

Problems Experienced by Hijras or Hermaphrodites in Slums of Punjab

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The present study explored problems faced by transgenders in the slums of Punjab, Pakistan. Transgenders are also known as *hijras*, *Khwaja seras*, etc. (GIA, 2021) and are a stigmatized minority group of people that can be classified as intersex (Ahmad, 2021), third gender (Ahmad, 2019), cross-dresser, transvestite, etc. (GIA, 2021). One hundred and fifty-three transgenders were collected through snowball sampling and were interviewed. Thematic analyses of these interviews revealed that the transgenders experienced six categories of problems that included bullying and discrimination, family and relationship, housing and community, justice and police, the general public, and psycho-medical problems. The study documented different discriminatory behaviors experienced by transgenders as they faced legal, social, and economic hurdles, their problems like social isolation, dignity, and blame. This study documents problems faced by this marginalized group and presented in-depth data that would urge policymakers and society to provide rights any common citizen of Pakistan enjoys.

Keywords: compliance, discrimination, hijras, intersex, Khwaja seras, slums, thematic analysis, third sex, transgender, transvestites

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Transgender is an umbrella term that does not do justice in naming marginalized intersex or third-sex communities in Pakistan (Gender Interactive Alliance or GIA, 2021) or South Asia (Ahmad, 2019) because local jargon classifies these people as hijra, Khawaja sera, etc. and have different socio-cultural connotations than terms like transgender, transsexual, transvestite or cross-dresser, etc. Kalra (2012) and Indian investigators call them the *third gender* that is represented as females or have a female status, and for thousands of years have lived in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent as a separate cultural group. Transgenders and transsexuals are different groups in terms of self-identity and are different from the third gender which is female in identity (Kalra, 2012). Somewhat different, hermaphrodites are biological males whose gender and gender expression are female-assigned (Sharma, 2014), and offer blessings and congratulation at weddings and births (Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2015). Transgenders represent social individuality that is formed by a variety of factors other than gender and sex, such as society, culture, and religion (Reddy, 2005). With all these difficulties in terminology, we will use the words hijra and transgender interchangeably and talk about such people with birth sex as male or partially male with female-assigned gender. Since the birth of Pakistan in 1947, hijras have exploited minority groups of individuals (Ahmad, 2021) that express distinct social behaviors, follow restricted residential regulations, and suffer from unconcealed bias and stigmatization (Sharma, 2014). These transgenders adopt female gender expression in society like dressing up as females, and having sexual relationships as passive female partners, but know they are different and separate from biological females (Shivakumar & Yadiyurshetty, 2014).

Transgenders, Stress, and Other Crises

Transgender come across discriminatory attitudes within society as they faced barriers to ration cards, educational organizations, as well as in vote casting, difficulties in getting access to finding basic needs such as health and education, or even most basic human needs gender identity respect (Equality Act, 2010). Hatzenbuehler et al. (2009) reported discrimination predicts stress, and Huebner and Davis (2007)

reported transgenders commonly experience discriminatory behaviors from others. Not just real discrimination but perceived discrimination among transgender individuals produces a heightened stress response (Lee et al., 2007), which is associated with unhealthy activities and thoughts, as well as decreased participation in healthy behaviors and socialization like loneliness (Pascoe & Richman, 2009). These unhealthy activities include the use of alcohol and chemical substances and not seeking help from medical and clinical professionals for fear of being perceived with stigma and discrimination (Thoits, 2010).

Discriminatory behaviors and biases not only increase stress they cause transgenders to suffer from mental health problems (Sanchez et al., 2010). A cross-sectional study of 50 transgenders indicated that 84 percent of these individuals would fulfill conditions for gender identity disorder, psychiatric disorders, alcohol abuse, and dependence on depressive spectrum disorders (Kalra et al., 2013), and yet these authors reported, that this cohort never once sought psychiatric consultation for their issues.

Transgender in Pakistan are different and face similar extremely persistent, biased, and discriminatory behaviors that have a strong negative effect on their psychological fitness like depression (Sadiq & Bashir, 2014) and ill-ease from isolation (Sadiq & Bashir, 2015). According to Bindiya Rana, President of Gender Interactive Alliance an organization that works for the rights of Khawaja Sera's in Pakistan, "In Pakistan's transgender people have faced extreme discrimination and other violations of basic human rights, most transgender people are forced to live in slums because other people discriminate them and are not prepared to let them live in apartment buildings or houses in nicer areas. They live on the margins of the society as entertainers and beggars often denied access to education and healthcare and facing a lot of problems including health issues" (Rasul, 2013).

The term "transgender" covers a wide range of possible identities in Pakistan, including, "intersexual, transsexual, hijra, Khwaja sira, butch, cross-dressers, and transvestites" (GIA, 2020). The root cause of this violence enacted upon transgender persons' bodies in this geographical area goes back centuries (Saha, 2011). With the interlocking

of racial oppression and patriarchy, some bodies are deemed disposable and link the phenomenon of violence directly to colonialism (Razack, 2016). Transgender communities have been socially constructed as undeserving, untouchable, marginalized, and the most “disposable” (Razack, 2000) group in Pakistani society. To worsen an already bad situation, some of the gravest violations of transgender people’s rights have occurred within legal frameworks, and the state has been viewed as supporting (Evans & Spivak, 2016). Sultana and Kalyani (2012) argue that the lives of transgender people have traditionally been ignored due to their perceived low social standing, in Pakistan, due to their severe marginalization, and lack of public support (Shah et al., 2018).

In 2019, one Pakistani province established a separate hospital ward for transgender people, and the Trans Action Alliance 69 advocated that it be named the "Alisha Shaheed Memorial Ward" (Shabbir, 2019). The Supreme Court had ordered the government to respect the gender identification of transgender people and to protect their right to education, inheritance, voting, and equal employment (Iqbal, 2009). The Supreme Court was compelled to recognize and honor the existence and humanity of transgender people, and the clause declared them "third gender" (Pakistan Const. Art. 25, 2018).

Rationale of Study

Problems experienced by transgenders are widespread phenomena in Pakistan. As Ahmad (2017) has given the closest answer, in Pakistani society, transgender persons represent shame and a curse. Most researchers have focused their attention on the transgender individuals in Pakistan but this study has focused on hermaphrodites, to study this phenomenon from the point of hermaphrodites, will give a rich picture of this human side. This research uses thematic analysis for exploring various experiences related to day-to-day life.

Objectives of Study

The basic purpose of this study is to explore the problems of hermaphrodites in their everyday life to investigate the following question:

- What is the nature of problems faced by hermaphrodites in Pakistan?
- What are the impacts of the discrimination on the hermaphrodites' psycho-medical health?

Method

Participants

There were 153 transgenders divided into 21 Gurus ($n = 21$) and 132 Chelas, recruited through the snowball sampling technique method from 21 cities of Punjab. Participants ranged in age from 16-81 years ($M = 36.84$, $SD = 15.71$). Only a single transgender, living within the LBGT community in slums could be part of the study. Eunuchs, cross-dressers, and having gender identity disorder, and married individuals were excluded from the sample (Sadiq & Bashir, 2014, 2015).

Insert Table 1

Table 1 depicts the frequency and percentage of demographic characteristics of the sample concerning groups according to their designation as Gurus and Chelas.

The Interview

The study is based on an interview conducted with hermaphrodite individuals individually. Open-ended interview questions were asked about six major areas of the life of hermaphrodites. These six areas are discrimination, family and relationship, housing and community, justice and police, the general public, and psycho-medical problems. as the interview proceeded, an additional question was asked about these areas as (types and places they experienced discrimination), family and relation (behavior of family, support, isolation, feeling of the family), housing and community (housing crises, neighbors, accommodation, relationship with Tran's people, emotional & practical support), about laws and behavior of law enforcing agencies, the attitude of the public, feeling of hermaphrodites, psycho-medical problems (medical facilities, access to

healthcare services, mental health, alcohol abuse, future, motivation, and about body parts)

Analysis

The two main reasons to use thematic analysis (TA) were accessibility and flexibility. This analysis provides an entry into a way of doing research that otherwise seemed vague, mystifying, conceptually challenging, and overly complex (Braun, and Clark, 2006). TA was done in the following six phases; phase 1: familiarizing with the data, phase 2: generating initial codes, phase 3: searching for themes, phase 4: reviewing potential themes, phase 5: defining and naming themes, and phase 6: producing the report.

Procedure

Participants were approached through the snowball sampling technique, at the head office of the transgender community in Rawalpindi for data collection, and an interview was conducted with each of the 153 transgenders. In the first stage of the interview, 21 Gurus and in the second stage 132 Chelas were interviewed, interview was conducted in their communities individually. After completion of the interview; all participants were personally thanked. Data collection was completed in six months. After gathering information through the interview method verbatim responses of participants related to their life and describing discriminatory issues they face were subcategorized into further categories. Ethical consideration was followed during the study, like informed consent was signed by participants and the purpose of the study was communicated to the participants, as the purpose of research, procedure, and their rights as participants and confidentiality of the data were assured to the participants.

Results & Discussion

From the interview data of these hijras or transgenders' problems, themes, category, frequency, code, and meaning units were derived and are presented in table 2.

Table 2 depicts an integrated result matrix for the problems experienced by hermaphrodites in the slums of Punjab.

Participants reported problems related to bullying and discrimination, discriminatory treatment at schools, discriminatory treatment related to facilities and opportunities, harassment and physical assault, discrimination related to work and workplace, rejection by their family and friends, isolation problems, and a strong desire to live with their families, problems of house crises strong relationship and feeling of community with other trans-members. The participant reported that they face hate crimes, and a lack of trust because the police didn't cooperate with them, In case of illness, they face discrimination to access medical facilities and reported psychological problems they experience in life. Problems reported by participants were consistent with previous findings of transgender experience in eastern and western societies. Previous findings support the findings of this study results as Shivakumar and Yadiyurshetty (2014) findings indicated transgenders face incongruence between their real self and social rules that outcast them from society, this is augmented by a persistent need for sex and gender transformation, poor self, and social acceptance, traumatic transitions, and physical, verbal, and sexual abuse from family and law enforcement agencies. transgender people in Pakistan have internalized their oppression and the culture of disregard for consent, and making disparaging comments about their bodies, the way they talk, and how they walk has been normalized (Ali, 2016).

Conclusion

The overall findings suggest that the hermaphrodites are an integral part of Pakistani society, but have continued to be marginalized in terms of education, economic opportunity, and access to quality healthcare. This discrimination is in the form of bullying, in the provision of commodities, facilities, and services, toilet facilities service at eating places, experience harassment and physical assault use of the name or appropriate pronouns, rejection by their family and friends, isolation problems and strong desire to live with their families, the problem of house crises homelessness arising and irritation by family and neighbors,

they face hate crimes, mostly due to gender discrimination and much of it may go unreported due to lack of trust on police. Generally, people realize that they are superior to them, people behave them like toys, they took pity on them, and they experience like LGB but in reality, it is not so, they face discrimination to access medical facilities. It is concluded that in our society hermaphrodites are in danger of loneliness, alcohol abuse, suicide, and self-harm, and they have no motivation for life.

Limitations of the Study

Certain issues that could not be controlled can weaken the results of the study. A brief discussion of all these is mentioned here:

- There is a lack of data and other verification about the hermaphrodite's residents at nationwide and local levels. There is no practically precise estimation of the size of the hermaphrodite's population and the significant assortment within this society. It is a restriction to make vigorous population generalizations from the quantitative studies to date.
- Within the study of the transgender population, significant problems were experienced: recognizing transgender and compliant groups in LBGT in the survey was complex.
- It was quite challenging to approach the hermaphrodite population, which leads to restrictions on recruitment approaches and sampling techniques that may be used.

Suggestions

Keeping in view the current issues of contaminating the present research, some suggestions for future research are recommended:

- Based on findings, there is a need to investigate the family structure and the hermaphrodite's family's experiences should be taken into account.
- Other areas of research such as laws, crime, police, and transgender who are convicted and are in prisons to investigate their experiences should be considered.
- There is a need for research on social services, like, like restaurants, hospitals, and shopping places, and should take the

views of related people to investigate their point of view about transgender.

Implications of the Study

The present study is qualitative and explorative; the problems of transgender were explored with the relevance of discrimination. This study is an important addition to research and is the first study in Pakistan related to transgender. The findings are helpful for mental health professionals in their treatment by targeting prescribed problems to lessen the harm of discrimination. The clinician can identify their problems and find out different ways that contribute to better adjusted to society and how they utilize their strengths to survive in society. In short, although preliminary, the data presented here suggest the need for a more advanced action in which a selective path shaped by the choices of transgender may emerge as the most relevant in promoting their living standards.

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Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N = 153)

Variable	Percentage & Frequency		
	Guru (n = 21)	Chela (n = 132)	Total (n = 153)
Age (Years)			
16-25	0.0(0)	31.8(42)	27.5(42)
26-35	14.3(3)	33.3(44)	30.7(47)
36-50	9.5(2)	25.0(33)	22.9(35)
51-81	76.2(16)	9.8(13)	19.0(29)
Education			
Uneducated	71.4(15)	27.3(36)	33.3(51)
Primary	9.5(2)	24.2(32)	22.2(34)
Middle	9.5(2)	18.9(25)	17.6(27)
Metric	9.5(2)	19.7(26)	18.3(28)
FA	0.0(0)	5.3(7)	4.6(7)
BA	0.0(0)	3.8(5)	3.3(5)
MA	0.0(0)	0.8(1)	0.7(1)
Experience (Years)			
1-10	4.8(1)	37.9(50)	33.3(51)
11-20	14.3(3)	30.3(40)	28.1(43)
21-35	14.3(3)	20.5(27)	19.6(30)
36-70	66.7(14)	11.4(15)	19.0(29)
Transgenders per Group			
1-5	28.6(6)	49.2(65)	46.4(71)
6-10	38.1(8)	39.4(52)	39.2(60)
10+	33.3(7)	11.4(15)	14.4(22)
Monthly Income (PKR)			
5-20K	23.8(5)	54.5(72)	50.3(77)
21-40K	19.0(4)	36.4(48)	34.0(52)
40+K	57.1(12)	9.1(12)	15.7(24)

Note: gurus = teacher, and chelas = pupil

Table 2

Integrated Result Matrix for the Problems Experienced by Hermaphrodites in Slums of Punjab

Meaning Unit	Code	Frequency	Category	Theme
At school we are mostly discriminated with fellows from other students and their families, in case of expressing gender identity we are treated as homophobic people, dominating the behavior of society as school and learning institutions are not our place (P23).	Homophobic threats	47	Harassment and physical assault	
Jobs that are offered are below our skills, we are devalued to perform challenging tasks, at the workplace we experience issues to reproduce normative gender normative behaviors either male or female, and use of a name or inappropriate pronouns (P45).	Below skill job	42	Work and work atmosphere	Discrimination

<p>We continuously face discrimination in providing accommodation, toilets, services, and cargo, we have issues in establishing reliable and trustworthy relationships, trouble in appropriate accessibilities to entertainments, due to our gender identity experience difficulty in paying bills, at restaurants we are being rejected to provide appropriate services, prohibited from using or "wrong" toilet services and we always try to avoid such places to visit where the awkward situation may happen. and so, we prefer to avoid such places where such kind of situation may occur (P54).</p>	<p>Service and opportunities</p>	<p>56</p>	<p>Bullying</p>
<p>When are at dance functions and parties from the audience we experienced harassment or bullying and physical/sexual assault, normally we experienced maltreatment from unfamiliar individuals when people identify our gender identity as transgender: recurrently they displayed variation of verbal abuse (such as remarks, alarming conduct, physical mishandling, verbal or sexual exploitation) at the workplace? (P43)</p>	<p>Verbal persecution</p>	<p>39</p>	<p>Frightening behavior</p>
<p>"When our gender identity is disclosed, we are excluded from family gatherings and events, due to our gender identity we have to change our accommodation and shift from one house to another as an outcome of rejection from our family. We experience a lack of social support from family members, parents, siblings, work colleagues, and friends or feel distanced from them (78)."</p>	<p>Lack of social support</p>	<p>58</p>	<p>Rejection by their family and friends</p>
<p>"We have a strong longing to live and stay connected with our family members, we feel pathetic without a family life, we family life is compromised and we feel craving for family (P69)."</p>	<p>Longing</p>	<p>51</p>	<p>Isolation problem</p>
<p>Family and Relationship</p>			

Participants reported parent’s non-acceptance attitudes related to problems that have devastating effects on their mental health, our parents have a concern about their feeling rather than our feelings about how we live this life without family (P82)

We have major housing crises; we encounter sometimes homeless situations caused by our family members and mostly neighbors. Due to our social and gender identity public consider us a sinner and it's hard to find a house in better areas of cities, we are forced to live in slum areas of society. We lived in a rented house; an unsuitable room being offered (P35).

Transgender described the quality of a relationship, friendship, well calculated and significant with other trans- members of the community, which are a source of emotional and practical support. Community members work as a replacement for family members but in reality, transgender are isolated individuals missing their families and facing hate crimes and discrimination from society in findings accommodation and livings spaces (P87)

When we encountered legal issues law enforcement agencies didn't cooperate with us, and there are no appropriate regulations for our safety, and their consequences are hopeless and disheartening (P11).

	Lack of proper laws	Emotional and practical support	Inappropriate lodging	Mental health
	62	61	79	48
	Justice	Community	Housing	Non-acceptance attitudes
	Justice and Police	Problems of housing and community		

Mostly we experience hate crime situations due to our gender identity biases that are linked to our experience of violent behavior and much of it may go unreported due to a lack of trust in the police the behavior of the police was inappropriate, whenever someone attacks us, police considered it normal routine work. Mostly we avoid reporting to the police due to unfair behavior toward our third gender (P09)
 we are living in a society that is aware of the dichotomous world of only male and female and unaware about the third gender and their role, their identity, and their separate individuality never exists we often supposed that we share a parallel framework and practices like LGB but in reality, we are different (P01)

The general public attitude is that they are superior, we are a sinner and sent here in the world for punishment, considered us disabled, feel sympathy for our creation, this world is created for them, and we are created for entertainment (P99).

<p>Mostly we experience hate crime situations due to our gender identity biases that are linked to our experience of violent behavior and much of it may go unreported due to a lack of trust in the police the behavior of the police was inappropriate, whenever someone attacks us, police considered it normal routine work. Mostly we avoid reporting to the police due to unfair behavior toward our third gender (P09) we are living in a society that is aware of the dichotomous world of only male and female and unaware about the third gender and their role, their identity, and their separate individuality never exists we often supposed that we share a parallel framework and practices like LGB but in reality, we are different (P01)</p>	<p>The biased attitude of the police</p>	<p>54</p>	<p>Police</p>
<p>The general public attitude is that they are superior, we are a sinner and sent here in the world for punishment, considered us disabled, feel sympathy for our creation, this world is created for them, and we are created for entertainment (P99).</p>	<p>Outline like LGB people</p>	<p>59</p>	<p>Attitude of public</p>
	<p>Inferiority and worthless</p>	<p>65</p>	<p>Feelings of hermaphrodites General public</p>

We experience insufficient access to healthcare facilities and we are being located in unsuitable hospital areas (P101)

We suicide attempt at least once in life, experience a sense of loneliness, dissatisfaction with appearance, isolation from society, and future ambiguity (P119).
It is concluded that this culture is dangerous for transgender in the sense of solitude, liquor abuse, suicide, putting their lives in danger, and lack of motivation for a better life (P137 & P145)

Inadequate access to
healthcare services

59

Medical facilities

Distress about body
parts

65

Medical conditions

Psycho-medical Problems

Note: P = Participant