

Gender Identity & Harassment: Understanding Transgender Harassment Experiences In the Punjab

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the problem of transgender harassment and the mechanisms underlying such violence. Despite the efforts of advocates for transgender rights both online and offline harassment continues to be a real issue. Transgender people face widespread harassment, including being denied employment, evicted from their homes, insulted in the streets, and even assaulted by police. This paper looks at harassment from various perspectives, including gender identity, socioeconomic status, and culture, as they affect the transgender community. The research aims and objectives are as follows: In the first place, the research seeks to identify and describe various forms of harassment with the goal of providing distinct profiles of the phenomenon. Second, it investigates the causes, with a focus on factors that increase vulnerability to harassment, and explains the roles of social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Furthermore, the current study evaluates the efficacy of existing support measures, such as legislation, support groups, and awareness creation, in addressing harassment and providing support to transgender persons. The paper concludes with evidence-based practice recommendations for policymakers, activists, and community agencies to improve prevention factors, supportive structures, and legal protection for transgender people and other marginalized groups in an attempt to make this society a better place for each unique individual. As a result, this study contributes to the discussion about transgender people's rights by providing information on the dynamics of harassment.

KEY WORDS: Transgender Identity, Harassment, Gender Script, Vulnerability

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INTRODUCTION

Transgender means a person whose gender identity, or behavior is different from the sex assigned at birth or is diverse from the sex usually associated with their physical appearance. Gender identity is a personal awareness of being male, female or a combination of both or being of another gender altogether, whereas gender term refers to the way in which a particular individual communicates their gender identity to other people through expression, voice, clothing, hairstyles or physical characteristics. The abbreviation “trans” is sometimes used in relation to a member of the transsexual or transgender community while the term ‘transgender’ is perfectly fine, most people who have feminine or masculine traits or behave in ways that are different from their gender will not consider themselves as such. People’s orientation, knowledge, and awareness toward the transgendered individuals differ in relationships, popular culture, academia, and science over time (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Transgender people are human beings with equal human rights; however, they are then not treated humanely. They are not people as part of human community and as such they cannot go out there and mix with other people. Numerous cases of harassment and violence against transgender people have been reported, and research shows that this harassment and violence leads to a variety of difficulties such as sexual harassment, suicide attempts, gang rape, emotional problems, and physical violence (Testa, Sciacca, Wang, Hendricks, Goldblum, Bradford, & Bongar, 2012). Harassment is conduct that is unwanted, whether verbally or through actions, and it is motivated by race, color, religion, sex, nationality, age, disability, or genetic characteristics, including family history of diseases (EEOC, 2024).

An individual who is subjected to harassment and violence is entwined in a variety of distress. Some are emotional breakdowns, and they lead to mental diseases. Some of the symptoms associated with victims include depression, mood swings and isolation. Another effect of violence is the high rate of molestation, and poor physical health status (Meyer, 2015).

The ways in which the representations of transgender persons in the media, in literature, in scientific publications, as well as academia, has changed over time and the evolution is most specified in the indicators of the people’s awareness, knowledge and acceptance of transgender and their experiences. The World Health Organization recently removed it from the list of mental disorder, but some culturally susceptible communities continue to refute their life as men and women, referring

to them as the “third sex” (Altaf, Zahidie, & Agha, 2012). Although, transgender people are becoming more visible, they still face numerous challenges in navigating gender roles. Every day, they face negligence, humiliation, and discrimination because of their gender identity, cultural, social, and physical characteristics. While in some cultures it is seen they cannot worship in any religious practices while in the other it is believed they possess divine power (Melesse, Shafer, Shaw, Thompson, Achakzai, Furqan, & Blanchard, 2016). Transgender people get dismissed and ousted from workplaces and their homes. They are dismissed by police, health care providers, and government employees and they often cannot get the services they need. The restroom is the most common place where transgender people face harassment and violence. These basic public and workplace amenities are also not safe for them. While countries have adopted the call for rights, social behavior remains the same (Currah, Juang, & Minter, 2006; Stotzer, 2009).

In Pakistan, the transgender individuals are socially marginalized and, in most cases, considered a pariah. This is so because this community is illiterate, poor, and suffers from social injustice, lack of opportunity, social and cultural boycott due to power relations in their relationships with religious leaders who are arrogant to change their attitude towards them. In addition to that, the failure to reproduce and how to deal with sexual orientation forms part of the disgust (Khan, 2015). Pakistani transgender people face stigma, harassment, discrimination, and pressure to conform to gender binaries. Failure to do so can lead to separation from family and placement in a transgender neighborhood, where they are raised by Guru. Segregation from family unit can cause isolation and fear among transgender people, leading to prejudice against them (Khan, 2014). For Pakistan, the roots for the transgender are believed to have originated from the “Khawaja Sira” who used to guard the ladies of the harem during the Mughals era. Transgender rights in Pakistan do not allow them to be out of the gender binary that is forced upon them. Failure to do so resulted in harassment, limited education and employment opportunities, and worsening living conditions. Despite facing challenges, some individuals have overcome social barriers and achieved success while maintaining their identities. Efforts to increase visibility include granting third-sex status in CNIC and reserving 2% of employment quotas (Dayani, Minaz, Soomar, Rashid, & Dossa, 2019).

Non-governmental organizations and human rights groups bear the major responsibility for fighting for the rights of the transgender community of Pakistan. Feminist and trans groups including Gender Interactive Alliance actively gives legal advice and information, as well as support. They have specifically performed invaluable services toward awareness and policy when it comes to

transgender issues (Gender Interactive Alliance, 2019; Farhat, Abdullah, Hali & Iftikhar, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transgender means that someone is different from the traditional gender role or gender identity (Agarwal, 2016). According to Canadian Human Rights Commission (2024), substantial evidence reveals that harassment is a form of discrimination. It involves any aggressive act or a word that you do not want to hear or feel from that person. Typically, harassment is a pattern of behavior that occurs in a similar vein over a long period. One-time serious incidents can also be qualified as harassment sometimes. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2024) identified some forms of harassment are specific examples as being sex-based harassment, harassment based on gender identity and sexual orientation, racism and ethnicity harassment, disability harassment, age harassment, religion harassment, and intersectional harassment. Furthermore, the EEOC defined sex-based harassment as “gender harassment”, which includes sexually explicit language, displays, and sexist comments.

Cortina & Areguin (2021) posited that out of the four distinct subtypes of sexual harassment, which include gender harassment with contempt at its core, it is the most prevalent. Previously, sexual harassment was viewed solely as a sexual problem: quadrant two was characterized as forceful sexual regression arising from normal sexual attraction or affection. This behavior is designed to demoralize people and to eject them, not to pull them into sex.

Literature highlights that harassment may be triggered by racism, religious bias and nationality. While scholars and advocates most frequently use the terms ‘sexual harassment’ in the social sciences literature and in the law there is a set of scholars who have used the term ‘sex based harassment’. However, the term sex-based harassment is much closer to the real essence of this phenomenon since harassment is not about sex in most cases but ‘conduct that denigrates a person because of their sex’ and is a way to maintain the position in the rank and file of the gender pyramid (Berdahl, 2007; Shultz, 2018; Edelman & Cabrera, 2020).

A quantitative study reported that transgender people live in constant harassment and discrimination throughout their lives in Pakistan. They don’t get to fully utilize conservative sociability and structure and these subjects can be explained by the low level of access of the transgender subject to social and cultural, educational services. Namely, those who are perceived as being ‘abnormal’ are victims of sexual harassment. The later sexual harassment is experienced by transgender people and they are not represented in educational institutions. Lack of education leads individuals into dances begging

or prostitution meaning that there will be high cases of sexual harassment (Khan, 2021).

According to Stenersen, Thomas & McKee (2022), in the United States, police violence and police harassment of gender diverse and transgender community are still prevalent. Nevertheless, few studies have investigated this phenomenon based on large-scale cross-national data set. To establish the occurrence of and reasons linked with police contact, harassment, and violence against transgender people, the study relied on the data from The United States Transgender Survey. Specific police harassment and violence types covered were; (a) officers using the wrong pronoun with the client, (b) officers asking the client about their gender transition process, (c) verbal abuse/assault, (d) physical assault, (e) insisting on sex to avoid arrest, and (f) touching or interacting sexually with the client.

Another US based research (Grant, Mottet, Tanis & Min, 2011) reported that harassment and workplace mistreatment are cross-cutting experiences affecting most transgender and gender nonconforming workers, and there are many forms and outcomes. Indeed not only do more individuals experience unfavorable treatment and discrimination from co-workers and direct supervisors; some are emotionally upset and threatened when they witness other persons being discriminated against, and then feel they must remain invisible or quit pursuing their career aspirations for their own safety. Thus, 90% of the respondents reported that they personally had been harassed or treated unfairly at work or been made to take preventive measures that hindered their professional advancement or otherwise harmed them: 8% asserted that they had to cover themselves up to avoid retaliation or further victimization. Mistreatment included verbal/psychological harassment and violation of the confidentiality/privacy rights of the trans individuals; physical and/or sexual abuse, on the other hand, was as part of their bias-loving experiences were the acts of deception that one tries to avoid being visible as a trans individual, decide to delay transition to avoid a job they would otherwise be happy leaving, or have to actively conceal one's gender. The probability of working under precariously vulnerable conditions about harassment was higher among the low-income earners. Most unemployed respondents said they were assaulted or received threats when working. In the same way, most of the respondents who claimed being laid off due to bias also reported workplace harassment. Lastly, it was also important to note that those that practiced unlawful type of work including sexual related services, drugs, and other banned activities, were more inclined to report more workplace harassment.

Klein and Washington (2023) suggested, structured prevention should help the transgendered avoid

anti-transgender prejudice, abuse, and violence to the ever extent it is possible and teach coping-strength strategies in case they are victimized. This is true to even the youngest transgender people especially the minority ones who are not in a relationship.

Aurat Foundation (2016) reported that transgender people in Pakistan are frequently subjected to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Police frequently ignore transgender women's complaints and harass them during events like birthdays and dances. No data or study involving mental health issues or psychological disorders affecting the Pakistan's transgender individuals can be found.

According to the 2020 report of ILGA, it was found out that approximately 70% of the transgender people of Pakistan underwent harassment; they are being rejected by their families and friends (ILGA, 2020).

Literature indicated that 2018 was a good year for transgender rights in Pakistan, following the passing of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of the year 2018. This legislation allows transgender persons to choose and be recognized their gender identity at will and proposes non-discrimination regarding their genders in different spheres of human life such as in learning institutions, at the workplace and access to health Service (Farhat, Abdullah, Hali, & Iftikhar, 2020). The law can be said to be pioneering the process of integration into the social fabric and economic mainstream of society, a significant change from stigmatization of the transgender. While the protective framework to safeguard the rights of the transgender people of Pakistan is even in its embryonic stage, the door to possible legislation has quite recently opened in this part of the world which will help to preserve the freedoms of a typically socially ostracized transgender identity belonging (Nawaz & Safdar, 2023).

A survey conducted by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR, 2020) discovered that several members of the community were still denied equal legal protection. Transgender people experience a lack of policing education and acknowledge of transgender matters, making such legislation enforcement challenging.

Khan (2020) noted that Pakistani population believes that gender nonconformity is taboo, and thus discriminates the rights of the transgender population. Furthermore, those cultural beliefs that surround transgender sexualism are shameful, leading to violence and rejection. While the legal structure governing the rights of the freedoms of transgender is still fairly new in Pakistan, the doors for further legislation in Pakistan have only recently been opened, which will be helpful for the marginalized Pakistani transgender community has been one of the most oppressed communities

since the inception of Pakistan. According to Akram, Munir & Baig, (2023), transgender individuals within Pakistan are socially ostracized as some of the most discriminated, rejected, stigmatized, violated, and ‘othered’ citizens within the country. And both the state and society regarded these individuals and their neighborhoods as ‘the others’, ‘defective’, or ‘a danger to the social order’. These conditions led to the transgender community’s passiveness in society and they accepted their destiny.

According to Hossain (2019), sex and sexual choices have been strong indicators of social discrimination irrelative to their legal freakishness of ‘third sex’ message in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. On the one hand, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people’s identities are now legally acknowledged and protected, but, on the other hand, they suffer different forms of violation in their everyday practice.

Saddique, Mirbehar, Batool, Ahmad and Gang, (2017) highlighted that one can well imagine how it is to be a transgender person in Pakistan. They are often socially excluded in their day to day activities and options for learning, medical, and earning facilities. Forced out of their homes at a tender age escaping from harassment and physical abuse in their families, they seek acceptance and employment in the closed circle and the community of this group (de Lind van Wijngaarden, Schunter, & Iqbal, 2013). According to Kilbride (2015), transgender persons in Pakistan are harassed and discriminated, and this put them in even a worst position and vulnerable.

Qureshi and Arif (2024) stated that in Pakistan, the transgender community, known as "Khawaja Siras," faces widespread prejudice, violence, and marginalization, making them one of society's most vulnerable groups. These people are defined by their existence outside of traditional gender binaries, and they represent a distinct third gender identity. Many transgender people are estranged from their families and face discrimination from landlords who refuse to rent to them because of their gender identity. As a result, they frequently find themselves homeless, forced to seek shelter in urban slums or precarious, unsafe buildings. Street begging becomes a means of survival to pay rent, perpetuating their exclusion from education, employment, and basic services such as healthcare. Therefore, for their basic needs they beg, dance, sing and offer sex work services thus enjoying increased vulnerability. Many of them are sexually harassed and abused by customers who visit their homes for dance, music, singing, or sex work. The people involved herein include the spouses, school/college mates and friends, family members, neighbors and teachers within these communities (Khan et al., 2009).

According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, at least 500 transgender women in Peshawar have been subjected to physical and sexual violence, kidnap and murder since 2015 (HRCP 2022). In addition, transgender individuals experience from 15 to 20 hate crimes, such as harassment, extortion, sexual assault, and threats daily. The Express Tribune, a Pakistani newspaper, covered the story of a celebrated transgender woman killed through assassination, Shootings in District Mardan, Peshawar left a friend critically injured, (Khan, 2021). Likewise, another newspaper had the headline about four transgender persons who were shot and wounded in Peshawar (Kakakhel, 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using qualitative research methodology and data was sourced from transgender persons residing in Sargodha, Faisalabad and Lahore by using snowball sampling technique. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the culture, harassment experiences and context under study, in-depth interviews of transgender persons were conducted by using purposely designed interview guide. To address ethical concerns, some general interview protocols were implemented. Formal permission was obtained from the research respondents. Moreover, considering sensitive nature of the study, a quiet and suitable location was selected to ensure the confidentiality of the information. The number of interviews was determined by the fact that the research data reached the point of saturation and 33 transgender persons were interviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No.1. Respondents' Age

Age	No. of Respondents
18-24	3
25-31	7
32-38	10
39-45	7
46-52	6
Total	33

The analysis of the collected research material also reveals the fact that most of the respondents were below the age of 45 years. Statistical Bureau of Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 2023) indicated population breakdown in 2023 that there were 124.32 million males and 117.15 million females, for a gender ratio of 1.06. The population of transgender people has been estimated at 20,331. According to data, 67 percent of the total population in 2023 was under the age of 30, with 80 percent falling below the age of 40 (Malik, 2024).

Table No. 2. Respondents' Education

Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents
Illiterate	21
Primary	9
Middle	2
Matriculation	1
Total	33

The above table shows the respondents educational status and it explicitly refers that majority of residents (21) were illiterate, 9 were primary standard pass, 2 were middle pass and one of matriculate standard. Secondary data suggests that transgender education policies in Pakistan were not implemented. Subsequently, transgender individuals are often denied admission to educational institutions and lack equal educational opportunities, hindering their ability to live independently in society (Rukhshanda, Kanwal, Roohi, & Shakoor, 2021).

Table No. 3. Respondents' Geographical Origin

Geographical Background	No. of Respondents
Urban	30
Rural	3
Total	33

The following table captures residents' geographical location. It also shows that most of the respondents (30) were from urban areas while others were from rural areas.

TRANSGENER PERSON'S HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES

A respondent (Age 40) shared, "while living with family, I was facing verbal and emotional abuse. When I left my family and they disowned me, I faced verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and financial harassment".

Another respondent (Age, 30) shared,

"We are marginalized minority, and the system has failed to protect us... families disowned us and state does not own us... subsequently, we have limited access to education, employment and protection. Our informal protection system is "Guru Chella System" that is our only protection against harassment but some of us are even facing harassment from their Guru but we cannot report such incidents".

However, another respondent (Age, 31) shared, "*limited access to education and equal opportunity forces us to involve in beggary, dancing and prostitution like fields....and in these professions, transgender persons are facing verbal, emotional, financial and sexual*

harassment more frequently”.

Noreen & Rashid (2024) reported that transgender individuals in Pakistan face numerous educational challenges. The cultural barriers to education included parental issues, social stigma and lack of social acceptance. Institutional barriers that harmed their education included a lack of school policies and legal protection, insufficient teacher training, and inadequate classroom facilities. Based on their findings, the researchers recommended comprehensive awareness programs both inside and outside of educational settings to increase acceptance of transgender people in society and schools.

According to secondary data, the role of families cannot be detached from the lives of transgender people. Most of them experience familial rejection each time they come out with their true gender and end up being homeless and socially excluded. Moreover, most people have little or no knowledge of transsexualism and this leads to their prejudice. Research proves that such false beliefs regarding the gender identity are rife and worsen the harassment transgender receive. Education is important for the promotion of acceptance and consequently eradication of stigma through interventions for learning (Khan et al., 2020).

A respondent (Age, 46) shared, *“we are facing harassment in families, schools, streets, public and private institutions. Majority of us are disowned by the society and due to our limited access to education and financial resources, we are forced to work as beggars, prostitutes and dances which makes us more vulnerable to harassment”.*

Another respondent (Age, 33) said,

“I did my matriculation while facing verbal, emotional and sexual harassment in my school. My family tried to give me a normal life but society didn’t accept me. So, I had to leave my family to be with people like me. I am now living with my Guru and working in a gent’s hair salon. Occasionally I am working as a dancer as well. Harassment is a normal part of our lives because of our gender identity and odd professions but we have no reporting options. Even if we report such incidents, who is going to change the entire society for us?”.

Many previous studies supported that transgender persons endure various challenges in Pakistani society as these people are in a terrible state, and no one pays them any attention in life. They do not have other vital social contributing factors like social support, health, education, employment or political and socially enforceable entitlements. This is because, due to social rejection and mean, they have been forced to create their own lifestyle that they hold to this day (Abdullah et al., 2012; Abbas, Nawaz, Ali, Hussain, & Nawaz, 2014).

Literature also suggests that transgender people are typically impoverished and have established their own subculture in society. Some of the deviant behaviors include prostitution, sex change, begging, vulgar language and motion, dressing in the opposite sex attire, dancing and putting on cheap makeup (Jami, 2005).

A respondent (Age, 27) shared, *“We are rejected by our families and communities, and they pushed us out onto the streets. We are particularly at risk of harassment and violence. Our peer group is our support to be resilient and resistant”*.

According to Baker, Ali, Ali, & Khan, (2024), individuals sacrifice their lives to protect and maintain many social and familial bonds. Family reputation, societal norms, and religious values are prevalent in almost every society, and everyone pays a price for them; however, disclosing one's identity can sometimes spark social stigma. Transgender identity has long been stigmatized in all societies, causing significant distress. On the one hand, transgender people face stigma, while infringements on their identity and rights make their situation even more precarious.

Majid , Rasool, Rasool, & Zafar, 2023) reported that the transgender community has been identified as a socially barred group. They are always left out, denied their rights and basic freedom, and suffer from high rate of psychological, physical, as well as sexual assault. They are excluded in the social area and they are powerless in the economic, political and educational arenas. They are socially isolated and alienated by their family and all other units of society.

According to another respondent (Age, 32), *“we are not recognized people so our issues are also not recognized by the state and we are facing all types of harassment in every aspect of life. Moreover, prejudice against transgender people and legal vacuum makes our lives more vulnerable”*.

Similarly, another transgender person (Age, 42) said, *“as transgender, we are more vulnerable to harassment. People call us with the wrong names and pronoun. Transphobic harassment and discrimination is a regular part of our lives but there is no one to protect us, neither family nor the state”*.

Secondary data indicates that transgender individuals in Pakistan experience various forms of harassment, including verbal, emotional, physical and sexual harassment. Moreover, transgender individuals often meet prejudice, insult, and threats in the public and private domains. Gender Interactive Alliance conducted a study in 2019 on sexuality minorities and found that most of them

are verbally abused and many of them have complained of being mocked or verbally assaulted. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018 is a positive endeavor towards the rights of the Transgender in Pakistan. But the actual implementation of the existing laws has been a problem throughout the world. Most complainants still experience stalking, but they seek justice in vain.

A respondent (Age, 40) shared,

“I belong to a rural area and my family never disowned me. While living in small community, my family protected me from physical and sexual harassment but I had to face hate speech and emotional harassment. As an adult, I started to work as daily wagger in my locality and faced verbal and emotional harassment at workplace. For a brief period of time I worked in a metropolitan city but there were more complex pattern of harassment for transgender people in big cities”.

A respondent (Age, 30) shared,

“In Pakistan, transgender persons have no acceptance in families and communities. In family setting they have to tolerate hate speech and emotional abuse but general public considers us prostitutes. So, we have to face physical, emotional and sexual harassment. Young transgender persons are at increased risk for harassment and victimization”.

Another respondent (Age, 42) shared, *“I think our culture, transphobia, limited access to education and wrong career choices make us more vulnerable to harassment but our bold lifestyle and outspoken community is resisting and to protect ourselves”.*

Literature suggests that financial issues are also one of the most influential and motivating factors in the commercial sexual behavior of transgender people. If they do not have adequate information on safe sex practices and or lack the means by which to enact the safe sex norms, they are very likely to be infected with HIV as well as other sexually transmitted diseases (UN Pakistan, 2011; Nasir, 2013).

Another respondent (Age, 25) shared, *“we cannot even use public toilets as there are no separate toilets for transgender persons. We cannot use ladies toilets and if we use gents’ toilets, we are more prone to physical and sexual violence there”.*

Bagagli, Chaves, & Zoppi Fontana (2021) reported that access to clean and safe public toilet facilities is very important in performing civic functions at workplaces, learning institutions and other institutions. The same applies to cases of transgender. However, the use of public restrooms by gender identity has caused controversy to the extent that such individuals feel shame and even get expelled from such a facility. The transgender group struggles mentally and physically due to the

failure to access and use public restrooms.

Another respondent (Age, 35) shared,

“As a transgender, people assume us as public property with no human emotions. We are facing harassment at public and private spaces. Hate crimes are common against us and a few of us even faced harassment in police stations. In fact, people dislike us because of transphobia. In my age, I am resilient enough to manage harassment experiences, but it is definitely difficult for young transgender persons”.

According to secondary data, transgender people overall, and more so, the transgender women are more vulnerable to physical attacks. Moreover, the research findings show that emotional abuse, namely bullying and social exclusion, aggravate the quality of mental health. Moreover, most transgender suffer from loneliness and acts of depression resulting from sustained interpersonal psychological tactics (Khan et al, 2020).

A senior transgender respondent (Age, 50) said,

“Transgender people are facing harassment in every aspect of life because of their gender identity but they are showing resistance and resilience to answer society’s in-built harassment. Majority of us are not living with our biological families so our transgender community is the only support for us. We are facing harassment even at police check posts and police stations so where we can report harassment experiences? In such society, transgender persons’ outspoken and bold attitude is the only way to resist. Do you remember police and transgender issue at Kharian police station?”

According to media reports (The Nation, 2024; ARY News, 2024), The incident began with a confrontation between police officers and a transgender person named Hira and her male companion during a stop-and-search in Kharian, Punjab. Following a verbal altercation, Hira and her companion were allegedly taken to the police station and tortured before being released. In retribution, a group of transgender people attacked the police station. The transgender protesters vandalized property and dragged furniture into the streets as they were armed with bricks and stones. Subsequently, a police case was filed against 27 individuals, 20 of whom were unidentified, under 12 different legal provisions. Moreover, case had also been filed against police officers accused of assaulting a transgender individual.

A respondent (Age, 31) said,

“The state should take action to ensure that laws prohibiting harassment and sexual

orientation-based violence are made transgender-inclusive. To ensure that the legal rights protect transgender people from harassment, current laws must be enforced. This entails educating police and public servants about transgender people's rights with the goal of changing their attitudes toward acceptance.

Another respondent (Age, 40) shared, *I worked as a dancer and personally faced physical, emotional, financial and sexual harassment but as a transgender person, complaining about such incidents was never an option because of the social stigma associated with transgender persons and dancing profession*".

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2022), the police forces generally have no adequate training on the transgender individuals; therefore, they poorly handle cases of harassment. Most transgender people do not seek assistance following violent encounters because they expect to be disbelieved or dismissed by the police. Majid et al (2023) also reported that the police have an essential function of shield of the people and maintaining social order. The relationship that transgender people have had with the police is negative and depressing. Transgender people still experience much more police violence than the population at large. Their contact with the police is standard, and they are harassed because they present a defenseless front.

A young respondent (Age, 21) shared, *"when I was staying with my family, I was facing negative stereotypes and emotional harassment but after leaving my family I am prone to physical, verbal, sexual and financial harassment. My rough behavior is my support to address harassment incidents against me"*.

Another respondent (Age 29) shared, *"Initially my family tried to conceal my gender identity to avoid transgender stigma and related discrimination and harassment. However, with the passage of time they were not able to hide my gender identity and then I faced real face of this world and inbuilt gender harassment practices"*.

Many respondents who were working as dancers, sex workers and beggars reported high prevalence of physical, sexual, emotional and financial harassment against them.

Devís-Devís et al (2017) explored harassment patterns and risk profiles among transgender people living in Spain and concluded that transgender women experienced more harassment than men. Young people who disclosed their gender identities appeared to have higher rates of harassment compared to those who did so later in life. They also experienced more forms of harassment in their workplace. In relation to the risk of harassment, it was found that older participants were at higher

risk for being harassed than younger participants and overall risk decreased with increasing years of delayed disclosure of their gender identity.

CONCLUSION

Transgender harassment in Pakistan is multifaceted, involving stigma, cognition, prejudice, and political enactment. The fact that legal measures are in place but harassment persists highlights the importance of integrated approaches to providing protection for transgender people. The study concludes that transgender people are at a high risk of being harassed or discriminated against by society because it does not protect their rights. Moreover, the study clearly demonstrates the need for the development of specific contextually oriented strategies to effectively combat the complex themes of harassment against transgender people. Transgender people do not report their cases for a variety of reasons, including a lack of trust in the police, fear of being fired, or concern that they will lose their social standing. Thus, gender identity protection from sexual harassment at work remains a vice that requires legislative reforms to advance the precedent. Creating favorable conditions that allow survivors of harassment to access mental health and culturally sensitive support has been identified as another important factor that may help to mitigate the negative effects of harassment. However, preventing harassment against transgender people requires a multidimensional approach. To prevent prejudice and build coping mechanisms within the transgender community, challenging discriminatory constructions, including sexual harassment, are unavoidable. Forcing individuals to accept the reality of transgender people is a way of assisting society in embracing the fact that there are various situations that make life difficult for transgender, allowing for a more equal and tolerant society.

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