

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

MASTER THESIS

**HUNGER AND THE HELP: A CASE STUDY OF RIZQ
AS A CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION IN URBAN
PAKISTAN**

SHAHRUKH BURKI

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALEV ERKİLET**

ISTANBUL, 2024

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by

SHAHRUKH BURKI

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in
Sociology**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALEV ERKİLET**

ISTANBUL, 2024

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts Sociology.

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Date of Submission


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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

AÇLIK VE YARDIM: PAKİSTAN'IN KENTSEL BÖLGESİNDEKİ BİR SİVİL TOPLUM KURULUŞU ÜZERİNE BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Araştırmanın amacı, Pakistan'daki kentsel yoksullar arasında gıda güvensizliği ile mücadelede tabandaki toplumsal hareketlerin rolünün etkinliğini araştırmak ve değerlendirmektir. Ribot ve Peluso'nun Erişim Teorisi (2003), Sembolik etkileşimcilik ve Kaynak Mobilizasyon Teorisi (RMT) kullanılarak, kar amacı gütmeyen bir kuruluş olan Rizq'in gıda güvensizliği ve açlıkla mücadeledeki rolünü incelemek için teorik bir çerçeve oluşturuldu. Derinlemesine görüşmeler ve katılımcı gözlem kullanılarak, Rizq iki yönlü bir yaklaşımla gıda güvensizliğini ve açlığı hafifletmedeki etkinliği açısından bir vaka çalışması olarak Rizq'in gıda sağlanmasındaki rolü ve yararlanıcılar üzerindeki etkisi analiz edildi. Çalışmanın sonucu: Rizq'in açlığı ve gıda güvensizliğini azaltmada başarılı olduğunu, ancak sonuçların kısa vadeli olduğunu gösterdi. Gıda güvenliği konusunu çok disiplinli ve olası yerel çözümler olarak anlamak için kentsel yoksulluk konusunda daha fazla araştırmaya ihtiyaç olduğu tespit edildi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Açlık, Gıda Güvensizliği, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları, Yoksulluk.

ABSTRACT

HUNGER AND THE HELP: A CASE STUDY OF A CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION IN URBAN PAKISTAN

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The research aims to explore and evaluate the efficacy of grassroots social movements in battling food insecurity amongst the urban poor in Pakistan. By using Ribot and Peluso's Theory of Access (2003), Symbolic interactionism, and Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), a theoretical framework was established to study the role of a non-profit organization, Rizq, in battling food insecurity and hunger. By employing the use of in-depth interviews and participant observation, Rizq was analyzed as a case study in its efficacy in mitigating food insecurity and hunger by a two-pronged approach: the role of Rizq in the provision of food and the effect it had on the beneficiaries. The result of the study showed that Rizq was successful in mitigating hunger and food insecurity. However, the results were short-term. Further research is needed in urban poverty to understand the issue of food security as a multidisciplinary phenomenon and strive toward possible local solutions.

Keywords: Food Insecurity; Hunger, NGOs, Poverty.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APWA	All Pakistan Women's Association
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
PCP	Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy
PNF	Pakistan NGO Forum
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
WBWO	The Women Being Welfare Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Following the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a resurgence in the debates related to health, well-being, and those with access to them. It is not just the pandemic, but climate change and extreme weather conditions, political instability, and war between Ukraine and Russia have galvanized the food crisis. One hundred ninety-three million people are acutely food insecure in 53 countries, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization for the year 2022 (Global Report on Food Crises 2022). The estimates indicate that the number of people worldwide experiencing hunger in 2022 ranged between 690 and 783 million. These figures denote an increase of 122 million individuals compared to the pre-COVID-19 figures. (FAO et al. 2023) In Pakistan, social policy mechanisms are being drafted and implemented to benefit the impoverished, and there are calls for more social security nets. 39% of the country's workforce is dependent on agriculture (30% for men, 67% for women), 24% for industry, and 24% for services (Food and Agriculture Organization 2021). Agriculture has been essential for domestic food availability and self-sufficiency. Despite having high food production at the national level, a large portion of the population has poor access to nutritious food, particularly women and children (Ahmad and Farooq 2010). Thus, the debate that focuses on supplies does not answer the plight of food insecurity in the country. The status of complete food security has not been accomplished in Pakistan, primarily for economic and social reasons. A review of the government's financial planning documents spanning decades shows that the country has not had a standard yardstick to measure the level of food insecurity. The Government of Pakistan has now focused on Sustainable Development Goal number 2: Zero Hunger and incorporated in its twelfth Five Year Plan 2018-23 to target and quantify the degree of food security in the country. The list of measures includes sustainable agricultural practices, promoting small-scale farmers and their land holdings, sound infrastructure, and gene banks ("Federal SDGs Support Unit" 2022). Around 7 of the eight targets are focused on the supply part of the problem.

Despite that, there is a deepening issue of food insecurity. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2021), Forty percent of Pakistani households face moderate or severe food insecurity. Severe food insecurity rises to 13% in urban areas. Moderate food insecurity is 33% in urban and 30% in rural parts. Additionally, there are almost 44% of children under the age of five suffer from stunted growth. (World Food Program 2017). More than half of Pakistani women and two-thirds of children suffer from micronutrient deficiencies (POFN, 2019). Pakistan is one of the countries with two-thirds of the world's undernourished population. Pakistan is one of the countries with two-thirds of the world's undernourished population. If these do not alert the urgency needed to address this issue, it is further amplified. The country has one of the fastest population growth rates, being water-stressed and sensitive to global warming. Pakistan presents a paradox: a country with an abundance of staple foods is still suffering from hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity. There are many reasons that propelled me to focus on this area, starting with the urgency aspect. However, there needs to be a shift in focus, policy, analysis, and insight from supply and production to a spotlight on access. There needs to be a focus on a localized and indigenous problem-solving approach to the problem that seeks to grant access to food directly to households rather than a national/ international level approach to boost supply and make it available. The research aims to look at local social movements that focus on mitigating the issue of food insecurity and hunger. For this, the focus is on a social movement titled “Rizq,” which has been involved in philanthropic efforts to reduce hunger and food insecurity in the cities of Pakistan. Before we delve into the workings of the organization, it is important to understand the concept of food insecurity since it is a very complex phenomenon. Food insecurity, according to the definition by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is “people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth, development, and an active and healthy life” (Dudek, Hanna, and Ryciak 2020: 1). The dimensions and pillars will be discussed further in detail.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of indigenous attempts to research the social access dimension of food insecurity. There are many nationwide surveys, regional and district-level research, and private and state-sanctioned studies, and all, in one way or another, capture the prevalence/incidence of food insecurity or the possible vulnerable communities. Very few capture the sociological aspects of food insecurity, and if they

do, they use a rural-based approach. Some studies focus on the Non-government organizations that are involved in poverty alleviation and hunger mitigation. Some look into the role of microfinance organizations in reducing poverty for women (Niaz and Iqbal 2019), some assess how government interventions and policies can alleviate poverty and uplift households (Staicu 2017), some evaluate the role of agriculture (Hayat et al. 2019), others look into the role of physical and social infrastructure and its effects in the reducing poverty (Faridi, Zahir, Chaudhary, and Ramzan 2015). If we look into the domain of social movements and/or NGOs in lessening the food insecurity/hunger aspect of poverty, there are few works that can be cited.

The paper will engage with the complex idea of access to food. It seeks to shift the debate from food availability to food access and highlight it as the real issue for poor and disadvantaged people in the complex inter-relationship between food insecurity and hunger. Furthermore, the research focus is qualitative; it aims to go beyond statistics or divisions or counts of calories and bring forth real people.

The concept of dignity and freedom is attached to food as well as a lot of social, economic, political, cultural, and religious meanings. There is history, personal life, questions of power and status, and questions of legal human rights. In many societies, social relationships, social order, caste, and hierarchies are shaped by the importance they place on food. To elucidate, a caste in India called Newars does not accept water or boiled rice from members of lower castes (Parish 2010). Many more examples will follow suit in the pursuit of researching the efficacy of charitable organizations in tackling food insecurity and hunger. The scope and nature of the research topic make a qualitative analysis indispensable to the pursuit of highlighting the research question of how effective charities, NGOs, and NPOs are in tackling food insecurity and hunger.

This research will help me use my previous expertise gathered from previous research experiences in the food and health sectors. The research uses the organization “Rizq” as a model that can offer solutions to the problem of food insecurity and hunger. It is pertinent to mention that Rizq will be cited as a case study, and their merits and demerits will be discussed in detail through participant observation and in-depth interviews with their beneficiaries and the workers in the organizations, top to bottom, as well as their volunteers.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The most important focal point of the entire research is the role of civil society, particularly in mitigating hunger and food insecurity. The literature about civil society and its subsequent units is broad and accustomed to definitions and scope according to context and multiplicity of views and actions pertaining to it. The idea of civil society has its roots in early modern European thinking. The 1980s saw a resurgence of the idea of civil society in Eastern Europe and Latin America, and the 1990s saw it incorporated into the policy jargon of international development organizations (Glasius, Marlies, Lewis, and Seckinelgin 2004). The discourse surrounding it has added up to include the concepts of “global civil society” with ideas transgressing nations and locality and including terms like globalization (Kumar 2007).

A literature review on civil society brings forth two schools of thought. One side asserts that civil society is an independent and assertive institution, whereas others give weight to the role of the state in creating a civil society. It is an idea that has been discussed from ancient Greece to modern philosophy. Plato and Aristotle described citizens as active beings who took an interest in the life of the polis, whereas Hobbes, Locke, Hegel, Marx, and Gramsci articulated their ideas on civil society that further enriched the debate. Hobbes and Locke emphasized the importance of civil society, which comes into existence out of the state of nature. For Hegel, it is the dialectical relationship between the state and the family unit. For Marx, civil society is in congruence with the bourgeoisie society. For Gramsci, it is the cultural and ideological framework that gives rise to his famous concept of hegemony. He sees it as the way the ruling class disseminates its norms and values into the greater society by way of civil society, which includes schools, media, religious organizations, voluntary organizations, etc. This cultural hegemony aids the elite or the ruling class in maintaining control over the marginalized without using physical force.

Today, civil society refers to the domain of social interactions that exist apart from governmental authority. It encompasses a wide range of non-governmental and non-profit organizations, groups, and voluntary associations that promote inclusivity, diversity, pluralism, and active participation in civic affairs (Kumar 2007). In definitional terms, Kumar (2007) provides a very comprehensive and encompassing idea of civil society where the organization stands out to be independent from the state; it also embeds its roots into the ideas of inclusiveness and diversity where the society's most marginalized or underrepresented are given a voice. The definition also includes pluralism that ensures everyone has a point of view that is respected, beliefs that are protected, and multiple opinions and dialogues that are endorsed. The civic society also ensures active participation by the members of the society in civic affairs. They can be involved in a myriad of activities ranging from mediating between conflicting communities, allowing discourse on social, economic, political, and religious issues, raising awareness, and being drivers of social change. This last domain of civil society, where civic participation drives social change, is of great value to the paper.

Bayat (1997) talks of how the disenfranchised and marginalized groups of people can create social change. The urban poor practice what he calls "quiet encroachment of the ordinary- a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives" (57). It is an attempt by poor segments of society to negotiate for their space in the world in a very non-confrontational way. He gives an alternative view of civil society where, by formal definitions, these groups might not constitute a civil society, but their collective actions have the potential for social transformation. There is a need for further broadening of the ideas that constitute a civil society that can be culture-specific, geographically contextualized, and/or not demarcated by certain rules/regulations, class systems, methods, participants, etc.

Furthermore, considering the broad range of duties performed by civil society, it is essential to describe the term that will serve as the center point to conceptualize not just the idea of civil society but also related concepts. There are many terminologies for the concept. According to Ciucescu (2009), terminologies range from "noncommercial organizations," "nonprofit organizations," "non-profit association," "associative commercial sector," "the third sector," "organizations without lucrative

purpose,” “NGOs,” “civil society” etc. No matter how much the definitions vary, their core functions and aims remain very similar. A case study from Pakistan that looked at performance measuring system for an organization and the perceived utility by the managers of that organization took the term NGO and defined it the following way: “NGOs are nonprofit distributing, independent from government organizations which are self-governing (Salamon, cited in Tahajuddin et al., 2021,466), and serve a social cause for community benefit (Boris, cited in Tahajuddin et al., 2021,466)”. For the purpose of this study we shall begin defining RIZQ as a “nonprofit organization (NPO)” with the aforementioned definition. Considering that the definition of an organization is fluid and subject to different interpretations as social realities differ, it is possible that members of Rizq might add further to the definition that this study will begin with. However, to contain the scope of the literature and make it streamlined and coherent, it is pertinent to start with a concept that may further be enhanced/updated.

2.1. Historical Background of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations in Pakistan

Pakistan has a rich history of non-governmental organizations and civil society movements that have played a significant role in the socio-political landscape of the country. In order to contextualize the topic of the research and aid in understanding Pakistani society and its issues from the civil society front, it is important to delve into the historical background of NGOs and civil society organizations in Pakistan.

Before the advent of the British, the region had a flourishing civil society driven by religious beliefs and political strategy. Practices from both Hinduism, such as daana (giving) and seva (service), and Islam, like zakat (charity to the poor) and *khairat* (charity) and *haqooq-ul-bad* (human rights), fostered a culture of voluntary activities. Sufis, a mystic Islamic sect, established monasteries and religious schools in South Punjab and Sindh in the 11th century. In the colonial era, British missionaries initiated welfare efforts. These activities led to the establishment of modern institutions, including schools, convents, medical facilities, orphanages, hostels, infirmaries, and seminaries. In the late 1800s, the British government introduced two laws, the Societies Registration Act (1860) and the Trust Act (1882), to monitor and control welfare organizations. These laws are still used in Pakistan today. The nascent years

of the country saw civil society make efforts to provide medical care and rehabilitation for refugees. Women had an important role at this point when organizations like the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) were created. The government at the time was in favor of civil society and funded the National Council of Social Welfare in 1958. (Asian Development Bank 2009). The period of military rule under Ayub Khan created conditions conducive to the growth of civil society in Pakistan. Ayub's presidential era was marked by processions, protests, and the surfacing of new interest groups and classes (Bhattacharya 2016).

According to Malik and Rana (2020), in Pakistan, the conversation around civil society has been prominent since the late 1980s. Prior to this period, the "civil society" was typically associated with civil bureaucracy and political factions, as distinguished from the military establishment. Due to the populism of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan saw a substantial increase in the formation of trade unions, professional bodies, student unions, and women's organizations. Education became more commonly used for social progress, and as cities grew, people's ambitions and expectations did, too. This led to these new social and economic groups voicing their interests through civil society organizations. The 1980s and a decade after saw the repressive military rule of General Zia and his actions toward civil society organizations, including intellectuals, students, labor and trade unions, as well as lawyers and other professional groups. In the past, Pakistani NGOs haven't had strong coordination among themselves. However, in response to government efforts to regulate NGO activities in 1995-96, various organizations across the country came together to establish the Pakistan NGO Forum (PNF). While urban civil society groups focused on development projects and fighting for human rights, rural groups battled for existence and fair representation in policy and development plans (Bhattacharya 2016)

If one were to look at the state of civil society in today's Pakistan, it is the result of its history, a hybrid tackling the values of a pre-capitalist era as well as modernization; some quarters speak of the remnants of the martial laws and the feeble aspirations of a democratic setup where good governance is the motto of the day. Civil society in Pakistan has evolved over the years, transitioning from an emphasis on poverty reduction and rural growth to matters of governance, accountability, and political and

human rights. This shift is due to social and political crises and the evolution of electronic media (Bhattacharya 2016).

The civil society sector is involved in a wide array of activities that include religious teaching, sports, performing religious ceremonies, advocating for civic services, operating local vocational centers, and managing national human rights organizations. Sizes of these entities vary significantly, from small informal groups managing local graveyards to large hospitals with budgets in the billions of rupees (Asian Development Bank 2009)

The Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP) is the sole agency recognized by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to conduct performance assessments of Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) in Pakistan. To date, the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP) has performed over 1,200 certifications of organizations throughout Pakistan. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are operating in various fields, particularly focusing on the health and education sectors. (Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy 2022,28). The recent tenure of ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan (2018-22) has been credited with “pro-poor” policies that have bolstered civil society functions and improved social capital and facilities for the marginalized. Programs like “Ehsaas Program,” “Panahgahs,” health insurance, “Kamyab Jawan Program,” Housing policies, “Panahgaas” and many others were focused on poverty alleviation and are considered to be one of the most extensive welfare programs in the country.

The aforementioned texts attempt to contextualize the role of nonprofit organizations in the social landscape of Pakistan; how these organizations have been able to function in the domain of food insecurity is of the utmost relevance to this research. Before we delve into the link between food insecurity and NGOs/NPOs, it is important to define them in the light of the research.

Food insecurity, according to the definition by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth, development and an active and healthy life” (Dudek, Hanna, and Ryciak 2020: 1). The definition lays out four pillars of food insecurity namely: availability of sufficient quality food, access is another pillar that looks at the physical

and economic ability to procure food that is dependent on a person's income, location, and social stratification, third is utilization that looks into food handling, preparation and fourth being stability that addresses the consistency of the other three pillars over time. The focus of this study is the second pillar, and the area of concern is the social reasons for access.

Hunger is another factor that is cited along with food insecurity and, in many studies, used interchangeably. According to Poppendieck (1999), hunger is a term that goes beyond the individual; it is a social problem where a person or an entire population does not have adequate food and nutrients to lead a healthy life, a situation commonly known as food insecurity. She sees hunger as a symptomatic problem of broader issues, including poverty, income inequality, and insufficient social safety nets. According to her, an individual's lack of access to food is particularly due to economic constraints, and economic constraints are due to societal structures and systems. Factors like racial or gender discrimination and insufficient education opportunities all contribute to income disparities, which then affect the ability to secure food. She sees hunger as not just a physical deprivation but a reflection of systemic social inequalities. Her concept of hunger goes beyond individual biology or specific food intake to encompass societal, economic, and political contexts. Additionally, she criticizes food charities because they offer immediate relief and even perpetuate the problem since they allow the government to neglect its responsibilities of welfare and poverty alleviation. The UN Sustainable Development Goals have the second goal, "End Hunger," which is further delineated into eight targets. The first target is to end hunger and ensure all people have access to food that is safe, nutritious, and sufficient for the whole year. The main megatrend, as denoted by the UN report titled "State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023," was urbanization. According to the report, an interesting dynamic is the blurring of the distinction between rural/urban and the creation of more fluidity in the dichotomy of what is rural and urban; rather, it's a spectrum now with an increase in peri-urban (informal and formal settlements around urban areas), small cities and interconnected towns. Due to urbanization, changes are occurring in the agri-food system, including food production, processing, distribution, access, and consumer behavior. Some changes are positive, such as an increase in the variety of nutritious foods, but there are demerits that include access to convenience food that is highly processed, calorie-dense, and cheap. Although the report sees better

access to affordable healthy diets in the cities rather than rural sites, there are socioeconomic disparities in diet affordability and food security that make the claim very complicated (FAO et al., 2023).

2.2. The Social Dimensions of Food Insecurity

There are also studies that prefer to differentiate food poverty from food insecurity by considering food poverty as a specific and multifaceted form of poverty, compared to food insecurity, which is a broader concept. The authors propose that food poverty involves aspects of both material deprivation (such as economic, physical, physiological, and hygienic factors) and social deprivation, including social, cultural, and mental dimensions. Tools of analysis need to go beyond material dimensions, which include economic (food affordability, income, physical (availability and distribution), Physiological (health, nutrition) and hygiene. To include social dimensions which include social (social connections, networks, community support programs, shared meals, etc), cultural (norms, traditions, customs, and practices related to food), and mental (emotional security, self-esteem, coping mechanisms, etc) (Bartelmeß et al.2022). The cultural dimension of the issue in relation to the refugees was analyzed, and several issues that hinder food access were seen in the light of Power's concept of cultural food security. Challenges for immigrants in Canada included a dearth of culturally satisfying food, low incomes, and difficulties identifying new foods (Moffat et al. 2017).

There is also the gender dimension to food insecurity, where it is stressed that women have a higher risk of food insecurity than men, and in countries of Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the severity is higher (Broussard 2019). Women in South Asian countries face a high level of vulnerability in terms of food insecurity, which is of two levels; at the family unit level, they are deprived individuals mostly due to economic reasons. Another is the societal level, where women struggle to find a place in society and dignity as human beings because of patterns of social interactions, cultural beliefs, and numerous other psychological factors. All of these factors are compounded by the diversification found in Asia in terms of religion, geography, culture, and level of economic development. Aside from women having poor health, their children also

suffer from it, and it is further worsened due to the women's lack of education or income or poor legal support (Mathur 2011).

2.3. Lahore

The population of Pakistan has expanded to 241.49 million, at a yearly growth of 2.55%, showcasing substantial demographic shifts in recent times. 61.18% represents the rural demographic, while 38.82% is the urban population. With a total population of 127.68 million, Punjab is the province with the most residents, with 52.8% of the entire population living in Punjab. It has a population distribution of 59.30% in rural areas and 40.70% in urban areas. Punjab province has 36 districts and nine divisions. Rapid urbanization is one of the most characteristic features of the province, and with a lack of infrastructural development, the increase in slums is a concern for the administration. With an increase of 28.18% in the urban population from the last census of 2017, this phenomenon is mostly taking place in bigger cities of Punjab. 17.83% of Punjabis live in the Lahore division alone, making it the most populous city in the province.

Lahore is the capital city of the province of Punjab. It has a population of 13,004,135 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023). According to the last updated census of 2017, 52.35% of Lahore's population was male, 47.64% were female, and 0.01% were transgender (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2017). The city boasts of being the cultural hub of Pakistan, with various monuments, palaces, and gardens representing its Mughal history, colonial legacy, and freedom struggle for independence from the British in 1947. While it is a pull factor for the rural segments to migrate to the city, the metropolitan is grappling with challenges. The situation becomes more critical due to issues like lack of unified city planning, unchecked city expansion, unclear land governance roles, and weak building regulations (Rana and Bhatti 2018). Despite Pakistan's significant progress in securing the food supply, including cereals, milk, vegetables, beef, mutton, and poultry, two significant challenges persist: first is the limited understanding of a balanced diet, and second is insufficient food intake. This has resulted in the high-income class consuming more beef, mutton, and poultry, while the lower-income class typically consumes starchier foods (Yousaf et al., 2021). The

poverty rate for Punjab stood at 16.3% for the year 2018-19 (Pakistan Institute of Development Economics 2021).

A Study to measure the level of household food intake was conducted in Johar Town, Lahore, which is a well-connected residential and commercial town catering to a diverse population with affordable to upscale options. Of the 500 households surveyed, 42.4% were living under the poverty line, 41.8% were on the poverty line, and 15.8% were living above the poverty line. They also reported reduced dietary intake and limited dietary diversity (Yousaf et al., 2021). There are approximately 202 NGOs, nonprofits, and charities working in Lahore, out of which 46 solely focus on poverty alleviation that ranges from looking after the well-being of disadvantaged women, operating free food services, offering discounted grocery items, and carrying out various other initiatives aimed at aiding the impoverished sections of the community. Out of these, 12 significantly aid in reducing instances of food insecurity and hunger in Lahore by providing services from immediate food relief to long-term food stability options. Their work is crucial in assisting at-risk communities in the city. Some notable ones include the Edhi Foundation, Akhuwat, Saylani Welfare International Trust, Rizq, Alamgir Welfare Trust International, and SOS Villages Pakistan. The Alkhidmat Foundation is a leading charity organization in Pakistan, and its head office is located in Lahore. Since 1990, the organization has immersed itself in humanitarian efforts by collaborating with community leaders, volunteers, donors, media members, and civil society partners. Their efforts address critical human issues such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, orphanhood, and widowhood through sustainable development projects. Their focus is to improve the lives of the most vulnerable, including orphans and street children, widows, and unemployed individuals, providing support through relief, development, and community work. There is also a collection service for zakat, sadaqah, and orphan support. The community services include the provision of wheelchairs (7,175 in number), prisoner's welfare (2,292), masjid constructions and rehabilitation (91), and Diwali and Christmas gifts (12,177). In terms of the question of hunger and food insecurity, the foundation has delivered 119949 food packages, each costing around 7,700 PKR (approx. 27\$). They have international partnerships as well, with combined relief efforts from station countries like the US, UK, Turkey, Germany, and Norway. Their central board of management consists of 25 members, including the president and numerous vice presidents overlooking the programs. Then

there are also secretaries and assistant secretaries, directors that overlook the various programs, finances, and geographical regions (Alkhidmat Foundation 2023).

Although it is not situated in Lahore, it is worth mentioning because of the similar aims and objectives of the NGO under study, Rizq. The Women Being Welfare Organization (WBWO) is a charitable and non-profit organization founded in 2013 that operates in Karachi, which is the largest city in Pakistan population-wise, succeeding Lahore, which is the second largest city. They are dedicated to those in need, including the frail, widowed, impoverished, and disabled. They distribute essential monthly rations that include tea, milk, detergent, flour, sugar, rice, oil, pulses, and ghee. Moreover, WBWO runs the Fatima Zehra Public School, which provides free education from kindergarten to secondary level to 200 children from financially challenged backgrounds, ensuring they meet global education standards. They also make contributions for Zakat and Fitrah (charity given at the end of the fast in Ramadan). In terms of food insecurity, WBWO operates over four community kitchens (Dastarkhwan in Urdu). These kitchens feed approximately 4000 individuals every day, three times a day, regardless of caste or creed, ensuring respect and hygiene are taken care of.

Another charity organization that has food distribution as its hallmark is Saylani Welfare International Trust, founded in May 1999. Starting in a leased house, the organization now boasts at least 630 branches globally, along with more than 630 community kitchens employing thousands of employees. Today, the organization spends over 7 billion annually on various humanitarian services and initiatives. It spans beyond this, covering over 63 life aspects from birth to death, including food, health, education, social welfare, clean water, marriage, mass IT training, vocational training, support for Syrian and Burmese refugees, pilgrimage services, school fees, easy loans and employment, hairdressing, and medical services, etc. Their work in terms of food provision spans seven projects, including ration distribution, Sadaqah meat distribution, refrigerator points to pick up food, and mobile canteens. They have also collaborated with the government under the infamous “Ehsaas” program.

The Ehsaas program, which literally means compassion, is the first anti-poverty program by the government of Pakistan that brings together efforts from federal and

provincial ministries and tackles poverty from all angles, including providing a safety net, education, human capital, job creation, and health. Ehsaas included 16 different programs for 16 underprivileged groups, backed by 292 supportive initiatives, and aimed at achieving six measurable objectives. Many different agencies were involved in carrying out Ehsaas' initiatives (Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University 2022). It includes multiple elements like financial aid, urgent food assistance, scholarship programs, health coverage, and assistance for individuals with disabilities. Despite being lauded by the world for its strategic implementation and planning, it is at risk of political instability due to the changing governments, which normally do not carry on with projects from the previous governments as it is the norm of the country. The dilemma with public projects is that they have little to no results due to multiple reasons. Pakistan spends around 2% of its GDP in eradicating poverty but has been unsuccessful. Existing programs are not organized well, are often duplicated, and don't always reach the people they should, as there's a lack of proper planning, implementation, and checking on how they're doing (Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University 2022).

Operational charities and organizations form the backbone of city welfare projects. As cited previously, the inability of the government to provide creates a space that needs to be filled in order for society to function because each day, the population is increasing, coupled with inflation and depleting resources. Inconsistent policies, corruption, regional and national politics, bureaucratic hurdles, prioritizing bigger, fancier projects for political clout, and lack of vision or funds are some of the few reasons the governments fail to perform. This added to the problem of lack of awareness in the poor segments of society about their rights, needs, and wants, forming a gap that becomes difficult to fill. This requires a solution that is localized, sustainable, self-sufficient and caters to the real needs of the people with a transparent and replicable system. Many NGOs, NPOs, and charities functional in Lahore right now are focusing on multiple poverty alleviation programs spanning different cities and even countries. There are few locally run that solely focus on mitigating food insecurity and hunger as their core aim and ambition. Even if we find such organizations, there is an issue of gatekeeping their working systems and mechanisms that makes the replicability of such initiatives more challenging. Additionally, there is not enough literature that investigates, explores, describes, or analyses how charitable

organizations function in Pakistan, let alone Lahore, and how the beneficiaries feel about the agenda of food insecurity and hunger from an urban setting through a qualitative lens. Choosing to study Rizq is an attempt to fulfill all these missing domains that require urgency not only to be studied but also to offer practical solutions for a better future.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

By establishing the theoretical framework, we can investigate this issue further. By utilizing Ribot and Peluso's Theory of Access (2003), a lens is provided that can debate the access dimension of food insecurity. The major concept of food insecurity revolves around the concept of food as a resource, particularly the resource access dimension, which is a key concept in Ribot and Peluso's theory. Access is the analytical tool that is used to describe how people benefit from resources. They define access as "the ability to derive benefits from things, broadening from property's classical definition as the right to benefit from things." (Ribot and Peluso 2003,153). They shift the focus from property "rights," i.e., someone having ownership and a legal binding to a resource to gain advantages from it, to "abilities" in social relationships determining who benefits from resources. These social relations are also embedded in a "web of powers" that are socio-economic, cultural, and political in nature and within the web are situated "bundle of powers." A bundle of powers is a power or ability that enables individuals or groups to control or benefit from resources. The powers can dictate how the resource can be utilized and can also stop others from accessing it. These powers are not static; they are dynamic and can change according to the complex intertwined "web of powers" in which they are situated. Then there are mechanisms of access (technology, capital, markets, labor, knowledge, authority, identity, and social relations), which are methods to attain, control, and sustain benefits. For example, social relations can affect access by a person knowing someone influential; friendships, community memberships, and trust relationships all can influence the way access is achieved for the resource. If we look at identity, factors like age, gender, and ethnicity can have an effect on resource access. However, these need to be seen in a wider plane or context where one factor can overlap, overrule, intertwine, or bolster the dynamic concept of access and its control and maintenance.

The theory presented by Ribot and Peluso (2003) equips us to use access as an analytical tool to look into the phenomenon of food insecurity and hunger. The resource stated above becomes food, and the people who have the ability to gain access to food are seen in the light of the web of powers in which the food insecure or hungry are actors. How are these people affected in their everyday lives by the bundle of powers (abilities to benefit from a resource), either from being equipped with the powers or affected by someone owning the bundle of powers, for these phenomena to occur in a setting that is already a network of complex social economic, political, cultural, religious factors and which affect and change the everyday? Given the dynamic nature of food insecurity and hunger and the dynamism of the theory of access, it is possible to form a strong theoretical base on which the study can be explored further.

This research will also adopt the symbolic interactionism theory as a second guiding framework. Symbolic interactionism, grounded in the work of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1986), says that interaction and meaning are central to understanding human behavior and social processes. Symbolic interactionists argue that individuals construct their reality based on the meaning they attribute to their social interactions and the symbols within those interactions. For example, a handshake may be perceived as a sign of friendship, respect, or agreement, depending on the context and the individuals involved. Therefore, human behavior is viewed as constructed instead of being governed by societal norms and structures.

For the purpose of this qualitative research, a micro theory looks into the exploration of individuals' experiences and their interpretations of social phenomena. In this study, Symbolic Interactionism will be employed as a lens to examine how the urban poor in Lahore, Pakistan, perceive food insecurity and access and interpret their engagement with the organization "Rizq."

The research questions driving this study relate to the dimensions and experiences of social inequality faced by the food-insecure and hungry urban population, as well as the role of the non-profit "Rizq" in their lives. In alignment with the symbolic interactionism framework, a qualitative approach will be taken to explore these, using in-depth interviews and participant observation.

This theoretical framework will aid in interpreting the complex social dynamics, interactions, and interpretations that shape experiences of food insecurity and hunger and aid in this context.

A major area of the research revolves around the role of Rizq. It is argued that the actions employed by the NPO facilitate the access of food to the needy. Therefore, the research employs the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). According to McCarthy and Zald's seminal work on Resource Mobilization Theory, social movements are heavily influenced by the ability to effectively mobilize resources and strategically organize structures to advocate change. The leaders of a movement or organization need to handle resources and rally support in order to invigorate the movement. They must navigate the challenges of fundraising, recruiting volunteers, engaging with the media, and lobbying the government to push their cause. Resource Mobilization Theory stresses that successful social movements fundamentally depend on the capacity to mobilize resources—both tangible (like donations, volunteers, food, etc.) and intangible (social capital, alliances, partnerships, access to institutes)—that will facilitate a group's activities and goals. In the context of the organization "Rizq," their tangible resources could include the food they distribute, the funding they receive, and the volunteers who work for them. Their intangible resources might be their partnerships with other organizations, the trust and reputation they have built within the community, and any influence they might have in governmental or policy-making circles.

Secondly, the theory also highlights the importance of organizational strength. This includes hierarchy, communication, and efficient administration. There should be clear leadership and organization. Everyone involved needs to understand who is responsible for what. Secondly, an effective communication network: There should be a solid system for sharing information across the organization. Everyone involved should know what's happening and what the plans are. Thirdly, efficient administration: The daily operations of the organization should run smoothly. This implies that tasks are completed on time, resources are well-managed, and issues are addressed quickly.

Thirdly, the theory does not overlook the importance of external factors. It insists that social, political, and economic circumstances in a society can greatly affect a movement's ability to successfully mobilize its resources. For example, social norms, political climate, and economic conditions can either facilitate or hinder resource mobilization (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Applying this to "Rizq," one would examine how the organization mobilizes its resources, how it is organized, and how it responds to or is affected by Pakistan's social, economic, and political environment.

- i. The purpose of the research is to explore and evaluate the efficacy of the role of grassroots social service organizations in battling food insecurity amongst the urban poor in Pakistan.

The study is an attempt at a sociological understanding of the dimensions of social inequality in relation to hunger, food insecurity, and food access amongst the urban poor in Lahore, Pakistan, by looking at the workings of the organization "Rizq." This will be conducted by using in-depth interviews and participant observation that will be:

- a) Assessing the dimensions of social inequality in the everyday lives of the urban food insecure and hungry in relation to the resources accessible to them.
 - i) What are their everyday experiences, struggles, and coping mechanisms?
 - ii) What forms of help do they access?
 - iii) What is Rizq's role in their life?
- b) Assessing the role of the Non-Profit Organisation "Rizq" in the everyday lives of the food insecure and hungry in terms of the resources made accessible by "Rizq."
 - i) What are the strategies employed to address the issue of food insecurity and hunger?
 - ii) How are the beneficiaries affected by it?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The study centralizes its attention on a specific nonprofit organization, “Rizq.” Registered as a Non-Profit Organization, Rizq’s primary mission is to combat hunger by collaborating with various agents and volunteers. The methodology for this research consists of a two-step approach deriving qualitative data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The main focus of the research was to analyze the role and efficacy of the social movement by the name of Rizq in battling food insecurity and hunger. The strategy was two-pronged: i) analyze the role of Rizq in the lives of the food insecure and/or hungry by conducting in-depth interviews with the organization members and participant observation of how they mobilize their resources and run the organization structure, ii) analyze and explore the everyday experiences, struggles and coping mechanisms of the food insecure and hungry and what role Rizq plays in their lives using in-depth interviews and participant observation. The two-pronged method will help the researcher evaluate the main research question, taking into account the two main agents: the hungry and their help. The details of the methodology are as follows:

The NPO: The Non-Profit organization Rizq recognizes itself as a social enterprise that believes in “food philanthropy” to combat the problem of food insecurity, wastage, and hunger. Their mission statement is “To alleviate hunger for food insecure Pakistanis by developing, deploying and enabling programs & interventions, designed to combat food insecurity and food wastage, through a network of food banks and partner non-profits” (“About us” n.d.). They collaborate with various stakeholders, such as corporations, academia, NGOs, etc, to create a Pakistan that is hunger-free. Their main programs are titled “Rizq Ration” and “Rizq Khana” (Rizq daig, Rizq bachao”??). These are permanent campaigns, and other campaigns are seasonal or subject to festivals or seasons, for example, id, Muharrem, Ramzan, etc.

The details of the methodology are as follows:

- a) IN-depth interviews: The first research method used was in-depth semi-structured interviews. This was chosen because of the rich, nuanced data, giving insight into experiences and perceptions that are not often achievable with other methods. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling the researcher to pivot the research area according to the responses of the respondents. Also, the rich insights helped with contextualizing the phenomena of food insecurity and hunger and not only provided answers to the research questions but opened up new areas of interest. Interviews were conducted with the program in charge, program volunteers, and four beneficiaries who are the targeted food insecure and/or hungry. The selection of the interviewees was kept diverse, ensuring there was a wide range of perspectives that covered the operations and the effectiveness of the organization. Each interview was designed to ensure the individual's role, experience, and observation regarding the work and impact of Rizq.
- b) Participant Observation: The second method chosen was participant observation in order to obtain firsthand knowledge of the workings of the organizations as well as observe the impact it had on the people they benefited. This involved field visits to the two permanent ventures of Rizq: Rizq Ration and Rizq Khana. During these visits, the researcher immersed themselves in the workings of the organization by first conducting in-depth interviews as well as simultaneously making observations of the individuals as well as the atmosphere they were situated in. The use of participant observation paired with in-depth interviews ensured the production of data that would otherwise would not have existed with just interviews alone. It helped contextualize the interviews and enriched the data by capturing nonverbal cues like body language and/or changes in the voice, etc.

The Resource Mobilisation Theory (1977) was employed in formulating the interview questions for Rizq. The main focus areas of the RMT were resources (donations, volunteers, food, social capital, alliances, partnerships), which facilitate the organization's abilities and goals; the second focus is the organizational strength and

the external factors, which are the social, political, and economic conditions in the society. The questions were designed to be semi-structured and in-depth, providing the interviewees with a chance to express their views in their own words. The interviews followed a guide, which was altered for the organization, project heads, and volunteers. However, the broader perimeters were two: the structure of the organization and its impact.

The first part of The interview questions focused on resource mobilization structures.

- i. **Mobilization Structures:** What structures/systems are in place to mobilize resources? This was primarily an analysis of the resources the organization has and how they are mobilized and allocated. The resources include human resources (volunteers, staff), financial resources (funds, donations, fundraising), physical resources (tangible assets like office space, equipment, vehicles, supplies, etc), and information resources (data, research, reports). Questions that functioned as a guide were: a) How does Rizq recruit volunteers or staff, and b) How does it raise funds? c) How does it acquire physical assets?
- ii. **Decision-making Structures:** What structures guide decision-making, particularly in resource allocation? How Rizq decides to use its resources. a) How does it decide which projects to fund? b) Which communities to serve c) How many volunteers to deploy d) How to distribute supplies d) Who decides how the resources are used? e) Provide an example as to how decisions regarding resources were made. For the volunteer, the question was added that asked f) How are you involved in the decision-making process of the organization?
- iii. **External Partners:** a) What external organizations or donors contribute resources, and how are these relationships managed? b) How does Rizq ensure transparency and accountability with its external partners and donors?

The second focus area is organizational strength. Questions like a) How would you describe the leadership of Rizq? b) Can you describe an instance where efficient administration was key to running the organization smoothly? c) How are any issues

or challenges addressed? d) How does the organization measure success? e) How does Rizq promote the growth of its volunteers and staff?

The third focus area in terms of the RMT was the external factors that affect an organization's ability to deliver, including social norms, political climate, economic conditions, legal framework, technological environment, cultural factors, demographics, etc). a) How have societal attitudes in Pakistan influenced the way Rizq operates b) impact of government policies on Rizq? c) Have the economic conditions posed any challenges to the working of the NPO d) Are there any specific laws or legal frameworks that affect the way Rizq operates? e) How does technology impact the way Rizq mobilizes its resources? f) Can you talk about some cultural factors that support or challenge Rizq's mission? g) Has a particular demographic proven to be supportive or challenging to engage with? h) How do partnerships aid Rizq's mission? Please give an example.

Another area added to analyze the functioning of Rizq that is not included in the RMT but is important for the research questions is the beneficiary feedback. Questions relating to a) What do the staff or volunteers believe? How do beneficiaries perceive the changes or initiatives brought about by Rizq? b) How does Rizq gather feedback from the beneficiaries? c) How does Rizq ensure the inclusion of its beneficiaries' opinions and ideas when making decisions or planning projects?

The first part of the fieldwork focused on "Helping" the workers of Rizq. The second half focused on the "Hungry," the beneficiaries of Rizq. Their interview questions focused on their everyday struggles in procuring food and their coping mechanisms, as well as the role Rizq has in their lives. Question guides included a) 1. Can you describe a typical day in your life, especially with regard to securing food for yourself/family? 2. What are the main challenges you face regularly in accessing food? 3. How do you cope with these challenges? Are there any specific strategies or tactics you employ? 4. In terms of resources, what aids are available to you to help secure food? 5. How has the help from the organization "Rizq" impacted your life, particularly in relation to your access to food? 6. Have you accessed other forms of help aside from "Rizq"? If yes, what are they, and how have they helped you overcome food insecurity? 7. How do aspects of your identity, such as age, gender, or ethnicity, impact

your ability to access food in your community? 8. Can you talk about how your relationships with others in your community affect your ability to access food? 9. How do you perceive and interpret your engagement with "Rizq"? What meaning does the role of "Rizq" hold for you? 10. Does interacting with "Rizq" enhance or limit your control or benefit from resources, and in what way?

The questions were designed to be open-ended to allow for detailed responses, while the semi-structured format provided enough flexibility to explore unexpected topics that may arise during the interview process. The questions above were not asked in the same manner, nor were all of the questions used as it was dependent on the interviewee and the type of questions he/she was more keen to indulge in.

In order to ensure the research was conducted ethically, all participants were briefed about the topic of the research and its purpose. Their consent was obtained before conducting interviews and participant observation. They were also given the option to leave the interview midway if they felt the need to. The names of the beneficiaries were changed because they were promised anonymity and confidentiality. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The objective of thematic analysis is to uncover themes, meaning identifying notable or intriguing patterns in the data. These themes are then used to address the research question or contribute to a broader discussion on a particular subject (Maguire and Delahunt 2017).

Moreover, themes and sub-themes were formed, clarified, and explained using quotes pulled directly from the field notes. In this process, the semantic approach of thematic analysis was employed. It is a stepwise process that starts with describing, where the data are plainly arranged to reveal patterns in clear content and summarized, then moves onto interpretation, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data saw the interplay and relationship between various concepts. This was succeeded by a period of verification or validation, seeking to delve deeper into the stories presented to uncover hidden meanings or explanations. Ultimately, the results were aggregated. There was a continuous process of reassessing assumptions and themes throughout the drafting phase.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Key Themes in Rizq the Organisation

A sociological understanding of the functioning of Rizq is essential for the project. That meant firstly understanding that Rizq was a structure that operated in a social setting. Therefore, that meant not just looking at the actors within the organization but also observing the situation outside. The themes that emerged look at Rizq as the world knows it, another look at the interplay of the organization with internal actors, and lastly, the interaction with external actors.

4.1.1. Rizq: The Overview

In a bustling neighborhood in the city of Lahore was a house that had a ritual occurring every day for over two decades. Right at noon, Huzaifa's mother would invite those who were hungry and did not have the means to access food to her house. The everyday interactions with the poor and impoverished offered an insight into the magnitude of poverty and hunger in Pakistan that motivated Huzaifa to do something about it. He, despite growing up in relative comfort, was increasingly aware of the stark inequalities. The irony was evident; on one end, there were people going to bed hungry, while on the other hand, enormous amounts of food were being thrown away. Huzaifa shared these thoughts with two of his college friends, Musa and Qasim. United in their will to bring about a change, they attempted to find a solution. They were met with a lot of roadblocks in an attempt to find a solution, but they persisted. Without any plan, they decided to use the power of social media. On Facebook, they put up a status with their contact numbers asking people if they had any food to donate. The page went viral, and the next day, they were out of their universities all over Lahore, collecting food to distribute to the poor. They felt this to be the start of something new, and this phenomenon had to have a name. Huzaifa's mother, Mrs. Rukhsana, suggested

the name Rizq, and the story actualized itself to become a Non-Profit Organisation that aims to eradicate hunger from the world.

Established in 2015, Rizq set out with the objective of providing food to those in need whilst also promoting awareness around food waste and sustainability. Identifying as a social enterprise, the not-for-profit organization has embraced “food philanthropy” as its mode of combating food insecurity, waste, and hunger in Pakistan. Their mission is to ease hunger for food-deprived Pakistanis through the development and implementation of interventions and programs that fight food wastage and insecurity. They aim to accomplish this through a collaborative network of food banks and partnering with big and small non-profit organizations. It has established a widespread network that spans individuals, businesses, educational establishments, media outlets, and individuals from all walks of life. The volunteers, who are mostly students, are an integral part of the organization and are considered very important in terms of mobilizing resources.

The team consists of 46 members, with three being contractual and the rest on payscales. The head office is in Lahore, with some ventures functional in Karachi (largest city of Pakistan in terms of population and Faisalabad (third largest, second largest being Lahore). The office is a two-story building with cubicles that are designated for the concerned departments. Departments include Procurement, Customer Support, Auditor, Operations, HR & Administration, Agriculture (Grow Rizq), Kitchen, Marketing and Communication, Executive, Donor Relations and Accounts and Finance. The organizational structure of Rizq shows a hierarchical arrangement of roles with clearly defined responsibilities, which is detailed below in an organogram provided to me in direct communication by the head of HR. (Organogram, Rizq, provided by Muhammad Yaquob, personal communication, October 24, 2023).



Rizq Trust

Broad Functional Areas 2023 - 2025

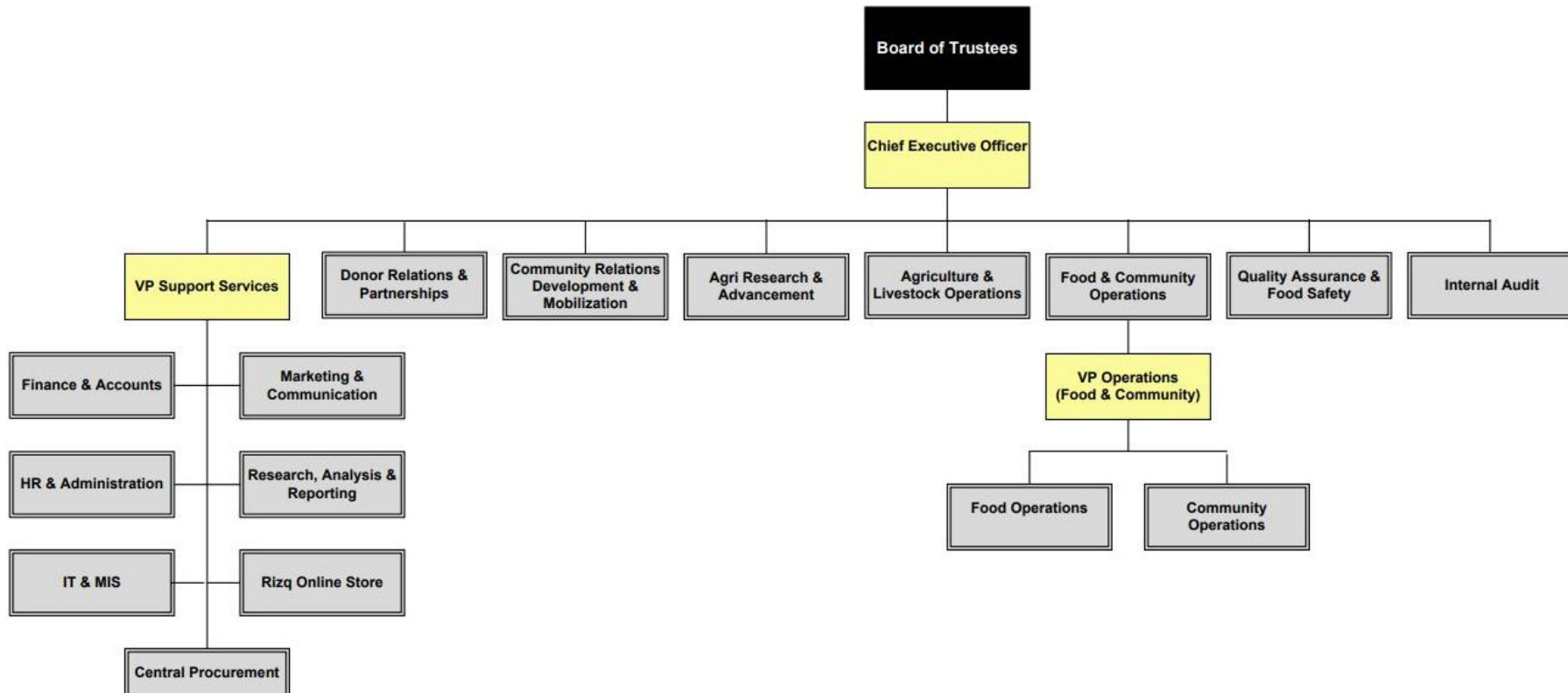


Figure 4.1. Rizq Organogram

The organizational structure of Rizq, as represented in the organogram (Fig.1.), delineates a clear hierarchy that underpins the daily functions and operations of the NPO. The structure shows it is segmented into different departments, each with a specific task, allowing for streamlined processes and efficient resource management and allocation. The Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer form the top tiers, overlooking the rest of the departments that are uniformly spread. This makes a centralized decision-making process, which is beneficial for uniformity in strategizing and goal setting. Understanding this structure provides insight into how Rizq mobilizes its resources and subsequently impacts the ultimate goal of lessening hunger and food insecurity.

The projects Rizq is involved in range from Rizq Daig, Rizq Ration, Rizq Bachao, Rizq Khana, and Rizq Dastarkhwan. There are also new ventures that are gaining momentum in implementing their ultimate goal of completing the food cycle chain from the produce to the end result: GroRizq. Some are seasonal projects that are dependent on the occasions, such as Iftar Dastarkhwan in Ramazan, Rizq Qurbani during Eid-ul-Azha and Muharram Sabeel in Muharram and during emergency situations such as flash floods, earthquakes, etc. There is a mega kitchen to produce food for most of these projects, especially Rizq Daig, Rizq Khana, Ramzan, Muharram, and Eid. In Rizq Daig, the word *Daig* is a common kitchen utensil for making large portions of food. It is a metallic vessel with a wide mouth that is very similar to a cauldron. Rizq organization allows donors to donate a daig through their website to be distributed to the needy or Rizq organization itself provides daigs free of cost for special cases (weddings, funerals) to those that are unable to afford to feed large amounts of people. The Rizq Ration program, where the word Ration refers to its definitional meaning, where a fixed amount of food is given on a monthly basis to the deserving, which currently is not done on a large scale and is kept for emergency responses or requests. Another small-scale venture is Rizq Bachao, where Bachao means to save in Urdu. Here, the concept is to collect excess food by partnering with small-scale NGOs and restaurants. This was the venture that Rizq started with the sole aim of preventing food wastage. A big project currently happening is Rizq Khana. *Khana*, which means food, aims to provide nutritious and affordable food through food carts around various points in Lahore. There is also Rizq Dastarkhwan, which means

a tablecloth around which people sit to eat. This venture happens at Huzaiifa's house, and his mother is in charge of providing free meals to whoever comes to her doorstep.

From the seasonal projects, the biggest one in terms of manpower deployed and people served is the Iftar set up at various places in Lahore and other cities in Ramazan, where thousands are able to break their fasts with the collaboration of various organizations. In the month of Muharram, in order to keep the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain alive, there are various points in Lahore that offer beverages and food to those taking part in the processions. Rizq Qurbani (*Qurbani- sacrifice*) is done on every Eid-ul-Azha. The donors are requested to donate an animal that is reared on Rizq farms to be sacrificed, and meat is then distributed to the poor and food insecure. Their newest projects include Gro Rizq, where the aim is to implement the concept of farm-to-fork and contribute to the country's disrupted supply chains, especially after the floods of 2022. It involves uplifting the disenfranchised small-scale farmers with inputs (seeds, pesticides, tools, etc) at market prices with zero interest rates while also educating them to increase crop yields and uplift their standard of living. Another collaborative project is titled Rizq Yunus Scholars Program. In a joint effort with the Yunus Center and Al-Bukhary International University Malaysia, this program aims to grant Pakistani students from disadvantaged backgrounds the chance to do a master's in social business and return to contribute their learnings to their country.

At the heart of most of these projects is Rizq Hub (Fig.2.), from where the food is stored/made/packed and distributed. It is located in Kot Lakhpat, Lahore, which is the city's industrial district. Situated near industrial units of big manufacturing companies, the area is strategic enough to be connected to the city and near its head office, its food carts, and distribution points. The Rizq Hub contains a mega kitchen, storage area, and office area, as well as pickup points for loading/unloading food delivery vans. The area spans approximately 10,890 square feet. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the workings of the organization, it was essential to visit the Hub and observe the activities as they proceeded. The Hub is central to Rizq's philosophy, as most projects are actualized here. Mr Akbar Fareed was the kitchen supervisor and food carts supervisor who was overlooking the processes.

In the Hub, the day starts as early as 4 am. When the food starts to cook around 9 am, the first batch of food is dispatched. The food prepared serves 2000-4000 people, and it can accommodate a capacity of 10000-15000 people every day. The food is given to the various food carts installed in the city, and the food supplies the Rizq Daig program, where the cauldrons of food are donated to the needy. The food carts have a basic menu of serving a plate of rice and lentils for 60 PKR (equal to 0.022 USD). The quality of ingredients procured is of top quality, which is overlooked by their procurement department for the maintenance of standards and quality. The food carts are situated at 5 points as of now, and there is a plan to add ten more in the next six months. Currently, one is placed in Jinnah Hospital, Shaukat Khanum Hospital, Factory area gate no 4, Wapda Town, and the newest venture of Bahria University that was launched a day before the interview was conducted. They want to include more hospital sites in the near future. The reason provided as to why the focus is more on hospital sites is that, according to their surveys and analysis, there is a specific type of needy class that is unable to feed themselves when visiting the hospitals. The culture of the hospitals in Pakistan is such that patients from smaller cities are in big numbers, added to the culture of one patient being accompanied by a lot of relatives. They are unable to find affordable accommodation and food.



Figure 4.2. Rizq Hub Kitchen

4.1.2. Rizq: Their Culture

The interviews and participant observation revealed that there are certain drivers in the organization that make the organization different. They mostly emerge from the core beliefs and values that have penetrated the system well enough to become a practical model of those beliefs and values. One of the most prominent features was the element

of Respect. The interviews conducted with the project heads and founders had an underlying concept that the members were content with how the system worked. They felt that they were heard, supported, and motivated to perform their tasks. This sense of respect and recognition within the organization was a recurring theme throughout the interviews and observations. It became evident that the culture of respect was not just a superficial value but was deeply embedded in the everyday interactions and decision-making processes within the organization. Furthermore, the interviews provided insights into how this culture of respect was manifested in various aspects of the organization, such as in team dynamics, leadership styles, and communication channels.

The organogram showed that there is uniformity in the system, with the top order working collaboratively and attentively with the lower levels, reflecting a culture of respect and inclusivity. The system has a corporate style of professionalism, with departments and hierarchical structures, but the overall atmosphere is one of mutual respect and support. This could stem from the fact that the founding members and the project in charge are young, from the ages of 15-35, if we include the volunteers as well. Mr. Akbar, the kitchen and food cart manager, mentioned that it is this very trait that motivates him to perform better and not join any other organization. He also mentioned that he has been working with them for over five years now and has not had any issues that made him switch or move to the corporate sector, where there is an opportunity to earn more. Some things, according to him, cannot be put in words or attached to a price. He also added that Rizq has not fired anyone till the inception of the program (personal communication, October 27, 2023).

The brotherhood and friendly attitude of the organization were also recorded during my observation of the Rizq Headquarters. In my field notes from October 27, 2023, I described the scene of lunch break: “All the staff members are gathered in the dining area, sharing meals and engaging in lively conversations. Since it is a Friday, lunch is served after the Jummah prayer break when the male members come back from the mosque. It is a carpeted room with little furniture and everyone sitting on the floor in a circle. When I entered, I was greeted with immense warmth and hospitality. I did not feel like I was new or not a part of them. I was introduced to the rest of the team, and lunch came. I was intrigued by what food is served in an organization that is dedicated

to addressing food insecurity and hunger and found out it was biryani from one of the trials they are conducting in their kitchen. The biryani is set to be introduced in their new food carts. The way it was served reflected the ethos of the organization. *Dastarkhwan* (tablecloth) was set at the center, and plates were passed around. Everyone took a portion and passed it along. The feeling of camaraderie and respect is evident. Resource mobilization theory (1977) mentions that organizational strength is needed in terms of communication. The camaraderie and respect seen in the organization indicate a strong and effective communication system. This could also be one of the underlying factors that the organization is growing, expanding, and upscaling, as well as why they are different in their dealings and why they always have a stream of enthusiastic volunteers eager to work alongside them.

The element of respect is not just limited to the internal dynamics of the organization but extends to their interactions with the beneficiaries and the wider community. They engage with their target audience in a dignified manner. All of the members that were interviewed were very clear on their goals, and they kept reiterating the fact that food needs to be hygienic, healthy, and served in a respectful manner. They foster in their interactions a sense of dignity and ensure that their services are provided in a respectful manner. In the case of food carts, they ensure that the people who eat there do not feel hesitant to approach and avail themselves of the services. The idea of charging an almost negligible amount for the meals also contributes to maintaining the dignity of the beneficiaries, as it allows them to feel like customers rather than charity recipients. This is why they don't organize *langar* openly except for orphanages and special areas/events. "Langar" refers to a free public kitchen that aims to distribute food without considering factors such as religion, class, caste, color, beliefs, age, gender, or social status. It is a popular practice embedded in Sikhism and Sufi Islam, whereas in the latter, it is popular in the shrine cultures of Punjab (Iqbal and Farid 2017). The cultural interpretation of *langars* is that it is for the needy, even though, in essence and spirit, it is for all. Therefore, people do not feel comfortable accepting *langar*, especially if the person is from the upper class. Rizq focuses on making sure everyone feels respected and equal, so they charge a value for the plate of rice and lentils they offer on the food cart. According to them, this makes them feel dignified and honored.

Furthermore, they emphasize the use of disposable utensils and hair nets while providing food so the food is not just hygienically dealt with, but the person receiving that plate does not feel offended or embarrassed by the value the food handler is placing on the food being given. In the ration delivery project, the line of recipients had the ability to sit while they awaited their turn. One of the founders of Rizq, Musa, mentioned in his interview that in their venture of GroRizq, they provide the farmers with the necessary inputs at market prices and receive the same return with no interest rates. At one of the instances in a village in south Punjab, a woman received the inputs and, before leaving, removed her gold bangles and placed them on the table. The team was surprised to find it and called her back to ask why she did that. She was surprised that the team did not want the bangles since it was customary there to give some sort of guarantee to the loan provider. Upon hearing that they did not have such a condition, she started crying because she was overwhelmed by the level of trust Rizq placed in her (personal communication, October 29, 2023).

The second pattern and recurring concept that was evident in the organizational culture of Rizq was the incorporation of Islamic values and principles. The name Rizq itself is derived from an Islamic concept, which refers to sustenance or provision granted by Allah. It is derived from the verb “razaqa,” which means to provide, give, or make. It is also seen as something beneficial or repelling harm. Rizq encompasses various forms such as food, health, income, property, family, peace, etc. It is considered a provision from Allah to His creations ("The Meaning of Rizq," 2023). All of the team members believe that Rizq is only provided by Allah and that they are merely a means through which it is distributed to those in need. Mr. Akbar, in his interview, mentioned that one of the most surprising aspects of his interview when joining Rizq was that one of the founders said that this organization does "Allah wala kaam" (translation: "The work of Allah's people, for Allah's sake). Being from Pakpattan, which is a city in Punjab known for its shrines and saints, he was immediately invested in the organization since his upbringing and childhood were reflective of the Sufi traditions of serving humanity without any discrimination. He found it impressive that instead of the organization asking for big concepts related to organizational experience, they were simply interested in the will of the applicant. (personal communication, October 27, 2023). The volunteer interviewed was also very expressive in explaining that she was immediately on board with the organization after

seeing how many prayers the beneficiaries were given to them. They were saying things like, “You are doing great work; Allah will reward you all.” She said that the essence of the work and the spirit of that essence incorporated in Rizq made her continue with the organization for years to come. She worked as a volunteer for four years and was recently appointed as an outreach and engagement representative who deals with volunteers in different schools and universities as well as the administrations of those institutes. Their main venture is titled “Rizq Youth Republic,” and their main aim is to gather students with a sense of responsibility and respect for their country. They give introductory sessions and create chapters not more than 20-25 volunteers. Upon asking why only 20-25 in each chapter, the response was that they take responsibility for each student in terms of mentoring them into responsible human beings by conducting sessions, workshops, and informal settings to build connections with them and slowly educating them about the organization and the issues they deal with.

Currently, they are dealing with 30 chapters for the fiscal year, with a majority of them from schools since they are more enthusiastic. Each chapter had 4 to 5 leaders, and the rest worked under them. The recruitment process involves opening the chapter and then choosing the volunteers backed by administration collaboration who also have a social responsibility and a drive for their students to learn. Volunteers give initial interviews where they are gauged just for their drive for the cause. Here again, the essence is of utmost importance for them. Later, they are taught IT skills, fundraising skills, and negotiation skills needed on-site. Furthermore, there are also mechanisms that ensure smooth functioning within the group members themselves. (Aqsa, personal communication, November 4, 2023)

Another evident feature of Rizq was their emphasis on educating others. This ranged from educating the volunteers, the beneficiaries, and the partners to the general public. The organization does not believe in gatekeeping any of the knowledge and information it possesses but rather aims to share it freely with others. Musa, one of the founders, was proud of Rizq's progress and was very clear about his intention to share the knowledge and expertise they have gained through their work with Rizq. They label themselves as a "people-powered movement," and by that, they mean that they wish to equip everyone to better their surroundings. The partnerships they have with

people, for example, people they collaborate with to distribute, encourage them to help their communities and nearby areas first. They say that they do not want food; they need the will of the people to change their concept around food and learn not to waste but to share. It is not just a matter of charitable giving or distributing resources but also a desire to empower individuals and communities to become self-sufficient and actively participate in their own development. They do not believe in gatekeeping any of the workings but openly invite others to learn their model and apply it to their communities and affectees.

While talking to the in charge of outreach and engagement executive, she said the organization lays a great emphasis on inculcating the values of a good community worker. They are told differences of empathy and sympathy, how to engage with the beneficiaries, and how to make them feel connected with the community in its true sense. The volunteers come from all walks of life, from expensive schools to public university students, and they are trained not only to help with packing food but also to distribute, gather feedback, engage, and analyze their findings.

The emphasis on educating was evident from the fact that the team members' answers regarding food insecurity and hunger were quite similar to the answers given by the founding member. They believed that there was no such thing as people not having enough to eat, but rather, it was due to a lack of awareness about food waste. To address this issue, Rizq focuses on educating individuals and communities about food waste, its impact on hunger, and the importance of sharing resources. Resource mobilization theory (1977) saw successful organizations mobilizing their resources (volunteers) in a way that the goals were met. In the case of Rizq, they have more than a hundred chapters signed with different schools, colleges, and universities, and each chapter has its own leadership that overlooks its own inner workings. Very few NGOs have a dedicated volunteer system that actively engages and educates those around them, and Rizq is one of the few.

4.2. Challenges

Being an organization that aims to expand its projects, upscale its initiatives, and strive to end food insecurity and hunger, it is bound to face challenges along the way. Upon

asking the project heads about the challenges, they seem to not have many to quote, possibly due to the social desirability bias and the pressure to represent an organization and its ethos. However, mentioning the practical implications of their fieldwork did allow them to share the realities they navigate on a daily basis. The team emphasized the need for self-sufficiency in order to continue providing social services without worrying about funding. The organization's reliance on donor funds threatens its long-term sustainability. Economic fluctuations triggered by the global recession, as well as the political instability in the country, have created a situation where the donor's purchasing power has reduced significantly, and the poor have increased exponentially. The founding member Musa agreed that the country's current economic situation was making it very hard to keep the project running smoothly, and the number of donors was very low compared to previous years.

Additionally, while on-site for their projects, they have to face hurdles almost daily. Sometimes, it becomes a challenge to place food carts near the road. Despite having permits, they are unable to set up in certain areas due to local regulations or resistance from existing vendors. Many times, local vendors bribe the police or traffic wardens into uprooting the food carts or creating obstacles for them to operate. Some vendors fear competition from them and try their very best to make sure they do not work in that area by hurling abuses or resorting to vandalism. Sometimes, local authorities start to make issues regarding the space the carts take despite it being legal. The cart in charge, Akbar, felt that the lack of awareness and understanding about the work Rizq is doing also creates challenges for them. For example, many authority personnel cannot understand the price they charge for the plate of food, whether it's a charity or the emphasis on the quality and hygiene standards they maintain. According to him, people have a mentality of feeling threatened or lagging behind if they see others flourish. There is also the cultural habit of not accepting progressive or different ideas. When they install the food distribution points in the month of Muharram, distributing free food in remembrance of Imam Hussain, they sometimes face resistance and criticism from conservative elements within the community who oppose such practices. Given Rizq's ambition of expanding its ventures, it faces an issue of reaching the most in-need population. The ratio of the hungry and impoverished far outweighs the food insecurity. Additionally, with expansion arises the issue of quality control since ensuring consistent quality and hygiene of the food can be challenging,

especially because their vendors are externals to the organization. They are en route to solving that issue with their Gro Rizq initiative, which believes in the farm-to-fork concept and aims to include the supplies in their chains.

Theory of Access (2003) mentions the bundle of powers that affect access to resources since there is an interplay of societal forces that are economic, political, cultural, and religious. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistani society is conservative and traditional, where religion dictates every day, and acceptance of innovation and change is not welcomed easily. Rizq's simple yet innovative approaches, especially led by the youth, may face some resistance. The traditional mindset prevalent in some sects of society can be opposed or resistant to concepts that challenge their established notions. The volunteers in charge mentioned that sometimes they are not taken seriously because it is thought that they gather together just for fun's sake, and there is no real agenda. The resistance to change is not just limited to the public but can also be entrenched within local authorities or other stakeholders. Nonetheless, they have been successful in creating an image of perseverance and garnered respect in their beneficiaries' circles, but surviving in an arena where third parties might see them as threats or misunderstand their aims and objectives, it is important to recognize these at the earliest to be able to survive in the society and expand their field of operation.

In conclusion, the challenges are multifaceted, ranging from harassment and limited access to capital to issues with local regulations and resistance from existing vendors. Furthermore, the lack of public awareness and understanding about the charitable nature adds another layer of complexity. Addressing these challenges will require a multi-faceted approach, including better awareness campaigns, improved regulatory policies, and increased access to resources and capital.

4.3. Sociological Dimensions of Food Insecurity and Hunger

4.3.1. The Respondents

Setting 1: The Rizq Ration program is where Rizq provides flour, oil, and sugar to the needy on a monthly basis at a discounted price. Rizq locates communities and families using local community networks and organizations that help them identify food

insecurity. Families go through a very robust verification process before they are enrolled in 6-month cycles of the program.

Observations: 24 May 2022

The neighborhood is considered one of the more affluent areas of Lahore, but the city is characteristically known for squatter settlements near affluent areas or pockets of places where the incidence of poverty is high. As I maneuvered my way to the building, I could spot it from afar since it was near empty plots, peppered with some small residential homes circumventing the vicinity. One of the Rizq volunteers was able to help me locate the building, and as I entered, a line of women went out through the gate. There was a booth which was verifying the information provided by the recipients of the ration. Around 5-8 volunteers were also present. The ration distribution had started and was going to continue for the next 4 hours. The program manager provided me with a seat and gave a brief overview of what was happening and where they were at that point in time. The seat I sat on gave a clear view of the booth, which was verifying information and providing the ration essentials. I was told I could, at any point, ask the beneficiaries to give you an interview if they agreed to do so. Before I intervened in the process, I decided to observe the surroundings. The line was almost entirely of women, approximately between the ages of 30-55 years old. They were waiting for their turn as if they already knew how the process was. The volunteers ensured the ration provided matched the person on their lists, and I could hear some people murmuring about their difficulties and how grateful they were for the support they were receiving from Rizq. I also saw a lady who was standing away from the line, very engaged in the process. Upon inquiring, I was told that she was the principal of the school, which is run on weekdays here. Since it was a Sunday, they were using that space for their ration distribution. The project head told me that he had asked a few beneficiaries regarding the interview, and they were seated at the side of the room (Fig.3.) That allowed the respondents to speak their minds without any intervention by the Rizq's volunteers or heads. I interviewed four ladies who agreed to be interviewed, but they preferred to remain anonymous. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I have changed their names and will be using first names to ensure it is easier to locate the participants in the research. The project head also gave an interview as well as the principal of the Rukh Foundation. The picture attached has

been taken from the back due to the respondents' requests not to capture their faces. There is a strict observance of *purdah* in Pakistani society when a woman enters a public space, and every woman sighted can be seen wearing a long fabric called a dupatta wrapped around their head and chest. The cultural interpretation of *purdah* transcends the Islamic observance of covering the parts of the body and reflects an attitude where the women are expected to be less active in public life and are taken care of by a male member of the family, like a husband, brother, or father. One of the reasons for conducting this research was an attempt to gather real data representative of the women because a woman researcher can go beyond the *purdah* and access the real lives of the women who seldom voice their woes.



Figure 4.3. Rukh Foundation Ration Distribution

The first of the respondents was Kausar. A mother of 4 children who study at the same school. Kausar expressed her gratitude for the Rizq ration program, stating that it has been a lifeline for her family. She mentioned how difficult it had been for her to make ends meet before receiving the monthly ration from Rizq. She said it is impossible to buy these basics from outside because of the inflation. "We cannot even think of touching the food if we have to buy it from outside," is how she responded when asked how the situation was for her before and after the program. She also mentioned how her husband suffers from piles, and she has a kidney stone, which prevents her from working too much since she works as a housemaid. Upon asking if she had other sources of food, she mentioned how the women she works for occasionally give her some food, but that does not happen often, and her reliance on this program is very much there. I asked if she was content with what she was cooking at home, and she stated that while the ration essentials provided by Rizq were basic, they were sufficient to feed her family, and she was grateful for that. Before the program, she had to rely on the goodwill of neighbors and local charities for food support.

The second beneficiary, who gave consent to the interview, also expressed that she would remain anonymous and that we would refer to her as Nazia. Nazia, a widow, and mother of two young children, aged 5 and 8, shared her experience with the Rizq ration program. She explained how difficult her life had been after her husband's death as she struggled to provide for her children on her own. She works as a cleaner in one house and also occasionally stitches clothes. Her son, aged 5, is disabled and requires constant attention. Upon asking how life is for her at home, she replied that the son's treatment makes it difficult sometimes to have enough money to spend. She appreciates the support provided by the Rizq ration program, as it has helped alleviate some of the burden of providing food for her family when she was asked if the ration essentials were an aid to her. She doesn't need to take help from outside and has been a receiver of this ration for the last two years. Family support also helped her live her life with some ease. Nazia was asked if she knew what poverty is, and her answer was that when they do not have the means to, she feels heartbroken seeing people on the streets. "The other day, I cried when I saw a man eat something smelly from a garbage can. May Allah never make someone be in that position because begging for food is a very difficult thing." She was asked if she knew what food insecurity is and what

remedies to it, and she became a little shy, saying she didn't really feel like she had a comment to that.

Our third respondent, Nagina Bibi, was comfortable sharing her name. Nagina, a divorcee of age 53, was wearing very shabby clothes and knew very little Urdu. All of her answers were in Punjabi, but she easily understood my questions in Urdu. However, being illiterate, she had trouble expressing her ideas and resorted to non-verbal communication and sharing her life story and miseries with most of the questions. She said she was ill, and her condition made her unable to eat a lot. Her health deteriorated when her 14-year-old son died due to jaundice. She has another son who is a drug addict and a daughter she rarely sees who was given a job as a sweeper in a hospital. The husband became a burden for her as he, too, was into substance abuse and did not earn or contribute to the household. There was a spark in her eyes while talking about where she lived, which was right outside the building. It was a shabby old tent in a small plot, and she had been living there for the past 6-7 years with her son, who was missing the whole day, doing odd jobs to raise enough money for drugs. She said she ate only one meal a day, and this was sufficient for her. On days she is unable to cook, she requests lunch from a neighboring house; on the other days, she is dependent on the ration essentials provided by the Rizq project.

She expressed gratitude and thanked Allah for the support she receives from Rizq and the kindness of the lady who requested the Rizq officials to provide her with ration essentials. She said the team thoroughly scrutinized my home and inquired about my livelihood before providing the ration essentials. She added, "I want to ask the government where the money goes. Where is it? Us poor people never get it." On the discussion of the problem of hunger and how it can be solved, she said, "I think people like these and ventures like these should get a lot, a lot of it so that they share it with us.." It was evident she had trouble understanding the concept of hunger and food insecurity and lacked knowledge of how interventions could be implemented to address these issues. For her, life was a daily struggle, and poverty was the biggest challenge she faced.

The fourth respondent willingly participated in the interview but requested anonymity and confidentiality for her personal information. Her name is Fauzia, and she is

responsible for this discussion. Fauzia has four children, aged 12,7,4 and 2. She suffers from hepatitis C and is still on medication. She thanked a lady for paying for her treatment. Her husband was critically ill, too. It has been six months since she took a ration from the program. They took a month to verify her case and then started getting ration the next month. She learned about it through her daughter, who studies at the Rukh Foundation School. Fauzia shared that before receiving ration essentials from the Rizq project, managing food was very difficult. She said, "Whoever has the means should help those that don't; doing it on a small scale is good, especially for those that do not want to beg, "We don't ask for anything, we don't ask for any properties or wealth, we just ask for food every day," "The *bajis* (sisters) tell us how abroad they lower the prices of food essentials in Ramzan and here when Ramzan comes, they raise the prices. We don't have the privilege of eating fruits, and I see excess food thrown in the garbage. I do not wish to be ungrateful, but I see big houses throwing food, and we, the labor class, work all day and barely get to eat. She again expressed her gratitude for the program, sorting her food for the entire month, for there were days she did not cook due to a lack of ingredients. Inflation was her biggest hurdle in making ends meet, and she sought Allah's help to make life easy. Upon inquiring how Rizq does things differently, she said that many NGOs they reached out to took all their information and ID cards, but they never heard back from them. Another beneficiary added to the conversation, saying they take that money for themselves. On asking what can be done to eliminate hunger, she proposed that more institutes like Rizq should be established to provide ration essentials to the needy.

Setting 2: The food carts

Observations: 27.10.2023

The data collected for this project was on the road outside Shaukat Khanum Cancer Hospital, Johar Town, Lahore. The hospital is the top cancer hospital in the country, covering 75% of patients' expenses for free. The food cart was located right outside the gate. A boy wearing gloves and a hairnet was handling the food, which was given in disposable utensils. The time was around 12:30 pm, which was the start of the lunch hour, and when I reached, there were already two people eating a plate of rice and lentils, as illustrated in the following photograph (Figure 4):



Figure 4.4. Food Cart Outside Shaukat Khanum Hospital

The cart had all the hygiene standards strictly maintained. In terms of portion size, there was a little notice board attached to the side of the cart that mentioned the amount of weight one should get according to the portion order. In the case of a smaller portion size offered, a complaint number was displayed. Fig.4. presents a stark juxtaposition of two different worlds divided by barbed wires. The inside world has state-of-the-art facilities and a well-equipped kitchen that provides quality and hygienic meals for the patients, staff, and visitors. Although the majority of the people treated inside belong to the lower classes, they are in an illusion of luxury inside. However, the luxury is ephemeral once they cross the high walls to the reality check outside, where procuring one meal a day becomes an arduous task. I almost immediately gravitated to the man

resting his back next to the tree. He seemed disconnected from the ruckus of the world around him and focused only on his food. I asked him for his name, and he replied that it was Zeeshan.

Zeeshan was orphaned when he was in the third grade. His parents passed away, and he was abandoned by his older brother. He stopped going to school and had nowhere to go; he lived his life on the streets. Now, at age 27, he works as a roadside massager with only two small bottles of oil that he can claim as his property. Unmarried, orphaned, homeless, and a migrant from Sialkot (a city in Punjab), his life trials and tribulations were visible on his face. His voice was low, but he had confidence in it. His posture was weak, but his hand was steady. His expressions were calm, but his eyes had a different story. He said when he was new to the city, he felt like an alien. He said people treated him badly and did not give him money for the odd jobs he did. He said it was because he was a “*pardesi*” (*foreigner*), and thus, he was powerless. Zeeshan mentioned how eating food every day was a struggle since he did not know if he would earn that day or not. There were times he had suicidal thoughts, too. He had to resort to begging and expressed that he felt ashamed when he had to beg. He was grateful for the food cart for providing him with a meal, sometimes even free, if he hadn’t eaten anything the whole day. However, sometimes, the food cart boys, since they kept changing, would be rude and tell him to move away, calling him names.

Ahmed Hassan was also another customer of the food cart. This food cart was 20 minutes away from the hospital location. This was situated outside a gated housing community on a busy road. A group of daily wagers and rickshaw drivers were gathered around the food stall. Amidst them was Ahmed, who was 28 years old, studied till high school, and was well versed in English. He was unmarried and lived with his mother, who was a government teacher. On asking about the issue of hunger and food insecurity, he believed it was due to the poor faith of the rulers. He said his heart is full of pain seeing injustice in this country and the unIslamic and corrupt leadership that has ruined the lives of the people. He said he works as a fittings worker in a plumbing shop but is unsure whether he will have this job the next day or not. On the idea of hunger and food insecurity, he said it was only due to society moving away from the teachings of Islam. He started crying in the middle of the interview and said that he could not see the sufferings of those around him. He also said that food is

provided by Allah, that the Rizq organization is a channel through which people are helped, and that Allah rewards them for that. He, too, was grateful that he was able to eat at such an affordable rate and said that he had not eaten lunch since yesterday.

Sheraz, aged 57, was a rickshaw driver and father to three daughters. He categorized himself as “*safaid posh*,” which in a literal sense means clothed in white and is used to denote a social class that is understood to be a respectable, middle-class person that is close to the lifestyle of a white collared person. Since he cannot ask for money, he works 12-13 hours per day to feed the family; before that, he needed to work 8 hours. Upon asking what he understood about hunger as a phenomenon, he said that people have drifted away from religion, which is why Allah has drifted away from us, and hence, we suffer. As a father of three, he said he needs to manage his monthly groceries, limit milk consumption, and make sure we have enough vegetables and pulses to last us the month. We cannot afford the luxuries of the rich, nor can we have a balanced, nutritious diet despite knowing healthy food. When we can’t afford it, we do not think about it; our main concern is to keep our tummies full. He appreciated Rizq’s efforts in battling the issue of food waste and was very satisfied with his meal, which he had the first time. The price on the cart is what attracted him the most and was grateful that such ventures, although rare, still exist that can help people like him who will never visibly show they are hungry or struggling to make ends meet since they are *safaid posh*.

Mujahid Hussain, 61, is a cancer patient. He has two daughters and one son. The son works in the health department, and one daughter is married, and the other is studying. He had visited the food carts multiple times since they were set up. He linked hunger with unemployment and inflation. To give a fair picture of his situation and link it with the societal situation, he mentioned how, in the recent past, he used to get a week’s worth of groceries for 500Rs, and now the situation is so bad that keeping 1500Rs for the daily grocery is not enough. According to him, some mafias run the country, and ventures like Rizq are a source of blessing. However, he said that there was a time when these food carts used to serve rice with meat at half the cost and wished they would start that again at least for two days a week. He knew that the plate they served was of good quality, but he was very persistent and said that Rizq should offer more than rice and lentils.

Another lady interviewed did not wish to have her name disclosed. Her name is Safina, and she will be conducting the research. She was 40 years old, a housewife with four children, and a cancer patient undergoing treatment. Her husband was a *zamindar*, which means he was a landowner. Her interview was very brief, as she had somewhere to go, and her answers were not as in-depth as the rest of the respondents. She was very impressed with the food cart and said she couldn't believe her eyes when she read the price of the food. She also mentioned that the ongoing inflation and the people "on top" had made a living very difficult, especially for the "safe posh" who do not ask for help from others. She mentioned monthly groceries were not a bigger challenge than the rise in the price of petrol, which was hampering her daily life. She said sending children to school every day was becoming very difficult. She said she would rather prioritize sending children to school than worrying about their food needs. Her response could be that the earnings were comfortable enough for her to be able to sideline food procurement, as those must be happening without any problems, as she also mentioned in one part of the interview.

Muhammad Jamil, 48, was an office boy at the university nearby who had two children. He had a very philosophical approach to the issue of hunger and food insecurity. According to him, the people suffer because our actions and beliefs have drifted away from Islam, and the problems we face are a result of that disbelief. Allah provides *Rizq* (food), and onto him, we should return, and it is only He who controls the provision of goods. He said that with his salary of 28,000 Rs, he can only pay rent and utilities, and the rest is provided by Allah. Once, he was walking on the road, and a person stopped him mid-way. He was afraid that he had done something wrong, but a person handed him a bag full of groceries and said he could keep it. He added that he believes that if you do things with pure intention, then Allah will sort out ways for you. He did not deem it appropriate to blame the government for the current situation of inflation, for it is more of an issue of good and bad deeds. He came to Lahore from a small city in 2013 and compared the prices of rents, food, and salaries over the years. Till 2020, things were not bad, but afterward, there has been a surge in the prices of things that are impossible for a poor person to manage. He says meat is a luxury that is seldom cooked, and when it does, it feels like a wedding feast. Vegetables are even expensive. Tea is only consumed once a day, and for that, too, tea whitener is added instead of real milk. He was appreciative of the efforts of Rizq and proposed that the

rich have a responsibility to take care of the poor and they should make sure there aren't hungry people around them. His wife suffers from black jaundice and said that the diets are not pure or nutritious because everything is adulterated in the market, and we are always exposed to a bad diet.

4.3.2. The Help

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Ribot and Peluso's Theory of Access (2003) sees access as an analytical tool by which the person gains the ability to derive benefit from things. They focus on the abilities of social relationships to derive benefits from things that are dependent on the "web of powers," which are socioeconomic, political, and cultural. Within these complexities, there are bundles of powers that are the ability of the individual or groups to derive benefit from things and control access to that resource. In the case of Rizq, they have the necessary "mechanisms of access" that include technology, capital, markets, labor, knowledge, authority, identity, and social relations. After conducting interviews with the four members of the organization, one co-founder, and one volunteer who later became a part of the organization, the inner workings are highlighted. They can use their technology, labor, knowledge, identity, and social relations to connect with donors, gather food supplies, and distribute them effectively to those in need. Moreover, Rizq's authority and capital enable them to establish partnerships with other organizations and negotiate better deals for purchasing supplies in bulk, thus maximizing their impact on addressing hunger. They also ensure in their planning that physical access is not hampered in any way by employing efficient logistics and distribution systems. The food cart placements, the analysis of the maximum footfall of the people who need their services, and the strategic placement of distribution centers all contribute to their ability to provide timely access to food for those in need. Another perspective in the strategy employed by Rizq ensures targeting communities that others cannot access. Rizq does not function in affluent areas because there are already several helping groups that cater to the slums on their peripheries, especially the residents there. They make sure they can establish systems of distribution in areas that are underserved or marginalized, where access to food and resources may be limited due to various socio-economic factors.

Additionally, there is another lens by which Rizq sees access. While it is evident that they recognize that access is not solely about physical availability but also about the ability of individuals and communities to exercise agency and make decisions regarding their resources, they also believe that too much access to food provided by them can be troublesome long-term. They are aware of the power dynamics at play and strive to empower individuals and communities to take charge of their food security by promoting sustainable practices and education. The rationing program started initially by providing necessary edibles free of cost to those in need, but it slowly evolved to a subsidized ration program, where individuals are required to pay a small amount for the food they receive for six months. The idea is to promote the feeling of taking ownership and initiative to secure for themselves their food. Rizq also collaborates with various organizations to empower people to be able to work or secure jobs so they become self-sustaining and can escape the cycle of hunger and food insecurity. Their scholarship program is also an attempt to uplift the sections of the community that would otherwise be unable to stand on their own feet. Musa, the co-founder, did not call Rizq a charity because he did not find it sustainable to be a charity alone; he believed in running a social business that can uplift communities collectively for years to come.

4.3.3. The Hungry

Ribot and Peluso's theory of access provides a comprehensive understanding of how Rizq has been able to navigate the complex web of powers to ensure the efficient delivery of essential resources to marginalized communities. How the hungry engage with the concept of access is another important research domain. How the bundle of powers in the web of powers equips or strips them of the ability to procure food is a question of immense sociological importance. The interviews conducted with the ten beneficiaries revealed that the economic access domain was indeed a major problem for them. Not having enough money was an obstacle in their eyes that hampered their ability to access food. All four respondents relied on the food ration provided by Rizq due to the lack of stable income sources. They all seemed to work low-wage jobs like housemaids, cleaners, or other irregular jobs. However, looking at the definition of hunger and food insecurity provided by Poppendieck (1999), hunger is a symptom of economic and income inequality, which itself is a result of societal structures and

systems. Their inability to secure good jobs could stem from the fact the education system failed them, the job market is unable to produce jobs, or the economy is unstable. Almost all the interviewed beneficiaries lacked social support and faced some form of social isolation. For instance, Nagina seemed to be estranged from her family. This estrangement could result in a lack of support, both emotionally and physically, curbing her access to assistance or resources that families provide to each other. A common sentiment felt by the respondents pointed towards neglect from both societal structures and government. They expressed a sense of abandonment, feeling as if the government structures meant to support them were nonexistent. This dissatisfaction underscores the respondent's struggle to meet their primary needs, thus reinforcing their dependence on Rizq.

The health issues faced by the respondents or their family members contribute significantly to their socioeconomic struggles. Nagina suffered from kidney stones, Kausar battled with her family's drug addiction, and Fauzia dealt with hepatitis C. These health conditions became an obstacle to finding consistent employment and also drained their already limited resources to pay for medical treatments and medicines. Additionally, chronic health conditions could potentially lead to long-term disability, further exacerbating their mental health and overall condition. As Mathur (2011) previously mentioned, women are harder hit and more vulnerable to the conditions of food insecurity. Apart from being in a disadvantaged position in society, which is strictly patriarchal and cultural norms inhibit the level of movement they can do in public spaces, they are further burdened with the cultural expectation that they are responsible for feeding the families. The gendered dimension of food insecurity also puts men at a disadvantage. Zeeshan believed it was easier for women to gain sympathy from society and it was easier for them to ask for food than men. There is a feeling of honor that hurts men more if they beg, and people have harsher attitudes toward men than women if they ask for food. He was even denied entry to police stations and shrines based on his physical appearance. Ahmed Hassan said that he sometimes felt burdened being a son since the responsibility of providing for the family solely rested on him. He, too, recalled an incident where he was refused to be given a job based on his appearance (beard, traditional clothes) and labeled him as a religious man. According to him, they felt uncomfortable around someone who strictly followed religion since he would stop them from wrongdoings.

The state of being at a social disadvantage due to their economic disadvantage, which in turn is due to structural inequality, forces these individuals to be highly dependent on organizations like Rizq. This dependency is not just financial but also psychological, as the lack of a self-sustaining livelihood affects their self-esteem. This situation becomes worse due to fear of the continuation of these services. Take the case of Zeeshan, who used to do massages on the roadside and was homeless. He decided to seek refuge at a small park near the food cart so that he was able to at least eat one meal a day. Even when he didn't have money to pay for the food, he found the server to be kind enough to let him eat anyway. Although Rizq actively works to ensure such dependencies do not develop in their beneficiaries, they eventually do develop, and erasing such dependencies will take the effort for broader social interventions beyond food aid, such as providing skills or training, or employment opportunities.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through the firsthand testimonies of recipients of the Rizq programs and the members of the organization, this study offers an insightful glimpse into the very tangible impact of food aid initiatives amongst vulnerable populations. Despite the diverse backgrounds and circumstances described by the participants, one theme found consistent was that of gratitude for a program ensuring essential food security, thereby eliminating a significant daily struggle. It also showed how the organization was successful in mobilizing its resources. Yet, the narratives also brought out the stark limitations that they continue to endure, such as health issues, inflation, politics, etc.

The analysis demonstrated how a small-scale NPO like Rizq operates in a city that resides close to 14 million people. It also demonstrates how the will of a few can transcend the structural barriers and offer solutions that can be practical and lean less reliance on the flailing government bodies that are unable to keep up with the demands of the increasing population. Over the years, the city administration has had transportation infrastructural development as its foremost priority and has left other necessities as secondary, if noticed at all. These developments have led to Lahore being one of the most polluted cities in the world, with smog levels at an alarmingly high rate, worsening the quality of life of the residents. Amidst these conditions, a community and youth-led initiative that caters to the immediate demands of its people with the right combination of intervention and resource mobilization offers a fresh and hopeful solution to the dilemma of food insecurity and hunger.

The analysis also showed how the dilemma is a major one. The lives of the beneficiaries grapple with multiple challenges in their everyday. Amidst these challenges, the most profound is that of filling their bellies, no matter how and with what. Rizq aims to understand their concerns and offer aid in ways that not only alleviate their poor quality of life but inspire them to create a livelihood for themselves.

The name Rizq is what connects the Hungry with the Help: almost all the beneficiaries had a firm belief that rizq(sustenance) is provided by Allah and people are just the channels by which the divine helps His creations. The Rizq organization was named after the same belief system, and its members fully incorporated those ethos. It is an organization that prides itself in the respect and loyalty it gives to its cause and the people working for it. The testimonies demonstrate not only the human value but also the necessity of initiatives like the Rizq ration program in societies grappling with profound food and income insecurities. They supplement the beneficiaries' efforts to secure necessities and better their living conditions in the face of adversity. Moreover, the suggestion by the beneficiaries to create more institutions like Rizq underscores the collective public will to tackle hunger and poverty. However, the study also points out the overarching societal issues that contribute to food insecurity and disproportionately affect certain groups. From the interviews, it is clear that a mix of economic, social, cultural, political, and religious factors limit their food access, leading to a heavy reliance on food aid. This shows a clear need for broader societal interventions that extend beyond just providing food aid. These should aim to create stable incomes and improve healthcare and social support as well as provide a politically and economically stable society. Psychologically, too, there is a dilemma: the distrust and hopelessness of the government in alleviating their pains. There needs to be interventions that create a feeling of trust in the people again.

Further studies that include bigger sample sizes and reach greater geographical limitations are needed. The nature of the study was such that the beneficiaries hailed the efforts of Rizq since they were direct recipients of the help, and some degree of social desirability is possible here. Studies that incorporate triangulation models of methodology that would look at alternative ways to gauge the efficacy of such initiatives will be a good step in ensuring the reliability and validity of the data collected.

As we move towards a more inclusive and food-secure world, the Rizq ration program and initiatives like it serve as keystone examples of combating food scarcity and poverty. More importantly, we must remember that they act as short-term alleviations to a multifaceted issue that calls for long-term and sustainable solutions.

Understanding and acknowledging this is the first step towards a world where food, a fundamental human right, is accessible to every individual.



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- *Project titled: "Women, Work, and Food Consumer Attitude." A Quantitative Research designed to analyze the relationship between the employment status of wives and their consumer attitude toward food.*

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