

SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS TO TRANSGENDER

Abu Baker¹, Aftab Ali², Sheraz Ali³, Muhammad Asghar Khan⁴ (Corresponding Author)

¹ School of Sociology, Quaid e Azam University Islamabad, Syedabubakaer425@gmail.com

² M. Phil Scholar, Department of Social and Gender Studies, University of Swat, E-mail: aftabalikhan30@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor in Sociology, Department of Social and Gender Studies, University of Swat, Email: sheraz.khan80@gmail.com

⁴ Lecturer in Sociology, Department of Social and Gender Studies, University of Swat, E.mail: asgharsocio@gmail.com

Abstract

This research study is a secondary review that focuses on the socio-cultural barriers to transgender. Since, transgender has been one of the deliberate topics, therefore, it has been a topic of discussion and research in various social sciences disciplines. Many social and familial bonds are protected and maintained by individuals at the cost of their life. Family reputation, societal norms and religious values are dominant in almost every society and every individual wages for them, however, disclosure of one's identity sometimes becomes an ignition point for social stigma. The identity of transgender has been a stigma in every society and it causes huge distress. On the one hand, the disclosure of transgender is a stigma, while on the other hand infringement upon their identity and rights make the situation doubly precarious for their survival. This research study discusses these socio-cultural barriers and the relevant theories of transgender in detail.

Key Words: Transgender, Familial and Social Bonds, Social Stigma, Marginalization

Introduction

Lev S. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that social interaction is fundamental to the development of individual consciousness. Vygotsky argues that the social dimension of consciousness precedes and shapes the individual dimension, emphasizing that mental functions originate from social interactions before being internalized by individuals. This theory is exemplified by Vygotsky's "genetic law of development," which describes how cultural development in children progresses from social interaction to individual cognition. The text also highlights the role of semiotic tools—such as language and symbols—in mediating this process, suggesting that these tools are not only crucial for collaborative knowledge construction but also for independent problem-solving. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is introduced as a key element in understanding how learning and development are intertwined; learning, when properly organized, can drive mental development. The text concludes by contrasting Vygotsky's theory with other developmental theories, noting critiques of his internalization model and introducing an alternative participation model, which views development as a transformation of individual participation in sociocultural activities (Scott, & Palincsar, 2013).

A socio-cultural barrier refers to the set of social norms, values, beliefs, and practices within a society that can hinder or block the acceptance and integration of new technologies or ideas. These barriers arise when the innovation conflicts with the prevailing cultural expectations, traditions, or social structures, making it difficult for the innovation to be embraced by the community. While many theories acknowledge that socio-cultural factors influence the spread and acceptance of innovations, the concept of socio-cultural barriers specifically highlights how these cultural elements can act as obstacles, preventing innovations from gaining widespread adoption, regardless of their potential advantages or effectiveness. This barrier can cause innovations to be rejected or abandoned, despite their apparent benefits, because they do not align with the social and cultural context of the community (Deligiannaki, & Ali, 2011).

Transgender

The concept of transgender revolves around the idea of gender incongruence, where an individual's gender identity does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth. This discordance leads to the identification of some individuals as transgender, encompassing a broad spectrum of gender identities. Transgender men are those who were assigned female at birth but identify as men, while transgender women were assigned male at birth but identify as women. Additionally, some transgender individuals do not adhere strictly to the binary gender framework, instead identifying outside of it, possibly as neither, both, or somewhere in between.

In various cultures, there are also recognitions of "third genders" and indigenous gender identities. The societal and legal challenges faced by transgender people, highlighting the stigma, discrimination, and marginalization they often endure. The provision of healthcare for transgender individuals is also discussed, particularly the ongoing scrutiny of the mental illness perspective that currently dominates this field.

The text notes that the World Health Organization (WHO) may revise its classification of transgender people as mentally disordered in its diagnostic manual. Furthermore, the text touches upon the debate surrounding the diagnosis of transgender children before puberty. The authors emphasize that gender identity is distinct from sexual orientation and clarify that being transgender is not the same as being intersex, as the latter relates to atypical development of biological sex characteristics (Winter et al., 2016).

Sociocultural Barriers to Transgender

The pervasive socio-cultural challenges faced by transgender individuals, particularly in Pakistan and to some extent globally. The text highlights how deeply ingrained societal norms, rooted in a rigid binary gender system, lead to the marginalization, stigmatization, and invisibility of transgender identities. In Pakistan, this results in widespread discrimination, family rejection, and limited access to education and employment, severely impacting the well-being and social inclusion of transgender individuals. The text underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to address these issues, including legislative changes, public education, and support for transgender communities. On a global scale, particularly in the United States, the discussion on the ongoing struggles for transgender rights, highlighting the significant disparities in legal protections and social acceptance. Despite some progress, such as increased legal safeguards and advocacy efforts, transgender people continue to face high rates of discrimination, mental health challenges, and poverty, emphasizing the critical need for continued efforts toward equality and inclusion (Akram, Munir, & Baig, 2023).

Similarly, the content emphasizes the significant gaps in transgender healthcare, particularly the lack of comprehensive and inclusive studies on transgender health issues. The review highlights

that most research has disproportionately focused on transgender women, indigenous gender identities, and sexual and mental health, while neglecting transgender men and broader health concerns like communicable and non-communicable diseases. The document stresses the urgent need for gender-sensitive, person-centered healthcare services that respect the rights and dignity of transgender individuals. It calls for the implementation of nondiscriminatory policies, improved healthcare access, and the inclusion of transgender health in medical education and public health initiatives. The text also discusses the social and legal barriers faced by transgender individuals, such as economic exclusion, stigma, and inadequate legal protections, which exacerbate health disparities. The importance of addressing these issues through evidence-based policies, community-based interventions, and comprehensive research is underscored to ensure better health outcomes for the transgender population (Pandya, & Redcay, 2021).

Likely, the significant social and cultural pressures faced by transgender individuals in Pakistan and Bangladesh, particularly in relation to their identity disclosure. The study highlights how the desire to preserve family reputation, societal norms, and religious beliefs strongly influences transgender individuals' decisions to conceal their true identities. The narratives illustrate that the collectivist nature of these societies, which prioritizes community conformity and family honor, creates a highly pressurized environment where transgender individuals are compelled to suppress their identities. The fear of social stigma, loss of family ties, and psychological distress further complicates their situation, making disclosure a daunting task. The research also emphasizes the role of ethical obligations and the need for societal change, urging for greater awareness and acceptance of transgender identities in these communities (Yasser, Agrawal, & Anonymous, 2021).

Likewise, the pervasive cultural and institutional barriers that transgender individuals face in accessing education in Pakistan. Despite of the fact that education is being recognized as a fundamental right, transgender people are marginalized due to rigid societal norms, conservative interpretations of religious texts, and systemic exclusion within educational institutions. These barriers are deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of society, leading to discrimination and harassment that are mirrored in schools and universities. The lack of inclusive policies, legal protections, and supportive environments further exacerbates the difficulties transgender individuals encounter, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social ostracism. The text underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in both cultural attitudes and educational systems to ensure transgender individuals can fully exercise their right to education and contribute meaningfully to society (Noreen, & Rashid, 2024).

Similarly, the critical need to tailor HIV prevention strategies, specifically PREP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), to the unique sociocultural and healthcare needs of trans women rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach that categorizes them under the broader MSM (men who have sex with men) risk group. The study highlights that despite the availability of PREP in high-resource settings like San Francisco, trans women are not effectively reached by existing MSM-targeted HIV prevention efforts. This oversight occurs because MSM-focused strategies often fail to consider the distinct barriers and facilitators affecting trans women, such as their involvement in sex work, social marginalization, and the lack of trans-competent healthcare providers. The study underscores the importance of developing and implementing trans-specific health interventions and incorporating gender-affirming practices to improve PREP uptake and adherence among trans women. Additionally, it points out the necessity of exploring ways to integrate PEEP services within non-transgender women's clinics and to adapt existing programs to be more inclusive of trans women's unique experiences and needs. The findings call for a more nuanced and inclusive

approach to HIV prevention that recognizes and addresses the distinct challenges faced by trans women (Sevelius, Keatley, Calma, & Arnold, 2018).

Analysis on transgender issues in India highlights the profound historical and cultural complexities surrounding the transgender community, particularly the 'Hijra' community. It outlines a rich heritage of gender variance in India, tracing back over 4000 years with roots in ancient Hindu scriptures and Jain literature. Despite this long history and initial societal roles in religious and royal contexts, the colonial era introduced severe discrimination through laws like the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which criminalized the Hijra community. This historical prejudice has evolved into systemic marginalization in modern India, leading to significant socio-economic and psychological challenges for transgender individuals. The analysis underscores that contemporary transgender people in India face extensive discrimination across multiple domains, including education, employment, and healthcare. They often experience marginalization, social exclusion, and transphobia, which exacerbate their economic hardships and psychological distress. Issues such as low literacy rates, lack of job opportunities, homelessness, and pervasive violence against them are highlighted as significant barriers to their social inclusion and equality.

Legal advancements like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2016 aim to address these challenges by promoting social, educational, and economic empowerment. However, the effectiveness of such measures remains contingent on overcoming entrenched societal prejudices and ensuring the full realization of human rights protections, as stipulated by international human rights law. The analysis concludes that addressing these issues requires not just legal reforms but also a profound shift in societal attitudes to eradicate stigma and discrimination against transgender individuals (More, 2021).

The core concept revolves around the socio-legal challenges and incremental progress concerning the Hijra community in Bangladesh. The Hijras, a marginalized group, face systemic discrimination and violations of their rights across various sectors. The studies reviewed reveal significant gaps in addressing the socioeconomic and legal issues affecting them, such as inadequate legal protection, social stigma, and insufficient educational opportunities. Despite some progress—like recognition as a third gender, community empowerment initiatives, and inclusion in government schemes—the core challenges persist, including deep-seated societal prejudices, lack of accurate data, and insufficiently organized support projects. The article emphasizes the need for comprehensive measures to bridge these gaps, enhance legal protections, and improve societal attitudes to facilitate the full inclusion and dignity of the hijra community (Haque, 2021).

The core concept revolves around the systemic and multifaceted social exclusion faced by the transgender community in India, emphasizing its profound impact on their social, cultural, educational, and economic lives. The text outlines how transgender individuals experience widespread discrimination and marginalization across various aspects of life. Social exclusion here is not just about overt rejection but also includes subtler forms of exclusion through misrepresentation and persistent negative labeling. Transgender individuals face severe discrimination starting from their families, where non-conformity to traditional gender norms can lead to physical and emotional abuse, disownment, and social isolation. This exclusion extends to societal levels, where stigma forces many into precarious survival strategies, such as sex work or begging, exacerbating their vulnerability to violence and health risks. Educational systems further perpetuate exclusion through violence, neglect, and inadequate support, leading to high dropout rates and limited educational attainment.

Economically, transgender people often struggle with unemployment or underemployment, with few opportunities for stable, respected livelihoods. The challenges are further compounded by

insufficient legal recognition and protection, hindering access to basic rights and services. Despite some isolated positive initiatives, systemic barriers in civil, legal, and economic domains continue to impede the transgender community's full integration and well-being. The text underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms, better societal attitudes, and tailored support mechanisms to address these deep-rooted issues and foster equitable inclusion for transgender individuals (Vanitha, 2017).

The core concept revolves around the severe and multifaceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transgender individuals in Kashmir. The analysis highlights that transgender people have faced exacerbated challenges due to their already marginalized status, resulting in increased discrimination, social exclusion, and neglect. The pandemic has intensified pre-existing issues such as healthcare inadequacies, psychological distress, food and job insecurity, and stigma. The transgender community, already struggling with limited access to essential services and societal support, has found themselves in an even more precarious situation with the pandemic's onset. They face heightened risks of infection due to inadequate health information and lack of access to vaccinations, compounded by a lack of supportive infrastructure and discriminatory attitudes within healthcare systems. Additionally, the economic impact of the pandemic has disproportionately affected their livelihoods, with many losing incomes from traditional occupations and facing increased food insecurity. The study underscores the urgent need for gender-responsive research, inclusive healthcare policies, and targeted social support to address these compounded adversities and uphold the dignity and rights of transgender individuals during such crises (Ahmad, & Shafi, 2023).

The multifaceted healthcare challenges faced by the transgender community. It outlines significant barriers, including both physical and mental health issues, and highlights the broader systemic problems impacting access to appropriate care. Transgender individuals encounter unique health challenges due to their gender identity, which can include physical health concerns like hormone therapy complications, increased risk of certain cancers, and the dangers of non-medical silicone injections. Mental health issues are also prominent, with high rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and other disorders exacerbated by discrimination and bullying. The transgender people often face barriers to healthcare such as lack of knowledgeable providers, financial constraints, and systemic discrimination. These barriers are compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has worsened existing inequalities and restricted access to gender-affirming treatments. Legislative measures, such as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in India, are discussed as essential steps toward addressing these challenges. This act aims to reduce discrimination and ensure access to healthcare by recognizing the rights of transgender individuals and mandating healthcare provisions, including coverage for sex reassignment surgeries and hormonal therapy. The document underscores the need for improved healthcare access and support, as well as continued advocacy and legal reforms to protect transgender rights and address health disparities (Rajpurohit, & Sharma, 2021).

Similarly, the nuanced understanding of psychological distress and gender identity among transgender individuals, particularly focusing on the influence of social strain, stigma, and cultural factors. The study reveals that while psychological distress is significantly related to social strain, it does not directly correlate with gender dysphoria or transgender congruence. This finding supports the notion that distress in transgender individuals often stems from experiences of social rejection and stigma rather than from gender incongruence itself. Over time, many participants found self-acceptance and community support to mitigate feelings of discordance between their internal and external identities. These challenges outdated classifications that label transgender

identity as a mental illness and aligns with current expert consensus that views transgender identity as non-pathological.

Furthermore, the study critiques the limitations of the gender binary framework in capturing the diverse experiences of transgender individuals, noting inconsistencies in reporting gender dysphoria due to the framework's rigidity. The research highlights the cultural context in India, where transgender individuals face significant stigma and discrimination, exacerbating psychological distress. It also explores the impact of vertical collectivism in the Hijra community, where hierarchical and restrictive norms contribute to discontent among members. The study underscores the need for a broader and more inclusive approach to understanding transgender identities and experiences, particularly in the context of cultural and social dynamics (Arvind et al., 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the complex interplay between sociocultural factors and the experiences of transgender individuals across different contexts. It underscores Lev S. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in shaping individual consciousness and cognitive development. This theoretical framework is critical for understanding how cultural and social interactions influence transgender identities and experiences. The discussion extends to the impact of socio-cultural barriers, noting how entrenched norms and values can hinder the acceptance and integration of new ideas or technologies, including those relevant to transgender issues. The text further delves into the multifaceted challenges faced by transgender individuals, particularly focusing on socio-legal barriers and discrimination in countries like Pakistan and India. It outlines how rigid societal norms and systemic discrimination lead to marginalization, limited access to resources, and significant psychological distress. Despite some progress, such as legal protections and increased visibility, the emphasis is on the continued need for comprehensive reforms and societal change to address these deep-rooted issues effectively. The analysis also highlights the specific needs of the transgender community in healthcare, education, and social support, emphasizing the need for tailored, inclusive strategies that consider their unique experiences and challenges. The ongoing disparities in healthcare access and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transgender individuals further illustrate the urgency of addressing these issues through targeted interventions and legal reforms. Overall, a more nuanced understanding of transgender experiences, incorporating both theoretical insights and practical considerations to foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

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