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## Gender Identity and the Issues of Acceptance in Pakistani Community

**Abstract:** *Research paper defines the problems, issues and challenges faced by the third gender. Paper also examines the role of social structure towards them and hypothetical constraints build by society. Acceptance for the third identity is not permitted by social and religious structure, in paper scholars review the literature, different programs which were already done, research theses, books and work done by scholars in the shapes of Articles. For the collection of data Purposive sampling method adopted. The paper focuses on the social acceptance and religious perspective for the construction of the third identity. The paper mentions the life of the third gender and its limited constraints. It was found that they lead a very difficult life in which family and community support are truly missing.*

**Key Words:** Hijra, Transgender, Identity, social acceptance

### Introduction

This short-term paper refers to the issues of the third gender in Pakistani society. Unfortunately, many books, articles and different voices that raise the issue of gender equality, but it is surprising for the scholar they mostly address the women rights. The third gender is also a part of society, but cultural norms and values have no space for this deprived identity, religiously space for the third identity are not present. In this context acceptance from the parental side does not fever able for the third gender. In Pakistan especially no one is ready to consider them as a part of society even on humanitarian grounds and needs legislate to special provisions for them. During literature review on the third gender mostly incidents are highly shocking and the behavior of the people so much cruel towards them.

These third genders named *Khusra, Zannana, Hijra, Murrat*. Basically, these names have a different biological and psychological history which scholars have written in this paper. The acceptance level of the society for the third gender is immoral, state actors are not serious that's why the marginalized community of third gender is not facilitated with the basic facilities of life like job opportunities, health insurance, education, identity problems and especially social norms and values against them. These homeless identities have no proper shelter as compare to other deprived identities of society. For better understanding, the scholar covered the topic from different angles like cause and effect relationship, biological and psychological reasons, religious aspects, history, economic needs, social structure, the role of police and judiciary, the role of government, working environment, quota system, sex worker, health issues (AIDs/STDs), cultural perspective, legal issues, jobs in public/private sector, rule of law, legislation, poverty, small business loans, social safety network, literacy rate and one of the most important is acceptance from the families.

For a better understanding of the problems of the third gender and how to resolve these issues, Social constructivism theory explains very well about the construction of relations in the community. If society considers them as a part of society then it will make a positive change in the life of third gender, with strong relations the acceptance level will increase, and they will be strong on economic and social bases. The theory also constructs a blueprint of the society and become a cause of change.

The study focuses to examine the identity of a third gender, identify the role of the social structure/social acceptance towards them, religious perspective and a life of third gender in stereotype society. It is a multidimensional effort and without the intervention of all stakeholders it is not possible to assign the third identity on equality bases.

### Literature Review

History of Transgender existed since 9 century BC, in Greek time they were serving as "Keeper of the bed" (guard for women in the royal household). In Vedic (1500 BC - 500 BC) culture they were accepted as the

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third gender. Hindu astrology defines Transgender as natural phenomena and compares it with 9 planets [\[Michelraj 2015\]](#).

The history of the third gender in Indian society is more than four thousand years. Basically, classification of gender is divided between two sexes male and female and they are socially constructed by birth. As a whole, the word third gender is used for those identities that do not lie in socially constructed identities. The third gender refers to those identities that are not satisfied with their birth assigned identity or are biologically born as Hijra. In Pakistani society, the third gender is called Hijra, Murat, Kushra and its old name Khawja Sara [\[Nazir & Yasir, 2016\]](#).

In the Ottoman Empire and the Mughal rule, Hijras (Transgender) were in well-known positions within palace, and playing a crucial role in politics. In Islamic age of Mecca and Medina, the transgender were appointed. The colonial period of subcontinent was not good for Hijra community. The British rulers threw them out of the palaces and made laws against Hijras [\[Michelraj 2015\]](#).

The word eunuch (Hijra) derived from the Greek words 'Eune' and 'Ekhein' which means bed keeper, because Hijras were in demand and appointed as guards of royal Palaces. Firstly, they were appointed in China. In Ming's regime there were seventy thousand Hijras in the royal palace [\[Rehan, Chaudhry & Shah, 2009\]](#).

The word 'transgender' is a term for those identities that are not comfortable with their socially constructed identities and their attitude not matches with their sex. In traditional societies, gender identity means only male/female. The writer elaborates the living style, way of communication, expressions and attitude of the transgender. Further scholars claim these identities are known as Transgender (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Linguistically, the word transgender refers to the identity which does not match with its birth-assigned sex. Basically, they change their identity full time or part time; they are not male/female and acknowledged as transgender. The third genders are mentally not satisfied with their birth sex so they change their living style from the socially constructed sex [\[Saddique, 2017\]](#).

[Akai \[August 2015\]](#) identified the identity of gender by sartorial, kinesics and address the one type of transgender who is a drag queen. In his thesis Akai addresses the problem of identity of transgender because stereotype society believes genders are male and female they have no space for the third identity. People are identifying by their biological sex and this identity is enslaved of customs and values. Akai focused on the role of film medium because in film identity is expressed through body, dress and movements. Film artists can create space and establish a positive role for transgender [\[Akai, 2015\]](#).

Society assigned the role and duty of gender according to their birth sex but sometimes a male or female not able to perform their role mentally or physically according to their sex, mentally they want to live in their opposite sex. A large number of transgender reassigned their birth sex by surgery, although reassignment surgery is not natural but they adopt this method to resolve the issue of their birth sex [\[Pardo, 2008\]](#).

Recognition of gender in this stereotype society only as a male and female. In practice, society have no space for the third gender. Even societal taboos do not treat them on humanitarian grounds. In Pakistani society third gender has different names in which one is Khawjasara, during Mughal Empire the ruling kings named them Khawjasara. One of the names is khusra, this name is used for those, who are born with the sex disorder. The Hijra term is used for those persons, who change their sex by surgery, Zannana and Murat have behavioral change from male to female [\[Shahnaz, 2016\]](#).

By profession Hijras are not homosexual; they like to live in their opposite sex like in dressing and way of communication. Actually the persons who linked with homosexuality transform their physical trades and covered herself under the umbrella of Hijras community (Alefiyan, Saeed, Haider, Khanani, Ali 2008).

The article of Jami address the issues of third gender, basically this article creates a sense about the conditions and status of Hijras in Pakistani community. Jami defines the begging and working as a sex worker of third gender in Pakistani community and discuss the out comings threats like AIDs. Article briefs the reasons of becoming Hijra and the role of community towards them, writer answered the question of "is there any space for Third gender in culture and religion" answer was no. Article also briefed about the legal prospective and the general attitude of the public towards them. Jami also gives some suggestions for the betterment of Hijra community e.g no acceptance from the families, psychological problems and financial help from the government [\[Jami, 2005\]](#).

The article is about the fast rate of urbanization and Anthropological perspective of Hijra community in Rawalpindi & Islamabad. The article was written by Abid, Shaheer, Aftab and Khan. They focus on the begging Hijras of twin cities, before urbanization somehow people accept the role of Hijras on birth and wedding ceremonies, but urbanization throws them on the traffic signals. They notify the role of media as a helping tool for the betterment of Third gender [\[Chaudhry, Khan, Ahmed & Khan, 2014\]](#)

Sharma wrote in her article about the historical facts of Indian society. Author notifies the legal status of Hijras in Indian community, the most high, and the most highly claimed democratic country crush the rights of third gender. Further Sharma suggested legalizing the third identity on equality, without official declaration these third identity holders faced number of challenges in practical life like to built employability and hurdles in daily routine work. Author also mentioned the issues of family acceptance and cultural behavior towards third gender [\[Sharma, 2012\]](#).

### Methodology

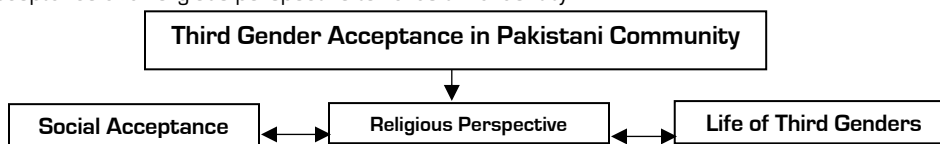
Predominantly, the research methodology that has been taken is qualitative research technique in which collection of data retrieved from Articles, Books, Talk shows, Documentary movies, Newspapers and Magazines. This medium creates better understanding regarding the topic and helps out to develop the questioner. In this paper secondary resource employed, includes journals, previous conducted researches and briefed literature review on the life of third gender.

For the collection of data on scientific bases social scientist applied probability and non-probability sampling methods for the representation of whole sample. In this paper Purposive Sampling technique is used for the collection of data. This method is used according to attain the required knowledge from the specific person. Sampling technique figure out the structure of the research paper, in this paper acceptance from the community is not in the fever of third gender. Collection from literature briefed the historical perspective and life of a third gender struggling for the acceptance in orthodox community.

### Finding and Discussion

Paper analyze the life of a third identity, socially identities construct from the day of birth but socially and religiously space for third identity not present in this orthodox community. Religion only gives them space in its most resemblance gender as male/female but socially they are not accepted as male/female and when they raise their voices, community blamed them and said there is no third identity in religion. Paper analyzes the confusion within the community, community not properly follows the judgments of religion and people of community are enslaved of socially constructed norms and values. Paper briefly reviews the social acceptance and religious perspective towards third gender. Paper also focus on the life of a third gender and analyze the miseries and their solutions to fulfill the gap.

In Pakistani community space for third identity suffers under social and religious constraints. The main point here the space given by the religion strongly rejected by orthodox cultural values. Meanwhile when the third identity holders raise their voices for the acceptance as third gender both cultural and religious structures oppose them. In this model of third gender acceptance in Pakistani community briefly review the social acceptance and religious perspective towards third identity.



Scenario Perspective POL  
 Cultural perspective  
 Social Safety Network  
 Police and Rule of Law  
 Acceptance from Families  
 Role of Media

Biological and Psychological reasons  
 Reasons of Becoming Hijra (third gender)  
 Life Style of Hijras  
 Educational Perspective  
 Job Opportunities  
 Health Issues

### Social Acceptance

The fast rate of urbanization and cultural perspectives not in the support of third identity, that's why the social safety network does not support the third gender. The outdated laws which are not enough to fulfill the modern

requirements not support the professions adopted by third gender. Under these circumstances family support is rare and not supportive due to cultural norms and values.

### Cultural Perspective

In Pakistani culture Hijras have no respect and honor in the society. They are known as beggars, dancer, and sex worker, culture recognize them as a black spot on the face of the society. In Pakistani culture Hijras are not considered as humans, people doing sex with Hijras and enjoying the dance, but humanity is gone forever. Different types of myths prevail about the third gender but in short they live a miserable life because they have no access to basic needs (Laura, Momina, Nighat, Tahria, Nosheen, Shahzad, James & Faran, 2013).

The historical cultural perspective of Hijras starts from Mughal era, in Mughal era they are known as Khawjasara. In Mughal Empire Khawjasaras were employed in palaces on key posts. Amazing facts in Mughal Raj Khawjasaras had a major role in administrative work and valuable role in court proceedings. In past they were rich and effective, but presently they are now on traffic signals.

### Social Safety Network

In Pakistan Third gender have no security, basic issues of health, education and access to food are the primary things, which are the responsibility of state but unfortunately state have no interest in third gender. The problem starts from the acceptance level, families are not in position to adopted their children that not belongs to defined gender. At this time Guru and Chela system provides security and solves the problem of accommodation and approach to basic needs. Under the supervision of Guru Hijras adopted prohibited professions like begging, sex worker and dancing on function. Fundamentally it is a give and take process Guru provide security to their *Chelas* and receives amount in the shape of commission in return Guru provides basic commodities of life. The life of third gender is miserable, mostly live below the poverty line and facing the worse conditions of humanity ([Lead Pakistan, 2015](#)).

### Police and Rule of Law

The other side of the coin formally Hijras has legally equal rights in the community. legally but not socially they can cast vote and have rights to contest in election process. Example of Aslam Hijra who got over seven thousand votes in National Assembly elections. Only the trends set by the society for the recognition of gender creates hurdles for the acceptance of Hijras.

Rule of law is equal for all genders in Pakistan, mostly police arrest the Hijras under three sections. First section of Vagrancy can impose on all the Hijra community, because begging is the profession of Hijra community. A person who is arrested Under the Punjab Vagrancy ordinance, 1958 (W.P. Ordinance XX of 1958) punished with imprisonment of 3 years or with or without fine or both ([Punjab laws 1958](#)).

Pakistan Panel code (PPC) section 294 the persons who performed vulgar acts publically, abused someone and sings in public place. For this person the punishment of imprisonment for three months, or with fine, or with both. Working conditions of Hijras comes under the environment of section 294, so police can arrest the Hijras ([PPC 1860](#)).

Many Hijras adopt the profession of sex worker, which have no shade in Pakistani community both culturally and religiously. The person, who is an offender of unnatural offence, shall be punished under the section of 377 (PPC) charged imprisonment not less the period of two years and not more than ten years and fine also imposed. The whole life of Hijras in Pakistani community passes under these three sections, because they adopt such kinds of works ([PPC 1860](#)).

### Acceptance from Families

Voice of Hijra " How I can identify my gender, without identification why no one accept me as a human, is gender is more value able than humanity?" Religion, culture and norms/values of the society accept human as male and female, but the same society have no space for the persons who have sexual and psychological disorders. So in Pakistani society people feel shame on birth of Khusra (sexual disorder). Mostly families did not accept handicap (sexual disorder) babies and handed over to Hijra community at the time of their birth.

Some of the parents consider them as a social abuse. Mostly Hijras says we don't know about the role of father and mother in their lives. Due to high practice of religious and cultural values parents never accept them as a third gender. Due to these reasons third gender can easily see under social and economic crises.

Basic need is to conduct trainings, workshops and awareness programs about the Third gender, settle them as a progressive human in the society. Acceptance level in the community only comes through awareness campaign especially in lower and middle lower families; this area of community is weak and uneducated.

### **Role of Media**

Media is known as a fourth pillar of nation, many theories of mass communication proved that voice of media always become a voice of general public. The role of electronic and print media in the world is very powerful because those problems which highlighted by media known as the problems of the nation. Author observed many interviews, talk shows, documentary films, and read some magazines, newspapers and articles about the third gender, producers and writers done well but need some kind of others programs in which include elected persons, police officials, judges, social reformists, religious scholars, educationalists and randomly selected Hijras. Role of media is crucial for the transformation of identities.

NADRA provides the form, which has three boxes for gender two for male, female and third one is for Hijras. The implementation is due to orders of Supreme Court. Media highlighted the issues for resolutions especially in the case of third gender ([Mehmood, 2012](#)).

### **Religious Perspective**

Religious perspectives in Pakistani society are very important to examine the role and space for third gender. The first question rise, what are the rights for third gender in Islam. In the light of Quran/Hadith Islam gives equal opportunities and rights to all humanity, but if someone disobey the rules and sections imposed by Islam, without any discrimination of gender he/she will be punished under Hudood (Islamic Laws). In Islam sexually handicap treated on equality according to its similarity of sex. There is no concept of third identity in Islam, nearly comparative features of body relates the identity of gender as a male or female. Sexually disorder child treated only as male or female and all the sections imposed which are normally imposed on both sexes. Further if physical identification not possible then assign the female sex to sustain the respect of an individual. Although Hijras are physically ill but the acceptance from the families can make them useful persons of the society. Khusras are allowed equal rights in the society like other beings which lives under the umbrella of Islam. However, marriage is allowed through lawful permission because he or she is notable for sexual intercourse in case of Khusra/intersexed. If they want to marry with someone, then they should inform about their sexual disorder. Otherwise, punishment for the cheaters will prevail under Islamic law (Murray & Roscoe 1997).

Islamic laws are clear in this matter, male Hijra is uninitiated for women and it's compulsory to take veil. In Hadith Profit Muhammad (PBUH) said, although male Khusras are sexually handicap but they are not allowed to enter homes. This Hadith is in the fever of women, with sexual disorder male khusra take interest in women. Only female features of khusras allowed in homes (SahiBukhari, 1986, p. 119). Islam gives clear instructions about the dressings and role of male and female, both genders are not allowed to wear opposite gender dresses. Prophet (PBUH) has cursed those people who not resembled with their birth sex, like a man who change their dressing, association and body gestures as women. In practice Prophet (PBUH) not only cursed, Prophet (PBUH) and his companion Hazrat Umer ordered the same practice to through them out from houses (SahiBukhari, 1986, pp. 513-514). In Islam Prophet (PBUH) strictly banned to change birth sex and also banned marrying (SahiBukhari, 1986, p. 8).

Islam strictly banned the sex reassignment surgery, in the age of Prophet (SAW) some companions told to Prophet (SAW) they couldn't afford marriage and took permission for surgery but Muhammad (SAW) stopped them and said the sex was written in your fate and there is no benefit to do such kind of acts (SahiBukhari, 1986, p. 9). In medicine after a complete detailed checkup if doctors realized the surgery is essential for the patient to cure him from the birth sexual disorder then Islam allowed. Islam does not allow the personal feelings or desires to change sex. Allah commands, "O you who believe! Make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, but commit no transgression" (5:87). In Islam four marriages are allowed for male in one time, in lawful manners heterosexual relationships allowed. Islam does not permit the persons who have sexual relations with different partners because this practice is harmful for society.

Homosexuality in Islam considered as a great sin, punishment of homosexuality is death sentence who commit this sin. Islam clearly draw the limits, Allah has Condemned Prophet (SAW) people who are involved in homosexuality and cross the limits warn them for terrible results, Allah draw the limits for sound human values (AlQuran; apkarpk, 1997, p. 75). Prophet (SAW) banned homosexuality and condemned those people who violate these limits. In India researchers found a relation between Hijras and Hinduism, but Pakistani Hijras have no connection with this type of concept ([Jami, 2005](#)).

### Life of Third Genders

Deprived living standers of third gender clearly described the reasons of substandard life style. From the first day of birth they are separated from the domain of gender, further the basic necessities of life are far away from them. There is confusion in this stereotype society to understand the creation of God.

### Biological & Psychological Reasons

Under the umbrella of third gender only 1 % Hijras have a biological disorder, abnormal fatal disorder of sexual hormones created a cause of giving birth to hijra. Disorder in sex hormones commonly known as congenital adrenal hyperplasia it is a metabolic disorder of chromosomes ([Narayanan, 2016](#)). Gynecologist doctor Saeeda from PIMS hospital Islamabad said one out of two thousand babies born with the problem of sexual disorder and she also said mostly cases of sexual disorder can easily resolved through medical treatment.

Psychological reasons are define as spirits of Transgender not satisfied to live with their birth assign sex. It can also easily define as a behavioral change in sex, in Pakistani community only male change their sex they also called as transgender. Science proves that the persons who have psychological disorders also associated with opposite sex and change their dressing and gestures. Desire of changing their sex is also a serious issue because mostly go through surgery ([NIH, 2017](#)).

### Reason for Becoming Hijra

It is a huge phenomena stands on number of reasons, within man another personality prevails who wants to do dance, feels to look like a woman creates interest in changing sex. Another reason of changing gender is poverty and unemployment pushes to join Hijras community, because it's easy way to earn money. From this way raised health issues, increased cases of AIDS in Hijras community tarnishing the repute. In many cases, they got much encouragement to behave like opposite sex in childhood. In some cases, families treat them badly and these types of behaviors become a cause of changing sex and join Hijra community. Persons who change their sex, Hijra communities are a safe haven for them. Some persons experienced psychological problems and these problems become a cause of transgender. Sexually abuse in childhood also refers to commit homosexual events. In this case attitude of boys change and behave like women for example in movement, protecting their skin and pretended like girlish behavior attracts men towards them in all working places and this behavior leads towards sexual abuse. Hijra community is favorable for these kinds of persons. Another cause some boys get involved in Hijra community, and fell in love with any Hijra, after some time they also become a part of this community (Emmanuel, Faran, Blanchard, James, Zaheer, Hasan, Reza, Tahira, McKenzie & Merydth, 2010).

Jami highlighted the issues regarding guardianship of hijras, author claims that parents gave them to hijras community because socially families not accepted. Further Jami mention the poverty facts in lower class who sold their sexually handicap children. These all of reasons exists because of poverty and lack of education. This practice is only within the lower and lowers middle class families ([Jami, 2005](#)).

### Living Style of Hijras

Human rights repot highlighted the issues of Hijras in Pakistani society. Third gender community in Pakistan faces number of issues they are not treated on equal rights, they oppressed and victimized by the societal constructed taboos. Discrimination starts from their birth firstly they are not considered as humans from family side they are left ignored and through them out on gender based discrimination. In this orthodox society another system prevails of Guru and Chela system, Guru provides shelter and provides basic commodities in response Chela feed Guru to adopted prohibited professions ([Human rights campaign, 2017](#)).

The miserable life of a third gender, mostly live below the poverty line and facing the worse conditions of humanity. They actually suffer because society has no acceptance for them. Health, Education and

employment problems are very serious issues for them because there is no contribution on the end of government [\[Ahmed, Yasin, Umair 2014\]](#).

### **Educational Perspectives**

Authors highlighted the educational perspective, educational institutes creates healthy environment in the society and help the child to face the future challenges. Situation totally differs in third gender case, acceptance level from the institutes are not encouraging. First to least number of hurdles, admission, selection of gender section and survival lot of problems faced in the name of identity (Jami, and Kamal, 2015),

Families are not interested for their education because of their gender. Economic issues also effects the decision of their education. Resources as well as the situation of the society are not favorable for getting education. Head “gurus” promoting the skills of dancing which can help to earn the livelihood. Inhuman behaviors of the society towards Third gender also a cause of illiteracy. The environment of the schools and the role of administration towards Third gender are not supportive. To uplift the Hijras community need reforms in educational sector, without education they can never grow and development need educational reforms [\[Lead Pakistan 2015\]](#).

### **Jobs Opportunities in Public/Private Sector**

Job opportunities for Third gender in Pakistani community are so much rare both in public and private sector. Both public and private sector recognized gender as male and female, less space for third gender in employment. On the other hand employability is also an issue; many graduates and higher degree qualified students have no jobs in market. Basic problem for third gender is that in marginalized society of Pakistan job opportunities are less and comparatively low according to their qualification [\[Azam, 2011\]](#).

A group of scholars wrote a paper on the employment rate of third gender in the Province of KPK. Report sort out the figures of employed Hijras in different cities of KPK. The rate of Unemployment was 57, 30 percent of the whole self employed and only 13 percent had job. Mostly unemployed Hijras belongs form district Abbottabad, in summer number of Hijras moves to the hilly area of Abbottabad for begging. Opportunities were not on big scale people feels hesitation to appoint a third gender as a worker that's why the employment rate was not high for Hijras. Overall the situation for Hijras in country not fevers them. People not trusted on hijras community because of their unethical professions [\[Nazir, Aqsa & Yasir, 2016\]](#).

### **Health Issues**

Health facilities are so much rare for Third gender in Pakistan. Acceptance level for Hijras is so much low both in public and private hospitals, mostly they ignore them or refused to take cases. Living conditions are not hygienic that's why they suffer with diseases, approach to food and medicines are also so much difficult due to poverty (Ahmed, 2010).

One of the most lives threatening issue in the life of hijra is HIV/AIDS, but they also a source of transmission the infections of sexual diseases including HIV/AIDS. According the study on third gender in Karachi 37 percent found syphilis positive. According to the study of National Study of Reproductive Tract Hijras are infected with number of complex issues [\[Nazir,& Yasir, 2016\]](#).

### **Conclusion**

During research voices of third gender created question mark on humanity and asked different questions. Who am I?, why you dislike me?, what is my fault?, is it's my own creation?, why I can't live like a normal human? Life of third gender directly and indirectly suffers from the undefined rules and these rules build on the bases of norms and values. Acceptance as a gender in society only in the shape of male and female and these trends not give them rights to live like a normal human being.

Absolutely they are humans and they have right to live their own life. The life of Hijras in Pakistani society is so much miserable, religious and culture values have no space for them. Furthermore, these values also discourage the acceptance level of the families. Public and private sector can play an important role for the economic stability of Hijras. Social reformers and educationalist can change the social dilemma of the society and with the help of media these changes can be transforming on fast track. The basic responsibility of the government is to provide economic and social safety to its citizens. With better reforms the role of third gender can be more effective for the society.

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