

# GENDER IDENTITY DEPRIVED OF SOCIAL RECOGNITION AND APPROVAL: DILEMMA OF THIRD GENDER POPULATION

Shereen Yunus Khan\*

Fateh Mohammad Burfat†

Aazadi Fateh Muhammad‡

## Abstract

*A person's genuinely sensed internal distinct experience of gender that may be contradicted or congruent with his / her biological sex is referred to as gender identity. It includes self-conception of the build and structure of the body as well as how they perceive their psychosomatic being. Third gender people in Pakistan, along with other discriminatory and exclusionary practices, face social disapproval of their gender expression and are deprived of social recognition and approval. This research is designed to explore the gender revelation among third gender population that is considered variant by social setup and societal attitude towards their gender expression. The study tries to find out the pattern of gender identity status at the national level through the provision of CNIC and vote casting. The research was carried out in Karachi, where a large number of the third gender population comes to dwell from different areas of Pakistan as the city is the economic hub of the country. 170 respondents were selected for data collection. The nature of the study was mix research method comprising both qualitative and quantitative approaches and the instrument used for this study was an interview schedule. The data was collected by the researcher herself. The collected data were analyzed statistically by using SPSS. Inferential analysis and descriptive methods were applied to the collected data.*

**Keywords:** Gender identity, Social disapproval, Gender expression, Societal attitude.

---

\*Assistant Professor, Sociology Department Sardar Bahadur Khan women's University, Quetta

†Ex-Vice Chancellor, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

‡Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Federal Urdu University for Arts Science and Technology, Karachi

## INTRODUCTION

Our society entrapped in our own created dichotomous social order in which it is taken for granted that there can be two sexes; male and female and two gender identities; masculinity and femininity respectively. Conformism by following only two choices of gender individuality, male and female, is necessitated by Conventional social constructions of gender (Dietert & Dentice, 2009). The presence of third genders is a clear refutation of this postulation (Daub, 2013). Identity embraces one's intensely held, core sense of self as a male, female, intermingling of both, or neither; who we internally acquainted with oneself to be. The fact that in some individuals gender identity changes throughout the course of life makes it more complicated (Sytsma, 2006), treated as a continuum of identity potentials (Reicherzer, 2006). Gender identity reflects how individuals categorize themselves on the basis of gender and how do they show their behavior and self-manifestation in accordance with that classification (Baqutayan, 2014). Perception of desired gender identity starts with childhood, at the age of seven to eight years, identifying the dissimilarity in identity awareness and assigned gender associated with biological sex. After identity perception development the transgender person looks for different means of gender expression for enhanced identity comprehension, followed by a culminating stage in which they establish their gender identity explicitly and perform their desired gender (Krishna, 2017). Third gender persons either lack appropriate sex and corresponding gender at birth, in case of intersex or hermaphrodites, or in case of transgender, transsexuals, and transvestites; they have to face crossing of gender identities. The movement of identity from one gender to another is called transition which is stimulated by communal, traditional, evolving, and individual factors and which is facilitated by economic and social resources (Hoffman, 2014). Be it a biological or psychological reason behind gender-variant identity, the affected people face identity crises that influence their personality adjustment (Baqutayan, 2014).

Culture and value systems presume individuals to carry out the gender associated with their biological sex as well as the gender expressions and roles linked with it and those who express characteristics contrary are often seen as social deviants demolishing their identity causing their invisibility to be their entity (Grossman & D'augelli, 2006). They experience societal stresses to preserve binary portrayals of gender by meeting the requirements of relationship maintenance and gender expressions. Their continuous struggle to fight back collectively shared anticipations of sex and gender is due to the irresistible need to represent an identity that is distinctive from two sex model (Gagné and Tewksbury, 1998). The incongruity between their biological identity and gender generates the crises of identification that substantiates to be the baseline of familial and societal reaction towards them. This problem of mismatch arises at an individual level, as third gender persons face great challenges in coming to terms with their own gender identity or gender expression which are contradictory to the gender identity and gender role imposed on them based on their biological sex (Chakrapani, 2010).

The description of gender, in accordance with societal shared expectations, creates inimitably thought-provoking circumstances for the one who is transitioning or planning to switch to another gender (Sawyer, Thorough good, & Webster, 2016). The disclosure decision of their true gender identity is subjective to complexities of family integrity, tightly integrated family network, social obligations, and prevalent religious believes in the society (Saeed, Mughal, and Farooq, 2017). True gender identity revelation in case of gender variant individuals stimulate their families, who sometimes adopt bargain tactics like money, business support, or social backing as tempting strategies to stop gender nonconformity or to sometimes implement preventive measures involving threats like alienation from intimate relations, boycott of family, exclusion from household, deprivation of property, etc. (Denny, 1998). Every sphere of third gender persons' life is affected by the pervasive lack of accurate

identity documents; comprising primarily mental adaptation with self-identification at family and secondarily societal adjustment (Scourfield, Roen & McDermott, 2008). Lack of identification documents encompassing birth certificate, identification card, and passport creates problems in more formal situations since most privileges hinge on registration, where legal gender status is mandatory like school or university admissions, interviews with potential employers, and access to public services (Winter, 2006).

To be clear, deprived of identification, one cannot travel, have the right of entry, or the right to use many amenities that are indispensable to function in the social order. According to American Psychological Association, most third genders yearn for identification as its lacking make the third gender subject to disparity and discrimination. Transgender people may also affect the type of discrimination they experience; such additional identities include third genders with ethnic or religious minorities background and socioeconomic statuses. Segregating third gender from the mainstream society as a unique dejected minority, draw a strident distinction between transgendered and cis-gendered men and women (Redding, 2017). In a number of western cultures, this division is becoming less unconditional and it may be healthier to consider these aspects as a continuum, with male and female characteristics on each respective end (Ahmed, Morrison & Hughes, 2004). Transgender individuals usually face various challenges. As compared to metropolitan settings, the small communities are more unbecoming for third genders, owing to the intimate social relations and proximity, making unrecognizability and discretion almost nonexistent, thus in such locations, the stigma associated with gender identity can be predominantly penetrating (Rainer, 2010).

John William Money (1921–2006), was the one of pioneers who studied sexual identity by exploring sexual fluidity and analyzing the effect of societal construction of gender on an individual. The two vital terms, gender identity and gender role, were coined by Dr.

Money; furthermore, numerous definitions associated with gender were introduced by him. Being a psychologist and sexologist, he researched sexual orientation and gender identity formation. Money highlighted six variables responsible for determining the sex of a person. These include assigned sex at birth and the nurturing sex, external genitals, internal reproductive organs, hormonal characteristics gonads, and sex chromosomes. Inconsistency of one or more with others may lead to anomalies and according to Money, such anomalies may be appraised on the basis of gender role, the seventh variable defined by him. Money revealed that gender is not restrained to masculinity or femininity, rather it is a more inclusive phenomenon embracing personal gender identity and social recognition on the basis of social behavior. He presented the concept of gender identity determination on the basis of interaction between biological aspects and rearing patterns. Money supported his approach by the assumption that gender identity is all about upbringing not dependent on inborn characteristics and recommended the treatment for sex anomalies in case of intersex or hermaphrodites in the form of gender assignment considering what may be presumed to be best by nurturing sources.

## **METHOD AND MATERIAL**

The paper has been derived from the researcher's Ph.D. dissertation, entitled as "Socio-economic challenges faced by third gender". Mix approach method of research was utilized to conduct the study, having a quantitative method for profile description of the respondents and qualitative method to make a detailed investigation to ensure appropriate results and detailed description of almost all realities and details related to the objectives of the study which would not be possible by quantitative method only. The study was undertaken in Karachi city, mostly in its urban areas due to the availability of third gender population in these areas. The third gender including transgender, intersex, and transsexuals dwelling in

Karachi made the population of the study. It was very difficult to approach all third gender individuals in Karachi, therefore the sampling method was used. Hence pertaining to the target population, the snowball sampling method was selected for the study as approaching genuine third gender and avoiding the fake one was not possible without assistance from unpretentious third gender persons. After the selection of the sample, the tools for data collection were decided, and on the basis of the nature of the study, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were selected by the researcher to collect the data in relevance to the study's indicators.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through gender identity and expression, the research probed aspects related to the identification and manifestation of the gender perceived by the respondents. It embraced the related aspects like the age of revelation gender-variant identity, status of their national identity cards, interaction with the government official through NADRA, and their involvement and immersion in the national voting process.

**Table 1: Respondent's age of revelation of gender-variant identity**

Categories	Frequency	Percent
1--5	9	5.3
6--10	74	43.5
11--15	73	42.9
16--20	14	8.2
Total	170	100.0

The table depicts the respondents' age of revelation of gender-variant identity. Though the exact age of gender variant attitude could not be affirmed precisely, however, the respondent provided their estimated age. Respondents had no idea about the exact age of revelation of their gender-variant behavior, still, they provided an age based on presumption. According to the data most of the respondents,

constituting 43.5% of the total population, acknowledged the age of revelation of their variant gender identity ranged between 6–10 years. They stated that their family response was very unforgiving and they declared that they suffered very hard consequences of their gender variance. Respondents reported that they were often beaten by the male members of their family, either father or elder brothers. They were restrained to interact with other relatives and neighbors and were pressurized to follow the normative gender roles and expressions. They were mocked and ridiculed by their peer groups and the obstinate attitude towards them made them stressed between social anticipations and their perceived gender identity.

**Table 2: Respondent's awareness regarding third gender inclusion in CNIC**

Categories	Frequency	Percent
yes	146	85.9
no	24	14.1
Total	170	100.0

The table shows the respondents' awareness concerning third gender inclusion under a separate category (X) in National identity cards by the Government. The data revealed that most of the respondents, constituting 85.9% of the total population, acknowledged their awareness regarding third gender inclusion in CNIC while the rest of 14.1% respondents declared unacquaintedness. Fortunately, in Pakistan, the third gender is recognized as a separate gender category under the label of transgender (sex category marked as "X") in official documentation. Their inclusion in CNIC and passport is a step towards their insertion in our society as its worthy members.

**Table 3: Respondent's Status of CNIC**

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Yes	112	65.9
No	46	27.1
Applied for	12	7.1
Total	170	100.0

The majority of the respondents (65.9%) had their NIC, but most of them had sex category "male" in their NIC as it was issued before the allocation of X category as a third option in sex classification by National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA). Respondents shared their experience of interaction with NADRA officials in the process of applying for NIC and most of them were unsatisfied with registration authority officials' attitude towards third gender people. The provision of CNIC enabled third gender population to cast their votes in national and provisional elections and nearly half of the sampled population voted for their preferred electoral candidates whereas those who didn't use their right to vote, either had no CNIC or their mobility deprived them, as their names were in the voting list of their native regions from which they were far away.

**Table 4: Respondent's having interaction with officials of NADRA**

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Yes	124	72.9
No	46	27.1
Total	170	100.0

The table indicates the interaction of the respondents with the officials of NADRA. According to the data, 72.9% of the respondents had experienced the communication with NADRA administration either for applying for national identity card or receiving it, while 27.1% of the respondent never had interaction with NADRA as they neither had the national identity cards nor they had applied for them. The attitude of the staff of NADRA toward transgender people was



discriminatory as well. They asked them such questions that are considered as abusive and humiliating. Like the in rest of society, exclusion and discrimination prevailed in such public offices as well. According to the majority of the respondents, marking the X category on CNIC puts them in such a minority group that is considered unworthy of any civil liberties or rights.

**Table 5: Respondent's experience casting vote**

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Yes	84	49.4
No	86	50.6
Total	170	100.0

The table shows the experience of respondents of casting votes in national and provisional elections. Data discovered that most of the respondents (50.6%) hadn't ever cast vote in their life whereas 49.4% of the respondents had cast vote and participated in national and provisional elections by using their right to choose pertinent candidates. The opportunity to cast vote depends mainly on the status of CNIC and unfortunately, many transgenders are still deprived of casting their opinion due to the absence of CNIC.

**Table 6: Respondent's revelation of gender-variant identity in schools**

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Yes	59	66.3
No	30	33.7
Total	89	100.0

The table illustrates the revelation of respondents' gender-variant identity in schools. Out of 170 respondents, 89 students had experienced the school environment, as the rest of 81 respondents never been to school. Data demonstrates that out of 89 respondents, 59 (66.3%) had revealed gender-variant identity in schools while 30 respondents (33.7%) concealed gender-variant identity in schools.

The revelation of gender variant attitude at schools was uncontrollable for most of the respondents while few succeeded in hiding their nonconformity. Their gender-variant behavior in schools affected their relations with the teachers, fellow students, and the school administration. The attitude of the teachers and fellow students was always deriding and mocking towards the respondents by which the school environment became insufferable for them, coercing them to end their education journey before their destination.

## CONCLUSION

The perception of third gender individuals about themselves was having incongruity in body and soul, upon which they had no power but were the subservient creation of God. The precise age of their gender transformation generally couldn't be appraised and was believed to be from birth. Their gender variance is usually revealed by their conduct; wearing feminine dresses, applying make-up, spending time with girls, enjoying girls' company rather than that of boys', taking on womanly way of walking, talking, and body gestures. Their gender nonconformity usually results in social detestation and discernment. The primary observers of a child's sex or gender deformity are the parents. Parents from the birth of their child knew how the child is, since neither the biological apparent anomalies nor the child's gender variant attitude is hidden from them. The attitude of the family towards the third gender individual generally remained unforgiving and degrading, especially the male members of the family like father, brothers, who stigmatized and discerned third gender member as their incapability and disinclination to understand the situation made them prejudiced to the presence of such gender variance. Fathers as the head of family and household in our patriarchal societies look after the reputation and honor of the family and are totally unyielding and intolerant to the nonconformity of normative gender norms and considered the gender-variant expression to be an element of extreme disgrace and embarrassment. Negativity in perception compelled them to disown their gender

variant child and consequently the third gender member of the family being thrown out from household and familial relations. Brothers' attitude is almost similar to that of fathers', considering them the cause of shame and humiliation.

In contrary to males, female members of the family (mother, sisters) are relatively polite towards third gender members. Mothers are always affectionate and caring for all their children, no matter if the child is having any sort of deformity or disability, the mother's nature remains compassionate even veiling the flaws of her child. Sisters are also loving and caring to some extent but when they get dejected by the gossips in the relatives and neighbors and by continuous social stigmatization, their attitude alter as well. Their love and care is replaced by hatred and aloofness and their reaction is shown by hatred and negligence. The third gender is victimized by social marginalization and in this relegation, their relatives play their utmost part as well. Their gossips and remarks intensify the humiliation of family members and consequently increase domestic violence, resulting in mocking and upsetting influence, making the third gender member's life a hell and pressurizing the family to take cruel steps to move the respective member away from family and household. The nonconformity of shared expectations regarding gender role and gender expression is sanctioned by severe domestic mistreatment and discrimination. Third gender individuals suffered family constraints like restriction in partaking in family functions, restrained interaction with relatives, controlled mobility and social relations, and detachment from household matters. This attitude of society hurts them; breaks their hearts, their emotions are being hit, and their state of mind is distressed. Ambivalent attitude prevails in society. However, by the declaration of third gender rights in 2009 by the Supreme Court, there is a slight change in societal attitude, recognizing and accepting them though slightly and in very small number.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. F., Morrison, S., & Hughes, I. A. (2004). Intersex and gender assignment; the third way?. *Archives of disease in childhood*, 89(9), 847-850.
- Baqutayan, S. M. S. (2014). The Psychological Distress and Coping Mechanisms among Intersexed Individuals. *Annual Research & Review in Biology*, 4(19), 2910.
- Chakrapani, V. (2010). Hijras/transgender women in India: HIV, human rights and social exclusion.
- Daub, N. (2013). The Hijras. An alternative Gender Role in India.
- Denny, D. (Ed.). (1998). *Current concepts in transgender identity* (Vol. 11). Taylor & Francis.
- Dietert, M., & Dentice, D. (2009). Gender identity issues and workplace discrimination: the transgender experience. *Journal of Workplace Rights*, 14(1).
- Gagné, P., & Tewksbury, R. (1998). Conformity pressures and gender resistance among transgendered individuals. *Social problems*, 45(1), 81-101.
- Grossman, A. H., & D'augelli, A. R. (2006). Transgender youth: Invisible and vulnerable. *Journal of homosexuality*, 51(1), 111-128.
- Hoffman, B. (2014). An overview of depression among transgender women. *Depression research and treatment*, 2014.
- Jami, H., & Kamal, A. (2015). Measuring attitudes toward hijras in Pakistan: Gender and religiosity in perspective. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 30(1), 151.
- Krishna, G. (2017). Transgenders in Kerala-Realisation of their Identity.

- Mithani, A., & Burfat, F. M. (2003). Hijra—the sex in between. *J Independ Stud Res*, 1.
- Rainer, J. P. (2010). The road much less travelled: Treating rural and isolated clients. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 66(5), 475-478.
- Redding, J.A. (2017). The rule of disgust?: contemporary transgender rights Discourse in India.
- Reicherzer, S. L. (2006). The grounded theory of a new gender episteme: Transgender subjectivity deconstructs the power, privilege, and pathos of mental health diagnostics.
- Saeed, A., Mughal, U., & Farooq, S. (2017). It's Complicated: Sociocultural factors and the Disclosure Decision of Transgender Individuals in Pakistan. *Journal of homosexuality*, 1-20.
- Sawyer, K., Thoroughgood, C., & Webster, J. (2016). Queering the gender binary: Understanding transgender workplace experiences. In *Sexual orientation and transgender issues in organizations* (pp. 21-42). Springer International Publishing.
- Scourfield, J., Roen, K., & McDermott, L. (2008). Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people's experiences of distress: resilience, ambivalence and self-destructive behavior. *Health & social care in the community* 16(3), 329-336.
- Sytsma, S. E. (Ed.). (2006). *Ethics and intersex* (Vol. 29). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Winter, S. (2006). Thai transgenders in focus: Demographics, transitions and identities. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 9(1), 15-27.