

Abstract:

Women's mobility outside the home in Pakistan is restricted both by social norms and security concerns. In particular, social norms against women coming into close contact with unrelated men, and the discomfort, social stigma and threat of harassment when they do so, restricts women's use of public transport. This restricts women's choices to participate in the labor force, continue their education, and engage in other independent activities.

Public transport interventions targeted for women have been adopted in contexts as diverse as India, Pakistan, Brazil, Mexico and South Korea. Yet their impact on women's mobility, labor force participation and empowerment has not been rigorously evaluated. This project will use a randomized controlled trial of women's-only transport and mixed-gender transport in Lahore, Pakistan to test rigorously whether a simple intervention can give women expanded choices.

The methodology will allow us to quantify the benefit of a reduction in cost, an improvement in safety and social acceptability, and the two combined, on women's mobility, labor force participation, and empowerment. The results of this research will inform policy on how transport services can best be designed, adapted and expanded to improve women's mobility and empowerment.