

Need to Belong and Loneliness amongst Transgender Community Due to Family Rejection

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Abstract

Transgenders pay the price for a non-binary gender conformation in every walk of life including spending a life away from their family members. This study aims to assess an unexplored aspect of their mental health their need to belong and the loneliness they experience as the cost of their life choices. A qualitative research design was used. The sample of the present study was collected from transgenders N=4. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected through in-depth interviews that consisted of semi-structured open-ended questions. To analyze the data thematic analysis technique was used. The findings of the research indicate that transgenders are mainly outcasted due to their professional choices. After spending a lifetime away from their loved ones, they now regret the reckless behavior they adopted in their youth. However, that does not justify the difficulties they face in the form of mocking, judgments and not being able to find a safe place to live. The trans-community has been found to play a positive role in the lives of the transgenders although the intercommunity conflicts are a part of their bond. Hence, the present study concludes that the unjust behavior on the part of society makes transgender individuals question where they belong and the loneliness prevails in their lives despite living amongst similar people. The only way out of this dilemma is through accepting the third gender as a normal part of this society.

Keywords: Transgender community, Loneliness, Behavior, Family rejection

1 Introduction

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Transgenders, generally referred to as *khawaja sira*, *hijra*, and *khusra* in Pakistani society, are probably given more names than rights. They are commonly frowned upon for cross-dressing and living a life opposite to their assigned sex at the time of birth. Many of them are believed to be intersex persons, but transgender is an umbrella term and these individuals are quite diverse and differ (Javed, [2016](#)). To understand the complexities and layers of trans-identity, a thorough understanding of sex and gender must be attained.

Sex refers to the two main biological categories (male and female) in which all living beings are distinguished based on their genetic makeup (genes, chromosomes, and hormones) and reproductive functions. Culture has no impact on one's sex. Relatively sex is a sturdy category that cannot be changed easily, despite the fact, that the latest technology has allowed people to change their biological sex (Ingold, [2021](#)). On the other hand, gender is a much more fluid category. Gender refers to the social categories of male and female. Both categories are divided from one another by a set of psychological traits and allocated roles that society has assigned to the biological category of sex. Our perception of ourselves as psychologically female or male is known as gender identification or gender-role identity. You have probably heard of Individuals who are naturally male but wish they were female, or vice versa (Ingold, [2021](#)).

The process of acquiring sex-appropriate preferences, habits, abilities, and self-concept is known as sex typing. What does it take for a girl to become feminine? And a guy to be masculine? Sex-typed people are those who conform to the gender roles that society has assigned to them. A sex-typed male thinks, feels, and acts masculine, while a sex-typed female thinks, feels, and acts femininely. Cross-sex-typed people are males who act feminine and females who act masculine. Androgynous is a term used to describe someone who possesses both masculine and feminine characteristics (Blake-Beard et al., [2020](#)). Transgender is an umbrella term used to refer to those whose gender doesn't comply with their assigned sex. These also include individuals who are born with ambiguous genitals.

In Pakistan, Transgender individuals encounter numerous challenges throughout their lives, from birth to death. When they are born, their families reject them and refuse to acknowledge them as their children, even if they discriminate against their other children and their intersex children. Transgender people have the most terrible lives that we can't imagine (Saeed et al., [2018](#)). Education is the basic right of every child. Even Islam emphasizes education, claiming that education is mandatory for everyone, regardless of gender. Even though Pakistan is an Islamic country, transgender people are denied access to education. They are not allowed to attend the same schools as other children since they are not deemed normal. In our country, there are no separate educational institutes for transgender individuals. By July 8, 2021, the very first transgender school is open in Multan (Tanveer, [2021](#)). Pakistan, thanks to the hard work of the transgender community. 2021, which is the current year, indicates that no previous attempts were made for them. Education is the key to success, how do you feel if this key/right is taken away from you?

No education implies no job, and even if they are educated, they are unable to get a job. Because they are unable to fit into a single gender category to meet the demands of the job. In Pakistan, there are no occupations for transgender individuals. They have signed numerous petitions to be considered for the positions. Because it is difficult to survive without a job (Khan, [2017](#)). They are unable to play with other children because society does not regard them to be of any gender or even a child/ or a human being. In this brutal culture, they have no acceptance. Every individual living in that country has a basic right to a national identity card, but they have no right to be identified as Pakistani in Pakistan. They are not permitted to apply for an identity card. By March 2018, a measure establishing a transgender identity card and basic rights had been passed (Adair, [2019](#)).

They face discrimination throughout their lives. Transgender individuals experience economic, social, and personal discrimination which is why many transgender women believe that working in the sex business is their only realistic job option. Their participation in sex work is influenced by discrimination. They are also subjected to sexual violence. News outlets are reporting on the violence, but there is no justice for the victims. Human well-being is dependent on social relationships. People face severe problems while going through loneliness like High blood pressure, cardiovascular illness, disability, cognitive decline, and depression these are all negative health consequences that are connected to loneliness (Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana, [2015](#)). Other than all these physical problems psychological distress is also there in times of isolation.

According to a study transgender Community Face more Loneliness in comparison with other genders. Transgender adolescents suffered severe loneliness and had a hard time finding acceptance or affiliation with mainstream as well as homosexual and lesbian youth. While familial rejection and social isolation are unquestionably the leading causes of transgender loneliness (Yadegarfar et al., [2014](#)). The ones who are being rejected by their family members also face isolation. It truly is traumatizing when your family and society accept you as a Trans.

Every human being has an innate need to belong somewhere. The fact that belongingness is a need in itself tells us that it demands to be fulfilled for optimal human functioning. The need to belong can be defined as a fundamental drive found in human beings to be welcomed into relationships and social groups (Baumeister & Leary, [2017](#)). If we evaluate the psychological basis of this concept, it can be traced back to Freud's idea of parental-offspring relationships. The sense of belongingness in an individual develops at an early age through our relationship on the other hand, Abraham Maslow gave it another direction by putting it amongst the most basic human needs like food, sleep, shelter, and self-esteem in his Hierarchy of Needs. This emphasizes the significance of the need to belong in human lives.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Theory of behaviorism

The behavioral approach was given by B.F. Skinner around the 1960s and 1970s (O'Donohue & Kitchener, [1998](#)). If we look at this approach loneliness is defined by personality characteristics that are linked to, and maybe contribute to, interpersonal interaction patterns which are harmful. Loneliness, for example, is linked to social anxiety, social inhibition (shyness), unhappiness, aggression, distrust, and low self-esteem, all of which impair one's capacity to engage in a smart and fulfilling manner. Indeed, studies have shown that lonely people have a hard time creating and keeping meaningful connections. In this case when transgenders who are rejected by their family members and society are more vulnerable to issues like low self-esteem, sorrow, aggression, etc.

Through Maslow's Hierarchy

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory that describes the motivations that drive human behavior. Abraham Maslow, a psychologist, postulated five types of human needs in 1943. He also argued that people are motivated to meet particular needs and that some needs are more important than others (Dar & Sakthivel, [2022](#)). His theory is still used and interpreted in modern literature and research.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is displayed like a pyramid starting with the most fundamental needs at the bottom. According to the theory, Maslow explains that there are five needs including physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Transgender persons are a minority in our society. They battle for basic human rights and suffer from a lack of identity, low self-esteem, issues regarding their safety, and a need to belong somewhere. This research aims at studying the third level of Maslow's Hierarchy in transgenders i.e., the need to belong.

2 Literature Review

Family rejection plays a significant role in experiencing loneliness among transgender communities across the globe. Previous studies have revealed several factors that are included in the oppression and discrimination of transgender community. This study is focused on the lack of belongingness and loneliness caused due to family rejection as very few studies have indicated there is an association between these variables. Previous studies have explored that family rejection and loneliness are significant factors for developing depression in individuals who are transgender. This chapter has concentrated on the above variables by using the frameworks of previous literature, analysis, and theory. The chapter has also focused on finding the link between these variables and the association with transgender community in Pakistan, in past explorations.

The research was conducted to understand the culture, identity politics, and transgender activism in Pakistan (Moiz & Gaewalla [2021](#)) the Pakistani Supreme Court began granting rights to gender-ambiguous people who are locally known as *khwaja siras*. Meanwhile, *khwaja siras* began to mobilize to control their public image. However, *khwaja sira* politics did not promote an understanding of gender and sexual difference. These provisional solutions perpetuated ambiguity about *khwaja siras*, temporarily grazing the surface of their struggles without promoting long-term stigma reduction.

Another investigation was undertaken in Pakistan to highlight the issues and management of transgender community in Pakistan. (Alam et al., [2019](#)) Interviews were conducted with open-ended questions and a snowball sampling technique. Results indicated that transgender people face harassment, family rejection, abuse, and abuse from society through the health care system, education system, employment, and other government institutions. They face a variety of abuses, from exclusion to brutal murder. They are subjected to trafficking, extortion, and forced prostitution. The study suggested recommendations for the management of the transgender community in Pakistan. Another study explored that in Pakistan transgender are ignored in every walk of life including, education, government jobs, health care, and even security for their life. Not only society, but their families are not accepting them as their family members (Saddique et al., [2017](#)).

In 2018, a cross-sectional study was conducted in Pakistan, aimed to investigate the challenges faced by marginalized communities including transgenders (Shah & et al., [2018](#)). A validated close-ended questionnaire was used to estimate the high-risk behaviors. It was concluded that the transgender community is socially excluded by the Pakistani society where they experience high levels of physical abuse and face discriminatory behavior in daily life. Such attitudes make them vulnerable to risky behaviors, isolation and forcing them to become commercial sex workers, drug use, and even suicidal ideation. Apart from basic human acceptance, research has previously explored that the transgender community face difficulties in educational settings as well which lead to a high illiteracy rate among transgenders. According to a study, the prevalence of illiteracy amongst transgender resultantly results in insight into the barbaric ways of life, indulged in ignorance and far-flung from social development (Gondal & et al., [2021](#))

A recent study based on grounded theories analysis of interviews with transgender-identified people from different regions of KP, Pakistan revealed that policies regarding the education of transgender were not implemented. Furthermore, educational institutions are not willing to give admission to them and no equal educational opportunities are available for transgender which results, in they are far away from living a normal independent life in society (Rukhshanda et al., [2021](#)). It was suggested in the study that the government penalizes those who are not given admission to transgender individuals and humiliate them at educational institutions, especially, by regularly initiating an awareness program in media to remove negative attitudes of family and society. Along with it, initiate educational and employment opportunities and fix quotas for

transgender in all sectors.

Another examination found that the disclosure decision of transgenders is influenced by the complexities of family honor, tightly integrated family network, social obligation to get married, and prevalent religious beliefs in society (Saeed et al., [2018](#)). This study advanced the understanding of the identity and disclosure decisions of transsexual individuals by explicating how sociocultural factors are an intricate part of their decision to come out.

To examine the impact of social support and self-efficacy in producing psychological distress in the transgender community, a study was conducted in 2018, which indicated that social support and Self-efficacy were significantly negatively associated with Psychological distress. Moreover, Social support significantly predicted Psychological distress in Khawajasiras even after controlling the demographic variables. In the transgender community, the association between Social Support and Psychological Distress was mediated by Self-efficacy (Abbas et al., [2018](#)). Lack of employment among transgenders was also studied in the literature. A study evaluated the status of occupational skills and the willingness of the transgender population to change and switch over to other jobs in the study area (Nazir & Yasir, [2016](#)). Results showed that there was a high tendency of willingness to adopt other honorable professions. Their choice of acceptance of other professions was interesting but they need government support to adopt the professions of their choice.

Transgender communities across the world are vulnerable to abuse, discrimination, and violence. This vulnerability leads the transgender community towards social isolation, psychological disorders, suicidal ideation, and self-harm. A qualitative study was conducted to examine the phenomenon of social exclusion and how it relates to suicidal ideation and self-harm among transgender youth living and working in a society (Javaid et al., [2020](#)). The findings showed that transgender people are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and self-harming tendencies. Loneliness, gender identity crises, police behavior, and the guru's poor attitudes were all factors that contributed to suicidal thoughts in the transgenders. The most common cause of suicidal ideation among transgender people is their gender identity's sense of an "incomplete life." Transgender people with unclear gender identities had higher rates of suicidal ideation than their non-transgender counterparts. The behavior of their families and failed relationships are substantial predictors of self-harm in.

Research was conducted to study transgender people and human rights issues in Pakistan (Awan, [2019](#)). This study indicated that the transgender community faced violations of human rights in their daily life activities. While it is commonly accepted that a genitally ambiguous child is intersexed, the family frequently conceals this fact or attempts to impose a largely masculine identity on the child. Many family members and relatives regard them as a threat to family honor or a sign of weakness, making the youngster exposed to sexual and physical abuse. Nonetheless, a gender-variant child's experiences of loneliness, abuse, and exclusion may lead him or her to seek company outside of his or her family orientation. Similarly, the Supreme Court has ordered local governments to change current legislation to safeguard the transgender community. Despite this, there are differences in legislative and judicial interpretations of transgender identity, which continues to struggle in the fight for basic rights. In the quest to integrate transgender people into mainstream Pakistani culture, there is still a long way to go.

Many studies have been conducted to improve the mental health of the transgender community. The effects on mental health are typically brought on by social and familial rejection (Jami & Kamal, [2015](#)). Studies have focused on important facets of transgender people's mental health, such as the anxiety and depression they encounter (Oswalt & Lederer, [2017](#)). The lack of inclusivity and suicidal ideation they experience (Rood et al., [2015](#)). They are excluded from an early age, primarily as a result of parental rejection, so it can be said that they have an intense

desire to fit in. All people are born with the need to fit in somewhere. The sense of alienation a transgender person who has experienced early abandonment can only be imagined. The purpose of this study is to shed light on the loneliness experienced by the transgender community as a result of their families' rejection of them and their need to belong.

Several studies and earlier literature looked into crucial aspects of the variables in our study. Previous research has also backed up our goals and the relationship between the variables we looked at. Previous research provided direction, expertise, and information on a sense of lack of belonging, loneliness, and family rejection. It was useful in determining whether these variables had been explored in the transgender community or not, and whether they had been investigated together or individually. All of these characteristics have never been investigated together in the transgender population before.

2.1 Rationale

There have been numerous studies that aim towards the mental health of transgender Community. Usually, the effects on mental health are caused by to lack of acceptance from society and family (Jami & Kamal, [2015](#)). The research has revolved around major aspects of the mental health of transgenders like the depression and anxiety they experience (Oswalt & Lederer, [2017](#)). The suicidal ideation and lack of inclusivity they face (Rood et al., [2015](#)). Since they experience exclusion from a young age mainly due to parental rejection, it can be generalized that they have a dire need to belong. Every human being has an innate need to belong somewhere. One can only imagine the lack of belongingness of a transgender who has been abandoned at a young age can experience. So, this study aims to shed light on transgender community's need to belong and the loneliness that they feel as a result of not being accepted by their families.

2.2 Purpose and Objectives of the study

- To build a relationship between loneliness and the need to belong
- To assess the loneliness in the transgender community due to familial rejection
- To assess the need to belong in the transgender community due to family rejection

2.3 Research Design

A qualitative research method was selected for the research which was further analyzed through thematic analysis. A qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews comprising open-ended questions.

2.4 Research Questions

- What are the main causes of family rejection faced by transgenders?
- What impact does be away from family have on transgender people's loneliness?
- What are the major effects of living away from family for the transgenders?
- Do the transgenders experience an unfulfilled need to belong somewhere?
- Is there a feeling of loneliness in transgenders' lives?
- What is the role of the community in the lives of transgender individuals?

2.5 Interview Guide

The interview guide was prepared by keeping in view the research questions and the variables. Each variable was thoroughly investigated through in-depth questions. The beginning of the interview guide comprised some rapport-building questions and the demographics of the participants. The questions regarding family rejection were self-made and intended to probe their life stories and their relationship with their families. Loneliness was studied through questions obtained from the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell & Ferguson, [1978](#)) and further altered to fit the demand of our qualitative research. Need to belong was assessed by getting questions from The Need to Belong Scale Nichols and Webster, ([2013](#)) as per our requirement. The interview guide ended with concluding remarks from the participants and their message regarding the transgender community of Pakistan.

3 Methodology

This chapter explains the procedure that is applied for conducting the research. It includes information about the sample, measuring tools, data collection methods, and other relevant information.

3.1 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for data collection. This method was selected to make sure that the subjects fulfilled certain requirements related to the main objective of the research.

3.2 Sample Selection/Target Population

Members of transgender Community who were rejected by their family members were selected within the age range of 30-50 years. To provide richer data for the study, a demographic that is likely to have undergone significant life events after rejection was selected within this particular age range.

3.3 Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals who are rejected by their families will be included.
- Individuals who are biologically transgenders will be included.

3.4 Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals diagnosed with gender dysphoria will not be included.
- Individuals gone through Gender Transitioning will not be included in the research.

3.5 Data Collection Method

Face-to-face in in-depth interviewing was conducted. A sample of 4 members of the transgender community who were rejected by their family members was selected. For Data Collection, a self-made questionnaire was developed to get relevant information from the respondent.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis was used after coding was done from transcription.

Written permission was taken from the institute and authorities of the selected organization 'Baham' for data collection. After getting permission from university authorities, required steps were taken to approach transgender individuals who were rejected by their families. Semi-structured open-ended questions were prepared and designed before administering interviews. In-person interviews were conducted for data collection. A written consent form was provided to the participants before conducting interviews. The initial step of the interview was to take demographic information including age, profession, number of siblings, and residency. In-depth interviews were used to obtain a detailed background history of the participants. There were several open-ended questions included. Data was collected, and organized, and a transcript was created after that. Sub-themes and main themes were retrieved from the codes that were developed. General observations were made regarding what the data revealed for each theme. Thematic analysis was used to make results and draw conclusions.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Formal permissions to conduct the study were first taken from the thesis supervisor. Informed consent was taken before the interviews were conducted. Participants were informed about the freedom to withdraw at any time during the research. Participants voluntarily participated in this research. They were ensured that the confidentiality and anonymity of their data will be maintained throughout. Sensitive topics were discussed in a considerate manner and did not prop to questions that made them uncomfortable, the goal was to obtain information and not to hurt them with our actions and words. Moreover, all ethical principles of the American Psychological Association followed throughout the research study.

4 Results

This chapter deals with the results related to the phenomenon of the need to belong and loneliness that transgenders experience due to family rejection. This chapter addresses the semi-structured interview data from four participants by weaving through their unique contexts and experiences to

uncover the themes. Here those various themes are presented.

4.1 Gender Identity

All the participants chose to identify as females. They stated that they had an innate inclination towards feminine traits and hobbies. From a young age they liked dressing up, doing makeup, and portraying feminine and delicate body language. They preferred female company because they could resonate more with the female lifestyle and be their real selves around them. A major part of their gender identity was also formed by internalizing other people's comments i.e., *ye toularkiyon ki tarahuth 'tabeth' ahai*.

4.2 The Void of Family

None of the participants were found to be living with the family. They had very limited contact with them. One of the participants stated that she had contact with only one family member. Similarly, another participant reported that she was in contact with two of her family members. All of the participants showed hesitancy while answering the questions related to their families. Their replies were short and reluctant.

When asked about the reason for not living with their families, they stated that they were cast away due to their professional choices.

"Kehtay hain lekin kehtay hain ke ye field chor kar aao"

This was mainly due to societal pressure and fear of judgment on the family's part. The society has certain set standards and since they did not abide by those standards, their family reputation was at stake. So, this resulted in a change of behavior, restrictions, constraints, and violence from home like when they said,

"Ghar walay darwaza nahi kholtay thay. Aur khoob pitaai hoti thi."

They were unaccepting of their feminine traits, stigmatizing their gender identity. Their families discriminated between them and their straight siblings. They received constant taunts and scolding which resulted in them feeling suffocated and leaving their homes due to unlivable circumstances. However, they openly admitted that they loved their families wholeheartedly despite the circumstances. They crave the love and affection of their closed ones. They missed the presence of their family members particularly on special occasions like festivities. The deficiency of a normal functioning family remains in their life.

4.3 Trans-Community as Family

The transgenders were found to be in a very close bond with their trans community. They supported each other as a family.

"abyehi meri family hain. inse hi share krleti hon, harbaat share karletehain."

Their unfulfilled need for belongingness was being fulfilled by their trans-family. They had a good intracommunity understanding and were extremely fond of each other's company.

4.4 Trans-Community as Mafia

Many organizations are acting as mafia in disguise of NGOs and welfare for transgenders. The trans community on a larger scale consists of Gurus who are considered the leaders of the community. The participants stated that they faced injustice, assault and mistreatment by the Gurus for the sake of money. One of them exclaimed,

"Jo baray guru hain wo chotaykhawaja sara pr buhat pressure daltayhain. buhat tang krtehai."

The greedy and toxic behavior of Gurus causes conflicts within the community.

4.5 Unraveling the Emotions

The participants showed an evident need for empathy from society. The unfulfillment of this need has led to the feeling of loneliness in their lives which was evident in their statement *"koi nhi hai"*

They started having a feeling of emptiness and going into deep thoughts of how they regret their reckless choices in youth. They state to have realized this very late in their lives and they have somehow learned to survive with this guilt. They claim that the only way to endure their circumstances is by being emotionally detached and accepting their fate because they see no hope for the future. However, their hearts still long for peace.

4.6 Treatment from Society

The transgenders reported a difference in treatment from society. Although there were a few people who would ask them for a cup of tea if they showed up to their door for begging unfortunately the occurrence of mistreatment like cat-calling, hooting, mocking, and judgmental stares is way more prevalent than the kind gestures. They conveyed that they live with a constant fear of judgment which has led them to social isolation. But the need for recognition still prevails in their lives.

4.7 Profession – An Over-Powering Factor

All of the participants were illiterate and left their education due to an aimless attitude. When asked whether they had any goals in life one of the participants chuckled

“Meratou bus dance karnay ka he dilkartatha”.

All of them got into dancing as a profession at a young age because they thought of it as a career that resonated with their feminine instincts. But now they claim to be stuck in the same profession that was once a hobby. Apart from dancers, they are also beggars because there are no respectable job opportunities for them. They are sick of their routine as stated by them

“Ye kyazindagihai? Roz tayarhona, roz bell dena, begging karna, function karna.”

They want to earn in an honorable way and want self-sufficiency in their lives. But since they are the primary breadwinners, they are left with no choice but to dance and beg to make their ends meet.

4.8 Living Situation and Shelter Crisis

Due to the stigma attached to their gender identity and profession, the transgenders expressed that they struggle to find a safe living space. Not only it is hard for them to afford the rent of the place but the landlords also give them a hard time and kick them out after one month or so as reported by the participants.

5 Discussion

This chapter focuses on the interpretations of the results analyzed in the previous chapter. This research aimed at assessing the need to belong and loneliness amongst transgenders who spent their lives away from their families. Seldom have these traits been examined together in the transgender population. After interviewing four participants who were rejected by their families, various layers of the phenomenon were discovered that are supported by the existing literature.

Several researchers have examined transgender people's mental health, frequently emphasizing the impact of rejection from both families and society (Jami & Kamal, [2015](#)). Prior studies have concentrated on issues like anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts (Oswalt & Lederer, [2017](#); Rood et al., [2015](#)). The purpose of this study is to examine the connections between loneliness, exclusion, and the desire for acceptance within the transgender community.

Due to their non-binary gender identity and innate tendency toward femininity, the participants identified as transgender. Compared to their homes, where they were forced to conform to gender roles and faced rejection from both family and society, they felt more at ease and comfortable in the company of other women (Saddique et al., [2017](#)). They looked outside of their families for companionship due to experiences of abuse, exclusion, and loneliness (Awan, [2019](#)). They

embraced who they truly were and found acceptance in the transgender community. They chose to pursue dancing as a career because they wanted to be more feminine, but their families didn't support this decision, so they were rejected even more.

Family honor, integrated family networks, social pressure to marry, and prevailing religious beliefs all play a role in a person's decision to come out as transgender (Saeed et al., [2018](#)). They had to leave their home because of violence and limitations, and they wanted to find acceptance in the transgender community. Their transgender community met their need for belonging and offered support. However, they experienced social isolation as a result of the mistreatment they endured in society due to their chosen gender identity and line of work. Transgender people felt regret for their decisions in life, even though they received some acceptance. They regretted not pursuing education, which may have opened up more opportunities, and they were always filled with emptiness. They wanted financial support from their families so they wouldn't have to be the main breadwinners. They have survived by accepting their fate, being detached, and feeling guilty about their late realization.

Although one's circumstances can affect their destiny, these transgender people made their own decisions and are now dealing with the repercussions. They don't feel accepted at home or in society, so their need for belonging is still unmet. They regret it, but the treatment they received was unfair. Their substandard living conditions were exacerbated by society's failure to offer them unconditional acceptance. Society must shift if their lives are to improve. There could have been a big impact from an inclusive educational system, de-stigmatizing their profession, and embracing their femininity. Had these changes been implemented, they could have become more fully assimilated into society.

5.1 Conclusion

By the end of this research, it can be concluded that the mental health of transgenders living in Pakistan is in very bad condition as they go through numerous problems just because they identify differently from the set norms of the society. This also serves as the main reason that they are rejected by their families. This is why they have a strong need to belong somewhere, but it remains unfulfilled by their family, society, and as well as their trans-community. All of this has left a void of loneliness in lives which can only be filled if their gender is accepted as a normal part of this society.

5.2 Limitations

The most difficult task we faced was selecting and locating the sample. It was quite difficult to reach out to the participants because they live in a separate community which is unreachable for students like us. Selecting the sample was also a challenging task, considering that the research required individuals who were rejected by their families. The number of studies conducted on transgenders in Pakistan was already very limited. And on top of that, the variables of our research have never been studied before on this specific sample due to which we could not gather any existing insights on the topic. COVID also served as a barrier because we were subjected to numerous delays in our data collection. Participants preferred speaking in Punjabi language and were unable to understand even basic terminologies which were further simplified for their ease of understanding. Certain topics were left unexplored like the need of intimate relationships in their lives. They were hesitant to talk about it and provided unclear answers that were deviating from the point.

5.3 Future Research

The society needs to stop the stigmatization around transgenders and let them live a normal life like other genders. This can be done by stopping the catcalling, mocking and judgmental stares. And letting them be a part of social circles.

The discrimination against transgenders roots in their own homes. The families of transgender individuals should start treating their children equally despite of their gender identity. And their femininity should be accepted so that their need for belongingness can be fulfilled at their own homes.

The need for shelter and safety are necessities of every individual. Transgenders should be provided with safe shelter where they could live without the fear of being thrown out by the end of the month. They also should be provided legal protection which will guard them from unexpected violence. Transgender children should be allowed to attend regular schools with other male and female children without any unfair treatment. Educated transgenders will be able to build a respectful career for themselves. Even if these individuals have been deprived of their educational rights, they should be given skill-based professional opportunities.

Awareness campaigns and programs should be carried out to educate the families of transgender individuals and the rest of society. This way the third gender will be normalized and stigma attached to their gender will finally break. One of the major aspects left unexplored in this study was the need for intimate relationships among transgenders. So, further studies should incorporate this aspect of their lives in the research.

5.4 Data availability

The data file is available for the reviewer as per your requirement.

5.5 Conflicts of Interest

In this article no conflict of interest.

5.6 Funding statement

No funding was present for the present research.

6 References

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