

The pros and cons of vending in Tehran subway for women: Study



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Social Desk

The story of women working in the subway reveals their resilience and determination to pursue personal, family, and career aspirations despite facing numerous challenges. These women have managed to navigate the social-moral hazards, disrespect, and threats present in their external environment while vending within the subway. As the subway lines expand, an increasing number of women join the ranks of underground vendors in Tehran. Consequently, one can encounter these hardworking women at any time of day or night within the capital's subways. Observers note that this trend intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many women have unique narratives from this period that have been documented in reports and research

conducted on this subject. One such study is titled, 'The Narratives of Vending Women Working in Tehran Subway amid the Coronavirus Pandemic,' mainly authored by Sediqe Piri from Allameh Tabataba'i University's Department of Sociology, and others. The research aims to answer questions regarding the experiences and hardships faced by female retail workers operating within subway stations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In what follows, we will explore excerpts from this insightful study.

Subway as a safe haven

As more women enter traditionally male-dominated sectors of the labor market, they face heightened challenges. In addition to heavy workloads and low wages, issues such as job insecurity and limited prospects plague this workforce. However,

one particular challenge that stands out is the unsafe and inappropriate atmosphere within work environments, especially concerning sexual harassment and disrespect – both in terms of behavior and language. These distressing experiences have been reported by participants in the research. They range from verbal forms of harassment – which predominantly manifest as sexual advances – to explicit offers or threats of dismissal or demotion for non-compliance. These challenges serve as compelling reasons for women, including those with higher education qualifications, to seek employment opportunities within the subway system.

Discomfort and physical strain in the subway

Working in the subway environment presents various challenges for women,

ranging from dealing with crowded spaces to interactions with officers. Additionally, female subway vendors often recount experiences of discomfort and physical hardships due to the weight of their equipment, lack of resting places, and constant stair climbing at different stations.

Contemptuous treatment by others

Unfortunately, women working in the subway are frequently subjected to disdainful treatment from their families, passengers, and even subway officials. This negative attitude stems from societal judgment surrounding their occupation and work environment.

Ongoing conflicts within the subway

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing economic difficulties faced by households, research-

ers have witnessed a rise in vendors – especially female vendors – in the subway system. These individuals encounter daily acts of violence perpetrated by colleagues and passengers alike. In numerous cases, their goods and belongings are confiscated as well.

Advantages of vending in subway for women

During interviews with these women, researchers discovered narratives that shed light on why they perceive vending within the subway as preferable compared to other spaces. Key reasons include a sense of personal space and security along with flexible employment opportunities.

One of the notable benefits is the flexibility offered by subway vending regarding working hours, selling various products or services independently. For women juggling studies or household responsibilities alongside childcare duties, this flexibility becomes a significant career advantage.

Conclusion

The majority of participants involved in this research are divorced or have spouses who struggle with disabilities or addiction issues. Many also have children whose educational expenses have increased due to the impact of COVID-19. Some engage in hawking activities within the subway alongside their partners. Consequently, their livelihoods heavily depend on these endeavors which entail unwanted social, economic, and psycho-

logical consequences resulting from successive shocks.

Considering such vulnerable circumstances prevailing throughout their lives during the pandemic period highlights how deeply it has affected both business operations and personal lives. Notably, the findings indicate that micro social capital and relationships, primarily at the family level, have played a crucial role in mitigating this pervasive insecurity for some women through support from parents who assist with childcare.

Despite the challenges faced by women working in the subway during these trying times, which have made their professional lives arduous, many remain resilient in pursuing their personal, familial, and career aspirations. They consistently take proactive initiatives within both work and family environments. Engaging in vending activities within the subway system – with all its associated difficulties and risks – serves as an avenue to escape social-moral harm, disrespect, and threatening external circumstances.

The primary objective of these women's endeavors is to generate income while escaping absolute poverty. Their earnings contribute towards household expenses and supporting their families. For some individuals, working in subway offers a perceived sense of safety – a platform that can help them achieve their dreams by reducing various costs – leading them towards a more promising future in their chosen careers.

Rajaie-Shahr prison shut down for good

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Rajaie-Shahr prison in Karaj, Alborz Province, was completely evacuated and closed.

As part of the implementation of the approvals in light of the Chief Justice of Iran Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i's visit to Alborz Province earlier this year regarding the relocation of Rajaie-Shahr prison, approximately half of the prisoners had been evacuated by Tuesday, July 1, 2023. As of Saturday, August 5, 2023, all prisoners from Rajaie-Shahr have been transferred to Qezel Hesar prison and Rajaie-Shahr prison has been closed, Mashregh News reported. Following the prisoner transfer from Rajaie-Shahr prison, located in one of Alborz Province's prime locations, it has now been completely vacated and shut down.

Iran's Prisons' Organization is currently engaged in follow-ups and actions to finalize an agreement with Alborz Governorate for the complete transfer of Rajaie-Shahr prisoners.

One of the aspects emphasized by the Chief Justice during his tenure has been relocating prisons from city centers to suburban areas outside urban environments. During a visit to Khorasan Razavi Province in 2022, the Chief Justice inspected the Mashhad Central Prison and ordered its prompt relocation to the city's outskirts. The Prisons' Organization has taken steps toward accomplishing that directive as well.

The action aims at improving citizens' well-being and comfort by distancing prison environments from the society.

Injured cheetah sighted near Turan reserve

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The director of Wildlife Protection and Management of Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE) has reported an incident involving an injured cheetah in the habitats around Turan reserve, in Semnan Province, north-central Iran.

Gholamreza Abdali stated that upon receiving the news, DoE officers from the Turan reserve were immediately dispatched to conduct a thorough search for the cheetah. Abdali added that currently, environmentalists are observing the injured cheetah from a safe distance. He further mentioned that it is necessary to investigate and examine the health of this particular cheetah.

Abdali further pointed out that a veterinary team has been deployed to assess the situation. He emphasized that any additional updates regarding this cheetah's condition will be provided later.

Climate change a threat to Pakistan's security



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

Climate change poses a significant threat to Pakistan's security, as highlighted by recent events. In late June 2023, monsoon rains resulted in the tragic deaths of 117 individuals, including children, with an additional 55 fatalities occurring in July. The worst affected region was Punjab Province, where the majority of deaths occurred. The destructive impact of the rains and floods has also led to the damage of over 450 houses and injuries to more than 230 people. The meteorological department has issued warnings of potential floods in urban areas of Balochistan and

Sindh, as well as a fresh warning of a mountain storm in Punjab's Dera Ghazi Khan District. Last year, Pakistan experienced devastating floods and disease outbreaks that claimed the lives of nearly 2,000 people and submerged a third of the country. The United Nations Meteorological Organization (WMO) has reported that climate change has contributed to an increase in droughts, floods, and extreme heatwaves worldwide. Glacial melting and rising sea levels, which have been ongoing for thousands of years, were projected to reach record levels in 2022. These changes have resulted in the loss of over 2,000 lives and affected a total of 33 million people, with eight million individuals being internally displaced.

The UN report also highlights that extreme weather conditions have forced a significant number of people to migrate, exacerbating the situation for the 95 million people already being homeless globally. According to UN Secretary General António Guterres, despite Pakistan's contribution of less than one percent to global greenhouse gas emissions, the country is disproportionately affected by climate change caused by human activities. In 2022, the province of Sindh, governed by the People's Party, suffered the most damage from flood disasters. It is shocking to know that the international community has largely overlooked this issue, leaving the burden of relief on the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan. The affected population

continues to rely on international assistance and their own governments for support. The adverse effects of global climate change on Pakistan also have implications for the country's security. The devastating floods in Pakistan have forced over 650,000 families to migrate, with 7.9 million people being displaced. Even after a year, these individuals continue to endure inhumane living conditions. According to UNICEF, climate change could result in a nine percent loss of Pakistan's annual GDP, significantly increasing the number of people living below the poverty line. Unseasonal rains have also severely impacted agricultural production, posing a serious threat to food security in the country. In 2021, Pakistan ranked 92



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out of 116 countries on the Global Food Insecurity Index. Failure to address food insecurity and mitigate the harmful effects of climate change in a timely manner could jeopardize Pakistan's security.

Pakistan heavily relies on the Himalayan glaciers as a vital source of water, with 23 percent of its GDP derived from the agricultural sector. However, these glaciers have experienced more mass loss since 2000 than during the entire 20th century, which Pakistan must be concerned about. During Imran Khan's government, a tree planting

campaign was initiated, garnering global recognition. However, the campaign has stalled since the end of his tenure. Restoring damaged forests, which have suffered greatly due to illegal logging over the past 75 years, is imperative for Pakistan's future.

Pakistan possesses the potential to construct a large dam at Kalabagh, which could mitigate the devastating effects of floods and safeguard Sindh. However, the Kalabagh Dam project remains suspended due to political disputes. It is essential for Pakistan to prioritize this inevitable issue.