B. Grusky's book "Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men" explores gendered occupational segregation globally, revealing that despite

progress towards gender equality, women continue to be concentrated in lower-paying, lower-status jobs, establishing "occupational ghettos" in various societies (Maria Charles, 2004). Likewise, Bus hostesses in Pakistan belong to this category of work where they are responsible for ensuring customer comfort and safety as well as performing emotional labor while maintaining a professional aura. Their work exemplifies the feminization of the service sector, with women overrepresented in emotional and physical customer-facing positions. Despite the hard nature of labor, these positions are often devalued and underpaid, reflecting larger gender disparities in service-based employment.

Controlling and regulating emotions as part of a job's duties is called emotional labor, especially when working with the public, clients, or customers. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild first used the phrase in her ground-breaking 1983 book *The Managed Heart*. According to her definition, it is "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display". This emotional control is frequently necessary in service-related professions when workers are expected to project feelings they may not truly feel, such as tranquility, friendliness, or politeness, regardless of how they feel emotionally at the time. Hochschild discusses how managing emotions can lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion. She investigates the cost of job conditions in modern capitalist, post-industrial countries marked by the growth of the service sector (Hochschild, 1983). This emotional burnout is most evident in underpaid occupations that make employees feel undervalued.

When service agents exhibit expected emotions during service contacts, this is known as emotional labor. It can be done via expressing real emotion, deep acting, or surface acting. In addition to promoting self-expression and work efficacy, emotional labor can also lead to emotional dissonance, self-alienation, and unmet consumer expectations. However, by social identity theory, it is argued that emotional labor increases stress on the individual to identify

with the service role and that some of its impacts are mitigated by one's social and personal identities (Ashforth, 1993).

Professional workers at human care institutions are frequently forced to spend significant time interacting with people. Frequently, the staff-client relationship revolves around the client's current concerns (psychological, social, and/or physical), which might provoke sentiments of anger, shame, anxiety, or despair. Solutions to these challenges are not always evident or easy to obtain, which adds uncertainty and frustration to the situation. For the service professional who works continually with people under such conditions, prolonged stress can be emotionally taxing and raises the risk of 'burnout'. Burnout syndrome is also characterized by a negative self-evaluation, especially when working with customers. Workers are unsatisfied with their self-esteem and job performance (Maslach, 1981).

The undervaluation of skills in gender-segregated jobs in service economies is a major factor in the lack of progress in gender pay fairness. Traditional approaches to skill recognition, focusing on qualifications and job appraisals, neglect the abilities required for technology-based clerical work, care work, and interactive frontline service positions. Feminists argue that talent is socially constructed, and the term 'emotional labor' has entered academic and popular discourse to describe work historically considered unskilled. Gender-equitable work value claims and job evaluation systems acknowledge these skills (Junor, 2020).

Women's incomes often lag behind men's in various occupations, but emotional labor may be the missing link. Many women's jobs involve emotional work like caring, bargaining, empathizing, and facilitating cooperation. This invisible and uncompensated work is often overlooked in job descriptions or performance evaluations. Civil service systems, based on outdated assumptions, fail to recognize and compensate for emotional labor (Guy, 2004).

Emotional labor leads to burnout as regulating emotions in service employment causes long-term psychological distress and tiredness, especially for women (Brotheridge, 2002).

In addition, societal norms regarding emotional expression can differ across cultures. For instance, how Western norms of customer service, such as smiling, may not be well-received in other cultural contexts, leading to misunderstandings and negative perceptions (Ashforth 1993).

These academic works give a strong foundation for comprehending the interaction of gender, labor, and emotional stress within the gendered service industry, emphasizing how women are disproportionately affected by the demands of emotional labor and the subsequent burnout.

In the context of Pakistan, selecting traditionally unconventional and male-dominated sectors such as transportation can be more difficult in a conservative social structure when cultural and religious norms excessively restrict women's mobility. The job of a bus hostess for a private company is not an easy one while striving to ensure a safe and comfortable journey for passengers, despite facing numerous obstacles. Working outside of their homes and in financially precarious situations, bus hostesses are vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, emotional labor, and harassment. The constant strain of navigating societal pressures, such as being ogled and exposed to risky situations, takes a toll on their mental well-being leading to emotional burnout and exhaustion. Unfortunately, deeply ingrained social norms and cultural beliefs only exacerbate these challenges, amplifying the difficulties faced by bus hostesses in their professional lives. This qualitative research study explored the difficulties bus hostesses confront in their quests for economic empowerment along with the reasons behind those difficulties, and the costs they incur on a personal level across various fronts. To document and collect primary data from the subjects under study, industry experts, and the associated, in-depth interviews are also carried out. Direct observations are also used to record data.

This qualitative research study examined the challenges encountered by bus hostesses in their endeavors for economic empowerment, alongside the underlying causes of these challenges and the personal costs they incur across multiple dimensions. To systematically document and gather primary data from the participants involved in this study, as well as from industry experts, comprehensive in-depth interviews are conducted.

The research additionally investigated the reality of the claims made by transportation companies regarding the employment of women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to "assist the underprivileged and integrate them into the economic framework" as authentic or otherwise. This may represent a factor contributing to the recruitment of these young women to portray a gentler image of the business and the professional environment.

The news reports about Pakistani bus hostesses occasionally surface and are full of disheartening narratives. These media reports reflect that the bus hostesses experience the worst gender-based discrimination at work, are murdered, harassed, raped, and mistreated. A brief reference to the list of those media reports and cases that get most of the public's attention and outrage is mentioned here for the readers. Pakistani bus hostesses deal with several risks and challenges, such as harassment and violence. A security guard killed Mahwish Arshad in 2018 when she turned down his marriage proposal. Bus hostess Mahwish Arshad was shot and killed by Umer Daraz, a security guard working for the same company as her, allegedly for repeatedly refusing his marriage proposal (Dawn, 2018). There have also been reports of incidents involving sexual violence, including the gang rape of a Daewoo bus hostess in Sialkot in 2010 (Dawn, 2010) and the rape of a hostess by a bus driver in Bahawalpur in 2022 (Dawn, 2022). A political party leader slapped a waitress over slow service (Business Standard, 2013), and in 2019 an FIA officer abused a hostess over a small service issue, and the video went viral

(YouTube, 2019). These kinds of instances demonstrate the necessity for stricter legal protections and enforcement to guarantee the security and respect of women employed in the transportation industry.

When we examine such profoundly distressing occurrences, it indeed highlights the challenges and the pervasive culture of exploitation, control, and suppression on all fronts, thereby prompting a multitude of inquiries. Are their prospects for job and success contingent solely upon their adherence to the organizational policies? What are the probabilities of achieving a prosperous career within this domain, alongside the long-term sustainability of their professional path? Therefore, it is imperative to conduct further investigation into this subject matter.

The study also examined the difficulties faced by bus hostesses in their profession in terms of their social and economic class and their precarious position in society and the workplace. This can also be examined if it's possible that their inferior status in terms of gender, class, and occupation prevented them from negotiating on an equal footing.

Additionally, the study also examined if the private bus/transport companies are exploiting women from low-status backgrounds as cheap labor in the name of women's emancipation and to project a softer image of their industries. The study's main themes include the social and cultural expectations of women in Pakistan regarding their employment, sexual harassment of women at work, emotional labor and the psychological demands of being a hostess, and the difficulties that women workers face because of their weaker status as members of a particular sex group, social class, or line of work.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Bus hostesses are employed in the transportation sector, particularly on buses to assist passengers, ensure safety, and offer customer service throughout the journey. This means that

bus hostesses play a crucial role in the day-to-day operations of bus transportation services, which are an integral part of the broader transportation industry.

There is a perception that working women, particularly those in the service industry such as bus hostesses, are seen as easy prey for sexual and verbal harassment, aggression, and excessive social behaviors. Their demanding work environments are hurting their physical and mental health. As a result, it's critical to investigate and dig deep to develop a deeper knowledge of the challenges these people encounter by carrying out an in-depth study where they may express their hearts and minds and lived experiences firsthand. Such problems can only be this way investigated, recorded, highlighted, and then convincingly handled. Such social research must be carried out to ascertain the issue and admit it before coming up with solutions. Therefore, the statement of the problem is “An exploratory study to discover the social and professional challenges of bus hostesses in Pakistan’s transport industry.”

1.3 Research Problem

The thesis intends to address the research problem “To study the working conditions and lived experiences of women particularly bus hostesses in the transport industry” by operationalizing the topic into the following research questions and objectives.

1.4 Research Questions & Objective

1. What are the personal and professional challenges that bus hostesses experience in general?
2. What are the social norms around women's work in general and bus hostesses in particular?
3. What is the scope for career growth in the transport industry and the long-term sustainability of the profession?

The objective of the Research

The specific research objective is:

“To explore personal and professional causes and challenges faced by bus hostesses by investigating the social norms around women's work in general and bus hostesses in particular”.

1.5 Explanation of Key Terms/Concepts

- **Challenge:** (the difficult condition of being faced with) a task that requires significant mental or physical effort to complete successfully and hence assesses an individual's aptitude (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).
- **Harassment:** Any inappropriate and unwanted behavior that could be expected or is thought to offend or degrade another person is considered harassment. Words, gestures, or acts that tend to agitate, frighten, abuse, denigrate, intimidate, belittle, humiliate, or disgrace someone else, or that produce a hostile, threatening, or offensive work environment, can all be considered forms of harassment. Typically, harassment is the result of multiple occurrences. Generally speaking, disagreements over job performance or other work-related matters are not deemed harassment and are handled outside the scope of this policy, but rather within the framework of performance management (UN Women, n.d.).
- **Sexual Harassment:** Any unwanted sexual approach, request for a sexual favor, verbal or physical behavior or gesture that could reasonably be expected to offend or humiliate another person, or any other sexual behavior that interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, is considered sexual harassment. It usually refers to a pattern of behavior, but it can also be one isolated instance. Sexual harassment can happen between people

who are the same sex or of different sexes. Men and women can both be the perpetrators or the victims (UN Women, n.d.).

- **Social Norms:** Common definitions of social norms state that they are "rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide or constrain social behaviors without the force of law (Ajzen, 1991).
- **Emotional Labor:** Emotional labor refers to managing and regulating emotions as part of job requirements, particularly when dealing with the public, customers, or clients. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild coined the term in her seminal 1983 book *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. She defined it as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983).
- **Burnout:** Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress (Freudenberger, 1975).

1.6 Significance of the Research

This is the first unique research study conducted to explore and highlight the challenges faced by bus hostesses in Pakistan on social, cultural, economic, and workplace fronts. Its significance cannot be denied as no such study has ever been conducted on this group of working women in the transport industry in Pakistan. By employing a phenomenological theoretical framework, this research study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of the challenges faced by female bus hostesses.

The findings contribute to a better understanding of their lived experiences, shedding light on potential areas for improvement within the bus transportation industry. Ultimately, the study aims to promote gender equality, inform policy changes, and enhance the working conditions and well-being of the bus hostesses. The study highlights systemic abuse, financial instability, lack of career progression, and basic benefits. It also exposes discrimination and social stigmas,

emphasizing the need for a positive work environment and promoting changes to address social and economic inequities.

Research findings will help policymakers and think tanks devise such principles and sound policies that will empower a common woman to feel safe while working in such industries where they are socially and economically vulnerable. The study will give voice to concerns that a bus hostess faces daily but doesn't express out of fear of losing her job and social pressures or finding no help/complaint mechanisms. The study will help human resource departments in the bus industry recognize and address the rights and issues of their women staff, who are often overlooked. This exploratory study will serve as a foundation for future quantitative and qualitative studies, ensuring that women feel safe and supported in their work.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section contains a thorough review of the literature that critically reflects on a variety of major themes related to the research study. It examines the status of women in Pakistan by examining their roles, rights, and challenges in sociocultural settings in the country. An exploration of working women's experiences in Pakistan is part of this, as well as societal norms that impact their jobs mostly focusing on male-dominated sectors such as transport. Moreover, it covers gender in a wider context focusing on transport, giving an analysis of the transport industry globally and of Pakistan regarding gender. Moreover, it presents an overview of women's mobility challenges, not only in Pakistan but also globally aimed at shedding light on impediments hindering them from accessing transport services and opportunities. The global and national transport industry faces many challenges that women must overcome to build their careers; they still have many difficulties due to gender inequality.

It also presents literature on neoliberal economics that has led to tremendous expansion in the service industry globally. This expansion has coincided with the feminization of labor, in which women are overrepresented in low-wage, emotionally demanding jobs. Women like bus hostesses suffer additional pressures in industries such as care service because they are expected to perform emotional labor, such as managing customer emotions and keeping a cheerful mood. Under neoliberalism, which supports deregulation and market-driven policies, these women are frequently exploited, with few protections, job insecurity, and higher rates of emotional fatigue.

This review aims to shed light on the gender inequalities and structural barriers that women face, both as workers and as users of transport services.

2.1 Pakistani Women, Work & Sociocultural Realities

Men dominate all areas of women's lives in Pakistan's patriarchal system, keeping women dependent on men for their behavior, mobility, control over resources, and reproductive choices. Violence against women is frequently perpetuated as a result of men's honor being associated with women's liberty and freedom. This study conducted in Pakistan proposes employing education, public awareness, and economic prosperity to abolish direct, cultural, and structural violence against women in Pakistan (Babur, 2007). A study conducted in Pakistan explains that domestic violence against women persists and grows daily in Pakistan despite the country's numerous laws and regulations. Surveys indicate that Pakistan accounts for between 35% and 70% of violence in personal relationships. The dowry system, poverty, having a girl child, infertility, low levels of education and empowerment for women, misconceptions about Islamic beliefs, traditional rituals, and drug and alcohol abuse are all major causes of domestic violence in Pakistan. These factors lead to the physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse of women (Falak, 2022).

Additional research from 2006 conducted in Pakistan examines the cultural and socioeconomic limitations faced by women. 100 respondents were chosen at random from two villages, Moheb Banda and Zando Dheri of Mardan, district of Khyberpakhtonkha to provide primary data. The findings indicate that women's socioeconomic status was worse due to a low rate of literacy, a lack of educational resources, a lack of knowledge, a bad economic situation, a lack of skills, and an unsecure social environment for working. Men make more decisions than women do when it comes to families, choosing male companions, and budgeting for the home. In certain instances, decision-making involved consulting exclusively elderly women. Cultural norms

required women to take care of their families at home (Khan, 2008). Mary Becker in the article “Patriarchy and Inequality: Towards a Substantive Feminism” follows that masculinity and masculine characteristics will always be valued above femininity and feminine characteristics in a societal structure that is male-centered, male-identified, and male-controlled. Men (and women) will be encouraged to view women as entities fit to satisfy male desires under such a system. Despite not being primarily motivated by the oppression of women, patriarchal culture is incredibly misogynistic and values masculinity. Women are viewed as less than completely human and untrustworthy in such a culture, especially when they "accuse men of sexual misconduct." The decisions and nature of women justify aggression against them (Becker, 1999).

Working women in underdeveloped countries face numerous problems due to their traditional socio-cultural system. It not only disturbs the status of women but also hampers regional socio-economic development. A study conducted in Lahore, Pakistan reveals that despite being significant contributors to healthcare, nurses are not treated well in society and at their workplace. The abuse adversely affects their livelihood which affects the efficiency of healthcare. The respondent's quality of life was significantly impacted by harassment, difficult-to-attend social events, and obnoxious behavior from patients, coworkers, and relatives. Conclusion: The socio-cultural factors harmed the livelihood of staff nurses. There is a dire need to make policies to change the attitude of the people towards this profession (Nafees, 2022).

Women's participation in the workforce is challenged and restricted for a variety of reasons, including restrictive gender roles, societal and cultural norms, harassment and gender-based violence, and the idea of honor associated with women. To determine why there aren't enough women in the workforce, the World Bank created a thorough survey. The first one focuses on

Peshawar, in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan where strict cultural standards provide a barrier to women's economic development. It was discovered that women's labor results are influenced by societal norms. Many males forbid women from leaving the house, and when they do, they are accompanied by chaperones to respect women's manners and preserve their honor. That's why women look for work that they can accomplish from home. Conventional honor codes have an impact on hiring decisions as well as erect obstacles to positions that defy social norms. These viewpoints reveal pervasive gender discrimination, which is frequently supported by women. *"I think a woman should do home-based work,"* said a non-working woman who had worked as a school assistant. *"She can monitor the kids in this way. Everything will go smoothly, everyone will get food on time, and she will be able to handle home duties"* (Redaelli, 2021).

Similarly, "Perpetuation of gender discrimination in Pakistani society: results from a scoping review and qualitative study conducted in three provinces of Pakistan" reveals that discrimination based on gender is a human rights concern that affects a significant number of women in Pakistan. In Pakistan, women's health and nutritional status are worse, and about 50% of them lack even a basic education. In addition, most women are confined to their houses and have little to no autonomy to make decisions that directly impact their living situations and other elements of their families. In Pakistani society, however, men are viewed as dominating. There are harmful effects of women's subjugation on several phases of their lives (Ali, 2022).

The study carried out in the Pakistani context by Ali and Syed (2017) has shown that because of regional cultural norms, women continue to encounter significant obstacles in their professional lives. In particular, it draws attention to problems like sexual harassment, career-related obstacles, and financial disparities at the meso level; concerns like family status and agency at the micro level; and societal norms surrounding feminine modesty and gender

segregation at the macro level. Gul et al. (2023) explore Pakistani women's political participation under a patriarchal political system and a society characterized by gender-based discrimination. The study's conclusions show that several obstacles prevent women from participating in politics and making decisions. These issues, which are dominated by a male-centric culture, hampered by a lack of social acceptance, hindered by structural hurdles, impacted by political parties that are unequal in terms of gender, vulnerable to external threats, and limited by a failure to empower women, come to light as major concerns (Khan, 2024).

A research study examines the "Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010" in Pakistani society, focusing on religious norms and socio-economic conditions. It highlights the ongoing issue of harassment among working women, particularly those from needy or poor backgrounds. The Pakistani Parliament passed the Act to protect women's dignity, respect, and work rights. However, the issue continues to rise, with the number of harassment cases increasing by 20% in the last five years. The article evaluates the Act in light of religious norms and sociocultural factors in Pakistani society, identifying reasons why the act has not been successful in reducing harassment (Razi, 2016).

The study "Workplace Sexual Harassment and its Underreporting in Pakistan" examines that Sexual harassment in the workplace is not a singular incident with psychological or criminal causes; rather, it is a manifestation of the unequal power dynamics between the sexes. Sexual harassment in the workplace happens in a variety of professions and sectors, making it harder for women to attain their proper position in the workforce and creating a hostile, stressful, and destructive work environment. The most common type of gender-based violence in Pakistani society, which is marked by patriarchy and gender segregation, is sexual harassment at work. Women have to suffer sexual harassment when they try to enter the workforce and take on financial responsibility for their families against the prevailing social standards. This speaks

not only about the structure of the workplace but also to the deeply ingrained culture of female objectification, which frequently portrays women as simple receivers of male desire - attitudes that are reinforced and maintained at work. This study aims to identify the causes of sexual harassment in the workplace in Pakistan, as well as the underlying elements that contribute to under-reporting of sexual harassment incidents in the workplace. This study contends that patriarchal attitudes prevalent in Pakistani society encourage sexual harassment in the workplace and prevent victims from reporting the incident by failing to provide proper moral, cultural, and legal assistance. This study contends that in a setting such as Pakistan, where the rule of law is not pervasive throughout society, simply establishing policies and raising knowledge about them may not be a genuine and relevant factor in reducing sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment in the workplace reflects unequal power relationships between genders in Pakistan's patriarchal society and cannot be combated unless patriarchal mindsets are changed, which can only be accomplished by transforming the existing patriarchal society that produces such mindsets (Hadi, 2022).

According to a qualitative study done in Sindhi and Urdu in Pakistan, women working in the media sector in Pakistan experience pressure, obstacles, and misbehavior. The main sociocultural issues that women in media industries silently confront are workload, masculine stereotype thinking, family discrimination, nepotism, and criticism from society. The media business faced notable issues such as employment insecurity, dangerous workplaces, non-cooperative behavior from colleagues, and jealousy between females. They also get fewer marriage proposals and are viewed as unethical. Families should support and encourage these women, while laws exist but are unimplemented. Law enforcement organizations must uphold legislation that safeguards women both within and outside of the workplace (Shah, 2023).

Social norms that discriminate based on gender hampers women's economic empowerment (WEE), affecting their experiences at work and their ability to get respectable jobs. The Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program supported 14 WEE research projects in more than 50 countries between 2013 and 2018. These studies have shown how women's access to economic opportunities and job experiences are impacted by discriminatory gender norms. They aid in the understanding of gendered problems that disproportionately affect women, women's concentration in less lucrative industries, and stagnation in women's labor force participation (Marcus, 2021).

Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of female labor force participation in South Asia in 2023—at just 25%. This low rate is caused by several factors, including cultural norms that govern gender roles, low levels of education, and weak skill sets. Family culture matters a lot, particularly when it comes to who decides whether or not married women can work outside the home. According to ethnographic research, married women are 18–19% less likely to be working in households where men make all of the decisions. Poor education and home location are not as major barriers to female employment as the influence of family decision-making (Khan, 2023).

Traditionally, women have been kept inside their houses and have not been allowed to actively contribute to the advancement of society. To better understand the stressors that Pakistani working women face, this study concentrated on their job in secretarial and administrative roles inside Pakistani organizations. Work-life balance, sexual harassment, peer pressure, gender discrimination, and lack of promotion possibilities are among the major stressors that have been found. These elements impair their ability to actively participate in economic development by causing physiological, behavioral, and psychological issues. The goal of the

study is to address these issues and advance an atmosphere that is more welcoming and encouraging for women in developing nations (Arif, 2017).

2.2 Gender in Transport

The transport sector contributes about 10% to Pakistan's gross domestic product and more than 6% to the country's overall employment (Ministry of Planning D. a., 2014). There is a lack of data available related to the gender dimension in the transport sector of Pakistan and the percentage of women workers in the transport industry of Pakistan. Therefore, global perspectives are taken into account for understanding the obstacles and opportunities in the way of incorporating gender in transport.

The 2013 ILO report by Peter Turnbull discusses transportation sector has long been considered a "no place for women." This may still be the case today in many nations and in many ways. Since its founding in 1919, the ILO has dedicated itself to achieving equality and furthering the rights of all men and women in the workplace. The gender equality vision acknowledges this goal as both a basic human right and a crucial component of the worldwide goal of Decent Work for All Women and Men. The report outlines the challenges that women experience in the transportation sector, such as gender stereotypes, workplace abuse, and limited career advancement opportunities. Despite efforts to promote equity, structural hurdles such as a lack of flexible work regulations lead to high turnover rates. The research suggests increased social discussion and better human resource policies (Turnbull, 2013).

Chantal Duchène's 2011 discussion paper "Gender and Transport" investigates the gender-specific issues and limitations that women encounter in the transportation sector. Chantal Duchène's research in Gender and Transport (2011) was done as part of a discussion paper for the International Transport Forum, with a focus on gender concerns in mobility and transportation policy. This study served as context for the Forum's 2011 summit in Leipzig,

Germany, which focused on the larger socioeconomic impact of transportation. The study investigates how transportation policies might be more inclusive by taking gendered mobility patterns and issues that disproportionately affect women. Although gender is being taken into account more and more frequently in many fields, the transport industry lags far behind. Gender roles in our communities are distinct for men and women in both developed and developing nations. It is crucial to investigate how gender might be included in transport and mobility policies (Duchène, 2011).

Some of the barriers faced by women are 'imposed' (e.g., legal restrictions that inhibit the working time of women in some countries, most notably night work, which effectively excludes them from many transport jobs that demand 24/7 operations); others are 'gender-specific' (e.g., 'cultural stereotypes' that define 'men's work' and 'women's work', including unpaid work in the home, which display many common characteristics across countries/transport sectors but women are disproportionately affected due to their primary responsibilities in childcare and domestic chores (Turnbull, 2013).

Wei-Shiuen Ng and Ashley Acker (2020) conducted research for the International Transportation Forum highlighting global and national transport sectors are male-dominated sector and on the global front, with only 17% of female employees on average across a sample of 46 nations compiled by The International Transport Forum, an intergovernmental organization with 62 member countries (of which Pakistan is not a member), women are still underrepresented in the majority of transport-related industries (Wei-Shiuen Ng, 2020).

"Methodology for Gender Analysis in Transport: Factors with Influence in Women's Inclusion as Professionals and Users of Transport Infrastructures," a research paper published in the journal *Sustainability* in 2020, investigates the factors that influence women's participation in transportation networks, both as users and employees. This study examines several situations

from Europe and other locations, including North America, Australia, and New Zealand, and makes policy recommendations to improve women's access and inclusion in the sector. The study highlights gender disparity in access to and employment in the transportation sector as a result of historical, social, political, and conventional gender perceptions of women as primary caregivers, according to a study. Four primary categories of Clusters of Fairness characteristics (CFCs) were found about women's employment in the transportation sector: Individual qualities, job characteristics, personal circumstances, and socioeconomic situations. Enhancing the accessibility of female amenities, enforcing better laws, and implementing human resource policies that recognize women's caregiving obligations are among the primary elements that require improvement to boost the number of women working in the transportation industry (Jiménez,2020).

Anna Fraszczyk and Janene Piip's (2019) article, "A Review of Transport Organisations for Female Professionals and Their Impacts on the Transport Sector Workforce," investigates women's underrepresentation in the transportation sector. It explains how professional organizations that encourage female workers influence workforce diversity. The study highlights continuing gender gaps, emphasizing how certain roles—particularly technical and managerial positions—are still dominated by men, whilst women are more represented in service-oriented employment such as flight attendants. While it addresses difficulties confronting women in the transportation industry, including particular data on representation in various nations, it does not concentrate on a single geographical location but rather discusses trends and initiatives from across the globe, including Europe and beyond. The global transport sector, utilized by diverse populations for daily activities, exhibits gender disparities, particularly in the underrepresentation of women. Despite comprising half of the world's population, women's roles in transportation have often been marginalized. The traditionally

male-dominated sector has less than 20% female representation in the global workforce, with individual EU countries varying around 30%, and the aviation sector standing out with 40% female employees, mainly in roles such as flight attendants and customer service. However, the pilot sector in the US, as of 2010, reported a mere 2% female representation among those seeking employment. Efforts are underway to address these gender imbalances and promote inclusivity in the transport industry (Fraszczuk, 2019).

The study, "Discussing measures to reduce the gender gap in transport companies: A qualitative approach," was carried out in several public transport companies within the European Union. The study highlights even in developed countries, women's participation in the transport sector is limited to less productive roles. Regarding the transport sector, the European Commission states that, in the whole sector, only 22% of transport workers are women. This gender gap is even higher when we look in detail at the different transport sectors. It is clear from companies in this sector that departments such as Human Resources, which handles administrative or cleaning responsibilities, employ more women than other departments that handle stereotyped jobs like mechanics, drivers, technicians, and engineers. Likewise, female representation in boards of directors is quite limited (Dorantes, 2019).

Many studies recognize that transport has been traditionally a male-dominated area. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the term "gender gap" is used to describe the differences between women and men in the labor market. The EIGE discusses that, in general terms, the main issues concerning the gender gap are: employment rate, part-time work, unpaid care, and family responsibilities, access to rights and assets (professions and decision-making positions), working conditions, hourly wages (gender pay gap), and the possibilities for economic independence, among others. At EU level, it is clear that some countries have

more advanced policies regarding conciliation and family, and working-life balance, which directly influence the rate of female employment in the transport sector (Dorantes, 2019).

The study “Road Transport Workers in Pakistan” presents an overview of the road transport sector of Pakistan regarding work environment, labor relations, and working conditions and examines workers' responses to address some of the issues relating to social security through collective action. The transport services sector covers four sub-sectors—road, rail, sea and air transport. The road transport sector in Pakistan is categorized by noncompliance and no application of labor law. The road transport labor force consists of male wage workers, self-employed operators owning a single vehicle purchased on loans from moneylenders on exploitative terms, and small entrepreneurs who own individually or jointly 5 to 20 or larger vehicle fleets and fail or evade to comply with rules depriving the employees of minimum social security the state institutions provide for permanent employees in registered industrial/commercial establishments. Road transport workers face low pay, long hours, unfavorable working conditions, occupational health risks, and a lack of social protection in a deregulated, competitive industry (Hisam, 2006).

Alejandro Ortega Hortelano's 2021 study “Women in Transport Research and Innovation: A European Perspective” investigates the role of women in Europe's transportation sector (across Europe), highlighting the importance of research and innovation in advancing gender equality. The study highlights several gender differences that exist in the transport sector. These include accessibility to transport modes, safety and security when traveling, and the participation of women in transport research and innovation (R&I). To achieve sustainable and inclusive transport, planners and policymakers should consider all impacts on gender equality (Hortelano, 2021).

2.3 Women's Challenges to Mobility: An Overview

A large body of literature is comprised of research studies that are focused on covering the need for women's barrier-free mobility, addressing it as a critical issue in the way to make progress. It is reflective of the issues women face as travelers worldwide and in Pakistan in such spaces.

Pakistan is a country where female mobility is a serious issue, and women face numerous challenges while traveling like sexual harassment and safety concerns. When someone is subjected to words, gestures, or acts that are intended to frighten, agitate, abuse, denigrate, threaten, belittle, humiliate, or embarrass them, or to create a hostile, threatening, or offensive work environment, that behavior is considered harassment (UN Women, n.d.). As stated in PIDE's publication on Public Transportation System and Female Mobility in Pakistan, "*in the context of human security, female mobility is also contrived because of the violence and harassment women face when they are in public spaces in general or public transports, in particular. The number of harassment cases and the forms it takes to show that name-calling, teasing, staring, touching, male physical exposure, and groping are common in the public transport which women use to travel to and from for educational and job-related reasons. The number and types of harassment have been consistently reported in all the developing countries in and around all public spaces and in public transport such as bus stations, train stations, or public transport stops*" (Zulfiqar, 2020).

The study on women's mobility using bus rapid transit (BRT) in Lahore, Pakistan found that socio-cultural norms and expectations limit women's mobility in Pakistan. Women rely heavily on public transportation, often experiencing harassment and a lack of gender-responsive options. The data also revealed that women primarily travel during daytime hours, highlighting

safety concerns and societal conventions. The study emphasizes the need for gender-sensitive BRT systems to address these challenges (Malik, 2020).

A study investigating violence against women and girls in public transport in Hawassa City, Ethiopia, using data from 199 respondents and 24 focus group discussions, reveals that 50.8% of women and girls have experienced various forms of violence. The types of violence identified were physical, sexual, and psychological with significant factors including age, marital status, type of transport, and travel time. The findings emphasize the urgent need for gender-sensitive policies to ensure women's and girls' safety and mobility in public transportation (Kacharo, 2022).

Another study from Bangladesh indicates that recently violence against women in urban areas has taken a new form, posing a serious threat to women's freedom of movement and dignity, with sexual violence on public transport being a prominent example. This type of violence remains largely hidden due to under-reporting, leading to a lack of recognition of the issue nationally in Bangladesh. As a result, women's lives are not only restricted but also face a hostile environment hindering their empowerment (Mazumder, 2019).

Ankita Sil's (2023) study "Moving towards an inclusive public transport system for women in the South and Southeast Asian region" examines the barriers that women experience when utilizing public transportation in South and Southeast Asia. Because of inadequate public transportation options and traditional patriarchal social norms, women in South and Southeast Asia suffer obstacles to mobility. International norms notwithstanding, women's mobility is still hazardous and restricted. In addition to critically analyzing these obstacles—which include subpar customer service, sexual harassment, and cultural norms—this study also looks at the efficacy of existing regulations and measuring techniques. The results show that protective laws and inclusive policies are insufficient, and that victim-blaming and harassment are made

worse by societal norms. To create safer and more inclusive public transportation networks for women in these areas, the report identifies knowledge gaps (Sil, 2023).

Nirmal Gautam's (2019) study "Violence against Women on public transport in Nepal: sexual harassment and the spatial expression of Male Privilege" investigates violence against women on public transport in Nepal. Violence against women in public spaces is a global issue, especially as women step outside traditional domestic roles, potentially defying societal norms. This article investigates sexual harassment and assault on public transport in Kathmandu, Nepal, using a mixed-methods approach. Survey data from 238 college-age women reveal frequent harassment and assault, particularly targeting younger women, with few official complaints made despite the seriousness of the incidents. The anonymity provided by public transport contributes to high levels of abuse, with little risk of repercussions (Gautam, 2019).

In "Moving Bodies as Moving Targets," Pedersen (2020) investigates sexual violence in transportation from a feminist viewpoint, focusing on how public areas become vulnerable spaces for women. Women experiencing sexual violence on public transportation are hesitant to move freely due to societal structures empowering men, necessitating understanding and altering laws and policies to end violence. "Women's mobility is restricted worldwide by sexual violence in transit areas since it impacts their movement due to fear of violence. This paper explores Valentine's concept of "the spatial expression of patriarchy," offering structural and relational interpretations. It is necessary to comprehend and address both the structural and relational dimensions of patriarchy to find solutions to stop sexual abuse on public transportation" (Pedersen, 2020).

It can be assumed that women are less likely to work in the transport sector in Pakistan considering such issues as well lack of opportunities/roles therefore there is less scholarly work available that discusses and recognizes their potential as a productive workforce to work in the

transport sector rather than traces the worries of women for harmless and protected travel by family members. It is pertinent to state here that there are very few studies conducted on bus workers, particularly no study covering the opinions of bus hostesses as women working in the transport sector of Pakistan.

2.4 Career Prospects in Transport

Jobs in transportation can be lucrative, and fulfilling, and provide long-term career options. Sadly, and unacceptable, too few women work in these fields, and some occupations don't even qualify as quality jobs. Workplace violence is one of the obstacles to a career in transportation. In addition to instigating pain and suffering to women, gender-based violence destroys families, reduces workplace productivity, lessens the competitiveness of the country, and halts growth. Workplace violence is commonly recognized as a significant "push" element in the transportation industry that contributes to involuntary quits and low retention (ILO, 2013).

D. J. Pillinger's (2017) study "Violence against Women at work in Transport" offers the findings of a survey on violence against women in the transportation sector. The European Transport Workers' Federation conducted the study, which highlighted the frequency of gender-based violence against women workers while also suggesting crucial areas for improvement in safety and support measures. Any act of gender-based violence that falls in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life," is how the United Nations defines violence against women (UN, 1993). Violence against women in the transport sector is not only prevalent in underdeveloped countries but it is also common in developed economies. For example, the findings of a study (2017) showed that 911 women transport workers disclosed at least one recent experience of violence, One quarter (25%) of women transport workers believe that violence against women

is a regular occurrence in the transport sector, Just over a quarter (26%) of women transport workers believe that harassment is considered to be 'part of the job' in transport, Shocking accounts are given in the survey of verbal threats and intimidation, sexual harassment, and sexual and physical assault against women workers, often with devastating effects on women (Pillinger, 2017).

Violence against transport workers is one of the major reasons, according to the ILO, that prevents women from pursuing jobs in transportation and prevents those who are employed in the industry from staying in it (ILO, 2013).

C. Mulley's book "Women, Work, and Transport" investigates women's involvement in public transportation, addressing both historical and present challenges. The Study highlights the challenges faced by female workers and their predominantly male employers. Focusing on the bus sector, it delves into historical insights and contemporary data, emphasizing the struggles women encounter in this field. Through New South Wales, Australia case studies, it illustrates the evolution of transport, remaining hurdles, and the potential progress with increased female participation and advocates for collective action from employers, regulators, governments, and unions to facilitate inclusive changes. It concludes by proposing initial policy suggestions and avenues for further research (Mulley, 2022).

Although the gender gap in the transportation industry has long been acknowledged, not much has changed. Although steps are being taken, obstacles still exist. Therefore, the Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All) Gender Working Group carried out research. The report "Gender Imbalance in the Transport Sector," published in 2023 by the Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All) program, investigates the significant gender inequities that exist in the worldwide transportation sector. It is part of a global program that focuses on transportation policies and

practices that impact gender equality in various regions and created a toolkit that identified five crucial action areas spanning all modes of transportation: gender stereotyping, an environment that is discriminatory at work, a lack of flexible work and childcare provisions, the absence of diversity in all forms at all levels, the glass ceiling, and limited opportunities for career advancement (SuM4All, 2023).

Palgrave Macmillan released Tanja Joelsson's and others' book "Integrating Gender into Transport Planning" in Cham, Switzerland. This book emphasizes the need to consider gender views in transportation planning and legislation. People's daily activities involve both mobility and transportation. Utilitarian, rationalistic, and quantitative epistemologies have been characteristic of transportation study and planning. Additionally, research on transport planning has always been classified as masculine. In addition to the fact that "numbers" help address issues of power and gender equality, qualitative and critical epistemologies also contribute significant and vital knowledge to the field of transportation planning research. Research on transportation planning must consider the variety of social situations while designing for accessibility and equity (Tanja, 2019).

S. Hanlon's report "Where Do Women Feature in Public Transport" was released by TransAdelaide in Australia in 2000. The report explores women's roles in public transportation, emphasizing their present situation, past developments, and upcoming requirements. It emphasizes how different women's transportation demands are from men's and how current transportation policies fall short of meeting these needs. Historically, the sector has put the requirements of its customers, particularly women, last and given priority to the product (transport services). The paper makes the case that, to improve public transportation, services should be tailored to the requirements of users, especially women who make up the majority

of customers. This omission is also a result of the underrepresentation of women in professional ranks within the sector. The report illustrates the presence of women in the business with the help of workforce figures from major Australian transit providers (Hanlon, 2000).

Kimbely Riddle's study, titled *Antecedents to Sexual Harassment of Women in Selected Male-Dominated Occupations: A Systematic Review*, focuses on finding characteristics that contribute to sexual harassment in workplaces occupied primarily by men. In all workplaces, around 50% of women report having experienced sexual harassment. Compared to women in non-male-dominated occupations, women in male-dominated occupations may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment. Lower rank, shorter tenure, the physical nature of the work, job insecurity, and unfavorable relationships with coworkers and/or supervisors were all contributing factors to sexual harassment in the workplace. Other factors included a physical job, a shorter tenure, a lower rank, a hostile work environment, unstable employment, strained relationships with coworkers and/or superiors, treatment of women as outsiders, accentuated gender disparities, uneven gender ratios, and promotions based on gender (Riddle, 2023).

2.5 Feminized Labor in Neoliberal Capitalist Economies: Emotional Labor & Burnout, and Marxist Feminist Perspectives

The combination of neoliberal economic policies under globalization and gendered labor demands feeds a cycle of exploitation, marginalizing women and increasing their vulnerability in patriarchal and capitalistic workplaces. Thus, neoliberalism and labor feminization contribute to the structural disadvantages that bus hostesses and other women experience in precarious, low-status occupations.

A study titled "Challenges at Workplace: A Case Study of Non-Standard Female Workers in Pakistan's Retail Sector" conducted in Pakistan focuses on non-standard female workers in retail who work part-time, temporarily, or informally. The study focuses on challenges that

these women encounter, such as harassment, bullying, mental stress, and physical tiredness, which all have a negative influence on their well-being and productivity. They are increasingly participating in paid employment to improve their economic status. Broader societal developments and economic demands drive women to seek employment outside of traditional occupations. Non-standard employment frequently comprises part-time, temporary, or informal positions, which are growing more popular among women wanting to improve their economic standing by working in less secure employment situations. Even jobs designed to improve their financial circumstances frequently come with negative conditions that might lead to a vicious cycle of disadvantage. The results showed that women faced issues such as harassment, bullying, mental stress, physical fatigue, and exploitation daily, which negatively impacted their efficiency and well-being (Perveen, 2022). Cultural norms, economic institutions, and legislative frameworks all have an impact on women's labor market participation in Pakistan's service industry. Despite recent initiatives to improve women's employment, considerable barriers persist, restricting their participation in the workforce. Cultural expectations prioritize women's roles as homemakers, discouraging their participation in the labor market (Zulfiqar 2024). Gender inequality and patriarchal norms create systemic barriers, reducing women's economic autonomy (Maqsood, 2024).

The feminization of labor in the service sector highlights the increasing participation of women in various roles, often accompanied by economic and social challenges.

The book chapter "Feminization of Labor in the Shadow of Globalization and Neoliberalism" by Mehmet Öçal and Özge Kutlu examines how globalization and neoliberal policies impact women's labor. The study highlights that globalization and neoliberalism are complex and multifaceted phenomena that have significant impacts on women's labor especially in the context of developing countries. Globalization has enabled women to participate more in

the labor market. However, liberalization policies and economic structures during the globalization process have generally forced women to work in low-paid and insecure jobs. Neoliberal policies also have significant effects on women's labor. Neoliberal policies aimed at reducing state intervention, privatizing public services, and reducing social security have increased women's insecurity in the labor market. Women had to adapt to flexible working conditions without social security, and their rights in the workplace were frequently violated. The effects of globalization and neoliberalism on women's labor have also contributed to the reproduction of gender roles. As a result, globalization and neoliberal policies have complex effects on women's labor (Öçal, 2024).

Jennifer Ball's paper "Feminization of the Labor Force, Development, and Economic Reform: Effects on Job Segregation by Sex" examines the trend of growing feminization in the workforce and suggests that both supply-side (such as women joining the workforce to support declining household incomes) and demand-side (such as firms preferring to hire women due to lower costs) factors contribute to this phenomenon. The paper covers a wide analysis across 49 countries. It cites international research showing that increased feminization of the workforce is typically the result of neoliberal structural adjustment. Instead of reducing occupational segregation, the feminization of the workforce has frequently led to a concentration of women in less secure and lower-paying positions (Ball, 2008).

Naila Kabeer's book "The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and Labour Market Decisions" examines how social, cultural, and economic variables influence women's work choices in London and Dhaka. She examines the lives of Bangladeshi garment workers to shed light on the question of what constitutes "fair" competition in international trade. Kabeer argues that systemic constraints such as gender norms and poverty influence choices, frequently driving women into exploitative jobs. Despite these limits, women exercise agency in

negotiating work-life decisions. The study discovers that, while access to employment benefits women economically and socially, the kind of accessible jobs frequently promotes disparities. Any attempt to develop acceptable labor standards at the international level that ignores the forces of inclusion and exclusion in local labor markets, she says, is likely to benefit the powerful at the expense of the weak (Kabeer, 2001).

Bus hostesses in Pakistan are mainly employed by private bus companies in an unorganized sector, which is marked by a lack of official contracts, job security, and legal protection where they frequently suffer precarious employment, with the possibility of termination without notice or cause. The same has been mentioned in this study conducted in India “The main reason for the employment of women in such a large extent in the unorganized sector is due to their weaker bargaining power, low skills, ready to work for lower wages, and lack of unionization. The majority of them are working in a variety of occupations in unorganized sectors such as pottery, agriculture, cotton and tea plucking, construction work, handlooms, domestic services, and employment in household enterprises. These unorganized workers usually work as casual labour typically into intermittent jobs at very less wages. These workers face total lack of job security and zero social security protection net. They face extreme exploitation, resulting in long hours of work, unacceptable working conditions and occupational health hazards. As a woman in a vulnerable sector, she faces additional inequalities because of gender. Discriminations like lesser wages, sexual harassment, the absence of maternity benefits, and poor nutrition and ill-health are very common” (Jalisatgi, 2022).

Guy Standing's book *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice* (1999) emphasizes the negative effects of labor market flexibility on job insecurity and economic inequality. He critiques the shift toward unstable labor arrangements, claiming that it helps

companies while making employees more vulnerable. Standing advocates for distributive justice, including universal basic income and improved social protections, to counteract exploitation and ensure economic security. He argues against measures like workfare that restrict workers' autonomy. Standing also discusses the issues that women experience in terms of labor flexibility, emphasizing how they frequently endure higher work insecurity, lower salaries, and fewer benefits. He argues for policies that promote gender equality in the work market, such as maternity leave, affordable daycare, and stronger labor rights, to ensure women may participate equitably (Standing, 1999).

The role of emotional labor by women in the service sector can not be denied considering their efforts to improve client happiness. The following literature review is presented to examine the concept and its psychological consequences on employees' well-being, emphasizing the importance of better recognition and compensation for supporting women in emotionally demanding roles.

The concept of emotional labour discusses how employees of a business control their emotions to create a good emotional impact on their peers and consumers. This emotional well-being is referred to as employee well-being, and it is connected with employee happiness. However, disaffection from an individual's actual feelings emerges when employees undergo emotional labour, which may have negative implications for employees' psychological well-being (Rivas, 2020). As a result, ignoring emotional labor can lead to negative consequences such as feelings of shame, discomfort, despair, and stress (Syed, 2013). It is considered that the concept of emotional labour is multifaceted, incorporating both explicit and implicit aspects. However, the most prevalent antecedents of emotional labour are incidence frequency, change of emotions, and emotional dispute (Costakis, 2020). However, Emotional Labour can be best understood utilizing two types of emotional instruments: surface-level acting and deep-level

acting (Kruml, 2000). Emotional Labour is decided by employees' surface and deep-level acting, where surface acting is about adjusting facial expressions and deep acting is about modifying inner feelings to suit emotion-based work needs (Grandey, 2017). These tactics support corporate goals, yet they can lead to stress and burnout. Grandey argues that emotional labor, when properly understood, gives useful insights into managing both staff well-being and consumer happiness (Grandey, 2000).

Service organizations, in particular, tend to monitor employee well-being using emotional labor. The idea of emotional labor defines how employees of a business manage their emotions to make a positive emotional impact on their peers and consumers (Hochschild, 1983). This required or mandated emotional activity results in emotional labor among employees. As a result, such employees may have negative consequences such as emotional tiredness, concealing of inner feelings, lower employee well-being, burnout, and much more (Adelmann, 1989).

In neoliberal economies, emotional labor is even more important to the success of the service sector, as corporations prioritize customer satisfaction and brand loyalty above employee well-being. Women workers, in particular, bear the brunt of the system since they are obliged to achieve emotional performance goals in more precarious and exploitative roles (McDowell, 2009). Furthermore, as the emotional demands of these occupations increase, so does the gap between official recognition of emotional labor and actual compensation.

Blake Ashforth and Ronald Humphrey's study "Emotional Labor in Service Roles: The Influence of Identity" emphasizes the significance of emotional labor in service positions, which entails expressing expected emotions through surface acting, deep acting, or true expression. According to the authors, social and personal identities have an impact on emotional labor; a high affiliation with service duties might lessen dissonance and self-alienation, whereas

a weak identification may increase emotional conflict. The paper emphasizes the significance of social identity theory, which suggests that people's group classifications impact their emotional labor and perception of their duties, with strong group affiliations boosting self-esteem, while negative experiences can be emotionally draining. Organizational norms shape the content, intensity, and consistency of employees' emotions, resulting in job demands that are frequently neglected. Understanding emotional labor is critical for firms seeking to effectively support staff and manage customer relations. The report advocates for additional research on emotional labor at all levels, including micro, meso, and macro. Deep acting, which requires reworking emotions, is more likely to result in more identification with roles, emphasizing the complexities of emotional labor and its profound impact on service agents and organizational dynamics (Ashforth, 1993).

A prime reason for the lack of progress on gender pay equity is the under-recognition of skills in gender-segregated jobs in rapidly growing service economies. Approaches to skill recognition that are based on qualifications, work value cases and job evaluation, and are focused on physical or perhaps mental labour, overlook the skills needed in technology-based clerical work, care work and interactive frontline service jobs. These skills are mainly used by women and have been taken for granted as 'natural' feminine attributes. Feminists have argued since the 1980s that skill is socially constructed and the concept of 'emotional labour' has entered academic and popular discourse to describe work historically seen as unskilled. Gender-equitable work value claims and job evaluation systems recognize the skills of emotional labour (Junor, 2020).

Emotional labor is a predominant requirement in the service sector. The economy of Pakistan consists of a relatively large service sector; research has shown that it contributes more than fifty percent to the country's GDP (Ahmed, 2011). Pakistan is majorly an Islamic nation and

the masses try to abide by the Islamic laws and guidelines. Religion provides Muslims with guidelines about outward behavior about situations. For instance, females are to display modesty when interacting with the opposite sex. Hence, the performance and experience of emotional labor by the Pakistani workforce are likely to differ from that of the labor force of other countries (Mohsin, 2020).

A Pakistani study discusses customers as a source of stress for service personnel, study was conducted to determine how social pressures experienced by customers affect bus hostesses' emotional weariness and, in turn, their job and life happiness. 150 bus attendants in Lahore, Pakistan provided the data that was gathered. Several tests of the exterior and inner model evaluation are used. Verbal abuse from customers and clients they despised turned out to be increasing weariness, which had an impact on the job satisfaction and quality of life for female servers (Nawaz, 2018).

In this paper, Mediating Role of Work Exhaustion: The Missing Linchpin to Address Employee's Turnover" among small and medium firms in the service sector of Pakistan were explored. The research investigates the mediating role of work exhaustion in addressing employee turnover in Pakistan's service industry. It confirms two hypotheses about work overload and work-family conflict. Data was collected from five bus services, including drivers, hostesses, and customer care agents. The study discovered that on-the-job stresses such as job autonomy, fair rewards, work-family conflict, and work overload significantly contribute to work tiredness and turnover among employees working for various bus companies. However, work overload and work-family conflict were identified as important indications of work exhaustion among Pakistani bus service employees. The study found that work tiredness among bus service employees is mostly caused by work-family conflict and perceived job stress. Nighttime bus routes frequently compel employees to spend more time with the

organization, resulting in sleepiness and irritability during daytime rest. Bus drivers and hostesses face greater workloads as shifts change, restricting working autonomy. The study also discovered that work exhaustion mediates the association between independent factors (work-family conflicts and perceived work stress) and turnover intention (Saleem, 2016).

In the Alicia A. Grandey's study, "When 'The Show Must Go On': Surface Acting and Deep Acting as Determinants of Emotional Exhaustion and Peer-Rated Service Delivery," the author discusses the importance of emotional labor in service roles, where expressing positive emotions is critical for customer satisfaction. However, the study acknowledged that employees frequently face stress when they are unable to authentically express their emotions. Grandey emphasizes the importance of studying the impact of distinct acting strategies—surface acting and deep acting—on emotional exhaustion and service quality. The study concluded that surface acting is associated with increased emotional exhaustion, which negatively impacts service quality as rated by peers. This research is critical for understanding emotional labor in the service industry and its consequences for employee well-being and performance (Grandey, 2003).

In their book "In the truth about Burnout," Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter define burnout as a process of disengagement that happens when workplace stress overwhelms personal resources (Maslach, 1997). H. J. Freudenberger (1974): Freudenberger first described emotional burnout as a state of exhaustion and fatigue due to dedication to a cause or way of life that does not yield the expected rewards (Burnout described in Journal of Social Issues). Emotional burnout is characterized by exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Schaufeli, 2001). Maslach and Jackson's "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout" underlines the necessity of viewing burnout as a multifaceted condition that affects professionals, particularly those in emotionally demanding employment. They characterize

burnout as emotional weariness, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The work advocates for the development of trustworthy methods, such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory, to evaluate burnout systematically, emphasizing its significance for employee well-being and job performance (Maslach, 1981).

A study looks at how loneliness and alienation in the workplace affect employees' intentions to leave their jobs. The hypotheses were evaluated using data from 402 survey participants at nine shopping malls in Turkey's Central and Eastern Black Sea areas. The study's hypotheses were tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings revealed that loneliness and alienation in the workplace have a considerable impact on employees' intentions to leave their jobs, with emotional exhaustion acting as a mediator. Bootstrap analysis verified the effect's significance. The results reveal creating effective communication channels to prevent employee isolation and minimizing pressure and poor working circumstances caused by unrealistic sales expectations. Employees should also be included in decision-making processes and given adequate job autonomy to avoid work alienation. This research is critical for analyzing shopping malls, frequently viewed as symbols of consumption. According to the report, employees want to leave their employment because they are emotionally exhausted as a result of workplace loneliness and alienation (Çiftci, 2021).

The study "Putting the Process Back in Rethinking Service Sector Skill" by Ian Hampson and Anne Junor in New Zealand demonstrates that many service occupations, particularly lower-level positions, require complicated abilities that are frequently overlooked. Health Care Assistants (HCAs) have valuable talents in recognizing nonverbal signs and administering care that are not often recognized by official certifications. Service work frequently necessitates a combination of non-mundane and tacit abilities, such as awareness management and

coordination, which are critical for properly caring for people and managing work processes. The study discovered that proficiency in applying these abilities improves with experience, making it critical for navigating the intricacies of service jobs. The findings indicate the need for a more comprehensive understanding of skill recognition in the service sector. This involves recognizing the informal learning that occurs among workers and the value of teamwork and communication skills, which are frequently missed in traditional assessments (Hampson, 2010).

The intersection of gender and labor is critical to comprehending current socioeconomic dynamics. Scholars have investigated how capitalism, patriarchy, and globalization influence women's experiences in the workplace. The following body of literature, from Saskia Sassen's analysis of the feminization of migration to Heidi Hartmann's critique of the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, illustrates the challenges of women working in low-wage, insecure conditions. These studies, which look at reproductive labor, media portrayals, and institutional frameworks, illustrate the systemic obstacles that women confront and the need for pathways to gender equity in today's economic landscape.

Saskia Sassen's "Global Cities and Survival Circuits" investigates the feminization of migration, with women from poorer nations migrating to wealthier cities to take low-wage domestic, care, and service jobs. These professions benefit the elite workforce and are part of survival circuits in which women's remittances support their families. Sassen emphasizes gendered and racist inequities in global labor markets, where migrant women work in precarious, underpaid professions, frequently enduring exploitation and emotional distress. This labor polarization reflects capitalist exploitation. Sassen's analysis is critical to

comprehending the feminization of labor and the global commodification of work (Sassen, 2002).

Heidi Hartmann's "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union" contends that patriarchy and capitalism are intricately linked systems, with both institutions maintaining women's subjugation in labor and domestic responsibilities. Hartmann pushes for a coherent framework that combines Marxist and feminist theories to address the confluence of class and gender oppression, offering a more comprehensive approach to achieving equality (Hartmann, 1979).

Joan Acker's "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations" contends that organizations are fundamentally gendered, favoring masculine norms and reinforcing gender inequality in jobs, pay, and power structures. She adds that organizational practices presume an ideal worker who is male and devoid of caring responsibilities, which marginalizes women. Gender is ingrained in both formal systems and everyday interactions, making inequity appear natural and difficult to overcome. Acker's work is critical for understanding how gender and power are perpetuated inside institutions. It draws on Marxist feminism to investigate how capitalism and labor structure promote gender inequality (Acker, 1990).

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Friedrich Engels contends that the growth of agriculture and private property resulted in patriarchy, which subordinated women to domestic responsibilities to ensure male inheritance. Monogamous marriage developed as a strategy for controlling property transfer and promoting male authority. Engels says that the state emerged to serve the interests of the property-owning classes while maintaining social inequalities. He believes that women's oppression is caused by economic

systems rather than nature, and proposes that gender equality necessitates the abolition of private property and the establishment of a classless, socialist society (Engels,1884).

Tithi Bhattacharya's *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* offers a comprehensive explanation of how capitalism is based on both paid and unpaid, gendered work inside households and communities. Bhattacharya contends that the reproduction of labor power—via caregiving, education, and emotional labor—is a key but underappreciated feature of capitalist economies. Drawing on Marxist feminism, she argues that the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression perpetuate economic exploitation. The book advocates for unified fights that combine workplace demands with social reproduction issues, targeting both economic systems and cultural norms to deconstruct capitalist structures (Bhattacharya, 2017).

In "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labor, Precariousness, and Cultural Work," Gill and Pratt (2008) investigate how immaterial labor—work creating services, information, and emotions—and precarity—unstable, insecure employment—define today's cultural and creative sectors. They say that neoliberalism blurs the distinction between work and personal life, resulting in overwork and self-exploitation because employees are supposed to be enthusiastic, emotionally engaged, and adaptable. This "social factory" dynamic highlights how affective and emotional labor has become essential to production while also increasing vulnerability in unstable jobs with little security or protection (Gill,2008).

Lise Vogel's book, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory*, is an important addition to Marxist Feminism. It surveys Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' perspectives on women's oppression, investigates socialist movements in Europe and the United States, and contends that women's oppression should be understood in terms of their

position in social and labor power reproduction. The book considers the relationship between capitalism and gender oppression, emphasizing that capitalism and patriarchy maintain women's subservience (Vogel, 2013).

Silvia Federici's book, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (2012), explores the role of reproductive labor in capitalist economies, including domestic work, childcare, and social reproduction. Federici, a campaigner for Wages for Housework, argues that unpaid private labor is crucial for capitalist production. The book highlights the importance of feminist movements challenging reproductive labor's value and advocating for its recognition as necessary work. Federici criticizes neoliberalism for increasing women's care burden and advocates for communal resistance, autonomy, and social revolution (Federici, 2012). In her work *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Silvia Federici, a feminist theorist known for her influential work on Marxist feminism and social reproduction theory examines the role of gendered oppression in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. She claims that the capitalist system needed to subjugate women, particularly through witch hunts, to control female labor, sexuality, and reproductive power. Federici connects past exploitation of women to contemporary forms of oppression, emphasizing capitalism's reliance on unpaid reproductive work (Federici 2004).

Maria Mies's *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a Global Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, investigates the connections between capitalism, patriarchy, and the exploitation of women's work in a globalized economy. Mies contends that capitalism relies significantly on unpaid or undervalued labor by women, particularly in the Global South, reinforcing both economic exploitation and patriarchal authority. She develops the term "housewifization," which refers to the systematic undervaluation of women's labor by framing

it as part of natural responsibilities such as caregiving and domestic duties, hence sustaining capitalism. Mies also criticizes the development discourse, demonstrating globalization intensifies gender inequality by classifying women as a reserved workforce (Mies, 1986).

R.W. Connell's book "Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics" investigates the link between gender, power dynamics, and societal structures. Connell introduces the term of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the dominant form of masculinity that claims control over women and other masculinities. The book examines the role of institutions including family, education, and the workplace contribute to the formation and reinforcement of gender norms. Connell emphasizes that gender is shaped by cultural norms and power dynamics, arguing for a more comprehensive understanding of how class, race, and sexuality intersect with gender (Connell, 1987).

Naomi Wolf's book "The Beauty Myth" delves into the societal pressures surrounding beauty standards and their negative influence on women. She contends that the beauty myth is a type of societal control that is becoming more prevalent as women's rights and visibility increase. The book emphasizes how media and advertising's restrictive ideas of beauty contribute to body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem. Wolf advocates for a rethinking of beauty standards and encourages women to defy conventional constraints for empowerment and self-acceptance (Wolf, 1991).

Rosalind Gill's *Gender and the Media*, investigates how media depictions shape public ideas toward gender, maintaining traditional roles but also reflecting shifting notions of masculinity and femininity. She criticizes many media forms, including advertising and internet platforms, emphasizing their role in propagating stereotypes and the power dynamics that exist. Gill

emphasizes the significance of critically engaging with media to understand how it influences gender views and identities (Gill, 2007).

Nancy Fraser's "Fortunes of Feminism" criticizes neoliberal policies that have intensified gender disparities and underlines the value of intersectionality in feminist movements. Fraser advocates for a reinvention of feminist politics that fosters solidarity while also addressing modern difficulties for women, particularly in light of rising inequality and the economic crisis (Fraser, 2013).

Pierre Bourdieu's "Masculine Domination" investigates gender as a social construct shaped by power dynamics. Bourdieu investigates that masculine dominance is maintained through cultural, social, and symbolic practices that sustain male power and privilege. He investigates how these power structures influence individual behavior, identities, and societal norms, highlighting that gender inequality is embedded in both conscious and unconscious mechanisms of dominance. The study emphasizes the need to understand these processes to confront and destroy oppressive systems that perpetuate gender hierarchies (Bourdieu, 2001).

Carol Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* criticized traditional social contract theory for disregarding gender and sexuality. She contends that the social contract fundamentally establishes men's rights and authority while normalizing women's subjugation. Pateman argues that this sexual contract emphasizes patriarchy and maintains gender inequality and calls for a rethinking of social contract theory to better address the consequences of gender and sexual interactions in society (Pateman, 1988).

Catherine Katz's "On the Grounds of Globalization: A Feminist Analysis of the Transformation of Labor in the Post-Fordist Era" explores the impact of globalization on women's work and

experiences, highlighting the feminization of labor, often in low-wage and hazardous jobs. The article explores the intersection of gender, class, and globalization, arguing that economic shifts reinforce existing inequities and call for a feminist perspective to advocate for improved labor rights and working conditions for women in a globalized economy (Katz, 2001).

In "Spirit of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia," Aihwa Ong investigates the experiences of female workers in Malaysia's manufacturing industry, focusing on the relationship between labor, culture, and capitalist discipline. Women manage the demands of factory work while resisting the structures that seek to regulate their labor and identities. The book emphasizes the women's autonomy and coping techniques in dealing with exploitation, illustrating their experiences reflects greater socioeconomic shifts. Ong contends that understanding the spirit of resistance among these factory women is critical to understanding the dynamics of labor and capitalism in the global setting (Ong, 1991).

Women in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan face more barriers and discrimination in career advancement than in developing nations. A better understanding of the lived experiences of women workers can lead to economic development by tapping their untapped potential as the workforce in the transport industry.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

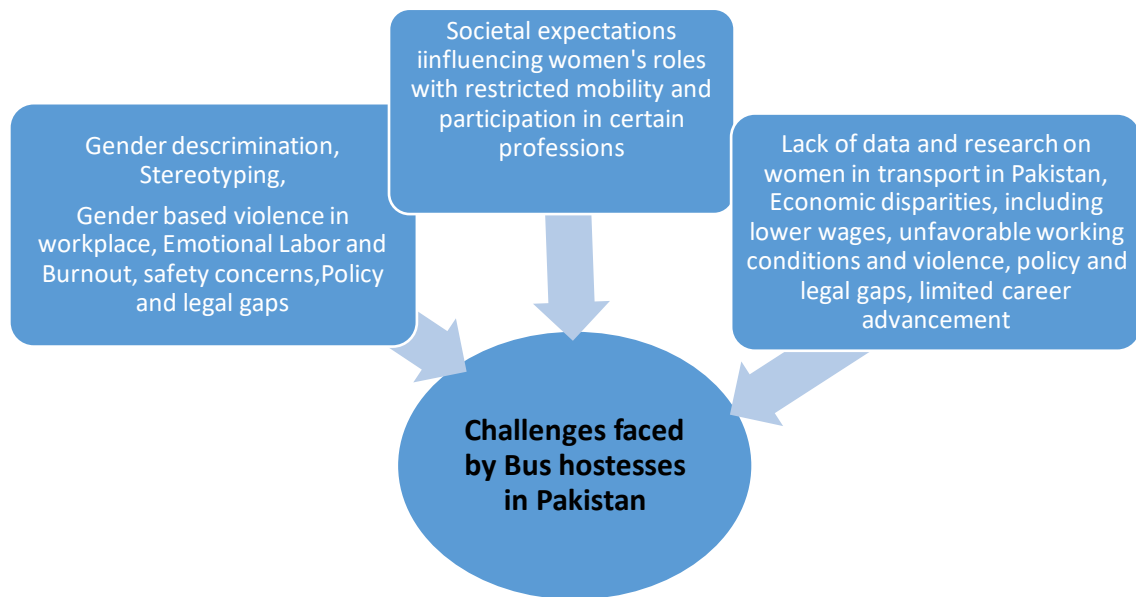


Figure 1 Pictographic representation of the conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework is presented to demonstrate various fronts (personal, societal, and professional) where bus hostesses face challenges at the individual level which add up to their sufferings in their daily lived experiences. Being female bus hostesses from poor social backgrounds and low economic class in the male-dominated Pakistani transport sector make them vulnerable to challenges like hostile social and working environments, harassment, violence, emotional labor and psychological stress, economic exploitations, lack of job security, undervaluation of women's work under capitalism and patriarchy and precarity of the profession due to broader neoliberal economic policies. Working women being outside the home and in hostile social and working environments are more vulnerable to becoming victims of multi-dimensional challenges in their pursuits to gain economic empowerment. Most of the research body links women's lack of participation in economic activities to discriminatory social and cultural norms around women's work, illiteracy, gender stereotyping of girl child, and restricted mobility. More specifically, in case of bus hostesses whose work required them to remain calm, courteous, pleasant, and hospitable, there is a need to explore more to document

and present their voices for an effective contribution to an existing body of literature and make recommendations for improvements.

Despite many studies on various aspects of the transportation sector in Pakistan, there remains a significant research gap concerning the challenges faced by bus hostesses in the public transport system. Considering the rapid evolution of the transportation industry and the increasing participation of women in this sector, there is a critical need to delve into the unique challenges faced by bus hostesses, such as safety concerns, societal perceptions, workplace dynamics, and career advancement opportunities. By focusing on this overlooked aspect, a more comprehensive understanding can be developed, paving the way for targeted interventions and policy measures to promote the safety and well-being of female bus hostesses and to foster a more inclusive and equitable working environment within Pakistan's transportation sector. There is no previous study specifically conducted on the challenges of bus hostesses in Pakistan however a strand of research touches on some different aspects of the transport sector in Pakistan. Like, a study posits a negative correlation between tension and job satisfaction among bus hostesses (Malik, 2011). Another study suggests that women are less likely to travel, are only half as mobile as men, and may rely significantly on walking. The country's particular social and cultural context, which characterizes women as private, secluded, and family-honoring, appears to influence their mobility and choice of activities. Age, household income, and marital status are demographic factors that reduce female mobility (Adeel, 2016). Similarly, the customers may also be a source of tension for service workers and impact their health (Nawaz, 2018). This study explains the impact of customer social stressors on the emotional exhaustion of bus hostesses and, consequently, their job and life satisfaction. In the same stream, Sarwar and Imran (2019) explored women's multi-level career prospects in Pakistan regarding barriers, interventions, and outcomes. The study reveals an

interconnected matrix of factors interacting at three levels: macro, meso, and micro (Sarwar & Imran, 2019).

2.7 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Anfara and Mertz (2014) define a theoretical framework as "a specific perspective, or lens, through which to examine a topic." It recommends specific types of questions and prompts replies that may not have been considered previously" (Anfara, 2014).

This study aims to investigate the difficulties faced by bus hostesses in Pakistan's transportation industry. In both labor and gender studies, this group is often ignored. The study is grounded in a multi-theoretical framework that employs a triangulated theoretical outline, combining *the theory of Emotional Labor, Marxist Feminism, and Feminization of labor* in service sector perspectives that analyze bus hostesses' various challenges in a capitalist, patriarchal economy under the deregulated neoliberal policies. Understanding the intricate relationship between gender, labor, and power in this feminized service sector is supported by the unique contributions of each theory.

The theory of emotional labor is applied to the study to examine the fundamental elements of emotional labor as outlined by Arlie Hochschild. The process of controlling emotions and expressions to meet the emotional demands of a job—often to elicit a desired emotional response in clients or customers—is referred to as emotional labor. This may entail repressing genuine feelings while pretending to feel them for the sake of the job. Arlie Russell Hochschild's book, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, was released in 1983. She describes how social conditions influence emotions through the experiences of flight attendants and bill collectors (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild's study on emotional labor is essential for understanding how service sector employees like bus hostesses must regulate their emotions to achieve organizational expectations. Workers who disguise their actual

emotions for workplace success may experience alienation and emotional burnout. Emotional labor, as part of their job, becomes a source of exploitation because it is neither acknowledged nor sufficiently compensated within the current capitalist structure.

Hochschild's framework is critical for understanding bus hostesses' emotional labor and its commodification under capitalism and neoliberal economic policies. They are expected to provide a welcoming environment while dealing with the often-aggressive behavior of male passengers and the emotional toll of harassment, without receiving enough compensation for this invisible labor. Surface and deep-acting strategies by such workers lead to emotional exhaustion. In the context of Pakistani conservative and patriarchal society, due to societal and gender norms attached to women's lives and mobility, bus hostesses mostly have to endure contextualized emotional labor in challenging job conditions and experience prolonged emotional labor and exhaustion which leads to burnout. Emotional exhaustion and burnout are intensified by the mismatch between compulsive emotional regulation and real emotions. The load on these employees is increased in the absence of efficient organizational rules that manage burnout or harassment, exposing a disconnect between corporate policies and the harsh realities of the workplace.

Marxist Feminist Theory

Marxist feminism, which draws inspiration from the theorists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels of the 19th century, emphasizes how men oppress and dominate women as a result of the capitalist system of production. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Engels is a very important work. Marxist feminists contend that capitalism and patriarchy both take advantage of working-class women. They consider social class to be just as significant as gender. This viewpoint draws attention to the nuanced interplay between socioeconomic class and gender in society (Awan, 2024).

Marxist feminism is a conceptual subset of feminism that holds and broadens Marxist philosophy. Marxist feminism examines how women are exploited by capitalism and individual ownership of private property (Desai, 2014). According to Marxist feminists, women's liberation can only be achieved by dismantling the capitalist systems in which they argue that much of women's labor is uncompensated (Ferguson, 2004). Marxist feminism contends that in a capitalist society, class exploitation and gender inequality are mutually reinforcing (Dawn, 2023).

Feminist perspectives on family in capitalist society arose in the late 1960s and 1970s, emphasizing the family as a unit that produces labor, capitalism's core commodity. This viewpoint contends that capitalists benefit from cheap labor from the family because they are not required to pay for kid production or upkeep, particularly the wife, who is not compensated for raising children. Margaret Beinston argues that “unpaid labor by women benefits those with production means while paying women would redistribute wealth. Not only does the family produce and rear cheap labor, but it also keeps it in good condition at no cost to the employer. In her function as a housewife, the woman attends to her husband's requirements, maintaining him in good enough condition to perform his role as a wage laborer” (Jahan, 2009).

Marxist feminism is a subset of feminist ideology that emphasizes dismantling capitalism as a means of liberating women. According to Marxist feminism, capitalism is at the foundation of women's oppression since it causes economic inequality, dependence, political confusion, and, eventually, unhealthy social interactions between men and women. Marxist theory holds that in capitalist societies, class relations define the individual; that is, people's capacities, wants, and interests are determined by the mode of production that characterizes the society in which they live. Marxist feminists argue that gender inequality is ultimately determined by the capitalist method of production. Gender oppression is class oppression, and women's

subordination is viewed as a kind of class oppression that is tolerated (like racism) because it serves the interests of capital and the ruling class. Marxist feminists have extended classic Marxist analysis by looking at both domestic and paid work to bolster their perspective (Jahan, 2009).

Marxist feminism blends class analysis and feminist theory, claiming that women's oppression is rooted in both capitalism and patriarchy. It underlines the importance of women's unpaid reproductive labor and economic dependency in capitalist systems. Scholars such as Engels, Dalla Costa, and Kollontai have emphasized how private property, household, and production processes perpetuate gender inequality. The ideology criticizes both capitalism and liberal feminism, calling for systemic change to alleviate class and gender inequality. Modern applications look at how globalization and neoliberalism abuse women's labor, contributing to the feminization of poverty and perpetuating inequality.

The Marxist feminist perspective, under this study, testifies to the exploitation of women in low-status, undervalued jobs under capitalist patriarchal systems. This theory is employed to examine how bus hostesses work in insecure positions with low pay, few benefits, and poor working conditions. If their efforts are undervalued under capitalist exploitation and gender prejudice. How they feel alienated from their job, autonomy, and dignity, with little control over their work environment, emotional expression, or working conditions. It further examines if the lack of adequate pay exacerbates this alienation leaving individuals feeling undervalued and exploited as Marxist feminism contends that in a capitalist society, class exploitation and gender inequality are mutually reinforcing (Dawn, 2023).

The growth of the service sector is frequently investigated through many theories that explore economic development, structural change, and labor dynamics. However, this study testifies to **the Feminization of Labor Theory** which outlines how neoliberal economic trends have

increased female labor force participation, notably in low-wage, service-oriented jobs such as bus hostesses. These positions are generally precarious, low-paying, and devalued, but they are critical to the service economy. Similarly, Guy Standing's concept of the precariat refers to a new class emerging from neoliberal restructuring, defined by insecure and fragmented work with little career advancement or security. The precariat covers a wide range of oppressed groups, including disgruntled adolescents, women working in exploitative conditions, migrants, individuals who have been criminalized or branded as "disabled," and many others. Standing contends that the precariat is an emerging class, internally divided and frustrated, living in insecure situations with less rights than citizens. His study investigates how these precarious identities contribute to rising authoritarianism and social instability, arguing that the precariat possesses the revolutionary potential to transform society by opposing inequality and injustice (Standing, 2011). Bus hostesses often work in insecure environments with little to no formal labor rights, reflecting neoliberal trends where workers are seen as cost-reducing commodities rather than human beings with rights. Women are subjected to gendered demands of patience, care, and emotional control in the highly feminized role of bus hostess. These jobs are considered "women's work" and are therefore undervalued in both societal and economic contexts, which the theory helps to explain. This concept examines how Pakistani bus hostesses are marginalized and exploited as a result of the feminization of the service industry, which is supported by neoliberal economic policies.

Bus hostesses' lived experiences can be explored in depth owing to this multi-theoretical approach, which helps in gauging how their struggles are ingrained in broader systems of capitalism, patriarchy, and gendered labor. This theoretical framework intersects in several ways, making it a cohesive framework for understanding the challenges faced by bus hostesses in Pakistan. The intersection between these theories highlights different aspects of their

exploitation, but together they create a comprehensive view of how capitalist, neoliberal, and patriarchal systems combine to create a highly exploitative environment for women in the service sector. This intersectional lens is crucial for analyzing not just the economic struggles of bus hostesses, but also the gendered and emotional dimensions of their labor.

2.6 Research Gap

There is a large research vacuum in Pakistan's transportation industry, especially when it comes to the difficulties experienced by bus hostesses. This covers issues with workplace dynamics, social attitudes, safety problems, and chances for career progression. Although no prior research has been done explicitly on the difficulties faced by bus hostesses in Pakistan, a body of work has touched on several other areas related to the country's transportation industry, highlighting the need for a deeper comprehension of women's experiences to fully realize their potential for economic growth.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. Research Methodology

A qualitative research study aims to investigate, collect, evaluate, and interpret data. A greater understanding of a certain occurrence or situation can be attained by the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, which is the main goal of qualitative research methodology. To find patterns, themes, and meanings, it entails gathering and analyzing text, images, and other media (Denzin, 2011).

Qualitative research is a situated practice that locates the observer in the real world—where people go about their daily lives, work, and socialize. It is a method of gaining knowledge about society by being deeply and personally involved with its subjects, frequently over a long period of time (Geertz, 1973).

Qualitative research methodology is applied by conducting semi-structured and in-depth interviews with the bus hostesses to record and gather primary data from the bus hostesses and the managers of the bus hostesses.

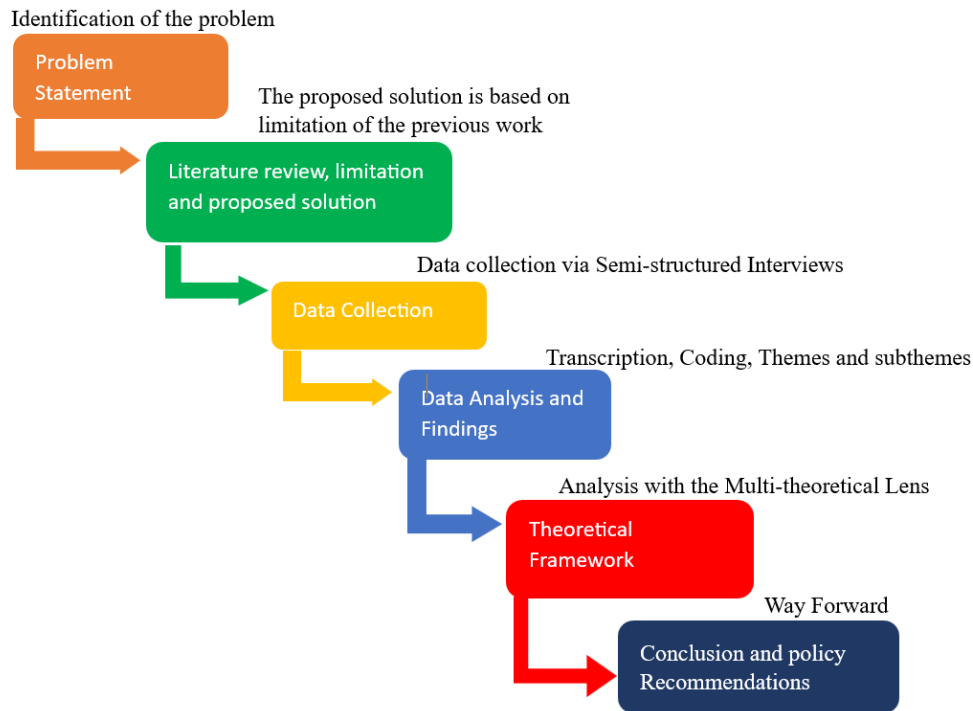


Figure 2: The steps of the research methodology

3.1. Units of Data Collection: Bus Hostesses

The study chose bus hostesses as the prime unit of data collection to share the difficulties they face in their line of work to gain a deeper understanding of issues and firsthand knowledge from their lens. Managers, supervisors, policy papers, and government documents are among the other sources that were also considered in this study to gain multiple perspectives on the problem. To understand their position on discrimination and determine whether policies such as those against harassment or employee safety measures are being implemented, I also seek the opinions of senior management and responsible officials from the transportation sector for their side of the story.

3.2 Research Strategy

A qualitative study is conducted to explore issues faced by the bus hostesses and to record their social and professional lived experiences in Pakistani transport companies by conducting semi-structured and in-depth interviews.

3.3 Research Design

This study is a qualitative research study. The research design for this study is phenomenology. Phenomenology is the study of conscious experience or perception and is a direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation, and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions (Smith, 2013). Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that started in the 20th century and is the study of objectivity and reality as subjectively lived and experienced. Phenomenology aims to gain a deeper understanding of subjective experience, rather than focusing on behavior. The term "phenomenology" derives from the Greek "phainomenon" ("that which appears") and "logos" ("study"). According to phenomenology, every intentional act is implicitly accompanied by a secondary, pre-reflective awareness of the act as one's own. Phenomenology seeks to determine the essential properties and structures of experience. There are different types of phenomenology, including transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, and embodied phenomenology. Phenomenology has applications in various fields, including psychology, cognitive science, health sciences, architecture, and human-computer interaction (Husserl, 1913). More simply stated, phenomenology is the study of an individual's lived experience of the world. An Exploratory study is conducted as preliminary research to create hypotheses rather than test them and to establish research priority. The data collected through interviews is qualitative in nature.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

To gain a deep understanding of the challenges faced by the bus hostesses, qualitative methods are utilized. The primary data collection technique involves observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews allowing bus hostesses to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words.

Semi-structured interviews are based on a priori identified topics of interest and questions, but the specific questions and their order are not predefined, and the interviewee has a large degree of freedom to express their thoughts and experiences (Kvale, 1996).

Additionally, observational data and documentary analysis (e.g., policies and industry reports) and views of supervisors to bus hostesses are also considered and examined to complement the interview data.

3.5 About the Sample

Purposive sampling is selected to interview a diverse group of bus hostesses who have varying experiences and backgrounds. Purposive sampling assumes that the researcher can identify the characteristics and attributes of the population that are most relevant to the research questions and objectives (Patton, 2015).

The sample includes hostesses from different regions, age groups, years of experience, and those who left the industry but served 7 to 12 years, to capture a wide range of perspectives and in-depth information from a sample size of 20 bus hostesses through semi-structured interviews. The reason for selecting this sampling technique is that the researcher wanted to gather relevant and on-purpose information from this unique group of working women's category in the transport sector.

3.5.1 Demographic Details of the Bus Hostesses

Table 2: The demographic details of the bus hostesses

Sr.no	Age	Qualification	Experience	Socio-economic background	Origin	Marital Status
1.	30	Graduation/BA	5 years	Working class	Bahawalpur	Single
2.	31	Matric	7 years	Working class	Okara	Widow
3.	23	Graduation	3 years	Working class	Faisalabad	Divorced
4.	32	Less than Matric	5 years	Working class	Lahore	Widow
5.	33	BA	7 years	Working class	Faisalabad	Single
6.	38	Less than Matric	14 years	Working class	Multan	Divorced
7.	33	FA	8 years	Working class	Bahawalpur	Single
8.	34	BA	8 years	Lower middle class	Bahawalpur	Single
9.	33	FA	12 years	Working class	Bahawalpur	Single
10.	32	FA	19 years	Working class	Bahawalpur	Single
11.	32	FA	8 years	Working class	Bahawalpur	Single
12.	33	BA	6 years	Working class	Bahawalpur	Single
13.	23	FA	2 years	Working class	Sahiwal	Single
14.	24	Matric	5 years	Working class	Sargodha	Single
15.	23	Matric	4 years	Working class	Faisalabad	Single
16.	25	FA	7 years	Working class	Pakpattan	Divorced
17.	23	Matric	3 years	Working class	AJ Kashmir	Single
18.	21	FA	2.5 Years	Working class	Sahiwal	Single
19.	25	FA	3 years	Working class	Sargodha	Single
20.	24	FA	5 years	Working class	Sahiwal	Single

The demographic information gathered from the sample of 20 Pakistani bus hostesses during semi-structured interviews includes their origins, age, level of education, employment history,

and socioeconomic and marital statuses. The bus hostesses were mostly in their early 30s, but their ages ranged from 21 to 38 years old. These young women usually hold bus hostess jobs, indicating that the work may require physical endurance and a youthful appearance that conforms to social norms for such professions. Although the hostesses' educational backgrounds differ, the majority have completed secondary education (FA or Matric). Some have graduated (BA), yet a significant number have not finished matric. The variation in educational backgrounds shows that, although a college degree is not a prerequisite for this position, most hostesses have some degree of education reflecting broader socioeconomic factors where women or individuals from lower-income backgrounds may need to enter the workforce earlier sans training and skills necessary for effective performance. The working tenure of bus hostesses ranges from two to 19 years, which shows a broad variety of experience levels. Many have extensive job experience in the same position/role indicative of the reality of a lack of prospects for career advancement inside the company or alternative employment opportunities. The data related to their socioeconomic backgrounds shows that only one bus hostess appears to be from the lower-middle class, and most of the hostesses belong to the working class. This indicates the role of women's economic necessity as the driving force motivating them to pursue this career.

Bus hostesses' marital status is a reflection of important social factors and labor market demands. Of the twenty hostesses, fourteen are unmarried, two are widowed, and three are divorced. Thus, they are all single and sole-earning heads of their families. The majority of unmarried women (70%) indicate that they are more likely to be available for full-time jobs, frequently as a result of having to support their families. Motivated by financial need, widows and divorced women look for work to make ends meet following personal tragedies.

It is evident from perspectives such as neoliberalism and Marxist feminism that women's labor, especially emotional labor, is exploited by capitalism and the expanding service sector, as noted by Arlie Hochschild (Hochschild, 1983). The service industry benefits greatly from the feminization of labor, as it requires emotional control from women like bus hostesses, who often experience emotional exhaustion due to managing and suppressing emotions. This affects their negotiation of an exploitative labor market, which takes advantage of their gender and emotional labor, especially during difficult personal circumstances like divorce or bereavement. While widowed and divorced women are more vulnerable to exploitation because of their financial needs, single women are perfect workers because of their flexibility and lack of family responsibilities. This relationship upholds the oppression of women based on their gender and class, wherein their labor is viewed as commodified, undervalued, and crucial for their survival.

In summary, the demographic analysis of the bus hostesses reveals that Pakistani bus hostesses face critical socioeconomic challenges, such as limited educational opportunities, financial constraints, and job barriers. Many are in the working classes and lack access to and affordability to achieve higher education, which hinders their career development and mobility. Regional hiring, particularly from far-flung areas to work in other cities from company hostels, is another issue that indicates targeted recruitment, due to the economic conditions in these areas reflecting the broader regional economic disparities.

3.5.2 Interview Language

The interviews were conducted in Urdu as the participant's preferred language. Although certain ethnic groups in Punjab province speak their native languages at home, Urdu and Punjabi are the primary languages spoken in public. The author speaks both Punjabi and Urdu fluently. As a result, the researcher encountered no major challenges in conducting interviews

and gathering data from participants. After conducting interviews, the taped interviews were manually transcribed into acceptable written English, and analysis was carried out to extract findings as major themes and sub-themes.

3.6 Data Analysis

After conducting one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with our prime UDC bus hostesses, thematic analysis is conducted as a tool to interpret the data.

Six Phases of Thematic Analysis	
1. Familiarizing yourself with data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If required transcribe the data. • Reading and rereading the data. • Noting down any initial ideas.
2. Generating Initial Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding interesting features of the data in a methodical fashion across the data sets. • Collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising data into potential themes. • Proceeding to gather all data into relevant themes.
4. Reviewing the themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking that themes work in relation to the coded extract. • Generate a thematic “map” of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and overall patterns the content shows. • Generating clear definitions for each theme.
6. Producing the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final opportunity for analysis. • Selecting vivid and compelling extract examples

Figure 3: *The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Clarke, 2006).*

The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Clarke, 2006) is employed as a method for interpreting the data. This is done by going through the interview transcript to extract and identify recurring major themes and sub-themes by data coding within the data set which helped in uncovering the challenges faced by female bus hostesses. This involves systematically reviewing the

interview transcripts to identify recurring primary themes and sub-themes through a process of data coding within the dataset. The aim is to uncover the challenges experienced by female bus hostesses. The researcher iteratively created a coding framework, analyzed the data, and fine-tuned the themes. For this analysis, the researcher follows an inductive approach rather than a deductive one, with the intent of obtaining interesting insights and discoveries. Inductive content analysis, as a qualitative research method, revolves around the collection and analysis of data without predefined categories or theoretical frameworks. This adaptable approach enables researchers to be guided by the data itself, facilitating the recognition of emerging patterns, themes, and concepts during the analysis process.

3.7 Locale

The purpose of this research study is to provide a critical overview of the challenges faced by bus hostesses in Pakistan. Primary data is collected by 20 bus hostesses working in the leading Bus companies with terminals in Islamabad and Rawalpindi through semi-structured interviews and observations. The company's and bus hostesses' names and identities are kept confidential as committed. Data is collected from the hostesses of leading bus companies with good infrastructural setups and buses. Visits are conducted to Faizabad Bus stop, and Bus Terminals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad for the data collection nevertheless bus stops of other cities in Punjab province are also contacted for interviews.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines. Information about the bus hostesses and their employers was kept private and anonymous as committed. Before interviewing the participants, the purpose of the research and the goals of data collection were communicated and made apparent. The bus hostesses gave their verbal consent to participate in the study and data-gathering process. A few even expressed their approval for their names to be mentioned, and

they had no issues with it. However, the researcher abides by the principle of keeping it confidential for everyone because of the nature of the inquiries, which include the names of the bus companies involved and the extremely intimate details of the incidents. Every bus hostess was informed that they might choose not to answer any questions that they felt like answering.

CHAPTER 4

REVIEW OF LAWS AND POLICIES

4.1 Review of Laws and Policies

Table 2: Policies and Laws cited in the study

Sr. No	Policies and Legislations
1.	National Transport Policy of Pakistan 2018
2.	National Trucking Policy 2007
3.	The National Trade and Transportation Facilitation Strategy, 2016
4.	The National Freight and Logistic Policy, 2020
5.	The National Highway Safety Ordinance, of 2000
6.	Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2010
7.	Article 25(2) ensures women's protection from gender-based discrimination in various settings, including the workplace.
8.	Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act of 2011
9.	Pakistan Penal Code (Section 509)
10.	The Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offenses Relating to Rape) Act, 2016

Pakistan's transport legislation contains a comprehensive framework to regulate and modernize the sector, addressing both national and provincial needs. At the federal level, key laws include the National Trucking Policy, 2007, which aims to align Pakistan's freight sector with international standards. The National Trade and Transportation Facilitation Strategy, 2016, seeks to enhance transit facilities for international trade. The National Transport Policy of Pakistan, 2018, provides a holistic vision to ensure safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly transport, supporting sustainable development goals. This policy includes specific objectives for each transport subsector and outlines governance principles and implementation arrangements (Ministry of Planning D. &, 2018).

Pakistan's transport legislation includes several key policies and laws. The National Trucking Policy of 2007 modernizes the freight sector to meet international standards. The National Trade and Transportation Facilitation Strategy, 2016, improves transit facilities for international trade. The National Transport Policy of Pakistan, 2018, aims for safe, efficient, and eco-friendly transport aligned with sustainable development goals. The National Freight and Logistic Policy, 2020 (Pakistan, 2020), focuses on SMART objectives for logistics development. The National Highway Safety Ordinance, of 2000, provides rules for safe highway driving. Provincial laws, like the Balochistan Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2021. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mass Transit Act, 2016, and the Sindh Motor Vehicle Rules, 1969, establish regulations for licensing, vehicle registration, and traffic control, aiming to modernize urban transport systems. Punjab's Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1958, and Highways Ordinance, 1959, focus on tax imposition and highway management, respectively. These laws collectively aim to create a safe, efficient, and modern transport infrastructure, promoting economic growth and connectivity across Pakistan.

National Policy for Development & Women's Empowerment (2002) also calls for barrier-free transport access and convenient connectivity for all, regardless of gender (Pakistan, 2020). However, if we critically analyze Pakistan's transport legislation and policies through a gender lens, it reveals a huge gap and negligence in ensuring gender equality and safety for women as commuters, travelers, and employees, such as bus hostesses, drivers, managers, and other transport-related roles. The legislative framework, including the Motor Vehicles Ordinance, of 1965, and subsequent amendments, provides a robust structure for regulating vehicle safety and employment standards. However, the practical implementation of these regulations often falls short of addressing the unique needs of women in the industry.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights, and the chapter on Principles of Policy emphasizes the idea that all citizens and people should be treated equally, regardless of gender or other distinctions. Appendix A contains the pertinent articles of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's Constitution that generally address women's rights.

Pakistani laws protect women from all forms of harassment, and women are protected under the Pakistan Penal Code. Harassing a woman at work, in public, on social media, or in private is a criminal violation. To prevent abuse of authority, management must examine the risks associated with the authorities assigned to supervisors.

Pakistan has several laws and legal frameworks in place to combat workplace sexual harassment and gender discrimination. The introduction of anti-harassment laws, like the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, of 2010 marks a significant step toward creating safer working environments for women. The Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010 is an important tool, defining sexual harassment as unwelcome advances, solicitations for favors, or other sexual behavior that creates an intimidating or offensive work environment. Organizations must form an Internal

Inquiry Committee to evaluate complaints and recommend actions against the accused. If a victim is dissatisfied with the internal process or the organization fails to take appropriate action, they can file a complaint with the Federal or Provincial Ombudsman. According to Section 2(H) of the act, anyone who makes unwelcome sexual approaches, requests for sexual favors, or engages in conduct that interferes with job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment may face sanctions. Depending on the seriousness of the crime, perpetrators may face fines, termination of job, or suspension (Secretariat, 2010).

The Pakistani Constitution, ratified in 1973, provides equal rights to all citizens and equal protection under the law. Article 25(2) specifically forbids sex-based discrimination, laying the foundation for women to be protected from gender-based discrimination in a variety of settings, including the workplace. Articles 25(3) and 26(2) allow the state to make special provisions for the protection of women and children (Punjab, n.d.).

The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act of 2011 seeks to address discriminatory practices against women, such as forced marriages and the denial of women's inheritance rights, while also contributing to a broader legal environment aimed at reducing gender inequality beyond the workplace (Government of Punjab, n.d.).

The Pakistan Penal Code (Section 509) makes insulting a woman's modesty, including sexual harassment and verbal abuse in the workplace, a crime punishable by fines and imprisonment. Section 509 of Pakistan's Penal Code 1860 specifies sanctions for various offenses. It states that someone can be punished for labeling a woman, using rude language, or making an inappropriate gesture. A girl under the age of 18 who is forced to engage in sexual intercourse may receive a ten-year term and a fine. If a person demands sexual favors and annoys others, they may face a three-year sentence or a fine. If someone unjustly accuses a lady of fornication,

they may face five years in prison and a fine. If a person assaults a woman with criminal force, taking her clothes and exposing her in public, they may face execution or life imprisonment, as well as a fine. Sexual advances, demands, or physical conduct in the workplace to annoy, intimidate, or threaten others, or make it a condition of employment, can result in imprisonment for up to three years or fines of up to five hundred thousand rupees, or both. If an individual engages in unacceptable behavior, reacts negatively, or intentionally interferes with their work performance, they may face imprisonment, a fine of up to 50,000 rupees, or both (Penal Code,1860).

The Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offenses Relating to Rape) Act 2016 seeks to amend sexual violence laws and provide better legal protection for rape survivors in Pakistan. The law expanded rape definitions, mandated DNA testing, eliminated the controversial two-finger test, expedited trials, and enhanced punishments in cases involving children and public employees. Despite substantial attempts to strengthen victim protection and speed legal processes, further advocacy and reforms are required in enforcement, cultural norms, and awareness (Government of Punjab,n.d.).

Pakistan has passed laws to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination in the workplace, but implementation remains difficult, particularly in the private and informal sectors. Due to institutional flaws, many women are uninformed of their rights and have lost faith in the system. Cultural barriers also discourage reporting, as victims frequently face stigma or fear of punishment in male-dominated industries. "Workplace Sexual Harassment and its Underreporting in Pakistan" published in 2022 in the European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, examines how patriarchal norms in Pakistani society not only encourage workplace harassment, but also prevent victims from reporting events by limiting

cultural, moral, and legal assistance. It further argues that simply being aware of legal frameworks, such as the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2010, is insufficient to solve the issue in situations without the rule of law (Hadi, 2022). Therefore, the enforcement of these laws remains inconsistent, and cultural barriers continue to hinder women's full participation in the transport sector. Training programs provided by major transport companies, while beneficial, need to incorporate more comprehensive gender sensitivity and empowerment modules to effectively support female employees.

Globally, women's rights have been given due importance and various laws and policies have been made to ensure their advancement and growth. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. Goal 5 is about "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls" and Goal 8 is about "decent work and economic growth" and is one of which aims to "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (United Nations, n.d.).

Despite Pakistan's pledges to fulfill national and international commitments regarding women's rights, if we analyze Pakistan's current situation, gender inequality is a serious concern. Pakistan is ranked 145/156 for economic participation and opportunity, 135/156 for educational attainment, 143/156 for health and survival, and 95/156 for political empowerment in the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2022. However, because of structural issues brought on by patriarchal beliefs, women are still underrepresented in leadership posts and are prohibited from assuming positions in the political and public domains. Pakistan is the country where women have the lowest portion of senior, managerial, and legislative roles 4.5% (Forum, July 2022). Sadly, there is a dearth of genuine and practical application of laws and regulations protecting women throughout the nation.

The national transport vision for Pakistan as mentioned in National Transport Policy 2018 is to offer everyone reliable access to markets, employment, education, and other services by offering safe, economical, effective, long-lasting, and environmentally sustainable modes of transportation (Ministry of Planning, 2018). However, after reviewing Pakistan's National Transport Policy 2018 document, it is learned that the policy only addressed women as end users and travelers, not as workers in the transport industry, and turned a blind eye to include and address their exclusive rights and duties as employees in the industry.

Similarly, the National Transport Research Centre (NTRC) which is established under the Planning and Development Division, to provide much-needed research and development (R&D) support for the planning and appraisal of transport sector projects/plans to the Communications Division is effectively functioning as an R&D Wing of the Ministry of Communications now, has yet conducted no research study specifically on the women employers or travelers (National Transport Research Centre, n.d.).

Overall, Pakistan's transport laws and policies exhibit a need for a more focused and consistent application of gender principles as necessary. This includes strict application of anti-harassment laws, tailored safety measures, and inclusive training programs that empower women and address their specific challenges in the transport industry.

4.2 Review of Bus Companies' Official Policies & Management's Stance

The researcher conducted meetings with three managers including two male operations managers from two different top bus companies and a female hostel warden/supervisor —to know the official company policies in place to address those issues and to learn and inquire about their perspectives on the professional issues of bus hostesses. They speak and share

official company policies and procedures on behalf of the companies. These discussions assessed management's position and clarified operational guidelines about bus hostesses.

4.2.1 Company A's Official Policies and Management's Stance

Company A presents itself as Pakistan's leading private transportation company, setting trends and serving the country's largest bus and infrastructure fleet. Initial research about the company reveals that the company has a Gender Equality Social Inclusion policy, and Health & Safety policy displayed on its website which reflects the Company's official stance and commitment to employees' safety and well-being, but this matter is not discussed openly. When approached, company A directed the researcher to contact the Lahore headquarters but did not provide a phone number or official point of contact instead shared random mobile numbers where every other official was reluctant to connect with the designated official to talk on the matter. It was especially difficult to obtain detailed information due to this rejection. As a result, the researcher could only get a partial stance on the company's health and safety procedures from the website and a senior executive who was approached using a personal reference. The Senior Executive Terminal from company A briefly and reluctantly shared the company policies in place as well as the challenges experienced by bus hostesses. He mentioned that *“managing passenger behavior, responding to emergencies, and upholding excellent customer service standards in a fast-paced environment are typical difficulties. These difficulties may cause fatigue, stress, and emotional exhaustion, which may hurt their well-being and performance. He acknowledged that while gender dynamics and social expectations can result in discrimination and unequal treatment, such instances are rare. There are support systems in place, such as HR support, employee assistance programs, and training courses; however, their efficacy differs depending on the organization and how they are implemented. He also said that different organizations have different working cultures and gender equality policies;*

some lay more emphasis on respect and gender equality, while others still require improvement. He clarifies that it is about the general working environment in the transportation sector by reflecting general industry trends rather than the particulars of any one organization”.

Analysis

The manager of company A who is also the direct supervisor of the bus hostesses did not refer to formal policies about gender equality, health, or safety in his statement, suggesting a lack of awareness and commitment to these matters. This aloofness draws attention to the gaps between the company's present operations and its affirmed values. Bus hostesses' ignorance of these policies was exposed during interviews, reflecting a disconnect between the company's principles and the realities that its employees must deal with. The hostesses revealed that these policies were put in place when the firm was a multinational organization, therefore it is assumed that the company's transition to private/local ownership must have subsequently affected the quality of operations and the practicality of these policies.

The manager agrees that bus hostesses frequently deal with difficult situations like passengers' rude behavior and maintaining high standards of customer service, which can cause stress and emotional exhaustion. His claim that unfair treatment and gender discrimination are uncommon, however, stands in stark contrast to the hostesses' repeated allegations of abuse and harassment. An evident disagreement exists between management's perception and the hard realities of the job, as hostesses consistently report feeling overworked, underpaid, and subjected to unacceptable passenger behavior. This disparity emphasizes the need for better understanding and more effective policies to deal with these pervasive issues with comprehensive policies and effective communication to create a safer, more equitable working environment.

4.1.2 Company B Official Policies and Management's Stance

The operation manager and direct supervisor of the bus hostesses from a relatively better transport company from the Islamabad office was interviewed to inquire about official company policies on the day-to-day challenges of bus hostesses. As a company representative, the manager shared that there are a lot of day-to-day challenges for bus hostesses, first, *“most passengers misbehave and harass them, secondly, colleagues and staff also bully them sometimes and get disrespectful towards them. When they face such treatment, it adversely affects their psychological well-being and mental health. They feel demoralized. The transport industry is not well developed in Pakistan”*, he added.

Talking about the Societal expectations regarding bus hostesses concerning gender dynamics, he shared that *“they face many challenges regarding society as they come from very humble backgrounds where they are oppressed themselves. They are usually oppressed that’s why they choose this profession because, in our society, the profession of bus hostesses is not considered respectful by the people “acha nahi samjha jata” (it is not considered as good profession) even just recently the profession of air hostesses was recognized after so many years in Pakistan. Before that, even the air hostess profession was taboo, and it was not considered a good thing. People don’t want to send their daughters and sisters to enter these professions. But now travel industries like airlines are much groomed and working on an international and corporate level, as compared to buses or road travel which is not corporate level and groomed and not well trained to cater to women staff properly, The Industry is not accepting this still, but passengers are accepting. When staff is non-corporate, their mindset is different and difficult, they take them as girls who only serve food and drinks. When the industry is revolutionized and corporate, these things will improve and gradually it is happening. Local-level bus companies need more improvement in terms of creating a conducive workplace environment for women as*

compared to those with good infrastructure and corporate settings. Local companies haven't recognized women as employers to include in their team like bus hostesses.

Discussing the support systems of the company to support bus hostesses with these challenges in case when passengers get disrespectful toward them, he shared that *"We have a policy, in case a passenger or a staff member is misbehaving with the bus hostess and harasses her and it becomes evident and proved, we straight away fire him and we have done it in history many times. For the passenger, during the journey, if he does something to harass the bus hostess, we offload him immediately.*

Upon inquiring if policies are in black and white form, he shared that *"as such it's not in black and white and is not in written form as an official policy document. These are the rules and working practices. Company policy is in progress to be documented, the transport industry has just been a corporate world in recent years, and it will take time to ensure such measures. Standard operating Procedures are in process for everything and will be ready soon.*

He further explained that these rules and regulations are effective somehow in addressing challenges so far. Rules ensure implementation when there are no rules there is less chance of addressing them. Our Standard operating procedures (SoPs) remain effective in decreasing the complaints. Now complaints are decreasing. We usually receive an average of complaints as a complaint per two months. *"The nature of the complaints is driver and cleaning staff misbehaved and scolded, the driver's style was harsher and bus hostess started crying about that, harassing complains, asking for numbers, unwanted requests, and undue favors, but started from misbehavior"*.

The manager narrated one such incident when a bus hostess slapped a passenger upon misbehavior, in his opinion, she was unfair, and the reason was her untrained behavior on the job as we don't offer them a good salary package and hence the staff is untrained.

Describing the overall workplace culture in the transport industry, the Manager responded that *“the transport industry has no acceptability for women as employers, culturally as well as in workplaces. We hope, with time, the transport industry will be developed enough to accommodate female staff in different roles”*.

He responded when asked about the measures, first, *“we as a first measure should start placing women staff in different roles not just bus hostesses, and with proper career progression opportunities. When they are placed in different positions, they will be intermingled with other positions like booking agents, and they must hold positions like call center agents for different transport companies to enhance women’s access and acceptability in the transport industry and to neutralize the masculine character and working of the transport industry. We as a next step will also consider them as booking agents. In this way, we can ensure a family environment for women staff and comfortable travel for female passengers and will ensure gender balance as females are also part of the society and they have equal rights to employment as men.*

He further shared about the strategies to combat challenges as formulation of a complete policy on women workers in transport and its robust implementation for ensuring their rights and responsibilities and acknowledgment of their role in organization structure and proper job description.

Upon asking how he views the role of management in ensuring such mechanisms, he shared that management could play an effective role through justice and no favoritism to a particular individual in case of disputes. He shared that we have a female in charge who handles their day-to-day problems and their booking.

He further commented that the pay package is so small, and he refused to share the amount, but he accepted that right now we are not paying them much. The package is less as per the requirements of the job. We pay them as per trip and not monthly and it’s a complex calculation

that you will not understand, as in a way he refused to disclose the “*science behind the pay package*”. The package is less as compared to drivers and other staff and not market competitive.

Analysis

Bus hostesses' comments support the manager's statement that rudeness and harassment from passengers and employees negatively impact their emotional well-being. The bus hostesses did, however, also draw attention to the absence of official policies as well as the poor training and assistance they receive; the manager acknowledged this to some extent by claiming that policies are not set in stone but rather are evolving. The hostesses' experiences with inadequate support and protection are reflected in the need for an organized and documented policy as well as improved training. Furthermore, the hostesses' experiences of stigmatization associated with their profession and discrimination based on gender are consistent with the manager's explanation of social perceptions. His recommendations for more positions for women in the field and a more positive work environment present a possible solution to deal with these persistent problems.

4.1.3 Hostel warden/ Supervisor's views

A brief interview was conducted with the female hostel warden who supervises 40 to 50 bus hostesses under her supervision, works in one of these leading transport companies, and requested to keep her identity hidden and anonymous. She arranged the meeting to conduct interviews with the bus hostesses in the hostel of this transport company. However, these interviews were highly influenced by her presence and her strict surveillance so that girls couldn't share any information that could go against the company's repo and image, in a controlled environment. A limited number of hostesses responded to my questions while at the same time feeling hesitant to fully participate. These bus hostesses were between the ages of

18 to 25 and with the educational qualifications of Matric and intermediate hardly. They belong to far-off areas like Sargodha, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Kashmir, Pakpattan, etc. According to a female manager overseeing 40 to 50 bus hostesses, *"nobody wants to perform such a challenging job, "Majboori main kerti hain" as a last resort."* She mentioned that most girls don't have a father, brother, or other male family member. Some people are divorced and have no one to assist them financially. She said that we train them to remain patient as a foremost obligation to fulfill during the training of a week because they have to earn too as they come here due to severe financial crisis. Therefore, they can't give more days in training instead they like to earn. We train them in services and grooming about how they should behave with passengers. Qualification should be intermediate preferably Matric and not less than this. We also train them in how to carry yourself.

Analysis

The interview with a female hostel warden reveals that bus hostesses face financial constraints and inadequate support, highlighting systemic issues in the transport industry. The controlled environment and minimal training focus on appearance and service, making these women vulnerable to exploitation and harassment, calls for the need for genuine support.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings of the study are presented, discussed, and analyzed in detail in this section. This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of the data collected through interviews with bus hostesses and direct supervisors. The context of the research questions outlined in the first chapter is applied to the findings. The findings are systematically divided into several themes and subthemes and examined thoroughly. This approach guarantees an organized and comprehensive examination of the viewpoints and encounters of the study subjects, the bus hostesses. The analysis is conducted by applying a multi-theoretical framework that combines Emotional Labor Theory, Marxist Feminism, and Feminization of Labor Theory. It investigates their working conditions, challenges, and social perspectives, emphasizing the psychological demands, gendered exploitation, and employment insecurity that they endure. This paradigm provides a complete knowledge of how intersecting inequities influence their work and personal lives.

5.1 Themes and Sub-Themes

The researcher analyzed emerging themes and subthemes to unleash the systematic exploitation and marginalization of the bus hostesses while questioning and challenging prevailing structures and ideologies that perpetuate gender-based inequalities and their social and professional oppression.

Data analysis revealed the following primary themes and sub-themes under the challenges faced by the bus hostesses on personal and professional fronts in their quest for economic empowerment.

Table 3: Major themes, and Sub-themes of the study

Themes	Sub Themes
Personal & Professional Challenges	Poor Socio-economic Conditions and Personal Struggles
	Full-time Job & Schedule
	Stressful Life in Company Hostels
	No Work-life Balance
	Gender discrimination & Passenger Harassment / Rude behavior
Social Attitudes and Norms Towards Working Women and Bus Hostesses	Negative Social Perceptions about Bus Hostesses
	Gender-based Harassment in Patriarchal Society
	Harmful Impact on Personal Dignity and Professional Identity
Career Prospects & Job Sustainability	No Career Advancement
	Job instability & Financial Dissatisfaction and Exploitation
	Job Improvement Ideas by Bus Hostesses

5.3 Findings of the Study

1. Personal & Professional Challenges

1.1 Poor Socio-Economic Conditions and Personal Struggles

All the Bus hostesses employed in different bus companies who were interviewed under the study revealed that they belong to the working class. Explaining the reasons and motivation to join this profession, bus hostesses expressed varying reasons to join this profession mostly

rooted in poverty and economic compulsion and to make both ends meet. The bus hostesses reveal significant personal reasons and challenges fueled by economic necessity and familial responsibilities. Many women enter this profession as primary breadwinners, caring for parents and bearing the educational expenses of their children in the absence of male family members. Economic necessity and the need to support their families turned out to be a primary motivator of the respondents.

Respondent 1. shared

"I began working as a bus hostess to support my family," she said.

Respondent 2, had a similar perspective, saying,

"I am the only earning member in my household, responsible for my parents and my two children. My husband died and my father is disabled and walks with a cane. With no brothers to assist my parents, the entire burden is on me." She continued, "My daughter is in 7th grade and my son is in 9th, their education and well-being also depend on my income being a single parent."

Respondent 3 shared about working to support herself and her children after divorce and battling health issues as well.

Respondent 9 shared that

"A girl often becomes a hostess out of compulsion, to support her family. They take this job because the salary package is better compared to other jobs. Nowadays, even well-educated girls are not finding jobs and are sitting at home. If they do get jobs, it's often in teaching, which doesn't pay well. That's why some girls choose this field. It's better to take this job and earn a good salary rather than sitting at home. They can support their families and continue with this job."

One of the girls shared her story that *“she joined this profession due to domestic issues with her husband who divorced her to marry another woman after 16 years of marriage. She has filed a divorce case, but he is not divorcing her nor returning her dowry. He doesn't bear her expenses. She has been waiting for 4 years for he will divorce her and free her. “I have only this job to support myself and my parent's family where my younger siblings are also dependent on me. I want to do a parlor course to get a respectable job and want to go abroad”*. She shared.

Gender and marital conflicts like being divorced and abandoned by their partners, increase socioeconomic struggles. *“The personal challenges I faced are that I got a paralysis attack, I had no money to bear expenses related to health, and I started working as a bus hostess so that I could earn money and take care of myself. I have no parents, and I am divorced because my husband remarried. I have 3 children, and I have to take care of them as well,”* a hostess shared her reasons for joining this profession.

The Bus Company's operational manager shared that most of the bus hostesses belong to low-income families and depend on their daily wages per trip basis as they cannot wait for the whole month to get paid due to urgent financial needs. They keep working in an uncertain industry because of limited job options and societal expectations. He shared that *“Mostly women are employed in such roles. This division of labor based on gender perpetuates patriarchal standards and prevents women from pursuing higher education or better prospects. They are further imprisoned in a cycle of poverty and reliance by the urgent financial necessity for these jobs, which upholds patriarchal norms.”*

Some respondents expressed facing opposition from their families to join this profession given the social stigma attached to the role of bus hostesses. A bus hostess shared *“My father used to work in his canteen, then he got a leg injury and hence he stopped working. That's why I*

decided to join the bus hosting field, but my brothers and my father tried their best to stop me, they said you don't need to do such a job, we can do everything ourselves, you don't need to earn, But I was thinking about a lot of things because I felt it was necessary to do so that day was very difficult for me because there was a lot of pressure from my family."

They were also compelled to work to bear the costs related to health and education. *"Due to my education, I thought that there is provision of some facilities like hostels and most jobs do not provide accommodation. I didn't want to be a burden on my married sister as my father remarried after my mother's death and my stepmother used to quarrel a lot with my father. So, I joined this profession"* a bus hostess recalled.

Despite societal stigma and family opposition, few bus hostesses exhibit real enthusiasm for their jobs, demonstrating their perseverance and determination to overcome obstacles to achieve financial security and familial support. *"I started it because I loved the bus hostess job, but no one in our family had ever worked as a bus hostess, Yes, my mother supported me, I loved the job of a bus hostess, but later it became my compulsion too because my father passed away."*

Most of the girls joined this profession considering it as a well-paying job as compared to teaching *"Because the salary in the teaching job was very low and I needed money urgently, Bus company was paying good compensation to the bus hostesses."*

These accounts show the responsibility they have to carry, motivated by the need to care for their families in difficult situations.

The narratives reflect cultural and socio-economic limitations faced by women in Pakistan's patriarchal society. The Cultural expectations prioritize women's roles as homemakers, discouraging their participation in the labor market (Zulfiqar 2024). Gender inequality and patriarchal norms create systemic barriers, reducing women's economic autonomy (Maqsood,

2024). Women's socioeconomic status in Pakistan is worse due to a low rate of literacy, a lack of educational resources, a lack of knowledge, a bad economic situation, a lack of skills, and an unsecure social environment for working. Men make more decisions than women do (Khan, 2008). Women's participation in the transport sector is limited to less productive roles (Dorantes, 2019). Non-standard employment in the Pakistani service sector frequently comprises part-time, temporary, or informal positions, which are growing more popular among women wanting to improve their economic standing by working in less secure employment situations. Even jobs designed to improve their financial circumstances frequently come with negative conditions that might lead to a vicious cycle of disadvantage. The results showed that women faced issues such as harassment, bullying, mental stress, physical fatigue, and exploitation daily, which negatively impacted their efficiency and well-being (Perveen, 2022). Liberalization policies and economic structures during the globalization process have generally forced women to work in low-paid and insecure jobs. Neoliberal policies aimed at reducing state intervention, privatizing public services, and reducing social security have increased women's insecurity in the labor market. The effects of globalization and neoliberalism on women's labor have also contributed to the reproduction of gender roles. As a result, globalization and neoliberal policies have complex effects on women's labor (Öçal, 2024). Growing feminization in the workforce suggests that both supply-side (such as women joining the workforce to support declining household incomes) and demand-side (such as firms preferring to hire women due to lower costs) factors contribute to this phenomenon. The feminization of the workforce has frequently led to a concentration of women in less secure and lower-paying positions (Ball, 2008) The shift toward unstable labor arrangements, claims that it helps companies while making employees more vulnerable (Standing, 1999).

According to Hochschild (1983), emotional work is the managing of emotions to satisfy job needs, which frequently results in psychological distress. Narratives from bus hostesses reveal that regardless of personal tragedies such as grief, divorce, or health issues, one must maintain a pleasant outlook when serving passengers. This emotional regulation reflects gendered emotional labor, in which women are expected to be loving and patient (Guy, 2004), as Respondent 3 deals with health difficulties and emotional loads while keeping a professional front to earn a living. Marxist feminism emphasizes capitalism exploits women's labor, notably by undervaluing their contributions to both paid and unpaid work and emphasizing that capitalism and patriarchy maintain women's subservience (Vogel, 2013). These women, who are mostly from the working class, are obliged to labor in low-wage positions due to poverty and familial obligations. Their job provides revenue for bus companies, yet they are underpaid and imprisoned in terrible working circumstances. It exposes capitalist and patriarchal exploitation; as major breadwinners, many bus hostesses care for children, parents, or siblings in the absence of male support, but they are underpaid. This twofold exploitation is consistent with the view that capitalism is based on both economic compulsion and patriarchal gender roles (Federici 2012). The feminization of labor concept highlights women's increasing tendency to work in low-wage, informal service jobs, often overlooked and devalued. It's not just an increase in female employment; it's a complex interaction of economic necessity, societal expectations, and gender inequity, highlighting the unseen character of women's work in the informal sector (Standing, 1999). Bus hosting, despite being slightly higher paying than teaching, is not seen as a "respectable" job by families, highlighting the impact of gender stereotypes on employment choices. The concentration of women in such occupations promotes patriarchal standards, preventing them from pursuing higher degrees and better opportunities. Some women report familial opposition to their work.

1.2 Full-time Job & Schedule

All the respondents shared that the job is full-time, meaning they are only devoted to work life during the whole day with little breaks and no time for family or leisure.

Respondents shared:

"Yes, it is a full-time job. My shift used to be for 24 hours and after that, I used to rest for 24 hours."

"Yes, it is a full-time job. My shift is for 8 hours, sometimes during the day and sometimes at night, and there are two breaks during a trip. When our schedule is tight, we take three to four hours of rest."

"It is difficult. Traveling is exhausting for me, but I have to work for survival as well as to support my family."

"No, I want to quit working because my legs are aching all the time, and I have rods in them."

"It was a full-time job, and the company did not allow us to rest. When one journey was over, they made us sit in another bus without any rest for another trip."

These findings highlight the physical and psychological toll that working as a bus hostess must bear. The differences in rest intervals and shift durations point to an absence of uniform working conditions, which causes fatigue and tiredness. The notion that *"traveling is exhausting for me, but I have to work for survival as well as to support my family"* reveals the financial constraints that force women to put up with these difficult job circumstances. The fact that they wish to stop working because of bodily pain, as demonstrated by the statement *"No, I want to quit working because my legs are aching all the time and I have rods in them,"* highlights how seriously the job affects their health. Lastly, the grievance regarding the lack of sleep, *"the company did not allow us to rest,"* raises the possibility of industry-wide exploitative

behaviors. When taken as a whole, these stories depict a challenging career where women must weigh the negative repercussions of employment on their well-being against their need for work.

These findings support the fact due to these issues, despite efforts to promote gender equity, structural hurdles such as a lack of flexible work regulations lead to high turnover rates for women in transport. The research suggests increased social discussion and better human resource policies (Turnbull, 2013). Despite comprising half of the world's population, women's roles in transportation have often been marginalized. The traditionally male-dominated sector has less than 20% female representation in the global workforce, mainly in roles such as flight attendants and customer service (Fraszcyk, 2019) which have physical as well as psychological repercussions related to the health and well-being of the staff like bus hostesses. Even in developed countries, women's participation in the transport sector is limited to less productive roles (Dorantes, 2019) doing laborious jobs and enduring emotional labor.

Enhancing the accessibility of female amenities, enforcing better laws, and implementing human resource policies that recognize women's caregiving obligations are among the primary elements that require improvement to boost the number of women working in the transportation industry (Jiménez, 2020). Some countries have more advanced policies regarding conciliation and family, and working-life balance, which directly influence the rate of female employment in the transport sector (Dorantes, 2019). Road transport workers in Pakistan face low pay, long hours, unfavorable working conditions, occupational health risks, and a lack of social protection in a deregulated, competitive industry (Hisam, 2006).

According to Hochschild (1983), emotional work is controlling emotions to achieve employment requirements, which frequently results in tiredness. The findings reflect the physical and psychological toll that bus hostesses face as they work demanding shifts with

inconsistent schedules and few breaks. The hostesses discuss emotional and physiological pain, exhaustion, and a lack of rest, demonstrating how the emotional and physical burdens of lengthy hours contribute to burnout. Forced Cheerfulness despite pain demonstrates how, despite health obstacles, such as the respondent's rods in her legs, they continue to work, showing how emotional labor in service positions requires resilience at the expense of well-being (Newman 2004). Marxist feminism criticizes capitalism for exploiting workers, particularly women, by undervaluing their effort while maximizing profits. Long, irregular shifts without enough rest are an example of this exploitation. Employers gain from women's desire to labor in tough conditions for economic reasons, while workers bear all physical risks. The findings—such as "the company did not allow us to rest"—show how capitalist goals dehumanize workers, seeing them as disposable individuals to support profits (Vogel, 2013). Respondents demonstrate that financial pressure forces them to work in arduous conditions to feed their families, which aligns with Marxist feminist critiques of women's economic dependence under capitalism (Federici, 2012). The feminization of labor theory examines the growing concentration of women in insecure, low-wage employment with instability, irregular shifts, and bad working conditions (Standing, 1999). The respondents' experiences reflect the precarity of feminine labour, in which long working hours and short rest periods are normative. Precarity and lack of protection are obvious in the absence of defined working conditions—with shifts ranging from 8 to 24 hours—demonstrating the unregulated nature of such employment, which is characteristic of feminine sectors. Health risks and job insecurity are evident, as many women indicate a wish to leave owing to physical suffering, yet financial restrictions force them to stay in the field. This demonstrates the gendered burden of precarious work, in which women are frequently obliged to choose economic survival over personal well-being (Kabeer, 2001)

1.3 No Work-life Balance

In this full-time profession, the household and family responsibilities of bus hostesses are significantly impacted. Bus hostesses shared that they are fully reliant on family support for household duties as they are all the time out of home and in different locations due to travel. In demanding jobs, this support system is crucial.

Respondents shared

"No, my parents take care of the household responsibilities, and I stay in touch with them via mobile. But when I take leave, I also do household chores."

The second quotation emphasizes how rigid the work is and how it affects personal and family life: *"Yeah, my job prevents me from dedicating enough time to domestic duties. The driver always complains about me, even when I get an urgent call, and I never get time off for important tasks like weddings or funerals."* This reflects the demanding work environments that keep women from attending important events and taking care of their families, which could cause social and familial strain.

The emotional burden of working women is depicted here, *"Yes, like if the kids get sick, I can't go home immediately, I have to finish my work first and then I can go,"* which emphasizes the importance of work over pressing family obligations. The need to put work ahead of urgent family obligations can lead to anxiety and feelings of inadequacy when it comes to striking a balance between personal and professional obligations.

Finally, one of the hostesses while recalling her professional life as a hostess shared, *"I didn't do any housework because my mother and sister were working and I used to do my duty,"* suggesting that household job distribution may need to be modified in some cases to account for bus hostesses' busy work schedules. Families need to be able to adapt to balance the competing demands of work and home.

These narratives focus on the difficulties bus hostesses have in juggling household duties, highlighting the necessity for more flexible work schedules and supportive family structures to enable women to manage their personal and professional lives successfully.

It is a significant challenge faced by bus hostesses to balance their job demands with household responsibilities and family life. The first quote was, *"Yeah, I can't spend time with my family; but I get leave in case of an emergency, such if someone passes away. However, there is no work-life balance at this position, and I typically obtain a one-month leave of absence,"* which emphasizes how rigid their schedules are. While there is emergency leave available, the general lack of vacation time leads to a serious imbalance between work and personal life.

Another bus hostess discussed the psychological and emotional effects of her work, saying, *"Yes, because I can't take care of my kids and I can't spend time with my family. I merely provide for them financially by working like a man. I can't display parental love to my kids and it is the biggest guilt".*

It demonstrates the significant impact on their capacity to carry out their parental responsibilities, resulting in emotions of inadequacy and guilt for their absence from their kids. One of the hostesses also revealed, saying, *"Yeah, I can't dedicate my time to domestic duties. Because of professional commitments, I am unable to attend any weddings or social events. In the event of an emergency, such as a death in the family, I receive a break; without it, I am unable to dedicate enough attention to my domestic duties. Thus, there is no balance"* draws attention to the inability to take part in significant family and social gatherings, aggravating the feeling of alienation and detachment from family and society. As Hochschild discovered, when commercial interests claim a worker's emotional life, that worker becomes vulnerable to alienation from aspects of themselves and their work (Hochschild, 1983).

The physical exhaustion and inadequate rest shared by bus hostess further strain their ability to manage both work and home life effectively. *"I found the work-life balance to be the most difficult because sometimes we would be sent on another trip without rest, and it was very difficult."*

One hostess reflects more deeply, saying, *"The bus hostesses are too busy to dedicate time to family chores. "I didn't buy new clothing when I used to work as a bus hostess since I knew I wouldn't have time to wear them."* This moving comment captures the degree of personal abandonment and sacrifice that comes with the work.

Last but not least, the statement, *"Work-life balance is the most challenging one because sometimes there are problems in the house, and whenever there is a problem in the house, there is psychological pressure on me being the earning head of the family,"* emphasizes the continuous psychological stress brought on by having to prioritize work over taking care of personal matters.

Even while there is some leniency in certain situations, as stated in *"Yes, I am unable to devote time to my household responsibilities but whenever there was an emergency, I am granted leave,"* the fundamental obstacle is still finding a balance between work and personal obligations. Better working conditions and support networks for bus hostesses are imperative, as this imbalance has serious emotional and psychological effects in addition to negative effects on their physical health.

If we analyze these findings in light of the literature review section, research supports that on-the-job stresses such as job autonomy, fair rewards, work-family conflict, and work overload significantly contribute to work tiredness and turnover among employees working for various bus companies. However, work overload and work-family conflict were identified as important indications of work exhaustion among Pakistani bus service employees. The study found that

work tiredness among bus service employees is mostly caused by work-family conflict and perceived job stress. Nighttime bus routes frequently compel employees to spend more time with the organization, resulting in sleepiness and irritability during daytime rest. Bus drivers and hostesses face greater workloads as shifts change, restricting working autonomy. The study also discovered that work exhaustion mediates the association between independent factors (work-family conflicts and perceived work stress) and turnover intention (Saleem, 2016).

In Pakistan, Women face worse living conditions, limited autonomy, and male dominance, harmfully affecting various aspects of women's lives. This human rights concern highlights the detrimental effects of gender discrimination (Ali, 2022). In Pakistan, over 70% of economically active women work in dangerous professions with unfavorable working conditions (Women,2023). Some of the barriers faced by women are 'imposed' (e.g., legal restrictions that inhibit the working time of women in some countries, most notably night work, which effectively excludes them from many transport jobs that demand 24/7 operations); others are 'gender-specific' (e.g., 'cultural stereotypes' that define 'men's work' and 'women's work', including unpaid work in the home, which display many common characteristics across countries/transport sectors but women are disproportionately affected due to their primary responsibilities in childcare and domestic chores (Turnbull, 2013). Recognizing women's caregiving obligations are among the primary elements that require improvement to boost the number of women working in the transportation industry (Jiménez,2020).

Emotional labor theory here highlights the emotional toll that workers must bear to achieve employment demands. This prolonged emotional labor leads to exhaustion and burnout (Hochschild, 1983). The psychological burden of juggling work commitments and family responsibilities is clear in these stories. Emotional exhaustion from role conflicts are visible in the inability to attend family events or care for sick children, indicating a conflict between work

and family obligations. This frequently results in shame and feelings of inadequacy, as one responder stated: "I can't display parental love to my kids, and it is the biggest guilt." The respondent's statement of how professional duties take precedence, even amid emotional emergencies, demonstrates suppression of emotional needs. This resonates with how service-sector professionals are frequently forced to disguise personal emotions to maintain professionalism (Newman 2004). Marxist feminism criticizes capitalism for exploiting women's dual roles in producing (work) and reproductive (home) labor, trapping them in a double burden (Federici, 2012). Bus hostesses are obliged to juggle these tasks within strict time limits, reflecting capitalist exploitation of women's labor. The reliance on family members to take over household responsibilities demonstrates how domestic labor is still primarily a family responsibility, even when women work for pay. This indicates the continuation of patriarchy, in which women bear the weight of both paid and unpaid work (Vogel, 2013). Many hostesses reflect overwork and alienation as they express weariness, psychological stress, and lack of time for social engagements, indicating that they are alienated not merely from leisure but also family life—a common result of overwork under capitalism (Hartmann, 1979). Similarly, the strain of managing emotions can lead to a sense of disconnection from one's feelings (Hochschild, 1983). Feminization of labor theory here explains why women, particularly in the service sector, are frequently drawn into low-wage, hazardous occupations with long hours and few social benefits (Standing, 1999). These jobs have a poor work-life balance, as evidenced by the respondents' accounts. The accounts show precarious working conditions, which include inconsistent hours, short breaks, and difficulty obtaining time off for important events such as weddings and funerals, exemplifying the inflexible and demanding character of feminine occupations. The statement "I didn't buy new clothing because I knew I wouldn't have time to wear them" emphasizes the sacrifice of personal well-being and identity

as a result of structural job insecurity in gendered roles. The lack of time for home tasks causes emotional and mental strain, especially for women in these roles who are also the primary breadwinners for their families. This demonstrates how the feminization of labor makes women more susceptible to psychological pressure (Kabeer, 2000).

1.4 Stressful Life in Company Hostels

Bus hostesses shared the harsh living circumstances and difficulties faced while staying in hostels provided by the bus companies. *"I live here in a hostel provided by the company, I had to move to Islamabad and stay in a hostel because of work requirements. Before, when I worked in Faisalabad, I would go home after eight hours of work,"* reflects the transition from living at home to living in a hostel. This change may cause disturbances to personal habits and increase feelings of loneliness.

One of the hostesses shared about the substandard living conditions: *"The hostel is not well maintained, there is a lack of gas for cooking, and the hostel is not clean. The only furniture in the room is a mattress, which is in poor shape and not clean"* Inadequate amenities can hurt employees' health and happiness, as well as make living conditions unpleasant and unhealthy. These women are made even more vulnerable by their remote locations from relatives and the dearth of safe transportation choices. The third remark, *"According to me, the most difficult was safety concerns, because the company didn't provide pick and drop service, we were living far away from our family in hostels,"* emphasizes the importance of safety concerns.

Another hostess shared *"I have 19 years of experience as a bus hostess. I started my job in 2006 when I was very young. There were twenty hostesses living in one hostel room in a bus company (name is not mentioned) which is an awful company in terms of environment for female workers, these girls work on shifts, coming and going from the same room"*. This brings attention to the problems of overcrowding and the long-term effects of poor living conditions

on workers. Compounding the challenges of living in a hostel is the possibility of increased discomfort and stress due to overcrowding.

A bus hostess who is the ex-staff of a leading bus company who served there for 12 years shared

"Another difficulty was working from the hostel rather than our residence. We missed our homes. They wouldn't allow us to go home for 15 days, whether we were on duty or not. We asked to go home on our off days. For example, if I had a duty in Lahore and then a 12-hour stop/rest period, their policy required us to stay in the hostel/residence and not go home. This was very hard for us. During Ramadan, when duties were fewer, we still couldn't go home. They only allowed us to go home for four days after 15 days."

This example illustrates how gender oppression and economic exploitation relate from a Marxist feminist perspective. Even when they are not on duty, the hostesses are compelled to remain in hostels, which limits their independence and keeps them away from their families for extended periods. This not only makes them feel more emotionally and psychologically stressed, but it also shows how capitalist systems put worker welfare last and operational convenience first. The disregard for cultural and personal needs—like spending Ramadan with family—highlights how indifferent profit-driven practices are to the psychological and social demands of their workforce.

Upon asking the female manager/hostel warden about what they do in their free time in the hostel when they are not on the job, she said that *"they wash their uniform, talk to their families on the phone, hardly go out for outings, miss their families, and talk or share their hearts with fellow hostesses. They are hardly visited by any family members as tickets are expensive to travel and families cannot afford such visits"* reflecting an overall unhappy life away from families.

Overall, these sentiments depict the severe difficulties bus hostesses endure in their living arrangements, highlighting the necessity of improved housing and security precautions to raise their standard of living.

About harsh living conditions of women residing in company hostels, findings resonate well with the literature review section as many studies recognize that transport has been traditionally a male-dominated area. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the term “gender gap” is used to describe the differences between women and men in the labor market. The EIGE discusses that, in general terms, the main issues concerning the gender gap are employment rate, part-time work, unpaid care, and family responsibilities, access to rights and assets (professions and decision-making positions), working conditions, hourly wages (gender pay gap), and the possibilities for economic independence (Dorantes, 2019). The road transport sector in Pakistan is categorized by noncompliance and no application of labor law. The road transport labor force consists of male wage workers, self-employed operators owning a single vehicle purchased on loans from moneylenders on exploitative terms, and small entrepreneurs who own individually or jointly 5 to 20 or larger vehicle fleets and fail or evade to comply with rules depriving the employees of minimum social security the state institutions provide for permanent employees in registered industrial/commercial establishments. Road transport workers face low pay, long hours, unfavorable working conditions, occupational health risks, and a lack of social protection in a deregulated, competitive industry (Hisam, 2006). In such unorganized jobs, workers face total lack of job security and zero social security protection net. They face extreme exploitation, resulting in long hours of work, unacceptable working conditions and occupational health hazards. As a woman in a vulnerable sector, she faces additional inequalities because of gender. Discriminations like lesser wages, sexual harassment, the absence of maternity benefits, and poor nutrition and ill-health are very

common” (Jalisatgi, 2022). The demand for the pick and drop service from the company to the bus hostess considering the safety issues reveals that “in Pakistan, “in the context of human security, female mobility is also contrived because of the violence and harassment women face when they are in public spaces in general or public transports, in particular. The number of harassment cases and the forms it takes to show that name-calling, teasing, staring, touching, male physical exposure, and groping are common in the public transport which women use to travel to and from for educational and job-related reasons. The number and types of harassment have been consistently reported in all the developing countries in and around all public spaces and in public transport such as bus stations, train stations, or public transport stops” (Zulfqar, 2020). Also from a Pakistani society perspectives, socio-cultural norms and expectations limit women's mobility in Pakistan. Women rely heavily on public transportation, often experiencing harassment and a lack of gender-responsive options. women primarily travel during daytime hours, highlighting safety concerns and societal conventions (Malik, 2020). Kabeer argues that systemic constraints such as gender norms and poverty influence choices, frequently driving women into exploitative jobs (Kabeer, 2001).

Emotional labor extends beyond the workplace into personal life when employees are required to regulate their emotions even under stressful circumstances (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional management is even more difficult for bus hostesses who live in poorly maintained hostels far from home. Loneliness and psychological toll are visible when living away from family, which causes emotional exhaustion, as hostesses miss home, particularly during Ramadan. The requirement to stay in hostels even when off duty generates a sense of isolation and alienation, adding to the emotional load. Hostesses spend their free time washing uniforms, chatting with families on the phone, and communicating frustrations with colleagues, demonstrating their restricted leisure time and emotional reliance on coworkers. The absence of supporting

surroundings aggravates the stress associated with emotional labor, leading to burnout (Grandey 2000). Marxist feminism criticizes how capitalism and patriarchy work together to exploit women's labor while separating them from their homes and families. The experiences of these hostesses demonstrate the twofold exploitation women face—economically through insecure working conditions and emotionally through isolation from their social support systems. Control and alienation from family are well depicted as hostesses are required to reside in hostels even when not on duty, demonstrating how capitalist firms prioritize operational convenience over worker well-being. This restriction over their movement is a form of gender discrimination that limits personal autonomy. The inability to return home even during Ramadan demonstrates how cultural and familial needs are sacrificed to advance capitalist objectives (Federici, 2012). Reports of twenty women sharing a single room with subpar amenities illustrate the exploitation of female labor without regard for their dignity. This reflects the structural issue of underpaid, undervalued women's labor in Pakistan's service sector, where patriarchal norms and capitalism justify severe living and working conditions, maintaining women's subjugation (Hartmann 1979).

The feminization of labor theory examines women are increasingly employed in service-sector employment with poor, unstable working conditions (Standing, 1999). In Pakistan, hostessing is a rising category of precarious professions in which women provide critical services with little work security, poor living conditions, and limited mobility. Vulnerability and Safety Issues are evident as inadequate mobility, and a lack of company-provided pick-up and drop-off services make women more vulnerable. This is especially important in Pakistan, where socio-cultural norms and expectations limit women's mobility. Women rely heavily on public transportation, often experiencing harassment and a lack of gender-responsive options (Malik, 2020). The job compulsion by the companies to stay in hostels further isolates them from their

families. Invisible labor and emotional impact are evident as even when not working, hostesses are expected to stay in hostels, demonstrating capitalism's demand for complete control over workers' time and space. These women's concerns demonstrate how emotional weariness and alienation are byproducts of such institutions, particularly for women imprisoned between professional pressures and restricted personal liberty (Kabeer 2000).

1.5 Gender-based discrimination, Exploitation & Passenger Harassment / Rude behavior

According to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), 'violence and harassment' in the world of work refers to "a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment." The Convention defines 'gender-based violence and harassment' as "violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment" (ILO, 2019).

Bus hostesses from low socioeconomic backgrounds experience more difficulties. For example, a lot of these young girls come from uneducated and unprivileged social classes and are therefore vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation. Numerous respondents brought out the lack of moral and financial support by peers and shared that even when it is offered by someone in the workplace, it occasionally has conditions or restrictions. This conditional support can take many different forms, such as demands for subservience, loyalty, or even inappropriate behavior that preys on the weaknesses of those who need assistance. Bus hostesses may feel pressured to adhere to these requirements to obtain the necessary support, even at the expense of their dignity or well-being, making this relationship especially exploitative.

As one of the respondents shared,

"You encounter all kinds of people in this profession. Sometimes, the other person appears to be offering a lot of moral and financial support, but there's often a hidden motive, such as seeking a physical relationship. This has been my personal and very bad experience: as long as you don't give a firm response, they take advantage of you, thinking you are a young and inexperienced girl. Because you are a woman, you have to face this everywhere. This field teaches you not to trust anyone, especially if you are young and inexperienced. It's very difficult for young girls in this field, they become disheartened seeing all this. Girls who lack experience and are very young, or those without fathers, or those supporting their education, are more easily trapped in this whereas educated girls with a strong background can deal with the problems".

Another respondent shared while talking about on-the-job training.

"In 15 days of training after joining, they taught how to deal with passengers, how to handle if a passenger is hyper, and all the functions that the passengers used to talk about like seating, cushions, presenting food and soft drinks, doing announcements, etc. Mostly they taught us to remain calm, cool, and silent and ignore the passenger's rude behavior. We were informed that the people on the bus were members of your family and that this was your house. You must overlook what they say, stay calm, and behave properly. To keep our home a nice place to live, you must remain silent. You must accept whatever comes your way. Mostly travelers acted in a very courteous manner."

This statement reveals how important it is to the company to keep up an image of composure and friendliness, regardless of how the passengers behave. This is how workers' emotional labor is exploited. This relates well to the flight attendants interviewed by Hochschild "who often spoke of their smiles as being on them but not of them and found it difficult to come down

after work from their artificial elation, born of the need to continuously enhance the customer's status by acting as if the cabin is the customer's home” (Hochschild, 1983).

One of the bus hostesses who was recently laid off from the job as the company seized its operation from her route area shared that

“The biggest difficulty is that it's a 50-seater bus, and sometimes 40-seater, and it's very challenging for a single girl to operate among 50 men in our society. Then there is our dress code; like we have to wear full makeup, apply specific lipstick, and appear like a model in front of those men. This is the hardest part! Another challenge is to ignore staring passengers. 'To save your dignity, the best way is to ignore them. Men or passengers think that we are there for them, that we belong to them, and that paying PKR 2200 makes them feel entitled to us. Our silence, ignoring their actions, avoiding them, was our way of preserving our dignity.”

This is consistent with Hochschild's theory that emotional labor necessitates people not only managing their own emotions but also implementing mechanisms to regulate the flow of emotions and interactions between workers and customers. According to Hochschild, the flight attendant must be more pleasant than would be expected. In contrast, bill collectors are expected to be harder, instilling fear in their clients. In both circumstances, the employee is expected to create a feeling in the consumer to satisfy company demands (Hochschild, 1983).

Bus hostess quoted *"The male staff and people expect the bus hostesses to befriend them, and after that, they want to control her."* In the workplace, where male coworkers and customers anticipate bus hostesses to enter personal relationships can result in additional control and exploitation, this statement emphasizes the power dynamics and gendered expectations.

Respondent shared

“Because we are women, we have to hear a lot from passengers even though the company didn't discriminate. They would say, "We have paid the charges," and we would say, "You paid

for the seat, not to misbehave with us." They would repeatedly call and bother us, especially during busy times like Eid days."

This reveals how, because of their hectic work schedules, passengers feel entitled to the attention and care of bus hostesses, even when it comes to acting inappropriately.

The female hostel warden shared about the job environment *"Some passengers are decent, but some are illiterate and unnecessarily ring the bell again and again, making the hostess go to them repeatedly. They even make false complaints about the hostesses when they don't get the desired response. Most bus hostesses are beautiful and young, and passengers think they are easily available for inappropriate moves or unreasonable demands like asking for phone numbers or friendship. Our society talks so much about Islam but in reality, they are far from it, reflecting the contrast between words and deeds"*.

This captures the dual standards and hypocrisy of society's treatment of women. Despite religious and cultural traditions that advocate for respect, bus hostesses are subjected to systemic harassment and discrimination based on their gender. This demonstrates how capitalist exploitation of female workers and cultural hypocrisy connect.

A bus hostess complained about both staff and passengers

"The behavior of the passengers is not good; they try to create problems like if there is an issue with the headphones or a chair in the bus, they become rude and ask me to fix the problem, I can't change the bus chair. They try to give me their phone number for friendship, and when I do not respond, they put pressure on me. Moreover, the staff tries to annoy the new bus hostesses and make fun of them."

One of the hostesses shared *"that passengers overburden them with one demand after another right after boarding the bus. They intentionally tease us, and male passengers keep ogling at us, making it an uneasy and uncomfortable experience. She further says that still, we believe,*

'hum theek tu wo theek,' and we try to keep ourselves well-disciplined and professional, thus coping with this challenge by avoiding the situation. Company rules for bus hostesses are really strict as they don't allow us to use mobile phones during duty. Therefore, on a long ten-hour trip, we are only dedicated to the passengers' needs."

"If there is ever an accident, the company does not give any medicine, just the hostesses have to take care of themselves."

Respondent shared

"People in society are rude and when they know that this woman is working due to financial compulsion, they try to take advantage of her."

A previous staff /bus hostess of the company shared

"It was difficult for me to serve the passengers and if there was any problem, the bus hostess would have to deal with the passengers, not the company, and answer their questions like why headphones are not working, why the bus seat is not comfortable, etc. There should be a safety policy, the company should take responsibility for the safety of the bus hostesses because passengers try to harass the bus hostesses, and the company does not take any action against them. No, if I complained about any passenger, the company would tell me to bear it, and they would not take any action against the passenger."

Thus, revealing the lack of caring measures for bus hostesses and the company's disregard to harassment complaints.

"Passengers 'tung kerty hain' (passengers harass). Some passengers in the bus hold a strange mentality, 'baithy baray ajeeb style say hotay hain, bar bar kehna parta hai side dain, change karain, guzarnay dain' (they sit in a very strange manner; we have to repeatedly ask them to move or get aside, change their position, or let us pass). They try to touch the knee, foot, and

arm of the girls. 'Larki a rahi hai tu kuch touch ho jay' (if a girl is passing by, they try to touch her). 'Ghoor k, dekh kay jatay hain bar bar' (they stare at us constantly and repeatedly)."

To measure the extent of harassment faced by bus hostesses in this male-dominated sector, this close-ended question was designed to quantitatively assess the prevailing tendencies of harassment within the work environment. Respondents were asked if they experienced any form of harassment (verbal, physical, and sexual) at the workplace based on their gender. The researcher manually compiled and measured all the responses of the bus hostesses to this query from the interview transcripts.

The result shows that out of a total of 20 Pakistani bus hostesses, 16 bus hostesses reported facing harassment at least two to three times during their entire service, making it 80% while 4 bus hostesses reported that they never faced such issues, making it 20%. This 20% also shared that they were mentally prepared and consider such happenings as quite predictable because they believe it is the nature of the job and workplace and it is predictable in such public-facing careers, thus normalizing the oppressed behavior. This relates well with the study in the literature review which states that Violence against women in the transport sector is not only prevalent in underdeveloped countries, but it is also common in developed economies. For example, the findings of a study (2017) showed that 911 women transport workers disclosed at least one recent experience of violence, One quarter (25%) of women transport workers believe that violence against women is a regular occurrence in the transport sector, Just over a quarter (26%) of women transport workers believe that harassment is considered to be 'part of the job' in transport, Shocking accounts are given in the survey of verbal threats and intimidation, sexual harassment, and sexual and physical assault against women workers, often with devastating effects on women (Pillinger, 2017).

The bus hostesses' high number of reports of harassment points to a dysfunctional corporate culture that either ignores or tolerates these problems. It is imperative that every level of employee engagement, from top management on down, try to alter this culture.

Analyzing these findings in light of the literature review, it is evident that Men dominate all areas of women's lives in Pakistan's patriarchal system, keeping women dependent on men for their behavior, mobility, control over resources, and reproductive choices. Violence against women is frequently perpetuated as a result of men's honor being associated with women's liberty and freedom (Babur, 2007). A study conducted in Pakistan explains that domestic violence against women persists and grows daily in Pakistan despite the country's numerous laws and regulations (Falak, 2022). Men make more decisions than women do when it comes to families, choosing male companions, and budgeting for the home. Cultural norms required women to take care of their families at home (Khan, 2008). Masculine characteristics will always be valued above femininity and feminine attributes in a societal structure that is male-centered, male-identified, and male-controlled. Men (and women) will be encouraged to view women as entities fit to satisfy male desires under such a system. Women are viewed as less than completely human and untrustworthy in such a culture, especially when they "accuse men of sexual misconduct (Becker, 1999).

Working women in underdeveloped countries face numerous problems due to their traditional socio-cultural system. It not only disturbs the status of women but also hampers regional socio-economic development. A study conducted in Lahore, Pakistan reveals that despite being significant contributors to healthcare, nurses are not treated well in society and at their workplace. The abuse adversely affects their livelihood which affects the efficiency of healthcare. The respondent's quality of life was significantly impacted by harassment, difficult-to-attend social events, and obnoxious behavior from patients, coworkers, and relatives

(Nafees, 2022). Women's participation in the workforce is challenged and restricted for a variety of reasons, including restrictive gender roles, societal and cultural norms, harassment and gender-based violence, and the idea of honor associated with women. (Redaelli, 2021). Similarly, discrimination based on gender is a human rights concern that affects a significant number of women in Pakistan (Ali, 2022). A research study examines the "Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010" in Pakistani society, focusing on religious norms and socio-economic conditions. It highlights the ongoing issue of harassment among working women, particularly those from needy or poor backgrounds. Even after the law passed, the issue continues to rise, with the number of harassment cases increasing by 20% in the last five years. The article evaluates the Act in light of religious norms and sociocultural factors in Pakistani society (Razi, 2016). Women working in the media sector in Pakistan experience pressure, obstacles, and misbehavior. The main sociocultural issues that women in media industries silently confront are workload, masculine stereotype thinking, family discrimination, nepotism, and criticism from society. Law enforcement organizations must uphold legislation that safeguards women both within and outside of the workplace (Shah, 2023). Violence against women in public spaces is a global issue, especially as women step outside traditional domestic roles, potentially defying societal norms (Nirmal Gautam, 2019). Public areas become vulnerable spaces for women. Women experiencing sexual violence on public transportation are hesitant to move freely due to societal structures empowering men. "Women's mobility is restricted worldwide by sexual violence in transit areas since it impacts their movement due to fear of violence. The concept of "the spatial expression of patriarchy," offers structural and relational interpretations (Pedersen, 2020). Sexual harassment in the workplace is not a singular incident with psychological or criminal causes; rather, it is a manifestation of the unequal power dynamics between the sexes. Sexual harassment in the

workplace happens in a variety of professions and sectors, making it harder for women to attain their proper position in the workforce and creating a hostile, stressful, and destructive work environment. The most common type of gender-based violence in Pakistani society, which is marked by patriarchy and gender segregation, is sexual harassment at work (Hadi, 2022).

Findings also highlight workplace harassment, discrimination, and abuse from passengers who violate personal boundaries and make hostesses uncomfortable. It also reveals the intersection of power, privilege, and class, with harassers potentially exerting dominance. While increased labor force participation can empower women economically, it can also lead to exploitative conditions, as women are often concentrated in the most vulnerable sectors of the economy (Standing, 1999). Here Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labor is critical for understanding how bus hostesses perform emotional labor in a hostile environment while balancing cultural expectations, gender standards, and organizational requirements.

Hochschild (1983) observes that emotional work is more typically connected with positions held by women, who are expected to be nice, polite, and calm regardless of how they are treated. The hostesses' narratives demonstrate these emotional expectations, as they are coached to maintain a calm demeanor even when harassed. The phrase comparing passengers to "family" reflects the expectation to disguise frustration or fear while providing care that prioritizes the company's public image. This recalls Hochschild's research on flight attendants, who were educated to improve customer experiences while suppressing personal emotions, resulting in emotional dissonance (Hochschild, 1983). One of the respondents emphasizes the pressure to "remain calm, cool, and silent" in the face of impolite behavior, demonstrating the gap between expectations and realities of emotional work. The requirement for constant politeness and compulsory makeup and beauty standards highlights how these workers' bodies and emotions are commodified to serve corporate goals. Workers are thus required to embody

an idealized version of femininity that is both emotionally and visually beautiful, to conform to gendered standards within capitalist labor arrangements.

The conditional support mentioned by respondents reveals a gendered power dynamic in which male coworkers or passengers exploit women's need for assistance by making unreasonable demands. Emotional labor intersects with gender-based control here, as the pressure to cooperate with inappropriate advances for job survival exemplifies how emotional labor can be exploited (Hochschild, 1983). This narrative emphasizes that young, inexperienced, or economically insecure women are more prone to these exploitative settings and that emotional labor in male-dominated industries can take on particularly abusive forms. This is consistent with neoliberal labor practices, in which the responsibility of maintaining professionalism and managing inappropriate behavior is placed on the individual worker rather than the organization addressing these issues consistently (Gill, 2008).

The respondents' testimonies also reveal a lack of institutional support for dealing with harassment, demonstrating how neoliberal organizations emphasize profit and customer happiness over workers' well-being.

One of the bus hostesses stated that passengers read the hostesses' silence and politeness as availability, highlighting the gendered expectations placed on women in emotional labor tasks. This also emphasizes customer entitlement, as passengers believe that their bus ticket money gives them influence over the hostess' body and emotions. Hochschild's theory explains how emotional labor becomes an invisible kind of control, with hostesses forced to repress their discomfort to maintain the company's intended image, even in hostile environments. This is exacerbated by workplace restrictions that limit coping techniques, such as banning cell phone use, making it more difficult for hostesses to seek help during lengthy shifts. The requirement to avoid disagreement reflects a larger societal message that women should accommodate

others' behavior, even if it jeopardizes their dignity. According to Hochschild (1983), workers are required to generate emotions that are appropriate for their role (for example, friendliness and serenity), regardless of their true feelings. The saying, "society is rude when they know a woman works due to financial compulsion," represents the stigmatization of economically engaged women, especially those in public positions. This is also consistent with capitalist labor exploitation, in which the labor market pushes women into unstable, low-paying positions while subjecting them to harassment (Standing 1999). The absence of accountability from management, as stated in the comments, demonstrates how firms shift emotional costs onto employees, maintaining systemic disparities. Bus hostesses are left to self-regulate their emotions with little institutional assistance, similar to how Hochschild portrays the emotional weight carried by flight attendants who must maintain emotional control in the face of unpleasant situations.

Marxist feminist lens examines here that bus hostesses, who are frequently uneducated and disadvantaged, endure two types of oppression: class and gender. Their socioeconomic situation makes them particularly vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation under a capitalist system that undervalues their labor (Mies, 1986). The bus hostesses, many of whom are illiterate and disadvantaged, confront two types of oppression: class and gender. Their social situation exposes them to discrimination and exploitation in a capitalist economy. Conditional support, which frequently requires subservience or unacceptable behavior, reflects patriarchal systems and societal expectations about women's duties. The bus hostesses' stories demonstrate how men in positions of power, whether coworkers or passengers, frequently exploit these women's financial desperation (Hartmann, 1979). This transactional character of assistance reveals the power dynamics inherent in a capitalist society, in which women are compelled to compromise their dignity to meet fundamental requirements. The respondents'

observations on the hidden motives for support highlight how masculine entitlement intensifies their vulnerability (Connell, 1987).

Bus hostesses' training emphasizes emotional management, teaching them to moderate their feelings and overlook disrespectful behavior from passengers. This is consistent with Hochschild's theory of emotional labor, which holds that workers must repress their genuine sentiments while presenting a professional face (Hochschild 1983). This expectation puts a strain on the hostesses, who must navigate a work setting that dehumanizes them while requiring emotional labor to maintain the company's image.

The accounts also demonstrate how gendered expectations impact the work environment for bus hostesses. The pressure to conform to a specific appearance, such as full makeup and a model-like manner, reflects cultural standards that objectify women (Wolf, 1991). The shared experiences of harassment and unwanted advances by passengers highlight how women's bodies are policed and objectified in public areas (Gill, 2007). The notion that they must endure such behavior to keep their jobs perpetuates capitalist exploitation and patriarchal control over women's bodies (Fraser 2013).

The high rate of reported harassment (80%) and the acceptance of such behavior emphasize a concerning feature of the workplace. The fact that some hostesses justify harassment as part of their work demonstrates how systemic oppression can lead to internalized misogyny and a passive acceptance of exploitative conditions (Bourdieu, 2001).

The lack of corporate assistance for addressing harassment and discrimination reflects a systemic neglect of women workers in unsafe positions (Pateman, 1988). The company's failure to develop safety measures or respond to harassment complaints demonstrates a fundamental disregard for the realities of women's experiences in the workplace. This disregard

for worker safety demonstrates the capitalist prioritization of profit over people, forcing vulnerable workers to navigate exploitative settings on their own (HUWS, 2014).

Applying the lens of feminization of labor theory, we find that bus hostesses' experiences demonstrate how the aspects of female roles—such as care, emotional support, and customer service—are frequently portrayed as "natural" attributes of femininity, undervaluing their contributions (Ong, 1991). Their narratives show the grim picture of bus hostesses working in a precarious employment environment marked by job uncertainty, low pay, and a lack of support. The economic pressures women experience forces them to endure harassment and exploitation, demonstrating how neoliberal policies frequently exacerbate the vulnerabilities of feminine labor (Katz 2001). The absence of safety precautions and corporate accountability for harassment underscores the systemic neglect of women in precarious positions, emphasizing the need for structural changes to safeguard and empower these workers (Fraser, 2013).

The pressure to comply with cultural beauty standards, such as wearing makeup and keeping a certain appearance, demonstrates how femininity is commodified in the workplace (Wolf, 1991). This expectation not only objectifies women but also creates a work atmosphere in which they must navigate unwanted advances and harassment, underscoring the continued issues of gender discrimination in feminized labor roles (Gill, 2007).

The normalization of harassment in the bus hostesses' narratives highlights a disturbing component of feminized labor: women are expected to tolerate inappropriate behavior as part of their employment. The high rate of reported harassment (80%) reflects a larger societal context in which women's workplace experiences are frequently discounted or ignored (Bourdieu, 2001). The lack of corporate duty to handle harassment and ensure a safe working environment demonstrates structural challenges in gendered labor sectors. The absence of

protective policies highlights the critical need for accountability and reform in industries with a largely female workforce.

1.5.1 The Most and the least difficult Challenges

Respondents are asked to rank the challenges they face on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least challenging and 5 being the most challenging.

Based on the scores, "dealing with rude passengers" turned out as the most difficult challenge overall, while "safety concerns on duty" is the least difficult factor for the bus hostesses.

Bus hostesses identified **dealing with rude passengers** as the most difficult component of their job, citing stress and discomfort. Disrespectful behavior which may include verbal abuse, improper comments, and physical harassment, fosters a hostile work environment. This emphasizes the need for improved dispute resolution training and greater safeguards to maintain the safety and dignity of bus hostesses. The second most challenging factor for the bus hostesses is **financial instability** due to low earnings, unpredictable income, and a lack of financial security. This employment is critical for them to support families, and there is a clear demand for higher wages and more predictable income arrangements, underlining the importance of economic relief. **Managing Work-life balance** appeared as a significant challenge, with an impact and score similar to financial instability. Bus hostesses have a tough full-time job that involves long and unpredictable hours, making it difficult for them to adequately balance their personal and family responsibilities. Burnout and stress can result from trying to juggle work and personal obligations, which emphasizes the need for more flexible work schedules and support systems to help maintain a healthier balance. The **job's physical demands**, including long hours and prolonged standing or sitting, pose a substantial challenge to bus hostesses, potentially leading to health issues like fatigue and musculoskeletal problems, necessitating ergonomic interventions, regular breaks, and job redesigns.

Surprisingly the least challenging factor turned out to be the **safety concerns** while on the job, indicating that they might not be as urgent or widespread as other problems. Nonetheless, bus hostesses are still greatly impacted by even lower-ranked difficulties, highlighting the ongoing need to uphold and enhance safety standards.

Other thematic challenges indicated by the hostesses in daily lives were negative societal attitudes and norms towards them and family opposition to pursuing their careers, which led to stigma and prejudice, complicating their employment circumstances. Family opposition also hampers their work lives, as they may object to their job choice, creating emotional and psychological distress.

2. Social Attitudes and Norms Towards Working Women and Bus Hostesses

After analyzing the emerging themes and sub-themes from the interview transcripts of the bus hostesses, we found that Pakistani bus hostesses are severely stigmatized and harassed by society. The study explores social perceptions and attitudes towards bus hostesses through interviews. It categorizes sentiments of society toward working women as positive, neutral, and negative to assess societal views on women's labor. It also investigates common preconceptions and stigmas to understand cultural standards. Bus hostesses discuss instances of bias or discrimination they experienced, highlighting how societal perceptions and treatment affect their personal and professional lives.

According to them, they are commonly harassed and subjected to unwanted advances because the passengers view them as easy targets. Society's bad opinions about working women and particularly of their jobs have an impact on their personal lives, leading to problems like failed marriages and marital conflicts. By casting doubt on the morality and appropriateness of bus hostesses for marriage, relatives also add to this stigma. Some hostesses receive support from their coworkers and continue to uphold their dignity in the face of these difficulties.

Nonetheless, the general public perception of women in this field is still unfavorable, which makes it challenging for them to be respected and accepted. Because of these harmful social perceptions, a lot of hostesses would quit their jobs if they were offered better opportunities, as shared by them.

The following are the most frequently prevailing themes or patterns that emerged from the data collection through interviews under social norms and perceptions/ attitudes toward bus hostesses.

2.1 Negative Social Perceptions of Bus Hostesses

All the bus hostesses believe that society has negative opinions about women working outside the home and complain about the negative perception of working women by society as characterless and immoral, especially in the case of bus hostesses. This stereotyping makes them vulnerable, making them easy targets for offensive and extreme social behaviors.

Respondent 2 shared

"Societal views about bus hostesses' work are bad and negative. While working, some passengers throw phone numbers, thinking these girls are easy to contact and trap for friendship. I don't believe that all girls are the same in character, but society still treats every girl as an easy target. We are often subjected to unsolicited offers and propositions for friendships. In our society, negativity is pervasive. "Bohat se baatein sunani parti hain" (We have to listen to a lot). As a bus hostess, we have to endure so much because of the job and necessity (majboori). We have to bear it to secure our job, as it is beyond our control".

Bus hostess shared

"Relatives have negative perceptions that a bus hostess is not the right person to get married with as she is working around males, and she is not a decent girl."

Respondent 8 shared

“This is not well received in our society. Additionally, our job and transportation firms are not well regarded. People with a higher level of education are aware of the role that transportation businesses play in society and understand that girls who are forced to work do so to support their families. They find this work to be satisfactory. However, the majority of people in our society think bus hostesses are not respectable and do not think this is a worthwhile profession.”

One of the bus hostesses shared *"I believe that working as a bus hostess can hurt my future. For example, I believe that my marriage may be in jeopardy as a result of being a bus hostess."*

The statement highlights the anxiety and fear women face due to societal stigma associated with their profession, such as bus hostess jobs. This fear is rooted in deep-rooted biases and stereotypes, which can negatively impact their personal lives and relationships. The pressure to conform to traditional roles and societal expectations significantly impacts women's career decisions.

If we analyze the findings in light of the literature review of this study, it is a well-known fact that men dominate all areas of women's lives in Pakistan's patriarchal system, keeping women dependent on men for their behavior, mobility, control over resources, and reproductive choices. Violence against women is frequently perpetuated because of men's honor being associated with women's liberty and freedom (Falak, 2022). Men make more decisions than women do when it comes to families, choosing male companions, and budgeting for the home. In certain instances, decision-making involved consulting exclusively elderly women—cultural norms required women to take care of their families at home (Khan, 2008). In a male-centered, male-identified, and male-controlled social structure, Men (and women) will be encouraged to view women as entities fit to satisfy male desires. Despite not being primarily motivated by the oppression of women, patriarchal culture is incredibly misogynistic and

values masculinity. Women are viewed as less than completely human and untrustworthy in such a culture ((Becker, 1999). Working women in underdeveloped countries face numerous problems due to their traditional socio-cultural system. A study conducted in Lahore, Pakistan reveals that despite being significant contributors to healthcare, nurses are not treated well in society and at their workplace. The abuse adversely affects their livelihood. The respondent's quality of life was significantly impacted by harassment, difficult-to-attend social events, and obnoxious behavior from patients, coworkers, and relatives. Conclusion: The socio-cultural factors harmed the livelihood of staff nurses (Nafees, 2022). Likewise, the main sociocultural issues that women in media industries silently confront are workload, masculine stereotype thinking, family discrimination, nepotism, and criticism from society. The media business faced notable issues such as employment insecurity, dangerous workplaces, non-cooperative behavior from colleagues, and jealousy between females. They also get fewer marriage proposals and are viewed as unethical (Shah,2023). Social norms that discriminate based on gender hampers women's economic empowerment (WEE), affecting their experiences at work and their ability to get respectable jobs. Studies have shown how women's access to economic opportunities and job experiences are impacted by discriminatory gender norms. They aid in the understanding of gendered problems that disproportionately affect women, women's concentration in less lucrative industries, and stagnation in women's labor force participation (Marcus, 2021).

Hochschild (1983), for example, highlights that "emotional labor is often invisible and undervalued, yet it profoundly shapes the experiences of individuals in service industries—especially women working in socially stigmatized roles" . The hostesses complain of being subjected to harassment and unpleasant behavior from passengers, such as unsolicited offers. According to Hochschild (1983), emotional labor entails surface acting, in which workers hide

their true sentiments (such as rage or discomfort) to portray emotions judged appropriate for the job, such as politeness or neutrality. According to one respondent, "We have to listen to a lot because of the job and necessity". In this case, the hostess performs emotional labor by putting up with abusive behavior to keep her job, regardless of the emotional cost. This is consistent with Hochschild's concept of emotional dissonance in which the mismatch between displayed and felt emotions causes emotional strain.

Hochschild defines deep acting as the effort to match internal emotions to professional standards. The narratives show how bus hostesses adopt society's unfavorable preconceptions about their jobs. For example, one respondent is concerned that her employment may affect her career: "I worry that working as a bus hostess will harm my future. For example, I fear that working as a bus hostess could jeopardize my marriage". This worry shows how society's expectations of "respectable" jobs and traditional gender roles pervade their self-perceptions, compelling these women to participate in deep acting by convincing themselves that they must remain in such roles for economic survival, regardless of personal costs. Hochschild (1983) notes that such intense emotional engagement frequently results in emotional tiredness and burnout over time.

One respondent observes that bus hostesses are frequently regarded as "not the right person to marry" because they work in a male-dominated setting. This stigma stems from deeply ingrained patriarchal ideals that demand that women comply to home obligations. According to Hochschild (1983), workers in emotionally demanding positions, particularly those that defy gender norms, face role conflict when the emotional demands of their job clash with society's expectations. This depicts the conflict these women experience between society's judgment and their economic responsibilities.

Another respondent describes how passengers view hostesses as "easy targets" for unwelcome advances, implying that their job makes them prone to inappropriate behavior. Hochschild (1983) contends that emotional work is gendered, with women in service roles obliged to suffer or absorb emotional abuse to achieve client or company demands. This exploitation of emotional labor perpetuates gendered dynamics of power and control in male-dominated environments. According to the accounts, bus hostesses feel confined in their employment choices due to the cultural stigma associated with their work. For example, "The majority of people in our society think bus hostesses are not respectable and do not think this is a worthwhile profession," aligns with Hochschild's (1983) view that emotional labor not only shapes workplace behavior but also affects life choices, as individuals are pressured to conform to societal norms at the expense of personal ambitions.

Marxist feminism examines the relationship between capitalist exploitation and gender oppression, contending that capitalism undervalues women's labor while profiting from their economic marginalization (Engels, 1884; Vogel, 2013). The narratives emphasize that the hostesses are working mostly for economic reasons—"majboori" (compulsion)—to maintain their family. This exemplifies capitalist exploitation, in which working-class women are driven into low-wage, precarious jobs to support household economies while working in difficult conditions. The stigma associated with women working as bus hostesses demonstrates how patriarchal norms influence labor participation. For example, one responder says, "Relatives have negative perceptions that a bus hostess is not the right person to marry with because she works with males."

Marxist feminists such as Federici (2012) contend that women's labor is socially devalued to perpetuate gendered hierarchies. In this situation, their public-facing job is interpreted as endangering the male-dominated social system, strengthening societal punishment through

exclusion from marriage opportunities. Women's labor outside of typical domestic roles becomes both an economic need and a source of stigma under patriarchal capitalism.

The feminization of labor refers to the growing number of women working in insecure, low-wage, service-oriented employment with precarious working conditions (Standing, 1999; Sassen, 2002). The narratives depict bus hostesses are vulnerable in work scenarios, with abuse and inadequate work security being part of their daily lives. One respondent shared that "Some passengers throw phone numbers, thinking these girls are easy to contact" supporting the hypothesis that feminine labor entails not just economic insecurity but also emotional and physical hazards, particularly in male-dominated environments (Acker, 1990). Furthermore, the double burden—balancing a paid job with societal expectations—comes into play when a respondent shows anxiety about her marital chances "I believe that working as a bus hostess can hurt my future." This tension reflects gendered expectations imposed on women, forcing them to balance economic survival and social stigma, as feminized labor frequently contradicts traditional family obligations (Sassen, 2002).

The patriarchal nature of many companies driven by capitalistic competition intensifies these vulnerabilities. Women encounter institutional hurdles like inequalities and exploitations to promotion, reinforcing gender gaps in salary and work status.

2.2 Gender-based Harassment in a Patriarchal Society

Bus hostesses vehemently shared the incidents of harassment and abuse by the passengers due to prevailing negative perceptions of women associated with such careers where they are in close contact with men, in an overly conservative and patriarchal society. Passengers often harass and treat bus hostesses disrespectfully through unwanted advances, acting inappropriately, and using foul language. Passengers attempting to record videos or requesting special treatment are frequent occurrences.

Respondent 2 who served 7 years in this profession shared

“There are many issues that arise on personal as well as professional levels related to social norms, both at home and at the workplace. In my career, I have encountered several difficulties. There was a point when I had to physically confront a passenger. People have no concern that I am a lady deserving of dignity and respect. I have had to defend myself twice since the start of my career as a bus hostess. A passenger once demanded that the driver drop him down in the middle of the trip, which is against the rules. When I intervened, he started abusing me and used foul language, so I slapped him, and we immediately dropped him off. In another incident, a passenger tried to make my video without my permission while I was working and serving on the bus. I asked him to stop, but he refused, so I slapped him, deleted the video, and involved the motorway police to fine him.”

This highlights the broader phenomena of social norms that under-value and mistreat women in particular professions, forcing them to take the assertive stance to uphold their professional obligations and preserve their dignity.

Respondent 4 shared

“Some passengers try to befriend me by offering food during the journey, initially being very kind and acting polite but when I decline and don't respond, they get angry and get rude by complaining about non-issues like why water is not cold, why headphones are not working for pressurizing me and make false complaints against me to the company by criticizing the services and complaining that I was disrespectful towards them. The company then asked colleagues about the incident. But at that moment, the crew support was there for me.”

Respondent 8 shared

“Yes, once a passenger was harassing me, he got my cell number from my colleague, and he repeatedly messaged me on my mobile during the entire journey that he was watching me and asked me to befriend him”.

These narratives emphasized the social and professional obstacles that bus hostesses must overcome, such as abuse and contempt, which calls for self-defense. It emphasizes how little respect is given to them and how much more assistance and enforcement of safety precautions are required.

As per the literature review of the study, Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of female labor force participation in South Asia in 2023—at just 25%. This low rate is caused by several factors, including cultural norms that govern gender roles, low levels of education, and weak skill sets. Family culture matters a lot, particularly when it comes to who decides whether or not married women can work outside the home. Married women are 18–19% less likely to be working in households where men make all of the decisions. Poor education and home location are not as major barriers to female employment as the influence of family decision-making (Khan, 2023). Data from 150 Lahore bus attendants revealed verbal abuse from customers increased weariness, impacting job satisfaction and quality of life for female servers (Nawaz, 2018) Traditionally women have been kept inside their houses and have not been allowed to actively contribute to the advancement of society. To better understand the stressors that Pakistani working women face, this study concentrated on their job in secretarial and administrative roles inside Pakistani organizations. Work-life balance, sexual harassment, peer pressure, gender discrimination, and lack of promotion possibilities are among the major stressors that have been found. These elements impair their ability to actively participate in economic development by causing physiological, behavioral, and psychological issues. The goal of the study is to address these issues and advance an atmosphere that is more welcoming

and encouraging for women in developing nations (Arif, 2017). The most common type of gender-based violence in Pakistani society, which is marked by patriarchy and gender segregation, is sexual harassment at work. Women have to suffer sexual harassment when they try to enter the workforce and take on financial responsibility for their families against the prevailing social standards. This speaks not only about the structure of the workplace but also to the deeply ingrained culture of female objectification, which frequently portrays women as simple receivers of male desire - attitudes that are reinforced and maintained at work. This study aims to identify the causes of sexual harassment in the workplace in Pakistan, as well as the underlying elements that contribute to under-reporting of sexual harassment incidents in the workplace. This study contends that patriarchal attitudes prevalent in Pakistani society encourage sexual harassment in the workplace and prevent victims from reporting the incident by failing to provide proper moral, cultural, and legal assistance (Hadi, 2022).

Surface acting is a fundamental part of emotional labor in which employees suppress their actual feelings to appear courteous or calm. The bus hostesses relate instances where they have encountered inappropriate behavior, such as unwelcome advances, verbal abuse, and recording without permission. For instance, Respondent 4 offers the following: "Some passengers try to befriend me by offering food, acting polite at first, but when I decline, they get angry and complain about non-issues like water not being cold." This depicts how hosts are supposed to retain a nice demeanor even when mistreated. According to Hochschild (1983), such surface acting causes emotional dissonance—a difference between true emotions (such as rage or terror) and portrayed emotions (such as politeness). This emotional dissonance has a psychological impact, leading to burnout and tension over time.

The narrative emphasizes moments when the hostesses abandon emotional labor and take decisive action, such as addressing passengers. Respondent 2 states, "I slapped him, deleted

the video, and involved the motorway police to fine him, demonstrating a breakdown in surface acting, in which the employee is unable to maintain the emotional display required by the profession due to intense provocation. Hochschild (1983) observes that when workers in emotionally demanding professions encounter a constant mismatch between their feelings and the expected emotional show, it frequently leads to emotional exhaustion, causing them to take severe measures to retake control of their dignity.

The hostesses' accounts highlight the tension between employment expectations and gendered cultural norms. Women working in public spaces face harassment and judgment, putting them in a difficult situation. Respondent 8 remembered: "A passenger got my number from a colleague and kept messaging me, saying he was watching me and wanted to befriend me." "This instance exemplifies the gendered challenges of emotional labor, in which social norms place greater demands on women in public-facing positions. They must perform emotional labor not only to service clients, but also to deal with gendered expectations and harassment, which are not part of their formal job description. This is consistent with Hochschild's (1983) claim that women in gendered professions are frequently forced to bear emotional stress without enough institutional support (Hochschild, 1983). Such labor can lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion, as Hochschild (1983) informs.

Bus hostesses sometimes receive assistance from coworkers during tough situations, as indicated by Respondent 4: "The crew support was there for me."

Hochschild (1983) argues that when workers obtain social or organizational support, their emotional labor becomes maintainable. In employment without structural protections, informal support networks can serve as emotional buffers, mitigating the negative impacts of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983).

Marxist feminism investigates these narratives, revealing that bus hostesses' labor is both undervalued and molded by economic necessity. They struggle to support their families but face harassment and disdain, demonstrating how capitalist systems rely on women's insecure labor while denying them dignity and respect (Federici, 2012). The hostesses' comments demonstrate how their jobs are driven by economic survival. Respondent 2 elaborates: "I had to defend myself twice since the start of my career as a bus hostess. We have to bear it to secure our job."

This is consistent with Marxist feminist critiques that capitalism exploits women's labor by forcing them into underpaid roles with no institutional protections (Vogel, 2013). Their precarious employment exposes them to abuse, revealing how class and gender discrimination intertwine to perpetuate exploitative labor regimes. The stories also demonstrate how patriarchy devalues women working in public places, echoing what Marxist feminists call the social policing of women's labor. The fourth respondent writes: "Relatives have negative perceptions... they don't think a bus hostess is respectable." This stigmatization shows how patriarchal concepts maintain control over women's work by linking females working outside the home to immorality. Such attitudes force women to conform to traditional roles, restricting their career options and strengthening capitalism's reliance on cheap, gendered labor (Engels, 1884).

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home to immorality. Such attitudes force women to conform to traditional roles, restricting their career options and strengthening capitalism's reliance on cheap, gendered labor (Engels, 1884).

The feminization of labor refers to women's rising engagement in insecure, low-wage, and service-oriented employment that typically lacks basic protections (Standing, 1999). Bus hostesses are a striking example of this trend, as women operate in an informal industry with few institutional safeguards and are frequently harassed. Respondent 8 remembered, "A passenger got my number from my colleague and kept messaging me, saying he was watching me." This highlights the vulnerability inherent in feminized labor, in which women undertake public-facing tasks without adequate safety precautions. Feminized labor frequently lacks legal protections, leaving employees vulnerable to emotional and physical harm (Sassen, 2002).

The hostesses face harassment as part of their profession, highlighting how capitalism shifts the costs of emotional labor onto individual women.

Feminization of labor also emphasizes women's double burden, as they must balance paid work with society expectations and gender norms (Acker, 1990). According to respondent 4, passengers initially offer food as a gesture of kindness, but when I refuse, they become upset. This demonstrates how women in gendered occupations are required to perform emotional work by being polite and helpful, even when abused. Such labor promotes their subordinate status in the workplace while limiting their ability to fight for themselves. While official protections are limited, hostesses describe informal workplace assistance as an important coping method.

While official protections are limited, hostesses describe informal workplace assistance as an important coping method. Respondent 4 stated, "The crew support was there for me."

In feminized labor, informal networks frequently serve as emotional buffers, as women rely on collegial support to negotiate the stress and insecurity of their jobs (Standing, 1999). However, these informal channels do not disregard the need for systemic reforms to combat harassment and exploitation.

2.3 Harmful Impact on Personal Dignity and Professional Identity

The findings demonstrate a widespread negative public and social attitude toward bus hostesses, which manifests itself in stereotyping and stigmatization, consequently hurting their dignity and self-respect. Such negative perceptions have a massive impact on their daily lives. For example, the idea that bus hostesses have immoral character results in broken engagements and familial disapproval. This stigma extends to marriage relationships when in-laws and extended families frequently ridicule and tease women for their profession.

Furthermore, findings reveal that social norms dictate that women should not work outside the home, which reinforces the notion that bus hostesses are not considered a suitable choice for marriage and family life. To avoid this conflict, some women tend to hide their professional identity from future in-laws due to cultural expectations. This shows that on a social level, bus hostesses' profession is not recognized and well-accepted, and this disrespect manifests itself in social and familial issues that have an impact on their mental health and social standing. These stigmas create challenges for women in this industry, prompting some to consider leaving their jobs due to societal pressure and negative social judgment.

Respondent no 9 who served 12 years in this profession felt very debilitated and disheartened while talking about social perceptions around her job:

“The attitude of society is quite negative. People consider it unethical and immoral for a woman to go out and work. They don't think about the compulsions behind her decision to work and if she turns out to be the bus hostess then it is considered stamped/certified that she is a

confirmed bad characterless woman. Because she is free in her mobility. Even though our work is open and visible to all and not hidden like in offices, still they believe she is bad if she is a bus hostess. Sometimes we feel so discouraged about our lives because of these cultural beliefs that we think we are just like puppets, not humans moving around in front of men. But then, through our willpower, we manage to return to normal, accepting that this is our life. When we think of our sisters, brothers, and families, and the financial responsibilities we have, we find the strength to stand up again."

This reflects the reality of how society wants to control the movement of women, and they consider the outside space to be the domain of men. This is also a reason for harassment.

Respondent 12 shared *"My sister was a bus hostess, she quit the job and got married after 5 years and when she got married, she didn't tell her in-laws about her employment as a bus hostess to avoid social disgrace. She wished to stay clear of any possible issues. Because people view bus hostesses as unreliable, I think bus hostesses shouldn't disclose their jobs to their in-laws."*

Respondent 8 shared while she shared the negative impact of this job on her family life *"People think that the bus hostesses are characterless, and my engagement was broken because of being a bus hostess."*

Like her, Respondent 1 shared

"Relatives have perceptions that a bus hostess is not the right person to get married with as she is working around males, and she is not a decent girl." She further shared that gender and social issues arise due to her professional identity *"My job impacted my married life and my relationship. My in-laws tease me about being a bus hostess, always calling me bus hostess in family gatherings sarcastically, even though they take all my salary."*

Not only do negative societal views and actions influence women's professional lives, but they also have an impact on their personal choices; some women have even thought about quitting their jobs to escape societal disapproval. One of the bus hostesses shared *“Society holds a negative attitude towards working women. The job of a hostess is considered bad by everyone, and no one respects them. People say that hostesses are not good girls. No one respects bus hostesses due to their social background and of course, I would have left this job if I had found another job because of society’s negative views and rude behavior.”*

The stigma that society attaches to particular careers for women, even when those careers are pleasant, and the person feels comfortable in her work is also highlighted by the bus hostesses. *“Yes, they do, this is considered as 'badnaam e zamana job' (notorious profession). For people, this job for women is not right 'achi nahi hai'. Sab ki nazar main yai job ladies k liay bilkul bhe achi nahi (In everyone's view, this job is not suitable for women). But for me, this is the best job as I am earning from here. Because nothing is hidden here; we work openly in public. If someone tries to point a finger at us, another person will stand up for us. This is a good thing. Not all are the same.”*

Bus hostesses narrated the demand from both family and society for women to conform to traditional roles; even close relatives will criticize and disapprove of women who take up jobs they believe are inappropriate.

"My relatives told my family that the job your daughter is doing is not good, and you have made a big mistake by allowing her to join this profession."

This draws attention to how negatively bus hostesses are viewed by the public, who frequently associate their jobs with indecency and lack of morality. Because of this stereotype, they are more likely to encounter rudeness, disrespect, and harassment from people internally and externally, which compromises their sense of dignity and respect. Their personal lives are

impacted, which results in rejection and broken engagements. Despite these difficulties, some bus hostesses find strength in their ability to sustain themselves financially and support from those who understand their line of work. This calls for the need to recognize women in all fields and societal change.

Cultural norms, economic institutions, and legislative frameworks all have an impact on women's labor market participation in Pakistan's service industry. Despite recent initiatives to improve women's employment, considerable barriers persist, restricting their participation in the workforce. Cultural expectations prioritize women's roles as homemakers, discouraging their participation in the labor market (Zulfiqar 2024). Pakistani study found that customers' social pressures affect bus hostesses' emotional weariness and job satisfaction (Nawaz, 2018). Likewise, according to Zaman (2021), women in Pakistan face greater challenges in pursuing careers than men, often facing discrimination in various aspects such as pay, benefits, advancement opportunities, and job autonomy, particularly in positions where men hold authority. A study conducted in Pakistan proposes employing education, public awareness, and economic prosperity to abolish direct, cultural, and structural violence against women in Pakistan (Babur, 2007). Working women in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan face numerous problems due to their traditional socio-cultural system. It not only disturbs the status of women but also hampers regional socio-economic development (Nafees 2022).

These narratives show the emotional labor that comes with being a bus hostess in a patriarchal, traditional social framework that enforces gender norms and stigmatizes women who work in public settings. Hochschild's (1983) idea of emotional labor emphasizes how workers must control their emotions to achieve workplace expectations. In this situation, the emotional pressure on these women is intensified by cultural expectations, harassment, and the necessity to conceal their occupation to avoid criticism.

These accounts show how bus hostesses balance contrasting social roles—the societal expectation that women stay at home with the need to work to support their families. As respondent 9 states: "People don't think about the compulsions behind our decision to work, but if a woman becomes a bus hostess, it's considered certified that she is characterless."

According to Hochschild (1983), emotional work frequently entails surface acting, which is the display of emotions that do not correspond to interior feelings. In these situations, bus hostesses face stigma and scorn from both society and family, but they must continue to do their professional duties. This emotional labor is intensified by role conflict, in which the demands of a paid job clash with societal norms, resulting in emotional pain and tension in personal lives.

The persistent need to repress personal emotions in the face of public criticism results in emotional dissonance—a mismatch between inner feelings and outward behavior. Respondent 8 says, "People think that bus hostesses are characterless, and my engagement was broken because of my job." Emotional dissonance is widespread in gendered employment, where societal stigma intensifies feelings of guilt, humiliation, and solitude. Hostesses endure not only customer service issues, but also emotional responsibilities caused by cultural views that regard their profession as immoral. According to Hochschild (1983), such unresolved emotional strain can lead to emotional tiredness and burnout, frequently prompting employees to consider abandoning their employment, as seen by multiple respondents' testimonies.

Bus hostesses control their emotions by concealing their job identity to maintain their social position and avoid disputes with family and future in-laws. Respondent 12 says, "My sister didn't tell her in-laws about her job to avoid social disgrace." This is consistent with Hochschild's (1983) notion that workers in emotionally demanding roles must regulate both their conduct and their identities to meet societal expectations. The act of concealing one's

employment is an additional layer of emotional labor required to avoid negative judgment, indicating how societal standards impact individuals' emotional lives. Respondent 9 describes the emotional impact of exploitation "Sometimes we feel so discouraged. We think we are like puppets, not humans moving around in front of men." Hochschild rightly mentioned in *The Managed Heart* that flight attendants describe their job as a constant performance where they are always on show". (Hochschild,1983). Ashforth (1993) rightly emphasized about idea of self-identification with the job that strong identification with the job leads to less emotional exhaustion as compared to weak identification which may increase emotional conflict.

Despite the emotional toll, many bus hostesses devise coping mechanisms by focusing on their financial and family obligations. As respondent 9 says "When we think of our families and the financial responsibilities, we find the strength to stand up again." According to Hochschild (1983), emotional labor becomes bearable when employees associate their emotional efforts with a sense of purpose or personal meaning. Despite societal condemnation and personal problems, these women can bear the emotional strain because they must support their families. Using a Marxist Feminist lens, the accounts reveal how women's labor is exploited by capitalist and patriarchal frameworks, often forced into insecure roles due to economic necessity. Marxist feminists argue that capitalism undervalues women's labor, especially in the service sector, and reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, putting women in subservient positions (Federici, 2012). Respondent 9 emphasizes the contradiction between economic need and social alienation, stating, "When we think of our families and financial responsibilities, we find the strength to stand up again." The feeling of alienation, which is important to Marxist ideology, happens here when women are obliged to conceal their own emotions and well-being to meet financial obligations. Capitalism forces them into jobs where they are considered disposable, even though they rely on this work for survival (Vogel, 2013). These women are alienated not

only from their jobs but also from society, which regards their work as sinful, limiting their ability to participate equally in public life. The accounts also show how patriarchy and capitalism intersect to limit women's mobility and agency. Respondent 12 says, "My sister quit her job and didn't inform her in-laws to avoid problems."

This reflects Engels' (1884) argument, which holds that capitalism survives by keeping women's economic reliance within the household. The stigma associated with employment such as bus hostesses indicates how women's work in public settings is perceived as a threat to patriarchal family systems. When women defy these expectations by taking on public responsibilities, they experience serious societal reactions, including broken engagements and family disapproval, as shown in the narratives. This highlights the double exploitation people face at work and home.

Respondent 9 describes the emotional impact of exploitation "Sometimes we feel so discouraged. We think we are like puppets, not humans moving around in front of men."

This is a direct reflection of Marxist feminist critiques of how women's labor in low-wage, feminized industries separates them from their sense of identity and worth (Bhattacharya, 2017). Such disempowerment originates from bus hostesses' undervaluation despite their apparent contributions to society, which reinforces their exclusion from both economic power and social respect.

The feminization of labor theory describes how bus hostesses' experiences relate to broader global trends in which women are disproportionately employed in low-wage, insecure service employment with few benefits. This shift toward precarious work is caused by structural shifts in labor markets, in which women's labor is increasingly desired but undervalued (Standing, 1999).

The narratives illustrate how bus hostesses must conceal their professional identity to escape social stigma. Respondent 12 states, "She quit the job and didn't tell her in-laws to avoid social disgrace." This highlights the unstable character of feminized labor, in which women must navigate both employment uncertainty and social rejection. Feminized labor frequently offer minimal institutional support, leaving women vulnerable to harassment and social marginalization (Sassen, 2002). These roles are not only underpaid but also stigmatized, leaving women with the dual burden of emotional work and financial precarity.

Respondent 8 states "People think bus hostesses are characterless, and my engagement was broken because of my job." This demonstrates how emotional labor is inherent in feminized employment, in which women are required to manage customer interactions while concealing their emotional well-being (Acker, 1990). In these stories, bus hostesses must maintain politeness and composure in the face of harassment and abuse, a burden that is peculiar to service-sector employment dominated by women. The emotional burden of juggling professional commitments and societal expectations causes burnout and emotional tiredness, as women are compelled to accept society's contempt for their field, especially in the context of Pakistani conservative society where they bear contextualized emotional labor.

Bus hostesses, like Respondent 9, use resistance techniques to overcome challenges, citing financial responsibilities as their strength. Women in gendered labor view their jobs as essential for family survival, despite negative attitudes. However, the perception of gendered employment lacking dignity perpetuates a cycle of disempowerment and social isolation.

3. Career Prospects and Job Sustainability

According to Singh and Patiraj 1988, Job satisfaction refers to a person's feeling of satisfaction on the job, which acts as a motivation to work. Positive attitudes towards the job are conceptually equivalent to job satisfaction. At various times it has been linked to production,

motivation, absenteeism, tardiness, accidents, mental health, physical health, general life satisfaction, and job involvement. Job satisfaction is the function of the person's environment interaction. Job satisfaction covers both the satisfaction derived from being engaged in a piece of work, or in any pursuit of a higher order. It is essentially related to human needs and their fulfillment through work. Job satisfaction is generated by an individual's perception of how well and his job on the whole is satisfying various needs (A. P. Singh, 1988).

Bus hostesses have expressed extremely poor career prospects and dissatisfaction with the unstable job dynamics; they have few avenues for professional growth and no set and clear career path. The absence of fundamental benefits like life and health insurance, pensions and medical coverage contributes to both work discontent and financial instability. The viability of the profession is further undermined by social stigmas and discriminatory behaviors. As a result, a lot of bus hostesses consider their work to be unsustainable and look for other avenues for career growth. The following major themes emerged when inquired about how they feel about the sustainability of the career they are performing day and night.

3.1 No Career Advancement

All bus hostesses share the same view when asked "Do you see opportunities for career growth within the transport industry beyond the role of a bus hostess" shared that "*No career path, No promotion or pension,*

"There is no chance of success or advancement in this job. Moreover, we will neither get a promotion nor a pension. As long as we can work as bus hostesses, we will get our compensation, otherwise, we will have to find another job."

"Bohat mushkil job hai aur koi permanent career path nahi hai" (Job is too demanding in labor but there is no career growth in it).

One of the bus hostesses shared.

“No, there is no chance of success or advancement in this role. At most when a bus hostess becomes experienced, they promote her as in charge of the hostesses in a hostel and yes if a bus hostess works for 5 years, then she can become a hostel warden or she can also go to the HR department with almost the same salary but with different duties, and this is not offered to all hostesses only a few when they get tired of traveling”.

“Hostess jobs have no career path and no opportunities for advancement. As a bus hostess, you can survive here as long as you are working.”

All bus hostesses shared that they don't see and consider this profession as a long-term career choice considering the social stigmas attached to it and societal treatment of such roles.

“Yes, of course, I would have left this job if I had found an alternative better opportunity, because of society's negative views and rude behavior”.

“Hostess jobs have no career path and no opportunities for advancement, everyone works here due to compulsion. I am thinking about leaving this job and joining a parlor. I also have an interest in teaching.”

"I want to open a sewing center at home, and I want the government to give me sewing machines."

While there are limited prospects for promotion, such as becoming a warden or joining the HR department after five years, these options do little to change the perception of the profession's lack of a long-term career.

In the context of the literature review section, A study investigates the significant gender inequities that exist in the worldwide transportation sector. As part of a global program that focuses on transportation policies and practices that impact gender equality in various regions, it created a toolkit that identified five crucial action areas spanning all modes of transportation: gender stereotyping, an environment that is discriminatory at work, a lack of flexible work and

childcare provisions, the absence of diversity in all forms at all levels, the glass ceiling, and limited opportunities for women's career advancement (SuM4All, 2023). The main issues concerning the gender gap between men and women labor in the market are employment rate, part-time work, unpaid care, family responsibilities, access to rights and assets (professions and decision-making positions), working conditions, hourly wages (gender pay gap), and the possibilities for economic independence, among others. Some countries have more advanced policies regarding conciliation and family, and working-life balance, which directly influence the rate of female employment in the transport sector (Dorantes, 2019). Jobs in transportation can be lucrative, and fulfilling, and provide long-term career options. Sadly, and unacceptable, too few women work in these fields, and some occupations don't even qualify as quality jobs (ILO, 2013).

If we analyze these narratives applying the theory of emotional labor, the lack of career advancement prospects reveals emotional exhaustion. While some employees may eventually switch to administrative roles such as hostel wardens, they remark that such changes pay "*almost the same salary but with different duties*," implying that these shifts provide no relief from emotional exhaustion. Workers who engage in continuous emotional labor without substantial rewards or professional progress are more prone to experience burnout (Guy, 2004). Neoliberal employment systems, which prioritize profitability over worker well-being, exacerbate these issues. The bus hostesses "*survive here as long as [they] are working*," highlighting the fragile nature of their occupations. Under neoliberalism, emotional labor is commodified, and workers are treated as disposable resources without having their psychological needs met (Adorean, 2023). This adds to the alienation felt by many workers, who are obliged to continue in emotionally stressful occupations due to a lack of alternatives.

Analyzing bus hostesses' experiences from a Marxist feminist lens demonstrates the link between labor exploitation and gendered expectations in the neoliberal economy. The lack of opportunities for growth, promotions, and retirement reflects the commercialization of labor, in which workers—mostly women in this sector—are considered as disposable resources (Hochschild, 2003). Avtar Brah's investigation of diasporic identities in “Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities” highlights the interconnectedness of race, gender, and class, mirroring the difficulties experienced by bus hostesses in navigating a labor market that frequently ignores their contributions. It relates well to Pakistani bus hostesses as how identity and social positioning can perpetuate marginalization and discontent in specific roles, mirroring larger systemic inequalities (Brah, 1996). As the hostesses voice their dissatisfaction with the absence of long-term job prospects, it highlights the societal stigmas associated with their roles, as well as how patriarchal systems perpetuate their labor market marginalization. Their desire for alternate employment, such as teaching or creating a sewing center, demonstrates a quest for agency and economic independence, confronting the established narrative of female labor as inherently subordinate.

Analyzing bus hostesses' experiences through the lens of feminization of labor theory under neoliberalism illustrates how women's work is frequently devalued and unstable. The hostesses' comments regarding their lack of professional advancement reflect a larger trend in which women's labor is increasingly consigned to low-wage, precarious jobs with little possibility for advancement (Öçal, 2024). David Harvey's "A Brief History of Neoliberalism" criticizes how neoliberal policies have commodified labor, reducing it to a mere resource for profit maximization. He claims that this commercialization frequently violates workers' rights, resulting in precarious working conditions and economic instability. Harvey stresses neoliberalism's impact on the labor market, showing how it favors capital over labor, resulting

in the collapse of social safety nets and the weakening of worker rights (Harvey, 2005). Under neoliberalism, the commodification of labor exacerbates these situations by seeing hostesses as disposable and expecting them to accept their jobs without question. Their desires for alternate jobs reflect a struggle against systemic constraints and societal beliefs that limit women's occupational opportunities.

3.2 Job Instability & Financial Dissatisfaction and Exploitation

The bus hostesses' accounts highlight serious issues of job insecurity and financial dissatisfaction in this industry. Many hostesses expressed dissatisfaction with options for progress, with one stating, *"No, it is not sustainable, and it depends on the bus hostess how long she can work as there are no chances of promotion."* Another underlines the need for more financial security, noting, *"The company should increase the salary according to experience and there should be a pension for the bus hostesses."*

A recurring theme is financial dissatisfaction, with many hostesses feeling taken advantage of by their meager pay. A hostess shared, *"As a bus hostess, I feel exploited because our compensation is too low in comparison to the profits of the company and workload"* Considering the difficult nature of the work, the pay scale, as stated by a hostess *"making between thirty and thirty-five thousand rupees per month, is insufficient. I receive PKR 1200 every trip for long trips and PKR 800 for short trips which is not enough to afford life and family expenses."*

The lack of financial stability is worsened by the absence of benefits. A hostess says, *"There should be a fixed salary, there should be promotion, and the company should provide us with medical insurance."* Another hostess echoes the general feeling of exploitation, saying, *"I feel exploited as a bus hostess because the salary is too low."* In addition to being financially exploitative, hostesses are subjected to worse working conditions and lesser pay because of

their gender. *"Yes, we are paid less for being a woman," a hostess clarifies. Occasionally, the company cancels our trip because of a small mistake or a complaint which further affects the possibility of earning something."*

A major source of discontent is the job's demanding nature mixed with inadequate compensation. One of the hostesses shared *"Long working hours and one after another duty without enough sleep and rest often leads to complaints from drivers and passengers if a bus hostess falls asleep from fatigue during the duty"*.

One more shared that *"Yes, the gender norms are impacting my salary, we normally get a vacation after one or two months, and we work day and night and are always there for the duty, without our presence and assistance, the bus company can't start a journey/trip but the company underpays us and requires us to do a lot of work (psychological pressure),"* says a hostess, describing the psychological strain and underpayment.

The job's exploitative nature is further highlighted by the working circumstances. Despite the company's large revenues, hostesses are sometimes forced to sit on uncomfortable folding seats, and their well-being is not given any thought. *"Even if there are vacant seats in the bus, the bus hostess has to sit on the folding seat and it is very difficult to sit on a folding seat,"* a hostess says. *"Yes, we have signed a contract that the company will not be responsible to pay or compensate if we die in an accident,"* says another, highlighting the harsh terms of employment.

Talking about the duties and responsibilities, the female hostel manager shared that *"during a trip, bus hostesses not only take care of passenger's needs but also serve patients in the bus if a passenger fell ill, they have to take care of his needs like sometimes diabetic patients when they have to visit washroom time and again, they make sure that bus will stop and wait for them. Therefore, if we see all these duties and additional burdens on her during a ten-hour*

journey, where she is sponsored for just one meal and PKR 1200 cash in hand is not a justified salary but a meager amount as compared to what companies charge their customers. 46 passengers each pay PKR 2100 ticket amount/charges and the only girl who is taking care of their needs for ten hours and stays on her toes only gets PKR 1200 after doing a ten-hour job. This is economic exploitation, but they can't raise their voice because they have no other option or means. There is no pay increase system in the company." This shows how bus hostesses are exploited economically since, despite doing labor-intensive and necessary work, their pay is inadequate in comparison to the company's earnings. This exploitation is made even more worse by the lack of a pay raise system, which keeps hostesses away from receiving a fair wage that is in line with their workload and expertise. Furthermore, the hostesses' vulnerability and the power disparity in their work are highlighted by their inability to voice their complaints due to a lack of job options or alternatives. Overall, this shows how critical it is to address the economic and social inequities that bus hostesses confront by implementing better pay and working conditions.

The feeling that working conditions have deteriorated since the company's ownership shifted adds to this discontent. An ex-hostess who served almost 7 years in the role shared, "*The company was multinational when I started working there in 2011 with the best services and facilities like pick and drop services and better compensation and protection mechanisms and numerous facilities at the time, there were no issues. The issues arose after 2015 when Pakistanis acquired the business, and its ownership changed. New management stopped pick and drop service for the bus hostesses and started transferring them to work in other cities while living in company hostels away from their families which led to a challenging situation for female staff*".

Another ex-staff and a bus hostess highlighted poor and discriminatory management practices towards women “*So, when they made a hostel for us, you can understand that living with one's own family is a different scenario. When we shifted to hostels and lived in isolation, that was a big challenge for us. 'Na tu banda family ko time day sakta na relatives ko, bohat sari tensions hoti thien'* (We couldn't give time to our family or relatives, there were so many tensions). We tolerated this because of the job, but then they started transferring us to other cities for bus operations. If we belonged to Bahawalpur, they transferred us to Karachi, then from Karachi to Hyderabad, and then to Islamabad. This continued until 2018. After that, they decided to lay off hostesses and hire stewards (boys) in our positions. They made our lives difficult by creating issues through our supervisors as a tactic, so many girls resigned, and many left the company in 2018. The job environment was so stressful as they used to send us from one trip to another right after one was finished”.

Overall, the bus hostesses' testimonies point to deep-rooted issues with job instability, unsatisfactory pay, and exploitative working conditions—all of which are made worse by discriminatory practices against women and missing company policies to address such issues. Referring to the literature review section, findings suggest that cultural expectations prioritize women's roles as homemakers, discouraging their participation in the labor market (Zulfiqar 2024). Gender inequality and patriarchal norms create systemic barriers, reducing women's economic autonomy (Maqsood, 2024). Women's socioeconomic status in Pakistan is worse due to a low rate of literacy, a lack of educational resources, a lack of knowledge, a bad economic situation, a lack of skills, and an unsecure social environment for working. Men make more decisions than women do (Khan, 2008). Women's participation in the transport sector is limited to less productive roles (Dorantes, 2019). Non-standard employment in the Pakistani service sector like retail, frequently comprises part-time, temporary, or informal

positions, which are growing more popular among women wanting to improve their economic standing by working in less secure employment situations. Even jobs designed to improve their financial circumstances frequently come with negative conditions that might lead to a vicious cycle of disadvantage. The results showed that women faced issues such as harassment, bullying, mental stress, physical fatigue, and exploitation daily, which negatively impacted their efficiency and well-being (Perveen, 2022). Liberalization policies and economic structures during the globalization process have generally forced women to work in low-paid and insecure jobs. Neoliberal policies aimed at reducing state intervention, privatizing public services, and reducing social security have increased women's insecurity in the labor market. The effects of globalization and neoliberalism on women's labor have also contributed to the reproduction of gender roles. As a result, globalization and neoliberal policies have complex effects on women's labor (Öçal, 2024). Growing feminization in the workforce suggests that both supply-side (such as women joining the workforce to support declining household incomes) and demand-side (such as firms preferring to hire women due to lower costs) factors contribute to this phenomenon. The feminization of the workforce has frequently led to a concentration of women in less secure and lower-paying positions (Ball, 2008). The shift toward unstable labor arrangements, claims that it helps companies while making employees more vulnerable (Standing, 1999).

Bus hostesses' accounts when analyzed under the theory of emotional labor denote that the hostesses describe emotions of exploitation, especially given their demanding tasks and minimal compensation, showing that their labor has a considerable emotional cost (Hochschild, 1983).

Emotional labor is the unsung, and often unseen, job of managing other people's emotions. "It's not just the work that runs economies," explains Rose Hackman, the author of a 2023 book on

the subject. "Work is what drives families and communities. Emotional labour is manipulating the heart to influence clients, consumers, passengers, and patients. It is what fosters a sense of safety, connection, significance, and belonging within a company" (Hackman, 2024), yet it remains uncompensated as evident here in the case of bus hostesses in Pakistan. For example, the bus hostesses discuss the psychological pressure of keeping a happy demeanor while working in tough conditions and with poor pay. This is consistent with Hochschild's observation that emotional labor frequently involves repressing actual feelings to meet job expectations, which can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Hochschild, 1983).

From the Marxist Feminist lens, the experiences of bus hostesses highlight the nexus between capitalism and patriarchy, as well as the exploitation of women's labor. Testimonies demonstrate a lack of job stability and poor remuneration, emphasizing the undervaluation of women's employment in a labor market that prioritizes profit over workers' rights. These hostesses play important jobs yet get little pay, perpetuating women's subservient status in the workplace and society. Gender-based discrimination reveals systemic hurdles to women's success and perpetuates economic inequity (Federici, 2004). Job insecurity and bad working conditions demonstrate how neoliberal policies prioritize profit maximization at the expense of vulnerable workers, particularly women (Fraser, 2013).

By applying the feminization of labor theory to the testimonies of bus hostesses, we can see how neoliberal policies have commodified women's work in the transportation industry. Hostesses are paid minimal wages despite performing demanding jobs, indicating the undervaluation of women's labor. Their financial insecurity and lack of benefits highlight the precarious character of feminized roles in a neoliberal economy, where gender discrimination adds to their vulnerability (Standing, 2011). Furthermore, the shift from global to local

management added fuel to the fire in working conditions, emphasizing the exploitation of feminine labor under capitalism (Bakker, 2003).

3.3 Job improvement ideas/demands by the bus hostesses

When inquired about the changes or improvements they believe are necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of this profession, the bus hostesses proposed a variety of demands for improving the job experience in their roles, including better social and professional treatment, provision of financial benefits, and improved working conditions.

Approximately all of them emphasized the need for respect and recognition from society, the management, and co-workers, saying that such a regard would inspire others to follow suit.

“The transport industry and society must give us respect as the first and foremost step for our career progression. If the company gives us respect, then society and passengers will follow suit and our treatment will automatically be improved. We need improvement in provisions as well at work, like if a passenger complains, our company must also hear us and give us this chance where we are also heard and can present the full perspective of a happening. They must support us as an office. If the bus owner will protect us then people will also respect us. We need a bus hostess protection policy in place.”

Financial issues turned out to be a more significant concern of the bus hostesses, they urged for a raise in pay (basic salary and per trip amount) and provision of health insurance. They also complained about poor hostel amenities, such as dirty mattresses and a dearth of basic supplies like gas and water.

“Salary should be increased, and life and health insurance should be given. In the hostel, there are no facilities, only mattresses available and they are also untidy. Moreover, the company should provide food in the hostels.”

The demand for health insurance revealed the absence of a vital safety net and increased the financial burden on them by not covering medical costs. The fact that almost half of the respondents gave priority to salary raises indicates that their overall job satisfaction and quality of life are significantly impacted by financial instability. These financial worries reflect larger problems in the sector, where benefits and pay might not match the hazards and demands of the work.

Mostly desired added benefits including pension, childcare, and more road trips for doing extra duty to earn more. The hostesses emphasized safety and security and asked the companies to be accountable for their well-being. Furthermore, they asked companies to take appropriate action against inconsiderate travelers/passengers and listen to their stance too in such cases.

“There should be a safety policy, the company should take responsibility for the safety of the bus hostesses because passengers try to harass the bus hostesses, and the company does not take any action against them.”

They expressed the dire need for a pick-up and drop-off service and didn't want to work from hostels or other places; they would much rather go home every day than stay in hostels. Lastly, few felt that their uniforms should better conceal their bodies according to their personal preferences.

The bus hostesses focused on respect and better treatment and recognition of their role, a salary increase, and improved working conditions as critical areas that needed improvements to make this a long-term professional choice for them. The need for respect from management, pay raises, health insurance, and better hostel facilities were the top demands. Other facilities, including daycare and pensions, safety protocols, and administrative action against passenger misbehavior, were also emphasized. Their demands call for a more professional, respectful, and safe workplace with a stable income.

The bus hostesses' demands represent multidimensional struggles against economic, social, and emotional exploitation. They advocate for recognition of their duties as well as their rights as workers in a sector that has historically neglected women by seeking respect, financial security, and better working conditions. The demand for a "bus hostess protection policy" is consistent with the need for an atmosphere in which their emotional well-being is addressed.

Research on transport planning has always been classified as masculine. In addition to the fact that "numbers" help address issues of power and gender equality, qualitative and critical epistemologies also contribute significant and vital knowledge to the field of transportation planning research. Research on transportation planning must consider the variety of social situations while designing for accessibility and equity (Tanja, 2019). Guy emphasizes the negative effects of labor market flexibility on job insecurity and economic inequality. He critiques the shift toward unstable labor arrangements, claiming that it helps companies while making employees more vulnerable. Standing advocates for distributive justice, including universal basic income and improved social protections, to counteract exploitation and ensure economic security. He argues against measures like workfare that restrict workers' autonomy. Standing also discusses the issues that women experience in terms of labor flexibility, emphasizing how they frequently endure higher work insecurity, lower salaries, and fewer benefits. He argues for policies that promote gender equality in the work market, such as maternity leave, affordable daycare, and stronger labor rights, to ensure women may participate equitably (Standing, 1999).

According to Hochschild (1983), when employees are expected to regulate their emotions for the benefit of the organization, failing to satisfy these psychological demands can result in burnout and discontent. From a Marxist feminist perspective, the demands for higher salaries, benefits, and working conditions reflect the economic exploitation inherent in a capitalist labor

market that undervalues women's labor. The hostesses' experiences demonstrate how patriarchal institutions create financial instability and discrimination. As Hartmann (1976) points out, the lack of equitable wages and benefits highlights the intersection of gender and class exploitation, as women frequently hold lower-paying, less secure employment in a capitalist economy. When viewed through the lens of feminization of labor theory, their demands for increased job security, benefits, and better working conditions highlight the structural difficulties of gendered labor. The demand for health insurance and childcare reflects a larger cultural neglect of women's specialized employment requirements, exacerbated by neoliberalism (Standing, 2011). Because the feminization of labor frequently results in women being disproportionately affected by economic insecurity, their demands for better treatment and financial security are critical to maintaining their professional viability.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and Discussion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this research study which demonstrate the key challenges faced by bus hostesses, offering a clear perspective on areas requiring attention and improvement:

1. Regular and equitable compensation to meet socio-economic pressures

Study findings reveal that Pakistani bus hostesses, like the majority of women working in service industries, are faced with socioeconomic challenges like limited educational qualifications, financial constraints, and job barriers, which hinder women's career development and mobility. Regional hiring, particularly from far-flung areas, is targeted due to regional economic disparities. Thus, requires regular and equitable compensation.

The same has been reflected in Pakistan's female labor force participation rate (LFPR) which is 21%, lower than the global norm of 39%. Despite improvements in the last 20 years, Pakistan's rate of advancement is stalling, ranking 145th out of 146 nations in the Gender Gap Index 2022 for economic participation and opportunity. Over 70% of economically active women work in dangerous professions with unfavorable working conditions (Women,2023). In Pakistan, Women face worse living conditions, limited autonomy, and male dominance, affecting various aspects of their lives. This human rights concern highlights the detrimental effects of gender discrimination (Ali, 2022).

Economic necessity and the need to support their families are primary motivators for bus hostesses choosing this profession. Their earnings are crucial for their families, especially when no male family members are present. Bus hostesses' dependence on their income to maintain their families and being under-educated makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and stresses the need for consistent, equitable pay in this line of work. Similarly, in a study, Jiménez

(2020) reveals that gender disparity in transportation sector employment is rooted in historical, social, political, and conventional gender perceptions of women as primary caregivers. Four Clusters of Fairness characteristics (CFCs) were identified: individual qualities, job characteristics, personal circumstances, and socioeconomic situations.

The main reason for the employment of women in such a large extent in the unorganized sector is due to their weaker bargaining power, low skills, ready to work for lower wages, and lack of unionization. The majority of them are working in a variety of occupations in unorganized sectors. These unorganized workers usually work as casual labor typically into intermittent jobs at very less wages. These workers face total lack of job security and zero social security protection net. They face extreme exploitation, resulting in long hours of work, unacceptable working conditions and occupational health hazards. As a woman in a vulnerable sector, she faces additional inequalities because of gender. Discriminations like lesser wages, sexual harassment, the absence of maternity benefits, and poor nutrition and ill-health are very common” (Jalisatgi, 2022). Women's incomes often lag behind men's in various occupations, but emotional labor may be the missing link. Many women's jobs involve emotional work like caring, bargaining, empathizing, and facilitating cooperation. This invisible and uncompensated work is often overlooked in job descriptions or performance evaluations. Civil service systems, based on outdated assumptions, fail to recognize and compensate for emotional labor (Guy, 2004).

The negative effects of labor market flexibility have posed a significant impact on job insecurity and economic inequality. The shift toward unstable labor arrangements, claims that it helps companies while making employees more vulnerable. Standing advocates for distributive justice, including universal basic income and improved social protections, to counteract exploitation and ensure economic security. He argues against measures like

workfare that restrict workers' autonomy. Standing also discusses the issues that women experience in terms of labor flexibility, emphasizing how they frequently endure higher work insecurity, lower salaries, and fewer benefits. He argues for policies that promote gender equality in the work market, such as maternity leave, affordable daycare, and stronger labor rights, to ensure women may participate equitably (Standing, 1999). Kabeer (2001) discovers that, while access to employment benefits women economically and socially, the kind of accessible jobs frequently promotes disparities. She sums up well that “any attempt to develop acceptable labor standards at the international level that ignores the forces of inclusion and exclusion in local labor markets, she says, is likely to benefit the powerful at the expense of the weak” (Kabeer, 2001).

2. Ensure improved work-life balance

Hosting is full-time work, meaning they are only devoted to work life during the whole day with few breaks and no time for family or leisure. They rely significantly on their families to take care of domestic duties. Thus, require improved work-life balance and assistance due to their demanding job, which demands limited time off and causes significant psychological and physical stress.

Referring to this finding in the literature review chapter, Saleem (2016) emphasized that work tiredness among bus service employees is mostly caused by work-family conflict and perceived job stress. Nighttime bus routes frequently compel employees to spend more time with the organization, resulting in sleepiness and irritability during daytime rest. Bus drivers and hostesses face greater workloads as shifts change, restricting working autonomy. The study also discovered that work exhaustion mediates the association between independent factors (work-family conflicts and perceived work stress) and turnover intention (Saleem, 2016). Similarly, Zafar (2013) also identifies that it can be difficult for Pakistani working

women to balance their personal and professional responsibilities, the issue is made more complicated by the pervasive and openly practiced gender discrimination. Also, the Sustainable Mobility for All Gender Working Group (2023) identified five key action areas in transportation to address the gender gap: gender stereotyping, discriminatory work environments, lack of flexible work and childcare, lack of diversity, and limited career advancement.

Dorantes (2019) emphasized and acknowledged that at the EU level, some countries have more advanced policies regarding conciliation and family, and working-life balance, which directly influence the rate of female employment in the transport sector. Turnbull (2023) also shared how the transportation sector has long been considered a "no place for women. Therefore, in this view, Tanja (2019) suggested well that transportation studies and planning often use utilitarian, rationalistic, and quantitative epistemologies, with a masculine classification. Qualitative and critical epistemologies contribute vital knowledge. Research must consider social situations, accessibility, and equity for equitable design.

Acker (1990) points out that organizations are fundamentally gendered, favoring masculine norms and reinforcing gender inequality in jobs, pay, and power structures. She adds that organizational practices presume an ideal worker who is male and devoid of caring responsibilities, which marginalizes women. Gender is ingrained in both formal systems and everyday interactions, making inequity appear natural and difficult to overcome. Gender and power are perpetuated inside institutions. Capitalism and labor structure promote gender inequality (Acker, 1990). The growth of agriculture and private property resulted in patriarchy, which subordinated women to domestic responsibilities to ensure male inheritance. Monogamous marriage developed as a strategy for controlling property transfer and promoting male authority. Engels says that the state emerged to serve the interests of the property-owning

classes while maintaining social inequalities. Women's oppression is caused by economic systems rather than nature, gender equality necessitates the abolition of private property and the establishment of a classless, socialist society (Engels,1884).

3. Upgrade living conditions in companies' hostels

Compounding the challenges of bus hostesses, living in a company hostel is the source of increased discomfort and stress due to its untidy and unhygienic conditions, lack of basic amenities, and the emotional burden of being away from home, which further deteriorates their overall well-being. The company management intends for bus hostesses to live in hostels under company control, where they have no freedom of movement. This ensures their availability for work on call, prevents them from seeking jobs in other companies, and discourages them from socializing. There is an urgent need to upgrade the living conditions of companies' hostels.

This demonstrates bus hostesses face capitalist exploitation, gender discrimination, and precarious living situations combined to cause emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion. The experiences, viewed through the lens of emotional labor theory, demonstrate how these women are compelled to hide feelings, endure isolation, and bear emotional burnout. Freudenberger (1974) first describes emotional burnout as a state of exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Schaufeli,2001). Ciftci (2021) revealed that loneliness and alienation in the workplace have a considerable impact on employee's intention to leave their jobs, with emotional exhaustion acting as a mediator. Employees should be included in decision-making processes and given adequate job autonomy to avoid work alienation (ciftci, 2021). The Marxist feminist lens demonstrates patriarchy and capitalism are intricately linked systems both maintaining women's subjugation in labor and limiting autonomy while prioritizing profit over worker's welfare (Hartmann 1979). Finally, the feminization of the labor framework emphasizes neoliberalism blurs the distinction

between the work and personal life, resulting in overwork and self-exploitation increasing vulnerability in unstable jobs with little security and protection (Gill, 2008) of the women like bus hostesses who faced poor working conditions and inadequate social protection, intensifying gender inequities in Pakistan's labor market.

4. Address gender-based discrimination and Harassment

Findings reveal that bus hostesses face persistent harassment and discrimination, causing them psychological stress like lower self-esteem and job dissatisfaction. Bus hostesses from low-income families and illiterate social classes fall prey to challenges like discrimination and exploitation. They regularly deal with bullying, harassment, and discrimination based on their gender from male coworkers as well as from passengers. Because of the professional demands of their line of work, which includes keeping up a polite appearance and manner, they are frequently the targets of objectification and inappropriate behavior.

According to the testimony, some passengers treat the hostesses with respect, but many of them harass them, thinking that just because they paid for the service, they are entitled to their attention and personal space. The acceptability of gender oppression is deeply rooted, as evidenced by the normalcy of such behavior. To solve these problems, bus companies must completely restructure their cultures to put the rights, safety, and dignity of their female employees first. The literature review chapter also validates this finding as Razi (2016) examines the "Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010" in Pakistan, highlighting its failure to reduce harassment among working women, particularly those from needy or poor backgrounds. The Pakistani Parliament passed the Act to protect women's dignity, respect, and work rights. However, the issue continues to rise, with the number of harassment cases increasing by 20% in the last five years. Similarly, according to ILO (2013), Workplace violence is commonly recognized as a significant "push" element in

the transportation industry that contributes to involuntary quits and low retention of women in transport. Likewise, Riddle (2023) identified that around 50% of women in all workplaces report experiencing sexual harassment, with male-dominated occupations being more vulnerable. Factors contributing to this include lower rank, shorter tenure, physical work, job insecurity, and unfavorable relationships with coworkers and supervisors. Other contributing factors include gender disparities and promotions based on gender. In addition to this, Pillinger (2017) in a study found that violence against women in the transport sector is widespread, with 911 women workers reporting incidents, with 25% believing it's a regular occurrence and 26% claiming harassment is part of the job. Similarly, Nawaz (2018) in a Pakistani study found that customers' social pressures affect bus hostesses' emotional weariness and job satisfaction. Data from 150 Lahore bus attendants revealed verbal abuse from customers increased weariness, impacting job satisfaction and quality of life for female servers. Likewise, according to Zaman (2021), women in Pakistan face greater challenges in pursuing careers than men, often facing discrimination in various aspects such as pay, benefits, advancement opportunities, and job autonomy, particularly in positions where men hold authority. in a setting such as Pakistan, where the rule of law is not pervasive throughout society, simply establishing policies and raising knowledge about them may not be a genuine and relevant factor in reducing sexual harassment in the workplace. Hadi (2022) emphasized that sexual harassment in the workplace reflects unequal power relationships between genders in Pakistan's patriarchal society and cannot be combated unless patriarchal mindsets are changed, which can only be accomplished by transforming the existing patriarchal society that produces such mindsets (Hadi, 2022). Capitalism and patriarchy maintain women's subservience (Vogel, 2013) while the feminization of labor pushes women into hazardous jobs with low wages reinforcing gender

inequities call for improved labor rights and working conditions for women in a globalized economy (Katz, 2001).

Hence, to combat harassment in male-dominated workplaces like transportation, strict anti-harassment policies, giving victims access to reporting channels, financial assistance to victims, and legal support are needed, along with a cultural shift towards women's protection. These actions will guarantee a more secure and encouraging atmosphere for women.

5. Social reforms to challenge negative social perceptions and harmful stereotyping

Study findings demonstrate that the hostile cultural attitudes and stigma surrounding working women, such as bus hostesses, result in heightened instances of harassment and contempt from passengers as well as staff. The study findings call to bring social reforms to challenge society's negative perceptions of women working as bus hostesses to combat vulnerabilities from offensive and extreme social behaviors viewing them as characterless and immoral. Bus hostesses face harassment from passengers due to their close contact with men in a conservative, patriarchal society, leading to unwanted advances, inappropriate behavior, and foul language. Deep-rooted social norms in Pakistan discourage women from working outside the home, causing bus hostesses to hide their professional identity from future in-laws and relatives, leading to challenges and potential job loss due to societal pressure and negative judgment. Because of such harmful stereotypes and discrimination, they encounter rudeness, disrespect, and harassment from people internally and externally, which compromises their sense of dignity and respect thus resulting in psychological stress and job instability.

Referring to this aspect in the literature review chapter, Becker (1999) points out that in a male-centered, male-identified, and male-controlled societal structure, masculinity is valued above femininity, leading to misogyny and a view of women as less than human. Women are viewed as untrustworthy, and their decisions justify aggression against them. Similarly, Khan (2008)

in research found that women's socioeconomic status is worsened by low literacy rates, lack of educational resources, knowledge, economic problems, skills, and an unsecure social environment. Men make more decisions about family, companions, and home budgeting, and cultural norms require women to care for their families. In a similar kind of study, Nafees (2022) discusses the challenges faced by Nurses due to their traditional socio-cultural system, which negatively impacts their status and regional socio-economic development. Nurses, who contribute significantly to healthcare, face abuse, harassment, and other negative aspects that negatively impact their livelihoods. The article concludes that socio-cultural factors are a significant issue and calls for policies to change attitudes towards the profession. Likewise, Khan (2024) shared that Ali and Syed's (2017) study in Pakistan highlights the challenges professional women face due to regional cultural norms, including sexual harassment, career-related issues, financial disparities, family status, and gender segregation. Gul et al.'s (2023) study reveals that Pakistani women face obstacles in political participation due to a male-centric culture, lack of social acceptance, structural hurdles, unequal political parties, external threats, and failure to empower women. Likewise, Shah (2023) in a qualitative study in Sindhi and Urdu found that women in the media sector face pressure, obstacles, misbehavior, and sociocultural issues like workload, masculine stereotype thinking, family discrimination, nepotism, and societal criticism. Issues include job insecurity, unsafe workplaces, and non-cooperative behavior. They also receive fewer marriage proposals and are viewed as unethical. Connel (1987) introduces the term of hegemonic masculinity which refers to the dominant form of masculinity that claims control over women. Family, education, and the workplace contribute to the formation and reinforcement of gender norms. Connel emphasized that gender is shaped by cultural norms, and power dynamics (Connell, 1987). Media depictions shape public ideas toward gender, maintaining traditional roles but also reflecting shifting notions of

masculinity and femininity. Many media forms, including advertising and internet platforms, propagate stereotypes and the power dynamics that exist. Gill emphasizes the significance of critically engaging with media to understand how it influences gender views and identities (Gill, 2007). Wolf advocates for a rethinking of beauty standards and encourages women to defy conventional constraints for empowerment and self-acceptance (Wolf, 1991).

6. Need to address career and financial dissatisfaction

Bus hostesses expressed dissatisfaction with their job dynamics due to a lack of professional growth opportunities, insufficient compensation, and a lack of fundamental benefits like life and health insurance. Social stigmas and discriminatory behaviors further undermine the profession's viability, leading many to view their work as unsustainable and seek other career opportunities. This aspect needs to be addressed as these discontent hurts both the hostesses' well-being and the overall effectiveness of their jobs. The bus hostesses proposed a variety of demands for improving the job experiences in their roles, including better social and professional treatment, recognition and respect, provision of financial benefits, salary raises, and improved working conditions with safety and security policies in place. Referring to the same factors in the literature review chapter, Hisam (2006) shed light on the Pakistani road transport sector where the road transport labor force comprises male wage workers, self-employed operators, and small entrepreneurs who fail to comply with state regulations, resulting in low pay, long hours, unfavorable working conditions, occupational health risks, and lack of social protection in a deregulated, competitive industry. Similarly, Zaman (2021) points out that Pakistani women face greater challenges and discrimination in various aspects such as pay, benefits, advancement opportunities, and job autonomy, particularly in positions where men hold authority. Dorantes (2019) while shedding light on women workers in less lucrative roles in transport shared that the European Commission reports that only 22% of

transport workers are women, with higher rates in administrative or cleaning departments. This gender gap is even more pronounced in the transport sector, with limited representation in boards of directors and stereotypical occupations. Similarly, Jimenez (2020) points out that the absence of female facilities, the need for improved regulations, and the need for human resource policies that acknowledge women's caring responsibilities are some of the main factors that should be improved to increase the participation of women in transport jobs.

Saleem (2016) explored small and medium firms in the service sector of Pakistan that on-job stresses such as job autonomy, fair rewards, work-family conflicts, and work overload significantly contribute to work tiredness for workers working in various bus companies.

Ocal (2024) noted that liberalization policies and economic structures during the globalization process have generally forced women to work in low-paid and insecure jobs. Neoliberal policies also have significant effects on women's labor. Neoliberal policies aimed at reducing state intervention, privatizing public services, and reducing social security have increased women's insecurity in the labor market. Women had to adapt to flexible working conditions without social security, and their rights in the workplace were frequently violated. The effects of globalization and neoliberalism on women's labor have also contributed to the reproduction of gender roles. As a result, globalization and neoliberal policies have complex effects on women's labor (Öçal, 2024). Similarly, Balls (2008) emphasized the growing feminization in the workforce and suggested that both supply-side (such as women joining the workforce to support declining household incomes) and demand-side (such as firms preferring to hire women due to lower costs) factors contribute to this phenomenon. Increased feminization of the workforce is typically the result of neoliberal structural adjustment. Instead of reducing occupational segregation, the feminization of the workforce has frequently led to a concentration of women in less secure and lower-paying positions (Ball, 2008). Kabeer also

argues that systemic constraints such as gender norms and poverty influence choices, frequently driving women into exploitative jobs (Kabeer, 2001). While capitalism and labor structure promote gender inequality (Acker, 1990).

Thus, addressing bus hostesses' demands for improved salary, professional development, and working conditions is critical for their well-being and job satisfaction, as well as improving their quality of life and the efficiency of the transportation sector.

7. Address Policy and Practice Gap

Findings from the companies' management reveal that policies related to the well-being of female employees remain missing or undocumented in most bus companies, indicating the underdeveloped state of Pakistan's transport industry and a lack of acceptability of women staff. However, the global transport sector also presents the same picture as it is predominantly male-dominated, with only 17% of female employees on average, highlighting the underrepresentation of women in transport-related industries (Wei-Shiuen Ng, 2020).

There is also an insufficient understanding among bus hostesses about health and safety policies and rules. There is a significant gap between the company's health and anti-harassment policies and their actual implementation resulting in inadequate execution of policies and a dearth of support. This gap causes bus hostesses to receive little protection and assistance, which intensifies problems of exploitation, bullying, and discontent. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating gender in transport planning, strong policy execution, and better communication strategies to guarantee that staff members are well-informed to ensure a sustainable and inclusive transportation sector for all. Here Marxist feminist critique is valid as capitalism and patriarchy both take advantage of working-class women. It considers social class to be just as significant as gender. This viewpoint draws attention to the nuanced interplay between socioeconomic class and gender in society (Awan, 2024). Such tactics support

corporate goals, yet they can lead to stress and burnout. Grandey argues that emotional labor when properly understood, gives useful insights into managing both staff well-being and consumer happiness (Grandey, 2000). Such professions benefit the elite workforce and are part of survival circuits in which women's remittances support their families. Sassen emphasizes gendered and racist inequities in global labor markets, where women work in precarious, underpaid professions, frequently enduring exploitation and emotional distress. This labor polarization reflects capitalist exploitation highlighting the feminization of labor (Sassen, 2002).

On the other hand, overall, Pakistan's transport laws also need to focus on gender principles, including anti-harassment laws, safety measures, and inclusive training programs to empower women and address specific challenges in the transport industry. The government of Pakistan should formulate a comprehensive policy on women working in transportation and its vigorous implementation to guarantee their rights and obligations, as well as recognition of their role in appropriate job descriptions and organizational structure, are some ways to address obstacles. Referring to the literature review chapter, globally many studies presented the same suggestions as Duchène (2011) points out that although gender is being considered more and more frequently in many fields, the transport industry lags far behind. It is crucial to investigate how gender might be included in transport and mobility policies. Similarly, Tanja (2019) realized that transportation studies and planning often use utilitarian, rationalistic, and quantitative epistemologies, with a masculine classification. Qualitative and critical epistemologies contribute vital knowledge. Research must consider social situations, accessibility, and equity for equitable design. Likewise, Hortelano (2021) emphasized that gender disparities in transport, including accessibility, safety, and women's participation, require careful consideration by planners and policymakers for sustainable and inclusive

transportation). Mulley (2022) explores the challenges faced by female workers in the bus sector, highlights the evolution of transport, and advocates for collective action from employers, regulators, governments, and unions.

This calls for urgent policy reforms to address women's underrepresentation and well-being in Pakistan's transportation sector, with a focus on gender-inclusive regulations, enhanced communication, and female employee empowerment to ensure a sustainable and equitable industry.

8. Compensate and reward the bus hostesses for Unrecognized Emotional Labor

Study findings reveal that Pakistani bus hostesses undertake significant emotional work by controlling passenger behavior, remaining polite under stress, and dealing with harassment. The economy of Pakistan consists of a relatively large service sector which contributes more than 50% to the country's GDP (Ahmed, 2011). The performance and experience of emotional labor by the Pakistani workforce are likely to differ from that of the labor force of other countries (Mohsin, 2020). Pakistani bus hostesses experience significant emotional exhaustion because of customer-related pressures such as verbal abuse and interactions with hostile customers. Customer stressors, particularly in public-facing service professions, present a difficult environment for women in the transportation sector, echoing broader issues of emotional labor and societal pressures that are widespread in male-dominated industries (Nawaz, 2018).

Emotional labor which often goes unrecognized, is controlling emotions to fulfill job needs (Hochschild, 1983). In male-dominated and conservative societies like Pakistan, this burden is intensified since women must balance professionalism with self-defense against harassment. Proper remuneration and awards are required to recognize their emotional effort and maintain workplace dignity.

Hochschild (1983) discusses how managing emotions can lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion. She investigates the cost of job conditions in modern capitalist, post-industrial countries marked by the growth of the service sector (Hochschild, 1983). When service agents exhibit expected emotions during service contacts, this is known as emotional labor. It can be done via expressing real emotion, deep acting, or surface acting. In addition to promoting self-expression and work efficacy, emotional labor can also lead to emotional dissonance, self-alienation, and unmet consumer expectations. Understanding emotional labor is critical for firms seeking to effectively support staff and manage customer relations (Ashforth, 1993). Professional workers at human care institutions are frequently forced to spend significant time interacting with people. Frequently, the staff-client relationship revolves around the client's current concerns (psychological, social, and/or physical), which might provoke sentiments of anger, shame, anxiety, or despair. Solutions to these challenges are not always evident or easy to obtain, which adds uncertainty and frustration to the situation. For the service professional who works continually with people under such conditions, prolonged stress can be emotionally taxing and raises the risk of 'burnout'. Burnout syndrome is also characterized by a negative self-evaluation, especially when working with customers. Workers are unsatisfied with their self-esteem and job performance (Maslach, 1981). The undervaluation of skills in gender-segregated jobs in service economies is a major factor in the lack of progress in gender pay fairness. Feminists argue that talent is socially constructed, and the term 'emotional labor' has entered academic and popular discourse to describe work historically considered unskilled. Gender-equitable work value claims and job evaluation systems acknowledge these skills (Junor, 2020). Women's incomes often lag behind men's in various occupations, but emotional labor may be the missing link. Many women's jobs involve emotional work like caring, bargaining, empathizing, and facilitating cooperation. This invisible and uncompensated work

is often overlooked in job descriptions or performance evaluations. Civil service systems, based on outdated assumptions, fail to recognize and compensate for emotional labor (Guy, 2004). Emotional labor leads to burnout as regulating emotions in service employment causes long-term psychological distress and tiredness, especially for women (Brotheridge, 2002). Training of such employees should be arranged by service firms in Pakistan that perform such emotional labor speaking Urdu language using a scale that effectively measures Emotional Labor in the Urdu language. (Mohsin, 2020).

Applying the theory of emotional labor, the Marxist Feminist lens, and the feminization of labor theory, the study highlights the need for reforms in bus hostesses' compensation structures, health benefits, and work environment. Bus hostesses face emotional, economic, and gender-based exploitation. Their experiences show emotional labor as they strive to conceal personal problems, and financial exploitation under a patriarchal capitalistic system perpetuated as the consequences of feminized, unstable employment situations that impede their upward mobility. Addressing these difficulties demands understanding systemic oppression rooted in both capitalism and patriarchal norms. It is pertinent to emphasize the need for longitudinal research to address systemic exploitation to empower women. It calls for policy changes and advocacy to improve working conditions and career prospects for women working in such roles. The study addressed significant gaps in the body of knowledge, most notably the lack of thorough information on the experiences and working circumstances of bus hostesses.

The study on bus hostesses in Pakistan's transportation industry reveals contradictory findings. Transportation companies claim to hire women from low-income families to improve passenger services and provide economic independence. However, the study suggests these hiring practices are more about enhancing the company's public image than empowering

women. The workplace also presents contradictory results. While some bus hostesses occasionally receive promotions to HR or warden jobs, the majority complain about a lack of professional growth, clear promotion paths, and no significant pay increases, highlighting inconsistent career development strategies in the sector.

The study reveals that Pakistani bus hostesses often view their pay as inadequate and exploitative, despite the company's claims that the compensation offered is reasonable. This contradictory view highlights the discrepancy between management's assessment of the job and the hostesses' lived realities. Additionally, there is a lack of consensus on the support provided by management and working conditions. Some hostesses acknowledge occasional assistance from supervisors, but the consensus is one of disregard and indifference. The study also highlights the pervasive issue of harassment at bus stops, largely due to the cultural environment and negative societal perceptions. Passengers often act inappropriately, make unwelcome advances, and verbally insult hostesses, despite occasional assistance from coworkers and management. Future research is needed to further investigate these issues and develop workable plans to ensure empowerment and fair treatment for Pakistani bus hostesses. To secure the sustainability of bus hostess roles and improve their working circumstances, the transport industry must take a comprehensive approach that addresses the multifaceted issues these workers face. According to the hostesses, respect and acknowledgment from management, passengers, and society are essential to their job fulfillment. Companies should implement policies, such as a "bus hostess protection policy," to safeguard their safety, and fair treatment, and avoid harassment. Improved financial stability through pay increases, health insurance, and pensions is required to reduce economic vulnerability. Furthermore, better hostel facilities, childcare options, and transportation services should be implemented to promote their well-being and work-life balance. These measures not only fit with labor justice

ideas, but they also fight the systemic exploitation of systematic exploitation of women in male-dominated industries. Finally, incorporating gender-sensitive policies into transportation planning and labor practices is critical for ensuring equitable, secure, and professional workplaces that attract and retain female employees.

6.1 Limitations of the Study

The inherent difficulties of doing phenomenological research are one of the study's limitations. The data set is small since it focuses on individual experiences and emotions, which makes it challenging to draw broad generalizations about the phenomenon. The accuracy of the study relies on how accurately the female bus hostesses could describe their experiences, which can differ greatly. Furthermore, because phenomenological research is qualitative, it was difficult to summarize and convey the findings, necessitating careful consideration and nuanced conclusions.

It is also important to state the challenges and limitations the researcher has encountered as a female researcher yearning to explore the issues faced by bus hostesses from their unique perspectives, challenges that were directly and indirectly linked to their roles as bus hostesses within the bus companies.

The researcher's self-identity as a Punjabi feminist from an upper-middle-class family may have had a significant influence on this research study. The researcher's academic background and extensive professional experience in the development sector in communication for development, particularly with vulnerable populations informed her commitment to carry out this research for human rights policy advocacy and women's empowerment. This research study is motivated by a desire to study and highlight the challenges of marginalized women, particularly those working in vulnerable, male-dominated fields like bus hostesses who confront a variety of challenges, including exploitation, social stigmas, emotional burnout,

harassment, and financial exploitation. Belonging to an upper-middle-class family background with a feminist lens, the researcher was aware of her relative privilege but her empathy and sincere motivation to record and highlight their struggles balanced this gap by staying objective as well as sensitive to their lived realities. The researcher's gender has helped her create trust with these women by providing a safe space for them to share their narratives and facilitating the collection of sensitive data on issues like harassment and exploitation which they might not have shared with any male researcher. On the other hand, it has also made it difficult to engage with male administrators of the bus companies. Researcher frequently faced opposition from male-dominated organizational structures, which resisted or blocked her efforts fearing as an outsider and investigative journalist. They doubted the researcher's intents and efforts and took them as a threat to their power or revelation of uncomfortable truths revealing the systemic gender inequality that exists in these venues. This dual experience—access and opposition—reflects the difficulty of a feminist in campaigning for women's rights in change-resistant patriarchal contexts. This male-controlled organizational structure, defensive stance, and opposition also resulted in limited access to vital information like company policies. Through this research, researcher hope to raise awareness and promote reform, particularly for women in male-dominated industries.

First, it turned out to be a difficult sample. Data collection through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the bus hostesses and their managers for this study was difficult. Data collection plans made in a sophisticated academic environment dashed to the ground when encountered with field realities like a lack of acceptance for research on women in business-driven sectors and a display of complete displeasure and disregard for a woman-focused academic quest. This disconnect also posed considerable challenges in linking academic plans to practical fieldwork.

Initially, the researcher had planned to conduct 30 to 35 interviews (5 to 7 bus hostesses from each bus company in Islamabad/Rawalpindi), but the researcher could only conduct 20 interviews. This limitation resulted mainly from the high-level opposition, indifference, and lack of cooperation by the company management together with the inconsiderate focal points of leading bus companies.

The male management was not convinced about the intentions because they thought that the researcher may bring out some delicate issues regarding their operations. They insisted on seeing my questionnaire so that they could know what I was targeting. Even when a simple set of questions meant for bus hostesses was shared, they still hesitated in allowing me to conduct interviews. Their actions portrayed an inner discomfort that prohibited them from permitting scrutiny from outside parties about their female employees as if those women belonged to them alone and they shouldn't narrate their work experiences.

The resistance from the terminal managers of leading bus companies was real; they were non-supportive and often rude. They were more focused on meeting the passenger's complaints and needs thus caring for the business-generating activities rather than facilitating a research student to interview the female crew. Despite several requests and the university's authorization letter for data collection, they used delaying tactics, stopped picking up my calls, and postponed meetings repeatedly.

Consequently, the researcher could not access any bus hostesses from those companies as this meant a waste of a momentous amount of time and resources. By refusing to facilitate this research endeavor, it made clear that these companies lacked discipline from a corporate standpoint as well as the organizational discipline itself. However, bus companies with better systems and policies and cooperative focal points from human resource management departments allowed me to conduct interviews and made this study possible. Personal

references and links were also used to interview and get connected to the ex-staffers of the companies that refused me to meet their on-duty bus hostesses.

Bus hostesses' educational background also compelled researcher to oversimplify her questions to get responses. Secondly, time constraints and supervisory presence in in-depth interviews with bus hostesses limited the depth of insights. The limited engagement and potential discomfort in discussing sensitive topics may have somehow limited the scope of the hostesses' struggles.

CHAPTER 7

Policy Recommendations & Way Forward

Gender inequities are deeply rooted in most contemporary modern societies, resulting in a transportation sector dominated by male perspectives. This male-centric strategy fails to match women's needs and experiences, limiting their travel opportunities and access to jobs. The research emphasizes the importance of implementing Gender-Equitable Human Factors (GE-HF) by evaluating literature from several modes of transportation (road, rail, aircraft, and maritime) to identify major gender concerns. It advocates a multidisciplinary approach from the social sciences to solve these discrepancies, emphasizing the need to involve women in important decision-making processes in the transportation industry (Parnell, 2022).

Pakistan's National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) which aims at providing a structured mechanism with defined objectives for improving the lives of women and providing them with equal opportunities to excel in the professional sphere, has been put in place in pursuance of a strong commitment to ensuring equal rights for women across the country (Ministry of Planning D. a., 2022). However, male-dominated industries like the transport industry of Pakistan need to adhere to and comply with it to fill the policy gaps.

Pakistan ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) in 2001 (Ratifications of C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), 1951), committing to equal pay for men and women for equal work, in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards. This was part of broader efforts to address gender disparities in the workforce and promote gender equality in the labor market. However, Pakistan has struggled to fully integrate the principle of equal remuneration into its legal framework, resulting in ongoing gender pay disparities.

A wide range of policy recommendations that target gender inequality and economic exploitation can be proposed to address the challenges faced by bus hostesses. Here are a few possible suggestions:

- The findings of this research study call for a pressing need to recognize women's potential as workers in the transport industry in Pakistan's national transport policy through effective policy reforms and legislative protections to solve the challenges faced by women working in the transportation industry. The government of Pakistan should formulate a comprehensive policy on women working in transportation and its vigorous implementation to guarantee their rights and obligations.
- Bus Companies must ensure mandatory formal employment contracts mentioning regular working hours, job security, and in-time salary payments with added benefits. To shield employees from an unexpected loss of income, this could involve paid leave and paid time off provisions.
- Implement effective mechanisms to ensure work-life balance-promoting measures including flexible work schedules, maternity leave, and childcare assistance. This would make it easier for bus hostesses to balance their obligations to their families and their jobs.
- To guarantee adherence to labor laws and norms, the government should improve labor inspection mechanisms. Bus hostesses can be protected from exploitation through strict implementation and regular inspections.
- Governments and businesses should launch public awareness programs to shun stigmas and misconceptions about women working in low-paying, unstable employment while stressing the value of gender equality and lauding the contributions made by women in the workforce.

- Bus companies must adopt Corporate Social Responsibility policies to put the welfare of the workers—including bus hostesses—first. Businesses should be held responsible for fair labor practices to promote gender equality at work.
- Government agencies supervise and keep an eye on the execution of laws meant to improve the working conditions of bus hostesses. Policies may be revised to inculcate a gender lens with effective and regular evaluations.
- Bus companies can create a safer, more inclusive working environment for bus hostesses, contributing to gender equality in the workforce by implementing robust anti-harassment protocols. These guidelines should specify what constitutes inappropriate behavior as well as how incidences of harassment should be reported and handled. All staff members should receive regular training on these rules with an emphasis on equality and respect.
- Bus Companies should establish a specific grievance redressal procedure to manage concerns effectively and discreetly from bus hostesses. This can be a hotline or a dedicated ombudsperson, to whom staff members can report problems without fear of facing consequences.
- Companies should conduct regular audits and monitoring of company practices to ensure compliance with anti-harassment policies and gender equality standards. Third-party assessments can provide unbiased evaluations and highlight areas for improvement.
- Ensure that women are represented in policy-making processes within the company. Including women in leadership and decision-making roles can help ensure that their perspectives and needs are addressed in company policies and practices.

- For a long-term career decision, bus hostesses place a high value on respect, better treatment, pay increases, and better working conditions. They demand better hostel facilities, safety procedures, pick and drop service, wage increases, life and health insurance, respect from management, and execution of administrative actions against misbehaving passengers and staff.
- Companies must compensate and recognize the emotional labor carried out daily by bus hostesses as a skill. Understanding emotional labor is critical for firms seeking to effectively support staff and manage customer relations.

Moreover, government and academia should identify key areas requiring additional research and evidence to achieve transformative change in the Pakistani transport sector for women and address the challenges hindering progress on gender equality. This research should focus on promoting women's economic empowerment within the transport industry while ensuring a violence-free and supportive environment.

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Appendices

Appendix A

- Article 3 calls upon the State to eliminate all forms of exploitation.
- Article 4 provides for the right of individuals to enjoy the protection of the law and to be treated by the law. This applies to the citizens as well as “to every other person for the time being within Pakistan” without distinction. This article also clearly states that certain rights cannot be suspended.
- Article 25 ensures equality before the law and equal protection of the law and states that there shall be no discrimination based on sex alone.
- Articles 25(3) and 26(2) allow the state to make special provisions for the protection of women and children.
- Articles 26 & 27 provide for equal access to public places and equality of employment in the public and private sectors.
- Article 32 makes special provisions for the representation of women in local Government.
- The Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010
- Article 34 directs the state to take appropriate measures to enable women to participate in all spheres of life and social activities (Women Development Department, n.d.)

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire for Bus Hostesses

Note: Respondents' identity and company to remain anonymous.

Demographic profile

- Gender.....
- Age.....
- Highest level of education completed.....
- Other (please specify)
- Experience in years as a bus hostess.....
- Working location and place of Origin.....

Research Question 1: Exploring the Experiences and Challenges of Bus Hostesses

Personal and job-related challenges.

1. What is your current employment as a bus hostess? (Select one option.)

- a. Full-time b. Part-time c.

Casual/Temporary

2. How long have you worked as a bus hostess? (Select one option.)

- a. Less than one year b. One to three years c. Three to five years
d. Five years or more

3. Please rate the following personal challenges you confront as a bus hostess on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the least challenging and 5 is the most challenging:

- a. Maintaining work-life balance.
b. Dealing with disruptive passengers

c. Physical demands of the job like working long hours and standing for longer periods.

d. Safety issues while on duty

e. Financial instability, such as low pay or irregular income.

f. Other (Please indicate)

4. Could you describe your socioeconomic background? (Think about issues like class, income, and access to resources.)

a. Working class. b. Middle class. c. Upper class. d. Other (Please specify)

5. What personal and professional problems do you face in your work as a bus hostess? (Open-ended)

6. Have you ever faced discrimination or harassment in the workplace because of your gender?

Options: a. Yes, b. No, or c. Unsure.

7. How do you believe class dynamics connect with gender dynamics to shape bus hostesses' job experiences, particularly in terms of discrimination and exploitation?

Research Question 2: Social Norms and Perceptions

1. How do you see society's views of women's jobs in general? Choose one:

a. Positive b. Neutral c. Negative d. Other (please define)

2. What societal norms do you believe exist for women who work as bus hostesses? (Open-ended)

3. Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice as a bus hostess owing to societal perceptions? If so, please offer examples. (Open-ended)

Research Question 3: Career Development and Sustainability

1. Do you see prospects for career advancement in the transportation industry beyond

the function of bus hostess?

- a. Yes b. No c. Unsure

2. What initiatives or opportunities do you believe could improve career advancement for bus hostesses in the transportation industry? (Open-ended).

3. How do you see the long-term viability of bus hosting as a profession?

- a. Sustainable b. Unsustainable c. Unsure

4. What improvements or enhancements do you think are required to ensure the long-term sustainability of the bus hostess profession? (Open-ended)

5. How do you see the relationship between your profession as a bus hostess and the larger economic system?

- a. I feel exploited by the capitalist system,
b. I feel empowered by my work (within the capitalist system).
c. Other (Please specify)

6. Do you believe your work as a bus hostess is fairly compensated given the demands of the job?

- a. Yes b. No c. Unsure

7. How do you manage your responsibilities as a bus hostess with any unpaid caregiving or domestic tasks you may conduct outside of work?

- a. I find it difficult to manage both responsibilities.
b. I have support systems in place to assist me with my tasks.

8. If you are offered another work, will you leave your job as a bus hostess?

9. Do you believe that the gendered division of labor, particularly in caregiving and domestic duties, impacts your capacity to fully engage in the workforce?

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Supervisors

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get feedback from managers or supervisors in the transportation industry on the difficulties bus hostesses encounter and the methods used to overcome them. The company and the respondent identities will remain anonymous.

Questionnaire: Examining Bus Hostesses' Challenges from a Manager/Supervisor Perspective

General Details:

- a. Age: _____
- b. Gender: _____
- c. Years spent working in the transportation sector: _____

Section 1: Experience and Job Function

What role do you currently hold in the transportation organization?

- A. Supervisor
- B. Manager
- C. Other (please define)

For what duration have you held this role?

- a. Less than a year
- b. one to three years
- c. three to five years
- d. more than five years

Section 2: Recognizing the Difficulties

1. In your opinion, what are the most typical difficulties that bus hosts deal with daily?

2. How do you believe these difficulties affect bus hostesses' productivity and well-being at work?

3. Have you noticed that bus hostesses face any particular difficulties about social norms or gender dynamics? If so, kindly give some instances.

Section 3: Resources and Assistance

4. What tools or support networks are available right now to help bus hostesses deal with their difficulties?

5. Do you think these support systems are helping to minimize the difficulties that bus hostesses face? Why not, and why not?

Section 4: Policies and Workplace Culture

1. In what ways does the transportation company's general workplace culture promote gender equality and respect for bus hostesses?

2. Are there any current guidelines or practices designed to handle the unique requirements and worries of bus hostesses? If so, could you kindly elaborate?

Section 5: Strategies for Improvement

1. What plans or actions do you believe should be put in place to better support and handle the difficulties that the company's bus hostesses face?

2. How do you see management and leadership contributing to the development of a more welcoming and encouraging work environment for bus hostesses?