

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND EMPOWERMENT IN HORIZONTAL GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS: CASE STUDY OF KARACHI BACHAO TEHREEK

by

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There is an increasing interest in horizontally structured grassroots organizations, but there is a lack of in-depth case study analysis of how such organizations function and evolve - especially in the geographic context of Pakistan. Using the case of Karachi Bachao Tehreek (KBT), which is a grassroots organization that includes activists and residents resisting evictions in Karachi, Pakistan, the thesis focuses on these research questions: the organizational structure of KBT; internal challenges related to empowerment of mutasireen (people affected by demolitions); and external challenges to grassroots organizing in Pakistan.

I conducted 11 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 13 members of KBT. The data were analyzed through grounded theory method and coding. While KBT claims to maintain a leaderless horizontal structure, I found that informal hierarchy emerges naturally in the absence of formal structure. KBT has been successful at empowering mutasireen through its internal structural aspects, such as by providing opportunity role structure and subgroup formations. The structure of committee subgroups also allows KBT to remain flexible and sustainable in a resource scarce and unpredictable environment. However, KBT also faces various challenges, including state violence, burnout and lack of funds.

Due to major interpersonal conflicts, KBT has subsequently felt the need to restructure and become more formalized. This move towards formalization is consistent with resource

mobilization theory. Through this restructuring, there is also potential for KBT to move towards the model of community organizing.

Embedded in Pakistan's context, the research provides important lessons on successful grassroots organizing practices along with the challenges that arise in this work. This research can help KBT and other organizations improve their organizing practices, and also fills an important gap in the literature of social movements and grassroots organizing in Pakistan. However, additional research is still required on grassroots organizational structure in different contexts, the challenges they face and how they maintain the balance between having an informal or formal structure.

**Keywords: Grassroots Organizations; Horizontalism; Social Movements; Organizational Structure; Organizational Empowerment**