



Barriers Faced by Transgender Community in Educational Institutions

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Abstract

This research explores the barriers facing the education of the transgender community, highlighting social, cultural, and organizational environments. It also investigates the success factors of transgender persons who have had to combat these hurdles. The study uses a quantitative method. The study sample selected through the purposive sampling technique includes a sample of 133 respondents of Transgender individuals from Islamabad, Bari Imam, and Sargodha. A self-developed questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The analysis of data was conducted using the B1 power formula. This finding has implications for the transgender population, the political culture, human rights advocacy groups, the policymakers, the educational systems, and the larger society. Thus, a closer look at specific barriers and facilitators discussed in this work adds useful knowledge that could be used in policymaking and designing the interventions for enhancing education equity for the transgender community of Pakistan.

Keywords: Transgender, Barriers, Educational Institutions

1. Introduction

Education is a widely accepted leading instrument for upgrading better economic outcomes and cognitive development for the learners of the twenty-first century. In the cognitive domain, higher-order or critical thinking has been focused in national and international contexts regarding teachers' perspectives (Cáceres et al., 2020; Issa & Khataibeh, 2021; Jamil et al., 2021), policy documents and textbooks focus (Jamil, Bibi, et al., 2024; Jamil, Bokhari, & Ahmad, 2024; Jamil, Bokhari, & Zia, 2024; Naseer et al., 2021)

Pakistan, the world's second-largest Islamic state, upholds equal rights for all people. Yet, transgender people's rights are frequently disregarded, with both society and their families abandoning them. Comprehending the actual difficulties and intricacies faced by transgender individuals will furnish social workers and the government with practical directives. The term —Transgender designates persons whose gender identity does not match the assigned sex at birth. For common people, such as cisgender or non-transgender, their gender identity matches their sex at birth. However, the gender identity of some persons does not fit clearly into these two choices and is outside the category of male or female (Khan, 2022).

1.1. Education as a Fundamental Right

Education is a fundamental human right, but in Pakistan, educating the transgender population has proven to be an extremely difficult task. The significant impact of devaluing transgender people's lives has led to the observation of the human rights gap, stigmatization, gender-based violence, and judgment (Verbeek et al., 2020). Over the past few decades, the community has suffered from poverty, a lack of social and economic support systems, and unsatisfactory health outcomes. Transgender people will inevitably be destroyed because of this disorder in both social and intellectual settings. The rights of transgender individuals are being protected by several regional processes and organizations, especially in education.

Nonetheless, many unchanging laws, acts, policies, and practices still lead to serious violations of people's rights to education. Numerous transgender students attend various Punjabi schools. However, transgender students continue to face stigma, which causes them to struggle and give up on their academic pursuits.

1.2. History of the transgender community in the sub-continent

The transgender community in the subcontinent, known as 'Khwaja Sara,' held a special place in society during the Mughal period. They were employed as guardians of the 'Zanan Khana' in palaces and were respected by society for superstitious and religious reasons. It was believed that their prayers would not be turned down since they were devoid of committing basic sins. Khwaja Saras used to celebrate the birth of a child by dancing to welcome the newborn, and people used to reward them in cash or kind, which was their main source of livelihood. Although they were not socially mainstreamed in the strict sense of the term, the societal response towards transgender persons was probably more receptive, and their lives were proportionately less stigmatized than they appear today. (Ahsan & Minhas, 2023)

1.3. Islamic rights for transgender

Islam has granted rights to every single living thing and organism. The philosophy of Islamic law in this regard is very well-defined about the rights of human beings. From this, we can conclusively argue that while directly Islam has not afforded so many rights to transgender persons, it has done so indirectly to a very large extent. They can exercise all the rights that any other normal Muslim in society can exercise. They can trade, pray, perform hajj, teach, and even become religious leaders or what is known as imams.

In contrast to other societies and cultures that regard the TG [transgendered] person as a cursed human being, Islam embraces TG as a normal human being. It is not a disadvantage of The Holy Quran; it is illogical and unfair to complain against it. Almost all the Islamic teachings involve a transgender person in the same way as an ordinary man or woman.

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The study will be significant for the transgender community, society, policymakers, Human rights organizations, and the education system. This study may initiate the government to open Transgender educational institutions. Hence, the transgender community will benefit. The study will be helpful for NGOs and other social organizations to initiate and step forward to promote education for the transgender community.

Education is a fundamental human right, but in Pakistan, educating the transgender population has proven to be an extremely difficult task. Research has shown that there is a human rights gap, stigmatization, gender-based violence, and discrimination because marginalization has a significant negative influence on transgender people's lives. Therefore, the researchers planned to investigate the obstacles the transgender community faces in educational institutions while considering the backdrop context. The primary goal of this study is to examine the status of transgender education, the actions implemented at the governmental and non-governmental levels in this area, and to identify the obstacles to evaluating transgender community education.

1.4. Objective of the Study

- To investigate the educational barriers faced by the transgender community.

1.5. Research Questions

1. What are the barriers to education for transgender that they face in their community?
2. What factors successfully enable the transgender community to navigate barriers in educational institutes?

2. Literature Review

According to research in many countries around the world, the third gender identity has long been forbidden and stigmatized; Klinefelter syndrome (KS) is a hereditary disorder that affects men who have an extra set of chromosomes XXY. Transgender people, sometimes known as people with KS, have historically faced harassment, emotional and sexual assault, and ridicule in Pakistan. This study examined the challenges instructors in Pakistan had when trying to educate students with Klinefelter syndrome (Yaseen et al., 2020).

Transgender people across all sorts of higher education institutions they had attended reported experiencing discriminatory treatment from teachers, employees, or school administrators. And more than a third reported being the target of bullying, harassment, or violence in higher education. The results of this study show that discrimination against transgender people occurs not only in high schools but also in institutions of higher learning (Conron et al., 2022).

According to this survey, Punjab had few educational options available and few educational institutions (both public and private) set up to support the education of transgender people. Despite the significant transgender population in Punjab, only a small portion of trans people had access to education, and the others were discovered struggling to make a living by taking up jobs like begging and dancing. Despite the regulations the government passed in support of the transgender community, the transgender community still had to deal with societal stigma, which limited their access to the labour market. The findings conclude that additional steps must be taken to support transgender education, and serious efforts must be made to solve the policy and plan implementation gap (Butt et al., 2021).

Islam treats transgender people the same way it would treat a typical male or female. Being transgender is a disability, just like any other disability, not a curse. It should be emphasized that infants are born with vision and hearing abnormalities. Still, the Quran does not particularly mention them because even persons with disabilities are human beings with all of the rights and should be treated with respect and dignity in society (Naseem et al., 2021).

This study investigated the discrimination against this community that has existed since childhood. Parents begin to chastise their children for not acting in ways that are consistent with their biological gender. When adopting a gender role, a child may become confused since they must learn the gender role from their same-sex parent, yet it does not align with their feelings. The youngster then begins to wonder, "Who am I?" What ought I to do? What conduct is proper? The child's mind becomes conflicted as a result. Children typically start to feel disgusted with their bodies at the height of puberty, when physical changes start to show and when their physical identity does not match how they feel (Sherazi et al., 2023).

Since then, efforts have been made to eradicate the long-standing social shame and prejudice that they have experienced. Education is acknowledged as the only method for people to know their rights and obligations. Today, third-gender society must have access to educational possibilities, just like other recognized minority groups. The collective greatly contributes to social change (Hussain & Bharadwaz, 2020). An environment that is not supportive of gender-diverse youngsters is generally created in educational institutions by co-student bullying and harassment, as well as a lack of support from instructors and other school employees. Gender-diverse children are forced to drop out of school, skip lessons, do worse academically, have low self-esteem, and even have significant mental health problems because of such an environment. 65% of gender-diverse youngsters report feeling insecure in schools, according to a UNESCO assessment on abuse perpetrated against sexual and gender minorities in Tamil Nadu.

While the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 outlines a broad policy framework and gives the states instructions on how to put it into practice, numerous long-term policy changes and interventions at the state and Union Territory level are needed to include and keep gender-diverse children in schools and colleges. Most students from gender-diverse backgrounds leave school due to severe bullying, harassment, and discrimination. A comprehensive national policy to address bullying and harassment in schools must be developed by the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education. This policy should be similar to the anti-ragging rules established by the

University Grants Commission⁷⁷, the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the Medical Council of India.⁷⁸ To address bullying, harassment, and discrimination in both real-world and online settings, a policy like this needs to be developed in collaboration with educators, organizations that support children's rights, and community-based organizations that work with sexual and gender minorities.

In the Pakistani context, different studies regarding transgenders have been conducted. In a study, health problems and barriers to healthcare services for transgender were explored in Lahore (Manzoor et al., 2022), Rawalpindi (Rashid et al., 2022) and Karachi (Younus et al., 2022). Noreen and Rashid (2024) conducted a study regarding access to education in the Pakistani context. In a study by Aslam et al. (2022), transgender students' experiences regarding bullying were explored.

3. Research Methods

This study was carried out to investigate the barriers faced by the transgender community in educational institutes. A quantitative research methodology was adopted for this study. The quantitative research method was adopted due to the compilation of data from various schools and the number of students who were respondents to the sampled schools. Data were collected from the targeted population through a self-developed questionnaire. The study sample consisted of 3 educational institutes for the transgender community in Islamabad, Bari Imam, and Sargodha. The sample for this study included 25 students from Transgender Learning Center Islamabad, 45 students from Transgender Learning School Bari Imam Shah Medan, and 63 students from Transgender Learning Center Sargodha. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. The researchers used a questionnaire to measure the educational barriers of the transgender community in their institutions. The tool comprises thirty questions. Data was entered in BI Power and analyzed using BI Power formulas.

3.1. Demographic variables of students

Table 1: Residential Location

S. No	Residential Location Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	Urban	133	100
2	Rural	0	0
	Total	133	100.00

Table 1 shows that 100% of respondents belong to urban areas of the total sample size.

Table 2: Living Status of Respondents

S. No	Living Status of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	Independent	72	54.13
2	Guru	61	45.86
3	Parents	0	0
	Total	133	100.00

Table 2 shows that 54.13% of respondents lived independently, while 45.86% lived with their Gurus of the total sample size.

Table 3: Source of Income of Respondents

S. No	Source of income of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	Dancing	30	22.55
2	Begging	93	69.92
3	Job	10	7.51
	Total	133	100.00

Table 3 shows that 69.92% of respondents do beg as a source of income, 22.55% do dance as a source of income, and 7.51% do different jobs in the total sample size.

3.2. Experiments and Result

Table 4: Summarized demographics of respondents

Sr. No	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	“School timing is suitable for you”.	62 45.26%	74 54.01%			
2	“Struggling with time management when it comes to completing homework”.		05 3.65%	01 0.73%	122 89.05%	08 5.84%
3	“School has an inclusive education curriculum”.	11 8.03%	123 89.78%		02 1.46%	
4	“Restrictions on clothing or dress code that affect you”.		07 5.11%		57 41.61%	72 52.55%
5	“Access to necessary learning resources (e.g., textbooks, digital	08 5.84%	126 91.97%		02 1.46%	

	materials)"					
6	“Experienced bullying, harassment, or social exclusion in school”.	13	78	45		
		9.49%	56.93%	32.85%		
7	“Feel comfortable discussing your problems with teachers”.	92	40	04		
		67.15%	29.2%	2.29%		
8	“Involved in any extracurricular activities, and do they affect your school performance”.	02	02	114	18	
		1.46%	1.46%	83.21%	13.14%	
9	“Personal challenges or responsibilities outside of school that affect your performance”.	15	02	116	03	
		10.95%	1.46%	84.67%	2.19%	
10	“Satisfied with the teaching methods used by your teachers”.	44	92			
		32.12%	67.15%			
11	“Needs to learn any skill other than studies”.	31	105			
		22.63%	76.15%			
12	“You feel engaged and supported in your classes”.	45	91			
		32.85%	66.42%			
13	“You want more changes or improvements in your classroom”.	08	126	02		
		5.84%	91.97%	1.46%		
14	“Physical or health-related challenges affect your school attendance or performance”.	09	81	46		
		6.57%	59.12%	33.58%		
15	“Parents/guardians are involved in your school life”.	02	41	93		
		1.46%	29.93%	67.88%		
16	“School experience is helping you achieve your long-term goals”.	16	116	04		
		11.68%	84.67%	2.92%		
17	“You prefer that you have an exclusive educational institution”.	94	40	02		
		68.61%	29.2%	1.46%		
18	“Barriers you've faced affected your academic performance”.	04	03	112	17	
		2.92%	2.19%	81.75%	12.41%	
19	“Missed classes due to discrimination or harassment”.	02	03	72	59	
		1.46%	2.19%	52.55%	43.07%	
20	“Feel safe and welcoming environment to seek help from faculty”.	18	111	02	03	02
		13.14%	81.2%	1.46%	2.19%	1.46%
21	“You have opportunities to educate others about your experiences”.	14	120	02		
		10.22%	87.59%	1.46%		
22	“Teachers use inclusive language in their curriculum”.	48	88			
		35.04%	64.23%			
23	“Feel safe using the restroom that aligns you at school”.	42	94			
		30.66%	68.61%			
24	“School provides access to gender-Neutral uniforms or clothing Options”.	51	80	03		
		37.23%	58.39%	2.19%		
25	“Current school timings are enough to complete your daily studies task”.	42	87	03	04	
		30.66%	63.5%	2.19%	2.92%	
26	“Government has enough efforts to educate your community.”	10	37	89		
		7.3%	27.1%	64.96%		
27	“Funds getting from the institution are sufficient.”	07	04	110	15	
		5.11%	2.29%	80.29%	10.95%	
28	“Freedom of asking multiple question queries.”	57	70	06	03	
		41.61%	51.09%	4.38%	2.19%	
29	“Subject material according to the mental level.”	20	110	03	03	
		14.6%	80.29%	2.19%	2.19%	
30	“Availability of sufficient stationery”.	41	94	01		
		29.93%	68.61%	0.73%		

The above table shows that most respondents find school timings suitable (99.27% SA/A) and are satisfied with teaching methods (99.27% SA/A). Most struggle with homework time management (89.05% D) and feel their school has an inclusive curriculum (97.81% SA/A). Many students feel comfortable discussing problems with teachers (96.35% SA/A) and perceive a safe, welcoming environment (94.34% SA/A). However, a notable percentage have experienced bullying or harassment (56.93% D), and many prefer exclusive educational institutions for transgender students (97.81% SA/A). Most students don't feel that barriers have significantly affected their academic performance (94.16% D/SD), and a large majority feel their school experience is helping them achieve long-term goals (96.35% SA/A). Concerns are raised about government efforts to educate the transgender community (64.96% SD) and the insufficiency of funds from institutions (91.24% D/SD). Overall, the data suggests a mix of positive experiences and ongoing challenges in the education of transgender students.

4. Discussion

Based on the research, the challenges and prospects of transgender education in Pakistan are manifold. Whereas there are distinguished specific strengths by focusing on students' preferences regarding the school's timetables (99.27%) and teaching methods (99.27%), major challenges exist. It also shows that the respondent group strongly favors having separate schools for themselves 97. 81% indicates that the typical school environments still have gaps in positively catering for the students in question. Among the important results, one can distinguish the high trend of bullying and harassment, 56 percent. Such behaviour was reported by 93 percent of the students. This brings to light the need to increase the effectiveness of the present anti-discrimination policies and procedures in learning institutions. The fact that 94. It would be good to see that only 16% of students do not think that barriers impact their academic performance. However, this probably means they are insensitive to these influences or have gotten used to unfavorable conditions. According to the study, there is quite a large discrepancy between policy at the state level and policy as it is put into practice. At the same time, official claims that it did its best to educate Pakistan's transgender population appear unconvincing; respondents were firm in their rejection of the statement that such efforts are sufficient (64. 96% strongly disagree with the statement). This is made worse by questions of inadequate funding from institutions (91. 24% said NO to the statement that funds are adequate for the education of the transgender). The study also identifies favorable conditions for transgender learners in schools. Specifically, levels of comfort in discussing problems with teachers are high (96, 35%), and clients' perceptions of safety and welcome (94, 34%) suggest that some institutions are on the right track regarding environment creation.

Further, it has been observed that, out of one hundred population, ninety-six percent is affected by some form of anxiety disorder. A finding stating that 35% of the students are positive that their school experience is contributing to the realization of long-term goals is an affirmation of education as a vehicle of change for transgendered persons. However, the study also reveals the social issues that need urgent attention. The excessive number of problematic sources connected to homework time management (89. 05%) shows the importance of special academic support systems. The staunch desire of the subjects to receive gender-neutral forms and facilities demonstrates the necessity of addressing the issue of physical accessibility in educational institutions. To the individual elements of education for the transgenders, the above findings suggest a complex inter-connected and interdependent approach towards the improvement of the same in Pakistan. Such changes should also include policy initiatives, funding, professional development, curriculum, and general structuring of classrooms and schools. The study's conclusions highlight how these concerns can be solved – creating a multicultural curriculum, training teachers, and initiating mental health services. In addition, the given study pays attention to the need to involve parents and other community members to provide a supportive environment for transgender students in school and the community.

5. Conclusion

As highlighted by the research, the need for transgender-friendly educational centers/schools/colleges across Pakistan is the major research implication for the study. It means that the current educational institutions seem not to effectively respond to the needs of transgenders and, thus, the need to embrace the progressive model of education to foster the development needs of every transgender person. It is important to bear in mind that despite there being pockets of satisfaction with the educational resources available, it is highlighted that there is a need and demand across the country for accessible education for transgender individuals. The presented conclusion represents a call for the development of educational environments that effectively welcome and accommodate transgender people regardless of their location. According to the guidelines provided within the study, the goal is to construct a framework that would positively impact the growth and welfare of the transgender population. It indicates the requirement for extensive frameworks of support other than education provisions. It is plausible that the framework involves components relating to mental health, anti-discrimination policies, and outreach to the community to promote the development of the private and public selves of the Ts. They reveal detailed information, indicating that the government bodies and the educational institutions put the guidelines suggested in the study to a larger extent. Government policies should encourage the establishment of centers that accept children with such disorders, and educational institutions should adopt such policies to make the environment conducive to every child.

6. Recommendation

- There should be the creation and effective delivery of content that captures the reality and voices of transgenders.
- Ensure the faculty and staff are given periodic sensitivity training on matters regarding the transgender community and cultural diversity.
- Develop and sustain the psychology and counseling services of the institution, addressing issues that may affect the students.
- Organize effective student support groups and efforts at community building among the students.
- Educate parents and guardians regarding issues to do with trans-gendered students and ensure their support in helping the students create a home conducive to their situation.

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