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The Impact of Changing Social Networks and Cultural Displacement on Gentrification: Examining Urban Social Change

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Abstract: Despite increasing presence of gentrification in the urban redevelopment in the world, the social implications of gentrification have not been severely looked into in the Pakistani setting. This paper examines a combination of influences of the transformation of social networks and cultural displacement in the experience of gentrification in the sample urban neighborhoods of Pakistan. The study is conducted on a quantitative methodological basis in the form of a survey, which expounds on how socio-spatial reorganization influences community relations, cultural identification and belongingness among the long term locals. Using the answers given by 250 respondents selected in three gentrifying communities, the results demonstrate that there are significant correlations between impoverished interpersonal relations, perceived cultural degeneration and experiences of alienation. The study is a contribution to the literature on gentrification as the study proposes a context-sensitive analysis based on the Pakistan urban realities that entangle the concept of gentrification with the class, informality, and kinship networks, as regards the greater development agendas. Through empirical data, this study will help point out the social aspects of gentrification, which is important to guide urban policymakers and planners when it comes to the issue of inclusive and culturally sensitive urban development.

Keywords: Gentrification, Cultural Displacement, Social Capital, Urban Sociology, Community Networks, Urban Change

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Introduction

Cities are imageable spaces that are volatile and therefore, thrive on economic, political, and social changes. One of the most disputed options regarding such urban changes is gentrification a posh process to change historically marginalized or lower-income urban neighbourhoods by introducing more affluent citizens and in many cases commercial redevelopment and heightened property prices (Gonzalez-Argote & Maldonado, 2024). Although gentrification is normally addressed within the context of its economic and spatial effects, it is also true that gentrification has severe social impacts especially in connection with instances of social network disruption and cultural displacement, which could largely remain understudied in empirical research, especially in the Global South. Socio-spatial changes can completely change social networks (the re-organization of personal relationships and community contacts) with significant reshaping of relationships between individuals and their communities. New work on network-based modeling contributes by making visible the latent dynamics of social displacement social network change (i.e. the replenishment and admixture of ties of new social network structure) can be seen to precede visible

neighbourhood turnover (Mauro et al., 2024). It is possible to weaken the traditional support system and diminish the community, which makes urban life hold together (Cole et al., 2021). At the same time, cultural displacement, as the absence of culturally significant places, customs and activities becomes another force that comes hand in hand with physical displacement but with a gentler, but also no less devilish, touch (Liang et al., 2024).

Residents who remain in gentrifying neighbourhoods often report feeling like strangers in their own communities due to altered social and cultural dynamics. Khan (2025) expands on this by highlighting how state-led housing strategies in facilitate not only physical removal but symbolic elimination of community ties through "accumulation by dispossession." While the phenomena of changing social networks and cultural displacement have been studied independently in Western contexts, their combined impact on gentrification, especially through a quantitative lens, remains underexplored in South Asian urban contexts such as Pakistan. Most existing studies on gentrification focus on Western urban centers—like New York, London, or Berlin—where neoliberal policies, real estate speculation, and class-based mobility are more structurally embedded (Diamond & Sugrue, 2020). In contrast, cities in Pakistan exhibit unique configurations of class, religion, informality, and kinship networks that shape urban change in distinct ways. This study seeks to empirically investigate how changing social networks and cultural displacement interact to influence perceptions and realities of gentrification in selected urban neighbourhoods in Pakistan. It does so using a quantitative survey-based approach—filling a gap in existing literature which tends to be qualitative, anecdotal, or Western-centric. By situating the study in Pakistani urban centers, this research contributes to the global understanding of gentrification by providing insights from a context where urban informality, ethnic diversity, and colonial legacies intersect with modern development agendas.

Importance in Pakistani Context

The development of cities in Pakistan is influenced by a mix of historical, political and social factors. Because of colonial urban design, the emergence of slums, impact by land crime groups and the use of neoliberal policies, Pakistan's cities are now quite disjointed (Hasan, 2015; Qadeer, 2006). Unlike in many Global North places, cities like Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad in Pakistan feature a blend of zoning and urban planning. Here, you'll find both casual ways of living and very modern buildings which is what gives rise to much diversity in the landscape. Recently, projects like the Karachi Green Line Bus and the developments in Bahria Town and DHA have resulted in many social and geographical shifts. Despite claiming to improve conditions, these projects very often displace poor communities and wipe away their cultural and social spaces (Ahmad, 2022). By pursuing similar redevelopment projects, cities would alter their makeup by introducing new forms of separation, putting those in charge before those on the edge. Karachi highlights the relationships mentioned above. Lyari and Orangi Town which had strong community ties and a mix of cultures, are being affected by gentrification. Higher land costs, intense rebuilding and different political concerns have made it possible for richer and generally ethnically different, people to move into these properties (Beck, 2024). It brings about more than a change in where people live; it also transforms their way of life.

Yasir and Farooq (2024) demonstrate that rapid urban sprawl in the city of Dera Ismail Khan has disrupted social interaction and weakened cultural identity, echoing concerns central to gentrification discourse. Locals are evicted and take their homegrown languages, personal beliefs, work opportunities and local customs with them. The changes leave even those not displaced could find themselves feeling lonely and little connected to the past. In Pakistan, where family is valued and people share a common faith, gentrification changes how people interact with each other. The disappearance of someone from the community is felt differently here, as it can mean much more than the loss of a friend. The disruptions brought by urbanization change people's connections to their community, sense of belonging and ways of using the city. So, studying urban changes in Pakistan by looking at numerical shifts in communities and cultural displacement is very important. This way of researching offers insights from studies and captures the unique aspects of gentrification in urban areas around the world.

It helps to address gaps in multiple areas of sociological and urban studies by using both findings and theories in different regions. This way of thinking replaces Smith (1996) and Zukin (2010) by looking at changes in urban areas in terms of money and pop culture. While their work laid critical groundwork for understanding gentrification in advanced capitalist societies, this study offers an empirical expansion by quantifying social and cultural shifts within a

developing country context. It complements existing qualitative accounts with structured, survey-based data drawn from a non-Western urban setting, thereby enhancing the comparative scope of gentrification research. In addressing the concept of cultural displacement, the study contributes to a growing but still underdeveloped area of inquiry. While Hyra (2015) and others have pointed out the symbolic and emotional expenses caused by gentrification, most parts of cultural writings are based on human observations or narratives. Researchers in this area look at the issue by studying cultural loss, increased detachment from the community and avoided contact in public spaces. They make it possible to evaluate and measure the impact of cultural displacement in several different global cities. A particularly novel contribution lies in the application of these frameworks to South Asian urbanism. Cities in this region are characterized by religious pluralism, ethnic contestation, informal land tenure systems, and historical layers of colonial and postcolonial governance (Kaviraj, 1997). By focusing on Pakistan, this study challenges the universal applicability of Western-centric models of gentrification and contributes to the development of indigenous urban theory. It highlights how gentrification in South Asia cannot be fully understood without considering local cultural dynamics and socio-political histories. Methodologically, the study adopts a quantitative approach to the relational and symbolic dimensions of urban change. Through a structured survey instrument, it enables replicability, allows for multi-variable analysis, and sets a foundation for future comparative research within and beyond South Asia. This methodological innovation addresses a critical void in the literature, where much of the existing urban sociology in the region remains either theoretical or descriptive. As such, the study not only contributes substantively but also offers a replicable framework for future inquiry.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value in advancing sociological understanding of gentrification by shifting the analytical focus from purely economic and spatial changes to the often overlooked social and cultural dimensions. While much of the existing literature conceptualizes gentrification through metrics such as rising property values or patterns of displacement, this research introduces a novel approach by quantitatively examining the roles of changing social networks and cultural displacement—two critical yet underexplored factors in urban transformation. By applying this framework in the context of urban Pakistan, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature, which is predominantly centered on cities in the south Asian. Pakistan's urban centers, marked by a confluence of informality, class stratification, ethnic diversity, and neoliberal development policies, provide a distinct socio-political environment in which to examine gentrification. In doing so, the study not only adds to the growing body of South Asian urbanism literature but also generates contextually relevant insights for policymakers, urban planners, and scholars. Moreover, the research's empirical, survey-based methodology allows for the quantification of complex social phenomena—such as community fragmentation, alienation, and cultural loss—which are typically treated qualitatively. This methodological contribution enables more systematic evaluations of urban change and offers a replicable framework for future research. Ultimately, the study enhances our understanding of how gentrification operates in non-Western settings and calls attention to the nuanced, often invisible, ways in which social life and cultural identity are reshaped by processes of urban redevelopment.

Objectives of the Study

- ▸ To examine the effect of changing social networks on residents' perceptions and experiences of gentrification in urban Pakistani communities.
- ▸ To analyze the relationship between cultural displacement and the sense of belonging among residents affected by gentrification.
- ▸ To investigate how the interaction between disrupted social networks and cultural displacement shapes patterns of urban social change in the Pakistani context.

Literature Review

Gentrification has now become connected with the patterns of urban social life as well as economic and land use matters. Studies today often recognise that social influences and relocation due to changing culture play an important part in the way gentrification is experienced in the Global South by its residents. The review finds main themes related

to the subject, outlining the gaps in studies being filled by this study and using statistics and data in Pakistani cities. A strong community bond and good individual health are both supported by the network of social ties in cities. Disruptions from gentrification usually lead to social fragmentation and changes in how people in the neighborhood relate to one another (Afandi, 2018). According to researchers, as individuals from lower income levels are pushed out, social interaction among locals becomes scarce, leading to disconnection in their community (Golio, 2025).

In places just developing, these networks provide much more than support, as they often help people find housing, a job and necessary services. In many informal settlements throughout South Asia, individuals depend on their own families and the community to take the place of missing public services (Ghertner, 2015). When a neighbourhood undergoes gentrification, these threats appear as costs going up, people of different backgrounds moving in and preferred designs that mostly suit those of higher income. Sources from Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa indicate that people in similar settlements are highly likely to be impacted by state-led modernization, as also seen in Pakistan's case (Parnell & Pieterse, 2016). Earlier studies mainly noted that gentrification leads to moving people and now more attention is being given to its likely effect on culture which is less noticeable. When cities change in terms of people and appearance, the usual cultural traditions, symbols, languages and sense of local identity often erode. In neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, the arrival of middle- and upper-class populations often brings with it new consumer cultures, aesthetic norms, and lifestyle expectations, which clash with the existing socio-cultural environment.

Díaz-Parra and Hernández-Cordero (2023) argue that gentrification can create a "cultural colonization," wherein the cultural expressions of the original inhabitants are overwritten or repurposed for commercial gain. In multi-ethnic and religiously diverse areas, such as those found in Pakistan, the implications of cultural displacement can be especially profound. Mosques, shrines, local bazaars, and tea stalls serve as cultural anchors for urban residents, and their loss signals more than spatial change—it reflects a symbolic erasure of community identity (Malik, 2023). Much of the gentrification literature remains rooted in Euro-American contexts. However, scholars such as Lees et al. (2016) have called for "planetary gentrification" frameworks that recognize its diverse expressions globally. South Asian cities present unique challenges: informal housing, political patronage, contested land rights, and layered cultural traditions make the process of gentrification both chaotic and deeply political (Sengupta & Nielsen, 2025).

In Pakistan, state-led "beautification" and infrastructure projects have often targeted informal and working-class areas, under the guise of modernization. For instance, the Karachi Circular Railway project displaced thousands without adequate rehabilitation (Arsam et al., 2025). While there is growing commentary on urban displacement in Pakistan, much of it is journalistic or legal in nature, with limited sociological inquiry—particularly quantitative—in assessing how these changes affect every day social and cultural life. There is a dearth of quantitative studies addressing the symbolic and relational aspects of gentrification. Most quantitative work in urban sociology emphasizes economic indicators such as housing prices, migration trends, or infrastructure investment (Erol & Ünal, 2023). However, recent efforts have begun to integrate survey methods to measure perceived neighborhood change, social capital erosion, and cultural alienation (Du et al., 2023). Despite increasing interest in the socio-cultural dimensions of urban change, there is limited research applying such frameworks to Pakistani cities. The literature remains dominated by either qualitative case studies or macroeconomic urban planning analyses. Few studies have systematically measured how gentrification affects social capital and cultural continuity using empirical data in South Asia. Moreover, cultural displacement—although gaining academic recognition—has rarely been quantified or contextualized in non-Western urban settings. This study thus seeks to fill a methodological and contextual gap by using quantitative tools to assess these transformations within a Pakistani framework, offering both theoretical innovation and policy relevance.

Theoretical Framework
Understanding gentrification through the lenses of social network theory, cultural displacement theory, and spatial justice provides a multidimensional perspective on how urban change is experienced in social and cultural terms.

These frameworks underpin the current study's investigation into the relational and symbolic impacts of gentrification in Pakistan.

Social Capital and Network Theory

In this research it is based on the definition and concept of social capital given by Putnam (2000) especially between bonding and bridging capital. The bonding capital is the giving of strong ties in the homogenous groups like the extended family, religious groups, or the ethnic clustering; the connection between bridging capital is the linking of the individuals across the social divisions. Gentrification has been identified to cause the loss of the bonding capital as it breaks up local communities that are tightly knit together and undermine the aspects of mistrust and reciprocity (Arısoy & Paker, 2019). These disruptions have a huge repercussion in the Pakistani context in terms of communal survival and identity as most social support systems of this Pakistani society are strong on the kinship and collectivist forms of support.
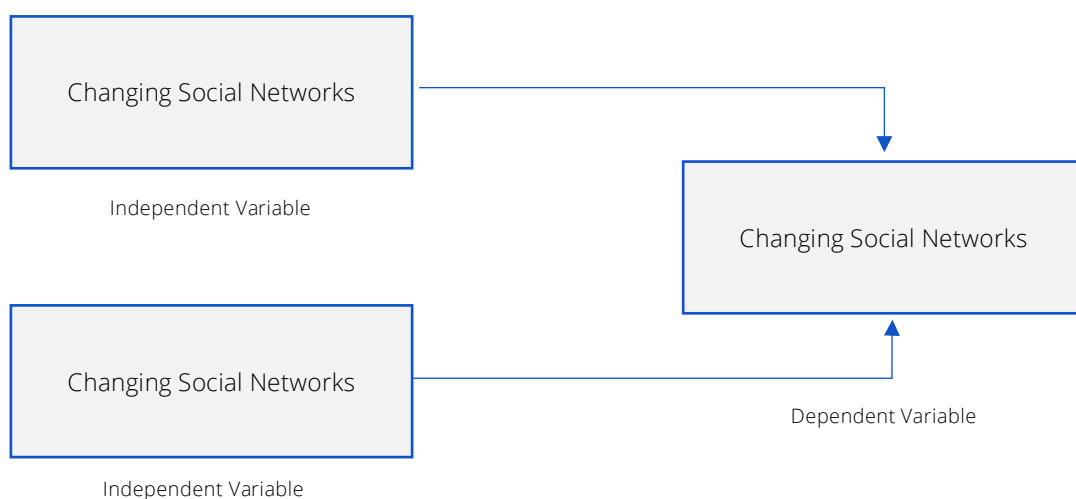
Cultural Displacement Theory

In order to describe symbolic and emotional contexts of the urban change, the paper takes the perspective of Cultural Displacement. Hyra (2015) describes cultural displacement as a situation in which the tenure of long-term residents in their own neighborhood becomes alien to them because of change in dominate norms, commercial cultures, or publicly acceptable aesthetics. This theory is particularly applicable in culturally rich however economically disadvantaged regions where community signs, shrine, religious processions, ethnic food market, and so on are traded in with more contemporary and market oriented arenas. The theory assists in the conceptualization of the way in which the residents can be tied physically on to the land and be culturally out of touch.

Spatial Justice

The framework of Spatial Justice, as developed by Soja (2010), is essential for understanding how power operates spatially in the urban context. Gentrification in Pakistan often mirrors broader inequities in class, ethnicity, and access to services. Spatial justice theory critiques how urban space is allocated and reorganized, revealing how marginalized groups are pushed to the peripheries—both literally and symbolically—while the city center is reclaimed for elite use. This lens helps analyze how changing urban geographies reinforce exclusion, dispossession, and uneven development.

Conceptual Framework

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│ Changing Social Networks│────────────┐
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Methodology

A positivist approach was adopted in this study to explore how alterations in social networks and displacement from one culture affect how people in Pakistani cities view gentrification. Since this study utilized well-known sociological theories to analyse the study objects, the most appropriate method was the deductive approach. The rationale here

was that using variables for abstract social concepts, it becomes possible to test them with more accuracy and store the findings which can be repeated and applied to other cases. The field was built on a view known as positivist epistemology which claims that research in the field should be based on measurable evidence. Realists agree with this view, believing that these changes caused by gentrification can be observed and analysed. By operationalizing these phenomena into survey indicators, this study avoids subjective interpretations and instead emphasizes empirical validation.

The nature of this study was explanatory, aiming to uncover causal relationships between variables rather than merely describing occurrences. Gentrification, in this context, is not seen solely as a material or economic process but as a socio-spatial transformation driven by measurable shifts in communal ties and cultural dislocation. The rationale for selecting a quantitative design stems from the scarcity of such approaches in gentrification studies in the Global South, particularly in South Asian cities, where qualitative and anecdotal methods have dominated. By contrast, this study applied a structured survey instrument to enable hypothesis testing, inter-variable comparison, and potentially broader policy implications. The universe of the study comprised residents of three rapidly urbanizing and gentrifying cities in Pakistan: Lahore, Islamabad and Rawalpindi. These cities were selected based on their ongoing urban redevelopment initiatives, displacement patterns, and visible socio-cultural transitions. Within these cities, specific localities were identified where gentrification is actively taking place through infrastructure projects, real estate developments, or state-led "urban renewal" programs.

A sample size of 250 respondents was chosen using a stratified purposive sampling technique. The sample was evenly distributed across the three cities (approximately 82 respondents per city), ensuring a diverse representation of socio-demographic characteristics and gentrification experiences. While the total urban population in these cities is significantly larger, the choice of 250 respondents is justified based on several considerations. Firstly, for social sciences, a sample size of 250 is statistically robust for conducting inferential analyses (such as correlation and regression) at a confidence level of 95% with a 5% margin of error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Secondly, collecting data from gentrifying populations—a relatively hard-to-reach and transitioning group—requires focusing on depth and contextual relevance rather than sheer scale. Lastly, prior studies on urban transformation in South Asia have operated with even smaller samples (e.g., Hasan, 2015; Qadeer, 2006), supporting the viability of this approach.

The unit of analysis was the individual resident—both long-term residents affected by gentrification and new residents entering gentrified areas. The respondents include men and women aged 18 and above, from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. The study prioritized those who have experienced, witnessed, or are currently living in areas undergoing gentrification-related change. Data was collected via a structured questionnaire, containing both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions designed to assess the perceptions of gentrification.

Inclusion Criteria
The inclusion criteria for the study included residents who have lived in the gentrifying locality for at least 5 years. Then those above the age of 18, and individuals aware of recent changes in their neighbourhood. This ensures respondents possess enough temporal and social insight into the transformation process.

Exclusion Criteria
Exclusion criteria involved:
- Real estate agents or developers, whose economic interest may bias responses, and
- Transient populations (such as short-term renters), who may not have sufficient historical context of the area.

Data collection techniques included direct, in-person surveys in the selected neighbourhoods, facilitating respondent participation. The structured survey design enables quantitative analysis of patterns, including correlation and potential mediating effects between variables. Data was analyzed using SPSS, focusing on descriptive statistics, regression models, and correlation analysis to explore the interrelations between changing social networks, cultural displacement, and perceived gentrification.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Valid percentage
1	Age	18–22	57	22.8
		23–27	109	43.6
		28–32	52	20.8
		33–40	27	10.8
		41-47	1	0.4
		48-Above	4	1.6
2	Gender	Male	117	46.8
		Female	132	52.8
		Prefer not to say	1	0.4
3	Education level	Less than Bachelors	44	17.6
		Bachelors	116	46.4
		Masters or higher	90	36.0
4	Employment status	Employed	158	63.2
		Unemployed	24	9.6
		Student	62	24.8
		Other	6	2.4
5	Length of Residence in Neighbourhood	5-9 years	104	41.6
		10-14 years	52	20.8
		15-19 years	34	13.6
		20 years or more	60	24.0

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals several key characteristics that shape the overall composition of the sample. A significant majority of the participants fall within the younger age brackets, with 43.6% aged between 23–27 years and 22.8% between 18–22 years. This indicates that most respondents are likely students or young professionals, while a smaller proportion, 20.8%, are aged 28–32, suggesting early-career adults. The representation declines further with only 10.8% aged 33–40, and very few respondents (2%) are above 40 years. This age distribution suggests that the sample is predominantly youthful, which could influence their perceptions and experiences of urban and social change. Gender representation is fairly balanced, with a slight majority of female respondents (52.8%) compared to males (46.8%), and a negligible percentage (0.4%) choosing not to disclose their gender. In terms of educational background, the sample appears highly educated. Nearly half of the respondents (46.4%) have completed a bachelor's degree, and 36% hold a master's degree or higher, while only 17.6% have less than a bachelor's qualification. This suggests a well-informed and potentially critical group capable of engaging with complex social issues. Regarding employment status, the majority of respondents (63.2%) are employed, reflecting a working population actively engaged in the economy. Students make up 24.8% of the sample, while 9.6% are unemployed and a small fraction (2.4%) fall under the 'Other' category. This indicates a sample largely composed of economically active individuals, with some still in the process of completing their education. Finally, the length of residence in the neighborhood shows that 41.6% have lived in their current area for 5–9 years, and 24% for over 20 years, suggesting that a substantial portion of respondents have medium to long-term connections with their communities. Those with 10–14 years and 15–19 years of residence account for 20.8% and 13.6%, respectively. This diversity in length of stay allows for a broader understanding of community evolution and social dynamics over time.

Table 2

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.724	3

The Cronbach's Alpha value of .724 for the three items indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency, suggesting that the items reliably measure the same underlying construct. It implies that the scale can be used with confidence in further analysis, as the items demonstrate a reasonable degree of coherence.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix

		CSN	CD	PFG
CSN	Pearson Correlation	1	.180**	.252**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004	.000
	N	250	250	250
CD	Pearson Correlation	.180**	1	.274**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004		.000
	N	250	250	250
PFG	Pearson Correlation	.252**	.274**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	250	250	250

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix reveals statistically significant positive relationships among the three variables: Changing Social Networks (CSN), Cultural Displacement (CD), and Perceived Feeling of Gentrification (PFG). The relationship between CSN and CD is weak ($r = .180$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals experiencing changes in their social networks are slightly more likely to feel culturally displaced. A slightly stronger correlation is observed between CSN and PFG ($r = .252$, $p < .01$), indicating that those facing shifts in their social ties are more likely to perceive gentrification in their neighborhoods. The strongest relationship in the matrix is between CD and PFG ($r = .274$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals who feel culturally displaced are also more likely to experience a sense of gentrification. Although all the relationships are statistically significant, they are relatively weak, pointing to subtle but meaningful associations between social changes and perceptions of urban transformation.

Table 4

Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.343[a]	.118	.110

a. Predictors: (Constant), CD, CSN

The model demonstrates a positive relationship between Cultural Displacement (CD), Changing Social Networks (CSN), and the Perceived Feeling of Gentrification (PFG), with an overall correlation of .343. Together, CD and CSN explain 11.8% of the variation in perceived gentrification, reflecting their important role in influencing how individuals experience changes in their neighborhoods. The adjusted R Square of .110 further confirms the model's strength in capturing these key factors.

Table 5

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.524	2	4.262	16.453	.000[b]
	Residual	63.985	247	.259		
	Total	72.509	249			

a. Dependent Variable: PFG

b. Predictors: (Constant), CD, CSN

In the results of ANOVA, the regression model that puts Cultural Displacement (CD) and Changing Social Networks (CSN) as very important explanations of the change in Perceived Feeling of Gentrification (PFG) is statistically

significant. It can be concluded that model is significant (F-value = 16.453, p-value = .000) which indicates that CD and CSN have been reliable together as predictors of perceptions of gentrification. This implies that the two factors in combination offer a significant explanation to change that people are subjected to in their neighborhoods as a result of gentrification.

Table 6

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.019	.274		7.371	.000
	CSN	.159	.046	.210	3.449	.001
	CD	.294	.076	.236	3.887	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PFG

As regression coefficients indicate, Changing Social Networks (CSN) and Cultural Displacement (CD) have both positive and significant influence on Perceived Feeling of Gentrification (PFG). In particular, 2.019 is a constant value that denotes the baseline of the perceived gentrification under the condition that both CSN and CD equal zero. There is an increase in perception of gentrification of 0.159 unit with one unit change in altering social networks, and a bigger increase (0.294 units) of perception of gentrification with a unit change in the perception of cultural displacement. Both are found to be significant and the p values are .001 in case of CSN and <.000 in case of CD. The standard coefficients also reveal that cultural displacement exerts a presence (Beta = 0.236) a little more sufficient than changes in social networks (Beta = 0.210) regarding the perception of gentrification. On the whole, these findings show that the two factors are significant in determining how people view gentrification in their communities, and the role that cultural displacement plays is slightly more instrumental.

Discussion

The study examines the effect of concepts of changing social networks and cultural displacement with regard to experiences of gentrification in Pakistani urban contexts. Its findings are especially prominent in the setting of the Pakistani cities that are rapidly being transformed into a neoliberal sphere under the influences of the rapid urbanization and neoliberal urbanization policies. In such metropolitan areas as Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, the housing developments and commercial development projects initiated by the elites tend to displace lower-income populations and increasingly isolate them both spatially and metaphorically (Hasan, 2015). The feeling of cultural displacement on the part of the residents despite not being physically moved correlates with the data obtained globally regarding the so-called psychological displacement that usually acts as an antecedent to the actual move (Lown, 2025). In addition, the work is part of the literature, which is currently identifying gentrification as a multidimensional process. It emphasizes in its argument that urban disparities are not only regarded as purely economically displaced, but a dimension of social, cultural aspects would also act as a critical influencer, particularly in non-Western urban settings. Combining the local experience and perceptions into the studies of gentrification is key to increasing the context-sensitive urban policies as argued by Lees (2024).

Conclusion

This paper researched on the Changing Social Networks and Cultural Displacement impact on the Perceived Feeling of Gentrification in the background of urban transformation in Pakistan. The results show that the two independent variables have significant and predictive influence on the perceived gentrification whereby, cultural displacement has a stronger significant influence than economic displacement. These findings support the knowledge of the fact that gentrification, especially, in developing urban contexts, does not simply concern economic reconfiguration but also involves social and cultural transformations. The study adds to growing body of literature on gentrification by addressing the significance of lived experiences and local perceptions: the research highlights the role of lived experiences in the non-western urban environment where development is experienced rapidly and has interacted with traditional community shapes.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the study provides valuable empirical insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer temporal or causal relationships between the variables. Additionally, the study's geographic scope was limited to just two urban areas, which may affect the generalizability of the results to other regions with differing socio-political dynamics. The reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of respondent bias, despite efforts to ensure reliability. Future studies should adopt longitudinal methodologies to track changes over time and incorporate mixed-method approaches to enrich the quantitative findings with deeper qualitative insights. Comparative studies across multiple cities or between rural and urban contexts in Pakistan could also enhance the understanding of regional variations in gentrification processes.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, several policy and research recommendations can be advanced. Urban planning and development strategies should prioritize cultural inclusivity and community engagement to mitigate the socially disruptive impacts of gentrification. Planners and policymakers must recognize the importance of preserving existing social networks and cultural identities in neighborhoods undergoing change. Integrating residents' voices into urban development processes through participatory governance mechanisms can foster more equitable and socially sustainable outcomes. Moreover, academic inquiry should further explore the socio-cultural dimensions of gentrification in the Global South, where urban transitions are often shaped by unique historical, cultural, and institutional conditions.

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