

Plight of Marginalized: Educational Issues of Transgender Community in Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study focused on the issues of transgender community regarding their education. It is one of the emerging issues of our society and directly interacts with the complexities of gender identity and the lives of these people facing the gender disapproval from the society. The objective of the study was to find out the need of education in their life and their perception about getting their education and contribution of state towards the plight of the transgender community. The research was conducted by using interview method through a self-semi structured guideline. The snowball sampling technique was used as it was difficult to find out the study participants. The sample size for collection of the information was 50 participants. The overall findings of the study showed that the social prejudice is too strong towards their appearance and despite the fact that the transgender community wanted to get education but they had to stay out of this institution. The findings further revealed that there was not any single practical approach adopted by the government for the plight of the transgender community. On the basis of study it is suggested that there should be a formal law/policy in the education sector that facilitate the third gender community within the institution and further there is a need of a platform at the city level to send their needs to the government.

Keywords: transgender, marginalization, education, perception

1. Introduction

The paper focused to find out the educational issues of transgender population in Pakistan. Gender is one of the simplest elements that make up human personality. In fact, gender is very basic to the identity that people assume a sense of being male or female with absolute certainty of the anatomical sex.

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Contrary to popular belief, one's sense of gender and one's anatomical sex are two distinct elements: each developing at different times in different parts of the body (Vitale, 1997).

Transgender (Hijra) has been acknowledged in ancient Hindu scriptures. In India, hijras are viewed as an institutionalized "third sex" that has always existed. They are particularly associated with the worship of Bahuchara Mata, a version of the Mother Goddess, for whose sake they undergo emasculation. In return, the Goddess gives them the power to bless people with fertility (Nanda, 1999). Transgender are found in every part of the world, they are accepted and part of Muslim's societies. During Mughal times in the sub-continent, transgender (kwaja saras) or eunuchs, guarded the ladies of the harem. While working in the field among the transgender (Hijra) of Hyderabad, Jaffrey (1996) discovered that during the Mughal era (1526 to 1857) when Hyderabad was a princely state, hijras were employed to oversee the harem, as servants in the homes of the nobility, often becoming key advisors.

It was in the modern time period that they are completely excluded from the mainstream society (Hoda, 2010). After 1870, British morality laws such as the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 and the Dramatic Performance Act, 1876 restricted the activities of hijra and their inheritance and other rights, tarring them as "sodomites." The British rulers in colonial India unprotected the hijras of the laws that granted them the security they received under Mughals and regarded them as a menace to society (CSS forum, 2010).

At present, the situation of the community is worse because they are left ignored, isolated without the survival facilities, health care, education, employment opportunities, identity crisis or even the conformity from the dominant social class. They are living more severe condition than other marginalized communities. Pakistani cities have sizable hijras communities, divided into clans, living mostly in ghettos and managed by a leader or guru. These communities are generally known as Chellas. Hijras, in past, earned their living by dancing at carnivals, weddings and births.

However, with the outgrowth of novel means of celebrations, sex work and begging remain the only available occupational choices for the hijras community (Tufail, 2006). The circumstances are going more severe because there is no national or international movement helping for their plight. Despite the fact the UN delegates declared that they will achieve the gender equality till 2015 but no specific focus on the issues of third gender.

Recently, Chief Justice of Pakistan has ordered to provide the transgender community their identity as citizens of Pakistan in December (2009) and it was also suggested that transvestites be hired for debt recovery but the community continues to face the scorn and neglect by the society. This was stated by Bindiya Rana, a transvestite who is running an NGO by the name of Gender Interactive Alliance (GIA) in Karachi (Ashraf, 2010).

In a census of the transvestites in Pakistan which was carried out by the Social Welfare Department, they came up with about 1500 registrations in Punjab and about 800 in Sindh and over 0.4 million throughout Pakistan (Ashraf, 2010). Recently at Feb 02, 2012 Supreme Court has directed the NADRA chairman to resolve the issue regarding registration of people belonging to the third gender and also ordered to make sure that 'fake' transvestites were not registered.

Considering all the situation in mind, their perception regarding their own plight through education was desired to find out in this study

2. Method and Material

2.1. Objective of the Study

To find out the perception of third gender community regarding their own education and as an agent of change in their plight

2.2. Research Design

Descriptive research design was selected, keeping in mind the nature of the current situation of transgender population that is excluded from the mainstream society of Pakistan.

2.3. The Study Area

The study was conducted in different areas of Rawalpindi like Bhabra bazaar, Pir wadhai, Peshawar mur, Faizabad, Awan market, Raja bazaar, Bangash market etc.

2.4. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sample size was taken by using non-probability snowball sampling technique in which participants helped the researcher to identify other similar participants. The sample size for the study was 50 participants.

2.4.1. Key Informants

1st Informant: first key informant was also study respondent named "Dil nasheen" used to pronounce as "Female". She is 50 year old and first time came at researcher door for begging. She was willingly agreed on to help me. She told me about the other respondent's place and personally visited with me at their place where third gender community resides.

2nd Informant: second key informant was not from the third gender community but reside at nearby areas in "Bhabra bazaar". He is a shopkeeper at Awan market and helped me during finding the exact places of the community.

2.5. Tool

A self Semi Structured guideline was developed to check their perception of the transgender community regarding their own education.

2.6. Procedure

The data was collected personally by the researchers. All respondents were approached with the help of informants from different area of Rawalpindi, where they were living. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that the data will purely be used for research purpose only. Interview guide line was designed in English language and researcher personally asked the questions in their language and probed them in a convenient way.

During the discussion session researcher got many points and got a grip in a fluent way. Data collection was possible with the help of informants, some respondent were approached in different markets of Rawalpindi and in that way they further lead for others one.

3. Results

3.1. Awareness about their Sexual Orientation

All the participants under study were aware about their sexual orientation as they mentioned that the symptoms of changes in body started at the age of five years. But the development of the personality completed till the age of ten. One of the participants stated that there are three kinds of people living within our community one is known as “khosra”, having the tendency towards male orientation. Second one is “khosri”, having tendency towards female orientation and Third one is completely a man but behave like a woman known as “janana”.

3.2. Family Belongingness

Participants in this study are currently living with their communities. On asking about their family, most of them responded that provision and protection of the child is responsibility of the family till the sensible or mature age. But it is completely different in our case within Pakistani society. The attitude and behavior of the family is so rude and degrading that Saima said that we had to run away from the home due to the harsh attitude of the family members. Disapproval within our legitimate family is painful and we find people like us and this is our family now. We joined the community to find the peace of mind at least we know that there is no one to curse us. As we reached here it seems that “hamy Maa ka payar mil gaya” It means that we got love of our mother. The facilitation for the family interaction for them is just limited with the mother and sister as shama said that “Khusra ka sirf Maa or Behan ka rishta hota hay”

It means that they have only relationship with mothers and sisters and stated if our sisters got married or mother died they completely lose their family. Zubaida stated that “Brothers and fathers never bother to think about our situation perhaps they thanked to God if we left the home”

3.3. Feelings on Social Behavior

Social prejudices are very strong towards them. As they cannot easily move within the society, not even to get the entertainment and perform the religious rituals at mosques. One of participants Bobby told that they also want to say prayers but they are not allowed to enter into the mosques for pray as the people scold them that there is no place for them in mosque. During Eid days they have to stay at homes as they step out for celebration, people's attitude is very humiliating and weird towards them. They cannot easily move in parks for the entertainment. While asking about the social attitude, they replied that degrading behavior of the people do not heart us now as we are used to of it but feel emptiness in our souls and pray to God that "kisi ka ghar kuda khsra na payda kary" It means that God never bore anymore third gender person in any family. We all know that it is natural but it is our fate.

3.4. Problems During Getting Education

Institution of education contributes as a healthy place for the children to grow and meet the challenges of the world. The situation is very grim for third gender persons as there is no concept of getting education for this community. They have no acceptance and equal access of education and no place to make their lives like others.

Some of them tried to get education but they faced lot of problems in terms of their enrollment in schools, group selection in the class rooms and to answer the unknown questions of the fellows.

In the initial stages, family is not serious about their education as they knew about their gender. Secondly the economic situation of the family also effects the decision of their education.

According to the older participants there was no concept of getting education for the people like us at that time. Resources were not enough to get education, and the head "gurus" also focused on learning those skills that help to earn the livelihood. The guru trained for survival through dancing. While the young educated respondents stated that the social attitude towards them is very insulting and inhuman that the parents did not like to send the schools.

The most injustice situation is prevailing within the institution itself. There is no support system within the premises to favor the children. Teachers and school administration never bother to concern what is actually happening with the children in the class rooms and school.

School administration is just concerned with their charges as one of the participants Kiran elaborated the clear picture of the school environment enrolled as male child.

3.5. Perception about Education

The participants were asked to respond on what they think about role of education in their future, education as an agent of change, education can increase job opportunities, reduce social prejudice, bring confidence to face social attitude, need of separate schools.

Table No: 1 Role of education

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	47	94%
Certain	3	6%
Not Necessary	0	0
Total	50	100%

The table 1 shows the perceptions of third gender community towards the significance of education in their lives. 94% of the members agreed that education can play a very important role in a person's life and to their upward mobility in society. They were interested in education that could cater their needs. 6% participants were not sure about the importance of education in their existence as they were more concerned about their earning for living.

Table No: 2 Education As an agent of change

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	36	72%
Certain	10	20%
Not Necessary	4	8%
Total	50	100%

The table 2 indicates that 72% participants truly believe that education can bring change for their betterment while 20% participants were not in an opinion that education can bring change in their life rather they believe that it depends not only on third gender community's education but also on the social consideration. Remaining 8% believe that it is not necessary that education can bring change in their betterment because social prejudice is very strong.

Table No: 3 Education can increase job opportunities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	24	48%
Certain	14	28%
Not Necessary	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 illustrates that 48% participants perceive that their education can increase existing as well as new job opportunities for them. While 28% believe that it depends on government interventions. While 24% said that it is not necessary that job opportunities be increased as the attitude of the society is a big hurdle.

Table No: 4 Education can reduce the social prejudice

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	14	28%
Certain	13	26%
Not Necessary	23	46%
Total	50	100%

The table 4 displays those 46% participants who are in a view that it can never be possible that their education can reduce the social prejudice towards them as most of the members of society are already educated. People consider them abnormal human being. 28% of the total participants perceive that their education can reduce the social prejudice as they get education people will start thinking positive towards them.

Table No: 5 Education can bring confidence to face social attitude

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	35	70%
Certain	12	24%
Not Necessary	3	6%
Total	50	100%

The table 5 indicates that 70% participants in the opinion that their education can bring them confidence to face social attitude to move in the society. Other 24% participants were not sure about that education can bring confidence to face the social attitude. The rest 6% were sure about it that education cannot bring confidence to face social attitude, it is their training within the community that gives confidence to face social attitudes.

Table No: 6 Necessity of separate schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very True	18	36%
Certain	07	14%
Not Necessary	25	50%
Total	50	100%

The table 6 shows that 50% of the community perception is that it is not necessary to make separate school for them as it will again create a border line between them and the society. There is a need to make likely place for them within the society. Similarly 36% of the participants also show their concerns for the separate system of their schooling due to the rude behavior of the people while other 14% respondent shows that it may necessary for a separate system initially for their upward mobility.

3.6. State Contribution Towards their Plight

While talking about the current change in the state steps towards their plight they all are very clear about it. They are of the view that just the announcements never guarantees for the open opportunities for them until state never adopt a practical approach. There is not any practical approach working for their rights.

They stated that just their education is not matter for them in real terms but the social attitudes need to be changed. Kiran stated "There is no place where we can go to ask about our rights"

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted in different areas of Rawalpindi city. The study emphasis on the core hurdles behind acceptable and equitable access of education for the third gender community, the perception of third gender community towards their education and state's contribution towards their education. The Social Welfare Department of Pakistan has registered transvestites almost 1500 registrations in Punjab, 800 in Sindh and over 0.4 million throughout Pakistan but it was still difficult to find out them in the city. This is because that they are not getting any support from anywhere and this is also buttressed by Ashraf (2010) that they are not receiving maintenance that requires them to stand up on their own feet. Entry into the institution of education is the prerequisite of a legitimate birth certificate that they do not have at present. The response of the participants showed that they did not receive protection from their families and are considered as morons or sign of embarrassment for them as Zubaida stated that "Brothers and fathers never bother to think about our situation perhaps they thanked to God if we left the home"

Another participant Shama said that "Khusra ka sirf Maa or Behan ka rishta hota hay". It means that they have only relationship with mothers and sisters and stated if our sisters got married or mother died they completely lose their family. And this is also supported by Richerdson (2009) that the exclusion of this community from the family makes them isolated and scary for others which lead the prejudice towards them.

Beside family rejection, social prejudices are also very strong towards them. As they cannot easily move in the society, not even to get the entertainment and perform the religious rituals. During Eid days they have to stay at homes as they step out for celebration, attitudes of the people are very humiliating and weird towards them. They cannot easily move in parks for entertainment. They cannot freely visit to a doctor as they hesitate to examine them due to their blurry identity. They cannot go for employment as people never trust on them. Under such narrow environment, the chance for getting education is not possible.

The perception of community on getting education and their right to get education is a very informative point. 94% were of the view that education is a very vital in a person life and they were interested in getting education that could cater their needs. It is their birth right to get education as it gives them sense of moving in the society.

92% participants were optimistic about their education that it can change their life but heavily depend on social attitudes as they are very strong towards them.

Almost half (48%) of the participants perceive that their education can increase existing as well as new job opportunities for them. The rest believe that it is subjected to government interventions as well as on the attitude of the people and this is supported by Rana (2011) that they tried their best to approach all these facility but there is no solid response from the government side.

72% participants viewed that their education cannot reduce the social prejudice towards them as most of the members of society are already educated. People consider them abnormal human being. The key point for all the above is the need of sensitization of the people and change in the social rigid attitude towards them.

30% participants were not sure about it that education can bring confidence to face social attitudes rather it is their training that could help them to face social attitudes while 70% were in the believe that education can bring confidence to face the social attitudes.

50% of the respondents agreed on the point that there should be the possibility to get them educate within the prevailing education system. There is no need of separate education system for them. As it further leads for them complete isolation and cut off from the normal regulation of the society.

After the recent order by the Chief justice of Pakistan on the issues of Third gender community there come only few changes. People are recognizing as human beings," said Almas Bobby, (2010) who acts as head of the community, She-Male foundation in Pakistan at Rawalpindi and fights for equal rights. On identity cards, "they wrote men," Bobby said. "We want eunuch.

If we are eunuch, please write eunuch, not men." Adding a third gender would be a symbolic victory for the community, giving it hope of social acceptance (Naqvi, 2010). The community wants to get an honor and dignity of their lives, their personalities and their emotions as well. This is supported by "India's third gender gets own identity in voter rolls" (Lerum, 2009). Further third gender community in India is working to raise the awareness about HIV on county wise. In the same Supreme Court of Nepal made historic decision ordering the Government of Nepal to recognize third gender according to their gender identity (Pant, 2008). They got their one representative person in parliament. The underlying problem in Pakistan is that there is not a proper system where they can go to get their announced rights. Not a single movement or representing person in the parliament which truly depicts the whole community situation at country wise. "The Chief Justice talked about giving small loans, but no one is willing to do that. Even in political participation we are marginalized and not allowed to come forward (Ashraf, 2010).

They are not fully satisfied on what is going on for their betterment from the state side. It seems there is a structural flaw which keeps them away to enjoy the fruits of state's decision and they are passing their lives as marginalized. As it stated that marginalized people are poorly integrated into the structures of mainstream of the society and rarely in a position to effectively participate in the formal processes of polices making which is necessary to challenge unfair structures (Richardson, 2009).

5. Conclusion

It is concluded from the study that a person needs all the institutional support from the society to survive and live the life as better as it possible. All the institutions are the pillars of any society and family is one of the important one and in the same manner education, employment and politics. If we make a narrow place for a certain person and categories the institutions on the bases of sex, gender, class or ethnicity, unintentionally we are destroying the whole structure of the society. It is just like we are keeping aside a larger portion of the human resource out of the flow of growth and same contributing the society. There is a need of wider space within the institutions for all the human beings without any kind of discrimination. It will harness the society with progress and leads towards the prosperity.

There is a need of proper legislation on the issues of third gender community in all the institutions especially within the family, as core of the society. In the same way, provision of education facility for the community so that they can be able to meet the challenges of the world like the others. Law making firms should cater the needs of the third gender community through participatory approach and people should show the responsible concern towards the presence of the third gender people, consider them as human being without keeping any prejudice and negativity.

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