

## Problems Faced by Transgender Persons in their Professional Progression

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the problems faced by transgender persons in their professional progression. The current study used a phenomenological approach in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the problems encountered by transgendered people in their professional progression. Ten semi-structured in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted to collect data for this study. Snowball sampling technique was used to find out the transgender participants for data collection. Ten transgender participants were selected using snowball sampling technique. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Six key themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis, including finding employment, maintaining relationships with heads and colleagues, hesitation in participation in official meetings, going outside with coworkers/colleagues, harassment, violence and bullying, and mental health. This study found that transgender individuals are less likely to obtain jobs than other genders and are less likely to attend official meetings. They also encounter difficulties in developing and sustaining relationships with coworkers and suffer from mental health issues. They were subjected to harassment, violence, and bullying. The findings emphasize the importance of promoting an inclusive, violence-free environment where transgender persons feel secure and flourish freely without fear of rejection by their colleagues. It is needed to improve the workplace atmosphere and reduce transgender harassment. Relevant guidelines and anti-bullying policies might be implemented to keep transgender persons safe in organizations.

### KEYWORDS

Transgender, Harassment, Violence, Bullying, Mental Health, and Professional Progression

### JOURNAL INFO

HISTORY: Received: October 25, 2021

Accepted: December 25, 2021

Published: December 31, 2021

### INTRODUCTION

Transgender are regarded as second-class people and are given no value in our culture because we are conditioned to recognize only two genders: male and female. We do not understand their issues, so in order to keep our distance, we treat them as taboo, humiliating them for no cause. In Pakistan, the term "Hijra" is widely used to refer to transgender people. Because of their sexual identity in our culture, transgender people are the most oppressed group, as they face various issues such as inequality, poverty, illiteracy, social and cultural boycotts, social identities, and a lack of opportunities (Abdullah et al., 2012). Furthermore, Chakrapani (2010) highlights transgender minorities' vulnerability to health threats such as HIV. The study area is India, but there are multiple similarities that can be traced back to Bangladeshi society when considering the historical background of the South Asian region. The investigation led by Sowden, Fleming, Savage, & Woitaszewski (2016) has a clearer link to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender).

Many transgender people are powerless against sadness, nervousness, intense pressure, and self-destruction due to the intersections of individual personality, social avoidance, and testing beneficial experiences. Until this investigation, there was no information about transgender people's susceptibility to suffering, unease, and even self-destruction in Cambodia. In fact, this is a region of exploration that is lacking throughout Asia. According to research in the United States, the rates of depression and tension greatly outperform those of the general population (Warren, Smalley, & Barefoot 2016). Transgender persons have been ignored by their close relatives, and their classmates are more likely to have had violent experiences. During the index period, the vast majority of participants reported experiencing social rejection due to their gender identification, most commonly from members of the family and friends (Domínguez-Martínez et al., 2020).

Discrimination was the most prevalent form of rejection among family members and friends, whereas aggressiveness has been the most frequent mode of rejection among fellow colleagues. Those who desire to be regarded as their gender identity also have encountered abuse from relatives, but usually from coworkers. Gender nonconformity respondents described more violent incidents than those who disguised their gender nonconformity. Transphobia causes enormous pain in children and young adults since they form their identities and personalities (Domínguez-Martínez & Robles, 2019).

Experiencing rejection and aggression from friends and colleagues can have serious long-term effects on transgender professional advancement, including poorer performance and increased absenteeism, eventually leading to failure and even



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high dropout rates (Poteat et al., 2014). Apart from that, discrimination and violence against sexual diversity negatively impact family interactions and, in severe instances, can result in death, either suicide, or violent attacks

In the context of Mexico, violence has spread across all areas of social life in recent decades. This has had a considerable effect on how gender-based aggression is practiced and communicated (Domínguez-Martínez et al., 2020). Various forms of violence that transgender people, — especially transgender women, are subjected to are rooted in both institutional and sociocultural factors, both of which are tightly connected to the hetero-patriarchal system that governs Mexican culture and contributes to the reproduction of patriarchal oppression while also maintaining social systems that demonstrate the exercise of gender violence, which begins in the family and spreads to numerous social settings (Constant, 2017). LGBT community in the United States is expected to endure terrible situations and substantial impediments in many organizations, despite recent socially beneficial advances in viewing and treating LGBT individuals in the country. The educational system is one of the most difficult and complex arenas to navigate (Sowden et al., 2016).

Many grounds experts and guides are unprepared to address the unique needs of transgender students. For transgender students, having sufficient mental attention is critical; Grossman and D'Augelli, (2012) found that 26% of transgender youth aged 15 to 21 would attempt to live on their own. The health and standard of living of transgender individuals, specifically those who choose to undergo medical and surgical transition, are greatly influenced by their access to quality healthcare. In certain situations, the transgender person's healthcare experiences could substantially impact their opinion of health and their future interactions with the health care (Heng, Heal, Banks, & Preston, 2018). Because of discrimination, a lack of provider expertise, and coordination between physicians and therapists, transgender people face significant obstacles in receiving mental health care services. So, to ensure the cognitive and emotional well-being of a community whose needs are routinely ignored, transgender-affirmative services are essential. Systems therapists who collaborate with medical professionals may be eminently qualified to improve the care of transgender individuals (Dalton, Jones, & Stoy, 2020).

Participants reported feeling uncomfortable with numerous body elements and considering adjustments to make themselves more match their gender identification. Transgender youth must reconcile their gender identity with the stereotypical gender expectations associated with their biological sex and reconcile their gender identities with sexual orientation. A social transition occurs when a youngster presents to others as a representative of the "opposite" gender in some or all situations (Durwood, McLaughlin & Olson, 2017). Developing gender and sexual identities are challenging for sexual minority youth. People with a stigmatized identity often feel shame, embarrassment, or denial because of identity confusion and lack of support for their developing identities, leading to high-stress levels (Murdock & Bolch, 2005). In this regard, all individuals expressed dissatisfaction with various features of their bodies and considered changing them to match their gender identity.

According to the findings, those who have described experiences of violence were most inclined to make adaptations to their physical looks compared with those who have not reported experiences of violence. Transgender youngsters frequently break socially accepted gender norms; the presentation of gender-typical behaviors leaves them vulnerable to victimization and bullying, particularly from their parents and friends (Grossman & D'Augelli/D'Augelli, 2006).

After declaring one's gender identity, some researchers discovered that transgender youth were frequently subjected to discrimination and violence (Grossman and D'Augelli/D'Augelli, 2007). Domínguez-Martínez et al., (2020) discovered that non-conforming gender expression is associated with increased levels of verbal aggression, sexual abuse, and physical violence. Those who appear to be more visible in public places are also more likely to target verbal and physical aggression.

There seems to be a guideline with advice for creating safe, inclusive, and respectful venues for LGBT people (México, Y. A. A. J. 2017). Unfortunately, there is no evidence to date of its effectiveness. More measures and interventions to decrease workplace violence are required, as are public policies to deconstruct gender norms and eradicate discrimination among adolescents (Domínguez-Martínez et al., 2020).

Several studies have indicated that having friends who are transgender or compassionate of one's gender identity may be a key resilience-promoting or preventative aspect against bullying because they provide positive social support and information during the transitioning process, such as for maintaining relationships with family members and other supportive people. However, more research is needed to confirm these findings (Robinson & Espelage 2013).

Dispenza (2012) explored that transgender worker are often subjected to small-scale hostilities that are sincerely based on predispositions, such as being instructed on how to dress or behave in accordance with their sexual orientation. These assessments are carried out in the United States, where there are no legal protections in place to protect transgender workers. Nonetheless, in the European Union (EU), comparable results were discovered, with current laws struggling to be enforced. Separation is faced by one out of every three transgender representatives when searching for jobs, according to EU reports, and a quarter experience segregation during business (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

The study found that people who successfully changed before having a job experience separation, but shifting between sexual orientations while working can be especially challenging and leave a trans\* person more vulnerable to extreme encounters. One study looks at how generalizations regarding sexual orientation continue to affect hiring practices, with many employers believing that workers only work in positions that are socially sexual orientation acceptable. Individuals who possess

"customary attributes" may interpret advancing at work as intentionally checking work environment sexual orientation standards, as moving from one sexual orientation to the next may be seen as purposefully testing work environment sexual orientation standards (Schilt and Connell, 2007).

Coming out as trans\* at work can also make an employee the victim of workplace abuse and put them at risk of being fired by bosses and colleagues (Beagan2012). After choosing to disclose their sex personality, many trans\* people report experiencing oppressive language, restricted access to bathrooms that conform to their sex personality, and unwillingness by collaborators to be addressed with preferred pronouns (Dispenza 2012).

Grossman, & D'augelli (2006) conducted a study in the United States that showed obnoxious assault started at a normal age of 13. At the age of 14, physical violence, including assault, began on a daily basis. In this report, guardians verbally prodded 77 percent of transgender youth, brothers or sisters prodded 48 percent, and cops prodded 65 percent.

An ongoing study sponsored by FHI360 on the positive experiences and HIV risks of young amusement workers included a limited review of transgender people as well as some notable risks. Regardless of sex work, all transgender respondents reported having several overlapping accomplices, high levels of drug and liquor usage, and conflicting condom use, according to the survey (Phlong, Weissman, Holden, and Liu, 2012).

An ongoing inquiry into Cambodia's social prohibition against lesbian, gay, and transgender people uncover substantial levels of stigma and alienation on a number of levels, including families, classrooms, the workplace, health clinics, and public spaces (Salas, 2013).

According to Bozani (2019), trans people felt gradually recognized, esteemed, and trusted by governments as a result of positive activities. It is suggested that a social guide will have a huge effect on the mental states of trans people. Arrangements should strive to ensure that trans people can live their lives free of discrimination in order to optimize their latent potential and minimize hopelessness before, during, and after transitioning (Bozani 2019; Drydakis, 2017).

Researchers observed that transgender people had been largely overlooked by society and government for a long period. According to the literature, no positive and effective efforts have been made in Pakistan to uplift transgender people by providing them with similar educational and employment opportunities as other genders. The researchers believed that through exploring the provision of education and their professional advancement, the underserved segment of society (Transgender) may be cared for and elevated. This study is being performed to raise awareness and understanding of the problems encountered by transgender individuals as a result of harassment, victimization, violence, discriminatory attitudes, and bullying by people during their career advancement. This study may catalyze for effective and leading individuals to develop the best policies potential for transgender people in terms of employment and other aspects of their lives in society, as well as a message may be sent to society to avoid harassment, victimization, rejection, discriminatory attitude, bullying, and to provide them with a good opportunity to perform their role as a normal human being during their professional lives. The educationists might develop a curriculum that includes transgender learners on an equal footing with the rest of society. In this approach, the other two genders show them respect rather than victimize them due to their gender.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. What are the problems that transgender persons face in their professional progression?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a phenomenological design to understand transgender people's professional progression problems. According to Ben-Eliyahu (2017), phenomenology is the greatest way to explain a phenomenon. The researcher tried to understand how people construct their worlds, how others interpret their understanding and knowledge, and what meanings they assign to those understandings (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenological study explores how people perceive the world. Snowball sampling was employed to find study participants. Ten transgender persons were selected as a participant for the interview. Semi-structured interviews were designed to collect data. This study employed an interview protocol (Patton, 2014). Using the transcriptions of the interviews, coding, categorization, and contextual themes have emerged. Themes emerged throughout the data analysis. At various stages of the research, member checking was carried out to ensure that the information acquired was authentic. The interview transcripts were also provided to the study participants to reduce the possibility of biases. (Creswell, 2013). Themes emerged in the context of the study and support of research question. Qualitative data analysis emerged key six themes: finding employment, maintaining relationships with heads and colleagues, hesitation in participation in official meetings, going outside with coworkers/colleagues, harassment, violence and bullying, and mental health.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS**

### **FINDING EMPLOYMENT**

There is no place for a third gender in our culture because it is dominated by two genders, male and female. As a result, in both the public and private sectors, work prospects are limited to males and females. Transgender people felt difficulties in finding employment that would help them to meet their basic needs. They are struggling to stay alive. To begin with, they are unable to find jobs. When looking for employment, transgender people face a slew of issues. They were often rejected because

of their gender, not because they were not capable despite the fact that the bulk of the company threw their CVs in the trash without even looking at them.

*"Finding a job is difficult." (R3); "We only come across sweeping jobs." (R6)*

### **MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH HEADS AND COLLEAGUES**

When they do, they are forced to work in an atmosphere where they must struggle to establish relationships with their employer and coworkers. Despite the fact that they worked incredibly hard, they were not compensated for their efforts. They had to deal with criticism from their bosses and peers as well. Even if they have little experience and are juniors, people are promoted.

*"Good relations with my boss limit my interactions with others". (R1)*

*"My interpersonal relationships are satisfactory. Even though they are my juniors, my supervisor prioritizes other coworkers above me. My boss did not pay me in full throughout the first few months of my employment." (R3)*

### **HESITATION IN PARTICIPATION IN OFFICIAL MEETINGS**

They are both confused and reluctant at the beginning, but as time passes, things calm down and begin to work in their favor. If their employers and coworkers are accepting and helpful, transgender people work very hard. However, some of the attendees remain anxious due to the negative reaction and behavior of other colleagues in the conference.

*"Yes, the way people look at me makes me feel uneasy when I attend an official meeting. I tried to ignore it as much as I could". (R8)*

*"People don't always enjoy it while I'm around, which makes me feel uneasy. Most ladies regard me as if I were an extraterrestrial". (R5)*

### **GOING OUTSIDE WITH COWORKERS/COLLEAGUES**

We do not allow transgender people in our society to move freely with other genders, and we are far less likely to recognize them as members of society. Transgender coworkers stop going outside with them. And their discomfort stemmed from their ignorance. They are humiliated to be seen with them. Many transgender people stop going outside with their coworkers, with the exception of going to lunch with them. Transgender people like to stay at home to stop going out. It's not that they don't want to go, but when they do, people glare at them curiously and even laugh at them. If their friends pressurize them, they would even invite them to a party at their houses. It is preferable to have fun at home rather than going out.

*"I rarely go out with my coworkers." (R1)*

*"No, I'm not a big fan of going out." (R7)*

*"I prefer to spend my time at home." (R5)*

*"Yes, I usually avoid going out because I would rather stay at home." (R2)*

*"No, it was at the beginning. I am confident in my ability to handle and issue a cease-and-desist order." (R3)*

### **HARASSMENT, VIOLENCE, AND BULLYING**

When it comes to transgender people, we often hear of sexual assault, verbal violence, and hostility. Transgender people are bullied by their colleagues and even their bosses. Whenever someone has the opportunity, they attempt to annoy them. Furthermore, in some situations, the organization's leader pressures transgender people to have a relationship with them or risk losing their jobs. They sometimes make them an offer to raise their salary.

*"Some folks are simply too nice to be true. However, some people are quite harsh, staring at me strangely and murmuring to each other after gazing at me." (R1)*

*"However, some people are quite harsh, staring at me strangely and murmuring to each other after gazing at me." (R2)*

*"I was even harassed by one of my team members during a shot. My head harassed me." (R3)*

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Being transgender professionals, some have to suffer mental illness due to the behaviors of their colleagues and heads as well. Often during interaction with the people, they faced unethical behavior, and sometimes, hated aptitude became the cause of depression which disturbed the mental health of the transgender persons. Due to affected mental health, suffering increased, leading to deprivation. The majority of this section felt that health facilities provided by the Government are insufficient, and there is no separate treatment mechanism for them.

*“Sometimes, coworkers bully me and give me mental torchers through their gestures.” (R2)*

*“Sometimes, people laugh at me as I am a joker.” (R7)*

*“Mental health is a blessing for all genders, but I am deprived from it at the workplace.” (R5)*

*“Due to mental stress, I cannot perform my duties well.” (R10)*

## DISCUSSION

When it comes to transgender people, we often hear of sexual assault, verbal violence, and hostility. Transgender people are bullied by their colleagues and even their bosses. Whenever someone has the opportunity, they attempt to annoy them. Furthermore, in some situations, the organization's leader pressures transgender people to have a relationship with them or risk losing their jobs. They sometimes make them an offer to raise their salary. Similar to the study of (Barr, Budge, & Adelson 2016), many transgender people are powerless against sadness, nervousness, intense pressure, and self-destruction due to the intersections of individual personality, social avoidance, and testing beneficial experiences. Until this investigation, there was no information about transgender people's susceptibility to suffering, unease, and even self-destruction in Cambodia. In fact, this is a region of exploration that is lacking throughout Asia. According to research in the United States, the rates of depression and tension greatly outperform those of the general population. Transgender people are afraid of social rejection, losses of loved ones, verbal bullying, and certain other discriminatory behavior or violence, increased vulnerability assault to emotional bullying (Stall, Friedman & Catania, 2008).

Transgender professionals are more likely to experience violence and rejection at the workplace, as evidenced by many studies. This phenomenon must be considered to create a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for trans workers (Walls., Kane, & Wisneski 2010). According to several studies conducted worldwide, designing and implementing specific educational training and awareness programs designed for academic staff at all levels of education is essential for preventing and trying to combat bullying related to transgender identity, promoting respect for and compliance with the universal declaration of human rights, and counteracting discriminatory behavior caused by sexual gender identification (Dominguez-Martnez & Robles, 2019). In several countries, programs to prevent transsexual bullying and create inclusive learning systems have been established to address these issues.

Customized programs should be developed to enable transgender professionals to access plans to achieve their preferred gender identity, which should include resources and programs that meet the individual needs linked to their transgender identity (such as physical and mental health care services, and employment, housing, and so on (Mayer, Garofalo, & Makadon 2014). Furthermore, it is critical to design and implements anti-discrimination campaigns and laws to enhance community inclusiveness focused on social justice and human rights, increases vulnerable persons' rights, and give additional protection against discrimination and disapproval (Stieglitz, 2010). The findings of this research should not be interpreted as measures of occurrence or other sociological factors, and extending the findings to other transgender communities should be done with extreme caution, according to the researchers. This study would be repeated in other Pakistani contexts with a larger and more diverse sampling of participants.

## CONCLUSION

After completing their degree, transgender people face difficulties in finding employment. The majority of the participants struggled to develop and sustain relationships with their coworkers and the organization's leader. Usually, all transgender persons face such issues. Few of the participants highlighted that their bosses or coworkers harassed them. The majority of the participants had been bullied and teased by their coworkers. The majority of people do not accept transgender persons in the organization. Attending professional meetings is tough for the majority of such persons; however, they gradually gained confidence in attending meetings. Few of the transgender persons were confident in their ability to attend professional conferences, seminars, and professional development training. The majority of participants were hesitant to go outside for lunch/dinner with their coworkers in order to avoid society's strange and unwelcoming attitude. Because they have a dual personality, the majority of transgender persons are perplexed. Their outward personalities are frowned upon by the people of the society. So, this study revealed that transgender professionals have been treated to a great deal of rejection and violence, as well as these experiences are harming their mental health and their career advancement process. Therefore, it is imperative to implement the relevant policies and guidelines in the organizations to reduce these occurrences and ensure that organizations might serve transgender professionals in a safe and comfortable environment (Domínguez-Martínez et al., 2020). In order to better understand the factors of transgender bullying, additional studies might be conducted in organizations, communities, and national contexts (Earnshaw, 2017).

## CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

**Dr Muhammad Amin:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Analysis through Software, Data curation, **Humera Amin:** Writing- Original draft preparation, Visualization, Investigation, Validation, **Sumera Rashid:** Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

## COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

It is declared that all authors don't have any conflict of interest. It is also declared that informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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