

Social problems for transgender in Pakistan

Waniya Shehzad

20-11139

Soc-100 Sec C

Forman Christian College

(A Chartered University)

Submitted to Dr. Sara Rizvi

18 December 2017

**TITLE:**

**“Social problems for transgender in Pakistan”**

**RESEARCH QUESTION:**

**Q. What are the social problems for transgender in Pakistan?**

**MAIN THEME:**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Literature review**
- 3. Sociological theory**
- 4. Causes**
- 5. Conclusion**
- 6. Recommendations/ implications**

## **SOCIAL PROBLEMS FOR TRANSGENDERS IN PAKISTAN**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Who am I? This question was asked to me so many times by so called “Humans” all around the world. This question strikes me, why I am like this? Who am I? My identity is not yet confirmed by so many countries, I cannot have the equal rights as a Pakistani citizen even I cannot get my rights for living my life on my will. WHO AM I? (Letter of Transgender) One of the most sensitive social issues of all times up till now has been the problems faced by the transgender community in most of the countries around the globe and unfortunately Pakistan falls in one of those countries.

Transgender, people who belong to the third gender, are considered a disgrace, a bad luck by the society. Transgender is “Broad” term which describe “the people whose sexual characteristics identity diverse the form that usually correlate with sex at the time of birth.” In Pakistan, transgender people include hijras, khowajasara, Murat, kushras and many more. “In fact, there are many who do not belong to any of the groups but are transgender persons individually.” (Abdul Rafay) They fall under the LGBT group (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). Due to the controversial nature and typical mindset of people, the subject of Transgender rights in Pakistan is not even discussed in sophisticated circles. Most people do not even consider them as a part of their community; massive rejections are often faced by transgender in almost all the parts of Pakistan. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2007), Article 2 which says “Every single human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights without distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. But in case of the “third gender” these so called “Human Rights” are not implemented, because transgender are the people who enjoy the least amount of happiness regarding their respect, rights, their life and what not!

According to recent research, “studies conducted on transgenderism, approximately one out of 50 children are identified with a transgender tendency/ potential. In other words, about 2 percent population of Pakistan is affected by transgenderism.” Third gender is firstborn determined by family. At first glance the families become hyper to kill them or to throw them from their circle because they feel a shamed to have them as a part of family. “No one knows being born what sex you belong to?” Then why Hijra faced lowborn discrimination in family, communities, social groups, schools, and society it means in every single step of life. “According to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Supreme Court of Pakistan agreed to give transgender equal rights like other citizens of this country with protection under the article 4 and 9 of the Pakistani constitution 1973. In 2013, they got as same rights as all citizens of Pakistan. And the federal and provincial governments give them basic rights of employments, education, health, work in governments different departments during the comparable period of time.” Apart

from all these laws implementation which are not being actually implemented in our society just because of our people unchangeable mindset and the way they have pictured the third gender in their minds.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The burgeoning literature emerging from Pakistan on Khawaja Siras (KS) falls broadly into various categories: firstly, anthropological investigations of their gender identity and lives; and secondly, research aimed at understanding their social exclusion and its impact, thirdly their activism in society, fourthly the laws passed and their implementation and many more. The literature exploring their gender identity explores the varied nomenclatures within the KS community and brings their experiences to the fore in the context of their customs and rituals (Haider 2008; Pamment 2010; Sultana and Kalyani 2012). These studies expand on how KS enact family life, focusing on rituals surrounding marriage and parenthood.

The other strand of literature investigates different aspects of social exclusion KS experience. Some studies investigate the type of livelihood transgender people pursue in Pakistan, highlighting sex work and begging as key choices (Abdullah et al. 2012; Rehan, Chaudhary and Shah 2009; Chaudhry et al. 2014). A study by Tabassum and Jamil (2014) explores a different facet, looking at how stigmatization of KS gender identity can force them to leave school and make them vulnerable to limited employment opportunities. In their work (ibid.) they also bring to fore the need for comprehensive policies to ensure that KS have access to education in a safe environment. Since social hatred and discrimination keeps them away from educational institutions, therefore, very few attain good education.

(Transgender Issues in Pakistani Community) This study examines that how transgender survives in Pakistani society. In Pakistan transgender groups of people generally concerns with dancing, whoring, street walking. The researcher trying to find out about third gender prevalence, it means the fact and conditions in Pakistani traditional society. In this research paper researcher shows that transgender have basic facility of life, or can Pakistan provide or deprived third gender from these rights of life like Income, Social respect, education, treatment, Sex abuse, marriage, prayerful, political, religiously, freedom, residence issues, and specially personal Safety? On the basis of previous researcher papers have done on this issue so far. According to the Pakistani English newspaper ([www.pstimes.com](http://www.pstimes.com)) (Pakistan state times in Article which was published by Mehwish Akhter on wed, Apr 20th, 2016. Answer is very simple and attractive uncomplicated that transgender and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) area of people are recognized as a shame and ignominy in the Pakistani culture. They don't have sources of income without dancing, singing etc. They are bound to live outside of common societies, and to make their own colonies.

The literature establishes the social exclusion of KS and its adverse impacts on their economic life, but it does not provide a nuanced analysis of the multidimensional nature of the exclusion they experience. This is evident in the absence of an exploration of the interrelation between limited social, economic and political opportunities open to KS, and the individual and

collective impact of these on their lives. Moreover, these studies have also left out an analysis of gender and sexuality as unified descriptors of an individual's identity.

Furthermore, in one study (Ahmed, Yasin and Umair 2014) the language it uses to describe KS is problematic and discriminatory in itself – the authors refer to KS as ‘sexually handicap [sic.]’ (2014: 2279). This shows the existence of problematic assumptions in the research on KS and their lives. Additionally, there is a lack of information in the literature on the link between the social and economic exclusion of KS and the broader discourse of development programs. Along with this, the literature also fails to explore the ability of gender identity-based programs to bring about change in the social and economic exclusion experienced by KS. (“Transgender” Activism and Tran’s nationality in Pakistan- Faris A.Khan) the Pakistani Supreme Court’s 2009 decision to grant rights to khwaja siras was hailed by civil society groups as a crucial step to rehabilitate the “transgender” population. Though unexpected, the court’s decision coincided with similar developments in other South Asian countries, like India allowed transgender citizens to register for passports in 2005, added a third gender category to the country’s voter registration process in 2009, and included transgender people in the country’s census and citizen identification system in 2011, next Nepal created a third gender category in 2007 and included transgender people in its census in 2011, and then Bangladesh allowed transgender citizens to register to vote in 2008. Improvement in their legal status has created a public discourse around “transgender” rights in Pakistan and provided certain protections to khwaja siras, particularly with respect to their treatment by law enforcement personnel. However, it has done little to positively impact other aspects of the everyday lives of most gender variant people, thus explaining the involvement of khwaja sira rights groups and NGOs in the rights activism and social development of this minority population.

### 3. SOCIOLOGICAL THOERY

**Ellen Wittlinger, Parrotfish** “But you can only lie about who you are for so long without going crazy.”

**John Irving, (The World According to Garp)** “All men are liars, said Roberta Muldoon, who knew this was true because she had once been a man.”

*“To those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender-let I say- you are not alone. You're struggle, for the end to violence and discrimination, is a shared struggle. Today, I stand with you. And I call upon all countries and people, to stand with you too.*

*A historic shift is underway. We must tackle the violence, decriminalize consensual same sex relationships and end discrimination. We must educate the public. I call on this council and people of conscience to make this happen.*

*The time has come.” — Ban Ki-Moon*

As being a sociologist, and thinking from the sociological perspective, the transgender community in Pakistan is not treated as Humans which is crystal clear! The laws, their rights, their living, their respect and what not! Every each thing is ignored when it comes

to the third gender. Their lives still being on threat even when the Supreme Court has passed laws to give transgender their equal rights and protection like other citizens of this country and the government to give them basic rights of employments, education, health, work in all the departments. Then the question arises why still this particular group is facing all these social problems?

The answer which I have, after reading all these articles and perceiving the information about the transgender life and what role they play in our society is that there is this social conflict among us all which is not letting our inner side to accept this third gender group physically, emotionally, psychologically and socially. And this is because of our culture dominancy upon our laws which do not let transgender fix in either of the groups, primary and secondary. Other reason is people wrong ethno- methodological thinking which is only letting them go and approach only one side where every single person is dragged to and that is our social race in which every single person without even thinking for a second what they are up to are running in the same direction as others in this biggest race in which they don't even know what harm they are doing to themselves. As structural functional theory focuses on structure but not on an individual which brings harmony but with this only some people benefit but others who are in minorities are harmed more. In case of the ignored minorities, we, If began to think from interpretivist sociological perspective by studying every single individual of this group and then combining this study with the critical approach of the society which focuses on the social change with the positivist approach that focuses on the changing social behavior can overcome this ignorance and help transgender have their rights without any fear.

#### **4. CAUSES OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY TRANSGENDERS IN PAKISTAN**

Islam has given equal rights to everyone. Pakistan being the second largest Islamic state in the world through media and other major sources we have found that being an Islamic state, in Pakistan, still transgender community is neglected by the government and local society which is the main cause and head of every social problem transgender face. In Pakistan, transgender are ignored in every walk of life including education, employment, health care, and even security of their own life and all other rights which being a citizen, a person enjoys.

##### **4.1 Education**

Education as being the weapon of every individual which saves him/her from any future problem has never been given to transgender. Being uneducated, the third gender leads to earn in different wrong ways for their living thus, this becomes a major cause of the social issues they face regarding education and unemployment.

## 4.2 Employment

Being not able to get jobs in the respectful departments the Khawaja Siras began dancing, street walking, begging and even sex working for their income. And then we humans know them only for dancing and singing. When they will not be given their respected rights by us, locals they will go for another way in order to earn their living.

## 4.3 Health care

Health and other medical facilities unlike other facilities is not fully provided to the third gender, which lead them to more severe diseases. No separate hospitals are made for them and nor even separate doctors are available. Separate only in sense because in common hospitals even if a KS goes for a medical treatment or etc not only the stuff there, but the patients, and even the doctors don't accept to treat them and provide them with medical facilities. There is this example, of "Alisha- a transgender activist who fought for the rights of transgender was shot in Peshawar. KPK transgender alliance coordinator was shot six times and when driven to the hospital the doctors made them wait for an hour trying to figure out whether to shift him to the male ward or female ward, which eventually led to Alisha's death." Her death lead the question to millions WHO AM I?

## 4.4 Violence

Transgender are not only subjected to physical violence but sexual harassment and rape as well. Pakistan's constitution contains laws in written form that safeguard the rights of transgender but unfortunately, when the time comes to enforce the laws, no as such implementation of these said laws can be seen from the government's end.

## 4.5 Rights

"In 2009 The supreme court former chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry declare rights that they are third gender and they have equal rights with national ID card with free education, jobs and health care." But members of transgender community, they don't have these rights it is just certain records on papers. According to Farzana Jan the corporate executive of the transgender peoples of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, " In a video report of Voice of America Pashto that it is the reality that when we started our endeavor for ours rights then we faced a lot of problems. And she said that from 2015 to 2016, 40 to 45 (Khawaja Sira) harass , kidnapped, raped and killed by some groups. And these groups giving us threats of life they want to depress our voice in society. (Transgender Issues in Pakistani Community) furthermore, farzana jan said that, "Now I realized that we are inhuman we are not the part of this society, I don't know that we are animals or what but

humans love with animals is more that if they have a dog or cat they give it a proper food, milk shelter everything which they need” Farzana Jan words sums up the rights which are not given to the third gender in Pakistan.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Transgender community, being the third gender, are frowned upon and are considered as degenerates, being treated as if they are not even human. Transgender represent a group of people who enjoy the least amount of respect and rights in Pakistan. All the above studies mentioned that there is direful need to solve the troubles of third gender of unemployment, low income, health, medication, houses, jobs, respect, social gathering rights, gender equality, fundamental rights and life safety, in the society especially in an underdeveloped country such as like Pakistan. (Abdul Rafay November 15 2016) As Pakistanis, we need to realize that this is not merely a war that these individuals have to fight they are human beings, just like us, and deserve as much of a right to education and these individuals have voices that are not heard by anyone. We need to be the voice that speaks on their behalf, fights for their rights and makes living for them less painful.

## **6. RECOMMEDATIONS / IMPLICATIONS**

A myth, formed which says “that they cannot do any work except for sing and dance.” I wonder who made this, an another thing which I have noticed is that there is this constant hatred and at the same time a sense of fear among people for transgender and whenever I have asked them why you hate them and why this fear? Most answers which I have got were just because ‘they are not like us’ another was ‘Aarhh their physical appearance \*laughs\*’ another was ‘are you mad don’t you know?’ for hatred every answer was different but when it comes to fear, the answers were same! So why you fear them? A Khawaja Sira ‘dua’ (good luck) and bud’dua (bad luck) is accepted mostly!

Here, humans, what I see in them is just that every single person has lost its way of thinking logically and every individual is right behind the other one without even knowing which lane they are in just because the lane is the longest one that is way every individual is in it nothing else nothing more and this describes our culture and how blindly we are following it not even knowing what actually our religion Islam says about our culture, its norms and values, rights and regulations etc.

So the major and most important thing which I recommend to ‘Humans’ (us) is that, “please be humans, and if you are humans then please act like one!”(Waniya) Change your mindset, think from your own perspective first and then decide which way to follow, because I have a believe that a single person can bring change to a society both socially and mentally If you have the will and you choose the right way no one can stop you from changing this society, society’s thinking and even world! A change always starts from the heart, from one own self! Moreover when it comes to our government, unfortunately, our



government has failed to provide legal rights to the transgender community even when laws and legislations are being given and proven in Supreme court of Pakistan but because not implemented yet fully and properly, due to which they have not been given the respect they deserve as human beings and as members of society. Therefore they should be given equal rights, as are other men and women in Pakistan by law, there should be proper quota for their jobs in every private and government sector organization, to encourage them and in order to secure their future, they also have the right to ambitions, they can be future doctors, engineers, scientists, or artists – if only

Our government pays a little attention towards them. They can live a respectful and prosperous life if we all cooperate and encourage them by considering them our equals.

## REFERENCES

2002 Young Adult Fertility and Sexually Survey, 2003

Ahmed, D (2011, November 15). Pakistani Supreme Court leads the way. Inside Islam: Dialogues and debates. Available from <http://insideislam.wisc.edu/2011/11/pakistani-supremecourt-leads-the-way>

Transgender Issues in Pakistani Community (PDF Download Available). Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314116381\\_Transgender\\_Issues\\_in\\_Pakistani\\_Community](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314116381_Transgender_Issues_in_Pakistani_Community)

transgender-in-pakistan-by-mahwish-akhtar-jinnah-university-for-women

Majeedullah, A. (2016). *Living on the Periphery: The Khawaja Siras of Pakistan* (No. IDS Evidence Report; 165). IDS.

Redding, J. A. (2016). Transgender Rights in Pakistan?: Global, Colonial, and Islamic Perspectives.

Ghilzai, S. A., & Ali, H. Why only Beg or dance? Transgenders.

Redding, J. A. (2012). From'she-males' to'unix': transgender Rights and the productive paradoxes of Pakistani policing.

Collumbien, M., Chow, J., Qureshi, A. A., Rabbani, A., & Hawkes, S. (2009). Multiple risks among male and transgender sex workers in Pakistan. *Journal of LGBT health research*, 4(2-3), 71-79.

Miller, L. R., & Grollman, E. A. (2015, September). The social costs of gender nonconformity for transgender adults: implications for discrimination and health. In *Sociological Forum* (Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 809-831).

Abdullah, M. A., Basharat, Z., Kamal, B., Sattar, N. Y., Hassan, Z. F., Jan, A. D., & Shafqat, A. (2012). Is social exclusion pushing the Pakistani Hijras (Transgenders) towards commercial sex work? a qualitative study. *BMC international health and human rights*, 12(1), 32.

Khan, A. A., Rehan, N., Qayyum, K., & Khan, A. (2008). Correlates and prevalence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections among Hijras (male transgenders) in Pakistan. *International journal of STD & AIDS*, 19(12), 817-820.

Jami, H., & Kamal, A. (2015). Measuring attitudes toward hijras in Pakistan: Gender and religiosity in perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 30(1), 151.

Kozee, H. B., Tylka, T. L., & Bauerband, L. A. (2012). Measuring transgender individuals' comfort with gender identity and appearance: Development and validation of the Transgender Congruence Scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 36(2), 179-196.

Winter, S., Diamond, M., Green, J., Karasic, D., Reed, T., Whittle, S., & Wylie, K. (2016). Transgender people: health at the margins of society. *The Lancet*, 388(10042), 390-400.

Nazir, N., & Yasir, A. (2016). Education, Employability and Shift of Occupation of Transgender in Pakistan: A Case Study of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *Dialogue (Pakistan)*, 11(2).

Shakir, M. How and to what extent does social marginalization, a result of 'gendered citizenship', effect the economic status of the transgender in Pakistan?.

Reisner, S. L., Poteat, T., Keatley, J., Cabral, M., Mothopeng, T., Dunham, E., ... & Baral, S. D. (2016). Global health burden and needs of transgender populations: a review. *The Lancet*, 388(10042), 412-436.