

## PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY AGED TRANSGENDER IN THE PUNJAB- PAKISTAN

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## Original Article

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**Abstract**

Transgender people are observed marginalized and socially excluded at the Global level. Particularly, aged transgender people faced the bleak condition to spend their life. In Pakistani context, most of the aged transgender people are attached dancing, singing, begging and sex work profession for the livelihood. The present study was conducted to explore the Psycho-social problems faced by Aged transgender in the Punjab- Pakistan. Sample of (n=9) transgender people was selected through the snowball sampling to conduct this study. Case study techniques were used collection of information which is the type of qualitative method. Data was analyzed by the thematic approach. The results showed that *Physical Health*: their physical health started to narrow down with their age. *Disability*: Most of them faced disabilities at this age because of malnutrition and lack of caretaker services. *Financial barriers to health care*: They had financial issues and thus were unable to consult for medication. *Fear of accessing health service*: The feared accessing the 'limited' access they had because of the ambiguity of interaction. *Lifetime Victimization*: They are even more victimized now as their demand in their work is diminished. *Marginalization and Social Exclusion*: With the low level of interaction, they are marginalized by some of their own community members and socially excluded from the 'little' interaction they had with the society in general. *Problems of Homelessness*: With the increasing financial crisis, they lack the means to own or even rent a home. *Psychological Distress*: Loneliness and embarrassment makes them go through low self-esteem, thus creating psychological distress. *Discrimination in the Workplace*: Since they are not 'young' anymore, on top that they are transgender, it becomes even harder for them to find work. Ageism also discriminates them. In a nutshell, aged transgender people are facing discrimination and marginalization in Pakistan. The study suggested that there should be established rehabilitation center for the transgender people to uplift their life.

**Keywords:** Psycho-social problem, Aged, Transgender, Punjab, Stigmatized, Identity

**INTRODUCTION**

Physiological or Physical differences between males and females are called Sex. Gender refers to socially constructed distinctions associated with male or female such as norms, roles and relationships (Little et al., 2012). Third-gender refers to individual

who do not fall under the category of male or female gender is also called the transgender (Talwar, 1999). Transgender is an umbrella term, coined by the US, used to include people whose life styles appear to conflict with the gender norms of society (Whittle et al.,

2007). The term “transsexual” is associated to individuals who do not have cleared their birth sex and want to change their physical body. It aligns with their internal identity hormone therapy and (SRS) Sex Reassignment Surgery (Carroll et al., 2002). Transgender person is legally defined in Pakistan as whose sense of gender does not match with the assigned gender at the time of birth or neither wholly male or female, having gender abnormality, or a combination of female and male and also included trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender-queers (Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act, 2017). Transgender person are divided into three types *first*, Hermaphrodite refer to those who are born inter sex or with mix genitalia, *second*, Transsexual who are castrated and turned in to transgender, *third* Transvestites who are males but have feminine sexual orientation and behave like women (Ahmed et al., 2014). Transgender people are living across the world with their own identities, customs and norms. Every society used different terminologies for these queer creatures. In Pakistan transgender people are known as Hijra, Khusra, Khawaja Sira, Morat, Mokhanas, Eunuchs and Zennana. In the medieval period of South Asian History, the term Khawja Sira was used for the transgender people. They were known as a title of chief eunuch of the Mughal court (Manucci, 1906). They detained on powerful position as harem guards, imperial advisor and army generals (Reddy, 2005). In the first decade of twentieth century, the term khawja Sira was replaced with term Hijra which has negative attitude. Their role also has been changed in the contemporary period due to their gender ambiguous. Consequently, due to gender non-conforming they pushed into lower class of society and associated with dancing, begging and sex work (Khan, 2016). A report titled as Social Exclusion of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in Europe has explored that LGBT people regularly face discrimination and exclusion across Europe in all spheres of life. They suffer from physical violence, abuse and bullying constantly. They do not enjoy the same rights and protection as males or females. Consequently, they experience homelessness, school dropout, segregation

from social network, unemployment and mental health issues (Takacs, 2006). Transgender people are marginalized communities in South Asia, which do not have equal status in the society as normal male or female gender. A number of research studies are evident to the fact that transgender people are socially excluded, and even stigmatized and faced physical abuse, verbal violence and hence marginalized in terms of minimum access to basic human rights due to their gender ambivalence (Ozturk, 2011; Jaspal, 2012; Wijngaarden et al., 2013; Mal, 2018). In Pakistan situation of transgender people is not different as they are socially segregated, culturally stigmatized, economically deprived and politically dysfunctional. Since the birth of a child (transgender), parents/family mostly prefers them to hand over to the transgender community, after considering their birth as a matter of disgrace and shame for the whole family and tribe. Transgender people are mostly deprived of their basic rights including right to job, education, health, property and justice. Cultural specifics (taboos) hinder their social acceptance and mainstreaming which ultimately turned them into a weak, vulnerable and relegated segment of the society (Abdullah et al., 2012; Ahmed et al., 2014; Khan, 2016; Asghar and Shahzad, 2018).

### Objectives of the study

- To highlight the psycho-social problems faced by aged Transgender people in Punjab Pakistan

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is important to recognize that there are multiple levels of normative gendered discourse surrounding ageing research questions. Gendering as a sub-textual messaging system that adds a layer of discourse is a common theme in feminist literature (Witten, 2009). As a study highlights the challenges of social constructions imposed on the body, as well as the implications of those constructions on how we perceive the significance of various aspects of ageing. While this has traditionally been viewed as a problem exclusively experienced by/imposed upon women (Coupland, 2007). (Witten, 2009) explored the problems include social support networks, intimacy and relationships, living

arrangements, violence and abuse, health care issues and concerns, and transgender ageing adult end-of-life obstacles. The geriatric transgender community has received limited amount of research. There seems to be little research on the long-term consequences of hormone therapy in the ageing transgender population, and no papers found on transgender end-of-life care (Wanta, 2017). Because of discrimination and the lack of a fulfilling relationship, a high number of transgender people endure family rejection, social isolation, and loneliness, according to previous study. Previous research has also indicated that the rejection, isolation, and loneliness that transgender people face can lead to a variety of poor outcomes, including depression, suicidal ideation, sexual risk behavior, substance misuse, and academic failure (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). Many Trans women's initial experiences with the development of their nascent gender and sexual identity occur inside their family of origin, and their experiences of rejection or violence begin there (Koken, Bimbi, & Parsons 2009). Many Tran's women reported that they had been punished for their feminine behavior, forced out of their homes and rejected by their families (Gagne & Tewksbury, 1998). While elderly transgender people have many of the same healthcare needs as there is gender counterparts, they also have distinct needs that healthcare providers may neglect (Persson, 2009). (Karami & Kitzie, 2018) argued that millions of transgender people are in the world have lack of awareness about their health issues. They don't have the right way of curing and information about their health. Yadegarfar et al., (2014) reported an article titled as Family rejection, social isolation, and loneliness as predictors of negative health outcomes on transgender person. The significant relationship found between family rejection, lower social support, higher loneliness, depression and lower protective factor related to suicidal behavior and risk behaviors among the transgender people. Another study Grossman et al., (2014) was conducted titled as Domestic harm and neglect among lesbian, gay, and bisexual older adults among 113 LGBT to examine the harm, hurt neglect by the caregivers as well as physical and mental health status. The result

showed that 22.1 % respondents faced at least one type of harm, including physical, verbal, emotional, sexual and neglectful. A study was conducted by Teaster and Soka (2016) titled "Mistreatment and Victimization of LGBT Elders found that transgender people are particularly vulnerable to abuse and violence. According to preliminary statistics from MAP, an average of 42% of transgender people has experienced physical violence or abuse. Furthermore, 80 percent of transgender people have been subjected to both verbal and physical harassment. Schilt and Connel, (2007) elaborated that in Western countries transsexual people attained social acceptance and tolerance to great extent. Most of them have come out of the cage and started jobs. A research study conducted by the USAID and Aurat foundation (2016) reveals that physical abused faced by transgender community from their so-called family, clients and male sexual partner who solicit transgender women for sex work and often invite over their friends for gang-rapping. These abuse cause severe emotional and mental distress among transgender. In result, self-harm and suicidal tendencies increased. No professional help is available in these cases. The study by Nazir and Yasir (2016) focuses on the education of eunuchs. The educational background for the third gender is bleak as their parents are reluctant in revealing them to the society to avoid facing social stigma. This makes them leave their native places for they are left with only two options: dancing or begging. These professions require them to shun those they know. The low literacy rate not only results in their 'disgraceful' jobs, but is also a reason that makes the mainstream society thinks about the eunuchs the way they do. Their dropout rate of the eunuchs is high because of the ambiguity of interaction, sexual harassment and financial problems. A study shows 79% of their 'researched' population as uneducated. Apart from facing psychological, they are confronted with educational level discrimination too. A study conducted by (Lewis, 2017) shows that transgender face multi-faceted dilemma on campus. Their safety is not ensured at the campus as they are the most vulnerable to harassment. A study shows 41% of them face harassment in a year as compared to 28% experienced by

non-transgendered gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. They experience harassments at the bathrooms and resident halls on campus. The problems faced by transgender on educational level are not only limited to the Pakistani society, but rather they are universal. There is an urgent need for the officials to learn about multiple gender orientations and invite people to awareness. Subhrajit (2014) stated that the transgender individuals have to face insecurity, violence, harassment, and constant victimization of hate crimes in Pakistani society. The elder transgender remained marginalized from the legal, financial resources and community support. Gentry (2015) explored that transgender people face several issues especially Tran's women such as sexual assault, homelessness, health disparities and lack of legal protections. When their identities are not taken in to account due to their race, lack of education and especially their gender, they engaged in sexual works and sexual orientations in the society. Flakerud (2002) stated that hence transgender people are vulnerable populations in the society. Resultantly, they experienced health problems, low quality of life, violence, and deprivations of life comparatively other groups. Abbas et al., (2014) stated in their article social adjust among transgender community with respect to Pakistan that these people are unable to find appropriate jobs in the society, resources for education like other people. Even, they were not allowed to perform religious obligation like Hajj as a Muslim. They face high level of violence from their parents because they tried to kill them at their birth due to gender-ambivalence. Jami and Kamal (2015) argued that Hijra are stigmatized and marginalized community in Pakistan. Their role is associated with dance on the newly birth child or marriage ceremony. They are also hired for the commercial sex work. Most of the Hijra people adopt begging profession in term of Whadai (alms) on the newly born child in the respective community.

#### METHODOLOGY

Researcher was interested to explore the life style of aged transgender and highlight their problems. An exploratory research is adopted to collect new information in to matter at hand (Jaeger and Halliday, 1998). It was observed by the researcher that aged transgenders are

socially excluded and their community is less research area in Pakistan. Researcher conducted the case studies by using the un-structured questionnaire that was comprised of different themes. They remain invisible. Therefore, it was very difficult to approach them. Snowball sampling technique was used to access the representative sample in Punjab, Pakistan. Sample size of nine (n=09) transgender was engaged from the Mutlan, Lahore and Rawalpindi tehsil. The criteria of selection of the respondents were above 50 years age. An age criterion was also limitation of the study. Ethical research considerations were sustained by the researcher during the interview. It was informed to the respondents about the purpose of the study and time required and other privacy of the data. Consent of respondents was assured before the interview and in return they were paid PKR 500 for the interview. It was essential because most of the respondents were busy in their duty. Their time was costly and after getting paid, they agreed for the interview. Thematic analysis was carried out to describe the information collected from the aged transgender. In qualitative research, thematic analysis is common analysis technique to represent the qualitative data in the meaningful pattern.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this article, we sought to highlight the life of transgender when they become aged, where aged stands as 50 years and above. Their lives, as the studies show are not good even when they are young, but they become even worse when they grow older. This study focuses on the occupation they go for and also the psycho-social impacts that mount because of the occupational choices they are left with. The research discovered three major findings. The *first* one was that they became 'Gurus' of the young transgender and trained them; in return, the young ones take care of the 'Guru' like their parents and mentors. Guru here has the connotation of a leader of a particular group who may act as a parent, a care taker, a mentor, and has the authority to a certain extent. The 'Guru' may train them for dancing, for begging, for their discourse, and their whole demeanor etc. The *second* one was that, for survival, they started begging in the limited geographical area, allocated by their

chairperson. In this condition, they are not a 'Guru', so the dilemma even worsens because they neither have any authority, nor do they choose their area on their own. They will give all the money back to their 'Gurus' who are almost their age. While the *third* one was, that they spent the rest of their lives in other transgender's homes and provided services like cooking, cleaning and even maintenance of their homes. This is possibly the worst as they do not have any more authority over their own selves. They work for others; they live in someone else's homes, and keep on doing even the maintenance work for them. There are some findings which deconstruct the above mentioned ones. There is a major issue of health conditions which is not a cause of a spur of age, but rather has a long history behind. The discrimination, as mentioned by Lisa and Eric in their study of gender non-conformity and health, leads to poor health conditions which may include diminishing physical rigor because of the aging process and limited access to health services. It also costs them their physical ability because of the malnutrition they experience throughout their

lives. The discrimination for their non-confirmative behavior, and the opposition to the 'narrative in terms of a binary' put their lives at stake in financial terms and health care services. The lives that they live don't put an end to their misery here, but rather this research shows another insight where they face lifetime victimization coupled with marginalization and social exclusion. Since they are not working anymore, and they also are not adding to the economy of their households, so their victimization increases. They either adopt one of the three major findings on the study where being Guru is not an option, it comes through a good fortune; or they face social exclusion because they are not contributing as they used to be. The financial problems lead the trans people to a constant psychological dilemma. They are unable to even rent a house, let alone buying one. In the world of uncertainty we are living in, to have a house gives us a sense of protection and not having is a constant source of psychological dissatisfaction. The report cites that nearly one third of them experience depression.

<b>Physical Health</b>	Their physical health started to narrow down with their age.
<b>Disability</b>	Most of them faced disabilities at this age because of malnutrition and lack of caretaker services.
<b>Financial barriers to health care</b>	They had financial issues and thus were unable to consult for medication.
<b>Fear of accessing health service</b>	The feared accessing the 'limited' access they had because of the ambiguity of interaction
<b>Lifetime victimization</b>	They are even more victimized now as their demand in their work is diminished.
<b>Marginalization and Social Exclusion</b>	With the low level of interaction, they are marginalized by some of their own community members and socially excluded from the 'little' interaction they had with the society in general
<b>Problems of Homelessness</b>	With the increasing financial crisis, they lack the means to own or even rent a home.
<b>Psychological Distress</b>	Loneliness and embarrassment makes them go through low self-esteem, thus creating psychological distress
<b>Discrimination in the Workplace</b>	Since they are not 'young' anymore, on top that they are transgender, it becomes even harder for them to find work. Ageism also discriminates them.

**CONCLUSION**

Ageism is one such thing that can discriminate the conforming genders of the world let alone the non-conforming ones. Transgender in Pakistani society face this anxiety as well. Since they are left alone by their families, they live with their own accord. When they age, their loneliness leads them to think that they are not worth enough and they are a burden. This makes their way even easier for psychological distress. In a net shell, aged transgender lived in bleak condition and deprived from the basic rights in Pakistan. Approximately, 2 percent respondents were happy with their life and access to the basic rights. In sum, the study represents that adult transgender people are marginalized people in the society. Transgender people are facing social alienation, financial insecurity, formal job opportunity and shelter problem; they face Emotional, verbal and physical abuse. Largely people do not like to interact with them. Consequently, they are drifted into Deep Ocean of immoral means of earning like sex work, beggary, dancing and criminal activities.

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