

**ENGAGING WITH TRANS-GENDERS IN PAKISTAN IN
THE EXISTING LEGAL CORPUS AND FRAMEWORK
FOR THEIR ENFORCEMENT;
A CRITICAL APPRAISAL, ISSUES AND FUTURE
POLICY SUGGESTIONS**

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Introduction

“Gender is an anchor and once people decide what you are they interpret everything you do in light of that”.⁽¹⁾ While, sex is the biological component, gender is the psychological and social component. However, there are certain conditions in which the biological aspects are in contradiction with the social and psychological aspects of gender. These conditions override the biology in determining gender identity and influencing gender role.⁽²⁾ In West, the term transgender is used for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. In Pakistan, the terminology transgender is interchangeably used with khawajasaras and eunich. The word transgender or khawajasara in Pakistan is commonly used to refer to intersex persons, individuals born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the binary categories, male or female. **Khawajasara** is an umbrella term used for those men who are transgender, eunuch, transvestites, hermaphrodites or intersexed, bisexuals or homosexuals with feminine behaviour.⁽³⁾

loosely defined as third gender, and neither man nor woman, but containing characteristics of both; an intersexed/impotent man, who undergoes emasculation in which all parts of the genitals are removed; physically healthy man who may or may not have castration but wear female clothes,⁽⁴⁾ and behave like women. Lack of any scientific study conducted on this group generates a lot of fallacies about khawajasara. People hold stereotypic beliefs that God has blessed them with powers in their blessings and curses being born with sexual deformity.⁽⁵⁾ People do fear this belief and often get exploited by khawajasara in hoarding money and other favours. Deviant behaviours and ambivalent appearance make others apprehensive and annoyed in interacting with khawajasara, therefore, lead towards negative attitude towards them.⁽⁶⁾ In some cultures people believe that they are blessed with some divine power. Since ages, transgenders or khawajasara in Pakistan lived on margins of society. The social response towards transgenders is very discriminatory and

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prejudiced. With most of the population still following centuries old tradition, khawajasara's find themselves in a very unique situation. They cannot go out and work like other men of the community; mainly due to the fear of being ridiculed and sexually harassed. They also cannot sit home and do household chores like women, because their families see them as men and expect them to support them financially. As a majority of khawajasara today live alone or with their own kind, they find themselves antagonized by the community at general.⁽⁷⁾ Owing to poverty and the struggle of sustenance, this cohort has no other option but to turn to commercial sex work for a living. The main reason being, that our community fails to define a role for them; a clear proof of this fact is that since the independence of Pakistan in 1947, they had not been allowed to have National Identity Registration according to their gender identification. It has only been a few years since the Supreme Court ordered the relevant authorities to register khawajasara as Pakistani citizens with a right to vote.⁽⁸⁾ For many khawajasara school is the first stage in the public arena in which personal insecurity is experienced. Verbal harassment, physical abuse and sexual abuse at school were occurrences mentioned by transgender.⁽⁹⁾

The transgender and described being beaten at school by teachers and classmates and also being sexually and verbally harassed. They are victims of deprivation and rejection and have long languished on the economic front and thus living in isolated communities in improvised conditions. The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantees equality of citizens with no discrimination on the basis of sex (Article 25) and also promotes social and economic well-being of the people irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race (Article 38). As per these Articles, transgenders have the same rights and privileges like any other citizens of Pakistan, however, the ground reality is quite the opposite. Recently, National Assembly of Pakistan passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018. It's a basic anti-discrimination legislation that sets the base for further civil rights work regarding transgender community in Pakistan. The Bill prohibits discrimination against transgenders and addresses fundamental rights including: right to education, employment, health, inheritance, assembly, public office, property and vote. Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA), recently drafted and published a policy for the protection and rights of transgender persons. The vision of the policy is to create a society where persons of every gender have equal social status, opportunities for socio-economic inclusion and mutual respect for one another. The main objective of the policy is betterment of the transgender persons in multiple dimensions on the basis of equity, resilience, opportunity, gender equity and social inclusion.⁽¹⁰⁾ Despite

these provisions and certain measures taken by the Government as well as attention given by the Supreme Court on issues such as issuance of identity cards, etc. the situation on the ground has not changed much.

Social Exclusion and Transgenders

The current dismal condition of transgenders in Pakistan could be attributed, among other things, to social exclusion which they face in all spheres of life. “Social exclusion is an accumulation of confluent processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of economy, politics and society; gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in positions of inferiority in relation to center powers, resources and prevailing values”.⁽¹¹⁾ Beall & Piron proposed a method and a condition that averts individuals or groups from full involvement in socio-cultural, political and economic life and from declaring their rights.⁽¹²⁾ It derives from exclusionary connection based on supremacy. Thus, the excluder eliminates social dealings denying right to use the possessions and services, infringing citizenship privileges to particular individual and groups. Silver suggests three standards—solidarity, monopoly and specialization, which are trapped in the socio-cultural, political and economic perspectives. These standards were in perspectives of republican, moderate, and democratic societies.⁽¹³⁾

The Social Exclusion Knowledge Network (SEKN) model suggests that social exclusion is driven from extreme power dynamics and work in four interrelated and relational proportions (e.g. socio-cultural, economic and politics) at different levels (e.g. individuals, groups, households, communities, countries, and the world as a whole).⁽¹⁴⁾ Social aspects of exclusion refer to limited or no access to social, educational, legal and health services, resulting from ruptured social protection and social cohesion, such as kinship, family, neighborhood, and the community. Political features of exclusion refer to lack of citizens’ rights, voter rights, including limited access to organizations, constitutions, legislations, and decision-making in policy. The concept of social exclusion is increasingly being recognized as an important aspect of understanding poverty and deprivation in society that requires a public policy response. Amartya Sen described it very aptly that, “No concept of poverty can be satisfactory if it does not take adequate note of the disadvantages that arise from being excluded from shared opportunities enjoyed by others.....focusing on social exclusion can substantially help in the causal as well as constitutive analyses of poverty and deprivation. The perspective of social exclusion does offer useful insights for diagnostics and policy”⁽¹⁵⁾

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Problem Statement/Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine that if public services and enabling environment would be provided to a neglected segment of the society (i.e. transgenders in this case) who did not have easy access to public facilities because of social and cultural taboos; will they become productive members of a society. This research study further find out that how innovative and need-based remedial measures will be undertaken to overcome both administrative and socio-cultural obstacles to mainstream the disadvantaged group.

A descriptive case study method is used to answer the following research question:

Would provision of enabling environment to transgenders make them amenable to the opportunities offered for mainstreaming?

Case Study

The objective of this study is to examine and detect the supposition that provision of enabling environment to transgenders make them amenable to the opportunities offered for mainstreaming and looks at a local initiative. Mr. Nadeem Mahbub assumed charge of Commissioner Sargodha in 2016. He shared that he used to be involved in social work during his University days and had special empathy with the disadvantaged groups. The new posting provided him an opportunity to support this socially excluded community at the Divisional level. As Commissioner of a Division, he had the authority to take steps on his own whereby some window of opportunity could be opened for transgenders.

After due deliberations and several meetings with stakeholders, Commissioner Sargodha initiated a program titled “Teesra Rukh” as a first step to support local transgenders by offering them exclusive public services. Initially, the exercise was carried out in the districts of Sargodha and Khushab to reach out and support transgenders to become productive members of society through provision of basic education and skills development. The main aim of the project was to bring the transgenders into mainstream preferably through imparting basic education and technical training. Initially, the commissioner conducted an exercise to obtain basic statistics regarding: (a) population of transgender; (b) identification of the localities where they were living; (c) ascertain their economic conditions and sources of income. The situational analysis revealed that the highest number of known transgenders was in Sargodha city which numbered around 300/350 while a couple of hundred transgenders were residing in Sillanwali (a tehsil of Sargodha) and in

Joharabad, District Khushab. They earned their living through performing at functions (singing/dancing), sex work and begging. Their health condition was generally poor and they particularly suffered from skin ailments. Since they lived in isolation, they rarely went to regular doctors and relied upon local quacks. Further, no government department had any specific program for their welfare. During this exercise, when these transgenders were informed about the proposed intervention, they showed interest in acquiring basic education, technical skills as well as provision of health services. A local notable and philanthropist showed interest in the project and was involved in the process. After due deliberations with stakeholders and keeping in view the available resources, it was decided to keep the program limited to Sargodha and Khushab districts and start provision of basic education and skills development. In addition, basic health services might be extended, which would also help in creating goodwill in the community.

Literacy and Non-formal Basic Education department was selected to impart basic education to transgender considering their past initiatives on both Adult Literacy classes (ALC) for older people and Non-formal basic education schools for out of school children. It was decided that the classes would be held in rented place near the settlements of transgenders since local community is not expected to provide space. The second facet of the project was to provide technical and skills education to transgenders and TEVTA (Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority), which was the premier technical training institution in Punjab was selected to design a custom-made program for transgenders. With respect to selection of the technical courses for transgenders, an informal session was arranged with the representatives of transgenders about their inclination towards specific courses. The target community requested for beautician and tailoring courses, however, they wanted these courses to be no longer than 3 months duration and that too in the afternoon. TEVTA finalized the standard course duration of 6 months and a stipend of Rs. 1000 per month per transgender. Commissioner Sargodha directed District Health Authorities and MS DHQ hospital for establishment of special medical camps for transgenders at all the three designated cities once the classes start. The medical camps would have a Medical Officer, Skin specialist and free medicines. In response to the demand by the transgenders, it was also decided to prepare special health cards which would allow easy / fast track access to health facilities in DHQ Hospital. A doctor was specially assigned and notified in the DHQ Hospital Sargodha to treat the transgender community in addition to his regular duties.

Once the project design was finalized, the project went into implementation phase a

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number of challenges surfaced as soon as the project commenced such as renting of classroom, recruitment of teachers, and beneficiaries' reluctance for enrolment and motivation of team members. With challenges and obstacles on every step of the way, the team members became frustrated and dealing with a taboo topic made them uncomfortable at times. The team leader motivated his team and told them to ignore any odd remarks as they were pioneers of a noble task and could make a difference for this community. After overcoming the obstacles of hiring, recruiting and motivating, the other difficulty was turnout for beneficiaries' enrolment was abysmally low. It was revealed that all important decisions were taken by the Guru and if the relevant Guru was on board and some kind of incentive or stipend was given to them to facilitate the process, transgenders who were interested in taking courses would easily join. Accordingly, a stipend of Rs. 6000 per month was fixed for the concerned Gurus (for the course period) and resultantly the enrollment improved. Once the technical trainings went underway, some of the participants started demanding that they might be given loans after they complete their course. They wanted to start their own businesses for which they needed funds. After some effort, Akhuwat, a NGO, agreed to provide loans to those transgenders: (a) who would complete the course; (b) pass the TEVTA standard test (required for certification); and (c) put up a business proposal with two guarantors. This was a considerable achievement for the project and gave confidence to the participants of the course that they now had an option to earn their living through the skills acquired.

Results and Findings

A total of ninety-four (94) transgenders attended adult literacy classes out of which 75 completed the course and passed the requisite test. While seventy-eight (78) transgenders undertook skills training and seventy-three (73) passed out who were awarded certificates. The intervention also showcased that the government agencies, at least the one chosen for this project, could be flexible and innovative enough to serve the socially excluded segment of the society. A simple and implementable model had been developed which could easily be replicated at the provincial level.

A total of seventy-three transgenders completed the skills development course and passed the exam. Through these training sessions transgenders acquired skills in the fields of tailoring and beautician. Some of them took the initiative and started their own businesses and one of them was given opportunity in the Cattle Market Management Company, Sargodha. Following are a few success stories:

Sr. No	Transgender Name	Transgender Nick Name	Course Completion Trade	Current Shop or Business Address
1	Bhola	Bhooli	Three Months stitching TEVTA Course	Bhola Stated stitching work jointly with Javed (Jedo) and Noor (Noori) at her own drawing room.
2	Javed	Jedo	Three Months stitching TEVTA Course	
3	Noor	Noori	Three Months stitching TEVTA Course	
4	Kamran	Kami	Three Months stitching TEVTA Course	Attached with Rangoli Boutique Sargodha
5	Qamar Abbass	Moona Leza	Three Months stitching TEVTA Course	Punjab Beauty Parlor Satellite Town Chowk Sargodha
6	Ali	Alena	Three Months Stitching Course	Clerk at Cattle Market Management Company

The following transgenders got Qarz-e-Hasna (Rs.50,000/) from Akhuwat and started their own work / business.

Sr. No	Transgender Name	Transgender Nick Name	Course Completion Trade	Current Shop or Business Address
1	Saqib Ali	Bhameeri	Three Months	The Transgender

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			TEVTA Course	got raw material of Rs.50000/- at Rehman Plaza Garments Shop
2	Abu Hurera	Qatrina Kethi	Three Months TEVTA Course	The Transgender has started boutique work on order in his/her own house. (From Qarz-e- Hasna Amount)

The project received considerable publicity in the local press. The certificate distribution ceremony received wide coverage in local press since Commissioner was the chief guest. Some of the electronic news channels covered the event and even BBC news item highlighted the project. A documentary (available on YouTube) was also made on the project which covered various activities and recorded the views of the target community. The certificate distribution ceremony also conveyed a message to the transgender community that they are important and also deserve recognition and respect. During the early phase of the project, people considered the issues of the transgenders as a taboo subject and were not comfortable to discuss about the subject. By the time the project concluded, it was encouraging to see people start commencing debate on the issue. Without discussing this subject, it would not be possible to take further steps towards mainstreaming of transgenders. Moreover, it may be mentioned that at the later stage, the program details were shared with the team of Punjab Social Protection Authority who was formulating the Transgenders Persons Welfare Policy and it appears to have indirectly influenced as they have adopted some components of the intervention in the policy.

Due to non-existence of a separate unit/institution for welfare of transgenders and in

Reflections of a Transgender

Saqib Ali is one of the transgenders from Sargodha who received technical training and on the basis of his certified training, he received interest free loan of Rs 50,000 from Akhuwat. He started business by opening a tailoring shop from the loan and is currently doing well. Saqib is 35 years old and comes from a lower middle-class family and after graduation, he tried to get a job and tried to live a normal life but was not successful. Disheartened and dejected, he went to join the local community of transgenders. He started singing and dancing and also got involved in sex trade. Encouraged by his Guru Aleena, who himself was not comfortable in living the promiscuous lifestyle, he joined the technical training course. After successfully completing the course, he availed the loan offered by Akhuwat and bought raw material to make and sell clothes. While his Guru was given a job by the Divisional Administration in the Cattle Market Management Company Sargodha. Both of them left their previous life and turned a new page in their lives and they feel happy and satisfied.

an absence of a champion or coordinator to take forward the initiative, the project could not sustain itself once the Commissioner was posted out from Sargodha. The failure of upscaling could partially be explained by the traditional inertia at government level to undertake a project which did not fit a standard pattern. Despite notification of a doctor at DHQ Hospital specifically for transgenders and provision of special health cards (which they themselves requested), the health facility provided at DHQ hospital was not frequently used by the transgenders and they were still comfortable in going to local quacks. This basically showed that until there was non-threatening environment for transgenders, they would avoid using public facilities where they had to interact with the general public. The immediate objective of the intervention was to provide social services through public sector organizations and provide a window of opportunity for local transgenders. Mainstreaming was expected to come at second stage which did not happen. The intervention also showed that despite the provision of few social services, many of the transgender saw no benefit in getting education; few of the graduated trainee went to start their own businesses; and even fewer accessed public health service delivery outlet despite easy access. This indicated that they were not comfortable in the current socio-cultural environment confirming what social exclusion theory postulates i.e. inclusion requires an all-encompassing response.

Conclusion

The research study has revealed that provision of enabling environment to transgenders is necessary but not a sufficient condition for mainstreaming and overall mainstreaming of this disadvantageous group requires a more holistic approach. The deprivations faced by transgenders are multifarious and complex and requires a larger policy response keeping in view the cultural, social and political aspects. Deliberating and talking about the issues faced by the transgender community is important and is a first step towards overcoming socio-cultural taboos and mainstreaming effort. The problems and challenges confronted by the transgenders need to be looked through the framework of social exclusion, and the policy response need to be tailored accordingly. The mainstreaming of transgender community requires full commitment of government. Before devising any welfare programme it is necessary to hold extensive consultative sessions with transgenders community and their respective leaders/Gurus to identify the areas of their interests and comfort. The programme should be kept flexible and need based given that they have a peculiar lifestyle and duration of any welfare program must be of five years or more for making it more effective and successful. They face harassment and disrespect in their everyday life and if they are given respect, they would be more amenable to the opportunities offered.

However, in order to take forward such initiatives on a sustainable manner, a dedicated institution is required at the provincial / national level with political backing which could champion the cause of transgender in a holistic manner over a period of time. It would be an arduous task but is necessary to undertake if we envision a society where transgenders are accepted as equal member of the society.

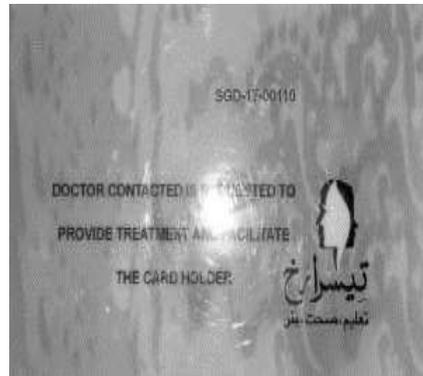
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Annexure A



Annexure B

Observations of a Teacher

Mr. Mohsin Azeem, a student of sixth semester of B.Sc. Information Technology (IT), University of Sargodha, taught the adult literacy classes for Transgender in Sargodha city. He recalled that he was approached by Mr. Sanaullah from the Literacy Department for the task. Since he had earlier worked with the Literacy department, he accepted the challenge. He took this job since he felt that transgenders also deserved a break and must be provided the opportunity. He had done some social work earlier as well and took the assignment as a challenge. He further recalled that teaching transgenders was not easy and found the behaviour of transgenders disconcerting but he persisted and understood that the situation demanded special handling and patience. The Literacy department's officials were very supportive and regularly visited the classes to support him. Mohsin further recollected that he shared his experience of teaching with his close friends and immediate family member but never revealed it to his relatives or class fellows as he felt that they would ridicule him.

Speaking about the response of transgenders in the class, he said that most of them took interest and studied seriously. He used slides and computers as tools to keep the transgenders interested in the course and he also taught them teachings of Islam. The refreshments provided by the Literacy department were appreciated by the transgenders and they felt that they are being treated respectfully.

Mohsin observed that the location of the classroom could have been better, however, he understood the constraints faced by the administration in this respect. Overall, he thought it was a good initiative which contributed towards the welfare of transgenders.

Endnotes

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