

Received: 23 December 2023, Accepted: 17 January 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33282/rr.vx9il.87>

Exploring Educational, Occupational, and Familial Support for the Transgender Community: A Qualitative Perspective

Khadija Ghulam Hussain¹, Lubna Aram Azam², Dr. Farooq Ahmed³, Dr. Mudasar Jahan⁴, Dr. Rukaiza Khan⁵

1. Associate Lecturer, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan. khadija.ghulam@uog.edu.pk

2. Lecturer in English, AJ&k University of Bhimber. lubna.azam12@gmail.com

3. Mirpur University of science and technology Mirpur. farooq.eng@must.edu.pk

4. Department of English, University of Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

mudasar.jehan@uog.edu.pk

5. Assistant Professor, National University of Science and Technology, Islamabad.

rukaiza.khan@ceme.nust.edu.pk

Abstract

This study delves deeply into the experiences of the transgender community in Pakistan. The savagery they face for something they did not even opt for and lastly, given the opportunity, their desire, their willingness to live a reverent life like standard genders among which they cannot even walk freely. This research reckons lives of transgender in four different aspects of life. Starting from Profession and Employment, research showed 90% of interviewed transgender community was involved in begging and dancing with just 10% were self-employed mostly because of their strong background. Secondly, more than 90% of participants were illiterate, very small percentage had minor education and even rare ones had education up to intermediate level, and the major reason behind this was „no social acceptance“. Research also indicated most of the transgender would have opted for a different, more respectable profession if they had a certain level of education. Third part of research aimed towards their economic conditions and results stated that 95% were in poor economic conditions that enforced them to beg or dance. Lastly, all this research brought us up to a stance that transgender who have family support at their backs never opt for begging or dancing. 90% transgender did not have family support which also reflects the percentage of transgender involved in begging.

Keywords: Transgender, Education, Willingness, Family support.

Introduction

In 2009, Supreme Court of Pakistan passed the decision of officially recognizing

transgender as a third gender and awarded them the right to register as a third gender on CNICs. The court also ruled that they are equally entitled to all the rights guaranteed by the Constitution which are enjoyed by the rest of the society. That is they are given the right to vote, are entitled to have a fair share in inheritance, easy accessibility to a good quality of education and have a right to get decent jobs on merit. Unfortunately, these are nothing but hollow promises and are only guaranteed on a piece of paper. In reality, transgender community is the least respected part of the society and because of this they suffer personal stigmatization and intense institutional discrimination in every aspect of their life. For most of them, their livelihood depends upon singing, dancing, begging and prostitution. Transgender community is the most illiterate part of society. This illiteracy leads to lack of job opportunities which they could opt in order to lead a decent, respectable life. Even those small percentages of transgender who are supported by their families become a pray to the narrow mindset of this society and are shunted and humiliated by their many teachers and peers during their educational life and when they apply for job, if they apply, are rejected by the companies because they don't „fit in“.

Many studies have been conducted on the isolation of transgender community from educational institution and how the isolation closes the door for them to get decent and honorable jobs. One such study, (Naila and Aqsa, 2016) tries to evaluate the status of occupational skills and willingness of transgender population to change and switch over to other jobs if given the right opportunities. This research highlights the severity of the behavior of teachers and mates towards transgender at any educational institutions. These inhumane attitudes make them to leave education thus, forever closing the doors to decent and respectable employments in the society. According to this research, 79 percent of the surveyed population of transgender in Pakistan is uneducated and the main reason for a high percentage of illiteracy is due to gender discrimination, sexual and verbal harassment, beating by teachers and lack of finance. This ultimately forces them to participate in acts of begging, dancing and prostitution in order to earn livelihood. This research also tries to highlight the damages done to socio- economic strength of Pakistan. Transgender community makes up approximately 2 percent of the total

population of Pakistan and most of this percentage is illiterate and rather helping the society, they have become a burden and thus, are very damaging to the social and economic growth of a developing country. This research also provided with the recommendation on how to increase the literacy of transgender community. Authors provided with solutions like government fixing quota in all public and private institutions to accommodate the third gender, provide financial support to them and create an accommodating environment. Strengthen the legal support for them by passing some kind of law which prohibits and penalizes those who make fun or harasses them at educational and professional institutes. Also, the study emphasizes on the need of awareness and education to all segments of society about transgender and this is to be done by including special courses in the curriculum of college and university which emphasizes on third gender and how their biological differences does not make them a lesser being.

However, this study does not incorporate the interviews or stories of individuals among the transgender community and hence is unable to deliver the ground realities and their current statuses. This study failed to provide the viewpoints of transgender about what they want and how to make their lives better.

This study do not only targeted to the eunuch's community but also to the privileged society of this country. It aims to explain how the conservative mindset of the fortunate part of the society is severely deteriorating the intelligence, confidence and dreams of these individuals and how does this have a grave effect on our society collectively. It sheds light upon the reality of transgender as a citizen of Pakistan. It also explores the barbaric conditions which they call their normal day to day life. This may help in improving their quality of life by highlighting the problems in getting education and finding decent jobs.

Literature Review

The key analysis of previous papers indicates an exponential base of Queer theory (Annamarie, 1996; Patrick, 1999), used by researchers to support post-structuralism breakdown of educational and employment issues with respect to transgender community. The incorporation of social identities with educational and employment paradigms is an emerging theoretical orientation. While Queer theory was initially condemned for its possible deficiency to ignore the social models of transgender

people (Ki Namaste, 1996), the theorists over the years have systematically worked on queer phase of transgender (Katrina, 2001).

Research practices prevalent in this field that have been collaborated and congregated over a span of last few decades provide a detailed sight into the transgender population and their distinguished aspects (Ellen, 1994). The theories that circulate about existence and physical traits of transgender vary with respect to culture, area and religion with no definite scientific agreement in a particular direction. The biological, cultural, regional and psychological background of these theories makes it more unrealistic and challenging to implement them coherently in a single phase. Cultural theories are mainly focused on identification and projection of transgender in a society and their reflection based on social paradigms that exist within the subjected culture. Biological perspectives align the transgender on the basis of chromosomes and different or not normal chromosomes are identified as intersex, which on certain pretext may be transgender. The medical models relate imbalance of hormones with existence and upbringing of transgender. The prospects of civil and political rights of transgender are viable only to institutionalized measures with support of LGBT or queer theory. In addition, postmodern feminist theory has opened new dimensions in support of transgender; many feminist perspectives are embracing transgender to openly align it with other archetypes (Eleanor, 1998).

Considering the findings of foregoing studies, the first stage of public integration for a transgender is school and it's the same place where societal insecurity, physical abuse and verbal harassment has been reported by transgender (Riaz, 1996). The beatings by teachers which were comparatively amplified due to issue of gender familiarity and emotional trauma suffered at the hands of students are a common norm for transgender community (Berk, 1999). These forms of insecurities often lead to transgender avoiding schools and reaching out to illiterate older transgender for employment preservations (Eriksen, 2010). A few transgender however, in spite of facing these insecurities move along with their education just because of high level financial security at their end (Haider, 2009). Investigating the prime factors in this situation, it is established that an omnipresent environment of discernment and predisposition against transgender community is prevalent within Pakistan. The economic demarcation and educational blockage is vehemently concomitant with people's norms regarding gender (Emilia, 2002). In Pakistan, Transgender community

have long been denied the basic human rights, educational facilities and respectable professional opportunities. The Supreme Court's decision of 2009 to grant transgenders, all basic human rights paved way for measures at government level but the fact remains that their lives are more discordant than what is portrayed by state (Nadia, 2012). Transgenders continue to live in a state of misery and disparity in Pakistan. Discernment against them is not systematic and structural to culture but entrenched in their social integration which casts an effect on their educational and employment credentials (Sadia, 2014). The fiscal stalemate allied with transgender community's discriminatory employment status gives rise to improbable state of economic volatility. The economic predicament has comparatively been controlled by the inclusion of political dimension into the transgender disparity concern. The human right entities have conceptualized transgender in terms of political nature to guard their social insecurities (William, 2006). Institutional work that abides by the law in framing the rights and political direction of transgender is critical in today's era. In south-east Asian countries, a large scale and brief study or institution is not present that would account for the political, social, and economic rights of transgender. The dilemma of third gender in Pakistan is mainly constructive due to passive approach of political measures on transgender front. The major hindrance in this regard is the lack of formal data, which compels the inactive and unreceptive obverse of transgender community.

In Pakistan, there are major issues and varying reports on the population of transgender community. The Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC) issued by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) under the domain of „transgender“ amounts to around 4000. These CNICs have the category „X“, which include transman, transwoman, and intersex (NADRA Central Directorate Official, 2016). Moreover, at the non-governmental level the UNAIDs Department's Control program's annual report also provides insight into the population estimates of transgender in Pakistan. According to the 2015 report, the approximate population of transgender is estimated to be around 150,000 which further instigate the significance of matter. Since the socioeconomic arrangement of country is such that it propels the transgender away from the educational institutions, the literacy rate for transgender is extremely low in Pakistan.

Aim & Objectives

The research being conducted and viewed aims at maintaining coherence with the problems of education among transgender population in Pakistan. The socioeconomic structure and restricted recognition bounds the exposure and rights of transgender. The study proposes to find the educational background and needs associated with literacy along with the employment status and economic conditions of transgender community in Pakistan. It further takes into account the jobs and professional upbringing of the transgender. Considering the existing situation of Pakistan where non acceptance of social diversity is a norm, the rights of transgender from educational perspective are of fair importance and this study aims at providing an outlook on the operational sightedness of major ambiguities in the system. Categorizing in form of formal ramifications, the objectives of this study are:

- 1.To highlight the educational problems of the transgender Community.
- 2.To evaluate the employability status and Job willingness of transgender.
- 3.To consider the factor of family backing and financial support.
- 4.To remotely review the government's role in sustenance of transgender community.

Research Methodology

Transgender reflects a group of individuals who enjoy the least amount of respect and rights in Pakistan. They are among the most oppressed communities and suffer extreme personal stigmatization and intense institutional discrimination in almost all aspects of their lives. Due to the typical and narrow mindset of most people, the subject of transgender and their basic rights are considered as a taboo and are not even discussed in the most „sophisticated“ and „learned“ part of the society. A large majority of „normal“ individuals do not even consider them as a part of their community. Because of this stereotypical attitude, transgender are often faced with massive rejection and transphobic violence in almost every part of the country. We always wondered why the word „transgender“ is dealt with such hatred and negatively in our society. Why they are always associated with works like begging, dancing, promiscuous activities and other ills of the society? Why are they among the most uneducated part of the country? And why are they not given respectable jobs in the society? These questions triggers to conduct this investigation as a research study A research methodology is an integrated part describing the nature of research work,

based on a number of different aspects and plots that make up the research framework. (Rubin and Babbie, 2012). The research was approached from a transformative/advocacy view because we are dealing with the efforts and contributions that help in reforming the society and also highlighting the problems faced by the marginalized section of a society. It is based particularly on queer theory that involves the study of transgender, LGBT, homosexuals, and bisexuals etc. in this research the problems faced by the transgender community in acquiring education and employment

While using qualitative approach ,the interview technique was implied for collecting information for this study k. Punjab province was chosen for conduction of the interviews. Initially, problems were faced in collecting data because some of them were hesitant in allowing us to enter their area for the interviews. Transgender which were found begging in market places and along roadsides were scared suspicious about the interviews and in order to gain their trust, some compensation was done(money was given) . So along with the interviews, we also opted for another method for data collection. Social media was used to gather a list of contact number of various organizations and NGOs working for the betterment of transgender. We discussed the gist of our research work with the concerned individuals of the organizations and managed to get interviews with few transgender who benefited from the organizations and are now living a respectable life in the society. As the questions were open ended, they were asked in Urdu, so that language doesn't become a barrier for them to share their thoughts and views because most of them were not educated to understand or answer in English. So in order to make them feel comfortable and to keep their pride intact, Urdu was selected as mode of communication. However, translation was done carefully so that the actual meaning of information does not change. About 10 interviews were conducted and all were individual in nature. Interviews were taken on phone because many of them did not want their identity to be revealed.

Each interview lasted around 20-25 minutes and recordings were heralded as references.

This research sheds light on the educational and employment issues faced by transgender. Following are the set of 8 different interview questions asked from the selected respondents for this study:-

1. What are the problems faced by transgender in acquiring socially acceptable and benefiting jobs?
2. What is the role of government in tackling the most basic issues faced by the transgender community?
3. How the limited job opportunities effect the standards of living for transgender?
4. What collective efforts have been done by the privileged part of the society in uplifting their standards of living?
5. Are these contributions more than enough to provide them with basic personal and institutional security which is a basic right of each and every citizen of a country?
6. What are the reasons for an alarmingly low literacy rate of transgender community?
7. How does the difference in behavior of teachers and colleagues affect their education?
8. What difficulties and hardships they face in educational institutions and job centers?

The term „transgender“ refers to a group of individuals who express gender in ways that deviate from the gender binary, and includes transsexual, cross-dressers and others. In Pakistan three terms, hijra, khusra and zenana are commonly used to classify the transgender community. The meaning of hijra in Urdu is eunuch or hermaphrodite. The word implies an inability to perform a male sexual role. The term khusra is mainly used in the Punjab province and has the same meaning, eunuch, and is used in the same sense as hijra in the other parts of the country. Hijra and khusra are further divided into two categories, hijra by birth and hijra not by birth. Individuals born intersex or born with sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical definition of gender binary are also called asli. Hijras who have undergone sex reassignment surgery and are living a life of women are simply called trans woman.

The third term, zenana is an Urdu word meaning feminine and use to describe individuals with physical attributes of male but have a strong female attributes to their day to day works and in their actions. They act as women but have no desire to undergo emasculation. To avoid any unnecessary confusion in the research paper, the term transgender is loosely used in a broader spectrum to include all the categories of transsexual.

Results:

Through thorough text analysis and integrated qualitative methods, different responses were sought from diverse ranged methods and themes. Some common patterns were identified within the transgender population. It was clinched that all transgenders were in favour of education and termed it as one of the principle aspect in childhood. The dishonourable jobs associated with transgender community are even looked down upon in the transgender hemisphere, thus most of the population is ready to leave their current jobs, if other respectable means are provided. The major reasons behind disharmony in their lives are due to poverty, absence of family support and social integration issues. Lastly, non-appearance of government support at any level is a major problem for transgender community in realizing their rights. In the recent years, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken a few steps to harmonize and integrate the transgender into society but no-action policy from the government has seriously depreciated the efforts and currently the conditions of transgenders in Pakistan with respect to education and employment is intimidating and hostile.

Analysis and Discussion:

The state of transgender community in Pakistan is inimical and unpropitious at the same time. The present study and surveys conducted broadly to access the nature and feasibility of education among transgender community in Pakistan indicate a strong affluence of illiteracy among them. The conditions prevalent in country are defluctive of the fact that social integration is directly related to gender discrimination and access to basic education, especially in Asian states. The existing national dilemma in educational front is associated with lack of mass acceptance for transgender community. Transgender people and their families are wary of their presence in educational institutions and prefer to remain at home. In a Pakistani society, being a parent of a transgender is a catastrophic tribulation. Apart from exclusion from communal gatherings and restricted admittance to self-rights, the parents of the transgender face financial and social problems. Moreover, the current educational scenario of Pakistan; with illiteracy rate spanning downwards over the recent years has contributed exponentially to this problem. Low literacy rate strains the thinking of parents to a point where they are forced by norms and social pressure to disown their

transgender child, thus paving way for them to grow-up in the vicinity of other transgender. These established transgender which cater the needs of young transgender along with teaching them the art of dancing and begging are referred to as "Gurus". This norm and system propels the transgender away from a normal life into one that is deemed dishonourable. A recent research into the realms of transgender community in Pakistan reflects that 79% of the population of transgender in Pakistan is illiterate. The main motives behind these contrasting differences lie in financial problems, social discrimination, gender inequality, and harassment in schools and workplaces. Due to these torments, a major proportion of transgender resort to professions like dancing and begging. The present study directs on the same principles to highlight the educational plight of transgender community. The study replicates that 90% of the participants (transgender) were uneducated and illiterate. The rest of 10% that underwent education was just up to a very minimal level (A.Khan, 2008). The current survey and tests conducted manifest that very few transgender, who have attained any sort of formal education. Much of population under examination during current phase was uneducated and unfortunately not even a single one was having an undergraduate level degree. The 10% population with basic formal education included a few from primary background and specifically one individual who had attained or cleared 12th Class (High School). Unlike many other countries, one of the dilemmas in Pakistan for transgender is unavailability of quota system. In its absence, the transgender are forced to resort to other means. One more predominant factor is unavailability of jobs for educated transgender due to social pressure and societal behaviour. Relating to findings of a survey, whereby 2755 individuals participated in the questionnaire from all over the country, it was established that a major chunk of current population (55%) is willing and in favour of allocation of distinct quota for transgender in scholastic organizations and offices while almost 20% were against the idea and the rest around 20% did not respond (Gallup Pakistan, 2023).

Theme 1 (Profession & Employment):

According to the data collected and interpreted, it can be evaluated and discussed that the major proportion of our sampled population was involved in the begging business, which constitute of around 90% of the population. The begging business could be categorized in unemployed status but due to the fact that the subjected transgender

were intentionally in this business due to financial crisis and demands by their Gurus, it can be concluded that begging is at the moment top priority for transgender to earn money on daily basis. Apart from the begging business, dancing is another profession openly adapted by the transgender and they usually shift between dancing and begging. This particular

fraction constituted of about 70% of our sampled individuals. Moreover, the transgender are of the view that with changing dynamics of current era, the general population is less tilted towards dancing profession and as the days pass, the number of opportunities for transgender in this field lessens. Lastly, 10% of the participants of our interview were self-employed running a successful organization. These participants were from stable financial background and had full family support unlike other transgender. The analysis of current data could be stipulated in form of the fact that most of the professions adapted by transgender community in Pakistan are not considered honourable. In fact, begging and dancing are one of the most looked down upon professions in Pakistan's social structure. In addition, Government has yet to allocate special jobs for transgender community. After the ruling of human rights by Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2012, different jobs openings were announced by the government in public sector but these rulings were never enforced. It can be arguable that whether the harsh attitude of public compelled the transgender to join these professions or vice versa.

Theme 2 (Education):

As discussed previously, the system of Education for transgender in Pakistan is very deleterious. In the interviews conducted, it was motioned that 90% of the participants were uneducated and had no access to basic education in their primary years. The difficulties faced by transgender during initial years of education include physical abuse, mental pressure, and societal attitude. The parents of transgender are compelled by society to treat their transgender child in a different manner, many a times even abandoning their transgender children. The primary education is often withdrawn due to teachers' and school administration's behaviour towards transgender and unrealistic, conventional and dissimilar conduct on various issues related to gender. Because of these uncertain situations, most of transgender students are withdrawn from the schools and are either home-taught or sent off to „Gurus“ that are experts in the art of dancing and begging. The educational predicament of

transgender in Pakistan is deteriorating fast and turning into a major national issue. The current interviews conducted in different regions across Pakistan showed and manifested that all transgender communicated through the course of action wanted to acquire basic education and deemed injustices in societies as the chief reason behind illiterate past. If provided a chance, most of the transgender (95%) were willing to change their field after acquiring certain level of education.

Theme 3 (Economic Conditions):

The text analysis of interviews conducted qualitatively was elaborate and sufficient in providing the context of the economic issues faced by the transgender community in Pakistan. 95% of the subjected persons were in poor economic circumstances and preferred daily income return to manage household activities. In the interviews piloted, the major focus of the participants was on the Government's role in catering the needs of its citizens according to the ruling of Supreme Court of Pakistan. While many transgender were despondent of government's action and sought personal growth and development through different channels and forums. 5% of the transgender community were having strong economic background and family backing. This led to more employment opportunities and stable financial support.

Theme 4 (Family Support):

The backings of our research were conclusive in finding the true aptitude of transgender in Pakistan. The societal differences in our culture were predominant in the results of the interviews conducted. 80% of the participants were of the view that family support is crucial in the upbringing of the transgender and 90% of the subjects under consideration didn't have family support in any manner. The current family structure prevalent in Pakistan's society is generic in sense that the pressure added by the society often leads to abandoning of transgender. It must be noted here that, individuals with strong backing of family often propels them to exceed further in life thus creating a more open environment and wider opportunities. Moreover, transgender associated with the profession of dancing and begging often moved to different cities to protect their family name.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The low literacy rate of transgender is not only due to the poor economic condition but, mainly due to the lack of family support and social animosity that they face. Their literacy level cannot be improved unless government devises a way and sets a

fix quota for this third gender in all public and private institutions.

Policies and Strict actions should be taken against violation of transgenders rights .

The dataset results suggest a considerable willingness among transgender community to learn, educate themselves and polish their skills. About 85% amongst them are willing to learn stitching, tailoring and other skills. Unfortunately, our country does not have any such vocational institutes that could entertain them. Government must either open separate vocational or technical institutes for them or it must fix a quota for transgender in the existing institutes.

These individuals are more willing to leave their present immoral occupations and adopt decent jobs like household, tailoring, software related jobs and repairing work etc. hence, they should be given a chance to work in a respectable environment. Social and visual media must be used to spread awareness among people so that they change their attitude towards this third gender and accept them wholeheartedly. Transgender make up 2% of total population of the country. If they are given opportunity to do jobs, they can add up to the economy of country as well.

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