

# Navigating the Social Landscape of Transgender Lives: A Case Study of Punjab

Laraib Iqrar<sup>1</sup>, Shazia Habib<sup>2</sup>, Huma Yasin<sup>3</sup> and Muhammad Husnain<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

*Sexual orientation and gender are crucial aspects of an individual's social identity. Under specific conditions, biological variables may not align with the social and psychological characteristics associated with gender. Consequently, a qualitative investigation was devised to examine the social encounters of transgender individuals within Pakistan's cultural framework. A purposive and snowball sampling technique was employed to pick 22 transgender individuals aged 20-40 years from Punjab, Pakistan. An interview with a semi-structured format was conducted with all participants. The data underwent content analysis. As a result, various topics such as interpersonal relationships, living situations, societal expectations, rejection, responses to transgender individuals, societal pressures, issues faced by transgender individuals, discrimination, misconceptions about blessings or curses, and transgender identity were identified alongside a common theme of 'positive social responses.' In summary, within the Pakistani cultural framework, it is necessary to implement counseling services tailored explicitly for transgender individuals who encounter negative social encounters in society. Additional research is required to develop efficient interventions aimed at tackling the societal challenges faced by the transgender community.*

**Keywords:** Transgender, Social Interaction, Qualitative Methods

## Introduction

Sex refers to the biological characteristics of an individual, while gender refers to the psychological and social aspects of identity (Diamond, 2002). There are situations where the biological parts of gender do not align with the social and psychological aspects. An individual's gender identity is a multifaceted psychological and social experience influenced by societal and cultural norms and expectations (Mascis, 2011). Transgender is a broad term that encompasses variations in gender identification when an individual's assigned biological sex does not align with their internal sense of identity. Transgender individuals are those who do not identify with the binary classification of sex as either male or female and do not feel that they fit within the traditional definitions of masculinity or femininity (Meier & Labuski, 2013). The terms transgender, Trans, gender-variant folks, or gender-nonconforming are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to this heterogeneous population. A study conducted in the United States categorized transgender individuals into three groups: (1) individuals who were assigned male at birth but identified as female, (2) individuals who were assigned female at birth but identified as male, and (3) individuals who do not identify as either male or female (Factor & Rothblum, 2008). Over the past decade, an increasing body of research indicates a significant

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<sup>1</sup>MS Student, Department of Psychology, Government College University Faisalabad.

Email: [Hafizakainat154@gmail.com](mailto:Hafizakainat154@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Government College University Faisalabad.

Email: [Shaziahabib@gcuf.edu.pk](mailto:Shaziahabib@gcuf.edu.pk)

<sup>3</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Central Punjab, Lahore and Lecturer, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University, Lahore Campus. Email: [Humayasin@cuilahore.edu.pk](mailto:Humayasin@cuilahore.edu.pk)

<sup>4</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of Media & Communication Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur and Lecturer, Department of Media & Communication, UMT, Sialkot. Email: [muhammad.husnain@skt.umt.edu.pk](mailto:muhammad.husnain@skt.umt.edu.pk)

population of individuals who do not identify within the traditional binary gender categories (Motmans et al., 2019).

Several South Asian countries, such as India, Nepal, and Pakistan, have officially acknowledged the legal rights of transgender individuals through arbitration. These countries employ the phrase 'third sex' to refer to individuals who do not fit into the categories of males or women and who identify themselves or are identified by society as such. The term "the third gender" is frequently used to refer to specific populations, such as the hijras (Aggarwal, 2017). According to Walter (2015) "transgender" refers to the adoption of a gender identity (a fundamental conviction about being male, female, or another gender) that differs from the sex assigned at birth. Sexual orientation refers to an individual's sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and emotional connections to males, females, or both. Specific individuals who identify as transgender undergo a process of transformation, while others do not. The often-used terms to categorize different groups of transgender individuals include 'guru,' 'hijra-dera,' 'hijras,' 'transgender women,' 'eunuchs,' 'khusra,' 'moat,' and 'zenana' (Kamal, 2016). In Pakistan, particularly in Punjab, transgender individuals are commonly identified as Hijras and Kawahara. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-2018, the population census is 207,77. It is distributed as follows: 3052 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 11001 in Punjab, 4788 in Sindh, 1234 in Baluchistan, 500 in FATA, and 200 in Islamabad. The traditional function of hijras in Pakistan involves engaging in singing, dancing, and soliciting alms during the birth of a male child and the marriage ceremony of sons. However, this role is becoming increasingly unfavorable as time progresses (Hossain, 2002).

Furthermore, many individuals have resorted to begging, engaging in dance performances at events, participating in fairs, and engaging in the sex industry. Transgender individuals may experience extreme acts of violence, while nearly all of them encounter substantial and detrimental microaggressions and prejudice rooted in transphobia (Grant et al., 2011). Transphobia encompasses prejudiced ideas and attitudes towards individuals who identify as transgender, including an aversion and irrational fear towards those who exhibit masculine traits as women, feminine traits as men, cross-dressers, transgender individuals, or transsexuals (Hill & Willoughby, 2005). According to (McCann and Brown, 2017), transgender individuals have developed improved methods for dealing with challenges. However, they are still at risk for various psychosocial issues such as violence, discrimination, financial difficulties, substance abuse, and difficulties accessing appropriate healthcare and social services (Bocking et al., 2012). Transgender individuals experience a joblessness rate that is twice as high as the general population, and they are more likely to be underemployed (Nuttbrock et al., 2010).

## Review of Existing Literature

Prior research has shown that *hijras* face numerous social and personal challenges, including health complications, harassment, legal repercussions, sexual abuse, violence, and lack of human rights (Chettiar et al., 2015). Moreover, numerous studies have documented that the hijra group experiences social stigma, which is associated with psychological distress and economic hardship, primarily resulting from limited social engagement. Transgender individuals are part of a highly stigmatized demographic in society (Verbeek, 2020). Despite facing biased policies in educational institutions, this group also faces discrimination from school administrators, family members, and peers (Lenning et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2016). McCann et al. (2021) qualitative study revealed that trans people face stigmatization, discrimination, marginalization, affirmation experiences, assistance, and healthcare access issues. A study demonstrated the correlation between the age of transgender individuals and their social adaptation. In addition, older transgender individuals in Pakistan exhibit a greater degree of social adaptability compared to younger transgender individuals (Abbas et al., 2014). Lombardi et al. (2001) conducted a study to examine the frequency of violence and prejudice

among transgender individuals. The survey revealed that 60% of the participants reported experiencing harassment by unknown individuals in public spaces, including incidents of verbal abuse, physical attacks including weapons, and sexual assault. Additionally, 37% of participants indicated they faced disciplinary actions, mistreatment, termination, and financial difficulties (Hill & Willoughby, 2005). While it is evident that transgender individuals face unfavorable attitudes and Trans phobia from many groups, there are certain demographics where research indicates good sentiments towards transgender persons. Research conducted among health professionals and feminist societies indicates that these groups tend to have more favorable opinions toward transgender individuals (Gorrotxategi, 2020). Indigenous research has revealed that transgender in Pakistani society face adverse responses from their transgender community. The findings suggest that individuals experienced violence throughout their formative years, mostly within their own families and subsequently within society (Kamran et al., 2017). Subsequent investigation revealed the role of personality politics among khwajasira campaigners and contributed to initiating the khwajasira litigation in Pakistan. They aided gender-ambiguous tribes in brief interactions with the public, helping them resolve conflicts, win debates, avoid unwanted scrutiny, and portray khwajasiras as upstanding members of society (Khan et al., 2014). Several qualitative researches have demonstrated the pervasive presence of social bias against the physical appearance of transgender individuals. Despite the transgender community's desire for education, they often face exclusion from educational institutions. The government has not implemented any specific practical measures to address the challenges faced by the transgender community (Tabaasum et al., 2014). Pakistan ranks as the second largest Islamic nation globally. Islam has established a system of equitable justice for all individuals. The government and local society continue to neglect transgender individuals despite being an Islamic state, as reported by various electronic and print media outlets. Numerous non-governmental organizations advocate for human rights, yet transgender individuals continue to be overlooked in all aspects of life, including census data collection, education, government employment, healthcare services, and even personal safety. In 2013, the Supreme Court of Pakistan affirmed the validity of transgender individuals, although this ruling has yet to be fully implemented in society. Both society and their relatives show little tolerance for them as clan members. It is crucial to address the challenges faced by the third gender in Pakistani society, including issues like unemployment, low income, and health problems. They should have medical and housing facilities, employment opportunities, respect, equal rights, basic privileges, and safety (Saddique et al., 2017). Furthermore, literature has shown that hijras, due to being excluded from occupational and educational opportunities, are compelled to engage in the high-risk activity of selling sex (Abdullah et al., 2012). The transgender community in Pakistan faces social segregation and is compelled to engage in commercial sex work, putting their lives at risk. In addition, their transgender identification prevents them from accessing essential healthcare services and rights (Jami, 2015). The present study evaluated the social issues the khwajasiras population faces in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan. Transgender discrimination remains a pressing concern as individuals continue to face prejudice based on their gender identification. In Pakistan, there has been a lack of extensive research on transgender individuals. The existing studies have primarily examined their social adjustment (Abbas et al., 2014), attitudes towards hijras (Jami, 2015), beliefs and misconceptions about hijras (Jami & Kamal, 2017), as well as the cultural identity politics and transgender activism (Khan et al., 2014; Qurashi, 2016). Hence, the present study investigates the distinctive social encounters of transgender individuals within Pakistan's cultural framework through a qualitative methodology. So far, a limited amount of literature that focuses on this subject is available.

## Materials and Methods

### Sample and Research Design

A total of twenty-two transgender persons, aged between 20 and 40 years (mean age = 27.90; standard deviation of age = 6.16), were purposefully and selectively sampled using the snowball sampling approach from different cities in Punjab, including Lahore, Sahiwal, and Faisalabad, Pakistan. The sample size for the current study was determined based on recommendations from several phenomenological studies. Creswell (1998) recommended a sample size of 5-25 individuals, while Morse (1994) recommends a minimum of six participants for a qualitative investigation. The present study employed an exploratory research strategy.

### Criteria for Exclusion and Inclusion

The transgender community was exclusively included. The study excluded adolescents who identified as transgender, lesbian, gay, binary, or intersex.

### Measures

#### Demographic Profile

The demographic information sheet was derived from data about participants' age, education, monthly income, occupation, period of transgender community involvement, and transgender status.

### Sample Characteristics

**Table 1: Demographic information of transgender, sample (N=22)**

Name	Gender Identity	Age	City	Education	Earning	Profession	Years	Status
S.S	Transgender	35	Fsd.	Middle	40000	Dancer	18	Guru
S.N	Transgender	35	Sahiwal	Primary	15000	Begging	25	Chela
A.S	Transgender	25	Lahore	BBA	35000	Project Manager	8	Guru-Chela
I.H	Zenana	24	Lahore	Graduation	15000	Project Manager	11	Chela
K.H	Zenana	24	Lahore	F.A	18000	Phone operator	2	Chela
C.D	Transgender	30	Fsd.	Nil	10000	Dancer /Begging	20	Chela
L.B	Transgender	30	Fsd.	Metric	20000	Begging	20	Chela
K.L	Transgender	22	Sahiwal	Primary	10000	Dancer	14	Chela
T.S	Zenana	40	Lahore	Nil	10000	Begging	35	Guru
S.N	Transgender	20	Sahiwal	Nil	15000	Begging	13	Chela
C.A	Zenana	28	Fsd.	Metric	25000	Begging	12	Chela
N.M	Transgender	24	Lahore	F.A	40000	Dancer/ Officer Assistant	7	Guru-Chela
M.N	Zenana	33	Lahore	Metric	15000	Cook	20	Chela-Guru

### Interview Schedule

The study employed a semi-structured interview schedule as a measurement tool. This timetable was established by analyzing the existing literature and utilizing electronic and social

media platforms. The interview questions were exclusively centered around investigating the social encounters (both favorable and unfavorable) of the transgender community.

### Procedure

Initially, participants were requested to provide a demographic data sheet with age, birth order, monthly income, education, occupation, period of being part of the hijra community, and transgender status. A semi-structured interview schedule was administered for approximately one hour to collect data. Ultimately, the participants expressed gratitude for their collaboration and dedication. The first coding process was driven by theoretical thematic analysis, and data assembling was conducted using content analysis.

### Ethical Consideration

Prior to completing the interview and audio recording, consent was obtained from all participants using a formal consent form. In addition, they were provided with a detailed explanation of the objectives and methodology of the study and assured that the confidentiality of the gathered data would be upheld. The participants were instructed to respond candidly to the questions and were free to withdraw from the study at any point.

### Data Analysis

The data was subjected to content analysis. The present study's material is mainly conveyed through textual representation and thematic analysis. The analysis technique reduces the size of the collected text, identifies different groups or categories based on content similarity, and ultimately extracts several themes related to the social experiences of transgender individuals.

### Findings

The main findings of the study are discussed in the following table.

**Table 2: Major themes and Sub-themes based on the social experiences of transgenders**

Major themes	Sub-themes	Major themes	Sub-themes
Interpersonal relations and living arrangements	With family Independent With Guru	Social problems	Unemployment Lack of Educational facilities Property/Living issues Marriage Moving/ Travelling Religious
Social demands	Family demands Relatives demands Transgender community demands	Social discrimination	Educational institutes Hospitals Public places Airports
Social rejection and transgender reactions	Familial Relatives Trans community	Myths about curses/blessings	Curse/ blessing as reality Curse/blessing as myth
Social pressures	Familial Societal	Positive social reactions	Social acceptance and support Protection against harassment Support by the Transgender community
Transgender status	Chela Guru	-	-

### **Interpersonal Relationships and Residential Situations**

Only a small number of transgender individuals articulate their social experiences through their "family relations and living arrangements." Only a small number of transgender individuals reside with their biological family in their own homes. In addition, their family members support and maintain a positive relationship with them. They assert that biological, familial assistance is of utmost significance, as solely a genuine family can provide them with a more profound sense of purpose in life and social backing. Consequently, a transgender individual needs not to sever ties with their family. Conversely, a small number of transgender individuals have chosen to live alone due to their families' refusal to accept their transgender identities, resulting in a complete estrangement from their families.

One of the participants named Tabassum stated "She lives alone due to rejection from family for meeting in certain attire, leading her to leave family". Several transgender individuals have said that they currently reside with their "Guru," as they took them in during their youth after being adopted from their biological parents. Specific transgender individuals have voluntarily separated from their biological families and now reside with "Gurus" due to their belief in the importance of living within their transgender community and considering them as their actual family members. They expressed a lack of desire to reside with their biological family or to have any inclination to meet them. Sonia stated "Since childhood, I have been living with my Guru, who has raised and cared for me, and I have strong relationships with "Guru".

### **Societal Expectations**

Some transgender individuals have described that their relatives consistently insisted that they present themselves as male both within their homes and in public. Some transgender individuals have said that their relatives consistently ask for money, and even their married sisters frequently rely on them for financial assistance. One of the Trans stated that, "My family demands money, including my married sisters, who rely on me financially." Several transgender males have said that, despite their families being aware of their gender identification, their mothers persistently urge them to enter into a heterosexual marriage.

### **Social Exclusion and the Responses of Transgender Individuals**

A small number of transgender individuals claimed that their families refused to meet them while they were presenting as their identified gender. Transgender individuals faced familial rejection, prompting many to depart from their families. Furthermore, transgender individuals have expressed that there is a prevailing perception that their female family members, particularly their mothers and sisters, are the ones who provide them with significant support and care. This notion is incorrect. They resemble a piercing blade that strikes their heart immediately. They were informed that their siblings not only harbor animosity towards them because of their transsexual appearance but also have no desire to have any contact with them.

### **Societal Influence**

Some transgender individuals have expressed experiencing a dearth of autonomy as a result of their transgender identities.

Their family has enforced limitations on their lifestyles, prohibiting them from maintaining any connections with their transgender group. They also noted that their families exerted pressure on them to conform to a masculine lifestyle. One of the trans reported that "We have faced many issues as Trans from family and relatives. Like we are not allowed to grow nails or hairs and to do plucking. Once I grow my long hair my mother felt angry on me" (Mona).

Individuals within the transgender community lack autonomy in selecting their companions and expressing their style by donning clothing independently. Many transgender individuals report that even when they present themselves as male, their distinct transgender mannerisms

and body language make them immediately recognizable, often leading to ridicule from others. They cannot conceal their true identity despite their attempts to alter their appearance.

### **Issues About Society**

A significant number of interviewees indicated that they encountered numerous work challenges despite a high education level. They are unable to secure employment as a result of gender bias. Several exceptionally skilled transgender individuals have reported experiencing discrimination during job interviews solely based on their transgender identification. In addition, they reported encountering numerous obstacles in obtaining education due to being subjected to bullying or harassment by both teachers and students, ultimately leading to their departure from academic institutions. They claim that the students and teachers employ offensive language and misbehave towards them. Transgender stated that "She left her school due to negative behavior from classmates and teachers, attending an Islamic education institution, where they were subjected to negative language and discrimination" (Sana).

### **Social Problems**

Several transgender individuals have reported being unable to purchase property or rent due to their transgender identification. In addition, the respondents reported encountering problems such as worker misconduct while traveling, whether on public transport or during international flights at the airport. Additionally, there have been reports indicating that individuals who identify as transgender and follow the Islamic faith are being denied the opportunity to participate in the "Hajj" pilgrimage even though Islam promotes the principle of equality. Anaya and Zehrish informed their sentiments that "transwomen cannot perform "Haj" due to their trans identity, as no man will admit them to the event."

Social discrimination is the unjust treatment or prejudice against individuals or groups based on their social characteristics, such as race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status.

Transgender individuals face social discrimination at shopping malls due to their trans identity, being often seen as beggars rather than shoppers. As a result of their abrasive demeanor, they predominantly opt for internet shopping or rely on their boyfriends to meet their wants. According to one of the participants "Nirmal recounts a shopping incident where a man mistakenly offered him 10 rupees for a dress, despite Nirmal's reassurance that he was there for shopping purposes".

### **Debunking Misconceptions Regarding Curses and Blessings**

Findings indicated that society is embracing the belief in curses attributed to transgender individuals, and it is widely believed that these curses are acknowledged and accepted by a higher power. Some transgender individuals have reported experiencing frequent teasing and mistreatment from others. In response, they may express their frustration by uttering curses, which they believe are often acknowledged by a higher power. One of the participants named Shazia informed "The Trans expresses sadness for a boy who lost his business and money due to his bad behavior, stating that God accepts trans bad wishes".

Nevertheless, the question remains to be answered as to whether this phenomenon is either a fiction or an actuality. However, society experiences fear due to their malevolent desires and holds them in high regard for their benevolent goals.

### **Gender Identity as a Transgender Individual**

One of the participants stated the following sentiments "The Guru/Chela system is crucial for survival in the trans system, as it identifies individuals based on their father's name" (Kajal).

Several transgender individuals have alleged the existence of a hierarchical structure in the transgender community. Surviving in our group is challenging without attaining the position

of either a "Guru" or a "Chela." "In the "Guru" system, "Guru" is regarded as the progenitor of their "Chela." The "Guru" exercises complete authority over the life of the "Chela," who holds great reverence for their "Guru" and chooses to reside with them. Moreover, among the transgender community, individuals are acknowledged by their "Guru" with the moniker "Chela."

### **Favorable Social Responses**

Some transgender individuals have expressed that they are unaffected by society's treatment of them, as they have already experienced unpleasant behavior from their own families and relations, rendering society's behavior inconsequential. Only a few individuals exhibit favorable responses towards their relatives and provide them with financial assistance. They believe that they must take care of their families. As a result, they receive favorable responses from their families and relatives for giving them financial assistance. One of the participants said "The Trans expresses their complete family support, as they are aware of their financial responsibilities and the support they provide to their family" (Lucky).

Conversely, their families offer comprehensive social assistance and readily embrace their transgender identities. Several transgender individuals have expressed a strong emotional bond with their parents, who likewise exhibit a deep affection towards them. Other transgender individuals have reported receiving support from their relatives, particularly their cousins, who protect them from harassment. Transgender also obtain social assistance from their transgender community. They have a sense of security in the presence of their transgender acquaintances and derive pleasure from their companionship. To them, transgender individuals are akin to their parents or relatives.

### **Discussion**

During socialization, gender identity manifests distinct attributes, roles, and emotions associated with either masculinity or femininity. This interactive process facilitates the self-recognition of individuals as either male or female, as human identity encompasses various dimensions, with "masculinity" or "femininity" being the most prominent (Kachel et al., 2016). The current qualitative study examined the social experiences of transgender individuals from different districts of Pakistan. Several themes emerged during the exploration, including interpersonal relations and living arrangements, social demands, social rejection, transgender reactions, social restriction, and pressure, social problems, social discrimination, myths about transgender curses or blessings, transgender status, and positive social reactions.

The primary theme in the present study is the interpersonal relationships and living arrangements of transgender individuals. This topic aligns with prior studies indicating that transgender individuals may have challenges in their interpersonal connections, including estrangement and a lack of emotional support, as a result of rejection, limited social support, and hostility from their family and friends. Some transgender individuals have formed amicable relationships and a sense of camaraderie with other transgender groups. Moreover, research has indicated that transgender individuals who express their gender identification at a young age tend to experience greater levels of familial rejection (Grossman et al., 2005). Conventional culture and social service organizations frequently reject individuals who express their gender identities later in life (Grant et al., 2011). The findings of the current study indicate that only a small number of transgender individuals reside with their biological families. Their family members support them and maintain positive interactions with them. Transgender individuals advocate for the significance of family support, as they believe it is crucial for leading a dignified life. They argue that transgender individuals should not be compelled to sever ties with their biological families.



Conversely, specific transgender individuals resided either independently or within the transgender community, as they lacked communication with their birth families due to their families' refusal to acknowledge their transgender identity. They regarded their 'Guru' as a parental figure due to his act of formally taking them under his care and responsibility during their upbringing, thereby assuming the role of their adoptive parent. Specific transgender individuals voluntarily severed ties with their families. They chose to reside with a 'Guru' due to their conviction that their transgender identity is innate, therefore warranting their inclusion within the transgender/Hijra group. They have no obligation to reside with their biological family or express a desire to interact with them.

Social needs are the second most frequently cited theme. This theme aligns with earlier studies (Polat et al., 2005). However, there is limited data on the social demands and attitudes of family members towards transgender individuals, particularly in Asian and Middle Eastern settings (Landen & Innala, 2000; Pfafflin, 2003). One possible explanation is that Asian culture diverges from Western culture, resulting in differences in families' fundamental needs and structure, as Yeh et al. (2010) described. Primarily, in Western societies, adult offspring typically lead autonomous lives and are not financially encumbered by their families.

In contrast, in Pakistani society, children are predominantly reliant on their relatives, who, in turn, place expectations and obligations on them. In the present study, regarding the social expectations placed on transgender individuals, it was found that their families require them to remain at home and consistently present themselves in a masculine manner, both within and outside of their homes. According to some transgender individuals, their families have a sole desire for financial resources. Furthermore, many have conveyed that their families are aware of their transgender identification. However, their mothers persist in arranging marriages with women. Concerning Pakistani culture, the majority of transgender people have indicated that their families only accept them when they offer monetary compensation and provide financial assistance. Similar to other individuals, transgender individuals are also expected to fulfill their cultural obligation of providing financial support to their families.

Another significant central issue is societal exclusion and transgender responses. This recurring issue among Pakistani transgender individuals is also evident in prior research (Kosciw et al., 2011; Smith, 2015). The existing literature indicates that transgender individuals experience adverse reactions from both their immediate environment (family) and the broader society (relatives and community). The present study reveals congruent findings, indicating that transgender individuals experience social rejection from their family members, particularly their biological parents and relatives. The majority of transgender individuals reported experiencing a lack of acceptance from their parents, with others facing complete rejection from both parents. The parents of transgender individuals not only refused to acknowledge their children's gender identification but also declined to meet with them. As a result, transgender individuals experience feelings of depression and heartbreak. Similar sentiments of rejection are found in their family.

In Pakistani culture, transgender people often encounter significant social ostracism and adverse reactions from both their families and society as a whole. Even if their families do not accept them in their transgender identity, they tend to reject and disown them from an early age, subsequently handing them over to the transgender community. In the current study, a small number of transgender individuals indicated that their families disapprove of their transgender identity, leading them to leave their homes as a result of familial rejection. Other transgender individuals have refuted the notion that those who claim that their mother and sister are the primary sources of support and care are mistaken. Transgender individuals assert that the language and remarks used by those around them can be likened to a cutting weapon that inflicts direct emotional harm. Several transgender individuals have said that their siblings harbor animosity towards them because of their transgender appearance and are unwilling to

have a relationship with them. In Pakistani society, transgender face significant social ostracism, not just from their immediate family members but also from the broader population. In addition, it is important to note that the Guru/Chela system, which is present among the transgender population in Pakistan, is not observed in any Western nation. Therefore, it is assessed that this particular transgender identity system is present in Indo-Pak culture, where a "Guru" assumes responsibility for transgender children, offering them security as well as financial and social assistance. The results of the present qualitative investigation demonstrate that transgender individuals who experience rejection from their biological families as a result of their transgender identity are frequently supported by the transgender community, which offers them protection. The Pakistani transgender population also faces the challenge of social constraints and pressure. There is a limited amount of literature on this topic. Within this study, a limited number of transgender individuals disclosed experiencing societal and familial pressures. According to one participant, her mother exerted pressure on her to discontinue her schooling due to criticism from her peers and her inability to blend in with other school students. Furthermore, she compelled him to reside within the confines of his home and explicitly prohibited him from venturing outdoors or socializing with transgender acquaintances. In Asian cultures, the family tremendously influences their children and seeks to shape their lives (Pomerantz, 2009). The findings of the current investigation also unveiled that families encounter challenges from their relatives when they visit since the parents expect the transgender individual to conform to masculine behavior and refrain from exhibiting any feminine behavior. Despite experiencing harassment, their families prohibit them from lodging complaints against the perpetrator. To adhere to these customs, individuals must conform to societal and familial expectations by assuming the role of a male when attending a family member's funeral. An additional prominent aspect observed in the present study pertains to the societal challenges encountered by transgender people. This theme is corroborated and aligns with earlier work since the majority of transgender individuals worldwide face social problems, harassment issues, violence, and societal hurdles as a result of their transgender identity (Stotzer, 2009). Rajkumar (2016) states that transgender in India continue to experience discrimination and harassment in several domains, such as family, school, and community, despite the existence of legislation aimed at protecting their rights. The current research shows that many transgender individuals have reported experiencing various work challenges despite having good qualifications. They face employment discrimination solely based on their transgender identity, resulting in their inability to secure employment and even disqualification from work opportunities. In addition, some discontinued their primary schooling due to being subjected to bullying and harassment from both teachers and fellow students. These findings are corroborated by a prior study conducted in Pakistan, which indicates that transgender individuals in our nation experience verbal abuse from their relatives and educators, often in the form of derogatory name-calling such as "Khusra," "Amaa," or "Saheli," among others. Even young youngsters subject them to ridicule on the streets and use derogatory language. In addition, they encounter physical abuse while on the highways, such as experiencing bodily scratches, punches, and being forcibly dragged by strangers. In addition, individuals have encountered instances of sexual harassment or have become victims of rape perpetrated by their family members, colleagues in the workplace, or even law enforcement authorities, whom they had seen as a source of safety or safeguard. Therefore, obtaining suitable recognition and acceptance within society is a crucial aspect of the life of a transgender individual in Pakistan. The current research demonstrated that individuals who identify as transgender face social discrimination in public venues, such as marketplaces and shopping centers, where they are often seen as beggars rather than customers. As a result of this inappropriate behavior, they predominantly opt for internet shopping or rely on their boyfriends to make purchases. It is worth noting that some individuals are unable to marry due to the lack of legal recognition for

transgender marriages in Pakistan. The findings of the present investigation are consistent with prior scholarly works. Multiple studies have demonstrated that transgender individuals encounter prejudice and mistreatment in public restrooms, shopping centers, and airports. The presence of discriminatory attitudes and stigmatization is observable not only in Asian societies but also in Western cultures (Rios & Resadori, 2015; Bagagli et al., 2021).

The findings of the current study also indicate that Pakistani culture is embracing the belief in curses bestowed by transgender. This is considered to be one of the distinctive themes among transgender individuals in Pakistan. Individuals experienced fear as a result of the malevolent desires or curses of transgender individuals, while they held admiration for them due to their kind wants. The previous indigenous research findings align with this distinct reported theme, as Jami and Kamal (2017) investigated the belief system of transgender and discovered that the sample firmly held 12 myths and had faith in 4 fables. These included the belief in forcibly taking away intersex children, the belief in the power of their curses and blessings, the belief that interfering with their social tasks brings adversity, and the belief that hijras do not appreciate anyone interfering in their social responsibilities. According to Kamal (2016) women held a firm conviction in the myth concerning males, while those who felt that hijras are intersex had an even higher belief in these beliefs compared to their counterparts. In Pakistani tradition, it was often thought that the prayers of transgender were considered to bring blessings to the individual. There is a belief that if someone causes emotional harm to transgender individuals, they may be subjected to a curse that can significantly negatively impact their lives.

The positive social response is a significant theme that encompasses favorable reactions from oneself, family, relations, and society and favorable replies from the transgender community. Existing evidence has also indicated that transgender individuals who receive psychosocial support from their family and society experience reduced emotional suffering (Challan, 2014). There is a scarcity of references to this issue in Western literature. When it comes to Pakistani culture, a small number of transgender have reported experiencing favorable relationships with their family, friends, and society. Their family offers comprehensive social and financial assistance and embraces them with unconditional acceptance of their transgender identities. Within the context of Pakistan, the transgender community offers a robust network of assistance to those who identify as transgender, exemplifying a notable attribute of a collectivist culture.

## Conclusion

This qualitative study specifically examined the social interactions and encounters of individuals who identify as transgender. Multiple themes surfaced during the process of content analysis. Unique transgender social experiences have arisen within the context of Pakistani culture and the social lives of Pakistani transgender individuals. Several topics illustrate unpleasant social experiences, such as interpersonal conflicts and living conditions, societal expectations, social issues, discrimination, rejection, attitudes toward transgender individuals, societal pressures, misconceptions about blessings and curses, and transgender identity. In addition to bad social experiences, the study participants emphasized a pleasant social experience called "positive social reaction." One of the distinctive social experiences mentioned by the Pakistani transgender group is highlighted.

## Constraints and Recommendations

The study is limited in that the sample of transgender individuals is exclusively drawn from Punjab province, Pakistan. Additionally, the sample size was restricted due to a lack of cooperation from many transgender individuals during the data collection process, as they exhibited reluctance to reveal personal information and their experiences.

The current study exclusively recruits transgender individuals from a solitary province in Pakistan. Hence, gathering data from additional provinces in Pakistan is recommended to ensure inclusivity of viewpoints on the social experiences of transgender individuals across the country, thereby improving the generalizability of the study's findings. Additional data-gathering methods, such as conducting focus group talks, can be employed to get a more comprehensive range of viewpoints from those who identify as transgender. Future studies can explore additional distinctive social experiences using this approach.

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