

**Transgender: Stigma, Discrimination and Social Exclusion****Ume Sughra<sup>1\*</sup>, M Imran<sup>2</sup>***Assistant Professor, Curriculum & Teaching Coordinator MSPH Programme, Al-Shifa School of Public Health, Pakistan Institute of Ophthalmology, Rawalpindi, Pakistan**<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Consultant surgeon, Fauji foundation hospital, Rawalpindi, Pakistan***About author**

Dr. Sughra is a medical graduate with Fellowship Degree from College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan, in addition to Masters Degree in Public Health from University of Health Sciences Lahore. She is a passionate teacher, researcher and academician who enjoy a teaching experience of more than 10 years.

*“We are God’s creation we didn’t create ourselves so why are we blamed to be like this? “We wish we would have a separate world to live, this world of males and females don’t want to see us and we don’t want to see them either.”* This was the comment I heard while interviewing a transgender community at Bari Imam Islamabad, Pakistan. I visited that community for a research project along with my supervisee studying at Al-Shifa School of Public Health in Rawalpindi. This was a life time experience and an eye opener experience for me. They are the targets of harassment, abuse, stigma and discrimination. They say that *“the way this world treats us we would have committed suicides if it would have not forbidden in our religion”*. According to them this is the first time ever that someone is talking to them sympathetically and patiently and with due respect that they have never experienced before. People don’t want to even sit with them while travelling in local transport, don’t shake hands with them and not even talk to them and get annoyed by their presence as if they have AIDS. From early years of life it’s the parents who first stigmatize them and make their life miserable by not supporting them the way they are. Then it goes on in schools where their teachers and peers make fun of them and abuse them and many a times sexually harass them too. When they visit hospitals it becomes an issue that where to put their gender either in males or females. Doctors don’t treat them on the basis of humanity rather refuse to counsel, to refer or to providing any supportive measures to them. If they don’t fit into either category of gender identity of being male or female they won’t be even touched by the doctor. One of the experience shared was that upon fainting doctors

didn’t even examine and just gave an injection which even worsen the condition of a transgender.

Many of them strongly recommended that their doctors and hospitals should be totally separate where they can have privacy and freedom to share their entire problems with full confidentiality. They also suggested that their schools and all other centers should be entirely separate focusing on their needs only. The other school of thought was that *“we don’t want to have separate schools and health care centers but we want the society to accept our existence and let us be a part of the society because if we start demanding separate things for us we will be further cornered and isolated that we don’t want”*.

They were mostly involved in begging, dancing and sex traits for earning their livelihood. They were all satisfied by their identity but not satisfied at all by the way the society treats them and stigmatize them. They say that *“by a single gesture people kill us and although we are living but this is no life”*. Many of them use hormonal replacement therapies to align their bodies according to their feelings and identities. They could have been our useful human resource and asset that is being spoiled by us just because of the label “Transgender”.

We talk about animal protection laws and policies why not protecting rights of human beings labeled as *Transgender*. Why not their health protection? This discrimination would certainly lead to negative health outcomes. Why we deprive them from their basic human right of seeking health care? There is an increased risk of HIV infection among transgender and health disparities would further make it worst.<sup>1</sup> Although identity as transgender is purely medical issue but social stigma creates a difficult situation for

them being transgender. There shouldn't be any sex discrimination for the provision of health care. Instead of social isolation there should be social inclusion for transgender [2]. We being health care professionals need to break that barrier and bridge the gap between transgender and their health. Society as a whole will have to play its role starting from the family with positive parenting techniques[1], nondiscriminatory visiting policies in hospitals, need to create safe and supportive school environments for all students regardless of gender identity. All these measures would lead to a more positive group identity, more positive mental health and higher self esteem for transgender [3].

## References

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