

## **EXPLORING GENDER BASED DIFFERENCES IN INCLUSIVE BEHAVIORS TOWARDS TRANSGENDER AND SAFETY CONCERNS IN PAKISTAN**

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Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 marks a significant legal advancement, but genuine social acceptance continues to lag because of entrenched patriarchal norms and limited public understanding. The present research explores how male and female university students in Pakistan differ in their awareness, perceptions, and inclusive practices toward transgender and intersex individuals. For measuring students' knowledge, attitudes, and intentions to engage in inclusive behaviors and their safety concerns, a 30-item survey instrument was developed using a two-stage random cluster sampling approach. The data was gathered from 356 respondents, equally divided between men and women (178 each). Analyses conducted in SPSS v25 confirmed strong internal consistency for the scale ( $\alpha = .78-.85$ ). Findings showed that female students demonstrated higher levels of knowledge ( $M = 3.45$ ), more positive attitudes ( $M = 3.58$ ), and greater inclination toward inclusive behavior ( $M = 3.42$ ) than their male counterparts ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $M = 3.20$ ,  $M = 3.05$ ; all  $p < .01$ ). The study also found significant positive correlations among the key variables ( $r = .39-.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and regression analysis indicated that knowledge and attitudes collectively accounted for 27% of the variance in inclusive behavior. Through the lenses of Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory, the concepts were interpreted that highlight the cultural hierarchies, safety concerns, and societal narratives that may influence gendered patterns of inclusivity. Predominantly, the study underscored that there is a need for educational initiatives, awareness programs, and stronger policy implementation for advancing inclusion, equality, and safety for gender-diverse populations in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** gender differences, transgender inclusion, intersex, awareness, attitude, behavior, social identity theory, queer theory, safety concerns

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Context and Background**

Over the past decade, legislative reforms accompanied by wide visibility across educational, political, and media spheres globally have expanded the recognition of transgender and intersex identities considerably. Despite these advancements, many developing societies continue to grapple with entrenched gender hierarchies and dominant moral narratives, including Pakistan, which has been hindering full social inclusion. Among the few South Asian nations, although Pakistan has laws that affirm the rights of transgender individuals, societal acceptance is still fragile and frequently contested (UNDP Pakistan, 2024). Although Pakistan is among the few South Asian nations with laws affirming the rights of transgender individuals, societal acceptance remains fragile and frequently contested.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 marked a significant milestone that allowed individuals to self-identify their gender and secure their entitlement to essential services, i.e., education, healthcare, and employment (Redding, 2019). However, lived experiences are not solely transformed by legal provisions; many transgender and intersex individuals have been continuously facing systematic exclusion, discrimination, and restricted participation in public life (Aurat Foundation, 2021). These challenges are reinforced by persistent stereotypes, widespread misinformation, and structural inequities embedded within patriarchal social institutions.

Young adults have been shaping future professional, social, and policy discourses, attitudes toward gender diversity that may hold particular importance within university settings. Recent studies suggested that through awareness and targeted educational exposure, biases can be mitigated, which may promote more inclusive attitudes (Mukherjee & Roy, 2022). However, empirical research examining gender-based differences in students' awareness and acceptance of transgender and intersex communities in higher education remains limited. Addressing this gap is essential for designing informed, gender-sensitive educational strategies aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Pakistan's social fabric is strongly influenced by patriarchal traditions that shape expectations around gender expression, family honor, and moral conduct. Patriarchal norms in Pakistan institutionalize gender-based violence as a means of controlling and disciplining women, reinforcing their social subordination. Such violence is not incidental but central to the functioning and persistence of patriarchy (Hadi, 2017). From the very beginning, the conventional family structures have been reinforcing rigid distinctions between masculinity and femininity, which granted more authority and decision-making power to men and limited the agency of women in both domestic and public domains (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001).

Consequently, people who have been identified beyond the binary encounter systemic discrimination most frequently. Transgender and intersex individuals are routinely facing verbal abuse, barriers to employment, and restricted access to education (UNDP Pakistan, 2024). On the contrary, men are more likely to reinforce hierarchical gender structures and may interpret inclusive practices as a challenge to their social group's status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Drawing

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on this scholarship, the present study examines how male and female participants differ in their knowledge, attitudes, and inclusive behaviors toward gender-diverse populations in Pakistan.

Pakistan's transgender and intersex minorities confront severe safety issues, i.e., physical abuse, harassment, and social isolation, which restrict their access to jobs, healthcare, and education (UNDP, 2017). These people frequently face antagonism in public and institutional settings despite legal protections, therefore rendering them more vulnerable to abuse and discrimination (Tarar, Ahmed, Alvi, & Fatima, 2024). According to research by Noreen and Rashid (2024), threatening circumstances are strongly associated with prevalent negative attitudes and ignorance, which limit social inclusion and sustain stigma. According to Qureshi, Saeed, Fatima, Bibi, and Qayyum (2025), addressing these safety concerns necessitates focused interventions that integrate institutional reforms, community education, and legal enforcement in order to create safe and supportive environments for gender-diverse communities. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the connection between awareness, attitudes, and behavior in order to create strategies that effectively lower vulnerabilities while improving the wellbeing of transgender and intersex people in Pakistan.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the gender differences in levels of awareness, attitudes, and behavioral intentions toward transgender and intersex individuals.
2. To assess how awareness and attitudes affect the safety and inclusion of transgender and intersex individuals in Pakistan.
3. To explain the identified gender differences using the theoretical lenses of Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Global Perspectives on Gender Diversity and Inclusion**

Globally, gender diversity highlighted the intricate interplay between legal protections, societal attitudes, and the everyday experiences of transgender and intersex individuals. Dicklitch-Nelson & Rahman (2022). Although LGBT communities are often grouped together, states and societies do not treat all identities equally. The F&M Global Barometer of Transgender Rights (2011–2019) shows that most countries provide limited protection and frequently violate the human rights of transgender people. Even in Western countries with established legal safeguards, discriminatory practices persist in more covert forms, including subtle exclusion and workplace inequities. Reports from UNESCO (2023) indicated that higher educational institutions have still been struggling with microaggressions, inadequate institutional support, and weak implementation of gender-inclusive policies.

In the Global South and South Asia, in particular, cultural and religious norms play a decisive role in shaping gender inclusion. Despite the historical presence of communities such as the Hijra and Khawaja Sira, they continue to face social marginalization. Scholars such as Nanda (1999) and Haque et al. (2024) argue that colonial moral doctrines, combined with postcolonial

nation-building, entrenched binary gender categories and diminished indigenous recognition of gender fluidity.

### **South Asian Context: Legal Recognition and Cultural Resistance**

The sociocultural landscape of South Asia has reflected a longstanding tension between traditional recognition of gender diversity and the regulatory frameworks imposed by modern nation-states. Supreme Court of India in 2014, ruling in National Legal Services Authority. The Union of India formally acknowledged transgender individuals as a third gender, and in 2019, Bangladesh introduced similar administrative recognition. Pakistan's Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 extended even further by affirming the right of self-identifying one's gender and to ensure access to education and employment opportunities (Redding, 2019).

Cultural and religious narratives have continuously been reinforced for the marginalization of gender-diverse communities. Hossain & Nanda (2020) showed that hijra identities in South Asia have evolved from traditional religious and cultural roles to a more global transgender identity. Gender understandings have reshaped globalization, activism, and media that supported legal and social recognition of hijras in the region.

In Pakistan, recent research indicated that transgender and intersex individuals have been still facing challenges related to social acceptance, safety, and inclusion, particularly in public, professional, and educational settings. Research consistently demonstrates that gendered biases, unfavorable opinions, and illiteracy all eventually lead to frequent risks of exclusion, harassment, and security (UNDP, 2017; Tarar et al., 2024).

Research on university and community contexts further showed that supportive attitudes and inclusive behaviors have a strong connection to knowledge and exposure, although institutional limitations and poor policy implementation contribute to vulnerability (Noreen & Rashid, 2024; Qureshi et al., 2025). When considered holistically, this literature emphasizes the need for policy and education-driven initiatives to improve social inclusion and safety for Pakistan's gender-diverse citizens.

### **Gender Differences in Awareness, Attitudes, and Behavior**

Gender consistently has been emerging as a significant predictor of attitudes toward marginalized groups. Across various cultural contexts, women tend to display greater empathy, openness, and egalitarian values (Eagly, 2008). Cross-cultural evidence further supports these trends. Scandurra et al. (2017) conducted research in Italy that revealed significant gender disparities in attitudes toward transgender individuals, with women showing higher levels of acceptance and inclusivity. These findings corresponded with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which suggested that dominant social groups, i.e., men in patriarchal societies, may uphold existing hierarchies to preserve in-group status and social order. On the contrary, Queer Theory provided a cultural and discursive framework to understand gender and sexuality that are constructed by social stigma. Scholars such as Butler (1990) and Jagose (1996) argued that gender identities are performative and capable of being challenged or redefined due to their sustainability through repeated actions and linguistic practices.

### **Educational Influence and Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior Link**

For the advancement of gender-inclusive attitudes, education serves as a key catalyst. Mukherjee and Roy (2022) found that students who are enrolled in gender studies programs at Indian universities have been demonstrating heightened empathy and stronger allyship. In a similar vein, Iqbal, Shahbaz, Ahmad, & Saleem (2025) examined the key social, cultural, economic, and familial barriers to women's careers in rural Sahiwal, Pakistan. Based on interviews with diverse women, it highlighted interconnected challenges and calls for locally tailored interventions that may promote women's empowerment and advance SDG 5.

This shift can be understood by the model of Knowledge–Attitude–Behavior (KAB) that offers a cognitive–behavioral lens through which (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). According to the model, enhanced knowledge contributes to more positive attitudes, which in turn guide inclusive behavioral responses. The present study draws on this framework to explore how levels of awareness and attitudes toward transgender and intersex communities influence behavioral intentions, with particular attention to gender-based variations.

### **Research Gap**

Most of the studies in Pakistan remain largely descriptive, while research on gendered perceptions of transgender communities is gradually gaining recognition. Existing study emphasizes sociocultural challenges or legislative developments by quantitatively assessing awareness, attitudes, and safety concerns (Aurat Foundation, 2021). Few investigations compared male and female perspectives or analyzed how levels of knowledge shape intentions to engage in inclusive behavior. Additionally, no previous research has systematically validated a self-developed scale that measures awareness, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies toward both transgender and intersex populations within the Pakistani context. The present study responds to these gaps by evaluating an instrument informed by the Knowledge–Attitude–Behavior (KAB) model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). It explores how inclusion is shaped along gender perspectives and offers empirical insights to guide educational reforms and social awareness initiatives. The study also included theoretical discourse by drawing together Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory, creating a combined framework that captures the psychological and cultural factors that may influence safety issues and gender-diverse inclusion.

### **Significance of the Study**

Pakistan offers a complex context in which progressive legal reforms exist alongside deeply conservative cultural norms. Although the Transgender Act, 2018 outlines a vision of equality, limited public understanding and persistent stigma and safety issues that continue to marginalize gender-diverse groups (UNDP Pakistan, 2024). Within this environment, universities serve as critical spaces where future leaders develop their social values and professional ethics toward inclusivity of transgender or intersex that ensures their social safety.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Social Identity Theory***

This study is theoretically grounded in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains that individuals derive their sense of self from the social groups to which they belong. This process of social categorization often results in favoritism toward one's own group and discrimination against others. Within this context, gender serves as a central social identity. In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, dominant male groups typically uphold binary gender norms to preserve existing social hierarchies.

This vantage point contributes to the explanation of why male study participants had less inclusive attitudes and lower awareness levels. Their support for the dominant group could result in opposition to modifications that operate against conventional gender norms. On the other hand, women typically show more empathy for oppressed groups since they frequently encounter social injustices personally.

### ***Queer Theory***

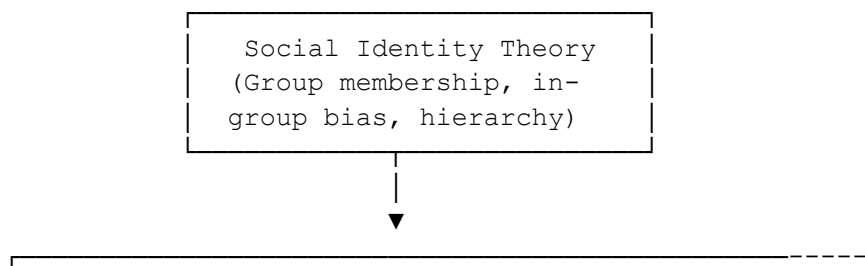
Building on this framework, Queer Theory (Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996) offers a poststructural critique of traditional binary gender categories. It views gender as performative, shaped and sustained through cultural practices rather than determined solely by biology. This perspective challenges heteronormative beliefs that often serve as the basis for discrimination and exclusion.

By applying Queer Theory, gender can be understood as fluid and context-dependent. This approach helps explain how increasing awareness and education, by revealing the socially constructed nature of gender, can promote greater inclusivity. In Pakistan, where heteronormative values are deeply ingrained, this theoretical lens encourages a critical examination of prevailing social norms and moral frameworks.

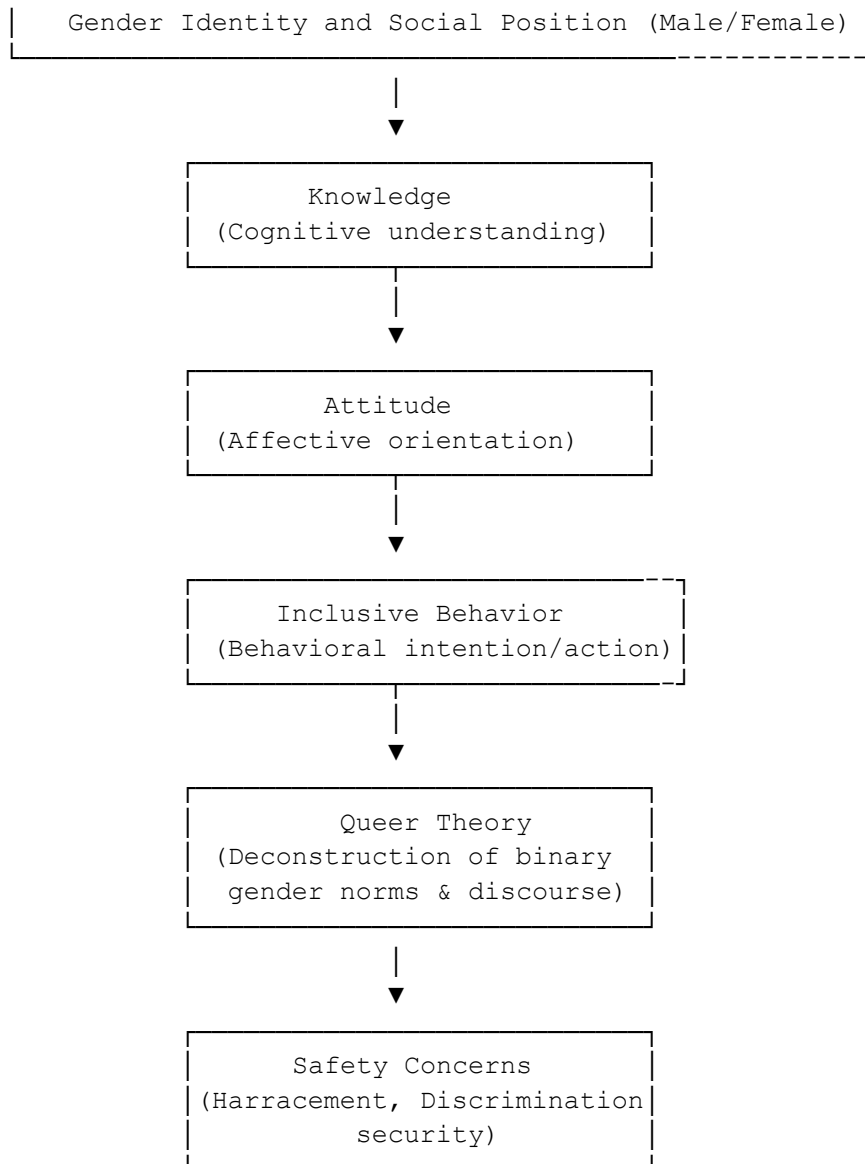
### **Integrative Theoretical Model**

Combined, Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory create a robust framework for interpretation. Social Identity Theory clarifies how people categorize themselves and others into groups, reinforcing social boundaries, while Queer Theory reveals how these boundaries are socially constructed and maintained through language and cultural practices. Together, these perspectives offer a nuanced, multidimensional insight into gender-related attitudes toward transgender and intersex individuals and their safety concerns.

**Figure 1 *Integrative Theoretical Model of Gender-Based Attitudes Toward Transgender and Intersex Individuals and Their Security Concerns***



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An integrative theoretical model demonstrates that Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory together account for gender-based differences in awareness, attitudes, and inclusive behaviors toward transgender and intersex individuals and their safety concerns. By combining these approaches, the model captures both the psychological processes and social dynamics that drive inclusion and exclusion.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study investigated gender-based differences in awareness, attitudes, and inclusive behaviors toward transgender and intersex people through a quantitative survey approach. The choice of quantitative methods allowed for objective measurement and facilitated statistical comparisons between male and female respondents. This approach is consistent with positivist

principles, which prioritize objectivity and the potential for generalization (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

### **Participants**

In the study sample, 356 participants ages ranged from 18 to 26 years, were chosen from several departments at two public institutions in Lahore, with 178 males and 178 females. A two-stage random cluster sampling method was employed: first, clusters were established based on academic faculties, i.e., Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, and then students were randomly selected within each faculty.

### **Instrumentation**

For this study, a self-developed instrument named the Transgender and Intersex Inclusion Scale (TIIS) was created. The scale comprised three subscales:

1. Participants' knowledge of transgender and intersex problems, rights, and laws was assessed using the Knowledge Subscale (10 items).
2. The 12-item Attitude Subscale measured moral and emotional attitudes toward inclusiveness and safety.
3. Behavior Subscale (8 items) evaluated people's tendency to encourage or take part in inclusive activities.

A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," was used to grade the different subjects. Higher scores indicated more knowledge, more favorable attitudes, and stronger intentions toward inclusive conduct. Forty students participated in a pilot study to examine the scale's reliability and intelligibility. The pilot's Cronbach's alpha scores, which showed adequate internal consistency, varied from .76 to .83. Alpha coefficients in the primary study ranged from .78 to .85, indicating a strong level of reliability. Three gender studies researchers from LCWU and a psychometrician from the University of the Punjab evaluated the content and verified its validity.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Following approval from the institutional ethics committee, data collection took place over a six-week period in early 2025. With prior consent from faculty members, participants were invited to complete the survey during their class sessions, which took about 20 minutes. They were briefed on the study's objectives and confidentiality. The collected responses were numerically coded and entered into SPSS (Version 25) for analysis.

### **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The data were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods for male and female participants. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare males and females on each subscale. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationships between knowledge, attitude, and behavior. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine how

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knowledge and attitudes predict inclusive behaviors. Additionally, effect sizes (Cohen’s d) were computed to gauge the strength of gender differences.

**Reliability Analysis**

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), all subscales exhibited reliability coefficients over the acceptable range of 0.70, which indicates satisfactory to strong reliability.

**Table 1** Reliability Coefficients of the Self-Constructed Scale (N = 356)

Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach’s $\alpha$	Interpretation
Knowledge	10	.78	Acceptable
Attitude	12	.85	Strong
Behavior	8	.80	Good
<b>Total Scale</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>High Reliability</b>

All Cronbach’s alpha values met or surpassed the accepted standards for internal consistency. These robust reliability scores confirm the instrument’s psychometric validity, endorsing its suitability for further analysis.

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables by Gender (N = 356)

Variable	Gender	n	Mean	SD
Knowledge	Male	178	3.12	0.78
	Female	178	3.45	0.65
Attitude	Male	178	3.20	0.72
	Female	178	3.58	0.60
Behavior	Male	178	3.05	0.70
	Female	178	3.42	0.66
<b>Total Scale</b>	—	356	3.35	0.68

Scale range: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

On average, female participants obtained higher scores in knowledge (M = 3.45), attitude (M = 3.58), and behavior (M = 3.42) than male participants, who scored 3.12, 3.20, and 3.05 respectively. These results indicate that women showed greater awareness of and more positive attitudes toward gender diversity.

**Table 3** Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Differences in Knowledge, Attitude, and Behavior (N = 355)

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Levene’s F	p (Levene)	Cohen’s d
Knowledge	2.45	353	.015	1.23	.268	0.47
Attitude	3.10	353	.002	1.15	.284	0.52
Behavior	2.78	353	.006	1.07	.302	0.49

*Equal variances assumed based on Levene's Test ( $p > .05$ ).*

Female participants scored significantly higher than males in knowledge ( $t(353) = 2.45, p = .015$ ), attitude ( $t(353) = 3.10, p = .002$ ), and behavior ( $t(353) = 2.78, p = .006$ ). These results suggest that women display greater awareness, empathy, and willingness to engage inclusively. The associated Cohen's  $d$  values, ranging from 0.47 to 0.52, indicate moderate effect sizes, highlighting meaningful differences between the groups.

**Table 4** *Intercorrelations Among Key Variables ( $N = 356$ )*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Knowledge	—	.42***	.39***
2. Attitude		—	.45***
3. Behavior			—

\*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

The findings showed that higher levels of knowledge were moderately linked to more positive attitudes ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ) and greater inclusive behaviors ( $r = .39, p < .001$ ). Additionally, attitude and behavior demonstrated a moderate correlation ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ). These results support the Knowledge–Attitude–Behavior (KAB) model, indicating that enhanced awareness and positive feelings together contribute to inclusive actions.

**Table 5** *Multiple regression Analysis Predicting Inclusive Behavior ( $N = 356$ )*

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	1.48	0.18	—	8.22	.000
Knowledge	0.26	0.05	.23	4.78	.000
Attitude	0.41	0.06	.36	6.12	.000

The model identified 27% of the variation in inclusive behavior, demonstrating that intentions to act inclusively are influenced by both increased knowledge and more favorable views. Knowledge ( $\beta = .23$ ) was the second most significant predictor after attitude ( $\beta = .36$ ). It indicates that promoting emotional connection and empathy may be more important in encouraging inclusive behavior rather than mere cognitive awareness.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated gender-based disparities in Pakistani university students' knowledge, attitudes, and inclusive behaviors about transgender and intersex people. Three significant patterns emerged from the findings: (1) Compared to male participants, female participants had significantly greater awareness, more positive attitudes, and stronger intentions to promote gender diversity; (2) The Knowledge–Attitude–Behavior (KAB) model was supported by the moderately and positively correlated knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, and (3) Regression analysis revealed that attitudes, which accounted for over 27% of the variance, were the strongest predictor of inclusive behavior. These findings illustrated how cognitive interpretation and emotional involvement cooperate in promoting inclusive behavior. They also highlight how perceptions of

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excluded groups in South Asian contexts are determined by gendered socialization and identity ideologies.

Pakistan, a largely Muslim society with strong religious norms, has historically failed to protect transgender rights. Pakistan's parliament passed the Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act, 2018, after years of judicial engagement, public debate, and activism by transgender communities (Redding, 2019). The article reviews the Act's key provisions, highlighting how it reshapes the legal recognition of gender in Pakistan while also noting areas that remain ambiguous or potentially problematic. Despite these advances, concerns about the Act must be understood within Pakistan's broader history of gender inequality, particularly its troubled record on women's rights, shaped by laws such as the Hudood Ordinances, which disproportionately harmed women (Jahangir & Jilani, 1990; Khan, 2006). Women's higher scores across the measured dimensions may be linked to their generally higher emotional intelligence and social empathy, which are often nurtured through socialization processes that emphasize caregiving and compassion (Eagly, 2008).

In the context of Pakistan's patriarchal social structure, men's comparatively lower levels of inclusivity can be understood as a defense of traditional gender norms. Arshad, Hassan, Khalid, & Haider (2024) examine the gap between legal protections for transgender rights in Pakistan and their continued exclusion from higher education. It analyzes laws, institutional practices, and the lived experiences of transgender students to identify barriers such as social stigma, institutional bias, and inadequate support systems. Drawing on qualitative data, the research highlights the absence of inclusive policies and facilities and emphasizes the need for targeted reforms to create equitable and supportive university environments.

These findings align with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which proposes that people preserve a positive social identity by avoiding out-groups that are perceived as abnormal and favoring their own group. As members of a historically excluded group, female participants in this study may relate more to marginalized communities and hence exhibit higher acceptance, whereas cisgender male participants might see transgender inclusion as a challenge to the dominant gender order.

Regression analysis revealed that knowledge had a less effect on inclusive behavior than attitudes, which were the most relevant predictor. This implies that behavioral change may not result from cognitive knowledge alone unless it is coupled with emotional acceptance. This result is consistent with Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, which emphasizes the importance of attitudes and perceived social norms in shaping intentions and behavior.

The correlations observed between knowledge, attitude, and behavior support the stepwise process proposed by the KAB model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011), where awareness influences attitudes, which in turn shape behavioral intentions. Within the regression analysis, attitude proved to be a more powerful predictor than knowledge, highlighting the crucial role of emotional involvement in converting understanding into action. These findings indicate that cognitive approaches alone are not enough; effective educational programs should incorporate experiential and emotional components, i.e., storytelling, open discussions, and direct engagement to foster genuine internalization of inclusive values.

On the contrary, women's growing inclusivity can be interpreted as a display of cross-group empathy, in which solidarity and a sense of ethical inclusion are promoted by their identification with transgender and intersex people, another marginalized group. By underlining the performativity and socially constructed aspect of gender, queer theory provides an additional level of insight (Butler, 1990). According to this perspective, the study's conclusions show how limiting binary gender categories can be challenged by more knowledge and education. Growing understanding of gender variation challenges heteronormative perspectives that categorize "male" and "female" as being fixed and eternal.

According to this standpoint, female participants' susceptibility to transgender inclusion can be an undercover means of challenging patriarchal expectations. According to Jagose (1996) and Crenshaw (2017), criticizing gender stereotypes creates possibilities for more comprehensive conceptions of social justice and identity. Consequently, the structural and discursive elements influencing beliefs toward gender diversity become apparent when Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory are applied simultaneously.

These results align with prior South Asian studies that connect education and empathy to more inclusive attitudes. Yadava, S. (2024) assessed how prepared higher education institutions in India's National Capital Region are for transgender inclusion. Using questionnaires and rating scales with students and faculty, it examined existing facilities, stakeholder attitudes, and the lived experiences of transgender students. The findings highlight gaps in infrastructure and awareness, underscoring the need for targeted sensitization initiatives and policy guidance to strengthen inclusive practices in higher education.

Despite the presence of the Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act, 2018, ineffective implementation and insufficient awareness, especially among law enforcement, continue to undermine routine security, illustrating the need for ongoing advocacy and institutional training. The results showed that substantial promotion of transgender and intersex individuals in Pakistan requires coordinated educational, policy, and social interventions. Addressing gender diversity, human rights, and safety concerns, i.e., harassment, violence, and access to safe public spaces. Safer settings and an overall decrease in stigma can be achieved through community-based participation and responsible media representation. Theoretically, a strong perspective to comprehend how awareness, social belonging, and cultural constructions of gender shape inclusion and protection within patriarchal societies can be obtained by integrating Social Identity Theory and Queer Theory with the Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior framework (Ajzen, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Butler, 1990; UNDP Pakistan, 2017).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This study has been restricted by its focus on single university students, which might not accurately represent the experiences of transgender and intersex people in other areas where safety concerns might be different. The accuracy of answers on delicate topics like security and discrimination may potentially be impacted by the use of self-reported data. For a deeper comprehension of how awareness campaigns affect attitudes and safety, future research should use qualitative or mixed

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methodologies, involve individuals from a variety of social and geographic backgrounds, and evaluate changes over the course of time. Highlighting the perspectives of transgender and intersex individuals is crucial for recognizing actual challenges and implementing successful inclusion measures.

## CONCLUSION

The results indicate that opinions about the inclusion of transgender and intersex individuals in Pakistan are significantly influenced by gender, with female participants exhibiting greater understanding, more supportive attitudes, and more substantial inclusive practices than male participants. Gendered socialization processes that impact empathy and sensitivity toward oppressed groups are shown in this pattern. The findings additionally demonstrate that knowledge, attitudes, and actions are closely related, with attitudes having the greatest influence on inclusive behavior. These relationships are important from a safety perspective since unfavorable opinions frequently end up in prevalent risks, i.e., harassment, exclusion, and insecurity. The study emphasizes how strict gender norms in patriarchal settings uphold limitations that impact both social acceptance and individual safety when interpreted through the lenses of social identity and queer theory. In order to ensure that legal protections are converted into safer social situations, the findings practically support the necessity for inclusive education, focused training, and efficient policy implementation. Strategies intended at lowering discrimination and enhancing security for gender-diverse populations might be further informed by extending future study across generations and regions.

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