

**RESEARCH PAPER****Struggling for Crumbs: Economic Security of Pakistan's Transgender Community Amidst the Global Pandemic****¹Ammara Tariq Cheema* ²Zahra Afzal Malik ³Sameera Saleem Bakhshi**

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***Corresponding Author** amammara.tariq@gcwus.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to find out the Economic Stress of Covid-19 on the marginal transgender community of Pakistan and to suggest relief packages and more inclusive work opportunities for the destitute community. "Transgender" or "Hijra" refers to the umbrella term used to define the non-binary sexual abnormalities along with gender fluid people associated with the community, these includes; Hermaphrodites or intersex people, eunuch, transvestite, trans-women, trans-men and others. Already an ostracized group in Pakistani society because they are seen as sexually deformed people with deviant proclivities such as dancing, prostitution, homosexuality or begging, etc. Thus, they are stigmatized and devoid of any social status leading to limited sources of income. Trans-phobia is a major reason for their unemployment in the mainstream sector of the economy, while social isolation blows the deal employing them via back route or illicit means of earning: primarily in the service sector that requires close proximity; human contact or social gathering. Amidst Covid-19 and social distancing, the streets have also been closed down on this community. Hence, those already living in social isolation need to be pulled away from starvation and social isolation via a collective effort.

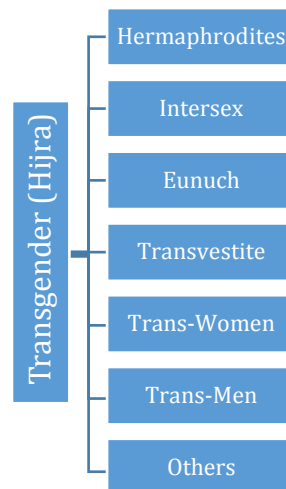
KEYWORDS Economic Security, Gender Security, Social Isolation, Social Segregation
Transgender**Introduction**

Economic security or financial security is composed of basic social security, defined by access to basic needs including income security, job security, work security etc. Basic security is restraining the effect of risks and uncertainty of life and has equal opportunities in pursuit of occupation. (Definition: What we mean when we say "Economic Security"). It also includes plausible sustained wealth and probability of future cash flow of a person or an economic unit; such as state. The economic security is not only apprehensive about economy but, it also strengthens the happiness and tolerance in personal wellbeing. When a state provides its citizens with a sustained level of economic security also gain a higher level of happiness. (Programme, 2004) (Levitt, 2014) (Howe, 2015).

Transgender or the "Hijra" Community

The Transgender community or the "Hijras" as they are called in local language, are a marginalized group in Pakistan that consists of people who fall outside the traditional gender binaries, thereby giving rise to a third gender that includes all the gender fluidities.

“Transgender is an umbrella term that describes people whose gender identity or expression does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a transgender person may identify as a woman despite having been born with male genitalia” (Bradford, 2020).



This figure shows the multiple orientations of Hijra community in Pakistan.

Hijra is a blanket term that includes:

Hermaphrodites

Hermaphrodite is a more antiquated term more often associate with mythology, however *True Hermaphroditism* is where a person is born with mixed histologic features such as both testicular and ovarian tissues present in same or opposite gonads. This category of individuals may have other four sub categories. It is a rare sporadic disorder, therefore Transgender community has the least number of Hermaphrodites (Bland & Mancino, 2020).

Intersex People

Intersex is modern term that defines people who do not fit into typical definitions of male and female. Thus the changes in sexual anatomy reflect the real biological variations in this category as it is an inborn condition which may not present itself at birth but rather become more pronounced at puberty (What is intersex?, 2020).

Eunuchs

Eunuchs are male individuals who have been castrated. These individuals either by action, surgical, chemical or otherwise have their male testicles removed and loose the function of the male gonad (Eunuch, 2020).

Transvestites

Transvestites are individuals who cross-dress, although it is not a sexual orientation but a social behaviour which is seen as deviant and is often associated with non-heterosexual behaviour (Transvestism, 2020) . Perfectly normal males may feel the desire to dress in the opposite sex and are often seen soliciting among Hijras and are thus categorized as such.

Trans-women

Trans-women are individuals who are designated male sex at birth but due to gender dysphoria they undergo sexual reassignment surgery or hormone replacement

therapy to transition to resolve those feelings related to gender dysphoria (Trans woman, 2020) . These are often termed under queer as well and many trans-women are working in modelling agencies in Pakistan. This group is a victim of trans-misogyny at work places because they are not deemed as female enough.

Trans-men

A Trans-man is an individual who was is categorized as female at birth but later transitions into a man via hormone therapy or surgery (Trans man, 2020).

Others

This category refers to individuals who are cisgender but conduct their lives like that of Hijras. Their reasons may be financial or merely sexual attractions, but their affiliations with the community are very strong and such uncategorized people are members of the community.

Literature Review

There is an ample of normative and empirical data on trans genders, their struggles and right. Many conceptual idea have been proposed to handle these issues related this particular community. Although literature covers a wide range of such ideas in general, but this paper observes that how transgender community survives during pandemic in 2020. The condition of transgender community in Pakistan is not sound even before COVID-19 Pandemic, but their condition worsened during this pandemic. There is a plenty of recent data about their struggle for fundamental rights and social acceptance. Many scholarly researches only concerned with their overall struggles and few concerned with their ailment during pandemic.

Material and Methods

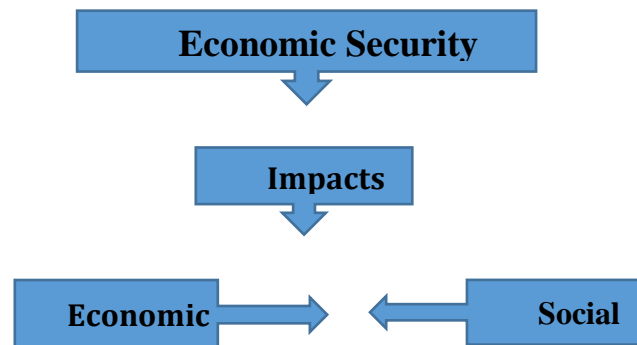
The qualitative method of research along with the exploratory approach was used to conduct the research. In-depth partially structured interviews were utilized to gather primary data about the group and their general living standards and financial practices. Snowball sampling method was employed to reach other trans genders in the community to understand their social gatherings and networking within the community.

Transphobia and Employment

Transphobia is the general dislike or contempt of the trans sexual or trans people in the form of prejudice or discrimination in various phases of life. Transphobia is a menace that is vividly present across Pakistan that may take the form of hate speech, social ostracising, or other violent activities against this group. Pakistani Trans genders are a peaceful people that live under the tutelage of their 'gurus' or may choose to live independently based on the tolerance of their neighbourhoods. They are not employed into the mainstream economic sector because of Transphobia as well as cultural practices. Therefore many resort to prostitution, homosexuality, begging, dancing, and mostly work that involves social gatherings. Very few have joined the garments stitching sector while some have managed to climb up to modelling careers or are affluent social media personalities. However majority is struggling to make ends meet as due to social distancing and lock downs, social gatherings have been banned or restricted, making it impossible for these destitute people to find a source of income other than relief packages.

Inverse Relationship of Economic Security and Pandemic

The economic security is a composition of economic prosperity, social cohesion and basic survival. (Tamosiumience, 1st International Conference on Business Management) (Pankov, 2011). The transgender community is a marginalized sector of Pakistan population. The impact of the lockdown has further resulted in the further segregation of them from the society. They must struggle for even the basic necessities of life. Hence, they have to struggle for the availability of funds or foods etc. This lockdown creates further chances of mental health disorders. Keeping in view the situation of a Tran's person from Pakistan, the Hindu reports that her sole source of income was from begging in the local trains and since, everything is in shutdown. Hence, it has now become difficult for her to make her ends meet.



Currently, it's not about the economic security but ultimately to survive in this scenario. The economic upheaval in Covid 19 could cause a countless loss during this hard time and even long after the virus. People across the world are struggling with their respective jobs and those communities which were already facing problems in their daily life, now in situation like economic risk. (Ensuring Economic Security in A COVID-19 Reality, 2020). Laski describes Economic Security & liberty into the following words;

"By Economic Liberty I mean security and opportunity to find reasonable significance in earning of one's daily bread". (Pruthi, 2005)

The trans community has over the years faced several inequalities in the Health care facilities, according to the research conducted by the LGBT Foundation, based in UK, the trans community needs access to mental health care facilities, and want to reduce their isolation, and some fear that may lead to drug or substance abuse, they fear the unavailability of medication even for non-covid related issues. this represents the case of even the developed countries. However, the situation in developing countries is even worse, as the prevalent taboos in the society. Economic security is the availability of the basic necessities of life, and to be able to meet the unexpected expenses in a proper manner. The economic security from that perspective can be divided into two parts:

1. Needs 2. Wants

Social isolation has forced people to think about the things that were taken for granted previously, However it is the norm in many states, including Pakistan that transgender are in isolation from the rest of the population and hence, this forced isolation is nothing new for the already deprived. Apart from Covid, they have to face the issues of acceptability and harassment. Despite these issues and degrading behavior, they have to earn their livelihood by venturing outside. This Covid has resulted in the loss of jobs for several well educated, hence, its impact on the Trans community is of many folds.

Divulging into the Service industry of Pakistan Transgender Community

The misery of Transgenders in Pakistan was connected to the colonial era, before that they were living in admired positions. The rulers of India were giving them land and various positions that they are able to live a healthy life. But the British period marked a vibrant change, especially after the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 which deemed the community of Transgenders. This act allowed the police to harass and arrest any member of this community at any time. However, this community in Pakistan they belong to third sex, such elimination obviously caused a great suffering, depression and isolation. The Supreme Court of Pakistan recognized in 2009 the Transgender community as the citizens of Pakistan. They are deprived of healthcare facilities, employment and educational opportunities and are regarded as unacceptable and immoral. Hence, they are unable to find suitable jobs. Their Gender concealment is also an issue which affects their employment opportunities. Although, according to a survey conducted out of a total of 16 the Transgender revealed that they have an employment in some private organizations which are largely based on real estate, advertising and finance. Few of them had jobs in the educational sector, others had a government job. This shows that although they face harassment issues but still, there are some who have gained access to better standard of living. Due to the Supreme Court ruling in December 2009, NADRA gave permission to Trans community to get their CNICs.

Abuse, Violence and Trauma

The Trans community has to face physical violence from different sections of the society. Those involved in prostitution, face harassment and violence from their sexual partners and are often gang raped. This further aggravates their mental stability which is already damaged by the lack of acceptance from the society. They eventually divulge in drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism to deal with the stress. Moreover, it can also lead to self-harm as they face suicidal inclinations that require mental help, but they are unavailable to receive even a respectable access to basic health care facilities. The HIV/AIDS surveillance project 2011 revealed that HIV was found in 7.2% of the Trans community. Moreover, their main sources of Income include Dancing on the Traditional rituals and Blue-Collar work. Their sources of Income are as follows:

1. Toli: the call from public for charity
2. Vadhai: money by giving blessings to the newly born.
3. Dhingna: This is also known as begging.
4. Bail: the money gained through dancing at the weddings

The elections of 2013 are regarded as truly representative and democratic as there was a wider acceptance of diversity as for the first time many of the members of the Trans community ran for the access to the political office. During the electoral campaign of 2013, Bindiya Rana, fought from the PS – 115 constituency which received mockery from the public as Trans people are associated begging, dancing and prostitution as there only source of living (Silent No More Transgender Community in Pakistan, 2016)

Impacts of Lockdown: Social Isolation amidst Societal Isolation

The developing states do not have formal social safety nets to protect the deprived and hard pressed people. There is no mechanism whereby the needs of different sections of the society can be re-addressed. The transgender community in Pakistan has encountered a number of different discriminations, although the government of Pakistan guards this community but transgender compounded by dearth of respect with no acceptance in Pakistan (Silent No More Transgender Community in

Pakistan, 2016). Society has gone into isolation now but isolation is not new for transgender community because they were living in social isolation from the start. They were not living with their families, relatives and friends as many people were not ready to accept them. Just to live in isolation is easy but to live in a social isolation is far more difficult; and that's what transgender facing from years. The transgender community is one of those communities who don't have savings to survive during crisis like situation. Here is a statement of Ade, a transgender from America which is showing the discrimination and economic instability even before this pandemic.

"There was already a significant level of economic instability and high rates of discrimination for the trans community before we started with this epidemic". (Burns, 2020)

In 2009, supreme court of Pakistan has given the equal status, inheritance, opportunities (article 25A, 26 & 27 Constitution of Pakistan) same as others but practically no action was taken. Gender discrimination and diaspora is more likely to add more socio-economic and health problems into the lives of transgender community during pandemic.

The real core values are liberal values of tolerance and freedom (Harari, 2018); both need to reconsider and people need to show more tolerance towards each other.

Results and Discussion

Transgender people or any other marginalized community may regularly face discrimination in many ways in general but their condition in Pakistan got worsened in Pakistan. The transgender community is one of the most disregarded communities in Pakistan. They are often spurned by their families and communities at large, and live on the fringes of society. They face enormous refinement and fierceness, both physical and mental. As a result, they often don't have access to schooling, occupation, healthcare or even basic human rights. And yet, in spite of all the odds stacked up against them, many transgender people are working towards creating inclusive spaces for themselves and other members of their community. There is a need to create consciousness in general public about this class and much required working towards making a change in society.

Conclusion

It is concluded we may act in innumerable ways, but we should rejoice this diversity in our world society and we should try to give equal value to all the others; what we want for ourselves. We stand in solidarity with Tran's community in these times of crisis. There is high time to inculcate the value of tolerance that is much needed in this time of crisis. With tolerance, there is a necessity to ensure that the voices of this community must be heard and have a direct reach to policy makers.

Recommendations

- Social unacceptability of transgender community in Pakistan compels them to choose risky source of earning including sex work (Hassan Bin Usman Shah, 2019). Economic insecurity has been directly impacted by social exclusion while Social inclusion helps the transgender community to gain their confidence and ability to participate and avail mainstream economic opportunities in the society.
- Trans-phobia and discriminatory attitude shatter the confidence of transgender persons and isolate them from the remaining society. Recognition of gender identity of transgender individuals provides the basis for change in any society (Vivek Divan, 2016). Without establishing identity, transgender individuals are unable to participate in mainstream economic opportunities. Trans-phobia and discrimination should be eliminated to ensure economic security to transgender community.
- Business avenues should be open for transgender community. Vocational training centers develop to provide access of their choice and interest of various skill building to transgender individuals. It enables them to acquire different skills according to their interests and helps them to build their economic power. While micro-financing opens new avenues for skilled transgender individuals towards economic empowerment at individual as well as community level.
- Rare visibility of transgender community in political arena makes it difficult for them to represent their community at different tiers of governance. Security in economic sphere can be made possible if they are given forum to bring forward their issues and find out solutions. Political representation enables them to avail security in political as well as in economic spheres. Political parties should take initiative to address the issue of socio-political and economic security of transgender community. (Transgender Community in Pakistan, 2016)
- Social security of transgender community must be ensured through the implementation of laws made by Parliament and judgments passed by Supreme Court of Pakistan. Discriminatory attitude of agencies who are supposed to ensure their safety addressed properly and exploitative behavior of law enforcement agencies must be checked (Vivek Divan, 2016). Any violation to their rights must be addressed in proper way and role of law enforcement agencies must be guaranteed.
- Legal identification of transgender individuals established after passing Transgender Act (2018) which initiates the process of recognition and enforcement of rights of transgender community in Pakistan. There is a lot required to do for their support and development which help them to establish themselves strongly financially. There is dire need to create new laws and policies for improvement of social, economic, political condition of transgender community in Pakistan.
- For economic security, social inclusion is crucial which can be made possible through academician. Change in behavior and attitude of general public towards transgender community can be generated by adding topics of gender identity recognition in syllabi. Teachers' training workshops also helpful in changing perspective of teachers towards transgender community which eventually change the perspective of students and new generation.
- Economic empowerment of transgender community can be catered by providing incentives to influential transgender individuals who work hard to change the stereotype attitude of people towards transgender community.
- Active involvement of media in changing perspective of society towards transgender community can be positively influenced the status of transgender individuals which minimize the social exclusion and help them to generate effective role of transgender community in the society (Transgender Community in Pakistan, 2016)

- Awareness among the masses as well as among the transgender community should be increased via training sessions and conducting various workshops. General public should recognize the fundamental and basic rights of transgender community while transgender community can strive for their rights if they have the knowledge of their own rights.

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