Why only Beg or dance? Transgenders

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Abstract

The main purpose behind the research is to unleash the reasons why the third gender specifically those belonging to Pakistan, earn their living by means of begging for money and dancing in dreadful night functions, although they enjoy living a life of women, profoundly loving the abundant use of makeover cosmetics and getting dressed up like women, then why not to choose a respectable, praiseworthy profession which would be a sign of great prestige and honor for them and their families, but since the word family is brought under consideration, that is why it is also important to do the in-depth analysis of a she male’s separation from their families which directly result into their wrong choice of profession, in simple words the only choice of profession they are left with. Moreover, the researcher also deliberated the actions taken by the government and the Supreme Court in order to protect them and for the provision of their basic human rights. The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively; both emic and etic perspectives were presented. Trans-individuals reported feeling of depression, rejection and isolation, some of them also reported attempts to commit suicide or self-harm. They were compelled to discontinue their education and dropped school so early because of the inappropriate behavior of people and absence of proper policy about trans-individuals at schools. The research findings and recommendations would be helpful in making policy about trans-individuals at schools and at work place. A proper policy and legislation may provide them protection and the status of a respectable citizen, thus not a mere problem for their parents and the society.

Keywords: Transgender, legislation, jobs and education, begging and dancing

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Introduction

The topic which the researcher has selected for working upon is thought to be a very insightful topic today, not only today but since ages it’s taken the same, people mostly vacillate on talking about their basic rights, because of a number of different reasons and as a result they (the transgender) hesitate to enjoy the normal life like any other ordinary, normal human being who lives in the same society, specifically talking about the Transgender population of our society also known as the she-males, eunuchs, in-betweens, hermaphrodite and a number of different terms have been associated to them in different languages, a term ‘khwaja sira’ was actually developed by the Mughals, though they suffer and face a number of difficulties but what the researcher has decided is something other than their miseries and discomfort, that is to unleash the reasons why they don’t choose a different praiseworthy profession other than just pleading for money or dancing in dreadful night functions specifically here in Pakistan. Is there something that has been done to protect them and their privileges on governmental level, like many other countries of the world, where the same gender earns respectably serving in different fields of life.

Third Gender referred as Hijra in Pakistani social order i.e. eunuch or hermaphrodite. They are hermaphrodites commonly incapable to lead a normal life, unable for marriage and producing children. Most of them are close to males but they wish to be identified as feminine than masculine due to their fondness to lead a life of a woman. An expert in sociology describes them as “man minus maleness”. Apart from begging, their sources of income are numerous. It's an ancient ritual in the country to have third gender bless childbirths, marriages, housewarmings and other auspicious occasions. The in-betweens are assumed to possess occult powers, and their blessings and curses are both considered powerful and effective, the reason behind this is the irregularity they are born with, people look down upon them and give them money, on occasions like childbirth they sing and dance and create a fuss outside the house until the mother has permitted them to look at the new born baby. Once they are done with blessing the baby they demand huge sums of money in lieu of their good wishes. Otherwise they are taken to the night functions they dance to show their womanly skills and earn money. On rare occasions when the child is born a eunuch, the she males along their patron insist that the baby should be given to them. Often, the families and guardians comply, to avoid humiliation which they gonna get from society in future, and the group will take the child away to their ghettoes and bring him up as he
should represent himself as one of their own, this is how they are different from the rest when they stay out of educational institutions, deprived of their basic right to get education and most of all they are detached from their families which is really a heart breaking act. The she males in Pakistan are living a life like the one in hell and they have got no image in our society along with zero representation and privileges in Pakistan. Killing of she males have become a routine task but there is nothing which is done, on the part of those in power, to provide justice to the she males. During the year, (2011), three she males killing have been reported many violence cases with the she males have also been reported from all over Pakistan in year 2011. It was mentioned in an article from the year 2011 that Men and Women of Pakistan refuse to admit that she males are also human beings. The same article also reported that “Alma’s Bobby the president of She male Foundation has also told many heartbreaking stories to the media of the She males across Pakistan. Handling of third gender’s treatment in hospitals is an issue of great concern too, for the reason that whenever one is admitted in the hospital, the doctors never know whether to place them in the male wards or in the female wards. They condemn all men and women and refuse to join either of the two teams, this becomes a serious trouble for them which turns a sick into a complete patient. They are afraid of our society due to the alien attitude of the people which bothers them the most. In the year 2012 the she males association was formed in Huripur, against the “harassment” and “discrimination” they receive from the society, the third gender persons from across the country created the Haripur chapter of the All Pakistan She males Association on Wednesday”. The All Pakistan She males Association President Alma’s Bobby selected two renowned she males as district president of the district Huripur She male’s Association. Bobby (The chairperson) kept announcing the difficulties and troubles their community was exposed to. She and the other partakers exclusively criticized the police as “always treating them harshly and being discriminative” towards them. In the same article it has been mentioned that following the landmark decision of Supreme Court, transgender persons from all over Pakistan have been recognized and accepted as the third gender. She further told the media that now onwards all third gender persons will have their own identity cards following the law. She also esteemed and valued the verdict handed down by the then existing Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, regarding rights of transgender persons (Published in The Express Tribune, June 21st 2011)
The express tribune published an article regarding transgender rights SC tells NADRA to alter the gender verification process, written by Azam Khan, which talks about the verdict handed down by the Chief Justice of Pakistan on 25th April 2016 but later another article was published in the express tribune Pakistan regarding the transgender registration that, NADRA failed to state and detained media personnel instead, by Owais Jafri published on May 9, 2012. Which shows that order of the SC was not successfully accomplished till 2012 by NADRA, on the other hand on February 3rd 2012 the Express Tribune Pakistan Punjab also published a different story under the article, NADRA provides 3 gender options on CNIC registration form. Which shows that some efforts have been done in this regard and lack of awareness seems the major cause. But on the other hand an article published by Zainab Bhatti on March 5th 2014 covers a totally different story under the same subject i.e., Transgender in Pakistan: An identity card hasn’t accomplished anything, means even an ID proved to be of no use. Encoding every word of the she male who told his own story, which can be simply explained in these words, “we are still insulted and laughed at. We therefore have to route to other means of making money, even if that means letting go of our ethics and morality. There are times when we aren’t able to enjoy a good dinner, even after a complete day of dancing on wet floors.” The article by Zainab Bhatti tells us the importance of an identity card for a she male, life remained the same even after getting an identity, job the utmost requirement is not being fulfilled in any case. In Pakistan today “The forgotten third gender in Pakistan” written by Mehreen Umar, again talked for their rights she inscribed really boldly on the tight spot, according to her the khawaja siras are assumed as prostitutes who sell their bodies to earn money. Which shows a drastic lack of knowledge amongst the people who doesn’t even feel the need of exploring the causes, since they are left with no choice after they leave their homes their families, they for sure will opt the only option they are left with and that is nothing more than taking the orders and instructions from the guru (patron), in order to earn for their living. The writer further highlights that people in our society need to know nevertheless that these people really don’t have a choice in what they are confronted with.

**Literature Review**

Previous research done so far on transgender education, job opportunities and harassment issues etc. conducted discrimination surveys and recorded trans-youth experiences to improve school

McGuire, J. K., Anderson, C. R., Toomey, R. B., & Russell, S. T. (2010) used both survey data and focus group to identify the issues that transgender students face in school environment. They examined school strategies to reduce harassment; individual responses form transgenders and supportive school personal. They found that there was greater connection between school personal and greater feeling of safety when school took action to reduce harassment. The school strategies had an indirect effect on safety feeling. The focus group data was helpful in analyzing how the students perceive and experience about school intervention and the process school can employ to support youth.

Beemyn, G. (2012) the experiences and needs of community college students specifically and discussed the problems faced by the Transgender students as a results of gender based discrimination and prejudice in both education and employment. The research explains how community college failed to provide them transgender inclusive and supportive environment. Beemyn provided some suggestion on how to make college atmosphere more compassionate helpful and supportive for these students.
Stevenson, T. (2014) conducted a qualitative study and interviewed self-identified transgender within the university. Stevenson reported that participants were not satisfied with housing facilities at campus especially sharing of double-rooms with strangers instigated anxiety and frustration. They were not satisfied with trans-specific resources; however they acknowledged that campus counselors were very beneficial for them. However, they complained about health care staff with limited or incorrect knowledge about trans-health that may have serious consequences. The research suggested that health care professionals must be provided gender training. The researcher reported that the most common complaint was about wrong name on class roll calls or ‘use of incorrect names and pronouns’ by the professors. The research indicates that university staff needs to be trained about trans-sensitive issues and dealing.

Schneider, F. (2015) reported that little research has been conducted on transgender college students’ experiences and the reports that exist shows limited resources and facilities for these students. Student movements have emerged across the country regarding specific difficulties transgender face in higher education. Women colleges which experienced challenging student activism and significant controversy regarding transgender especially smith college has been center attention and under discussion in media in order whether or not transgender students who identify themselves as female-to-male belong to women’s colleges. Schneider presented a case study of Smith College. The current education policy of Smith College allows students who undergo the process of transitioning after registration and identified as FTM to complete their graduation. The first major change in constitution made in 2003 at smith college when students voted to replace ‘gender specific pronoun’ with ‘gender neutral pronouns’ (Schneider, F. (2015 pg.102) Schneider reported that a large number of administrators, staff, university officials and activists are dedicated to work for solving transgender problems in higher education. Schneider also emphasized that students affairs officials and higher education employs will gain understanding and awareness about transgender student exclusive needs with the rapidly growing importance of this issue. Schneider also mentioned ‘Non-discrimination policies’ (Transgender law and policy institute 2008, for more detail see Schneider, F., 2015) passed by 254 colleges and universities in the united states to make Higher education more accommodating for transgender students.
A number of researchers investigated transgender employees transition, their problems, analyzed supportive organizational policies and offered recommendations to improve policies to make organizational environment more conducive for trans-individuals (Law, C. L., Martinez, L. R., Ruggs, E. N., Hebl, M. R., & Akers, E., 2011, Fassinger, R. E., 2008, Budge, S. L., Tebbe, E. N., & Howard, K. A., 2010, Dispenza, F., Watson, L. B., Chung, Y. B., & Brack, G. 2012, King, E. B., & Cortina, J. M., 2010,) They argued that transgender employees face discrimination at work which has negative impacts on their physical and mental health. They emphasized that organizational psychologists have greater ethical responsibility to support such kind of efforts. They suggested that work related legislative and public policy can be influential with the help of psychologists.

**Methodology**

The researcher has taken interviews from the she males, the detailed interviews were taken from two of the interviewees named Sapna and Rania. These interviews were based on the semi structured questionnaires and almost 18-20 trans-individuals participated in focus group discussions arranged by the researcher at her home with the help of her family. The researcher also gathered the personal views and opinions of people belonging to different fields and professions. The data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The interview consisted of the following questions.

1. What’s your name?
2. What do you do?
3. How much education have you got?
4. Why you left school so early?
5. Why didn’t you choose a different profession from the one you have?
6. Are you satisfied with your job and life?
7. Is life easy, the way you live it?
8. What about your basic rights? Provided or not?
9. Did you get the religious education? How much?
10. Have you got the ID card? What about your right to vote?
11. Did you notice some family members stopped speaking to you because of transition.
12. Have you ever been debarred from family events?
13. Did you ever feel kind of rejection feeling from society?
14. Have you ever felt that you are excluded from society?
15. Have you ever tried to commit suicide or self-harm? If yes what was the trigger, for being trans-individual, because of parents, relatives or other people?

Qualitative data analysis

Interviews and focus group study of trans-individuals-emic perspective

CASE #1: SAPNA.

“I studied till grade VI, my family got irritated with my demeanor full of womanly traits, my behavior was annoying for my father and brothers the most, I went to school but with the passage of time people surrounding me started annoying me, some called me lerki some others called me with other different names like khusra, aunti, as a result I stopped going to school. Later I joined the people from my gender, amongst them I was free to do anything of my choice, we are both happy and unhappy at the same time, I earn by performing dance in night functions. Police makes fun of us instead of protecting us, I earn and serve my family back home I have my
mother and an aged unmarried sister in my dependents, after every month I visit them and do the grocery for them, we earn enough to feed ourselves, buy some cosmetics for everyday use and that’s all we need.”

Lastly when the interviewer asked a question regarding the satisfaction, if it’s missing or they are satisfied with whatever they have, the answer was;

“I wish God doesn’t even bless my enemies with a baby like us.”

**CASE # 2: RANIA**

“We from the start are made to beg and dance because we have nothing else to do, everybody in this world asks us to work but doesn’t hire us themselves, who in this world won’t like to work but whenever we ask someone for a job he refuses and asks to search it with someone else, nobody hires us that’s the reality, everybody enjoys putting in efforts to earn, if somebody gives me some work I’ll enjoy doing it, people ask us to pray for them and in return give us money, life is too tough and our life from the very start seems like it’s over.”
CASE #3: REEMA

On a question asked why don’t you work or do labor instead of begging in public?

Answer: “you offer me a job, I promise to serve you well, you take me to your hostel I will cook for you, wash your clothes and will serve you well, nobody hires us for work I did apply many times at many houses they complain that you are not suitable to work at our place, we don’t have our ID cards people can’t trust us because of the uncertain condition prevailing in our country resulting from terrorist attacks, ID cards have not been issued yet well if that is done it would at least give us an identity, we earn much by begging in public places there are ladies who give us huge sum which fulfills almost every purpose.”

Few of the common public opinions- etic perspective

Public opinion interview # 4: MEHMOOD KHAN

I am a university security guard, my opinion on the topic is that these third gender people don’t want to work actually they beg and dance because of their interest in those things, I have heard that their patrons when find them they take them away from their families, and teach them only singing, dancing and begging for money, they neither do labor or hard work nor they ever wished for it.

Public opinion interview #5: GHAZALA.

I work at a library, check cards on entrance, the she males even if they want to work they can’t because people mistreat them and there are some others who doesn’t want to do their work, because they are told to do the same i.e. to dance and earn money since their childhood, they earn more in this way, government doesn’t support any other citizen here in our country so how can we expect the government to help these poor third gender citizens of the state.

Public opinion interview #6: MAIRA

I am a student, I don’t think any of them particularly choose that profession, I just think because of their position in society and how I mean they are isolated people don’t see them, don’t want to talk to them, don’t interact with them, so obviously they need the means to make a living, I don’t
think it’s by choice that they don’t want to work, because no one wants to beg. If the government could do something like they won’t be treated badly at work but they are not treated well.

Quantitative Data analysis

Analyzing Responses to questions 10, 11, 12, 13 revealed that trans-individuals had to face rejection, isolation, depression because of their family and local community attitude towards them.

- 27% of participants reported that they were debarred from family events.
- 37% of participants reported they felt extremely distressed and deserted when family; neighborhood and local community disowned them altogether at once.
- 36% of participants reported they were extremely depressed by losing social and family support. They felt extremely isolated from the whole world, and they felt their life was devastated and shattered.

Figure 1. shows percentages of respondents who attempted to commit suicide or self-harm because of being trans individual, because of parents’ behavior towards them for having trans-child, relatives reaction towards them for being trans-individuals and other people’s attitude towards them.
Nearly 9% of trans-individual respondents reported having suicide attempt or self-harm because of being trans-individual, 12% because of parents behavior towards them for having trans-child, 6% because of relatives reaction, and 13% because of other peoples’ attitude towards them.

Respondents were asked why they left school so early what were the causes that compelled them to discontinue their education (question. 3 and 4). Figure.2. Shows causes of early school drop out by trans-individuals. The causes include bullying, abusive language, negative treatment, inappropriate comments and threatening behavior.

![Bar Chart: Causes of early school drop out](image)

**Figure.2** Shows causes of early school drop out by trans-individuals.

**NOTICES TAKEN BY THE SUPREME COURT**

In a landmark decision in December 2012, the Supreme Court ordered that they (she males) must be sheltered from police harassment, be eligible for a separate gender category on ID cards so that they should have the identity of their own and be recognized under inheritance laws.
In addition to the order for government recognition, Chief Justice in 2011 also issued a forewarning that the hijra’s rights of inheritance, which are often unceremoniously ignored, would be imposed.

Pakistan's Supreme Court has issued a number of groundbreaking orders for the administration and police to give third gender the same civil rights as other citizens as they are also the equal citizens of the Islamic republic of Pakistan.

Police have been warned to close down harassment and terrorization of the third gender. Pakistan's national database and registration authority, which issues ID cards, has been told by the supreme court to research a third option under the "sex" column.

**Conclusion**

The present research revealed that the people got mixed opinions on the topic under discussion but just mentioned three of those different opinions opted by people, otherwise mostly don't consider them as human beings, they don't like to eat with them, drink with them or shake their hands and any type of activity is considered as a ridicule, but they are full citizens of Pakistan like everyone else. But behind the merriment, hijra life can be secluded and dangerous in a conservative society such as Pakistan which is really disappointing. The stigma attached to them since then has left them increasingly vulnerable to theft, attack, abuse, and other immoral activities in Pakistan's male-dominated, patriarchal and often-feudal society. Although most of them dress as women, they engage in activities that would be considered inappropriate for women of the subcontinent hence embarrassment is attached to their activities, such as dancing in public. Still hopes go up that one day they will recover their glory and prestige with the help of courts and media and for sure by the help of the people of Pakistan, they’ll become useful citizens of the country. Moreover, it is also the responsibility of our society to treat them as normal human beings and bring a change in their unfamiliar attitudes towards the third gender. This society teaches its members to avoid even looking at the faces of these malformations. Unless we change our attitude towards them, they will continue to suffer and the society won’t change. Since they have got a heart too, and like everyone else’s heart, it hurts when it gets broken for a slipup it did not commit. They must have the rights to survive comfortably in the
society which is theirs too instead to lead a life in seclusion. They must not be treated as a misfit part of the society.

**Implications and Recommendations**

1. Policy making is in fact a collective process, in which policy officials (including a wider range of researchers and expertise) gather empirical data regarding a social issue and use up to date tools and data in make policy and suggesting solutions. But unfortunately, policy makers are often left to work on their own with limited knowledge about policy making, limited up-to-date data or sensitivity to work as an unbiased researcher.
   a) The Govt. may establish Policy making team and policy LAB
   b) The team works closely with government departments and external departments (like research experts from University).
   c) The Govt. may refer the issue to the Law commission

2. The very word “word hijra or transgender” is humiliating and has negative connotations. It is very hurting for Transgenders when people call them by this name which is very abusive. Using abusive language for them without any reason is totally improper and illogical. Public awareness cannot be raised about this issue to treat them properly and respectably when an abusive word is used to address them. The first step is to coin a new word for them with positive connotations or at least a neutral word.

3. It has been observed that both parents and society is reluctant to own transgender. The Gov’t may design special “residential and schooling program for transgender “to ensure and improve school safety for transgenders. The program will prevent both parents and trans-individuals from psychological torture and pain they undergo throughout their life. Gov.t must establish separate institutes like those we have for orphans, for special children etc. The institute will be responsible to educate and brought up these children as good citizen of country and must allocate special scholarships for brilliant students and specify job’s for them on quota basis. For all average students’ skill based programs must be offered so that they need to adopt begging for their living.

4. The empirical data gathered from transgender shows that the problem mostly begins at school level when the gender non-confirming students are victimized personally in school setting. They are left with no other option than to quit their education. Gov’t may
establish either separate schools for Transgender or may introduce and apply a strict policy at school regarding gender transgenders:

a) The students or parents notify the school administration that the student has different gender identity than listed on student’s birth certificate or school registration card. After collecting the required information the school administrator must issue the student new school registration card.

b) The school must have clear policy regarding transgender. The teachers may raise awareness in the class and ask their students not to tease, harass or discriminate the transgender individuals. The teachers must present themselves as a model in treating transgender without discrimination. The students mostly follow their teachers and imitate them, if a teacher is mistreating or mocking at transgender individual the rest of the class will definitely do the same.

c) The school must implement equal opportunities and harassment policy very strictly regarding transgenders. The school administration must take into account these issues very strictly and those who violate the rules must be punished.

5. The problems will not be solved until Govt. is involved in this and take serious and strict measures to enforce rules and regulations. The culprits, who mistreat or harass them, must be penalized or punished. They must be entitled to file a lawsuit in court directly against those who treat them unfairly and hurt them on work place or public spot.

6. Research indicates that transgender individuals frequently experience unfair treatment by the police officials. Police must be taught and instructed in their training sessions not to discriminate public on gender basis and treat all citizens of Pakistan equally, they are not allowed to violate rules in any case.

7. Complex issues still need to be resolved, including inheritance, whether trans-individual merit special jobs or lodging allocations, election registration and their gender status on ID cards lastly the act which should be given prime importance the one concerning their jobs and hiring.

8. Government should more actively and positively approach to ‘Transgender’ and develop public awareness program to handle the issue, people should be taught about their rights and respect. Media must also play their role to raise awareness to treat transgender as human beings and do not deprive them of their basic human rights.
9. Awareness against faulty assumption of their blessings for the new born baby or a groom or any other grieved person should also be developed, which would demote the act of begging.

10. There should be complete record of a new born third gender on district level. So that these third gender people can either be provided with financial help publicly to restrain them from falling in socially unacceptable activities or assign them quota in employment.

11. It is also incumbent upon the government to launch new schemes for the rehabilitation of the third gender beings in our society like various other countries across the world.

12. Another foremost duty of the government is the implementation of the laws made, there should be a complete check and balance, and the government should provide foolproof security to the third gender in order to help them enjoy their lives like normal citizens of the country.

References


