

## **A Study on Socio-Economic Problems Faced by the Transgender: The Evidence from Dera Ghazi Khan, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*Transgender community have been facing socioeconomic problems in Pakistan for long. It is imperative to identify such issues to resolve these problems for the betterment of the transgender community. This study is primarily focused on the identification and evaluation of socioeconomic problems faced by the transgender individuals in the Dera Ghazi Khan division, Punjab, Pakistan. The study shows that the transgender individuals lack the access to better healthcare facilities, have no access to education, and have no employment opportunities. Consequently, transgender community have to live in severe economic conditions with meagre income levels. Moreover, they do not have any social recognition and status. The findings of the study draws attention of the government and policymakers to promulgate policies to ensure the provision of better healthcare, educational, and employment opportunities to the deprived transgender individuals.*

**Keywords:** *Transgender, abuse, marginalization, violence, Pakistan*

## **Introduction**

Transgender individuals are one of the most stigmatized, marginalized segments of society. Moreover, these are the segment of society that is socially and economically excluded (Khalid et al., 2022). These individuals are the persons having “the expressions, identifications, and blusher of behaviors that are being challenged by the predominant bipolar gender system in a specified philosophy” (Hedley et al., 2004). It is also termed transsexual (Gil-Llario et al., 2021; Loesch et al., 2003). Transgender is an umbrella term that is associated with individuals having a gender identity different from the sex designated to them at the time of birth (Khalid et al., 2022). A very important review of this definition is that the attitude of male as female and female as a male but in reality, at the time of birth, they are biologically male and female respectively (Loesch et al., 2003; Solbes-Canales, Valverde-Montesino, & Herranz-Hernández, 2020). *Hijras/Transgender* term explores that people who are identified and their sexual characteristics do not match at birth time. Most third-gender people become a part of the transgender community. The duration of this part consists of a full life or part-time as an element opposite sex. For example, a male person lives like a female, or a female lives like a male. However, a person is not a transgender who typically behaves like a male or female (Goldbach et al., 2022; Paechter, 2006; Solbes-Canales et al., 2020).

Whenever we study transgender, we come to know that some people are not transgender, but they change selves according to their wishes and some are found at the time of birth and sometimes medical treatment like surgery makes them transgender. While some of them are transgender by their own choice, A survey conducted by Young Adult Fertility and Sexually in India, this survey showed that there is 11 percent transgender in India according to Government statistical data, but the other study which is individually conducted shows that the number of transgender is 490,000 which is six times higher as compared to the government report. People enjoyed the presence of transgender (Gil-Llario et al., 2021; Gomes et al., 2011).

Similarly, in Pakistan, the total number of transgender is 10,418 (Wazir & Goujon, 2019). First of all, transgender is identified by this family member and in the early look the members of that family adopt a very harsh behavior sometimes the family member attempt to kill because they think that is how they will face the community. At the time of birth, nobody was aware of what sex he belongs to. So, the question is what transgender people have to face

discernment in every social institution (Ortmann et al., 2016). The government of Pakistan and the Supreme Court of Pakistan has decided to give proper and equal right and facilities to transgender in all over the country. Like other citizens of Pakistan, transgender people have the security of life under article 4 and 9 of the Pakistani law 1973. In 2013, Transgender succeeded to achieve equal rights, basic rights in every social institution special job quota has been approved for the transgender (Kannabiran, 2016).

### **Background of the Study**

History shows in many contexts that the presence of the *hijra* (transgender) community has been noticeable. They are known by different terms in different countries for example as Bekla in the Philippines and Indonesia, Xenith in Oman and Qatar, and other words like Hijra, Kothi, Jogappas Jogtar or shiv-Shaktis in India and Pakistan (Kravis, Heston, & Summers, 1978). Most of the transgender individual are uneducated and some are educated. Uneducated are unable to get a job and educated transgender face a lot of hurdles in getting a job (Ikeda-Vogel, 2008). In Pakistan, there is the least quota for transgender. And the community has already rejected these people (Sanders & Dickson, 2014).

Due to socio-economic factors, transgender becomes a marginalized community. For the sake of poverty reduction and to full fill their basic needs and for the survival, they have to adopt such kind of activities that are prohibited in the society like dancing in different marriage ceremonies and festivals, sex-working in the red zone, and drug smuggling (Takács, 2006). This group (transgender) enjoys the least amount of respect and rights. Traditional mind setups of average Pakistanis people do not consider them part of their society (Bolaito, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The transgender population struggles with problems such as discrimination, violence, and high suicide rates & ideation (Shah et al., 2018). Two high-profile cases have occurred since 1999 that help to illustrate violence & discrimination against transgender people. This is that of Braddon Teena, an FTM Transposon who was raped & subsequently murdered after the rape in Nebraska. The second cause of illiteracy discrimination against transgender people, is that of type hunter, a cross was not given properly at the scene accident made derogatory comedy first respondent at the scene of type hunter's accident made derogatory comments about medical treatment, after this, the transgender died to careless attitude of medical staff (Israel & Tarver, 1997).

A study conducted on the third gender health issues in which it is reported that health facility for such a person is very fewer and sometimes transgender is refused proper treatment for those who do not request care, prohibitive costs of many services may cause some transgender people to forgo treatments that they desire or need, like this hormone concept and operation and proper guideline for third gender people alone by WPATH. For proper treatment in health, WPATH wants individuals to obey the pathologisation of their kill (Munro et al., 2017). WPATH principle of care person, what is vital to get gender people to learn that they should treat in that way to get proper access to treatment.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The literature review shows that very limited studies attempted to explore the challenges and issues faced by the transgender individuals in Pakistan. The authors find it imperative to explore the socioeconomic problems faced by the transgender community in Pakistan. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. The study is focused to trace out the socioeconomic problems faced by the transgender community in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan.
- ii. The study also explores the causes and consequences of the challenges faced by the transgender community in the sampled area.

### **Literature Review**

Chettiar (2015) explained in this research paper that transgender is known as *Hijras* all over India. These *Hijras* are one of the barely researched, abused, discriminated against, and neglected groups in the community of India. This study is a doctoral-based research that was submitted to a university of Mumbai in India the title of this study was “The Status of *Hijras* in Civil Society: A research which was conducted in Mumbai”. The main purpose of this study is to cabinet briefly the social and economic standards of transgender or *Hijras* and to find out the solution to this problem that transgender is facing in the common society.

(Leelavathy, 2014) examined the socio-economic problems of transgender in the workplace in India. The author unveiled that there was socioeconomic discrimination in the workplace in Indian society. Consequently, transgender individuals have to face economic and health issues.

Qualitative research was conducted, and purposive and snowball sampling was adopted for sampling techniques the sample size was sixty-three transgender and the target population was in Mumbai and Maharashtra, India. The Kuppusswamy Scale was used to know measure socioeconomic status. More than 50 percent of transgender belong to the middle class in this

study. The majority of the respondents said that they are suffering from a large number of hurdles in society which are lack of medication, lack of jobs, miss behaving of people, harassment, unlawful consequences, sexual abuse, violence, and deficiency of human rights (WHO, 2015). They mostly high lights the police officer and railway police and another member of society harass them.

Hashmi et al. (2006) conducted qualitative research. In this study, the authors explore the social security and life security of the *Hijras*. His study focuses on three main directions of human security of the lines of hijra. These are community, economic and personal security the study especially emphasis on the betterment of life of *hijra* from beyond their community while the act of Supreme court of Pakistan is in the favor of this community. These groups of *hijra*. Real *hijra* fake *hijra* and *Zenana* have responded to this study. In addition, vital and significant discussion has been held with pro bono lawyers and two of the brothers who have submitted a petition for the basic rights of *hijra* in the supreme court of Pakistan.

Akhtar & Bilour (2020) attempted to examine the state of mental health among transgender individuals in Pakistan. The authors used the snowball sampling method to collect information on 100 transgender individuals. It was found that the majority of transgender had lower levels of psychological resilience and self-esteem. However, the transgender individuals living with gurus had significantly higher levels of resilience and self-esteem compared to those living alone or with friends.

The main aspects revealed in fieldwork that affects the human right and life security of *Hijra* and their family relation and education which have tight binding with each other. The study result that the young *Hijras* have a few socio-economic problems as compared to the old *Hijras*. A recent study by Khan (2022) examining the socio-economic and educational challenges faced by transgender in Karachi, Pakistan, revealed that biasness toward the transgender was the major cause of the social demarcation of transgender. They have been facing social, economic, and educational challenges.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Population**

The study focused on the identification and evaluation of the transgender individuals in the Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. All the transgender individuals in Dera Ghazi Khan Division have been considered as the population of the study.

### **Sample, sampling method, and sample size**

The study was carried out in the various localities of Dera Ghazi Khan Division. The sampling areas taken for this study have been Chowk Azam, Fateh Pur, Karor Lal Eson, Kot Adu, Layyah, Nawan Kot, and Taunsa. The sample size was (10-15). Snowball sampling (Akhtar & Bilour, 2020) was used as a sampling technique person who identified himself /she as transgender and agreed to share his/her experiences.

### **Data Collection Method**

The interview guide and FGD (Focus Group Discussion) was a tool for data collection. The open ended interview method was used to interview the respondents. The logical question that grabbed our attention was “What kind of Social problems do transgender have to face and how do they feel when society tries to discriminate?” Discussion with each group was conducted separately to avoid conflicting opinions. Respondent questioned till saturation. The conversation was voice recorded. The transcripts were read over several times to gain a better understanding of the information provided by the respondent.

### **Results and Discussion**

It was a qualitative non-directional interview-based study where the sole purpose was to explore and highlight the problems of transgender. The researcher(s) approached the male transgender with the help of a gatekeeper. The researcher(s) reached the respondents' homes and observed that the condition of the house was so miserable. There was no cleanliness. There was dust all around the place. The researcher(s) introduced themselves to the respondent. The respondent revealed, “He is living alone for a very long time<sup>1</sup>”. The respondent was asked to tell about his/her childhood. It was a terrible story. His/her parents threw him out of the house and no one adopted him due to being transgender. One of the transgender took him and adopted him. Three transgender were already living there. Afterward, they lived together following a *guru-chela* system. In this system, one of the old transgender heads the *transgender family* and becomes the *Guru Maa* (mother). The respondent revealed that the *Guru Maa* trained him in dancing and started to send him to social functions such as marriage ceremonies. Dancing became her profession and only source of meager income. After four years, he left his *Guru Maa* and started living with another transgender group. However, there was no difference in socio-economic life as there were no economic opportunities to earn living except for dancing and making people happy.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated (the respondent speaks *Seraiki*)

Moreover, he expressed, “society neglects the transgender. The people biasedly treat us everywhere. People look down upon us. Sometimes we have to face unavoidable circumstances and we have to face and bear sexual abuse. At old age, we are forced to beg door to door to survive as there is no socio-economic security for the people like us<sup>2</sup>.”

Another transgender Monika was contacted and she agreed to an interview. She has been living in Layyah city. She told, “In my early teenage, I was thrown away from my parents’ house for being transgender. My parents and relatives cursed me. I was never enrolled in any school. Most of the time, I cannot have the opportunity to get proper healthcare service<sup>3</sup>”.

Another respondent revealed, “I have to face violence and discrimination in public places. I cannot travel in buses due to transgender discrimination. People do not accept our identity of being transgender<sup>4</sup>”. Furthermore, she reveals, “it has hard to travel in public transport. People make fun of us. Mostly, the men harass us and laugh at us<sup>4</sup>”. Monika unveils, “due to such public behavior, I have to travel in Rickshaw which is more expensive for me, and have to face extra financial burden despite meager income<sup>4</sup>”.

Monika also faces a problem and says: “For medical service at government hospitals, he is being ignored because doctors and patients often glare at him, curse at him, and make a lauded comment, so therefore, he has to go to a private clinic which is also very expensive. Street passers regularly make vied and derogatory comments to Monika and he has to face sexually harass comments and often sexually harass him with unwanted touching and grazing”.

Another respondent<sup>5</sup> says, “I was raped by a group of men at a party. One of my partners witnessed it but could not do anything to protect me. One of the senior transgender partners told me that it was not new. It is normal. It is routine, she said<sup>2</sup>”. The respondent was so angry and sad while telling all this. She was grieved. She said, “It was so terrible. I was so depressed. I did not know to get rid of such torture and violence<sup>2</sup>”. All of them could not have the opportunity to go to school and get educated due to the transgender biases of the society and negligence of the governments and government institutions to ensure the provision of at least basic education to those kids. This is not only the case in the Dera Ghazi Khan Division, it has been a routine all across Pakistan. It is hard to avail of the employment opportunity

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<sup>2</sup> Translated from *Seraiki* (the local language of the sampled area)

<sup>3</sup> Translated (the respondent speaks *Punjabi*)

<sup>4</sup> Translated (the respondents speaks *Seraiki*)

<sup>5</sup> His/her name is kept anonymous on his/her request.

due to a lack of education and skills needed for employment. Even if there is an opportunity, there are multiple socio-economic challenges transgender face in their daily life.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

There is very short space for transgender in the local community. In every field of life, they experience more violence, threats, and discrimination due to unidentified gender, they are unable to get benefits from our social institution. Transgender cannot enjoy citizenship and they cannot use an authority in society. Due to minimum access to the sources and the services, their health and socio-economic structure are much disturbed. Whenever we study the transgender, it shows that alternative actions, hospitalities, and alienations encountered by the transgender are so deep, at the same point when they cannot get any space in society, they get escaped from the common society and we notice that they live in their own established society.

Transgender are very small in number. The total number of transgender in Pakistan is 10464 according to the census report 2017. The government of Pakistan can handle this situation by establishing a society at any corner of the city. The government of Pakistan should provide all types of facilities. This action, when this small population will get proper facilities, then a lot of problems will be dissolved; for example, we can eliminate street begging, and sex work and we can control HIV and AIDS disease. We should create awareness among common people through electronic and social media that transgender is a normal human beings. It needs time to sensitize society regarding the recognition of transgender identity. Though the government in Pakistan has introduced some rules and regulations and promulgated the transgender act in 2022, there is still a long way to go achieve harmonization and gender unbiasedness in every sphere of socio-economic life. In this regard, the socio-economic policy should be developed to ensure the social and economic inclusion of the transgender and other deprived segments of society. The government and policymakers should frame policies to ensure the provision of better education and healthcare facilities and services to these segments.



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