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Transport Policy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tranpol

Transportation disadvantage and activity participation in the cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 13 January 2015

Received in revised form

16 November 2015

Accepted 1 December 2015

Available online 17 December 2015

Keywords:

Transport policy

Public transport

Activity participation

Poverty

Social exclusion

Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This paper explores public transport related issues and their impact on activity participation in everyday life in the Pakistani urban context. The study is based on primary data collected through questionnaire survey from four case study communities in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, each of whom experience reduced access to public transport. Results show that out of home activity uptake is gender segregated. Men were more likely to travel for almost all activities. They were also more likely to either walk or use public transport for daily activity participation. On the other hand, women participated less frequently in the out of home activities. They were more likely to use personal automobile as well. Quantitative analyses highlight that transport related issues such as the financial costs of travel, availability and quality of public transport played a major role in shaping individual's activity participation. People often cut down their activities that required the use of motorized, particularly public transport. Women appeared to be additionally disadvantaged due to limited access to economic resources and increased reliance on personal means of transportation in the study area.

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1. Background

Social exclusion is a theoretical concept that acknowledges the undesired alienation of certain individuals from their society, and examines its process, causes and consequences (Duffy, 1995). Alienation occurs when people are unable to participate in activities such as employment, education, healthcare and leisure, which are normal activities to others in their own society. This will lead to low quality of life and reduced wellbeing of the disadvantages (Levitas et al., 2007). The concept also recognizes that its causes lie with the individuals, the society or even with the state (Sen, 2000). Poverty is often the central reason behind it (Barry, 1998; Room, 1995). But, non-economic factors, such as exclusionary practices, play a significant and decisive in creating and prolonging the situation (Kabeer, 2000). Due to its broad, dynamic and context specific nature, authors agree that it is difficult to quantitatively 'measure' exclusion as the human needs, abilities and standards of participation vary across individuals and societies (Percy-Smith, 2000). Nevertheless, in a comparative sense, a state of reduced participation and a limited material welfare remain its defining factors. At present, social exclusion is a well-researched policy

concept that has reached from Europe to the developing countries where majority of population can be termed as excluded due to widespread poverty and the alienation of individuals due to social customs and practices (De Haan and Maxwell, 1998; Beall, 2002).

The study of transport as 'the' cause of exclusion began to emerge in the late 1990s from the UK and has spread across the world in fifteen years or so. The influential work on the subject highlights that individual's accessibility, mobility and activity participation are often constrained by a number of technical or 'moral' shortcomings in the land use and transport systems, other than their ability to pay for motorized mobility (Hine and Mitchell, 2001, 2003). Transport related exclusion does not only reduce the individual's welfare by decreasing their physical mobility (Rosier and McDonald, 2011; Lucas, 2004b), it also results in 'limited horizons' as people are not psychologically able to look beyond their local boundaries and reach out to the opportunities in wider spatial context (Lucas, 2004a). Various approaches such as 'accessibility planning' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003), free or concessionary fares, demand responsive transport and promoting virtual mobility have been suggested and often applied to improve the fragile 'connections' between vulnerable population and their life-line activities (Kenyon et al., 2002; Grieco et al., 2000). Although one might describe the agenda of transport related exclusion as a mobility focused and short term strategy to address a larger issue of social exclusion (Kenyon, 2003), the concept remain an important aspect of wider debate on access and inequality, as it aims

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to provide viable solutions to the suppressed mobility and promotes accessible public transportation for the success of social policy (Kenyon, 2012; Currie et al., 2007).

In the global south, most of the limited work has been done in South American (Delmelle and Casas, 2012) and African contexts (Porter, 2002, 2007, 2013; Lucas, 2011). Literature from the Asian continent, particularly from South Asia, remains wanting where the issues of transport and exclusion are faced by majority of residents (Elias et al., 2015; Currie, 2011; Gakenheimer, 2006; World Bank, 2004; Lucas 2012). The limited available literature in Asian context mainly comes from India and it is mostly focused on work related to travel and explores the mobility behavior of the poor, women or specific spatial locations such as squatter residents (Tiware, 2002; Srinivasan and Rogers, 2005; Astrop, 1996). While the remaining regions of South Asia have been rarely discussed, none of the work in Asian context has particularly explored the role of transportation disadvantage in wider activity participation perspective. In case of Pakistan, two major reasons behind this lack of attention are a) a limited focus on social exclusion and activity participation perspective in government policies and b) a deregulated market where financial viability—rather than social needs of its users—drive the provision of public transport (Adeel et al., 2014a, 2014b; Imran, 2010). Literature on the Asian experiences in transport disadvantage and social exclusion indicates the links between the two constructs along the lines of gender, income and location based disadvantages (Elias et al., 2011; Mumtaz, 2003; De Haan and Maxwell, 1998; Turner and Fouracre, 1995). Widespread issues related to poverty, ghettoization, underdevelopment and gender gaps exacerbate the already existing issues of transport related exclusion in the growing metropolitan areas in the South Asian countries.

Work on transport related exclusion has used a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches for the examination of public transport accessibility (Church et al., 2000; Blair et al., 2013; Currie et al., 2010; Delbosc and Currie, 2011), individual space time accessibility (Neutens et al., 2011; Miller, 2003), individual activity spaces (Schönfelder and Axhausen, 2003; Kamruzzaman and Hine, 2011, 2012) and travel behavior (Dodson et al., 2006; Lucas et al., 2013; Mattson, 2012). The limited, yet vivid, volume of qualitative work (or with substantial qualitative component) on the topic has used techniques such as focus groups (Lucas, 2011), ethnography (Rose et al., 2009; Ureta, 2008) and other less used research methods such as Q-Methodology (Rajé, 2007) to sort out the vulnerable population's ideas and feelings about the intensity of the issue.

As the concept of social exclusion focuses on activity participation, transport related exclusion should highlight the role of transport in fulfilling and/or limiting the activity participation across vulnerable groups (Hodgson and Turner, 2003). An objective analysis of revealed activity participation as a determinant of transport related exclusion is relatively scarce and that is also for a small range of activities. For example, Farber et al. (2010) examines the inequalities in shopping activity participation caused by various personal and transport related constraints as a potential indicator of exclusion. In another study, that used two-day long dataset of 1994 Household Travel Survey from Portland, Farber and Páez (2009) empirically demonstrate that the reliance on automobile significantly reduced frequency and range of social activities among the respondents. In their study on discretionary activity participation among disabled Canadian adults, (Páez and Farber, 2012) report significant influence of various transportation disadvantage related variables on revealed frequency of discretionary activity participation, and their 'desire' of increasing participation as an indicator of social exclusion. Their study takes into account the activity participation over a period of month.

It seems that activity participation when measured in short

periods such as daily levels, becomes less effective in untying the broader exclusionary processes as the window of observation period remains very small (Hine, 2007). People may not participate in all activities daily or may travel less frequently, but still be able to spend more time over longer study periods in activities by increasing their activity duration (Hamermesh and Pfann, 2005). The present state of knowledge needs more studies that take into account long term activity participation usually over multiple days, weeks or even months, to comment on the state of activity participation. However, the generally available datasets used in transportation literature barely collect multiple day diaries of mobility behavior.

2. Study objectives

This paper aims to explore the role of socioeconomic and transport related factors that influence the frequency of social and recreational travel among Pakistani men and women living in areas with reduced access to public transport. More generally, the study explores the pattern of activity travel and mode choice across men and women and specifically explores the following three questions: (1) what is the long term pattern of activity participation and mode choice across Pakistani men and women? (2) Do the individual and locational disadvantages of access to transport affect the frequency of activity participation in social and recreational activities? (3) Whether these disadvantages have a similar effect across activities?

The empirical work reported here is not a statistical representative of the masses by any means. Its primary purpose is to put forward the broad picture regarding the impact of transportation issues on individual's activity participation. We build on the wider international debate to examine transport related exclusion in the Pakistani urban context. The lack of literature on the links between transport disadvantage and activity participation in the developing countries context, coupled with the vast yet under-reported gender differences in mobility and access to resources, make us to start the debate with somewhat exploratory standpoint. Lack of data availability further contributes to the narrow margin of 'new' work. This study aims to provide a firsthand look on the links between transport disadvantage and long term discretionary activity participation in a less researched socio-spatial context of Pakistani cities. Our research compliments the exiting literature by providing unique insights regarding the role of socioeconomic, spatial and the transport related circumstances in shaping individual's mobility and activity participation.

3. Conceptual framework

This study builds on the conceptual relationship between transport disadvantage and social exclusion from the earlier works by Páez and Farber (2012) and Lucas (2012). According to Páez and Farber (2012), mobility leads to activity participation (inclusion) and the relationship is mediated by accessibility. Whereas mobility itself is shaped by factors related to personal, economical and living space that interact with each other at various levels (Páez and Farber, 2012: p. 4). In the second conceptualization of the relationship between transport and social exclusion, Lucas (2012) sees that social and transport disadvantages combine to create transport poverty and each of the three elements may lead to inaccessibility to essential services, potentially resulting in exclusion and inequalities in one's own social, cultural and governmental contexts. While the authors of first framework take social and transportation issues in broader personal and housing contexts whereas the second conceptualization makes an implicit

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