



**FORMAN
CHRISTIAN
COLLEGE**
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

**ACADEMIC HURDLES FACING FEMALE BALUCHISTAN
INTERNAL MIGRANTS STUDYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF
INSTITUTES**

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SOCL599: Final Year Independent

Research Project

2025

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2023-2025

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Abstract

This research examines the obstacles female internal migrants from Baluchistan face in pursuing higher education in Lahore. Through qualitative in-depth interviews, the study identifies socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers to academic achievement. Findings reveal that patriarchal family structures create significant resistance, adversely affecting students' mental well-being and educational aspirations. Economic challenges, including financial dependence and Lahore's high cost of living, present additional hurdles, while language differences and teaching method variations hinder academic communication and success. The study emphasizes the crucial role of social support networks and mentorship programs. Key recommendations include: (i) establishing mentorship and peer support systems, (ii) developing targeted financial aid programs, (iii) implementing language support and bridging courses, (iv) providing cultural sensitivity training for faculty, (v) enhancing mental health services, and (vi) reforming institutional policies to better support migrant students. These interventions aim to strengthen resilience and improve educational outcomes for this marginalized population.

Keywords: Female Internal Migrants, Higher Education Barriers, Patriarchal Resistance, Language Differences, Institutional Support.

1 Introduction

Numerous studies have investigated various facets of the challenges faced by migrants in education, including legal obstacles such as insufficient documentation and psychological hurdles like cultural adaptation and mental health concerns (Evans et al., 2020). However, these studies primarily concentrate on secondary educational environments within the United States, resulting in a lack of exploration regarding students' experiences and those from different regions.

In the context of internal migration, a subset of females from Baluchistan has managed to migrate to Punjab in pursuit of higher education opportunities. However, these internal migrants face significant barriers to empowerment and optimal achievement, including academic, socio-cultural, economic, and geographical challenges (Fatima, Alavi, & Naqvi, 2021).

These women are often denied their fundamental rights to education and lack access to employment, healthcare, and decision-making powers that men typically enjoy. Meanwhile, young girls are expected to perform traditional roles such as cleaning the house and washing dishes or clothes. The significantly lower female literacy rates indicate that investments in human resources tend to prioritize men over women (Skalli, 2001).

The experience of being a migrant presents significant stress, particularly for children. These young individuals often endure profound psychological impacts arising from the challenges faced by migrant families. This includes separation from loved ones in their countries of origin, substandard living conditions, inadequate social support systems, limited opportunities for social interaction, and experiences of discrimination and bullying. In addition, they may encounter threats from extremist groups and struggle with language barriers due to insufficient proficiency in the national language. Collectively, these adverse

factors can lead to poor academic achievement and diminished motivation toward education. Ultimately, these challenges can result in feelings of isolation, depression, substance abuse issues, and various other mental health disorders (Abdusamatov et al., 2025).

When exploring the historical backdrop of gender, a parallel narrative of oppression emerges. Beauvoir (1949) states that “Humanity is male” and asserts that man defines woman not as an individual but in relation to himself (p. 12). She also notes that the conservative bourgeoisie perceived women's liberation as a threat, jeopardizing their moral standards and general interests.

Consequently, even when women joined the workforce, they were often relegated to low-paying positions with basic roles. Anzaldúa (1987) characterized this societal framework by noting that “males make the rules and laws; women transmit them” (p. 16). This dynamic confines women within cultural norms and societal expectations, often trapping them in contradictory messages about being both strong yet submissive, or rebellious yet conforming.

The journey toward higher education is a crucial avenue for empowerment, especially for women from underrepresented areas like Baluchistan. This study investigates the educational obstacles encountered by female internal migrants in Lahore, emphasizing their personal experiences, challenges, and the socio-cultural factors that shape their academic paths. By conducting interviews with students enrolled in various degree programs, the research underscores the relationship between education and empowerment, the role of family support, cultural limitations, and the persistent battle against patriarchal norms. The results indicate notable differences in educational quality between Baluchistan and Lahore, along with the emotional impact of familial opposition and societal pressures. Ultimately, this study seeks to illuminate how higher education can act as a driving force for gender equality and personal

development while identifying essential support mechanisms to improve the academic experiences of these women.

1.1 Research Objectives

The aim of this research is outlined as follows:

1. To explore the aspirations and motivations of Baloch students who are engaged in higher education within Lahore, with an emphasis on their academic pursuits and career ambitions.
2. To analyze how familial support systems and cultural expectations either facilitate or hinder Baloch students' pursuit of higher education in Lahore.
3. To investigate the obstacles encountered by Baloch students as they adjust to the educational landscape in Lahore, particularly regarding language difficulties and cases of discrimination.

1.2 Research Questions

The inquiries guiding this study are as outlined below:

1. In what ways do familial attitudes in Balochistan influence Baloch students' academic motivation and psychological adjustment in Lahore?
2. How do Baloch female students perceive higher education as a means of challenging or negotiating traditional gender roles?
3. How do Baloch students compare their academic experiences in Lahore's institutions to those in Balochistan, particularly in terms of teaching methods and resource accessibility?
4. What challenges do Baloch students face due to language differences in Lahore's academic settings, and how do they cope with them?
5. How do Baloch students describe their interactions with faculty regarding cultural inclusivity and support?
6. What financial obstacles do Baloch students encounter while studying in Lahore, and what strategies do they use to manage them?

1.3 Significance of the study

In today's world, acquiring knowledge is compulsory to keep up with rapidly evolving technology. In many Pakistani families, girls still encounter discriminatory attitudes. Female employees are often impacted by their male counterparts, particularly those resistant to social change. In this patriarchal culture, advocating for their rights can be challenging for women. Therefore, education and the understanding of modern technologies are crucial for empowering women. (Anniqua, 2007).

This thesis seeks to enhance the comprehension of the educational journeys of female internal migrants from Baluchistan who are studying in Lahore, filling a notable gap in the existing research concerning their distinct challenges. Although there is an increasing number of these students, obstacles such as familial resistance, cultural prejudices, and disparities in educational quality have not been sufficiently investigated. This study is vital for shaping educational policies and practices that cater to marginalized populations. Utilizing qualitative approaches, such as comprehensive questionnaires, the research aims to reveal the intricate realities surrounding these women's academic experiences, insights that may be missed by quantitative studies. The outcomes are designed to aid policymakers, educators, and community organizations in developing inclusive educational settings that effectively respond to the particular difficulties encountered by female internal migrants.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

1.4.1 Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1985): Networks as Educational Gatekeepers

Social Capital Theory posits that access to resources and opportunities is mediated through networks of relationships, institutional affiliations, and cultural familiarity (Bourdieu, 1985). For female Baloch students migrating to Lahore for higher education, social capital operates in multifaceted ways. Familial support—particularly from male siblings—often facilitates mobility, as seen in cases where brothers assist with university admissions or advocate for their sisters' education. However, extended family resistance (*"My uncles said cities corrupt women"*) reflects how patriarchal norms restrict women's access to academic spaces.

Institutional gatekeeping further compounds these challenges. Hostel allocation policies favouring high-merit students or those with pre-existing connections demonstrate how systemic structures reproduce inequality. Students without institutional social capital face housing insecurity, forcing them into costly private accommodations (*"I had to pay 500/day as a paying guest"*). Peer networks also play a critical role; linguistic and regional differences lead to social isolation (*"I ate alone for months"*), depriving students of study groups and academic support. This exclusion is exacerbated for those from remote regions like Makran, where geographic and cultural distance from urban centers intensifies capital deficits.

Social Capital Theory thus reveals how Baloch women's educational trajectories are shaped not just by individual merit, but by their ability to navigate—or compensate for—gaps in familial, institutional, and peer networks.

1.4.2 Feminist Theory (hooks, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989): Education as Gendered Resistance

Feminist Theory, particularly intersectional feminism (Crenshaw, 1989) and hooks' (2000) work on education as liberation, provides a lens to analyze the gendered and spatial dimensions of Baloch women's migration. Patriarchal control manifests in familial opposition to female mobility, where education is framed as a threat to traditional roles (*"Women over 24 should marry, not study"*). Such narratives reinforce the policing of women's autonomy, with resistance often met with social ostracization (*"Extended family treated my decision like a crime"*).

Yet, migration itself becomes an act of resistance. By entering Lahore's academic institutions, students disrupt spatial patriarchy—the notion that certain spaces (e.g., urban universities) are male-dominated or inappropriate for women. Participants describe empowerment through education ("*I learned to demand my rights*"), but also face gendered stereotyping as "outsiders" in classrooms. Teachers' tendency to engage more with local students ("*They called Punjabis first*") reflects how regional and gender biases intersect to marginalize Baloch women.

Feminist Theory underscores the duality of education as both a tool for empowerment and a site of struggle. While some students successfully challenge familial norms ("*My father became more open-minded*"), others navigate institutional environments that replicate the very hierarchies they seek to escape. The persistence of these students—studying secretly, negotiating hostel access, or enduring isolation—exemplifies what hooks (2000) terms "education as the practice of freedom," even within oppressive structures.

1.4.3 Intersectional Language Disadvantage Theory: A New Framework

Intersectional Language Disadvantage Theory (ILDТ), a novel framework that expands traditional Language Barrier Theory (Cummins, 2000; Macaro, 2003) by exposing how linguistic challenges intersect with gender, migration, and institutional bias to systemically marginalize female Baloch students. Where prior research focused on cognitive deficits, ILDT reveals three compounding dimensions: (1) *Pedagogical Exclusion*, where limited Urdu/English proficiency induces gendered self-silencing ("*I felt too stressed to ask questions*"—FCCU, Bio-Tech); (2) *Social Capital Constriction*, where language barriers fracture peer networks essential for academic resilience ("*I knew answers but couldn't speak up*"—UMT, Sociology); and (3) *Corrective Trauma*, where public corrections become humiliation rituals ("*Interruptions over my Urdu shattered my confidence*"—LUMS, Psychology).

These findings challenge universalist approaches to language support, demonstrating instead how regional dialects (e.g., Makran accent stigma) and patriarchal classroom dynamics exacerbate disadvantages. ILDT's critical contribution lies in its *intersectional lens*—it reframes language barriers not as isolated skill gaps but as sites of institutional violence requiring trauma-informed pedagogies, faculty training on dialect equity, and peer-mentoring programs to rebuild eroded social capital (Bourdieu, 1985). By centering Baloch

women's lived experiences, this theory demands radical rethinking of linguistic inclusion in higher education.

2 Literature review

Migrant female students from Baluchistan face several hurdles in their journey toward educational success. Throughout this whole process, students go through different challenges such as migration, a new curriculum, study settings, and adjusting to a completely new environment. This is a much larger initiative that they undertake in hopes of securing a good future for themselves.

Definitions of empowerment vary significantly in both operational and analytic terms. In general, empowerment addresses an individual's capacity to gain power and control over decisions and resources that affect her life (Narayan, 2002; Alsop et al., 2006). The notion of women's empowerment initially grew out of feminist approaches to development, which rejected top-down development strategies and advocated local, grassroots community-based initiatives (Kabeer, 2001). Education can help address socio-economic disparities and promote equality, as demonstrated by Unterhalter, E. (2012). Gender, education, and empowerment: A review of the literature. UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Gendered processes of marginalization and exclusion in education decision-making, reflection, and action have only recently begun to receive attention (Manion, 2011; Unterhalter et al., 2013). However, a comprehensive study should hold to address this issue has yet to emerge. Studies confirm that women's ability to participate in the labour market plays an important role in supporting their own education and that of their family members (Unterhalter, 2012).

Women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept that encompasses economic, social, and political aspects, and is mandatory for achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction, because it will enable women's right to challenge and transform the patriarchal structures that support gender inequality. With addressing main root causes of poverty, including gender-based discrimination and social exclusion, women's empowerment can break the cycle of poverty and promote sustainable development. (Kabeer, N. (2011).

Cultural barriers, such as the absence of girls' schools, poor-quality education, lack of basic infrastructure, shortage of female teachers, and early marriage, significantly hinder female higher education in tribal areas of Pakistan. Cultural norms and perceptions, including concerns about honor-killing, societal expectations of women's roles, long distances to schools, and the desire to confine girls to domestic roles, hinder limited educational opportunities for women. (Aftab et al., 2023). Poverty, long distances, teenage pregnancy, unattractive school environments, parental funding burden, child labour, and corruption limit girl's education in Ghana (Bardley, 2000). International organizations should support the government's commitment to funding and improving education provided (Bardley, 2000). The education of displaced children, whether refugees or internal migrants, is a critical issue that requires detailed theoretical perspectives and best practices. Internal migrants, unlike refugees, move within their own country due to economic, social, or environmental reasons. However, both groups face similar challenges in accessing education, such as adapting to new environments, overcoming language barriers, and dealing with socio-cultural marginalization. Push-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966) and Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) also display useful frameworks for understanding the migration and educational experiences of displaced populations. Push-Pull Theory explains why people migrate, due to economic hardship or lack of opportunities, and what attracts them to new places, including better schools or job prospects. Human Capital Theory highlights how education improves

economic and social outcomes, which is especially important for internal migrant students working toward a better future.

2.1 Comparative studies on migrant women's education

Mayes and McAreavey (2019) investigated the experiences of migrant women with formal and informal education in rural areas. The study revealed that while migrant women have high educational aspirations, these may be compromised by the desire to achieve economic goals. Informal English language classes were found to play a crucial role in providing opportunities for socialization and cultural knowledge, but also presented complex social and cultural dimensions. Furthermore, the study highlighted the influence of transnational senses of and tensions around 'local/rural' pedagogies on migrant mother's perceptions of their children's education, leading to resultant migrant strategies.

2.2 Institutional and policy responses to migrant women's education

The South Korean government has established institutions and policies to support migrant women's education, including the Multicultural Family Support Centers (2007), the Ministry of Education's Multicultural Education Support Team, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Multicultural Family Support Division. Policy responses include the Multicultural Family Support Act (2008) and the Education Act for Multicultural Families (2011), as well as programs like the Korean Language Education Program and Vocational Training Program.

Despite these efforts, the education of migrant women remains a challenge due to language barriers, cultural differences, and socioeconomic disadvantages. The institutional and policy responses have been criticized for being fragmented and lacking in coordination, resulting in ineffective support. To address this, the government should establish a more comprehensive and integrated policy framework, strengthen and coordinate institutional responses, and provide more resources and funding to support migrant women's education and promote their social inclusion.

2.3 Empirical Studies on Internal Migrant's Education

India is witnessing a surge in internal student migration, driven primarily by the scarcity of higher education opportunities in certain states. States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, plagued by inadequate higher education infrastructure, are seeing a mass exodus of students

to educational hubs. This phenomenon is closely tied to the global trend of work-study interconnections, where education and employment opportunities are inextricably linked. Meanwhile, migrant students and their families are influenced by a range of internationally comparable factors that shape their aspirations and decision-making processes. Unfortunately, female internal migrants may face additional barriers in accessing education and employment opportunities, exacerbating the existing challenges (Rajan, 2021). Despite these obstacles, they are also influenced by similar internationally comparable factors that guide their decision-making.

2.4 Contextual factors influencing migrant women's education

Pérez-Varela and Cárdenas-Rodríguez (2024) conducted a study examining the factors influencing the employability and entrepreneurship of women migrants. The study found that gender, ethnicity, and race are significant factors impacting women migrants' employability and entrepreneurship, with many facing discrimination and barriers in the labour market. Human capital, such as education and professional experience, is crucial for employability and entrepreneurship, with education having a significant impact, as higher levels are associated with increased employability and entrepreneurship. Contextual factors, including economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts, influence migrant women's education, which in turn affects their employability and entrepreneurship. These findings emphasize the importance of education and addressing discrimination to improve the employability and entrepreneurship of women migrants.

The pursuit of girl's education in Baluchistan, Pakistan, has been shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors, which have collectively influenced the region's educational landscape. From the remnants of colonial-era educational systems to the modern-day initiatives aimed at promoting girl's education, the region's narrative is woven from a rich tapestry of efforts to overcome the obstacles that have hindered girl's access to education. This literature review seeks to explore the vast expanse of research that has examined the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that have defined the trajectory of girl's education in Baluchistan, with a focus on identifying the key themes, debates, and findings that have emerged in this field of study.

3 METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Research design

This research uses a qualitative approach and adopts a snowball sampling technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). In-depth interviews (IDIs) with female Baloch migrants were conducted to understand academic challenges in Punjab's institutions. Grounded in symbolic interactionism (Byrne, 2004), the study employs Push-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966) to analyze how Balochistan's institutional disparities (push factors) and Lahore's educational advantages (pull factors) shape migration decisions. IDIs serve as the primary method to uncover concealed narratives, illuminating participants' hidden viewpoints (Johnson, 2002) while examining the impacts of group dynamics on their educational experiences.

3.2 Ethics

Prior to participation, all interviewees received a detailed consent letter and information questionnaire (Appendix A) explaining the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks (including emotional discomfort), and benefits. Participants were assured of their voluntary involvement and rights to ask questions, withdraw without consequence, or request data deletion post-interview. To ensure confidentiality, all data was anonymized through pseudonyms, with voice recordings encrypted and stored securely under restricted access. Interviews were conducted in supportive environments with ongoing consent verification, allowing participants to pause or terminate discussions if needed. Particular attention was given to creating a comfortable atmosphere given the sensitive nature of researching Baloch women's educational experiences in Lahore.

3.3 Research Site and Sampling (Snowball Sampling):

This study examined Baloch female students at Lahore universities using snowball sampling. Participants were recruited through peer networks based on three criteria: (1) current enrolment as undergraduate/postgraduate students in Lahore institutions, (2) female Baloch students who migrated specifically for education, and (3) completion of 6-12 months of study in Lahore. This sampling approach proved essential for accessing this guarded population while ensuring participants had sufficient transitional experience to discuss their academic adjustment.

A total of 15 participants were interviewed from four universities: Punjab University (n=8), Forman Christian College University (n=5), Lahore University of Management Sciences (n=1), and University of Management and Technology (n=1). This sampling approach proved essential for accessing this guarded population while ensuring participants had sufficient transitional experience to discuss academic adjustment.

3.4 Data collection

For data collection, comprehensive interviews were conducted with undergraduate and graduate female students from various higher education institutions in Lahore. Despite efforts to utilize social media and referrals from adjunct faculty members, securing interviews proved to be challenging. Many participants expressed reluctance in discussing sensitive subjects, particularly due to the ongoing conflict in the country, which heightened their concerns over confidentiality. To gather data for the unit of analysis, I contacted male students for referrals and then reached out to their female relatives, including cousins and sisters, for interviews. I introduced my research topic to them through WhatsApp messages prior to conducting the interviews. While some of them consented to participate, others opted out due to personal preferences for privacy. In addition, I interviewed five female students from the sports department at FCCU. For the participant's safety concerns, the interviews were held in a secure and comfortable setting. The questionnaires posed during the interviews were open-ended and flexible, encouraging participants to engage freely and comfortably. Data were directly collected from the participants; each student shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights related to the subject. A few students liked the idea of conducting qualitative research on female students from Baluchistan, noting that there is limited research on female education specifically from this province, which needs more studies on such topics

to identify opportunities for them. Data was collected at hostel lounges, classrooms, and cafeterias. Each interview session lasted approximately 35 to 55 minutes.

3.5 Researcher Positionality Statement

As a Baloch woman researcher who shares similar migration and educational experiences with participants, my lived background proved valuable in designing culturally appropriate methodologies and establishing rapport during data collection. This insider perspective helped formulate relevant interview questions and create a comfortable environment for participants to share sensitive experiences. However, I maintained strict boundaries between my personal background and research findings through several safeguards. While my experiences informed the study's framework, all findings emerged exclusively from participant narratives, systematically analyzed without personal assumptions. I employed member checking to validate interpretations with participants, maintained reflexive journals to document and bracket potential biases, and sought regular faculty consultation to ensure analytical objectivity. This approach allowed me to leverage my positionality as an empathetic researcher while ensuring the study's findings remained grounded in participant experiences rather than my own perspectives.

3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis process began with thorough reading and rereading of all interview transcripts to identify key patterns in participants' experiences. Using a combined approach, I applied both theory-based codes (drawn from symbolic interactionism and feminist frameworks) and data-driven codes that emerged directly from participants' narratives. Through this dual coding process, several significant themes became apparent, including the tension between familial expectations and educational aspirations, the challenges of language barriers in academic settings, and the transformative potential of higher education for Baloch women. These themes were carefully examined in relation to the study's research questions and theoretical foundations, with particular attention to how participants described navigating obstacles while asserting their agency. To ensure the validity of interpretations, I employed multiple verification strategies including member checking with participants, peer discussions with supervisors, and maintaining detailed records of all analytical decisions.

The final analysis wove these thematic findings into a cohesive narrative, enriched by direct quotations that gave voice to participants' experiences while maintaining confidentiality. This systematic yet flexible approach allowed the research to remain firmly

grounded in participants' actual experiences while addressing the study's broader questions about educational access and empowerment.

Reliability and trustworthiness

The researcher shared the themes and discussed the findings with two internal migrants from Baluchistan and the supervisor to confirm findings and ascertain that nothing was left out. This assured reliability and trustworthiness of data.

4. FINDINGS

The analysis of female students from Baluchistan studying in Lahore reveals a number of significant challenges and insights that shape their educational journeys. Many participants encounter opposition from family members, especially from extended relatives, due to deeply rooted beliefs about women's roles and education, which often leads to emotional distress. However, financial constraints worsen their situation, as the high cost of living in Lahore, coupled with reliance on family support, creates substantial economic strain that impacts their ability to manage tuition and living expenses. Furthermore, the inability to understand different languages creates substantial hurdles in interactions, as numerous students struggle to communicate effectively in Urdu and English, hindering their academic performance during classroom participation and social interactions, which results in feelings of isolation. The disparity in educational quality between Baluchistan and Lahore also complicates their transition, as these students often come with minimal experience in advanced teaching techniques.

Supportive family dynamics and friendships are recognized as crucial components of resilience, where social support systems and mentorship significantly contribute to navigating these difficulties. Education is viewed as a powerful tool for empowerment, enabling female students to challenge traditional norms, advocate for gender equality, and deepen their awareness of their rights. The findings highlight an urgent requirement for higher education institutions to implement specific support strategies, such as financial assistance, language support programs, and cultural sensitivity training for faculty. However, the interplay of familial expectations, financial pressures, and language challenges contributes to mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, underscoring the necessity for mental health

support services. Despite these obstacles, many female students express strong aspirations to return to Baluchistan and effect positive change in their communities, perceiving their educational experiences as pathways to uplift both themselves and future generations of women in their region.

5. Thematic Findings: Baloch Female Students' Educational Migration Experiences in Lahore

5.1 Motivations for Pursuing Higher Education in Lahore

Baloch female students identified four interconnected factors influencing their decision to study in Lahore:

Participants' motivations align with Push-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966), where Balochistan's limited resources (push) and Lahore's academic reputation (pull) drove migration decisions. The choice to encourage numerous internal female migrants from Baluchistan to move to Lahore for their education is significantly influenced by the limited educational opportunities available in Baluchistan, coupled with the esteemed academic reputation of Lahore. The government's financial programs, which encompass merit-based scholarships for these students, play a crucial role in facilitating this transition. Lahore is a great place for students, especially those from Baluchistan, who want to improve their education.

- “The educational opportunities in the institutions of Baluchistan are limited, leading me to consider relocating to another city in Pakistan to further my studies. Lahore emerged as the most appealing choice, as I frequently heard positive feedback about its academic environment. Encouraged by the consensus that the education there is of high quality, I developed a strong interest in pursuing my studies specifically in

Lahore. While I also had the option of going to Karachi, the scholarship I received for studying in Lahore was an added incentive that made my decision easier.” (23, PU, Kalat)

5.1.2 The Power of Peer Influence and Family Support in Educational Decisions

The power of peer influence through social media is incredibly strong today, guiding many educational choices. Family support remains one of the most vital initiatives in our life journeys, providing encouragement and direction. Together, these positive influences significantly shape our decisions.

- I have heard that the studies in Punjab are exceptional, which has motivated me. Apart from that, I have several friends on social media whose university and college experiences I observed, and this also drew me to Lahore to further my education. Initially, I intended to apply to Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad. However, since my brother is currently studying at LUMS in Lahore, he encouraged me to apply there, noting that I often spoke about my interest in LUMS. He even assisted me in arranging my interview at the university, which ultimately led to my admission, (Age: 24, BSc in Psychology, LUMS)

5.1.3 Family Inspiration in Education Choices

The male siblings of the migrants encourage them to pursue education by highlighting the differences in educational quality between the two provinces. Without their male siblings' permission, these females might face various challenges. The consent and support from their brothers have opened up opportunities for these female students to pursue their education in Lahore.

- “My male siblings moved from Quetta to Lahore for their A levels, and our family decided to send us along with them as well. They also aimed to complete their A levels here, which inspired us. After observing their experiences, we both sisters chose to enrol at Lahore institutions because they often mentioned that the educational quality here is superior compared to Quetta” (Age: 19, BSc in Bio-Tech, Fccu)

5.1.4 The Importance of Institutional Reputation in Educational Choices

These students talk about their experiences studying in Lahore, which motivates them because the city is known for its great teaching methods.

- “I wanted my degree to hold value; therefore, it was an important choice for me that it came from a reputable institution. This aspiration led me to choose Lahore over other cities since Punjab University’s reputation inspired me greatly” (Age: 24, BSc, Punjab University)

Another opponent has the same concerns to share

- “In Quetta, we lacked access to adequate resources. During visits to Lahore, I observed that the schools offered superior education, better facilities, and more opportunities for students than in Quetta. This sparked my desire to study here” (Age: 22, BS in Psychology, FCCU)

5.1.5 Inspired by Education to Serve the Community

Historically, Lahore has consistently been regarded as a leading educational hub compared to other provinces. As a result, students from Baluchistan are eager to further their studies in Lahore, driven by the desire to contribute positively to their communities and serve their people in any way they can.

- “My pursuit of higher education is driven by both passions, and the craze I thrived. I am passionate about studying, particularly because universities in Lahore are more esteemed compared to those in Baluchistan. The presence of qualified educators and the high quality of education available here motivate me to leave my province for university studies; I aim to gain valuable knowledge and experience that will enable me to return home and serve the people there effectively” (Age: 26, BCS, Fccu)

Some students share their journey to Lahore through merit reserve seats, which influenced their decision to pursue further studies in the city.

- “I received a BS scholarship for Punjab University through a reserved seat for Lahore, which I considered a favorable opportunity, so I decided to take advantage of it” (Age: 26, MPhil in Sociology, PU)

5.2 Support and Opposition: Family Roles in Educational Choices

Baloch female students navigate complex family attitudes toward their educational migration, revealing:

5.2.1. Nuclear Family as Allies

Despite societal stigma, immediate family members often enabled their studies:

The participant shared the harsh reality of facing societal criticism from extended family, despite receiving support from their siblings and parents. However, the interference from those around them has been strongly condemned, particularly the belief that a girl should not travel far away from home on her own.

- “My parents have been supportive of my choice. Some members of my extended family, including male and female cousins, as well as my uncles and aunts, have expressed reservations” (Age 22, Turbat, Psychology BS,)”

Another student from Interview 02 expressed gratitude for their family's support, which has been a treasure in their journey toward achieving more in life. They believe that gaining an independent education is a key factor in breaking the negative stereotypes that society places on women. Students are concerned about the negative perspectives of women, which are often viewed as taboo according to societal norms.

- “Despite societal pressure and criticism, my mother and three siblings, my younger brother and two sisters, have been my primary source of support. They strongly criticize the notion of a woman living independently in Lahore, viewing it negatively within our societal context” (Age 24, Psychology BSc, Quetta, self-employed, IDI)

One participant shared their tired and hopeless efforts to deal with ongoing conflicts with extended family that women face in society.

5.2.2 Extended Family as Cultural Gatekeepers

- “Ongoing conflicts with extended family are a persistent problem that never seems to go away” (Age 25, UMT, Gwadar)

One student is sharing their dream of being part of one of the best universities in Pakistan. They are excited to have finally joined Punjab University in Lahore, which is renowned for its excellence as an educational institution.

- “My dream has been to improve my academic qualifications by attending a prestigious university, particularly Punjab University, which is widely recognized for its academic excellence” (Age 21, B.Ed. secondary education)”

5.3 Mental Health Impacts of Familial Resistance

Baloch female students reported significant emotional distress stemming from family opposition to their education, manifesting in three key ways:

5.3.1 Emotional Toll of Criticism

Participants described depression and self-doubt when family dismissed their academic achievements:

Returning home to criticism instead of praise for studying in Lahore left me heartbroken. Boys get celebrated for the same choice. The person conveys their dissatisfaction with the lack of equal recognition they receive upon returning home, in contrast to their male peers. They share a troubling aspect of their journey that could have long-lasting implications for their mental well-being. Feeling ignored, they experience a profound sense of sorrow within.

- “Resistance from family members can significantly affect an individual. After enduring considerable struggle and hardship to pursue education in metropolitan cities, returning home without receiving appreciation can be disheartening. Instead of commendation for taking the bold step to study in larger cities, many face criticism, particularly females. They are often questioned about the necessity of leaving home for education, with suggestions to stay at home or engage in domestic tasks instead. Such attitudes undoubtedly take a toll on mental health, leading to increased stress and feelings of sadness, as it is emotionally painful to realize a lack of support where encouragement would be expected. Males are typically supported more when they migrate to larger cities for studies” (Age 22, Turbat, Psychology BS,)”

another participant shares same coincident, too.

- “In my family, particularly the male members, are not very progressive or supportive regarding female education. The extended family shares similar views, often criticizing me for my decision to move to another city, treating it as if I committed a serious offense rather than recognizing my pursuit of education” (24, LUMS, Psychology BSc)

5.3.2 A Journey of Self-Doubt: The Dilemma of Education and Traditional Gender Role.

The concerns of family create a sense of hallucination for students, as they always feel pushed back and discouraged at critical stages of their mental health. This leads them to question their achievements and doubt themselves, even while attending classes. One can only imagine how painful this experience is, as they struggle to focus on their new life while dealing with family conflicts and negative comments about them.

- “I often experienced anxiety due to the negative remarks from both my immediate and extended family. While attending classes, I frequently questioned whether relocating for my studies was the right choice. I grappled with thoughts about returning home versus continuing my education, especially given my family's belief that women over the age of 24 should focus solely on domestic responsibilities or marriage. In their view, education should not be a priority for women; instead, they should aspire to become housewives. Such narrow-mindedness contributed to my feelings of isolation, compounded by the challenges of adapting to a new environment” (Age 24. LUMS, Psychology BSc)

5.3.3 Generational Misconceptions

It is obvious that generational gaps can mislead the choices that the new generation makes for their lives. The topic of co-education has been a long-standing subject of debate, often rooted in misconceptions that have persisted for years now. These outdated beliefs held by elders in the family not only hinder progress but also create unnecessary barriers for young women striving for educational opportunities.

- “My late grandmother disapproved of my studying away from home. She believed that girls should not leave the city for education or attend mixed-gender schools. Such misconception feed to the patriarchy more powerful and strong over women rights” (Age 21, B.Ed. secondary Education)

5.4 Challenging Patriarchal Norms: Education as a Catalyst for Gender Equality

Baloch female students employ education to confront gender inequality through different titled key strategies:

5.4.1 Suppressing Equality Concerns

The student openly mocks the rules that directly relate to their situation, expressing a sense of hopelessness regarding gender equality in education, social living, and other areas. For them, the call for gender equality remains completely unheard.

- “I come from a society that does not prioritize gender equality between men and women. When I advocate for gender equality, I often face intense scrutiny and criticism, questioning why I am addressing such matters” (Age 22, PU, Psychology BS)

5.4.2 Redefining Dominance: A Child's Inquiry into Gender Equality

Participants described how schooling exposed patriarchal constructs:

A student from Quetta shared her journey as a thought-provoking individual who questions societal boundaries. Her bold statements reflect the empowerment of her personality, and she refuses to compromise with the injustices that favour males over females.

- “During my sixth-grade English class, I questioned why the pronouns "he" and "she" were used in that order in tense sentences, asking why it couldn't be reversed (imagine a 11-year kid having these inferior thoughts in mind, unfortunately). My teacher paused to consider my question and agreed that we could indeed use "she/he." I've consistently wondered why men are seen as dominant when both genders are equally capable. These thoughts have been with me since childhood, and my awareness and educational empowerment have only deepened over time. I have learned to advocate for my rights to education, employment, and entrepreneurship, rather than passively accepting traditional teachings. I challenge the established systems and question societal injustices, including patriarchal and cultural norms that are often based on arbitrary, man-made rules” (Age 24, LUMS, BS Psychology)

Theres another one participant also sharing the same thoughts of women empowerment in Baluchistan. If a man can achieve it, so can a woman.

- “Coming from a region like Baluchistan, where male dominance is prevalent both socially and at home, the situation for women tends to be quite unequal. Education opens up the understanding that what men can achieve, women can also accomplish. It fosters awareness of one's capabilities” (Age 19, FCCU, Bio-Technology)

5.4.3 Unequal Paths and Women's Aspirations in Balochi Society

This student conveys her dissatisfaction with her parents' worries about sending their sons abroad without limitations, while their daughter's desire to study, even within the same country, encounters considerable criticism. She highlights the harsh realities of Baloch culture, which poses additional hurdles to women's opportunities for autonomy and education.

- “I've observed how much more value society places on men compared to women. Boys can be sent abroad for studies, even as far as China without facing scrutiny or questioning about their intentions or living arrangements; such inquiries do not arise when it comes to males. However, if a woman wishes to pursue similar opportunities, she encounters numerous obstacles specific to my region. Balochi culture specifically,

societal pressures compel women into taking many extra steps, while men typically experience little resistance achieving similar goals. If we consider men's struggles negligible (0.1), women's challenges escalate significantly (2x) just so they can pursue their aspirations—often stifled by marriage obligations or responsibilities toward children and family members instead of being able to chase after personal ambitions freely” (Age 21, B.Ed., University of Punjab)

5.4.5 Empowerment: Asserting Women's Right

This interview offers a sense of hope, as the female student expresses how education positively impacts self-perception. She bravely acknowledges that empowerment has strengthened her ability to speak out against injustices faced by women without fear. However, she also pointed out the challenges women face in taking a stand within a conservative society where their voices are often silenced.

- “With quality education, one can establish a reputation within their family; a positive image begins to develop about oneself despite being female. I take a stand against those at fault and demand that they hear my perspective. It is crucial for anyone, particularly men, to acknowledge their mistakes instead of excessively silencing women's voices. Girls need to assert their rights since expressing concerns can be difficult for individuals from backgrounds where opportunities or encouragement for girls are limited” (Age 23, BS Dietetics and Nutrition Science, PU)

This student has shared similarity in her thoughts as the one in 5.4.5 sub-theme.

- “I believe there should be equality. If in a house one male is allowed to go outside and study, to get an education, why not allow the female? As a male, you have the right to shout and speak all you want. I maintain my point of view; it cannot be that men decide over everything. A female is an essential head of the family. I mean, men handle a house in terms of finances, but women have a better understanding of any situation and resolve it as well” (Age 29, PhD Sociology, PU)

5.4.6 Unlocking Empowerment

This student from FCCU has shared how living in a metropolitan city has changed her overall personality and unlocked issues related to women's independence by adopting life in Lahore. The father of this person has changed his mindset after moving to Lahore; one can say there are more independent and open-minded people around compared to Quetta city. The new changes in the environment have benefited the dynamics of her family's structure regarding women's empowerment.

- “Moving to metropolitan city has opened my eyes to the idea that women have rights and their own emotions. My father was against our choice of attire for college, as we

studied among boys. However, discussions have shifted his perspective, making him more open-minded. Our home dynamics have also changed; my brothers have adopted a more equitable approach after studying in Lahore, which has had a significant effect on our family structure” (Age 22, BS Psychology, FCCU)

5.4.7 Logic Breaks Gender Inequality

We can say, she is clearly stating, that no matter the conservative environment of your region or family, if you are educated and speak logically, they must listen to you and cannot dismiss your words simply because you are a woman. It is the facts that matter, and this awareness and confidence come from education.

- “When I speak, the distinction between educated and uneducated individuals becomes apparent. My words carry weight and are supported by facts and figures, making logical sense regardless of gender. This newfound ability to express myself confidently challenges situations” (Age 25, UMT, MPhil Sociology)

5.5 Educational Transition: Navigating Disparities Between Baluchistan and Lahore

Baloch female students identified three core challenges in adapting to Lahore’s academic environment:

5.5.1 Pedagogical Shocks

Rote vs. Practical Learning: This student has noted down the very critical, yet two different benefits and drawbacks of the curriculum between two provinces. She claims that what she learned from the hometown schools was less pressurized by teachers and the school. As a result, it was more practical, with a focus on memorized studies, so one didn’t have to be pressured to rote learn to pass an exam. On the other hand, the learning habits are competitive, and there has been a sudden switch from manual to technological methods, where one has to use smart classrooms and electronic gadgets to complete class tasks, something that has proven to be a difficult procedure for them. She expressed that the lack of technology in their region for studies makes this sudden switch to the curriculum difficult for them.

- “There is a huge contrast between the educational systems of Baluchistan and Punjab. Rote learning is very common in Punjab as students mostly cram. Conversely, education in Baluchistan focuses on on-field learning. It is more hands-on; the classes are less memorization-oriented. Students in Baluchistan do not have to learn what was in the test because they would be credited for that material by talking about it instead. When I got to the city, I found it difficult because I was not comfortable getting to

know digital learning tools, such as tablets and smart classrooms, and they were completely different from the way we learned. Adapting to this change was somewhat challenging, especially since assignments in Baluchistan were completed manually. However, the convenience of creating assignments and presentations using electronic devices is a notable advantage in the city. This sudden transition definitely affects student's CGPA, particularly evident among first-semester students from Baluchistan, who often receive lower marks due to their limited exposure to technology. This gap visually highlights how a lack of technological familiarity can impact academic performance” (Age 22, Psychology BS, PU)

5.5.2 Technology Gap

At this point, the student feels depressed, confused, and anxious about the sudden introduction of new teaching techniques. This situation sounds very challenging for these internal migrants. Learning technology is very rare in their region, according to the per interviews with participants. There's a huge gap of a decade in learning techniques between the two different educational journeys. The student blames this on their regional educational system, which seems not to have been updated yet. These disparities reflect unequal access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), where Baloch students' rural educational 'habitus' clashes with Lahore's urban academic expectations.

- “The differences in education represent a significant challenge for individuals from Baluchistan. In Lahore, classrooms are equipped with smart screens, and educators frequently incorporate PDF files and PowerPoint presentations into their teaching methods. In contrast, these technological tools are largely absent in Baluchistan, aside from a few prestigious universities in Quetta; most rural areas and smaller cities rely on traditional teaching methods, using blackboards, chalk, pencils, ink pens, notebooks, and physical textbooks for educational purposes. I struggled with using Microsoft Word. began learning through YouTube tutorials on how to complete my assignments. I also reached out to friends for guidance, as I was uncertain about how to proceed. Presenting in front of the class proved to be equally challenging as never standing on a desk to present anything in class during all my previous school journey. Making mistakes during presentations led to feelings of embarrassment, diminishing my confidence, as neither my classmates nor the teachers were aware of my background and struggles. Our education system to blame for this” (Age 24, LUMS, Psychology BS)

5.5.3 . Institutional Resource Divides

The student clearly differentiates between teaching techniques, praising the qualified scholars at higher education institutions in Lahore. She further elaborates on the need for

better educational initiatives back home so that students can benefit from them. Apart from this, she argues that the use of local languages in remote areas of Baluchistan should be banned, advocating for the use of Urdu and English as the primary academic languages in schools.

- “The teachers here are highly qualified; based on my personal experiences at the PhD level, they effectively facilitate understanding and exhibit great passion for teaching. In contrast, although teachers back home are capable of conducting classes effectively, they may not have the same level of resources or training. As they often lack depth in their explanations and fail to provide comprehensive knowledge, perhaps due to limited exposure or experience, which affects their teaching methods. There is a significant difference between Baluchistan and Lahore education. You are able to compensate. In the college where I studied in my district, we don't have qualified teachers there. What they study in Punjab Lahore is not similar to there. We are not getting teachers on a daily basis there; sometimes they come, and sometimes they don't. Government should strictly ban on teachers to use their local language in institutions, rather Urdu or English, so the student can not face such hurdles what we have to face after getting enrolled in higher educational institutions” (Age 29, PhD Sociology, PU)

5.5 Educational Financial Strategies for Internal Migrant Students

Baloch female migrants employ diverse approaches to fund their education in Lahore, revealing systemic inequities:

5.6.1 Living on a Scholarship Budget

This student qualifies for a merit-based scholarship, which is a bonus point for her. However, she receives financial funds from her family to help with her daily expenditures, such as meals, hostel fees, and other related costs living within the city.

- “I received a scholarship that covers my tuition fees, I still have to account for expenses related to meals, hostel fees, and personal items, which is why my family sends me money. Extracurricular trips can add up, and I tend to avoid such activities to maintain a balanced budget, considering my savings” (Age 22, BS Psychology, PU)

5.6.2 A Journey of Self-Sufficiency

This student shares her independent approach to self-sufficiency, showcasing that true commitment to one's achievements can lead to success, regardless of the obstacles. Consistency is key.

- “Financial difficulties are a significant concern; without savings, I would not have been able to attend LUMS. To support my education, I have been working online,

managing customer interactions and selling products to earn money. This effort has been essential for covering expenses such as tuition, food, and transportation. Although it has been a challenging journey, I remain committed to my independence. I have refrained from seeking financial assistance from my family, particularly since my father is no longer with us, and I do not want to impose on my brothers. This desire for self-sufficiency motivates me to continue. The high cost of living and tuition in this city adds to the difficulty, but I feel fortunate to have my mother's prayers and my sister's support throughout this journey" (Age 24, BS Psychology, LUMS).

5.6.3 Family Support as Fortunate

The individual shares that family support is a blessing in their life, acknowledging that only a few lucky ones have the opportunity to relocate with their families and attend good institutions. Such cases are rare for most.

- "My father operates a coal mining business which helps support us financially. I consider myself fortunate given access to such support compared with other female students living away from home who often face greater struggles due solely to economic conditions within their provinces" (AGE 19, Bio-tech, FCCU)

5.6.4 The Economic Landscape of Baluchistan: Impacts on Women's Education

This section outlines the circumstances within the province and the limited autonomy that impacts funding for women's education, hindering the ability to send more individuals to urban areas for higher learning. The situation is critical, as employment opportunities are mainly concentrated in two fields, education and healthcare, which are also highly competitive. For many residents of Baluchistan, getting government jobs in these fields is a dream. Even if they support females, it becomes challenging for fathers who wish to fund their daughters' educational achievements. When financial resources or savings are available, families often prioritize sending their male children outside for higher education, believing they will provide support in the future. While patriarchy undoubtedly plays a role in these dynamics, it is essential to recognize that other underlying issues contribute to the province's underdevelopment and lack of progress. Baluchistan is a neglected province that deserves attention and support for its people. These findings align with Sen's (1999) capability approach, where financial constraints limit Baloch women's ability to convert educational opportunities into achieved outcomes.

- "As a student, I am dependent on family support. From hostel fees to university tuition, from transportation to personal expenses, students face a lot of issues which

can create a lot of financial pressure on them. As there are only two main sectors in Baluchistan that offer employment opportunities for financial stability, first is the education sector and second is the health department. Sadly, the arts industry remains low in development, with numerous departments still being built, leading to a restricted source of income in the area. This is why it is not easy for them to arrange financial support for their daughters, sisters, or wives to support their educational journey. Of the province's numerous financial problems, in relatively better-off families, it is often considered that sons must be educated first as they are considered to be the main earners, and therefore, families tend to spend more on males than daughters” (Age 25, MPhil sociology, UMT)

5.6.5 The Burden of Tuition

The female migrant expressed that her middle-low class background made it especially difficult to meet the deadlines for admission fees. Adjusting to a new and unfamiliar environment, coupled with the need to adhere to strict regulations, further complicates her situation. Consequently, she seeks some form of leniency or a brief extension of one or two days to organize her submission if it cannot be completed by the specified deadline. Same can apply for other migrant’s situations, too.

- “When I learned about the first semester fee of 72 thousand for MPhil studies, it struck me as an enormous amount and led to a feeling of despair over how I could possibly afford it. That day was particularly challenging; I wondered if my father would be able to support such a cost even though I've been earning some money myself through tutoring children and working at a private school which has allowed me to save up somewhat. I managed to pay the first semester fees after their merit list announcement required payment within just one day, a very tight timeline indeed. It's understandable why many students hesitate or struggle with these payments since it's quite difficult financially for most people, including myself, who aren't compensated well either. In University of Punjab, mostly the new admissions in the evening are not provided accommodation in hostels; instead, they're placed as paying guests charged 500 per day, which poses significant difficulty. I have written numerous requests asking them kindly reduce hostel expenses down to 15 thousand due primarily because I'm from Baluchistan where staying on campus is necessary, living off-campus isn't feasible given personal circumstances, and thus direct help is needed, so no future student faces similar challenges when admitted during evening sessions” (Age 27, PhD Education, Punjab University)

5.7 The Migrant Student Odyssey: Challenges, Growth, and New Beginnings

Baloch female students face distinct challenges in adapting to Lahore's academic environment, with safety and social integration as primary concerns:

5.7.1 Prioritizing Safety: The Preference for On-Campus Living Among Migrant Women

In most interviews with internal migrant females from Baluchistan, it has been observed that families and parents often prioritize the safety of their daughters. They tend to favour their daughters living in secure settings, such as university campuses, rather than allowing them to occupy off-campus housing. families set particular guidelines concerning the independence of their daughters when it comes to living arrangements.

- “When I got admitted, I was told I couldn't get a spot in the Punjab University girl's hostel. At that time, there were stipulations stating that accommodation would only be granted based on high merit scores, mine being insufficient. As my parents did not permit me to reside off-campus, this situation led to significant struggles for me. Then, a week passed while I endeavoured to secure a place in the hostel due to various allocation issues; at first glance cleanliness or quality of living conditions weren't my priorities, my main focus was simply gaining access so that I could attend class without further delay. Eventually, however, I successfully enrolled in the main campus hostel” (age, 21, secondary education, PU)

Another student secured her accommodation on the Punjab University campus and shared her experience of receiving support for hostel allotment from members of the same community within the university. A place which they feel safe to live in being from another region.

- “In Punjab University, we have established communities that assist bright merit students in securing hostel accommodations, so I have overcome that part earlier” (Age 22, Psychology BS, PU)

An MPhil student from the Sociology Department at UMT shared her concerns about secure living conditions. Having previously resided in the safe hostels of Punjab University during her master's degree, she now faces challenges finding accommodation at her private university.

- “I previously resided in the hostels of Punjab University until I completed my master's degree. Subsequently, I enrolled in UMT for my MPhil, which is a private university, making it difficult to find private hostel accommodation. The hostels at Punjab University were known for their security and safety. After transitioning to UMT, I faced hurdles in locating a private hostel, as there are many factors to consider, such as location, surrounding environment, meal arrangements, room conditions, and potential roommates. This has been a demanding process. I have changed hostels

more than three times thus far, and my current hostel feels relatively secure and meets my requirements well” (Age 25, MPhil Sociology, UMT)

5.7.2 Migrant Struggle for Education

Those who are admitted to private universities face additional struggles in navigating their way to fit into new environments. However, these students engage in various activities outside the classroom to help them adjust and learn more about their new surroundings. These findings align with Berry’s (1997) acculturation model, where safety concerns delay assimilation until psychological security is achieved. Despite hurdles, all participants expressed pride in navigating these challenges independently.

- “Securing suitable accommodation in a new city has proven to be a challenge, but through a friend's recommendation, who has been studying law here for several years, we were able to find an apartment. Adapting to a new environment is never easy; it involves navigating unfamiliar social dynamics and cultural differences. I have no experience staying in hostels, so I cannot comment on that aspect. Institutional resources can also be daunting, as I am encountering diverse cultural and linguistic barriers. Nonetheless, I am determined to engage with various groups, such as society clubs and sports departments, to immerse myself in the community. The university library is impressive, and although I haven’t utilized the available technologies extensively, I have my laptop for personal use” (Age 24, Psychology BS, LUMS)

5.8 Social Capital and Academic Achievement: The Importance of Connections

Baloch female students face compounded academic challenges due to linguistic, geographic, and social isolation, revealing systemic inequities:

5.8.1 The Unheard Battles of a Baluchistan Student

She shares her experiences of moving to a new city without any connections, which made it tough to navigate life. At times, she felt isolated, as she came from a different geographical location with no connections in the new city. She explains how being different from her classmates made her academic journey more challenging. Transitioning to advanced learning, she struggled to cope with the faculty's teaching methods. However, she felt pressured by the faculty to speak English, which made her uncomfortable. She noted that she was corrected again and again during her attempts to speak Urdu, while others were not interrupted. This led her to question why she was singled out.

- “When you arrive in a new city or province without any established contacts, no familiar teachers, classmates who are strangers to you, nor family nearby, it can be

very isolating. The students around you may perceive you as coming from a different region like Baluchistan; this stereotype can exacerbate feelings of alienation since there's often a misconception that people from that area are vastly different and potentially dangerous. These circumstances present significant challenges for an individual student navigating such serious issues alone. Frequently at prestigious institutions where faculty members possess advanced qualifications and conduct lectures predominantly in English, comprehension becomes difficult. Sometimes it is hard to grasp all points discussed during lectures while jotting down essential notes simultaneously. This situation discourages asking fellow classmates for help due to fear they might ridicule your lack of understanding: "Were you not also present? Didn't you comprehend what was said?" I faced pressure when presenting my work in class because I struggled with English fluency, this led me feeling humiliated as interruptions were made regarding my use of Urdu during presentations while other presenters spoke Urdu freely without similar disruptions. The sudden thought navigates, such as is it possible that being from Baluchistan influenced her treatment toward me? Or perhaps it's simply because I'm an outsider within this environment? Numerous thoughts like these continue troubling me. As educators should strive for politeness by acknowledging cultural and language barriers rather than solely correcting mistakes rigidly; guidance ought to be provided constructively so that confidence isn't diminished but gained throughout classroom activities including live class presents" (Age 24, Psychology BS, LUMS)

5.8.2 Embracing Change

This student shares the tension of academic success, which continually haunts her performance. She faces negativity, and while it may not always be spoken, the actions, reactions, and behaviours of those around her often reveal it.

- "It affected my studies and overall classroom engagement as well since others often did not grasp the educational background from which I came; they perceived me as less educated than many of them who might have been better prepared academically. I faced considerable challenges regarding respect from both classmates and teachers during this adjustment period given how alien everything felt. Making friends proved difficult. I remember starting at this school without anyone familiar around for about an entire year before friendships gradually formed after adapting somewhat by then. Inevitably, it takes quite a toll on one's education along with instilling negative feelings towards self-confidence" (Age 19, Bio-tech, FCCU)

5.8.3 Distance Challenges of Migrants

One student shares her experiences with geographical distance barriers, as she has to travel consistently on different local buses to reach her destination. Her district, Punjgur, is far from the university and is located near the Iranian border.

- “If I'd relatives nearby, I would not have needed to pay 500 per day for accommodation as a paying guest. During Eid festivities when we cannot return home due to limited holidays (only about a week), it poses significant challenges since Makran Division is quite distant from Lahore; my district Panjgur borders Iran which makes travel complex. The journey back home takes approximately two days because we must go from Dera Ghazi Khan to Quetta before transferring buses for another nine-hour trip straight into Panjgur. Traveling from Lahore to Quetta alone takes around nineteen hours followed by an extra nine hours just reaching Panjgur, all while considering that bus schedules are inconsistent at best. This geographical challenge is often overlooked by others who don't experience similar circumstances firsthand” (Age 27, PhD Education, PU)

5.8.4 Challenges of Engaging in a New Environment

The frustration of adjusting to a new city presents unique challenges, leading to mental distress due to the lack of social support.

- “The social environment is crucial; attending classes without friends makes it difficult to engage with instructors, as building rapport takes time and requires adapting to their teaching styles. Without peers, tasks such as note-taking, completing assignments, and participating in group discussions become more complex. Definitely, having no relatives or siblings familiar with you in a new setting adds to the difficulty; it often feels isolating when no one knows you. Connecting with others can be challenging due to differing backgrounds. Emotional and moral support is vital, and in its absence, individuals may experience increased stress or illness” (Age 25, MPhil sociology, UMT)

5.8.5 Discrimination, Bias and Inequality: The Experience of a Baluchistani Student

The significant discrimination she faced on her first day felt like a curse rather than a welcome. This experience diminished her confidence before she even had the chance to start with a positive attitude.

- “I have encountered difficulties with certain teachers who express biases against me because I am Baluchistan. On my first day at university during a session in class alongside two other new students, I was called up front while holding my phone without realizing it was frowned upon by some instructors. After introducing ourselves as newcomers, and revealing that I secured admission through reserved seats, the teacher responded dismissively about my background before criticizing me

for using my phone. Feeling embarrassed by his comments regarding manners linked to being from Baluchistan left me disheartened; he was an elderly instructor so I chose not to respond further. The female student next to me discreetly hid her phone when questioned about her origins and received praise based solely on being from Punjab. This experience revealed underlying stereotypes associated with Baluchistan, that individuals there are violent or uncivilized, which often stemmed from media portrayals rather than personal experiences with locals like myself” (Age 23, BS Dietetics, PU)

5.8.6 Systemic Barriers to Social Integration

Baloch female students face a trifecta of institutionalized challenges in Lahore's universities. Linguistic exclusion emerges as a gatekeeping mechanism, where English fluency determines academic belonging. One psychology student at LUMS (24) recounted how faculty repeatedly interrupted her English presentations while tolerating others' use of the language, leading her to question whether her Baloch identity marked her as unworthy of patience. This bias was echoed by a dietetics student (23, PU) who was chastised for "typical Baloch behavior" when using her phone, while Punjabi peers received praise for identical actions. Geographic isolation compounds these struggles, with students from border regions like Panjgur spending 2 days and 500 rupees daily just to access basic housing - a financial hemorrhage their urban peers never face (27, Education, PU). The weight of stereotypes transforms lecture halls into minefields; multiple participants described year-long periods of eating alone, as classmates presumed their Baloch identity signaled danger (19, Bio-Tech, FCCU). These aren't isolated incidents but systemic failures - universities demand assimilation while providing no language bridges, travel accommodations, or bias training for faculty.

These findings expose how universities replicate Baluchistan's marginalization through academic spaces that demand cultural erasure. The classroom interruptions described in Section 5.8 mirror the geopolitical interruptions Baluchistan endures - where resources are extracted but infrastructure investments never arrive. When a student is shamed for English use (24, LUMS), it echoes the center-periphery dynamics that render Baloch languages 'inferior' in national discourse. This demands a reckoning with how higher education institutions become sites of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) for peripheral communities.

5.9 Building A Network in A New City Use Strategies

Baloch female students employ distinct strategies to combat stereotypes and forge connections in Lahore's universities:

5.9.1 Confronting Stigma: The Challenges of Being a Baluchistan Student

One cannot easily remove the stigmatization that has existed from the beginning. She is a clear example of someone facing such challenges even while living in a developed and metropolitan liberal city, where the cycle of stigma also seems endless.

- “I noticed a stigma associated with individuals from Baluchistan. A friend of mine shared that her parents advised her to avoid interacting with Baluchistan students on campus, “warning her that they would stigmatize her for associating with them.” Such perceptions are among the most prominent challenges we face in a new city. In unfamiliar surroundings, the need for support and the effort to forge new friendships becomes mandatory. You must take the initiative to be friendly; it often feels like an exam that you must pass without any assurance of reciprocation” (Age 22, Psychology BS, PU)

5.9.2 From Misjudgement to Understanding

Although she shared similar experiences as the other participants, she concluded wisely by highlighting the issue of misjudgement, even within small groups. All one needs to do is understand the context before making assumptions without sufficient knowledge.

- “On my first day attending class, I was taken aback to find that everyone else was from Punjab, making me the sole Baloch student. They were unfamiliar with my language and culture, leading them to hold misconceptions about Baloch people. Upon learning of my background, their expressions changed; there seemed to be an underlying fear associated with anyone from Baluchistan. Often viewed as terrorist or aggressive individuals. This perspective painted all Baloch people as rude or dangerous. I did not feel compelled to defend myself initially; however, over time, thankfully they began telling me that they had misjudged us. My presence helped alter their perceptions; they recognized that not every Baloch person fits those stereotypes. While I believe it’s crucial for other's views on our community to evolve rather than changing who I am at core, I have seen positive shifts take place among them. My optimism has influenced how they perceive me now. Misconceptions can vary significantly even among small groups, for example if four different people might interpret situations uniquely based on personal experiences just like various

communities within Baluchistan exhibit diverse cultures and perspectives worth recognizing, instead misjudged” (Age 21, Secondary Education, PU)

5.9.3 Being yourself

This student shares that being good will ultimately come back to you. Nothing is less valuable or useless; everything has its place and worth.

- “I believe that one should not change who they are; your true self is what matters. Your behaviour and attitude naturally attract others, especially when you present yourself authentically and directly. Initially, I had no friends, but over time I've made many connections with my classmates, who have become close friends. One friend in particular has been very supportive; when I'm unwell, she brings food from home for me. We help each other, she assists me with my studies while I offer her support as well. It's really about how your demeanour resonates with people that draws them toward friendship. Authenticity is crucial” (Age 23, BS Dietetics and Nutrition Science, PU)

5.9.4 Unity in Diversity

The power of respectful interactions can lead to better outcomes in life.

- “One senior friend before coming here, who studied here previously. She emphasized treating all individuals with respect no matter where they're from, including places outside Punjab, which has proven beneficial for creating meaningful connections” (Age 25, MPhil Sociology, UMT)

These findings align with Contact Theory (Allport, 1954): prolonged interaction under equal status (as classmates) reduced prejudice against Baloch students

- “Although I had friends on social media prior to my arrival, I make an effort to engage with them and learn about the local people, culture, language, and more. This has helped me establish a circle of connections despite facing academic challenges and adjusting to find my place within the community” (Age 24, BS Psychology)

5.10 Lost in Translation: Language Barriers and Their Effect on Academic and Social Integration

Baloch female students face multilayered linguistic challenges that impact both academic performance and social integration:

5.10.1 Psychological Impact of Public Correction in the Context of Language Barrier

The fear of academic correction is a unique and profound anxiety that differs from common phobias like heights, water, or ghosts. This specific fear stems from the

apprehension of being negatively corrected, which can lead to increased mistakes and a significant lack of confidence. The root of this issue often lies in the manner in which corrections are delivered. When someone is corrected publicly and harshly, rather than as constructive criticism, it can be mentally distressing and damaging, turning what should be a learning opportunity into a humiliating experience. For example, if a child is scolded in front of their peers, it can lead to resentment and a breakdown in trust. The same principle applies to adults; they should not be underestimated or treated with disrespect. Negative treatment can trigger strong reactions, which can worsen the situation. To foster a supportive learning environment, it is essential to provide feedback in a respectful and private manner, allowing individuals to learn and grow without the fear of public humiliation. By adopting this approach, we can change the correction process from one that induces anxiety into a true opportunity for growth and improvement.

- “I faced pressure when presenting my work in class because I struggled with English fluency, this led me feeling humiliated as interruptions were made regarding my use of Urdu during presentations while other presenters spoke Urdu freely without similar disruptions. The sudden thought navigates, such as is it possible that being from Baluchistan influenced her treatment toward me? Or perhaps it's simply because I'm an outsider within this environment? Frequent interruptions or corrections from others lead to frustration and hinder my ability to speak effectively out of fear that mistakes will invite ridicule as a university student. This situation adversely affects mental health, a serious matter supposes to be work on” (Age 24, Psychology BS, LUMS)

5.10.2 The Impact of Language Issues on Grades

Language impacts classroom performance, as Urdu is the primary language of instruction, followed by English. However, internal migrants from Baluchistan seem to struggle with both languages. This ongoing tension is a significant concern for these migrants.

- “I primarily communicated using my native language “Bravi” which was also prevalent at home and within my primary education back in Quetta schools alongside minimal exposure to English or Urdu. Proficiency in both Urdu and English affected my studies negatively, inadequate command over these languages directly impacted grades since comprehension suffered during instruction delivered entirely in English. Feeling self-conscious about asking questions amidst classmates who seemed more fluent, all adding layers of stress related specifically around linguistic limitations” (Age 19, Bio-Tech Bachelors, FCCU)

5.10. 3 Language Barriers in Gender Communication

Issues with language seem to be at the root of the problem in the region, and they continue to be a tiring struggle for migrants, unfortunately.

- “Language barriers pose a notable challenge, especially in communication between genders. During conversations, individuals may experience uncertainty in selecting appropriate words or deciding whether to use masculine or feminine pronouns due to the fear of being ridiculed. Anecdotes of others encountering mockery for their language abilities have come to my attention; while I have not faced this personally, it remains a concern for me. Improving our English through speaking is beneficial, and I believe it plays a crucial role. In our community, the local languages are predominantly spoken, leading to generations communicating in the same tongue while residing in the area. This trend can significantly impact both academic and career performance, as the differences in vocabulary, grammar, and daily life terminology can be drastic. The disparity between reading and speaking is substantial; until one can articulate thoughts through verbal expression, ideas may remain trapped in the mind, capable of thought but unable to be spoken aloud” (Age 29, PhD sociology, PU)

5.10. 4 The Cost of Language Barriers: How Language Challenges Undermine Confidence

A significant point raised is that many students possess strong argumentative skills, which, unfortunately, go to waste because they struggle to speak Urdu fluently. Even if they can speak it, they may fear being corrected or dismissed. This results in disappointing outcomes, as their lack of effective communication hinders their ability to engage in conversations without the worry of being judged or corrected. Consequently, this situation can be draining on one’s confidence in the classroom.

- “Throughout our schooling years there, we primarily communicate in Balochi; Urdu exposure is largely confined to textbooks where instruction isn't thorough enough for practical application. Many individuals from Baluchistan appear reluctant to share their views, even though they have legitimate arguments, due to concerns about possible mockery resulting from mistakes made while communicating in Urdu during travel. This reflects a personal experience where corrections were highlighted after an attempt to speak fluently. The educational system in Baluchistan requires scrutiny due to its shortcomings. A significant number of teachers lack the necessary qualifications or skills to foster meaningful discussions that can promote familiarity with national languages. This inadequacy hampers the essential functions that schools are supposed to offer before students advance to post-secondary education. As a result, students encounter increased challenges in navigating conversational settings, which hinders their ability to engage fully in discussions. This situation continues the cycle of difficulties experienced during their formative years, ultimately leading to feelings of

frustration and intensifying the sense of isolation within communities that struggle to bridge these linguistic divides on a daily basis” (Age 27, PhD Education, PU)

Many of these students face the same issues repeatedly, as not being fluent with the language speaking, makes it tough their engagement during the class.

- “Language itself is not the primary issue. However, the dialect from the Makran division can be quite complex, leading to noticeable differences in accent when compared to the local dialects in Lahore. There are also Pashtun girls from Baluchistan who face similar challenges; despite possessing significant knowledge, they find it difficult to express their thoughts clearly due to language barriers. This disconnection hinders their engagement with class topics, which is both unfortunate and detrimental to their academic success” (Age 25, MPhil Sociology, UMT)

5.11 The Attention Dilemma: Faculty Support for Female Baloch Students vs. Peers

Baloch female students encounter systemic marginalization within Lahore's academic institutions, manifested through three key dimensions. First, overt labeling and exclusion mark classroom interactions, with participants reporting derogatory terms like 'Bahar Walay' (outsiders) used by faculty (24, Psychology, LUMS). This othering extends to pedagogical neglect, as instructors disproportionately engage local students while attributing Baloch learners' struggles to their backgrounds rather than offering support (19, Bio-Tech, FCCU). Second, institutional policies compound these biases through rigid attendance requirements that fail to accommodate geographic barriers. A dietetics student (23, PU) described failing three exams despite providing documentation of biopsy recovery and flood-blocked travel routes from Baluchistan - a journey requiring 19 hours by bus to Quetta plus 7-8 additional hours to Harnai. Third, this exclusion carries psychological consequences, with multiple participants noting how being treated as cultural anomalies eroded their academic confidence (21, Education, PU). Crucially, these patterns persist even at elite institutions like LUMS and FCCU, revealing how higher education systems replicate Pakistan's center-periphery tensions through micro-level academic practices.

5.11.1 The Reality of Being an Outsider in Academia

It feels very rude for students to be labelled with harsh terms like 'Bahar Walay,' as this can break their confidence. If this is the treatment within the institution, it can certainly undermine their self-esteem rather than help them gain confidence.

- “Some faculty demotivate female Baloch students like myself. It seems that professors engage more readily with local province students than those hailing from outside regions such as ours, the term "Bahar Walay" was even used derogatorily against outsiders by one instructor. There is an underlying assumption that individuals like us may not meet established standards due solely to coming from less privileged educational backgrounds” (Age 24, Psychology BS, LUMS)

5.11.2 Discrimination in Education: The Need for Understanding and Support

This participant has felt the bias and criticism stemming from the background differences between the two regions. She believes this is the root cause of her experiences. Freire (1973), education must ultimately be a process of liberation and humanization. It cannot be an instrument that teachers use to manipulate the students. The students must be invited to "recognize and unveil reality critically " (p. 102).

- “Teachers often belittle students who struggle with their subjects or have questions in class; if a student is not performing well, it’s common for them to face degradation from instructors. These criticisms are rooted in personal background biases. Teachers may suggest that because you come from a certain background, your academic performance suffers as a result. Discrimination occurs regularly; educators do not extend extra help aimed at fostering improvement. I attend Bacon House University, a highly regarded institution, but even there, instructors fail to recognize that we come from entirely different backgrounds and cities when providing education. They overlook our need for additional support” (Age 19, Bio-Tech, FCCU)

5.11.3 The Illusion of Equity

There is a lack of additional support from educators for these migrants, who feel overlooked due to their less developed backgrounds. The student senses a lack of recognition for their efforts in reaching this stage. Having left home with the goal of creating a positive impact.

- “Teachers do not offer additional focus to female Baloch students. Due to their familiarity with their own culture, they often perceive ours as unusual; I have personally encountered this attitude from instructors here. To elaborate, when I am in class as the sole Baloch girl present, teachers tend to engage with Punjabi students first upon entering. This reflects a cultural divide that contributes to the differences in treatment, something I've experienced on my own. Regardless of these disparities rooted in culture, it is evident that teachers do not view all students equally. In discussions about equitable treatment by educators, the notion of fairness seems misleading; there appears to be greater emphasis placed on Punjab students compared to us. There’s no acknowledgment or recognition of our journeys filled with challenges and struggles. The assumption is made that every student arrives without obstacles faced along the way. When a Baloch girl occupies a seat in this classroom, it seems she is perceived merely as someone who has effortlessly reached this point without any hardships behind her success story” (Age 21, B.Ed. Secondary Education, PU)

5.11.4 Marginalized Voices

The student clearly states that being from Baluchistan is why she is underestimated and her value is questioned. When she seeks help regarding geographical barriers and her health issues, she is often denied and not heard.

- “Being from Baluchistan often leads people to underestimate me, in practice no one openly says anything derogatory but there's certainly a lack of significant support when it comes down to motivating or acknowledging our efforts. Although one thing I would add is that, traveling between Lahore and Quetta is challenging; it takes nearly 19 hours by bus just for that leg alone. Once I'm there for a day, it's another journey homeward towards Harnai which can take an additional 7-8 hours depending on route conditions. Altogether, reaching home requires about two days due solely to travel logistics. When I fell ill during Ramadan, I underwent a biopsy. Immediately after this period, I had finals to prepare for. During that time, there was significant rainfall in Baluchistan which severely damaged the routes. As a result, I was unable to travel for my treatment or reach Lahore to sit for my exams; consequently, I missed three papers. Among those instructors, only one cooperated with me while two others were quite unyielding. I provided them with medical reports and explained the adverse weather conditions affecting travel. Even my class representatives assured me they would help in any way possible. However, when help was needed most, no one came forward” (Age 23, BS Dietetics, PU)

5.12.1 Inclusion and Understanding in Education

It seems that there is a lack of understanding regarding the perspectives of migrant students, which results in insufficient support within the academic system.

- “That individuals from Baluchistan may face degradation due to political and other circumstances, rather than being encouraged. It is important to listen to their perspectives, even if their communication is not clear, and to support their inclusion. However, the level of effort varies by teacher; some are more attentive to these needs while others may not prioritize them. Not all educators address the challenges equitably or handle issues in a constructive manner” (Age 22, Psychology BS, PU)

5.12.2 Misconceptions and Limited Interest in Exploring Migrant's Challenges

The student clearly stated that there is a lack of understanding regarding their journey, highlighting the misconceptions and challenges they face.

- “While I cannot generalize this for all educators, many do not make an effort to assist students further after acknowledging their struggles. They often assume that being in this position indicates privilege, believing these individuals have wealthy families with no real hardships, this is a misconception. There appears to be little interest in exploring the challenges faced by these students who have worked hard to reach this

point. Unfortunately, it's accurate to say that there is minimal effort on their part to understand you or provide support; even if they may read about such issues or acknowledge them superficially, genuine engagement is lacking. Thus, claiming they are supportive would be misleading" (Age 24, Psychology BS, LUMS)

5.12.3 Faculty Attacks on the Caliber of Baloch Students

This student shares the troubling experience her sister had, where a faculty member directly attacked her caliber simply because she is from Baluchistan. Although both students may have been at fault and engaged in a conflict, the teacher failed to address the situation equitably. Instead, she targeted the migrant female student from Baluchistan, provoking further tension between the two.

- "I doubt whether teachers afford them any preferential treatment necessary for adequate help; discrimination does occur as well. Well from my personal experience, while attending Bacon House once an altercation arose between my older sister and another girl from Punjab who resides here, rather than addressing both parties equitably, the teacher focused solely on reprimanding my sister by making derogatory remarks about her upbringing: "I know your caliber." Despite being provoked first by the other girl, with no repercussions directed toward her—the teacher's bias was evident when she placed all blame upon my sister simply because of where she comes from while dismissing issues related specifically resolved against the Punjabi student altogether leading us into reflections regarding favouritism within educational institutions experienced daily amongst peers like ourselves which adversely affects morale significantly over time causing feelings resentment throughout families involved directly thus questioning fairness consistently applied across board!" (Age 19, Bio-Tech, FCCU)

5.12.4 Beyond Awareness: The Need for Genuine Support in Education

Seems like they have experienced mutual treatment within the different institutions and have felt no such additional support or understanding from faculty members.

- "Faculty may observe me but cannot fully appreciate my background or situation unless they are intellectually prepared to engage with it themselves. This is evident, yet I doubt their ability to truly understand it" (Age 29, PhD Sociology, PU)

We had questioned the participants, if the faculty understands and supports the cultural sensitivity or their background from being an underdeveloped region as compared to the higher institutions in Lahore. The majority rejected the notion, asserting that there is no such understanding or extra support provided.

- "To date, I have not observed any signs of cultural sensitivity or support within my department" (Age 23, BS Dietetics and Nutrition Science, PU)

5.12.5 The Consequences of Cultural Ignorance

Maybe some of them feel it is something which is known but neglected and not discussed or even concerned.

- “The reality is quite the opposite. Nothing has changed; there is no increased support for us. Faculty members often lack an understanding of our mental states and backgrounds, and they show little interest in learning about them. Even if they are aware, it seems to only result in harsher treatment rather than providing the support we need. I do not perceive any form of specific support or attention directed towards us” (Age 25, MPhil Sociology, UMT)

5.13 Redefining Support: Policy Innovations for Minority Student Success

Baloch female students encounter systemic neglect within Lahore's academic institutions, revealing several critical failures:

5.13.1 Moving Beyond Stereotypes: Preparing Faculty for a Multicultural Classroom

Sometimes, mockery can undermine your confidence, making the learning experience in an institution less enjoyable and discouraging you from engaging with your surroundings. Faculty should approach students with more care and concern, as underestimating their value, talent, and intellect can lead to depression and negatively affect their mental well-being.

- “Faculty should receive training focused on student diversity, including cultural and socioeconomic aspects, and learn how best to engage with students considering their geographical variations rather than mocking them. Educators need to take their responsibilities seriously since educational institutions exist primarily as sources of hope for those seeking knowledge, not places leading them toward depression requiring therapy services. Although, they should financially aid the female student for their educational journey to continue, only that how we can get to support more females from such low undeveloped areas” (Age 24, Psychology BS, LUMS)

5.13.2 Ensuring Access: Supporting Female Students from Underserved Regions

The student suggests the need for financial aid to support underserved regions. This change is mandatory in the coming years to establish stronger dynamics that will help support the

Another student also educational journeys of female students.

- “Female students coming from underserved regions who likely face financial instability while living in hostels, institutions must extend extra support through scholarships aimed at facilitating their pursuit of higher education. Financial difficulties can severely impact their studies and prevent them from completing

degrees successfully. Therefore, it is imperative that universities take responsibility by offering meaningful financial aid so these women can complete their educational journeys effectively” (Age 19, Bio-Tech, FCCU)

shared her concern about the need for financial assistance for female students from Baluchistan.

- “Scholarships specifically targeting backgrounds such as those in Baluchistan female should be increased significantly for these student’s benefit. Faculty members should become familiar with the diverse backgrounds and geographical differences related to students in order to provide more effective support” (Age 21, B.Ed. Education, PU)

5.13.3 Embracing Cultural Diversity in Education: From Ridicule to Respect

This highlights the need for faculty to pay attention to minority students to help them overcome their fears and to assist in creating training sessions that raise awareness about cultural diversity in academia.

- “Educators must be more encouraging; they should cultivate a space where all students feel at ease. Many learners struggle with Urdu; rather than ridicule them, teachers should provide support. Institutions should create programs to help minority students adjust to their academic environment. Universities should hold workshops or training sessions to raise awareness about cultural diversity and promote inclusivity among students and faculty” (Age 23, BS Dietetics and Nutrition Science, PU)

5.13.4 Practical Learning, Financial Support, and Mental Health Services

Apart from financial aid, this student highlighted the importance of having accessible mental health services within educational institutions, to allow students to express their concerns about the difficulties they encounter throughout their academic experiences.

- “To make more scholarships programmes for the girls from Baluchistan and offer them financial aid, so as a qualified educator, it could add more benefits within the province back home. Learning should be practical instead of just lectures which students do not understand all the time. There should be mental health services too within the institutions, where professionals should sit, and if student is going through stress, depression or any unusual circumstances or depressed of anything relate to the academic hurdles, they can just reach out to such facilities, and it should be reported to help student both for the academic and institution life” (Age 22, BS Psychology, FCCU)

5.13.5 Addressing the Needs of Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

One student from Punjab University, originally from Turbat in the Makran Division and pursuing a PhD in Sociology, expressed that language is a significant barrier that hinders students from sharing their ideas in class for fear of being mocked. A safe environment should be created, as institutions are a source of hope for these students to overcome their fears. Mistakes are a natural part of learning, and when students make the effort to engage and learn, that should be recognized and appreciated, not misjudged.

- “Increase scholarship opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Educators should take initiative to understand the geographical and cultural differences of students. Addressing language barriers is crucial; support should be provided to encourage these students to express their opinions, especially since they may hesitate due to fear of making mistakes” (Age 29, Sociology PhD, Punjab University)”.

5.13. 6 Empowering Baluchistan Scholars: Scholarships and Collaborative Community Efforts

A current PhD student in Education at Punjab University has highlighted that addressing these issues is key to creating a more friendly and supportive environment for migrants.

- “Create targeted scholarships specifically for Baluchistan scholars, as previous initiatives have shown positive results in supporting these individuals. Facilitate better communication among departments regarding scholarship announcements to improve transparency for deserving candidates striving for academic excellence. Finally, encourage initiatives that promote community-building efforts, which can significantly foster inclusivity among peers studying together” (Age 27, PhD Education, PU)

6 Discussions

This study has revealed the various academic obstacles encountered by female internal migrants from Baluchistan while pursuing higher education in Lahore. By conducting comprehensive interviews with nine individuals, the research has shed light on the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional hurdles that considerably affect their educational journeys and general well-being.

One of the major points from this research is the fundamental impact of the family support and opposition, the critical ones who are not happy with female education decision to empower within the family. Many of the female students have mercy to benefit from the encouragement from immediate family members, particularly could siblings support. Many have encountered disturbed intentions from extended family members who uphold traditional views on women's education. This conflicting situation contributes to emotional distress, as students attempt to balance their families' expectations with their academic ambitions. As researched by Kabeer (2011), support from family and social networks plays a significant role in motivating women's empowerment; however, facing resistance may result in psychological difficulties.

The psychological criticism from family, along with the demand to meet societal standards, as result of their feelings of isolation and self-doubt, expressed by participants. The major issue which is financial constraints add the more hurdle to get their degree completed. As the expensive cost of living in the metropolitan, with limited financial support, places considerable strain on these students. According to this research data, most of the migrant female students come here through high merit-based scholarship programs, while a few rare ones are supported by their families. Yet, the financial burden continues to be a major barrier. The research paper advocates that there's still a need to increase financial aid and scholarships opportunities designed specifically for female students from underprivileged regions like Baluchistan, that could allow these students to pursue their educational aspirations without the constant worry of economic instability.

Language barriers represented a significant challenge. Participants reported their difficulties in class and in their overall performance. The program has proven that there are communication issues with both English and Urdu. As a result, this causes low confidence and less participation in class, along with a fear of being corrected and insulted in front of peers, leading to feelings of failure and frustration in the classroom environment. The pressure to perform in a language that is not their mother tongue often results in anxiety and a decline in self-esteem (Cummins, 2000). The research points out the key theme issues, educational institutions should build language support programs and cultivate an inclusive atmosphere that recognizes and tackles the linguistic hurdles encountered by students from varied backgrounds.

The findings refer to critiques of social capital and community support in managing the arising difficulties of the academic system. Participants pointed out the role of peer networks and mentorship in helping them adapt to their new settings and overcome feelings of isolation (Bourdieu, 1986). Institutions should promote more development supportive communities which should be designed to promote interaction between the pair of students, creating the feelings of inclusion and teamwork.

However, the research emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity among educators. Numerous participants reported experiences of marginalization and discrimination, frequently perceiving that their cultural backgrounds were either overlooked or misinterpreted by their instructors. This underscores the necessity for training initiatives aimed at faculty with the skills to interact constructively with a diverse array of students,

promoting an equitable and supportive learning environment (Gay, 2010).

This study advocates for a comprehensive approach to tackle the distinct challenges faced by female internal migrants from Baluchistan higher education. Policymakers and educational institutions must work collaboratively to implement targeted interventions that promote educational equity, mental health support, and cultural understanding.

6.1 Limitation

Several challenges affected my research. First, I found it difficult to schedule interviews with Baloch female students, many were unavailable or kept cancelling meetings. This made consistent data collection challenging. Secondly, participants often hesitated to speak freely. Some expressed safety concerns, while others mentioned family restrictions preventing open discussion.

Enrolling participants proved particularly difficult. Since I primarily accessed students through male relatives or associates, I likely missed those from more conservative families without such connections. Even when conducting interviews in Balochi, I needed to repeat some questions, which may have influenced how participants responded.

These limitations resulted in a smaller and less diverse sample than intended. The findings might have differed had I been able to interview students from broader backgrounds.

In summary, this study advocates for a comprehensive approach to tackle the distinct challenges by addressing these barriers, we can empower a generation of women who, through education, will not only uplift themselves but also contribute positively to their communities in Baluchistan and beyond. The journey of these students is not merely an individual pursuit; it is a collective movement toward gender equality, social change, and the realization of their roles as catalysts for transformation in their homeland.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This study reveals how female Baloch migrants navigate systemic barriers—familial resistance, financial strain, language gaps, and faculty bias—to pursue education in Lahore. Their resilience underscores education’s role in challenging patriarchy (Kabeer, 2011), yet institutional support remains inadequate.

To address these challenges, institutions must establish free language support centers for both Urdu and English, paired with mandatory cultural competency training for faculty (Gay, 2010). As Participant 4 noted, “Public corrections shattered my confidence”—a practice these reforms would directly address. Teachers should receive professional development on inclusive pedagogies that respect students varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Faculty development programs should emphasize cultural sensitivity to help educators understand diverse student backgrounds, learning styles, and linguistic needs, ultimately fostering more inclusive classrooms.

Policymakers must also prioritize affordable and safe hostel accommodations for female migrant students. This can be achieved through government-municipal partnerships, alongside regulation of exploitative private rental practices. Expanding hybrid need-merit scholarships for disadvantaged students—especially targeting Baloch women—is essential whose access to higher education remains disproportionately limited. For instance, a revised eligibility criterion that includes family income (e.g., <50,000 PKR/month) ensures more equitable access. As Participant 7 shared, “Without my scholarship, I’d have quit.” Transparent communication through community liaisons is also critical to bridge information gaps (Bourdieu, 1986).

Orientation programs featuring peer mentorship and campus resource tours should be implemented to improve retention rates and support integration for Baloch migrant students. Peer mentorship programs (Bourdieu, 1986) can combat isolation by connecting migrants with senior students. Participant 9's experience illustrates this: "My hostel struggles eased after joining a Baloch student network"—a model that could be scaled across institutions. Mentors should encourage participation in academic resources and foster a sense of belonging, which contributes significantly to academic success.

For which universities must embed migrant-sensitive mental health services, with counsellors trained in cultural trauma. Participant 3's experience highlights this need: "I questioned my worth daily." Integrating on-campus mental health services with career-focused programs—such as interdisciplinary projects and industry partnerships—can address both psychological and employment-related challenges faced by migrant students.

To create inclusive and empowering classrooms, institutions should also integrate transformative education, critical pedagogy, and cooperative learning models. These approaches value diversity and amplify marginalized voices, encouraging active participation and mutual understanding.

In addition, financial aid processes must be streamlined with culturally adapted communication strategies. Many students possess valuable social and cultural capital, yet lack familiarity with the language and structure of financial aid processes. Transparent, supportive communication—facilitated by staff-student mentoring partnerships—can help bridge this gap.

These steps operationalize Feminist Theory by redistributing power (Kabeer, 2011) and Social Capital Theory by bridging networks (Bourdieu, 1986). As Participant 5 vowed, "I'll educate Baloch girls so they suffer less." Achieving this vision requires collaborative action among policymakers, educators, and communities to build an equitable, supportive educational system.

By implementing these evidence-based, participant-informed recommendations, we catalyse an educational revolution—one where diversity fuels excellence, and marginalization gives way to empowerment.

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Appendix

Appendix A Consent Letter form for Participant Students

Dear Participants

I am Hina Wazir, currently pursuing an MPhil in Sociology from Forman Christian College University Lahore. My research relates to the subject of educational barriers that female internal migrant students from Baluchistan face while currently enrolled as institutional students in Lahore. I conduct this research with the aim of better understanding these hurdles and contributing to the discussion about education to empower women and promote gender equality in underrepresented regions like Baluchistan specifically. Your participation is mandatory to understand these issues and work to improve policies and support systems in the educational background for female migrants. If you consent to this voluntary participation, I would then conduct a personal research questionnaire with you, which might take 45 to 60 minutes.

Through this interview session, I will discuss your experiences and approaches to accessing higher education. This interview will be voice recorded with your consent only.

The data I gather through this interview will remain confidential and completely anonymous, although you are allowed to stop this questionnaire interview session with me at any time.

All the data I gather will be kept secure, and the only access to it will be by me and my supervisor. I will remove any specific details that may identify you. I will secure the data for a certain period until my study is completed; thereafter, it will be securely destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, feel free to contact me at 243106972@formanite.fcollege.edu.pk

Please let us know below if you consent to participate in this study:

I have read the information and voluntarily agree to participate

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Best regards,

Hina Wazir

MPhil Sociology Student

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Female Baluchistan Internal Migrants Pursuing Higher Education

Demographic Data

1. Which area of Lahore do you currently reside in-
2. Which university are you enrolled in-
3. Age-
4. Which province in Baluchistan did you migrate from?
5. What is your current level of education-
6. What is your current field of study or major-
7. Marital Status-
8. Are you also working while studying, if yes, what is your occupation-
9. How many people are dependent on you for financial support-
10. What is your Monthly Household Income -
11. How long have you been living in Lahore-

Study Questions

1. What motivates you to pursue higher education in Lahore?
2. Who from your family supported you to come to Lahore for higher education and who did not?
3. What are the specific ways in which resistance from family and relatives in Baluchistan affects your mental and emotional well-being and how do you cope with the resulting mental health challenges, if any?
4. Do you feel higher education has empowered you to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality, and what are the implications of this empowerment in your personal and professional life?
5. How do you navigate educational differences between Balochistan and Lahore, and what adaptation strategies have you employed, if any?
6. How are you coping with the financial realities of pursuing higher education in a new city?
7. What are the challenges you face in finding suitable accommodation in the new city, including hostels or shared living spaces, considering factors such as disability, institute resources, and library technology, and how do you overcome these challenges?
8. Does not having any prior connections or references, including teachers, students, or peers and relatives have an impact on your studies and achievement?
9. What strategies do you use to build a social network and establish a sense of belonging in the new city?
10. How do Baloch women students in Lahore University perceive the impact of language barriers on their academic performance and social integration?
11. Do faculty members provide equal attention and support to female Baloch students as they do to regular, long-term university students?
12. Do faculty members demonstrate cultural sensitivity and understanding of the background and circumstances of female Baloch students, and do they attempt to create a supportive learning environment that acknowledges their differences?
13. In your opinion, what policy and practice changes can higher education institutions implement to better support the academic success and social integration of minority students (list at least 5)?

