

Phenomenological Study of Life Challenges Faced by Transgender: A Case of Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

Transgender people in Pakistan especially in Punjab experience wide socio-cultural, economic and institutional discrimination to play a complete role in the society. Although transgenders have a historical presence in terms of culture, they are still marginalized and face systematic discrimination in their education, employment, health care, and in their social inclusion. Research Objectives of this study are: To examine the social, economic and psychological issues that transgender people in Punjab, Pakistan face. To explore the coping ways and processes that transgender people use in coping with stigma and marginalization. To explore the role of cultural norms, institutions and societal beliefs in the daily lives of transgender people. To deliver information that can be used to make policies, interventions, and programs that can promote better social inclusion and well-being of transgender communities in Punjab. The chapter describes the research design used to explore the issue of the life difficulties of transgender people in Punjab, particularly in such cities as Sargodha, Multan and Lahore. The research design is a quantitative research design as a structured questionnaire is used to obtain empirical data about 235 respondents. The quantitative methods are known to be effective in measuring variables that are systematic and replicable, and this is appropriate when it comes to evaluating social, economic, and psychological issues that transgender communities are exposed to. The research follows the purposive sampling method that is usually applicable in identifying certain groups of people with distinctive features. A structured questionnaire that was designed during the current study was used to gather data based on five sections, namely, demographic information, social challenges, economic challenges, psychological/emotional challenges, and coping mechanisms. Everything was placed within a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree) in order to measure the experiences and perception of the respondents. The questionnaire was modified based on the established instruments that are valid and were previously used in other studies on the transgender populations around the world. Data analysis was performed in SPSS in order to provide the descriptive and inferential statistics. Demographic characteristics and distribution of social, economic and psychological problems were summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Keywords: Transgender Community, Social Discrimination, Economic Challenges, Psychological Well-being, Social Support System

Introduction

The empirical research of transgender people has been more and more considered to be a significant

field of scholarly research, particularly in the field of sociological and psychological research. People who do not identify with the gender they were born with, transgender people tend to encounter multidimensional life issues based on society, cultural expectations, and institutional constraints (Mizock & Lewis, 2008). Transgender communities in Pakistan, and especially in the Punjab province, have traditionally inhabited the frameworks of socio cultural realities that do acknowledge them and marginalize them, making them experience their life path in a unique way due to both resilience and adversity (Rizvi & Zaidi, 2020). A phenomenological approach would be best placed to seek these lived experiences as it gives the researcher the opportunity to comprehend the meaning of being transgender in a particular cultural context.

In spite of the recent positive shifts in the international community where transgender individuals gained recognition and acceptance, they are still subjected to a high level of discrimination in social, educational, and economic fields (Grant et al., 2011). These issues are heavily complicated in Pakistan, as social stigmas and structural inequalities are deeply embedded in the country, with transgender persons having to deal with the inability to access basic rights, harassment in open spaces, and access to employment and healthcare (Social Welfare Department, Government of Punjab, 2019). Studies have shown that these issues are not just personal problems but issues within the culture in terms of perception and normative structures that influence normal life outcomes of transgender individuals (Khan, 2018). By investigating them based on the first-hand experiences of members of the community, it becomes possible to obtain valuable information that lies deeper than mere statistics.

Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that is aimed at having a deep and broad coverage of the lived experience of an individual (Creswell and Poth, 2018). It places significant importance on the subjective experiences of the study members instead of generalized assumptions whereby one can gain a thorough approach of the manner in which transgender students process, react, and navigate life issues. Such a strategy is especially useful in situations when quantitative data might be inadequate or be incapable of reflecting the emotional and social nuances experienced by the marginalized groups (Van Manen, 2016). With regard to Punjab, phenomenology makes it possible to explore how the lived reality of transgender people is constructed by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and institutional practices.

The current studies in Pakistan have covered transgender concern mainly by conducting policy studies and advocacy reports, but there is still a considerable gap in phenomenology studies that preempt the voices of the foreground participants (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2021). Other previous researches have reported discrimination and exclusion of transgender groups but very few have examined how people internally live through and construct meaning out of these issues on a daily context. The proposed research will add both theoretical and practical relevance to the literature by shedding light on the life stories of transgender people in Punjab, coping mechanisms, and hopes, placing the proposed study at the core of a more comprehensive and detailed insight into the problem.

Background of the Study

Transgender people constitute a discriminated group of the population that does not correspond to its sex of birth. On the international level, this group of people is exposed to a wide range of social, economic, and psychological issues caused by stigma, discrimination, and institutional marginalization. Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, and Keisling (2011) report that transgender people are disproportionately subjected to the unemployment rates, social ostracism, and mental health problems in comparison with the rest of the population. The situation is also exacerbated by the fact that these issues are especially evident in areas where strict cultural and religious traditions dictate gender roles, which restrict the presence and rights of transgender individuals.

Transgender communities, often called Khawaja Sira or Hijra and transgender persons, occupy a special socio-cultural status in the history of Pakistan, but still face the marginalization of people (Rizvi and Zaidi, 2020). The social and legal status is still unequal, which leads to poor access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities. As Ahmed, S., and Fayyaz (2024) pointed out,

transgender people in South Asia are discriminated against systemically, which influences every aspect of their lives, including their acceptance by the family and their involvement in society. These problems are not merely structural but rather have a deep-seated nature in the perceptions of the society, which tend to support exclusion and stigmatization.

As the most populated province of Pakistan, the Punjab province possesses the existence of both the diverse transgender communities and the increased social complications. According to the Social Welfare Department of Punjab (2019), the barriers encountered by transgender people in the province include housing, healthcare services, and legal forms, thus preventing the social integration of these people. Moreover, the induction of vulnerability and constriction of personal agency are fueled by the insufficiency of culturally sensitive services and harassment in the public area. Mizock and Lewis (2008) claim these societal pressures are the causes of psychological distress, which supports a cycle of marginalization that affects mental health, self-esteem, and the quality of life in general.

Problem Statement:

The transgender people in Pakistan and especially in Punjab are exposed to vast levels of socio-cultural, economic and institutional problems that make them not to take full part in the society. Although transgender communities have a long-standing presence, they tend to be marginalized, which manifests as the systemic discrimination level in education, employment, healthcare, and social inclusion (Rizvi and Zaidi, 2020). The inability to achieve acceptance in society and the presence of stigmatization are limiting access to the most basic rights, as well as have a considerable impact on the mental and emotional health of transgender individuals. Grant et al. (2011) demonstrate that marginalized gender groups across the world are at a higher risk of anxiety, depression, and social exclusion, which explains the global applicability of the problem, and the local factors in Pakistan increase the risks of these problems because of the strict gender norms and the absence of protecting policies.

Research Hypotheses:

1. Transgender individuals in Punjab experience significant social, economic, and psychological challenges that negatively impact their quality of life.
2. Coping strategies employed by transgender individuals, such as community support and personal resilience, help mitigate the adverse effects of societal stigma and discrimination.
3. Cultural norms, institutional practices, and limited policy implementation in Punjab exacerbate marginalization and restrict the social inclusion of transgender communities.

Research Questions:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of transgender individuals in Punjab, Pakistan, with regards to social, economic, and psychological issues in their everyday living?
2. How do transgender individuals cope and what are their coping mechanisms used to overcome stigmatization and marginalization in society?
3. What role do cultural values, institutional processes and policy platforms play in determining how transgender people live and include themselves in social life in Punjab?

Research Objectives:

1. To explore the social, economic, and psychological challenges experienced by transgender individuals in Punjab, Pakistan.
2. To examine the coping strategies and mechanisms employed by transgender individuals to manage stigma and marginalization.
3. To investigate the influence of cultural norms, institutional practices, and societal perceptions on the daily lives of transgender individuals.
4. To provide insights that can inform policies, interventions, and programs aimed at improving social inclusion and well-being of transgender communities in Punjab.

Conceptual Framework:

Independent Variable:	Dependent Variable:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Challenges• Economic Challenges• Psychological Challenges• Cultural and Institutional Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lived Experiences• Coping Mechanisms and Resilience• Social Inclusion and Well-being

Independent Variables:

1. **Social Challenges:** Stigma, discrimination, harassment and exclusion both in the public and family.
2. **Economic Challenges:** Low access to jobs, financial instability, poverty and access to education.
3. **Psychological Challenges:** Mental problems, stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem as a result of being marginalized.
4. **Cultural and Institutional Factors:** The norms on society, religion, and the efficiency of the policy (Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018 by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2021).

Dependent Variables:

1. **Lived Experiences:** The day-to-day life realities, autobiographical experiences and sense-making of transgender people.
2. **Coping Mechanisms and Resilience:** Some of the strategies used to deal with challenges e.g. community support, advocacy and personal resilience.
3. **Social Inclusion and Well-being:** The extent of acceptance, inclusion in society and general quality of life of transgender people.

Literature Review

Besides, this chapter places the research in the wider context of gender diversity, social inclusion, and human rights. It takes into account the historical, cultural and socio-economic aspects, which affect the status of transgender people in the society, especially in South Asia, where cultural awareness and systemic discrimination co-exist (Ahmed, S., and Fayyaz, M. 2024). Analyzing the literature on the topic both in the global and local contexts, the chapter reveals the similarities and differences in the issues that transgender communities have to deal with, which leads to the importance of context-specific studies. The summary also shows that the gaps in the literature, particularly within the literature that deals with the phenomenological studies concerning Pakistan, stipulate that there is a need to explore the lived experiences, coping styles, as well as resiliency strategies of transgender individuals in Punjab in-depth (Badgett, M. 2019).

The life issues that transgender people experience in Punjab, Pakistan, are explained based on the theoretical framework. It can be used as a prism that enables one to examine the intricate relationship between social, economic, psychological, and cultural factors. The framework will facilitate the research by describing the main concepts and theories that underpin the marginalization, coping as well as resilience of transgender groups. The use of theoretical lens in the phenomenological research is crucial because it puts the personal experience of people in the context of the wider social and structural contexts and enables the researcher to make a sense of the narratives presented by the participants in a meaningful and scholarly manner (Eliason, M. J., and Schope, R. 2007).

The social issues that transgender people in Punjab encounter are many and are based on stigma, discrimination, and non-acceptance of the society. Their families, communities, and even in the streets tend to marginalize them; hence, they become socially isolated and do not engage in the activities of society (Shaikh, A. Z., et al., 2025). Prejudice and the fear of being harassed deny so many of them access to social services, including healthcare and education. There have been examples of verbal and physical abuse and lack of social functionality and identity recognition, which all lead to state-sponsored marginalization of transgender people in Punjab (Schein, A. I., and Bauer, G. R. 2015).

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018 is a historic legal document in Pakistan, which is focused on the protection of the rights of transgender people. The Act provides transgender individuals with a right to self-determine their gender, have access to education and medical services, receive legal documents, and find employment without being discriminated (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2021). This law forms an important basis of fostering equality, righting past wrongs, and assimilating transgender groups into the mainstream society. It also recognizes that transgender people are socially and economically vulnerable people, and that they should be shielded against harassment and exploitation.

Although the research on transgender issues is increasing all over the world, it is striking that there is a lack of distinctive qualitative and phenomenological research that appreciably delves into the lives of transgender people. Majority of the current studies are based on quantitative survey or secondary information, which does not give a good understanding of individual stories, identity formation, and coping mechanisms (Grant, J. M., 2011). Particularly, phenomenological research, which aims at comprehending personal lived experience, will be most appropriate to study the subtle social, psychological and cultural issues of transgender communities. The deficiency in such researches limits our understanding of the experience and experiences of transgender people in the presence of systemic discrimination, social marginalization, and economic marginalization.

Research Methodology

The study design to understand the life issues of the trans people in Punjab will be conducted in the form of a quantitative research with a questionnaire divided into structured questions to be provided to 235 respondents. Its design guaranteed systematic, trustworthy and quantifiable analysis of social, economic, and psychological variables in addition to adhering to ethical considerations like informed consent and security (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Babbie, 2020).

Research Design:

The measure of the challenges encountered by transgender individuals was conducted in terms of quantity and frequency of their occurrence by using a quantitative descriptive design. The Likert-scale questionnaires made possible an objective analysis and the possibility to test the hypothesis, which became possible to analyze the relationship between social, economic and psychological variables (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Population of the Study:

The samples were transgender persons aged 16 years and older in Sargodha, Multan and Lahore. Accessibility and population diversity of these cities were chosen to be able to compare them based on socio-economic and demographic factors (Rizvi & Zaidi, 2020; Winter et al., 2016).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique:

The purposive sampling approach was used to choose a sample of 235 respondents to include persons with experience related to the topic of interest. Access was made easier due to community networks and NGOs that had access to valuable information and ensured voluntary participation and confidentiality (Etikan et al., 2016; Babbie, 2020).

Data Collection Instrument:

The questionnaire was filled with demographic, social, economic, and psychological questions and coping strategies to gather the data. A 5-point Likert scale, the use of which was justified by the clarity and reliability of the instrument, was pre-tested (Creswell, 2018; Budge et al., 2013).

Data Collection Procedure:

The information was collected by communicating face-to-face in risk-free settings with the help of NGOs. Participants were provided with informed consent and guaranteed with confidentiality, and face-to-face data collection enhanced the accuracy of responding to questions and minimized non-

response (Babbie, 2020).

Data Analysis:

Data analysis was done in SPSS to come up with descriptive and inferential statistics which include correlation analysis, regression analysis. This was achieved through comparative analysis across cities to find out differences in life challenges (Field, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations:

There was adherence to ethical standards and a high level of voluntary involvement, anonymity, and confidentiality of the information. Currently, the participants received information about their rights, and special attention was paid to the sensitivity of the study (Babbie, 2020; Winter et al., 2016).

Data Analysis:

Table 1: Demographic (N = 235)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	16–20	45	19.1
	21–25	80	34.0
	26–30	60	25.5
	31–35	30	12.8
	36+	20	8.5
Gender Identity	Transgender Male	95	40.4
	Transgender Female	105	44.7
	Non-binary	25	10.6
	Other	10	4.3
Residence	Urban	140	59.6
	Semi-urban	50	21.3
	Rural	45	19.1
Marital Status	Single	160	68.1
	Married	50	21.3
	Divorced	15	6.4
	Widowed	5	2.1
	Other	5	2.1
Education	No Formal	25	10.6
	Primary	30	12.8
	Secondary	60	25.5
	Higher Secondary	50	21.3
	Bachelor	50	21.3
	Master	15	6.4
	Other	5	2.1
Employment	Unemployed	80	34.0
	Student	50	21.3
	Self-employed	40	17.0
	Private	35	14.9
	Government	20	8.5
	Other	10	4.3
Income (PKR)	<10,000	70	29.8
	10,001–20,000	80	34.0
	20,001–30,000	50	21.3
	30,001–50,000	25	10.6
	>50,000	10	4.3

The demographic stackings show that most respondents were young adults with the biggest

percentage of 34.0% (n=80) in the 2125 age bracket as 8.5% (n=20) were aged 36 years and above. Regarding gender identity, 44.7% (n=105) were transgender female and 40.4% (n=95) were transgender male implying a female proportion slightly higher. There was urban concentration with a significant proportion 59.6% (n=140) living in urban areas and 19.1percent (n=45) living in the rural areas. The majority of the respondents were single 68.1% (n=160), which implied little involvement in marriage. In terms of education, secondary schooling 25.5% (n=60), higher secondary and bachelor 21.3% (n=50 each) was the highest and least 6.4% (n=15) achieved a master level of education. There were employment differences with employment data showing that 34.0% (n=80) were neither employed and those who were employed worked in the government only 8.5% (n=20) were employees. There was also economic vulnerability in income distribution wherein 34.0% (n=80) earned between 10000-20000 PKR and only 4.3% earned over 50000 PKR. In general, the demographic results, present a young mainly urban and economically vulnerable transgender community with moderate educational levels and low access to stable jobs and increased income levels.

Table 2: Social Challenges

Variable	Highest Response (%)	Lowest Response (%)
Family Acceptance	Agree (29.8)	Strongly Disagree (12.8)
Public Discrimination	Agree (36.2)	Strongly Disagree (8.5)
Social Exclusion	Agree (31.9)	Strongly Disagree (10.6)
Neighborhood Respect	Agree (25.5)	Strongly Agree (12.8)
Verbal Harassment	Agree (34.0)	Strongly Disagree (8.5)
Physical Harassment	Agree (29.8)	Strongly Disagree (10.6)
Safety in Public Services	Disagree (29.8)	Strongly Agree (10.6)
Expression in Gatherings	Disagree (29.8)	Strongly Agree (8.5)
Friend Support	Agree (29.8)	Strongly Disagree (12.8)
Educational Discrimination	Agree (27.7)	Strongly Disagree (14.9)

Based on the results, social issues are very common among the respondents with most of them citing negatives experiences in various areas. The rate of discrimination at a public place was also high with 36.2 agreeing and a high percentage also experiencing verbal harassment (34.0%) and a physical one (29.8). Social rejection (31.9%), inability to feel comfortable with the way of expressing identity (29.8% disagree) are further indicators of marginalization. As much as there is a certain amount of family and peer support (29.8% agree), there are still large percentages that have reported to be rejected (12.8% strongly disagree). There were also institutional barriers with 29.8% having feelings of being unsafe when accessing the services in the open. Overall, this information indicates current social stigma, lack of approval and inclinations towards discrimination which affect the lives of transgender people.

Table 3: Economic Challenges

Variable	Highest Response (%)	Lowest Response (%)
Equal Job Access	Disagree (34.0)	Strongly Agree (8.5)
Job Application Discrimination	Agree (29.8)	Strongly Disagree (12.8)
Stable Income	Disagree (31.9)	Strongly Agree (10.6)
Skill Development Access	Disagree (31.9)	Strongly Agree (8.5)
Education as Barrier	Agree (29.8)	Strongly Disagree (12.8)
Financial Difficulties	Agree (31.9)	Strongly Disagree (10.6)
Workplace Harassment	Agree (29.8)	Neutral/Strongly Disagree (14.9)
Policy Effectiveness	Disagree (34.0)	Strongly Agree (6.4)

The economical results show the vast deprivation in structural disadvantages experienced by respondents. Most of them indicated a lack of equal access to the job, as 34.0% of them claimed not to agree at all, and only 8.5% strongly agreed. The incidence of job related discrimination was also prominent (29.8% agree) with the instability of income being evident with 31.9% of the disagreement on the receipt of a stable income. The economic mobility is further limited by limited access to skill development programs (31.9% disagree) and role of education as a hindrance (29.8% agree). Financial problems were prevalent (31.9% agree) and workplace harassment was still prevalent (29.8% agree). Notably, the government policies were seen to be not effective with 34.0% dissenting over its effects. In general, the results lay emphasis on severe economic marginalization, poverty, and a dearth of institutional endorsement.

Table 3: Psychological, Emotional & Coping

Variable	Highest Response (%)	Lowest Response (%)
Anxiety (Stigma)	Agree (31.9)	Strongly Disagree (8.5)
Depression	Agree (34.0)	Strongly Disagree (8.5)
Confidence (Expression)	Disagree (29.8)	Strongly Agree (10.6)
Social Isolation	Agree (29.8)	Strongly Disagree (12.8)
Emotional Trauma	Agree (31.5)	Strongly Disagree (10.6)
Stress Management	Disagree (27.7)	Strongly Agree (12.8)
Mental Health Support	Disagree (31.9)	Strongly Agree (11.9)
Fear (Public Services)	Agree (30.6)	Strongly Disagree (11.5)
Peer Support	Agree (34.0)	Strongly Disagree (8.9)
NGO Support	Agree (31.9)	Strongly Disagree (10.6)
Social Networks	Agree (33.2)	Strongly Disagree (10.6)
Resilience (Coping)	Agree (34.9)	Strongly Disagree (8.5)

The psychological results indicate that there were high scores of emotional distress in the respondents, anxiety (31.9 per cent agree) was the most common depression (34.0 per cent agree) because of social stigma and discrimination. Isolated socially (29.8%) and traumatized emotionally (31.5%), also demonstrates strong mental health issues. The number of those who did not feel confident about their ability to express identity (29.8% disagree) and poor stress management (27.7% disagree) were significant, and the access to mental health support was low (31.9% disagree). Coping mechanisms did have rather positive results though with peer support (34.0% agree), NGO assistance (31.9% agree) and social networks (33.2% agree) being significant ways to alleviate the distress. Interestingly, 34.9% responded that coping skills resulted in increased resiliency, implying support networks as effective in enhancing mental health despite the negative environment.

Hypotheses Testing (Compiled for Research Article)

To examine the relationships between key study variables, three hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test of association. The results are presented below in a compact form suitable for a research article.

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Result
H1	Social Discrimination × Psychological Distress	21.634	4	0.000	Significant
H2	Employment Barriers × Financial Difficulties	19.287	4	0.001	Significant
H3	Family Support × Coping Ability	23.918	4	0.000	Significant

The results showed that the relationships between the three were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In particular, there was a strong relationship to the extent of social discrimination and psychological

distress ($\chi^2 = 21.634$) whereby the greater the discrimination the greater the mental health issues. In the same vein, financial challenges were largely associated with employment barriers ($\chi^2 = 19.287$) which proved that financial barriers indeed exerted direct roles in the causing of economic instability in transgender individuals. In addition, family support showed also a significant positive correlation with coping ability ($\chi^2 = 23.918$), whereby, people with greater family support portrayed improved psychological resilience. On the basis of these findings, all null hypotheses were eliminated and alternative hypothesis accepted, indicating the critical role of social, economic and family factors to determine the well-being of the transgender people.

Discussion

The demographic results indicate that most of the respondents are the young adults with the largest number of 34.0% (n=80) in the age category of 21-25 but only a small percentage, 8.5% (n=20), were aged 36 and above. This shows that young transgender people are more apparent and available but the older groups are underrepresented. Concerning gender identity, the sample was fairly even with 44.7% (n=105) considering themselves as transgender female and 40.4% (n=95) transgender male. Moreover, 59.6 percent (n=140) of participants lived in urban and 19.1 percent (n=45) in rural areas experienced a difference with a greater concentration of transgender people being in urban areas, where there might be more support networks than in the rural areas where the problem continues to exist with ease.

Socially, the results indicate both positive and negative experiences of being accepted as well as discrimination. Where 29.8% of the respondents (n=70) believed that they were accepted by their families, they also found that 31.9% (n=75) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, with some showing mixed feelings that their family supports them. Discrimination was deemed to have been significant with 36.2% (n=85) and 27.7% (n=65) agreeing and strongly agreeing respectively that they are discriminated against in the public spaces. On the same, the majority of them reported verbal harassment with 34.0% (n=80) agreeing and 29.8% (n=70) strongly agreeing. Physical harassment was a notable issue both with 29.8 (n= 70) people agreeing and 23.4(n=55) strongly agreeing to it. All these numbers demonstrate that social stigma and exclusion continue to be prevalent and impact normal life.

Education The economic analysis points to a dire financial exposure of respondents. The percentage of those unemployed was quite large (34.0% n= 80), and only 8.5% (n= 20) of those employed were in government employment. Income levels were also low, with 34.0% (n=80) earning between 10,001–20,000 PKR and only 4.3% (n=10) earning above 50,000 PKR. There was also great inequality on access to job opportunities with 34.0% (n=80) not agreeing and 29.8% (n=70) strongly disagreeing that they had equal access to jobs. Also, 29.8% (n=70) and 25.5% (n=60) concurred that they were discriminated when being applied to jobs, and strongly concurred respectively. These results affirm that economic instability in the transgender population is a major factor due to job discrimination.

There was high degree of distress and emotional difficulties were very evident in terms of psychological issues. The 31.9% (n=75) (agree) and 29.8% (n=70) (strongly agree) reported anxiety due to social stigma, and depression due to discrimination, respectively. Social isolation was another feature that was high and 29.8% (n=70) agreed with it and 25.5% (n=60) strongly agreed with it. Of the respondents 31.5% (n=74) and 28.9% (n=68) reported emotional trauma in the form of rejection respectively. Additionally, their coping skills were limited with 27.7% (n=65) not agreeing that they could cope with stress and accessibility of mental health assistance was also low with 31.9 (n=75) and 21.3 (n=50) disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. This set of statistics also makes it obvious that mental health issues are acute and directly related to social and economic marginalisation.

Nonetheless, coping strategies and sources of support has been an important factor in resiliency. There was great esteem in peer support where 34.0% (n=80) agreed and 30.6% (n=72) was in full agreement that they also count on peer support. Likewise, 31.9 (n=75) thought that the NGO aid enhanced their quality of life and 33.2 (n=78) thought that social networks diminish loneliness.

Familial support had also a positive influence with 30.6 per cent (n=72) agreeing with influence of support in coping. Significantly, 34.9% (n=82) and 28.9% (n=68) agreed and strongly agreed respectively that standard support systems together with personal strategies fostered better psychological strength overtime, which highlights that support systems and personal practices have a high level of agreement.

These results are further validated statistically by the hypothesis testing. The correlation of social discrimination and psychological distress was statistically significant (χ^2 1.634, $p < 0.05$) that means social discrimination is higher most of the individuals have more mental health problems. On the same note, there was a significant relationship between job barriers and financial difficulties ($\chi^2 = 19.287$, $p < 0.05$) indicating that there is a positive correlation between the lack of jobs and the economic issues. In addition, it revealed that family support had a close positive correlation with coping ability (χ^2 3.918, $p < 0.05$) and so is crucial to enhancing resilience. On the whole, the discussion implies that social, economical and psychological problems are inextricably tied to each other, and gradual but thorough policy changes, inclusive employment policies and increased social support will be necessary to tackle the problems.

Conclusion

The current research came up with the conclusion that transgender people in Punjab, Pakistan face tridimensional life issues which have a considerable impact on their general welfare. The demographic results showed that most of the respondents were in their youthful age with 34.0% (n = 80) aged 21-25 years and 25.5% (n = 60) aged 26-30 years; implying that the transgender population consists predominantly of young people. Moreover, 59.6% (n = 140) of the respondents lived in urban centres, which is more visible and accessible in urban centres, and the representatives of rural areas were scarce. These data emphasise that the concentration of transgender people is more in cities where there is more chance as well as discrimination on the other hand.

On the social level, the research found that transgender people have to experience daily discrimination and exclusion. Quite a high percentage of them showed the experience of discrimination in the public spaces as 36.2% (n = 85) said they agree and 27.7% (n = 65) strongly agree. Verbal harassment was common as well with 34.0% (n = 80) out of the respondents subjecting to it and 29.8% (n = 70) victims subjected to physical harassment. Though there was a percentage of 29.8 percent (n = 70) of reported family acceptance, a significant number of them still faced rejection and lack of support. These data are a clear sign that, although there are slight positive changes in the field of social awareness, transgender people still are subjected to the common stigma, marginalization, and social insecurity.

In economic terms, it is strongly pointed out that transgender people are more likely to have a structural inequality and financial instability. Formal employment opportunities were very low with majority, 34.0% (n = 80) having no jobs and only 8.5% (n= 20) in government jobs. Income levels were also critically low, with 34.0% (n = 80) earning between 10,001–20,000 PKR and only 4.3% (n = 10) earning above 50,000 PKR. Moreover, 34.0% (n = 80) of them did not agree that they have equal access to job opportunities and 29.8% of them (n = 70) strongly disagreed. These findings affirm the fact that economic marginalization, work place discrimination and absence of skill building venues are significant impediments to economic self-sufficiency.

At a psychological level, the researchers came to the conclusion that transgender people undergo intense emotional distress, associated with discrimination and social rejection. One-third (31.9) of the participants (n = 75) noted anxiety because of stigmatizing attitudes, whereas 34.0 (n = 80) suffered depression. There was also widespread social isolation with 29.8% (n=70) saying that they are isolated. The prevalence of emotional trauma (family or community) rejection was 31.5% (n = 74) and 28.9% (n = 68). These results illustrate that constant exposure to discrimination has a considerable impact of negatively affecting mental health, self-esteem, and emotional stability of transgender people.

In spite of these, the research also found out that support systems and coping mechanisms are also important in improving resilience. The essential role of peer support was greatly recognized and

34.0% (n=80) and 30.6% (n=72) affirmed and strongly affirmed respectively that they look upon fellow transgender individuals. In the same spirit, 31.9 (n = 75) and 33.2 (n = 78) said that the NGO support enhanced their quality of life and social networks have made isolation decline. Significantly, a portion of 34.9% (n = 82) of them responded that coping strategies helped them to be stronger at the end of the day. These results point out that even under those harsh social and economic predicaments an aid of the community, NGOs, and individual coping mechanisms do play a significant role in psychological resilience and survival.

Lastly, testing of the hypotheses proved that all significant relationships in the study used were significant ($p < 0.05$). There was a significant correlation of social discrimination and psychological distress (21.634) and barriers to employment were significantly correlated with financial trouble (19.287). Moreover, there was a good positive correlation between family support and coping ability (23.918). All in all, the research finds that transgender people in Punjab have to cope with interrelated social, economic and psychological issues, and the only way to change the situation is to introduce inclusive policies, employment opportunities, better application of laws, and better mechanisms of social acceptance.

Recommendations/Suggestions

- Equal employment opportunities: Transgender people should be offered equal employment opportunities by effectively applying anti-discrimination policies at workplaces. Both the public and the private sectors should sensitize their employers to encourage fair hiring in employment without their discrimination. This will assist in creating a decrease in long term economic prolongation and advance livelihood chances.
- Designing the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018 ought to be reinforced on the ground level. Awareness activities should be carried out in such a way that transgender are fully aware of what their legal rights are. There should also be effective systems of monitoring to enhance enforcement of policies.
- Vocational training and skill development and development programs must be made more accessible and inclusive of transgender people. These programs must be modeled in a manner that is enhanced employability and suitability with market demands. There should also be special efforts to access the marginalized groups both in the urban and rural setting.
- Mental health should be increased and brought close to the transgender communities. They should have trained professionals to assist them in counseling as well as psychological support, in a safe and respectful environment. Mental health interventions, which are community-based, are also able to minimize emotional distress.
- Strong initiatives to curb harassment in work places and the open spaces should be taken. The reporting systems must be safe, confidential and easily accessible to transgender people. Awareness and training which should be carried out on a regular basis in institutions should also be done to encourage people to behave in a respectful manner.
- The programs addressing family awareness and counseling should be propagated to enhance the emotional support and acceptance. The families will be advised to learn about gender diversity and its significance in alleviating psychological stress. Effective family support has a great potential to enhance coping and well-being.
- Community support networks: Community support networks need to be reinforced to minimize social isolation of transgender people. Emotional stability and feeling of belonging can be offered by support groups and provision of safe spaces in the community. These support systems can be also promoted by working with the NGOs.
- There should be economic empowerment programs which will facilitate financial independence. Opportunities, including small businesses support, self-employment opportunities and financial assistance should be promoted. Such actions could be used to alleviate poverty and economic insecurity.

- There should be an intervention of public awareness campaigns to de-stigmatize and discriminate the society. Media, institutional, and community programs can be used in education to change the negative perceptions. This will enhance social inclusion and acceptance of transgender people.
- Unique education systems ought to be formulated to make learning opportunities equal. Schools are supposed to be safe places, where they are not discriminated or bullied. Transgender students can be assisted in their studies and/or receive a scholarship without hindrances.

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