



LUMS

Saida Waheed
Gender Initiative



SAIDA WAHEED GENDER INITIATIVE
FALL NEWSLETTER
2021

OVERVIEW



IN THIS ISSUE:

Webinars 1

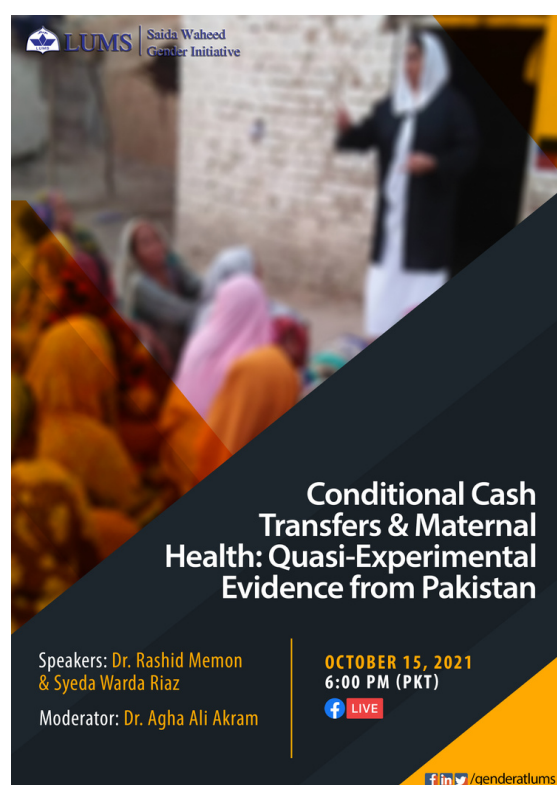
Collaborations 6

Grants 10

The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative (SWGI) had an exciting Fall semester with a packed schedule and many important conversations. Keeping in mind the ongoing pandemic, all events happened online and were live streamed on our [Facebook page](#). We wanted to share some highlights with you and thank you for your continued support and interest in the Initiative's work. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for updates!

Conditional cash transfers and maternal health: quasi-experimental evidence from Pakistan

Saida Waheed Gender Initiative (SWGI) invited Dr. Rashid Memon, Assistant Professor at LUMS and Ms. Warda Riaz, a Ph.D. candidate at University of California (Davis) to speak about their research project titled, '*Conditional cash transfers and maternal health: quasi-experimental evidence from Pakistan*'. The session was moderated by Dr. Agha Ali Akram, also an Assistant Professor at LUMS.



Dr. Rashid began the session by describing the problem and design of the evaluation of the research, which is expected to start in January 2022, while Ms. Warda spoke about the preliminary results from the project so far. The panellists touched upon the gaps in maternal and child health in Sindh and highlighted the need for a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program in the area. They also highlighted the various dimensions of heterogeneity which are expected to create a differential impact of the CCT program on the outcomes of interest such as the take-up of health care services. In conclusion, the panellists discussed some of the key findings from the on-going pilot study and how it aims to contribute to the society in the future. Watch the panel discussion [here](#)

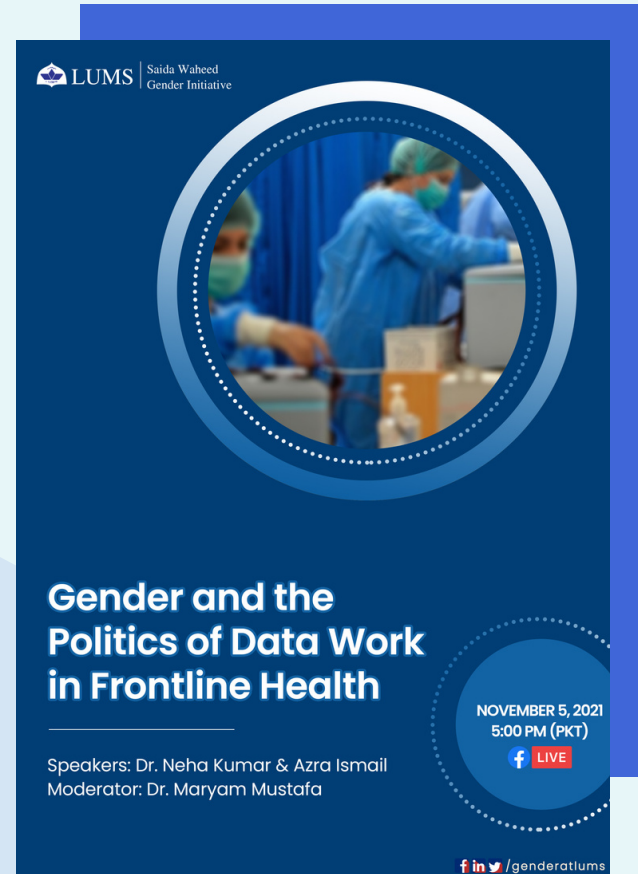
Gender and the Politics of Data Work in Frontline Health

To discuss the application of data-driven and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in frontline health, SWGI invited Dr. Neha Kumar, an Associate Professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S and Ms. Azra Ismail, a PhD candidate in Human-Centered Computing at Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S. to talk about the data work that these systems depend on, and the gender-based politics surrounding data work, through their latest research project. The session titled '*Gender and the Politics of Data Work in Frontline Health*' was moderated by Dr. Maryam Mustafa, an Assistant Professor at LUMS.

Dr. Kumar and Ms. Azra presented findings from an extensive literature review of the ongoing AI efforts for frontline health, as well as their ethnographic fieldwork conducted over three years with frontline health workers engaged in data work based in Delhi, India. Ms. Azra explained that many of these workers are women who are already engaged in underpaid and invisible care work, primarily with women from underserved communities. They discussed how their analysis uncovers gaps in current data-driven efforts and outlines opportunities for design, while centring the perspectives of frontline health workers. Dr. Maryam shared the challenges faced by lady health workers in collecting similar data in Pakistan, particularly while using digital tools. She added that these researchers working on digitizing the existing data also face numerous challenges as well since it has been stored in piles of registers and similar mediums over the past decades.



She listed lessons distilled from literature on Human-Computer Interaction for Development (HCI4D), post-development critique, and transnational feminist theory to present an agenda for AI or data-driven efforts that target 'social good', more broadly. Watch the panel discussion [here](#).



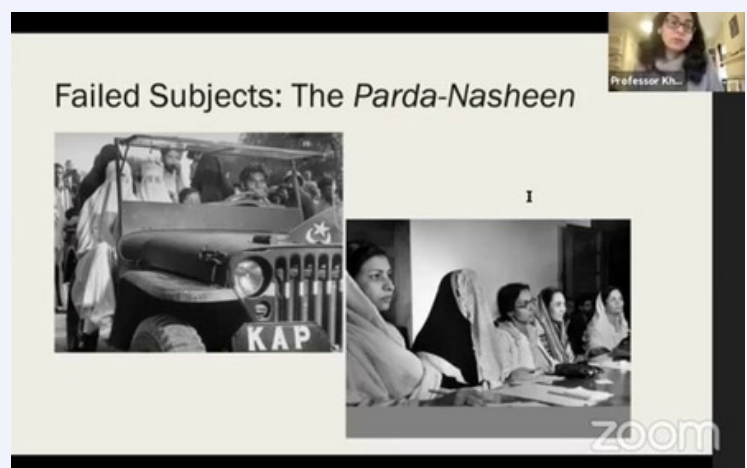
To conclude, Dr. Kumar highlighted the various takeaways from their research such as the need to foreground user agency, develop sustainable interventions and foster solidarity and exchange knowledge across disciplines and geographies among others that can be applied to various contexts including Pakistan.

Forging Gendered Subjects: The Cultural Politics of Education in Pakistan



Our Fall 2021 event calendar also included a riveting book talk by Dr. Shenila Khoja-Moolji, who joined Dr. Razia Sadik, an Associate Professor at LUMS, to discuss her latest work: *'Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia'*. The book received the Jackie Kirk Outstanding Book Award by the Comparative and International Education Society in 2019.

Dr. Shenila, an author and interdisciplinary scholar working at the intersections of gender and Islamic studies, described the book as a genealogy of the 'educated Muslim girl.' During the session, she explored how this figure appears and circulates in reformist and state archives between 1857 and 2015



In her book, she challenges the prevailing common sense associated with calls for women and girls' education and argues that such advocacy is not simply about access to education but, more crucially, concerned with producing ideal Muslim woman-/girl-subjects with specific relationships to the patriarchal family, paid work, Islam, and the nation-state. Watch the book talk [here](#).

Auntologies: Queer Aesthetics and South Asian Aunties

SWGJ invited Dr. Kareem Khubchandani, a Mellon Bridge Assistant Professor in theatre, dance, and performance studies, and women's, gender, and sexuality studies at Tufts University, U.S to talk about his research about the figure of the 'aunty' in South Asia. The session was moderated by Dr. Sara Shroff, Assistant Professor at LUMS.



By exhibiting a montage of visual elements, Dr. Khubchandani began his talk by describing how the figure of the aunty as ubiquitous in South Asian public cultures. While speaking about the artworks of Maria Qamar titled 'Trust no Aunty' and Meera Sethi

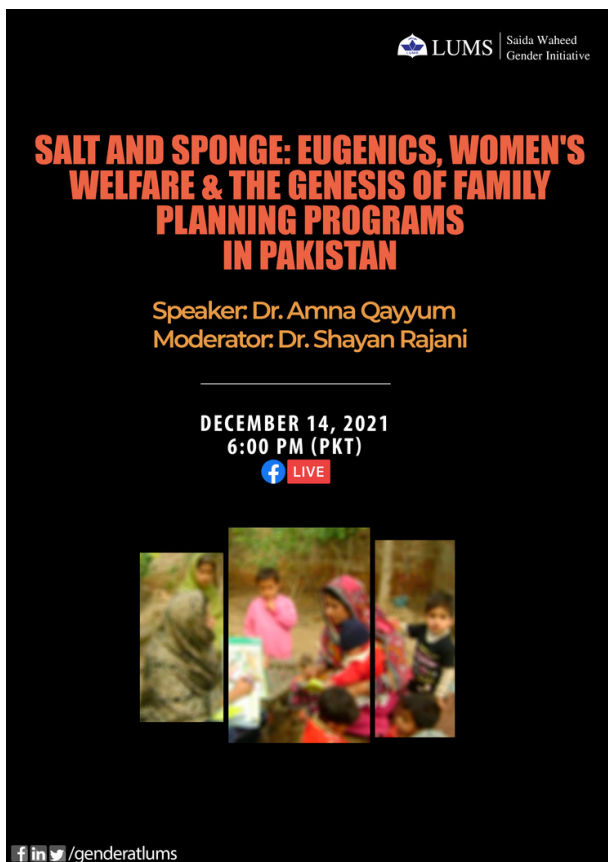
titled 'Upping the Aunty', Kamala Harris's 'chitthi brigade' fan club, the use of the term 'aunty' in television commercials, the story behind The Telegraph's labelling of Indian Union Minister Smriti Irani as 'Aunty-national' at one occasion and other examples, he explained how the figure of the aunty poses important questions about gender, sexuality, and normativity in South Asian and diasporic contexts

He emphasised on how the notion of aunty requires us to think about the aesthetics of excess such as color, fatness, accent, faith, superstition, which are attached to older women's bodies, and provides an opportunity to think about age as both ontological and relational. Dr. Khubchandani shared that the peripheral nature of the aunty which is known to be always at the edge of home and at the border of modernity, requires us to look differently at cultural texts



to make sense of her while 'Aunties' offer, or sometimes require, alternative methods to do cultural criticism. As a way forward, he explained that his research hopes to explore what the study of aunties, i.e., auntologies, do to think critically about age, aesthetics, gender, kinship, and pleasure. Watch the session [here](#).

Salt and Sponge: Eugenics, Women's Welfare, and the Genesis of Family Planning Programs in Pakistan



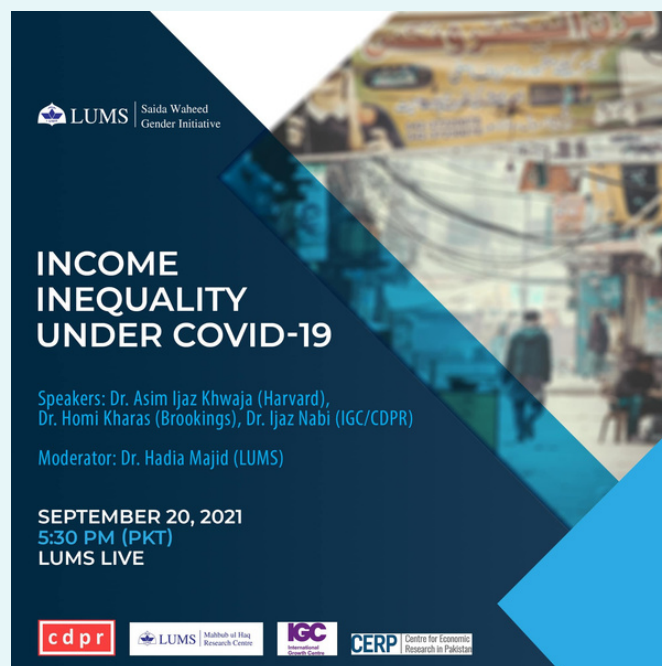
Our final event of Fall 2021 was a fascinating talk titled '*Salt and Sponge: Eugenics, Women's Welfare, and the Genesis of Family Planning Programs in Pakistan*' by Dr. Amna Qayyum, a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, Yale University, U.S. She specializes in twentieth-century global history, with a particular focus on decolonization and the Cold War in South Asia and the Muslim world. The session was moderated by Dr. Shayan Rajani, Assistant Professor at LUMS.

During her talk, Dr. Amna discussed the founding of the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPA) in 1952, and analyzed how elite Pakistani women's welfare activists & American

eugenicists drew on intersecting transnational currents of racialized and class-based knowledge, along with concerns over maternal health, to introduce new methods of birth control in Pakistan. In doing so, she spoke about the state-private links that enabled the institutionalization of family planning programs in Pakistan in the early-to-mid 1950s, at a time when both the Pakistani and U.S government shied away from an official stance on such programs. She charted how such voluntary programs by the late 1950s were increasingly tied to conceptions of the national economy, providing the ground for masculinist programs of population control in the following decade.

Income Inequality Under Covid-19

Saida Waheed Gender Initiative in collaboration with Consortium for Development Policy Research (CDPR), Mahbub ul Haq Research Centre (MHRC), International Growth Centre (IGC) and Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP) organised a webinar titled '*Income Inequality Under Covid-19*'. The panellists for the session were experts from across the globe including Dr. Asim Ijaz Khwaja, Professor of International Finance and Development at Harvard Kennedy School and Director of Center



for International Development at Harvard University, U.S, Dr. Homi Kharas, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director for the Global Economy and Development Program at the Brookings Institution and Dr. Ijaz Nabi, Country Director for Pakistan at the International Growth Centre (IGC) and Chairman of Consortium for Development Policy Research (CDPR). The session was moderated by SWGI's Director and Associate Professor at LUMS, Dr. Hadia Majid.

The webinar explored the appropriate lens that can help discuss income inequality as well as the impacts the Covid-19 pandemic has had on inequality in Pakistan and globally. Within this context, the panellists shared their thoughts



about the role governments have played in responding to the pandemic and what more can be done given the constant possibility of recurrence. They also discussed the economic and developmental opportunities that have emerged as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lessons to remember moving forward. Watch the panel discussion [here](#).

Patriarchal Violence and the Policy Landscape

SWGJ in collaboration with Shaikh Ahmad Hassan School of Law (SAHSOL) and the Office of Accessibility and Inclusion (OAI) at LUMS organised a webinar titled '*Patriarchal Violence and the Policy Landscape*'. The panellist for the session included Ms. Maliha Zia, Advocate of the High Court and Associate Director of Legal Aid Society (LAS), Ms. Mehlab Jameel, a Lahore-based researcher whose interests include issues of gender and sexuality in postcolonial contexts and Ms. Nighat Dad, a lawyer and digital rights activist, currently heading Digital Rights Foundation. The webinar was moderated by Angbeen Atif Mirza, Faculty Director for OAI at LUMS and member of the Board of Directors of the Digital Rights Foundation.



The panel of experts dissected the ways in which patriarchal violence plays out online, offline and in an intersectional manner. While speaking about the everyday violence, Ms. Mehlab pointed out that neither violence inflicted on the members of the transgender community is ever acknowledged nor the countless instances of Trans resistance. She said that when we talk about patriarchy, it is important to remember the 'less than ideal' victims that include minorities in our movements as well.



Ms. Maliha added that it is crucial to highlight the voices of the victims, whether they are women, transgender or children. She explained that it is common to speak on their behalf, however, it is important to rely on their own narratives to understand the root causes of patriarchal violence.

The panellists also reflected on government response in terms of its policy, legislation and the actions taken to address the issue. To conclude the discussion, the panellists shared the different ways to cater to patriarchal violence as lawyers, journalists and activists.

Watch the panel discussion [here](#).

Impact of COVID-19 on Women in Informal Work across South Asia

Saida Waheed Gender Initiative (SWGII), in collaboration with Women in Economics and Policy (WiEP), hosted a panel session on the '*Impact of COVID-19 on Women in Informal Work across South Asia*'. The webinar included experts from across a few countries in South Asia, including Ms. Ume Laila Azhar, a woman labour rights activist, pioneer of the Home-Based Workers movement in Pakistan and member of Homenet, Pakistan; Dr. Imran Matin, Executive Director of BIGD (BRAC Institute of Governance and Development) at BRAC University (BRAC), Bangladesh; Dr. Sona Mitra, Principal Economist at IWWAGE at KREA University, India; and Ms. Prabha Pokhrel, Chairperson of Home-Based Women Concern Society, Nepal. The session was moderated by Dr. Ammar Malik, Senior Research Scientist at AidData, a research lab at the College of William & Mary, U.S.

The panellists discussed the policies and interventions focused on informal female labour force participation and the challenges that have emerged due to and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic across India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Each of them spoke in detail about their respective work and how it has changed due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.





Saida Waheed
Gender Initiative

Panel Discussion

Impact of COVID-19 on Women in Informal Work across South Asia



Ms. Prabha Pokhrel
Home-Based Women Concern Society Nepal



Dr. Imran Matin
BRAC Institute of Governance and Development



Dr. Sona Mitra
Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy



Ms. Ume Laila Azhar
Homenet Pakistan



Moderated by:
Dr. Ammar A Malik
AidData

Tuesday, 5th October 2021
04:00 PM PKT | 4:30 PM IST
04:45 PM NPT | 4:40 PM BTT

Hosted by Women in Economics and Policy and Saida Waheed Gender Initiative

The panellists also shared their thoughts about the role of technology in their work particularly during and after the pandemic and the visible trend of more women signing up for digital devices such as mobile in both rural and urban settings. However, panellists also pointed out the challenges faced by the women in accessing and using these devices. Dr. Mitra said while women are being encouraged to use mobile phones, it is also crucial for the government to focus on raising awareness and conscious building around social patriarchal constructs that inhibit them from having access to the devices. Similarly, Dr. Matin shared that the biggest challenge faced by women in using the devices has been the meticulous on boarding support which needs to be addressed so women can fully benefit from the technology. Watch the panel discussion [here](#).

SWGI Grants for Students at LUMS

The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative offers small grants for student led research projects and senior projects that focus on, or use gender and sexuality as a major analytical tool in their work. Undergraduate students from all departments/schools at LUMS are welcomed to apply. This semester we have funded three senior research projects.

Grantees of this cycle

- Marha Fathma and Muhammad Faizan ul Haq – A New Man? Masculinities in the Post #MeToo World
- Rameen Iftikhar and Ramsha Fatima – Popularity or Power: does the accumulation of social capital in higher education settings in Pakistan increase women's agency?
- Aamina Shekha, Nisma Riaz and Shamaim Kirmani – Investigating how young women in Pakistan employ fashion as a tool of resistance against patriarchal gender and cultural norms

SWGI Grants for Faculty at LUMS

The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative provides grants to faculty for the pursuit of creative and interdisciplinary research and projects relating to gender and sexuality in Pakistan. In line with our mission and philosophy, the Initiative seeks to promote approaches that attend to the shifting and contested meanings of gender across different contexts.

Grantee of this cycle:

- Dr. Tania Saeed – Intergenerational Knowledge amongst Women: From Sex Education to Menopause

We are already planning an exciting line-up for the Spring semester and are keeping our fingers crossed that the situation improves so we can safely hold in-person events. Till that is not a possibility we will be holding online events. We will keep you posted! We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We also hope you and your loved ones remain well during these trying times and hope you are taking all necessary precautions to get through this in the best possible health and spirits!



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