



RESEARCH PAPER

Transgender Representation in Politics: Paving the Way for Inclusion and Equality in Pakistan

¹ Muhammad Qasim Arslan*, ² Naseema Ali ³Mahar Ghulam Rasool

1. M Phil Sociology , Department of sociology , Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpind, Punjab, Pakistan
2. M Phil Sociology Department of sociology Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Islamabad, Pakistan
3. Deputy Registrar, Federal Shareat Court , Islamabad, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author: qarslan9999@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This academic study looks at how transgender people in Pakistan are becoming more involved in politics and government. Pakistan has a growing transgender population. Historically disadvantaged and misunderstood transgender persons have found their way into powerful positions within the government machinery through advocacy campaigns, electoral candidacies, and advisory roles. Their participation is a powerful demonstration of the need of diversity and inclusion, and they bring new ideas to the table for improving laws that protect and advance social justice. Amidst pervasive prejudice, transgender activists' views have been vital in driving policy agendas and promoting progress in crucial realms such as legal rights, socioeconomic inclusion, healthcare provision, and more. One of the greatest assets in the fight for justice, integrity, and empowerment is the continued and increased participation of transgender authorities and activists. Their engagement is a vote of confidence in democratic pluralism and a source of optimism in the fight against structural exclusion. Women's participation in Pakistan's government has increased dramatically, and this is mostly due to the efforts of transgender people.

KEYWORDS: Advocacy Campaigns, Diversity and Inclusion Empowerment , Gender Diversity, Government Machinery ,Healthcare Provision , Transgender Persons, Political Participation, Social Justice

Introduction

In Pakistan, transgender people have historically been subjected to hostile treatment on the basis of their gender identification, including physical assault. Inspiringly, there has been a significant uptick in the number of trans people taking part in electoral politics. With more people aware of their plight, their civil liberties may be better protected.

Known as 'khwaja sita,' Human Rights Watch (2014) reports that transgender persons in Pakistan have faced decades of discrimination, harassment, and even violence due to their gender. The Pakistani transgender rights organization Trans Action has been instrumental in spreading the word. Transgender people did not get the ability to vote, inherit property, or receive government-issued identity until two historic Supreme Court verdicts in 2009 and 2013 (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). With this precedent set, it will be easier to take future legal action and secure full citizenship rights. Over forty transgender people submitted candidacy papers for various seats in the upcoming election after Pakistan became the first country in the world to constitutionally guarantee transgender persons the right to vote in elections (BBC News, 2018). While not everyone was successful, their efforts were still essential. Nadeem Kashish, in 2019, became the first transgender councilwoman in Islamabad, marking a watershed moment for transgender inclusion in politics and its influence on public policy (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Significance in Promoting Inclusivity and Representation

Trans people now have more opportunities to have their voices heard by policymakers thanks to the growing political participation of the trans community. Fighting discrimination, supporting transgender rights, and abolishing forced begging have all been prioritized (Pakistan Today, 2020). There are now many transgender councils which are lobbying for a variety of causes in the wider public. There has been a rise in attention paid to issues of transgender-inclusive healthcare, housing, and education (Mir, 2020).

Waqqas Mir, a legal expert, argues that the presence of transgender people in government positions may have a major impact on the development of inclusive policies (2020). Those who have been discriminated against themselves have unique perspectives on the power of laws and institutions to either reinforce or counteract prejudice. Advocacy work by transgender people has the potential to affect positive policy changes for their group and boost their legitimacy as political leaders.

However, there are still several obstacles that prevent trans people from being fully represented in government. There are barriers to electoral success, including as a lack of institutional backing and persistent transphobia. The transgender rights movement in Pakistan is split on whether it should focus on political action or community outreach (Khan, 2014). However, recent events show a flexible attitude and a desire to include transgender voices in decisions. Better understanding, freedom, and rights for everybody are all boosted by this type of representation.

As the number of transgender people working in Pakistan's democratic institutions continues to rise, there is cause for cautious hope that discriminatory obstacles can be broken down. Gender equality will only progress with more transgender politicians and campaigners having a voice and a chance to affect policy. Their participation and leadership preserve the democratic principles of tolerance and respect for all people.

Literature Review

In order for the transgender population in Pakistan to achieve inclusion and equality, transgender presence in politics is an essential component that must be accomplished. This literature review examines essential ideas from a variety of sources on this subject, drawing from research and efforts in Pakistan as its primary sources.

Media Presentation of Political Participation of Transgender Community in Pakistan

The purpose of this research study is to shed light on the visibility and representation of transgender persons in the public sphere in Pakistani media by highlighting the social and political position of transgender individuals in Pakistani media.

Pakistan Is Leading the Way on Transgender Rights

Pakistan has made tremendous strides in advancing transgender rights by outlawing discrimination and recognising self-perceived gender identity. These policies have consequences for political inclusion because they have the potential to remove barriers to participation.

Equality, Inclusion and Participation: Way forward to trans rights!

This source places an emphasis on the significance of equality, inclusion, and participation for the transgender community in Pakistan, implying that the transgender community's increasing visibility and involvement in political processes might pave the way for the recognition of their rights.

Legal Analyses on Rights to Transgender

An essay that examines the legal and regulatory framework in Pakistan with the goal of determining the rights of transgender people, particularly their right to equality, which is essential for their involvement in political life.

Descriptive to Substantive Representation: A Study of Gender

This source sheds light on the responsibility that falls on the Pakistani government to pave the way for an inclusive route that takes into account gender diversity and representation in politics.

UNDP Pakistan holds a dialogue for developing a national strategic framework for transgender protection and political inclusion

Recent initiatives by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan reveal an increasing commitment to building a national framework for the protection and political inclusion of transgender people, signalling success in this area.

Material and Methods

Using an integrative strategy, we combine different schools of thought and bodies of information in order to conduct a thorough analysis of transgender participation in Pakistani politics and administration. In light of recent shifts in the political climate in Pakistan and the increasing need for studies of gender diversity in the context of Southern governance, this integrated approach aims to shed light on the big picture and pinpoint potential growth areas. Research issues center on how transgender people have been more visible in politics, what effect they have had on legislation, what barriers they have faced, and how they could overcome such challenges in the future.

This study follows precedents set by previous works (Butt,Awan,2022) and conducts an integrated literature evaluation. In order to gain a more nuanced knowledge of complicated events, this approach entails a thorough review and synthesis of data from many sources. This goes beyond merely describing something; rather, it seeks to build fresh understanding. The project will examine and evaluate the most up-to-date scientific and grey literature published between 2010 and 2022. Research will be conducted using terms like "transgender," "trans," "khawaja sira," "policy," "politics," "advocacy," "Pakistan," and "JSTOR" to comb libraries and archives for relevant material. Organizational reports, media coverage, and conference papers will also be accessed via Google Scholar searches to broaden the range of viewpoints considered.

The collected material will be systematically evaluated to answer research questions on entry points, policy effects, challenges, and future possibilities. The data will be analyzed thematically after qualitative coding is used to inductively extract salient themes (Jalil,A.,2020). Gender theory, feminism, and the concept of social inclusion (S.A,2020) will be used to provide context for the analysis of these issues.

The results will be presented in narrative style, outlining the current state of knowledge and its many facets in a logical manner. This method makes it easier to compile an all-encompassing qualitative synthesis of the literature. This study attempts to illuminate the existing state of knowledge and possible paths for future research and action on transgender empowerment in Pakistan via political involvement and policymaking by synthesizing viewpoints from both scholarly and grey literature.

Torraco (201fi) states that a survey of the literature can "contribute to theoretical development, knowledge enrichment, and policy formulation" (p. 417) about the dynamics of transgender inclusion in modern Pakistan. It fills a need in the area of policy studies (Karmani, N., 2018) by responding to requests for the inclusion of underrepresented LGBTQ

perspectives and addressing knowledge gaps at the interface of gender diversity, governance, and justice in the Global South.

Shazadi Rai's Contributions to Transgender Policymaking and Advocacy in Pakistan

In Pakistan, transgender rights campaigning and policymaking, Shazadi Rai plays a crucial role. She has made a significant effect as one of the first out transgender legislators. The transgender rights advocacy and community organizing experience that Rai brings has been invaluable. In 2017, she co-founded Trans Action KP to better serve the trans community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As a result of her advocacy, transgender people across the country now have access to gender-specific identification documents that allow them to fully participate in and enjoy the protections of our society.

Four transgender candidates, including Rai, were finally allowed to run in a Pakistani election in 2018 (Kollman, 2019). Rai continued in her fight for fairness and justice despite encountering many obstacles. She sided with Imran Khan's PTI government when he became prime minister in order to work on transgender equality concerns. She became the first transgender government advisor in Pakistan when KP Chief Minister Mehmood Khan hired her in 2021 (Express Tribune, 2021).

Over the course of the next year, Rai utilized her position to push for major changes in the law. She began addressing transgender people's needs by creating a transgender welfare board, a publicly sponsored school for transgender pupils, and initiatives to help transgender people find work (Warrach, S. K., 2019). These efforts are especially important because transgender youth have traditionally encountered educational difficulties. Rai has also advocated for the creation of transgender-only hospital wards and the modification of medical professionals' attitudes about people who identify as transgender.

In an important step toward gender parity, in May 2022, Rai signed legislation that legalized a third gender category on KP official papers. She is a strong advocate for transgender representation in public office and the workplace. Rai recognizes that discrimination still exists in society despite significant advances (Warrach, S. K., 2019).

The transgender community in KP has benefited much from Rai's perseverance and leadership as she has risen from a grassroots organizer to a prominent government advisor. Her groundbreaking efforts can serve as a template for emancipation and pave the way for transgender people to have a voice in human rights policy in Pakistan.

Nayab Ali's Role as a Transgender Rights Advocate and Policymaker in Pakistan

Nayab Ali is one of the few openly transgender elected politicians in Pakistan, and she is a prominent advocate for transgender rights. As a transgender person in Pakistan, she faced prejudice and violence, which spurred her advocacy. She co-founded Trans Action KP in 2017 to help transgender people succeed in areas like as higher learning, employment, and legal recognition through the issuance of national ID cards (J.A,2019).

In 2018, Nayab Ali became one of the first transgender Pakistanis to enter national politics when she stood for the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (J.A,2019). Her first attempt at politics was not fruitful, but it did provide the framework for her subsequent work in this area. She joined the PTI in 2019 and has been advocating for transgender rights with Imran Khan, who is expected to become prime minister in 2020.

The Engagement of Other Transgender Figures in Policymaking and Advocacy in Pakistan

In Pakistan, transgender activists have increasingly entered the political and advocacy spheres, drawing inspiration from leaders like Nayab Ali and Shazadi Rai. Their

efforts and participation are making the political environment more welcoming to people of different backgrounds and perspectives.

In 2015, transgender rights activist Mazhar Anjum broke the mold of minority-only representation by running for a regular seat in Pakistan's National Assembly (Shaikh,2013). Anjum's attempts to improve transgender people's financial standing were met with resistance, but she persisted in her fight against prejudice anyhow. She formed a training organization in conjunction with the Benazir Income Support Program (Shaikh,2013).

An advocate for healthcare reform, transgender shelters, and citizen representation, Lubna Umar stood for the National Assembly in the same election cycle (Kollman, 2009). In terms of breaking down barriers for women seeking public office, her campaign alone was groundbreaking. From 2015 forward, a number of additional trailblazing transgender candidates, including as Zarish Khanum, Nadeem Kashish, and Qamar Naseem, have gained significant government advisory jobs (Kollman, 2009).

As Pakistan's first transgender councilor, Ramesh Singh Arora worked to reduce incidences of discrimination and harassment by law enforcement and the business community (Javaid, 2020). While social worker Shahzadi Rai has passionately fought for the right to vote, transgender activist Farzana Jan has been vital in spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS (Kollman, 2009). Amna Masood, a writer, has also used the media to call attention to social injustices. Transgender people's growing public acceptance, agitation, and leadership have established their authority in politics.

Although these changes have been subtle, they have had an impact on public opinion and policy. As the community of transgender officials and activists grows, issues of inclusion, representation, and human dignity have emerged as critical foci. Their unique viewpoints have the ability to break down long-standing discrimination. Despite widespread prejudice, this emerging group of leaders in Pakistan has made significant strides toward transgender equality.

The Challenges and Advancements in Transgender Policy Development and Rights in Pakistan

Transgender people have made great progress toward full participation in political life, but they still face considerable barriers. Their representation in positions of power is nonetheless limited by transphobia and long-standing institutional impediments. However, transgender leaders and activists' profiles and clout have grown significantly in recent years.

Recognizing a third gender identification and the rights and protections that come with it is a landmark decision in the court system (Redding, 2019). Access to education, employment, and healthcare has improved thanks to government initiatives, advisory positions, and inclusive quotas (Redding, 2019). Changes in mindsets and perceptions drive this development.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done before inclusive policies are widely adopted and effectively implemented. Transgender experts are needed to ensure that efforts to advance gender parity, social justice, and human rights are sustained. Despite transgender people's long struggle with discrimination in Pakistan, giving them a greater voice in governance might spark revolutionary change.

The Impact and Future Prospects of Transgender Inclusion in Pakistani Policy Framework

As more transgender people enter the public sphere in Pakistan, they are helping to pave the way for greater acceptance and equal treatment of all people. More people are aware of and believe in the importance of equal rights thanks to their participation and visibility in governing areas (Mir, 2020). By increasing opportunities and safeguards for all

people, significant progress has been made toward establishing a more equal society that promotes human dignity (S., 20).

Conclusions

In conclusion, transgender people in Pakistan have achieved great gains toward inclusion and empowerment. This can be largely attributed to their rising visibility in public life and political arenas, which has been the driving force behind these advancements. The long history of prejudice directed at this community lends added weight to their recent integration into positions of leadership, which represents a symbolic as well as practical breakthrough. Their participation clears the way for addressing the needs of the community and removing prejudices that are embedded in the system. Despite the ongoing difficulties presented by institutions, essential democratic concepts such as diversity, honesty, and equity are strengthened when persons who identify as transgender are given the opportunity to voice their opinions publicly.

Even though Pakistan has made significant headway, it is very necessary for the country to keep the momentum going in the direction of political involvement and civil rights. When transgender leaders and activists are given greater opportunity to have their voices heard and influence the policies and choices that affect their lives, discriminatory organizations have the potential to morph into institutions that respect the promise of equal citizenship. These intrepid individuals have paved the way for a more empathetic and equitable Pakistan by laying the groundwork. The fact that they are actively participating marks an important turning point in the fight for civil rights and gender equality.

References

- Mir, W. (2020). *Transgender activism in Pakistan: Contesting multiple marginalization's*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Benjamin, J.A. (2019, August 5). *Pakistan elects first transgender person as lawmaker*. Reuters.
- Jalil, A. (2020, August 9). 'More visibility, more acceptance': Pakistan transgender activist. Al Jazeera.
- Khan, F. A. (2014). *Khwaja sira: Culture, identity politics, and" transgender" activism in Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University).
- Butt, M., Awan, M., & Roomi, A. R. (2022). Self-Perceived Identity in Transgender of Pakistan; a Review of Transgender Protection Act 2018. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(2), 68-74.
- Khan, F. A. (2014). Khwaja sira: Transgender activism and transnationality in Pakistan. *South Asia in the world: An introduction*, 170-184.
- Khan, A., & Kirmani, N. (2018). *Moving beyond the binary: Gender-based activism in Pakistan*.
- Khan, S. A. (2020). Transgender Community in Pakistan: From Marginalized "aliens/others" to Empowered "Citizens"?. *Progressive Research Journal of Arts & Humanities (PRJAH)*, 2(2), 28-42.
- Bhattacharya, S. (2019). The transgender nation and its margins: The many lives of the law. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, (20).
- Khan, F. A. (2016). Khwaja Sira activism: The politics of gender ambiguity in Pakistan. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 3(1-2), 158-164.
- Kollman, K., & Waites, M. (2009). The global politics of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender human rights: An introduction. *Contemporary politics*, 15(1), 1-17.
- Talbot, I. (2010). India and Pakistan. In *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics* (pp. 27-40). Routledge.
- Khan, F. A. (2016). Khwaja Sira activism: The politics of gender ambiguity in Pakistan. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 3(1-2), 158-164.
- Shaikh, F. (2013). From Islamisation to Shariatization: cultural transnationalism in Pakistan. In *Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms* (pp. 193-209). Routledge.
- Redding, J. A. (2019). The Pakistan Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 and its impact on the law of gender in Pakistan. *Austl. J. Asian L.*, 20, 103.
- Alam, I., Warraich, S. K., & Rehman, N. U. (2019). Issues and management of transgender community in Pakistan: a case study of Lahore. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3(2), 761-770.