

Exploring the Effects of Transphobia among Transgender Community

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Abstract

Transgender community often faced many negative attitudes and discrimination because of their identities. These experiences can affect their mental health or education and relationships or access to healthcare facilities and many more. This qualitative study explores how transgender community in Pakistan experience transphobia and how it affects their daily lives. Descriptive phenomenology approach was used in this study. Data were collected through two focus group discussions method in which we take 12 transgender participants between age 24 to 32 years. The data were collected from different areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The data were analyzed through Thematic analysis in which we found two main areas psychological effects and social effects. Participants talked about discrimination and harassment or stress and anxiety. They also talked about police harassment or verbal abuse at their workplace. They talked about how they face educational and unemployment issues or rejection for society. Despite of these difficulties, they show signs of hope and personal strength. The findings show that transphobia affect transgender community at both personal and social levels. Greater acceptance and proper psychological support are needed.

Keywords: transphobia, transgender people, discriminations, minority stress, mental health, Pakistan.

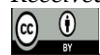
Introduction

Everyone deserves to live with dignity and respect. Transgender people face discrimination because of their gender identity as it is acceptable by society. Transphobias include rejection and bullying or harassment and unfair treatments. These experiences affect mental health and many opportunities.

The minority stress theory helps explain this problem. Meyer (2003) explained that people from stigmatized groups may experience stress because of rejection and social pressure. White Hughton et al. (2015) explained that transgender stigma can happens at any level from personal and family relationships to workplace healthcare institute and society.

Earlier studies shown that transgender community who face discrimination and rejections are at considerable risk of suicidal thoughts (Testa et al., 2017). McNeil et al. (2021) explained that minority stress experiences suicidal thoughts and behaviours among transgender or nocomforming adults has positive relationship.

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Murchison et al. (2019) reported that negative effects of unsupportive school environments Transgender individuals who experienced these negative effects are on high risk of sexual assault.

In Pakistani context many research findings have found social exclusion or discrimination and socioeconomic difficulties among transgender community (Shah et al., 2018). According to earlier studies health care is also main concern of transgender community. Manzoor et al. (2022) reported many barriers which include nonacceptance, documentation problems, and poor experience with healthcare services. Another study found that the health care treatment of transgender and cisgender has many differences and set standardization in Pakistan it shows that unequal treatment occurs when overt discrimination is not present (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Previous studies help to provide the valuable information which is describe by transgender people by their own words by the help of qualitative study and present study helps to find out the effects of transphobia on their psychological wellbeing and social lives of transgender individuals in Pakistan.

Purpose of study:

The purpose of this study was to explore how transphobia effects transgender people in Pakistan and which types of psychological and social consequences they faced.

Research question:

What are the effects of transphobia on transgender community in Pakistan?

Method

Research design:

A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was used. It helps to understand participants lived experience of transphobia. Focus group discussion allow every participant to explain and discuss their experiences with others and share their opinions on other experiences.

Participants:

This study included 12 transgender participants their age between 24 to 32 years. They are from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Ten out of them had no formal educational background. One had completed grade eight and other one had completed matriculation. Participants include transgender women. Convenient sampling used for this study.

Data collection:

Two focus groups discussion was conducted. First one conducted in PWD housing society Islamabad which was lasted approximately 25 minutes and second one conducted in commercial market Rawalpindi which was lasted approximately 40 minutes Informed consent was obtained and confidentiality was supported. This study use semi structured interview guide with open ended questions because it helps the participants to speak more about their experiences and it also helps interviewer to clarify their doubts. Questions were focused on their psychological well-

being or education they face different type of discrimination and social support or their coping strategies.

Data analysis

The collected material analyzed by using thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) it includes several stages. In which information which was collected from the focus group discussion verify repeatedly it help to easily understand the experience of participants. Then codes were generated from given important statements and similar codes were grouped together. These similar codes help to generate themes.

Results

After the analysis, the two primary areas were found psychological effects and social effects. Psychological effects included emotional stress or mental health problems. It also includes suicidal thoughts or verbal abuse and discrimination or hope. The need for respect or identity and the desire of happy life.

Social effects included problems with employment or financial difficulties. It includes more domains like education or healthcare and police or family relationships and social stigma or social exclusion.

Psychological effects:

Emotional stress and mental health

Participants explained that transphobia give them a lot of emotional stress. They talked about how anxiety or helplessness and low self esteem give them fear about their future. Many participants collectively discuss mental health problems regarding to unemployment and rejection. This shows that their emotional problems have positive relationship with financial hardship and difficult living conditions.

Suicidal thoughts

Suicidal thoughts appeared as one of the hardest findings. Participants describe feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness which push them for suicide attempts and many of them just not only try to suicide but also, they sacrificed their lives. This study was qualitative that why not any standardized test use for suicide risk measure. Finishings interpreted very carefully results does not provide prevalence rate for suicidal thoughts it only shows suicidal thoughts of participants which they discussed.

Discrimination and verbal abuse

Discrimination found at many areas of daily life it happens in schools workplaces healthcare centres. Participants described they treated unfairly and fear of discrimination reduced their opportunities.

Verbal use was also common issue they face in their everyday life chaos. Participants reported hate speech humiliation and derogatory language which give them emotional pain and they feel that they were not respected as like other member of society.

Hope

Participants show signs of hope. They hoped that after some tough time they were accepted by society their circumstances will be changed, and they also enjoy the important sources of resilience.

Identity

Participants wanted to be treated as complete human's beings rather than they only defined by their gender identity. They want their feelings need and identities should be recognised. They also show desire to help others. Participants does not want to be treated as victims. They show themselves as complete human being who have feelings abilities and goals.

Desire for life:

Participants expressed intense desire for normal life they wanted to earn money help their families and want to live safely.

Social effects:

Employment

Participants discussed how they face difficulties to earn money. They described that there are limited job opportunities for them and high rate of discrimination. They also face many difficulties to obtain housing because of negative social attitudes.

Education

Participants described bullying teasing and social rejection in schools. One participant who completed eight grades experience many negative social attitudes and they believe that if education system improved, they achieve many good opportunities in their lives.

Healthcare services

Healthcare services were also main concern for them. Participants expressed that when they went to hospital for their medical issues they laughed on them and asked inappropriate questions from them. They described that because of fear of being judged they try solving most of their medical issue at their homes.

Police harassment

Participants described that authorities also disrespect them. Police authorities never support them instead of helping them they beat them brutally and harass them behind the jails.

Family relationships

Family relationships are the main protective factors. Participants expressed feelings of sorrow because of their families they discussed that when their family knows their gender identities instead of accepting they threw them from their houses and never give them social support or love.

Social stigma

Participants experienced marginalization. They believed that stereotypes effect their entire transgender community. Participants described that because of one person actions should not be used for judgments. They wanted society recognised individual differences within community.

Discussion

These findings show that transphobia affects transgender community in all main domains like psychologically economically and socially. Participants feel distress anxiety and talk about suicidal thoughts which supports the minority stress perspective (Meyer, 2003; White Hughto et al., 2015). These findings also positively linked with Testa et al (2017) who linked gender minority stress and lack of social belonging with suicidal ideation.

Participants also reported barriers in education employment healthcare services and many more . These difficulties increase rate of social exclusion.

Implications

The findings suggest that many areas need improvement . Mental health providers should be responsible and respectful to transgender community and help them for coping mechanisms and make easy to access for them . They should be trained for transgender community . Education system also improve their accessibility for them they work on bullying and harassment factors which stop them to complete their education .Employment programs should be provide fair requirements policies for them and provide save workplaces.

Healthcare workers should bhe trained and give them clear guidelines about communication for transgender patients.Healthcare institutes should protect them from discrimination and give them safe environment.

Police and other authorities should also trained for their protection . Families should encouraged for acceptance.

Limitations

This study based on convenience sampling and it has also small sample size only 12 participants and it cover only areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi .Findings may not represent all the areas of Pakistan.

Focus group discussion may also have limited diversity of participants reponses. Futher studies should use large sample size and include different areas of Pakistan it would give help them to generate new codes and themes .

Conclusion

This study found that transphobia negatively affects the transgender community. Its effects their psychological and social well being factors. Participants should reported emotional distress anxiety stress depression or hopelessness helplessness discrimination educational barriers or unemployment and problems accessing healthcare or institutional support. Rather than these challenges they have hope faith well being and community support for each other. For reducing transphobia it required great social acceptance and equal opportunities for them or social acceptance.

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