Home as a Battleground: Familial Rejection and the Struggle for Transgender Belonging

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ABSTRACT
This study delved into the intricate dynamics of familial rejection on the lives of transgender individuals, with a focus on how such rejection shapes their ongoing struggle for belonging and self-acceptance in Narowal, Pakistan. Drawing on qualitative interviews and existing sociological literature, the research highlights the emotional, psychological, and social consequences of being marginalized within one's own family. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, in which fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted across different villages in District Narowal through purposive sampling. It further examines the strategies transgender individuals employ to cope with rejection, build alternative support networks, and reclaim their identity in the face of stigma and exclusion. Utilizing thematic analysis, the study findings underscore the central role of kinship, both biological and chosen, in the formation of a secure sense of self and community. This research contributes to broader discussions on gender, marginality, and resilience, emphasizing the urgent need for inclusive familial and societal structures that affirm transgender lives.
Keywords: Transgender, Familial Rejection, Social Exclusion, Gender Identity.

Introduction
Understanding the distinction between "sex" and "gender" is fundamental when exploring the experiences of individuals whose gender identity diverges from societal norms. "Sex" refers to biological traits such as chromosomes and physical anatomy, whereas "gender" relates to socially constructed roles and behaviours associated with being male or female (American Psychological Association, 2021).

Sociologically, "family" is defined as individuals connected by blood, marriage, or adoption, living and interacting socially and emotionally. The family unit is central to socialization and caregiving, though its definition varies culturally and historically (Giddens, 2009). Transgender individuals often experience "social exclusion," a process in which people are systematically blocked from full societal participation due to discrimination, poverty, or other factors (Peace, 2001). Social exclusion from families deprives individuals of emotional support, care, and access to vital resources, contributing to broader social disadvantage (Esping-Andersen, 2015).

The term "transgender" was popularized in the 1970s by activist Virginia Prince to describe individuals between transvestites and transsexuals (Witten et al., 2003). It gained political and inclusive meaning in Leslie Feinberg's 1992 pamphlet, "Transgender Liberation," which

advocated for collective rights of gender-nonconforming individuals (Stryker & Whittle, 2006). The term now encompasses those who present a different gender publicly without undergoing surgery (Witten et al., 2003).

Globally, transgender identities are recognized in various cultural forms: hijra in South Asia, waria in Indonesia, faafafine in Samoa, kathoey in Thailand, and Two Spirit among Indigenous North Americans (Khan et al., 2009). Transgender individuals have a long history in South Asia. They served as guards and advisors during the Mughal era (1526–1857), but their status declined under British colonial rule. Laws like the Criminal Tribes Act labelled them as "sodomites," and their rights were stripped (Nanda, 1990; Abbas et al., 2014; Khan, 2020).

Hijras, often born with male physiology or intersex traits, defy simple definitions. Cultural roles, gender identity, and personal history complicate categorization, although many identify as women (Nanda, 1990). Their non-conformity to normative gender roles marks them as deviant in conservative societies, leading to family rejection and broader societal stigma (Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 1999).

In Pakistan, transgender individuals often called hijra, khusra, or Khawaja Sira face systemic exclusion. These terms are also used as slurs, reinforcing societal prejudice (Nazir & Yasir, 2016). The rigid gender binary in Pakistan, reinforced by religious and patriarchal norms, leaves little room for gender diversity (Ahmed et al., 2014).

This began to change in 2009, following the arrest of transgender performers and subsequent public outcry. The Supreme Court of Pakistan mandated a third-gender category on national ID cards and access to employment and services (Berti & Bordia, 2015; Nisar, 2017). The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2018) officially recognised transgender individuals and outlawed colonial-era discriminatory practices. The act defines transgenders to include intersex individuals, eunuchs, and anyone whose gender identity or expression diverges from norms (Government of Pakistan, 2018).

According to the 2017 census, there are 10,418 registered transgender individuals in Pakistan, with 6,709 in Punjab and 95 in Narowal (Pakistan Census Bureau, 2017). Most previous research focused on urban centres; however, Narowal's rural and underdeveloped context remains understudied despite its significance in understanding familial exclusion in a conservative setting. This qualitative sociological study investigates the specific ways transgender individuals in Narowal experience social exclusion from their families. Often rejected due to birth anomalies or gender identity revelations during adolescence, many seek refuge in hijra communities. Familial rejection denies them normal social development and security, increasing their vulnerability.

Research Objective

This study is to investigate the experiences, repercussions, and coping strategies of transgender people in Narowal, as well as their social exclusion from families. Understanding the unique ways transgender persons encounter exclusion, how it affects their life, and how they reconcile with their families.

Research Questions

1. In what ways do transgender people in Narowal experience familial rejection?
2. How does this exclusion affect their lives and well-being?

Literature Review

The phenomenon of transgender identity has been a subject of increasing academic and social interest, particularly in the context of South Asia. In the context of Pakistan as a predominantly Muslim nation, legal rights have been granted to transgender individuals, recognizing their presence as an intrinsic part of Islamic teachings. However, it is important to note that societal

norms and cultural conservatism still play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards transgender individuals.

The transgender community in Pakistan has historically occupied a unique yet marginalized space within the socio-cultural framework of the country. According to Khan (2020), despite the visible presence of transgender individuals, they have been subjected to systematic exclusion, often facing discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and familial settings. This section synthesizes key empirical findings on how family dynamics shape the lived realities of transgender individuals, illustrating the home as both a site of persecution and a pivotal locus for potential belonging.

Abdullah et al. (2012) provide one of the earliest in-depth accounts of how family structures can precipitate homelessness among hijras. Through qualitative interviews, the study revealed that many hijra individuals are compelled to leave natal homes when their gender identity becomes known or when they are coerced into conformity with patriarchal gender roles. In such circumstances, hijra gurus and deras become surrogate families, offering shelter and communal identity but also reinforcing dependency on alternative social structures.

Tabassum and Jamil's (2014) explained the study of transgender individuals in Rawalpindi illustrates how familial rejection extends into educational domains. Many respondents reported that, upon disclosing or being outed as transgender, they faced overt hostility from parents and school administrators alike. In several cases, families withdrew children from school to "avoid shame," citing concerns over community gossip more than the child's welfare. Such Familial interventions leaded towards high dropout rates, with respondents forced into low-skilled labour or reliance on hijra community networks for survival.

Nazir and Yasir (2016) further quantify this dynamic in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where family reluctance to acknowledge transgender identities correlates with an illiteracy rate of over 44.5% among eunuchs. Educational discontinuation, driven by parental fears of social ostracism, locks many young transgenders into a cycle of poverty, with only 13% reporting formal employment and over 80% resorting to begging, dancing, or sex work.

A study by Shahzad et al. (2020) in Pakistan found that adult transgender individuals have lower socio-economic status, with a significant proportion being illiterate and unemployed. They often lack family support, face negative healthcare experiences, and face financial challenges. The elderly transgender population often lives in poor conditions and is denied basic human rights, highlighting the significant challenges and discrimination they face.

Nisar (2017) examined the ways in which the Khwaja Sira community in Pakistan comprehends and interprets the legal recognition of their third gender identity, as well as the ways in which their experiences are influenced by a variety of social discourses. This person-centred ethnographic study lasted nine months. He concluded that transgender people's disappointing reaction to the legal third gender category is the product of a purposeful patriarchal agreement. This legal system is resented due to cultural limitations and dominant religious beliefs. Another important reason is increased stigma and social marginalisation. This increasing stigma and social marginalisation exacerbate the difficulties experienced by the Khwaja Sira group.

Fuller and Riggs (2018) explored the psychological dimensions of familial acceptance and rejection among U.S. transgender adults, finding that they resonate with Pakistani contexts. They identify that even within nominally supportive families, transgender individuals often experience marginalisation in everyday interactions: parental misgendering, lack of emotional endorsement, and implicit devaluation of gender-related support. Such microaggressions at home exacerbate minority stress, linking familial rejection with higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

Saeed et al. (2018) documented similar psychosocial risks in Pakistan. Their study highlights the fear of "losing honour," not just personal safety but familial reputation when disclosing transgender identity. This intertwining of individual identity with collective family honour compels many to conceal their true selves, fostering chronic stress, isolation, and reluctance to seek mental health support.

Shah et al. (2018) conducted research in Pakistan, specifically focusing on the Rawalpindi and Islamabad areas, to examine the challenges faced by transgender individuals. o dangerous livelihoods, self-harm, and thoughts of suicide. Negative societal attitudes resulted in victimisation, abuse, and a lack of support. These factors pushed many transgender individuals into risky behaviours such as sex work and substance abuse due to economic challenges. Institutional discrimination, particularly in employment, exacerbated their vulnerabilities, linking victimisation to suicidal thoughts.

Yadav et al. (2022) offered a poignant account of socio-cultural challenges, revealing that neglect by relatives and unequal acceptance compared to cisgender siblings often culminate in a desire to leave home altogether. Although extreme exploitation (e.g., trafficking) was reported to be relatively low, the pervasive sense of exclusion drove many respondents toward hijra communities or informal support networks as alternative "homes."

Vadevelu and Arunberkfa (2022) delved deeper into this phenomenon, conceptualising that refusal to attend gender-affirming medical appointments or challenging community harassment constitutes insufficient acceptance. Rejection, manifesting through forced marriages, denial of medical expenses, or overt expulsion, intensifies psychological distress and undermines coping strategies. Conversely, genuine familial backing characterised by problem-focused and emotional coping facilitation can mitigate the adverse effects of broader social exclusion.

The literature study finds a significant gap in the current corpus of work examining the growing dynamics of the transgender community in Pakistan, particularly in rural regions. Notably, there is a scarcity of research examining the continuity and change in the status of transgender people, particularly in the setting of social exclusion.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework employed to investigate familial social exclusion experienced by transgender women in District Narowal. A qualitative design was chosen to capture the complexity and nuance of transgender individuals' social exclusion within their families. Such an approach privileges inductive reasoning, allowing themes to emerge organically from participants' accounts rather than imposing preconceived hypotheses (Creswell, 2007). Data was gathered in participants' own environments, analysed by moving from specific observations to broader thematic structures, and interpreted to reveal insights into how familial rejection shapes transgender belonging and identity.

The study population comprised transgender women residing in various areas of District Narowal, Punjab. Here, the target group included individuals assigned male at birth who self-identify across the transfeminine spectrum and who had experienced exclusion within their natal families. A purposive, non-probability sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants most knowledgeable about familial exclusion (Neuman, 2014). This method enabled the selection of transgender women who could articulate firsthand experiences of marginalization, rather than relying on random sampling that might include individuals without such experiences. Facilitators with connections to local transgender networks helped identify and invite participants willing to share their stories, acknowledging both their vulnerability and the sensitivity of the topic.

Fifteen participants, representing diverse age ranges and locales within District Narowal, were interviewed. This sample size balanced depth of insight with feasibility, ensuring rich, varied accounts of familial rejection.

Data was collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews, a method suited for eliciting participants' subjective experiences, motivations, and perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted in participants' preferred settings, primarily their deras (community living spaces). Each session, lasting approximately one hundred twenty minutes, was conducted in Punjabi and Urdu, per participants' comfort. Prior to each interview, informed consent was obtained, confidentiality assured, and permission sought for audio recording. Participants received PKR 1,000 in acknowledgment of their time and potential lost earnings, a practice approved by local community networks. Interviews followed an open-ended format to encourage narrative depth while covering core questions derived from the study's aims.

Transcribed interviews underwent thematic analysis, a systematic method for identifying patterns of meaning across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The process comprised of repeated reading of transcripts and listening to recordings to immerse in the data. Then labelling significant text segments with descriptive codes reflecting their content. After that, grouping related codes into overarching themes and sub-themes that address the research questions. Iteratively comparing themes against raw data to ensure coherence and distinctness. Contextualizing themes within theoretical frameworks of social exclusion and transgender resilience. Throughout coding, the researcher negotiated between empirical findings and existing theory, ensuring that participants' voices guided interpretation.

Data Analysis

Seventeen individuals were initially identified as potential participants. Of these, fifteen shared their valuable experiences, enriching the study. Participants represented a range of ages: six were between 20–30 years old, five between 30–40, and four were over 40 years. This age diversity provided a well-rounded representation of transgender experiences across life stages.

The study also highlighted the diverse social roles and status of transgender individuals within their community, with three identifying as Gurus and twelve as chellas. Education was a crucial demographic feature, with five participants being illiterate, while seven completed primary education. The study also highlighted the diverse means by which respondents earned their livelihoods, with five offering wadhai and a significant portion derived their income from the art of dance. These findings shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of familial exclusion in the transgender community.

Early Gender Identity Recognition and Familial Reactions

From birth to death, social structures determine who we are and what roles we are expected to play based on our gender. Furthermore, societal expectations are guided by prescribed values, norms, and beliefs. Gender identity is arguably one of the most important aspects of societal formation. Many societies, including Pakistan, strictly adhere to a male or female binary that identifies people as either male or female. By providing two mutually exclusive choices of gender identity, the social construction of this normative gender binary arrangement maintains conformity and limits nonbinary gender identities. (Dietert & Dentice, 2009).

Gender identity is frequently defined as a person's self-defined internal sense of being male or female, or an identity that exists between or outside of these two categories. At birth, a child's external genitalia initiate a social process that encourages the child to exhibit masculine vs feminine characteristics. (Nagoshi et al., 2012) Recognition of gender identity is the very first and decisive step in the journey of a transgender person. The dynamics of being born with a gender

dysfunction is not normal. When a person does not align with the major gender and sex categories it is not easy for them to regulate how to live with it. Most respondent felt that early childhood was a very confusing time for them. While explaining early childhood days one of the respondents said:

"I was like this from a very young age. I used to play with girls and do all the stuff that usually girls do. We don't have feelings of being a boy from birth. We are born into this world like this. There was always a difference between me and my other brothers."

The respondent believes that accepting identity differences is about exhibiting femininity despite being born male. They describe the tension between gender and sex as their innate feeling, leading them to act in ways that are not comparable to their birth sex but to the gender they identify with. The notion of "being like a girl" is the reason they identify as transgender, as it reveals that their behavior and gender are not aligning. Chakrapani (2010) revealed that majority of families find it unacceptable when their male child exhibits behaviors that defy gender norms and are deemed feminine.

In a patriarchal society, transgender individuals face challenges in being themselves, often feeling different from others. Dayani et al. (2019) highlighted the discrepancy between physical sex and gender, a fundamental aspect of human identity. Social conventions, rooted in a binary gender model, stigmatize and shame those who question their identities, calling them "curses" or "shames," despite their indisputable human beings. One of the respondents stated:

"I was ridiculed by my neighborhood and because of their cat calling I became to know about my identity. When I was 5 to 6 years old people used to irritate me and tease me, that's when my family came to know about my identity. Then they got me checked from a doctor and he testified that I am a transgender. After that I was identified as a Khawaja sara."

The individual explains that societal norms initially impose transgender identity due to deviation from typical boyish behavior, leading them to unconsciously adapt and associate with those who identify with them, despite societal ridicule and labialization. According to Ahmed et al. (2014), people who do not identify as male or female are referred to as "Khwaja Sira" in South Asian languages and are deemed as social outcasts due to their sexual orientation.

In teenage years the identity discovery leads towards other paths of exploring the similar community and feeling more like them. Transgender individuals, according to Jabeen et al. (2021), continuously battled a severe dissonance between their firmly held gender identity and the anatomical sex that was assigned to them at birth. One of the respondents stated:

"I was 10 years old when I came to know that I am a transgender. I was not mature at that age, but I felt different as I behaved like girls despite being a boy. Whenever I saw a transgender after that I followed her to the dera as I felt connected to them."

Some respondents shared that they discovered their gender identity in their teen age. They stated that it is the time that parents also come to know about the seriousness of the situation that they tried to suppress earlier. Similar findings were reported by Pirzada et al. (2022), who found that transgender people primarily grow up as typical children until they begin to recognize the distinct aspects of their personality. Like many of them had no idea who they really were. However, they come to realize this after meeting other transgender people and through several incidents that happened to them.

Family is the very first social institution that determine and regulate a person's gender identity. An individual's many first social experiences are formed by family as their first 5 years are mostly spent at home. Transgender people are initially excluded from their homes (Konduru & Hangsing, 2018). Because of the general lack of acceptance by society, Hijras are particularly vulnerable in

Pakistan. Most of the time, these individuals continue to be incredibly weak, isolated from society, and disliked even by their own relatives. (Chaudhry et al., 2014)

When a transgender comes out to family their reactions vary ranging from very cold behavior to acceptance. Many respondents agreed that this is a difficult phase for them as well as for their families. The stigma attached to being a transgender in our society is the driving factor behind the unreasonable behavior towards them. In a normative society, gender roles that deviate from the norm are prohibited. (Sharma, 2000; Talwar, 1999)

Children who identify as transgender frequently give in and attempt to live a lie in order to preserve their family's reputation. But these efforts often do not align with expectations of all the family members. The abusive treatment is adapted to reject their behavior, and they are stigmatized as abnormal. A study conducted by Shah et al. (2018) revealed that transgender people face serious issues in general, and the severity of their problems varies depending on the circumstances. One of the respondents stated:

"My family was very good to me except my brother. He was very infuriated because of my identity. He used to hit me also because he hated me."

Another respondent recounted being publicly beaten and insulted by her brother after dancing at a community event:

"While dancing at a wedding in Mohalla her brother dragged her home in front of all relatives. He beat me up that night, and the next day I left home to put an end to his abusive behavior."

Physical harassment frequently worsens to the point where one has to be distant from family. Such incidents embody what Alizai et al. (2016) identified as coercive familial attempts to realign behavior with gender norms through "surveillance, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, blackmailing, threats, and torture."

Education and Health Challenges

The transgender population is extremely vulnerable and marginalized, and it performs very poorly on the human development index, especially when it comes to education. This community's majority lacks formal education and is therefore unable to fully engage in social, cultural, political, and economic life. Educational establishments are, in fact, strongly gendered. The school system, which reinforces rigidly binary and patriarchal gender norms like the rest of society, makes gender nonconforming and transgender children and youth even more stigmatized. (More, 2021).

Education is a fundamental human right but providing it to the transgender community in Pakistan is a significant challenge. Despite schools providing a safe space for development, transgender individuals are often denied access and even dropout due to discrimination. Despite their lack of awareness, societal labels continue to influence their education. One of the respondents stated:

"I have been to school but left it after 4th class. Because of the constant bullying I was unable to do well in school. These institutions do not control bullies but rather enjoy this."

Another responded that:

"I have studied till 5th class and because of the behavior of children around me I have left School. You cannot hide your personality and then the behavior of people around you become different they mistreat you. From students to teacher everyone shows weird behavior."

Children feel different due to mistreatment and abnormal treatment at school. Early-age students report bullying, ridicule, blackmail, and sexual abuse. This leads to loss of interest and dropping out. Teachers lack support and understanding, especially when other students abuse them. Butt et al. (2021) found that transgender students' capacity to fully exercise their right to

an education is impeded in several ways. Transgender kids drop out of school due to purposeful harassment and prejudice by professors and classmates.

Pakistan's rigid, gender-segregated education system, particularly in government-run schools, has led to increased bullying and limited access to higher secondary education for transgender individuals, with only a few reaching matriculation levels among younger respondents. As one responded that:

"I have studied till 10th class. In school I was ridiculed and when I got to college it was too much, so I left studies for good. Also, wherever I go when people notice I am a transgender their behavior gets worse, and they make fun of me. To them I am no more than a joke."

Another respondent also stated that she has obtained intermediate level education as her gender was not revealed before that. Respondents also revealed that after adapting their gender identity they have not been admitted to school as well as in colleges because of the lack in any educational initiative specifically for their gender.

Transgender people who express their gender identity at a young age are frequently rejected by their families. They are shunned within households if they are not cast out, resulting in a lack of educational opportunities and no attempts to ensure attention to their mental and physical health needs. (Divan et al., 2016) After coming out as transgender different restrictions are put up on them by their family. Often, they are not even allowed to be out of their house to even visit school. One of the respondents stated:

"I studied till 9th class then I left studies because when my family came to know about my identity, they confined me in the house. It was more like they locked me up in the house. Also, there were some personal reasons due to which I didn't wanted to study."

Parents of transgender in Pakistan often confine themselves to regulate their child's behavior and hide their disability, disconnected from societal functions. The stigma of being a eunuch parent in Pakistan leads to unspoken or open comments from relatives and neighbors. In conflicts, these parents struggle to defend their case, often silenced by remarks and taunts. Nazir & Yasir (2016) stated that many parents are taunted by sayings as you are having "two in one," and you are unable to produce a complete boy or girl, leaving no room for them except to conceal the birth of such a child and give away their identity.

Every human being has the right to health, regardless of age, religion, political beliefs, economics, or social status. The healthcare system in Pakistan is based on binary gender system. In general, binary gender individuals have to bear difficulties accessing it and for transgender individuals being a marginalized group it becomes an additional hassle to avail it. Transgender people experience stigma, discrimination, and financial hardships, which contribute to a number of health issues and a higher rate of disease (Abramovich et al., 2020). One of the respondents stated:

"When I went to the doctor in the hospital, I noticed that people were hesitant to sit near me. Everyone in the room was staring at me. I had to wait a long time to see a doctor. Everyone else in the waiting room had already been seen."

All respondents stressed on the discriminatory behaviors adapted by the people at hospital. If the transgenders go to hospitals, they are even treated badly there. Even with their health problems they have to go through additional humiliation for being there. The forms of discrimination against Hijras and transgender communities that Chakrapani (2010) listed included the willful use of masculine pronouns when addressing them, registering them as "males" and admitting them to male wards, humiliation from having to wait in the male line. These are also the reasons that transgender avoid visiting hospital as the respondents stated.

Visiting a public or private hospital is very troublesome for them, as the patients ridicule them. These discriminatory actions are the reason that if transgenders get sick, they treat themselves on their own, and if they do not get well, they visit a private practitioner around them. Sherazi et al. (2023) stated that one-third of their study participants reported having health problems, and they mostly rely on self-medication and advice from pharmacies. Another respondent stated:

"You are ridiculed and teased so much that you can't go to hospital even if you want to. Access is not any option until we get severely sick and if the private doctor's treatment does not work."

Most respondents said because of this maltreatment, they prefer being sick and delay going to the hospital as it is just for a severe emergency. Few people seek medical advice from private clinics. Free medical care is provided by government hospitals, but most patients receive poorer care, harm, refusals, or discontinuations of care at public and private clinics, which is upsetting and offensive.

Accessing educational and health care facilities with ease is not an option for transgenders. Pakistan has introduced several great initiatives, but they have not transformed into on ground actions. With the previous reforms introduced by government transgender individuals have gained a separate identity. Nisar's (2017) study highlights the gender segregation in Pakistan's public institutions, including schools, hospitals, and banks. Despite the creation of a third gender category, no changes have occurred, causing dire consequences for third-gender individuals. They lack acceptance, equal access to education, and a place to live as others.

Psychological Effect

Social exclusion and low acceptance as regular human beings are experienced by Pakistan's transgender community. Many forms of discrimination in public spaces are dealt with by this community, which leads to a variety of social and mental health problems. (Spagna, 2013)

Most respondents reveal their identity and leave their homes to start a new life, often feeling alone and immature. Embracing transgender life in Pakistan's traditional society can be difficult, isolating, and dangerous, as they face societal discrimination and face the reality of their identity revelation. Olson et al., (2016) revealed that family disassociation is the most severe trauma this community has ever experienced. Transgender people are frequently impoverished and unable to live normal lives. These factors also played a role in psychological problems, with many people reporting mental and psychological illnesses as a result. One of the respondents stated:

"When you are alone to fight a battle with the whole world it takes a tool on your mental health. Now I have reached an age where I am sick and vulnerable but there is no support for me to even live my remaining life peacefully."

Another respondent stated:

"To feel loneliness is a part of life but I have accepted it. As I have to live with it for my whole life. I can't go back to my family, can't enjoy a normal life."

Respondents explained it is not easy to live alone and deal with all the situations and there is no one to care for them. After leaving home, respondents stressed how emotionally vulnerable they were. Few had made this choice on their own to make their families at ease and to save them from the constant ridicule of having a transgender family member.

Transgender lives are significantly impacted by family alienation, leading to feelings of loneliness. A study by Sadiq & Bashir (2014) found a positive correlation between perceived discrimination and loneliness, with coping strategies playing a mediating role. Transgenders adopt these mechanisms to maintain calmness and ease their lives. The coping mechanisms vary in nature as one of the respondents stated:

"When I am depressed, I just think of hereafter and that Allah has something for me in it if this world is difficult."

Allah is the one who can ease any situation, and as His creations, we have a purpose to serve. When feeling depressed, we pray to Allah, thinking about disabled people who cannot earn, and thanking Him for blessings. Khan and Malik (2019) highlighted the significant role religion plays in the lives of hijras, who, despite societal disappointments, maintain an optimistic outlook on God's mercy.

Familial Reconciliation

Reconciliation entails returning to a peaceful state in a relationship, where the involved parties refrain from causing harm and can gradually rebuild trust, thus eliminating revenge as a viable choice (Webel & Galtung, 2007). It is extremely important to distinguish between "reconciliation" and "reunification." Family members can receive support in their efforts to reconcile experiences of violence, psychological and/or personal harm without actual reunification. Reuniting a family without reconciliation is potentially dangerous and increases the chance of recurrence. Successful reconciliation may lead the way to reunification. Barriers to reconciliation impede reunification. (Schladale, 2014)

For transgender people families hold a significance as they are mostly defied from them in this journey. Despite rejection, most participants maintained a deep yearning for familial acceptance. As some transgender individuals stated that after being away from their family, they often kept in contact with them. In several cases, participants continued to visit home or provide financial support. One responded:

"I am in communication with my family and often go there for a day or two to meet with my family. I just did not stay there for much time."

Some respondents described how only their mothers remained emotionally available:

"Now I am in touch with my family, but only my mother spoke with me. She is the only person who is praying for me, no matter what I identify as. Other than her, no one in my family accepts me, nor are they in contact with me."

In a few rare instances, reconciliation occurred under certain conditions:

"My family gathered when I went back after 6 years, and they said what is your plan. What you want to do in future, and they welcomed me back to the house only if I left the dancing profession, but I refused to do so. Firstly, they were not accepting of my identity, but now they are good with me as I am."

Male family members often reject their identity, even when they return to meet with their families. In a patriarchal system, decisions are made by men, and respondents feel they've been out of their house due to their behavior. Often, disapproval from brothers and uncles and family acceptance is conditional upon leaving the dancing profession. After multiple reconciliation attempts, they accept them. Ahmed et al. (2014) concluded that there is a lesser space for Transgender people to get out of the social exclusion in Pakistan due to the conservative social circles and gender hierarchy of Pakistan's society.

One participant, who financially supported her family, expressed heartbreak:

"After leaving home I have not been there. I met my mother just to give money that as well in someone's house. Nobody contacted me not even my siblings who are raised by my money. My brothers and uncles hated me for being what I am."

Even with material contributions, belonging was denied. Familial acceptance, where present, was fragile and rarely unconditional. Giddens (2009) defines family as a site of emotional support and identity-building. For these respondents, it often became a space of negotiation, shame, and conditionality.

Findings and Discussion

The present study focused on the experiences and challenges of familial exclusion on transgender individuals who particularly belong to the District Narowal, Punjab. Familial exclusion means a person is ostracized by their family the first and basic unit of socialization. Transgender individuals as per the study focus are those born with sexual deformities or unclear identities, including those assigned male at birth but expressing themselves as women. Acknowledging and respecting self-identified gender is crucial for understanding and addressing unique experiences within this demographic group. Transgender have held a significant importance throughout the historical context of sub-continent, but the colonization changed their status, and they were demeaned from then on. In Pakistan they were not recognized officially until 2009 and their status improved after 2018. As transgender are accepted legally there is a need to investigate the present-day circumstances of the familial exclusion experiences. The study took place across different villages of the District Narowal and a total of 15 transgender individuals were interviewed. Interview guide was used as the primary tool of data collection. Qualitative approach was used for data interpretation and analysis was thematic. The study's research objective and research questions attempted to draw attention to the experiences transgender people have had and consequences they faced because of being shunned out from their family. The first objective was to determine the specific ways in which transgender people in Narowal experienced social exclusion from their families. Due to the complex nature of gender identity, understanding this experience due to researchers' positionality was risky. After thorough analysis the emerging themes conceded were early recognition of gender identity and familial reactions after identity revelation. Themes outlined how they faced the problems of recognizing their different identity and the behavior their family showed to them because of their identity. The second goal was to determine the impact of familial exclusion on the lives and well-being of transgender individuals in Narowal. The analysis provides several themes such as effects of family's alienation and the challenges of education and healthcare access. This also showed how transgenders are compelled to ostracize from their family and society.

The study highlighted the dual burden faced by transgender individuals, the urge to be themselves with managing the familial shame and societal hostility. Some respondents even tried to live dual life being sons at home and a transgender within the hijra community. Few even continued the act to this day. Majority have left their home early whilst some are expelled and joined the hijra community. Respondents have shown kindling for reconciliation with families. Families often prioritized their honour and societal positioning over their own children because of their identity. Respondents reflected how their gender identity and expression led to expulsion from their homes further leading to adapting to an alternative familial belonging system and emotional distress.

Familial reactions had array of variations from the silent refusal to restoring to violent attempts of schooling them. These reactions depicted the disruption of gender binary system because of transgender identities had hit the patriarchal structure of our society. Male family members often turn hostile towards transgender highlight the deeply rooted patriarchy. Despite of being treated with hostility many respondents had a yearning for familial reconciliation. Some even rekindled their connections and are often met with conditional acceptance from their families. Conditional acceptance often came into play as hiding their real identity and even hiding the fact of reconciliation with family. Whilst others despite helping their family financially in times of adversity had not been accepted from them. Families run on their money but do not run for them.

These findings emphasized the central role families have in shaping the lives of transgender individuals. The rejection and abandonment from family not only inflict homelessness and emotional trauma but also hinder their access to education, employment and healthcare reinforcing the social exclusion. Simultaneously, the instances of acknowledgment and acceptance especially with their mothers offered insights into the potential of familial support for a transformative insight of transgender individual life.

This study was unique as it analysed the social exclusion by family in a traditional setting which provided insights into the lived experience of transgenders. This study is unique as it was entirely grounded on the transgender individual's gender identity. The qualitative approach helped in understanding this community. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of family support as after being rejected from family they become vulnerable. Families that show support for their children despite them living apart does help transgenders both socially and emotionally. If the families just do bare minimum that will make a lasting impact in the lives of transgender. This support as seen in findings about reconciliation fill the void in them. There is a need to gender sensitize society at large as often transgenders are making effort to live their life abiding by law, but the labels are not washing off despite efforts.

This study adds into the growing body of work highlighting the marginalization of transgenders is not merely a societal or institutional issue, but it is rooted within their own homes. Without addressing the foundational issues, we cannot make way for broader societal inclusion leading to a gender diverse society. When families will show an acceptance to the identity of their children then ultimately slowly or gradually the society will also create a better and inclusive environment for transgenders.

Conclusion

This study concluded that transgender people in Pakistan have faced marginalization and exclusion since colonization, facing various reasons such as gendered self-awareness, societal marginalization, being born differently, and ties to the transgender community. The 2018 constitution defines transgender identity as diverse, but embracing these identities often leads to rejection from families and estrangement. Factors contributing to this exclusion include gendered self-awareness, societal marginalisation, birth disparities, and ties to the transgender community. Despite accepting their identities, they are frequently rejected by their family and distanced from them. It focusses on the socio-cultural challenges individuals experience, as well as the reconciliation techniques they employ to deal with social marginalisation. The findings can be used to support activities targeted at improving the lives of transgender people and their parents. However, the study's limitations include its emphasis on transgender people's experiences, its geographical location, and the necessity to research these concerns in other provinces due to differences in societal beliefs.

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