

education. Many transgender attend schools in different areas of Punjab. Yet the stigma is still there, due to which transgender- students suffer and quit their educational activities. The key objective of this research involves exploring the current state of education of transgender and the initiatives taken both at government and non-governmental level regarding the education (basic/technical/vocational/primary/secondary education) of transgender community in Punjab.

Gender is a term used to indicate the individual as masculine and feminine (Nazir and Yasir, 2016). The concept of gender is quite profound to understand because primarily the aspects are associated with social and cultural context, and it varies over time. Gender identity is the core aspect of individual identity; it vividly shows the binary and limited aspects of individual sex. But sometimes it does not remain binary. Normally females and males have specified identities and others who feel like neither male nor female is the third gender (ibid, 2016). Acceptance of gender broadly depends on the cultural era (Grant, Jaime, Justin Min. Lisa, Jack, Harrison, Mara and Keisling, 2011). If a person's behavior, clothing, and appearance are outward, it means the individual may not belong to the community of normal people. Such stereotypes may result in creating a worse difference is called discrimination. It is significant to understand that gender category which is entirely erratic and acquiescent (Grant et al., 2011). The term transgender is used for people whose gender identity differs from normal people, who have their assigned sex at birth (Rani& Kamal, 2017). Transgender isa term used to describe individuals who exhibit gender-nonconforming identities and behaviors, or those who transcend typical gender paradigms (ibid, 2017).

Transgender, the most commonly discriminated community, who has been tolerating the brunt/effect of being social stigma and economic marginalization which had a terrifying impact on the life of transgendered -people in the past(Grant et al., 2011). At present, many researchers and advocates of human rights are witnessing this reality while working with the transgenders who have no shelter to accommodate themselves, experience discrimination based on their gender identity and are often fired from jobs, if any (ibid,2011).In the context of Pakistan, the lifestyle of transgender used to be basically in a frugal condition than other communities (Tabassum and Jamil, 2014). Pakistani cities have large/sizable hijra communities which are divided into groups, living mostly in the supervision of a leader or guru. These communities were generally known as Chellas. In the past, Hijras used to earn their living by dancing at carnivals, weddings, births and still the tradition is going on same way. Millions of transgender-people are suffering and experiencing extreme social exclusion which leads them to limit the access towards education and employment and lose of opportunities for economic and social advancement (Cortez, Keatley, Skaya, Divan, 2016). The transgender community in Pakistan has a poor and weak educational background. This community is working in streets as beggars, stage dancers, singers and sex workers (Abdullah, Basharat, Kamal, Satta, Hassan, Jan, Shafqat, 2012). Reportedly, they adopt such profession because of the denial of their family and societal lack of attention towards their needs.

Education is a vital unit for a developing society, to address the basic issues of a community or a state, because it's the primary factor that can bring a massive and significant change in personal, social, and economic development (Cortez et al.,2016). To address the dilemma of "Education for transgender" many international organizations are working worldwide including "National Center for Transgender Equality (NCFTE),

Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF), National LGBTQ Task Force, Gender Spectrum, Trans-student Educational Resources, GLESEN and Transgender Law Center (Cortez et al., 2016). These organizations are primarily working for providing educational opportunities and professional importance to the transgenders. The educational status of transgender in Pakistan is equally poor both in formal and informal ways (Sultana, 2017). According to Rani& Kamal (2017), only 10% of transgender in Pakistan are educated. The ability of transgender students to fully enjoy their rights to get education is affected in different ways. For example, deliberate harassment and discrimination by teachers and fellow students leads transgender students to drop out of school

Sultana (2017) therefore emphasizes on gender inclusive classrooms in schools. Strong and authentic policies need to be developed to protect transgender-students from discrimination and help them to have an easy access to the educational opportunities as any other student. Trans-affirmative professional and academic standards are based on trans-affirmatives policies and curricula that must be predominant in schools of social work and that social work faculty shows knowledge about and a commitment to the inclusion of transgender related issues and trans-affirmative practices in classrooms. It is increasingly being argued that the absence of trans-affirmative social work education and training negatively affects student attitudes towards the members of the transgender community (Austin, Shelley, Craig, Lauren, McInroy, 2016). Under the transgender people's welfare policy, in2017 the government of the Punjab tried to collect data of the transgender community in order to address their issues. The table 1 presents the average population of transgender community living in different geographical locations in Pakistan.

Table 1
Transgender population in Pakistan

Residence Status	KPK	FATA	Punjab	Sindh	Baluchistan	Islamabad
Rural	223	27	2124	3012	40	52
Urban	690	0	4585	2226	69	81
Total	10418	913	6709	2527	109	133

Source: (Transgender person welfare policy, 2018)

In the light of the total number of transgender community in Pakistan, the question arises why only 1% of this population has been able to attend school (Transgender person welfare policy, 2018). One of the possible answers to this critical question could be the limited number of initiatives taken for the education of transgender community in Pakistan (Transgender person welfare policy, 2018).

For the present research, interviews seemed the most convenient and reliable instrument for data collection, as it offered the researchers to have a direct contact with the respective respondents of this research. The average length of each interview was 25 minutes. The interview questions were deliberately kept simple and were administered in both Urdu and English language to make them understandable for the

participants. After collecting the desired data, the researchers transcribed the interviews and coded the data.

Results and Discussion

Data analysis

Profile of the Government and Non-Government Institutes Working for the Education of Transgenders in Punjab

One of the key informants of this research was from “Adult Literacy Center, Ladhoran” a governmental organization governed by the Punjab Literacy Department was established in August 2018. This institute enroll 20 students at a time are admitted at a time to provide basic education(Urdu, English and arithmetic)to transgender-students.

A concept has been developed like Eunuchs can't do anything except dancing and singing; this shows a downward spiral of degradation (Tabassum and Jamil, 2014). Because of the stigmatize environment faced by transgender they live an isolated life, face poverty and remain non participatory in societal mainstream activities (Abdullah et al., 2012). Most of them are uneducated as the notion of a transgender child of getting/being brought up in a normal household and studying in a mainstream school is not an acceptable reality. Although there has been Legislative and Non-Discriminated Policies made for transgender in Pakistan, but yet it is an open fact that, there is no any formal law/policy in the education sector in Pakistan that could facilitate the third gender community within different institution of Education (Tabassum & Jamil, 2014). Abdullah et al., (2012) argues that transgenders rights are preserved in Pakistan but only in written. In 2012 and 2013, third gender (Transgender) came forward for the right to register their identity in National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA). As a result, in August 2018, Punjab Social Protection Authority prepared a policy named as “Transgender Persons Welfare Policy” in order to take into account the social, cultural, educational and economic issues. To an extent the government worked on it and later, a limited number of transgender- people were able to cast their vote using the given NIC (Transgender person welfare policy, 2018), even though implementation gap is still a major concern in this regard as the condition of this community remained the same (Transgender person welfare policy, 2018).

Material and Methods

The study investigated the current state of and initiatives taken regarding the education (basic/technical/vocational/primary/secondary education) of transgender community in Punjab. Considering the nature of research objective, the researchers adopted a qualitative research approach in which semi-structured interviews of the two representatives of the Governmental (Adult literacy center, Lodhran) and non-governmental organization (The Gender Guardian School, Lahore)working for the education of transgender community in Punjab were conducted. The focus group interview of the five transgendered individuals acquiring education in Punjab were also administered to explain in depth demonstration of each respondent experiences and their views about the existing practices and initiatives taken for the education of transgender community in Punjab. Purposive sampling technique was employed for accessing the participants of this study.

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The other participant was a representative from Gender Guardian School, a community-based school established in Lahore, aimed to empower Pakistan’s marginalized community specifically transgender. This institute is supported by donation. Around 20 to 30 trans-students are graduated every year in vocational training and basic education.

Highlighting the need for the provision of education to the transgenders and taking the initiatives to establish educational institutions for them, the representative of the Adult Literacy Department said:

“Actually, in Pakistan, there are many institutions for communities including poor, special persons and orphans, but there are few such educational institutes for transgenders. The problem that transgenders face in mainstream institutions is that they are made feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. This recognition made us open separate educational institution for transgender where they could learn and also do earn a respect for themselves.”

The focal person of the Gender Guardian School responded

“The community of transgender is being portrayed as stigmatized community, victim of harassment, bullying both in schools and in workplace. It was noticed that members of transgender community in Lahore were either begging or involved in other activities such as dancing. We established this school with the aim to enable transgender community to seek those skills which help them to get a job similar to those of mainstream individuals and lead a respectable life”.

In response to the question what type of education was provided to the trans-students, and what outcomes were evaluated, the Gender Guardian School representative said:

“We offer different vocational trainings and diploma programs to trans-students. The training comprises of basics of English and four-month course of beautician, cooking skills, and stitching skills. Later, jobs are explored for them and those who wish to establish their own business are supported financially. Out of our 70 graduates till to date, 56 are doing different jobs. Our students are currently working as chefs, guards and beauticians. “Some of them have established their own business that we supported financially.

Talking about the resistance of the transgender community regarding getting education in these educational institutions, the representative of the Gender Guardian School stated:

“At the beginning we faced many challenges and problems because transgender community was of this opinion that nobody did anything for them in the past? So they regarded our initiative a ‘time being activity’. They seemed doubtful about our initiative and raised questions like why you are taking this initiative for us? What benefit could we get out of this etc? So we had to put all our efforts to make them realize that getting enroll in and attending our school will bring manifold benefits to them.....things have been improved with the passage of time.

About any support or advocacy of government available to expand education opportunities for transgenders in Punjab, he added:

“We have got no appreciation and worth noticing response from government helping us to expand or upgrade our social service. Government should consider the major problems faced by transgender in Pakistan, specifically in terms of education. There is no policy in the country preserving the rights of transgender. If there is any, it is not implemented in true spirit. There should be more organizations promoting the education of transgenders individuals’, so that transgender may also take part in societal development.

In order to know the perspectives of the transgenders regarding the initiatives taken for their education, a focused group interview of the 10 transgender individuals who were acquiring education was conducted, so that a number of initiatives for transgender education could be known. The Findings inferred from the focus group interviews highlighted the problems faced by transgender community while getting primary education. They were subjected to social stigma, gender- discrimination and mocked by calling names for having a dissimilar appearance. Also, their families deny to owe them as family members therefore, they had no convenient source of earning either. This is reflected through the following response of focus group participant1:

“As a transgender I used to face number of problems in the society and the (mainstream) school where I was enrolled in. I had been a victim of social stigma and discrimination.....although every individual faces some problems (in life), but for me to be a transgender is quite problematic..... I (tried to) learn to live with the societal perspectives and start ignoring them. I have got admission in a school which is meant for people like me. And now I’m not having as such problems, because I (either) used to stay at home most of the time or socialize only with close friends” (P1) (with focus added).

Participant 2 (P2) added

“We have no participation in societal development because of societal conditions particularly the social violence against us. School doors are closed for us; work places have no space for us. Such distressed experiences and treatment have added miseries to our whole life”.

Regarding transgenders’ perceptions of the initiatives taken in Punjab for their education, Participant 3 (P3) argued that:

In terms of protection of our (transgenders) rights, no worth mentioning efforts have been made by the government so far. Judicial decisions and legislative instruments are somewhat inactive in this regard. The government is failed to ensure equal rights policies through enrolling transgender persons in mainstream schools.

Participant 4 and 5 (P4 and P5) echoed that “the people in the normal (mainstream) communities think that our (transgenders’) job is to beg, dance, work as sex workers etc. This has hugely shaped our mentality that we are supposed to do such (inappropriate) jobs only.we are compelled to begging (though) we are aware its wrong. We face a hostile work environment where we tend to get stigmatized. The educational institutions for transgenders are few in number and those who exist do not cover formal education similar to the degree programs.....If government ensures facilitation in the form of employment and earning resources, transgender community could certainly come forward and serve the community” (with added focus).

Almost all the participants of this research strongly voiced that since many years, the transgender community is striving to avail the personal freedom and self determination to make their place in society. According to participant 2 “The benchmarks on social and cultural level participation have also restricted them to get access to education. The government’s initiatives taken under the constitutional and provisional acts for an inclusive education system in the country are not making any positive impact on the transgenders”.

Discussion

The main objective of the present study was to investigate the current state of the educational opportunities available to the transgender community and the initiatives taken by the governmental and non-governmental organizations in Punjab. Although the data was gathered from a small sample however, the researchers believe that the results still provide meaningful insights that could be generalized to the overall scenario of the education of the transgenders in Pakistan.

The findings of this study correspond to a number of research studies (Grant et al., 2011; Tabassum and Jamil, 2014; Cortez, Keatley, Skaya, Divan, 2016; Rani & Kamal, 2017), which identified the distressed experiences and treatment that the transgenders receive from the society. The existing literature (Cortez et. al, 2016; Nazir&Yasir, 2016; Rani& Kamal, 2017) does not only support the findings of present study about the lacking efforts related to the inclusion of transgenders students in mainstream

schools/institutions but also highlight the ineffective initiatives taken by the systems to promote the education of transgenders.

Conclusion

The findings suggests that there were few designated institutions for transgender-people where they could seek education in an environment free from stigma and discrimination, however as these institutions were not providing degree level education therefore, this could not helping them enough to obtain a good job or seek an appropriate career. Initiatives taken by the government to address the social, economic and educational needs of transgenders were also seen ineffective as these were not implementation well.

It is recommended that the transgender community should be provided awareness about importance of education and its role in raising their living standards. A proper feedback mechanism to evaluate the intended outcomes of the institutions established for the education of transgenders should be established. This would in turn ensure the sustainability of such institutions. Certain improvements in the mainstream schools may also be introduced such as teachers' training and sensitizing the other students to the lives of trans-students, in order to ensure them an inclusive and healthy environment. Most importantly, the implementation gap of the policies and laws in favor of transgenders should be reduced.

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