

THE STUDY OF WOMEN'S SAFETY AT PUBLIC PLACES IN LAHORE

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Women's peace and security is an agenda to ensure sustainable peace and security for women around the globe. Women's safety is one of the social issues faced by the contemporary world. The purpose of this paper is to investigate women's perception of women's safety in public places and highlight the major contributing factors that lead to their insecurity. The simple Google survey form was floated among 120 women in the age brackets 18 to 32 using a simple random sampling technique. The data was analyzed through the percentages and graphs collected by Google Forms floated in the different groups of university female students. The educational status of the participants was put in the categories of undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate. Major findings of the study show that women face harassment in public places and the majority of the women do not prefer to go alone in public. The majority of responses have the perception that public transport for women is unsafe and as a result women's mobility becomes limited. Around 89.1% of women agreed that harassment against women in public places is a serious concern and women's peace and security in public places is the need of time. Few participants know about the already existing policies and laws that protect women, but most respondents know about the women's protection helpline. Research is needed to extend further to other provinces and cities of Pakistan.

Key Words Women, Safety, Public place

INTRODUCTION

Women's safety in public spaces is a fundamental human rights issue linked to urban infrastructure, gender norms, and institutional frameworks. Across the world, women experience harassment, violence, and restricted mobility in public areas, limiting their freedom and participation in society (UN Women, 2020). Research suggests that inadequate urban planning exacerbates safety risks for women. Whitzman (2008) highlights that poor lighting, lack of surveillance, and unsafe transportation disproportionately impact women's sense of security. For instance, a study in Bogotá, Colombia, found that improving street lighting and pedestrian pathways reduced harassment by 40% (Montero, 2015).

Similarly, Valentine's (1989) seminal work on gendered spaces argues that public environments are often designed to prioritize male access while marginalizing women. Further, gender-based violence in public spaces affects women's physical and mental well-being. Studies indicate that the fear of harassment often leads women to modify their behavior, such as avoiding certain locations, restricting their movement at night, and opting for male accompaniment (Pain, 2001). Public harassment, also referred to as "street harassment," includes behaviors such as verbal abuse, unwanted physical contact, stalking, and indecent exposure (Bowman, 1993). These experiences not only undermine women's rights but also limit their opportunities for education, employment, and social engagement.

The issue of women's safety is particularly pronounced in South Asia, where traditional gender norms, weak law enforcement, and inadequate infrastructure create an unsafe public environment for women. A study in Delhi found that 95% of women felt unsafe in public spaces due to poor infrastructure and the normalization of harassment (Jagori & UN Women, 2011). Viswanath and Mehrotra (2007) argue that patriarchal societal norms and insufficient legal frameworks perpetuate public insecurity for women. International conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), mandate states to ensure women's safety in public spaces (United Nations, 1979). However, the effectiveness of such conventions is undermined by inconsistent implementation. For example, Egypt's 2014 anti-sexual harassment law led to increased reporting but failed to deter offenders due to weak enforcement mechanisms (FIDH, 2018). Similarly, Brazil's Lei Maria da Penha (2006) strengthened legal protections but did not address ingrained sexism in policing (Santos, 2017).

In South Asian cities, gender-based violence in public spaces is exacerbated by poor infrastructure and social stigma against reporting harassment. Women frequently face harassment in public transport, parks, and crowded marketplaces (Chakraborty et al., 2017). Limited access to police assistance and social fear of retaliation often discourage women from filing complaints against perpetrators (Ghosh, 2018). Additionally, lack of gender-sensitive urban planning continues to pose mobility constraints for women, limiting their participation in economic and social activities (Khosla, 2020).

In Pakistan, patriarchal concepts of *izzat* (honor) and *purdah* (seclusion) restrict women's mobility and

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reinforce barriers to accessing public spaces safely (Zia, 2018). A 2019 survey by the Aurat Foundation revealed that 90% of Pakistani women had experienced some form of harassment in public, including catcalling, stalking, and physical assault. Lahore, as one of Pakistan's most populous cities, reflects these concerns. Research by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW, 2020) found that 67% of women in Lahore avoid public transport due to safety concerns. The rapid urbanization of Lahore has further neglected gender-sensitive urban planning. Imran and Fazal (2019) highlight the absence of well-lit streets, security measures, and female-friendly facilities at bus stops, parks, and marketplaces. For example, only 12% of Lahore's bus stops have functional lighting, leaving women vulnerable, especially at night (Ali & Raza, 2017). Additionally, the lack of segregated spaces, such as women-only compartments in public transport, exacerbates the risks women face (Hassan & Mahmood, 2021).

Pakistan has enacted various laws to address gender-based violence and harassment, including the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (2010) and the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act (2016). However, Khan and Hussain (2020) argue that these laws primarily address domestic and workplace harassment, leaving public spaces largely unregulated. Law enforcement agencies often dismiss harassment complaints due to a "lack of evidence" or blame victims for "inappropriate attire" (Human Rights Watch, 2021). In Lahore, the Gender Crime Cell reported that only 15% of harassment cases filed in 2020 resulted in convictions (PCSW, 2021).

This lack of accountability contributes to the normalization of harassment in public spaces, discouraging

women from reporting incidents. Moreover, gender biases in policing and legal proceedings create additional barriers for women seeking justice. Many harassment cases are dismissed due to a lack of forensic evidence, and victims often face societal stigma when attempting to hold perpetrators accountable (Khan et al., 2022). Strengthening the implementation of existing legal protections and improving gender sensitivity training for law enforcement officials are crucial steps toward addressing these challenges (Iqbal, 2021).

Despite these challenges, community-led initiatives have emerged as effective strategies for improving women's safety. In Nairobi, the SafetiPin app utilizes crowdsourced safety audits to identify high-risk zones, leading to targeted infrastructure upgrades (SafetiPin, 2018). Similarly, Cairo's HarassMap initiative employs SMS reporting to map harassment hotspots, pressuring authorities to increase surveillance (Shoukry, 2016). In Lahore, organizations such as Women's Collective Pakistan (WCP) conduct self-defense workshops and advocate for safer public spaces (WCP, 2022). The Lahore Metro Bus System introduced women-only buses in 2020 to provide safer transportation options, but limited coverage (only 10% of routes) restricts accessibility (Punjab Mass Transit Authority, 2021). Academic institutions like LUMS have also piloted "safe route" mapping for students, though scalability remains a challenge (Rizvi & Akhtar, 2022).

This study seeks to evaluate female university students' perceptions of safety in public spaces across Lahore, with a focus on identifying the primary factors that contribute to their sense of insecurity. Additionally, the research examines their level of awareness regarding existing legal protections and governmental policies aimed

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at ensuring women's safety. By analyzing these dimensions, the study aims to provide actionable insights that can inform policy improvements and community-based interventions to enhance women's security in urban environments. The findings will contribute to ongoing discourse on gender-sensitive urban planning and public safety measures. The research aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 11, which calls for inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive urban planning (United Nations, 2015). Given that women constitute 49.3% of Pakistan's population (World Bank, 2024), addressing their safety concerns is essential for promoting gender equality and national development. Unsafe public spaces hinder women's mobility, participation in the workforce, and access to education, highlighting the urgent need for systemic reforms and community-driven interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's safety in public spaces is a critical issue that encompasses physical, psychological, and social dimensions. Defined as the condition of being safe from all forms of physical and psychological harm (INSPQ, 2018), the lack of safety in public areas such as streets, parks, and transportation hubs significantly restricts women's mobility, limits their access to education and employment, and negatively impacts their mental and physical well-being (Thematic Review on Women's Perception of Safety, 2023). Gender-based violence, a pervasive issue, is one of the primary causes of unsafe public spaces. It includes acts that cause physical or psychological harm to women, with men often being the perpetrators due to patriarchal systems that perpetuate power imbalances (Minnesota, 2023). This literature review synthesizes

findings from recent studies to explore the key factors influencing women's safety, the consequences of unsafe public spaces, and the policy and infrastructural interventions needed to address this issue.

Urban design and infrastructure play a pivotal role in shaping women's perception of safety in public spaces. Studies consistently highlight that elements such as adequate lighting, visibility, and the absence of physical obstructions (e.g., overgrown vegetation or poorly maintained infrastructure) significantly reduce fear and enhance safety (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2013). For instance, well-lit streets with clear sightlines allow women to see and be seen, thereby reducing the risk of harassment or assault (Women's Safety Perceptions in Public Spaces, 2018). Conversely, poorly lit or isolated areas, such as deserted parking lots or underpasses, are often perceived as unsafe and are avoided by women (Thematic Review on Women's Perception of Safety, 2023). Mixed-use spaces that combine residential, commercial, and recreational activities are generally perceived as safer because they encourage pedestrian traffic and foster a sense of community (Whitzman, 2008). In contrast, abandoned or single-use areas, such as industrial zones, are associated with higher levels of fear and insecurity (UN-Habitat, 2021).

In Pakistan, studies have identified poor lighting, lack of security, and inadequate sanitation as key contributors to women's insecurity in public spaces (Bajwa, Khan, & Nadeem, 2018). Similarly, research in Karachi highlights that public transport remains one of the most unsafe spaces for women, with frequent cases of harassment and abuse (Jamil & Hyder, 2019). Ilyas and Garg (2023) conducted an ethnographic study examining the experiences of women using public transportation in

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Karachi and Delhi. Their research highlights that, beyond safety concerns, systemic factors such as socio-economic disparities, cultural norms, and urban infrastructure significantly impact women's mobility. The study emphasizes the need for inclusive urban planning and policy reforms that address these underlying issues to facilitate equitable access to public spaces for women. One of the case studies of Rawalpindi in 2012, is a real-time story shared by the administrator of the area at that time (Fatima, 2019). She mentioned when I joined my office, the very next day a 65-year-old lady came to my office and complained to me that, there are no safe recreational places for women.

Where they go to spend their free time and for enjoyment. One of the studies about street harassment from Gujranwala shows that 96% of the girls face street harassment. One of the other studies about public transport from Lahore shows that 82% of women face harassment at bus stops (Zamurrad, 2020). One of the studies from Islamabad shows that more than half of the women of Islamabad are subjected to face street harassment (Masood *et al.*, 2020). Sociocultural norms and gender-based violence are significant barriers to women's safety in public spaces. Patriarchal systems perpetuate power imbalances, making women more vulnerable to harassment and violence (Minnesota, 2023). In many societies, deeply ingrained gender norms and stereotypes contribute to the normalization of harassment, creating an environment where women are often blamed for their victimization (Violence in Public Spaces Against Women and Girls, 2022). For example, in India, societal stigma surrounding victims of harassment discourages reporting and restricts women's mobility, particularly in urban areas (Women's Safety Perceptions in Public Spaces, 2018).

In Pakistan, studies reveal that women frequently engage in "mental mapping" of safe and unsafe zones, adjusting their behavior to mitigate risks. This may include avoiding certain routes, traveling only during daylight hours, or dressing in ways perceived as less provocative (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2013). A study by Ikram (2022) in Lahore, Pakistan, provides detailed insights into how cultural norms and social structures influence both the nature of harassment and women's responses to it. The research documented various forms of harassment experiences, their consequences, and the ineffectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms. Similarly, Babakhani's (2022) critical review of control over Muslim women's bodies highlights how street harassment functions as a mechanism of social control, restricting women's mobility and reinforcing patriarchal norms.

Despite growing awareness of the issue, there is a lack of standardized tools and methodologies for assessing women's perceived safety in public spaces. Traditional crime statistics often fail to capture the nuanced experiences of fear and insecurity that women face daily (Women's Perceived Safety in Public Places, 2024). Emerging methods, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), GPS-based smartphone applications (e.g., Safetipin), and participatory safety audits, offer promising avenues for data collection and analysis (UN-Habitat, 2021). For example, Safetipin, a crowdsourced app, allows users to rate the safety of public spaces based on parameters such as lighting, visibility, and crowd density, providing valuable insights for urban planners (Whitzman, 2008).

However, these tools remain underutilized in policy-making, and there is a need for greater integration of gender-disaggregated data into urban planning

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processes. Current policies often prioritize reactive measures, such as increased policing, over preventive strategies like gender-sensitive urban design (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2013). In Pakistan, despite the existence of laws such as the Women Protection Bill 2006 and the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act 2011, most women deal silently with harassers and do not register complaints due to lengthy procedures and fear of retaliation (Asif et al., 2023).

The consequences of unsafe public spaces are far-reaching, affecting women's mental health, mobility, and overall quality of life. Fear of harassment significantly impacts women's employment choices, leading to restricted workforce participation (Fatima & Sohail, 2021). In Pakistan, studies show that harassment in public places is a repeated phenomenon, with one woman often becoming a victim repeatedly, either by the same perpetrator or by new ones (Tabassum & Sohail, 2022). This fear is inculcated in the minds of women, acting as a hurdle to their emotional and social development (NIH, 2015). Internationally, studies reveal similar patterns. In the UK, 80% of women face harassment in public places (Hewitt, 2021), while in India, crowded places are more likely to witness harassment than less crowded ones (Dhillon, 2014). These findings highlight the global nature of the issue and the need for comprehensive solutions.

Several interventions have been proposed to address women's safety in public spaces. Gender-responsive urban planning, such as increased police patrols and designated women-only spaces, has been shown to enhance women's confidence in navigating cities (Siddiqui & Rashid, 2020). In Mumbai, urban infrastructure improvements, such as well-lit streets and CCTV surveillance, have improved women's sense of security

(Ghosh & Banerjee, 2019). However, women in lower-income areas continue to face higher risks due to inadequate law enforcement and social stigmas associated with reporting incidents.

In Pakistan, initiatives such as the Women Safety App and Punjab Safe City Authority aim to improve safety, but their effectiveness is limited by low awareness and accessibility (Jamshed, 2020). Community collaboration and policy interventions are needed to create safer public spaces. While numerous international and national studies have examined women's safety in public spaces, most lack a clear delineation of specific safety indicators or focus on generalized security concerns rather than gender-specific risks. In the Pakistani context, research on this critical issue remains scarce, particularly after 2018, with no recent empirical studies addressing women's safety in public places. This study aims to bridge this gap by identifying key safety concerns through systematic data collection, thereby contributing to the limited body of localized evidence.

Theoretical Framework

The two theories are used in the study to examine the women's safety in public places. One is cultural theory, and the other one is feminist theory. According to cultural theory violence against women is deeply entrenched in culture. Culturally, women are considered in a lower position and treated like objects (Sociology of Culture, 2024). Women are also considered as anything which is for entertaining or for giving pleasure to men. However, having such beliefs about women, violence against women feels so normal and a part of the culture. According to feminist theory, the major reason for violence against women is the patriarchal structure (Burton, 2014). It is defined as the social structure in which men acquire all the

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powers and women are subordinate to them in society. So that women are meant to be obedient to men's attitude and power. These two theories are the base of the study and provide us with the core reason behind women's insecurity and their fear of violence and aggression in public places. In short, it can be said that these theories paved the way for our study by providing knowledge regarding the ultimate mindset of society about women's violence.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative survey method to investigate female university students' perceptions regarding women's safety concerns in public spaces. A structured, self-administered questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of existing literature to ensure the validity and relevance of the constructs measured. The instrument included closed-ended Likert-scale items to capture quantitative data. A total of 120 female university students were purposively sampled to participate in the study. Data collection was conducted digitally using Google Forms, a secure and efficient online survey platform, to facilitate convenient and rapid responses while maintaining anonymity.

The survey link was distributed through university email lists, student forums, and social media groups targeting female students to ensure a representative sample. Prior to dissemination, a pilot test was conducted with 15 participants to assess the clarity, reliability, and internal consistency of the questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.7$), leading to minor refinements in wording and structure. This method ensured systematic, efficient, and ethical data collection while minimizing biases associated with self-reporting. Using a digital survey platform also allowed for

broader geographical participation and real-time data compilation, enhancing the robustness of the findings.

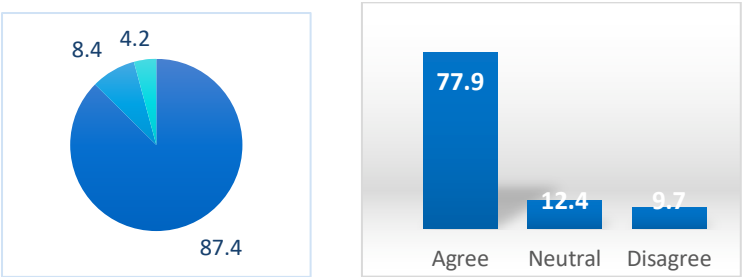
DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: *Demographic of the Respondents*

	13-19	19-25	25-32
Age	65%	22.2%	12.8%
	Undergraduate	Graduate	Postgraduate
Education	65%	22%	13%
	Rural	Urban	
Area	34.5%	65.%	

The above-mentioned table about demographics shows that most respondents are teenagers. The major portion of respondents are studying undergraduate and belong to urban areas.

Figures 1 & 2: Fear of women going outside alone and registering complaints

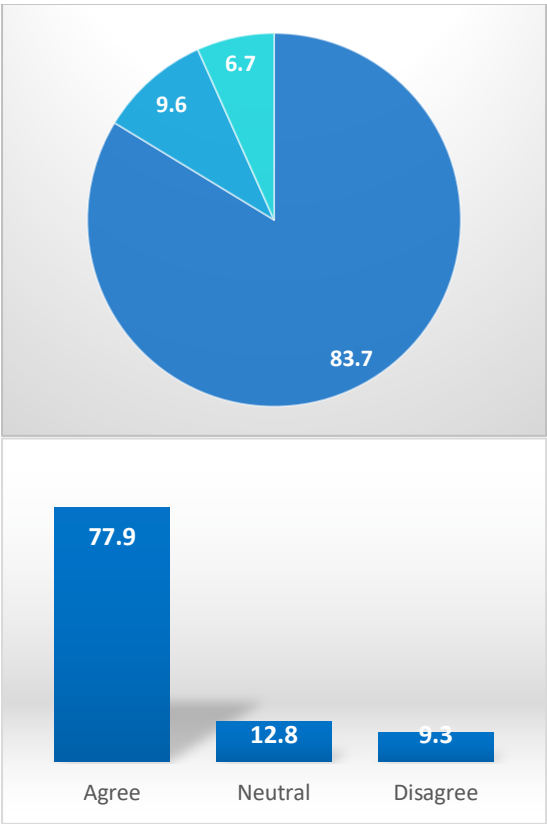


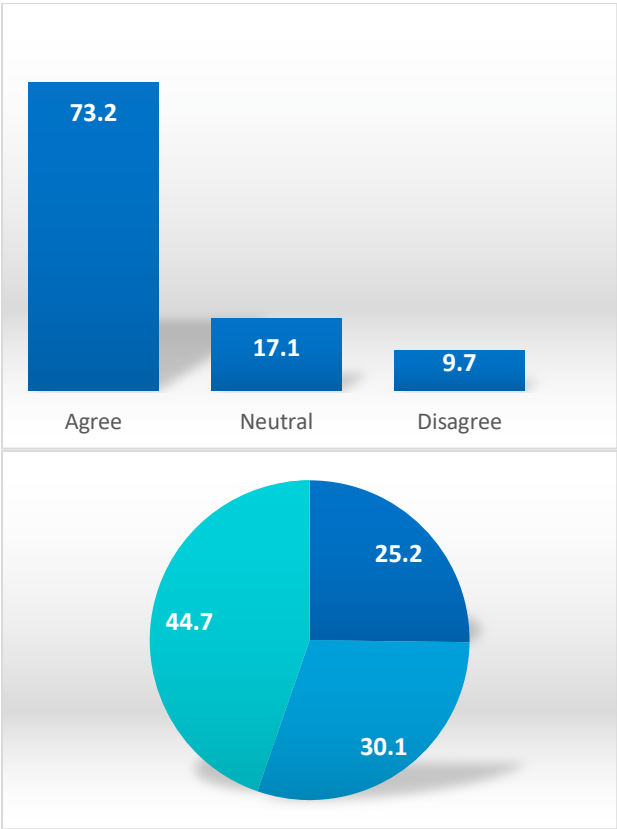
Figures one and two are regarding fear of women going outside alone and registering complaints in public places respectively. The result indicates that 87.4% of women feel afraid to go outside alone in public places and about 77.9% of women agree that they feel public humiliation to register a complaint against women's crimes in public

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places. Women prefer either to go in the form of groups or the company of males.

Figures 3,4,5,6: Harassment at public places (Bus stops, Markets, Parks)

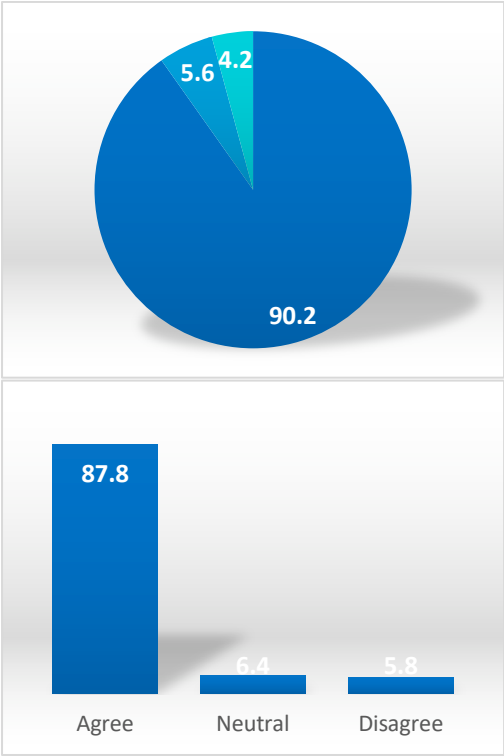




Figures three, four, five, and six are about the prevalence of harassment in public places. The results show that 83.7 % of women agree that harassment occurs at bus stops 77.9% of women agree that harassment occurs at markets and 73.2 % of women agree that harassment occurs at parks. Moreover, the results also indicate that the most often forms of harassment that occur in public places are unwanted physical contact (44.7), offensive remarks (30.1), and stalking (25.2).

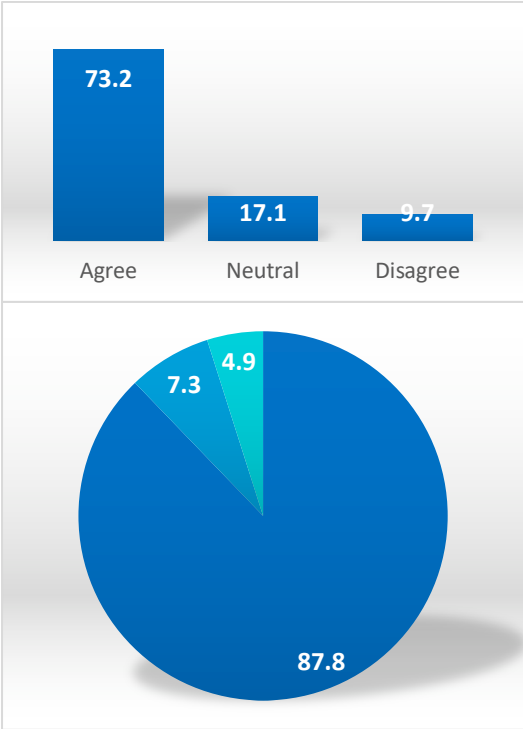
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Figures 7 & 8: Limit women's mobility and overall recreational participation.



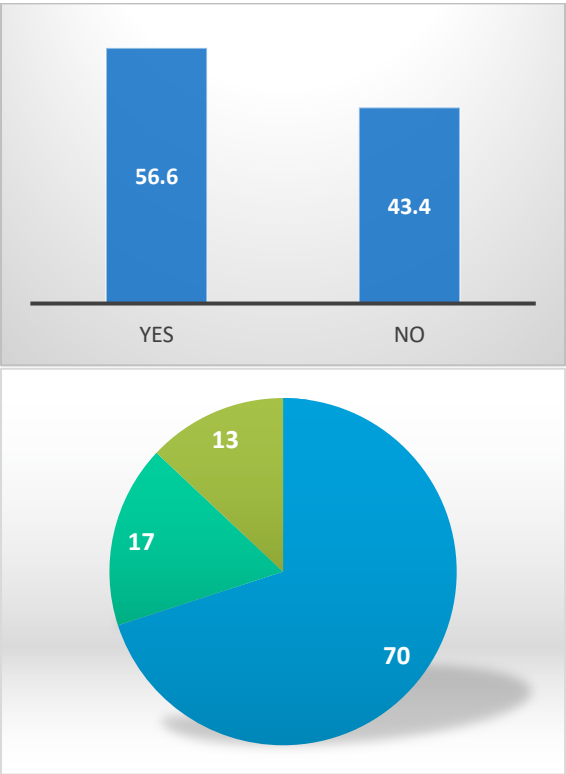
Figures 7 and 8 are about unsafe public places that limit women's mobility and overall participation in the community. The above-mentioned data shows that 90.2 % of women agree, that unsafe public places act as a hurdle in the way of women mobility. About 87.8% believe that unsafe public places are the major barrier to their overall participation in recreational activities.

Figures 9 &10: Need for gender sensitization and raising awareness



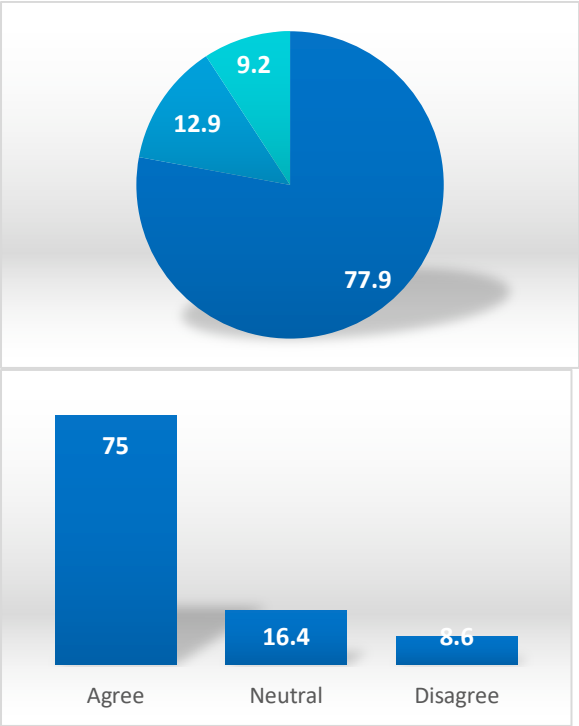
Figures 9 and 10 are about the need for gender sensitization and raising awareness. 73.2% of women agree that gender sensitization policies and 87.8% agree that addressing these issues at a broader level will play a vital role in ensuring women’s safety in public places.

Figures 11 &12 Women safety apps and helplines



Figures 11 and 12 are about women’s safety apps and helplines. The results indicate that only 56.6% of respondents know about government apps and about 70% of respondents know about the women’s protection helpline.

Figures 13 &14 Prevalence of patriarchal structure and justice for women



Figures 13 and 14 are about the prevalence of patriarchal structure and seeking justice for women. 77.9% of women agree that patriarchy is the most prevailing in society and 75% of women agree that due to prevailing patriarchy and cultural norms, it is difficult to seek justice for, women.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with a growing body of international and local research highlighting the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and women's safety concerns in public spaces. The results indicate that 87.4%

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of women in Lahore feel afraid to go outside alone, a statistic that resonates with global patterns. For instance, similar studies in Delhi found that 95% of women felt unsafe in public spaces due to poor infrastructure and normalized harassment (Jagori & UN Women, 2011). This fear is not unfounded, as 83.7% of respondents in this study reported harassment at bus stops, 77.9% at markets, and 73.2% at parks. These figures mirror findings from Gujranwala, where 96% of women faced street harassment (Zamurrad, 2020), and Islamabad, where over half of the women experienced similar issues (Masood et al., 2020). The prevalence of unwanted physical contact (44.7%), offensive remarks (30.1%), and stalking (25.2%) further underscores the urgent need for systemic interventions. The previous literature about women's safety concerns in public places suggested that women's safety situations in public places are highly alarming.

Women have a sense of insecurity to go at public places. The current study results also aligned with the previous studies and indicated that unsafe public places are one of the major public issues. It reinforces the claim that public spaces are not equitably accessible to all genders (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2013; Pain, 2001; Whitzman, 2008). Such findings corroborate the work of Koskela (1999), who introduced the concept of “spatial fear,” whereby women modify their behavior and movement patterns in anticipation of harassment or violence. This is further supported by research in Delhi by Viswanath and Mehrotra (2007), which revealed that the majority of women restrict their mobility based on perceived danger, thereby limiting their full participation in urban life. Women do not feel safe in public places. So that, they do not go to public places alone. They either go in the company of males or in the form of a group. It limits women's mobility (Roy S *et al*,

2024) and hinders their recreational activities, which further leads to mental issues in them (Fatima, 2019). Consequently, unsafe public places also act as a barrier to the overall development of women (NIH, 2015).

The study's theoretical framework, grounded in cultural and feminist theories, provides critical insights into the root causes of these safety concerns. Cultural theory posits that violence against women is entrenched in societal norms that position women as subordinate (Sociology of Culture, 2024), while feminist theory attributes it to patriarchal power structures (Burton, 2014). These theories are reflected in the study's results, where 77.9% of women identified patriarchy as a prevailing societal issue, and 75% acknowledged the difficulty of seeking justice due to cultural norms. The results of the study showed that the majority of the women felt hesitant to register a complaint about harassment in public places.

They have a fear of facing public humiliation because most of the offices are held by men (Asif, 2023). So, when women complain to any man about men there are chances, that he supports men rather than women. The hesitancy to report incidents of women feared public humiliation echoes findings from Pakistan's Aurat Foundation (2019), where societal stigma and ineffective legal mechanisms were cited as major barriers. In addition, the previous literature shows that women face harassment in public places (Mukherjee, 2018). The study's data also identify bus stops (83.7%), markets (77.9%), and parks (73.2%) as the most frequent locations for harassment, reinforcing existing literature from both local and international contexts. Ali and Raza (2017) and Imran and Fazal (2019) have documented how poorly lit, unmonitored, and crowded public areas in Lahore act as enablers of gender-based violence. Research from Kolkata

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(Bhattacharyya, 2016), Karachi (Jamil & Hyder, 2019), and Islamabad (Ahmad et al., 2020) similarly points to transportation hubs and marketplaces as high-risk zones, especially in cities lacking gender-sensitive infrastructure. This supports the global argument that unsafe urban design significantly increases the vulnerability of women (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2013; UN-Habitat, 2021).

Unsafe public spaces not only affect physical security but also create long-term psychological and developmental consequences. The current study found that 90.2% of women feel that insecurity restricts their mobility, while 87.8% report that it limits their participation in recreational and community life. These patterns echo the findings of Fatima and Sohail (2021), who highlight how persistent harassment and fear inhibit women's educational and professional ambitions. Similar findings from Zakar et al. (2012) suggest that public insecurity acts as a deterrent to women's empowerment by diminishing their self-efficacy and social agency. Moreover, prolonged exposure to harassment correlates with elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms, as discussed by Mehta (2015) and NIH (2015). The need for gender-sensitive urban planning, as advocated by UN-Habitat (2021), is evident in Lahore's context, where poor lighting and inadequate security at bus stops (Ali & Raza, 2017) perpetuate insecurity.

The study also reveals gaps in awareness about existing safety mechanisms. While 70% of respondents knew about women's protection helplines, only 56.6% were aware of government safety apps, corroborating Jamshed's (2020) findings on low awareness of legal protections in Pakistan. This lack of knowledge exacerbates women's vulnerability, as highlighted by the limited use of safety apps like SafetiPin in other contexts

(Whitzman, 2008). Anwar and Ghaus (2020), who argue that despite the launch of technological initiatives like the Women Safety App and Safe City surveillance systems in Punjab, their limited public outreach and accessibility reduce their effectiveness.

As Khan and Hussain (2020) explain, Pakistan's legal framework on gender-based violence tends to prioritize domestic and workplace harassment, while public harassment remains inadequately addressed due to weak implementation and societal denial. The ineffectiveness of reactive measures, such as policing, without addressing underlying infrastructural and cultural issues, further compounds the problem (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2013). For example, despite Lahore's Metro Bus System introducing women-only buses, their limited coverage (10% of routes) restricts accessibility (Punjab Mass Transit Authority, 2021), mirroring critiques of similar initiatives in Mumbai (Phadke, 2011). The data of the study, prove this hypothesis by indicating the results that half of the population of women do not know about already existing policies but women do know about women's safety helplines. However, there is a need to raise awareness about women's safety policies so that they can get help in case any incident occurs to them.

Theoretically, these findings are consistent with feminist and cultural frameworks that situate public harassment within systems of institutional and ideological control. Massey (1994) and Fenster (2005) argue that the exclusion of women from public space reflects the denial of their right to the city. From this perspective, harassment is not merely a behavioral problem but a manifestation of unequal power structures that define who belongs where. Similarly, Valentine's (1989) notion of "gendered geography" highlights how spatial arrangements reflect

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and reproduce patriarchal power. In the context of Lahore, women's constrained presence in public spaces reveals a deeply embedded sociocultural narrative that equates female visibility with dishonor (Zia, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2020).

The tripartite framework of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda—participation, protection, and prevention—is a useful lens through which to evaluate the study's findings (United Nations, 2000). Participation is visibly restricted, as women avoid traveling alone and refrain from engaging in public activities. Protection is compromised by the limited implementation of gender-sensitive laws and digital tools, while prevention is undermined by infrastructural and attitudinal gaps. These gaps necessitate multidimensional responses, including urban redesign, law enforcement training, and educational campaigns to shift public attitudes (Haque & Khan, 2021; Rizvi & Akhtar, 2022).

Globally, best practices illustrate how integrated approaches can make a difference. In Bogotá, improved lighting and pedestrian-friendly planning significantly reduced public harassment (Montero, 2015). Similarly, India's SafetiPin app uses participatory safety audits to identify danger zones and inform city planning (Madan & Nalla, 2016), while Egypt's HarassMap project has successfully pressured authorities into action using crowdsourced data (Shoukry, 2016). In Lahore, initiatives like women-only buses and safe route mapping have emerged (Punjab Mass Transit Authority, 2021; Rizvi & Akhtar, 2022), but their limited coverage and sustainability hinder broader impact.

The findings of the studies indicate that in indicator one of the study participants in public places, was limited due to unsafe public places, as we discuss in indicator two

protection and indicator three protection the result shows that the majority of the respondents are not aware of the laws and policies which are for their protection and aware. They do know about the women's safety apps but not of their proper usage. The findings call for holistic interventions, including community-led initiatives like HarassMap in Cairo (Shoukry, 2016) and policy reforms to integrate gender-disaggregated data into urban planning (Whitzman et al., 2009). Addressing these issues is critical to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11's vision of inclusive and safe cities (United Nations, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Considering women's safety concerns in public places, the study focused on examining women's perception regarding women's safety in public places, consequent factors contributing to their insecurity, and checking the knowledge of women about already existing policies, laws, and helplines. Consequently, the results of the study indicate that most women feel uncomfortable in public places specially, the age bracket of 19-25. Harassment in public places is the most prevailing form of gender-based violence at public places. Furthermore, women feel hesitant to register complaints against the violence due to fear of public humiliation. However, it can be said that this study helps to raise awareness about women's safety concerns in public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the study include that, this study is confined to Lahore city, the further studies should be conducted in the other cities. Secondly, the study just includes university students, further studies should be conducted on the other sectors of women too. The sample

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size of the study is limited further studies should be conducted on large sample size. The findings of the studies show that women do not know about already existing policies and laws about women's safety so further studies should be conducted to raise awareness about women's protection mechanisms.

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