



Original Article

Association Between Suicidal Attempts in Connection to Discrimination Among Trans Genders

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ABSTRACT

Suicide has become a serious public health challenge across the world with around 800,000 people dying by suicide each year. Amongst these a majority of the people (79%) belongs to low and middle-income countries. **Objective:** The study aimed to identify the association between suicidal attempts in connection to discrimination among transgender. **Methods:** An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted. Data were collected from a registered NGO (Gender Interactive Alliance) from February to May, 2020, using a universal and purposive sampling technique. Data was analyzed on SPSS (version 21.0). Mean and standard deviation was calculated for frequency distribution, while Chi-square was used for categorical variables. **Results:** Overall, 250 transgender were approached through a registered NGO. The mean age of participants was 32.34 years with a standard deviation of 7.86 years. From this, 88.4% were males and 11.6% were females as identified by their birth certificates. The current sex/gender the participants identified as 81.6% Males and 18.4% Females. Half of the participants were homeless while 33.6% were living in a shelter. The suicidal attempt was identified in 62.9% of Males, 13.5% of Females, and 23.6% of trans genders, as identified by their N.I. Cs (**p-value X² 0.012**). Based on monthly income, 36% of the participants who made monthly income between 21000 to 30000 PKR, reported suicidal attempts with a significant p-value of X² 0.034. **Conclusions:** This study found an association between discrimination and suicidal attempt among a transgender population.

INTRODUCTION

Suicide has become a serious public health challenge across the world with around 800,000 people dying by suicide each year. Amongst these a majority of the people (79%) belongs to low and middle-income countries [1]. Many factors can contribute to one's consideration of suicide, and this can be exacerbated in certain circumstances. Members of the LGBTQ+ communities may fall into these circumstances and have a greater risk of suicidal attempts than the general population [2]. According to the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, a higher risk of suicidal attempts has been reported among

younger trans genders and those who have a history of suicidal thoughts or attempts [3,4]. Specifically, about 25-32% of trans genders have attempted suicide in the past and about 41.7% who identified as transgender considered it and carried it out [5]. Part of these numbers can be attributed to a positive association between discrimination and suicidal attempts among trans genders. A Chinese study has shown a high (56.4%) prevalence of suicidal thoughts, whereas 16.1% of suicidal attempts have been reported. These suicidal attempts reported were by trans genders who experienced an extreme amount of conflict

with their parents and perceived discrimination from other public populations [6]. Discrimination is defined as differentiating the characteristics among somebody considering them to be a lesser priority based on their sexual, gender minority, or other features [7]. This matter includes many factors including, turning to substance use/abuse a lack of support in social circles, and even problems in socio-economic status. Discrimination is one of the leading causes of depression, drug and alcohol abuse. Drug abuse and discrimination have shown a positive association with the increased risk of suicidal attempts among the transgender population [8]. One study has been found that 62% of the majority of the transgender population sampled, low socio-economic status and reported suicidal attempts, had a prevalence of drug abuse [3,9]. Interaction between social circles and the lack of support in the form of discrimination can also affect transgender suicide attempts. According to the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, suicidal attempt shows a positive association with victimization lack of social support, and an increased risk for suicidal thoughts [3,4,10]. The National Transgender Discrimination Survey, also showed that 41% of the transgender participants attempted suicide due to discrimination perceived by the public population [4,10]. The Journal of Homosexuality emphasizes this as 32% of existing cases of transgender suicidal attempts have been reported as being due to discrimination; This included instances of enforced sex, gender-based discrimination, and gender-based victimization, which reportedly led to substance abuse and depression. These factors were thought to explain the high number of attempted suicides among the younger transgender population [11]. Socio-economic status also plays a role in discrimination, where many are often shunted from basic needs because of their gender identity. In Pakistan, a study conducted in Rawalpindi and Islamabad shows that the prevalence of suicidal thoughts was higher (38.6%) than compared to suicidal attempts (18.5%) among trans genders. In this case and others around the world, some of the factors causing this related to general life trying to earn money. This included discriminatory behaviors in daily life, physical attacks in public, forced commercial sex workers, and begging [3,12,13]. With all of these contributing factors, it is apparent that the prevalence of suicidal attempts is largely related to discrimination. In the context of low and middle-income countries, such as Pakistan, little research has been done in-depth regarding aspects of discrimination that are prominent in suicidal ideation. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the link between suicidal attempts and discrimination among a transgender population in the context of Pakistan.

METHODS

This study followed having a retrospective cross-sectional study design using the primary data analysis obtained from project data from Gender Interactive Alliance NGO (GIA). Cross-sectional study design examines phenomenon at one point in time [14]. GIA is a Non-Governmental Organization with the mission to improve the sexual health, welfare, and human rights of Minorities and their partners in Karachi, Pakistan. Founded in 2002, GIA provides counseling, screening, and related treatment for sexual health (Gender Interactive Alliance [Pakistan], 2017). GIA outreach workers collected the data primarily from minorities at all the hotspot/cruising areas in Karachi (hotels, parks, bus stops, cinema halls, male brothels, TG Deras, tea Dhabbas) by conducting interviews through non-structured interview guidelines followed by verbal consent. The data was collected in the national language "Urdu" using their record-keeping database. The performance contains the variables including Age, Gender on the birth certificate, Stated gender on National Identity Card, Transgender, Current Sex/ Gender, Preferred Gender Identity, Transgender Couple Relationship Status, Marital status (Married, Separated, Divorced, Widowed, Children Currently Rely on their Income, Sexual Orientation of the participants (Gay, Lesbian, Heterosexual, Queer, Bisexual), Religion of the participants, Race /Ethnicity of the participants, Province of the participants, Highest Degree or Level of education, Current gross Monthly household income, Current living arrangement, attempted and not attempted suicide. The sample size was calculated via open epi in which the sample size of 250 was required (confidence interval of 95% and precision value of 20%). The NGOs used the 'universal and purposive sampling technique' method to collect the data. The desired sample size helped achieves the final size of 250 participants. We used universal sampling technique, means all the participants meeting the eligibility criteria included that the participants must be;

- Be 18 years and above age or older
- Be registered with a non-governmental organization (NGO).

The data was collected in the year of 2020. For the data analysis SPSS (Statistical Package for the social sciences) were used. For statistical analysis, the data were analyzed on SPSS (Version 21.0). For continuous variables, mean and standard deviation were calculated, while for categorical variable, frequencies and percentages were calculated. For inferential statistics, a chi-square test was applied for comparing the association between discrimination and suicidal attempt among trans genders.

RESULTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of the

transgender participants are shown in Table 1. Overall, 250 registered trans genders with an NGO were identified. The mean age of participants was 32.34 years with a standard deviation of 7.8. From these, in accordance with the sex on their birth certificate, 221(88.4%) were males and 29(11.6%) were females. According to their stated gender on National Identity Card (N.I.C), 185(74.0%) were males, 24(9.6%) were females, and 41 (16.4%) were transgender. The current sex/gender the participants identified were as were reported to be 204 (81.6%) of them being males, and 46 (18.4%) of them being females. Their preferred gender identity was reported as less than half (40%) identifying as transgender, whereas 53.2% identified as females, and 6.8% identified as males. In terms of relationships and personal characteristics, a majority of the study participants were in couple relationships, 78.4% were singles, 0.4% were partnered, 1.6% were in a civil union, 1.2% were married, 2.4% were separated, 4.8% were divorced, and 11.2% were widowed. The sexual orientation of the couple relationship status of the participants was identified as 71.2% being gay, 18% being lesbian, 1.2% being heterosexual, 7.2% being queer, and 2.4% being bisexual. Furthermore, by assessing the religion of participants, 86.8% were Muslim; whereas 7.6% were Christian and 5.6% were Hindu. Moreover, 24.8% were Punjabi, 24.8% were Sindhi, 21.6% were Muhajir (Urdu speaker), 15.2% were Pashtun, 10.8% were Baloch, and 2.8% were others as identified by their ethnicity status of the participants. More than half (60.4%) of the participants belonged to the Sindh region, 18.0% were from Punjab, 13.6% from KPK, and 8.0% from Baluchistan province. Regarding their educational status and financial parameters, most of the participant's education levels (42.8%) were primary, whereas 18.4% had middle school education, 20.4% had matriculation experience, 6.4% had intermediate education, 3.2% had a Bachelor's Degree, 0.8% had a Master's Degree, 0.8% had a Professional degree, and 7.2% were uneducated. The monthly income of the participants was identified as, 2.0% earning less than 10000 PKR, whereas 14.0% earned between 11000 to 20000 PKR, 34.4% earned between 21000 to 30000 PKR, 38.8% earned between 31000 to 40000 PKR, 10.4% earned between 41000 to 50000 PKR, and 0.4% earned between 51000 to 60000 PKR. Regarding the participants living status, half (50.0%) were homeless, 33.6% were living in a shelter, 2.0% were living in university housing, 4.4% were still living with their parents, and 10.0% were staying with friends temporarily. It was reported that 2.0% of them were living with zero people in their household, 32.8% were living with between one to four children, 53.2% were living with between five to eight children and 12% were living with between nine to twelve children in their house. A majority of the participants

(94.4%) had no children relying on their monthly income for support, whereas 1.2% had only one child, 3.2% had two children, and 1.2% had three children relying on their income for support.

1 Demographic Characteristics	
Mean age of the participants in years	32.34+7.858*
2 Stated gender on birth certificate	
Male	221(88.4%)
Female	29(11.6%)
3 Stated gender on National Identity Card	
Male	185(74.0%)
Female	24(9.6%)
Transgender	41(16.4%)
4 Current Sex /Gender	
Male	204(81.6%)
Female	46(18.4%)
5 Preferred Gender Identity	
Male	17(6.8%)
Female	133(53.2%)
Transgender	100(40.0%)
6 Couple Relationship Status	
Single	196(78.4%)
Partnered (Girlfriend / Boyfriend)	1(0.4%)
Civil Union	4(1.6%)
Married	3(1.2%)
Separated	6(2.4%)
Divorced	12(4.8%)
Widowed	28(11.2%)
7 Children Currently Rely on their Income	
0 Children	236(94.4%)
1 Children	3(1.2%)
2 Children	8(3.2%)
3 Children	3(1.2%)
8 Sexual Orientation of the participants	
Gay	178(71.2%)
Lesbian	45(18.0%)
Heterosexual	3(1.2%)
Queer	18(7.2%)
Bisexual	6(2.4%)
9 Religion of the participants	
Muslim	217(86.8%)
Christian	19(7.6%)
Hindu	14(5.6%)
10 Race / Ethnicity of the participants	
Baloch	27(10.8%)
Pashtun	38(15.2%)
Punjabi	62(24.8%)
Sindhi	62(24.8%)
Muhajir (Urdu Speaker)	54(21.6%)
Others	7(2.8%)
11 Province of the participants	
Baluchistan	20(8.0%)
KPK	34(13.6%)
Punjab	45(18.0%)
Sindh	151(60.4%)
12 Highest Degree or Level of education	
Primary	107(42.8%)
Middle	46(18.4%)
Matriculation	51(20.4%)
Intermediate	16(6.4%)

	Bachelor Degree	8 (3.2%)
	Master Degree	2 (0.8%)
	Professional Degree (MBBS, DVM, LLB)	2 (0.8%)
	Uneducated	18 (7.2%)
13	Current gross monthly household income (before taxes)	
	Less than PKR 10000	5 (2.0%)
	11000 PKR to 20000 PKR	35 (14.0%)
	21000 PKR to 30000 PKR	86 (34.4%)
	31000 PKR to 40000 PKR	97 (38.8%)
	41000 PKR to 50000 PKR	26 (10.4%)
	51000 PKR to 60000 PKR	1 (0.4%)
14	People live in the participant's household	
	None	5 (2.0%)
	1 - 4	82 (32.8%)
	5 - 8	133 (53.2%)
	9 - 12	30 (12%)
15	Current living arrangement	
	Homelessness	125 (50.0%)
	Living in a shelter	84 (33.6%)
	Living in a campus or university housing	5 (2.0%)
	Still living with parents or family you grew up with	11 (4.4%)
	Staying with friends or family temporarily	25 (10.0%)

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Table 2 Shows The Demographic of Those Who Attempted Suicide, In Which 62.9% Were Males, 13.5% Were Females and 23.6% Were Trans Genders, As Identified by The Participant's N.I.C with The Significant P-Value of X2 0.012. The Participants Also Reported Suicidal Attempts Based On Their Current Sex/Gender, Which They Identified, In Which 73% Were Males and 27% Were Females with The Significant P-Value of Chi-Square (0.009). Based On Their Monthly Income Status, 4.5% Made Less Than 10000 Pkr, 19.1% Made Between 11000 To 20000 Pkr, 36% Made Between 21000 To 30000 Pkr, 29.2% Made Between 31000 To 40000 Pkr, 10.1% Made Between 41000 To 50000 Pkr, And Finally 1.1% Made Between 51000 To 60000 Pkr and Attempted Suicide with The P-Value of X2 0.034.

Demographic of those who attempted suicide				
	Name of the variable	Being attempted suicide	Being not attempted suicide	p-value
1	Gender stated on the birth certificate			
	Male	75 (84.3%)	146 (90.7%)	0.129
	Female	14 (15.7%)	15 (9.3%)	
2	Gender stated on National Identity Card			
	Male	56 (62.9%)	129 (80.1%)	0.012
	Female	12 (13.5%)	12 (7.5%)	
	Transgender	21 (23.6%)	20 (12.4%)	
3	Current Sex /gender			
	Male	65 (73.0%)	139 (86.3%)	0.009
	Female	24 (27.0%)	22 (13.7%)	
4	Preferred gender identity			
	Male	4 (4.5%)	13 (8.1%)	0.260
	Female	53 (59.6%)	80 (49.7%)	
	Transgender	32 (36.0%)	68 (42.2%)	
5	Current couple relationship status			
	Single	66 (74.2%)	130 (80.7%)	
	Partnered (Girlfriend / Boyfriend)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.6%)	
	Civil Union	2 (2.2%)	2 (1.2%)	

	Married	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.9%)	0.241	
	Separated	1 (1.1%)	5 (3.1%)		
	Divorced	7 (7.9%)	5 (3.1%)		
	Widowed	13 (14.6%)	15 (9.3%)		
6	Number of children currently rely on your income				
	None	82 (92.1%)	154 (95.7%)	0.137	
	One	1 (1.1%)	2 (1.2%)		
	Two	3 (3.4%)	5 (3.1%)		
	Three	3 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)		
7	Current sexual orientation				
	Gay	55 (61.8%)	123 (76.4%)	0.082	
	Lesbian	23 (25.8%)	22 (13.7%)		
	Heterosexual	2 (2.2%)	1 (0.6%)		
	Queer	6 (6.7%)	12 (7.5%)		
	Bisexual	3 (3.4%)	3 (1.9%)		
8	Current practicing Religion				
	Muslim	77 (86.5%)	140 (87.0%)	0.993	
	Christian	7 (7.9%)	12 (7.5%)		
	Hindu	5 (5.6%)	9 (5.6%)		
9	Race/ ethnicity				
	Baloch	12 (13.5%)	15 (9.3%)	0.188	
	Pashtun	15 (16.9%)	23 (14.3%)		
	Punjabi	21 (23.6%)	41 (25.5%)		
	Sindhi	27 (30.3%)	35 (21.7%)		
	Muhajir (Urdu Speakers)	13 (14.6%)	41 (25.5%)		
	Others	1 (1.1%)	6 (3.7%)		
10	Province distribution				
	Baluchistan	10 (11.2%)	10 (6.2%)	0.331	
	KPK	12 (13.5%)	22 (13.7%)		
	Punjab	12 (13.5%)	33 (20.5%)		
	Sindh	55 (61.8%)	96 (59.6%)		
11	Education				
	Primary	41 (46.1%)	66 (41.0%)	0.147	
	Middle	22 (24.7%)	24 (14.9%)		
	Matriculation	16 (18.0%)	35 (21.7%)		
	Intermediate	5 (5.6%)	11 (6.8%)		
	Bachelor's degree (for example :BA, BS)	3 (3.4%)	5 (3.1%)		
	Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, and MBA)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.2%)		
	Professional degree (for example: MBBS, MD, DVM, and LLB)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.2%)		
	Uneducated	2 (2.2%)	16 (9.9%)		
12	Current gross monthly household income				
	Less than PKR 10000	4 (4.5%)	1 (0.6%)		0.034
	11000 PKR to 20000 PKR	17 (19.1%)	18 (11.2%)		
	21000 PKR to 30000 PKR	32 (36.0%)	54 (33.5%)		
	31000 PKR to 40000 PKR	26 (29.2%)	71 (44.1%)		
	41000 PKR to 50000 PKR	9 (10.1%)	17 (10.6%)		
	51000 PKR to 60000 PKR	1 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)		

13	People live in their household			0.846
None	2 (2.2%)	3 (1.9%)		
1 - 4	30 (33.7%)	21 (32.3%)		
5 - 8	44 (49.5%)	89 (55.3%)		
9 - 12	13 (14.6%)	17 (10.6%)		

Table 2: Demographic of those who attempted suicide

DISCUSSION

The current analytical cross-sectional study investigated the link between suicidal attempts in connection to discrimination among trans genders through a registered NGO in Karachi, Pakistan. Findings reported a positive association between suicidal attempts in connection to discriminated trans genders. Higher suicidal attempt rates (62.9%) were reported in males as compare to females' trans genders, as identified by their stated gender on their N.I.C with a significant chi square of P-value 0.012. Comparing genders, the highest rate of suicidal attempts was found among male trans genders as compared to other gender identities. The National Transgender Discrimination survey showed that 42% of male trans genders was found with suicidal attempt; transgender population is on higher risk of suicide attempt as compare to other gender identity [5,15,16]. Furthermore, 73.0% male transgender as identified by their current sex/gender significantly suicidal attempt (p-value X2 0.009). In contrast, female transgender were significantly found for suicidal attempt; higher rate (38.7%) of suicidal attempt found among female transgender as compare to male transgender [6,17]. Moreover, regarding their current monthly income status of the participants were reported as 36.0% who made between 21000 to 30000 PKR, significantly reported suicidal attempt (p-value X2 0.034). it has been reported in Hong Kong that 43.4% of the participants reported suicidal attempt rate is higher among those whose monthly income was less than HSK\$ 6000. Another study has been found that low economic status is positive associated with the occurrence of violence in both male to female and female to male Tran genders [6,18]. In addition to that half (50.0%) of the transgender participants were reported homeless. Similarly, a previous study showed that a high level of suicidal attempt found among those who were (69%) homeless [16]. Furthermore, a study showed that homeless trans genders are more vulnerable to get mental health problems and posttraumatic stress disorders that can lead to psychiatric disorder which is the leading cause of suicidal tendency [19]. Moreover, another study found that there is a huge need of screening for suicide attempts and ideation among homeless trans genders which should be reduced and there is a wide range of needs of health care intervention to control the issue [20].

CONCLUSIONS

The finding of the current study displays that suicidal attempt is strongly associated among discriminated trans genders. They face a huge amount of discrimination in their homes and in public areas. Moreover, transgender males were more prone to attempt suicide as compared to transgender females due to their constant appearance in public spaces. Low monthly income is also strongly associated suicidal attempt and is more prominent in those whose monthly income is less than 30000 PKR per month. These findings suggest that this population is more vulnerable as compare to the general population, so there is an emerging need for policy makers to focus on this type of population for intervention.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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